

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF MAITREYA CULT

II-1. THE ORIGIN OF MAITREYA CULT

Maitreya has been given various names in different languages. He is recognized by the Pāli canon as Metta or Metteyya by Sāṃskṛit as Maitri, Maitreya or Maitreyanatha. The Greco-Roman inscriptions of Kushan period read Metrargo Boudo(1). He has been called Maidari in Mongolian, Milo in Chinese, Miryek in Korean and Miroku in Japanese, all of which might have derived from the Sanskrit word 'maitri'. Maitreya is the combination of the word 'metta' and 'ya' or 'maitri' and 'ya'; 'ya' here personifies the word 'metta' or 'maitri'. The suffix 'ya' in Sāṃskṛit can stand for either masculine, feminine or neuter gender, when it occurs at the end of a word. In the case of Maitreya as a Buddhist deity, 'ya' indicates his masculine identity.

The meaning of 'maitri' has been regarded as 'friendliness' 'benevolence', 'active and sympathetic good will'. There are various words having the similar meaning with the phonetic similarity(2). More specifically, 'maitri' is a feeling that is attached to those who are happy in life. It is distinguished from 'karuṇā', which is expressed towards unhappy and afflicted living beings. In the Pāli canon 'maitri' is mentioned more frequently than

'karuṇā'. 'Maitri' is exercised through a certain meditative practice, and is regarded as a great power in the universe. The Buddhas can emit rays of 'maitri' from their bodies, which are diffused over the world and promote peace and joy everywhere(3). According to the Avadāna literature 'maitri' is one of the magical learnings which is used for attracting someone, or with this one can cure other's ill health(4).

Maitreya in some occasions is called Ajita, or Ajitanatha, the meaning of which is 'unconquerable' or the 'unconquerable one'(5). The use of the name Ajita for Maitreya is well indicated by the passage in the Saddharma puṇḍarīkā sūtra, it reads: "... The lord address to the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva: I announce to thee, Agita(Ajita), I declare to thee: These Bodhisattva Mahāsattvas, Agita, so innumerable, incalculable, inconceivable, incomparable, uncountable, whom you never saw before, who just now have issued from the gaps of earth, these Bodhisattvas Mahāsattvas, Ajita, have I roused, excited, animated, fully developed to supreme, perfect enlightenment in this world"(6).

As it is indicated in this passage, the differences in the meaning of the names, Maitreya and Ajita, may suggest two different ideology; perhaps, the Hīnayānic concept of Maitreya and the Mahāyānic concept for Ajita. Most of the Pāli and Sānskrit literature use one or more of the different names like Metta, Metteya, Maitreya, Maitreya-

nātha, Ajita and Ajitanātha denoting the same deity. It is therefore conceivable that all represented Maitreya.

The origin of the name Maitreya reflects a complex issue. The previous scholarship relate the origin of Maitreya to the Iranian god 'Mithra', due to the phonetic similarity and to some extent because of the functional resemblance between Maitri and the Mitra of the Vedic pantheon. Grunewedel considered the striking similarity of the representation of the future Buddha Maitreya with Saoshyant, the deliverer in the Parsi religion(7). Rosenfield states: "in the Buddhist legends of Maitreya there are a great number of circumstantial details, in addition to the fervent views of future perfection, which appear to have western and especially Iranian analogies"(8). Conze is of the opinion that for centuries before the Christian era, Iran exerted a strong influence in the North-west of India, and Maitreya had strong affinities with Mitras of Iran in the beginning(9). According to Soper, the notion of Maitreya as the future Buddha was probably influenced by Mitra when Mithraism took the characteristic of Saoshyant. He suggests a strong possibility that Maitreya is derived from Mithra, the Future Saviour in Zoroastrianism(10). Accordingly the beginning of the Maitreya cult in India has been traced back to some time before the Christian era, when the belief in Messiah was at its height in the world outside India.

The basic idea of the above hypothesis is mainly due to

the phonetic resemblance between Sanskrit Maitri and Iranian Mithra and the similarity of their nature as a future saviour. There are however, a number of problematic issues in the above hypothesis. Firstly, the phonetic comparison between the words 'maitri' and Mithra does not seem to be logical, since we have Metta or Metteyya of Pali which is earlier than the Sanskrit word 'Maitri'. The association between 'maitri' and Mithra may be a later devolepment, if we consider the phonetic coincidence, for Maitri of Sanskrit is obviously more close to Iranian Mithra than Metteyya of Pali. Secondly, there are a number of differentiating elements between the nature of Maitreya and Iranian Mithra, apart from the assumption that the role of Iranian Mithra as a saviour which is closely related to that of Maitreya. Mithra is not only known as a saviour in Zoroastrianism, but also as the Sun-god, the Guardian of Truth, a Great Warrior, and a Life-giver(11).

According to Yashot - X of Zend Avesta, which is dedicated to Mithra, the chariot of Mithra is described as one wheeled and golden in color which is none other than the symbol of the sun(12). Mithra was created by Ahura-Mazdah, to be the beneficent protector and guardian of all the creatures as well as inspector and supervisor of the whole world(13). Mithra is wrathful to those who violate their contracts; he treats them with even worse punishment than the smashing of the heads. He diverts chances from the defiant countries, removes their victoriousness, and persues

them defenceless(14).

The first part of Yashot - X is largely devoted to Mithra's characteristic as a great war-god: Mithra sets battle in motion, takes his stand in battle, and smashes the regiments(15). He is powerful, strong and a broad-shouldered warrior. Mithra is also described as a life-giver in Yashot - X; he makes rains fall and plants grow, he awards flocks of herds, gives power and sons, and bestows life(16).

Mithra, the Indian counterpart of Iranian Mithra is considered to have been inherited by the Vedic Indians from the remote period of Indo-Iranian prehistory(17). In India, Mitra plays an insignificant role when alone, and occupies his lofty position solely through the association with Varuṇa(18). He seems to have been an Indo-Iranian sun-god who had already lost his vitality specifically on the Indian soil by the time of early Buddhist period. The Rg Veda itself contains only one hymn dedicated to Mitra, placed in unimportant position since here he appears singly without Varuṇa. The question here is then, how did the Iranian god, Mithra, impart a sudden impact on the formation of the concept of the of Maitreya when the Vedic Mitra, had already lost his importance long time ago in India.

In contrast to Iranian Mithra, or Mitra, Maitreya in Hinayana Buddhism is characterized by a compassionate disposition. Maitreya as the Future Buddha, in early Buddhism, is not a God who protects the world from the enemy

but an enlightened one who teaches Dharma and leads people to religious salvation. The twentieth century scholarship, however, emphasize more of Maitreya's saviour role and henceforth relate him with that of Yahweh in Christianity and Mithra of Zoroastrianism, whereas in the early Buddhism his position is that of Śākyamuni designate who will follow the same steps of several past Mānushi Buddhas.

The fundamental nature of Maitreya as a future enlightened-one is different from the nature of Mithra, a kind of divine son in his own right of Ahura Mazda, the great god of transcendent light, the supreme lord of Zoroastrian religion. It is pertinent to quote H. Kern's statement here; "palpable connection between Maitreya, Ajita and Mithras Invictus is no proof of the Buddhist having borrowed the figure from the Persians; the coincidence being perfectly explainable if we consider the narrow relationship of Indian and Iranian mythology. Maitreya is not strictly identical with Mitra, but a younger edition, so to speak, of him, he is the future saviour"(19).

The origin of Maitreya concept seems to be linked with the karma theory that existed in India, since at least from the Vedic period. The stories of Sakyamuni's previous rebirths as exemplified in jātakas and the theory of the Mānushi Buddhas definitely are the outcome of such ancient philosophical logic. The ancient Indian theory of karma propounds that the deed of a being determines the state of life into which he will be reborn. It is karma that

differentiates all beings into low and high states of the next birth. It is not incidental that, the ultimate goal of the Buddha's teaching was naishkarmya, freedom from karma leading to arhatship and consequently to nirvāṇa, the total extinction of personality(20). Jātaka stories of the Buddha's previous life, which are believed to have been told by Śākayāmuni Buddha himself in order to teach Dharma to ordinary people, suggest that he had obtained the Buddhahood through a series of great karma, good action, in the previous rebirths.

Thus, anyone who obtains a great karma, a good act, can become a Buddha or enter the final salvation, and consequently there emerged the concept of Mānushi Buddhas. There are many early Buddhist literature which give a detail account of the Mānushi Buddhas, during whose time the Sakyamuni Buddha was born in different forms and acquired the necessary cardinal virtues of Buddhahood. According to Mahāvastu which might have been formulated in the second century B.C.(21), Śākayāmuni Buddha was born innumerable times, and reconfirmed his future career as a Buddha by his predecessor Buddhas, among them the last was Kashyapa Buddha. Śākayāmuni, then born as Meghamānava, was confirmed of his ultimate success in attaining bodhi by Dīpaṅkara Buddha. Dīpaṅkara Buddha was also confirmed of his future career by one of the former Buddhas, Maṅgala, when Dīpaṅkara was born as Atula Nāgarāja(22). According to the theory of the Mānushi Buddhas there will be more Buddhas following

Śākyamuni Buddha just as there were many previous Buddhas. In Buddha-carita, Śākyamuni Buddha promised the practitioners of the Buddhist Law future rebirth in the Tushita paradise, in which all shall become a Bodhisattva and in the end they shall even become Buddha(23). This implies that, there can be more Buddhas after Maitreya. Hsuan-tsang gives an interesting passage in this regard. According to it Vasumitra, who came to attend the holy assembly called by the king Kanishka, . . . will be another future Buddha succeeding Maitreya(24). The next Buddha will, understandably, have indential series of rebirths as Śākyamuni himself had undergone. He can be in the form of an ordinary being or even an animal, and express his desire to achieve the Buddhahood in the presence of other Buddhas.

It is noteworthy that in the early Pali literature, the role of Maitreya as a future Buddha is often absent but he is pictured as an ordinary being(25). What is fundamental in early Buddhist teaching in this regard, is that Maitreya is of Śākyamuni's retinue and acquired the necessary virtues for attaining Buddhahood, but does not achieve the status of a saviour god. It is illogical to deny the presence of the concept of future Buddha during the time of Śākyamuni, when we agree that there existed the belief in Mānushi Buddha at that time.

As Grunewedel rightly points out, the final nirvāṇa of Śākyamuni Buddha might have made it still easier for the followers of the Buddha to look foreward to the coming of

Maitreya(26). The view of the Buddhists was not that Śākyamuni, who had trodden the immortal path might come again; but rather there were other beings who will become a Buddha.

One may then argue: why the apotheosis of Maitreya did not develop markedly at least by the time of Śākyamuni's final Nirvāṇa? The most probable answer to this question is that it was neither Śākyamuni nor Maitreya but the teaching of the Buddha which was important for the early Hīnayāna Buddhists(27). The great vacuum created by the death of Buddha could not have been filled by Maitreya, but, following Śākyamuni's wishes, the Dharma and Vinaya were given the supreme regard. Maitreya, for the early Hīnayāna Buddhist followers was one of the several Buddhas whom they may see in the future, only if they continue to practice Śākyamuni Buddha's teaching.

It is quite certain that the concept of Maitreya as a Buddha-to-be should have been known to the Buddhist followers at the time of Śākyamuni, and that the concept of Maitreya is a natural outcome of Buddhist teaching of naiskarmya, which developed from the ancient concept of Karma. This early concept was further systematized with the theory of Trikāya or Three Bodies of a Buddha, one of the most important Mahāyāna doctrines. According to the Trikāya system, the Dhyāni Buddhas were created by the Ādi Buddha, who in the Dharmakāya or in law body, the Dhyāni Buddhas in the Sambhogakāya or in adorned body lived in heaven, and the

Mānushi Buddhas in the Nirmāṇakāya or in mortal and ascetic body lived on earth(28)., Each Dhyāni Buddha is the author of different world cycle, in the fourth of which we live. Amitābha is the author, the actual creator is Avalokiteśvara, and Śākyamuni is the Mānushi Buddha(29). According to this system, Maitreya is a Buddha of the fifth world cycle; his Dhyāni Buddha is Amoghasiddhi, and his Dhyāni Bodhisattva, Viśvapāṇi(30).

The whole theory, according to which every Mānushi Buddha emanates from his spiritual Dhyāni Buddha, bears resemblance to the icons and emanations of the Gnostic, and it is possible that this theory might owe its origin to the Persian Zorāstrianism(31).

However, it should be remembered that the concept of Maitreya remains fundamentally same as the earlier belief of the coming of the Buddha which must have developed at the time of Śākyamuni Buddha himself, much before the declination and spiritualisation of the Buddha took root. Its concept differs from the Mahāyāna concept of Bodhisattvas which is an inevitable outcome of the tendency towards bhakti cult and Dhyāni concept of Persia. In other words, the concept of Maitreya developed as a successor of Śākyamuni Buddha, a future Buddha, whose present state is of a Bodhisattva. He is a celebrated Mānushi/Bodhisattva, the goal that every Hīnayāna Buddhists sought for. Thus, the concept of Dhyāni-Bodhisattvas differs fundamentally from that of the Bodhisattva Maitreya.

The theory of Persian origin of Maitreya cult beginning by the second century B.C. should, therefore, be revised. Throughout the Buddhist period, from the time of Śākyamuni Buddha to the present time, the fundamental nature of Maitreya as a successor remains unchanged, while the legendary story of Maitreya became elaborate with the coming of Mahāyāna theory.

II-2. LEGEND OF MAITREYA

Maitreya certainly is a unique deity in the Buddhist pantheon with three distinctive roles developed in three different periods and places; as an ordinary being on earth in the past time, as a Buddha ruling over the Tuṣhita realm in the present time, and as a Buddha of the Pure Land, (Ketumati) in the distant future. Maitreya is frequently mentioned in the Buddhist literature as a member of Śākyāṃuni's audience. In the Sūta Nipāṭta, his name appears as a young Brahmin who went to the Buddha to solve his question(32).

Maitreya is included even among a group of monks while Śākyāṃuni predicts the future career of Maitreya(33). Hsuan-tsang mentions the spot near Banaras where Maitreya received assurance about himself becoming a Buddha. According to the passage, at that time when Śākyamuni Buddha declared the future career of Maitreya in front of Bhikshus,

Maitreya rose from his seat and addressed Buddha thus: "May I indeed become that lord called Maitreya." Then Tathāgata spoke thus: "Be it so! You shall obtain the condition and as I have just explained, such shall be the power of your teaching"(34). An identical description is given in the Larger Sukhāvatī-vyūha, the larger part of which might have been written in the first century A.D. Here Maitreya is described as a ruling Bodhisattva of Tushita realm and leads a number of noble-minded Bodhisattvas to Rajagriha in order to attend the teaching of Śākyamuni Buddha(35). Similarly, in Ashvaghosha's Buddha-charita, Maitreya with his deities came from the Tushita realm to attend the Turning of the Wheel of the Law at the Deer Park(36).

Maitreya often partake in the conversation with Śākyamuni Buddha; who invariably asks questions and Śākyamuni Buddha gives the explanation. In the 'Ta-cheng Fang-teng Yao-hui Ching', translated into Chinese by around the mid-second century A.D., Śākyamuni Buddha teaches Maitreya the eight ways for attaining the highest knowledge in the course of such conversations(37).

Such appearances of Maitreya in the form of an ordinary being, mostly as an arhat, in order to meet his predecessor (Śākyamuni, in his case), is a natural outcome of the ancient theory of the Mānushi Buddha. There is, however, hardly anything told of his antecedents that is equivalent to the Jātaka stories of Śākyamuni Buddha. It is highly probable that the pattern of the supposed story might have

been identical to the Jātaka stories of Śākyamuni Buddha for we know that the lives of previous Buddhas are all alike(38).

The Saddharma-puṇḍarīka sūtras gives us an unexpected story of Maitreya. It describes Maitreya as one who was slothful, covetous, greedy of gain and cleverness(39). According to this sūtra his name was known as Yashaskāma, pupil of Varaprabha who "expounded for fully eighty intermediate kālpās the highest laws"(40). He was also known to have accumulated the merit of the good action and his love of renown is famous. He went through the regular course of duties and saw the present Buddha Śākyamuni. The Śākyamuni Buddha then preached the Law to him. He is the last to reach superior enlightenment and shall become a Lord known by family name of Maitreya, and shall educate thousands of koṭis of creatures(41).

The important point here is that Śākyamuni Buddha confirmed Maitreya's successive career as the Buddha of the next world. Mahāvastu, a Hīnayāna scripture, mentions that the Śākyamuni Buddha appointed Maitreya to be the next Buddha(42). It has been generally regarded that Śākyamuni Buddha predicted the future career of Maitreya in the Tushita realm. Traditionally, however, it is on the earth that such an incident took place, as in the cases of Śākyamuni and Dīpaṅkara Buddha. In the Maitreyavyākaraṇa. Śākyamuni Buddha predicts Maitreya's future career in front of monks; which indicates the event took place on earth(43).

It is true that in the case of Maitreya, controversy still exists whether the incident took place on earth or in the Tushita realm. Most of the descriptions do not mention the place or where the incident took place. Confusion arise in certain other descriptions; as in the Lalitavistāra, Śākyamuni Buddha before leaving Tushita, handed over his diadem to Maitreya(44). Such description can, however, be better understood to mean the transference of rulership from Śākyamuni Buddha to Maitreya. The same text, also mentions that Śākyamuni Buddha also lived in Tushita realm before taking birth(45).

Maitreya is presently in the Tushita realm, not only biding for the next birth, but ruling above the thitrtty-two thousand Buddhas, who had all obtained complete perfection and has but one birth left to attain Enlightenment(46). Within the Indian tradition it is difficult to trace the origin of belief in paradise, which in Buddhist theology is named as Tushita realm. Zimmer has proposed that belief in paradise was a late addition to the Buddhist tradition, derived from the relentless Hinduization(47). According to B. Suzuki there were the notion of three Buddhist paradises already at the time of Nāgārjuna: they are Tushita heaven of Maitreya, Abhirati of Akṣobhya, and Sukhāvātī of Amitābha(48). It is however, more logical to trace the origin of Tushita realm, in relationship with Maitreya's Pure Land, Ketumati, which certainly preceeds the last two. The origin of Abhirati and Sukhāvātī owes much to the the Vedic tradition. And

the principles of the two realms of Maitreya, Tushita and Ketumati, can again be traced back to the ancient belief of karma, which determines the condition of the next birth; since the good act results in a better state of existence and the bad act results in the worst state in the next birth. This belief eventually created the concept of the heavenly realm and the hell. Already in Mahāvastu, a major text of the Lokottaravādin sect, the concept of heavenly realm and Pure Land Ketumati is mentioned(49). Within the same logic even Śākyamuni Buddha himself is mentioned to have thought that the good beings having tranquil thought, go to heavenly realm after death(50).

The concept of Tushita realm might have existed during the time of the Śākyamuni Buddha himself, although we do not get any literary description about it from such an early date. The concept might have begun as a belief in the cosmic place where the dead soul go and stay till the next rebirth. According to J. Legge, the Tushita is the fourth Devaloka, where all the Bodhisattvas are reborn before their final appearance on the earth(51). Lalitavistāra, the oldest parts of which may be assigned to the third century B.C., and its final redaction to the sixth century A.D., mentions Maitreya Buddha as the leader of thirty-two thousand Buddhas in the Tushita realm(52).

The description of Tushita in the literature of India is comparatively rare and controversial. In the Chinese text, Kuan Mi-lo Pu-sa Sang-sheng Ton-shui-tien Ching of the

early fourth century A.D., we get an elaborate description of the Tushita heavenly realm. According to this text the Tushita heaven consists of billions of jewelled palaces. Each palace has billions of lotus flowers and trees with seven jewels. There are billions of Devas and jade maidens who play marvellous music. It is divided into an inner and outer palace. It is in the inner palace that Maitreya preaches Buddhist doctrine, while in the outer palace Devas continue to enjoy the pleasures(53). The description of this text is very close to that of Amitābha's Sukhāvatī realm described in the Larger Sukhāvatīvyūha sūtra. It seems that such description of Tushita realm might have derived from those of Sukhāvatī for almost all the elements of Sukhāvatī are present in this description of Tushita heaven. Vasubandhu, according to Hsuan-tsang's passage, went to the inner assembly in the Tushita realm, and was born there in a lotus flower(54). According to some sources, life in Tushita realm lasts for 400 years, but twenty-four hours in the heavenly realm is equal to 400 years on earth(55). Maitreya's heavenly realm, Tushita, is not a pure land where Enlightenment is possible, and is the land of fulfilled contentment and satisfaction(56).

During this period in Tushita Maitreya teaches the Devas and Devis the Buddhist Law, and also gives a consultation to those earthly arhats who have doubts regarding religious matters. There were many arhats who were said to have ascended to Tushita and greeted Maitreya and

listened to Maitreya's teaching(57).

Maitreya also appears on earth during this period and creates miracles. Hsuan-tsang tells us the wonderful story of the image of the Buddha made by Maitreya who came in the disguise of a Brahmin artist(58). The popular legend informs us about how Maitreya received the patra of Śākyamuni Buddha in the Tushita realm According to Fa-Hian's description the patra of Buddha, originally preserved in Vaisali, was to be taken up into the Tushita realm. Then Maitreya and all the Devas will pay homage after which the pātra will be kept in Jambudvīpa until Maitreya is about to attain complete wisdom(59).

Last and the most important role of Maitreya is the role of the Future Buddha after dwelling in the Tushita heaven, he will return to his earthly paradise Ketumati. The description of Ketumati is found in a very early Hīnayāna scripture, namely the Mahāvastu. In this Śākyamuni proclaimed that when Maitreya become Tathāgatha the royal capital will be known as Ketumati. It will be twelve Yojanās long and seven Yojanās wide. It will be surrounded by seven rows of palm trees, bright and beautiful, and will be made of seven precious substances(60).

In the Pali Dīgha Nikāya, as well as in a great number of Buddhist Sanskrit texts, it is stated that when a Cakravartin comes to rule again as the head of Jambudvīpa's eighty-four thousand towns, Maitreya will come among men to preach law, as Śākyamuni Buddha himself had done

earlier(61).

As it is evident in the above early texts, the concept of Pure Land Ketūmati must have been present at least by the time of Nāgārjuna. Chinese versions of the Maitreyavyākaraṇa sūtra gives much elaborate descriptions of Maitreya's Pure Land Ketumati. The ground of Ketumati is described as made up of golden sand, eight virtued water flows in the ponds and rivers, and various flowers are in full bloom everywhere. There will be no mountains or cliffs, but there would be delicious fruits, rice and beautiful flowers in Ketumati. The people of this land will pick up clothes from trees and the weather would be very comfortable. Various precious things, such as gold, silver and jewels would be found all over the country. People will not look different from each other and they would be of the same height(62). Compared with the people of the time of Śākyamuni the people of Ketumati will be like giants(63). Such description is, however, almost a replica of Amitābha's paradise, Sukhāvatī, which is seen in the Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtra.

The chief mission of Maitreya's descent to earth is to hold the Three Assemblies under a Nāgapushpa tree in order to lead people to enlightenment. According to Hsuan-tsang's account "those who shall be saved by the preaching of Maitreya are those whose heart his (Śākyamuni's) bequeathed law shall have worked the neccessary preparation"(64).

There are many theories regarding the time of Maitreya's descent. According to Getty, Maitreya will be

born as a Mānushi Buddha 5000 years after the birth of Śākyamuni Buddha, when the fifth world is created by the fifth Dhyāni Bodhisattva Viśvapāṇi(65). B. Bhattacharyya gives the period of 4000 years(66). Grunwedel gives us a detailed account of the period, which occur in between two Mānushi Buddhas. According to him the doctrine flourishes for a certain time followed by a gradual decline, then it is overborne by the barbarians and completely overthrown, till a new deliverer appears and once more establishes the lost truths in all the purity(67). The period of the first law lasts 200 or 500 years from Śākyamuni's death; the second period of the 'law of images' lasts 1000 years; and the period of the 'last law' or 'declining religion' last 300 years, after which Maitreya renews the process(68). Thus according to Grunwedel Maitreya will come after approximately 5000 years after Śākyamuni's Nirvāṇa. A very different account is also available from Fa-hsien's pilgrimage reports and some other Chinese texts. Fa-hsien, who visited Ceylon in the fifth century A.D., encountered a story learnt from an Indian religious brother. It says that the life span of the humans will increase in double ratio if each one practises faith and justice. At the time when human life span reaches 8000 years Maitreya will be born(69). Similar information is given in the Chinese scripture, Mi-lo Hsia-sheng Ching. According to it people will live to become 84000 years old, and they will never be greedy and jealous, and the land of Ketumati will be as flat

as a mirror(70). According to mathematical calculation, following Fa-hsien's description, the coming of Maitreya will be 84000 years after Śākyamuni's Nirvāṇa. Fa-Hsien also tells us that the years of man's life will begin to contract, when the pātra of Buddha disappears, until it will be no more than five years. At the time of its being ten years in length, rice and butter will disappear from the world, and men will become extremely wicked(71).

Kashyapa Buddha, according to Hsuan-tsang's records, appeared " In the world when the years of man's life amounted to 20,000, and taught the Buddhist Law(72)"; and Śākyamuni Buddha obtained the condition of Buddha, when the years of men had dwindled to 100 years(73).

Maitreya will choose his earthly family in his heavenly realm, Tushita heaven before his descent to earth. The elaborate descriptive story of Maitreya's life is found in the Maitreyavyākaraṇa-sūtra, available in many versions and in different languages, i.e., Śāṅskṛit, Chinese and Tibetan. According to available information from the above text, Maitreya will take birth in a Brāhmin family. His mother will be Brahṃavāddīya by name, the wife of Subrāhṃaṇa a very learned Brāhmin(74). The birth of Maitreya will take place in a grove full of beautiful flowers. Maitreya will emerge from the right side of his mother, who while standing will hold the branch of a tree. Then he will make the first seven steps each of which will transform itself into a lotus flower. Maitreya will have the thirty-two marks of

Mahāpuruṣa and eighty minor marks. He will look like a silver mountain. But according to Hsuan-tsang's passage, the appearance of Maitreya will be of golden colour, bright and glistening and pure(75). After taking a bath, his parents will take him to a fortune-teller who shall make the prophecy that Maitreya will become a universal monarch or a Buddha. Then Maitreya will go for a religious path and achieve enlightenment under the nagapuṣpa tree. He will achieve enlightenment on the same day when he goes to meditate under the tree, and some Chinese versions give the period of four months and eight days for the same(76). Henceforth he will go to Mount Gidharakūṭa and hold the "Three Assemblies of the Nāgapuṣpa", and lead hundreds of millions of human beings to salvation(77). He himself will enter nirvāṇa when he is 60,000 years old(78).

The general pattern of the story connected to Maitreya's earthly life is, almost identical with that of Śākyamuni Buddha. We have noted that even the life story of Vipassi, in the Mahāpadāna-sūta, is also very similar to that of Śākyamuni Buddha. After Maitreya has arrived at supreme wisdom, the four heavenly kings will once again come and respectfully salute him as they have done to the former Buddhas(79).

Another important legend connected with the coming of Maitreya is that the great Kashyapa is supposed to be waiting for the arrival of Maitreya in order to hand over the golden garment of kashāya(80). When Maitreya will

declare the three fold law, finding the countless persons opposed to him by pride, he will lead them to the mountain where Kashyapa will come out and deliver the kashāya garment of the Buddha(81). Then Kashyapa, after having paid profound reverence, will soar into the air and exhibit all sorts of spiritual miracles, which eventually open the minds of the people(82).

The above legends of Maitreya's life are of importance for the study of visual art, however they provide hardly any clue for the chronological study of the art manifestations. Such legends might have been developed already by around the second century B.C. as evident in the Mahāvastu, and the fully developed form we noted above might have been formulated by the early fourth century A.D., for we know many texts dealing with Maitreya in one way or the other have been translated into Chinese(83).

II-3. THE NATURE OF FAITH IN MAITREYA

It has been generally believed that the concept of paradise is the most important aspect in the cult of Maitreya. Yumin Lee, in her research on the Maitreya images of early China, points out that the ultimate goal of worshipping Maitreya is the wish to be reborn in Maitreya's paradise after death(84). She summarizes the four ways of the attainment of such wish by practitioners' of the early

Chinese Maitreya cult thus; taking a vow for rebirth in Maitreya's paradise, invoking Maitreya's name, studying the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka sūtra, and practising meditation(85). On the basis of circumstantial evidence from China the previous scholarship had presumed that the development of Maitreya cult in early India has a close relationship with the notion that Maitreya would come to this world in the future to preach the Buddhist Law in his earthly paradise, Ketumati, and it developed further with the wide spread belief in the concept of celestial paradise, Tushita.

It is true that the nature and extant of Maitreya faith in early India is rather uncertain and difficult to trace, since it is embedded within a number of problematic issues. As we have mentioned earlier some early texts, such as Mahāvamśa, Mahāvastu, Lalitavistāra, and early Vināyas mention sparsely the name of Maitreya's realms, Tushita and Ketumati. What we get from such early texts as a matter of fact, is just the information that these paradises are of Maitreya. But it is difficult to define exactly what role these belief in the paradises might have played in the development of Maitreya cult.

Mahāvamśa tells us that the king Dutthagamani had meditated upon Maitreya at the time of his death(86). However, it mentions neither of Maitreya's two paradises. The Mahāvastu, in which the description of Ketumati is found, gives an account of a monk named Uttara who is believed to have ascended to Tushita(87).

But it is still difficult to trace how close the belief in Maitreya's heavenly realm, Tushita, might have reached to the western concept of paradise.

Although we have enough sculptural evidence to understand the flourishing cult of Maitreya at least from the Kushan period, we have very little evidence to trace out the nature of Maitreya faith in the Hīnayāna period. The problem is that there is neither any definite literary evidence nor we have any Maitreya image having the inscription with which we can understand the importance of its cult. Further there is also the paucity of contemporaneous literary evidence associated with the practice of Maitreya faith in ancient India. Therefore, we are compelled to depend almost entirely upon the later evidences. The inscriptions on Buddhist images from early India, Kushana and Gupta period, and the later Chinese pilgrimage reports are the only sources we have in hand so far.

According to the available content of inscription found on the images of the Buddha and Bodhisattva from Mathura, it can be understood that the people's wish in making such religious images were for the 'happiness of all sentient being and the attainment of supreme knowledge'(88). It is rather unusual when we compare it with the wishes of the early Chinese whose aim of worshipping Maitreya is to be reborn in the paradise after death.

Throughout the Buddhist period in India, the Western

concept of paradise seems to have been comparatively rare, if not absent, in the cult of Maitreya. In rare cases we come across traces of the belief in the next world without specific name of the paradises. The inscription on the pedestal of Buddha/Bodhisattva from Jamalpur, now in the Mathura Museum (Acc. No. A. 48), mentions the donor's wish for the 'birth that resulted in happiness', and 'an auspicious nirvāṇa'(89). The inscription of Bodhisattva now in the Lucknow Museum (Acc. No. 66 48) tells the donor's wish for the 'welfare of all living being and accumulate merit for this world and merit for the next'(90).

Both the cases, however, have problematic points to relate them to the concept of paradise; the 'births' in the first inscription can be of 'beings', and the later inscription has been questioned for its authenticity(91).

A Maitreya image found in a temple at Ramnagar, ancient Ahichhatra, now in the National Museum of India, (fig. 1) gives a conclusive evidence in this regard. Although the inscription on this image is badly disintegrated, the legible part reads thus: "the image of Maitreya installed for the benefit and happiness of all beings"(92). Thus the concept of rebirth in the next world would seem a rather secondary concern for Buddhist practitioners in ancient India rather ^{than} the preliminary concern of the present world. In many cases the desire of rebirth in Maitreya's paradise, whether Tushita or Ketumati, implies the meeting with Maitreya and hearing his teaching in order to gain the final

nirvāṇa, the main goal of the early Buddhist teaching.

It is most likely that the nature of Maitreya as a source of the Dharma might have attracted the early Buddhist practitioners. Since Maitreya is the Buddha designate, all the Buddhist sages seek communion with him and seek his advice and sanction for their thoughts and deeds. The learned Buddhist scholars, such as Asaṅga, Uttara, Guṇaprabha and Bhāvaviveka, paid much regard to religious achievement in contrast to common people who paid greater attention to mundane benefits. The scholars either take the way to Tushita, as in the case of Asaṅga, Uttara and Guṇaprabha, or wait for the coming of Maitreya to go to Ketumati as in the case of Bhāvaviveka.

Chinese pilgrim Chih-yen, who visited India around 427 A.D. met an arhat who helped him solve the religious doubt by consulting Maitreya. The arhat is said to have gone to Tushita while immersed in a samādhi(93). Chih-yen is believed to have visited India twice in order to acquire the religious faith and solve his doubt on the moral Law(94).

Hsuan-tsang tells us a legend of an arhat called Uttara, who lived in the Chola country(95). When Uttara found difficulties in answering Devabodhisattva's question, he passed into Maitreya's heavenly realm Tushita by using the divine facilities, and there Maitreya gave the required explanation. According to Soothill, Devabodhisattva was the fourteenth patriarch of Buddhism and a disciple of

Nāgārjuna(96). We can presume that the nature of Maitreya as a source of Buddhist Law was already known to the Buddhists of the late second century A.D., if the relationship of Devabodhisattva and Nāgārjuna goes to the second century A.D.(97).

The most important legend in this aspect comes from that of Asaṅga, who is regarded as a founder of Tantrayāna doctrine(98). According to Hsuan-tsang's records, Asaṅga by supernatural power ascended to Tushita and listened to the doctrine from Maitreya and learnt the supreme knowledge of Yogācāra creeds(99). In Tārānātha's history Asaṅga, concentrated on having a vision of the tutelary deity when he found difficulty in understanding the Prajñā sūtras without being confused by its verbal repetitions. Asaṅga is believed to have spent six months in Maitreya's heavenly realm Tushita(100). He received from Maitreya the Yogāchārya Shāstra, and the Mahāyāna Sūtrālaṅkāratīkā, the Madyanta Vibhaṅga Shāstra, etc.(101). Because of such legends some scholars regarded that Maitreya was popular in Tantrayāna Buddhism and the faith in Maitreya's heavenly realm was widely accepted by Buddhist practitioners(102). However, some consider that Asaṅga was the pupil of one Maitreyanātha who was a historical figure and was the actual founder of Tantrayāna teaching(103).

Regardless of the confusion concerning the historical authenticity of Maitreyanātha, who is identified with the deity, Maitreya, the importance in our study remains on the

fact that Maitreyanātha had been understood as the Bodhisattva Maitreya and subsequently as the founder of Tantrayāna school at least by certain Buddhist schools(104).

Hsuan-tsang tells us another legend of an arhat, by the name Guṇaprabha, who failed to obtain arhatship even after consulting Maitreya due to his 'pride of self'(105). Experiencing difficulties on some secular books Guṇaprabha begged Devasena, who had the ability to visit Tushita, to obtain for him an interview with Maitreya in order to settle his doubts. But when presented to Maitreya, Guṇaprabha was too proud and conceited to give Maitreya due reverence, and consequently failed in his career(106). Accordingly, it is only for those who have faith in Maitreya, that the Dharma of Maitreya is within reach.

Unlike the above cases, Bhāvaviveka, the master of shāstras remains in the palace of the Asuras in the country of Dharakataka, and awaits the arrival of Maitreya as a perfect Buddha(107). According to Hsuan-tsang's account Bhavaviveka was widely renowned for his elegant scholarship and was fully possessed of the learning of Nāgārjuna, inspite of his position as a disciple of Kapila(108). With great religious doubts he questioned "Who is there that can satisfy my doubts in the absence of Maitreya as a Buddha?"(109) Here the important point is that even the master of shāstras like Bhāvaviveka acknowledges Maitreya as the source of knowledge, and Bhavaviveka recognized the perfect wisdom of Maitreya only when Maitreya became Buddha.

In other words the master of śāstras does not consider Maitreya Bodhisattva before becoming Buddha as the suitable one to consult. He even refused Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara's proposal that he should aim at the highest resolve to be born in the Tushita heaven, and there, even now, to see Maitreya face to face and worship him. Bhāvaviveka, in return, asks Avalokiteśvara if he could only help to keep his body alive till Maitreya comes, and so Vajrapani fulfils his wish by asking him to go to Asura's palace in the mountain of Dhanakatala(110).

From the above legends told by Hsuan-tsang we can trace two important factors regarding the nature of the faith in Maitreya in early India: firstly, the teaching attitude of Maitreya seems to have been emphasised greatly by the devotees of Maitreya, and secondly such tradition was still strong at the time of Hsuan-tsang's visit to India, i.e. the early seventh century A.D. Thus it would seem, despite the philosophical changes that occurred in the earlier period, that the majority of Indian Buddhists remained faithful to the earlier traditions concerning Maitreya as the Buddha designate and the aim of wishing to be born in Maitreya's heaven after death is to hear the doctrine of Maitreya, so as to be able to receive his instruction and reach nirvāṇa.

In Hsuan-tsang's pilgrimage record, there are six passages mentioning the Maitreya's paradise; Tushita (three times) and Ketumati (three times)(111). They are, however, by no means important regarding the belief in paradise in

relation to Maitreya, but just indicative of Maitreya's realm. Somewhat elaborate description of faith in rebirth in Tushita heaven is given in the account of Asaṅga. According to Hsuan-tsang, Asaṅga often talked to his disciples, Buddhasiṃha and Vasubandhu, about their desire to meet Maitreya in person after their death(112). When Buddhasiṃha and Vasubandhu died, both of them were reborn in Tushita, where Maitreya welcomed them(113).

S. Beal notes that "this was the desire of the early Buddhists after death to go to Maitreya, in the Tushita heaven. ... Afterwards the fable of a Western Paradise was introduced into Buddhism, and this took the place in Maitreya's heaven"(114). The first statement seems to be understandable, while the later needs reconsideration. It should be remembered that the nature of Amitābha's paradise, Sukhāvatī, is much closer to the Western paradise concept than any of Maitreya's heaven. The religious wish such as 'happiness' or 'joy' in the Tushita or Ketumati, after death is better to be interpreted as 'joy of participating' in Maitreya's teaching which subsequently lead people to the final salvation, rather than physical 'happiness'. Already at the time of Hsuan-tsang's visit to India in 730's, Buddhism became theistic with the entry of Tantrayāna philosophy. The Mahāyāna school of the earlier centuries, knew nothing of the hundreds of gods and goddesses invented by the Tantrayāna school. The earlier simple pantheon was highly elaborated with Ādi Buddha, Dhyāni Buddhas and the

emanations of Dhyāni Buddhas i.e., divine Bodhisattvas and female divinities. It has been generally believed that Maitreya lost his popularity with this new challenging trend, while Avalokīśvara, Mañjuśrī and Vajrapāṇi gain more pronounced positions.

B. Bhattacharyya notes that the Sādhanaṁālā gives only one description of Maitreya as a principal divinity while in several other texts he is represented as a minor god(115). The Niṣpannayogāvalī mentions altogether three sets of sixteen Bodhisattvas; the first group does not mention Maitreya and is headed by Samantabhadra, while the second and the third group are headed by Maitreya(116). In the Mañjuvajra maṇḍala, one of the two is headed by Maitreya, where he is located in the third circle on the east of the four cardinal directions, and takes the form of his spiritual sires Vairocana and Akṣobhya(117). In the Durgatipariśodha-maṇḍala, Maitreya is placed in the eastern direction, and his iconographical features differ from that of the Mañjuvajramāṇḍala(118).

The Tibetan historian of the sixteenth century Tārānātha's History of Buddhism in India becomes important for the understanding of the nature of Maitreya cult practised in India especially after the wide spread of Yogācāra philosophy. From the study of the passages relating to Maitreya, it is evident that there appears little change in the nature of Maitreya belief. Like Hsuan-tsang, Tārānātha also emphasizes the teaching aspect of Maitreya

here and there in his work.

According to his account, the Ācārya Haribhadra, a profound scholar in many śāstras, propitiated Maitreya and asked: "there exist now many commentaries on the Prajñāpāramita composed from different philosophical viewpoints, which of these should be followed?"(119). Then Maitreya gave him permission to complete certain part that are acceptable(120). On a rough calculation Haribhadra had lived sometime around the end of the eight century A.D. which indicates that the tutelary nature of Maitreya still continued even after the introduction of Tantrayāna philosophy(121). One of the most important changes that occurred in Tārānatha's history is that the teaching nature of Maitreya is shared by many new deities of Tantrayāna school. Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, and even Tārā are looked upon as the source of Dharma. The concept of Maitreya's heaven also seems to have lost its importance in Tantrayāna Buddhism. Now the Yogācāra scholars see the vision of Maitreya through meditation and there is no mention of 'ascending to Tushita'.

To sum up, the most important aspect in the worship of Maitreya in India was based on the common Buddhist desire to achieve nirvāṇa, the salvation. Buddhists searched for the Dharma to reach this goal in the present birth, as Hīnayāna Buddhists did. Maitreya became an immediate source for their Dharma, for both Hīnayānist and Mahayanists. Even after realizing that such salvation is not possible in the

present birth, they desired to be reborn in the paradise of Maitreya, either in Tushita or in Ketumati, where they can hear the Dharma directly from Maitreya. Finally, they all wish to descent along with Maitreya to Ketumati, and under the guidance of Maitreya all of them wish to enter the final nirvāṇa. Tushita and Ketumati are the land of pure Buddhist Law, for all the Buddhists.

The basic aspect in the worship of Maitreya remained unchanged throughout the Buddhist period in India, although his fundamental nature as a repository of the Dharma was shared by other deities, and his importance was reduced gradually under the Tantrayāna philosophy.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 J. Cribb (1980), pp. 79-88; Also his article, "The Origin of the Buddha Image", in South Asian Archaeology, ed.) B. Allchin(1984), p. 231.
- 2 Following are some of the words having similar meaning and phonetic similarity: a) Mitra: a friend, companion and associate; Nominal Verb, to act in a friendly manner. b) Mitraya: Nominative Verb, to befriend. c) Mitrayu: for Masculine, Feminine and Neuter Gender, friendly minded; winning or acquiring friends, attractive, possessing worldly preudence, Universal scholar. d) Mitraya: Nominal Verb, to desire or wish for a friend. e) Mitrayu: Masculine, Feminine and Neuter, desiring a friend, and seeking friendship. f) Mitrin: befriended, united by friendship. g) Mitriya: Masculine, Feminine and Neuter, friendly, coming from or relating to a friend. h) Mitrya: Masculine, Feminine and Neuter Gender, mitriya, belonging to the friends of any one. i) Maitra: Masculine, Feminine and Neuter gender, coming from or given by or belonging to a friend, friendly, amicable, benevolent, affectionate, kind, belonging or relating to Mitra; masculine gender, 'friend of all creatures,' a Brahman who has arrived at the highest state of human perfection; an alliance based on good will; a friend. j) Maitraya: to be kind or friendly. k) Maitri: Masculine Gender, a metonymic of a teacher. l) Maitreka: in fine composition, a friendly office, Pancar. m) Maitrin: Masculine, Feminine and Neuter Gender, friendly, benevolent Pancar. n) Maitrī: Feminine Gender, friendship,

friendliness, benevolence, good will. o) Maitreya: Masculine, Feminine and Neuter Gender, from Maitrī, friendly, benevolent, Masculine from mitrayu patronymic of Kaushārava; name of a Bodhisattva and future Buddha. p) Maitrya: Noun, friendship.



The above information have been collected from the Sanskrit English Dictionary, Monier Williams(1889), pp. 816 and 834.

- 3 Avadāna-cālaka, ed. by J.S. Speyer(1909), in Bibilotheca Buddhica, Vol.I, p. 31.
- 4 Vinaya-Vastu, I, ed.) Vaidya (1967), p. 171.
- 5 According to M. Williams it is also the name of Vishnu, Shiva, one of Saptarshis of the fourteenth Manvantara; the second of the Arhats or saints of the present, a descendent of Ikṣhvāku, the attendant of Suvidhi (who is the ninth of those arhats).
- 6 Saddharma-puṇḍarīka sūtra, Soothill's trans. in S.B.E. Vol. XXI, p. 291-92.
- 7 Grunewedel (1901), p. 190.
- 8 Rosenfield (1967), p. 228. He observed the popular cult of Messianic savior in the ancient Orient, the belief in Yahaweh (Jesus) among Jews in Israel; and the belief in the Saoshyant in Iran.
- 9 Conze (1959), p. 237.
- 10 Soper (1959), pp. 212, and 357.
- 11 The Zend-Avesta, S. Darmesteter's trans. Vol. III in S.B.E. 1887.
- 12 Yashot-X, 136, Gershevitch's trans. (1959), pp. 141-3. Mitra is not a personification of the sun itself but represents the source of light. A. H. Dani mentions that in Yūghistīra's prayer as recorded in the Mahābhārata, III-3, the name of Maitreya is

included among the 100 names of the sun-god. He suggests that in the Kushan period the sun-gods and the Mitra were confused; thus he argues that it is not difficult to see how the name Maitreya could have originated from that of Mithra, and at least in its origin it integrated the concept of the sun. Dani (1978), p. 98.

13 Ibid. p. 135.

14 Ibid. p. 87.

15 Yashot-X, 112, I. Gershevitch's trans. p. 129.

16 Ibid. pp. 103 and 105.

17 Franz Cumont points out that the Vedic Mitra and the Iranian Mithra have preserved so many traits of resemblance, that both of them must have had a common origin. C. F. Cumont, 'The Mysteries of Mithra', Thomas J. McCormar's trans. New York (1956), p. 1.

18 In several instances in the Veda, Indra enters into an association with Varuṇa in the place of the gradually disappearing Mitra.

19 H. Kern, The Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka, p. 18,n.

20 C.V. Joshi, in 2500 years of Buddhism. p. 29.

21 The Mahāvastu is a major text for the Lokottaravādin sect, a branch of the Mahāsaṃghika school, which was already well formulated as early as the century B.C. Cf. Charles S. Prebish (1975), pp. 36-38.

22 B.P. Bapat (1959), p. 127.

23 The Buddhacharita of Āśvaghoṣa, E.B. Cowell's trans in S.B.E. 49, Part I, pp. 174-189. According to this text, those who follow the Buddhist Law shall even become a universal monarch, a king of kings, a ruler among the guardians of the world, an Indra, ruler of the gods, a ruler of the Yama heaven, a ruler of the Tushita

heaven and so on.

- 24 Hsuan-tsang, Ta-T'ang Hsi-yu-chi, by S. Beal translated it with the title as Si-Yu-Ki. Cf. the trans. Vol. II, p.155. Here, the Devas speak thus: "In consequence of obtaining the fruit of Buddha, you (Vasumitra) shall succeed Maitreya in his place in the Tushita heaven, the three worlds shall honour you, and the four kinds of creatures shall look up to you with awe."
- 25 In the Sūta Nipāta, Maitreya is, indeed, described as one of the sixteen disciples of a Brahmin ascetic Bavari who was converted by the superior insight of Śākyamuni Buddha. For more details see, p.
- 26 Grunwedel (1901), p. 179.
- 27 In Dīgha-Nikāya, Part II, Mahāparinibbāna-sūta, p. 123, Bombay Uni. ed., 1936, the last word of Śākyamuni to his disciple is given as "work out your salvation with diligence."
- 28 Gordon (1959), p. 30. According to the Trikāya system, each Buddha had three kāyas or three natures; the Sambhoga state of a reflected Bodhi in the Rūpadhātu heavens as Dhyāni Buddha, the Nirmāṇa-kāya state of practical Bodhi on earth as Mānushi Buddha, the Dharma-kāya state of essential Bodhi after Nirvāṇa; Getty, (1914), p. 11.
- 29 Ibid. p. 30.
- 30 Ibid., pp. 28 and 42.
- 31 Grunwedel (1901), p. 195. He says that the whole doctrine of the Dhyānibuddhas and Dhyānibodhisattvas appears to rest on the Zoroastrian theory of the Fravashis (Fervers).
- 32 Sūta-nipāta, V. Fausholl's trans. in S.B.E., Vol. X-II, p. 183.

There is a controversy in identification of Maitreya in this text, since Ajita and Metteyya are mentioned as two of Bavari's sixteen disciples.

- 33 The Maitreyavyākaraṇa texts, summarized by Lamotte, Histoire pp. 777-78.
- 34 Beal's trans., part II, p. 47.
- 35 The Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha, F. Max Müller's trans. in S.B.E. 49, Part II, pp. 1-2.
- 36 The Buddha Charita, E.B. Cowell's trans. in S.B.E. Vol.49 p. 173.
- 37 Taisho No. 348. It is the earliest scripture that is associated with Maitreya. The main concept of this text is the teaching of compassion, which is one of the most important characteristics of Maitreya.
- 38 In the Mahāpadma-sūta, the life of the previous Buddhas is well described, particularly the life of Vipassī who is described almost as a replica of Śākyamuni Buddha.
- 39 The Saddharma-puṇḍarīka, H. Kern's trans. in S.B.E. Vol.21, pp. 23 and 28.
- 40 Ibid. p. 27.
- 41 Ibid. p. 27.
- 42 The Mahāvastu, Jones' trans. Vol. III, p. 231.
- 43 The Maitreyavyākaraṇa texts. Lamotte, Histoire, p. 777.
- 44 Lalitavistāra ed. by Parshuram Vaidya (1958), p. 71. The description meant to state the transformation of rulership from Śākyamuni Buddha to Maitreya. It is believed to be the work of the Sarvastivādins in mixed Sanskrit and Pali. It contains the story of Buddha upto his Enlightenment and some events after his

first preaching.

- 45 Ibid. p. 6. The name of Śākyāmunī Buddha there was Śvetaketu.
- 46 Ibid. p. 2.
- 47 Zimmer (1960), p. 249.
- 48 B.L. Suzuki (1949), p. 113.
- 49 The compiler gives an account of the hells and the sufferings witnessed there by Mahāmaudgalyāryana. See Nalinaksha Dutt in 2500 years of Buddhism, p. 128.
- 50 The Iti-vuttakar or Sayings of Buddha, J.H. Moore's trans. (1908), p. 34. According to native tradition, the entire canon was settled definitely at the first great convention at Rajagriha, shortly after the death of the Buddha.
- 51 J. Legge (1981), p. 25.
- 52 The Lalitavistāra, ed. Vaidya (1958), p. 71. The Saddharmapuṇḍarīka sūtra also gives a similar description. It was translated into Chinese in A.D. 255 by Dharmarakṣa.
- 53 Taisho, No. 452, pp. 418c-419a.
- 54 Si-Yu-Ki, Beal's trans. Vol. I, p. 227.
- 55 Eitel (1870), Handbook for the student of Chinese Buddhism, p. 152. Tibetan historian Tārānātha states that one year of Tushita is equal to half year on earth according to the popular belief prevalent in India and Tibet, see Tārānātha's History of Buddhism in India. p. 159.
- 56 Rosenfield (1967), p. 235. He further states that it bore the traces of its origin in the sphere of the Kāmadhātu, the planes of Sensuous Desire.
- 57 The most famous legend in this regard is that Asaṅga had visited

Maitreya in the Tushita heaven and to have been initiated by Maitreya into the mysteries of Tantra (Getty, 1928, p. 22). According to Huan-tsang's description, Asaṅga went up, by miracle to the palace of Maitreya, and there received the Yogācāra Śāstra, the Mahāyāna Sūtrālaṅkāratīkā, the Madhyānta Vibhaṅga Śāstra (Beal's trans. Si-Yu-Ki, p. 226). Tārānātha's History of Buddhism also gives an identical story. He gives a list of "Five works of Maitreya" brought by Asaṅga from the Tushita of Maitreyanātha. They are Sūtrālaṅkāra, Madhyanta-vibhaga, Dharmadharmata-vibhanga, Uttaratantra and Abhisamaya-alamkāra. See D. Chattopadhyaya (1970), pp. 159-160. However, some considers Asanga as the pupil of Maitreyanātha who was a historical figure and was the actual founder of Tantrayāna school. B.S. Upadhyaya regards the Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra as a joint work of Asaṅga and his teacher Maitreyanātha in 2500 Years of Buddhism, p. 196. Kiruma states that the Tantrayāna school was founded by Maitreyanātha and systematized by Asaṅga and elaborated by Vasubandhu, the younger brother of Asaṅga. See Kimura (1978), p. 175.

58 Beal's trans. (1884), Vol. II, pp. 119-721.

59 Fo-Kwo-ki of Fa-Hsien. See Beal's trans. p. 25.

60 The Mahāvastu, J. J. Jones trans. London, 1947, Vol. III p. 231.

61 Dīgha Nikāya, III. pp. 62-77; Rhys Davids' trans. in S.B.E. Vol. IV, pp. 64-74.

62 There are many Chinese versions of Maitreyavyākaraṇa-sūtra: the Ta-ch'eng-fo Ching and Hsia-shēng Ch'eng-fo Ching of Kumārajīva which might have been translated and Dharmarakṣa's Ekottarāgama also contain the same sūtra in Chapter 44. The date of the scripture

is uncertain although they might have been translated into Chinese at around the early fifth century A.D.

- 63 Ta-Chin-tu-lun, Capter II.
- 64 Beal's trans. Vol. II, p. 47. This is what is believed to be told by Śākyāṃuni Buddha in front of the Bhikṣhus who gathered on the Gridhrakūṭa mountain in Rājagṛiha.
- 65 Getty (1914), p. 46.
- 66 B. Bhattacharyya (1924), p. 80.
- 67 Grunwedel (1901), p. 181.
- 68 Ibid. p. 181 n; Beal's Romantic Legend (19) p. 9.
- 69 Fo-Kwo-ki by Fa-Hian, XXXIX, Beal's trans. p. 79. The life span of modern man is 100 years. See, Beal's trans. p. 47. The Cakkavatti' sihanada sūtta also gives the period of 80000 years. See Dictionary of Pāli Proper Name, G.P. Molalasekera. Vol. II, p. 660.
- 70 Mi-lo Hsia-sheng Ching, Taisho Tripiṭaka, No. 453. This is the earliest so far known sutra fully dedicated to Maitreya. The number, 84000, seems to be a secret number for the Buddhist and indicative of limitless vastness.
- 71 Fa-hsien's Fo-Kwo-Ki, Beal's trans. p. 79.
- 72 Hsuan-Tsang's Si-Yu-Ki, Beal's trans. II, p. 47.
- 73 Ibid. p. 47.
- 74 Conze (1959), p. 239. Conze tells us a detail story of Maitreya's earthly life taken from the Sāṃskṛit version of Maitreyavyākaraṇa-sūtra.
- 75 Beal's trans. Vol. II, p. 47.
- 76 Taisho No. 457. See Lee (1983), p. 23.

- 77 Traditionally, Maitreya in Ketumatī teaches the Dharma to arhats; while in Tushita he preaches to Devas and Devis rather than to arhats.
- 78 See Conze (1959), p. 241.
- 79 Fa-Haien, Fo-Kwo-Ki, Beal's trans. p. 78.
- 80 Hsuan-tsang, Si-Yu-Ki, Beal's trans. II p. 143. It is worth to cite the saying of Buddha in Hsuan-tsang's record for both the above legend and for the sake of understanding the transformation from Śākyamuni Buddha to Maitreya. Śākyamuni Buddha at the point of attaining Nirvāṇa addressed Kaśyapa and said, "Through many kalpās I have undergone painful penances for the sake of all that lives, seeking the highest form of religion. What I have all along played for (desired) I have now obtained to the full. Now as I am desirous to die, I lay on you the charge of the Dharma Piṭaka. Keep and disseminate (this doctrine) without loss or diminution. The golden-tissued Kashāya robe given to me by my foster mother I bid you keep and deliver to Maitreya when he has completed the condition of Buddha. All those who engage in the profession of my bequeathed law, whether they be Bhikshus, Bikṣhunīs, Upāsakas, or Upāsikās, must first cross over and escape the stream of transmigration."
- 81 According to Divyāvadāna, there remains only the compact skeleton of Kaśyapa when Maitreya arrive on the mountain. Divyāvadāna. p. 61. ed.) Cowell and Neill.
- 82 Hsuan-tsang, Si-Yu-Ki, Beal's trans. II p. 144.
- 83 They are; Mi-lo Hsia-sheng ching (T. No. 125) of early fourth century A.D. which is an important scripture for the study of

- Maitreya's Pure Land Ketumati, Ekottarāgama (T. No. 125), Madhyamagana Dirghama (T. No. 1), all translated into Chinese around fourth century A.D. The last two give a detail description of Ketumati; Kuan Mi-lo Pu-sa Shang-sheng Tou-shui-tieng ching (T. No. 452) of around the mid fifth century A.D., gives a detail description scripture of Maitreya's celestial realm Tushita; and there after many texts connected to Maitreya cult have been formulated in China.
- 84 Lee (1983), pp. 112-138. On the basis of the inscription found on the image of Maitreya from China from 390 to 600 A.D., she concluded that the common desire of the donors is of peaceful life, security of the family, no sufferings, a long life, curing diseases etc. and when the wish is for the rebirth, it is either in Tushita or more preferably Ketumati.
- 85 Ibid. p. 55.
- 86 According to A. Matsunaga, the King Dutthagamani is believed to have lived around 161-137 B.C.; (1969), p. 241.
- 87 Lee (1983), p. 347. Hsuan-tsang also gives a story of monk with identical name, Uttara. However, it is not certain whether this is the same personality given in the Mahāvastu. Hsuan-tsang, Si-Yu-Ki, Beal's trans. pp. 227-8.
- 88 H. Lüders (1961), Mathura inscriptions. Such is the case for all Buddhist cult images regardless of their identification.
- 89 Vogel, (1971), p. 59. Here the 'births' seems to address the different beings in this world rather than 'the births' of one being in different world.
- 90 Daya Ram Sahai (1908-9), A.S.I.R. p. 135.

- 91 R.C. Sharma (1984), p. 180. Sharma has pointed out that the first three lines are in the early Brahmi characters of the first century A.D., while the last recording of the Buddhist creed as mentioned above, is a later addition of the 874 to 9th century A.D.
- 92 Rosenfield (1967), p. 231.
- 93 Kao-seng Chuan (Taishō No. 2059), Daizōkyō, Vol. 50, p. 339 c; Lee (1983), p. 153. Hui-chiao compiled it around 530 A.D.
- 94 Ibid. p. 153.
- 95 Hsuan-tsang, Si-Yu-Ki, Beal's trans. II p. 227-8. It is uncertain whether the Uttara of Hsuan-tsang's description is the identical personage with the Uttara of Mahāvamsā.
- 96 W. E. Soothill, A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms (1913), p. 373.
- 97 It is generally considered that Nāgārjuna lived around the first or second century A.D., although there are many different opinion. A.L. Basham proposes that Nāgārjuna was a contemporary of Kanishka, Basham(1959), p. 278.; L.R. Lancaster gives the date in the first century A.D., Lancaster(1975), p. 65.; R. Kimura gives a date of the late second and the early third century A.D., Kimura (1978), p. 161.
- 98 R. Kimura, however, regards Maitreyanātha as a founder of Tantrayāna school and pointed out that Maitreyanātha is a historical person rather than mythical person or Maitreya. Kimura (1978), pp. 169-170; according to H.Ui Maitreyanātha flourished sometime between 275-350 A.D., H. Ui (1922). The Philosophical journal of Imperial University of Tokyo. No. 411.

- 99 Hsuan-tsang says he ascended to Tushita by supernatural power and according to Tārānātha it was Maitreya who took him to Tushita. The moment Asaṅga caught the corner of Maitreya's robe, he reached the Tushita. See Hsuan-tsang, Si-Yu-Ki, Beal's trans. II p. 226; Tārānātha, History of Buddhism in India, ed.) Chattopadhyaya (1970), p. 158.
- 100 Tārānātha's History of Buddhism in India, Chattopadhyaya (1970). He gives other account of 15 human years from unknown source and 50 human years on account of Indian tradition.
- 101 Beal's trans. Si-Yu Ki, p. 226. Tārānātha's History of Buddhism in India also gives the identical story. He gives the list of 'Five Works of Maitreya' brought by Asaṅga from the Tushita of Maitreyanātha. See Chattopadhyaya (1970), pp. 159, 160.
- 102 Lee (1983), p. 149.
- 103 B. S. Upadhyaya, regards the Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra as a joint work of Asaṅga and his teacher Maitreyanātha. 2500 Years of Buddhism, p. 196. Kimura states that the Tantrayāna school was founded by Maitreya, and systematised by Asaṅga and elaborated by Vasubandhu, a younger brother of Asaṅga. See R. Kimura (1978), p. 175.
- 104 Getty remarks that, because of this reason Maitreya is looked upon, by certain sects, as the founder of the Tantra school. Getty (1928), p. 22.
- 105 Hsuan-tsang, Si-Yu-Ki, Beal's trans. Vol. I, pp. 191-192. According to Hsuan-tsang Guṇaprabha was first a student of Mahāyāna system and later converted to the Hīnayāna by the persual of the Vaibhāṣha treatise. He is not to be confounded with the great Vinaya master of the same name mentioned by Tārānātha. See

- Tārānātha's History of Buddhism in India, ed. Chattopadhyaya (1970), p.
- 106 Watters (1904-05), p. 323.
- 107 Hsuan-tsang, Si-Yu-Ki, Beal's trans. II, pp. 223-226.
- 108 Ibid. II, p. 223.
- 109 Ibid. II, p. 224.
- 110 Ibid. II, p. 225.
- 111 The three accounts of Tushita abode are related to the previous mentioned stories of Asaṅga, Uttara and Guṇaprabha. Other three accounts on Ketumati are recorded in the passages regarding the nature of Maitreya's coming to earth, with regard to Hsuan-tsang's visits to Banaras, Magadha and the Dhanakata country.
- 112 Hsuan-tsang, Si-Yu-Ki, Beal's trans. Vol. II p. 227.
- 113 Ibid. Vol. II pp. 227-28.
- 114 Ibid. Vol. I p. 227, n. 53.
- 115 B. Bhattacharyya (1928), 2nd ed. p. 80.
- 116 Nispannayogāvalī ed. B. Bhattacharyya, pp. 46, 50, 67.
- 117 B. Bhattacharyya (1928), 2nd ed. p. 93.
- 118 Ibid. p. 94.
- 119 Tārānātha's History of Buddhism in India, ed. D. Chattopadhyaya (1970), p. 277. Tārānātha mentions that Haribhadra learned the Madhyamika works from Śāntiraksita and the Prajñā-pāramita from Vairocana-bhadra.
- 120 Ibid. p. 277.
- 121 Petech gives the date of Tibetan king, Khri-sroṅ-Ide-btsan, a contemporary personage with Haribhadra, as A.D. 755-797. See Ibid. p. 276, n. 8.