CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION
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Buddhism is what the Buddha taught and practiced. It is the eternal truth, the Dhamma, discovered by him.

For some, Buddhism is a religion and others regard it as a philosophy. But careful examination of earliest of the early recorded reveal us that it deals with spiritual, philosophical, social and individual growth and enlightenment. At the same time it should be understood that Buddhism is not a mysterious mysticism. Buddhism is not theocentric which centered around the idea of a creator God, but rather stresses it as being centered around the interest of man and purification of the mind of man. It is not based on a divine revelation but on human discovery. It is not dependent on blind faith and worship but on the understanding of experience through the use of human intelligence.

Buddhism does not regard man as sinner. It regards man as capable of rising above all human weaknesses and cultivating a pure, transparent and radiant mind through his own efforts.

The Buddha is not a saviour but a guide, and the destiny of man is not controlled by the whims of creator, but by the kind of life he leads, his thoughts, speech and actions in accordance with the law of cause and effect or causal theory.
The Buddha taught about rebirth but not in the reincarnation or the transmigration of permanent souls. The life after death is only a continuation of the present process of existence. The Buddha realized that our existence does not begin with the human life nor ends with the life, but he beheld that we have been existing since beginningless time in countless number of various existences according to our accumulated kamma and we will continue to do so until the whole process is understood. Buddhism is, therefore, a gradual evolution of human mind, where man transcends weaknesses and attains perfection of mind and finally, the Nibbana.

This research has attempted to study the evolutionary aspect of Buddhism emphasizing Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism, their origins and differences in gross and subtle manners.

We know, all problems of life boil down to one problem called Dukkha or suffering. Suffering is not just poverty, starvation and sickness but it is more related to mental suffering in the form of confusion, anxiety, depression, grief, worry, restlessness etc. Normally these states of mind are considered to be the fault of circumstances. This is why these are seen commonly as economic and social problems.

Yet the Buddha points out that they are caused by our mental attitudes and reactions to environment, not by the object or situations themselves.
So the suffering in Buddhism is understood to be the clash between ourselves and the world around us. In other words, it is the clash between our desire and reality.

This means that suffering is caused by unrealistic desires. May it be Theravada or Mahayana, from Buddhist point of view, the solution of our problems of life is the eradication of unrealistic desires which clash with reality.

This study indicated further that Nibbana is not an escape into a trance state of mystical bliss, but rather perfect sanity which goes beyond the so-called normality and, therefore, Nibbana is a state of being in which the mind is purified of all clinging, craving, aversion, ego-conceit and ignorance here and now, not a trance or life after death.

Rebirth should not be misunderstood as transmigration of soul from body to body. It is merely the breaking up of five aggregates. The five aggregates can again come together to continue as the chain of sensory experiences, going through once again the round of the birth, sickness suffering, old age and death ad-infinitem.

For Noble Eightfold Path, it is the full understanding, the abandoning of and the wearing out and cessation of these grasping, bodily ties, habitual tendencies sense desires, hatred, hindrances etc. and that the Noble Eightfold Path must be practiced, cultivated and made use of to destroy sufferings completely.
Reflections on the following aspects could be concluded as: Four

Noble Truths: the suffering, the origin of suffering, the extinction of suffering, and the Path leading to the extinction of suffering.

The first Noble Truth deals with all the problems of life. This shows that all conditioned things are unsatisfactory. This demands right attitude, knowledge and wisdom.

The second Noble Truth speaks about the origin of sufferings. It includes law of cause and effect. From this truth we get to know that all sufferings have their origins in craving rooted in ignorance. This second noble truth deals with casualty (cause and effect).

Cause and effect are the dependent origination needs, to be summed up as: In nature nothing remains constant, everything is in a perpetual state of transformation, motion and change. The general characteristic of the world can be expressed in terms of a principle which summarizes as the enormous domain of different kinds of experiences which have never been contradicted in any observation or experiment, scientific or otherwise, namely, everything comes from other things and gives rise to other things.

We know, that all the complexity of changes and transformation there are relationships that remain effectively constant.

We interpret this as significant. The necessary relationship between objects, events and conditions, in time and space are the causal laws. It should not be forgotten that causal laws are absolute. An important way of
obtaining evidence in favour of assumption that a given set of events or
conditions comes necessarily from another to show wide range of changes in
one or more of the causes occurring under conditions in which other factors are
held constant always producing corresponding changes in the effects.

The causal laws, however, explain the dependent origination. Explains the impermanence and establishes that the phenomenal world is
originated and decayed under the inexorable law of cause and effect. That is to
say that living being or any worldly object is in a state of continuous flux. And it is
by realization of this fact we get rid of all worldly attachments, mind becomes
completely emancipated and it is no more subject to rebirth. It then reaches the
state of Nibbana, which is uncaused and unconditioned. This study further
examined the doctrines and the differences of Theravada and Mahayana
indicating that in Theravada there is but one Bodhisattava, the formost birth of
Sakyamuni, but in Mahayana there are infinite number of Bodhisattavas.
Doctrinally, in Theravada, not to do evil is more emphasised, whereas in
Mahayana to do good is emphasised more. For Theravada, the *Four Noble
Truths*, and *Eightfold Path* are important to be followed, while Mahayana, the
Paramitas are of much importance. Nibbana in Theravada is tranquil state but in
Mahayana Nibbana is Nibbana itself. However, it is mainly a difference of
outlook.
The third Noble Truth tells that when ignorance is eradicated love and wisdom arise and Nibbana, the state of perfect peace, perfect bliss or absence of defilements and freedom from all suffering, is experienced.

The fourth Noble Truth defines the Buddhist way of life. It is the teaching and practice of Buddhism. This path is also known as Eightfold Path which contain: Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. The path is nothing but the three ways of training: moral, mental and wisdom training. This way is therefore the method of self training, self effort and assures Buddhahood to all beings.

**Role of Theravada**: Theravada came into being when primitive Buddhism got involved in the broader Indian world. It developed and changed through its interactions with the environment. The Theravada concerned with the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma* and the *Sangha*, with its basic teachings went to every level of society "Wander forth, disciples, for the welfare and happiness of human kind and deliver the message of the Dhamma", (Piyadassi, 1991) proclaimed the Buddha, and considered as the main policy of Theravada's mission.

Sila, Samadhi and Panna have always been the basic principles which are propagated by Theravadins everywhere.

Here, interaction of religions with environment for human existence, and their adoption to changing conditions and the role of Theravada at present have been thoroughly investigated indicating the Dhamma the only hope that
can deliver the peace-breathing message for the happiness and welfare of human kind and all beings.

**Role of Mahayana**: Mahayana today presents an infinite variety of forms. It is rich in images and symbols. It differs superficially in its doctrine from that of Theravada. However, Mahayana is a practice of realization. It operates at two levels, one devotional concerned with the salvation of all beings and second as a philosophy of highest calibre. Mahayana assures Buddhahood to all beings. It says that everybody possesses the seed of enlightenment. Not only that, it places great emphasis on social emotions also. Here friendliness and compassion are cardinal values of prime importance. Mahayana removes the apparent conflict between wisdom and social emotions. The Bodhisattava ideal of Mahayana is beyond doubt a wonderful gift to the Buddhist world.

Role of Mahayana with its compassion, thought of enlightenment and realization encompasses, the whole universe and assures the enlightenment for all living beings.

If Buddhism is understood and practiced by mankind this earth would become a place of harmony and happiness. Happiness not through power, but through wantlessness and wisdom.

**Status of Theravada and Mahayana in Thailand**: It is the historical fact that there is a close relation between Buddhism and Thailand. Archaeological findings proved that the history of Thailand is also the history of Buddhism and from the findings at Nakon Pathom such as Dhamma cakra, the Buddha
footprints and seals and inscriptions of Pali language, it is clear that the first form of Buddhism introduced into Thailand was Theravada, and was brought by *Sona* and *Uttara* in the third century B.C. Theravada Buddhism, even today, is the state religion of Thailand. According to the Thai Constitution a King has to be a Buddhist. This is a unique feature of Thailand.

Not only that, rulers of Thailand have encouraged and supported Buddhism by building and maintaining monasteries. Buddhist holidays are recognised by the Government as National Holidays.

We see the influence of Theravada in all aspects of the Thai life and culture. Buddhist education in Thailand responds to the need of contemporary world, responds to the social, religious, economical and technological needs.

The monk's educational activities are based on the Buddha's advice to the monks to go out into the world and teach the Dhamma to the world, for the welfare and happiness of society.

The developmental aspect of Mahayana in Thailand speaks of the mistaken views of Theravada and Mahayana taken by western scholars, and it shows that ultimate unity of all forms of Buddhism remains intact.

The author by presenting the Theravada and Mahayana status a case study in Thailand, produced a unique example of love and wisdom functioning through Theravada and Mahayana for mutual understanding and mutual harmony of Thai society.
The critical study here shows, without any interaction, that Theravada and Mahayana go hand in hand transforming the Thai society. Concurrent with this phenomena is the increase of interest in Buddhist teachings and practices, especially, meditation.

To understand Buddhism we, therefore, have to understand ourselves. What has to be done is not to examine the pages of old worn out texts, though this may be useful at the outset to find out where we have to go, nor we have to make long excursion into outer space or make complex mathematical calculations. The Buddhas's teachings are transparent and simple. We have to understand mind. When the mind is understood we have understood everything.

Thus, the world, the beginning of the world, the end of the world, and the path leading to the end of the world is right here in this small fathom long body with its perception and consciousness.