CHAPTER VII

REPUBLICAN SOCIETY

Introduction:

Modern students of social institutions have been recently pointing out that some sort of social classifications have always been present and are found to exist in any society, ancient or modern, which is not too crude or primitive. L.F. Ward has shown how social classes similar to castes in India were in existence even in European society. It is therefore not a surprise that the ancient Indian social structure was primarily founded upon caste. In fact, caste formed the sheet-anchor of

3. The word caste was first used in India by the Portuguese to denote the several 'Jātis' which they found existing in India (N.K. Dutt : The Origin and Growth of Caste in India, Vol.I, 1931, p.1). The Jātis were the outcome of the permutations and combinations of marriages.
the ancient Indian society. Of course, during the period of our study caste had not become institutionalised with hard and fast rules as we find it in the subsequent period of the Brahmanical Law Books. The pioneer works of Dr. Richard Fick and Professor Rhys Davids have given an account of the social organisation in the North-Eastern Indian in the age of the Buddha. But here we are solely concerned with the study of society in the republics of the Buddhist period. Nowhere do we find any systematic account of it, and in this circumstance, an attempt is made here to depict a picture of the republican society in North-Eastern India on the basis of incidental references in the early texts of the Buddhists and the Jainas, and some recent original works of general nature as referred above.

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between the four Varnas. Manu, while he speaks of the four Varnas, mentions about fifty-seven jātis. The early Indian social division was called 'Varna' (literally meaning 'colour') which was four only—Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra. But later on the original four-fold Varna scheme of the Hindus came to be evolved into the jāti or caste system (Cf. P.H. Prabhu: Hindu Social Organisation, pp.297-98)


5. Rhys Davids: The Buddhist India,
Four Principal Classes:

The society in these republics, as in the other parts of the North-East India under monarchy, was based upon the traditional four principal classes or Varnas. But there was a very significant change from the old in the character and relative position of these classes, especially the upper two ones, during this period, which we shall notice in the course of our discussion in the following text:

The Brāhmaṇas traced their descent from the sacrificing priests. Their main functions, according to the orthodox views propounded in Brāhmaṇas: the contemporary Sūtra Literature, were Yajana-Yajana (sacrificing for oneself and others), Adhyayana-Addhyāpāna (studying the Vedas and teaching it to others) and Dāna-Pratiṣṭhā (giving gifts and accepting them). According to the Buddhist account the Brāhmaṇas were so called because of their suppression of wickedness. But it speaks of them as having fallen from their ideal standard of life. The

7. Manu. I.88; X.75-79, 99; Cf. AP., II-10, 4-7; Jaut., 1-7, 49; Vas. II,13-19; Baudh. I.18, 1-4; Yagn.I.118-19; Vist. II.1-7; Cf. Arthasaśīstra, Eng.Tr. Shamaśastry, Bk.XIV, Ch.III, p.6.
Brāhmaṇa Dhammiya Sutta describes them as becoming greedy of wealth for which they persuaded rich persons to perform sacrifices, and as accepting gifts of all sorts of valuables including beautiful women, and also relishing beef. They are also described as following all sorts of occupations. As Fick observes: 'We see him now as a teacher asking the new scholar about the honorarium he has brought, now he meets us behind the plough, now in the court of the king interpreting signs and dreams or predicting from the constellations of the stars the future of the newly born prince, now as a rich merchant in the midst of accumulated treasures, now at the head of a new caravan.' It appears that in this time the Brahmans were of two kinds: One the 'proper,' who corresponded closely to the ideal cherished in the older scriptures, and the other was 'worldly,' who did not much conform to the strict rules of their class and followed all sorts of professions and such one represented the majority of their class. It may be noted here that in this time the Brahmans were ranked second to the Kṣatriyas in the social hierarchy. The percentage of the Brahmans in the republican society appears to have been quite large, which is suggested by the separate Brahma settlements in these republics like Dakshina-Brahma-Kundapura in the Vaishn

   Cf. Jātaka (Junha Jāt.), IV, pp.96 ff.
Republic and Khomadusa in the Sakyan Republic.

The early Buddhist literature accords premier position to the Ksatriyas in the society. They are held superior to the Brāhmanas in all respects, even if birth alone was taken to be the sole criterion of greatness. They claimed their descent from the leaders of the Arvan tribes in their invasion of this continent. Their traditional primary functions were learning, sacrificing, giving alms, and protection of the people by arms. Fighting, conquering and ruling and, in short, all martial occupations were peculiar to the Rājanya (Ksatriyas), the term itself indicating that the members of the Ksatriya class were either themselves king of states, or their relatives. According to the Buddhists, the Ksatriyas were so called because of the power they exercised over the cultivable lands (khetra). The Ksatriyas were most

14. BL., p.II.
15. Vide Ambattha Sutta (Buddhacarīya, p.195 ff.):
   Assalāyana Sutta (ibid., pp.167 ff.); BL., p.77.
16. BL., p.28.
17. Manu, I.89, X.77-79; Cf. AP., 11,10.4-7; Gaut. X.1-7, 49;
   Vas. 11,13-19; Baudh. I.18.1-4; Vist. 11.1-7; Yagn. I.118-119.
   Milindapañño, 178.
particular as to the purity of their descent through
seven generations, both on the father and the mother
side, and were 'fair in colour, fine in presence, stately
to behold.' They constituted the ruling class and
also the most privileged order, like the Second Estate
in the French society before the Revolution, in the
republican society. It is interesting to note that in
some of these republics like the Lichchhavis, Śākyas and
the Mallas, all the members of the ruling families bore
the title 'Rāja', which simply meant 'leading member of
the ruling class.' They did not form a compact whole;
they only represented the political power. Fick has very
correctly observed that 'certain customs, especially those
relating to connubium and prohibitions of impurity, may
be noticed in certain ruling families, which led to
separation from the rest of the population; but these
customs did not seem to have the authority of the Laws
as in the Brahmanical theory.'

The Vaiśyas stood the third in the social hierarchy,
and according to the Buddhist account, they were so called
because of their accumulation of wealth.

Vaiśyas: Their traditional occupations were learn-
ing, sacrificing, giving alms, agriculture, cattle-rearing, trade and money-lending. They were also

20. Ht., p. 28.
21. B.C. Law: India as described in the Early Texts of
Buddhism and Jainism, pp. 163-64.
24. Manu.I.90; VIII. 410,418; IX. 323-33; X. 79-80;
entitled to take up arms for self-defence, for the defence of the cow and the Brāhmaṇa, and for the prevention of the admixture of castes. Hopkins points to the tendency in the Mahābhārata to equate the Vaiśyas' status with that of the Śūdras. It is significant to note here that in the early Buddhist Literature and the Jātakas the word Vaiśyas occurs very rarely. The stock-phrase used in them to describe the persons following trade and commerce and agriculture etc., and amassing a huge wealth is 'Grihipati' (Pāli 'Gahapati' and Jaina Prākrit 'Gāhāvai'). It appears quite possible, as suggested by U.N. Ghoshal, that the Grihipati formed the rich capitalist class, consisting of big land-owners, money-lenders and ranchers, and that they enjoyed high social prestige and were distinguished from the humbler class of the artisans. However, in the actual picture of the social life, the Grihipati corresponded to the traditional Vaiśya class.

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Cf. AP., II.10, 4-7; Gaut. I, 1-7; Vas. II, 13-19;
Baudh. I, 18, 1-4; Vist. II.1-7; Yagn. I.118-119;
Cf. Mbh. XII.60.21 f.; Arthaśāstra, op.cit., p.17:
Milindapañho, 178.

25. Mbh. XII.165.35.
27. U.N. Ghoshal: Comprehensive History of India,
28. Cf. Pre-Buddhist India, p.255.
The Śūdras formed the next order in the traditional social hierarchy. Being of low origin, the tradition prescribed them only one duty and one occupation, which was to serve the upper classes, especially the Brāhmaṇas who in their turn were bound to feed, clothe and maintain them. In the early Buddhist texts the Śūdra is called 'Luda' because of their hunting-occupation. Besides the traditional functions, the Śūdra in this period carried on other occupations like agriculture, cattle-tending, trade and arts and crafts. They formed the bulk of the people of the non-Aryan descent and worked for hire, were engaged in handicrafts or services and were darker in colour.

The above four divisions corresponded to the actual fact of the society. However, it must be noted that there were insensible gradations within the borders of each of the four Varnas and the borders themselves were both variable and undefined.

Mixed Castes and Aboriginal Tribes:

Eminent scholars have differed on the question of the time of the growth of the Mixed castes. Mr. C.V.

29. Manu. I. 91; 123-125; Cf. AP., II, 10, 4-7; Gaut. I. 1-7. 49; Vas. II. 20; Baudh. I. 18. 1-4; Vist. II. 1-7; Yasn. I. 120; Cf. Mbh. XII. 60. 27-35; XII. 59. 32-33; Arthaśāstra, op. cit., p. 7; Milindpañho, 178.

30. Hardy: op. cit., p. 68.


32. XI., p. 28.
Vaidya is of the opinion that the mixed castes had not arisen even in the days of the Śrauta Sūtra and Pāṇini, though some caste sections had been degraded. Dr. V. M. Apte has conclusively shown that the mixed castes were existing definitely in the period of the Grihya Sūtra, although they are not enumerated. We have a list of the mixed castes in the Dharma Sūtras. The mixed castes were derived from the Anuloma (proper) and Pratiloma (improper) unions between the men and women of the four basic Varnas. Rhys Davids gives a pretty long list of the professional and artisan classes which he broadly groups them under Hīna Jāti (Low tribes) and Hīna-Sippāni (Low trades) and places them below the four principal classes in the social hierarchy. Besides, the early Pāli texts refer to a number of other low classes like Chandālas, the Niśādas, the Venas, the Rathakāras, the Pukkusas etc. He holds many of them as mixed classes, and the rest as the aboriginal tribes.

34. C.V. Vaidya: A History of Sanskrit Literature, Vedic Period.
35. V.M. Apte: op. cit., pp. 3-4.
38. HL., p. 28.
40. HL., p. 29.
Slaves:

And finally, below all the above classes which consisted of free-men, there was the class of slave. Rhys Davids suggests various circumstances for the growth of slavery as individuals captured in predatory raids and denied freedom, those deprived of freedom as a judicial punishment, those voluntarily accepting slavery, and those born of slave-parents. Manu adds to these as those purchased, or given in dowry, or given as present, or by hereditary ownership. Fick has offered many examples of these types of slaves from the Jātaka stories. We have a definite mention of the existence of slavery in the Sakyan republic in the famous story telling us how the Śakya king gave a slave girl in the name of a Sakyan princess to the Kosalan king Prasenajit. The existence of slaves in the other republics is a certainty, as the social structure in these republics was almost similar. As for the status of the slaves, for the most part, they were household servants and were not badly treated, and their number was not very large. They enjoyed many rights, even

41. Brahmajāla Sutta, Sāmaññaphala Sutta and Ambattha Sutta:
   Dialogues I, pp. 5, 19; 76-77, 83; and 101, 103, 128.
42. HI., p. 29.
43. Manu. VIII. 45; Dialogues I, p. 101.
45. Rockhill: The Life of the Buddha, pp. 75-77.
46. HI., p. 28.
the right to freedom whenever their term of slavery, punishment, stipulated period of contract in the fulfillment of debt or other such conditions expired. Professor Rhys Davids and Basham are of the opinion that slaves in India were better off than their counterparts in the most parts of the ancient world. However, their fate was far from being enviable. The instructions of the Buddha and also of the writers of the śārītaśāstra for giving liberal treatment to the slaves, clearly indicate that slavery posed a great problem to the social reformers of the age.

Inter-Caste Relation:

The republican society was based upon certain classes or orders as discussed above. The sense of class consciousness appears to have been very conspicuous. This fact is indicated by villages and places being named in these republics after these castes, like the Utterakṣaṭrīya-Kundapura (after the Kṣatriyas), the Dakshinā-Bṛāhmaṇa-Kundapura (after the Brāhmaṇas) and Vaniya-Grāma (after the Vaiśyas). Every class considered itself

49. Sigālovāda Sutta, Buddhacarya, p.861.
50. Manu.VIII.299-300; Cf. AP.,I.8.31; Gaut.II.43.44.
superior to the one below it. These classes were generally connubial and commensal. It was out of the class-pretension that the Sakyans refused to give any of their girls in marriage to the Kosalan king Prasenajit. It was for this very reason that the marriages of the Licchhāvī girls were limited within the City of Vaiśāli by a very stringent law. We learn from a Jātaka story that a barber's son fell in deep love with a pretty Licchhāvī girl and, having failed to marry her, he committed suicide. Such a pretension among the Brāhmaṇas was equally great. We have numerous instances in the dialogues of the Buddha where he has tried to demolish by ingenious arguments the high pretensions of the Brāhmaṇas to be the superior people above all others by virtue of their noble descent and high accomplishments. The Grihyapatiś were no exception. They too had a custom under which the Grihyapati parents must bring for their grown up son a girl from a good family of their own class. A Pāli text tells us how a Grihyapati's daughter named Sujātā, on attaining her full growth, prayed to a banyan tree that she be married in a good family of the same caste. In spite of this, the social divisions

53. Jat. No. 152.
54. Assalāyana Sutta and Ambattha Sutta (Buddhacaryā, pp. 167 ff. and 195 ff. respectively); Cf. Dialogues I, pp. 101 and 105.
55. Cf. Pre-Buddhist India, pp. 255 ff.
were not rigid. There was freer possibility of change among the social ranks than is usually supposed. We have plenty of evidences from the Jātakas which indicate a large measure of freedom and mobility in the classes. One Jātaka story tells us how a Kṣatriya prince, in pursuance of his love affair with a low caste girl, apprentices himself to a potter, a basket-maker, a florist, and a cook successively, without being a word said as to the loss of his caste, when his action becomes known. In another story we find a prince going to live with a merchant and earning his living 'by his hands.' Further, these stories very frequently represent Brahmins as being engaged in trade, as an assistant to an archer, who had himself been previously a weaver, as hunters, trappers and wheelwrights etc. Such instances from the Jātakas can be multiplied manifold. These few instances will suffice to demonstrate that, although there were certain restrictions regarding inter-dining and inter-marrying, the class divisions were no barrier to social freedom. The classes were not watertight compartments, whose membership was limited by the virtue of heredity.

57. Jat. V.290.
58. Jat., IV.15; V.22, 471.
59. Jat., V.127.
60. Jat., II.200.
61. Jat., VI.170.
only. In fact, they were 'open classes' based upon individual's virtue and accomplishment and less upon descent. In the actual working, all considerations of caste were sunk in the love of society and fellowship in feelings. And this must be noted to be the most characteristic feature of the North-Indian society (including these republics) of the time of the Buddha.

However, the entire social picture was not an ideal one. It had its seamy side too. The persons belonging to the mixed classes, whose number was pretty large, were looked down upon, and their lot was miserable. We know from the Samyutta Nikāya that the Chandālas, the Venaśas, the Nishāda, the Rathakāras and the Pukkusas were the poorest, hard-pressed to earn their living and were subjected to social indignities. They are described as looking pale, of unpleasant appearances, sickly, stunted, one-eyed, severed of limbs, lame, decrepit because of not getting sufficient foods, liquid, clothes, conveyance, beds, unguments and light etc., i.e., the basic requirements of life. The Pukkusas and the Chandālas were objects of general hatred, being despised more than the persons of the low tribes and trades. The Chandālas were forced

63. Vide Assalāyana Sutta (Buddhacaryā, pp.170-71):
64. SN. (Sara.), Pt.I, p.83.
to live outside the area of common habitations and were subject to all sorts of indignities. All these could be taken to be the clear signs of the drift towards a still distant future society disfigured by the most stringent caste-system and the practice of untouchability.

Family:

The family or the 'Kuṭumbā' was the basic unit of the social organisation then as it has been till the present time. The family consisted of a patriarch, his wife and co-wives, his unmarried daughters and his sons with their wives and children. A Sakyan prince named Anurudha, referring to his family, mentions his father and the grand-father who were dead, his mother, brothers and sons. The non-mention of his sisters and daughters may be due to his not having them at all. We also know that the Buddha was brought up by his stepmother Mahāprajāpati as his mother died seven days after his birth. The size of the family must have been greatly limited by the general practice of monogamous marriages, polygamy being confined to the rich and the nobles.

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66. Pre-Buddhist India, p.252; Cf. Manu. I.51.
68. Pre-Buddhist India, p.266.
69. Buddhacaryā, pp.56-57.
The family was patriarchal, the father having the absolute authority over the other members. The ancient Hindu tradition represents the father as the despot over the family. This could be seen in the story of Ajrāva who was blinded by his father, B. Patriarchal: of Sunahṣepa who was sold by his father, and of Nāgīketa who was given over to the Death (Yama) by his father. We have a counterpart to such Hindu tradition in the Buddhist legend of prince Vessantara. The legend states that prince Vessantara (Viśvāntara) was banished with his wife and children by his father for his giving away much of the royal treasure. The prince in his turn gave away his children to a wandering ascetic who asked for them to do his begging, and finally, he also disposed of his wife in the similar manner. The later texts speak in the similar strain of the father's authority. Rishi Kandu killed a cow at his father's command, even though he knew that it was a sinful act on his part. King Sagara at his father's order started digging the earth till he himself perished in it. Parasurāma committed the most heinous crime of murdering his mother at his father's order, and that

71. RV., I.116.16; Vedic Index, I, p.526.
72. AB., VII.17 ff.
74. Vessantara Jātaka (No.547).
75. Referred by Prabhu, op.cit., p.255.
77. Rāmāyana (Val.), Kāthākī, Sarga 56, 56; Cfr. loc.cit., 21.25; 22.68.
Bhīṣma remained a bachelor to the end of his life for the sake of his father’s wish. Some Smṛiti texts give so much authority to the father that ‘he rules over the family as a king does over his subjects.’ According to Vasiṣṭha the father has the right to drive his son out of the house and even to sell him. Next to the father, the mother used to exercise governing power over the family. A Buddhist text tells us how Anuruddha, whose father was dead, had to plead hard before he could get a conditional permission from his mother to renounce the world and join the Buddhist order. In general the Smṛitis also state that the mother, father and the preceptor and as well as the oldest brother must be respected and obeyed by every one. The family was patrilinear in which descent was traced through the father. But names like Sariputta, Moggallānaputta and Sanjaya Belatthaputta would suggest that matrilineal descent was not unknown.

The most striking feature of the family then, as in the subsequent period, was its joint nature. It included not only the parents and their children, but also the three generations. This is indicated by the fact that the Hindu Law book, under the

78. Maḥbh. Ṛṣabha-Parva, 200.95-96.
80. Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra, XV.2.
81. Buddhacaryā, p.56.
82. Maṇu. II.225-227; Cf. Viś. XXXI, 1.10.
rules of partition, entitles to a share any member of a joint family who is removed more than three degrees from the common ancestor. As Jolly observes all the members of the joint family lived under the same roof and shared the property of the family in common. The joint family was just like a small commonwealth.

Procreation, care and the nurture of the young has been one of the primary functions of the family. Children were naturally the happy corner of the house. Between the members: Prayers for children were very common, especially for the male child. A Buddhist text tells us how Sujata, the daughter of a rich farmer of Uruvela, makes an anxious prayer that if her first issue were a son, she would make a costly sacrifice by spending one lakh. A few days after the birth of the child, the ceremony of ‘Namakarana’ (giving name) was performed. The Buddha was christened on the fifth day of his birth. He was also


87. ibid., p. 5.
taken to a temple soon after his birth, in deference to 
the universal custom, and also to the writing school. 
Thus it appears that the performances of traditional 
'Samakāras' were quite popular in these republics, which 
expressed great 'Love and affection for the child.' The 
parents were held in high esteem. The Anguttara Nikāya 
says that 'Brahmā is a term for mother and father; because 
they do much for the children; they bring him up, nourish 
them and introduce the world to them.' It further remarks 
that those families where mother and father are honoured 
in the home are reckoned like unto Brahmā (governor of the 
Brahma world). The Sigālovāda Sutta gives us an ideal 
picture of the parent-child relation as follows. The 
mother and the father keep him (son) from evil, cut him 
in the right way, get him taught science, provide him with 
a proper wife and in time hand over their fortune to him. 
As regards the duty of the son to the parents, it says 
that he (son) will support them, do his duty to them, keep 
up the honour of the family, manage the inheritance, and 
keep up the offerings due to the relatives deceased. Un-
kind behaviour towards one's own parents, sisters and 

88. Lalitavistara, 134 (117); Rockhill: Life of Buddha, 
p.17. 
89. ibid. 
91. AN., I.131; The Book of the Gradual Sayings, I, p.115, 
II, p.70; Itivuttaka, p.109. 
92. ibid. 
93. Buddhacaryā, p.261; F.L. Woodward: Some Sayings of 
Buddha. p.162.
brothers was highly disapproved and one indulging in them was considered an outcast and vile. The Brahmanical texts support the evidence of the Buddhist literature on this point. The Mahābhārata states that the father being pleased, all gods are pleased, and also that in the person of the father there is a combination of all gods; but in the person of the mother, however, combination of all gods and also all humanity. The Śarīti texts also in general says that the mother, the father and the eldest brothers must be respected and obeyed by every one.

Thus the picture of the family in the republican society as depicted above fully corresponds, both in form and spirit, to a recent definition of it as follows:

"A group of persons, united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption; constituting a single household; interacting and communicating with each other in respective social role of husband and wife, mother and father, son and daughter, brother and sister, and creating and maintaining a common culture."

(S Burgess and Looks).

94. SN. (Sar.), pp.124-125.
95. MBh. Śānti-Parva, 266.21.
96. Ibid. 266.43.
97. Manu. II.225.37; Vis. XXXI.1.10.
Marriage Systems and Practices:

In ancient India marriage was one of the chief samaskaras or sacraments. As such marriage was obligatory on every person, for every man or woman was to pass through the prescribed sacraments at the proper age and time. This is very clearly expressed by Manu when he remarks, "To be mother were women created, and to be father men; therefore the Vedas ordain that Dharma must be practised by man together with his wife." The Epic also expresses the same view. The Mahabharata narrates the story of a lady who remained single for not finding an equal match and devoted her life to the practice of hard penances till the old age with a view to obtain moksha (salvation). But the sage Narada rebuked her for remaining unmarried and told her that it was impossible to gain the ultimate bliss as long as she was not sanctified by marriage rites. Marriage was considered necessary for the sake of progeny also, without whom man was imperfect. Manu remarks, "He is only a perfect man, who consists of his wife, himself and his offspring." Especially, the birth of a son was considered indispensable for a man to execute his obligations due to the departed ancestors.

100. ibid., IX.96.
102. Manu, IX.45.
(Pitri-rīna). The immense significance of having a son (putra) is very impressively demonstrated by the fact that 'putra' literally means 'one who saves from the hell (put). Manu says that 'because the son protects his ancestors from the hell called 'Put,' he has been called Putra.' The marriage of the woman was more important, though it was enjoined that every man should marry. Buddhist literature echoes a similar view about marriage. The Sigalovāda Sutta states that one of the principal duties of parents is to provide the son with a proper wife and hand over their fortune to him in time; and one of the principal duties of the son is to manage his inheritance and keep up offerings to the relatives deceased. This very strongly expresses the necessity of marriage as a social institution in the same way as the Brahmanical texts do. A similar great concern for woman's marriage is expressed in another early Buddhist text wherein it is declared that 'a woman's goal is man.'

The expression 'form of marriage,' when applied to the numerical variations in the partners in marriage, generally means, monogamy.

B. Forms of Marriage: polygamy, polyandry and group-marriage. But in regard to the Hindu marriage, the 'form of marriage' is determined by the method of the consecration of marriage-

103. ibid., IX.105. Cf. Vas., XI.43.
104. ibid., IX.138. Cf. Mbh. Ādi-Parva, 74.27; Vis., XV.44.
106. AN., III, p.363.
union. Accordingly, the Smriti texts enumerate eight kinds of marriage viz., Brāhma, Daiva, Ārā, Prājāpatya, Gāndharva, Rākshasa, Āsura and Paisācha. The first four forms include marriages arranged by the parents involving the gift of the maiden by her father or guardian; Āsura marriage was by purchase; Rākshasa by capture; Paisācha by stealth; and Gāndharva by mutual choice. We shall see below how all these forms of marriage were prevalent in these republics.

The marriage which was arranged by the parents of both the parties and in which the gift of the girl was made either by the father or any other guardian of the girl, appears to have been the ideal and also most popular. The Buddhist dharma for the laity enjoins on the parents to provide the son with a proper wife. A more direct evidence for it could be seen in the statement of a Pāli text viz., 'therefore, the girls, behave yourselves thus: To whatever husband our parents shall give us, anxious for our good, seeking our happiness, compassionate, out of compassion.' According to the prose

107. Manu. III. 21-34; Cf. Ap., II. 17-21; Gaut. IV. 65. 15
   Vais. I. 17-35; Baudh. I. 20, 1-21, 23; Vist. XXIV. 18-29;
   Yagn., II. 58-61; Cf. Mbh. Ādi-Parva, 74-27.
108. Sigālovāda Sutta, op. cit.
text of the Lalitavistara, the marriage of the Buddha with Sakyamuni’s daughter Gopa was approaching to this type. This form of marriage may be compared with the Brāhma type described and praised in the Ātritas.

The Jātaka stories offer numerous instances of this kind of marriage. The Katthahāri Jātaka gives an interesting story of this kind which is as follows. A king, having gone to his pleasure garden, was roaming about looking for fruits and flowers. He saw a beautiful woman merrily singing and picking up sticks in the grove. He fell in love with her at the first sight. He became intimate with her and she conceived. He gave her the signet ring from his finger saying, ‘if it be a girl spend the ring on her nurture:

2. Gāndharva Marriage: but if it be a boy, bring him to me.’ In course of time, the woman was made the queen-consort and the boy the viceroy.

In this kind of marriage the girl on attaining maturity freely and privately chooses her husband from a number of suitors, A.L. Basham

3. Svayamvara: considers Svayamvara to be a special form of Gāndharva marriage.


111. Katthahāri Jat. No.7; Cf. Mahāummagga Jat.

112. Wonder . . . , p.169.
It was at a great tournament of arts (Sippas) that the Boddhisattva won his wife Gopā by the display of superior skill in them. The Rāmāyana gives us a similar story of a Swayamvara in which Rāma won Sītā.

This form of marriage involves purchase of wife in some form or the other. A Pāli text represents the Buddha to have remarked, while describing the degeneration of the Brāhmaṇas of his time, that in the old age the Brāhmaṇas did not purchase wife. This clearly shows that the purchase of wife was current in his time.

These two forms of marriage involved capture and stealth of the girl respectively. A Jātaka story speaks of a king who slew his enemy king and carried away the latter's wife to make his own. Another Jātaka story speaks of achieftain who kidnapped a village girl and kept her as his wife.

We here have a direct reference to their practice in a direct reference to their practice in:

113. Lalitavistara, Eng. Tr., p. 204 f.
115. Brāhmaṇa Dhamiya Sutta and Dona Sutta (Buddhacarya, 341, 362). Cf. Pre-Buddhist India, p. 280; Mbh. I. 113 (Madari was purchased from her father for marriage with Pandu); Milindapañha, 47-48.
story which tells us that once the Koliyan youths carried away Sakyas while they were bathing but the Sakyas took no action as the Koliyas were their relatives.

Generally these republicans were monogamic. Among the Sakyas monogamy was strictly enforced by law. The probable reason for such a stringent law appears to be that the Sakyas being a small community, the number of the marriageable girls among them must have been very limited, and therefore in the absence of such a restriction, many of them would have remained life long-bachelors.

While the ordinary people were monogamic, princes and very rich persons were usually polygamic. According to the Pāli texts, the Sakyan chief Suddhodhana had two wives named Maya and Mahāprajāpati, but the Lalita-vistara credits him with a crowded harem of a thousand queens of whom Mahāmāyā was the chief. The ancient tradition speaks of rampant polygamy in the upper classes of the Videha country, which formed a part of the Vajjian republic in Buddha's time. A Jātaka story tells us that

118. Dh.A., I.262.
a king of Banaras named Brahmadatta refused to marry his
daughter named Sumedha to a Videhan prince because he
had already a number of wives. Further, the fact that
the princes and the sons of Brahmanas were distinguished
by the names of their mothers like Ajatasatru Vedeshiputta, 
Sariputta, Mogalana Puttara and Sanjaya Belattaputta, etc., clearly indicates the practice of polygamy as a
normal thing in the upper classes in this time.

We have no evidence about the

8. Polyandry: practice of polyandry in these
republics, although its prevalence is indicated by Jataka stories.

Every human society is known to observe certain
restrictions on marital relations by some kinds of exogamic
and endogamic rules. The

C. Marriage Rules: ancient Indian society also
had such rules prohibiting

marriage between different castes and also within certain
degree of kinship for a variety of reasons. The endogamic
rules enjoined marriage between persons of the same Varna
or caste, and the exogamic rules prohibited marriage among
the members of the same Gotra, Pravara and Saninda. These


traditional marriage rules of the Hindu society largely conditioned the marital relations in these republics also. The generally accepted norm was the marriage between the boy and the girl of the same Varna and also of the same station and place in the society. We find Sujata, the daughter of a rich farmer of Uruswala, on attaining maturity, praying that she be married in the same Jati or caste. A Jataka story, which I am tempted to summarise here, bears an interesting evidence to this fact. A barber's son seeing a Lichchhavi girl dressed up fine and grand, like a nymph, fell in love or desire of her. He said to his father about this. He would not touch a morsel of food, but lay down hugging the bed-stead. His father found him and said, "Why, son, don't set your mind on forbidden fruit. You are no match for her. I shall find you some body else, a girl of your own place and station." But the lad would not listen to him or anybody else, and at last he died. When this case was reported to the Buddha, he narrated the story in which a jackal falling in love with a lioness told her of his love and lost his life due to her eldest brother. In the Avadana-Sataka we have references to the procuring of brides from an equal family by a Sresthi, a Brahmana.

See also, ibid., p.306.
127. Jātaka, No.152.
a Sakyan noble, a Gṛhpāti and a caravan leader.

Further, we have very clear and definite references to the marriages being conditioned by consideration of Gotra, Pravara and Śinda in the Amāththa Sutta.

However, in spite of these endogamous and exogamous rules, the early Buddhist Literature speaks in clear and definite terms about the prevalence of the Anuloma and Pratiloma marriages as socially accepted. The Divyāvadāna speaks of a Gṛhpāti's daughter of exceptional beauty being sought in marriage by princes as well as some ministers. Gṛhpātis, Sreṣṭhis and caravan leaders.

Although the above marriage rules were the normal features, there were certain surprising exceptions which we may note as follows:

D. Exceptional Features:

The Buddhist tradition refers to the practice of marrying one's own sister among the Śākyas. A legendary account of the origin of the Śākyas traces their descent from king Ikshvāku (Okkāka). It says that king Ikshvāku banished his four

128. Avadāna Sataka (I.36), 19, 14, 67 (60, 83).
129. Buddhacaryā, p.201; Cf. Theragāthā Atthakatha, p.30 (Mahākāśyapa-Pravajyā); and Aṅguttara Atthakatha, I.72. (Vishākha-Charita); Buddhacaryā, pp.39 and 306.
130. Vide Assalāyana Sutta and Amāththa Sutta (Buddhacaryā, pp.170 f and 198, 200).
elder sons in order to give the throne to the son born to his most favourite wife named Manāpā. The banished princes went to the Himalayas and settled in Sākavasa. In order to maintain the purity of their blood they married their own sisters. And when the king heard of this, he exclaimed: "The princes are Mahasakya (very worthy)." And hence they came to be called Sākya. We have a most definite evidence of this in the famous story of a quarrel between the Sākyas and the Koliyas in which the latter heaped abuses on the Sākyas as having cohabited with their sisters like dogs and jackals. The sister marriage in this period is the reminiscent of the practice of incest in the primitive age, which is reflected in the famous story of Yama and Yami narrated in the Rig Veda.

The custom of marrying one's own cousin was also prevalent among the Sākyas and the Koliyas. The Buddha-sattva married Yasodharā or Māhula

2. Cousin-Muslim: Mātā who is stated to be his maternal uncle's daughter. We find another instance in marriage of Jeyatha and Nandi Vardhana, the elder brother of Mahāvira.

132. DN., I.92 (Ambattha Sutta); Dialogues, I, pp.113 ff.

Buddhacaryā, p.198; Cf. Jat. (Cowell), IV.67, V.219.

133. Buddhacaryā (Dhammapada Atthasalā, 15.1), p.256:
Cf. Mahāvastu I.351 (SBE., XVI, pp.296 f.);
Sumangalavilāsinī, I, pp.258-60; Suttanipāta Comm.11, pp.356 ff.

134. RV., L 7-10; Cf. S.C. Sarkar: Some Aspects of the Earliest Social History of India, p.74; (Contd.)
The existence of courtesan (Ganka) system was the most striking feature of the republican society. According to the Dulva, the existence of ourtesan (Ganka) system was the most striking feature of the republican society. According to the Dulva, the existence of ourtesan (Ganka) system was the most striking feature of the republican society. According to the Dulva, the existence of ourtesan (Ganka) system was the most striking feature of the republican society. According to the Dulva, the existence of ourtesan (Ganka) system was the most striking feature of the republican society.

3. Courtesan System: Lichchhavis had made a rule under which the girl of an extraordinary beauty, causing rivalries and strife among the citizens, was not allowed to marry. Such a girl was to remain unmarried for the sake of common pleasures. It was under this rule that Ambapali, the daughter of the Lichchhavi Chief Mahanama, was made a courtesan. We have a different version of this rule in another Buddhist text which says that the daughters of the Vaisālikas were to be enjoyed by the Ganas and were not to be married. This may be taken to suggest the practice of group-marriage among the Lichchhavis. In the Videhan republic also we find a woman such as Pingalā, gifted with extraordinary beauty and charm and accomplishment in music and dance, was chosen to be the courtesan and she spent her whole life as a public woman.

(Contd.)

Cf. Jayaswal: HP., p.178; Dasaratha Jātaka, Jat. IV, p.130. Cf. Mahābhārata which refers to undesirable sexual practices among the Gandhāras, Madras, and Uttara-Kurus; Index to names in Mahābhārata, pp.451, 698.


The Tibetan books speak of territorial restrictions on marriages among the LiohohhaTis. They state: "The people of Vaiśālī had made a law that a daughter born in the first district could marry only in the first district, not in the second and the third; that one born in the middle district could marry only in the first and the second; but that one born in the last district could marry in any of the three; moreover, no marriage was to be contracted outside Vaiśālī."

A Buddhist text indicates that a Liohohhavi who wanted to marry could ask the Liohohhavi Gane or corporation to select a suitable bride for him. This clearly shows the existence of some sort of marriage-bureau to help the intending citizen in finding a suitable match.

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138. Bodhisattvāvadāna-Kalpalatā, 20th, p.38;
Cf. I.Mishra, who has expressed doubt about the existence of this strange custom (op. cit., p.252).
139. J.P.Sharma : op.cit., pp.154-55; Bhāgavata Purāṇa, XI,8.22-44.
The early Buddhist tradition clearly indicates the prevalence of widow-marriage. A Jātaka narrates the story of a Kosalan king who killed the king of Banaras and married his widowed queen who was already a mother. Further, the Uoohanga Jātaka tells us how a woman prays for the release of her brother, who along with her husband and son, was sentenced to death, saying that, of these three, she can get a new husband and a new son, but not a new brother whatever she may do. Although we have no specific instance, the practice of widow-marriage must have been prevalent in these republics.

We have no mention of Niyoga

7. Miyoga: We have no or levirate practice in these republics.


See also Mahābhārata which narrates the story of Arjuna accepting as his wife the widowed daughter of Airāvata—the Nāga king, who bore him a son: Adi Parva 213.16

Cf. Arthaśāstra, III.2.
The Dharmaśāstras, which repeat the older Srāvitas' laws, permit the remarriage of women under certain conditions like the death of the husband after betrothal, irregularities in the first marriage, death of the husband before conception, impotency of the husband, or when he is outcast or mad. The Jātaka bears unmistakable evidence to this fact. One woman character named Pabhāvatī in a Jātaka story is represented as saying: "What I have to do with such an ugly, hideous husband. If I live, I will have another husband."

The Piyajātika Sutta states that the kiths and kins of a woman wanted to snatch her away from her husband and marry her to somebody else, which she did not like.

We have also definite evidence in the Jātakas about the remarriage of men and women in these republics as a part of the general custom of the age may be fairly assumed.

Dowry (Dāyajja or present Daheja) was an important feature of the marriage system and it was in general practice, especially among the rich sections of the people. It consisted of presents made to the daughter by the parents which she took to the husband's

144. Vasiṣṭha Dharmaśāstra, XVII.72-74 and 20.
146. MN.,II.4.7, Buddhacaryā, p.374.
147. See Pre-Buddhist India, pp.384-85.
house. It generally included cash, valuable materials like gold, furniture, ornaments, land, territory and slaves, both male and female. It was generally treated to be the personal property of the wife. We have a mention of the Stridhana or pin-money of a Vajjian woman which amounted to two such big heaps of diamonds and gold that a man standing on the one side of them could not see a man standing on the other side. The early Buddhist Literature refers to very big dowry which in one case consists of fifty-five thousand cart-load of wealth, and in the another, of ornaments worth nine crores, 5400 cart-load of wealth for bathing powder, five hundred female slaves, five hundred chariots and many other things, each 150 numbering one hundred.

We have no reference to the bridegroom's price.

We have clear and definite evidence to show that the early or child marriage, which became a social evil in the later period, was quite unknown. Boys and girls were usually married at the proper age of attaining maturity. An early Buddhist text tells us how one Grhipati's daughter

148. Pārājikā I (Buddhaecaryā, p. 294).
149. Therī-Gāthā Atthakathā, p. 30; S.N. Atthakatha, XV.1,II.
A.N. Atthakathā, I.1.4; See Buddhaecaryā, p. 41;
DPPN., II, p. 901.
150. A.N. Atthakathā, I.7.2; Buddhaecaryā, Viśākhā Carita, p. 308.
151. Buddhaecaryā (Viśākhā Carita & Mahākāshyapa Pravrajyā)
named Sujātā, on becoming full-grown (Taruni), prays for her marriage in a good family of the equal caste. The Boddhisattva was married at the age between sixteen and eighteen years. The sons of the Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas like the Lichchhavī Mahāli and the Mallian Bandhula, who went out for higher learning to such far-off places as Taxila, must have been married at a later age. According to the Jātaka's evidences, the usual marriageable age for girls was sixteen years and that of boys varied between sixteen and twenty years and so. The practice of unequal marriage when an aged man marries quite a young girl was not unknown. This is suggested by a passage in the early Buddhist literature, which runs as follows:

"When a man, passed youth, doth wed
a maid with rounded breasts,
Nor sleep for jealousy;
A source of suffering that."

C.V. Vaidya observes that the custom of child-marriage

153. Ibid., p.6.
154. Light of Asia (Arnold), p.16.
155. Vide Jātakas, See Pre-Buddhist India, pp. 277-278.
156. Suttanipāta, 109; SBE., X, p.19.
in the case of girls as revealed in the Sūtra Literature arose out of the fear of the parents that their girls might enter a Buddhist nunnery on growing up. We do not find support for this observation of the learned scholar in the actuality of the marriage practices in these republics.

Female Chastity:

The morality of the republican girls appears to have been very high. A great premium was placed on their chastity before and after the marriage. The Petavatthu Atthakathā tells us how a Lichhāvī chief Ambasakkhara designed to make love to a married woman whose beauty had captivated him, but he was foiled in his attempt.

The breach of marriage vow and the resultant violation of chastity was a very serious offence among the

157. Gobhila Grihya-Sūtra, III.4.6; Mānava Grihya-Sūtra, 1.7. "Herein the marriageable girl is referred to as ‘Nagnikā’ whose interpretation as ‘a naked girl’ has been made the basis for conclusion on child-marriage. But its another interpretation as ‘fit to be made naked’ is more relevant and correct. See Prabhu: op.cit., p.180.


159. PTS., pp.215-244, Cf. Petavatthu, PTS., op.45-57.
Lohoschavai. The Lohoschvahi assembly even permitted
the murder of an unfaithful wife, if the husband made
such a demand. Such a woman could save herself from
this dread punishment by joining the Buddhist order.
A glaring instance of this is furnished by a story in
the early Buddhist Literature, which may be summarised
as follows. A woman after repeated warnings by her
husband continued to indulge in adultery. Thereupon,
he reported the matter to the Lohoschvahi Gana and
resolved to kill her. She fled away with all valuables
and sought ordination from a Bhikkhuni at Sravasti. The
husband complained to the Kosalan king and asked for
the possession of his wife, but he was refused. The
Śākyas raised a great agitation over this matter which
was reported to the Buddha, whereupon he forbade the
ordination of such women into the Saṅgha. A classical
instance of the faithfulness of the wife to the husband
is found in a story which tells us how the queen-mother
Vaidehi made all out efforts to rescue her husband king
Śrīhāsāva. The Buddha himself was a great admirer of
the chastity of the Vajjia woman, who is said to have
observed: 'No women or girls belonging to their clans
are detained among them by force or abduction.'

160. Bhikkhuni Vibhanga Saṅghādiṭṭhesa, op. cit., Vol. IV,
161. ibid.
162. ibid.
164. Dialogues, II, p. 80.
Position of Woman:

The attitude of a community towards the woman has a great social significance in any society. The estimation in which woman is held, the status occupied by her in the society and the treatment accorded to her, have been justly regarded as a mark of the degree of civilization and culture attained in any country. In another word, the position accorded to woman in a society is the index of the level of its cultural attainment. Some scholars have remarked that position of woman in the early Buddhism deteriorated from that in the Vedic period. Before we come to examine the extent of the veracity in this statement and to form our own conclusion on this important issue, we shall try to analyse the position of woman in these republics in her successive stages and other various roles.

Some socio-religious and economic considerations have led the Hindu parents to put less premium on the daughter vis-a-vis the son.

1. As a Child: The son was to support the parents (obviously in the old age), to continue the family line, to inherit and manage

165. Sivaswamy Aiyer,: op.cit., p.54.
166. For example, M.N.Ghosh : Early History of India, p.98; A.L.Basham : Wonder ..., p.177.
the family estate and to keep up offerings due to the relatives deceased. The son was to save his parents and other relatives from the hell. To get a son was considered to be the primary aim of the marriage. A Buddhist text very characteristically remarks: 'A woman's goal is man; a son is her resolve.' The famous Sujātā of the Buddhist Literature prays that her first child be a son. A Vajjian Bhikkhu named Sudinna had to cohabit with his wife at the insistent pleading of his mother to beget a son so that his ancestral property may not be confiscated by the Lichehavi Gans. However, once a daughter was born, she received equal care and affection from the parents. As to her training and education, we have little information. The eventual admission of women by the Buddha into his Sangha must have given a great encouragement to the girl's education.

172. Cf. Pre-Buddhist India, pp.276-77; Cf. Piyājātika Suttanta; SN. (SBK.), Pt.I, p.78, where Buddha admonishes king Prasenajīta for being sad on the birth of a daughter to queen Mallikā.
This is evident from the fact that in the time of the Buddha we hear of a number of women who renounced the world and became distinguished for their great learning in religion and philosophy. But this was limited to aristocratic and highly rich sections of the people. In general, girls were imparted knowledge in the traditional arts and crafts of their respective families. They were also given instructions in the art of singing and dancing. The Buddhist tradition tells us that Suddhodhana provided the Bodhisattva with a large number of beautiful girls to divert his mind from the world of suffering with singing, dancing and instrumental music. When the girl attained marriageable age, which was usually sixteen years, the parents took all the pains to marry her to a most suitable person belonging to a good family of the same jāti or caste, so that she may have maximum comforts and happiness. The father of Gopā refused to give her in marriage to the Bodhisattva until he had proved his proficiency in traditional arts and sciences. Usually, the dowry was offered to the

173. Cf. Horner : Women under Primitive Buddhism, Ch.II:
   Cf. C.A. Foley’s article in Oriental Congress Report,
174. AN., III.37-38; IV.265.
175. Jātaka Atthakathā (Nidāna), Buddhacarya, p.8.
176. Vide Pre-Buddhist India, p.277.
177. AN., III.363.
bride at the time of her departure for the husband's house.

The early Buddhist Literature describes the function of the ideal wife in the following terms. For the sake of the husband, she will rise up early, be the last to retire, be willing workers, order all things sweetly and speak affectionately; she will honour, esteem and respect all whom the husband reveres, whether mother or father, recluse or Brāhmaṇa, and on their arrival offer them a seat and water. She will be deft and nimble at the husband's home-crafts, whether of wool or cotton, making it her business to understand the work so that to do it or to get it done; she will know all members of the husband's household, servants or messengers or work people, know the work of the each one of them by what has been done and their reminiscence by what has not been done; know the strength and weakness of the sick and minister to him; she will keep watch and ward over the treasure, corn, silver and gold brought home by the husband and will not act as a robber, thief, carouser and wastrel in regard to it. From this it is quite clear that the wife occupied the important and dignified status of being the virtual mistress of her husband's house in its internal affairs. According to

179. Vide AN., III. 37-38; IV. 265. See also Sīvalovāda Sutta, Buddhacaryā, p. 261.
the Buddhist Dharma for the laity, the wife constituted one of the Sixth Regions of worship and the husband should minister to his wife in the five ways viz., by showing her respect, compliance, not committing adultery, leaving her in charge and by supplying her with finery. This norm of behaviour towards the wife by the husband speaks of a very high degree of culture, and this must have been in practice in these republics which were under the influence of the compassionate teachings of the Buddha. The Buddhist Literature tells the story of the Mallian General Bandhula who ran the risk of his life in clashing with the powerful Lichchhavis in order to satisfy the pregnancy desire of his wife Mallikā to bathe and drink water in the sacred Coronation Tank of the Lichchhavis at Vaiśāli which was always under a heavy guard.

Mother was an object of great reverence and honour. She naturally occupied a position of substantial authority in the household.

3. As a Mother: The internal management and the control of the house were solely in her hands. Mother along with father constituted the First of the Six Regions of

182. Supra, f.n. 180.
183 worship. She was to be supported by her children in
184 the old age, and any disrespect to her was a great
185 crime. She was to be worshipped, and honoured, and
to be served with food, drink, clothing and bed, her
body to be anointed and bathed, and her feet to be
washed. Such a treatment to one's own mother in this
life was to merit a man heavenly bliss in the life
186 hereafter.

Widowhood appears to have been accepted as a
natural and normal phase in the life of a woman. In
this period there was no such

4. As a Widow: question as the right of a widow
to live. We do not find a single
instance of the self-immolation of a widow in any circum-
stance. The custom of Sati (Widow-burning) was definitely
non-existent in this period.

A pretty large number of women from these re-
publics renounced the world, entered the Buddhist monastic
orders and lived by begging.

5. As an Ascetic: The Sakyan women were the
first to come out in five

183. Sigālovāda Sutta (Buddhacaryā, p.261), Dialogues.III,
185. SN.,(Sar.) I,p.185; Suttanipāta, p.403, SBE.,X,p.66.
186. AN., I.132; II.70.
Gotami, Buddha's step-mother, and to join the Buddhist order. The women from other republics soon followed suit. Some of these female ascetics distinguished themselves by great literary skill in composition of beautiful devotional poems, reputed knowledge of religion and philosophy and art of disputations, and also great spiritual attainments in winning Arahantship. The early Buddhist texts give a long list of such female ascetics from these republics. We have slightest historical evidence for the existence of non-Buddhist female ascetics in the time of the Buddha. Moreover, the Buddhist and the Jaina texts refer to the women of the Brahman class who remained unmarried to carry on their studies.

Horizontal trade had been flourishing in India since the Vedic time. Prostitution had by this time become a recognised social institution. Prostitutes as a separate class of women existed in these republics. The prostitutes had certain stratification among them viz., the Natiya, Apsara, and Ganika. The Jataka Attarakatha tells us that the Bodhisattva at the age of sixteen was provided

\[\text{187. AN., IV. 274; Vinaya, II. 253; SAM., XX, pp. 320-34.}\]
\[\text{188. Infra, See Chapter on "Religion and Thought."}\]
\[\text{189. Vide E.J. Thomas : op. cit., p. III.}\]
\[\text{190. Cf. The Age of Imperial Unity, p. 563.}\]
with some thousands of Natiyas and Apsarás by his father. The class of prostitutes known as Ganikās or courtesans was the most typical of the age of the Buddha. The Ganikās were extremely beautiful, highly accomplished, wealthy, enjoying a position of fame and honour comparable to that of the Aspasias and Phrynes of the classical age, and, as in Greece, higher class hetairas were an educated woman. The most typical of such accomplished Ganikās of the age was Ambapali, so famous in the Buddhist legends. She was immensely wealthy, greatly intelligent and famous throughout the civilized portions of India of the age of the Buddha. She 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 asked fifty 'Kahāpanas' for one night. Through that person Vaiśālī became more and more flourishing. The Licchhāvī princes and wealthy citizens vied with one another in courting her favour. Even the Magadhan king Bimbisāra had fallen for her accomplished womanhood and paid secret visits to her in disguise during his war with


193. For the specific qualities of Ganikās, refer to
   G. Hayward: The Courtesan (London, 1926), Introduction
   and Ludwik Sternbach: Texts on Courtesan in Classical Sanskrit (Hoshiārpur, 1953).


the Liochhhavia, as a result of which Ambapāli bore 196
a son to the king who was christened Abhaya (fearless).
Ambapāli was one of the most treasured and cherished 197
possessions of the City of Vaisāli, and she mixed on
equal terms with the princes. On his last journey to
the Hills, as he passed through the City of Vaisali,
the Buddha accepted her invitation to dine in preference to
that of the city-fathers of Vaisali, who
wished to accord him a civic reception. The commentary
says that just before Ambapāli's visit to him, the
Buddha admonished the Monks to be steadfast and mindful, 198
lest they should lose their head about her. After the
meal she made a present of her park (Ambapāli-vana) to
the Buddha and his order, which he accepted and stayed
therein for sometime before leaving for Veluvagāma.
One day she was deeply moved at the sight of her aging
body and she renounced the world to join the Buddhist
order. Besides, there must have existed ordinary type
of prostitutes, for it is stated that in the evenings
the Liochhhavi youths used to move about with prostitu­
tutes (Nagara Sōbhaṇī—beauty of the town) freely in the

196. Rockhill: op. cit., p.64; Cf. Gilgit Manuscripts,
197. Vinaya Texts, SHE., XVII, p.171. Cf. Pingale of
Videha.
199. Dhammapada Atṭhakathā (PTS.), III, p.270-30;
    En.Tr. HOS., XXX, p.25.
pleasure gardens and parks which in large number skirted the Vaiśāli City. We are also told that the Ganikā institution was copied from Vaiśāli and introduced in the neighbouring kingdom Magadhā by king Bimbisāra who made Sālavatī, the most beautiful maiden of Rājagriha, its first Ganikā. The Gandhāra Jātaka speaks of Videha having 16,000 villages and 16,000 dancing girls, suggesting that each village or town had its dancing girls or courtesans.

Thus, from the above, it is clear that prostitution as a popular social institution existed in these republics. As a general rule, the prostitutes were not looked down as moral outcastes, beyond redemption. We have seen above how a courtesan like Ambāpāli lived in state and luxuries, her feminine accomplishments inspired amazement and envy, moved on equal terms with kings and princes and whose request was given preference over that of the city government of Vaiśāli by a great personage like the Buddha, and who ultimately found place in the Buddhist Order and won Arahantship. Thus the prostitutes generally occupied a fairly decent status in the society, and a few of them like Ambāpāli enjoyed a position of great honour and respectability. Whatever

Eng.Tr., HOS., XXX, p.35.

201. SBE., XVII, pp.171-72; Buddhacarīya, p.278
be the reasons for the existence of prostitution, the common notion that the people sought the company of the Ganikā because their life at home was miserable or unbearable appears to be wrong: rather, it was her unique feminine and intellectual accomplishments that attracted them.

Right to Property:

The right of the woman to hold separate property appears to have been recognised. Presents given to her at the time of marriage by the parents, relatives, husband and what she received after marriage from her husband and his family, were treated as her own property, or peculium or Stridhana. A Buddhist text states that the mother of a Bhikkhu named Sudinna, a Vajjian, made two big heaps of diamond and gold respectively and remarked that this much was only the Stridhana of his mother, and that of the father and grand-father was apart. This bears most positive evidence to the existence of the woman's right to property or Stridhan which she could dispose of as she liked, without being controlled by her husband in dealing with it.

203. Cf. Sivaswamy Aiyer : op.cit., p.50
Seclusion of Women:

The custom of the seclusion of women was confined to the nobility and upper classes only. The Jaina Kalpa-Sutra states that when the Ksatriyas Siddhartha summoned his ministers and courtiers to interpret the queen's dream, he took his seat on a throne in the hall of audience, but the queen was seated behind a curtain. The Lalitavistara also suggests that it was customary for a newly married girl to wear a veil in the presence of her father-in-law, mother-in-law and other elders. The evidences from the Jātakas clearly show that in general the seclusion of women did not exist and its practice in the nobility class was far from being rigid. Moreover, the Buddhist texts tell us that hundreds of women from all classes and from all stages and stations, married, unmarried and widow, went out of their homes and entered the Buddhist order and started living by begging to find true emancipation and bliss. To quote Oldenberg, "The seclusion of women from the outer world, which later custom has enjoined, was quite unheard of in ancient India; women took their share in the intellectual life of the people, and the most delicate and tenderest of

208. See, Pre-Buddhist India, p.890 f.
209. Vide Horner: Women under Primitive Buddhism, pp.95ff
the epic poems of the Indians show us how well they could understand and appreciate true womanhood. This apt observation of the great Buddhist scholar is especially true of the women of these republics, whose surging spirit and indomitable will for emancipation compelled the Buddha, much against his will, to grant their admission into his order.

An Estimate:

Some scholars have opined that the position of Indian women in early Buddhism deteriorated from that in the Vedic age. Such remark is based upon a number of facts viz., the Buddha's initial refusal to admit women to his order, his eightfold rule of discipline for the nuns wherein they are given an inferior position vis-à-vis the monks, his bitter lamentation over their admission into his order, and some stray disparaging remarks about them in the early Buddhist Literature.

211. For example, See N.N. Ghosh: Early History of India, p.88; A.L. Basham: Wonder . . ., p.177.
213. Cullavagga, Rules 1 and 2.
214. ibid., I; SBE., XX, pp.385 ff.
215. SN.(Sarn. Ed.) I, p.39; AN. (PTS.), IV, p.260;
    Rockhill: Life of Buddha, p.61; Cf. Horner: op. cit. p.50 ff, and Pre-Buddhist India, pp.236 f.
We may note here that Buddha's opposition to the entrance of women into his Sāmaṅga was not due to his either hatred for or a low opinion of them, but due to his realistic and practical consideration of certain natural disadvantages which obviously made women less suitable for living a house-less life. Moreover, Buddha has very clearly stated that a female child could be as good, great and beneficial as a male child, and that women possessed various kinds of strength. As for the republican woman, with whom we are particularly concerned here, from the foregoing discussion about her in all stages of her life and in all her possible roles in the society, we cannot but feel that she was happy, free and honoured, bellying by her magnificent accomplishments in many fields man's prejudices, existing in all time and in every human society, which declares her weak and wicked and man's sexual feast.

AMUSEMENTS

In the sombre atmosphere created by the teachings of the Buddha and the Mahāviṃśa who made a call for

216. ŚN. (Sar. Ed.) I, p. 78; Viskarado Sutta,
ŚN. (ibid.), II, pp. 556-57.
renouncing the world, we find the light side of the human nature asserting itself. These republicans being of martial nature, certain games and sports naturally formed their usual pastimes. Hunting appears to be the most popular. The Liohohhavi youths are mentioned as moving about in a large number with bows and arrows and hounds in the great forest of Mahāvana. Corns were raised in the midst of jungles to attract animals which were caught with the help of nets and hounds. Practice of the art of archery and training of elephants were also popular. 'Samājas' or festivals were occasions for general merry-makings. The Dulva speaks of the continuous festivities among the Liohohhavis, of which 'Chhana' and 'Sabbarathivāro' were the most important. At Sabbarathivāro songs were sung, trumpets, drums and other musical instruments were used, flags were flown, and kings, princes and commanders-in-chief freely participated in these festivals and spent the whole night in merry-making. Among the Sākyas there was a seed-sowing festival in which the Sakyamuni king and princes freely participated and which was marked with intense festive

217. AN., III, pp.75-76.
218. MN. (Sar.), p.98.
220. Psalms of the Brethren, p.106.
221. SN., I, p.201; Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā, III, p.460, (HOS., XXX, p.182); The Psalms of the Brethren, p.63; Life of Buddha (Rockhill, p.63).
spirits. The Mallas were fond of wrestling, and the Vinaya Piṭaka mentions women wrestlers. Gambling and playing dice were very common. The Brahmajāla Sutta narrates various kinds of dice plays. Besides, the populace amused themselves over a number of sports like, animal fights, acrobatic feats, boxing, wrestling, Games on boards with animals and birds, sham fight etc. Music, both vocal and instrumental, and dancing and dramatic performances were usual sources of recreations. The Buddhist tradition tells us that Rāja Suddhodhana provided a large number of beautiful girls to amuse the Boddhisattva with songs, dances and music played upon a number of musical instruments. Among the Sākyas we have a reference to sport-tournaments at which skill is sword-fighting, horse-riding, chariot-driving, shooting arrows etc. were displayed and this must have been an occasion for great merriment. Then there were

222. Buddhacaryā, pp.5-6.
224. Vinaya. (Sar.), p.529.
225. Vinaya Piṭaka (Sar.), p.349; DN. (Sar.), p.272; Buddhacaryā.
227. ibid., Dialogues I, pp.9 ff.
228. Brahmajāla Sutta, 10, Dialogues I, pp.7 f. and notes 2, 3, 4.
229. Buddhacaryā, pp.6, 9.
'Samajas' which were some kind of institutional gatherings for merry-making held on fixed occasions. Finally, the pleasures of wine and woman were also sought. We are told that the Lichchhavis used to drink wine and repair with prostitutes (Gandha or Nagara-Sobhanî) to convenient corners in the pleasure gardens and parks which skirted the City of Vaisali.

Personal Traits and Unique Customs:

These republican peoples had some striking personal traits. They were martial peoples and lived a very hard life. The Lichchhavis are described as sleeping on straw-couches and logs, as strenuous, diligent and zealous in their works, and as highly skilful and hardy archers. The Mallas, as the word connotes, were noted for their physical prowess. The Lichchhavis had a very strong sense of fellow-feeling. If any of them fell ill, the others would visit him, and that all of them would go out to join in any ceremony held at any one's house. The sense of

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233. SN., III, pp.267 ff.
234. Buddhacarya, p.86.
235. Watters : On Yuan Chwang’s Travels in India,II, p.79.
hospitality was very high in them. We are told that all the Lichohhavis would go out, the young and the old, to accord a rousing reception to any distinguished visitors to their city. They had also remarkable moral courage. It is said that a Lichohhavi, named Vaddha, preferred a charge of adultery against a Mallan called Dabba, but he soon realised his meanness and accepted his fault. To pay respect to the elders was a very great virtue among them. The Sākyas were highly temperamental and haughty. They were highly conceited, and it was because of this that they decided in their Mote-Hall not to give any of their girls in marriage to the Kosalan king Pasandhi who had made a request to them for the same. Tradition says that it was their dislike to associate with any other people that led them to marry their own sisters. It was with a view to break this complex that barber Upāli was given preference over the Sakyan princes in ordination into the

239. Buddhacaryā, p.58.
240. ibid.
241. Buddhist India, p.5.
Buddhist Sangha. They were also very arrogant. In the beginning they refused to pay obeisance to the Buddha as he was very young and only his miracles could win him their respect. The Videhas were highly charitable and liberal. The Jataka tells us that their country was studded with charitable institutions and that six hundred thousands pieces were daily spent on alms-giving.

We find the prevalence of some very queer customs and practices among these republicans. The Tibetan Buddhist tradition tells us that the Lichchhavis had the custom under which the most beautiful girls among them were to remain unmarried for the common pleasures of the whole Lichchhavi Gana. It was under this rule that Ambapālī, the daughter of the Lichchhavi chief Mahaṇāma and the celebrated beauty of the City of Vaiśālī, had to lead the life of a Gānīka. Prostitution appears to have been a fashionable practice without any social stigma among them. The Lichchhavis had the custom of exposing their dead bodies to be

243. ibid., 58.
244. Vinaya, II, 183; DN., I.90; Jat.I, 82.; Dh. A., III, 163; DPPN.,II, r.969.
245. Jat. (Cowell), IV, p.224.
246. Rockhill : op.cit. 
247. ibid. 
248. ibid.
devoured away by animals and birds, although they 249
practised cremation and burial as well. The
Liohohhavi Gana allowed its citizen to murder his un-
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faithful wife. The Sakyans had the custom of marrying
their own sisters and it was not an incest among them.
The Sakyans had the custom of marrying
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their own sisters and it was not an incest among them.
The Sakyans had the custom of marrying

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The Sakyan women used to deliver child in a standing
posture. It is said that Mahāmāyā gave birth to the
Boddhisattva in this very posture. In order to deliver
the first child, the Sakyan women used to go to their
father's house (Pihara). When the time of delivery was
quite near, Mahāmāyā left Kapilavastu for her father's
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house at Devadaha. According to Watters, the Sakyan
used to present the newly born child to the God in the
temple of Iśavara-Deva which contained a stone image in
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the posture of sitting and rising. Among the Sakyans no
father would offer his daughter in marriage to any youth
unless he had attained required proficiency in the tra-
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ditional 'sippas.' It was under this custom that the
Boddhisattva was asked to display his skill in such arts
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before Gopa could be offered to him by her father.

249. Beal's Romantic Legend of Śākya Buddha, pp.159-60.
250. Bhikkhuni Vibhanga Sānghādīśesa, Vinaya Text, Ed.
251. Supra, pp.126 ff.
252. Buḍḍhacaryā, p.3.
253. ibid.
256. ibid.