CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

I.1. General Introduction to the topic and its justification

The unique Buddhist doctrines such as the Dependent Origination (Paticca-samuppāda), Non-soulness (Anatta), Universal Flux (Anicca), the Problem of Liberation from the Body of Dukkha-s (Nibbāna), the Circle of Births and Deaths (Samsāra), the Concept of Buddhahood (Buddhatā), the Nature of Dharrnatā and so on find point to point explanation in the Pañca Nikāya-s which opens the door of the sky-like immense vision of the existence (Bhava) and nature (Sabhāva) of the man and the universe. It may appear to be paradoxical to note that the moment the man started to know about himself and the universe, the moment he started drifting away from both of them. The people, therefore, quite often put the questions such as whether the universe is eternal or non-eternal; whether the universe is finite or infinite; whether the soul is identical with the body or non-identical/different from the body. In fact, the man does not know that the reality of all things does not lies in such questions nor in the philosophical speculations which, in essence, are only the products of reasoning and language built on the abstract concepts of consciousness. In other words, the
reality of the *dharmma*-s lies in the Dependent Origination and No-self and in reality the queries regarding the existence (*Bhava*) and non-existence (*Abhava*) are the embodiments of the thought of self (*Atmana*).

In the Discourse to Vacchagotta on Fire (*Aggivacchagotta Sutta*), the Buddha taught “Vaccha, to think that the world is eternal or not eternal? This is going to a (speculative) view, holding a view, the wilds of views; the wriggling of views, the scuffling of views, the fetter of views; it is accompanied by anguish, distress, misery, fever; it does not conduce to turning away from, nor to dispassion, stopping, calming, super-knowledge, awakening, nor to *Nibbana.*”¹

The Buddha, with his transcendent insight into the true nature of phenomena, attained Himself the Supreme and Perfect Enlightenment and realized the Truth of Dependent Origination. He declared that the existence of the man and the world is only a chain of causes and conditions, which continually arise and cease. From His realization and declaration, one may surely believe that the insight attained by the Buddha beneath the *Bodhi*-Tree at Gaya is purely a spiritual attainment, and that it has nothing to do with any kind of normal conceptual construction of human thought. The

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¹ *The Aggivacchagotta Sutta* (Majjhima*Nikāya* II, Sutta No.72) preached at Jetavana to the wanderer Vacchagotta on the danger and futility of theorizing about the world, life, etc.
original Pāli Canon, which is regarded as the only available complete collection of Lord Buddha’s teachings, speaks time and again that all Dhamma-s are the Paticca-samuppanna (evolved by reason of the law of causation). It mentions the truth that all phenomena arise depending upon certain conditions. In other words ‘this being so, that is; this not being so, that is not’ (imasmim sati, idam hoti; imasmim asati, idam na hoti). This is the great Buddhist doctrine of Paticca-samuppada. What is the Law of Dependent Origination? (Or what is the Twelve Causes?) The Buddha describes it as under:

“Conditioned by ignorance, activities come to pass; conditioned by activities, consciousness comes to pass; conditioned by consciousness, mind and form come to pass; conditioned by mind and form, the six senses come to pass; conditioned by six senses, touch comes to pass; conditioned by touch, feeling comes to pass; conditioned by feeling, craving comes to pass; conditioned by craving, grasping comes to pass; conditioned by grasping, becoming comes to pass; conditioned by becoming, birth comes to pass; conditioned by birth, old age and death, grief, lamentation, suffering, sorrow, despair come to
pass. Such is the uprising of this entire mass of ill. This, brethren, is called ‘Causal happening’.

“But from utter fading away and ceasing of ignorance [comes] ceasing of activities; from ceasing of activities [comes] ceasing of consciousness; from ceasing of birth [comes] ceasing of old age and death… despair. Such is the ceasing of this entire of ill”.

It is from the above saying of the Buddha one clearly understands that the aim of Buddha’s teachings is neither to search for the first cause of genesis nor to the final end of man and universe, but to completely realize the nature of man and phenomenal world, which is only a combination of suffering (dukkha), impermanence (anicca), and no-self (anatta).

Thus, man (Manussa) and world (Loka), or mind-form (Nāma-Rūpa) and three realms of existence (Tidhātu) are only the running of ignorance (Avijjā), craving (Tanhā), and grasping (Upādāna), which are the causes leading to the cycle of births and deaths (Samsāra) of all living beings. Thus, during the forty five years in preaching the Dhamma, the matter that the Buddha often repeats many times in His discourses is the truth of suffering,

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2 S. Vol.II. PP. 26-29.
the truth of cause of suffering, the truth of cessation of suffering, and the truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering. However, the way leading to the cessation of suffering does not lie outside the insight into the true nature of phenomena. From that, comprehending the existence of man and universe is only the combination of two main components, viz. the physical and the mental. Thus, the human, according to the theory of Dependent Origination, relates to and reflects on the world. In other words, man and the universe do exist together, and cannot be separated from each other. Hence, the physical and mental components constituting man are also the components making up the world. This truth has been illustrated and conclusively proved by the Buddha in His discourses named the *Mahāpunnama-sutta*, and the *Dhātuvibhanga-sutta*.³

Thus, the essence of the Buddha’s teachings on this aspect lies in the fact that the individual has to turn back to himself in order to recognize who he is, where he is, and what he is doing. He is supposed to look truly at this universe as what it is and to look truly at this body as what it is. Thus, peace and liberation are supposed to be at his doorstep. It is the special outlook on life and the world view of Buddhism, established on the basis of the doctrines of Dependent Origination, No-Self through the specific analysis of

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³ M. III, Sutta-s No. 109 & 140.
great elements (mahābhūtā-s), aggregates (Khandhā-s), spheres (āyatanā-s), and realms (dhātū-s).

As stated above, the works done so far on the Buddhist concept of man and universe have not been successful in dealing with each and every aspects of the concept, the present attempt, therefore, would be made to discuss it on the basis of the Pañca Nikāya-s which will try to include all the necessary aspects of the concept. An attempt would also be made to include the missing aspects of previous studies in order to prepare a comprehensive treatise on the subject. The above main reasons has urged the writer to choose a research topic entitled “The Concept of Man and Universe in the Pañca–Nikāya: A Study” in order to do the Ph. D. thesis for him, which will analyze and express the theme in the fittest way that a modern reader requires to know and comprehend. It is hoped that this work will help the reader solace to him from the din and turmoil of the contemporary material world to which he is subjected to in the most brutal way.

I.2. The scope and methods of research on the topic

Through this study the writer proposes to do an analytical study of the Buddhist teachings related to the existence of man and universe as
depicted in the Pañca-Nikāya of the Suta Pitaka of the Pāli scripture. It is hoped that the doctrine of Dependent Origination (Paticca-samuppāda), No-Self (Anatta) and Five Aggregates (Pañcakkhandha) on which the early Buddhist Notion of existence has been formulated will be analyzed threadbare. Besides, in order to have a clear idea regarding the life and universe in Buddhism other classical as well as modern literatures will also be utilized during the course of the study.

To study the work systematically, the researcher will proceed with several main points as follows:

1. To present a brief historical background of evolution of the Concept of Man and Universe in the Buddhist literatures

2. To discuss elaborately the Buddhist Notion of Existence (The four great elements, the five Aggregates, different realms of existence etc.)

3. To analyze the Buddhist Exposition of Man and Universe as depicted in the Pañca-Nikāya.

4. To present a comparative study of the Buddhist Concept of Man and Universe as depicted in the Pañca-Nikāya and Modern Science.

5. Finally an attempt would be made to discuss the relevance and significance of Buddhist education to the questions of existence in
present day.

With the specific and important Buddhist teaching as enshrined in the Buddhist Scriptures and along with the latest researches in the fields of Modern Science, the writer hopes that the study in question would be a humble and interesting contribution to the extent to introduce a consistent and right-view towards the teachings of Buddhism as well as an exact view to the existence of man and universe.

While doing the study on the topic several methods of Social Science research such as analytical method, historical method, qualitative method, critical method would be utilized. The study would be fully documented from the original sources as the humble researcher proposes to derive his ideas from the Buddhist Scripture and other related sources.

I.3. The Concept of Man and Universe in the Buddhist Literatures

According to the teachings of the Buddha, life is comparable to a river. It is a progressive moment, a successive series of different moments, joining together to give the impression of one continuous flow. It moves from cause to cause, effect to effect, one point to another, one state of existence to another, giving an outward impression that it is one continuous and unified movement, where as in reality it is not. The river of yesterday is
not the same as the river of today. The river of this moment is not going to be the same as the river of the next moment. So does life. It changes continuously, becomes something or the other from moment to moment.

Take for example the life of an individual. It is a fallacy to believe that a person would remain the same person during his entire life time. He changes every moment. He actually lives and dies but for a moment, or lives and dies moment by moment, as each moment leads to the next. A person is what he is in the context of the time in which he exists. It is an illusion to believe that the person you have seen just now is the same as the person you are just now seeing or the person whom you are seeing now will be the same as the person you will see after a few moments.

Even from a scientific point of view this is true. We know cell divisions take place in each living being continuously. Old cells in our bodies die and yield place continuously to the new ones that are forming. Like the waves in a sea, every moment, many thoughts arise and die in each individual. Psychologically and physically he is never the same all the time. Technically speaking, no individual is ever composed of the same amount of energy, mental stuff and cellular material all the time. He is subject to change and the change is a continuous movement.
Impermanence and change are thus the undeniable truths of our existence. What is real is the existing moment, the present that is a product of the past, or a result of the previous causes and actions. Because of ignorance, an ordinary mind conceives them all to be part of one continuous reality. But in truth they are not.

The various stages in the life of a man, the childhood, the adulthood, the old age are not the same at any given time. The child is not the same when he grows up and becomes a young man, nor when the latter turns into an old man. The seed is not the tree, though it produces the tree, and the fruit is also not the tree, though it is produced by the tree.

When we understand the truth there could never have been a beginning an origin out of nothingness of the universe or the life process. It is true that the universe as we know it evolved out of the dispersed matter of previous universe, and when it passes away it remains in the form of active forces will in time give rise to another universe in exactly the same way. The process is cyclic and continuous. This is why it is said in Buddhist-texts the origin of Phenomena is not discoverable and the beginning of beings obstructed by ignorance and enslave by craving is not to be found. The same one universe gives rise to another through the residual energy which is
continuously renewing itself that is through the principal of the indestructibility of matter. So the life of a being gives rise to another being which is not the same in identity and without involving an unchanging permanent self that which links them is called in Buddhism "Kamma" or volitioned activity; the continuation of the causal process is called "Samsara" or the cycles of rebirths: the actuality of rebirth and existence without any unchanging principal of identity or self is called "anatta", from the cradle to the grave man's personality changes, Infant, child, young person, old then the death. All link, same but not the same in actual sense, but accumulated tendencies or habit formations continue with the new life and continue, that is why the Buddha explains that the Samsara is long and hazardous. All existences are different; but at the same time, they all share unity, because all are related to each other.

The living beings brought about by the comic forces in specific worlds also innumerable. The birth, existence destruction and disappearance of the various worlds and the living beings that are contained therein do not come from an original cause or an original and independently existing prime mover. According to the Buddha, there is nothing that can stand independently. That is sui-generis. In other words, the universe does not have a prime cause. Furthermore, this universe is believed to arise and fall in
accordance with causes and conditions in a rhythmic process that takes billions of years to go through just one cycle. No one created this universe; the universe is the existence with no beginning and no end, with infinite space time. "The God who created the world." -- Buddhists have a problem with this because we view the world as part of a larger cosmos that is at least as big as that taught by modern science, and in addition we believe that this universe includes realms that transcend the physical universe. The Buddha taught that we should not concern ourselves with speculations concerning the ultimate beginning or end of this process, but rather we should focus on taking responsibility for our lives and strive to extinguish suffering by living a noble life characterized by such qualities as loving-kindness, compassion, joy, peace, generosity, virtue, and patience to name a few. In the Culamalunkya Sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya opens with Malunkyaputta sitting alone in meditation, distracted from his practice by philosophical questions. It occurs to him that the Buddha has never declared the answers to these questions concerning the nature of the universe, the soul, and the existence of the Tathagata after death. Bothered by the Buddha's silence on these issues, he visits him that evening and threatens him with an ultimatum. If the Blessed One declares the answers, he'll lead the holy life under him. If not, he'll leave the order and return to his former life.
In response, the Buddha calmly asks, 'Did I ever tell you to lead the holy life under me by promising answers to these questions?'

'No, venerable sir' Malunkyaputta replies.

'Did you ever tell me that you would lead the holy life under me if I answered these questions?'

'No, venerable sir,' Malunkyaputta replies again. 4

The Buddha then addresses why he is silent in response to metaphysical questions by telling a short parable about a man wounded by a poisonous arrow. A surgeon is sent to treat him, and the man refuses to let him pull out the arrow until he knows which caste his assailant belongs to, his name, his clan, how tall he is, what color skin he has, which town he lives in, what kind of bow it was, what material it's made of, what type of shaft it had, what kind of feathers it had, and what kind of arrow it was. This is clearly ridiculous. Not only will the wounded man never know the answers to these questions, but he'll end up dying in the meantime. Similarly, if anyone decides not to lead the holy life under the Buddha until he answers these speculative questions, the answers will still remain undeclared and the person is still going to die. The Buddhist approach to all questions, then, should be primarily utilitarian. The adoption of a metaphysical view does

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absolutely nothing to alleviate suffering; there will still be birth, aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair. However, similar to the surgeon in the parable, the Buddha's function is therapeutic. His teachings are practical, not philosophical; he has "prescribed" the method that leads to the elimination of suffering.

The Buddha concludes the discourse by telling Malunkyaputta to remember those things that has left undeclared and those things that he has declared. He has not declared a position on questions concerning the nature of the universe, the soul, or the existence of the Tathagata after death. This does not simply mean that he doesn't know the answers, though. Rather, the answers are completely irrelevant to his teachings. In a radical departure from most world religions, he claims that metaphysical speculation does not belong to the fundamentals of the holy life.

So, the priority should be on resolving our actual human condition and not speculating on the beginning or end of the universe. So from this perspective, whether God created the universe or not, we are still faced with suffering and its causes and we must do something about it through learning what constitutes a noble life and then finding a way to live such a life. Aside from the priority of dealing with actual issues versus cosmological speculation, Buddhism also teaches that all things arise and cease depending
on causes and conditions. When we say that everything is "empty," we do not mean that things do not exist. What we mean is that things are always elements in a process of change and interdependence. When we learn to see things as processes and not as isolated finite objects then we will see that to talk of something being "created" or "destroyed" is only true conventionally. The network of causes and conditions that bring any "thing" into existence is actually a never-ending process with no boundaries. So in this sense, Buddhism never speaks of "creation" or "destruction," "birth" or "death," "appearance" or "disappearance," because that way of talking about things misses the infinite open-endedness and exclusivity of the process which is the reality behind the "things" that we perceive and try to grasp. This holds true for chairs, people, planets, or universes. This is the other reason why Buddhism does not speak of a creation or a Creator, because the reality of life, the universe, and everything defies such concepts.

There is also the inherent contradiction in insisting that there must be a God who caused the universe because everything must have a cause, but then insisting that God is an exception to the rule that everything must have a cause. Either one must insist that everything has a cause, including God, or one must admit that things do not always need causes and therefore you can not insist that the world or the universe must have a cause. This
logical dilemma is another reason why Buddhism does not speak of a creation or a Creator. In Buddhism, there is no concept of a God that created the universe; God as the creator and ruler of the universe does not exist; time and everything in the universe are not creations of God; there is no beginning and no end - no creation and no final judgement. Since time and things are inseparable, time has no substance and is empty because all things in the universe are impermanent so have no substance. For Buddhist acknowledges neither the existence of permanently existing self nor of a creator and ruler of the universe. This is a logical outcome of its fundamental philosophical conception. As a doctrine of becoming and uninterrupted flux it cannot accept the idea of unchangeable substance; just as, according to Buddhism, there is no matter which in itself is eternal though it may change its forms over and over again, so there cannot be an individual self of everlasting life which takes up a new material clothing in the course of its reincarnations. And just as there is no everlasting personality so there can be no personal god, who remains as an immovable pole in the midst of changing phenomena. The only permanent force that Buddhism believes in is the law that rules the universe and, from elements of existence forms lumps of transitory character which dissolve again and again to be replaced by others. The Buddha did not say anything against the
existence of God. But this is clearly wrong. For in the Buddha’s dialogues reported in the Pali canon there are several passages in which he criticizes in a most outspoken way the opinion that the world may have been created by God or may be governed by him. So he said according to Anguttara Nikaya ⁵: “People who think that the will of God (issara – nimmana) allots to men happiness and misery, must think that men become murderers, thieves etc. by the will of God.”. In the Brahmajala Sutta⁶ Buddha propounds even a theory as to how the wrong belief in a creator has arisen. In this world view, there is no place for a Creator God, nothing is believed to be predetermined and fixed, no external forces such as fate, time and nature is considered supreme. According to the Buddha's world view, while nothing is predetermined, nothing is undetermined also and nothing happens without a cause.

By examining the nature, the Buddha came to realize that everything is causally connected, causally related to each other. This is not the Buddha's view. This is what He saw in nature. This is what He

⁵ A.Vol. I, P. 74
⁶ D. vol. I, p. 17
discovered. That is why He very frankly declared in the samyuttani-kaya that whether there are Buddhas or not, this causal relation will operate\footnote{S. Vol. I, P.136}.

So the main feature of the Buddha's world view is that everything operates and functions on the basis of this causal law. Dependant on certain causes and conditions, arise certain specific effects. This law is known as the law of dependant origination paticca-sam-ppada. When it is shown that everything happens on the basis of this causal law, ie, on the law of cause and effect, then it becomes very clear that there is no place for 'God' in such a world view.

The rejection of the belief in the 'all powerful, all present and omniscient Creator God' was definitely not only a bold step, but also quite a revolutionary view. While it dethroned God, it made man a free and independent being. The man was no more considered a slave, a puppet or a tool of any external power. Man came to be considered as his own master and this is very clearly stated in the Dhammapada \footnote{Dhp. Vs 160}.

Thus it is seen that the Brahmanic God-Centered (Theo-centric) world view was rejected and instead, the Buddha presented the man-centered

\footnote{S. Vol. I, P.136} \footnote{Dhp. Vs 160}
(Anthropo-centric) world view. Man was made responsible for himself, for his purity and impurity, for his bondage as well as for his emancipation.

In the Dhammapada says, "By oneself indeed is evil done, by oneself is one defiled. By oneself is evil left undone. By oneself indeed is one purified. Purity and impurity depend on oneself. No one purifies another".  

According to this view, what the individual or his world, is depend on what the individual does through his verbal, physical and mental actions. You are nothing other than a reflection of your actions. This fact is very much emphasized. Your world is nothing other than what you yourself create according to your likes and dislikes. In this world view, the individual is considered a free and independent being possessing initiative, effort, manliness, ability, strength and above all, having freedom of thought, free will to think freely and to select freely whatever path of action one wishes to follow.

In this Buddhist world view, the man has a vital role to play in moulding his own self as well as shaping the world he lives in. This world view clearly shows how the individual and the society in which he lives

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9 Dhp. Vs. 165
mutually influences each other, both for their mutual well being as well as for their ill being. While other world views attributed the creation of different social institutions to some external power, the Buddhist world view very clearly showed that all social institutions are man-made. The Agganna Sutta of the Dighanikaya shows how the individual and the environment, (that is the outside world) mutually influence each other bringing about many changes in both\textsuperscript{10}. There is no god or any external agency involved in this process. Man is the creator of his own world, the master of his own life, the controller of his own fate and de tiny under the causal law of action (kamma); man's condition his station in life, his sorrow and happiness and so on-depending upon his own deeds under his own responsibility. The merit or demerits of actions performed by man accumulate, and, in the course of time, acquire a vital potency. In this connection Buddhism encourages the earnest pursuit of a course of go action for the betterment of moral existence of mankind and strengthens human potentiality to succeed in striving after human welfare and well-being.

Even the evolution of the world is explained according to the law of cause and effect, thus totally refuting the divine creation view. All social institutions, for example marriage, family life, private property, state and

\textsuperscript{10} D. Vol 3, PP 85-87
caste, are all causally produced; they are the results of certain causes and conditions. Even crime and punishment in society arise due to causes and conditions, and not due to God. If God created the world, where did God come from? Would be, of course God was created as well. In fact, in a Buddhist worldview there are an infinite number of causes and conditions that create every instant, every world, every being, including Gods. Infinite causes creating more causes, stretching to infinity with no origin or end. Buddhism allows for an infinite number of different universes to exist, some before ours, some after, some in parallel but with completely different natural and supernatural laws. Ours is not the best, or the worst. There is no ‘design’ of our world. Because our world is imperfect even if there was a designer, he/she/it would be imperfect—and to a Buddhist, irrelevant. There is no need to know why we are here, other than pure scientific curiosity. This is why Buddhism is not threatened by discoveries that contradict myths about the creation of universes or living beings, or discoveries about the shape, position, and relative movement of the Earth in the universe. None of these things was a key to understand the Buddha’s message, since there is no need to worship the forces or creatures which created our imperfect world. The Universe (and all that is in it) is ordered by impartial, unchanging laws. These laws have been operating throughout all time into the infinite past and
will continue to operate into the infinite future. There never was a first beginning, and there never will be a final end. The Buddha further said that there are at least a billion other world-sun systems like our own, and as these grow old and die out new solar systems evolve and come into being. Yet unlike the laws of physics and chemistry, the course of events is not a blind matter of chance. Buddhism regards the Universe as a harmoniously functioning whole with a unity behind its diversity. The teaching of causal interdependence is the most important of Buddhist principles. It describes the law of nature, which exists as the natural course of things. The Buddha was no emissary of heavenly commandments, but the discoverer of this principle of the natural order, and the proclaimer of its truth to the world. All facets of the natural order - the physical world and the human world are connected and interrelated, they cannot be separated. To create true happiness it is of utmost importance that we not only reflect on the interrelationship of all things in the natural order, but also see ourselves clearly as one system of causal relationships within that natural order, becoming aware first of the internal mental factors, then those in our life experiences, in society, and ultimately in the world around us.