

The Buddha's Socio-Political Ideas
By
Dr. Phramahachanya Khongchinda

Namo Tassa Bhagavato
Arahato Samma Sambuddhassa

Honour to Him, the Blessed One,
The Worthy One, The Fully Enlightened.

“This, dear son, that thou, leaning on the Norm (the Law of Truth and Righteousness) honouring, respecting and revering it, doing homage to it, hallowing it, being thyself a Norm-banner, a Norm-signal, having the Norm as thy master, shouldst provide the right watch ward, and protection for thine own folk, for the army, for the nobles, for vassals, for Brahmins, and house holders, for town and country dwellers, for the religious world, and for beasts and birds. Throughout thy kingdom let no wrongdoing prevail. And whosoever in thy kingdom is poor, to him let wealth be given.”

Cakkavatti - Sihanada Suttanta.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | |
|---------|--|-----|
| | Foreword | 4 |
| | Preface | 6 |
| | Acknowledgement | 10 |
| Chapter | | |
| I | Introduction | 14 |
| II | The Socio-Political conditions in Buddha's time | 59 |
| III | Buddha: Ideas on the State | 126 |
| IV | Buddha: Ideas on the Government | 171 |
| V | Buddha: As a Reformer | 218 |
| VI | Conclusion | 271 |
| | Bibliography | 294 |

FOREWORD

Phramaha Chanya Khongchinda is a Buddhist 'Bhikkhu' (Monk) from Thailand who earned the degree of Ph.D. from Banaras Hindu University under my supervision during 1986-88. He worked very hard and sincerely and produced an excellent research study on an important topic, namely, 'Buddha's Socio-Political Ideas'. Today when the modern socio-political atmosphere around the world is full of violence and selfishness, the socio-political ideas of Buddha which support non-violence, political tolerance and peaceful co-existence are of great importance and relevance. Being a Buddhist monk and a scholar of Pali, a language in which the teachings of Buddha were made, Phramaha Chanya Khongchinda is a fit person to make such a study.

The research work is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 'Introduction' discusses the nature and basic tenets of Buddhism, life and times of Buddha and sources of his ideas in a concise form. Chapter 2 gives an analytical account of socio-political conditions and inter-state relations of Buddha's times. Chapter 3 'Buddha: Ideas on the State' discusses the concepts of ideal state, origin of family, property and the state as well as nature, qualities and duties of the ruler. Chapter 4 'Buddha: Ideas on the Government' gives a comparative account of idea of Buddha and western thinkers (Plato and Aristotle) on form of Government, particularly monarchy. It also discusses the organization of 'Buddhist Sangha'. One may dispute the

contention of the researcher that Buddhist Sangha was a democratic institution, but the researcher has right to put forward his views, which he has done logically. Chapter 5 Buddha: As a Reformer gives an account of the dominant religious trends before Buddhism and gives a good account of the religious and social reforms initiated by Buddha and their impact. Chapter 6 is a summary of the findings of the researcher.

This research work fills a lacuna in the existing literature on Buddhism. I am sure every reader will find the book valuable as peace is a great need of our times.

Dr. Khongchinda is doing well in the academic field. He is Vice Dean of Graduate School, Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, Bangkok, Thailand.

P.D. Kaushik
Professor and Head
Department of Political Science,
Director
Centre for the Study of State Governments
Banaras Hindu University
Varanasi

PREFACE

Although the modern socio-political atmosphere around the world is full of violence, selfishness and competition, the socio-political ideas of *Dhamma* (Norms, Laws, Virtues) support non-violence, mutual understanding, mutual interest and peaceful co-existence. These are still relevant and very much needed. The problem of peace and the way to attain it both at the national and the international level is still with us. Buddhism is a religion advocating peace, of which the Buddha said: “No happiness is beyond peace.”

This thesis is intended to study the *Dhammas* which contribute to the socio-political well-being of man. The Buddha’s teachings have been expressed in the Buddhist Scripture named *Tepitaka* which consists of three sections; the *Vinaya Pitaka*, *Suttanta Pitaka*, and *Abhidhamma Pitaka*. This study draws on the first two sections as a source of ideas. The third has been left out. Commentaries on the scriptures have also been used. Other publications concerning sociology, political science, and philosophy were also used in this study.

The socio-political ideas of Buddha appearing in the Buddhist Scriptures were not mere political ideas and theories like those of other thinkers. They can be analyzed from various aspects. The ancient tales called *Jātakas* told by the Buddha contain many socio-political ideas, revealed through the conversation of men or women or even the

animals in the stories. The analysis and comparison of ideas is important in this work; the method of this research is analytical description.

This thesis is divided into six chapters as follows:

Chapter I deals with the life of the Buddha; general views regarding the sources of his socio-political ideas, the proclamation of *Dhamma* as a law, the concept of natural law and its interpretation in the Western and the Buddhist view the main characteristics of natural law as seen in Buddhism, and the comparative meaning and interpretation of moral law in Western and Buddhist views. This chapter provides a background to the socio-political ideas of the Buddha.

Chapter II discusses the socio-political ideas in the time of the Buddha. It discussed the sixteen states, their geographical location, the political system of the great sixteen powers and their subordinates, the social stratification, the *Vanna* system as mentioned in Pali Texts and its modern interpretation, the basis of social stratification the social status of each class, etc.

Chapter III is an analysis and evaluation of the Buddhist concept of origin of the state and the qualities of the ruler. The important points of this chapter are a general definition of state, the Buddhist concept of the state as contained in Buddhist Scriptures, the origin of the state and the ruler, theories concerning the origin of the state, Buddha's idea on the state, and the process of the origin of

the state and the ruler. The virtues and qualities of the ruler as mentioned in Pali Texts are also referred to. The concept of Universal Monarch as the ideal king has also been described. Finally, it summarizes the important ideas of the Buddha on the state.

Chapter IV deals with Buddha's views on the theory of government. It analyses the Buddhist Sangha Organization – a form of government formed by the Buddha and the Buddhist Sangha. It seeks the answer of the question: can Buddhist Organization be called a form of government? If so, what kind of government would it be?

Western and contemporary terms have been employed as basic principles of enquiry in this chapter. The important aspects dealt with in this chapter are: the definition of government, forms of government, the Buddha's theory of government, the virtues contributing to good government in Monarchies and Republics, development of the Buddhist Sangha and important features of the Buddhist Sangha Organization. An evaluation and analysis of political concepts in the Buddhist Sangha Organization has also been made.

'Buddha as a social reform' is the main theme of chapter V. It discusses the Buddha's idea concerning social reform. This chapter tries to analyze the important aspects of these ideas critically. The main aspects of this chapter are: need for social reform, the Buddha as a reformer, evaluation of his way of reformation, main doctrines

supporting his reforms, various social aspects of reforms, and the impact of the Buddha's reformation on his society.

On the basis of the above discussion, conclusions have been drawn in Chapter VI. It deals with the new ideas of socio-political betterment which should be based on what is called the *Dhamma* (Norms, Laws, Virtues). In such a system, socio-political principles, instead of the struggle for power, are the main force. As a consequence, the ruler and the ruled have close relationships based on compassionate love and mutual understanding.

Finally, I wish that if this thesis can be beneficial to our socio-political well-being, may such benefit be an homage paid to the Buddha, the master of *Dhamma* and to my fellow human beings. May all beings be without suffering and violence and may they emancipate themselves from evil and attain happiness and peace forever.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It is my duty to sincerely express my indebtedness to Dr. P.D. Kaushik, Professor, and Dr. R.R. Jha, Reader, Department of Political Science, Banaras Hindu University, for having industriously and kindly supervised and co-supervised, and provided facility in proceedings my entire research work from the beginning to the end. I have been immensely benefited by the possible lines of enquiry suggested by them.

I am very grateful to Dr. B.N. Singh, Reader and Dr. S.S. Bala Krishnan, Lecturer, Department of Philosophy, for their useful suggestions on various parts of this work. My deep thanks are due to Dr. P.K. Pandaya, Reader, Department of English, Banaras Hindu University, for giving some suggestions and translating some Sanskrit poems, pertaining to Buddha, into English.

It is with affection and appreciation that I acknowledge my indebtedness to Ven. Prarājañanakavi, Lord Abbot of Khan-nern Temple, Order Governor of Chumphorn Province, the Principal of Chumphorn Provincial Pali Academy, Thailand, my preceptor (father in Buddhist monkhood life) who initiated me as a novice and monk for having encouraged and supported my Buddhist life by frequently imparting and instructing the right understanding of Buddhism. Unfortunately, he passed away before I could finish my education.

I am also deeply indebted to Ven. Phradevavisutthi Medhi, the Lord Abbot of Cholaprathanrangsarit Temple, Vice-Order Governor of the 18th region, Thailand, who initiated me to the university student life in Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University. Throughout my education there and my post-graduate education in India, he has supported me with funds and has encouraged my aspiration to achieve success in education. It can be said that he been a constant source of inspiration for me.

I am also grateful to the following elders: Ven. Phraratanavedhī, Ven. Dr. Phrashidhammanathmuni, Ven. Phramaha Chan Thitavangso, for having impressed upon me to achieve a better life when I was a pre-university student. They have been providing me intellectual, spiritual as well as financial support from the beginning till now.

May I express my deep thanks to Ven. Phraseree Paknawin who has sponsored my post-graduate studies in India by kindly offering sufficient amount of money for livelihood . Acknowledgements are also due to Ven. Dr. Phramaha Tuen Pimaksorn who throughout my research work in India acted as my brother, caring and advising me until I finished it, and to Ven. Phramaha Somkid Sthaworn and Ven. Phramaha Sahas Dumkum, M.A. students of Political Science and Public Administration Department, Punjab University, my real friends since the days of my studentship both in Thailand and India.

My thanks are also expressed to Ven. Phramaha Dhammanath, Phramaha Wanchai, Phra Devan, Phramaha Sutin for being friendly while I was living at Sengupta Lodge, a part of International Hostel, Banaras Hindu University. During my stay in Varanasi in connection with my research I was frequently afflicted with allergy and asthma and I am grateful to Mr. Manoj Jawal for treating me and taking care of me with medicines, and to Mr. Surasak and Mr. Pravek Innual who helped me to their best abilities.

I have not only been supported by monks mentioned above but also by many devoted men and women. First of all I'd like to express my extreme indebtedness to my parents, Mr. Chang and Mrs. Kean Khongchinda, Thai agriculturalists who have given birth to me and have excellently discharged their duties in accordance with the Buddha's teaching. Their righteous functions enable me to lead my life in a good way. It is sad that my mother died when I was studying for a B.A. and she had no opportunity to see my success in education for which she had worked hard through her life and hoped to see my educational attainments.

My deep thanks are due to my sisters, brothers, and close relatives who through out my student life, have supported and encouraged me as much as they could. May I express my heartfelt gratitude to Miss Somparp Komson, Director of Kunnatee Ruttharam Wittayakom School, Bangkok, for having extended me compassionate love as a mother. My deep thanks are due to Miss Tasanee

Leelananda for providing money for my treatment during my illness.

Acknowledgements are also due to officials and staff of the following libraries: Library of Delhi University, Library of Mizor University, Library of Poona University, Library of Banaras Hindu University, National Library Calcutta, National Library, Bangkok, Thailand, Library of Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, Library of Chulalongkorn University and Library of Mahabodhi Society, Saranath, Varanasi, for having kindly given facility in collection of materials concerning my work.

May I express my deep thanks to Thai Buddhist people whose names cannot be enumerated here. Without their supports my research would not have been possible. I acknowledge my thanks to Mr. P.R. Rausaria for having typed the thesis with care.

I would like to dedicate my thesis to Buddhist Thai Fellowship and may entire humanity be benefited by it.

Dr. Phramaha Chanya Khongchinda
Abbot of Wat Buddha Panya Buddhist Temple
Pomona, California USA
www.buddhapanya.org

I

INTRODUCTION

A unique feature of Buddhism is that it is a doctrine of human beings, by human beings, and for human beings. It has played an important role in shaping the spiritual, philosophical, and social modes of life in the Eastern world. Many social laws, cultures, and traditions in the East have been dominated by the Buddha's doctrine. Buddhism is a vast source of inspiration in the arts and sciences in education.

A. K. Warder rightly says, "A glance at few of the countless modern books dealing with 'Buddhism' will soon convince the inquirer that Buddhism is all things to all men".¹ Such a conclusion is very valid.

Buddhism is concerned with human life and conduct. Man is regarded as the hub of truth and knowledge. Buddha's teaching is an all perfect-wisdom, an insight into all things both outside and inside human life as they really are; everyone has an equal right to realize the truth of Buddha's words through his own perseverance and confidence.

While individual salvation is much emphasized, socio-political well being is not neglected. T.W. Rhys Davids

¹ A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980), p. 1.

contends that “the early Buddhist ideas of the Buddha were chiefly modified by two ideals dominating the minds of men in those days. The one ideal was chiefly due to political experiences; the other to philosophical speculations.”²

The basic structure of the Buddha’s political thought consists of a world state under a virtuous ruler, having strength and purity, called the Universal Monarch.³ He protects all beings of the world by virtue of his office in accordance with *Dhamma* or Righteousness. A compassionate and non-violent sovereign of the world protects the people of the world and leads them to material prosperity and peaceful life. The ideal of a universal order with an internal unity of its constituent parts based on compassion and non-violence is the best way of human life, as suggested by Buddhism.

The concept of the virtuous ruler is not a concept for Buddha’s period only but it is, according to the Buddha, appropriate for every ruler regardless of time and place. The basic conception of the Buddha’s social ideas is based on five precepts, viz.:-

1. Abstinence from killing any living being.
2. Abstinence from taking what has not been given (to him).
3. Abstinence from adultery.

² T.W. Rhys Davids, *Indian Buddhism* (Allahabad: Jeet Malhotra Rachna Prakashan, 1972), p. 128.

³ See Rhys Davids (ed.), *Sacred Books of The Buddhists* trans., T.W. and C.A.F. Rhys Davids (London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1957), p.60.

4. Abstinence from speaking falsely.
5. Abstinence from intoxicating drinks.⁴

The first precept includes the virtue of non-violence and abets the fundamental human right of preservation of life. The second supports the security of property and wealth. The third contributes to the happiness of the family in which the members should reside with mutual understanding. The last two precepts support the speaking of truth which is an important virtue for social communication, and non-injury to oneself and society. This, thus, supports the ideas of the individual and social well-being. But before we deal with Buddha's social and political ideas it would be worthwhile first to discuss his life.

The Buddha's life in short:

The Buddha's life had a close relationship with the socio-political sphere from his childhood until his passing away. He was the Prince of *Kapilavatthu* (*kapilavastu*) his father, *Suddhodana*, was king of the *Sakya* clan in *Kapilavatthu*, and his mother was queen *Mahamaya*. The word "*Buddha*", meaning Awakened One or Enlightened One, is a title not a proper name.⁵ His proper name is *Siddhattha* (*Siddhartha*). The date of his birth is not quite

⁴ F. Max Muller (ed.). *Secred Books of the East*, Vol.X trans., F. Max Muller and Fousboll (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968), p. 66.

⁵ Phillip W. Geoetz (ed.), "Buddha", *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* 15th ed. Vol XV (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Inc., 1985), p. 269.

certain, but it can be fixed with sufficient accuracy between the middle and the end of the sixth century B.C.⁶

After he had finished his princely education, he was married to his cousin Yasodhara, the daughter of the king of the neighboring clan of the Koliyas. She gave him one son named Rahula. When he was twenty-nine years old he abandoned his home. After first studying under teachers of repute, from whom he derived no satisfactory solution to the problem of life, he devoted himself for six years to the strictest penance, by which men then believed that they could obtain the blessing and power of the gods.

His efforts in this direction did not lead him a lasting peace. However, in his thirty-fifth year the end of his struggle was reached when, under the Bodhi tree at Buddha Gayā, he attained that state of mind which was afterwards called Buddhahood. In this, he found at last a final solution to all his doubts and all his difficulties through inward self-realization and the love of all other human beings.

After initial hesitation as to whether it would be of any use to make his views known to others, he decided to proclaim publicly the truth he had discovered.

For the next forty-five years he walked from place to place preaching the good news of emancipation and gathering round him a small band of earnest and faithful followers, the earliest members of his afterwards famous

⁶ T.W. Rhys Davids, N. 2, p. 124.

order. At last, having gained a considerable measure of success, he passed away peacefully, in the midst of his disciples, in his eightieth year, at Kusinara in the Malla state, at present in Deoria district.

Sources of Ideas:

After enlightenment the Buddha, in the course of his sermons, started giving socio-political guidance to the people regardless of class, caste, race and sex. He started his missionary activities with the following resolution which he gave to the band of sixty monks who were his first missionaries:

I am delivered, *O Bhikkhus*, from all fetters, human and divine. You, *O Bhikkhus*, are also delivered from all fetters, human and divine. Go ye now, *O Bhikkhus*, and wander, for the gain of the many, for the welfare of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain, and for the welfare of gods and men. Let not two of you go the same way. Preach, *O Bhikkhus*, the doctrine which is glorious in the middle, glorious at the end, in the spirit and in the letter; proclaim a consummate, perfect, and pure life of holiness.⁷

The statement mentioned above indicates that the Buddha's resolution was meant for the annihilation of

⁷ F. Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XIII, trans., T.W. Rhys Davids and H. Oldenberg (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968), pp. 112-113)

suffering and promotion of peace and happiness among human beings and was not guided by the desire of capturing political power and social privilege. It was born out of his great compassion. In order to accomplish this resolution, he and his disciples spent nine months of each year in wandering from village to village, to make the Dhamma (doctrine) known to all.

The method of dissemination adopted was both by conversation and by public discourse in accordance with the varying abilities of the hearers. The conversation method provided the Buddha and his disciples a chance to know intimately the problems of the people and to provide answers for them. The main purpose was the annihilation of suffering and promotion of peace and happiness.

The collection of these conversations and discourses is called *Tipitaka* (Buddhist Scriptures). Of the three *pitakas*, the first *pitaka*, the *Vinayapitaka*, contains the rules for monastic discipline, the second, the *Suttantapitaka*, the sermons of the Buddha and his monks. The third is *Abhidhammapitaka*. It contains codifications of the teaching and analysis of all central terms into many sub-terms in the form of lists and charts. These three *pitakas*, for Buddhist *Theravada* are recorded in the Pali language. For the study of Buddha's socio-political ideas the *Suttanta* and *Vinaya Pitaka* (texts) are most important sources.

The essence of Buddhism contained in these scriptures can be resolved into two kinds: *Dhamma* or truths and *Vinaya* or monastic rules. The Buddha regarded them as the

instructions or the guiding principles for Buddhists after his death. The Buddha says; “the truths (*Dhamma*) and the rules of the order (*vinaya*) which I have set forth and laid down for you all, let them, after I am gone, be the Teacher to you”⁸ In his own life time the Buddha referred to the truths and the rules of the Order as the essence of Buddhism.

The above statement indicates that the word “*Dhamma*” means the teaching which the Buddha delivered through forty-five years to various kinds of people such as the king, the intellectuals and the common men irrespective of their social status. The word “*vinaya*” means the law and order issued by the Buddha and the Buddhist *Sangha*, and the regulations of conduct for the members of the Buddhist order. These are very important sources for the study of the socio-political ideas of the Buddha.

The study through the sources of *Dhamma* will be done by seeking the virtues or principles contributing to the socio-political ideas directly and indirectly. The study through the sources of *Vinaya* will be concentrated on the Buddhist order and its administrative organization. To consider the general view of the meaning of the word “*dhamma*” defined by various scholars concerning his socio-political ideas is the necessary first step of this research.

⁸ F. Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XI, trans., T.W. Rhys Davids (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965), p. 112.

Interpretation of term “Dhamma” as Law:

The term “*Dhamma*” is the key word by which Buddhists describe their religion. It is variously translated as doctrine, law, norm, religion truth, or world order.⁹ *Pali-English Dictionary*¹⁰ translates the different meaning of the word “*Dhamma*” including “law”. From the point of view of law, it is classified into rationality and morality. In rationality, it is translated as the natural law or cosmic law, universal in application. In morality, it is translated as moral law for social application.

*Dictionary of Political Science*¹¹ gives the meaning of *Dhamma* as law in the field of political science. It is the law or basic assumptions for conduct of individuals in Buddhist society and also for the ruler of the state. The law is also defined as the proper attitudes of the ruler of subjects and of subjects to their governing body.¹² In order to have a comprehensive view, the *Dhamma* (in the meaning of law) may be classified into two categories:

1. Natural law.
2. Moral law

Natural Law:

⁹ C.T. Straus, *The Buddha and His Doctrine* (Dallas Texas: Dennikat Press, 1970), p. 25.

¹⁰ T.W. Rhys Davids and William Stede (ed.), *Pali-English Dictionary* (Delhi: Motilal Banasidass, 1975), p. 336.

¹¹ Joseph Dunner (ed.), *Dictionary of Political Science* (New Yorks: The Free Press, 1984), p. 143.

¹² *Ibid.*

According to the Western view, Natural Law is meant as law that determines what is right and what is wrong, and that has power or is valid by nature, inherently everywhere and always. Natural Law is a high order law but not every higher order law is natural. There are things which are by nature good.¹³

St. Thomas Aquinas defines the Natural Law as a reflection of divine reason in created beings. It is manifested in the inclination which nature implants in all beings to seek good and avoid evil, to preserve themselves, and to live as perfectly as possible the kind of life suitable to their natural endowments.¹⁴

Natural Law may properly be defined as the Universal Law which is impermanent, eternal and uncreated. It is the rationality that anything that is should be according to its own reason. It is liable to change, and decay, and is destined to shift to another state of existence under the law of birth, age, death. Anything that is destined to come into existence must also cease to exist.¹⁵

Natural law, according to Buddhism, is the process which controls human life and existence without the creator and supernatural force. Suffering, according to Buddhism, originates from the natural process itself. Human life is also born out of the natural process. The beauty of Buddha's

¹³ David L. Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopaedia of Social Science*, Vol. XI (New York: The Free Press and MacMillan, 1968), p. 80.

¹⁴ George H. Sabine, *History of Political Theory* (Delhi: Oxford & I.B.H. Publishing Co., 1961), p. 253.

¹⁵ T.W. Rhys Davids and William Stede (ed.), N. 10, p. 336.

teaching is that he seeks and investigates the problems of human life within human life itself.

1. *Suffering: as a Natural Law:*

All existence is suffering. In his first sermon, delivered in the Deer Park of *Isipatana* (now call Sarnath) near Banares to the five monks, the Buddha explains what he understands by suffering:

Now this *O Bhikkhus* is the Noble Truth concerning suffering. Birth is attended with pain, decay is painful, disease is painful, death is painful. Union with the unpleasant is painful, painful is separation from the pleasant; and any craving that is unsatisfied, that too is painful. In brief, the five aggregates which spring from attachment are painful.¹⁶

Having considered this sentence, all its terms are connected with ideas which go beyond the obvious meaning we have to regard in turn: first the phenomena of birth, old age, grief etc. Second, the term suffering and third the teaching of the five aggregates which according to Buddhist consideration compose the personality.

1. Birth, old age and death, grief and despair, separation from beloved ones, the union of disliked ones, non-fulfillment of desires, all these aspects of existence are suffering. As long as they are not rightly understood as

¹⁶ F. Max Muller (ed.), N.B. p. 148.

they really are, becoming and passing, the suffering exists. Joy and satisfaction become suffering as soon as transition comes. So, these phenomena can be called Cosmic Law or Universal Law because they exist for everyone irrespective of place and position.

2. One scholar described suffering as follows:

The definition of suffering which came into existence after the Buddha's death classifies it into three parts: - viz; suffering resulting from pain, suffering from change or impermanence, and suffering arising out of the personality components.¹⁷

All phenomena connected with life such as birth, death, aversion and separation are inevitable. They are parts of the natural cycle of becoming and passing and hence suffering appears as long as man lives in non-liberation.¹⁸

3. T.W. Rhys Davids wrote as follows:

The sentence in the last explanation of suffering given in *Dhammacakkappavattana Suttanta* in brief, the five aggregates which spring from attachment (the conditions of individuality and their cause) are painful refers to the pain resulting from existence as an individual.¹⁹

¹⁷ Schuman, H. Holfagang, *Buddhism, an Outline of Its Teaching and School*, trans., George Fenerstein (London: Rinder and Company, 1973), p. 41.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ F. Max Huller (ed.), N. 8, p. 148.

This conclusion indicates that as long as the five aggregates are misunderstood due to attachment, individual beings imagine that they are selves, men, women, animals, I, my, he, him etc. The subject of suffering arises. Then, the suffering exists as well.

2. The Subject of Suffering and its Three Characteristics:

In Buddhism, the question of what man is - can always be answered by the enumeration of the five aggregates of grasping (*upādānakhandha*):

“And which, monks, are in brief the five aggregates of grasping which are sorrowful”? The Buddha answered himself: “They are: the aggregate of grasping material formation (*rūpa*), the aggregate of grasping sensation (*vedanā*), the aggregate of grasping perception (*saññā*), the aggregate of grasping mental formation (*sangkhārā*), the aggregate of grasping consciousness (*viññāna*).”²⁰

Material formation here means the physical frame of man, the space filled by bones, muscles, flesh and skin.²¹ When the Buddha says that the body as the organism consists of the four elements viz.; earth, water, fire and air.²² These

²⁰ Robert Chalmers (ed.), *Majjhima Nikaya*, Vol. III, (London: Henry Frowde: Oxford University Press Warehouse, 1899, p. 250.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

²² *Ibid.*

elements are understood as substantial material and at the same time the insubstantial qualities of extension, cohesion, temperative and movement.²³

The remaining four non-physical groups or components of the person are collectively called “name” (nāma) :

Sensations are the sense impressions, the contacts of the sense-organs with objects of the external world. When these have been picked up by the brain and become reflections in the head of the observer, they are called perceptions. They produce in man reactions which the Buddha collectively labels mental phenomena, notions, ideals, longings, moods, etc. Their common characteristic is that they all aim at, press toward materialization. Hence, the expression “mental phenomena” includes intention namely the intention to concert these longings and notions into realities. Lastly consciousness as the fifth group is the accumulative element which collects the mental phenomena and is influenced, even created, by them.²⁴

A further point arises as to why the above five groups result in suffering. Two reasons could be given.

²³ Schuman, H. Halfagang, N. 17, p. 43.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Firstly, their existence is inseparably connected with the phenomenons of birth, illness, longing and antipathy etc., which in themselves are causes of suffering.

Secondly, they are transient. The Buddha says:

“Monks, there is no body which is permanent, fixed, lasting not subject to the law of decay i.e., forever remaining the same. There is, monk, no sensation whatsoever no perception...., no mental phenomena whatsoever..., no consciousness whatsoever which is permanent, fixed lasting, not subject to the law of decay forever remaining the same.”²⁵

This explains the Buddhist viewpoint that nothing is permanent and whosoever imagines that the five aggregates are permanent, must suffer.

3. *The Three Characteristics of Natural Law:*

The impermanence of the five aggregates, the personality, as well as the temporariness of things, forms a central theme of the Natural Law in Buddhism from which the Buddha drew two significant conclusions. The first one is that nothing transient can be true. Happiness and any existence that an individual has, therefore, have to be regarded as forming a part of suffering. The second conclusion derives from the transitoriness of the groups;

²⁵ M. Leon Feer (ed.), *Samyutta Nikāya*, Vol. III, (London: Henry Frowde, Oxford University Press, Warehouse, 1890), p. 147.

that is to say, there is nothing in man which survives death. When all the five aggregates are subject to decay, none of them can be a self, an ego, a soul. The person or personality is non-self. It is merely a temporary phenomenon. Nothing is essential. The Buddha points out the existence of qualities which are irreconcilable with a self:

The body (*Rūpa*), *O Bhikkhus*, is not the self. If the body, *O Bhikkhus*, were the self, the body would not be subject to disease, and we should be able to say: “let my body be such and such a one, let my body not be such and such a one”. But since the body, *O Bhikkhus*, is not the self, therefore the body is subject to disease, and we are not able to say: Let my body be such and such a one, let my body not be such and such a one.²⁶ (the same with regard to the other four aggregates).

The 28th *Sutta* of the *Majjima Nikāyā*²⁷ contains an additional proof of the non-selfness of the body. It analyses the body into the four great elements, viz: earth, water, fire and air, and declares these as elements of nature. From this it follows that the body is but a part of the physical world, subject to change and consequently without selfhood.

²⁶ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 7, p. 100.

²⁷ Robert Chalmers (ed.), N. 20, p. 185

Ven. Ledi Sayadaw, the great Buddhist scholar of Burma, expressed this point of view on human life in his book titled “*The Manuals of Buddhism*” thus:

Human life exists on the basis of the composition of the natural elements. When they are composed, they are supposed to be called body. When they are separated into each form of original element, the characteristic of body will not appear. The supposed beings or creatures will not appear. In fact, persons and creatures are ideas from the forms and the continuation hence, the phenomena are not persons and creatures, and persons and creatures are not the phenomena. If the phenomena are called persons and creatures, this is a false naming of them, and if persons and creatures are called the phenomena, this is false too. Accordingly, the phenomena become not the person or creature, but the reverse of substantial essence. And also, person and creatures become quite evidently void and empty in as much as they are mere ideas derived from the form and continuity of the phenomena.²⁸

It is thus clear that the supposed creatures and persons are merely ideas derived from the form and continuity of phenomena. In fact, they are nothing but empty. They are only a natural process arising from natural elements that change and cease to exist. The natural process reflects Dependent Origination and the Law of Causation. Nothing

²⁸ Ledi Sayadaw. *The Manual of Buddhism* (Bangkok: Mahamakut Press, 1987), p. 51.

is independent. One of the main characteristics of persons and creatures is their desire for happiness of mind and body and an outstanding feature of phenomena is their uniformity with the causes or conditioned things. In other words, the arising and ceasing of phenomena is subject to cause, and never entirely in accordance with the desires of persons in defiance of existing causes.

The salient features of life are, thus, dependent origination, the arising process, and causation. The marks of impermanence and illness are marks of non-self. In other words, because of non-self, impermanence and illness appear. These are the natural laws of human life.

Our present purpose is not to go deeper into the philosophical aspects of Buddhism, but to confine ourselves to its implication, namely that suffering is a natural law because it arises from the natural process. The subject of suffering is the human life composed of body and mind or five aggregates or four elements. The suffering arises because of the two causes. The first is the impermanence of human life. The second is the non-self nature of human life. The Buddha points out the natural process of dependent origination in these three features viz: the impermanence, suffering, and non-self. These phenomena are controlled by natural law. It applies to all things universally. In fact the three marks can themselves be considered as the universal law for all things, both animate and inanimate.

The Concept of Justice, Equality and Natural Law:

Although natural law has not issued and determined penalties and punishments, the law reveals itself as an actual, present and eternal order. The Buddha was the man who came to penetrate and master it. He declared it as a universal norm, as a true standard of views and values, to the world. Everybody, without regard to class, or social status and economic conditions, must be under the natural law equally and justly.

Impermanence, one of the characteristics of the natural law described above, appears not only in human life but also for all conditioned things. The Buddha says: “transient are all conditioned things.”²⁹ Even socio-political phenomena in the world are under a process of change. When the Buddha himself and his disciples established the Buddhist Sangha organization system, they developed many improvements and reforms. The laws used for Buddhist monks were also improved from time to time. Even on the day of his death the Buddha, before, passing away, had said: “When I am gone, Ananda, let the order, if it should so wish, abolish all the lesser and minor precepts”.³⁰

A study of socio-political phenomena through the natural law of impermanence makes us aware that human life and the socio-political process are not much different.

²⁹ F. Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. X, trans., F. Max Muller and V. Fausboll (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980), p. 123.

³⁰ F. Max Muller (ed.), N.8, p. 112

Both human life and the socio-political processes are conditioned things. Because they are conditioned things, they are subject to change. Human life can exist because it continuously changes. In the same way, socio-political conditions sometimes need to be changed for their continued existence.

Law of Impermanence and the Modern Political Activities:

Now the question of two groups of people having different ideas about change arises. The first group are conservatives, who have a disposition to preserve what is established and who oppose innovation and change. They try to preserve the existing institutions and customs. They are satisfied with the traditional socio-political process. The second group is the reformists who see something wrong in the traditional system. They would like to bring change from a bad state to a good state according to their views. They believe that reformation can abolish evils and generate good conditions.

In some parts of the modern world the people of the two groups are fighting for the attainment of what they want. In some countries the bloody fighting is inevitable because they try to resist change. They are fighting because they ignore “transient are all conditioned things.” If they knew and agreed commonly that change is inevitable for the socio-political process, peaceful reformation would take place and there would be no need for bloody revolution or fighting.

Buddha's Action towards his Contemporary Political System:

The Buddha was neither a reformist nor a conservativist, in the Buddha's time there were monarchical and republican forms of government, but the Buddha did not guarantee any system as the best one. He had paid attention to principles of rule as the important factor. He, thus, laid emphasis not on the form of government but how it, in fact, runs. We find that whenever the Buddha visited some state, he made himself as a good friend of the ruler and advised him on the appropriate virtues for the stability of each system. No new political system was given by the Buddha. He believed in improving the systems of government already available. He wanted the rulers to be virtuous. Society in his time was dominated by the Brahmanical tradition. The mode of life in the society was determined by the Brahmanical tenets. The social structure was divided into four *vannas* (*varnas*).

The Buddha did not have any idea to make radical change in the social structure. He emphasized the importance of giving virtue to each individual rather than changing his social hierarchical position by any means. He said that "the gift of the law exceeds all gifts"³¹ By "law" he means the *Dhamma*.

³¹ F. Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. X, trans., F. Max Muller and V. Fausboll (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968), p. 83.

If the ruler and the ruled realize the natural law within themselves and society, then they could lead their lives by reason and prepare themselves to face reality. By so doing, they will attain happiness both at the individual level and at the social level. The last words of the Buddha refer to the realization of natural law and how to arrange it for attaining peace: “Decay is inherent in all component things. Work out your salvation with diligence. This is the last word of the Tathāgatā.”³²

Moral Law:

In Buddhism, moral law can be defined as the regulations for good conduct of the individual who has to practice for himself and for society. It shapes both the internal and external behavior of man. It determines what should be done, what should be avoided and how to behave oneself for happiness and peace. The vital aspect of the moral law can be seen from the central tenet of the Buddha’s doctrine in the following brief but meaningful quotation: “not to commit any sin, to do good, and to purify one’s mind. That is the teaching of (all) the awakened.”³³ This law describes the appropriate conduct of both the body and mind. It concerns both individuals and their social life. Each action of an individual has an impact on society. Good individuals support both self and social interests. They seek the goodness of both of the others and of themselves. The concept of moving from micro to macro unit in terms of the goodness of self and

³² F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 8, p. 114.

³³ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 31, p. 50.

society can be found there. In this context, we may discuss several important features of the moral law. They are:

1. *Action and Result of Action:*

Buddhism believes that the destiny of man does not come from supernatural beings but from his own actions. The principles of action and result of action are based on the law of causation. It is the natural justice. As surely as water, drawn up from earth and ocean by the sun, descends as rain, so surely will a good act yield somewhere and sometime its happy results to the doer. On the contrary, the bad action will give the opposite results. The whole idea has been beautifully summed up in one of the stanzas or the *Samyutta-Nikaya* which has been enumerated as under: “According to the seed that sown, so is the fruit ye reap these from. Doer of good will gather good. Doer of evil, evil reaps.”³⁴

This verse indicates that Buddhism believes in natural law or justice whereby acts bring their own reward or punishment. They are not suspended by God. Good action or bad action belongs to the doer. No one can help or take away the fruits of one’s action either good or bad. In Buddhism the Buddha does not proclaim himself as a savior who will take upon himself the sins of those who follow him. He says that everyone must bear the burden of his own sins that not even a God can do for man what self-help in the form of self-conquest and self-

³⁴ Quoted from Mrs. Rhys Davids, *Buddhism: A Study of Buddhist Norm* (London: Thornton Battiwarth, 1928), p. 123.

emancipation can achieve. The Buddha, thus, regards man as the creator of his own dignity based on his action. He says:

By oneself the evil is done, by oneself one suffers;
by oneself evil is left undone, by oneself one is
purified. Purity and impurity belong to oneself,
no one can purify another.³⁵

Again:

You yourself must make an effort. The
Tathāgatas (Buddha) are only preachers. The
thoughtful who enter the way are freed from the
bondage of *Māra* (Evil).³⁶

These moral laws, in brief, pave the way of self-sufficiency, self-confidence, self-culture and self-emancipation which contribute to the development of individual quality.

2. Encouragement of Natural Right:

“Natural right”, to quote David L. Sills, is the right which everybody possesses naturally. There are many kinds of natural rights, such as the right of self-preservation, and right of property. The doctrine of natural rights teaches primarily that all obligations are derived

³⁵ F. Max Muller, N. 31, p. 46.

³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 67.

from the right which every man has to preserve his own life.³⁷

In Buddhism the doctrine of natural right can be seen from both positive and negative aspects. In the negative aspect, it is the doctrine of non-violence. To quote a verse from *Dhammapada*:

Let him not kill, nor cause to be killed any living being, nor let him approve of others killing, after having refrained from hurting all creatures, both those that are strong and those that tremble in the world.³⁸

The above statement reveals that everybody has a duty to preserve himself and others from danger to life. To refrain from killing and hurting all beings is to support directly the fundamental right of living beings to live safely. Killing animals for the purpose of food and sacrifice should also be abstained from. The right of both man and animal to exist is considered to be equal. The Buddha also explains the principle of non-violence in the positive way by telling everyone to extend compassion to all beings thus: “Let everyone cultivate a boundless friendly mind towards all beings.”³⁹

To fear the punishment and to love one’s own life and that of all beings is the universal law. The right of self-

³⁷ David L. Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopaedia of Social Science* (U.S.A.: MacMillan & the Free Press, 1968), pp. 84-86.

³⁸ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 31, p. 65.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

preservation is a basic foundation of mutual peace and the happiness of all beings.

The second natural right which can be derived from the Buddha's teaching is the right of property. Having recognized the sacredness of property of human beings, the Buddha said:

Let the man (*sāvaka*) abstain from (taking) anything in any place that has not been given (to him), knowing (it to belong to another), let him not cause any one to take, nor approve of those that take, let him avoid all (sort of) theft.⁴⁰

Property is a basic condition of the existence of life. It covers both animate and inanimate property which one may possess. Theft can be done directly and indirectly. The direct stealing is clear. There is no need to discuss. But the indirect stealing is a vital aspect to be considered. To oppress labourers by paying little money is an example of indirect stealing. In reality, the product should belong to the producer. The accumulation of capital through the process of indirect theft in the hands of a few can have no justification. Capital is not, as some economists believe, the result of individual saving, but it is surplus seized from producers, many of whom are reduced to a condition of slavery, lacking both comfort and food. How does this differ from theft? It is an indirect kind of theft.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 65

To seize others' property directly or indirectly creates social injustice. The teaching of the Buddha which emphasizes avoidance from stealing, if followed, leads to ensurance of the right to property. Everybody will enjoy his own property gained from his own labour. The result of making more by everyone becomes the basis of social welfare. There is no need for the struggle for the betterment of life because everything made by oneself belongs to oneself in accordance with the mode of production. Exchange will be based on the value of production. Nobody gains the surplus value which leads to the concentration of wealth in a few hands, leading to social injustice.

This moral law, according to Buddhism should be a process applied by the manufacturer. The master will thereby encourage quality production. The wage which the master gives to the labourer will be based on the value and quality of work. In this way the workshops or industries become the center of social welfare which makes the gap between the poor and the rich a balanced one.

3. Universal Love or Compassion:

The Buddha instructed human beings to preserve their own lives and others' by abstaining from killing. A peaceful mind and good will towards all beings are praised, he always said:

Let him cultivate good will towards all the world, a boundless (friendly) mind, above and below and across, unobstructed, without hatred, without enmity. Standing, walking, or sitting or lying, as long as he be awake, let him devotee himself to this mind. This (way of) living, they say, is the best in this world.⁴¹

To practice compassionate love is one way of training the mind. Moral law has shown the way leading to good conduct of body and mind: To cultivate good will towards all beings should be done without bad intent. The Buddha said:

Let no one deceive another, let him not despise (another) in any place, let him not out of anger or resentment wish harm to another.⁴²

If this feeling arises in somebody, he can no longer hurt another being because his mind is full of compassionate love. The scope of the extension of love cannot be measured. One should think of another as one's close friend. This moral activity leads us to the concept of fraternity.

The Buddha pointed out that the difference among men in physical terms is nominal only. At the same time, he dwelled upon the similarity of men:

⁴¹ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 31, p. 25.

⁴² *Ibid.*

The marks that constitute species are not abundant. Not as regards their hair, head, ears, eyes, mouth, nose, lips or brows, nor as regards their neck, shoulders, belly, back, hip, breast, female organ, sexual intercourse, nor as regards their hands, feet, palms, nails, calves, thighs, colour or voice are there marks that constitute species as in other species.⁴³

The Buddha, thus, referred to the similarity of man with reference to physical factors. Human beings should have mutual relationships on the basis of the similarity of their physical factors. These also lead to the doctrine of peaceful co-existence.

The Buddha urged men to cultivate good will to each other without the limitation of time and place. While in the modern world, human beings have more communication, the misunderstanding among them is also increasing and the desire for power is increasing too. The great power distresses the small. In this situation the Buddha's universal love may be the only path to the world peace. Let everybody cultivate a peaceful mind and good will without the limitation of place and time. We human beings will thus attain mutual peace and happiness.

4. *Social communication:*

Social communication by speech has been recognized as an important affair. Although the advantage of

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

communication of the modern world is being expanded in many aspects, the communication of thought from one to another must still be done through speech. Many social and political activities or various kinds of conferences proceed through speech. In daily life, nobody can live without speech. In the long history of mankind, speech caused the origins of both war and peace.

The Buddha, it seems, was not only a good communicator but was well aware of the importance of good communication for attaining desired goals. The Buddha delivered discourses about the speech of individuals in *Subhāsitasuttanta* as follows:

O Bhikkhus, the speech that is provided with four requisites is well-spoken, not ill-spoken, both faultless and blameless to the wise

Which four?

O Bhikkhus, the *Bhikkhu* speaks well-spoken (language), not ill-spoken; he speaks what is right (*Dhamma*), not what is unrighteous (*Adhamma*); he speaks what is pleasing, not what is unpleasing, he speaks what is true, not what is false.

O Bhikkhus, the speech that is provided with these four requisites, is well-spoken, not ill-spoken, both faultless and blameless to the wise.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

The Buddha also mentioned these four principles of speech thus:

Well spoken language the just call the principal (thing); let one speak what is right (*Dhamma*), not what is unrighteous (*Adhamma*), that is the second; let one speak what is pleasing, not what is unpleasing, that is the third, let one speak what is true, not what is false, that is the fourth.⁴⁵

The Venerable Vangisa, standing before the Buddha, praised him with appropriate stanza:

Let one say such words by which he does not pain himself, nor hurt others; such words are truly well-spoken. Let one speak pleasing words which are received joyfully (by all), and which (saying) he, without committing sins, speaks what is pleasing to others. True verily is immortal speech, this is a true saying; in what is true, in what is good, and in what is right, the just stand firm, so they say. The words which the Buddha speaks, which are sure to bring about extinction and put an end to pain, such (words) are truly the best.⁴⁶

The *Suttanta* indicates that one should give others righteous words which promote virtue and give pleasure. It supports polite words which represent the truth. Well-

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

spoken language can lead to the annihilation of suffering. In this *Suttana* the Venerable Vangisa claimed that the Buddha's words were sure to bring about the extinction of suffering. When the Buddha spoke to people, it was to benefit them and bring happiness to the hearers. Most of the Buddha's doctrines are in the form of conversation in well-spoken language.

The modern world is the age of speech. In politics, both internal and external, speech has always played an important role. Leadership has always been decided by consideration of speech. One can change the intention and attitude of people by speech. It can be used to control the people for some purpose. In international politics great powers do not try to stop conflict by using weapons but by conferences and dialogues. This idea of resolving conflict through speech and discussion has led to the establishment of the United Nations which is at the center of different ideas of different statesmen from different parts of the world.

The well-spoken language which is delivered by the Buddha, if followed by those who have political power, will lead the world to peace and happiness. The important principle which the international community should follow is the idea that "well spoken speech brings about the extinction of pain". It should be a guiding spirit in international relations. It is a fact that human beings around the world are facing various kinds of pain from war and lack of food. The way to help them is to increase the food supply more than the weapon supply. It is a pity

that leaders try to solve the human problem by weapons. This idea is sure to bring suffering to the human race. Instead, let the great powers destroy the weapons and hold conferences for increasing food for those who need it. This idea will establish world welfare. In all this, speech with good intent, as Buddha has repeatedly emphasized, would be of immense help.

5. *Social contact:*

Social contact means “the reciprocal orientation of person or groups towards each other that is necessary for the initiation of social interaction and its continuance. On the other hand social contact is the contact between person and groups and that is a pre-requisite for initiation of social interaction.”⁴⁷

Social interaction, thus, is the reciprocal influencing of the acts of persons and groups usually mediated through communication. It is based upon communication. The individual interacts with others through the medium of communication.⁴⁸

The Buddha started with the qualities of the person by putting emphasis on self-confidence, self-control and self-culture. The individual is the actor in all social interactions. He is like the mechanism of the car or its engine. The qualities of each individual will create the quality of any society. The Buddha described the qualities

⁴⁷ Cold, J. and Kol W.L. (ed.), *A Dictionary of Social Science* (U.S.A.: The Free Press 1967), p. 650.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 660.

of the honourable man, and virtues contributing to the social contact and social interaction.

In this discourse to Sigala the Buddha described those with whom man should have good relations for seeking direction. He indicates how men should influence others by making them practice right actions. In the discussion, the Buddha described sets of pairs like wife and husband, teachers and pupils, parents and children etc., who should contact each other and behave in a moral way. It would automatically lead to a better social system.

They, according to Buddha, constitute the six quarters: parents are the east quarter, teachers are the south quarter, wife and children are the west quarter, friend and companions are the north quarter, spiritual leader and people are at the high level and servants and dependents are below.⁴⁹

Parents and Children:

The Buddha started with parents and sons. In five ways a son should serve his parents, who are the east quarter. The son should support them who have supported him, he should perform their duties, he should guard their possessions, he should make himself worthy to be their heir and when they have gone, and he should pay honour to their memory.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ T.W. Rhys Davids (ed.), *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, Vol. IV, trans., T.W. and C.A.F. Rhys Davids (London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1957), p. 180.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Similarly, in five ways the parents should show their affection for their sons. They should keep him away from vice, they should train him in virtues, they should provide him with good education, they should unite him with a suitable wife and in due time, they should make over to him the family heritage.⁵¹

As described above, this is the first fundamental relation which everybody must have in the family. The family is the fundamental unit of the society. It can be considered as the micro unit which plays an important role in developing the individual to adjust himself to society. Quite aware of the importance of family life, the Buddha laid down a set of virtues to be followed by each family member.

The Buddha emphasized the good actions which the son and daughter should perform for the pleasure and satisfaction of their parents. In the same way, the Buddha described a set of virtues to be followed by good parents as leaders of the family. The parents' duties, in short, are to give instructions of virtues and knowledge to their offspring.

They should be first teachers, shaping the fundamental behavior of their children. Their third duty is to give knowledge to their children. The parents send them to educational institutions. Meanwhile, the parents should encourage and motivate desires for good actions in them.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

The last duty is to arrange for a suitable wife and husband, then give them the family heritage.

Teachers and Pupils:

The second pair of persons is pupils and teachers. In five ways the pupils should honour their teachers by rising in their presence, by serving them, by obeying them, by fulfilling their wants, and by attentively receiving their instructions.⁵²

And in five ways the teachers can show their affection for their pupils. They train them to hold knowledge, they instruct them in science and art, they thoroughly instruct them in the lore of every art, they speak well of them among friends and companions and they protect them from every danger.⁵³

The students' life should be considered as the second step of getting experience from society. The first experience, man receives from home, and the second from educational institutions. In educational institutions the Buddha laid down the virtues contributing to a good relationship between teachers and pupils. From the above mentioned duties we find that the relationship between teachers and students is based on the virtues more than the economic condition. The duties of students encourage them to be of good behavior and to get more knowledge.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 181.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

These duties make the personalities of students sensitive and polite, which are the desired purpose of education. Having considered the teachers' duties, it has also been shown how teachers must be virtuous and not business-like. The personality of teachers must be delightful and sensitive. The teachers should make their students pay attention to art and science. Their duty is not only imparting knowledge to the pupils but also to protect them from any danger. The relation between teachers and pupils is very deep. It does not stop when pupils have finished their education but it continues forever. This relationship makes teachers worthy. The behavior of students will thus be guided by self-control, self-confidence and self-culture.

Husbands and Wives:

When a son has finished his education, it is the time for the establishment of a family for him. It forms one of the important aspects of the parents' duties. They must seek a suitable wife and husband for their son or daughter. This period of life is supposed to be the second step of life after education. The family life is very difficult and full of problems which should be considered and solved for mutual happiness and advantage. The activities in the family do not end in marriage but the marriage begins a new life. They have a mutual hope that they will have sons or daughters who make them happy. The Buddha laid down the mode of mutual relation and action which husbands and wives should have to act towards each other.

In five ways should a husband be loving to his wife: By treating her with respect, by treating her with kindness, by being faithful to her, by causing her to be honoured by others, and by giving her suitable ornaments.⁵⁴

And in five ways a wife shows her affection for her husband. She is hospitable to his kinsmen and friends, she keeps her household right, she is a chaste wife, a thrifty housekeeper, and skillful and delightful in all her duties.⁵⁵

The respect and honour which both husband and wife should exhibit for each other are the fundamental virtues. From the duties mentioned above, there is no system of a leader and a subordinate between husband and wife because the duties have been distributed clearly. Both are highly responsible to the duties that belong to each. They can enjoy life on the basis of mutual understanding and co-operation. Buddha, thus, lays proper emphasis on this aspect for a good family system.

Masters and Slaves:

In spite of the fact that the Buddha was a social reformer, he did not say in clear terms that slavery should be abolished. He did not take up the class struggle between the master and the slave. He, on the other hand, laid due emphasis on having a good relationship between the masters and the slaves through a modicum of a set of

⁵⁴ T.W. Rhys Davids (ed.), N. 49, p. 182

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

virtues for both of them. In five ways the master should provide for the welfare of his servants and dependents: By distribution of work to them according to their abilities, by supplying them with food and wages, by tending them in sickness, by sharing with them delicious food and by granting them occasional relaxation.⁵⁶

This reflects the human approach of the Buddha towards slaves. In five ways do they in return testify their affection for their masters. They rise before him, and retire to rest after him, they should content with what is given to them, they do their work thoroughly, and they speak well of their masters.⁵⁷

Each pair has five ways to act to each other for increasing good relationships between them. Having considered the masters' duties, we find that two interesting points arise i.e. the distribution of duties to the servants in accordance with their abilities and the distribution of benefits. To appoint servants to the work for which they have a skill and pay the wages in accordance with the quality and value of the work are justifiable and desirable for the workers. From the Buddha's idea the treatment which the master should show to his servants is based on kindness and not on oppression.

Social welfare is seen in the idea of relaxation to be given when the servants are ill. One may find the origin of

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

the modern concept of giving rest and leisure to workers in the above idea of the Buddha. This condition increases morality among the servants and at the same time production will be also increased. The virtues of honour and diligence are ones which every servant should follow. The servants should work hard with their skill and satisfaction with the wages which the master considers suitable for their work. This mode of action by which the servants serve their master will lead to close relationship and mutual co-operation between servants and masters.

Friends and Companions:

The Buddha believed in the necessity of co-existence of human beings as in the western idea that human beings are social animals.⁵⁸ Friends play an important role in success and failure in life. This depends upon the behavior of each friend. In order to have a friend who brings happiness the Buddha described the virtues that contribute to friendship. In five ways should the householder or honourable man minister to his friends and companions: By liberality, by courtesy, by kind words, by doing to them as he would be done by, and by sharing with them his prosperity.⁵⁹

And in five ways do they in their turn show their attachment for their friends. They watch over him when he is off guard, they watch over his property when he is

⁵⁸ Charles Howard McIlwain, *The Growth of Political Thought in the West* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1932), p.5.

⁵⁹ T.W. Rhys Davids (ed.), N. 49, p. 182.

careless, they offer him a refuge in danger, they forsake him not in misfortune and they show kindness to his family.⁶⁰

The principles of contact among friends are based on mutual understanding and mutual interest. Friends play important roles for their friends' success. This principle shows that nobody can live without friends but friends lead to different results. In political socialization friends are supposed to be called a "peer group" and play an important role in the political and social processes.

Disciples and Spiritual Masters:

The last person whom the honourable man has to meet and receive is the spiritual master. Although there are many kinds of spiritual masters, they are different in each area. Most of them are religious men. They possess certain beliefs which are their way of life. The honourable man should not refuse these kinds of people but should encourage them in the best possible way he can. In five ways honourable men should minister to spiritual masters: By friendly acts, by friendly words, by friendly thoughts, by giving them a ready welcome, and by supplying their temporal wants.⁶¹

And in six ways do masters show their affection in return. They restrain him from vice, they exhort mankind to virtue, they behave kindly towards others, they instruct

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ T.W. Rhys Davids (ed.), N. 49, p. 183.

them in religious truth, clear up doubts, and point the way to heaven.⁶²

Honourable men should receive and support spiritual masters. The spiritual master should offer his host voluntarily virtuous instruction and be a moral symbol for the people. They cannot interfere in family affairs but they can advise the way to heaven, the way towards a good life for happiness and peace in each family. They can provide for the peoples' spiritual welfare by imparting the virtues to the people in every place where they arrive. They must not hope for social status or political power, but they must devotee themselves for the happiness and peace of the people.

In the principle of social contact, we can find that the Buddha did not refer to the change of the social structure or refer to the social ruler but he referred to the question of the individual. The desirable characteristics of the individual are self-confidence, self-control, self-culture and self-knowledge. Virtue in individual development directly influences society. The Buddha said to the honourable men to avoid polluting actions to other people. This means that when one wants to increase self-purity, one must not create trouble to another.

A good action by one person directly influences others and the scope of happiness and peace will increase from personal action to social action. The Buddha taught dependent origination. The actions of man, according to

⁶² *Ibid.*

the Buddha, will not isolate him from other fellows. When one has happiness by following the virtues, another too would be influenced by his action. The social contact, according to the Buddha, can be understood by social peace and happiness in its relation to the individual. The numbers of virtuous individuals increase in the society in proportion to the increase of its peace and happiness.

The Buddha spoke of the advantage of those who follow the virtues in the following verses:

Mother and father are the Eastern views,
And teachers are the quarters of the South,
And wife and children are the Western view,
And friends and kin the quarter to the North,
Servants and working folk the nadir are,
And overhead the Brahmin and recluse.
These quarters should be worshipped by the man
Who fitly ranks as houseman in his clan.
He that is wise, expert in virtue's ways,
Gentle and in this worship eloquent,
Humble and docile, he may honour win.
Active in rising, foe to laziness.
Unshaken in adversities, his life
Flawless, sagacious, he may honour win.
If he have winning ways, and maketh friends,
Makes welcome with kind words and generous heart,
And can he give sage counsels and advice,
And guide his fellows, he may honour win.
The giving hand, the kindly speech, the life
Of service, impartiality to one

As to another, as the case demands;-
These be the things that make the world go round
As linchpin serves the rolling of the car.
And if these things be not, no mother reaps
The honour and respect her child should pay,
Nor doth the father win them through the child.
And since the wise rightly appraise these things.
They win to eminence and earn men's praise.⁶³

The Buddha's ideas on social contact were derived from the six quarters mentioned above, based on compassionate love. One of the western scholars in the team for translating *Sigalovada Suttanta* noticed a beautiful idea that:

In the attitude of parent to child love is at bottom a tender compassion, a vibrant care to protect. So wife love is largely motherly. Parent, wife, friend, master, teacher and religious man of all ranks are as little gods, so great is the responsibility attaching to these six positions, so fine is the opportunity for exercising compassion, tender care, and protection. In the six reciprocal aspects there is an element of childhood. The child under loving compassionate protection feels safe and confident, as does the believing worshipper.⁶⁴

On the other hand the whole duty of the honourable man mentioned might well have included some corporate

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 183-184.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p. 172.

ideals of citizenship, because such duty supports both the domestic and social duty. In domestic and social action, the concept of goodwill and love between man and man is set forth as the main tenet.

The discussion of the notion of *Dhamma* translated as a law leads us to conclude that the natural law is appropriate for man to realize his own life as it really is for annihilation of the suffering which originated from the grasping of five aggregates. The moral law is the law which is appropriate for a man to train himself for peace and happiness and contact with another on the basis of good conduct and good will. The virtuous man who follows the laws is one who harms nobody.

Such a man is one who works for his own good as well as that of others. This is not a man who can be called self-centered, who pursues a course of conduct that leads to his own benefit ignoring the welfare and happiness of those associated with him in social life. Nor it is the portrayal of a person who is altruistic in the extreme, who ignores his own welfare for the sake of those in society.

In short, the best individual, according to Buddhism, is one who works for his own welfare as well as that of others. One truth has been generally recognized that there is no ultimate or absolute criterion by which we can decide what welfare or well-being is, for it depends upon various circumstances and conditions. The notion of *Dhamma* as explained above represents the foundation

upon which the Buddha's socio-political ideas were formulated.

II

THE SOCIO-POLITICAL CONDITIONS IN THE BUDDHA'S TIME

After getting on overview of the general socio-political ideas of the Buddha it is necessary to dwell upon the socio-political conditions obtaining during his time in order to fully understand and appreciate his ideas in the proper context. An attempt has been made in the following pages to discuss social stratification and social status, as the main constituents of social life. The political division, the interplay of political force as represented in the various kingdoms and their activities have also been dealt with.

Social Stratification:

The Indian concept of social stratification is peculiar. It is based on what is called *vanna* (*varna*). Before and during the Buddha's time, the people were classified according to *vanna*. In the Vedic period, the stratification was based on the religious faith. The *Rgveda*, the earliest source of the Brahmnical theory, described the origin of human beings: "the *Brahman* was his (*purusha*'s) mouth; the *Rājahya* was made arms; the being (called) *Vaisya*, he was his thighs; the *Sudra sprang* from his feet".⁶⁵ (*Purusa Sukta, Rgveda*, x, 12, p. 618).

⁶⁵ N.K. Dutt, *Origin and Growth of Caste in India*, Vol. I (Calcutta: Shri Ramshankar Ghosh, 1986), p. 24

Some modern scholars have interpreted this hymn as the original foundation of the four *vannas*.⁶⁶ The idea of such social stratification grew more rigid and became deeply embedded in the Indian mind during the Vedic period and down to the Buddha's time. This duration was of about 1,400 years, and nothing could uproot it.⁶⁷

The Buddha's words collected in the Buddhist Scriptures reflect the division of society into four *vannas*. *Cullavagga* in *Vinaya Pitaka* mentions thus:

Just, O monks, as the great rivers, that is to say, the *Ganga*, the *Yamunā*, the *Aciravati*, the *Sarabhu*, and the *Mahi*, when they have fallen into the great ocean, renounce their names and lineages and are then forth reckoned as the great ocean. Just so, O monks, do these four *Vannas*, the *Kattiyas*, (*kshatriyas*) the *Brahmanas* (*Brahmans*), the *Vessa* (*vaisya*) and the *Suddas* (*Sudras*), when they have gone forth from the world under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the *Tathāgata*, renounce their name and lineage and enter into the member of *Samanas* (monks) the son of *Sakya*.⁶⁸

The statement mentioned above indicates that the existence of the four *Vannas* was the contemporary social phenomenon of the Buddha's time but the Buddhist Order

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Max Muller (ed.), *Secred Books of the East*, Vol. XX, trans., T.W. Rhys Davids and H. Oldenberg (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1985). p. 304.

organization became a new classless society with a new mode of life based on rules of equality.

Because of the *Vanna* becoming the keystone of study of ancient Indian social stratification, modern scholars have translated, interpreted, and explained it in different meanings. All of them are based their interpretation on traditional customs, and cultural and historical factors. This way of studying informs us about the social stratification in the Buddha's time in many ways.

Vanna: Modern Interpretations:

Encyclopaedia of Social Science translates the word “*Vanna*” as “caste” and defines its meaning as:

An endogenous and hereditary subdivision of ethnic unit occupying a position of superior or inferior rank or social esteem in comparison with other such subdivisions. Castes are special form of social classes, which in tendency at least are present in every society. They have emerged into social consciousness to the point that custom and law attempt their rigid and permanent separation from one another.⁶⁹

The statement mentioned above gives us the information that the mode of marriage within each group of the people living together is a very important factor of preservation

⁶⁹ Edwind R.A. Seligman (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Social Science*, Vol.III (New York: MacMillan Company, 1963), p. 254.

of blood purity. It leads to what is called class-consciousness. Having transferred from one generation to the next generation. The mode of life became the tradition, custom, culture and law. These factors make a caste system more rigid, subdivisions of communal groups occupy the positions of superior and inferior social status due to the strictness of preservation of blood purity. According to the definition mentioned above, castes are social classes.

Nripendra Kumar Dutt recognized the fourfold sources of human issue enumerated in the *Rgveda* as the *Magna Carta* of the caste system.⁷⁰ According to him, the word 'Vanna' was translated and interpreted as caste and class.⁷¹ He employed both concepts to explain social stratification. One gets idea that "everybody belongs to one of the four castes. Nobody can be born out of these castes".⁷²

T.W. Rhys Davids translated the word 'vanna' as social class⁷³ and colour.⁷⁴ He gave an explanation of the word 'vanna' on the basis of a social distinction in which the *Aryans* were proud of their lighter colour. *Aryan* society was divided into four social classes, called 'vanna' (colour). The first were the *Khattiyas*, the nobles, who claimed to descend from the leaders of the *Aryan* races. They were very unique as to purity of their descent

⁷⁰ N.K. Dutt, *Origin and Growth of Caste in India*, p. 24.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ T.W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984), p. 55.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

through seven generations both on the mother's side and father's side. They are described as fair in colour. The second were *Brahmans*, they claimed descent from the sacrificing priests, and they were equal with the nobles, distinguished by high birth and clear complexion. The third were *Vessas*. They were agriculturalists. Their profession was breeding the cattle, farming and doing business. The last of all were the *Suddas*. They included the bulk of the people of non-Aryan descent who worked for hire. They were engaged in handicrafts or service. They were dark in colour.⁷⁵

Classification reflected the facts of life. But there were insensible gradations within the borders of each of the four colours. The borders themselves were both variable and undefined. At the same time, T.W. Rhys Davids refused to translate the word '*vanna*' as caste because of the opinion that "it is no more accurate to speak of caste at the Buddha's time in India than it would be to speak of it as an established institution at the same time in Italy and Greece."⁷⁶ So the word '*vanna*' according to him is not caste but colour. It indicates that colour of skin of each communal groups had played an important role in social stratification.

Bhikkhu U. Dhammaratana translated and interpreted the word '*vanna*' as social class and caste.⁷⁷ It was also the sub-unit existing within a social class. According to

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁷⁷ Bhikkhu U. Dhammaratana, *Buddha and Caste* (Lucknow: Kaytree Art Press, 1969), pp. 2-3.

him, the class system was established on the basis of different professions. The members of the same occupations were divided into different classes, such as farmers, artisans, rulers, priests, and so on according to their abilities. They organized themselves in each profession in order to promote and protect their interests. In the course of time this led to what is called class exclusiveness.⁷⁸ With the growth of class rigidity, class restrictions also came to be observed. Those restrictions were different according to the different groups of people living together. The restriction of each group led to the evolution of the origin of what is called caste,⁷⁹ which is nothing but a class system instituted on a permanent basis.

His explanation and definition of the word '*vanna*' informs us that the '*vanna*' were derived from the association people from the same professions. The association of the people in each occupation for promotion and protection of their interest led to the rigidity of class-consciousness. The condition of each vocation is different. It is necessary to make regulations for members of each association to follow in the same direction. The restriction made with the consent of the members makes the class-consciousness very strong. It afterwards becomes what is call caste.

Richard Fick explained the social organization in northern-east India in the Buddha's time by a '*vanna*' approach in which the word '*vanna*' was translated and

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

interpreted as both caste and class.⁸⁰ His explanation was well balanced.

A.L. Basham has translated and interpreted the word 'vanna' as class.⁸¹ The caste was interpreted as the subdivision of class.⁸² From his long research he found that through a process of intermarriage and subdivision the 3,000 or more castes of modern India evolved from the four primitive classes.⁸³ He also found the class change and caste stability that "castes rise and fall in the social scale, and old castes die out and new ones are formed, but the four great classes are stable."⁸⁴ In fact the primitive classes have never been neither more nor less than four, and for over 2,000 years they have not changed.⁸⁵

The translations and interpretations of the word 'vanna' enumerated above imply three possible meanings: colour, class, and caste. Any study of the social stratification in the Buddha's time requires these meanings to understand the social phenomena.

Social stratification in Pali Texts:

The social grades described in the Pali Texts are not the original sources proclaimed by the Buddha in his

⁸⁰ Richard Fick, *The Social Organization In Northeast India in Buddha's Time*, trans., Shishirkumar Maitra (Delhi: Indological Book House, 1972), pp. 4-5.

⁸¹ A.L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1987), p.149.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

teaching. But it was a social phenomenon that existed before the Buddha's appearance. Besides, the division of people into four groups namely, *Khattiyas*, *Brahmans*, *Vessa* and *Sudda* prevailed in Pali Texts of Brahmanical theory. Some Sutta mentions two or six classes of people which differ from the general theory of social stratification. *Assālayana* who went to visit him thus:

Have you ever heard that in the *Yona* and *Kamboja* countries, and in other adjacent countries, there only two classes namely masters and slaves and that a master can become slave and vice versa *Assalayan*? Yes, I have heard so, replied Assalayana.⁸⁶

The Buddha's words tell us that in some countries besides northeast India, there were two classes, i.e., the masters and slaves. Each could move from one position to another, social status was not permanent.

Sīlvīmamsa Jātaka refers to the six classes of the people in these words:

A *Khattiya* who has aimed at vice and a *vessa* who acts viciously, both come to grief after they have passed away from the world, *Khattiya*, *Brahmana*, *Vassa*, *Sudda*, *Candāla* and *Pukkusa*

⁸⁶ Lord Chalmers (ed.), *Dialogues of Buddha*, trans., Lord Chalmers (London: Oxford University Press, 1927). p. 85.

will be all equal in the world of the Gods, if they have acted virtuously here.⁸⁷

It seems that the social classes in India numbered not only four but also six. Besides these two, four and six main classes, there were many subdivisions of classes. They were probably based on occupation. They cannot be called social class but they can be considered as sub-cultures within the classes. Their names of race or tribe are known along with their occupations such as potter, fisherman etc. There were many races and tribes of people out of the main list of social classes.

Basic factors of Social Stratification:

There are various explanations regarding the causes of the emergence of social grade. These factors include pride of birth and colours, occupations, the transference of blood or heredity. The restrictions regulated for observation within each group are the keystones of approach to the social grades before or in the Buddha's time.

Individual and Social Relationship:

T.W. Rhys Davids commented that among primitive peoples all over the world restrictions as to the right of intermarriage and as to the right of eating together exist. The custom of endogamy and exogamy, i.e., of choosing a

⁸⁷ Richard Fick, N. 16, p. 29.

husband or wife outside a limited circle of relationship and within a wide circle, is also universal.⁸⁸

The customs mentioned above are seen in several places in the *Buddhist Scriptures*. The *Ambattha Sutta* describes the custom of intermarriage as follows:

Long ago, *Ambattha*, king *Okkāka*, wanting to divert the succession in favour of the son of his favourite queen, banished his elder children, *Okkāmukkha*, *Karanda*, *Hatthinikaa*, and *Sinipura* from the land; they took up their dwelling on the slopes of the Himalaya, on the borders of a lake where a mighty oak tree grew. And for fear of injuring the purity of their line, intermarriage was arranged with their sisters.⁸⁹

This custom remained until the Buddha's appearance. The pride of their race and the strict restriction intermarriage and eating together with those of similar birth status was esteemed as very high among the *Sakyas*. It is stated that once the king *Pasendi*, having much faith in the Buddha, wanted to have a close relationship with the Buddha and monks. He thought of bringing to his house the daughter of some kinsman of the Buddha. Accordingly he sent a message to the *Sayas*.

⁸⁸ T.W. Rhys Davids, N. 9, p. 52.

⁸⁹ Lord Chalmers (ed.), N. 21, pp. 114-115.

As soon as the message of king *Kosala* was carried to *Kapilavatthu*, the important matter discussed by the *Sakyas* in the assembly was the pride of birth. They considered the king *Kosala*, although a *Khattiya*, as unequal with them. They decided to give one *Mahanama*'s daughter being born from a slave-woman to the *Pasendi Kosala* king.⁹⁰ This story suggests the ideas of endogamy and exogamy. The idea of the right of eating together was widely prevalent at that time. The example of this idea can be found from the story mentioned above. The *Pasendi Kosala* king tried to make the messengers test the birth by seeing whether *Mahanama* and his daughter ate together. But the secret plan of the *Sakyas* to show such an action could not be known by him at all.⁹¹

This indicates that the right to eat together was prevalent only among those who were equal, otherwise, it was impossible. It is one of the measures used to decide social classification. Individual and social relationship, if considered in accordance with this principle, is based on the regulation created within each tribe or race. External relations with other groups or other countries are based on another factor but are not so high in degree. Even so, within one group or race it is inevitable to have discrimination of birth among the people within each sub-unit. Every group was made of both individual and social relations in a unique way.

⁹⁰ See Charles Rockwell Lanman (ed.), *Buddhist Legend*, Vol. XXIX, trans. Eugene Watson Burlingame (London: The Pali Texts Society, 1979), pp. 36-77.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Although marriage and eating together with equal people in the social class were strictly practiced, a man of high class having sexual intercourse with a woman of low class was not prohibited. The sexual intercourse between Mahanama, of kingly class, and a slave woman is one example.⁹²

Occupational Base:

In Buddhist Scriptures, the Buddha recognized the similarity and equality of men in physical characteristics and the difference among men was considered from the point of view of occupation, *Vāsetta Suttan* gives the details of the occupational characteristics of social stratification as follows:

By work one is a husbandman,
By work one is an artisan,
By work one is a merchant,
By work one is a servant,
By work one is a thief,
By work one is a soldier,
By work one is a scarifier,
By work one is a king.⁹³

This evidently indicates that according to the Buddha, work is the basis of social stratification. The difference in human beings is due to diverse works. The Buddha's view

⁹² See *Ibid.*

⁹³ F. Max Muller (ed.), *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. X, trans., F. Max Muller and V. Fausboll (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968), p. 116.

of social stratification, it can be surmised, is based on the principle of diversity within similarity. The importance of occupational skill in various branches is equal for all. Each has responsibility to the work carried on in his field. The Buddha recognized the difference among individuals in intelligence and skill of performance of duties. At the same time the similarity and equality in humanity were not neglected.

Social Status:

Brahmana or Priestly Class:

In terms of social status the Brahmins or the priestly class occupied the top position. The priestly class always claimed its superiority over the other classes. A claim is made in the *Assālayana Sutta*, one section of Buddhist Scriptures, that “only Brahmins form the superior class, all the other classes being inferior”.⁹⁴ The Sutta states “only the Brahmins form the white class. All other classes being black fellows, purity resides in Brahmins alone, not in non-Brahmin”.⁹⁵ This *Sutta* reflects the influence of the *Rgveda* on ancient Indian social status that “only Brahmin is born from the God’s mouth”.⁹⁶ This claim of the Brahmins is derived from the traditional religious source⁹⁷ and historical background. In the Vedic period the *Aryan* people who were race-conscious spoke of and treated other races of people who were of dark skin as inferior

⁹⁴ Lord Chalmers (ed.), N. 21, p. 84.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ N.K. Dutt, N. 1, p. 24.

races. By the Buddha's time the race-consciousness might have given place to what is called caste.⁹⁸ Brahmins in particular and the high castes in general probably descended from the Aryan groups which claimed superiority over those with dark complexion by the characteristic of their light skin colour.⁹⁹

It is, thus, noted that three factors are responsible for their superiority over the other people. The first is the purity of blood. They were sure that from at least seven generations, if the blood was not changed into the other caste, it had maintained its purity. The second is the *Vanna* or colour. It may be compared with the situation prevailing in modern America, in spite of the fact that the people in such a great country regard themselves educated and civilized; the concept of race and colour discrimination is still recognized. The third is the traditional disposition, that is to say the Brahmins refer to themselves as the only legitimate sons of Brahman. Although, according to *Rgveda*, it is said that everybody is supposed to be the creation of God.

Khattiya (Kshatriya) or Warrior Class:

The *Khattiya* or kingly class was the ruling class with political power.¹⁰⁰ The *Khattiyas* played an important role in the conduct of war but it would be a mistake to suppose

⁹⁸ G.P. Malalasekara and K.N. Jayatileke, *Buddhism and Race Question* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1974), p. 8.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Richard Fick, *The Social Organization in Northeast India In Buddha's time*, trans., Shishirkumar Maitra (Delhi: Indological Book House, 1972), p. 81.

that *Khattiyas* only held military offices, because they also arranged many kinds of state affairs.¹⁰¹ According to traditional Brahmanical theory the *Khattiyas*' status was supposed to be placed second.¹⁰²

But the *Khattiyas* always claimed their superiority over the Brahmins. *Sonaka Jataka* throws light on this matter. It states that King *Arindama Sonaka* thought of his follower, the son of Purohita: Brahmin, low born fellow that he is, I am sprung from an unbroken line of nobles.¹⁰³ This indicates that *Khattiyas* thought of themselves as born in a family with an uninterrupted succession of princes. The members of such a family, both on their father's and mother's side were recognized as *Khattiyas*.

It is important to note in this context that in the order enumerated in Pali Texts, *Khattiyas* were placed as the first class and were followed by the *Brahmans*, *Vessas* and *Suddas*.¹⁰⁴ Some mention that it may be possible for Buddhist authors to raise the *Khattiyas*' class, the class of Buddha, to be superior over the Brahmins.¹⁰⁵ This ranking is not uniformly followed in all sources in Pali Texts. In some parts of Pali Texts the mention of the Brahmins in the first place and the *Khattiyas* in the second place in order can be seen. *Bhuridatta-Jataka* mentions the four classes and places the Brahmins first and *Khattiyas* second. The stanza runs as follows:

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Professor E.B. Cowell (ed.), *Jataka Stories*, Vol. V, trans., Various Scholars (Delhi: Cosmo-Publication, 1979), p. 132.

¹⁰⁴ See F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 4, p. 304.

¹⁰⁵ Shanta Anand, *Kshatriya In Ancient India* (Delhi: Atma Ram & Son, 1984), p. 72.

Brahmins he made for study, for command he made *Khattiyas*; *Vessas* plough the land, *Suddas* he servants made to obey the rest; thus from the first went forth his high behest.¹⁰⁶

It is very difficult to decide who is superior because there is a close relationship between the *Khattiyas* and *Brahmins* in regard to both religious duties and political affairs. Most educational matters were arranged by *Brahmins*. The kings' sons had to study science in the schools and were taught by *Brahmins*. The king always appointed a *Brahmin* as the advisor and minister of administrative affairs. A *Vassakara Brahmin* was appointed as the Prime Minister of Magadha from *Bimbisara's* reign up to *Ajjatasattu's* reign.¹⁰⁷ *Somadatta*, a young Brahmin, after he finished education at *Taxila*, returned to become the king's attendant at Banares where he was born. He enjoyed the honourarium given by the king.¹⁰⁸ The sacrifices were also performed by *Brahmins*.

Once *Pasendi Kosala* dreamed of bad things and heard bad sounds. He could not sleep all night. A *Brahmin*, his priest, advised him to arrange a great sacrifice consisting of many kinds of animals and humans.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ E.B. Cowell (ed.), N. 37, Vol. VI, p. 110.

¹⁰⁷ Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XI, trans., Rhys Davids (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965), p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ E.B. Cowell (ed.), N. 37, vol. II, p. 115.

¹⁰⁹ Charles Rockwell Lanman (ed.), N. 25, vol. XXIX, pp. 103-104.

By a study of close relations between *Brahmins* and *Khattiyas*, we may give the superiority to the *Khattiyas* in the field of political affairs. The superiority in religious and educational affairs may be given to the *Brahmins*.

However, the rivalry between the two classes cannot be definitely decided because they performed their functions with their abilities along with their hereditary inheritance. They played an important role in their occupations.

Vessa:

This class has been referred to in Buddhist Scriptures under the name of *Gahapati*. According to its etymology it means “householder, head of the household”. It generally denotes a landlord or a merchant.¹¹⁰ The term *Kutumbika* has been used in the same sense as *Gahapati*. This also denotes wealthy citizens at the head of household.¹¹¹ The other term which is used to designate the most important and aristocratic representatives of the *Gahapati* is *Setthi*.¹¹²

While the first two classes mentioned above were supposed to be responsible for the religious and political roles respectively the *Vessa* coming on the third rank played important roles in economic matters. According to Buddhist Scriptures, the *Vessa*'s professions are not only

¹¹⁰ Richard Fick, N. 16, p. 253.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 257.

in economic matters but in other professions also. In the court of the king the *Gahapaties*, on account of their importance and wealth, played significant roles along with the ministers and *Brahmins* mentioned.¹¹³ The *Kutumbikas* lived in towns and were engaged in trade. According to the *Sataka Jataka* it is said of the *Bodhisatta*, (the great being) that he was reborn in a *Kutumbika* family and maintained his livelihood by selling corn.¹¹⁴

In the *Vinaya* Texts the *Setthi* plays an important private role. He appears throughout as a respectable tradesman enjoying a special position of honour among the members of his profession.¹¹⁵ For instance, he was pre-eminently the much-quoted generous worshipper of Buddha, *Anathapindika*. He is said to be a banker of *Savatthi*, the capital of the *Kosala* kingdom.¹¹⁶

Setthi in the Buddha's time seemed to be the symbol of the wealth of the city. At that time in the Magadha kingdom where King *Bimbisāra* ruled there were four such persons: *Jotila*, *Ram*, *Punnaka* and *Kakavaliya*.¹¹⁷ It was probably the economic center of the country. The *Setthies* were needed. The King of *Kosala* thought that in *Bimbisāra*'s state there were four persons of limitless wealth, but in his state no one lived with such wealth. He decided to ask *Bimbisāra* to let him have one of his

¹¹³ Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. XIII, trans., Rhys Davids (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965), p. 137.

¹¹⁴ E.B. Cowell (ed.), N. 37, Vol. II, p. 186.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

¹¹⁶ Philip W. Geoetz (ed.), "Buddha", *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed., Vol. XV (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1985), p. 272.

¹¹⁷ Charles Rockwell Lanman (ed.), N. 25. p. 59.

persons of limitless wealth. He went to Rajagaha and told the purpose of his coming to *Bimbisāra*. *Bimbisāra* gave *Dhananjaya*, son of the treasurer Ram, to the king of Kosala.¹¹⁸

Although the *Vessa's* claim of superiority over the other castes is not widely prevalent in the Buddhist Scriptures, they were supposed to have pride of birth and status in the way of individual and social relations. Because of their economic power, their status could not be despised by the two high castes i.e., *Brahmins* and *Khattiyas*. The story of the marriage of *Visakha* throws enough light in this aspect. The *Brahmins* and the King participated in this function without any hatred.¹¹⁹ This story also indicates that the custom of marriage *into the Vessa* caste was carried on both within and outside their group with those who shared equal birth. The concept of the purity of blood was strictly followed.

The social status of the *Vessas* was recognized by the two high classes. Sometimes, because of their economic power, most of the economic matters were controlled by the *Vessas*. T.W. Rhys Davids, thus, states that “the three upper classes had originally been one. The *Vessa*, afterward, had raised themselves into high social rank.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ For details of the story see *Ibid.*, pp. 61-65.

¹²⁰ T.W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, p. 55.

The Low Caste:

In Buddhist Scriptures the word '*Vessa*' and '*Sudda*' are used only when a theoretical discussion of caste is made. As we mentioned above, the *Vessa* class is referred to by other terms such as *Gahapati*, *Seatthi*, and *Gutumpi*. Similarly, the *Sudda* manifested itself and its activities under the name of "slave" or *dasa*. The group of people belonging to this caste probably happened to be only slaves. In terms of social status it is supposed to be the lowest class compared to the three upper classes. Although most of the slaves belonged to the *Sudda* class, sometimes slaves are reputed to have come from the other castes under various circumstances. *Kulavaka-Jataka* speaks of such an instance in which a noble headman of the village was made a slave by the king.¹²¹

Slaves were also made by agreement on some condition and one could make them free by giving compensation as illustrated in *Vessantara Jataka*. The discussion between the king and *Jujaka Bharadvaja* in this *Jataka* throws light upon how a slave is made even from the high class such as *Khattiya* and after paying due compensation how slavery could be ended.¹²²

The slave could be given and purchased by a satisfactory agreement between the giver or the seller and the receiver. Whether the slaves could be given away

¹²¹ E.B. Cowell (ed.), N. 37, Vol. I, pp. 77-79.

¹²² For detailed narration of the story see *Ibid.*, Vol. V. p. 297.

freely or not depended upon the agreement made between the slaves and the masters.

The statement of *Manu*, the Brahmanical theorist, mentions that slaves are of seven kinds: those who are captured in water, those who sell themselves in return for maintenance, those who are born of slave parents in the house, those who are acquired by purchase, those who are received as gifts, those who are acquired by inheritance from the father, and those who are slaves by way of punishment.¹²³

The *Sudda's* activities were not much enumerated in the Buddhist Scriptures. Slaves did not always necessarily come from the *Sudda* class, but most of them came from the *Sudda* class. Their social status was, no doubt, very despised.

The Untouchables:

The *Candālas* were the most despised class of the society. They were supposed to be able to cause impurity to those who belonged to high classes. *Matanga Jataka* speaks of *Candālas* causing the high class people to be impure. Once upon a time when *Brahmadatta* was king of Benares, the Great Being was born outside the city, as a *Candāla's* son, and they gave him the name of *Matanga*, the Elephant. This name was the name of a man of *Candāla* class. At that time there was one *Ditthamangalika*, daughter of a Benares merchant. Every

¹²³ N.K. Dutt, N. 1, p. 180.

month she came and disported herself in the park with her companions. One day, the Great Being had gone to town on some business. As he was entering the gate he met *Ditthamangalika*. He went near her and stood quite still. From behind her curtain, *Ditthamangalika* spied him, and asked “who is that”? “A *Candāla* my lady”. “Bah” says she “I have seen something that brings bad luck” and washing her eyes with scented water she turned back.¹²⁴

On the other hand, the *Matanga Jataka* also suggests the idea of how to make the body pure after seeing a bad omen coming from the lowest class. The *Candālas*, were looked down on like the animals. According to tradition the ancient Indian people stated in the *Jataka*, whosoever had seen a bad omen, not only washed his eyes with scented water but also had to abstain from food and liquor all day. In the *Satadhamma Jataka* it is stated that a young *Brahmin* committed suicide because he had eaten the leavings from a *Candāla*'s dish.¹²⁵

In several other Buddhist Scriptures, it is said that the *Candālas* should be isolated from other classes' residence. Most of them resided outside the city. They were also despised and distinguished from the rest of the population by their dress.¹²⁶ According to the *Dhammasatras* the occupations of a *Candālas* are to carry the corpses of men who have no relations or friends and to execute criminals.¹²⁷ Having considered the ranks mentioned in

¹²⁴ E.B. Cowell (ed.), N. 37, Vol. IV, pp. 235-236.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* Vol. II, p. 57.

¹²⁶ N.K. Dutt, N. 1, p. 182.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

Buddhist literature and the occupations of the *Candāla*, their social status was supposed to be very low.

Thus, most of the social conditions in the Buddha's time were under the influence of Brahmanical theory. The culture, traditions, customs and various modes of life in each group of the people were derived from and based on religious faith. It is not surprising to find the Brahmanical theory in the Buddhist Scriptures. The people were surrounded by the influence of Brahmanical ideas and this faith could not be eradicated by Buddhism, the new doctrine of the age. Although many people were converted into Buddhism, their attitudes and their mode of life deeply rooted over thousands of years was difficult to change.

Political Divisions:

In any discussion of political conditions during Buddha's time it would be quite appropriate to talk of the political divisions i.e., about the great sixteen states. The sixteen sovereign powers are enumerated in *Anguttara Nikāya*, one of the Buddhist canonical Texts. These are considered as the fundamental base of political divisions. At or shortly before the days of the Buddha in or about the sixth century B.C., the list of states in *Anguttara Nikāya* runs as follows: “*Anga, Magadha, Kasi, Kosala, Vajji, Malla, Ceti, Vamsa, Kuru, Pancala, Maccha, Surasena, Assaka, Avanti, Gandhara, Kamboja.*”¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Quoted from Kanai Lal Harzara, *Royal Patronage of Buddhism In Ancient India* (Delhi: D.K. Publications, 1984), p. 1.

Geographical Location of States:

Anga:

It was in the east of *Magadha* and west of the chieftains who live in the *Rajmahal* hills. It was separated from *Magadha* by the river named *Champa*. The capital city of *Anga*, also named *Champa*, was situated at the confluence of the *Champa* River and the *Ganges*¹²⁹. It was about sixty *Yojanas* (leagues) far from *Mithila*.¹³⁰

Magadha:

It corresponded roughly to the present *Patna* and *Gaya* districts of south *Bihar*. It was probably then bounded on the north and the west by the rivers *Ganges* and *Sona*. It was also bounded on the south by spurs of the *Vindhaya* range and on the east by the river *Champa* which met the *Ganges* near the *Anga* capital.¹³¹ *Rajagaha* was the capital city of *Magadha*.¹³²

Kasi:

It was the state situated on the bank of *Ganges* unruined from the time before the Buddha's appearance

¹²⁹ Hemchandra Raychaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1972), pp. 95-96.

¹³⁰ E.B. Cowell, N. 38, Vol. VI, p. 21.

¹³¹ Malalasekara, *Dictionary of Pali Proper Name*, Vol. II (New Delhi: University of Calcutta, 1972), pp. 95-96.

¹³² F. Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XI, trans., Rhys Davids (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965), p. 1.

up to now. Bandaras was the capital city of *Kasi*. It is an important city in India even now. It extended over twelve leagues on every side.¹³³ The kingdom of *Kasi* was three hundred leagues in extent.¹³⁴

Kosala:

Kosala kingdom was bounded on the west by the *Bumti*, and on the south by the *Sarpika* River. On the east it was bounded by the *Sadanika* which separated it from *Videha* and on the north by the Nepal hills.¹³⁵

Savatthi was the capital of *Kosala* and one of the six great cities during the lifetime of the Buddha.¹³⁶

Vajji:

The *Vajji* territory was situated in the north of the *Ganges* and extended as far as the Nepal hills. On the west the river *Gandak* possibly separated it from the *Mallas* and perhaps also the *Kosalas*. Eastward, it may have approached the forests that skirted the river *Kosi* and the *Mahananda*. *Vesali* was the capital of *Vajji*.¹³⁷

¹³³ E.B. Cowell (ed.), N. 38, Vol V, p. 36.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 189.

¹³⁵ H. Raychaudhuri, N. 64, p. 88.

¹³⁶ Malalasekara, N. 66, p. 1127.

¹³⁷ H. Raychaudhuri, N. 64, pp. 105-106.

Malla:

The *Mallas* of *Kusinara* and *Pava* were also independent. Their territory was on the mountain slopes of the east of the *Sakya* land, and to the north of the *Vajjian* confederation. But some would place it south of the *Sakyas* and east of the *Vajjians*.¹³⁸ The capital was *Kusinara*.¹³⁹ (*Kushinagara*).

Ceti:

It was one of the states encircling the *Kurus*. It lay near the *Jumna*. *Ceti* was clearly connected with the *Maccha* (*Matsyas*) beyond the *Chambal*. The *Kasi* of Banares, and the *Karusha* were in the valley of the *Sona*. It was distinguished from the *Dasarana* who lived on the banks of *Dhasan*.¹⁴⁰

Vamsa:

It was the state situated in the southern part of the *Ganges*. *Kausambi* (*Kosombi*), modern *Kosam*, on the banks of *Jumna* (*Jamuna*) near Allahabad was the capital city. It was immediately to the north of *Avanti* and along the banks of the *Jumuna*.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ T.W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987), p. 26.

¹³⁹ Malalasekara, N. 66, p. 452.

¹⁴⁰ H. Raychaudhuri, N. 64, p. 115.

¹⁴¹ T.W. Rhys Davids, N. 73, p. 27.

Kurus:

Kurus occupied the state of which *Indapattha* (*Indraprastha*), close to the modern Delhi, was the capital city and had the *Pancala* to the east and the *Matsayas* to the south.¹⁴² The city of *Indapatta* (*Indraprastha*) covered seven leagues in the realm of *Kuru*, which extended over three hundred leagues.¹⁴³ It was (about one hundred and twenty leagues.¹⁴⁴) from *Takkasila* (*Taxila*).

Pancala:

The two *Pancala* occupied the state to the east of the *Kurus*, between the mountains and the *Ganges*. Their capitals were *Kampillaka* and *Kanoj*.¹⁴⁵ A great struggle raged in ancient times between the *Kurus* and *Pancala* for the possession of the northern *Pancala*. Sometimes *Uttara Pancala* was included in *Kururattha*,¹⁴⁶ which at that time was a part of *Kampillakaratta*.¹⁴⁷

Maccha:

The *Macchas* or *Matsyas* were to the south of the *Kurus* and the west of *Jumna* (*Jamuna*) which separated them from the southern *Pancala*.¹⁴⁸ It was an extensive territory between the hills near the *Cambal* and the forest

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ E.B. Cowell (ed.), N. 38, Vol. V, p. 264.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

¹⁴⁵ T.W. Rhys Davids, N. 73, p. 27.

¹⁴⁶ E.B. Cowell (ed.), N. 38, Vol. IV, p. 275.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 52.

¹⁴⁸ T.W. Rhys Davids, N. 73, p. 27.

that skirted the *Savatthi*. The political center of this state was *Viranagara* or *Baisa* in the modern *Jaipur* State.¹⁴⁹

Surasena:

Surasenas were situated immediately to the southwest of *Macchas*, and to the west of the *Jumna*. *Mathura* was the capital of the *Surasena*.¹⁵⁰

Assaka:

Assaka was situated on the banks of the *Godhavari*.¹⁵¹ *Potali* was the capital of *Assaka*.¹⁵² *Assaka* included *Mūlaka* and some neighboring districts and thus the territory which approached the southern frontier of *Avanti*.¹⁵³ *Assaka* was always mentioned with *Avanti* in the same way as *Anga* was with *Magadha*.¹⁵⁴ *Assaka Jataka* tells that once the city of *Potali* was included in the kingdom of *Kasi*.¹⁵⁵

Avanti:

It is mentioned as the greatest power among *Magadha*, *Kosala* and *Vamsa*. Its capital was *Ujjeni*. But according to another account, *Mahissati* is mentioned as having been, the capital at least for some time. *Avanti* was divided into

¹⁴⁹ H. Raychaudhuri, N. 64, p. 123.

¹⁵⁰ Malalasekara, N. 66, Vol. II, p. 438.

¹⁵¹ E.B. Cowell (ed.), N. 38, Vol. III, p. 1.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 168.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 108.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Malalasekara, N. 66, Less Vol. I, p. 193

two parts, the northern part having its capital at *Ujjeni* and the southern part at *Mahissati*.¹⁵⁶

Gandhara:

Modern *Gandhara* was the district of eastern Afghanistan and it probably included the northwest part of Punjab. The kingdom perhaps also included Kashmir.¹⁵⁷ Its capital was *Taxila*.¹⁵⁸

Kamboja:

Kamboja also held sway in the northwest being usually associated with *Gandāras* in epigraphic record and literature. It was an adjoining state in the extreme northwest with *Dvāraka* as its capital.¹⁵⁹

Small States:

Besides the sixteen great states enumerated in *Anguttaranikāya* there were many small states ruled by republican governments. These appeared in *Mahāparinibbana Sutta* “the *Sakyas* of *Kapilavatthu*, the *Bhaggas* of *Sumsumāragiri*, the *Devadaha* of *Ramgama*, the *Kālāmas* of *Kesaputta*, and the *Moriyas* of *Pipplivana*”.¹⁶⁰ The kingdoms of *Kalinga* and *Videha* and their kings, *Karandu* and Great *Nimi* respectively are

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ H. Rayachaudhuri, N. 64, p. 94.

¹⁵⁸ Professor E.B. Cowell (ed.), *Jātaka Stories*, Vol. III, trans., Various Scholars (Delhi: Cosmo Publication, 1979), p. 228.

¹⁵⁹ T. W. Rhys Davids, N. 73, p. 28.

¹⁶⁰ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 67, pp. 134-135.

described in the *Kumbhagara-Jataka*.¹⁶¹ These were ruled by monarchical governments. The details of each state are not found in the Buddhist Scriptures. Most of them are seen only by the names in the stories. The few details that can be found are as follows:

Sakyas of Kapilavatthu:

The word “*Sakyas*” means a clan in the north India to which the Buddha belonged.¹⁶² Their capital was *Kapilavatthu* located on the border of Nepal.¹⁶³ It was about one hundred miles north of Banares.¹⁶⁴

The Koliyas of Ramagama:

They were east of the *Sakyas* and the river *Rohini* which formed the dividing line between the two countries.¹⁶⁵ They had close relationship based on the inter-marriage between the *Sakyas* and the *Koliyas*.¹⁶⁶

The Bhaggas of Sumsumaragiri:

They were an ancient clan identical with the *Bhaggas* of the *Aitareya Brahman*. Their seat of power was in or about the district of *Mirzapur*.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶¹ E.B. Cowell (ed.), N. 93, Vol. III, p. 231.

¹⁶² Malalasekara, N. 66, Vol. II, p. 969.

¹⁶³ R.S. Tripathi, *History of Ancient India* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1967), p. 85.

¹⁶⁴ Rhys Davids, *Early Buddhism* (New Delhi: Bharatiya Publishing House, 1976), p.1.

¹⁶⁵ R.S. Tripathi, N. 98, p. 86.

¹⁶⁶ Malalasekara, N. yy, Vol. II, p. 971.

¹⁶⁷ R.S. Tripathi, N. 98, Less p. 85.

The Morriyas of Piphalikan:

The identification of the capital is doubtful. They were said to have been branches of the *Sakyas* and were so called because of the cities of peacocks.¹⁶⁸

The Bulis of Allakappa:

Not much detail is known about them. They were located near the kingdom of *Vethadīpa*, presumably between modern *Shahabad* and *Muzzaffarpur*.¹⁶⁹

The Kalamas of Kesaputta:

The location of their chief town is uncertain, *Alārā*, the great teacher of the Buddha belonged to these tribes.¹⁷⁰

Keeping in mind the political system of these tribes, one could say they were like republican or democratic states in character but in practice it was rather an oligarchy because the power of decision was in the hands of small groups and not public.

Political Activities of the Great Powers:

Of the sixteen great states, *Magadha*, *Kosala*, *Avanti*, *Vamsa* and *Lucchavis* or *Vajji*, were considered as great powers in the Buddha's time. The first four states were

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

monarchies and the last one was republican system. Besides these states, some were dependent upon other states while others were independent. In the Buddha's time a modern scholar points out that of the sixteen states, the two states, *Kasi* and *Anga*, were the dependent states. *Anga* was subject to *Magadha*. *Kasi*, in the Buddha's time had fallen to such a low political level that the revenues of the township had become the cause of fighting between *Kosala* and *Magadha*. It was sometimes incorporated into *Kosala*.¹⁷¹ The remaining states were rather independent but they were not big enough to be called great powers. They could only protect themselves from the invasion of the great countries such as *Magadha* and *Kosala*. During the Buddha's time there were a few wars among the states.

Magadha:

During the Buddha's time, *Magadha* had been one of the great powers. Its political system was monarchy. *Bimbisāra* the king of *Magadha* ruled over eighty thousand colonies.¹⁷² *Magadha*'s kings during the Buddha's time were *Bimbisāra* and his son, *Ajjātasattu*. The total area of the kingdom was thirty leagues in extent.¹⁷³ The area of *Rajagaha*, the capital city, was three leagues in extent.¹⁷⁴ The population within and outside this city were one hundred and eighty millions.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ T.W. Rhys Davids, N. 73, pp. 23-24.

¹⁷² F. Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XVII, trans., T.W. Rhys Davids and H. Oldenberg (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968), p.1.

¹⁷³ Charles Rockwell Lanman (ed.), N. 25, Vol. XXX, p. 191.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. XXIX, p. 199.

Royal Family:

The king *Bimbisāra* ascended to the throne at the age of fifteen and reigned in *Rajagaha* for fifty-two years.¹⁷⁶ *Bimbisāra*'s chief Queen was *Kosaladevi*, daughter of *Mahakossala* and sister of *Pasendi*.¹⁷⁷ On the day of her marriage, she received, as part of dowry, a village in Kasi for the bath money. Her son was *Ajjātasattu*. *Bimbisāra* had other wives as well. They were *Khemā*, and *Padumvati*. Both these later became nuns. *Padumvati*'s son was *Abaya*. *Bimbisāra* had other sons by *Ambapali*, known as *Vimala* and *Kondañña*, and two others, by different wives, known as *Sīlava* and *Jayasena*. A daughter named *Chundi* is also mentioned.¹⁷⁸

Magadhan High Officials:

Mahāparinibhāna Suttanta states that *Brahman Vessakara* was appointed as the Prime Minister¹⁷⁹ and Chief Minister of *Magadha*.¹⁸⁰ The other two Chief Ministers were *Sunidha*¹⁸¹ and *Kotiya*.¹⁸² *Sumana Mālāgāra* was the gardener whose duty was to supply the garlands of Jasmine flowers every day to the king.¹⁸³ *Jīvaka Komārabhajja*, an excellent young doctor, was the royal physician.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁶ Malalasekara, No. 66, Vol. II, p. 285.

¹⁷⁷ Malalasekara, N. 66, Vol. II, p. 285.

¹⁷⁸ Charles Rockwell Lanman (ed.), N. 25, Vol. XXIX, p. 60.

¹⁷⁹ Malalasekara, N. 66, Vol. II, p. 286.

¹⁸⁰ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 67, Vol. XI, p. 2.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Dr. Bhikkhu Amrittananda, *King of Buddha's Time*, (Nepal: Ananda Kuti Vihara Trust, 1983), p. 35.

¹⁸⁴ Charles Rockwell Lanman (ed.), N. 25, Vol. XXIX, p. 123.

Magadhan Economy:

Magadha was a center of trade and the citizens were caravan traders. It crossed the main route to India's heaviest deposits of both iron and copper to the southeast in the *Dhalbhuma* and *Singhbhum* districts.¹⁸⁵ *Magadha* had almost a monopoly over the main natural resources. Many people from other states also came and went to exchange goods.¹⁸⁶ *Magadha's* economy was based on natural resources and business. There were, no doubt, many businessmen who possessed limitless wealth.¹⁸⁷ They possessed gold and other products. They played an important role in economic and political affairs. It is a fact that those who controlled economic power also controlled political power.

Magadha maintained great power among other powers because of its rich economy. In modern times, although the socio-political sphere has been much changed, the fact remains that economic power still plays an important role over political power. The economic factor has been playing an important role since ancient times.

Interstate Relation:

Bimbisāra always had a good relationship with the neighboring states. He and *Pasendi*, the king of the

¹⁸⁵ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 107, p. 181.

¹⁸⁶ Damodar Pharman and Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan Private Ltd., 1988), pp. 154-155.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Kosala kingdom, were connected by marriage, each having married the sister of the other.¹⁸⁸ This is called matrimonial relation; it played an important part in ancient Indian politics. It was based upon the blood and family relation. The issue of this marriage would become close cousins, loosening the racial and national discrimination. During the Buddha's time there was no sign of war between *Magadha* and *Kosala*.

Economic Aid:

Magadha and *Kosala* also had a close relationship based on economic aid. It was well known at that time *Magadha* was very prosperous. There were many wealthy families living within the city. These families were supposed to be the sources of the funds for management of various kinds of business. But in the *Kosala* kingdom, the neighbor power, there were no such kinds of families. As a close friend, *Pasendi* sent a message to king *Bimbisāra* to let him have one of his wealthy families. *Bimbisāra* gave him a businessman who was the son of the treasurer Ram.¹⁸⁹

This story tells about the economic aid king *Bimbisāra* gave to king *Pasendi*, his great power neighbor. To give away a wealthy family meant giving economic aid because the family possessed a lot of funds which were useful to make the economy of the state stronger. The

¹⁸⁸ Charles Rockwell Lanman (ed.), N. 25, Vol. XXIX, *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁸⁹ See Charles Rockwell Lanman (ed.), *Buddhist Legends* Vol. XXIX, trans., Eugene Watson Burlingame (London: Pali Texts Society, 1979), p. 61.

prosperity of each state in former times as illustrated above, could be judged by the number of families who were millionaires.

Moral Aid:

When the neighboring states suffered from famine, *Bimbisāra* was sincere enough to help them according to his ability. This help may be called moral aid to a neighboring state, *Vesali*. Once there was great famine in *Vesali*. The Assembly was held and decided to send a *Licchavi* prince named *Mahali* to obtain the favour of *Bimbisāra* and to invite the Buddha to visit *Vesali*.

Accordingly, the *Licchavi* prince named *Mahali* and the son of the house priest went to the king. They presented gifts and made the following request “Great king, send the teacher to our city”. But the king, instead of granting their request said simply “You are men of intelligence and can of yourselves obtain this favour”.

So they approached to the Exalted One. They saluted him and made the following request to him, “Reverend Sir, three plagues have arisen at *Vesali*, if you but go thither, they will subside”. The Buddha listened to their request and considered the benefit which the people of *Vesali* would get, then he consented to visit *Vesali*.¹⁹⁰

King *Bimbisāra* caused the ground from *Rājagaha* to the Ganges, a distance of five leagues, to be smooth. He

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* Vol. XXX, pp. 169-170.

built a rest house at the end of each league. When everything was in readiness, he sent word to the teacher that it was time for him to come.

The Buddha set out on his journey accompanied by five hundred monks. In five days they reached the banks of the *Ganges*. King *Bimbisāra* arranged the entire journey of the Buddha from *Magadha* until the Buddha reached the boundary of the territories of *Vesali*.¹⁹¹ The king waited there for the return of the Buddha. On the day of Buddha's return after staying and preaching sermons for two weeks at *Vesali*, the *Vesaliyas* were happy. The king *Bimbisāra* again went into the water up to his neck to receive the Buddha.¹⁹²

Bimbisāra was very kind towards his neighbor, in spite of the fact that when the city and people wherein were suffering, it would have been easy to invade and occupy, and then to rule over it as a colony, but he encouraged the morale for the *Licchavis*' rulers and their people. His foreign policy was, it can be said, based on moral principle rather than personal interest.

Health Aid:

Bimbisāra supported not only close neighboring countries but also the countries which asked for support. At that time, it was well known that *Jivaka Komārabhajja*, the excellent young doctor graduating from *Taxila*, was

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

the royal physician. The king ordered him to serve those who were in need of cure. Once king *Pajjota* of *Ujjeni* was suffering from *Jaundice*. He sent a message to the *Magadha* king to send *Jivaka*. The *Magadha* king gave orders for *Jivaka* to go to *Ujjanī* and cure King *Pajjota*. *Jivaka* accepted this order of the *Magadha* king and went to *Ujjenī*. He cured the king and took a journey to *Magadha* because he had mixed the kind of medicines which the *Ujjenī* king hated. He reached *Magadha* and told the whole thing to the *Magadha* king. The king said “You have done right, my good *Jivaka*, in that you have returned; that king is cruel; he might have had you killed.”¹⁹³

The king *Pajjota*, being restored to health, sent a messenger to *Jivaka* to invite the doctor again to *Ujjenī* but he refused. Then king *Pajjota* sent his *Siveyyaska* cloth, the most excellent, to *Jivaka*,¹⁹⁴ as a gift.

From this aid given by the *Magadha* king a close relation between the two states can be understood, a relation based on mutual aid. During the reign of *Bimbisāra*, *Magadha* had a friendly relationship with all states concerned. He devoted himself to the teaching of the Buddha and had friendship with the other states. Because of the rise of the Buddha, the great powers, both republican and monarchical, tried to seek more peace than war. The Buddha always went from town to town spreading the message of peace to the people, irrespective

¹⁹³ See F. Max Muller (ed.), No. 107, pp. 189-190.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

of their class, caste, sex and race. Most of the rulers, it appears, followed the teaching of the Buddha.

Moral Campaign:

King *Bimbisāra* was a great devotee and patron of the Buddha. After he had listened to a sermon delivered by the Buddha, he dedicated *Veluvana*, the first temple of Buddhism to him and his monks.¹⁹⁵ He used all his power to help the new religion and to make it widely spread. He set an example to his subjects in the practice of the precepts by talking the *Uppostha* observation.

On the one hand, king *Bimbisāra* paid much attention to moral campaigns for his colonies and his subjects. Such moral campaigns also contributed to interstate relations. Once the Buddha dwelt at *Rajaha*, the king was holding an assembly of the eighty thousand overseers who ruled over the colonies. First of all he had taught them the knowledge concerning administrative affairs, and how best to manage townships. After finishing his instruction, he proclaimed that “you have received from me instructions in temporal things. Now wait upon the Blessed One. The Blessed One should instruct you in the eternal knowledge”.¹⁹⁶

They went to the place where the Buddha was. The Buddha spoke of the following virtues “sharing, righteousness, heaven, of the danger, the worthlessness,

¹⁹⁵ Charles Rockwell Lanman (ed.), N. 174, Vol. XXVIII, p. 198.

¹⁹⁶ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 107, pp. 1-6.

the depravity of lust and the advantage of renunciation.”¹⁹⁷ When the Blessed One perceived that they had become pliant, softened, unprejudiced, upraised and believing in heart, then he proclaimed the four Noble Truths which are the essential doctrine of the Buddha; suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the path”¹⁹⁸ They obtained a pure and spotless vision of the Truth.¹⁹⁹

The aim of the Buddha’s teaching was to make his hearers see truth, master it, overcome uncertainty and to reveal hidden values to those who had lost their path. His teaching was like a lamp of light in the darkness.²⁰⁰

According to king *Bimbisāra*’s opinion, knowledge of both worldly affairs and eternal virtues should be imparted. Religion and political affairs could not be separated and did not interfere with each other. They should go side by side for the well being of the people. The relationship between *Magadha* and its dependencies was based on the mutual understanding and mutual interest. He treated the overseers of the townships as his friends, not as servants. The relation between the ruler and the ruled was based on the virtue of kindness more than on oppression.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

Spirit of Secular State:

Bimbisāra employed Buddhism as his life's light and not as an opiate. In spite of the fact that *Bimbisāra* had much devotion to the Buddha, he did not interfere with or prevent the many religions from carrying on their affairs in his kingdom. *Dhammapada* commentary states that "there were six religions teachers in *Rajagaha* at that time".²⁰¹ It can be called a secular state because *Bimbisāra* recognized and allowed all religions to preach their doctrines according to their ability. Significantly, no religion was proclaimed as the state religion.

Rajagaha became a center of religious teachers, intellectuals from different directions. It was said that whoever would like to establish religion should go to *Rajagaha* and preach his doctrines. If it was recognized by a large number of the people it could be established.

Following the policy of the secular state, there was no conflict among the religions. Religion became popular because it was decided by the people. The people living within the kingdom enjoyed freedom to have faith in any religion that they liked. Although the *Magadha* kingdom was ruled by the monarchical system and the king controlled all the power to decide the socio-political affairs, the king did not exercise his power in the way of the dictatorship and oppression. Virtues were raised and worshipped by the king. *Bimbisāra* can be called, according to Plato's ideas, the philosopher king. Thus

²⁰¹ Charles Rockwell Lanman (ed.), N. 124, Vol. XXX, p. 36.

socio-economic powers were fully developed in the *Bimbisāra's* reign.

Because of his large-heartedness, humanitarian outlook and secular politics *Bimbisāra's* death was a sad one. His own son, *Ajjātasattu*, in whose favour *Bimbisāra* had abdicated the throne, tortured him in several ways after putting him in jail, which finally led to his tragic death.²⁰²

Ajjātasattu's regime:

After *Ajjātasattu* became the king of the *Magadha* kingdom his rule was different from that of his father. His internal and external policy was also different. He, instead of being kind towards his subject, had ill will and selfish ends. Once he wanted to take the beautiful palace of the treasurer *Jotaka*, but he could not succeed in his wish.²⁰³ The foreign policy in *Bimbisāra's* regime had emphasized making friends with the small and the great powers but *Ajjātasattu* started to invade and make war with those states.

War with Kosala and Vesāli:

War first arose because of the conditions caused by *Ajjātasattu's* murder of *Bimbisāra*. The queen, *Kosala Devi*, died of grief out of love for him.²⁰⁴ Even after her

²⁰² See Malalasekara, *Dictionary of Pali Proper Names*, Vol. II, (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprints Co., 1983) pp. 286-287.

²⁰³ See Charles Rockwell Lanman (ed.), No. 124, p. 332.

²⁰⁴ Malalasekara, N. 137, p. 287.

death the Magadhan king still enjoyed the revenues of the *Kasi* village which had been given to the queen *Kosala Devi* for bath money. But the king of *Kosala*, determined that no parricide should have a village which belonged to him by right of inheritance and war followed.²⁰⁵ When the war was going on, sometimes the Kosala king got the best of it and sometimes the rival king. The king of *Kosala* was defeated three times. Finally the war ended by the defeat of *Ajjātasattu*. The Kosala king took *Ajjātasattu* prisoner but spared his life as he was his nephew. He confiscated the army of the captive prince but sought to appease him by offering the hand of his daughter named *Vajirā*.²⁰⁶

Although *Ajjātasattu* failed in fighting with the king of Kosala he did not stop his thoughts of war with his neighbors. He started to fight with *Vesāli*, his neighboring state which was well known as a prosperous state during the Buddha's time. Preliminaries to the struggle between *Magadha* and *Vesāli* are described in the Pali Text. The *Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta* mentions that *Ajjātasattu* was eager to attack *Vajjians*. With this in mind he sent *Vassakāra Brahman*, the Prime Minister of *Magadha*, to see the Buddha and know about his opinion. The reply of the Buddha in this regard in a conversation with *Ananda* is very important even from the point of view of modern republican democratic governments. What the Buddha said was the seven conditions of national welfare.²⁰⁷ The

²⁰⁵ Hemchandra Raychaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India* (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1972), p. 186.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ See the details F. Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XI, trans., Rhys Davids (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965), pp. 1-4.

Buddha told *Vassakāra* how he taught the *Vajjian* these conditions of national welfare. He also contended that so long as those conditions should continue to exist among the *Vajjians*, they were not expected to decline, but to prosper.²⁰⁸

Having listened so, *Vassakāra* concluded and got a new idea that *Vajjians* could not be overcome by the king of *Magadha* in battle without diplomacy or breaking up their alliance.²⁰⁹

However, this policy was not adopted until the Buddha's death. It was adopted by the *Magadhan* statesmen headed by *Vassaakāra* to sow the seed of Disunion among the *Vajjians*. Because of this policy the *Vajjians* were destroyed.²¹⁰

Religious Affairs:

After becoming the king of *Magadha*, *Ajjātasattu* did not pay attention to religious affairs like his father, but he participated in two important events of Buddhism. *Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta* says that when the king of *Magadha* (*Ajjātasattu*) heard the news that the Blessed One had died at *Kusināra* he sent a message to the *Malla* to give him a portion of the relics of the Blessed One.²¹¹

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.* p. 4.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ H. Raychaudhuri, N. 140, p. 189.

²¹¹ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 142, p. 131.

Not long after the Buddha's death, when the collection of the teachings of the Buddha was done at *Rajagaha*, *Ajjātasattu* was a great sponsor for this from beginning to end.²¹² Though not much is known about the end of *Ajjātasattu's* regime which lasted for 32 years, he was killed by his son *Udaya* or *Udayibhadda*.²¹³

Kosala Kingdom:

Kosala was a country inhabited by Kosala people to the northwest of *Magadha* and next to *Kasi*. In the Buddha's time it was a powerful kingdom ruled over by *Pasendi* who was succeeded by his son, *Udayibhadda*.²¹⁴ The river *Sārayu* divided *Kosala* into two parts, *Uttara Kosala* and *Dakkhina Kosala*.²¹⁵

The *Kosala* kingdom was also a prosperous and powerful state among the sixteen important states at that time. It is said that it was the second power while *Magadha* was supposed to be the first among the great powers. *Kosala* kingdom ruled over these provinces: *Ichchananagala*, *Ukkattha*, *Ekasala*, *Opasada*, *Kesaputta*, *Candalakappa*, *Torananatthu*, *Dandakkappa*, *Nagaravinda*, *Nālakapana*, *Nālanda*, *Sankava*, *Venagapura*, *Veludvara Sāra*, *Salavatika*, *Setabbya*.²¹⁶

²¹² Prof. P.V. Bapat, *2500 Years of Buddhism* (Delhi: The Director Publications Divisions, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, Patiala House, 1987), p. 32.

²¹³ Malalasekara, N. 137, Vol. I, p. 34.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 695.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

²¹⁶ Bhikkhu Amritananda, *Kings of Buddha's Time* (Nepal: Ananda Kuti Vihara Trust, 1983), p. 66.

In the sixth century B.C. the *Sakyan* territory of *Kapilavatthu* was subject to *Kosala*.²¹⁷ The population of the capital city, *Sāvatti*, during the Buddha's time was seventy million.²¹⁸ The total population of the kingdom was eighteen crores.²¹⁹ It was ruled by the ancient monarchical system.

Royal Family:

The king of *Kosala* was the son of *Mahakosala* and was educated at *Takkasila*. On his return to his home, his father was so pleased with his proficiency in the various arts that his father made him king.²²⁰ He had two sisters, *Kosala Devi* and *Sumana*. His chief consort was *Mallika*, daughter of a garland maker.²²¹ He had also other wives named *Ubbiri*, *Soma* and *Sakula*.²²² *Bimbisāra*'s sister was also *Pasendi Kosala*'s wife.²²³

Buddhasāra Jataka states that *Pasendi* wished to associate himself with the Buddha's family so that their relationship might be even closer. He therefore, sent messages to the *Sakyan* chief, who was his vassal, asking for the hands of one of their daughters. The *Sakyan* discussed that proposal in their mote hall. They held it beneath the dignity of their clan to accede to it. But, unwilling to incur the wrath of their overlord, they sent

²¹⁷ F. Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. X, trans., F. Max Muller and V. Fausboll (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968), p. 67.

²¹⁸ Charles Rockwell Lanman (ed.), N. 124, Vol. XXVIII, p. 147.

²¹⁹ Bhikkhu Amritananda, N. 151, p. 66.

²²⁰ Charles Rockwell Lanman (ed.), N. 124, Vol. XXIX, p. 31.

²²¹ Malalasekara, N. 137, Vol. II, p. 171.

²²² *Ibid.* p. 170.

²²³ Charles Rockwell Lanman (ed.), N. 124, Vol. XXIX, p. 60.

him *Vasabba Khattiya*, daughter of *Mahānāma* and of a slave woman, *Magamuda*. By her, *Pasendi* had a son named *Vidudabha*. When he visited *Kapilavatthu* he heard by chance the fraud that they had practiced on his father and vowed vengeance. When *Pasendi* heard of the antecedents of *Vasabhakattiya*, he withdrew the royal honours which had been bestowed on her and her son and reduced them to the condition of slaves. But the Buddha, hearing of this, made him restore the royal honours to the mother and her son.²²⁴ *Pasendi* had another son named *Brahmadatta* who entered the order of Arhant.²²⁵

As a ruler, *Pasendi* heartily devoted himself to his administrative duties and valued the companionship of wise and good men. During the Buddha's time *Pasendi* became his follower and close friend, and his devotion to the Buddha lasted till his death.

High State Officers:

Uggo and *Sirivaddha* were the Chief Ministers of King *Pasendi Kosala*. He appointed the *Malla* prince *Bandhula*, who had been a classmate at *Takkasila*, as the commander-in-chief to reward his loyalty. The other high officers were very jealous of *Bandhula* and conspired against him. When he came to the palace with his thirty two sons, thousands of people followed him and expressed love and affection to their Commander-in-Chief.

²²⁴ Professor E.B. Cowell (ed.), *Jātaka Stories*, Vol. IV, trans., H.T. Francis (London: The Pali Texts Society 1957), pp. 92-93.

²²⁵ Malalasekara, N. 137, Vol. II, p. 171.

Without knowing their real intention *Pasendi* ordered *Bandhula*, the most loving, dutiful and loyal Commander-in-Chief and his son to proceed to *Pajjanta* area (rural area) to put down a rebellion there. After fulfilling his duty, while he was on his way back, *Bandhula* and his party were all brutally murdered. The king later realized his mistake when he knew that they had been quite innocent. After that, he never achieved mental peace.²²⁶ This proves that court conspiracy was not absent during this period. After that incident the king made *Dihakarayana*, who was the nephew of *Bandhula*, Commander-in-Chief.²²⁷

The king had two other ministers called *Kala* and *Junha*. Once the king offered *Asadisadana* (an unseen special offering) to the Buddha, the minister *Kala* had expressed his displeasure. He also did not listen to the Buddha's sermons, so the king banished *Kala* from the state. The other minister *Junha* appreciated the sermons and the king was very happy with him. Then the king handed over the kingdom to him for seven days and asked him to perform the alms giving for another seven days.²²⁸

Anathapindika, a banker of Savatthi, met the Buddha at *Rajagaha* and had become deeply devoted to him. He invited the Buddha to his city and built for him the famous monastery at *Jetavana*. This monastery became the head quarters of the Buddha's activities. Here he spent most of

²²⁶ E.B. Cowell (ed.), N. 159, Vol. IV, pp. 92-93.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ Charles Rockwell Lanman (ed.), Vol. XXX, N. 124, pp. 26-27.

his time and delivered most of his sermons. The Buddha and his teaching became so popular that monasteries were built for him and his Sangha in almost all the important cities. The number of his followers belonging to all classes of people increased rapidly.²²⁹

The king also appointed people disguised as ascetics for espionage activities.²³⁰ These people *Turukka Brahmana*, *Pokkharasti Brahmana*, *Jamessoni Brahmana* and *Todayya Brahmana* were all royal priests.²³¹

Corruption In State Affairs:

The *Bharu-Jataka* refers to the corruption of the king and high-ranking officials at the time when the Blessed One was honoured and revered. While he and his monks received rich presents, the pilgrims of heterodox schools were not so honoured. The secretaries finding that their honour and gifts had diminished convened a secret meeting for deliberation. The meeting decided to bribe the king to give them a place for settlement in a good spot.²³²

So by the intervention of his courtiers, they offered a hundred thousand pieces to the king to allow them make a rival settlement in *Jetavana*. They pleaded not to answer the objections raised by the rival-Buddhists. The king agreed, because he wanted the bribe. After thus

²²⁹ Philip W. Geotz (ed.), Buddha” *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed., Vol. XV, (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Inc., 1985), p. 275.

²³⁰ Bhikkhu Amarittananda, N. 151, pp. 79-80.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² Prof. E.B. Cowell (ed.), *Jātaka Stories*, Vol. II, trans., Various Scholars (London: Pali Texts Society, 1957), p. 118.

conciliating with the king, the schismatics got an architect and put the work in hand. There was a good deal of noise about it. Buddha sent people to the king to get it stopped but the king, having already been bribed, pretended that he was not well. This he did once again. Finally Buddha went to the king and impressed upon him how other kings in old days after taking bribes had made virtuous people quarrel together, thus “leading to the ruin of the kingdom. He added: Great King, one should not be under the power of desire.”²³³ The king, highly influenced by the sermon, sent some men to destroy the rival settlement.²³⁴

King *Pasendi Kosala* always sought Buddha’s advice on personal or political problems. In political affairs the Buddha very often delivered sermons on the maintenance of strictly high morals by the kings and higher officials who must never accept bribes and who should be strictly impartial in administration. Once at the king’s request, he told a story of the olden time known as *Rajovāda Jataka*, which concerned the matter of justice and moral conduct of the ruler. In this story, he referred to *Brahmadatta*, a king of *Vārānasi* who was very famous for his just rule, and his sense of uprightness in administering justice. When, because of his just rule, people stopped coming to courts he started finding out if something was wrong in his rule. With this end he moved from place to place adopting various ways, at times, moving in disguise. But he found no fault in his rule.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ See the details of story, *Ibid.*, pp. 118-121.

Now it so happened that during this time *Mallika*, the king of *Kosala*, had done this very same thing. He too was a just king, and he had been searching for his fault, but amongst them there was none who had any fault to find in him and he heard nothing but praise. He had been making inquiry throughout the country, then the two kings arrived at the same spot.

These two met in a place where the carriage-road was deeply sunk between two banks. There was no room for one carriage to pass another. When the question arose as to which carriage should give way to the other, the exchange of ideas between the two drivers is very instructive. When in all aspects such as age, territory, power, glory, both were found equal, the virtues of the respective kings worked as the last criteria to resolve the issue. Since the king of Banares was more virtuous the king of *Kosala* gave way to him.²³⁵

On another occasion the Buddha laid emphasis on the righteous rule of the king in the following terms: “A king, Sir, ought to rule his kingdom righteously, for whenever kings are unrighteous, then also his officers are unrighteous.”²³⁶ He also pointed out the suffering and blessing involved in following or abstaining from evil actions and expounded in detail the misery resulting from sensual pleasures, comparing them to dreams and the like. Apart from other things for their reputation’s sake the

²³⁵ See details of story, E.B. Cowell (ed.), N. 167, Vol. II, pp. 1-4.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 59.

kings must not be careless, but be earnest and exercise rule in rightness.²³⁷

The king *Pasendi Kosala* had paid much attention to the state affairs in administration but at the same time he had much interest in the moral instruction delivered by the Buddha. As long as the Buddha lived in *Sāvatti*, the king always went to see the Buddha for getting moral instructions concerning personal life and state affairs. He believed what the Buddha advised in the state affairs. The sermons concerning the political affairs and virtues of the ruler were delivered more to the *Kosala* king than to other kings. The attention given to moral instruction did not make the *Kosala* a small state. On the contrary *Pasendi Kosala* maintained his great power along with the moral development of his subjects.

Relations Among States:

During *Pasendi Kosala*' regime the relations among the states were going smoothly. Although the great king ruled over a large area, no colony thought about its separation from him. He ruled over the colonies and his subjects like a father ruling over his son. State relations were based more on fraternity than on the model of master and slave. By these virtues *Kosala* could maintain his great power. After lunch he always went to the Buddha, when he was in *Sāvatti*, reporting on administrative affairs and listening to the moral instruction imparted by the Buddha.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

Relationships among great powers were based on mutual interests and mutual understanding. *Dhammapada* says this of the matrimonial relations and economic aid with *Magadha*.²³⁸ The relation with the other states does not appear much in Pali Texts but we can infer that it was going on smoothly.

War Between States:

The *Taccha-sukara-Jataka* mentions the origin and the end of war between King *Pasendi Kosala* and king *Ajjātasattu*. The king of *Kosala* having the worst, asked his councilors how to take *Ajjātasattu*. They proposed to the king to send a messenger to the Brethren who had great skill with magical charms and to get their opinion. This pleased the king. Accordingly, he sent men to overhear what the Brethren should say.

At *Jetavana* many king's officers who had renounced the world were living. Two among these *Dhammagahatissa* and the elder *Mantidatta* were prominent. The conversation between the two regarding the war between *Magadha* and *Kosala* is very important. They discussed the way *Kosala* could defeat *Ajjātasattu*. After discussing three kinds of battle wagons, they discussed the strategy of war *Kosala* should adapt to defeat *Ajjātasattu*: "let him post valiant men on his two flanks on the hill-top, and then show his main battle in front. Once he gets in between, out with a shout and leap,

²³⁸ Charles Rockwell Lanman (ed.), N. 124, p. 60.

and they have him like a fish in a lobster pot. That is the way to catch him”²³⁹.

He immediately set out with a great host and took *Ajjātasattu* prisoner and bound him in chains. After punishing him for some days, he released him, advising him not to do it again. And by way of consolation he gave his own daughter, the princess *Vajirā*, in marriage, and finally dismissed him with the great pomp.²⁴⁰

Besides this, there was no war among the states held by the king *Pasendi Kosala*. Thus the war held with *Ajjātasattu* was not to conquer and rule over him. It was like a conflict among relatives.

After causing the death of *Pasendi Kosala* through the treacherous ways adopted by *Kārāyana*, *Vidudabha* became the king. After getting firmly established on the throne, he attacked the *Sakayas*. Though he defeated them along with many others he died due to a sudden heavy flood while taking rest on the banks of the river. The flood filled the bed of the river and carried *Vidudabha* and his retinue out to sea, and all of them became food for fishes and tortoises.²⁴¹

²³⁹ E.B. Cowell (ed.), N. 159, p. 216.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ See detail of story, Charles Rockwell Lanman (ed.), N. 124, p. 45.

The Fall Down of Kosala:

After the kings *Pasendi* and *Vidudabha* died *Kosala* had neither king nor armed force while *Ajjātasattu* had a fine army. The *Kosala* kingdom had to be under the rule of *Magadha* without a struggle. It vanished completely from history though the identical name was later given to a medieval central Indian Kingdom. Most of the Buddha's discourses were pronounced at *Sāvatti* but the first council of the Buddhist Order was convened at *Rājagaha*. This further proves that the *Kosala* kingdom had lost its former great power by 485 B.C.²⁴²

Vangsa (Vamsa) and Avanti:

Two states, *Vangsa* and *Avanti*, are considered by the Buddhist scholars as the contemporary great powers called *Magadha* and *Kosala*. Pali Texts do not describe their political affairs in as much detail as we find in other books. They appear clearly in the *Dhammapada* Commentary. It points out that the relationship between *Vangsa* and *Avanti* was based on matrimonial alliance. Rhys Davids points out that the royal families of Kosambi and *Avanti* were united by marriage as were their neighbors *Magadha* and *Kosala*.²⁴³ The *Dhammapada* gives the romantic story of the way in which *Vasula-datta*, a daughter of the king *Pajjota* of *Avanti*, became the wife

²⁴² Kosambi and Others, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, Bombay: Popular Prakashan Private Ltd., 1985), p. 160.

²⁴³ T.W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981), p. 4.

(or one of the three wives) of the king *Udena* of *Kosambi*.²⁴⁴

Canda-Pajjota was the king of *Avanti* at the time of the Buddha. *Mahavagga* gives the account of the relation between *Magadha* and *Avanti* that once, when ill with jaundice, he asked *Bimbisāra* to give him the service of *Jivaka*. *Bimbisāra*, as said earlier, provide him the service of *Jivaka*. This indicates that relations between *Magadha* and *Avanti* were characterized by mutual interest and mutual understanding during *Bimbisāra*'s reign. It can be said that *Pajjota* was the friend of *Bimbisāra* and when the latter was put to death by *Ajjātasattu*, *Pajjota* seems to have made preparations to wage war on *Ajjātasattu*. The defenses of *Rajagaha* were strengthened to meet the threatened attack, but nothing further happened.²⁴⁵

The state relations between *Avanti* and *Vangsa* were good because they were based on matrimonial relations. After *Udena* placed the daughter of *Canda-Pajjota* in the position of chief Consort, there is no mention of the relationship between the two states in other texts.

Udena, the king of *Kosambi*, in addition to the above reference, is again mentioned in the same source. The *Dhammapada* Commentary mentions that he was the son of *Parantapa*. His mother, when pregnant with him, was carried off by a monster bird and deposited on a tree near the residence of *Allakappa*. The child was born while a

²⁴⁴ See the story in details, Charles Rockwell Lanman (ed.), N. 124, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 270-274.

²⁴⁵ See Malalasekara, N. 137, Vol. II, p. 838.

storm was going on. *Allakappa* took them under his protection. One day, when *Udena* was grown up, *Allakappa* saw by the conjunction of the planets that *Parantapa* had died. When he announced the news, *Udena's* mother revealed to him her identity. *Allakappa* taught *Udena* the various charms he knew for taming elephants and sent him to *Kosambi*, with a large following of elephants, to claim the kingdom.²⁴⁶

It can be said that the close relation between *Vangsa* and *Avanti* was an alliance that was made for balance of power with *Kosala* and *Magadha*. Thus in the Buddha's time while the four great kings of the four great kingdoms were living, there was no war. It can be inferred that the concept of bipolarity which leads to the balance of power appeared long back in Ancient Indian History. The most favoured method of inter state relations in the ancient times was the matrimonial relation. Blood relation should be more conducive to unity and integrity than the relation based on self-interest.

Vajjī

Vajjī was the only republican state considered a great power among the sixteen great states. Its capital city was *Vesālī*. The *Ekapanna Jataka* states that in those days the city enjoyed marvelous prosperity. A triple wall encompassed the city, each wall at a league's distance from the next, and there were three gates with watch-towers. In that city there were always seven thousand

²⁴⁶ See Charles Rockwell Lanman (ed.), N. 124, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 247-252.

seven hundred and seven kings to govern the kingdom, and a similar number of viceroys, generals and treasures.²⁴⁷

Mahāvagga refers to the glory and prosperity of *Vesālī* that the city was opulent, prosperous, populous, and provided with all kinds of food. There were seven thousand seven hundred and seven store buildings, and seven thousand seven hundred and seven pleasure grounds, and seven thousand seven hundred and seven lotus ponds. There was also the courtesan named, *Ambapalika* (*Amrapali*), who was beautiful, graceful, pleasant, gifted with the highest beauty of complexion, well versed in dancing, singing and lute-playing, much visited by desirous people. She charged fifty *Kahāpanas* for one night. Because of her, *Vesālī* became more and more flourishing.²⁴⁸ It is said that the prosperous economic condition of any state plays an important role in supporting the power of the state. It is reflected in the mode of life of the people living in the state. Once the Buddha came to *Vesālī* and was staying at *Ambapali's* grove.

When the *Licchavis* of *Vesālī* heard that news, they mounted magnificent carriages and proceeded with their train to *Vesālī*. Varying in colour and size they all wore ornaments, a sign of their prosperity. When the Blessed

²⁴⁷ E.B. Cowell (ed.), N. 159, Vol. I, p. 316.

²⁴⁸ F. Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XVII, trans., T.W. Rhys Davids and H. Oldenberg (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968), p. 171.

One saw the *Licchavis* approaching in the distance he addressed the monks and said.

O monks, let those of the monks who have never seen the *Tāvātimsa* God, gaze upon this company of the Licchavis, behold this company of the *Licchavis*, compare this company of the *Licchavis* even as a company of the *Tāvātimsa* God.²⁴⁹

The Buddha's words indicate the well-being and prosperity of the *Vesālians* or *Licchavis*. The dwelling houses of the people also reflected the economic prosperity. In the city there were pleasure gardens for taking rest and swimming ponds. There was not only material prosperity but also moral or spiritual upliftment for the people. It can be said that martial and spiritual development were balanced. The equality of the people was recognized, too. They lived their lives according to their abilities. Even the courtesan also enjoyed social status. She could earn *puñña* (*punya*) or merit by giving food to the Order of Buddha and could listen to his religious discourse dealing with upright conduct, earnest contemplation and intelligence.²⁵⁰

Government:

The governing body consisted of seven thousand seven hundred and seven kings governing the kingdom.

²⁴⁹ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 142, pp. 31-32.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

The same number of viceroys, generals, and treasurers were working with them.²⁵¹ It was a republican system because the decisions on important policies had to be approved by the majority of the members of the governing body. Each king could be a member of the assembly. These states had a political system which differed from absolute monarchy because there were more than seven thousand kings. If absolute monarchy were established it could not have stability because it was very easy for the majority of the kings to rebel or disturb the administration.

It may be pointed out that the republican system of *Vesālī* may not be like that of American or any other country in modern times. It was a republican monarchy where the election of the leader of the state might be carried out by the kings and the common people might have no participation in the election of their leader.

The ability of the administration can be seen from the glory and prosperity of the cities of the people. The administration was decentralized by distribution of duties. The assembly consisted of a large number of qualified or educated members which provided an opportunity for checks and balance on each other in carrying out their duties.

The administrators and politicians of the republic of *Vesālī* did not take over the administration of law and justice. The judges themselves were the administrators of

²⁵¹ E.B. Cowell (ed.), N. 159, p. 316.

law and justice. No evidence is found of politicians and local administrators putting any undue pressure on the law courts or influencing the process of justice.²⁵² It may, thus, be surmised that the process of justice was free from interference.

Seven Conditions of National Welfare:

The unity of the *Licchavis* was based on mutual understanding, discipline, and moral strength. They had observed, with due devotion respect and honour, the seven conditions of national welfare and integrity which the Buddha preached at *Sarandada Temple*. This is what he spoke concerning the conditions of welfare:

1. so long, *Ananda*, as the *Vajjians* hold these full and frequent public assemblies.
2. so long, *Ananda*, as the *Vajjians* meet together in concord, and rise in concord, and carry out their undertaking in concord,
3. so long as they enact nothing not already established, abrogate nothing that has been already enacted, and act in accordance with the ancient institutions of the *Vajjians* as established in former days,
4. so long as they honour and esteem and revere and support the *Vejjian* elders, and hold it a point of duty to hearken to their words,
5. so long as no women or girls belonging to their clans are detained among them by force or abduction,

²⁵² Bhikkhu Amaritananda, *Kings of Buddha's Time*, p. 128.

6. so long as they honour and esteem revere and support the *Vajjian* shrines in town or country, and allow not proper offerings and rites, as formerly given and performed, to fall into desuetude,
7. so long as the rightful protection, defense and support shall be fully provided for the *Arahants* (holy men) among them, so that *Arahants* from a distance may enter the realm, and the *Arahants* therein may live at ease, so long as may the *Vajjians* be expected not to decline, but to prosper.²⁵³

It may be observed that the seven conditions of national welfare contain many ideas such as freedom, fraternity, human right, culture and ancient custom. In the beginning the frequent public assemblies supported the ideas of freedom to discuss, express and criticize the state affairs everyday. It was very easy to find what should be corrected or what should be started or finished. Everything was approved by the majority of the members. The *Dhammapada* Commentary regarding emergency matters submitted to the public assemblies says that they were approved by the majority of the members.²⁵⁴

The second condition of the national welfare promoted the ideas of integrity and mutual undertaking. To consider any matter, a meeting should be held. The members should have concurrence, co-operation and mutual help in carrying out state affairs.

²⁵³ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 142, pp. 3-4.

²⁵⁴ Charles Rockwell Lanman (ed.), N. 124, Vol. XXX, p. 169.

The third and the fourth conditions emphasized the maintenance of good custom and culture. It is not appropriate to abrogate the ancient regulations which contributed to the well-being of the modern society. The fourth emphasis was to honour elders. It is true that elder scholars have much expertise and experience of life. To esteem and honour them enables the modern generation to understand that the present phenomena are something resulting from former phenomena.

The fifth condition gives the idea of women's rights which is valid up to now. The Buddha can be said to be the first man of the East who raised the issue of women's rights and tried to protect them. By nature, the women are weak but they carry a lot of burdens in their lives. They are not mere slaves of men to serve them and give them pleasure; they have actually given birth to men. It would not be wrong to say that women have not been the slaves of men, but the owners of men's lives. To injure women by force or abduction is condemned. On the contrary to love and be kind towards them is praised.

The two last conditions give the idea of dealing with the faith of the former generation. The holy men coming from distant places to the state should be welcomed and given hospitality, and provided with the four conditions of life viz., food, clothes, residence and medicine. It also suggests freedom of preaching. The state should give them this opportunity because they are all preaching a righteous way of life to the people.

The Upright of Moral Conduct:

The *Licchavis*, whether young or old, were eager to seek and follow the truth of self-development. *Mahāparinibbana Sutta* says that when the Blessed One arrived at *Vesālī*, and was staying at *Ambapali's* grove they went to the place where the Blessed One was sitting and took their seats respectfully by his side. And when they were thus seated, the Blessed One instructed and roused and incited and gladdened them with religious discourse. They expressed their thanks and rose from their seats and bowed down before the Blessed One, as they departed from that place.²⁵⁵

The young *Licchavis* were also given moral education, and cultivated morality. It is said that among the kings' sons was one *Wicked* prince. He was a fierce, passionate and cruel young man. He always punished people like an enraged viper. So at last his parents resolved to bring the ungovernable youth to the all-wise Buddha, realizing that he alone could possibly tame their son's fierce spirit. So they brought him to the Master.

In a very instructive way the Blessed One convinced the cruel prince that his wickedness was going to be a cause of sorrow for him in the present life and in the next one also. As such, he should show kindness, be a doer of good. Such was the effect of this one lecture upon the prince that his pride was humbled. His errant manners and selfishness disappeared. His heart turned to kindness and

²⁵⁵ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 142. pp. 31-33

love. Nevermore did he revile or strike, but became gentle as a snake devoid of fangs, or as a crab with broken claws, or as a bull with broken horns.²⁵⁶

War with Magadha and Defeat of Vajjī

The *Licchavis* were peace lovers. They did not like to fight with their neighbors. At the same time it is known that the *Licchavis* were strong enough to defend their state from the enemy. The prosperity and glory of *Vesālī* made *Ajjātasattu* desire to rule over it. Instead of friendly relationship between *Magadha* and *Vesālī* there came many wars between the two. *Sunidha* and *Vassakāra*, the Chief Ministers of *Magadha*, built a fortress to repel the *Vesālians*.²⁵⁷ It was not long before the Buddha's death that *Ajjātasattu* was desirous of attacking the *Vesālians*. Because of the *Vesālians* being mighty and powerful it was difficult for him to decide to attack soon. So he sent *Vassakāra*, Prime Minister of *Magadha*, to see the Buddha and receive some advice from him. As narrated earlier the Buddha said, "so long as the seven conditions of national welfare shall continue to exist among the *Vesālians*, so long as the *Vesālians* shall be well instructed in those conditions, so long may we expect them not to decline, but to prosper."²⁵⁸ The Buddha's word made *Vassakāra Brahman* aware that the *Vesālians* could not be overcome by the king of *Magadha*, that is, not in battle, without diplomacy or breaking up their alliance.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶ E.B. Cowell (ed.), N. 158, Vol. I, pp. 316-317.

²⁵⁷ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 142, p. 18.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

The might and power of the *Vesālians* was based on the unity and their organizational method and as long as they maintained unity no power could do them harm. Then *Vassakāra* worked out a plan to create a cleavage among the *Licchavis*. As a part of the plan he requested the king *Ajjātasattu* to banish him from the kingdom as a punishment for some imaginary crime, after shaving him bald. The king followed his advice. After that *Vassakāra* went to the *Licchavis* and told them how he had been banished from the kingdom by king *Ajjātasattu*. Gradually, he was taken into confidence by the *Licchavis*. Then he started creating discord among them; playing one against other. During his three years' stay at *Vesālī*. *Vassakāra* severely weakened the republic. Then, he sent an invitation to *Ajjātasattu* to launch an invasion against the republic. *Ajjātasattu*'s chance of victory came only after three years.²⁶⁰ It was due to *Vassakāra*'s diplomacy and treachery that he succeeded in breaking up their union and king *Ajjātasattu* easily conquered them. The *Vajjī* republic came under the sovereignty of *Magadha*.

Dissension is the weak point of the republican political system. The political affairs cannot be decided by one leader but must be approved by the assembly. When the members of the assembly are divided into many groups, it is very difficult to issue policies for carrying on state affairs. The *Licchavis* had conflict among themselves. The co-ordination was lacking among the ministers and they could not carry out their duties. As they were disunited

²⁶⁰ Bhikkhu Amritananda, N. 151, p. 144.

they did not have consensus in fighting the enemy. So *Ajjātasattu* easily conquered them.

The political condition in the Buddha's time was not complex. It was divided into two, the monarchies and the republics. Of the sixteen great states, some were dependent and some were independent.

There were only five states considered as great powers. Of them, the four great states were monarchies and one was a republic. The important element of power of the monarchical state was its economic base and the strength of the leader. But the element of power in the republican state was economic power and the integrity of the members of the assembly and those who were responsible for state affairs. Matrimonial relationships promoted the foreign policies of each power but moral and economic aids were also employed as instruments of policy.

In the sphere of state relations there was general amity because most of the rulers were interested in the Buddha's religious discourses. The Buddha was looked upon as a good friend, master and the King of Kings by most of the rulers in his day.

III

BUDDHA: ON THE STATE

Towards a General Definition of State:

The study of political science, in a sense, means the study of the concept of the state, for the term “Political Science” has been defined as the science of the state.²⁶¹ Laski says, “the study of politics concerns itself with the life of men in relation to organized states”.²⁶² We hear a great deal about “the Welfare State,” “State Control”, “State Bureaucracy” etc. The word “state” should not be confused with a nation or country, though sometimes it is used in these senses as for example, the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union.²⁶³ It is necessary to clarify what we mean by “State”.

According to Franklin C. Salisbury, “the state is the political organization which preserves the social order.”²⁶⁴ His definition emphasizes the importance of the government. Raphael writes that “the state is designed primarily to maintain order and security exercising universal jurisdiction within territorial boundaries, by means of law backed by force and recognized as having

²⁶¹ Raymond G. Gettle, *Political Science* (Boston: Gin and Company, 1933), p. 3.

²⁶² Dorothy M. Pickles, *Introduction to Politics* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1972), p. 34

²⁶³ Carton Clymer Rode and Others, *Introduction to Political Science* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1967), p. 4.

²⁶⁴ Franklin C. Salisbury, *Speaking of Politics* (New York: Vantage Press, 1956), pp. 96-97.

sovereignty”.²⁶⁵ State, according to him, consists of the following factors: law and order, territorial boundaries, power and sovereignty. The security of the people living in the state is thereby maintained.

MacIver says, “the state is an association which acting through law, as promulgated by a government, endowed to this end with coercive power, maintains within a community territorial demarcated the universal conditions of social order”.²⁶⁶ This indicates that states consist of people, law, government, power, and territorial boundaries. At the same time the states’ relations are based on universal conditions of social order.

The definitions of Raphael and MacIver have the merit of being based on what is common to all states. There are many definitions of the state. However, almost all definitions of “State” contain four essential elements: people, territory, government, and sovereignty.²⁶⁷ This view is widely accepted.

Concept of State as Stated in the Buddhist Scriptures.

The word ‘state’ in English is similar to and practically identical with the term ‘*Ratha*’ in the Pali language, which means a reign, kingdom, empire, country, or realm.²⁶⁸ According to Buddhist Scriptures, the state is

²⁶⁵ D.D. Raphael, *Problem and Political Philosophy* (London: MacMillan, 1979), p. 59.

²⁶⁶ Vide R.M. Macler, *The Modern State* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 22.

²⁶⁷ Carton Clymer Rode and Others, N. 3, p. 5.

²⁶⁸ T.W. Rhys Davids and William Stede (ed.), *Pali-English Dictionary* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975), p.53.

not an independent thing, such as the ruler, government, or land, but the combination of the four important elements: the territory, people, government, and sovereignty or independence. The concept of the state in the Buddha's time consisted of four elements just as we find in the modern concept of the state.

Mahāvagga, one of the sections in the Buddhist Scriptures, says about the *Magadha* state “*Seniya Bimbisāra*, the king of *Magadha*, held his sovereignty over eighty thousand townships.”²⁶⁹ *Dhammapada* Commentary says; “the population of the *Magadha* State was a hundred and eighty million.”²⁷⁰ “The total area of the state was 300 leagues and the area of the capital city *Rajagaha* was 3 Gantas.”²⁷¹ It is to be noticed that the concept of the states might be well known in the sense of country or kingdom even before the Buddha's appearance.

The Buddha did not speak of the ideal government or ideal state because he recognized the legitimacy of every political system. He did not regard the political system as a prime factor. The spirit of the politician who exercised power was most important.

The ruler of the state should run the state for the common good, the benefit and happiness of the people. The state, according to the Buddha, is nothing more than a

²⁶⁹ F. Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XVII, trans., T.W. Rhys Davids and H. Oldenberg (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982), p. 1.

²⁷⁰ Charles Rockwell Lanmen (ed.), *Buddhist Legends*, Vol. XXIX trans., Eugene Waston Burlingame (London: Pali Texts Society, 1979), p. 199.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. XXX, p. 37.

place to seek the truth and wellbeing of the people. The ruler or the group of rulers, thus, is an agency consisting of the people who have ability to help the subjects to attain the highest aim of life. “State” in Buddhism, thus, is different from the definitions mentioned above. It lays special emphasis on the ethical and moral aspects. The Buddha’s ideas on the state involve the following distinct aspects: the origin of the state, the rulers of the state and their virtue.

Origin of the State:

Before we come to consider the origin of the state as expressed in Buddhist Scriptures, it is proper to discuss the origin of the state which the political thinkers have thought of and referred to. Down the centuries, political thinkers have debated over the question “What is the origin of the State?”. Lacking adequate historical or anthropological evidence, they are compelled to adopt various hypotheses. There are many theories concerning the origin of the state as propounded by both the Western and the Eastern thinkers. Here the divine theory and social contract theory will be taken into consideration in evaluation of the concept of the origin of the state as described in the Buddhist Scriptures..

The Divine Theory:

The central concept of the origin of the state according to the divine theory is that everything appearing in the world is created by God. The great Greek philosopher,

Plato (429-347 B.C.) , traces the origin of the state in one of his dialogues where the great Sophist Protagoras tells the following myth or story of the creation:

Once upon a time there were gods only, and no mortal creatures. But when the appointed time came that these also should be created, the gods fashioned them out of earth and fire and various mixtures of both elements in the interior of the earth and when they were about to bring them into the light of day, they ordered Prometheus and Epimetheus to equip them, and to distribute to them severally their proper qualities.²⁷²

The same book describes human beings who are created by God and their mode of life:

Mankind at first lived dispersed and there were no cities. But the consequence was that they were destroyed by the wild beasts. After a while the desire of self-preservation gathered them into cities; but when they were gathered together, having no art of government, the evil entreated one another, and were again in process of dispersion and destruction.²⁷³

The experience of suffering led human beings to establish political institutions. Since there was no art of human

²⁷² B.J. Diggs (ed.), *The State Justice, and The Common Good* (U.S.A.: Scott, Foreman and Company, 1974), p. 4.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

relations and good government they faced suffering again and again. No one had the idea to find the way for their self-preservation. Finally, God came to make them know the virtues and art of good government.

Zeus feared that the entire race would be exterminated and so he sent Hermes to them, bearing reverence and justice to be the ordering principles of cities and the bonds of friendship and conciliation.²⁷⁴

It is the function of God to impart virtues to human beings for good life. The virtues desired for the political action are wisdom and justice. They are followed by everyone who would be or are the governor of the state. In short, human beings and their virtues are created by God. One can get the idea from this that everything, world, human beings, political institutions, government, the virtues of government, are all created by God. Thus, the oldest of all theories regarding origin of the state is the idea that God ordained and established it.²⁷⁵

Social Contract Theory:

The social contract theory was based on the notion that “the state has been deliberately created by men, by means of a social contract to which each individual had consented.”²⁷⁶ Many different views of this social contract

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵ Carton Clymer Rode and Others, N. 3, p. 25.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

theory were advanced during the period of the religious wars and in the course of the popular revolutions in England, America, and France. Two of the best known and most influential social contract theories were those of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. And afterward, Rousseau also became a famous social contract theorist. Some theorists described a social contract by which man gave all his natural rights to an absolute monarchy, while others described an agreement by which man retained almost all his natural rights under a limited parliamentary type of government responsible to the people.²⁷⁷

Hobbes (1588-1679):

The Hobbesian view of the social contract is to be understood against the background of his world-view. According to him the world is a huge machine. Its fundamental features are matter and motion. The individuals are also a part of the universe. They are microcosms of the macrocosms. They are driven by impulses of self-preservation, fear, jealousy, competition and glory. In the mean time, their activities are influenced or determined by the forces of attraction and aversion. They like to do certain things which attract them and dislike or tend to avoid those things which are harmful to them. All the while, they seek to promote self-preservation and to avoid harm to themselves. All such individuals are said to inhabit the state of nature which, for all practical purpose, is something like a jungle. The individuals have their liberties and rights, limitations or

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

restrictions which arise only from one another's right or liberties. On the whole it is a miserable or intolerable situation. Men are always pestered by fear or insecurity.²⁷⁸ Hobbes says that "in the state of nature there is no account of time, no arts, no letters, no society, continual fear and danger of violent death, and the life of man is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."²⁷⁹

It is characterized by a war of all against all. In such a state of affairs there can be no questions of stable life, trade, commerce, civilization, learning or letters. The individuals, driven by the insecure and intolerable situation, seek to establish a common sovereignty or state. They bring a sovereign into existence by agreeing among themselves to surrender their rights and liberties. It must be clearly understood that the contract is among the individuals, and not between the individuals and the sovereign.²⁸⁰

John Locke:

John Locke's theory of state origin emphasized the state of nature. He said that "the original state of nature was moderately pleasant, because men were rational and moral beings who could perceive the law of nature and be guided by it."²⁸¹ Men under such an environment were not comfortable because many men in the state of nature were

²⁷⁸ William Ebenstein, *Great Political Thinkers* (New Delhi: Oxford & I.B.H. Publishing Company, 1969), p. 368.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ Carton Clymer Rode and Others, N. 3, p. 26.

still corrupt and vicious. They lacked any agency which could adjudicate the conflicting claims which individuals might assert in pursuit of their natural rights. In order to promote and extend man's natural rights, men decided to enter voluntarily and by unanimous consent, into a compact to form a civil society.²⁸² It, afterward, became a political society in which everybody could enjoy his natural rights.

The basic argument for the origin of the state lies in the inconveniences of the state of nature. According to Locke the state was created in order to preserve and protect natural rights, namely, property, life, and liberty.²⁸³ The chief function of the state is to serve as an instrument for the preservation and protection of its members' property.²⁸⁴ According to his social contract theory, the common consensus of the majority of persons created, controlled and enjoyed the state. It was the common consent without any compulsion by God or by any man. Far from giving up their natural rights, Locke said that "men retained all of them in the new society, with the sole exception of the right to adjudicate and determine the extent of such right."²⁸⁵

Rousseau (1712-1778):

Another influential version of the social contract theory was set forth in 1762 by the Swiss born French

²⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²⁸³ B.J. Diggs (ed.), N. 12, pp. 35-36.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p. 36.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

man, Rousseau. Rousseau's theory of social contract was closely influenced by his world view. He had a peculiar fascination for the primitive world of simplicity, innocence and bliss and he had a peculiar hatred for the civilized world of his times which was a world of artificiality, inequality, injustice and misery. He said that "the life of the primitive man was simple, uncomplicated and happy. His freedom and innocence were unspoilt. He grew up and lived like a healthy brute. In the course of time, however, man entered into the next stage of development."²⁸⁶

According to Rousseau, this stage, too, was pretty good, though the evils of the civilized society which came later were beginning to make their appearance. At the second stage of human history, man ceased to wander in search of food, and shelter and adopted a settled mode of life. He took to cultivation and had a more or less fixed residence. The institutions of family and property appeared in their rudimentary forms.²⁸⁷

At this second stage the individuals felt the need of a social contract for making possible community life under a common authority. Thus community life is the justification for the contract and the state.²⁸⁸

According to Rousseau, the contract is among the individuals. The individuals part with their liberties and

²⁸⁶ Jean Jacques Rosseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1952), p. 4.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

rights in order to create the common authority of the state. Rousseau said that:

In so giving up a portion of their liberties and rights the individuals do not really lose anything. There would have been a loss if only some individuals have given up their liberties and rights and not others. Since all the individuals have given up their liberties and rights all are equal and nobody is stronger in relation to the others.²⁸⁹

Rousseau maintained that the state is based on the general will.²⁹⁰ We have already seen the nature and role of the general will consisting of the real will of all and since the real wills are the results of the best the individuals can think of or aspire for, it represents the best thoughts and aspirations of the individuals. Rousseau contended that the state was based on such a general will.²⁹¹ His idea of the state was that of a city state which gave the individuals direct participation and control in the affairs of the state.

Since the state was also based on general will, its laws, policies, or administration were automatically representative of the individuals' wishes or aspirations. There was no question of any dispute or disharmony between the wishes of the individuals and the policies of the state. Rousseau's state is directly democratic, based on

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

a general will directed to the attainment of general good.²⁹² General will and general good are supposed to be the central significance of Rousseau's contract theory of state origin.

Evolutionary Theory of the State:

On the basis of existing knowledge it would appear that the state actually had its origin in the family. It later developed into clan and tribe with habits of obedience carried over from fathers to the elders of the tribal council. Actual government seems to appear from the rise of a pasture economy and the institution of property. Both these presented problems calling for stronger social controls and leadership, the latter usually that of a chieftain, whose rule frequently became hereditary.²⁹³

In later periods when populations began to arrange the supply of food, many people settled down in fertile lands which could be cultivated. With the appearance of an agricultural economy, the territorial state came into being, and territorial attachment supplemented the earlier bond of kingship. War and conquest had played an important role in the origin of the state and government. The state, thus, is the end product of many factors: biological, economic, cultural and military; like all human institutions, it defies explanation in the term of simple unilinear causation.²⁹⁴

²⁹² Sir Ernest Barker, *Social Contract: Essays by Locke Hume, and Rousseau* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 32.

²⁹³ Carton Clymer Rode and Others, N. 3, p. 24.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

The Buddha's ideas on the State Origin:

Nobody contends that the Buddha's ideas on the State Origin are based on divine theory or contract theory. It is necessary to study the original Buddhist Scriptures and compare them with the modern and ancient theory of the state origin as propounded by various political thinkers. Some aspects are very close to the divine theory but in Buddhist theory, everything is not created by God. God does not play a dominant role in human life, rather human beings try to solve their problems by themselves.

Aggaññ Suttanta is to be considered as an important source for seeking the Buddha's ideas on the state. It tells us the details of the evolution of human beings and the world from the dim past, the origin of private property, the family, the need for socio-political institutions, and the important features of economy in primitive society.

Origin of the World and Human Beings:

The concept of primitive humans in the *Suttanta* is the idea of humans of supernatural power who were living a special mode of life without any socio-political institutions. They were pure and enjoyed liberty to earn their livelihood. The characteristic of economic conditions were not enumerated.

The rise of the world and existence of being is described in the *Suttanta* as follows:

After the lapse of a long, long period this world passed away. And this world happens, beings have mostly been reborn in the world of radiance; and there they dwell, made of mind, feeding on rapture, self-luminous, traversing the air, continuing in glory.²⁹⁵

This statement tells us that before this world happened there were beings existing in another world, the world of radiance, a wonderful place. It is noted that the *Suttanta* uses the common word “beings” instead of “humans” or human beings. The concept of humans appears in the next description:

When this happens, beings who de cease from the world of radiance usually come to life as humans. And they become made of mind, feeding on rapture, self-luminous traversing the air, continuing in glory, and remain thus for long, long period of time.²⁹⁶

This statement of the *Sutta* speaks of a world in which only humans were living. Their mode of life was perfect. They enjoyed peace and danced in the air, and lived for a long time. This period of primitive humans was called a fanciful Golden Age or a form of Utopia.²⁹⁷ It was a

²⁹⁵ T.W. Rhys Davids (ed.), *Dialogues of the Buddha*, part III, trans., T.W. Rhys Davids and C.A.F. Rhys Davids (London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1957), P. 82.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ Beni Prasad, *Theory of Government in Ancient India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968), p. 205.

perfect society because the human beings lived in accordance with virtue and morality. In such a society, there was no concept of master, slave, ruler, ruled, social systems, or political institutions. Their feeling was full of good will without the interference of any other passionate evil.

In this stage if we compare this idea with the divine theory of state origin mentioned earlier it is different because the concept of the origin and existence of human beings and the evolution of the world according to Buddhism were based on the natural process while in the divine theory everything was created by God. When we compare Buddhist ideas with the contract theory of John Locke and Rousseau similar points can be found. The nature of primitive society was pure, simple, happy and uncomplicated. And there was no mention of the creator.

Evolution of Human Beings and the World:

It may be stated that the evolution of human beings and the world along with the natural process has never ceased. *Suttanta* refers to the origin of the earth and afterward it became the first kind of human food:

Earth with its savour was spread out in the waters. Even as a scum forms on the surface of boiled milky rice that is cooling, so did the earth appear. It became endowed with colour, with odour, and with taste. Even as well-made ghee or pure butter,

so was its colour; even as the flawless honey of the bee, so sweet was it.²⁹⁸

The story continues that “a being of greedy disposition, said: Lo now; what will this be? And tasted the savoury earth with his finger.”²⁹⁹ After he tasted the savour of earth he was suffused with the savour. Craving entered into him. And other human beings followed his action. They, thus, tasting, became suffused with the savour, and craving entered into them.³⁰⁰ This evolution of the world brought a new world form; also the mode of life of the human beings had been changed significantly. Because they had tasted the savoury earth, their full virtuous minds faded away. For the first time, human beings disposed by greed and craving arose. These two passions, greed and craving, later created social crises which led to society and various institutions. Keeping in mind this important point, that is, that human beings were going on in accordance with the power of craving and greed instead of morality or virtue, the state of primitive society which was supposed to be perfect was going to decline.

New Mode of Life of Human Beings and New Phenomena of the World.

When human beings indulged in the taste of the savour of earth, the self-luminosity faded away. When their self-luminosity faded away, the moon and the sun

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

became manifest. Thereupon star-shapes and constellations appeared. Then, the months, half-months, seasons and years appeared.³⁰¹ Now the trance of happiness and peace lasted for ages. But at last purity declined, and rottenness began. In a word, the human beings fell from the ethereal into the physical mode of life. From now the concept of human life moves from the idealistic in which all human beings were of full of morality and virtue, to the real phenomena of human beings who are men of both selfishness and virtue.

In the new form of life, human beings earned their livelihood with what they could find. According to the *Sutta* the natural foods which the primitive men had eaten were: savoury earth,³⁰² mushrooms,³⁰³ bamboo,³⁰⁴ creepers,³⁰⁵ and rice.³⁰⁶ When they ate new kinds of food their body became solid; there appeared variety in their comeliness. Their characteristics could be seen. They felt ill- or well-favoured. The concept of pride in those who had beauty and the concept of looking upon down those who were not beautiful appeared.³⁰⁷ The food mentioned above changed from time to time until it remained the rice. When human beings changed their mode of life from the ethereal life where they earned their life by rapture to a real human life where they had to earn their livelihood with food, the change made them feel and understand

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

³⁰² T.W. Rhys Davids (ed.), N. 35, p. 82.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

what was happening around them. But there was no concept of the family, or house. They still enjoyed natural conditions of life.

Origin of Family:

When they ate rice as food their bodies became more solid, and their feelings also became more sensitive. During this time *Suttanta* describes the cause and origin of the family as follows:

Rice appeared ripening in open spaces, no powder had it and no husk, fragrant and clean grained. Where of an evening they gathered and carried away for supper, there next morning the rice stood ripe and grown again.³⁰⁸ Then those beings feasting on this rice in clearings, feeding on it, nourished by it, so continued for a long long while. And in measure as they, thus feeding, went on existing, so did the bodies of those beings become even more solid, and the divergence in their comeliness more pronounced. In the female appeared the distinctive features of the female, in the male those of the male. Then truly did woman contemplate man too closely, and man, woman. In them contemplating over much the one the other, passion arose and burning entered their bodies. They in consequence thereof followed their lusts. And beings seeing them so doing threw, some sand,

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

some ashes, and some coudung crying: “perish, foul ones: Perish foul ones...” And in as much as those beings at that time quickly incurred blame for immorality, they set to work to make huts, to conceal just that immorality.³⁰⁹

According to the Buddhist view, the origin of the family was based on reason and rationality. The natural force made human beings satisfy with sensual pleasure which was a new one for them. It is not wrong to say that the main cause of transition of natural human life into family life is sexual pleasure. It became a new condition of life which they had never had before.

The most important cause of origin of the family may be public opinion. We find the idea from the statement mentioned above that human beings were divided into two groups: human beings with impure and with pure minds. With the passage of time the number of those with impure minds increased and the latter decreased. As the former were blamed by the latter, the former separated themselves from the natural mode of life and went to another place. They started to build residences for hiding their shame of sexual intercourse which is conceived of as bad behavior by those who did not commit intercourse. This phenomenon leads to the concept of the family. The family consists of father, mother, son and daughter.

Compare this with the modern theory of origin of state and society, such as the contract theory of Rousseau

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

wherein the origin of the state starts from the family. “The most ancient of all societies, and the only one that is natural, is the family”.³¹⁰

Origin of Private Property:

The family life had appeared. More food for preservation of life was required. *Suttanta* describes the starting point of this idea:

Then *Vāsettha*, this occurred to some being of a lazy disposition: Lo now: why do I wear myself out fetching rice for supper in the evening, in the morning for breakfast? What if I were to fetch enough rice for supper and breakfast together? So he gathered at one journey enough rice for the two meals together.³¹¹

Previously, whenever one got hungry he could go to bring the natural rice to eat. There was no idea of collection. The balance of natural distribution continuously appeared. Everybody needed food only for one meal. It was the natural justice of arrangement of social welfare. When the concept of collection appeared, it was inevitable to have competition. Those who were strong could control more property while the weak would be oppressed. Slowly, the concept of common property disappeared, and the concept of private property came into being. The *Sutta* says: “then those beings *Vāsettha*, gathered themselves and bewailed

³¹⁰ Jean Jaques Rousseau, N. 26, p. 4.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

this, saying: Evil customs, sirs, have appeared among men...Come now, let us divide off the rice fields and set boundaries thereto: And so they divided off the rice and set up boundaries around it.³¹²

The concept of individual ownership of private property thus appeared.

Cause of the Origin of the State:

The *Sutta* describes an interesting situation leading to the origin of the state and ruler:

Now some being, *Vāsettha*, of greedy disposition, watching over his own plot, stole another plot and made use of it. They took him and holding him fast, said: truly, good being, thou hast wrought evil in that, while watching thine own plot, thou has stolen another plot and made use of it. See, good being, that thou do not such a thing again: Ay, sirs, he replied. And a second time he did so. And yet a third. And again they took him and admonished him. Some smote him with the hand, some with clods, some with sticks. With such a beginning. *Vāsettha*, did stealing appear, and censure and lying and punishment became known.³¹³

³¹² See *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

From the statement mentioned above, it follows that the human beings controlled by the greedy disposition created social and economic problems. This phenomenon has appeared in the society from the former times up to now. In societies where human beings have followed morality and respected virtue, there was no need of punishment because there was no wrong action. Punishment is a legitimate action. At first bad action or behavior of some people is judged by the convention of the public opinion. This may be called sovereignty. According to the idea of this *Sutta*, sovereignty took the form of public opinion.

Origin of the State and the Ruler:

This idea of pure democracy arises by investing political power in the hands of the whole people. With the passage of time, the people in such a society would like to give the power to one person who can act for them. The mode of election of the ruler is stated as follows:

Now those beings, *Vāsettha*, gathered themselves together, and bewailed these things, saying: From our evil deeds, sirs, becoming manifest, in as much as stealing, censure, lying, punishment have become known, what if we were to select a certain being, who should be wrathful when indignation is right, who should censure that which should rightly be censured and should banish him who deserves to be banished?³¹⁴ ...

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

Chosen by the whole people, *Vāsettha* is what is meant by *Mahā Sammata*.³¹⁵

The greedy disposition in the human mind makes man hold and collect more property than is necessary to earn livelihood. From the oldest time till now, we find that laziness makes man collect the rice grain which is supposed to be the common property. By doing so the common property becomes private property. The greed, of human beings who want to increase their private property makes them steal others' private property. Such behavior brings about social and economic problems within the society.

This phenomenon makes the people have common consciousness to have convention and decide the way to preserve their property. It is natural for them to have common consciousness to protect their property. It can be called the universal common consciousness of the protection of private property. It is not only confined to a small group but it is a universal feeling. The way of protection may vary from one society to another because of various conditions such as environment, attitude, etc. If those who followed the wrong way did not return to the right way, punishment was produced because of the convention of the people to preserve social peace. This convention is based on reason.

Every social problem was considered and solved by the convention of the people. It means that sovereignty

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

was in the hands of the whole people. It is due to this natural process that when society expanded, the complexity of society also increased. The need for one who could decide social and economic problems arose. The statement mentioned above gives a clear idea of the origin of the ruler by way of social consent. The ruler came into being from the concurrence of the whole people. The sovereignty of the people by convention was given to the elected one. Thus appeared the election system.

Qualities and Duties of the Ruler:

The qualities and duties of the ruler were enumerated as follows:

Then, *Vāsettha*, those beings went to the being among them who was the handsomest, the best favoured, the most attractive, the most capable and said to him: Come now, good being, be indignant at that whereat one should rightly be indignant, censure that which should rightly be censured, banish him who deserves to be banished.³¹⁶

According to the *Sutta* the ruler possessed special qualities revered by the members of the society. Those elected as rulers would be good looking, favoured, and capable to decide justly the socio-economic problems. He, after having been elected, had to perform his duties on the basis of constitution issued by the agreement of the whole people. Its main basis was right action of the ruler.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

The elected ruler had limited power because although the sovereignty of the people was given to him, he could not use his own will. He had to use his power according to the will of the whole people. So the origin of Kingship or rulers, according to Buddhist concept, appeared from evolution, purpose, common will, good will, public need and reason. The ruler used the sovereignty on behalf of the people on the basis of *Dhamma*.

When did the state originate? According to this *Sutta* if considered along with the Western theory of social contract or civil state, the concept of the state arose with the origin of ruler or governor. The concept of state includes land for living and growing food, for earning livelihood; sovereignty, formerly was in the hands of the people but with the passage of time the power of the people was transferred to one person who could perform the ruler's function for the benefit and interest of the people. According to the idea of transference of sovereignty, the sovereignty is not permanent, the people control it. The legitimacy of the ruler derives from the consent of the people.

The government was one who used the power on behalf of the people by *Dhamma*. He came to power, according to *Sutta*, for preservation of the private property of the people. His function was to preserve the social order and peace among the people according to the laws and regulations issued by popular convention.

The fourth factor of the state is the people. They are considered important because without the people there is no sovereignty, no ruler, the land cannot be supposed to be the state. According to *Sutta* these factors appeared, so it is not wrong to say that *Aggañña Sutta*, one section of the Buddhist Scriptures, contains the idea of the origin of the state and the ruler.

Is Buddha's Idea of the State Origin Divine Theory or Contract Theory:

The Buddha's idea of the state origin, if compared with the Western theory, is very different from the divine theory. The important point of difference can be seen as follows:

According to *Aggañña Sutta*, the world and human beings originated through the law of natural evolution while in divine theory the world and human beings were created by God.

In the Buddha's ideas human beings in the primitive society were very happy and peaceful. They were moral beings, while in Divine theory human beings in primitive society were unhappy and despairing.

In the Buddha's ideas, human beings could have a good method of seeking their leader and establishment of the state by themselves. The art of government was created in the form of rules which the ruler had to follow strictly, while in divine theory human beings could form

their government but the art of government was unknown. It was the function of God to teach them the art of government.

In the Buddha's ideas, through the history of evolution whenever problems arose human beings could find the way and solve the problems by themselves, while in Divine theory all problems could not be solved by human beings. God played an important role over human dignity.

The Buddha's idea of state origin, if compared with the Western theory, is very close to the social contract theory. There are some similar points to be discussed as follows:

The human beings in primitive society, according to Buddhist Scriptures, were very moral and virtuous. They enjoyed peace and happiness. Such a state could not exist for long because there appeared some beings who were greedy, craving with passion, lustful and of lazy disposition. They were disturbed by such beings. A ruler who could preserve their peace and rights was required. It is same as in Locke's theory which emphasizes the state of nature. Men in the state of nature were moral beings and were also happy. Such a state was disrupted by vicious men of unvirtuous nature and hence the requirement of a state arose.³¹⁷ The purpose of the state was to preserve natural rights, life, liberty, and property.³¹⁸ Human beings in primitive society, according

³¹⁷ Jean Jacques Rousseau, N. 3, p. 26.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

to Rousseau, were good. The evils of society which came later destroyed the well-being of human beings. The difficulties of life concerning livelihood were the main cause to create a state.³¹⁹

The state origin, according to Buddhist Scriptures, also depends upon the consent of the people through which the state is created. The cause of the state origin, as in the Western social contract theory, is the suffering of the people. According to the Buddhist *Sutta* concerning the state origin the problems or suffering of human beings were solved by themselves through convention and agreement. So this can be synthesised as social contract theory.

Concept of the Ruler:

According to “*Aggañña Suttanta*”, the first ruler was entitled ‘*Maha Sammata*’ because he was chosen by the whole people.³²⁰ He also was called *Khattiya* or lord of the fields.³²¹ His last name was *Rājā* because he charms the others by the Norm or *Dhamma*.³²² It is noticed that the first duty of the ruler would be to resolve conflict among the people, to divide the fields and to distribute the fields to the people with justice. Everybody respected and obeyed him. They saw him as the lord of the fields who was helpful to them. In English the word “esquire” or lord of fields is rendered by “*Khattiya*” in the Pali language.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

³²⁰ T.W. Rhys Davids (ed.), N. 35, p. 88.

³²¹ *Ibid.*

³²² *Ibid.*

He preserved the peace and settled the conflicts among the people by way of *Dhamma*. So the word *Khattiya* or lord of the fields was the next expression to denote the ruler. He worked for the people through practicing virtue, morality and justice. He was not removed by the people but on the contrary because of his charm, the norm or virtue mentioned above, and his functions made people satisfied. He was entitled *Rājā**. It means one who gives pleasure. So this was the third standing phrase of the world for calling the ruler in Buddhist Scriptures. Of these words *Khattiya* and *Rājā* were employed generally in the Buddhist Scriptures. *Khattiya* is mostly used for explanation of the king's status. But the position of the ruler is mostly expressed through the word *Rājā*. In Buddhist Scriptures and their Commentary, the word *Rājā* was used to denote the ruler both in a republic and a monarchy.

* "*Rājān*" in Sanskrit, Besides meaning king also means "a man of military caste or Kshatriya. The word "*Kshatriya*" is derived from "*Kshatra*", meaning battle field. And one of the duties of *Kshatriya* is rulership as described in the *Bhagavadgita* XVIII: 43.. A *Kshatriyas* should contain all kingly qualities: powers, majesty, not running away from battle field, generosity, rulership – these are the *Kshatriya*'s duties born of his own nature.

The Pali-English Dictionary explains the etymology of the word *Rājā* as "*Dhammena pare Rañjetī tī Raja*" meaning he gladdens other with his righteousness³²³. We find it is used as a designation of "king" in the sense of an elected or hereditary monarch but also to imply a distinguished nobleman, or a local chieftain, or a prince

³²³ T.W. Rhys Davids and William Stede (ed.), *Pali English Dictionary* (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1975), p. 568.

with various attributes characterizing his position according to special functions.³²⁴ The duty of a good king is described in the *Cakkavatti-Sihanāda-Suttanta* as follows:

But what, sire, is this *Ariyan* (noble) duty of a wheel-turning Monarch? (*Cakkavatti-Rājā*). This dear son, that thou, leaning on the Norm (*Dhamma*: the law of truth and righteousness) honouring, respecting and revering it, doing homage to it, hallowing it, being thyself a Norm-banner, a Norm-signal, have in the Norm as the master, shouldst provide the right watch, ward, and protection for thine own folk for the army, for the nobles, for vassals, for *Brahmins*, and householders, for town and country dwellers, for the religious world, and, for beasts and birds. Throughout thy kingdom let no wrongdoing prevail. And whosoever in thy kingdom is poor, to him let wealth be given.³²⁵

From the meaning of the word “*Rājā*” we are informed about the origin and the functions of the ruler along with the origin of the state. These all originated from the public consent. They, it is said, were based on social contract theory.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

³²⁵ T.W. Rhys David (ed.), N. 35, p. 62.

The Virtues of the Ruler:

The ruler mentioned above was born from the Norm (*Dhamma*) or the virtues. The ruler must rule the realm in a virtuous way. A study of rulership is made by considering the royal virtues. The norm indicates what the king should do to become a good king or a good ruler.

Justice:

Plato, the great Greek thinker praised justice as one of the four virtues: wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice, to support the perfect state.³²⁶ According to Buddhism justice is the soul of the ruler's function. The Buddha said to the king of *Kosala*, "My lord king, to judge a cause with justice and impartiality is the right thing".³²⁷ *Mahā-Hangsajātaka* describes justice as a cause of well-being and happiness through the conversation between the king of the geese and the king of *Kasi* as follows:

"Don't you my lord, enjoy good health and is all well with thee?

I trust thy realm is flourishing and ruled in equity?"

"O King of geese my health is good and all is well with me;

³²⁶ V. Venkata Rao, *Ancient Political Thought* (Delhi: S. Chand & Co., 1966), p. 44.

³²⁷ Professor E.B. Cowell (ed.), *Jātaka Stories*, Vol. II trans., W.H.D. Rouse (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1973), p. 1.

My realm is very flourishing and ruled in equity.”³²⁸

In the same story the conversation indicates another virtue of the ruler which concerns the equity:

“And is the realm in happy case from all oppression free, held by no arbitrary sway, but ruled with equity”?

“My kingdom is in happy case, from all oppression free. Held by no arbitrary sway, but ruled with equity.”³²⁹

Oppression and arbitrary behaviour was considered as the root of social evil. It was a real cause of social suffering. It was supposed to be a great fetter which made humans suffer. In every society justice is needed for defeating oppression. The story also tells about justice which the ruler should give to bad men and good men. The conversation runs as follows:

“Dost drive bad man out from the land, good man to honour raise,
Or dost thou righteousness eschew, to follow evil ways?”

“I drive bad man out from the land, good men to honour raise.

³²⁸ E.B. Cowell (ed.), N. 67, Vol. V, p. 199.-

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

All wickedness I do eschew and follow the
righteous ways.”³³⁰

It is very proper for the ruler to encourage and support the man of virtue. The bad man, if allowed to live with others, naturally disturbs the society. It is necessary to isolate him from the society. This leads to jails to control the bad men. If one is dangerous to society he may also be banished to another place. The theme of the above verse is the concept of punishment and reward.

Principle of Justice:

The ruler should be careful to be fair to the people. Justice should not be based on the four wrong causes of behaviour or prejudice: “1) prejudice caused by love or desire, 2) prejudice caused by hatred or animosity, 3) prejudice caused by delusion or stupidity, 4) prejudice caused by fear.”³³¹ The ruler who has political, military, and judicial power in his hands should use his power with the spirit of righteousness. *Mahā-Pāduma-Jataka* says that the king’s duties in the court, when he decides some case, are to be performed with care and deliberation. The stanza goes:

No king should punish an offence and hear no
pleas at all,

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

³³¹ T.W. Rhys Davids (ed.), *Dialogues of the Buddha* Vol. IV, trans., T.W. Rhys Davids and C.A.F. (London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1957), p. 228.

Not thoroughly shifting it himself in all points, great and small.

The warrior chief who punishes a fault before he tries, is like a man born blind, who eats his food all bones and flies. Who punishes the guiltless, and lets go the guilty, knows no more than one blind upon rugged high way goes. He who all this examines well, in things both great and small, and so administers, decides to be the head of all.³³²

This is not only the principle of justice performed by the ancient king but it is valid for modern jurists also to perform their functions justly. The important quality of the person whose work is concerned with the punishment of the man of wrong doing is that he must consider and examine the case from many documents, situations and pleas, and then decide justly and rightly. The Buddha speaks of how to prepare the decision: “You first have the advice of a being all-wise like me; it is no wonder if you should judge your case fairly and justly avoiding the four ways of wickedness.”³³³

Buddha’s words mentioned above not only support the idea of justice but also the idea of companionship and wisdom because the wise man has known deeply the state affairs and had opportunity to study many branches of knowledge. This suggests that the ruler should have a committee of wise advisors in state affairs. At the same

³³² E.B. Cowell (ed.), N. 67. Vol. IV. p. 1119.

³³³ E.B. Cowell (ed.), N. 67, p. 1.

time in order to preserve justice in the state affairs if there is a bad man in the committee, the ruler must quickly remove him. Bad men holding positions in state affairs, especially on high levels, make people suffer.

Moral Support:

The ruler of the state is supposed to be the leader of the people. He always has self-development by self-control in order to stop the internal evil which is the root of external bad action. *Tesakuna Jataka* speaks of the way which the king should follow for his glory and that of the state through the dialogues between the wise bird named “*Vasantara*” and the king named *Brahmadatta* who ruled in Banaras:

First of all should a king put away all falsehood
and anger and scorn;
Let him do what a king to do
Or else to this vow be forsworn.
By passion and sin led astray, should he err in the
pass, it is plain
He will live to repent of the deed and will learn
not to do again.³³⁴

The ruler must always recognise what is right and what is wrong. He should avoid all evil deeds because the ruler has power in his hands. He can do what he wants. If he tolerates wrong doing which affects the lives of the people,

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

it is very dangerous for all the subjects. He must exercise his power rightly.

The stanza quoted above refers to the anger to be put away because the ruler is the chief man, whose action affects various kinds of people and if his mental state is not free from negative emotions, the state-affairs and other affairs will run with difficulty. As a man of power, if he gives an order angrily, he harms the people. Anger not only causes suffering to the ruler, but to all his subjects. So temperance must be observed with the help of self-control and self-realization. He should understand temptations. He should check evil.

The other stanza of the same *Jātaka* describes what the king should not do: Not be given to riot and waste, from gambling and drunkenness free. Such a one as can guard thee aright and thy treasure with all proper zeal.”³³⁵ The cause which leads to a bad action such as drinking, gambling, riot, the ruler should avoid because it destroys one’s personality and treasure. Such an action, if it is misunderstood and indulged in by the ruler, will bring ruin not only for him but for the people who indulge in it. The ruler must understand the demerit of these things. He must try to avoid them himself and destroy them if they appear in the state where he rules. The state is dependent on two elements, people and the ruler. They play important roles to make the state good or bad. It is necessary to develop and uplift morality both in the ruler and the ruled. If the state ruled by a good ruler but most of the people are

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

immoral it is impossible for the virtuous ruler to lead them to glory. On the contrary, if most of the people of the state respect and follow righteousness but the ruler is corrupt, he still makes the people suffer.

The state is a dependent institution; it prospers if both the ruler and the ruled are moral. The stanza in the same story speaks of what the king should do for moral up-lift to the people:

Thou thyself O great king,
Shouldst instruct thy people in every good way
Lest thy realm and thy substances should fall to
unrighteous official prey.³³⁶

In order to make the people have peaceful co-existence, moral instruction of the people should be practiced as a state policy. If a state of immorality spreads, the state's prosperity cannot be hoped for. It leads to the destruction of both the ruler and the ruled. Finally, even the state will not stand.

Mahā-Ḥangsa Jātaka speaks of ten royal virtues (*Rāja Dhamma*) which are regarded as the spirit of rulership “Alms giving, justice, penitence, meek spirit, mild temper, peace, mercy, patience, charity with morals undefiled.”³³⁷ The same story regards the five moral laws:³³⁸ 1) abstinence from killing any living being, 2) abstinence

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

³³⁷ E.B. Cowell (ed.), N. 67 Vol. V, p. 200.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

from taking what has not been given, 3) abstinence from adultery, 4) abstinence from evil speaking, 5) abstinence from intoxicating drinks, as the personal virtues which abide with the ruler all time. It is the basic ethic which the ruler must strictly follow.

These virtues reflect the principle of non-violence which is a basic tenet of personal and social security. The ruler is the protector of natural rights, including the rights to life, liberty and property. The five moral laws and some virtues among the ten royal virtues reflect clearly many ideas supporting socio-political well-being. The concept of social welfare is presented through alms giving. The ruler must pay attention to the way of living of the people by providing social welfare from state funds and personal funds. Such a system of social welfare makes the people, especially those who are in the low status, have more confidence. It is like life insurance given by the ruler. It is the emergency way of solving economic problems. At the same time, lifelong employment for the people should be arranged.

Kūṭadanta Sutta speaks of the facilities the ruler should provide to his subjects for their employment or other means of subsistence:

Whosoever there be in the king's realm who devote themselves to keeping cattle and the farm, to them let his majesty the king give food and seed-corn. Whosoever there be in the king's realm who devote themselves to trade, to them let

his majesty the king give capital. Whosoever there be in the king's realm who devote themselves to government service, to them let his majesty the king give wages and food.³³⁹

Buddha's teaching does not emphasize any one of the activities economic, social, moral and political as more important to the ruler. The ruler must consider all these factors as inter-dependent, for nothing is independent. *Cakkavatti Sīhanadasutta* throws light on the relationship among these factors. They are causes and effects of each other. *Suttanta* points the process of social crisis which leads to the difficulty of the people:

Thus, brethren, from goods not being bestowed on the destitute, poverty grew rife; from poverty growing rife, stealing increased, from the spread of stealing, violence grew apace, from the growth of violence, the destruction of life became common, from the frequency of murder, both span of life in those beings and their comeliness also wasted away.³⁴⁰

Thus, brethren, from goods not being bestowed on the destitute, poverty grew great ... stealing ... violence ... murder ... lying ... evil speaking ... adultery ... abusive and idle talk ...

³³⁹ T.W. Rhys Davids (ed.), *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, Vol. IV, trans., T.W. and C.A.F. Rhys Davids (London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1957), pp. 176.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

covetousness and ill-will ... false opinions ...
incest, wanton greed and perverted lust ...³⁴¹

The same *Sutta* says that when the ruler and the official advisor could not control the situation of crisis the state suffered from anarchy and violence. Life was short and difficult and some could realize and consider the cause of the crisis and then they changed their way of life, *Sutta* says:

Then this, brethren, will occur to those beings:
Now, only because we had gotten into evil ways,
have we had this heavy loss of kith and kin. Let
us therefore now do good. What can we do that is
good? Let us now abstain from taking up and do.
And they will abstain from slaughter, and will
continue in this good way...³⁴²

Then this, brethren, will occur to those beings:
Now we, because we have gotten into good ways,
increase in length of life and comeliness. Let us
now do still more good. Let us now abstain from
taking what is not given, ... adultery, ... lying, ...
evil speaking, ... abuse and idle talk, let us now
abstain from covetousness from ill-will, from
false opinions, ... three things incest, wanton
greed and perverted desires ... let us now
continue to practice each of these good things.³⁴³

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 71.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

Although morality, economy, society, and policy are interdependent factors of the state, morality is more important than other factors because in the field of socio-economic and political well-being morality is the basic necessity without which nothing can be achieved.

The other royal virtues, from social welfare through alms giving, as mentioned above, are also very important. They are instruments of self-development which the ruler must utilize for himself and for the people. In order to attain the ideal of the welfare state in which the people enjoy both economic prosperity and peaceful minds the ruler must support, follow, and give facility to the people to enjoy morality in accordance with their ability.

Seeking and Supporting of the Good Advisors:

One important function of the ruler in ancient time, was decision making in state affairs. In so doing it was impossible to work alone. It was necessary to seek the advice of those who were expert in any branch of state affairs. In Buddhist Scriptures the significance of the advisor is raised to the level of great power:

Amidst the great ones of the earth
fivefold power we see;
of these the power of limb is, sure,
the last in its degree
And power of wealth, O mighty Lord,
The next is said to be; the power of

counsel third in rank of these, O king,
I name;
The power of case without a doubt is
reckoned fourth in fame,
And all of these a name that's wise
most certainly will claim, of all these powers that
one is best,
as power of
learning known.
By strength of this a man is wise and
makes success his own.³⁴⁴

This verse not only points out the importance of the advisor, but his character is also mentioned, i.e., only the wise are worthy to become royal advisors.

Tesakuna Jātaka describes how to appoint the advisor and the result of doing so “Take as counselors men that are wise, thy interest clearly to see”.³⁴⁵ The wise men are well known as those who are experts and have insight into various kinds of state affairs. They are important sources of wisdom. In the same *Jātaka*, wisdom is supposed to be the way of happiness. The deeds of the wise man do not make both himself and the society suffer. In fact the ruler cannot know and analyse all the situations which come up in state affairs. If the wise are appointed in every position of state affairs, they can clearly analyse situations to know what should be done. When the ruler considers the

³⁴⁴ E.B. Cowell (ed.), *The Jātaka Stories*, Vol. V, trans., H.T. Francis (Delhi: Cosmo Publication, 1979), p. 63.

³⁴⁵ E.B. Cowell (ed.), N. 67, p. 61.

significance of the wise in this way, the wise should not only be promoted but also beloved and cared for by the ruler. It is the duty of the ruler to provide facilities for earning livelihood and to encourage people to acquire greater ability and potentiality.

Buddhism points out the dangers caused by foolish men and women who lead the ruler and the kingdom to ruin. “For the fool by ill deeds, like a house built of reeds, collapses and leaves rack and ruin behind.”³⁴⁶ “Study virtue, for every vice leads to a state full of suffering and woe.”³⁴⁷ Such people will also shamelessly destroy the honour of the city. On the other hand, the uneducated men and the men of evil, greedy disposition are obstacles to the development of the state. If such men are appointed as state officials, they will become corrupt because of self-interest. They can even do things which bring suffering to the people. This is a truth that can be seen in the long history of political systems.

Leadership:

The ruler is considered as the center of the society. Everybody has to follow him as the leader. He is the model for common people, an ideal. This concept of king as a model is also found in a play by John Webster, a junior contemporary of Shakespeare: “The lives of princes should like dials move, whose regular example is so

³⁴⁶ E.B. Cowell (ed.), *The Jātaka Stories*, Vol. V. trans., H.T. Francis (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1979), p. 63.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

strong they make the time go right or wrong”. The Buddha says that virtues support leadership as follows:

The bull through floods a devious cross will take,
The herd of kine all struggling in his wake,
So if a leader tortuous paths persue,
To base ends will be guided the vulgar crew,
And the whole realm and age of license rule.
But if the bull across direct should steer, the herd
of kine straight follow in his rear.
So should their chief to righteous way be true,
The common folk injustice will eschew,
And through the realm shall holy peace ensue.³⁴⁸

Even now the leader who is confident and moral can lead others under his responsibility to attain success. The people may live with him in peace.

In short, the virtues to be developed by the ruler and his subordinates according to the Buddha are as follows: The staff and all officials of the ruler should be men of wisdom and virtue. The economic glory and prosperity and spiritual peace of the people and the state should be taken care of strictly by the ruler. It is supposed to be the symbol of the well-being of the people. The qualities of life both of body and mind, both of the ruler and the ruled, should be developed simultaneously. Happiness, peace, security, and confidence of the people will thus be widely spread. This idea is relevant not only to a particular time period but for every period. The ideal ruler, according to

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 74.

Buddhism, derived sovereignty and legitimacy from righteousness and not from the weapons. Righteousness makes his subjects happy and the happiness of the people is the supreme goal of the ruler who is the manager of the state.

According to Buddha's ideas the state is never an end in itself, but a means to an end. The state is likened to the vehicle for going to the place desired, the ruler is likened to the driver of the vehicle, the people to the passengers who want to go to the place desired and the *Dhamma* (Norm) is the road to the intended goal. The supreme happiness and interest are considered as the goal. Both the ruler and the ruled should go side by side to the goal. The most important element in the political ideas of the Buddha on the state is the acceptance of the *Dhamma* (Norm) as the supreme thing both over the ruler and the subjects. The Buddha says:

The *Khattiya* (king) is the best among
this folk who put their trust in lineage. But one in
wisdom and in virtue clothed.
is best of all 'among spirits and men.'³⁴⁹

The state is created as a moral instrument and institution by the ruler and the ruled for the attainment of the goals of life, material comfort and spiritual peace. It, thus, must function as an instrument of *Dhamma* (Norm) for the

³⁴⁹ T.W. Rhys Davids, *Sacred Books Of The Buddhists*, Vol. IV, trans., T.W. and C.A.F. Rhys Davids (London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1957), p. 94.

transformation of men from merely socio-political creatures into perfect human beings.

IV

BUDDHA: ON THE THEORY OF GOVERNMENT

Man, Aristotle had long back said, is a political animal.³⁵⁰ In the thirteenth century, St. Thomas Aquinas had said, “man is a social and political animal”?³⁵¹ This indicates that man is gregarious by nature. It is a natural law made by an instinct which compels men to live together.³⁵² On the other hand, some say: “man is a community-building animal”.³⁵³ When two or more men live together they have a social environment called a “society”³⁵⁴ or community. It is inevitable to have relationships between men and men and between men and things. The formal regulation of these group relationships is achieved through political means.³⁵⁵

Men in any given group are free to act independently, according to their individual reasons. They need a common code of behavior to differentiate what is right from what is wrong. In short, it is a common agreement on social norms that keeps any society from the state of anarchy. The person or the group of persons who enforce the rules for society constitute the government.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁰ Charles Howard McIlwain, *The Growth of Political Thought in the West* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1932), p. 5.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

³⁵² Franklin C. Salisbury, *Speaking of Politics* (New York: Vantage Press, 1956), p. 91.

³⁵³ Paul Sithi-Amnui, *Essential Politics* (Bangkok: Oriental Press Service Co., Ltd. 1979), p. 3.

³⁵⁴ Franklin C. Salisbury, N. 3, p. 91.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁶ Paul Sithi-Amnui, N. 4, p. 3.

Definition of Government:

Webster's new Collegiate Dictionary defines the word "government" as the organization, machinery or agency through which a political unit exercises authority and performs functions and which is usually classified according to the distribution of power within it. It also controls and directs decision-making and administration of policy.³⁵⁷

Government is an activity of persons; it deals with management of society in which the individuals by the law of nature reside together. The relationship of each individual in such a society is based on the same rules or regulations. Everybody recognizes those rules as their central code of conduct. They may be called laws, orders norms, culture, or traditions, which are made for social harmony and integrity. Peaceful co-existence among the members of society is needed, and it is necessary to have a person or group of persons who can arrange and administer the central code of conduct justly and properly.

John Locke regards the family, the smallest unit of society, as the first society. It was the relation between husband and wife who led to the relationship between parents and children. Such a society is made by a voluntary contract between man and woman. It is called conjugal society. Though it consists chiefly in a communion between one another's bodies as necessary

³⁵⁷ Henry Bosley Woof. (ed.), *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (U.S.A.: Herrian Company, 1985), p. 493.

for procreation, yet it draws with it mutual support and assistance and communion of interest too. It is necessary not only to unite them in ease and affection, but is also necessary to their common offspring who have a right to be nourished and maintained by their parents till they are able to manage themselves.³⁵⁸

The husband and wife, though having one common concern, yet having different understanding, may sometimes have different wills. It is necessary to have some instrument for final determination i.e., a rule, or agreement. This naturally falls to the man's share as he is the stronger. The family becomes a miniature political society. There is a need for some rules among members being based on relationships among themselves. A leader of the society is needed. Thus, a small political government arises.³⁵⁹

Locke describes a society and government with the family as its basic principle. The head of the family is united with all the subordinate members under this domestic rule. Locke concludes:

Whenever, therefore, any number of men is united into one society as to quit everyone his executive power of the law of nature, and to resign it to the public, there and there only is a political or civil society. And this is done

³⁵⁸ Locke, Hume and Rousseau, *Social Contract Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 45-48.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

whenever any member of men in the state of nature, enter into society to make one people, one body politic under one supreme government or else. When anyone joins himself to and incorporates with any government already made. For hereby he authorizes the society or which is all one, the legislative thereof, to make laws for him as the public good of the society shall require, to the execution where of his own assistance as to his own decrees is due. And this puts men out of a state of nature into that of a commonwealth, by setting up a judge on earth with authority to determine all the controversies and redress the injuries that may happen to any member of the commonwealth, whose judge is the legislative or magistrate appointed by it. And wherever there are any number of men, however, associated, that have no such decisive power to appeal to, there they are still in the state of nature.³⁶⁰

The important feature of government in accordance with Locke's theory consists of the person or group of persons who have been given the authority to decide controversies which may happen in the society. A judge who is not a party to the controversy must be sought for the settlement of the controversy. The legislature is made for promotion of the public good of the society. It is not for supporting the happiness of some minority group. It is based on social contract. The government is the person, or the group of persons who perform the function of the

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

distribution of happiness and security along with the law issued and recognized by the majority of the people.

Thus, every society needs government for management of social affairs. The government is only the manager of the society acting on behalf of the people who in the words of Locke are both trustor and beneficiary. It is not a permanent organization. It can be changed by the popular will. The government is an aspect of society and it both shapes and is shaped by society. If we are to understand how a particular nation's government works and why that nation has that particular form of government, we must examine not only its formal governing institution but also the society within which they operate.

Form of Government:

As early as the fifth century B.C., Greek scholars classified governments as monarchies, aristocracies, or democracies. This classification was made and revised by three Greek Scholars. Herodotus classified all governments as either monarchies (government by one), aristocracies (government by the few) or democracies (government by many).³⁶¹ A century later, Plato revised this typology by adding that each of these forms had its degenerate version (autocracy, oligarchy and mob rule).³⁶²

Aristotle offered a somewhat revised version of Plato's set of categories. He classified into six categories

³⁶¹ Austin Ranny, *The Governing of Men*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), p. 60.

³⁶² *Ibid.*

the three original kinds: kingship, aristocracy, and the third for which Aristotle has no distinctive name, tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy.³⁶³

Monarchy, which exists for the good of all, is kingship.³⁶⁴ The government of a few in the interest of all is aristocracy. If it works for common good, it is called a polity.³⁶⁵ Tyranny is the perverted form of monarchy in which the good of the monarch comes first.³⁶⁶ Oligarchy is the rule of a few for the good of the wealthy.³⁶⁷ Democracy is the supremacy of the masses for the good of the poor.³⁶⁸ None of these really serves the interests of the community as a whole.

Whether or not we agree with Aristotle's classification is immaterial. What is more important to note is that the rule by one is just as capable of being good government as it is of being bad government. The same may be applied to the government by the few and by many.

There is, in fact, no ideal form of government. All good governments, however, must have one thing in common, that is, the interest of the people as their main goal. Following this background, we may now discuss the Buddha's theory of Government.

³⁶³ Charles Howard McIlwain. *The Growth of Political Thought in The West* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1963), p. 83.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Sources of a Study of the Buddha's Theory of the Government:

The essence of Buddhism is its rationality. Reason alone can lead one to embrace Buddhism. It is based on the process of causation. That is, all objects proceed from a cause. The *Tathāgatā* has explained the cause, and he has explained the cessation of causes also. This is the doctrine of the great *Samana*".³⁶⁹

Buddhism is concerned with the origin and extinction of all problems in the individual and in society. The proclamation of salvation was the main function of the Buddha and his followers. What was proclaimed was mostly concerned with the greatest problem of life, suffering. It can be said that Buddhism begins by accepting the truth that everybody in the world is subject to suffering.

Suffering prevails everywhere in view of death, dejection, separation and the hostility of enemies. It also comes from what we call pleasant and beautiful. It exists in enjoyment and luxuries. It emanates from desire and ignorance of the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path and the Three Main Characteristic Phenomena. The suffering can be got rid of by following the Noble Eightfold Path³⁷⁰ as Buddha maintained. The essence of Buddhism lies in mental training for the salvation of

³⁶⁹ F. Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XIII, trans., T.W. Rhys Davids, and H. Oldenberg (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982), p. 146.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 94-96.

mankind instead of worship or propitiation of some divinity.

The Sangha was a great voluntary body of monks who took upon themselves the task of working out this scheme of training not only for their own salvation but also for that of others outside their society. Throughout his life, the Buddha preached his doctrine concerning training of the individual to attain salvation, and also doctrines concerning political and social ideas.

A study of the Buddha's theory of government cannot begin immediately like other political theories. The two sources of Buddhism are the doctrines delivered to different people on different occasions and the Buddhist Sangha organization, and these will be the main sources of this study.

Principle of Good Government Monarchy:

In Buddha's teaching the system of government is not the most important instrument for ruling and managing of the national affairs. The virtues of the practitioner of government are considered more important. In the monarchical system, a good king is expected to be charitable, moral, sacrificing, just, humble, penitent, non-violent, patient, and harmless.³⁷¹ *Jātaka* mentions the ideal of the king in managing state affairs; "He conquers wrath

³⁷¹ E.B. Cowell (ed.), *Jātaka Stories*, Vol. V, trans., H.T. Francis (Delhi: Cosmo Publications 1979), p. 200.

by mildness, the bad with goodness. By gifts the miser vanquishes and lies with truth repays.”³⁷²

The concept of *Dhamma* or virtue, according to Buddhism, is supposed to be the highest principle which the king should follow, honour and respect.³⁷³ The five moral laws are supposed to be the fundamental conditions which the king should strictly observe.³⁷⁴ He should also frequently teach and guide his subjects for making socio-political progress,³⁷⁵ and for peaceful co-existence among the people within the state.

The king should respect public opinion. In the *Vassantara Jātaka*, *Vassantara* Prince had given away a miraculous elephant. People believed that “wherever this elephant goes, abundance of water for agriculture will come.” The people had the opinion that the prince had to show his responsibility by retirement from the position of crown prince. The prince shed his responsibility by exiling himself to live in the forest as an ascetic.³⁷⁶ This *Jātaka* shows the king’s responsibility towards the people and his respect for the public opinion which remains an important virtue of the politician even today.

A good king should also follow the traditions of *Attha* and *Dhamma*.³⁷⁷ The term *Attha* and *Dhamma* may be

³⁷² E.B. Cowell (ed.), *Jātaka Stories*, Vol. II, trans., H.T. Francis (London: Pali Texts Society, 1957), p.4.

³⁷³ T.W. Rhys Davids (ed.), *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, Vol. IV, trans., T.W. and C.A.F. Rhys Davids (London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1957), p. 62.

³⁷⁴ E.B. Cowell (ed.), *Jātaka Stories*, Vol. V, trans., H.T. Francis (Delhi: Cosmo Publications 1979), p. 200.

³⁷⁵ T.W. Rhys Davids (ed.), N. 24, p. 62.

³⁷⁶ E.B. Cowell (ed.), N. 25, Vol. VI, pp. 254-255.

³⁷⁷ Balakrishna G. Gokhale, “*Early Buddhist Kingship*” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXVI, N. 1 (November, 1966), p. 18.

rendered, in the present context, as action conducive to prosperity and righteousness.³⁷⁸ *Dhamma* is often equated with *Sama* which may be translated as impartiality and a sense of justice.³⁷⁹ In fact, the ideal king according to Buddha's teaching is often called *Dhammiko Dhammarāja*, the king who dwells with the virtues.³⁸⁰

It is noticed that the great thinkers both in the West and the East in the fifth - sixth century B.C. always emphasized the virtues of the ruler as an important criterion to decide whether the government was bad or good, instead of emphasizing the machinery of the governing body. Plato (born 427 B.C.) regarded as a great master among the Western political thinkers, expounded his concept of the ideal state in the Republic. The ideal state is governed by experts (Philosophers) as it is only they who have a true concept of what is right and what is wrong. He gave us the concepts of the philosopher king. According to him:

Unless philosophers become kings in their countries, or those who are now called kings and rulers come to be sufficiently inspired with a genuine desires for wisdom; unless, that is to say, Political power and philosophy meet together, there can be no rest from troubles for states, nor yet, as I believe, for all mankind.³⁸¹

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁸¹ Paul Sithi-Amnui, N. 4, p. 5.

Plato's definition of a philosopher king refers to one who is going to seek the truth; and truth can only be won by knowledge and wisdom. The best government for him is the one which has a philosopher king in power.³⁸²

The other virtue which is stressed by Plato is justice. He says that justice is the whole duty of man.³⁸³ He further explains that it is justice when each class does its own proper work. In each of us also, if our inward faculties do severally their proper work, we will live in the in virtue of justice; we will be just men, and doers of proper work.³⁸⁴

Aristotle (born 884 B.C.) wrote how the powers of government should be expressed. According to him, the government would be good if it worked for the interest of the community as whole, and on the contrary it would be bad if it worked for the governing body and for selfish purposes.³⁸⁵ Aristotle focused on the practitioner of government who, by his power, would make the common good, good life for all.

According to Aristotle, political justice exists among people who are associated in a common life with a view to self-sufficiency and who enjoy freedom and equality. Justice must be administered not merely for a private group but for the whole world.³⁸⁶

³⁸² *Ibid.*

³⁸³ Charles Howard Mellwain, N. 14, p. 33.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

Aristotle explains that government will be best if it serves the common good of the people. Both the Eastern and the Western views emphasize the moral virtues of the ruler who should do justice to all and bring good to all, a government working for the public good. The word “commonwealth” has certain interesting shades of meaning in this connection such as “the people of a nation or state” “body politic” “democracy” or “republic” “a group of people united by common interest” etc. But the relevant shade of meaning under discussion is the absolute sense “the general welfare” or “commonweal”. The modern concept of welfare state is also an expression and diversification of the concept of commonweal, or the general good.

Let us study first the political system that existed at the Buddha’s time before coming to his ideas regarding government, policy and statecraft.

The Buddhist Scriptures enumerate not only the qualities of a good government but also those of bad government. Aristotle called the bad king a ‘tyrant’. The Buddha gave examples of the qualities of a bad king and the people gave his reward when he died. King Pingala of Banares was a man hated by all the people for his harshness and cruelty.

All the people suffered harm at the hand of Pingala; so soon as he was dead they recovered confidence. Was he of yellow eyes dear to you?

Why do you weep, porter? He of yellow eyes was not dear to me; I fear to think of his return. Now that he has gone hence, he may harm the king of death, and the king of death thus harmed may send him back again.³⁸⁷

The above quotation shows, with the use of wit, how much the people fear a bad king. Even after his death, they fear his return. Finally, monarchy according to Buddhism has the virtues to perform its functions. The legitimacy of monarchy is not based on force and oppression but on the distribution of social welfare and the king should be concerned with the people on the basis of compassion, good will, and kindness, like the relation between parents and their sons and daughters.

The Norms and Virtues are respected, followed and honoured continuously by a king because they are the necessary prerequisites for himself and his subjects. (See the virtues of the ruler in the Chapter III).

Republican Government:

In the Buddhist Scriptures there is not much mention of republican government. Rhys Davids has given a list of the following states, which have been referred to in the Buddhist Scriptures as existing in the Buddha's time: The *Sakyas* of *Kapilavatthu*, the *Bhagga* of *Sumsumaragiri*, the *Bulis* of *Allakappa*, the *Kalama* of *Kesaputta*, the

³⁸⁷ Charles Lanman (ed.), *Buddhist Legends*, Vol. XXVIII, trans., Eugene Watson Burlingame (London: Pali Texts Society, 1979), p. 242.

*Koliyas of Rammagāma, the Mallas of Kusinara, the Mallas of Pava, the Moriya of Pippalivana, the Videhas of Mithila and the Licchavis of Vesālī.*³⁸⁸

Ancient India had a form of government where power was vested not in a person but in a *Gana* or group of people, hence the term *ganarājā* meaning a republic. Sangha was another term used precisely in the same sense because it was sharply distinguished from monarchy.³⁸⁹ The administrative organization might have been elected from some Noble Clan or transferred from clan to clan by some agreement reached among themselves.

Sakya Administrative Organization of the Republic Forms of Government:

The Sakya administrative organization, one of the republican governments, will be used as example. The Buddhist Scriptures always speak about the *Sakya*, as the Buddha was born in this clan. The head of the state was the president who had the title of *Rājā*. It is difficult to know whether he was drawn from one noble family only, and for what period he was elected.

Thus, the Buddha's father, *Suddhodana*, was a *Rājā*. We also hear of his cousin, *Bhaddiya*, holding this office. The business of the clan was carried on in open assembly in the *Santhāgara* or Mote-Hall. The Buddhist works also

³⁸⁸ T.W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984), p. 23.

³⁸⁹ Shobha Mukerji, *The Republican Trends In Ancient India* (Delhi: 1969), p. 9.

described how deliberations were conducted in these assemblies, which were modeled on the religious Sangha.

There were regular meetings with proper seating arrangements made by a special officer called *Āsanapaññapaka* (a man who arranges the seats for a meeting).

For a meeting to be valid, it must have the requisite number of members present, but the chairman was not counted for the purpose of the quorum. It was the duty of the whip to complete the quorum by requiring the presence of members. The affairs began with the formal presentation of the motion which was followed by a proclamation. Discussion was related to the motion only. A resolution was approved on one reading and sometimes even three. Silence of the members on the resolution was regarded as consent, but in case of disagreement there were various devices, like referring the matter to a committee with a view to arriving at a unanimous decision.

If no unanimity was possible, votes were taken. Voting was by tickets, generally slips of wood of various colours to indicate different views. The officer collecting votes was known as *Salagakhapaka* (a man who collects the tickets). He was expected to show no kind of prejudice, malice, or fear. It is believed that voting was perfectly free and unfettered, and the majority view prevailed. A question, once decided, was not to be re-opened. Records of proceedings appear to have been kept by clerks. The procedure was thus truly democratic, anticipating in many

respects the working of modern popular assemblies.³⁹⁰ It is creditable that hundreds of years before the emergence of the modern democratic institution of the parliament in Europe these republics had such well-defined, accurate practices for transacting the business of the state.

The Buddha was born and grew up in a republican political system. He had the opportunity to assist in state affairs like any other prince. He experienced the political system. He knew the way of prosperity and the way of decline. By virtue of this political system, the power of decision in state affairs was vested in the hands of a *gana* or committee which consisted of scholars drawn from different branches of knowledge. The homogeneity and the integrity of the members are very important virtues in such a political system. Other factors which contributed to the stability of the republican states are also found.

The *Mahaparinibbāna Sutta* refers to seven conditions necessary for national welfare and stability, especially in a republican system. So long as these conditions (social harmony, social precedence, honour and reverence to elders, honouring to women etc.) continue to exist among the *Vajjians*, they cannot be expected to decline.³⁹¹ The Enlightened One said this in clear terms. (See Chapter II on *Vajjī* Republic).

³⁹⁰ R.S. Tripathi, *History of Ancient India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1967), pp. 87-88.

³⁹¹ F. Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XI, trans., T.W. Rhys Davids (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968), pp. 3-4.

The factors which lead a republican state to prosperity are not only the unanimity of the members of the administrative organization but other factors such as tradition, culture, fundamental rights, woman's rights etc. Religious men were welcomed and facilities were given to them.

The Buddha always wandered from place to place without staying long and it gave him an opportunity to know the real problems which the people faced. The Buddha, as the link between the people and the ruler, proposed principles for solving and eliminating the sufferings of the people. Most of the principles were concerned with social welfare for the majority.

The principles of the government, whether monarchy or republics, delivered by the Buddha, have stressed imparting virtue to the individual; that is to say, all members of the society should follow virtues. Happiness will be realized by everybody who follows the Norms, Virtues, and Morality (*Damma*), and without them man cannot attain happiness.

The two forms of government mentioned above are neither praised nor condemned by the Buddha, but he supported and encouraged them by imparting the virtues to both the governor and the governed. The Buddha had never proposed any new alternative government.

Buddha's Form of Government:

However, a new governmental system established by the Buddha, which deserves to be studied, is the Buddhist Sangha (community) administrative organization. It cannot be decided for sure which form of government can describe such an organization because it comprises various features of government when compared with the Western ancient and modern classifications of government. Even the concept of communism, which is supposed to be the opposite system to all religion, prevails in Buddhist administrative organization. The concepts of democracy and the republic also can be found in it. In discussions on republics and democracy there are varied opinions among scholars, both in the field of religion and social science. In order to make an analysis and study of the theory of government as enunciated by the Buddha and his followers, a study of the development and evolution of Buddhist Sangha is necessary.

Development and Evolution of Buddhist Sangha (Community):

It is helpful to study the development of Buddhist Sangha from the origin of the first monk until the organisation of Bhikkhu (monk) Sangha. It begins with the preaching of the first sermon called *Dhammacakkappavattanasutta* by the Buddha to the fivefold ascetics at *Isipatana Marigadayavana*, at Banares, and when this exposition was propounded the Venerable *Kondañña* obtained the pure and spotless Eye of the Truth

as described below: “whatsoever is subject to the condition of origination is subject to the condition of cessation”.³⁹² Then the Venerable *Aññakondañña* spoke to the Blessed One to let him receive the *Pabajja* and *Upasampada* ordination from the Blessed One. He said, “Come O Bhikkhu, well taught is doctrine, lead a holy life for the sake of the complete extinction of suffering.”³⁹³ By this way Venerable *Kondañña* received the *Upasampada* ordination as the first Buddhist monk in the world.

The Buddha stayed at one place during the rainy season. Many men and women from many families in those places were converted into devotees and adopted monkhood. In that rainy season sixty monks originated in the world. Once the Blessed One said to the Bhikkhus:

I am delivered O Bhikkhus, from all fetters, human and divine, You, O Bhikkhus, are also delivered from all fetters, human and divine. Go ye now O Bhikkhus, and wander, for the gain of the many, for the welfare of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain, and for the welfare of God and men. Let not two of you go the same way. Preach, O Bhikkhus, the doctrine which is glorious in the beginning, glorious in the middle, glorious at the end, in the spirit and in the letter. Proclaim a consumable, perfect, and pure life of holiness. There are

³⁹² F. Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XIII, trans., T.W. Rhys Davids, and H. Oldenberg (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968), p. 97.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

beings whose mental eyes are covered by scarcely any dust, but if the doctrine is not preached to them they cannot attain Salvation. They will understand the doctrine.³⁹⁴

In the time of the early establishment of Buddhism, the Order's administrative organization was not established. One scholar writes that "In the earliest period of Buddhist history the Sangha seems to have existed as a wandering sect".³⁹⁵ The laws for controlling the monk's conduct were not issued. Keeping in mind the behavior of the Bhikkhu Sangha we find that there was no need of laws because each monk possessed perfect conduct which had complete self-control and self-confidence in itself. It can be stated that no social problem could arise from these monks who had such a good character.

From the Buddha's first proclamation we find that the policy of Buddhism was not directed towards serving the self-interest of Buddhism but for the happiness and benefit of the people. Buddhism describes a method of working and gives a clear method of procedure about what should be given to the people. It is stated that during the first stage of the preaching of the doctrines there was no need to make an organization. During the early phase of Buddhism the Buddha can be surely called the Sangha leader by himself. Like other societies in the early phase of Buddhism, there was no governing body. The laws and orders were not prescribed. But all the monks followed the

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

³⁹⁵ Trevorling, *The Buddha* (London: Lowe & Brydone Ltd., 1974), p. 127.

universal truth which each attained as his way of life and working. There was no goal or purpose for their life, because they had attained the supreme goal, *Nibbāna*.

Their lives were led for the benefit of the people. Although there was no form of government, if we compare the working of early Buddhism with Aristotle's classification, the form of government may be likened to a monarchy, for the Buddha guided all Bhikkhus by himself and the Buddhist followers treated him as the Lord of Virtues, or *Dhammarājā*. The policy issued by him was for the interest and happiness of the people. The objective of the Buddha and the Bhikkhus in the early phase was to proclaim and propagate the sublime way of life.

The Bhikkhus worked in accordance with the policy proclaimed by the Buddha without any recommendation, laws, orders, or reports. The visible result of their working was manifest in the increase of the Buddhist monks and laymen who devoted themselves to following the Buddha. It is noticed that during the first stage of the establishment of the Bhikkhus Sangha the power of decision-making was vested in the hands of Buddha without any consultation, conversation, or meeting. Thus, the Buddha had the sole authority for running and controlling the Sangha.

Rhys Davids, the translator of the work named *Mahāvagga*, writes about the method of admission to the order of monks that "In the beginning of course, there was nobody but Buddha himself who could ordain Bhikkhus;

to him those who desired to be received, expressed their wish, and he conferred on them the *Pabbajjā* and *Upasampadā* ordination by the formula *Ehi Bhikkhu*”.³⁹⁶

It was quite natural that afterwards, as the Sangha grew larger, the Buddha might have transferred the power of admitting new members to the Bhikkhus themselves.³⁹⁷ The transition, however, from the supposed oldest form of ordination (the so called *Ehi Bhikkhu Upasampadā*) to that of latter form in the *Vinaya* did not come immediately. There is described an intermediate stage between the two, the ordination by the three *Saranagamanas*, (the candidate three times repeated declaration of his taking refuge in the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha*.)³⁹⁸

The Buddha describes the ritual of the initiation of a monk and says:

You ought, O Bhikkhu, to confer the *pabbajjā* and *upasampadā* ordinations in this way: Let him first have his hair and beard cut off; let him put on yellow robes, adjust his upper robe so as to cover one shoulder, salute the feet of the Bhikkhus and sit down squatting; then let him raise his joined hands and tell him to say:

‘I take my refuge in the Buddha, I take my refuge in the Dhamma, I take my refuge in the Sangha.

³⁹⁶ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 43, p. 74.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

And for the second time... and for the third time... I prescribe, O Bhikkhu, the *pabbajjā* and *upasampadā ordination* consisting in the three times repeated declaration of taking refuge.³⁹⁹

This way of ordination was probably an important part in the *upasampadā* service of later times. Only learned Bhikkhus who had completed the tenth year after their own *upasampadā* could function at the *upasampadā* ordination of the Bhikkhus. It is impossible however to ascribe this form of *upasampadā* service to the early period of Buddha's teaching.⁴⁰⁰

The Second Stage of Evolution of Buddhist Sangha:

The second stage of admission to the Buddhist monkhood shows that the full right of admission, which previously was the duty of the Buddha, was now given to all Bhikkhus. As the business of the community increased, every member of the Buddhist Order was given equal right to participate in the initiation ceremony. With the passage of time not only admission of members to the Sangha but their training and supervision was also needed. The qualities of the preceptors of the new members were limited. The permission of choice of the preceptor for the young monk indicates that the process of monkhood should be completed through training and supervision from the Senior Bhikkhus. The Buddha describes the relation among them as that of a father and son in order to attain

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

the highest stage of doctrine and discipline, Nibbāna. Both preceptors and pupils should function according to the orders prescribed in the discipline continuously.⁴⁰¹

This stage, if compare with the evolution of a political system, is moving towards the republican stage because the power regarding the affairs of the Buddhist Order is being transferred from one person to qualified groups of monks who have high responsibility and ability to help in the affairs of the order. These groups may be called an oligarchy. They are high not because of their social status but because of their virtues. During this period we find that as the number of those who desired to be a monk increased, qualities of the members declined. It is true that every society consists of various kinds of people. The Buddhist Sangha society was a new society of people from various social classes and families.

In order to make the members of the Buddhist Community have high qualities, certain conditions were imposed. The duration of those who can be *Upajjhāyas* was limited by the Buddha's word: "I prescribe, O Bhikkhus, that only he who has completed ten years, or more than ten years may confer the *upasampadā* Ordination."⁴⁰² Some other conditions were also imposed. To quote the Buddha's words: "Let no ignorant, unlearned Bhikkhu, O Bhikkhus, confer the *upasampadā* Ordination."⁴⁰³ Again "I prescribe, O Bhikkhus, that only

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.* p. 154.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 177.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

a learned, competent Bhikkhu who has completed ten years, or more than ten years, may confer the *upasampadā* Ordination.”⁴⁰⁴

Gradually laws and rules were issued in the context of the problems prevailing in the Buddhist Order Community. They were not formulated by Buddha alone, but came into being because of a general need to improve the qualities of the Bhikkhus.

The Third Stage of Development of Buddhist Sangha, The Transition of Power to Arrange the Affairs of Buddhist Order Community Came to All Bhikkhus:

The small society of the Buddhist Sangha, with the passage of time, thus, became a big society. The functions of the Buddha and the Bhikkhus gradually increased. The method of work was changed along with the changing social situation. The method of admission to the Buddhist Order Community, supposed to be the main function of Bhikkhus, was changed. The function of giving the *upasampadā* Ordination was transferred to the Buddhist Community or Sangha.

This is the third transition of power: in the beginning the power was in the hands of the Buddha only, in the second stage this power was transferred to every senior and highly qualified Bhikkhu. Decision-making was an individual process. In the third stage this individual power

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*,

was transferred to all Bhikkhus to function on behalf of the Sangha or Community.

Having considered this transition in decision-making power, we find three political systems, or governmental forms: the first may be likened to a monarchy, the power being vested in the hands of one person; the second is that the power of monarchy is transferred to the oligarchy or aristocracy, the power of decision-making then being vested in the hands of a few, the third is that the power of few is transferred to many - that is democracy.

The style of functioning of the Buddhist Sangha in the third stage is democratic, both in form and in spirit. This form can be said to have been designed by the Buddha. It will not be too fanciful to say that the Buddha was the first to have thought of and to have formed a democratic government. According to the *Mahāvagga Vinayapitaka* the Blessed One on this occasion, after having delivered a religious discourse, thus addressed the Bhikkhus:

I abolish, O Bhikkhus from this day the *upasampadā* ordination by threefold declaration of taking refuge, which I had prescribed. I prescribe O Bhikkhus, that you confer the *upasampadā* ordination by a formal act of the Order in which the announcement (Ñatti) is followed by three questions.⁴⁰⁵ And you ought, O

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

* Put the name of candidates and preceptors on the place of N.N.

Bhikkhus, to confer the *upasampadā* ordination in this way:

Let a learned, competent Bhikkhu proclaim the following announcement (*ñatti*) before the Sangha:

Let the Sangha, reverend Sirs, hear me. This person N.N. desires to receive the *upasampadā* ordination from the venerable N.N. with the venerable N.N. as his *Uppajjhāya*. If the Sangha is ready, let the Sangha confer on N.N. as *Uppajjhāya*. This is the *ñatti* (announcement). Let the Sangha, reverend Sirs, hear me. This person N.N. desires to receive the *Upasampadā* ordination from the venerable N.N. The Sangha confers on N.N. the *Upasampadā* ordination with N.N. as *Uppajjhāya*. Let any one of the venerable brethren who is in favour of the *Upasampadā* ordination of N.N. with N.N. as *Uppajjhāya* be silent, and any one who is not in favour of it, speak. ‘And for the second time thus speak to you: Let the *Sangha* (& C., as before). And for the third time I thus speak to you. Let the *Sangha*, (& C., as before). ‘N.N.’ has received the *Upasampadā* ordination from the Sangha with N.N. as *Uppajjhāya*. The Sangha is in favour of it, therefore it is silent. Thus I understand.’⁴⁰⁶

* Put the name of candidates and preceptors on the place of N.N.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 169-170.

This affair of Sangha is finished by the consent of all Bhikkhus in the assembly. There was no question of anyone refusing that resolution. This power is vested in the assembly. It is not the majority accepting the affairs of the community, but unanimity is supposed to be the satisfaction of the assembly. The minority of the Sangha is also respected. All Bhikkhus in the assembly or in the monastery have equal right to do all Sangha affairs.

Development and evolution of the Sangha organization cannot be said to stop here but they were on-going. All Sangha affairs, such as distribution of social welfare within temple, were also vested in the assembly of the Sangha. The qualities of both the pupils and preceptors were being developed continuously on the basis of experience and social environment. The limitations, laws and orders were gradually increasing with changes of situation.

The development of Sangha organization was gradually improving both in respects to procedure and to the members of the community. A wrong deed or inappropriate action of the Bhikkhus was always submitted to be considered and corrected by the assembly of the Sangha. Such an action, after undergoing consideration, would form the basis of enacting new laws and orders for being the central principle of conduct of all Bhikkhus, both new and old, to follow. The Sangha society was not a fully ideal and static society but it was dynamic and changing. There was, therefore, need for

continuous improvement. With the passage of time there were many Sangha affairs and so there were requirements, regulations, laws, and orders to run those affairs.

Lists of Sanghakammas (Community Affairs):

The affairs of the Buddhist Sangha are distributed to those who have specialized in each function through the appointment and consent of the entire membership of the society. Bhikkhus will be appointed as managers for ad-hoc committees. The ad-hoc committees look after these affairs:

1. *Parivāsa*
2. *Mānatta*
3. *Tajjanīya*
4. *Nissaya*
5. *Pabbājanīya*
6. *Patisārāniya*
7. *Ukkepanīya*
8. *Pakāsanīya*
9. *Brahmadanda*
10. *Upasampadā the personal belongings to a deceased Bhikkhus.*
11. *Uposatha*
12. *Settlement of Sīma*
13. *Pavārāna*
14. *Kathina*
15. *Appointment of all officers*
16. *Dedication of any part of the building establishment, for any special purpose.*

17. *Settlement of succession to the personal belongings to a deceased Bhikkhus.*
18. *Abbāna*
19. *Tassāpapiyasika*
20. *Tinavattharaka Vinaya.*⁴⁰⁷

These lists are further divided into three kinds of affairs.

1. Disciplinary and disputations, list No. 1-9.
2. Non-disciplinary and non-disputations, list No. 10-18.
3. Anomalous, list No. 19-20.⁴⁰⁸

The procedures in these affairs consist of two parts – first *ñatti* (announcement or resolution) and then, *Anusāvana* (proclamation of the proposed act, called also *Kammavācā*). The matter for decision making by the Sangha was defined by a Bhikkhu in the form of a resolution placed before the whole assembly “Let this matter defined be done.” Then followed the proclamation. Those who were against the resolution were called upon to speak and those who were for it to remain silent as mentioned earlier. This shows the seriousness with which dissenting views were taken in the administration of Sangha affairs. However, this proclamation might be made only once when the act was called a *Nattiduttiya Kamma*. Some *Sanghakamma* (Sangha’s affairs) belonged to the first order and some to the second and third.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁷ S. Dutt, *Early Buddhist Monarchism* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publisher Pvt., 1984), p. 123.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

The qualifications for being a Bhikkhu manager of Sangha affairs are given as:

1. One who does not walk in partiality.
2. One who does not walk in malice.
3. One who does not walk in folly.
4. One who does not walk in in fear.
5. One who knows what measures have been taken and what have not been taken.⁴¹⁰

These are the prime qualities of the Bhikkhus who will be appointed to manage Sangha affairs. Otherwise, other qualities concerning the expert in each kind of affairs will also be considered as additional qualities.

Main Features of the Buddhist Sangha Organization:

The Buddhist Sangha came into being through the process of gradual and continuous evolution, development, and transition. It was a society in which men could live together with only the few possessions absolutely necessary for survival and health. The Sangha was an association of equality which operated on the assumption that unanimous agreement on policy questions would be possible given their reintegration of personality. The Buddhist Sangha was not an attempt to create a single political life. It turned to private experience as the ultimate fulfillment. The goal of spiritual peace came to replace

⁴¹⁰ F. Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XX, trans., T.W. Rhys Davids, and H. Oldenberg (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984), p. 25.

political goals as the highest expression of human purposes.⁴¹¹

The important features of the Buddhist Sangha organization can be concluded as follows:

1. *It is ruled by law not by man:*

One point which is frequently emphasized in the early tradition is that the Buddha firmly rejected the notion of authoritarian rule in the Buddhist Sangha which he had brought into existence. The Buddhist Sangha, it is said, did not resemble a monarchy. The Buddha himself was not in any sense a personal ruler nor was any member of the community to think of himself in this way after the Buddha's death.⁴¹²

Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta states the words the Buddha strongly repudiating the idea of a successor leading the Sangha:

I have preached the truth without making any distinction between exoteric and esoteric doctrine: for in respect of the truths, *Ānanda*, the *Tathāgata* has no such thing as the closed-fist teacher, who keeps some things back. Surely *Ānanda*, should there be any one who harbours the thought, 'It is I who will lead the

⁴¹¹ Charles Drek Meier, *Kingship and Community in Early India* (U.S.A.: California Stanford, 1962), pp. 286-287.

⁴¹² Trevorling, N. 46, p. 128.

brotherhood’, or ‘The order is dependent upon me’. It is he who should lay down instructions in any matter concerning the order. Now the *Tathāgata, Ānanda*, thinks not that it is he who should lead the brotherhood, or that the order is dependent upon him...⁴¹³

‘Therefore, O *Ānanda*, be ye lamps unto yourselves. Be ye a refuge to yourselves. Betake yourselves to no external refuge. Hold fast to the truth as a lamp. Hold fast as a refuge to the truth. Look not for refuge to any one besides yourselves.’⁴¹⁴

The indication of these passages of the Canon is the ideal that there was no leader of the Sangha, no one on whom the Sangha was dependent and it came to force after the death of the first master. The Buddha said to *Ānanda* that *Dhamma* or truth is to be the universal law, the refuge and the lamp. It guarantees that the truth will be the central principle and the ultimate determinative tool in the Buddhist Sangha life, instead of a person or group of persons. One more idea of rule by law has been envisaged in the same *Sutta*:

It may be, *Ānanda*, that in some of you the thought may arise, “The word of the master is ended, we have no teacher more”. But it is not thus, *Ānanda*, that you should regard it. The

⁴¹³ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 42. pp. 36-37.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

truths and the rules of the Order which I have set forth and laid down for you all, let them, after I am gone, be the Teacher to you.⁴¹⁵

It is creditable that the Blessed One, even though being the originator of Buddhism and Sangha, did not establish himself as a cultist and absolute authority of Buddhism. This clearly shows his faith in the individual and his capability of doing good to himself and to society by following *Dhammas* or *Norms*. The *Dhamma*, or collection of moral norms, is the real authority. It is the law that is supreme and not the lawgiver even if he be the Buddha. It also presents the spirit of self-reliance rather than dependence. If one needs dependence, let him depend upon his inner light, his own self, that self which is the truth.

In short, the Buddha had no desire to give the Buddhist order to anyone for ruling but he pointed to the universal and particular law, the *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*, as the Bhikkhu's ruler, supervisor and even master after his passing away. Thus, the Buddhist Sangha organization is ruled by laws.

2. *The Spirit of Equality:*

Every member of the Buddhist Sangha has an equal right to lead the holy life for attaining the highest goal of life, *Nibbāna*, under the same law. It is well known that the Buddhist Sangha organization has various kinds of

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

people from various classes, castes, and families but they are under the same law and order in a new society which supports the spirit of social equality.

Cullavagga Vinay Pitaka refers to equality under the discipline and doctrine:

Just, O Bhikkhus, as the great rivers-
That is to say, the *Gangā*, the *Yamunā*,
The *Aciravati*, the *Sarabhu*, and the *Mahī*-
When they have fallen into the great ocean,
Renounce their name and lineage and are
Thenceforth reckoned as the great ocean,
Just so, O Bhikkhus, do these four castes-
The *Khattiyas*, the *Brahmans*, the *Vessa*, and
The *Suddas* – when they have gone forth from
The world under the doctrine and discipline
proclaimed by the *Tathāgata*, renounce their
names and lineage, and enter into the number of
the *Sakyaputtiya Samanas*.⁴¹⁶

Equality in society was rationalized by the Buddha through the Buddhist Sangha organization by making the *Dhamma* (universal norm) and *Vinaya* (particular norms for monks) as the central principle of common conduct for every member of such a society.

⁴¹⁶ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 61, p. 304.

3. *Fraternity and Integrity or Homogeneity:*

Although the Bhikkhus, who are members of the Buddhist Sangha Community, come from different social classes having different experiences, when they come together they have a new idea of fraternity and integrity to carry out the Buddhist Sangha affairs. *Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta* comments on the fraternity and integrity quoting the Buddha's words before his death:

So long, O mendicants, as the brethren meet together in full and frequent assemblies – so long as they meet together in concord, and rise in concord, and carry out in concord the duties of the order – so long as the brethren shall establish nothing that has not been already prescribed, and abrogate nothing that has been already established, and set in accordance with the rules of order as now laid down – so long as the brethren honour and esteem and revere and support the elders of experience and long standing, the fathers and leaders of the order, and hold it a point of duty to hearken to their words – so long as the brethren fall not under the influence of that craving which, springing up within them, would give rise to renewed existence – so long as the brethren delight in a life of solitude, so long as the brethren so train their minds that good and holy men shall come to them, and those who have come shall dwell at ease – so long may the brethren be expected, not

to decline, but to prosper. So long as these seven conditions shall continue to exist among the brethren, so long as they are well instructed in these conditions, so long may the brethren be expected not to decline, but to prosper.⁴¹⁷

These are the seven conditions of welfare which lead to integrity, homogeneity and fraternity among Buddhist monks. The Buddha has given other six conditions for the stability and unity of the Buddhist Sangha in the following words:

So long as the brethren shall persevere in kindness of action, speech, and thought amongst the saints, both in public and private – so long as they shall divide without partiality, and share in common with the upright and the holy, all such things as they receive in accordance with just provisions of the order, down even to the mere contents of a begging bowl - so long as the brethren shall live among the saints in the practice, both in public and in private, of those virtues which are productive of freedom, and praised by the wise; which are untarnished by the desire of future life, or by the belief in the efficacy of outward acts; and which are conducive to high and holy thought – so long as the brethren shall live among the saints, cherishing, both in public and in private, that noble and saving faith which leads to the

⁴¹⁷ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 42, pp. 6-7.

complete destruction of the sorrow of him who act according to it. So long may the brethren be expected not to decline but to prosper – so long as these six conditions shall continue to exist among the brethren, so long as they are instructed in these six conditions, so long may the brethren be expected not to decline, but to prosper.⁴¹⁸

It is clearly stated that ‘concord’ or ‘unanimity’ is essential for the proper functioning of the Sangha, otherwise, its life will decline. These principles are also the conditions of stability in democracy. These conditions, especially concord, are considered as the very prime principles of a political system which wants unanimity in decision-making. In the Buddha’s words it is guaranteed that so long as the members of the Sangha have concord, prosperity is expected. However, if there is lack of unanimity the differing views would lead to a decline of the Sangha. Likewise, in a democracy consensus or agreement on major principles and policies is an important element.

4. *Non-Central Government:*

In spite of the fact that the Buddhist Sangha had formed a constitution and other methods of management there was no central government with absolute power to administer, direct, and control the majority of monks. Each group performed Sangha affairs according to the rules without depending on any person or agency.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

In this connection, S. Dutt points out that a primitive monastery is a republican colony of Buddhist Bhikkhus who form a Sangha by themselves with a constitution and a system of self-government. To conduct the affairs of the Sangha, a learned and virtuous person among them would be appointed ad hoc as president. But his character was strictly representative.⁴¹⁹

5. *Some Aspect of Communism:*

Such a form of self government, if it is compared with the modern theory of government, is perhaps similar to the communist form in the last stage of development, that is the form after the state withers away, in which the commission of each unit will be established instead of the central government. The people's power will be the basis of its political character. It will have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.⁴²⁰ But there are some different points to be considered here. According to the manifesto of the Communist Party, Marx contended that communist society is to be established by means of a revolution. It makes itself the ruling class, and sweeps away by force the old conditions of production. Then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonism and of classes generally and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a

⁴¹⁹ Sukumar Dutt, *Early Buddhist Monarchism* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publisher Pvt. Ltd., 1984), p. 120.

⁴²⁰ K. Marx and F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), p. 76.

class.⁴²¹ Unlike this, the Buddhist organization was established rationally, and evolved and developed through real phenomena and experience. Even now the concept of communist government is still an imaginary one. The Buddhist Sangha Government is a real government, and it existed even in the Buddha's time.

Apart from the above comparison, the goals of the Buddhist Sangha and communist society are also different. The goal of Buddhist Sangha is for the attainment of the highest stage of peace of mind, *Nibbāna*. Material goods are needed only for living with facility. The goal of communist society is completeness of production. According to the manifesto of the communist party, all production is concentrated in the hands of the whole nation. The sensual pleasures of the members of such a society are stressed but peace of mind is not aimed at. Communism abolishes eternal truth, it abolishes all religion and all morality, instead of constituting them on a new basis; it, therefore, acts in a way contrary to all past historical experience.⁴²²

In the Buddhist Sangha, the Bhikkhus who have no surplus private property lead their life with four simple fundamental conditions, robes, food, shelter, and medicine. The surplus private property, is given to the public, for distribution to those who need it. The private property of Buddhist Bhikkhus is given to the public without any compulsion. It is given voluntarily. Before they come to

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁴²² *Ibid.*, p. 73.

participate in the monastic life they know these conditions very well.

In communist society all private property is abolished by the state by the force of dictatorship of the proletariat. Then, equal distribution of social welfare is carried out. All property is concentrated and arranged for public purposes with the force of revolution. Although the people do not like to give that property for public purposes, they are compelled to do so. There is no freedom to possess and donate property. The difference between the two societies is that the Buddhist society gives up private property voluntarily, whereas in the process of communist society the people are compelled by force to give their private property for public purposes.

Is Buddhist Sangha Organization a Form of Democracy?

In order to answer the question Is Buddhist Sangha organization democratic? We must study the opinion of ancient and modern theorists regarding democracy. Etymologically, “democracy” is derived from the two Greek words “demos” (people) and “cracy” (system of rule).⁴²³ In the 5th century B.C. the Greek historian Herodotus defined democracy as the government by many, that is to say, the actual decision making of society is made by the majority of the people.⁴²⁴ By 1921 the word

⁴²³ Jinarajādāsa, *The Region of Law In Buddhism*, (Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1948), p. 12.

⁴²⁴ Austin Ranney, *The Governing of Men* (New York: Halt Rinehart and Winston, 1962), p. 60.

“democracy” had long been in general use as an expression of a broad social ideal. The slogan of the French Revolution (1789) ‘Liberty, Equality and Fraternity’, expresses the ideal democracy.⁴²⁵ On November 19, 1863, Abraham Lincoln delivered the address at Gettysburg where he said that “democracy expresses through the government of the people, by the people, for the people.”⁴²⁶

It appears that the rules of discipline of the Buddhist Sangha, create a well-knit system of Democracy. The Buddhist Sangha represents a system of government formed by the Bhikkhus, for the Bhikkhus and of the Bhikkhus. This, as had been pointed out, is democracy in form as well as in spirit.⁴²⁷ The above statement indicates that the pattern which is represented as being laid down by the Buddha for the regulation of affairs of the Sangha was described as democratic.

Trevoling says that the Buddhist Sangha has been described as democratic because there is no monarchical head, no authoritarian chain of command and responsibility and because a recognized procedure exists for decision-making by the whole community corporately.⁴²⁸ In the same book the author refers to N.N. Jayatilleke’s argument that “even the cosmic perspective is for the Buddhist democratic, for any man of his own

⁴²⁵ G.A. Jacobson and M.H. Lipman, *Political Science* (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1969), p.25.

⁴²⁶ William A. Noten, “Words of Wisdom” *The Span*, Vol. XXIX No. 2, (February 1988), p. 11.

⁴²⁷ Shobha Mukerji, *The Republican Trends In Ancient India* (New Delhi, 1969), p. 69.

⁴²⁸ Trevoling, N. 46, pp. 129-130.

free will may aspire to and attain to the status of Buddha.⁴²⁹

The prevalence of laws of community points towards the existence of democracy. It was derived from the evolution and experience of Sangha affairs. The procedure of enacting law was based on the fact that if there was some wrong action, it was taken to the assembly of the Sangha by some Bhikkhus. These would be discussions concerning the evil of such actions. Finally, the Buddha, when he was alive, recommended to all the Bhikkhus to abstain from such wrong actions. All Bhikkhus recognized and followed the recommendation as a central regulation. It thus became an act of laws. Some scholars point out the sovereignty of the assembly of Bhikkhus that “in theory, the Buddha remained the sole law-giver, but in the domain of practical administration the general assembly of monks was the sovereign.”⁴³⁰

Such a law the Buddha, before his passing away, gave the right of amendment. He said, “when I am gone, *Ānanda*, let the order, if it should so wish, abolish all the lesser and minor precepts.”⁴³¹ It is a right representing great freedom for the members of a society to be able to change, cut or add laws to suit their conduct. How prophetic was Buddha when he realized that static laws cannot serve the purpose of a changing society. The very

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁰ Parmatma Sharan, *Ancient Indian Political Thought and Institutions* (New Delhi: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1983), p. 158.

⁴³¹ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 42, p. 112.

rationale of the amendment-making process in a modern constitution is based on this assumption.

The Buddhist Sangha administrative organization has these characteristics; hence, it may be called a system based on democratic values.

Some Arguments of Buddhist Sangha Form of Government:

S. Dutt points out that the Buddhist Sanghas deliberated and acted together. They were communistic in property relationships, in their conduct of affairs, and had the tribal council as their organ of government.⁴³² It is clear that the Buddhist community inherited certain forms and methods of organization from the tribal republics. The political constitution of many tribes in the area that first came under the influence of Buddhism and from which early Buddhist Bhikkhus were largely recruited was of a republican type. In these small tribal republics, the authority, though vested in a monarchy or in a personal ruler, was exercised by an assembly, oligarchical or democratic. It is maintained that the people were quite familiar and conversant with free institutions like voting, committees, popular tribunals and collective legislation.⁴³³ K.P. Jayaswal says that “the Buddhist brotherhood, the Sangha, was copied from the political Sangha, the republic.”⁴³⁴

⁴³² Sumumar Dutt, N. 70, p. 119.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 119-120.

⁴³⁴ K.P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity* (Delhi: 1934), p. 103.

Shobba Mukerji in her study of the Sangha administrative organization says that Buddha adopted the republican ways practiced in the communities with which he had very close relations.⁴³⁵

All these opinions suggest that the system of Sangha administration should be more of republican than of other systems because the founders of the Sangha organization, the Buddha and Bhikkhus, were influenced by the republics. This consideration was made because of historical background – which constitutes an important factor in any political system. If we consider the form and method of procedure in Sangha affairs they were same as the contemporary tribal republican system. Despite this similarity, the Buddhist Sangha administrative organization had many factors as enumerated below which could not be found in the old tribal republican system. These factors are as follows:

1. The tribal republican administrative powers were vested in the hands of a minority of such society called *Rājā* and assisted by Brahmana. The low classes which formed the majority of the society had not any right or power to participate in the decision-making either directly or indirectly. The Buddhist Sangha administrative power was vested in the whole Sangha, and all the members of the Sangha had an equal right under the same law to participate in decision-making processes of Sangha affairs.

⁴³⁵ Shobba Mukerji, N. 78, pp. 69-70.

2. The main feature of republican tribal administrative organization was the idea of central government and the sub-unit under the control of central government while the main characteristic of Buddhist Sangha organization was self-government. There was no person or group of persons who possessed the absolute power to decide Sangha affairs; they were decided by all members of the Sangha. Each local settlement had its own form of administrative organization along with the central law and order, *Dhamma* and *Vinaya* prescribed by the Buddha.

3. Private property in the republican system is not mingled into the collective property. Every member could own property as he pleases. The Buddhist Sangha had no private property; private property was limited to the four conditions for leading the simple holy life. Surplus wealth or property was distributed for the social welfare.

4. Law and order in the tribal republican system are always orthodox. Tradition and culture are followed without any improvement. Law and order in Buddhism are allowed to be appropriately improved and changed according to circumstances and places; it can be called “amendable”.

Having considered many factors in Buddhist administrative organization and having compared it with the contemporary tribal republican system, we see that the Buddhist Sangha organization was a new system synthesizing various ideas to form a Sangha society which

consisted of people from various castes, classes and status who came to live together and who had the same goal, peace of mind. This system has never been called a political system, but in modern times, if we compare the idea prevailing in the Buddhist Sangha administrative organization with the political theory of government prevailing in the modern world or even with the ancient Greeks, there is no reason to deny calling it a democratic system. The government established by the Buddha is clearly in spirit, and essence, akin to modern democracy.

BUDDHA: AS A REFORMER

Dominant Religious Trends Before Buddhism:

Before we study the Buddha's ideas on religious and social reform it is better to know the beliefs prevalent before him and the contemporary ideas of his times. It would help us know the social factors because religion has a close relation to society. Many social regulations, norms, laws, orders traditions, ideologies, and modes of life are derived from religious tenets. It is also a vital source of thought in which people can seek answers to the doubts which may arise in their minds.

In many cases, social structures, social stratification and social mobilization are defined by religious teachings. The religious man not only performed sacrificial functions but also acted as a social advisor and also played educational and political roles. In short, it can be said wherever there is a group of men, the requirement of religion arises. The form and essence of each religion differs according to social conditions and the environment but each religion encourages a moral life and makes people feel strong and peaceful. Thus, a study of society through religion will reflect the essence of human life.

Before and during the Buddha's times there were several religious beliefs, but the main ideas and practices which could be called religion can be divided into three categories:

1. There was the sacrificial cult of the hereditary priestly class, the *Brahmans*.
2. There were popular cults and beliefs of the ordinary people, mostly villagers, who are the majority of the population.
3. There were various kinds of ideas and practices expounded by various non-Brahmanical teachers who were commonly known as *Shramanas*.⁴³⁶

The Brahmanical Sacrificial System:

The group of priests who performed sacrifices for the laymen was called *Brahman* or *Brahmana*. It was so called because they dealt with the *Brahman*.⁴³⁷ According to the Brahmanical belief, the *Brahman*, the impersonal absolute, is the vast source of the world and human life.⁴³⁸ The word "*Brahman*" referred also to the sacred word, the event, which was the essence of the sacrificial ceremony. The priestly or Brahman class possessed the knowledge of the sacred word. It guarded and preserved such a sacred word. According to Brahmanical theory, the

⁴³⁶ Trevorling, *The Buddha* (London: Lowe & Brydone Ltd., 1979), p. 66.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*

world had come into existence through the earliest sacrifice and was maintained in existence by the *Bramans*.⁴³⁹

The cult of sacrifice which developed out of the prayers in the *Vedic Samhitas* had a powerful impact on the minds of early people in India. This sacrificial system probably was not spread among the common people. It concerns various factors such as the knowledge of the *Veda* which is a very important source of all rituals. It is part of the knowledge only of the priestly class. They used the chants written in the *Veda* as a vehicle of communication between them and the *Brahman*, the Supreme Being.

The profound philosophy concerning the origin of the world and its sustenance was not widely known; it did not relate to daily life but to the world after death, which is very far from the current problems of life. Such sacrifices and knowledge were used by a minority group of society.

Cult and Beliefs of Common People:

The common people, the villagers, the peasants, the craftsmen and the tradesman had various kinds of cults for promoting glory and happiness, for guidance, and for protection from evil.⁴⁴⁰ Worship derived from fear of the unseen power which they believed could compel them to be happy or to suffer. In this connection, the Buddha said,

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

“To many refuge men go, to mountains and to forests to shrines and trees and groves, when terrified with fear.”⁴⁴¹

The people with such feelings needed something which would be their refuge. Such cults and beliefs were concerned with natural phenomena and problems in daily life, which made people afraid and troubled. These included such activities as palmistry and fortune-telling, determining lucky sites for houses by a knowledge of the spirits of the place and how to propitiate them; prophecies of various kinds concerning such matters as rainfall, the nature of the harvest, pestilences, disturbances, famines and so on; divining by the use of signs, omens and ecclesiastical portents, the provision of charms and spells, the obtaining of oracular answers from gods by various means, the interpretation of dreams; the propitiation of demons, and the offering of oblations of various kinds, such as grain or butter, to *Agni*, the God of fire.⁴⁴²

The account of these cults and beliefs can be found in the Brahmanical Texts written probably a little before the time of the Buddha, known as the *Atharva-Veda* which is the fourth of the *Vedic* collection of hymns, and the last to be accorded official recognition.⁴⁴³

One section of the Texts contains charms to ensure political and social harmony while some other sections are devoted to domestic and commercial affairs. There is,

⁴⁴¹ Charles Rockwell Lanman (ed.), *Buddhist Legends*, Vol. XXX, trans., Eugene Watson Burlingame (London: Pali Texts Society, 1979), p. 66.

⁴⁴² Trevorling, N. 1, p. 70.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*

significantly, a section devoted to prayers and imprecations in the interests of the *Brahmans*. The collection ends with a group of hymns to various gods and goddesses, such as Mother of Earth, *Kāma* (the god of sexual love) and *Kāla* (time personified as a deity).⁴⁴⁴

On the one hand, it is said that these cults and beliefs not only relate to the common people, the low and middle classes of the people, but are also for promotion of the needs of the high classes, the *Brahmans* themselves and the kingly class.

Non-Brahman Samana or Shramana:

There was also a group before and contemporary to the Buddha, called *Samana* or *Shramana*. The term *Shramana* refers mainly to non-Brahmins including ascetics, devotees, and religious mendicants in general, and also Buddhist monks, but among these there were some *Brahmans* by birth. Their aim of life was to discover the truth and attain happiness, or at least peace of mind. Having abandoned all social commitments, they were free to spend their time thinking, trying ascetic practices, studying nature, and teaching. They set up schools and trained pupils to remember and disseminate their teachings, and they also lectured in the villages and cities, even before kings, if invited. The contents of these public lectures were various, but they tended to be ethical, to instruct people how to earn their livelihood.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁴⁴⁵ A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980), p. 34.

The idea of reform of the Brahmanical tradition was the main characteristic of their teachings. They rejected the *Vedas* and the authority of the *Brahmans*, who claimed to be in possession of revealed truths not known to ordinary human beings. They declared that the entire Brahmanical system was fraudulent. It was also a conspiracy against the public by the *Brahmans* for the purpose of enriching themselves.⁴⁴⁶

The *Shramana* opposed the traditional approach to the universe according to the Brahmanical theory but they tried to give a new explanation of the universe and life by investigation and reasoning. They believed that they could discover natural laws by their own efforts, without support of authority from the ancients or supernatural power. These laws would be absolutely valid and must be accepted because anyone who cared to undertake a proper investigation could realize them. In brief, their outlook was that of scientists investigating the nature of the universe. They were guided by the practical aim of applying the knowledge they gained in the quest for happiness.⁴⁴⁷

Out of the Samana movement in the 6th century B.C. many schools of philosophy developed. Their system became more scientific than the traditional one. They developed their life from homeless wanderers to being

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

those who had organized and established schools and the monastic systems during the period of the Buddha.

Main Schools and Teachings of Shramanas:

The main organized schools of Shramanas in the time of the Buddha were the *Ājivaka*, *Lokāyata*, *Jaina* and *Agnostic* (Ajnana) schools.⁴⁴⁸

The name *Ājivaka* originated from the *Ājiva*, the way of life of the wandering *Shramanas*. It was taken by a large school or community founded by a group of prominent teachers in *Kosala* (West of *Vajjī*) in 489 B.C. The leader of this school was *Gosāla* (died 488 B.C.) who had propounded its central doctrine, that of fatalism, and was afterwards revered as a silent sage. The *Ājivaka* believed in transmigration on a grand scale, each individual soul passing automatically into final peace after having experienced every possible kind of life in turn. This school developed an elaborate system of divination and prognostication by the interpretation of dreams and other omens. *Ājivakas* were sometimes invited by kings to make prediction, but the original function of this knowledge of the future and its inescapable experiences was probably to lead to a spirit of resignation and peace of mind.⁴⁴⁹

In harmony with this determination, there was the doctrine of “inaction” (*Akriyā*) originally propounded by

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

another *Ājivaka* teacher, *Pūrana* (died 503 B.C.). All the supposed actions of men, ‘good’ or ‘bad’ are no action at all, and produce no effect or influence on the future. From another teacher, *Kakuda*, the *Ājivakas* took their doctrine of the constituent elements of the Universe, which were uncreated, uncuttable, sterile, immovable and rigid. These undergo no alternation or transformation and do not interact. Any supposed action passes ineffectively between their atoms. There are seven of these elements: earth, water, heat, air, happiness, unhappiness and soul or ‘life’, (*Jiva*).⁴⁵⁰

The *Lokayāta*, the name of which probably meant originally ‘natural science’ or ‘naturalism’ was a materialist school. As opposed to the *Ājivakas*, they proclaimed the concept of complete freedom, absolute free will as a natural way of life. They were also known as the do-as-you like school. Everything happens through the spontaneous actions of nature. The school agreed with the *Ājivakas*, in rejecting moral causation, but for opposite reasons, all acts and experiences are spontaneous, not determined by anything; moreover, there is no soul and no transmigration which could make the working out of moral causation possible.⁴⁵¹

The aim of living beings is happiness, but for this school the highest happiness attainable is that of the pleasure of the senses (*Kāma*). The pleasure of human relationship is also particularly mentioned. The *Lokāyata*

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*

School held that there is more happiness than unhappiness in life.⁴⁵²

According to this school the universe is constituted of four elements: earth, water, heat, and air. All phenomena consist of the combination of these four, and consciousness is such a compound one. It is rather a property of the elements combined in a particular way as a living body. The most pre-eminent *Lokayāta* teacher of the Buddha's time was *Ajita*.⁴⁵³

Jainism was another important school contemporary to the Buddha. It emerged as a reaction of Brahmanism. *Mahāvīra*, the founder of *Jainism*, was the last prophet of the present world cycle. He seems to have been slightly older than the Buddha. He preached ethical doctrines without knowing that similar ideas had been held by an incomparable senior ascetic, *Pārshva*. *Pārshva's* ethical code consisted of four rules, whereas that of *Mahāvīra* consisted of five. Of these, the first three viz. not to kill living things, not to take articles of uses unless they are given, and not to tell a lie, are common to the schools of both *Pārshva* and *Mahāvīra*. The fourth rule of *Pārshva's* teaching that of *Aprigraha* not to have any worldly possessions including a wife, was separated into two by *Mahāvīra* to make his code of five: not to take a wife and to lead a celibate life, which is the fourth rule in *Mahāvīra's* code and not to have worldly possessions

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

except clothes, which is the fifth rule in *Mahāvīra's* code. It seems to constitute jointly the fourth rule of *Pārshva*.⁴⁵⁴

Mahāvīra was known as the champion of *Kriyāvāda*. The principal tenets of the *Kriyāvāda* School are that misery is the result of one's own acts, and is not caused by anything else. Release from *Samsāra* can be secured by knowledge of the highest truth and by good conduct. The doctrine admits the existence of soul or self, this world and the next, the eternal and non-eternal elements in the constituents of the physical world, birth, death, heavens and hells. It also agrees that these are causes of misery which can be controlled.⁴⁵⁵

According to Jaina sources, however, Jainism is not only a purely ethical system, but also a philosophy based on the doctrine of many possibilities, known as *Anekanta* or *Syavāda*. The doctrine looks at two aspects of everything, the eternal and the non-eternal.⁴⁵⁶ The soul is supposed to be preserved for the attainment of purity. In order to achieve this, one must acquire right knowledge, faith and conduct.⁴⁵⁷

The last among these *Shramanas* is *Sanjaya Velathiputta*. His doctrine is known as *Vikhepavāda*, or a doctrine which diverts the mind from the right track. He always declined to give categorical answers to problems facing the human mind. There are ten unexplained and

⁴⁵⁴ P.V. Bapat, *2500 Years of Buddhism* (New Delhi: Central Electric Press, 1987), pp. 9-14

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

unanswered questions that have always exercised the mind of man and have frequently been mentioned in Buddhist literature which Sanjaya never even attempted to answer. It may be noted that these questions were also put to the Buddha on several occasions and he, too, declined to answer them; but his attitude towards them was altogether different. He said that it was useless to waste time on these idle quests, as they were not conducive to human progress.⁴⁵⁸

Having considered the religious movements before and in the time of the Buddha, we are aware that the important function of religion is to destroy the fear existing in the human mind. There were many schools of ideas showing ways to the people but they served similar functions. As long as human beings are afraid of the unseen, religion will continue to exist.

Jawaharlal Nehru, the great Indian statesman explains the origin of sacrifices and religions as follows:

The early men were afraid of everything and imagined that every misfortune was caused by angry and jealous gods. They saw these imaginary gods everywhere in the jungle, in the mountain, in the river, in the clouds.

Their idea of god was not of a kind and good person but of a very irritable person who was always losing his temper. And as they were the

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 17.

cause of his anger they were always trying to bribe him by giving him something, chiefly good. Sometimes if a disaster came, like an earthquake or a flood or a disease which killed large numbers of people, they would become very frightened and think that the gods were angry. And to please them they would even go so far as to sacrifice men and women, even kill their own children, and offer them to the gods. This seems horrible but a man who is afraid will do anything. This must have been the beginning of religion. So religion first came as fear, and anything is done because of fear.⁴⁵⁹

Authority of Priest Class and Impact on Society:

The statement mentioned above indicates that the priest occupied a very important social position. However, the priest who performed the sacrifice was not expected to accumulate wealth and lead a luxurious life. His life was a life of simplicity and dedicated to poverty. Though poor, he was respected even by the kings who would get up and leave their seats at his approach.⁴⁶⁰

With the passage of time, a great change took place in the priestly class. It became hereditary and its members gave up the simple life of social service. They in turn, began to desire wealth. Out of greed they made the rites

⁴⁵⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, *Letters From A Father To His Daughter* (New Delhi: Indraprastha Press, 1973), p. 64.

⁴⁶⁰ J.P. Suda, *Religion in India, A Study of Their Essential Unity* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1978), p. 142.

and ceremonies more and more complicated and even increased their number. They began to charge high fees for their services. They also began to struggle with the ruling class for political power. The result of all this was a great deterioration in their character. Whereas in the Vedic period they were pious, sincere, and honest and led simple lives, by the sixth century B.C. they had become greedy and covetous.⁴⁶¹

In order to take control of society in their hands, the priestly class laid down a number of rules and regulations for the people. With the passage of time, these rules and regulations became rigid and highly oppressive. Because of this, the power and authority of the priestly class, which had become hereditary, also increased. Huston Smith aptly describes the evil of this oppression:

Authority, deserved in the beginning, had become a front for the plus privilege of the *Brahmin* caste. Strict guild regulations had been devised to ensure that the religious truths discovered in their culture remained their secret possession. Ritual, instead of providing a warm protecting husk within which the seed of spirit might germinate, had become a confining shell. Endless libation, sacrifices, chants and musicals were available if one had cash to pay the priest to perform them, but the spirit had already departed.⁴⁶²

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁴⁶² Huston Smith, *The Religion of Man* (U.S.A.: A Mentor Publication), p. 109.

T.W. Rhys Davids explains such actions as follows:

The holy men by properly performing rituals and by suitable sacrifice, could, in fact, compel the gods to yield to their irresistible influence. The life of self-denial and penance, joined with mysterious wisdom, would give man superhuman power. The impact originated from such a strange religious affairs to the society is also said that the goodness was dying out of earth, and man had become more and more wicked and depraved. The society would be going to the point of the impending ruin.⁴⁶³

The priestly class controlled the forms of individual and public life; conditions, rules and regulations were issued by them. These, by the passage of time, had become social regulations, traditions and a culture which the people had to respect. Under such circumstances came the new religious movement called *Shramana* or *Samana*. It rejected the authority of the priestly class and some of the teachings in the *Vedas*. They, however, could not spread their new teaching widely. The *Vedic* religion was still influencing the majority of the society, although the priestly class had deteriorated from men with pure minds into selfish men. The people had no alternative to choose for their life. The origin of the new movement called *Shramana* could not become a real refuge of the majority of the people.

⁴⁶³ T.W. Rhys Davids, *Lecture on The Origin and Growth of Religion* (India: Allahabad: Jeet Malhotra Rachna Prakashan, 1972), p. 140.

The Buddha, a Reformer:

The definition of the term ‘reformer’ given in the *Encyclopaedia of Social Science* may be accepted as the criterion for considering and deciding whether the Buddha is a reformer. According to encyclopaedia of Social Science, a reformer is a man who rationalizes reformism. He can be in his attitude either conservative or liberal but he is not an exponent of reformism unless he offers some limited and specific rectification or betterment or restoration of a social structure or associative relation – until he brings about a general improvement of society.⁴⁶⁴ The reformer operates on parts whereas the revolutionist operates on wholes. The reformer seeks modifications harmonious with existing trends and consistent with prevailing principles and movements. He seeks the construction of the right forms for each situation.⁴⁶⁵

Having considered the Buddha’s intention before and after enlightenment, with the above criterion in mind, we notice that before he renounced the worldly life to be a homeless wanderer, he had no intention to reform society but intended to seek the truth once. He told this to king *Bimbisāra*, saying he was not seeking for sensual pleasure but for the delights of the mind.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶⁴ Edwin R.A. Seligman and Alvin Johnson (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. XIII-XIV (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1963), pp. 194-195.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁶ F. Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East* Vol. X, trans., Max Muller and V. Fausboll (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968), pp. 68-69.

It was precisely this that led to renunciation of the worldly life by the Buddha. The cause of this renunciation is the consideration that suffering is caused by sensual pleasure. The purpose of his being a wanderer is also clear. Leading the life of a homeless wanderer is meant to help one to seek the truth, peace of mind without misery. The aim of his ordination is to free himself from the fetters of suffering. The concept of reformer in his case will be one of self-reform. He reformed himself from the luxurious princely life which was desired by everybody, to be a homeless wanderer who led a life of hardship. In this case to call him a reformer is inadequate but the title revolutionary should be given because he changed his whole mode of life from a man of the highest class to being a classless man in society. Most of the other reformers and revolutionists think of reforming or revolutionizing society without improving themselves. They try to revolt against the social structure and some conditions which are supposed to be the cause of suffering. It is an external change. The mind is not revolutionized. The starting point of a reformer is different when an internal revolution has been done first, starting from himself, with the external social orders and conditions being done thereafter.

After the Buddha's enlightenment, although he had attained what he had wanted to attain, the extinction of suffering, he had no intention to make religion the instrument of social change. He was aware that the attainment of the supreme thing, the extinction of suffering, is the main aim of a human being. In the

beginning, while sending out the first sixty missionary monks, what Buddha said to the monks indicates that there is no idea of reform or revolution but the idea of compassion, kindness, and sincerity.⁴⁶⁷ The corruption because of the priest's actions is not discussed. From his policy, it is obvious that he was not opposed to the contemporary religious schools. His intention was to improve social welfare without discrimination of race, caste, class etc. The Buddha cannot be called a reformer or revolutionist according to the modern ideas because he had no idea of religious or social transformation. On the contrary he wanted to reform the conduct of individuals by instructing the *Dhamma*. He wanted to change them from bad to good men. And through the reformation process of the individual, the reformation of the society at large would arise automatically. The focal point in all this was the individual. In this sense, he was certainly a reformer, but a unique reformer.

There are many Eastern and Western scholars who have described the Buddha according to their views. Of these, T.W. Rhys Davids, the great Western Buddhist scholar, is of the opinion that the Buddha is one of four reformers who came nearly or at the same time. The other three thinkers and reformers are Pythagoras, Confucius, and Zoroaster. These previous movements were in fact so similar that they ran along nearly parallel lines resting on the common basis of animistic conceptions.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁷ For details of this ideas see F. Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XIII, trans., T.W. Rhys Davids and H Oldenberg (Motilal Banarsidass, 1982), pp. 112-113.

⁴⁶⁸ T.W. Rhys Davids, N. 28, pp. 122-123.

Rhys Davids refers to the Buddha as a teacher of a new religion. It is pre-eminently ethical, anti-ritualistic and even anti-philosophical.⁴⁶⁹ The Buddha discovered and taught a new religion which pointed to a reality that everyone could experience through contemplation. It is not concerned with sacrifices to god through a priest. The Buddha's teaching is thus opposite to the *Vedic* religion which stressed metaphysics supported by blind faith without any reasonable criticism of the phenomena. This standpoint which contradicts the traditional religion makes the Buddha a reformer.

Trevorling, another western scholar of comparative religion considers the Buddha as an opponent or critic of religion. According to his opinion, the Buddha had no intention of founding yet another example of what he criticized.⁴⁷⁰ The Buddha criticized the old forms of sacrifice. He did not destroy or transform the traditional belief radically but he tried to point out peaceful co-existence among men and among men and animals. It contributed both to social and economic reform. It is said that the way which the Buddha indicated aimed at individual development in the first stage, and economic and social development to follow this process. Economically, man was improved because he had not to spend money on sacrifice. Socially, he would improve because of developing virtues and having right knowledge and understanding.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁴⁷⁰ Trevorling. N. 1, p. 86.

Many Eastern scholars have called the Buddha a reformer. Of these persons Mahatma Gandhi, the great man of India, said, 'Gautama was one of the greatest Hindu reformers.'⁴⁷¹ He calls reform an essential part of the teaching of the Buddha forming an integral part of Hinduism.⁴⁷² Mahatma Gandhi is of the opinion that treating the Buddha as a reformer does not mean the renunciation of Hinduism and adoption of the new faith which is opposed to Hinduism but he reformed Hinduism by improving and interpreting some teachings inherent in Hinduism.

Mahatma Gandhi enumerates many examples of the Buddha's teachings which contributed to individual and social betterment, but the main instance given by Mahatma Gandhi concerns a new way to sacrifice. The Buddha's word concerning this is 'if you want to do any sacrifice, sacrifice yourself, your lust, all your material ambition, all worldly ambition there will be an ennobling sacrifice.'⁴⁷³ According to Mahatma Gandhi, the reform made by the Buddha is not a new religion but a development of Hinduism.

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the former president of India, has described the Buddha as the maker of modern Hinduism.⁴⁷⁴ This view is not much different from

⁴⁷¹ Karuna and Reangurai (trans.), *Buddha As Seen By Three Illustrious Sons of India* (Bangkok: 1985), p. 49.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁴⁷⁴ Harbans Singh and Lal Mani Joshi, *An Introduction to Indian Religion* (Delhi: Kailash Colony Market, 1973), p. 109.

Mahatma Gandhi's. These views of the great scholars are derived from the understanding that Buddhism was deeply influenced by *Vedic* thought.

Professor B.C. Pande maintained that Buddhism was deeply influenced by the *Vedic* thought in its origin.⁴⁷⁵ The partial similarity between early Buddhism and the teaching of the oldest *Upanishads* had led many scholars to trace the teaching of the Buddha to the older *Upanishads*.

Various scholars honour the Buddha in their own ways. These views can be divided into two categories:

1. The Buddha, the reformer who proclaimed a new teaching and establishes a new religion. He, it is said, is not Hindu after his enlightenment. He is the founder of a new religion. He proclaims the truth discovered by himself through hard experience. A lot of doctrines taught by him have special characteristics which differ from the old teaching of the *Vedas*.

2. The Buddha has been described as a reformer of Hinduism on behalf of Hindus. According to such a view the Buddha was born in a Hindu family and followed the Hindu religion. In spite of the fact that the Buddha proclaimed his doctrines enlightened by himself through hard practice and experiment for six years, yet they still contend that his teaching was influenced by Hinduism, especially by the *Upanishads*. Although there are two

⁴⁷⁵ G.C. Pande and Others, *Buddhism* (Patialal: Punjab University, 1967), p. 1.

views regarding Buddha they agree that he is a reformer. The forty-five years of the proclamation of truth, taken as reform, may be divided into two categories: religious and social.

The Main Doctrines Concerning Religious Reform:

1. *The Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path:*

These doctrines contained in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Suttanta* which was proclaimed as the first sermon at *Isipatana* deer park near Banares, (now called Saranath), are called the first series of teachings which indicate the disadvantage of two extreme actions, self-mortification and indulgence in pleasures. The *Suttanta* describes the unworthiness of the two extremes as follows:

There are two extremes, O Bhikkhus, which the man who has given up the world ought not to follow – the habitual practice, on the one hand, of those things whose attraction depends upon the passions, and especially of sensuality – a low and pagan way (of seeking satisfaction) unworthy, unprofitable and fit only for the worldly minded, and the habitual practice, on the other hand, of asceticism (or self-mortification) which is painful, unworthy, and unprofitable.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁶ Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XI, trans., Rhys Davids (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965), pp. 145-147

He had experienced the two extremes. Before he renounced the world to be a homeless wanderer, he had sensual pleasures of various kinds that he had wanted. After his renunciation of the world he led an ascetic life with self-mortification but he could not thereby attain enlightenment.

Then the Buddha told the five ascetics, his former friends, the truth he had discovered. He proclaimed the Four Noble Truths, suffering, the origin of suffering, the destruction of suffering, and the path which leads to the destruction of suffering. Then the Buddha gave the characteristics of each Truth regarding suffering. He said:

Birth is attended with pain, decay is painful, disease is painful, death is painful, Union with the unpleasant is painful, painful is separation from the pleasant, and any craving that is unsatisfied, that too is painful. In brief the five aggregates which spring from attachment are painful.⁴⁷⁷

As to the origin of suffering, the Buddha says:

Verily, it is that thirst (or craving), causing the renewal of existence, accompanied by sensual delight, seeking satisfaction now here, now there – that is to say the craving for the gratification of the

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

passions, or the craving for (a future) life, or the craving for success (in this present life).⁴⁷⁸

The Noble Truth concerning the destruction of suffering is that:

It is destruction, in which no passion remains, of this very thirst, the laying aside of, the getting rid of, the being free from, the harbouring no longer of this thirst.⁴⁷⁹

To the Bhikkhus, the Buddha says that the Noble Truth concerning the way which leads to the destruction of suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path; that is to say: “right views, right aspirations, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right contemplation.”⁴⁸⁰

The Noble Eightfold Path covers the moral aspects and wisdom of Buddhism. They can be classified into the morality (*sīla*), contemplation (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*pañña*).⁴⁸¹ Morality or ethical conduct (*sīla*) is based on the idea of kindness and great compassion for all living beings.

Right speech, right conduct and right livelihood cover the moral side of human life. Right speech means timely, truthful, and useful speech. It also means abstaining from

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁴⁸⁰ Harbans Singh and Lal Mani Joshi, N. 39, p. 132.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*

telling lies, from back-biting, slander and all malicious speech which might harm others. Equally it avoids harsh, rude, and abusive words which are useless and foolish gossip.⁴⁸²

Right conduct means good, moral and honourable action. It means abstaining from injuring and killing living beings, from stealing, from dishonesty, from unlawful commerce, and from unchastity. Positively, it enjoins us to help others in the pursuit of right conduct.⁴⁸³

Right livelihood means that one should earn one's living by peaceful and honest means. To make a living by cheating, by trading in lethal weapons and intoxicating liquors, and by burglary and killing beings is not the right and just way.⁴⁸⁴

Right effort is the intention to stop evil states of mind from appearance. It aims to destroy such evil thoughts as have already appeared and to produce and develop good and wholesome states of mind which have not yet arisen. It develops those good and wholesome thoughts that have arisen and preserves them, too.⁴⁸⁵

Right mindfulness is to eliminate the unsteady and flighty mind. There are four applications of mindfulness:

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁵ Phrarajavaramuni, *Dictionary of Buddhism* (Bangkok, 1985), p. 145.

1. The application of mindfulness to contemplate the body.
2. The application of mindfulness to contemplate feeling.
3. The application of mindfulness to contemplate mind.
4. The application of mindfulness to contemplate *Dhammas*.⁴⁸⁶

The application of mindfulness really means meditation to get rid of the mad, deranged, hot and burning mind that has always formed part of one's mental continuity from successive past lives, by binding the mind with mindfulness to the four or the five aggregate groups comprising oneself. Thus body-contemplation is applied to the body, feeling-contemplation to the feelings, mind-contemplation to consciousness and *Dhamma*-contemplation to mental formations. This should be done regularly in daily practice so that the mind does not touch with external objects, but is concentrated upon the four groups.⁴⁸⁷

There are four levels of contemplation, the first is called the first concentration (*Jhāna*) or (*Dhyan*) and is attained by intense practice of one of the meditation subjects. A feeling of joy and freedom from passions characterizes the first stage of concentration. The feeling of joy which is accompanied by one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*) and liberated from intellectual activity is the second stage. Perfect peace and happiness are the features

⁴⁸⁶ Ledi Sayadow, *The Noble Eightfold Path* (Buddhist Publication Society, Inc. Kandy, 1985), pp. 56-58.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

of the third stage. In the fourth stage of *Jhāna*, there are pure harmony and consciousness which free from the feeling of happiness and unhappiness. This is called right contemplation or right concentration.⁴⁸⁸

Right view and right aspiration belong to the category of wisdom. Right understanding means the understanding of things as they really are. According to Buddhist principle the important concept of reality is that “whatsoever is subject to the condition of origination, is subject to the condition of cessation.”⁴⁸⁹ The Buddha taught that suffering can be eliminated by removing its cause. By destroying craving and desires and by attaining true knowledge or wisdom, one can eliminate suffering and realize the highest bliss. The Buddha pointed out the way out, the way to stop suffering and attain bliss, which is immortal. Understanding to Four Noble Truths constitutes the right view. Wisdom is the faculty which penetrates the real nature of things. To have this wisdom is to have right understanding or right view.⁴⁹⁰ Right aspiration means the thought of renunciation of craving, unmalicious thinking, the idea of non-violence.⁴⁹¹

This way is called the Noble Eightfold Path. The deliverance of the four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path is raised and entitled “the foundation of the kingdom of righteousness.”⁴⁹² The essence of these Truths

⁴⁸⁸ Harbans Singh and Lal Mani Joshi, N. 39, p. 133.

⁴⁸⁹ Max Muller, N. 31, p. 97.

⁴⁹⁰ Harbans Singh and Lal Mani Joshi, N. 39, p. 134.

⁴⁹¹ G.C. Pande and Others, N. 40, p. 56.

⁴⁹² F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 41, p. 146.

is based on the experience occurring to all human beings. It is the internal problem originating in present life. This is not created by any god but it goes on in a natural process by itself. In the former beliefs the gods controlled, created and destroyed the mode of life of human beings. Human destiny was under the control of God. Nobody could challenge the power of God.

The *Sutta* mentioned above indicates rightly that human destiny, happiness and suffering, in fact, is not controlled by any supernatural power but it is based on certain causes. These are not Gods but ignorance about things as they really are. Now the way leading to the cessation of suffering is discovered and declared. Human beings are capable of determining their own destiny by themselves. Human right, according to Buddhist view, is nothing but the right of enlightenment and salvation from the fetters of suffering. It is spiritual emancipation and its effect is happiness and peace.

This doctrine, compared with the prevailing contemporary religion, contradicts many religions which support the achievement of happiness by self-mortification or indulgence in sensual pleasure. The Buddha had no intention to fight or struggle against them but he proclaimed the Noble Truth which he had discovered by himself. When he delivered the Truth, he did not refer to the individual or society or institutions but the right and the wrong way of life. Thus, the Buddha is honoured as a reformer in this sense because he

proclaimed the right way to salvation against the wrong way which leads to suffering.

2. *Anattā non-self:*

Anattā or non-self is the second important sermon which the Buddha delivered to the five ascetics at *Isipatana* deer park near Banares. He talked of five aggregates which are the body (*Rupa*), sensation (*Vedana*), perception (*Sañña*), mental form (*Sanghāra*) and consciousness (*Vinnana*).⁴⁹³ The Buddha separated each aggregate to explain by the way of dialogue in order to clarify the following five concepts:

The body (*Rupa*), O Bhikkhus, is not the self. If the body, O Bhikkhus, were the self, the body would not be subject to disease, and we should be able to say: ‘Let my body be such and such a one, let my body not be such and such a one. ‘But since the body, O Bhikkhus, is not the self, therefore the body is subject to disease, and we are not able to say: ‘Let my body be such and such a one, let my body not be such and such a one.⁴⁹⁴

The other four aggregates were also explained separately. In the next step, the Buddha asked Bhikkhus the state of each of the five aggregates, whether each of the

⁴⁹³ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 31, p. 100.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

aggregates is permanent or perishable. When they tell him that it is perishable and causes pain, the Buddha tells:

Therefore, O Bhikkhus, whatever body has been, will be, and is now, belonging or not belonging to sentient beings, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, distant or near, all that body is not mine, is not me, is not my self: thus it should be considered by right knowledge according to the truth. Whatever Sensation⁴⁹⁵ ... (the same with regard to the other four aggregates).

The Buddha explained the process of life as a natural process comprised of five qualities which are dependent on each other. It is not stable but dynamic, becoming and passing from time to time. The concept of life is based on the process of becoming and passing without the process being stopped. The Buddha, otherwise, had proved the concept of non-self to the Bhikkhus in the first step by calling life as the composition of the five aggregates in order to separate and to find the real self but the real self or permanent self does not exist, it is only the pure natural process under the changing appearances, and so on. Because of this process the five aggregates cannot be controlled by any power. It is said that nothing can control this natural process because there is no self to be controlled. There is no controller and no controlled. It is due to this state or non-self that the development of what is supposed to be life can exist. Without such a

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

phenomenon, human life would not grow and would have no dynamic at all.

What is called *Anattā* or non-self has three factors:

1. There is no self but it is only the composition of five qualities arisen from the natural processes.
2. The action and re-action of the five aggregates cannot be controlled.
3. It is under the transition which leads to painfulness. There is no place or time for permanent existence. The movement cannot be controlled, thus it is non-self, the concept of *Anattā* or non-self is the integral process. It is said that nothing is independent, it is in dependent origination. The modern scholar describes the principle of dependent origination thus:

When this was, then this comes, and it was then this becomes. At the contemplation of this, this is born, what has just ended is the cause and what has emerged after the cause is effect. The effect was wholly non-existent when the cause was there, and when the effect came into existence the cause completely vanished. There was no eternal substance inside the cause which is transferred to the effect. Actually they have no other relation to each other except that the one preceded or followed the other.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁶ Rahul Sankrityayan and Others, *Buddhism: The Marxist Approach* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1985), p. 5.

The discourse on *Anattā* or non-self contradicts the concept of *Attā* or soul in the *Upanishads*. The sages of the *Upanishads* laid the greatest emphasis on the existence of soul. It is something non-material, eternal and unchangeable. The doctrine of *Anattā* was a new teaching which had never been taught before the Buddha's time. It can be considered a reform over the contemporary belief which was rooted in the *Vedas*.

3. *Concept of Fire:*

The Buddha's doctrine in the early period was always delivered to people who had high intellectual abilities who were ready to know the essence of what he taught. Most of the doctrines delivered may be realized through real experience which everyone has. They are not concerned with any supernatural power which gives punishment and happiness. The surprising thing about the Buddha's teaching is that everything can be realized in daily life.

The Buddha converted the ascetics who performed the fire sacrifice on the bank of the *Neranjarā* river. They were *Uruvelā Kasapa*, *Nadi Kasapa*, and *Gayā Kasapa* respectively.

The Buddha was staying at *Gayā* on *Gayā-Sīsa* with the *Bhikkhus* who had just converted to the Buddhists. There he delivered a discourse on a new concept of fire which can be felt within human life instead of the general meaning of fire which is used for benefit of life and

sacrifice. Since the three ascetics had performed the fire-sacrifice as their religious ritual, the Buddha explained the concept of internal fire which is very dangerous for everyone who does not know its feature, root, and the power of destruction, without blaming the fire-sacrifice performed by them.

In this connection, he indicated that internal sense organs which are the eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue, the body, the mind, and external sense-organs which are visible objects, sound, odour, taste, touch, and mind-objects are the fire and the cause of the fire.⁴⁹⁷ Whenever these two sense organs contact each other, consciousness will exist in the internal sense organs. Actually the main fire, being derived from this contact between the external and the internal sense organs, is desire, hate, and delusion. Then the sensation of suffering or pleasure will arise because of such a process.

So, the Buddha emphasized that the three important fires: desire, hate, and delusion are inherent in the mind. The destruction of these leads to real happiness, *Nibbāna*, which is the supreme thing. Although the Buddha did not blame and discredit the fire-sacrifice performed by the three ascetics, at the end of the discourse they could know the demerit of their sacrifice. They abandoned their former faith and embraced the new faith which they had never known before. They had realized by themselves that fire sacrifice gives sensual pleasure, which is the cause of

⁴⁹⁷ For details see J.G. Jeenings, *The Vedantic Buddhism of the Buddha* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1974), pp. 68-90.

suffering. The Buddha had no intention to oppose the existing faith but if they could understand and receive benefit from his discourse, they could change their faith according to their own decision.

4. *Sacrifice:*

Kūtadanta Suttanta contains the conversation between the Buddha and a Brahman named *Kūtadanta* who was living at *Khanumata*. He owned much grassland, woodland, water and corn. This wealth was given by *Seniya Bimbisāra*, the king of *Magadha*, as a royal gift.

The great sacrifice was made ready on behalf of *Kūtadanta* the Brahman. And a hundred bulls, and a hundred steers, and a hundred heifers, and a hundred goats, and a hundred rams had been brought to the post for the sacrifice.⁴⁹⁸

According to the story the *Brahman* believed that the Buddha knew about the successful performance of a sacrifice with three-fold method and sixteen necessary instruments. Then he went to the Buddha and asked how a sacrifice should be performed. The Buddha, in reply, told the story of a great sacrifice that had once been offered by the *Brahman* Chaplain of a very prosperous king:

At that sacrifice neither were any oxen slain, neither goats nor fowls, nor fatted pigs, nor were

⁴⁹⁸ Lord Chalmers (ed.), *Dialogues of the Buddha*, trans., Lord Chalmers (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), pp. 173-174.

any kinds of living creatures put to death. No trees were cut down to be used as posts, no *Dhabbha* grasses mown to strew around the sacrificial spot. And the slaves and messengers and workmen there employed were driven neither by rods nor fear, nor carried on their work weeping with tears upon their faces. Who chose to help, he worked; who chose not to help, worked not. What each chose to do, he did. What they chose not to do, that was left undone. With ghee, and oil, and butter, and milk, and honey, and sugar only was that sacrifice accomplished.⁴⁹⁹

This, statement indicates that the sacrifice is not a thing which can be arranged by a *Brahman* only according to the disposition described in the *Vedas*. It is not a complex affair. The Buddha tells that it is not meant for a particular class of society but that all could perform such a simple sacrifice. The narrative tells us of the surprising decision of the king who had decided not to make a levy on the people of his realm to pay for the sacrifice, but to use his own wealth.⁵⁰⁰

The important point is the new way of the sacrifice given by the Buddha indicating the disadvantages of the traditional Brahmanical sacrifice. It involved economic wastefulness, cruelty to animals, forced labor with harsh treatment of labor, and oppressive taxation of the people

⁴⁹⁹ Lord Calmers (ed.), N. 63, p. 180.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

in order to pay for the sacrifice. It is, thus, a clear suggestion that such a Brahmanical sacrifice should be discarded because it involved lavish expenditure, cruelty, and social oppression.

The *Brahman* had listened to the Buddha. He had a new idea because of seeing the demerits of the traditional sacrifice, its trouble and cost. He asked the Buddha, ‘Is there, O Gotama, any sacrifice less difficult and less troublesome, with more fruit and advantage than this’? The Buddha described to the *Brahman* the preferable forms of sacrifice as follows:

The perpetual gifts kept up in a family where they are given specifically to virtuous recluses. The putting up of a dwelling place on behalf of the Order in all the four directions.⁵⁰¹

He who with trusting heart takes a Buddha as his guide, and the Truth, and the Order – that is a sacrifice better than perpetual alms, better than the gift of a dwelling place.⁵⁰²

When a man with trusting heart takes upon himself the precepts – abstinence from destroying life; abstinence from taking what has not been given. Abstinence from evil conduct in respect of lusts; abstinence from lying words; abstinence from strong, intoxicating, maddening drinks, the

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*

root of carelessness – that is a sacrifice better than open largesse, better than perpetual alms, better than the gift of dwelling places, better than accepting guidance.⁵⁰³

The last one emphasizes these virtues: the renunciation of the world, *sīla* (minor morality), guarding the door of the senses, mindfulness, being self-possessed, contentment, solitude, destruction of the five hindrances, and the practice of *Jhān*.⁵⁰⁴

The Buddha concluded: “This, O *Brahman*, is a sacrifice less difficult and less troublesome, of greater fruit and greater advantage than the previous sacrifices. And there is no sacrifice man can celebrate, O *Brahman*, higher and sweeter than this.”⁵⁰⁵

The concept of sacrifice which the Buddha explained to the *Brahman* gives the ideas of individual and social development and economic safety. Such sacrifices contribute to social welfare, instead of paying a lot of money for performing sacrifices consisting of violence and troubles, such as killing human beings and animals. Those who want to perform sacrifice give wealth to support the ascetics who live the virtues and preach the way leading to sublime life. There is no concept of oppression, only benefit for self and the other fellow beings. To follow the Triple Gem i.e., the Buddha, the

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

Dhamma (Truth) and the Sangha (Order) as one's guide, is to make oneself confident in the right way of life.

On the one hand, to take upon oneself the five precepts contributes both to self-development and to social security. Each limb of the five precepts is concerned with self-training, self-control, and peaceful co-existence in society.

The last one is concerned more with individual practice than social contribution. Yet, it is important for the society because the individual with self-culture, self-control, self-confidence, and self-training, can lead himself and society to happiness and peace. There is no place to commit evil and violence towards self and society.

Thus, the Buddha's sacrifice is based on the doctrine of compassion and peaceful co-existence among human beings and animals. The ideas of mutual understanding, mutual interest, and mutual relation are proclaimed instead of violence and selfishness.

The *Brahman*, after having listened to the Buddha's advice, was impressed by the Buddha's words. He changed his faith regarding performance of the traditional sacrifice and then, he said with feeling of compassion:

I myself, O Gotama, will have the seven hundred bulls, and the seven hundred steers, and the seven hundred heifers, and the seven hundred goats, and the seven hundred rams set free. To them

grant their life, let them eat green grass and drink fresh water, and may cool breezes waft around them.⁵⁰⁶

Thus, the Buddhist view of sacrifice is different from the Brahmanical view of sacrifice in the method of performance and the result arising thereof. This can be said to form a part of important reform introduced by the Buddha.

Some Buddha's teaching Contributing to the Idea of Social Reform:

Caste:

The teaching of the Buddha was not for the few. It was meant for all – the high, the low, the rich, the poor, the wise, and the ignorant, the noble-mind, and the immoral without any distinction. To quote Narusu:⁵⁰⁷

His teaching is pure, and makes no discrimination between noble and ignoble, between rich and poor. It is like unto water which cleanses all without distinction. It is like unto fire which consumes all things that exist between heaven and earth, great and small. It is like unto the heavens, for there is room in it, ample room for the reception of all, for men and women, boys and girls, the powerful and the lowly.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁵⁰⁷ P. Lakshmi Narasu, *The Essence of Buddhism* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Service, 1985), p. 70.

These were the words by which the Buddha impressed his disciples regarding the universality of the salvation he brought into the world. This can be described as the Buddha's social reform. Modern scholars have described him as an evolutionist:

Buddhism played a revolutionary role by preaching equality, attacking the system of *Varnas*, and giving hope to the downtrodden slave. The metaphysical attitude of the *Upanishads* applied to the social field defended the *Varna* system, slavery and upper class tyranny as absolute. Buddhism raised the slogan of revolution. Everything changes. Nothing is permanent. The *Varna* system also is not permanent. The Buddha openly attacked in hundreds of his sermons Brahmanical tyranny, the *Varna* system, monarchy and inequality. His heart melted at the suffering of the poor. When Buddha announced that his mission is life was to liberate humanity from suffering, it had great social significance. All the oppressed and downtrodden, the low castes, the women, the poor, the indebted, and the slaves – looked upon Buddha as a great savior.⁵⁰⁸

The Buddha rejected the concept of social status determined by birth, colour, or wealth. He, on the contrary

⁵⁰⁸ Rahul Sankrityayan and Others, *Buddhism: The Marxist Approach* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1985), p. 42.

determined the qualities of human beings on the basis of their actions or conduct. Once, while the Buddha was going for alms from house to house, the *Brahmana Aggikabharadvaja* saw him coming at a distance. He said, “stay there, O Shaveling; O *Samanaka* (i.e. wretched *samana*), O *Vasalaka* (i.e. outcaste).” This having been said, the Buddha replied: “Do you know, O *Brahmana*, an outcaste, or the things that make an outcaste?”

‘No, O venerable Gotama, I do not know an outcaste or the things that make an outcaste; let the venerable Gotama teach me this so well that I may know an outcaste, or the things that make an outcaste.’ Then the Buddha said:

Whosoever in this world harms living beings, whether once or twice born, and in whom there is no compassion for living beings, let one know him as an outcast.

Whosoever destroys or lays siege to villages and towns, and is known as an enemy, let one know him as an outcast.

Be it in the village or in the wood, whosoever appropriates by theft what is the property of others and what has not been given, let one know him as an outcast.

Whosoever, having really contracted a debt, runs away when called upon (to pay), saying, “there is

no debt (that owe) thee,” let one know him as an outcast.

Whosoever for love of a trifle having killed a man going along the road, takes the trifle, let one know him as an outcast.

The man who for his own sake or for that of others or for the sake of wealth speaks falsely when asked as a witness, let one know him as an outcast.

Whosoever is seen with the wives of relatives or of friends either by force or with their consent, let one know him as an outcast.

Whosoever being rich does not support mother or father when old and past their youth, let one know him as an outcast.

Whosoever strikes or by words annoys mother or father, brother, sister, or mother-in-law, let one know him as an outcast.

Whosoever, being asked about what is good, teaches what is bad and advises (another, while) concealing (something from him), let one know him as an outcast.

Whosoever, having committed a bad deed, hopes (saying), “let no one know me” (as having done it,

who is) a dissembler, let one know him as an outcast.

Whosoever, having gone to another's house and partaken of his good food, does not in return honour him when he comes, let one know him as an outcast.

Whosoever by falsehood deceives either a *Brāhmana* or a *Samana* or any other mendicant, let one know him as an outcast.

Whosoever by words annoys either a *Brāhmana* or a *Samana* when meal-time has come and does not give (him anything), let one know him as an outcast.

Whosoever enveloped in ignorance in this world predicts what is not (to take place), coveting a trifle, let one know him as an outcast.

Whosoever exalts himself and despises others, being mean by his pride, let one know him as an outcast.

Whosoever reviles Buddha or his disciple, be he a wandering mendicant (*paribbāga*) or a householder (*gahattha*), let one know him as an outcast.

Whosoever without being a saint (*arahat*) pretends to be a saint, (and is) a thief in all the worlds including that of *Brahman*, he is indeed the lowest outcast; (all) these who have been described by me to you are indeed called outcasts.⁵⁰⁹

The Buddha explains the concept of outcaste through a behavioural approach based on the individual's conduct. This approach gives equal opportunity for everyone to examine himself by making use of ethical measures given by the Buddha as criteria. In the foregoing analysis the Buddha seems to talk of the real phenomenon which is the nature of every society. The concept of oppression of those who are weak is treated as a violation of human rights. The Buddha left the traditional idea of inherited caste and gave a new idea of virtue as the important measure of a human being. In this case, the Buddha accepted the contemporary term of "outcaste" as the low caste and refused the traditional factors which determine the outcaste. He said:

Not by birth does one become an outcast, not by birth does one become a *Brāhmana*; by deeds one becomes an outcast, by deeds one becomes a *Brāhmana*.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁹ F. Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol X, trans., F. Max Muller and V. Fausboll (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968), pp. 21-23.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*

At the same time, the Buddha accepted the term *Brahmana* as the symbol of a gentle man or the ideal people who trust virtues. The term '*Brahmana*', according to the Buddha's doctrine, is the common or central meaning for everyone who practices virtue. *Dhammapada* contains verses concerning how to be a *Brahman* in the *Brahmana Vagga*. It refers to the Buddha's words which define a *Brahmana* on the basis of virtues: "Him I call indeed a *Brahmana* who does not offend by body, word, or thought and is controlled on these three points."⁵¹¹ Whosoever, irrespective of caste, can control his three points, the body, thought, and speech, has equal right to be called *Brahmana*. In order to assert this doctrine the Buddha says, "A man does not become a *Brahmana* by his platted hair, by his family, or by his birth. In whom there is truth and righteousness, he is blessed, he is a *Brahmana*."⁵¹² A uniform, race, and family are meaningless, but truth and righteousness are the real qualities of a *Brahmana*.

On the one hand, the spirit of *Brahmana* is not possessed by those who are born in a *Brahmana* family and who possess a lot of wealth, but of the poor man who is liberated from attachments, the Buddha says, "him I call indeed a *Brahmana* who has traversed this miry road ... who is thoughtful, guileless, free from doubts, free from attachment, and content."⁵¹³

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

The term “*Brāhmana*” is employed for the Buddhist Saint or *Arhant*. The Buddha says:

Him I call indeed a *Brāhmana* who in this world is above good and evil, above the bondage of both, free from grief, from sin and from impurity. Him I call indeed a *Brāhmana* who is tolerant with the intolerant, mild with fault finders and free among the passionate. Him I call indeed a *Brāhmana* who utters true speech, instructive and free from harshness, so that he offends no one.⁵¹⁴

These are the qualities of those who attain the highest virtues in Buddhism, *Nibbāna* or *Nirvana*. The Buddha also calls himself a *Brāhmana*, “Him I call indeed a *Brāhmana* who knows the destruction and the return of beings everywhere, who is free from bondage, welfaring (*Sugata*) and awakened (Buddha)”⁵¹⁵.

Buddhahood is not for the Buddha alone. Everyone who possesses the qualities of Buddhahood can be called Buddha or *Brāhmana*. Virtues, according to Buddhism, become the standard measure for determining human values. It gave new hope to those who came to know of it. The equal right of opportunity for self-development became open to all.

Although the Buddha tried to establish virtues as the standard measure for determining who is a real *Brāhmana*,

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

the *Brāhmanas* always claimed their superiority. The Buddha once explained to a young *Brāhmin Assālayana* the concept of the equality of human beings and asked him to recognize that: “the *Brāhmins*’ wives are known to have their periods, and to conceive and to lie in and give such; do *Brāhmins* really maintain all this, though they are themselves born of woman like everybody else?”⁵¹⁶

The young *Brāhmin* accepted his reply. The explanation of human equality indicates that originally every human being is equal and the concept of high caste or low caste is created by social conditions defined by the people in the past.

The Buddha supports the concept of human equality by giving the example of fire lit by the low and the high caste:

Suppose a noble who had been anointed king, were to assemble a hundred men of mixed origin and were to say to them: ‘all of you who were nobles or *Brāhmins* or of royal birth, take kindling wood of *sāla* or pine or sandal or lotus and make a blazing fire with it. And you that come of low stocks, trappers, rush platters, cartwrights, and vermin killers. You light your fire with cattle – through or long through or vash-tubes or bits of woodbine what would happen, do you think? Would it be only the fire kindled by

⁵¹⁶ Lord Chalmers (ed.), *Dialogues of the Buddha*, Vol. II, trans., Lord Chalmers (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 86.

the high born which would flare up with a bright-flame and serve the purpose of a fire? And would the fire of the low people fail herein?’ The young *Brāhmin* replied, no Gotama, it would be just the same with high and low, fire alike would blaze up with the same bright flame and equally serve the purposes of the fire.⁵¹⁷

In order to justify his doctrine that the *Dhamma* or virtues make no difference between one caste and another the Sangha organization was established as the ideal society based on equality. All were admitted into the Sangha without distinction. Only the minor groups, soldiers, slaves, invalids, and cripples were not permitted to join the order. These were inevitable exceptions. For the defense of even the best-governed country soldiers are necessary, and they cannot be allowed to give up their work without sufficient reason. They will be permitted to join the Sangha order on the condition that they are free or permitted by the master or the commander. The Sangha respected the fundamental and equal rights of an individual on the ground that if one is helped, then the other is not oppressed. They will enjoy their mutual interests. The Buddha had no right to emancipate slaves from the master to set them free but he taught people to attain the high freedom which is more vital than the physical freedom in the Buddha’s time the institution of slavery was alive.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

The Buddha, having been respected by many masters, improved the standard of living of the slaves or servants by teaching them that “the master should minister his servant by assigning them work according to their strength: by supplying them work according to their strength: by supplying them with food and wages; by lending them in sickness, by sharing with them unusual delicacies; by granting leave at special times.”⁵¹⁸

It shows that slaves and servants were instructed by the Buddha not to be oppressed by the master. On the contrary, mutual relationship on the basis of mutual help is suggested. He did not only teach the duty of the master but for doing justice to both sides, the Buddha also taught the employees that servants and employees should love their master in five ways:

They rise before him, they lie down to rest after him, they are content with what is given to them; they do their work well; and they carry about his praise and good fame.⁵¹⁹

The relationship in this respect is not that of the oppressor and the oppressed but like that of friendship, each performing his function according to his ability. The problem of conflict will not arise because they satisfy each other. Thus, here also the Buddha gave a message of harmonious relationship between the slave and the master.

⁵¹⁸ T.W. Rhys Davids (ed.), *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, Vol. IV, trans., T.W. and C.A.F. Rhys Davids (London: Luzac and Company Ltd., 1957), p. 182.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

It can be seen as a part of his overall theory of kindness and compassion. But it certainly did advocate the betterment of the condition of the slaves.

Impact of the Buddha's Reformation on the Society:

The attempt which the Buddha made at proclaiming the doctrine of the equality of human beings was not intended to attack traditional instructions, faith, or to destroy and change the existing social structure. The purpose was not to separate one caste from the other nor to create social conflict. The purpose was, no doubt, to establish social unity and harmony among the people from various groups living together in the same society. He always, after pointing out the demerits of social stratification, called upon all human beings around the world to unite in harmony on the basis of compassion. Living in harmony with love was much emphasized. Such a way is not only a source of social harmony but also the ultimate good of the individual.

The *Mettasutta* speaks of the infinite compassion:

Whatever is to be done by one who is skilful in seeking (what is) good. Having attained that tranquil state (of *Nibbāna*): - Let him be able and upright and conscientious and of soft speech, gentle, not proud,

And contented and easily supported and having few cares, unburdened and with his senses

calmed and wise, not arrogant, without (showing) greediness (when going his round) in families.

And let him not do anything mean for which others who are wise might reprove (him): may all beings be happy and secure, may they be happy minded.

Whatever living beings there are, either feeble or strong, all either long or great, middle-sized, short, small, or large,

Either seen or which are not seen, and which live far (or) near, either born or seeking birth, may all creatures be happy-minded.

Let no one deceive another, let him not despise (another) in any place, let him not out of anger or resentment wish harm to another.

As a mother at the risk of her life watches over her own child, her only child, so also let every one cultivate a boundless (friendly) mind towards all beings.

And let him cultivate goodwill towards all the world, a boundless (friendly) mind, above and below and across unobstructed, without hatred, without enmity.

Standing, walking or sitting or lying, as long as he be awake, let him devote himself to this mind; this (way of) living they say is the best in this world.⁵²⁰

Compassion and friendship are not mere verbal sympathy but a natural flow of mind to become one with the suffering of others and to make efforts for its removal. It is a boundless, flow of love and affection. It makes the entire atmosphere surcharged with waves of peace and tranquility. Under these virtues, there will develop a social order where there is neither enmity nor quarrel nor suppression nor unpleasantness of any type. Rather there shall prevail the supreme reign of happiness, both internal and external.⁵²¹

The Buddha's doctrine left its impact on his society both positively and negatively. Positively, there were manifold groups of people who, after listening to the doctrine, converted from the traditional faith and let their life be liberated from traditional social structures. The social structure was not changed radically but people within the social structure changed their ideology from concepts of oppressor and oppressed to equality and fraternity.

On the contrary, the negative impact was on those who were conservative. They did not convert their original ideas. Although the Buddha always had compassion to all,

⁵²⁰ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 74, pp. 24-25.

⁵²¹ Mahesh Tiwary, *Socio-Economic Ideas in Early Buddhist Scriptures*, (New Delhi: 1984), p. 11.

he might have created enemies unintentionally. He always stood for non-violence and proclaimed right understanding to the people. Brahmins continued to fight and protect their faith and interests.

Although Brahmins were opposite to him, the Buddha always exchanged ideas and consulted with them with a polite manner for explanation of the truth. Many non-converted *Brāhmins* were good friends of the Buddha. Some converts became important disciples to preach the truth. Some gave support by giving clothes, food, medicine, and shelter to the Buddha and Bhikkhus. In brief, the relation between the Buddha and the Brahmanical institution was not too bad.

Thus the statement that Buddha was the reformer of Hinduism is surely not right. The Buddha's reform brought about changes in understanding regarding reality. But the face of Hinduism and the social structure were not greatly changed because of the Buddha's teachings.

However, the Buddha did bring about some reform in the form of changed outlook, ideas, and humanitarian attitudes by preaching tolerance, universal peace, and compassion towards all. In order to give sustained support to his ideas he established an order of monks and gave it an institutional framework i.e., the Sangha in which the key words were equality and fraternity. And yet, in the final analysis, he also laid emphasis upon the self as our real guide and refuge as follows:

O Ānanda, be ye a lamp unto yourself. Be ye a refuge to yourself. Betake yourself to no external refuge. Hold fast to the truth as a lamp. Hold fast as a refuge to the truth. Look not for refuge to any one besides yourself.⁵²²

⁵²² F. Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol, XI, trans., Rhys Davids, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965), p. 38.

VI

CONCLUSION

Natural law and moral law are considered basic tenets of the Buddha's political and social ideas. An insight into natural law causes the attainment of individual salvation which is free from greed, hatred, and delusion. An individual who emancipates himself from the fetters of evil is an enlightened man. His remaining life is devoted to the happiness and benefit of society.

The moral law must be strictly followed for attainment of peaceful co-existence among human beings. It, of course, encourages the universal principles of equality, liberty, fraternity, and human rights for each member in society.

To have an insight into the natural law and to obey the moral law are two main functions of human beings for both individual and the social development. These two are dependent. They cannot be isolated from each other. It is very difficult for individuals to enjoy the bliss of salvation in a society in which the contrary ideas prevail. It is difficult to create a society abiding in moral law if there is no one to pay attention to the reality of life.

These principles were discovered by the Buddha through experiment and real experience. His family

background, that of a prince, and his wanderings in pursuit of truths gave birth to his socio-political ideas ensuring from his own experiences and meditation.

Before and during the Buddha's time, Indian society was divided into four main classes; *Khattiya*, *Brāhmana*, *Vessa* and *Sudda*. There were many sub-classes and sub-cultures. Each social class proclaimed superiority over others. The social stratification was inevitable. The Buddha supported social integrity through the principle of good conduct. The Buddha, instead of regarding birth as the criterion for determination of superior or inferior social status, established the individual's conduct as a determining factor. To commit a bad action makes man low. On the contrary, adhering to a good action makes man high in social status.

According to the Buddha, everybody has the equal right to emancipate himself from the fetters of evil and to attain the new life with the help of good action and peaceful mind. With a view to showing the spirit of equality the Buddha established the Buddhist Sangha organization as a classless society where everybody is equal, governed by the same law.

The political system during the Buddha's time was divided into two main types; Monarchy and Republic. The administrative power of state affairs was vested in the hands of the king. He was advised by the Brahman, who was an intellectual, an expert in statecraft. The unique characteristics of the monarchical ruler were high

responsibility and ability. Expertise in fighting was an important characteristic of the ruler. Most of the leaders of great powers possessed this quality. The advantage or disadvantage of the country depended upon the ability of the ruler who was central to everything. The king was succeeded by his heir, but there were instances where sometimes the son rebelled against the father and took over the kingship.

The republican system was a system in which the power of state affairs was vested in a group. Most of the members of the group were learned men among the kingly clan. However, the republican system in the Buddha's time was not similar to the modern republican system. While the president of the modern republican system is elected by the majority of the people, the president of the ancient republican system had to be elected from among the members of the parliament.

While the members of modern parliament can be said to be representatives of all the people in the country, the members of an ancient parliament might be elected from people of the higher castes, the *Khattiya*, *Brāhmana* and *Vessa* or only the *Khattiya* and *Brāhmana*.

While the modern president of a republic has full power to decide some important issues in many cases with or without ratification, the ancient republican president had a nominal power, the decision was to be ratified by the parliament. But some modern republican systems are similar to those of ancient times. The power of decision-

making does not matter because it depends on many conditions and factors concerning the place and time.

The ancient republic, however, was more oligarchic or aristocratic than the modern democratic republic because in the modern democratic republic the people have an opportunity to participate in political affairs. In ancient times, the monopoly of the political power was in the hands of a minority of the people, the learned or trained people from the high class only.

Even in modern times, the monopoly of political power and social privilege has been vested in the hands of those who control economic power, the mode of production and the distribution of production. If compared to the monarchical system of ancient times it is not much different because the nature of the monarchy is that the king controls state affairs. Every policy is decided by the king and the minority group of advisors who follow and hear what he wants. Personal ability and personality played an important role in leadership. There is a need for the king to be trained for development of high knowledge and ability.

During the Buddha's time the monarchy was more prevalent than the republic. It was so because of many factors. Some important reasons for the strength of the monarchies may be listed as:

1) The personal ability of the ruler in administration both in external and internal affairs constituted an important element.

2) The fighting ability of the ruler with the enemy was much more needed then. It probably played a more important role than other factors because the ruler who possessed expertise in fighting could both protect his country and extend its boundaries.

3) The natural resources: A kingdom gifted with natural resources was always in an advantageous position. One of the important reasons for the rise of *Magadha* power in ancient India was that natural resources such as iron ore were found in abundance in its empire. Such natural resources were needed for making weapons and also acted as an important medium of exchange for other things.

4) Topology also constituted an important element for any power to be great because it is natural boundaries such as rivers and mountains that make a power less vulnerable to attack. In war, it is difficult for an enemy to penetrate and occupy the country. Even today, this factor plays an important role.

5) Adroitness in making foreign policy was another important factor. At that time integrity within the empire and in inter-state relations were emphasized.

In order to attain this purpose, the rulers used to make friends and have concord with each other by exchanging natural resources and economic aid. Matrimony was also a method of foreign alliance because this could bring two or three countries closer since children born would establish blood relationship.

Considering the relationship between the Buddha and contemporary rulers, it can be said that they had a close relationship. The following factors contributed to bring about such a close and strong relationship:

- 1) Like the other rulers the Buddha was aristocratic, by birth, belonging to the high class. His close relationship to kings may have been based on this factor.

- 2) His function was to proclaim the truth for the benefit and interest of the people, irrespective of their social status. When everybody had received spiritual benefit from him they honoured him as a master or a good friend. He performed this role successfully without falling back on political power or social privilege.

- 3) Non-interference in internal affairs: The Buddha, it appears, never interfered in the internal affairs of the rulers. On the contrary through his teaching he provided answers to some of the puzzling problems of the state and society. From the point of view of social security the conversion of thousand of thieves and other antisocial elements into monks may be cited as an instance.

4) Development of moral conduct: He gave discourses to both the rulers and the ruled for uplift of moral standard. As a result of Buddha's teachings many rulers changed their behaviour and style of functioning from an oppressive to a benevolent rule.

5) Symbol of peace: While Buddha wandered from state to state the ruler of each was influenced by him and strictly followed his doctrines. The idea of war, in general, was neglected in due course. There were only internal conflicts.

The moral campaign became part of state affairs. Some kings employed the doctrine as an instrument of international relations. The doctrine became an excellent gift which a king would send to his friends. Wherever the Buddha had gone, individual and social peace and happiness were widely spread.

The Buddha had a close relationship with contemporary kings. They respected and honoured the Buddha as their spiritual guide and a great source of right knowledge. The political ideas of Buddha covering various aspects are to be found in the discourses he delivered to his followers from time to time.

The state, according to Buddhism, has evolved out of natural process and reason. Primitive society, according to some Western ideas, especially Hobbes', is described as barbarian, rough, uncivilized and cruel. Buddhism contends that primitive society was a society of virtuous

men. It was very happy and peaceful. But when virtue declined, happiness, peace and security decreased. Man's mind was filled with passion, greed, hatred, and delusion. There was, therefore, a requirement for social institutions. The family, the first unit of society, always existed. When the members of society increased their facility of livelihood, the natural conditions became exhausted. In fact, the demands of consumption increased as the quantity of natural resources reduced.

Violence emerged because of economic factors. The feeling of security for preservation of life and the guarantee of survival was disturbed. Human beings could not be happy by living alone. It was necessary for them to live together and then leadership was naturally required. The leader was elected from among the society's men. Thus, the concept of the state begins from the same time as the process of election of the leader starts. The process of evolution of the state can be seen in the following changes: pure society – impure society – family society, and state.

The state thus originated from the common will for the promotion of human well-being. It is, thus, a social contract. Power to be the leader had been given by the people. The leader of the state was only a manager to serve the people and to keep them enjoying both material property and high moral standards. The title of the ruler, according to Buddhism, is called *Rājā* which means king. In fact it does not suggest that the Buddha favoured the monarchical system but the word *Rājā* is derived from the

Pali language which is meant to make the people satisfied.⁵²³ The *Rājā* is the symbol of the ruler who has legitimacy based on the consent of the people in society. Such a ruler had no wish to become a dictator.

Compared to the criteria given by the ancient Greeks that government by one is monarchy, government by a few is aristocracy and government by many is democracy,⁵²⁴ the state according to the Buddha's idea is democratic because the ruler is controlled by the people.

The Buddha, however, does not refer to the machinery of the administration as an important factor but the behaviour of the ruler or the groups of rulers is much emphasized. He stresses the personal qualities of the ruler which determines the nature and quality of the government more than anything else. The ruler of the state should be a believer, and generous, ... a doer of good deed.”⁵²⁵

Some personal qualities such as high personality and ability have also been prescribed. The Buddha speaks of such qualities as follows:

The ruler should be handsome, pleasant in appearance, inspiring, trusted, gifted with great beauty of complexion, fair in colour, fine in

⁵²³ T.W. Rhys Davids (ed.), *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, Vol. IV, trans., T.W. and C.A.F. Rhys Davids (London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1957), p. 88.

⁵²⁴ Austin Ranny, *The Government of Men*, (New York: Halt, Kinehart and Winston, 1962), p. 60.

⁵²⁵ T.W. Rhys Davids (ed.), *Dialogue of the Buddha*, Part I, trans., T.W. Rhys Davids (London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1956), p. 177.

presence; - the ruler should be powerful, in command of an army, loyal and disciplined, burning up, methinks his enemies by his every glory – He should be learned in all kinds of knowledge.⁵²⁶

The ruler is not only a manager of social welfare but he must observe the precepts and purify his mind daily.⁵²⁷ His virtues are the instruments of his legitimacy.⁵²⁸

According to the Buddha, *Dhamma* (law or norm) should be the main criterion of decision of what is right and what is wrong. The state is not an ideal state but rather a real state, because the state administration, which leads to prosperity and glory, can be realized and rationalized.

*Kutadanta*⁵²⁹ and *Cakkavattisihanada Suttanta*⁵³⁰ reflect the spirit of welfare resulting from economic prosperity because the ruler of the state supports and watches every profession of the people who live therein. This also supports the view that even during Buddha's time economic well-being was regarded as the key to welfarism.

The rulers, according to Buddhism, were regarded as central personages of the state, themselves striving to be

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁷ T.W. Rhys Davids, N. 1, p. 62.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁵²⁹ T.W. Rhys Davids, N. 3, p. 176.

⁵³⁰ T.W. Rhys Davids, N. 1, p. 62.

Bodhisattavas. They were expected to lead their subjects on the way to salvation. As *Bodhisattavas* they were not only examples to their subjects, but actually helpful to them. The salvation charisma of the *Bodhisattava* consists in his using his own salvation to further the efforts of others to achieve salvation.

The state is regarded as a welfare state because it is the means for both the ruler and the ruled to enjoy material prosperity and spiritual salvation. The state, according to Buddha's ideas, is nothing but a virtuous institution ruled by virtuous rulers and lived in by virtuous subjects for attainment of economic glory, peace of mind, and perfect wisdom.

According to the Buddha's idea, the machinery of the government is nothing more than the instrument of the ruler. The form of government is not emphasized but the person who controls the administrative power is. If the ruler does not practice the virtues and righteousness and if he thinks only of self-interest, the machinery of government becomes the instrument of self-interest. On the contrary, if the ruler is virtuous and interested in the welfare of his subjects, the machinery of the government becomes the means for the distribution of social welfare.

Regarding what governmental form was taught by the Buddha, the simple answer is that nothing in this regard was proclaimed by the Buddha. But he had the belief that as long as the ruler follows righteousness, the people will not suffer but if the ruler administers on the basis of self-

interest, the people are bound to suffer. When we study the Buddha's political ideas we find that he neither condemns nor praises any governmental form but he is always ready to give advice to the rulers of both forms of government – Monarchy as well as Republic.

In the monarchical form the Buddha emphasized virtue for development of the king because the king is the center of all power in state affairs. In the monarchical system, the Buddha has described the example of the good king called universal monarch who honours and follows the virtues and Norms (*Dhammas*) as his refuge. He possesses great compassion and rules over the people with non-violence. The righteousness of the Emperor is loved by the people and colonies are under his sovereignty because he rules over them by love and kindness and not by force.⁵³¹

On the contrary the bad king who oppresses the people with force and taxation is called the tyrant. The Buddha blames such a bad king who rules the regime for his self-interest as a corrupt man.⁵³² This idea is similar to Aristotle's idea of polity. If the king rules over the people by righteousness and for promotion of the good life, he will be following dhamma, if he does the contrary he becomes a tyrant.⁵³³

⁵³¹ Rhys Davids, (ed.), N. 1, p. 60.

⁵³² Charles Rockwell Lanman (ed.), *Buddhist Legends*, Vol. XXVIII, trans. Eugene Watson Burlingame (London: Pali Texts Society, 1979), p. 243.

⁵³³ Charles Howard McIlwain, *the Growth of Political Thought In the West* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1963), p. 83.

The republican government is also included in the Buddha's ideas. He has spoken about the seven conditions of national stability. These conditions are emphasized for preservation of national integrity. The preservation of the fundamental rights of ladies and girls must be protected by the state. On the other hand, tradition, culture and good action should be supported by the state.⁵³⁴

These are the conditions for the glory of the republican state. The officials of the state should follow the collective principles of society, and the individual cultivation of righteousness is also emphasized. The difference between the principles contributing to the glory of monarchy and the republican state is made clear. Since the decisions regarding state affairs must be ratified by the parliament, it becomes necessary for everyone to hold the same principles of national interest. The collective principles are important for the republican state while the individual development of leadership plays an important role in the monarchical state.

The Buddha's political ideas are reflected through the Buddhist Order's organizational form. It would not be wrong if we call the Buddhist Sangha Administrative Organization a democracy because the decision-making in the affairs of the order is collective by all the members of the temple or the society. The Buddhist Sangha is a unique form of society in which there is no class or social

⁵³⁴ F. Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred books of the East*, Vol. XI, trans., Rhys Davids (Motilal Banarsidass, 1965), p. 4.

stratification.⁵³⁵ It is a society which supports the principle of a classless society, fraternity, liberty, and equality. Everybody in the Sangha society is equal under the same law called monastic discipline or the *Vinaya*. There is no system of high and low position; they have, however, the principle of senior and junior. There is no permanent leadership which may bring about tyranny but the leader should be elected unanimously. The factors which lead us to consider the Buddhist Sangha organization as a Democracy are as follows:

1. The Buddhist Sangha organization is an Organization run by Bhikkhus, for the Bhikkhus, and of the Bhikkhus, which is the spirit of democracy.

2. The degree of participation in social affairs is very high. The Order affairs must be run by the consent and participation of all members. Unanimous opinion is expected.

3. It is ruled by law and not by man.⁵³⁶ There was no succession of the Buddha after his death. So the Buddhist Organization is not owned by any one or any group but it belongs to the entire Bhikkhu community. All the Bhikkhus are equal and run the Sangha affairs under acts of law proclaimed by the Buddha through the ratification of the Bhikkhus. The law is the basis for the performance of the affairs of the order.

⁵³⁵ F. Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred books of the East*, Vol. XI, trans., Rhys Davids and H. Oldenberg (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1985), p. 304.

⁵³⁶ F. Max Muller (ed.), N.12, pp. 36-37.

4. The leader of the Sangha must be elected and consented to by all the members and he should possess the following qualities:

- A. A learned Bhikkhu.
- B. An Old Bhikkhu.
- C. An expert in the Norms (*Dhammas*) and discipline (*Vinaya*).
- D. Possession of justice.
- E. A Bhikkhu speaking Truth.⁵³⁷

5. The law is a conventional law derived from the conventions of the Bhikkhus presided over by the Buddha. The enactment of law is not something descending from ancient time but is based on real experience and reason. The Buddha proclaimed that if the Bhikkhus want to amend some acts of the law they could.⁵³⁸ This is the spirit of freedom given by the Buddha to amend what he himself had prescribed. It shows his respect of public opinion and the practical idea that laws should not be static in a changing society. Although he is the Enlightened One, he does not claim himself as the great one who could not be questioned by anyone.

The governmental system of the Buddhist Sangha differs from the old monarchical and republican forms in following ways:

⁵³⁷ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 13, p. 304.

⁵³⁸ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 12, p. 112.

1. While the republican system is ruled by a few people of the oligarchy, a minority group in the country, and while the monarchical system is ruled by one, the king, who controls all administrative power, the new democracy of the Buddha is ruled by all the members of the society.

2. While the president in the republican system is selected from among the members of oligarchy or aristocratic people, and while the king in the monarchical system transfers his power to his heir, who is the son or cousin of the king, in the new Buddhist democratic system everybody has the equal right to be elected as the president of Sangha under the act of law, if he possess the good qualities and is ratified by all the members who participate in the meeting.

3. While the two former systems have the central government to control the state affairs, the new Buddhist democracy has no central government. There are self-governments among various groups to run the Sangha affairs under the acts of the same law.

4. While in the other two systems the rulers work for power and social privilege, the members of the Buddhist Sangha work for the benefit and interest of all the people irrespective of caste, class, race, etc.

The Buddha did not bring about a political revolution or political reform but while supporting the old ones he formed a new system which is democratic. Since Buddha

was primarily a spiritual leader it was not his business to enunciate a political theory or bring about a political revolution. But since in his vision all men are equal, the kind of political system that emerges from his discourses is democratic, both in theory and practice.

The Democracy formed by the Buddha consists of the republican idea which prevailed in India in the Buddha's time. But the method of working goes beyond the existing ones and it seems to have its own unique character.

Another idea to be found in the Buddhist Sangha Administrative Organization is related to the idea of communism. It is a classless society, private property is common wealth. At that time there was no idea of communism so it can be said that the Buddha was the father of communism. Two features of communism can be compared and seen as different from each other.

1. The classless society according to the modern ideas of communism had not yet come but the idea of a Buddhist classless society had been realized.

2. Classless society according to the modern theory of communism will come by radical change through the employment of force. The Buddhist classless society came into being by imparting instruction and cultivation of virtues along with right understanding. There is no concept of violence; rather non-violence is the basis of his classless society.

3. The theory of modern communism advises the abolition of private property; giving birth to state ownership of property for distribution of social welfare to all members of the society. Whereas the Buddhist private property is collected into the central or common purse for the purpose of providing social welfare. Private property in the communist system is abolished by the dictatorship of the proletariat but the private property in the Buddhist Sangha is voluntarily renounced.

4. The objective of communist society is material prosperity but the Buddhist Sangha organization has the objective to emancipate humanity from evil and to live with sufficient material facilities. Buddhism aims at both material prosperity and spiritual happiness.

However, the Buddhist Sangha organization, a democratic model, is not a completed system. It is based on changing circumstances and factors. It is derived from the evolution and real experience of the Buddha and the Bhikkhus who are his followers. This democratic system is the inevitable result of the natural law of impermanence, transition, and non-control. The Buddhist Sangha organization still exists in many countries. But the form of pure democracy of early Buddhism has changed according to the environment and conditions of the society in which Buddhism has existed.

The Buddha's social ideas were against the traditional faith and social stratification and because of this the Buddha has been called a social reformer. He preached

principles which created a new social relationship favouring equality and freedom, fraternity and material abundance for all living members in society. These principles were based on compassion, love and kindness. Although he had no intention to contradict or injure anyone, his teaching, being based on righteousness, had much impact on the traditional faith and society dominated by Brahmanism. It is said that the Buddha's teaching has superseded the Brahmanical system on four counts:

1. The Brahmanic system limited the commandment of love to man alone. The caste system influenced love for a chosen few only; the harijans or untouchables who were supposed to be a low class had no place. In contrast, Buddha taught love for all living creatures.⁵³⁹ He opposed the bloody sacrifice of animals which was characteristic of Brahmanism.⁵⁴⁰

2. Buddha did away with the obligatory rituals of Brahmanism. He liberated man from the domination of priests, and from the idea of institutionalized mediation between God and man.⁵⁴¹

3. By rejecting the traditional caste system, Buddha became the greatest social reformer of his age. His teachings were delivered to all men, not to a special caste

⁵³⁹ F. Max Muller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. X. trans., F. Max Muller and B.V. Fausboll (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968), p. 25.

⁵⁴⁰ T.W. Rhys Davids (ed.), N. 3, p. 175.

⁵⁴¹ Benze, Ernest. *Buddhism of Communism* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1966), p. 103.

or group. Virtues became the most important determinative.⁵⁴²

4. Buddha aroused men to solve their problems by themselves and to arrive at truth by their own efforts. Each man could attain salvation for himself and by himself without reference to supernatural power or God. The priests as representatives of God were not needed. He increased respect for human nature and raised the voice of morality.⁵⁴³

The Buddha opposed the Brahmanical theory of division of society into four castes which dominated society. He pointed out the evil of exploitation of lower castes by the upper caste. He gave a new idea of caste which is not based on social and economic conditions but on virtues and action.⁵⁴⁴ It is a reformation of the traditional claim of privilege of the Brahmin. The word *Brāhmin* is impersonal, a symbol of polite man.⁵⁴⁵ Buddha spoke against animal sacrifices and the worship of god because all these ideas and practices created a society of inequality, injustice, sorrow and a suffering for the majority of the people.

The Buddha enunciated the universal truth that each man is faced with the problem of suffering. He explained the cause of suffering, craving or thirst which is rooted in ignorance, and the way to remove it. The way to remove it

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*

⁵⁴³ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 17, p. 46.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115.

is the eightfold path, which consists of: right understanding, right aspiration, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.⁵⁴⁶ If the people start following these principles they can set themselves free by ending the cause of suffering mentioned above. Then naturally there will emerge a society in which there would exist no caste, no inequality, no suppression, no animal sacrifice, and no suffering.

The first picture of society in accordance with Buddha's ideas will emerge when people live happily without greed, hatred, and delusion. Each man is imbued with the feeling of responsibility for doing good to others. Each promotes the common good, on the basis of good will. An important aim of Buddhism is that all people should take care of each other and should co-operate, then society will be based on the principle of peaceful co-existence and integrity.

The Buddha's teaching had not only been useful for the past generations but, with the universal truths discovered by him, it contributes to the well-being of all men. It is no doubt, useful for the modern world as well. The modern world, as we well know, is a world of great change. The development of technology and science is very high. It can bring comfort to human beings in almost every sphere of life. Unfortunately, such progress does not increase the virtues inherent in the human mind. Human beings become slaves of greed, hatred, and ignorance. The

⁵⁴⁶ F. Max Muller (ed.), N. 12, p. 150.

new technology and knowledge vested in the hands of such men bring humans closer to the holocaust. Now, it can be said that it is time for us, the human race, to find some law which is useful to break the coming holocaust.

Buddhism has a unique feature of law which can be called universal law. The word “law” is interpreted and translated from the Pali word “*Dhamma*”⁵⁴⁷ This law can be divided into two kinds:⁵⁴⁸ the natural law and moral law. Both of them are absorbed into the universal law, a significant instrument to solve all problems, great and small.

On the basis of the socio-political ideas of the Buddha, as reflected in the above study, it can be concluded that the individual will be virtuous and righteous. He will attain self-control, self-culture, self-confidence, self-sufficiency and finally self-salvation. The aggregate of the individuals becomes the society. The society of such individuals trained in virtue will be a society of mutual-understanding, mutual aid, compassionate-living and peaceful co-existence. Each individual tries to emancipate himself from the fetters of evil, and at the same time helps the others to attain the supreme goal of life. They have no time for conflict because they aim to destroy the cause of their suffering as best they can.

⁵⁴⁷ T.W. Rhys Davids and William Stede (ed.), *Pali English Dictionary* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975), p. 336.

⁵⁴⁸ Jiharaja Dasa, *The Region of Law in Buddhism*, (Adyar, Madras: The Theological Publishing House, 1948), p. 3.

The political institution is only a machine managed by the virtuous people who have righteous consciousness for the promotion of material sufficiency for leading their fellow beings to salvation. Thus, whenever and whatever human beings possess this Norm (*Dhamma*), as their refuge and their way of life, it is not necessary to fix any socio-political system to regulate them. The Buddha always laid emphasis on the virtue of the ruler, and not on the form of rule. He regulated the universal law.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Texts And Commentaries:

- Chalmers, Robert, ed. *Majjhimanikāya*. Vol. II. London: Oxford University Press, 1898.
- *Majjhimanikāya*. Vol. III. London: Oxford University Press, 1899.
- *Dialogues of the Buddha*. Vol. II. Translated by Robert Chalmers. London: Oxford University Press, 1890.
- Cowell, E.B., ed. *Jātakas*. Vol. I, II, III, IV, V, VI. Translated by various Oriental Scholars. Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1979.
- Dauids, T.W. Rhys, ed. *Sacred Books Of The Buddhists*, Vol. IV. Translated by T.W. and C.A.F. Rhys Davids. London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1957.
- *Dialogues of the Buddha*. Part I. Translated by T.W. Rhys Davids. London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1956.
- Feer, M. Leon, ed. *Samyuttanikāya*. Part I, II, III. London: Henry Frowde; Oxford University Press, 1890.
- Lanman, Charles Rockwell, ed. *Buddhist Legends: Dhammapada Commentaries*. Part I, II, III. Haward Oriental Series Vol. XXVIII, XXIX, XXX. Translated by Eugen Watson Burlingame. London: Pali Texts Society, 1979.
- Muller, F. Max, ed. *Sacred Books Of The East*. Vol. X. *Dhammapada Sutta-Nipāta*. Translated by F. Max

- Muller and V. Fausboll. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980.
- . *Sacred Books of the East*. Vol. XI. *Buddhist Suttas*. Translated by T.W. Rhys Davids. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968.
- . *Sacred Books of the East*. Vol. XIII. *Vinaya Texts*. Part I. Translated by T.W. Rhys Davids and H. Oldenberg. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1985.
- . *Sacred Books of the East*. Vol. XVII. *Vinaya Texts*. Part II. Translated by T.W. Rhys Davids and H. Oldenberg, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965.
- . *Sacred Books of the East*. Vol. XX. *Vinaya Texts*. Part III. Translated by T.W. Rhys Davids and H. Oldenberg, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1985.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Books:

- Altekar, A.S. *State and Government In Ancient India*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1949.
- Amritananda, Bhikkhu. *King of Buddha's Time*. Nepal: Ananda Kuti Vihar Trust, 1983.
- Anand, Shanta. *Kshatriyas in Ancient India*. New Delhi: Atma Ram and Sons Publishing House, 1984.
- Appleby, Paul H. *Morality and Administration in Democratic Government*. U.S.A.: Louisiana, State University Press, 1952.
- Bapat, P.V. *2500 Years of Buddhism*. New Delhi: Central Electric Press, 1987.
- Barker, Ernest. *Principle of Social and Political Theory*. New Delhi: Jay Print Pact Pvt. Ltd., 1976.

- . *Social Contract* .London: Oxford University Press, 1960.
- . *Greek Political Theory*. New Delhi: Jay Print Pack Pvt., Ltd., 1980.
- Basham, A.L. *The Wonder That Was India*. New Delhi: Rekha Printer (p) Ltd., 1987.
- Banerjee, Pramathanath. *Public Administration In Ancient India*. New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House, 1985.
- Carus, Paul. *The Gospel of Buddha*. New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1987.
- Coker, Francis William. *Reading in Political Philosophy*. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1955.
- Dauids, T.W. Rhys. *Indian Buddhism*. Allahabad: Jeet Malhotra Rachana Prakashan, 1972.
- . *Early Buddhism*. New Delhi: Bharatiya Publishing House, 1976.
- Dauids, T.W. Rhys. *Buddhist India*. New Delhi: Motilal Barnarsidass, 1981.
- Dauids, T.W Rhys. *Buddhism: A Study of Buddhist Norm*. London: Thornton Battirwarth Ltd., 1928.
- Dhammaratana, Bhikkhu U. *Buddha and Caste*. Lucknow: Kaytree Art Press, 1982.
- Digg, B.J., ed. *The State Justice and The Common Good*. U.S.A.: Scott Foresman and Company, 1974.
- Doctor, Adi H. *Issues in Political Theory*. New Delhi: Sterling Publisher Private Limited. 1985.
- De, Gokuldas. *Democracy in Early Buddhist Sangha*. Calcutta: University Press, 1955.
- Dutt, N.K. *Origin and Growth of Caste in India*. Vol I. Calcutta: Firma L. Mukhopadhyay, 1968.

- Dutt, Sukumar. *Early Buddhist Monarchism*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publisher Pvt., 1984.
- Ebenstein, William. *Great Political Thinkers*. New Delhi: Oxford & I.B.H. Publishing Company, 1969.
- Ernest, Benze. *Buddhism or Communism*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1966.
- Felltozat, Jean. *Political History of India*. Translated by Sproff, Philip. Calcutta: Susil Gupta Ltd., 1957.
- Fick, Richard. *The Social Organization in North east India in Buddha's Time*. Translated by Shishirkumar Maitra. Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1972.
- Gettle, Raymond G. *Political Science*. Boston: Gin and Company, 1933.
- Goshambi, D.D. *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan Private Ltd., 1985
- Hamilton, Clarence H. *Buddhism: A Religion of Infinite Compassion*. New York, 1952.
- Hazara, Kanai Lai. *Royal Patronage of Buddhism in Ancient India*. Delhi: D.K. Publication, 1984.
- Holfagang Schuman H. *Buddhism, and Outline of Its Teaching and School*. Translated by Fenerslein George. London: Rinder and Company, 1973.
- Jayaswal, K.P. *Hindu Polity*. Delhi: 1934.
- Jeening, J.G. *The Vadantic Buddhism of the Buddha*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1974.
- Jinarajadasa, C. *The Reign of Law in Buddhism*. Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House Adyar, 1948.
- Jones, W.T. *Master of Political Thought*. Vol. II. London: George Harrad Co. Ltd., 1975.

- Joshi, L.M. *Aspect of Buddhism in Indian History*. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1973.
- Law, B.C. *Ancient India*. Calcutta: Maniktata Sheet, 1948.
- Laski, Harold J. *A Grammar of Political Science*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1970.
- Locke, Hume, and Rousseau. *Social Contract Essays*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- Mahesh Tiwary. *Socio-Economic Ideas in Early Buddhist Scriptures*. New Delhi: 1984.
- Majumdar, R.C. *Ancient India*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982.
- Malalasekara, G.P. and Jayatileke, K.N. *Buddhism and Race Question*. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1974.
- Marx, K. and Engels, F. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975.
- McIver, Vide R.M. *The Modern State*. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- McIlwain, Charles Howard. *The Growth of Political Thought in the West*. New Yourk: MacMillan Company, 1932.
- Meier, Charles Drek. *Kingship and Community in Early India*. U.S.A.: California Stanford, 1962.
- Misra, G.S.P. *The Age of Vinaya*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1972.
- Mukerji, Shobha. *The Republican Trend in Ancient India*. New Delhi: 1969.
- Muller, F. Max and Others. *Studies in Buddhism*. Calcutta: Susil Gupta Ltd., 1953.
- Narasu P. Lakshmi. *The Essence of Buddhism*. New Delhi: Asian Education Service, 1985.

- Nehru, Jawaharlal. *Letter From a Father to His Daughter*. New Delhi: Indraprastha Press, 1973.
- , *The Discovery of India*. New Delhi: Indraprastha Press, 1981.
- Pande, G.C. and Others, *Buddhism*. Punjab: Punjab University Press, 1967.
- Pickles, Dorothy M. *Introduction to Politics*. London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1972.
- Parsons, Harward L. *The Value of Buddhism for the Modern World*. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1976.
- Pharman Damodar and Kosabmi, D.d. *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan Private Ltd., 1988.
- Phrarājavaramunī. *Dictionary of Buddhism*. Bangkok: 1985.
- Prasad Beni, *Theory of Government in Ancient India*. Allahabad: Indian University Press, 1974.
- Rao, V. Venkata. *Ancient Political Thought*. Delhi: S. Chand & Co., 1966.
- Raphael, D.D. *Problems and Political Philosophy*. London: MacMillan, 1970.
- Ranney, Austin. *The Governing of Men*. New York: Holt Rinchart and Winston, 1962.
- Raychaudhuri, Hemchandra. *Political History of Ancient India*. Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1972.
- Reang-urai and Karuna. Trans. *Buddha as Seen by Three Illustrious Sons of India*. Bangkok, 1985.
- Rode, Carton Clymer and Others. *Introduction to Political Science*. New York: McGraw Hill book Company, 1967.

- Rousseau, Jean Jacques. *The Social Contract and Discourse*. London J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1957.
- Sabine, George H. *A History of Political Theory*. New Delhi: Oxford I.B.H. Publishing Company, 1961.
- Salisbury, Franklin C. *Speaking of Politics*. New York: Vantage Press, 1956.
- Sankrityayan, Rahul and Others. *Buddhism: The Marxist Approach*. New Delhi: People Publishing House, 1985.
- Sayadaw Ledi. *The Manual of Buddhism*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Press, 1987.
- Sharma, R.S. *Aspect of Political Ideas and Institution in Ancient India*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1959.
- Sharan, Parmatma. *Ancient Indian Political Thought and Institution*. New Delhi: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1983.
- Sithi-Amnui, Paul. *Essential Politics*. Bangkok: Oriental Press Service Co. Ltd., 1979.
- Singh, Harbous and Joshi, Lal Mani. *Introduction to Indian Religion*. Delhi: Kailash Colony Market, 1973.
- Suda, J.P. *Religion in India: A Study of Their Essential Unity*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishing Pvt. Ltd., 1979.
- Thapar, Romila. *A History of India*. London: Hazeuwarson & Viney Ltd., 1983.
- Trevorling. *The Buddha*. London: Lowe & Brydone Ltd., 1974.
- Tripathi R.S. *History of India*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1967.
- Warder, A.K. *Indian Buddhism*: Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980.

Dictionaries and Encyclopaedias:

Cold J. and Kol W.L., eds. *A Dictionary of Social Science*. New York: The Free Press, 1967.

Davids, T.W. Rhys and Stede William eds. *Pali-English Dictionary*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975.

Dunner, Joseph, ed. *Dictionary of Political Science*. New York: The Free Press, 1984.

Geoetz Philip. W., ed. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 15th ed. Vol. XV. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1985.

Malalasekara. *Dictionary of Pali Proper Names*. Vol. II. New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Co., 1983.

Seligman, Edwind R.A., ed. *Encyclopaedia of Social Science*. Vol. III. New York: MacMillan Company, 1963.

Sills, Davids L., ed. *International Encyclopaedia of Social Science*. Vol. XI. New York: The Free Press and MacMillan, 1968.

Woof, Henry Bosley, ed. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*. U.S.A.: Herrian Company. 1985.