Chapter Six

CONCLUSION

The present dissertation is on the Concept of Liberation as noted in the title of the Thesis (A Study of the Buddhist Concept of Liberation with Special Reference to the Majjhima Nikāya) itself. It was kept in mind while taking up the topic that there can be two projections of the Study - (1) A Study of the Concept of Liberation independently illustration from the whole Pāli Scriptures including all the texts of the Tipitaka of the both traditions namely The Simhalese and the Myanmarese - Thai, and secondly (2) The Study with the special reference to the Majjhima Nikāya alone as the Nikāya in under reference is extremely rich in references of the sort. Keeping in mind the limited period of research at the disposal of the present researcher. The second course was thought to be more pragmatic. Hence the present thesis with its all detail. The subject has been expounded in six chapters, namely (1) Chapter One: “A Brief Introduction to the Concept of Liberation in Different Philosophical and Religious Traditions,” (2) Chapter Two: “The Buddhist Concept of Liberation in the Pāli Canonical Scriptures,” (3) Chapter Three: “The Liberation in the Mūlapaṭṭhāna of the Majjhima Nikāya,” (4) Chapter Four: “The Liberation in the Majjhimapaṭṭhāna of the Majjhima Nikāya,” (5) Chapter Five: “The Liberation in the Upparipaṭṭhāna of the Majjhima Nikāya,” and (6) Chapter Six: Conclusion. Efforts have been made to summarize some main points as mentioned in the previous chapters. Thereafter its values in modern social perspectives have been discussed and finally attempts have been
made to show the Buddhist practices in daily life of the practicing Buddhists in some Buddhist countries.

1. The Liberation from the Cycle of Birth and Death

Basically, the Buddhist concept of liberation is the heart of the Buddhist Doctrines, which has been clearly demonstrated through the life of the Buddha and His teachings in the Buddhist Scriptures, particularly, in the Majjhima Nikāya. The highest stage of liberation in Buddhism has been described as being freed from the cycle of birth and death, the stopping of all forms of suffering, i.e. nibbāna or parinibbāna. This ideal is mostly shared by various Indian religious traditions such as Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, and some others. 560 On the other hand, it has been denied by the most prophetic religions such as Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Muslim and others, because they do not believe in the cycle of births and deaths. Liberation for them is the state of salvation of the soul by God’s grace after death.561

The Buddha usually described the state of liberation by saying that: “Destroyed is birth, brought to a close is the Brahma-faring, done is what was to be done, there is no more of being such or such;” 562 “Knowledge and vision arose in me: unshakable is freedom for me, this is the last birth, there is not now again becoming.” 563 Again, just after the attainment of liberation under the

560 Y. Masih, A Comparative Study of Religions, pp. 149-52.
561 Ibid., pp. 24-28.
563 Ibid., p. 211.
Bodhi Tree, the Buddha uttered his aspiration as depicted in the Dhammapada, verse nos. 152, 153 that:

Through many a birth in existence wandered I,
Seeking, but not finding, the builder of this house.
Sorrowful is repeated birth.
Oh householder,\(^64\) thou art seen.
Thou shalt build no house again
All thy rafters are broken.
Thy ridge-pole is shattered
Mind attained the Unconditioned.
Achieved is the end of craving.\(^65\)

The cycle of births and deaths is lively described and illustrated by the Buddhist doctrine of Dependent Origination or Conditioned Genesis (Paṭicca-samuppāda), one of the most fundamental teachings of the Buddha. It may be briefly known as the Law of Cause and Effect; or deeply seen through Three Signs of Impermanence, Suffering and Non-self; or logically as the Four Noble Truths; or with more details as the Twelve Links of the Bhava-cakka, etc. The Buddha taught that: “whoever sees the Conditioned Genesis sees the dhamma,

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whoever sees the dhamma sees the Conditioned Genesis.”\textsuperscript{566} On the other occasions, Lord Buddha taught: “If this is, that comes to be; from the arising of this that arises; if this is not, that does not come to be; from the stopping of this that is stopped.”\textsuperscript{567} Thus, this wonderful doctrine can explain the origin, the arising and cessation of all physical and mental phenomena.

According to Buddhism, all what we are today is the indispensable result of our deeds (kammās) of our former lives and that of the present one. And our future is dependent on what we are doing in the present plus the past deeds as well. This is the natural law of cause and effect in the world. The Buddha said that: “Deeds are one’s own, Brāhmaṇa youth, beings are heirs to deeds, deeds are matrix, deeds are kin, and deeds are arbiters. Deed divides beings, that is to say, by lowness and excellence.”\textsuperscript{568} As a rule, for Buddhism, one must pay for all his past debts (deeds) and stop borrowing new debts before he becomes freed. Liberation is likened by the Buddha as to be freed from one’s debts. Kamma is also known by an alternative term, i.e. cankers (āsava) or defilements (kilesa). Liberation can only be achieved when all such cankers and defilements are destroyed without remainders. In the Sabhasava Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya, the Buddha said that there are seven means for the destruction of all cankers: vision, control, use, endurance, elimination and mental development.\textsuperscript{569}

\textsuperscript{568} Ibid., vol.3, p. 249.
\textsuperscript{569} Ibid., vol.1, pp. 8-16.
The law of cause and effect as reflected in the Law of Dependent Origination (Paṭiccasamuppāda) is the unique doctrine of Buddhism, a discovery of the Buddha. No other India thinker has ever spoken, this law prior to the advent of the Buddha. It is simply became of this fact that this doctrine has become the priceless spiritual heritage of not only India, but of the whole humanity. In fact, it has been improved and enriched humanity social ethics and individual responsibility.

2. **Nibbāna (Sanskrit, Nirvāṇa) Liberation**

Nibbāna has been seen as an alternative name of the concept of liberation. On the negative side, it is defined as “the ultimate and absolute deliverance from all future rebirth, old age, disease and death, from all suffering and misery.” On the positive side it is known as the highest and blissful state that a Buddha or an Arahant gains. There are two aspects of nibbāna, namely (1) nibbāna with groups remaining, and (2) nibbāna without groups remaining. The former corresponds to the state of liberation of an Arahant; while the latter, at the death of an Arahant.

The Buddha said: “... neither grasps after the grasping of sense-pleasures, nor ... of views, nor ... of rule and custom, nor the theory of the self; he himself individually attains to nibbāna.”

The state of nibbāna is believed to go beyond the normal human reach; Buddha used to express its state to be likely the stopping of the living lamp i.e.

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with burning wick. Meanwhile, nobody can show where it has gone. The Buddha used to remain silent when there were questions to him concerning the Buddhahood, or nibbāna at the present and even after death. For the Buddha such questions are irrelevant to his dhamma and disciplines. Once the Buddha referred to a simile of a person who was shot by a poisonous arrow; instead of pull out of the arrow and cure on time, he refused treatment until he knew all information concerning to the murderer, the arrow, the bow, etc. The result would be that the person would die before knowing all that he enquired of.\textsuperscript{572} The Buddha proclaimed that what he knows is like the leafs of the tree in the forest, and what he teaches is like the leafs in his hand. He only teaches suffering and the way out of that suffering. Thus, metaphysical questions or untruthful conjectures or speculations are profitless.\textsuperscript{573}

3. The Heavenly Liberation

Some scholars have regarded Buddhism as an atheistic system of religious thoughts. They think that there is no place for God in the Buddhist doctrine.\textsuperscript{574} However, the Buddhists believe that there are many gods or deities whose positions and powers are higher than those of human beings. The Buddhists do not believe in God as the Creator of the world, who is supposed to control everything in the world and decide all living beings’ destination. Heaven in the prophetic religions is the reward of God for those who devote their lives for worshiping God and following His laws. Nevertheless, heavens

\textsuperscript{573} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 164.
\textsuperscript{574} Y. Masih, \textit{A Comparative Studies of Religions}, p. 218.
in Buddhism are the higher worlds reserved for those who live the good life. According to Buddhism, the state of heaven is more wonderful and excellent than the human life.\textsuperscript{575}

The Buddha is reported to have said: “... But these worthy beings who were possessed of good conduct in body, speech, and thought, not scoffing at the Ariyans, holding the right view, incurring deed consequent on a right view, at the breaking up of the body after dying have arisen in a good bourn, a heaven world.”\textsuperscript{576} On another occasion the Buddha said: “Because dhamma has been well taught by me thus, made manifest, opened up, made known, stripped of its swathing, all those who have enough faith in me, enough affection, are bourn for heaven.”\textsuperscript{577} In this context, some scholar are of the view that this idea is similar to the idea of faith in God in the prophetic religions; and this might have pave the way for the doctrine of the Pure Land in Mahāyana Buddhism later.

One of the most preferable Heavens that Lord Buddha frequently mentioned in his discourses is Brahma-world; and the path leading to that is described as the practice of the four Brahma-viharas,\textsuperscript{578} i.e. loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. These four practices were performed by the Buddha Himself in his former lives as depicted in his

\textsuperscript{575} I.B. Horner, \textit{The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings}, vol.2, pp. 184-85.


\textsuperscript{577} Ibid., vol.1, p. 182.

\textsuperscript{578} Ibid., vol.2, p. 378.
discourse no. 83 and taught his disciples in His discourses nos. 7, 21, 40, 50, etc. of the Majjhima Nikāya.\textsuperscript{579}

In the Later or Mahāyāna Buddhism, the role of Buddha is regarded as God who is omnipotent and omniscient; and Heaven is then considered as the final destination as the Pure-land or Western Paradise for all sentient beings. According to the Wu-liangshou ching, Buddha Amitabha, who had made forty eight vows before attaining Buddha-hood, has unlimited life, unlimited lifespan. He welcomes all who wish to be reborn in His Pure Land and thereby saves them. They need only have faith in Amitabha's primordial vows and recite his name. Even a bodhisattva with inferior faculties and without the strength to observe the precepts or meditate can quickly attain a stage of spiritual progress from which he will not backslide by relying upon Buddha Amitabha's vows.\textsuperscript{580}

In the prophetic religions, God is the only Creator who has omniscience and omnipotence, Buddha in Buddhism is not the only one but so many, and all of them have the same nature, the Buddhahood nature or Buddhahood. The Buddha is believed as the Enlightened One who liberates Himself from the cycle of birth and death and who helps others to be freed from their sufferings. In the prophetic religions, those who follow rules or regulations God issues

\textsuperscript{579} I.B. Horner, \textit{The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings}, vol.1, 48, 166, 338, 399; vol.2, pp. 16, 33-34, 95, 269.

through His prophets and pray for Him will be saved in the eternal Heaven, and those who do not believe in Him will be damned in the fire of Hell forever.

However, Amita is an ideal human being, a fictional character who was created by the Mahāyānists, as the symbolization of the Dharma or the Universal Buddhahood that they interested in. The Mahāyānists believe that the most important thing in Buddhism is not the ideas or concepts, i.e., the finished products produced by the Buddha, but His creative spirit itself. So, Amida, according to Dr. Nobuo Haneda, is neither a God, nor a historical person. In another sense, Amida symbolizes two things: (1) Sākyamuni Buddha, and (2) the Universal Buddhahood.  

I. The Path of Liberation

The path of liberation is the Fourth and the last Truth of the Four Noble Truths (Ariya-Saccas). The Four Noble Truths are the main contents of the First Sermon (Dhammacakkappavattanasutta) of the Buddha to the group of five monks (bhikkhus) at the Deer Park in Isipatana, Benares (Bārānasī), India. The path of liberation was presented by the Buddha himself as the Middle Path avoiding two extremes of self-mortification and self-indulgence, i.e. right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.  

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582 Narada, *The Buddha and His Teachings*, pp. 56-57.
It is the main subject of two famous Buddhist works rather than the two Buddhist Manuals of the later periods: “The Path of Freedom” (Vimuttimagga) and “The Path of Purification” (Visuddhimagga). Both these works are regarded the encyclopedias of Theravada Buddhism. The former is known as an eminent ancient Pāli work, an encyclopedia of Buddhist doctrines, composed by Venerable Arahanta Upatissa who lived in Sri Lanka in the first century C.E. The latter is one of the famous works on Buddhist Literature composed by Buddhaghosa early in the 5th century A.D. The path of liberation which is described by these two works with the same theme, viz. Morality (Silā), Concentration (Samādhi), and Wisdom (Paññā).

The path of liberation has been referred to, depicted and illustrated by the Buddha as the act of horse training or elephant training, viz. gradual training. A normal person who first enters into the Buddha’s dhamma is likened to be a wild untrained horse or elephant with his former habits of body, speech and mind. The Buddha taught the process of training for a new member in several steps as follow:

1. Follow moral habits (Silā)
2. Control the senses
3. Mindful in all activities
4. Remote lodging

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(5) Remove five hindrances
(6) Attain four grades of meditations
(7) Achieve three kinds of super-knowledge leading to liberation.\footnote{586}

The path of liberation is also lively illustrated with help of the simile of Relays of Chariots in the Discourse no. 24 (Rathavinītasutta) wherein the charioteer must pass seven relays before he reach the destination. Similarly, one who wants to attain liberation must pass seven steps of (1) purity of moral habit, (2) purity of mind, (3) purity of view, (4) purity over doubt, (5) purity of knowledge, (6) purity of insight into the course, and (7) purity arising from knowledge and insight.\footnote{587} The path of liberation is depicted by the Buddha as the searching for the pith of a tree passing five choices of morality, concentration, wisdom, liberation, and liberation of views; among these, liberation of views was regarded to be the best (the pith of the Brahma-faring).\footnote{588} Although the path of liberation is described in various ways, the Noble Eightfold Path grouped in three categories of morality, concentration, and wisdom is officially considered the most common path of the Buddhists.

a. Morality (Sīla):

According to the "Buddhist Dictionary," "Sīla means "morality" or "Virtue," a mode of mind and volition (cetanā) manifested in speech and

\footnote{587 Ibid., vol.1, pp. 188-94.}
\footnote{588 Ibid., pp. 238-45.}
It comprises three parts of right speech, right actions, and right livelihood in the Noble Eightfold Path. Moral habit is the basic foundation of all virtues, meditations, wisdom, and enlightenment. With the support of good moral habit one easily proceeds to meditation; with the support of meditation, purifying the body and mind from defilements of three poisons, and filling up the mind with thoughts of harmony, calm, good-will and other perfections, one leads to wisdom. It is wisdom that opens the way of full Enlightenment. There are two common kinds of Sīla, i.e. (1) avoiding or restraining, and (2) keeping or observing. Besides, there are two categories of Sīla: Sīla applied for householders and Sīla applied for monks and nuns. According to the Buddha, all merits and achievements are attained by observing morality (Sīla).

Householders or lay-Buddhist followers must take refuge in the Triple Gem of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, along with observing five precepts, namely (1) abstaining from onslaught on creatures, (2) abstaining from taking what has been given, (3) abstaining from wrong behaviour in regard to the sense-pleasures, (4) abstaining from lying, and (5) abstaining from occasions for sloth consequent upon (drinking) arrack, toddy and strong liquor and so on. Lay Buddhist followers may have important duties such as support their families, social working, and more importantly: paying respect and offering the Triple Gem.


591 Ibid., vol.3, p. 216.
As a matter of fact, most of the teachings of the Buddha aim at monks and nuns. Thus Sila reserved for monks and nuns are rather plentiful. According to the Vinayapitaka (Packet of Morality and Disciplines), for example, a monk or a nun must observe ten precepts (Samaṇa) to two hundred twenty three or two hundred fifty precepts (Bhikkhu) along with various small regulations and other duties. However, the Majjhima Nikāya does not mention the exact figures of two hundred twenty seven or two hundred fifty precepts. This may be a doubtful question whether the Patimokkha of the Vinayapiṭaka, a systematized collection appeared after the Majjhima Nikāya. In the Majjhima Nikāya, the Buddha usually taught ten precepts as a common theme for both monks and nuns, namely (1) abandoning and restraining from: the onslaught on creatures, (2) taking what is not given, (3) sexual misconduct, (4) lying, (5) slandering, (6) harsh, (7) frivolous speech; (8) craving, (9) hatred and (10) delusion. In addition, monks or nuns must follow some monastic regulations such as respecting elders, living in harmony with the Brahma-farers, performing recitals, presenting on the full-moon Observance days, etc. In general, among the seven steps of training, the first four steps (follow moral habit, control senses, remote lodging and mindful) belong to Sila.

The Buddha taught in the Discourses nos. 101, 112 “The Six-fold Cleansing” that:

A bandoning onslaught on creatures, one abstains from onslaught on creatures; abandoning the taking of what is not given, one

abstains from taking what is not given; abandoning from unchastity, one abstains from unchastity, abandoning lying speech..., abandoning slanderous speech..., abandoning harsh speech..., abandoning frivolous chatter...; abstaining from destruction to seed-growth or vegetable growth; eating one meal a day, abstaining from watching shows of dancing, singing, music; abstaining from using garlands, scents...; abstaining from using high or large beds; abstaining from accepting gold and silver, raw grain, raw meat, women and girls, slaves, goat and sheep, elephant, cows... field and sites... messages or going on such; abstaining from buying and selling, from cheating with measures, from fraud and deceit, from murdering, robbery...  

In the Noble Eightfold Path (Ariya Sacca), right speech, right actions and right livelihood belong to Sīla. Venerable Sāriputta, in the Discourse on the Analysis of the Truth (Saccavibhaṅgasutta), said that:

Refraining from lying speech, refraining from slanderous speech, refraining from harsh speech, refraining from gossip... is called right speech. Refraining from onslaught on creatures... taking what has been given... doing wrong among the sense pleasures... is called right action. And “getting rid of wrong mode of living... is right livelihood.”

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In the “Discourse Pertaining to the Great Forty” (Mahācattārīsakasutta), wrong mode of livelihood is defined as “trickery (kuhanā), cajolery (lapanā), insinuating (nemittakatā), dissembling (nippesikatā), and rapacity for gain upon gain.”

b. Concentration (Samādhi)

According to the Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrine, Samādhi is derived from the root “sam-ā-dhā,” literally means “the state of being firmly fixed,” the fixing of the mind on a single object. Thus it means “concentration,” or “one-pointedness of mind” (cittassa ekaggatā). Samādhi has been comprehended in the sense of right concentration (sammā-samādhi) as contrasted to wrong concentration (micchā-samādhi).

The Buddha said in the “Discourse Pertaining to the Great Forty” (Mahacattārīsakasutta) that whatever concentration accompanied by right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, and right mindfulness is called the right concentration. Right concentration is the concentration that comprises all states of mental concentration that are associated with wholesome consciousness. On the contrary, wrong concentration is the concentration that is associated with unwholesome consciousness.

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597 Horner, op. cit., p. 114.
598 Nyanatiloka, op. cit., p. 156.
In the Noble Eightfold Path, concentration (Samādhi) comprises the last two components (mindfulness and concentration), one of the most important practices of Buddhism. The Buddha became the Enlightened by practicing meditation; during the forty five years of spreading Buddhism, He strongly exhorted his disciples to practice meditation in his discourses; and finally, He passed away in the state of meditation.599

With regard to the role of mindfulness, the Buddha emphasized its importance in the Four Applications of Mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhānasutta) that: “This is the only way that leads to the attainment of purity, to the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, to the end of pain and grief, to the entering of the right path, and to the realization of Nibbāna.”600 The Four applications of mindfulness are (1) contemplation of the body, (2) contemplation of the feelings, (3) contemplation of the minds, and (4) contemplation of the mind’s objects as described in the Majjhima Nikāya.601 The first one begins with breathing (ānapānasati), then four postures (iriyāpatha), mindfulness of consciousness (sati-sampajañña), thirty parts of body (kāyagatāsati), four physical elements (dhātu-vatthāna), and cemetery meditation (sīvathika). The second one is the contemplation on agreeable and disagreeable feeling of body and mind; sensual super-sensual feeling, and indifferent feelings. The third one is the contemplation on any state of mind (cittānupassanā), namely whether greedy or not, hateful or not, deluded or not, etc. The fourth one is the

599 Narada, The Buddha and His Teachings, pp. 172-73.
contemplation on five hindrances (nīvaraṇa), five groups (khandha), twelve bases of all mental activities (āyatana), seven factors of Enlightenment (bojjhaṅga), and the Four Noble Truths (Ariya-Sacca).⁶⁰²

By contemplating on the four applications of the mindfulness, one can attain the four meditative absorptions of Fine-material Sphere (rūpa-jjhāna); however, it is sometimes added with the four absorptions of immaterial sphere (arūpa-jjhāna) as follows:

(1) Aloof from pleasures of the senses, aloof from unskilled states of mind, one enters on and abides in the first meditation, which is accompanied by initial thought and discursive thought, is born of aloofness and is rapturous and joyful.

(2) By allaying initial and discursive thought, one’s mind subjectively tranquillized and fixed on one point, one enters on and abides in the second meditation, which is devoid of initial and discursive thought, is born of concentration and is rapturous and joyful.

(3) By the fading out of rapture, one dwells with equanimity, attentive and clearly conscious, and he experiences in his body that joy of which the Ariyans say: ‘Joyful lives he who has equanimity and is mindful,’ and he enters on and abides in the third meditation.

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(4) By getting rid of joy, by getting rid of anguish, by the going down of his former pleasures and sorrows, one enters on and abides in the fourth meditation, which is neither anguish nor joy, and which is entirely purified by equanimity and mindfulness.603

(5) A monk, by passing quite beyond all perception of material shapes, by the going down of perception of sensory reactions, by not attending to perception of variety, thinking: ‘Ether is unending,’ entering on the plane of infinite ether, abides in it.

(6) A monk, by passing quite beyond the plane of infinite ether, thinking: ‘consciousness is unending,’ entering on the plane of infinite consciousness, abides in it.

(7) A monk, by passing quite beyond the plane of infinite consciousness, thinking: ‘there is not anything,’ entering on the plane of nothing, abides in it.

(8) A monk, by passing quite beyond the plane of nothing, entering on the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, abides in it.604

And finally, the ninth meditation is sometime added as the highest level of mental concentration that runs as follows:

And again, a monk, by passing quite beyond the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, enters on and abides in the


stopping of perception and feeling; and having seen by intuitive wisdom, his cankers are utterly destroyed.605

c. Wisdom (Paññā)

Paññā is defined as “Understanding, Knowledge, Wisdom, or Insight,” comprising the first two components of the Noble Eightfold Path, viz. Right View (Sammā-diṭṭhi) and Right Thought (Sammā-sankappa).606 The Buddha taught that “one who is endowed with moral habit, concentration, intuitive wisdom might attain profound knowledge here and now.”607 According to the Abhidhamma, “the seeing, by the mind, of the objects as they are - this is called wisdom. And again, the considering of advantage and non-advantage, and of the sublime, is called wisdom.”608

There are three kinds of wisdom, i.e. (1) Learning wisdom (sutamayāpaññā), (2) Thinking wisdom (cintā-mayāpaññā), and (3) Mental development wisdom (bhāvanā-mayapaññā).609 The learning-wisdom is acquired through the learning from others; the thinking-wisdom, through one’ own thinking; and mental development wisdom, through the practice of meditation. Thus, right view and right thought in the Noble eightfold path may probably belong to the first two kinds of wisdom, i.e. learning-wisdom and thinking-wisdom; and the wisdom acquired through meditation must be a separate one that the Buddha taught on another occasion in the Discourse no.

607 Horner, op. cit., p. 96.
609 Nyanatiloka, op. cit., p. 122.
65 “Discourse to Bhaddāli” (Bhaddālisutta), Right Understanding among the ten qualities.610

In the “Discourse on Perfect View” (Sammā-diṭṭhi), Venerable Sāriputta said that those who comprehend (1) the unskilled and unskilled root, and skilled and skilled root; (2) sustenance, its uprising, its stopping and the course; (3) the Four Noble Truths, and (4) the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination, come to be of Perfect Views.611 In other words, one who understands the ten evil deeds and their roots is of Right View; one who understands ten good deeds and their roots is of Right View. One who understands four kinds of nutriment, its uprising, its stopping and the course leading to the stopping of it, is of right view. One who understands anguish ... of Right View; and one who understands every link of the Twelve Links of the Conditioned Genesis ... is of Right View.

Right Thought (Sammā-sankappa), which is said to be based on Right View, is defined as thoughts that are freed from sensuous desires, ill-will, and cruelty.612

Wisdom has been known as the profound knowledge of all phenomena as they really are. According to Lord Buddha, human body is a collection of the five aggregates, which is impermanent, suffering and non-self. Thus, the Buddha used to teach that:

A disciple of mine in regard to what is material shape, past, future, present, subjective or objective, gross or subtle, low or excellent, distant or near, sees all material shape ... as it really is by means of perfect intuitive wisdom as: ‘This is not mine, this am I not, this is not myself’.  

According to Buddhism, “a Perfected One (Arahanta) is freed by perfect profound knowledge.” As a formula for gaining the enlightenment the Buddha taught in the Majjhima Nikāya that one, after observing moral habit, controlling his senses, comporting himself properly, living in a remote lodging, getting rid of five hindrances, abiding in four meditative absorptions, directs his mind to three kinds of super-knowledge. The first kind of super-knowledge is the knowledge and recollection of former habitations, the second, of the passing hence and the arising of beings; the third, of the destruction of cankers. However, these three kinds of knowledge are described in the Buddhist Dictionary as the last three of the six psychic powers.

II. The Buddhist Concept of Liberation and Social Development

1. Buddhism and its contribution for the improvement of human society

Buddhism is one of the oldest religions of the world, which has undergone the ups and downs of the history and remains even them still now. Buddhism used to be lively colourful and vibrating in India during a long time, especially, under the patronage of King Asoka, Kaniska, Hara Vardhava and

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Pāla-s. However, Buddhism declined in India afterwards, due to various faction including split in Buddhist Order, foreign invasion of Turks, Arabs and Afghans etc., particularly after the 12th century A.D. The causes for this decline have been discussed by several scholars; and it has been a controversy. Buddhism appeals to human beings to return good for evil, truth for lie, harmony for schism, and particularly, love for enmity. The Buddhist spirit of liberation breaks the barriers of dogmatism and encourages creativity for improving human society.

2. Buddhist Liberation and Democracy

Buddhist spirit of liberation may be considered a strong aspiration for social development in modern world. The Buddhist Brotherhood Community (Saṅgha) has been seen as one of the earliest examples of democratic society where different ideas were respected and accommodated. According to the Buddhist tradition, every month on the full-moon day (Observance Day) all members of the Buddhist Order gather together at one place for a special ceremony where everyone can express one’s thought or perform penitence in front of the congregation. This tradition is still applied in many Buddhist community; and it is utilized by modern democratic countries through conferences at the national assemblies or parliaments.

3. Buddhist Liberation and Human Right

For Buddhism every attachment becomes obstacles for the process of liberation. The Buddha taught in the “Kālāmasutta” that one should not be led

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616 L.M. Joshi, A Historical Survey of Buddhism, pp. 21-23.
by customs, traditions, holy books, rumors, etc; even suttas ascribed to the Buddha or any other Master can be reviewed under the right understanding. He said that, if any dhamma brings about self-tormenting, tormenting others, tormenting both; one should abandon it; on the contrary, if this dhamma brings about happiness for oneself and others; one should follow it. This teaching is a considerable progression in the history of human thought. The freedom of thought and freedom of speech are human rights that were recognized by the United Nation as one of priceless heritages for human beings. This spirit of liberation was taught by the Buddha more than twenty five centuries ago.

Although Buddhism declined in its homeland, it spread quickly almost in all countries of the world. Buddhism easily penetrates into the other local customs and traditions of the countries. For example, Japanese Buddhism, Tibet Buddhism, Vietnamese Buddhism, Sri Lankan Buddhism, etc. are rather different due to local absorption. It is the Buddhist spirit of liberation that makes Buddhism more and more diversified to satisfy human beings with different dispositions. However, this spirit also makes Buddhism deeply changed from its inherent nature; and, in some cases, it has even disowned its own origin.