Chapter Five

Buddhist Contributions to the Australian Society

A/. Buddhist Contributions to the Australian Society

By "social action" we mean many different kinds of action intended to benefit mankind. These range from simple individual acts of charity, teaching and training, organized kinds of service, "Right Livelihood" in and outside the helping professions, and through various kinds of community development as well as to political activity in working for a better society.

The contribution of Buddhist organizations to social welfare in Australia can demonstrate socially engage concern of Buddhism. Socially engaged Buddhism as Buddhists practise involves a conscious contribution to relieve the suffering of sentient beings including oneself, but beyond oneself. This position is eloquently expounded by the Thai reformer Sulak Sivaraksa when he speaks of the essence of Buddhism, noting that "it means deep commitment and personal transformation. To be of help we must become more selfless and less selfish. To do this, we have to take more and more moral responsibility in society. This is the essence of Buddhism, from ancient time’s right up to the present."  

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Many of the Buddhist friends of different organization around Australia have conducted a very comprehensive education and teaching programs. They provide many public Dharma talks to teach the cause and alleviation of suffering and they also involved in programs of mental health to teach the public skills in meditation and stress management. In some place they also provide a public Kung Fu program to promote education for physical health. For maintain their cultures they also developed cultural education programs include flower arranging, calligraphy and vegetarian cooking classes. Moreover, they had conducted a series of public talks and discussion groups on Buddhist ethics, which involved in exploring difficult ethical issues such as suicide, divorce, abortion, depression and drug addiction etc.²

The aim of all such kinds of contribution is to develop what the Buddha terms “skillful” ways that help sentient beings are easy to deal with life so they are able to have a maximize human happiness and minimize human suffering in the light of the essential tenets of the Four Noble Truths of the Buddha’s first sermon.

Hence here, there are nine categories had searching out by Patricia Sherwood completed in the year 2003 that the Buddhist welfare contribution in Australia could be divided into nine different areas as below:

1. Education of the adult public

2. Education of children;

3. Working with the sick in hospitals and hospices;
4. Working with the sick and dying in the community and in palliative care;
5. Visiting prisons;
6. Working with drug addicts;
7. Fundraising for the poor and needy (both in Australia and overseas);
8. Speaking up for human rights and against oppression;
9. Compassionate activities on behalf of non-human sentient beings.3

Buddhism with its two pillars of wisdom and compassion necessarily engages human well-being both individually and socially. Modern forms of Buddhism are essentially contiguous with traditional forms despite different social arenas and cultural contexts. It is the position of the traditionalists that is strongly supported by the Buddhist practitioners in Buddhist organizations in Australia. Their view is strongly emic and very supportive of the view that social welfare activities have always been integral to Buddhism, although the cultural forms may vary.

1 &2. Education of the Adult and Children Public

Patricia Sherwood had stated in her research about “the contribution of Buddhist in Australia” that 96 percent of the organizations were actively involved in education and social welfare activities”. Most all of them reached to a 100% of Buddhist organization had joined to the public programs of education for adult.

While only 64% of Buddhist organizations in Australia provide education programs for children.

Although, all Buddhist organizations are seeking the most important thing need to pass on the public, is to teach the Dharma if suffering was to be addressed at its fundamental source of human thinking and understanding which they were strongly stated that if people are to be freed from their suffering, of whatever nature, then it is necessary to understand the Four Noble Truths. There is a group explains that the heart of their contribution to public education comes from a profound commitment to the work of the Bodhisattva who already achieves enlightenment; with the compassionate she vows to come back the world for help instead she was deeply going to Nirvana.  

Buddhist’s teaching in Australia, as anywhere in the world, is not about to convert people into Buddhism, but giving Buddhism to the people so that they become better people. This is why once we’ll hear the Buddha had taught in the doctrines that don’t be quickly believe what I had said but have deeply thinking and obverse it if it realistic then apply it into our everyday life. His Holiness the Dalai Lama also emphasizes that people should not hurry into changing their

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Nirvana (Skt; Pali nibbana; Jpn neban): Enlightenment, the ultimate goal of Buddhist practice, the Sanskrit word nirvana means “blown out” and is variously translates as extinction, emancipation, cessation, quiescence, or non-rebirth. Nirvana was originally regarded as the state in which all illusions and desires as well as the cycle of birth and death are extinguished. There are two types of Nirvana. The first is that of the arhat who has eliminated all illusions and will no longer be reborn in the six paths, but who is still bound to the world of suffering in that he possesses a body. This is called the nirvana of remainder or incomplete nirvana. The second is that which the arhat achieves at death, when both body and mind—the sources of suffering—are extinguished. This is called the nirvana of no remainder or complete nirvana.
religious and cultural ways even if they draw inspiration from Buddhism. In the same way that we do not go around knocking on people’s door to promote Buddhism. We should instead educate people about how to become non-violent, compassionate, tolerant and forgiving people regardless of their religion. These are the true values of humanity.

Teaching Buddhism to Australians can be very challenging if one is too attached to one’s old ways and fails to understand Australian people’s way of thinking. Australians who study Buddhism are not deeply religious people. They are people who have become somewhat disillusioned with traditional religion and are very skeptical about anything religious.

Deeply religious people do not necessarily come to Buddhism. People become attracted to Buddhism because it offers a way to live wisely and kindly rather than having to believe in a set of doctrines. Buddhism primarily focuses on how to live consciously and act, think and speak with kindness so that one does not add to the causes of suffering. Suffering stems from one’s unskillful action and unskillful action is caused by afflictions. Afflictions, in turn, arise from selfishness and grasping to the wrong notion of self.

The Buddha means awakened one and every one of us has the potential to wake up from the sleep of ignorance. This awareness can be cultivated through meditation, simple living and self-discipline. These tools help people to pause
before any action is undertaken knowing that their actions have consequences for other people and one’s own future.

Educated people have their own reasons for turning to Buddhism. Australians enjoy life and are appreciative of direct and practical teachings on how to live well with mindfulness and compassion. The practical nature of Buddhist teachings can bring up the humanity in people.

Although, they may attribute the teachings and texts to being revealed from rocks or from the pen of a scholar, but essentially none of them have anything new to add to what Lord Buddha taught in the eighty four thousand articles of the Dharma.

To fellow Buddhists teachings we have learn to respect each other, we can make a valuable contribution to multicultural Australia. If we all live by the teachings of kindness, tolerance and mutual respect, we are adding to the happiness of humanity. As long as we are kind to each other, we are all engaged Buddhists, whether we are laymen living in the city or monks and nuns retreating in the forest. This is why HH the Dalai Lama says, “My religion is kindness”. As this can go a long way to educate people that being Buddhist is about learning to be kind and caring.

Teaching is, of course, also a form of giving and helping. Indeed, one of the two prime offenses in the Mahayana code of discipline is that of withholding the
wealth of the Dharma from others. Moreover, teaching the Dharma is one of the most valuable sources of learning open to a Buddhist.

Here we are concerned primarily with the teaching of the Dharma to newcomers in Buddhism, and with the general publicizing of Buddhism among non-Buddhists.

Finally, the method of introductory teaching employed in some Buddhist centers leaves much to be desired both on educational grounds and as Buddhist teaching. The Buddha always adapted his teaching to the particular circumstances of the individual learner; he sometimes opened with a question about the enquirer's occupation in life, and built his teaching upon the answer to this and similar questions. True learning and teaching has as its starting point a problem or experience posed by the learner, even if this be no more than a certain ill-defined curiosity. It is there that teacher and learner must begin. The teacher starts with the learner's thoughts and feelings and helps him or her to develop understanding and awareness. This is, of course, more difficult than a standard lecture which begins and ends with the teacher's thoughts and feelings, and which may in more sense than one leave little space for the learner. It will exclude the teacher from any learning.

It follows that unless the teacher is truly inspiring; the "Dharma talk" is best used selectively: to introduce and stimulate discussion or to summarize and
consolidate what has been learned. Dharma teachers must master the arts of conducting open discussion groups, in which learners can gain much from one another and can work through an emotional learning situation beyond the acquisition of facts about Buddhism. Discussion groups have become an important feature of many lay Buddhist and social action organizations in different parts of the world.

3 & 4. Working With the Sick and Dying in Hospitals, Hospices and Community;

All social action is an act of giving (dana), but there is a direct act which we call charitable action, once the Buddha had said "Whoever nurses the sick serves me,". In our more complex society does this not include the active advancement and defense of the principles of a national health service?

The old phrase "as cold as charity" recalls numerous possibilities for self-deception in giving to others and in helping them. Here is opportunity to give out goodness in tangible form, both in our own eyes and those of the world. It may also be a temptation to impose our own ideas and standards from a position of patronage. David Brandon, who has written so well on the art of helping, reminds us that "respect is seeing the Buddha nature in the other person. It means perceiving the superficiality of positions of moral authority. The other person is as good as you. However untidy, unhygienic, poor, illiterate and bloody-minded he
may seem, he is worthy of your respect. He also has autonomy and purpose. He is another form of nature”5.

There are many different ways in which individual Buddhists and their organizations can give help and relieve suffering. “In Australia there are 54% of Buddhist organizations are involved in working with the sick and dying in hospital and hospices and 61%of Buddhist organizations are involved in working the sick and dying in the community”6. Those delivering these services cite as their rationale for engaging in such activities the need to demonstrate compassion and loving kindness towards the ill. Some also emphase the need to teach meditation and skilful ways of thinking to the sick so they are better able to manage their illness, particularly if it is chronic and associated with pain.

However, "charity begins at home." If a Buddhist group or society fails to provide human warmth and active caring for all of its members in their occasional difficulties and troubles — though always with sensitivity and scrupulous respect for privacy — where then is its Buddhism? Where is the Sangha?

In our modern industrial society there has been on the one hand a decline in personal and voluntary community care for those in need and, on the other, too little active concern for the quality and quantity of institutional care financed from the public purse that has to some extent taken its place. One facet of this which

5 Brandon, David, "Zen and the art of helping." Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976.p.59
6 Patricia Sherwood. The Buddha is in the Street. Engaged Buddhism in Australia. Cowan University, Sunbury, 2003. P. 89,90
may be of particular significance for Buddhists is a failure to recognize adequately and provide for the needs of the dying. In recent years there has been a growing awareness of this problem in North America and Europe, and a small number of hospices have been established by Christian and other groups for terminally ill people. However, only a start has been made with the problem. The first Buddhist hospice in the West has yet to be opened. And, less ambitiously, the support of regular visitors could help many lonely people to die with a greater sense of dignity and independence in our general hospitals.

5. Visiting Prisons;

To be tolerance, sympathy and give a chance for other, who had done the wrong things and who is in jail once the Buddha has said “turn a head become a Buddha” which mean that people who has done things wrong even they had kill people but if they know that they had done bad things, turn to regret and ashamed with the bad action they had done, vow not to do it again, try to do all good things and benefit for most people, depend on the times, years and lifes they make their effort so they would regain their purity, calm and truth nature.

In Australia there are 39% of Buddhist organization are involved in visiting prisons from all different schools of Buddhism. Prison work includes both formal and informal work. Formal work included programs for prisoners developed in
liaison with relevant statutory authorities, while informal work includes prison visiting.\(^7\)

All Buddhist organization emphasise that commission of evil does not imply a permanent habit of doing evil and that by providing prisoners with skilful and loving ways of managing their suffering they may provide significant opportunities for the prisoners to change their lifestyles both within prison and upon release.

**6. Working With Drug Addicts;**

As like the prisoner people, drug addicts people have the same considering of socially engaged Buddhist Organization to wish them managing their suffering they may provide significant opportunities to detoxicate to start a new life.

The percentage of Buddhist organization in Australia are involved in drug addicts is 24%. There is a commitment by such organisations to teaching the dharma so that they may provide addicts with a more skilful means of dealing with the stresses in their lives. Some organization also emphase the need for addicts to experience unconditional love, loving kindness, so that they can regain a sense of self-worth.\(^8\)

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\(^7\) Patricia Sherwood. The Buddha is in the Street. Engaged Buddhism in Australia. Cowan University, Sunbury, 2003. P. 90

\(^8\) Patricia Sherwood. The Buddha is in the Street. Engaged Buddhism in Australia. Cowan University, Sunbury, 2003. P. 91
7. Fundraising for the Poor and Needy (both in Australia and overseas);

According to venerable Lama Choedak Rinpoche engaging Buddhism is not about wearing a Red Wheel on our shoulders and going out to help victims of war, famine and natural disasters. Engaging Buddhism is about educating people so that no war and conflicts get started. Engaged Buddhism can help to nip the root causes of war: greed, hatred and ignorance in the bud. Even though, today world they are many of poor people by the time they get hungry, it would be hardly for them hear or observe things even that is a good ways to change a better life, was saying by the Buddha or God therefore if we are like to help them well in both conditions mental and physical of life so material that would be the priority then we are able to help or sharing with them an experience of truth nature in order to relieve their own suffering.

Based on the work of Patricia Sherwood in 2003 there is 61% of Buddhist organizations in Australia involved in fundraising for the poor and needy in Australia and other countries.

Giving clothes, money, time, skills, goods, energy help cultivate the awakening to compassionate heart of one ‘own Buddha nature.

8. Speaking up for Human Rights;

The social order to which Buddhist social action is ultimately directed must be one that minimizes non-volitionally caused suffering, whether in mind or body,
and which also offers encouraging conditions for its citizens to see more clearly into their true nature and overcome their karmic inheritance. The Buddhist way is, with its compassion, its equanimity, its tolerance, its concern for self-reliance and individual responsibility.

A disciple of the Buddha must maintain a mind of kindness and cultivate the practice of liberating beings. He should reflect thus: 'All male beings have been my father and all females have been my mother. There is not a single being who has not given birth to me during my previous lives, hence all beings of the Six Destinies are my parents. Therefore, when a person kills and eats any of these beings, he thereby slaughters my parents. Furthermore, he kills a body that was once my own, for all elemental earth and water previously served as part of my body and all elemental fire and wind have served as my basic substance. Therefore, I shall always cultivate the practice of liberating beings and in every life be reborn in the eternallyabiding Dharma and teach other to liberate beings as well.' Whenever a Bodhisattva sees a person preparing to kill an animal, he should devise a skilful method to rescue and protect it, freeing it from its suffering and difficulties.. (Brahma Net Sutra I 162)

The lack of understanding of the true cause of happiness is the principal reason why people inflict suffering on others. Some people think that causing pain to others may lead to their own happiness or that their own happiness is of such importance that the pain of others is of no significance. But this is clearly shortsighted. No one truly benefits from causing harm to another being. Whatever immediate advantage is gained at the expense of someone else is short-lived. In the long run causing others misery and infringing upon their peace and happiness creates anxiety, fear and suspicion for oneself.

The key to creating a better and more peaceful world is the development of love and compassion for others.
In any ways political and economic relations and a technology which will help people to overcome ego-centeredness, through co-operation with others, in place of either subordination and exploitation or the consequent sense of "righteous" struggle against all things so it really brings the peace and truth happiness for all, offer to each a freedom which is conditional only upon the freedom and dignity of others, so that individuals may develop a self-reliant responsibility rather than being the conditioned animals of institutions and ideologies but Buddhism can adapt all these for all sentient. 24% of Buddhist organization in Australia are involved in such activities, included amongst there are several groups publicizing, educating and lopping for human rights.9

9. Compassionate Activities on Behalf of Non-human Sentient Beings;

(Not Harm or Hurt)

Buddhism affirms the unity of all living beings, all equally posses the Buddha-nature, and all have the potential to become Buddhas, that is, to become fully and perfectly enlightened. Among the sentient, there are no second-class citizens. According to Buddhist teaching, human beings do not have a privileged, special place above and beyond that of the rest of life. The world is not a creation specifically for the benefit and pleasure of human beings. Furthermore, in some circumstances according with their karma, humans can be reborn as humans and

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9 Patricia Sherwood. The Buddha is in the Street. Engaged Buddhism in Australia. Cowan University, Sunbury, 2003. P. 92-93
animals can be reborn as humans. In Buddhism the most fundamental guideline for conduct is ahimsa—the prohibition against the bringing of harm and/or death to any living being. Why should one refrain from killing? It is because all beings have lives; they love their lives and do not wish to die. Even one of the smallest creatures, the mosquito, when it approaches to bite you, will fly away if you make the slightest motion. Why does it fly away? Because it fears death. It figures that if it drinks your blood, you will take its life. . . . We should nurture compassionate thought. Since we wish to live, we should not kill any other living being. Furthermore, the karma of killing is understood as the root of all suffering and the fundamental cause of sickness and war, and the forces of killing are explicitly identified with the demonic. The highest and most universal ideal of Buddhism is to work unceasingly for permanent end to the suffering of all living beings, not just humans.

Therefore, in Mahayana Buddhism adhering to a completely vegetarian diet is a natural and logical ramification of the moral precept against the taking of life. The Bodhisattva Precepts also explicitly forbid the eating of non-vegetarian food.

Student: "...when you eat one bowl of rice, you take the life of all the grains of rice, whereas eating meat you take only one animal's life."

Then the [Venerable] Master [Hua] replied: "On the body of one single animal are a hundred thousand, in fact, several million little organisms. These organisms are fragments of what was once an animal. The soul of a human being at death may split up to become many animals. One person can become about ten animals. That's why animals are so stupid. The soul of an animal can split up and become, in its smallest division, an organism or plant. The feelings which plants have, then, are what separated from the animal's soul when it split up at death. Although the life force of a large number of plants may appear sizable, it is not as
great as that of a single animal or a single mouthful of meat. Take, for example, rice: tens of billions of grains of rice do not contain as much life force as a single piece of meat. If you open your Five Eyes you can know this at a glance. If you haven't opened your eyes, no matter how one tries to explain it to you, you won't understand. No matter how it's explained, you won't believe it, because you haven't been a plant!"

Another example is the mosquitoes. The millions of mosquitoes on this mountain may be simply the soul of one person who has been transformed into all those bugs. It is not the case that a single human soul turns into a single mosquito. One person can turn into countless numbers of mosquitoes.

At death the nature changes, the soul scatters, and its smallest fragments become plants. Thus, there is a difference between eating plants and eating animals. What is more, plants have very short life-spans. The grass, for example, is born in the spring and dies within months. Animals live a long time. If you don't kill them, they will live for many years. Rice, regardless of conditions, will only live a short time. And so, if you really look into it, there are many factors to consider, and even science hasn't got it all straight." (Buddha Root Farm, 64)

Mahakashyapa asked the Buddha, "Why is it that the Thus Come One does not allow eating meat?" The Buddha replied, "It is because meat-eating cuts off the seeds of great compassion." (Cherishing Life, II 5)

The First Precept of Buddhism is to abstain from taking life. But it must be made clear that the Buddhist "Precepts" are not commandments; they are "good resolutions," sincere aspirations voluntarily undertaken. They are signposts. They suggest to us how the truly Wise behave, beyond any sense of self and other.

Evil springs from delusion about our true nature as human beings, and it takes the characteristic forms of hatred, aggression and driving acquisitiveness. These behaviors feed upon themselves and become strongly rooted, not only in individuals but in whole cultures. Total war is no more than their most spectacular
and bloody expression. In Buddhism the cultivation of *sila* (habitual morality) by attempting to follow the Precepts is an aspiration toward breaking this karmic cycle. It is a first step towards dissolving the egocentricity of headstrong willfulness, and cultivating heartfelt awareness of others. The Precepts invite us to loosen the grip, unclench the fist, and to aspire to open-handedness and open-heartedness. Whether, and to what extent, he keeps the Precepts is the responsibility of each individual. But he needs to be fully aware of what he is doing.

The karmic force of violent behavior will be affected by the circumstances in which it occurs. For example, a "diminished responsibility" may be argued in the case of conscripts forced to kill by an aggressive government. And there is surely a difference between wars of conquest and wars of defense. We may deplore the historic destruction of the great Indian Buddhist heritage in the middle-ages, undefended against the Mongol and Muslim invaders. It is important to note, however, that "according to Buddhism there is nothing that can be called a 'just war' — which is only a false term coined and put into circulation to justify and excuse hatred, cruelty, violence and massacre"¹⁰

¹⁰ Rahula, Walpola, "What the Buddha Taught," 2nd ed., Gordon Fraser, 1967, p.84
Violence and killing are deeply corrupting in their effect upon all involved, and Buddhists will therefore try to avoid direct involvement in violent action or in earning their living in a way that, directly or indirectly, does violence. The Buddha specifically mentioned the trade in arms, in living beings and flesh.

The problem is whether, in today's "global village" we are not all in some degree responsible for war and violence to the extent that we refrain from any effort to diminish them. Can we refrain from killing a garden slug and yet refrain, for fear of "political involvement," from raising a voice against the nuclear arms race or the systematic torture of prisoners of conscience in many parts of the world?

These are questions which are disturbing to some of those Buddhists who have a sensitive social and moral conscience. This is understandable. Yet, a well-informed Buddhist must not forget that moral responsibility, or karmic guilt, originate from a volitional and voluntary act affirming the harmful character of the act. If that affirmation is absent, neither the responsibility for the act, not karmic guilt, rest with those who, through some form of pressure, participate in it. A slight guilt, however, might be involved if such participants yield too easily even to moderate pressure or do not make use of "escape routes" existing in these situations. But failure to protest publicly against injustice or wrong-doings does not necessarily constitute a participation in evil. Voices of protest should be raised when there is a chance that they are heard. But "voices in the wilderness" are
futile, and silence, instead, is the better choice. It is futile, indeed, if a few well-meaning heads try to run against walls of rock stone that may yield only to bulldozers. It is a sad fact that there are untold millions of our fellow-humans who do affirm violence and use it for a great variety of reasons (though not "reasonable reasons"!). They are unlikely to be moved by our protests or preaching, being entirely obsessed by divers’ fanaticisms or power urges. This has to be accepted as an aspect of existential suffering. Yet there are still today some opportunities and nations where a Buddhist can and should work for the cause of peace and reducing violence in human life. No efforts should be spared to convince people that violence does not solve problems or conflicts.

The great evil of violence is its separation unto death of us and them, of "my" righteousness and "your" evil. If you counter violence with violence you will deepen that separation through thoughts of bitterness and revenge. The Dhammapada says: "Never by hatred is hatred appeased, but it is appeased by kindness. This is an eternal truth" (I, 5) Buddhist non-violent social action (avihimsa, ahimsa) seeks to communicate, persuade and startle by moral example. "One should conquer anger through kindness, wickedness through goodness, selfishness through charity, and falsehood through truthfulness"

B/. The Contribution in the Time of Buddha
The word contribution has a large an extensive application in its sense. The Buddhist contribution, so far as the world is concerned, is composite. Buddhism which moulded not only for the Indian thoughts for several centuries contributed largely to Indian culture in its various aspects but also for whole the planet up to today’s world. The contribution, which Buddhism giving out to the world is indeed notable. The part played by the monasteries (viharas) and the member of order was unique in this regard. In this section attempt to describe some of its important aspects, such as political and social ideals, and economic development based on the aesthetic ideals acquired in the time of Buddha.

**Political Ideal**

Buddha lived in the 6th century B.C. It was an age of great upsurge, intellectual and social, in many parts of the world, India not exception was notice the upheaval in the domain of political and social ideals, educational system and the like Gautama Buddha was born in a famous Sakya clan. His father Suddhodana with his capital at Kapilavatthu was the chieftain of the clan which had the oligarchical system of government. There were other neighbouring clans, viz. the Vajjis, Licchavis, Koliyas, Videhas ect…. They had also republican organizations. Buddha was thus born and grew up among republican people.

Being disgusted with the earthly pleasures Siddhartha in his youth left home and adopted the life of a recluse to rescue mortal beings from the miseries of
the world. After his victory of Maras and become Buddha he started his missionary career at the age of thirty-five and continued at for forty-five years, in other words right after his enlightenment he had served the benefit for all sentient beings until the day of his last physical breath. According to Mahayana text believes that the Buddha always exists in this world in order to make the benefit to beings not only his forty-five years in his lives time.

With his sixty disciples Buddha started his community order, known as the sangha, which contributed much to the propagation and popularity of Buddhism and exists even today. From the Mahavagga\textsuperscript{11} we had learned that the Lord Buddha was encouraged his orders dispersed into different places, into different directions even himself crossed from village to village, from town to town to preach the truths dharma to beings for their benefit such as “Go ye, now, oh Bhikkhus, and wonder, for the gain of many, for the welfare of many, out of compassion for the world. Let not two of you go the same way. Preach the doctrine which is glorious in the beginning, middle, and end, in the spirit and in the letter, proclaim a consummate, perfect and pure life of holiness.” Ere long the member of his disciples had grown fairly large and he had to work out rules and regulations for the guidance of the members of the sangha (order) which are contained in the Vinayapitaka. Before the rise of Buddhism there were forms of

\textsuperscript{11} The Mahavagga includes several sutta-like texts, including an account of the period immediately following the Buddha's Awakening, his first sermons to the group of five monks, and stories of how some of his great disciples joined the Sangha and themselves attained Awakening. Also included are the rules for ordination, and various procedures that monks are to perform during formal gatherings of the community.
communal life, but they lacked any organization and code of rules regulating the life of the members. Buddha’s credit lay in his thorough and systematic character which he gave to the sangha (order).

As already mentioned above, Buddha was born in a republican state. He was imbued with democratic ideas from his boyhood. The political constitution of the clans from which many men joined the sangha as Bhikkhus (monks) in early times was further of a republican type. One can, therefore, naturally expect Buddha’s democratic ideals in the constitution of the sangha.

In overall, here is given an outline of the noteworthy features of the constitution of the sangha to have an idea how principles of democracy worked in the sangha.

a. Novice (Pabbjja) and Bhikku (Upasampada)

There are two ceremonies prescribed for admission into the sangha. The first called Novice in Sanskrit called Pabbajja which admits one as a novice into the sangha while the other known as Bhikkhu in Sanskrit called Upasampada makes one a regular member of the sangha. In the beginning these were done by Buddha himself with the word himself with the words ‘ehi bhikkhu, come bhikkhu’, according as the member was one or more. This completed the ordination which conferred monkhood. No other formality was necessary. He hid not delegate the power of ordination to any of his monks in the beginning. Their
duty was to place before Buddha the seekers after ordination. The candidates for the ordination were thus brought before his presence from different parts of the country to the place where he was staying at the time. This caused great hardship to the desiring entrants and was sometimes also found Impracticable. The Sanskrit Vinaya records that one of such men, when being brought before Buddha for ordination, died on the way, and was deprived of the benefits of entering the sangha. This necessitated a modification of the original procedure “ which making its his senior disciples henceforth to confer the Pabbajja and Upassampada on the candidates in the name of Trinity i. e . Buddha, Dharmma and Sangha. He thus delegated the power to his monks to admit people to his sangha. But this power of delegation to the individual monks who were Upajjhayas did not work well. Shortly after, a Brahmin it a rule that the instead of the monks individually as hitherto before. The minimum member of monks required to constitute such an assembly was also laid down. This new procedure effected a radical change in the individual monks. It left everything to the judgement of the assembly of monks. This indeed made the opening of a new chapter as to the introduction of democratic principles in the history of Indian religious orders.

b. Semimonthly Meeting (Uposhadha)
Next in importance to the ordination is the Uposhadha\textsuperscript{12} ceremony which was introduced into which religious discourses were held on certain days of a month for the well-being of the members of the sangha. Such practice was in vogue among other sects of ascetics even before Buddha. It was held twice every month on the new moon and place and recites the Patimokkhasutta which contains 227 rules of conduct for monks and 348 rules of conduct for nuns. This code of rules which takes up eight chapters enumerates different types of offences committed by the monks. All the monks living within the fixed jurisdiction of the avasa (monastery) should hold the Uposatha together. None of them could be absent. If anyone failed to join in the service due to illness or unforeseen events, he should send his consent by proxy, and in which case the consent of the absentee was as valid as that of one present personally in the service. In case of a dispute as to the date of the calculation of Uposatha ceremony-the incoming monks counting the day as the fifteenth, while the resident monks reckoning it as the fourteenth-then if the number of the incoming monks was greater, the resident monks should yield to them and vice-versa. It may be recalled that the working of the sangha was on democratic lines. Every transaction of the sangha was done on the basis of the rule by majority and that was why consent of all the monk of monastery was so much insisted on.

\textsuperscript{12} Uposhadha in Sanskrit and Uposatha in Pali. A semimonthly meeting of self-examination and public confession held in Buddhist monasteries. At the uposadha, monks recited the precepts for the Buddhist Order, and those had violated them confessed their offenses. The uposadha was held at the time of the new and full moons.
All property communal. Every member of the sangha had principles of democracy. Like modern public meetings at the assembly of monks a chairman was elected by the unanimous consent of those present, but the consent was made by silence. There was no recognition of rank in the sangha. Simple seniority on the relation of teacher to pupil was only recognized. No monk could give orders to another. Buddha considered himself as an elder brother who was concerned with happiness of the masses. From the Mahaparinibbanasutta we learn that he repudiated the idea of a successor to him. As already observed, all decisions were taken by majority of votes and when differences of opinions arose, the decision was postponed. It was then referred to a select committee to deal with the dispute. Sometimes votes were taken, marked sticks were used for the purpose. Thus, the system of government obtaining in the sangha was entirely democratic in nature, and the principles of democracy working first in the domain of religious institutions. It made the sangha invincible and, as such, it was destined to work wonders in the history of the Indian people not very long after its inception.

Lastly, this democratic ideal was further developed and materialized in the field of state administration by the Maurya emperor Asoka who was indebted for this grand and noble deal to Buddhism. His idea of Dharmavijaya was not only a missionary movement, but a definite imperial policy. It indeed achieved of unity and fraternity for the people of India.
Social ideal

Shakyamuni’s call for equality and people’s response to it paved the way for social change in India at that time. It was his noteworthy contribution. Perhaps many are unaware that, on many occasions, Buddha expressed views on the importance of democracy. He called upon people to strengthen democratic values for the common welfare. Despite the existence of democratic institutions in India centuries before his birth, his advocacy of a democratic system, at a time of complicated social and political conditions, was a historical event.

Buddhism brought a new outlook in the social life of ancient India. Before the rise of Buddhism there was the grade (vanna) which mainly determined the various grades in the society. The castes’ still existing in India until today is Khattiya, the Braman, the Vessa and Sudda. According to the doctrine and discipline of the Tathagata, from home to homelessness, lose their names and origins. Buddha thus stood for the equality of castes. He maintained that it was an action (karma) that determined the low and high state of the being. By birth one does not become an outcaste, by birth one does not become a Brahmin. Every king being has Karma (action) as its master, its kinsman, its refuge.

There was no distinction of caste in the sangha. Buddha’s disciples belonged to all strata of society. For instance, we know that Upali who was a barbar by caste occupied an important position in the sangha. The admission to the
sangha was open to men and women alike. Although at first the Buddha was not willing to admit women into his sangha for some reason that if to let women join in the sangha Buddhism will be decline earliest in five hundred years because of the benefit of all sentient in order to keep alive and longest in Buddhism then Buddha refused but with the convincement of venerable Ananda in many times, with the deeply interested and wanted to join in the sangha order of Mahapajapati Gotami, the foster mother of Buddha’ childhood, he then resigned to admit women into the sangha. The first women entered the sangha order was Mahapajapati Gotami henceforth respectable career was open for women. Women were no bar to the attainment of Arhathood or the goal of life. This attracted a number of women who attained positions of eminence in the various spheres. The Therigatha gives us names of eminent nuns. Buddha thus raised the status and position of women in the society.

Truth, righteousness, moral conduct, charity, non violence and the like were further the important norms which Buddha had postulated for the society.

Gautama Buddha’s contribution to the Indian Way and to humanity can be highlighted in three ways. On the strength of his intense and highly philosophical research based upon knowledge, logic, and exercise, and having the four Arya Satyas – sorrow, its cause, its cessation, and the means of its cessation – in the center, he described the reality of human life. This was his first great contribution. He clarified to the suffering world that sorrow was the supreme reality of life.
Birth, disease, old age, death, astonishment, depression, grief, contact with
the unloving, separation from the dear, and the non-fulfillment of desire are
sorrows. Desiring enjoyment, power, wealth, and the will to live are the causes of
sorrow. Desire and lust give birth to a state of struggle and conflict, become the
source of striving and lead people toward the ocean of sorrows. Cessation of these
desires is the way to become free from sorrow. Gautama Buddha established the
Eightfold Middle Way as the way to free oneself desire, the cause of sorrow.

His path, besides becoming the Way’s best introduction, proved to be a
milestone of the Way. Buddhism flourished, affecting millions of Indians and
becoming the basis for the lives of many around the world. It touched the heights
of the spiritual world in his lifetime. The simple and practical teachings of Buddha
saved man.

Gautama Buddha and Buddhism have made excellent contributions towards
strengthening the Indian Way, which is based on universal acceptance, particularly
in making it dynamic and bringing the common man into its fold. Buddha’s
contribution for taking this way in his time, when it was a narrow path, cannot be
underestimated.

Buddhism is an accessible way of life as shown by the Buddhas. By
overcoming negative ideas, a Buddha develops positive virtues and rises to the
stature of being a mentor to the world. Anyone, by knowing the reality of life,
through self-control, restraint and discipline, and by following the Middle Way,
can get through the journey of life. By continuously doing good acts, he develops virtues, escapes the bond of sorrows, and attains the stage of being a Buddha.

**Economic Ideal**

"While the materialist is mainly interested in goods, the Buddhist is mainly interested in liberation. But Buddhism is 'The Middle Way' and therefore in no way antagonistic to physical well-being... The keynote of Buddhist economics is simplicity and non-violence. From an economist's point of view, the marvel of the Buddhist way of life is the utter rationality of its pattern — amazingly small means leading to extraordinarily satisfying results"\(^ {13} \).

Schumacher then outlines a "Buddhist economics" in which production would be based on a middle range technology yielding on the one hand an adequate range of material goods (and no more), and on the other a harmony with the natural environment and its resources.

The above principles suggest some kind of diverse and politically decentralized society, with co-operative management and ownership of productive wealth. It would be conceived on a human scale, whether in terms of size and complexity of organization or of environmental planning, and would use modern technology selectively rather than being used by it in the service of selfish interests. In Schumacher's words, "It is a question of finding the right path of

development, the Middle Way, between materialist heedlessness and traditionalist immobility, in short, of finding 'Right Livelihood.'"

Clearly, all the above must ultimately be conceived on a world scale. "Today we have become so interdependent and so closely connected with each other that without a sense of universal responsibility, irrespective of different ideologies and faiths, our very existence or survival would be difficult"\(^\text{14}\). This statement underlines the importance of Buddhist internationalism and of social policy and social action conceived on a world scale.

The above is not offered as some kind of blueprint for utopia. Progress would be as conflict-ridden as the spiritual path of the ordinary Buddhist — and the world may never get there anyway. However, Buddhism is a very practical and pragmatic kind of idealism, and there is, as always, really no alternative but to try.

E.F. Schumacher has concisely expressed the essence of Buddhist economics as follows:

The good society will concern itself primarily with the material and social conditions for personal growth, and only secondarily and dependently with material production. It is noteworthy that the 14th Dalai Lama, on his visit to the West in 1973, saw "nothing wrong with material progress provided man takes precedence over progress. In fact it has been my firm belief that in order to solve

\(^\text{14}\) Dalai Lama, H.H.XIV, "Universal responsibility and the good heart," Dharamsala (Library of Tibetan works), 1976, pp. 5, 28
human problems in all their dimensions we must be able to combine and harmonize external material progress with inner mental development." The Dalai Lama contrasted the "many problems like poverty and disease, lack of education" in the East with the West, in which "the living standard is remarkably high, which is very important, very good." Yet he notes that despite these achievements there is "mental unrest," pollution, overcrowding, and other problems. "Our very life itself is a paradox, contradictory in many senses; whenever you have too much of one thing you have problems created by that. You always have extremes and therefore it is important to try and find the middle way, to balance the two extremes.”

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