An Archetype of the Buddhist Academic Culture:
Nālandā Mahāvihāra

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Buddhism, as a monastic institution advanced inimitable educational ethics based on *śramanic* tradition. It created a plethora of knowledge in the field of *abhidhamma*, epistemology, metaphysics and other disciplines. For any sacred region, the specific features are essential and interrelated with the life pattern of numerous communities of that sacred complex. The primary qualification is that religious beliefs and practices influence the natural environment, sacred complex, and spatial characteristics.[1] The characteristic of a sacred complex consists of a specific regional zone that incorporates all the propensities associated with the land. Sacred sites are frequently confronted with accompanying issues of ownership, maintenance and access to this site as well as its sacred identification. The stakes are high when the local population and the faithful develop trust that specific territory belongs to them.[2] The *Mahāvihāra* tradition, otherwise known as Buddhist universities, first began in the Nālandā monastic complex in the early centuries of the common era. In this scholastic tradition, the Buddhist as also the curriculum of other disciplines were also taught. This represented a cosmopolitan approach in which people from different faiths, from different parts of the world could come, reside, and embrace a variety of knowledge but with their respective specialties. It was the first kind of model which promoted education among global citizens. What were the factors that led to the emergence of such types of institutions? Emergence and dominance of śramanic ideology, the parallel development of Brāhmanical Schools of philosophy, regular exchanges of knowledge necessitated a platform where free-thinking could be encouraged. It was also situated in a politically important area and hence, many kings patronized the institution for

the sake of acquiring knowledge. Nālandā Mahāvihāra was situated in a region represented by a wide variety of religious beliefs and cultures including Buddhism, Jainism, Ājivaka, and Brāhmanism. Such multiplicity of religious beliefs and cultures created in this region the space for mingling of cultures and a fertile ground for monks, nuns, and scholars to develop their own beliefs and values. Religious and ethical edification allowed them to explore India's other religions and views, which were independent of their own holy credence. The religious ideas and ethical education aroused ethical attitudes in different sections of society. It helped in thwarting predisposition and intolerance as people now viewed issues like sectarianism and discrimination more broadly and liberally. Such examples could be abundantly found in scholarly disputations among the scholars of the different sects and religions in the Nālandā and other Mahāvihāras. This type of compassionate attitude in academic curriculum was imaginable and appropriate. Buddhism taught us how humanitarian ethics could be universalized through the teachings of the Buddha. Settling moral dilemmas in the monastic and general context have a limited chance of cultivating an enduring and fruitful educational outcome because dilemmas are typically constructed by arbitrarily ruling out meaningful options. Therefore, the investigation into moral themes had to be amalgamated by the exploration of choices through philosophical inquiry and ethical values. However, ethical inquiry does not materialize by itself, but something-desirable opportunities have to be delivered for that to happen. Settling instant ethical dilemmas is not the goal of monastic moral inquiry; the initial concern is to conduct ourselves with respect to these matters. Therefore, the aim of this scholastic tradition was to encourage people to engage in ethical inquiry in the monasteries with genuine ethical concerns. In this respect, Nālandā has been the precursor of other Buddhist universities in India and the world and its contribution could be rightly said as the 'Nālandā Culture'.

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Formation of the 'Nālandā Culture'

In the early phase of the Buddhism, monasteries in Nālandā like others were engaged in the training of novices and inculcating the Buddhist ideals through internalization of monastic training. The purpose was to acquire the knowledge of basic tenets and adopt the heuristics of memorization to be an erudite monk. Such hermeneutical practices facilitated the dual responsibilities assigned to the monks by the Buddha. The first aim was to remove the impurities from mind through meditation and be an *Arahant*. The other purpose was to spread the message of the Buddha by wandering for the benefit and welfare of all (*Charathbhikkhavecharikam, Bahujanhitaya Bahujansukhaya, athayahitayadevamanussanam; Desethabhikkhavedhammamadikalyanampariyosanamkalyanamsatthasabbajanam, parisuddha brahmacharyam pakasitam* II).[3] The methodology to learn the *Dhamma* has three important elements: *pariyatti* i.e. accomplishment of the *Dhamma* and *Vinaya* with the help of the canons and elders,[4] *patipatti* i.e. the practice of *Dhamma,* as opposed to mere theoretical knowledge,[5] *pativedha*, i.e. experiential learning to extinguish defilement and releasing the mind from all sufferings. Taken together, they signify realization of the truth of the *Dhamma*.[6] The Pāli canons were the sources of monastic education and training, which includes texts remembered for instructional purposes as well as for performative actions. The knowledge of normative monastic ethics was grounded in action-oriented pedagogy, i.e. learning, experiencing and communication.[7] *Theravāda* practices were embedded with two different types of canons —formal and practical. The first category deals with teachings and rules mentioned in *tipitikas* that is not practically taught in monastic training, but it represents the ultimate authority and reference to guide and interpret the rules and practices. The practical canons like *tīkās* explaining the rituals were used to train the monks for the writing of manuscripts, memorizing the texts and preaching.[8] The foundation of the Buddhist academic landscape in Nālandā was strengthened by frequent visits of the Buddha and delivery of some of his important *suttas.*The Nālandā sacred zone also got prominence due to the birth and residence of some of the erudite scholar-monks such as Mahākassapa, Sariputta and Mahāmoggalāna. Mahākassapa's erudition was respected by the Buddha himself, who praised his ability to attain *jhāna* and delivering the true content of the *suttas.*[9] Despite the Buddha's request to live with him, Mahakassapa always lived an austere life, residing in forest, subsisting on alms, wearing rag-*cīvaras,* and staying aloof from the society. He always said that his exemplary life would set example for other monks.[10] Sāriputta's monkhood might have helped him to develop 'Nālandā Culture'. He was a disciple of Saňjaya Vellathiputta and became a convert on hearing the *Buddhavacana* from Assaji. Then he requested Saňjaya to visit the Buddha, but he declined.[11] He was a strict disciplinarian and irritated with those monks who had deviated from the rules. He showed his unhappiness with the monks of Kosāambī and Devadatta.[12] He never deviated from the path declared by the Buddha. Even in dire need and sickness, he sought permission from the Buddha to diverge from *saṁgha* practices.[13] Though the tradition of debate was not established in the *saṁgha,* Sariputta was known for questioning the monks and arguing some vital points. His debate with Upavana and Ananda is well known.[14] Mogallāna was another great disciple of the Buddha who was born and lived here. He was converted by Sariputta and declared as one of the chief monks of the Order. The Buddha sent him to preach even in his own community of the Śākyans.[15] His death shows incidents of mutual jealousy and violent practices prevalent among various religious sects. It is said that Mogallāna used to declare that the followers of the Buddha always attained heaven and others would face perilous conditions. The heretics conspired to kill him and hired criminals. Once, when he was meditating in Kālaśila, the brigands caught him and brutally crushed his bones. However, he regained consciousness due to his s*iddhi,* went to the Buddha to pay homage and died.[16] Though metaphysics and logic were still not part of Buddhism but occasional occurrence of the term *tākika* (*tārkika*) shows existence of *Dhamma* debaters.[17] All three erudite monks and many more of this sacred zone could be said as a precursor of tradition, which lasted for more than thousand years. The inference of their metaphysical and philosophical assumptions could be traced in Pāli literature. The terms *viññāna*or consciousness was explained in six categories, i.e. *cakkuviññāna* (seeing), *sotaviññāna* (listening), *ghanaviññāna* (sense of smell), *jīvhaviññāna* (taste), *kāyāviññāna* and *manoviññāna* (intellect).[18] The *Vinaya Pitaka* mentions disputes and its settlement (*adhikaranas*) in debates. These rules were fixed to regulate monastic codes and its scope might be expanded when metaphysical and epistemological traditions developed in Magadha, especially in Nālandā. These four kinds of *adhikaranas* are: *vivāda-adhikarana* (solve disputes and differences), *anuvadda-adhikarana* (violation of rule of virtues), *apatta-adhikarana* (when transgression of *Vinaya* rules by monks), and *kicca-adhikarana* (procedure of ecclesiastical rules).[19] In all respects, scholastic traditions started in the period of Aśoka. The *Kathāvatthupakarana* written by MogaliputtaTissa in the age of Aśoka discusses rules used in logic. These words are: *anuyoga* (inquiry), *āharana* (illustration), *patina* (proposition), *upanaya* (application of reason), and *niggaha* (defeat).[20] Such public disputations were not popular, but eminent monks and

their disciples were engaged in establishing superiority of their own sects. Aśoka himself inquired and cajoled the monks of KukkutārāmaVihāra into testing their acumen. It indicates that this kind of discipline existed but was still not popularized.

Beginning of the Scholastic Tradition

The radical changes accentuated *Dhammic* interpretations and practices with the beginning of the common era, which made aloofness from the Theravāda ideals of personal salvation and suggested universal compassion for every life. The metaphysical view shifted from pluralism to *śūnyatā* which actually did not deny the reality of the empirical world absolutely but accepts that the ultimate reality was not ultimate one.[21] With the emergence of four schools of philosophy in Buddhism, i.e. Vaibhaśikas, Sautrāntika, Mādhyamika and Yogācāra, the learning of metaphysics and logic underwent an immense development. The adherents found it suitable to defend their ideas through logic and counter the opponents to the same way. In this phase, hermeneutics was the method of organized understanding and interpretation of particular philosophical point of view. It was reflective interpretative practices to learn the content and context of texts for explanation and disputation. The actual ascendancy of this tradition started with Nāgārjuna (2nd century CE) who came from south India and became patron of Nālandā Mahāvihāra. He expounded *śūnyatā* in his famous work the *Mādhyamika-kārika* posited two kinds of truths — the conditional (*sanvriti*) and the transcendental (*paramārtha*). He also criticized Akṣapāda's theory of *pramāna* (evidence).[22] Nevertheless, some scholars found the doctrine of Mādhyamika school drift into a depressing nihilism. Asaṅga (5th century CE), the founder of Yogācāra school, endeavoured to overcome these tendencies while enduring allegiance to the spirit of Nāgārjuna's doctrine through a variety of *upāya*or methods.[23] Vasubandhu refined syllogistic logic by differentiating the procedure for reaching inferences informal debate (five steps) from the process in personal thought (three steps). He wrote several śāstras arguing that all visible outside substances are only mental illustrations. He was the author of the *Abhidharmakośa*, a codification of *Sarvāstivāda* doctrine.[24]

Dignāga (5th century CE) was a scholar of great repute and a founder of Indian logic. He was the author of the *Pramāṇa-samuccaya* in which he gave a new definition of perception arguing that knowledge was free from all conceptual constructions, including name and class and that only pure sensation can be considered as perception. In his theory of inference, he distinguished between inference for oneself and inference for the other and laid down three criteria of a valid reasons (*hetu*). Dignāga's tradition was further developed in the 7th century by Dharmakīrti. He propounded that inference and direct perception were the only valid types of knowledge in the *Prāman-vārtika*. He accepted that the object of inference, whether analytical or synthetic, was the universal (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*). Dharmakīrti endorsed that every person was a momentary being a prolongation of moments, compiled by imaginative and discriminative thoughts. The great philosophical tradition started by Nāgārjuna was almost complete by the time Dharmakirti.[25] By this time 'Nālandā Culture' reached the zenith of its glory.

The teachers of Nālandā as deliverers of knowledge, as disciplinary or epistemic authority, as stimulus or even as generator of knowledge had a vital role in the traditional educational set up and surroundings. They worked to guide the novices towards self-facilitation where each member of the academic community could enjoy some involvement with knowledge institutions and nurture the process of self-development as a whole. Also, the teacher refurbished the skills of the student as a whole or the theoretical structure of the argument that the student was involved with. Since this attempt at clarification of thought and generation of new ideas out of skirmishes and dialogues was a non-linear process, it is also accompanied by splitting views, recursion, emergence of some random and extraneous materials, and the occurrence of some communicative commotion.

The motive and method of imparting knowledge at Nālandā Mahāvihāra were to inculcate pragmatic education comprising of both the sacred and profane aspects. The theoretical ideas were introduced to strengthen the foundations of knowledge and then experimental stages were told to practice. Education as comprehended and delivered by the custodians and *panditas* of Nālandā was aimed at all-round development, including intellectual, moral, spiritual and aesthetic values.[26] Inside the Mahāvihāra, monks and nuns were trained to live a highly moral and spiritual life according to the precepts laid down by the Buddha. Outside of the Mahāvihāra, it called upon to lead a successful and prosperous life in the society and, at times, to prepare themselves to be intellectually acclaimed and erudite. I-ching informs us that few students of Nālandā Mahāvihāra were hired for the imperial services. Sometimes after exuberating their academic excellence, they used to receive financial help or were offered academic/administrative positions. Sometimes people who had not received any training in scholastic tradition of Nālandā linked themselves to the institution longing for name and fame. He says that even those who used the name of Nālandā without getting education here were also treated with respect and dignity.[27] It is noted that in the early medieval period as

many as 10,000 resident monks resided at Nālandā. [28] The curriculum at Nālandā was a skillful blend of sacred and profane knowledge. It included language and grammar, arts, medicine, logic and philosophy, as well as exhaustive study of the works of the 18 sects of Buddhism. It had a cosmopolitan campus, including students from countries like China, Korea, Tibet, and other parts of Asia.

'Nālandā Culture' envisaged that sacred and ethical teaching is a procedure where monks and novices engage in a pursuit of meaning, value, and purpose of life. Such vast learning comprises a comprehensive analysis of existing knowledge, traditions, and values. It also includes the process of augmenting this knowledge and introspection that how such beliefs and values could be voiced in a harmonious manner. The students, whether monks or laymen, must be aware that beliefs and values were vital to monastic system and society. There was an intrinsic value in erudition about religion as well as scholarship in religion, as students develop their understanding of diversity in our society and their roles in it. The notion of constructive replication of thoughts, critical thinking, and an enhanced understanding of the benign beliefs and values of others were all decisive in this process. Scholarship through ethical education empowers monks/layperson store cognize Buddhism as an important expression of human experience and learning about the beliefs, morals, virtues, and traditions of Buddhism in different contexts.

It was also a tradition in Nālandā Mahāvihāra that students from any faith were treated with compassion and care. In such ambiance, some wished to appraise their faith and discuss openly about it, but others might not be willing to share their values. The involvement in public debate and consequential result in garnering right opinions and values led to the growth of wider understanding and infused better learning and education. Above all, it was the scholar-monks who carried the stimulus and contested the critical thoughts in realizing right objectives for all. It was imperative to recognize locally conditioned circumstances and community expectations. It was also significant to evade shallow behaviour of contradictory religious views and too many dogmatic characteristics were theoretically puzzling. However, while one or more magnitudes of Buddhism were studied in-depth, scholars possibly sought to draw upon carefully selected aspects of other religions, perhaps in the context of interdisciplinary erudition. The framework of academic investigation frequently led the scholar-monks to appropriate arguments where views independent of religious belief, and traditions could be judged and measured. The dimensions connected with the idea of personal search and meditation remained an essential constituent of learning in Buddhism. The

background of the curriculum would strengthen the growth of person's own lenient views and morals, in addition to evolving his knowledge and understanding of ideas, observations, and traditions for society as a whole. This could be realized through deliberation of, and reflections upon and retort to the challenges posed by some of the religious beliefs and ideals. 'Nālandā Culture' endorsed that vibrant cultural ethos and virtues are embedded in the background of exploring religions and theirdifferent viewpoints. Eighteen types of teachings were taught in the Mahāvihāra, and the *panditas* recognized that assessment of religious and ethical education would emphasize thewidespread knowledge and understanding of religious practices and traditions.

The ethical education based on the ancient curriculum of Nālandā gave vital knowledge and inspired associations with other areas of learning to equip learners with profound, more permeating and lively understandings. This understanding facilitated much to the growth of the capacities in a person, he/she became an efficacious novice, composed, a responsible individual and effective contributor. Religious and ethical teaching had robust connotations with attaining knowledge for humanism, inventiveness, imagination, and sustainability. 'Nālandā Culture' offered opportunities to relate religious and ethical education to global contexts and to raise contemporary moral and ethical issues in a manner to develop a peaceful and vibrant global society. The expressive erudition fetches resources and means through incredible scholarship and standards of others. It elevated consciousness and understanding to adapt divergent opinions and beliefs to encourage dialogues and debates.

Vāda (Debate) and Transformation of Nālandā Pedagogy

Vāda was a kind of debate and a method of intellectual analysis of all that is comprehensible. Traditionally, the origin of *vāda* or tradition of debate is sought from Nyāya School of philosophy and it is believed that *vāda* tradition was first developed by Akṣapāda Gautama in his treatise the *Nyāya Sūtra*. The philological study of the literature shows that it was not a handiwork of one person but edited from time to time. It mentions Saṁkhya, Vaśeśika, Yoga, Miṁānsa, Vedānta and Buddhist Schools of *darśanas.* Some of the Buddhist texts like the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, Mādhyamika Sūtra,* etc. were directly borrowed and absorbed.[29] Nāgarjuna was supposed to be the first *ācārya* in Buddhism who thought to define the rules for *vāda* and his thesis of arguments became basis of all future theories of debates. In his work, the *Upāya-kauśalya-hrdayaśāstra,* he devised certain exposition of the art of debate. He broadly

divided it into four parts. The first is *vāda-visadhikarana* (elucidation of debate) which includes *udāharana* (example), *siddhānta* (principles and result), *vākyaprasaṁsa* (erudition in speech), *vākyadoṣa* (imperfection in speech), *anumāna* or *hetu-jañaāa* (perceptive inference), *samayocita-vākya* (properconversation), *hetvabhāsa* (misconception) and *duṣta-vākyanusarana* (fallacious motives). The second point *nigraha-sthāna* (points of defeat) deals with*avijñatartha* (incoherent), *ananubhāsana* (silence), *nyuna* (fewerdialogue), *adhika* (saying excess), *nirarthaka*(insignificant), *apraptakāla* (unsuitable), *aparthaka* (incoherent) and *pratijna-hāni* (hurting the proposition). The third point *tattva-vyākhyāna* (expending the truth) corresponds to *matanujna* (admission of an opinion), and the last element *jāti* (analogy) deals with *utkarsa-samā* (harmonizing the excess), *apakarṣa-samā* (balancing a discrepancy), *avarnya-samā* (balancing the unquestionable), *ahetu-samā* (balancing the non-reason), *prapti-samā* (harmonizing the co-presence) *aprapti-samā* (balancing the mutual absenteeism), *samsaya-samā* (balancing the *doubt*) and the *pratidrṣṭānta-samā (*balancing the counterexample).[30] Maitreyanātha elaborated the rules of debates and he was more interested in topics, the place of debates, presence of patrons and scholars and general applicability. In the *Saptadasa-bhūmi-sāśtra*, he discusses seven important points of debates and emphasizes on relevance of subject of debate, appropriate place (king's palace, a minster's place of scholars assembly) and congenial environment. The *sādhya* or means of the debate should be clear and must visualize *atma-saṁbandha* (one's self) and *parā-sambandha* (about others). To prove these points, one had to follow the eight corollaries i.e. *siddhānta* (doctrines), *hetu* (cause), *udāharana* (example), *sadharmya* (favorable examples), *vaidharmaya* (adverse examples), *pratyaksha* (perception), *anumāna* (inference) and *āgama* (scripture). He also mentioned basic qualities of a debater, important points pertaining to defeat (*nigrahasthāna*), considering the merit and demerit of place of debate and confidence of debater.[31] His view on rules of debate was simplification of ideas mentioned by Nāgarjuna. Asaṅga accepted his view on *vāda*except his theory of *sādhaka* (proof). He elaborate it as *anumāna*(inference), which includes *pratijña* (proposition), *hetu* (cause), *udāharana* (example), *upanaya* (application) and*nigmana* (conclusion). With its*pratyaksha* (perception), *upamana* (evaluation and compare) and*āgama* (scripture) are important subdivisions. He totally accepts total eight subdivisions for *sādhaka*.[32] His brother Vasubandhu did commendable work on logic known as the *Tarka-sāśtra*. It is divided into three chapters explaining five categories of syllogism (*pañcavayava)*, the analogous rejoinder (*jāti*) and the point of defeat (*nigrahasthana*). He recommends that thesis should be approved on two points i.e. proposition

and reason and for it syllogistic inference only deals with three elements, the*paksa* (minor), *sādhya* (major) and *hetu* (middle).[33] During these early exponents of *vāda*tradition, the discipline was mainly incidental and dealing with the Yogācāra and Vaibhāśika Schools. Since 5th century CE, the discipline of logic was completely transformed and separated from different philosophical schools of Buddhism. It emerged as a separated dripline and founder of this Medieval School of Indian Logic was the greatest Indian logician Dignāga (450-520 CE). His critical insight and acumen earned him the epithet 'the first and last of Indian logicians'. A resident of South India and disciple of Vasubandhu, he was invited to Nālandā Mahāvihāra to defeat *tirthika* Sudurjaya and other dialecticians, who were indeed defeated and converted to Buddhism. Because of his conviction and debating abilities, he was known as 'Fighting Bull' or 'Bull in Discussion' (*tarka-puṅgava*). He was not only a great scholar, but also a determined wandered who travelled widely from Bihar to Maharashtra, Odisha, and south India to defeat the *tirthika* dialecticians.[34] His contribution to Buddhism is no less than that of Saṅkara, who adopted same method to re-establish Brāhmanism. Though due to downfall of Buddhism from mainland India, name and contribution of Dignāga lapsed in history and Saṅkara became legend as saviour of Hinduism. Dignāga's technique of disputation, erudition, and intellect was so emphatic that it created ripples of fear in spine of his adversaries. He was feared by his opponents not only in his lifetime but also after death. Some of the most prominent scholars of the later period wrote derogatory remarks, cursed, and even used disparaging language against him. Kalidāsa in his *Meghadūta*[35] cautioned the scholars to avoid the ruggedness (*sthula-hasta)* of Dignāga. Uddyotakara[36] says that Dignāga was *kutarkika*, who did not follow the real rules of disputation. However, Dignāga was not alive to correct these disparaging remarks.Vācaspati Mishra[37] was also a formidable critique of Dignāga and used to exemplify his method as *bhranta* (wrong one). Kumārila Bhatta and Parthasarthi Mishra[38] were critical of his theory. Jains, Vedantins, and even some of the Buddhists opposed his ideas, but in reality, they were not able to produce any literature which was at par with Dignāga's *Pramāna-samuccaya* and his other works. The last great pillar of this tradition could be Dharmakirti (7th century CE). A *brāhmana* fromsouth India and well versed in all categories of Brāhmanical literature, he decided to engage himself in Buddhist dialectics. He learned Dignāga's *Pramāna-samuccaya* by Isvarasena but not fully satisfied by his ideas. He sought permission from Isvarasena to write a critical commentary on it, i.e. *Pramāna-vārtika-kārika*.[39] Like Dignāga, he became a formidable debater, and tradition says that he defeated his most renowned

adversaries like Kumārila Bhatta, Saṅkara and his disciple Bhatta Ācārya.[40] He was a great Buddhist scholar and was always at the pain that real scholarship in Buddhism was on the verge of decline. He lamented that he did not have any able disciple to carry forward his ideas. Once, one of his disciples, Devendrabodhi, desired to write commentary on *Pramāna-vārtika* and Dharmakirti granted permission. He compiled it twice but each time it was rejected by Dharmakirti as it was not as per his expectations. In his third attempt Devendrabodhi accepted his incompetence and requested Dharmakirti to approve it for people of mild understanding. He allowed the work known as *Pramān-vārtika-panjika*.[41] The great *vāda* tradition of Nālandā Mahāvihāra continued up to early decades of 12th[s] century, but by then, the rising sun of great philosophical tradition had already set in India.

Shifting Paradigms: Logic to Rituals

From the 6th to the 7th century common era, Buddhism started revealing a new form of meditational and ritualistic practices that recognized the effectiveness of powerful energy aroused by psychic sources. This *tāntric* learning was a total departure from early Buddhism. It recognized *tāntric* path based on *śūnyata* and *bodhicitta* which could only be achieved with the help of a *gurū*. It was an interpretative practice with the orientation to training the monks and *yoginis* in the semantic tradition as well as performative actions. One of its great custodians Naropa became chancellor of Nālandā Mahāvihāra but later moved to the Himalayan region. He was considered as a bridge between the Buddhist and Brāhmanical *tantra*. He became a great propagator of Nālandā tradition and for that reason he was known as Nandapada or Nālandāpada. He resided in Pullahari monastery near Bihar Sharif. He was ordained by MahāsiddhaTilopa. Atīśa and Somanātha were his disciples who propagated Tāntric Buddhism to Tibet and Nepal respectively. Padmasambhava or Rimpoche was a native of Udayāna and learned Tāntric tradition at Nālandā. He was invited to Tibet in 747 CE by King Thī-srong-detsan and he arrived at Samye (Bsan-yas) where he is said to have converted local populace to Buddhism. He also pacified local spirits that were inhibiting the construction of a Buddhist monastery by causing earthquakes. Atīśa devoted all his energies to the tantra practices in order to realize his fullest potential in this very life. His *vajra* master was Rahulagupta. Padmasambhava was engaged in steady practice and achieved perfect enlightenment in due course of time. In his early years, Atisha[42] studied at the monastic university of Odantapuri and Nālandā with the great Dharmarakshita.

Counter Pedagogy: Absorption and Assimilation

Logic, epistemology, and ethics were indispensable parts of every student's educational curriculum at Nālandā. The experiences and outcomes relating to the growth of their knowledge and scholarship did not form a separate framework but intertwined with the experiences and outcomes of broader deliberations, interactions and learning of different dimensions of Buddhism. When Buddhist institutions conceived the idea to impart education embedded with traditional values and traditions, they had to ensure to take account of sentiments of the local communities. It is also true that some of the residents of NālandāMahāvihāra had a range of faiths and views which might not be primarily Buddhist. References are found to people from different religious faith who could come and study here. Indeed, their experiences and knowledge outcomes led to extending their learning to higher levels. In the later phase of the tradition, academic arrogance of some of the Buddhist scholars were visible, and the same happened to Brāhmanical tradition. Stiff resistance and opposition started especially by the Brāhmanical schools, and some of its great luminaries like Kumārila Bhatta and Śaṅkara proposed new kind of counter-arguments against 'Nālandā Culture' initially, it was helpful to both for development of knowledge. The condition worsened when Buddhist and Brāhmanical traditions became hostile to eachother. Even scholars tried to destroy the works of their adversaries. Tāranātha says that when Dignāga contemplated writing his great compendium the *Pramāna-samuccaya*, a brahmana, Ishvarkrishna used to destroy his work during his absence from his home. This happened many times, and Dignāga was so frustrated that he contemplated giving up writing. However, once Dignāga detected the conspiracy and defeated his adversary in debate, Ishvarkrishna became Buddhist.[43]

The tradition of debate and disputation among ~~the~~ scholars often changed into rivalry and egotist self-aggrandizement. Kumārila Bhatta was antagonistic and hostile against Buddhism. He flourished in 7th century CE and was contemporaneous with Dharmakīrti. Kumārila studied at Nālandā but later on drifted away from Buddhism. Then, he engaged himself to counter Buddhist dispositions on logic and epistemology. But he was successfully subdued by Dharmakīrti. Tradition says that he converted Kumārila and his followers to Buddhism. It is also said that Kumārila's dialectical successes are chiefly to be credited for the decline of Indian Buddhism and that Kumārila was a formidable philosophical opponent of his Buddhist counterparts.[44] Śaṅkara absorbed some of the fundamental metaphysical and ontological ideas of Buddhism. The true reality of Mahāyāna is very close

to *māyā* of AdvaitaVedānta. Because of it he is known as *prachanna* Buddha (crypto-Buddhist). It is mostly a tradition that he debated far and wide against Buddhists on questions of logic, phenomenology, ontology, and metaphysics but it is true that he ushered the revival of Brāhmanism by improving upon its literary, theological and cultural viewpoints Without superiority of logic and inference, it was challenging to re-establish Brāhmanism.[45] The arguments between his followers and Buddhists were technical, complex and long-drawn.

Vācaspati Mishra in the 9th century is considered to be another crusader who strengthened the Nyāya viewpoint against the Buddhists. Udayanācārya was the logician of the tenth century who tried to resolve the contention of the two major schools of logic, i.e. Nyāya and Vaiśesika. It led to the foundation of Navya-Nyāya school in the thirteenth century by the Gangesha Upadhyaya. The Brāhmans of Mithila still gave him credit for finally extinguishing Buddhist logicians forever from the land of Bihar. He wrote a commentary on Vācaspati's work known as the *Nyāya-vārtika-tātparya-tīkā-pariśuddhi* and also composed the *Kusumanjali, Atma-tattva-viveka, Kiranaavali* and *Nyāya-parishishhta* or *Bodha siddhi*.[46] The 'Nālandā Culture' had such an emphatic impact that even after the downfall of the Nālandā Mahāvihāra, its ideas could not be crushed. The Navya-Nyāya school was founded after downfall of Buddhism to counter its robust literary tradition. With the advent of Islam in India, another powerful opponent rose against it, and one can say the 'Nālandā Culture' was finally demolished. But it was not reality; the tradition was imbibed by the other traditions that emerged not only in India but also abroad. The real tradition was preserved in the Himalayan regions especially in the area of Ladakh, Himachal, Nepal, and Tibet. Its rationalized form became the part of Bhakti and Sufi traditions. Such hidden treasure could be found from treatises of Kabir, Nanak, Bulleh Shah and many Sufi saints. Had Brāhmanical and Buddhist schools of thought worked together as they did till 5th-6th centuries CE, the nature of Indian literary tradition could have been different. Both systems perished under the long rule of the Sultanate and the Mughals due to the lack of patronage, destruction, burning, and plundering. The ocean of great literature was lost forever, and we are still boasting of the remaining few drops of water. The destruction of 'Nālandā Culture' also teaches us that despite ideological differences and dissent, academic endurance and harmony is necessary. After Independence, in the academic field mutual jealousies and dissidence are ever-growing and in the last two decades, its social base has widened. It is in the best interest of the nation and academics that we should respect other's academic endeavour. The criticism and reviews are not meant for violent reactions and counter conflicts.

What 'Nālandā Culture' pleads that an understanding of the religion is a broader segment of society and needs to be addressed within its own social and ethical context. There is a growing consensus in a contemporary multi-cultural society that religious matters are a personal choice and should be dealt with the values of co-existence. The upsurge in Buddhist oriented flexibility and religious plurality has reinforced awareness about inculcating harmonious ideas. It highlights the significant role Buddhism has to play in facilitating intercultural dialogue for the protection and advancement of kindness and concord. Besides, consultations with different religious communities could be done to exchange ideas on common concerns such as education, health, peace, and human rights. Not to participate in negotiation and talks is the prelude to developing a stereotypical insight of the other religions and cultures, which further generates a climate of mutual misgiving, strain, and anxiety and usually fosters intolerance and discernment.

Notes

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4. *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, V, 205.
5. *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, I, 69, V, 126.
6. *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, I, 22, 44.
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13. *Vinaya Pitaka*, II, 140.
14. *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, III, 361, *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, V, 76.
15. *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, IV, 183ff.
16. *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*, III, 65ff.
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19. *Vinaya Pitaka* (*Parivara khanda*).
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29. Vidyabhusana, *A History of Indian Logic*, p. 46.

30. Vidyabhusana, *A History of Indian Logic,* pp. 258-61.

31. *Saptadasa-bhumi-sastra,* chapter XV.

32. Vidyabhusana, *A History of Indian Logic,* p. 266.

33. *BunyiuNanjio's Catalogue of Chinese Tripitika*, No. 1252, vide, Vidyabhusana, *A History of Indian Logic*, p. 268.

34. Satis Chandra Vidyabhusana, 'Dignaga and His Pramana-samuccaya.' *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*. vol. 1(9), 1905, Thomas Watters, On Yuan Chwang, vol. II, p. 122.

35. *Meghadūta, Purva-megha*, V.14 (Mallinatha in his commentary of verse 14 of Purva-megha of the *Meghadūta* criticizes Dignāga as intolerant and rugged, vide, Vidyabhusana, *A History of Indian Logic*, p. 273) .

36. *Nyāya-vārtika*, pp. 1, 43-44, 52, 60-61.

37. *Nyāya-vārtika-tatparya-tīkā*, ed, Gangadhara Sastri, pp. 76-77, 97-98.

38. Vidyabhusana, *A History of Indian Logic*, p. 273 (It is mentioned in Parthasarthi Mishra's *tika* on verses 59-60 of the *Anumanapariccheda* of Kumarila Bhatta. It was vartika on the 5th *sutra* of Jaimini).

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