CHAPTER-7

RELEVANCE OF BUDDHISM

7.1. Relevance of Buddhism in Traditions:

Tibetan Buddhist have a lot to thank India for. Firstly, it is because we received the Buddha's teachings from the great Indian masters, that Buddhism was established in Tibet, and became the central part of Tibetan culture. And secondly, we need to thank Indians for opening their arms to us when we lost our homeland.

And so, it was a great occasion for me to meet with Buddhist from land of the Buddha and of the great masters who brought us His teachings. It was also a unique opportunity to meet with Buddhists of all traditions, and to be able to share our understanding of Dharma. While our world is becoming more and more integrated, and it's problems more and more complex, the need for peaceful cooperation is becoming urgent. Everyone, whoever they are, and wherever they are, believer or non-believer, everyone longs for peace and happiness. It is towards the goal of happiness that every individual, every organization, every society, every government, every country, the whole world, is working. For the sack of happiness, we have made so much progress in the fields of science and technology and in fact we have, through this, brought a lot of benefit to mankind: many diseases that were incurable are not a threat anymore; we can easily travel to all parts of globe. But then, at the same time, it is quite clear that just material progress alone does not allow us to achieve real peace and happiness.

We can only achieve real peace and happiness by transforming our own mind stream, and this is difficult. We have a body and mind. Our body is easy to perceive, and quite easy to tame. Our mind, however, is abstract, and therefore very difficult to tame. It is powerful, and it is our mind that determines everything that we do, good or bad. And so, it is very important that we transform our mind in order to transform our world. And how can change our mind? Since beginningless time, our mind has been associated with our negative emotions, such as ignorance, desire, anger, and so forth. It is very easy for these emotions to arise,
and it is so difficult for positive qualities such as loving kindness and compassion to arise. But if we understand the cause of suffering, the fact that it comes from our mind, and that it is caused by our own negative emotions, we have the possibility to change. If the negative emotions are the real source of the suffering of every individual, of every society, of every country, in fact, of the world, we need to eliminate them.

We can do this through spiritual practice, and the world has many different religions that, teach in their own way, have the responsibility and the tools to help mankind. But for us Buddhists, the teachings that the Buddha gave are still very relevant today, especially as we are facing so many difficulties, so many disasters, and so many conflicts. We must study and analyze the Buddha's teachings, and discover where the faults is, the real cause of our suffering. And then we must meditate on what we have learnt, because through meditation, we can eliminate these negative emotions. It is the only way can we really find the real peace and happiness that we are longing for so much.

The Lord Buddha, when he became enlightened, encapsulated what He had realized in His Four Noble Truths. These are the Truth of Sufferings, the Truth of the cause of Sufferings, the Truth of the Cessation of Sufferings, and the Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Sufferings, which He set down in His Eight-fold Noble Path. The Eight- Fold Noble Path is the path to Enlightenment, and prescribes certain measures that lead to liberation from Samsara, based on the cultivation of wisdom, ethical conduct and a still mind: Right View, Right intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Meditation. There are different schools of Buddhism, but they all share the Eight-fold Noble Path as their foundation. There are two main branches of Buddhism, Theravada and Mahayana. Theravada, the oldest school, is practiced mainly in Southeast Asia, while Mahayana is found in Eastern Asia.

The present discussion is a very important event, in that it allowed all of us to come closer together and build on what we have in common. Particularly in India, where there are all the community reside. May the merits gained by these
words spread among all beings and bring them peace and happiness. And may the
great blessings of Lord Buddha and Sangha be with whoever reads these lines,
now and always.¹

7.2 Significance of the Dharma:

The Dharma is a very significant word used by the Buddha in his religious
discourses. From the Buddhist point of view ‘religion’ is a very different concept
from that defined by other religious groups. The Dharma is the path or method
taught by the Buddha for us to follow in order to maintain our human dignity and
intelligence to lead a noble or righteous way of life. We are free to interpret the
Dharma according to our own understanding; there are no obligatory rituals which
we must practice in order to call ourselves Buddhists. Religion on the other hand
implies dependence on an external source for spiritual development, salvation
through prayer, strictly defined rituals and so on.

Buddhism teaches us that there are four unfortunate states of existence
which result from the way living beings have conducted themselves in their past
lives. Those who violate the Dharma or universal law will be reborn in one of
those unfortunate states namely, hell, the animal kingdom, the spirit world and the
ghost world. Such states are not located in any particular geographical area but
exist anywhere in the universe which can be inhabited by living beings. Those
who uphold the Dharma will never be reborn in any of these unfortunate states.
When we live according to the principles of the Dharma, we are in fact living as
‘good Buddhists practicing Buddhism’. It is therefore of the utmost importance
that we should know our own circumstances and live in accordance with the
Dharma as taught by the Buddha. To be a Buddhist one must have full confidence
in the Buddha, Dharma and the Sangha (Triple Gem) and we must also have an
understanding of the significance of the Triple Gem. Only then could blessing,
protection and guidance be gained. Without such knowledge and understanding,
whatever a person does in the name of Buddhism will not bring him the desired

¹ Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda, How to Practice Buddhism, Publication of the Buddhist Missionary Society
Malaysia Buddhist MahaVihara, 123, 123, Jalan Berhala, 50470 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia Wisdom
results. We are subject to being born over and over again according to the karma we create. You may want to know what karma is. It can be explained in the simplest language - do good and good will come to you now and hereafter; do bad and bad will come to you now and hereafter, within the cycle of birth and death. The condition of this world is that we must constantly strive for our survival. Because we believe in a false `ego' or `self', we tend to harbour within ourselves negative qualities like anger, jealousy, greed and enmity.

We believe that our survival can only be assured if we destroy everyone else whom we perceive as a source of danger to us - thus we believe in the `survival of the fittest'. We worry and cry unnecessarily for many desired but unattainable things. We also tend to live to enjoy life by lying, swindling or cheating our fellow human beings and by disturbing the peace of others. We thus commit more evil than good deeds. Our belief in a permanent self leads us to seek self protection at the expense of others. That is why we are very prone to do evil deeds. This will result in our continued existence in different forms determined by our respective good or bad deeds. The Dharma as taught by the Buddha guides us to avoid evil deeds and to maintain our fortunate human existence with which we have been blessed. This means our rebirth can take place in any one of the fortunate states such as the realms of human beings or devas. By understanding Universal Law, Natural Phenomena or Dharma, we have to cultivate human values and to harmonise ourselves with other living beings. Living in this way, we will become cultured and caring persons. We also can be assured that after our deaths we will be able to avoid being reborn into any of the unfortunate states. In Buddhism the ultimate aim is not merely to be born in a place to gain worldly pleasure. As long as we continue to do good, we will be born in happy planes of existence, but even these states are not satisfactory. They are to be regarded as being only temporary; for when the store of good karma we have built up becomes, exhausted we will die and be reborn according to whatever residual karma is left. So good Buddhists are not merely satisfied with worldly life; they strive to purify the mind and develop wisdom (panna). Only in this way will we finally be able to attain Nirvana - where there is no more rebirth, no more karma.
and no more unsatisfactoriness. By cultivating a spiritual way of life we will be able to see an end to all our physical and mental suffering. This should be our ultimate aim or final goal in life. Today, we are struggling to escape from our suffering. Since we are doing it in a wrong way, very few can understand that it is a losing battle. If we really want to get rid of our suffering forever, then we will have to discover the correct method: the method which the Buddha clearly defined in the Dharma.

7.3. Foundations of Buddhism :
(Sila, Samadhi, Panna)

The Dharma taught by the Buddha shows us the correct path. This path or method is classified into three stages. They are Sila (Morality), Samadhi (Mental culture or stillness) and Panna (Wisdom). They are the three basic principles or three pillars of Buddhism, which can be developed over many lifetimes with diligence, and which will lead us to ultimate peace. Let us first speak of sila or moral development through discipline. We must learn how to live as harmless and gentle human beings. In simple language we must know how to live without disturbing the peace and goodwill of others. If we are able to do this it will indeed be a great achievement. Discipline, good conduct, precepts and morals are all synonymous with this word `sila'. This is the foundation on which to start a religious way of life. If a house is built without laying a proper foundation, it will be very unstable. Modern man has learnt the hard way how important it is to live in `sila'. It means s respecting the right of others to exist. If we believe that the world was created solely for our own benefit, then we will take from it whatever we want indiscriminately; without caring about what happens to other living beings and the environment like plants, rivers, the atmosphere and so on. In the end, as a result of major ecological imbalances of nature created by us in our modern way of life, we will be destroying ourselves. A good Buddhist on the other hand has a deep respect and concern for the well being of every other being. This is sila. But sila alone is not enough as we also need to develop Samadhi and Panna which will be explained in the paragraphs that follow.
7.4. The Mind:

After having cultivated our moral conduct, we have to concentrate on training our mind. Humans are the only living beings in this universe capable of cultivating their minds up to the maximum limit to attain enlightenment or the ultimate wisdom. It is extremely difficult for living beings other than humans to develop their minds up to that level. That is why a person who aspires to become a Buddha must be a human being. Even the devas cannot become Buddhas without first becoming humans. The reason is that they can only passively enjoy their past good Karma - only human beings can actively create new, fresh good Karma and make the effort to totally purify the mind through meditation.

As human beings we have great latent potential in our minds, but such potential is eclipsed by our anger, delusion, ignorance, craving, selfishness and many other mental defilements. We must realize that with the passing of every second we are wasting and misusing our mental energy on unnecessary pursuits. We just do not know how to harness our vast mental energy for a useful and good purpose. The Buddha showed us how to harness that vast storehouse of mental energy and use it for our liberation from misery. In his final birth Sakyamuni sacrificed his life and kingdom and underwent severe suffering until he finally liberated the mind and gained supreme enlightenment. He has assured us that with mental development and purity, we too can follow his footsteps and experience the ultimate happiness. Do you know the amount of mental energy we are using through our five senses and imagery? So much mental energy is needlessly wasted through our six channels in useless imagination, temptations and frustration. The Buddha has introduced one proven method for us to harness this vast mental energy and it is called 'Meditation'. Meditation means harnessing our mental energy through concentration and from there we go on training and taming the mind. It is not possible to cultivate the mind simply by faithfully praying and worshipping any god, or by performing various rituals and ceremonies. We can never hope to gain knowledge, wisdom, purity or enlightenment through performing ritualistic practices or prayers.
The Buddha says in the `Sati Patthana Sutta' that meditation is the only path or only method that we can use to gain purity and enlightenment. Here we must not confuse Buddhism and Meditation. Buddhism is the total practice of the Teaching of the Buddha manifested through various popular cultures; whilst Meditation is the specific method developed to rid the mind of impurities. Once a person has practiced discipline through Sila and achieved control of the body, then the mind is ready to be developed through Meditation. It is the only way for our FINAL release from this existence. Here the Buddha is talking about concentration for mental training and purity for gaining final salvation. Since our minds are polluted, this method helps us to rid ourselves of our worries, miseries and mental disturbances. You may go here and there worshipping various gods and goddesses with the hope of getting rid of your worries and problems. But unless and until you train your own mind to develop a true understanding of the nature of existence, as well as realizing who you really are, you can never gain real relief from such miseries and worries. Meditation is the way whereby we can attain the four levels of sainthood namely, Sotapanna, Sakadagami, Anagami and Arahant which lead one to experience Nibbanic bliss. Only when we understand the Dharma taught by the Buddha and realize what we are in fact doing in the name of Buddhism, can we differentiate between actions which fail to lead us to real happiness and those which we call `skilful action', which positively help liberate us from misery and ignorance.

7.5. Human Behaviour :

Another important thing to remember is the understanding of our own character. We should know that the types of behavior which we had developed during our previous births do influence the molding of our habits within this lifetime. That is why we all have different individual characteristics and attitudes. Even children from the same parents each have different mentalities, characteristics, inclinations and behavior. These could be regarded as manifestations of their particular mental habits developed over a series of different lifetimes. Whilst one child may be criminal-minded, the second could be
very pious and religious, the third very intelligent, the fourth stupid, the fifth very honest, the sixth very cunning and so on. These are the manifestations of their own mental habits. In our storehouse of consciousness, we too maintain such mental habits as we pass from one life to another. Consciousness is a very dynamic mental faculty. All the five senses (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching) bring objects from the outside to influence the mind and create mental objects. The other three mental faculties relating to sensation, recollection and good or evil mental habits also constitute consciousness.

When we die, our consciousness leaves the body and joins with four elements and cosmic energies, to create another existence. These four elements are: solidity, fluidity, heat and motion. This is how beings appear and reappear again and again. Now, in order to ensure that we have desirable mental attitudes in the future we must make an earnest endeavor to develop good mental attitudes now, in our present life. Once the process of mental purification is begun and carefully nurtured it can be carried on into future lives for further development. So the mental training for gaining mental purity is the second stage necessary for leading a pure religious way of life as a Buddhist. This is called SAMADHI.

7.6. Different Characters:

Buddhism makes us understand our own character. Hence, if we can understand our own mind and recognize our own weaknesses then we can easily train it. This is the only way to gain peace and happiness. The Buddha taught us how to analyze our mind so that we can understand where our defilements lie and why disturbances arise to pollute the mind. The Buddha was such a practical teacher that he just did not stop there. He went on to the next stage and showed us how to change that mental attitude. If our minds are conditioned to be hot-tempered, selfish, greedy, jealous and cruel the Buddha taught us different methods to train such minds. He said that 'mind is the forerunner of all mental states'. Whatever we do, it all begins in the mind. This reminds us of the well known principle embodied in the preamble to the UNESCO Charter on Human Rights which states: `Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of
men that the defenses of peace can be constructed.' So if we stop evil thoughts from arising in the mind we will be capable of only doing good. This is the way to practice Buddhism. But many people have generally tended to ignore all the important aspects of the Buddha's teaching and have instead concentrated more on the ritualistic aspects, thereby looking for an easy way out of suffering. In Buddhism we cannot gain salvation by simply pleasing or praising the gods without training the mind.

The third and last stage is *Panna* which means Supreme Wisdom. Wisdom here is not simply academic or scientific knowledge. We can gather vast book knowledge through learning but that in itself does not bring wisdom. Wisdom cannot appear in the mind as long as elfishness, hatred and delusion predominate. It is only when these mental hindrances are completely erased from the mind and replaced with mental development that real wisdom will appear. Wisdom is like brightness. When brightness appears darkness disappears; one displaces the other. Occasionally, the evil forces which are latent in our mind do flare up according to the intensity of our temptation and irritation at any given moment. When anger flares up, we show our ugly face. Hidden evil forces in the mind can thus emerge to change and cloud our mental attitude. Even a man who has lived a religious life for a long period can still get into that horrible state of mind, if the mind has not been trained properly and if the impure states have not been completely uprooted. This is what the Buddha taught and this is what we have to do in order to lead a Buddhist way of life. First we have to cultivate our moral background, and then try to understand the nature of our mind and thereafter train it so that we can try to discover a remedy to cleanse the mental impurities. After eradicating our mental defilements we will be able to cultivate proper understanding. In the end we gain Wisdom and liberation from our physical and mental suffering - the ultimate goal aspired by every good Buddhist.

**Religions can be Divided into Two Groups:**

We can classify all existing religions into two groups: Religions which are based entirely on faith, and religions based on mental purity rather than faith.
Those who emphasize faith more than purity believe that they can gain their final salvation through their ardent faith alone. To them mental purity is not an important aspect. That is why they say that no one can gain salvation by observing morals and precepts without also developing a strong faith in god. Buddhism on the other hand teaches that faith is not the most important aspect but that purity of the mind is. When we have purity in the mind coupled with wisdom, we can never hold wrong ideas as the real truth. Faith alone cannot purify the mind to remove doubts so as to help us understand the truth. People can uphold a wrong belief without analyzing it or without having any sense of reasoning because they are afraid that if they do, they might lose their faith and thus also lose their chance to gain salvation. The Buddha's advice on the other hand is, before accepting any belief as the truth, it is for us to study, investigate, practice and see the results for ourselves in the end. When we come to a conclusion after having made a thorough analytical investigation, we gain confidence in the truth, as we have satisfactorily verified it for ourselves. By realizing the truth ourselves, we naturally gain confidence. This is neither mere faith nor belief but realization. The Buddha's advice is neither to believe nor to reject anything at first hand. As we have human minds to enable us to think soberly, we must therefore give a chance to our minds to think independently and understand things in their correct perspective. We should not think that we just cannot understand. Some people, who are very lazy to study a problem in depth, simply do not try to understand things as they really are and so seek the easy way out by just surrendering themselves to what the others say, because they have no self confidence in themselves. A true Buddhist on the other hand has self-respect, knowing fully well that he is responsible for himself, his actions and his salvation. `No one saves us but ourselves, the Buddha shows us the correct way.'

7.7. Three Other Simple Methods:
(Dana, Sila and Bhavana)

So far we have learned from the preceding paragraphs that to lead a practical Buddhist way of life we must essentially develop Moral Discipline
(Sila), Concentration (Samadhi) and Wisdom (Panna). There are three other simple methods to practice Buddhism. They are: Dana, Sila and Bhavana. Dana (generosity) means contributing or sacrificing something for the benefit of others. But this must be done without any ulterior or selfish motive. Then what is the main purpose of giving? The real Buddhist attitude of Dana is not the act of giving in the hope of gaining some reward in return, but to reduce selfishness. We commit enormous mistakes and disturb others owing to our own selfishness. So when we contribute something for the benefit of others we actually reduce our own selfish desires and in its place we develop love, kindness and understanding. That is the way to start a Buddhist way of life for our spiritual development.

The second stage is **Sila**. As we all know Sila means development of moral conduct which we have already discussed earlier. There are however five important precepts for lay Buddhists to observe with regard to Sila. They are abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, telling lies and taking in toxicating drinks and drugs. When we observe these noble principles, we not only cultivate our religious way of life but also render a better service to others by allowing them to live peacefully. By leading a pure life according to the noble eightfold path, we become noble ourselves and life becomes more meaningful. Those who are spiritually advanced see no meaning at all in material possessions and worldly powers, so they renounce the mundane world and observe more precepts in order to gain more peace and happiness. Many people observe their religious commandments or laws in the firm belief that if they violate any such commandments, a god will punish them Fear of god or fear of punishment therefore acts as a deterrent and is the main reason which makes them observe religious laws. Thus they 'do well' not because they are themselves intrinsically good, acting from a pure mind, but because they suppress evil thoughts out of fear of punishment. The evil thought is merely suppressed without understanding its source; not entirely eradicated, it lies dormant in the mind. It can therefore manifest itself at any time when the mind is not guarded. If anyone says that he does not like to kill just because of fear of punishment from god, then that will only indicate that he has not cultivated his mind to reduce cruelty and hatred and
hence has not developed mercy towards others. Such humane qualities would not have existed had it not been for the perpetual fear of punishment from god. He only maintains fear for his own personal safety with a selfish motive. When Buddhists observe the precept `not to kill' they are not concerned with any fear of punishment but they consider the danger of cruelty and suffering which they create towards others. By considering the danger of the act of killing they will, in this way, refrain from killing. They then give a chance to their minds to cultivate virtues such as kindness, compassion, sympathy and understanding. They also observe all the other Buddhist principles in the same manner. With regard to this act of killing, the Buddha says: `If you cannot understand why killing others is bad, then consider it in this way: When another person comes and tries to kill you, think of how you would feel at that very moment. How you would try to escape and what sort of physical and mental suffering or anguish you would have to experience? This is more than enough for you to understand why it is bad. If you cannot understand why stealing is bad then think of how you would feel should others come and take away your belongings.' This concept is summarized in the Dharmapada like this:

- All tremble at the rod
- All fear death
- Considering this
- One should neither strike Nor cause to kill

This is a practical approach to daily living and should not be regarded as a theory nor even as a commandment coming from an authority or a supreme being, who is both executioner and rewarder. By using our human knowledge we should understand the bad effects of evil deeds. Some people might say that they are forbidden to do certain things just because their religion says so. But that is not the way for a mature person to follow as to what to do and what not. To do when we uphold all our precepts, we should not think that we are observing them only for our own benefit. When you stop killing and disturbing people, they can expect to live peacefully because you do not create fear in their minds. What a wonderful
contribution that would be to others. If you do not rob, lie and swindle others they can have security, happiness and so live peacefully. If everyone in this country could follow these noble principles of moral conduct, how happy we will all be!

7.8. Religion’s Importance:

Human beings by nature are sometimes not reliable and so they do violate principles. That is why a religion is needed to train them. In the past we were scared of natural phenomena like lightning and thunder, wild animals, ghosts and devils. Later we realized that many of our past beliefs in ghosts and devils were unfounded and were merely imaginary. Today we can ignore them. What we need to fear however are ruthless human beings who are out to destroy our peace and happiness. It is difficult to reform humans to make them reliable persons. In a way animals could be regarded as more admirable than people. Although animals have no religion, they follow nature. They are only guided by the instinct for survival and never attack others except in self-defense or for food. They have no deceit. It is the human mind that must have a religion to think and understand. Man needs moral standards to reduce selfishness and deceit. Man can turn and twist his mind for his own ends and to his personal advantage. To straighten the crookedness of the human mind, religion is necessary. Albert Einstein once said, `atomic energy has shaken and changed the whole world; but even that powerful atomic energy cannot change man's nature'. It is still as crooked, unreliable and dangerous as it has been from earliest times. But religion can change this mind for a better purpose if people really uphold the religious principles. Here we must define what is meant by religion. For Buddhists, `religion' means something very different from the normally accepted meaning of the word. Buddhism as a religion envisages the human being as a devout person working in accord with the Teachings of the Buddha towards achieving his own salvation by doing well and purifying the mind. The teaching of the Buddha does not place any reliance on prayer, supplication and ritual. That is why the Buddha had repeatedly advised us to study the nature of the mind. We can thus understand where our weaknesses lie and only then can we find the suitable solution to get rid of our weaknesses to save ourselves. Buddhism teaches Self-Reliance.
7.9. **Meditation:**

The last or third stage is Bhavana or meditation for the development of the mind. Without Bhavana we cannot achieve the aim or the purpose of our life. The purpose of life is to see an end to our suffering. Then, what is meditation? When we develop the mind by eradicating mental impurities we gain purity. We strive with great effort to reach the peak of perfection. The only way to achieve this final goal is for us to practice meditation as taught by the Buddha. Although we have achieved some progress in modern society and have changed from striving for mere survival to some measure of physical pleasure and comfort, there is however, no real corresponding development in man's mind. People have used their wider knowledge of the physical world only to create more temptation and excitement and they regard such `discoveries' as development. They organize various activities to cater to our physical needs and advertise them to create temptation. In the past, people did not resort to crass commercialism to influence the mind and to create desire. Now, through the media of television, cinemas, erotic dances, lewd magazines and many other such entertainments, excitement is created.

Human passions are aroused to such a degree that immoral practices have become rampant. These do not in any way calm the mind and give peace. But this does not mean that we should condemn everything that pleases the senses. We cannot deny that art and culture do please the senses. They do so in such a way that raises the human spirit and encourages reflection and repose. The purpose of cultural activities such as Folk dancing, singing, the Theatre and many other kinds of arts are to make man, more aware of his existence; they relax and calm the mind without arousing the base passions. It is accepted that human beings do have emotions. They should be catered for by providing suitable and wholesome entertainment without arousing the wild nature latent in the human mind. In fact if there is nothing to occupy the mind, then that mind can become very violent and intolerant. The saying `An idle mind is the devil's workshop' is indeed very true. Therefore decent cultural practices should be introduced to calm the mind and
provide an understanding of the nature of our existence. It is regrettable to note how the modern consumer society has polluted cultural activities and abused the splendour of our ancient cultural practices.

7.10. The Consequences of Modern Forms of Entertainments:

How many kinds of immoral practices are there in our so-called modern entertainments? When you enter a place where they perform such entertainments, you can see for yourself how the organizers of such entertainments try to influence your mind. Their main purpose of course is to make easy money. They are not in the least worried about the adverse effects such shows would have on human values, religions and culture. That is why some people say it is difficult to practice Buddhism in the midst of our modern society because Buddhism does not condone nor encourage any kind of entertainment. As pointed out earlier, this is not true at all. Buddhism encourages culture and art, but it does discourage any activity which debases human dignity. In the distant past, when we were living as primitive men we had only a few problems. Such problems concerned our obtaining of food and shelter and the survival of the community. Even clothing was worn primarily for protection and not to adorn the body. Today we tend to regard those early people as being unfortunate or uncivilized when we compare their standard of living to that of ours. But in our modern society how many millions of problems are there? Most of them have in fact been created by us. Because of the problems of our own making we have no peace, no sleep, no appetite and have difficulty managing our lives amidst global disturbances everywhere. This is the nature of modern society, but in those early days people led a tranquil life. They had time to relax and enough time to take their food. There was no rat-race then. It might be argued that it is simplistic to say that primitive man was happy while we are not. But the point we are making is that modern civilization is unnecessarily complicated, creating problems which need not exist at all if we could only learn to reduce our wants and live like our ancestors with few basic needs. Many great men like Gandhi and Albert
Schweitzer have proven that even in modern times, the happiest people are those with the fewest needs. According to the Buddha the highest wealth of a man is contentment. Although primitive man had to go out and hunt animals for food, he was however quite contented and satisfied with that way of life, primitive though it might have been. Today we build large and tall buildings to live comfortably but there is no security within. How many iron gates and doors are there all secured and fitted with electronic burglar alarm systems? Why do we need all these extra gadgets? Is this modern development? Those who live in such lofty houses live in perpetual fear because of insecurity. In the past, however people could sleep peacefully even under trees, in caves or anywhere without having such fear and worry. Sure they had problems too - all human existence for that matter is problematic but modern man has increased and complicated these problems a thousand fold, all unnecessarily, and of his own making.

7.11. The Buddha Preach According to His Own Experience:

The Buddha introduced a righteous way of life for us to follow after having himself experienced the weaknesses and strengths of human mentality. During the early part of his life as a young man he experienced worldly pleasures just like any other human being. He was a prince, a husband, a father and the son of the ruler of a kingdom. He had a beautiful wife and a loving son. He loved them but he had more compassion towards suffering humanity. His kindness was not limited only to his family but extended to every living being. He had the courage to free himself from his emotional attachment towards them in order to discover the solution for human suffering. He had to renounce the worldly life to gain enlightenment. After gaining his supreme wisdom he returned home and revealed to all what he had realized. He told them that if they too would like to share this belief, liberation or salvation, he would teach them the method. He also advised people not to believe what he preached just because he was a great man. He further said that, simply by worshipping and praying to him one would not gain salvation.
7.12. Gradual Development of the Buddhist Way of Life:
(Traditional, Cultural, Devotional, Intellectual and Spiritual)

There are five methods in the practice of Buddhism. These methods have been introduced and practiced by people in different parts of the world, according to their own way of life, needs and education. They can be categorized into the above mentioned five groups.

**Traditions:**

The traditional aspect of religion was introduced by our ancestors according to their beliefs. Because of ignorance many of their beliefs were based on fear, imagination and suspicion; and verily, had been practiced for their own protection and physical well being. However, we should not dismiss all traditions and customs as simply based on superstitious beliefs. Some traditions and customs are indeed meaningful. They have developed to help members of the community to dispel fear and insecurity, at the same time, to perform activities in an organized manner to maintain humanism. From time immemorial some of these practices have become incorporated with religious practices. Those who are not familiar with the real teachings of the Buddha might get the wrong impression that the traditional practices are in fact the real Buddhist way of life. Traditions and customs differ from country to country and from time to time among different ethnic groups. Therefore we should not think that our own traditions are far superior to those of others. We must understand that Buddhism is not a static or readymade religious concept with dogma handed down by religious authorities. It is a way of life which had evolved according to prevailing times and circumstances. But the absolute Dharma or truth as taught by the Buddha can never change. We must also learn to differentiate between the Absolute Truth as taught by the Buddha and the Relative Truth which is changeable according to circumstances.

The Buddha's attitude towards traditions and customs is such that one should neither accept nor reject them offhand without first having given them due
thought and consideration. His advice is not to follow them if they are found to be useless and harmful to any being even though they might be ancient. On the other hand if they are indeed significant and beneficial to all, then by all means follow them. Some of those traditions are important to generate inspiration and devotion to those performing religious ceremonies especially in a community. Without certain traditional practices, religion itself will be in isolation and personal devotion will weaken. Some people even uphold traditional religious practices and preserve them as their 'heritage' for inspiration to rally round their religion.

**Culture:**

Culture and religion are closely interwoven in any society. Culture is part and parcel of human life. Human values, skill, intelligence and aesthetic beauty can be seen through cultural practices. Culture is the expression of refined and beautified traditions adapted either to influence or to promote fine arts as a means to entertain. Cultural practices inspire the human mind. Human passions can be calmed, gratified and ennobled through cultural practices. The glory of Asia depends a great deal on its culture and in this respect; Buddhist culture has played a prominent role. Culture can also protect and promote a religion. When we introduce religion through our cultural practices, our day-to-day religious activities will be more attractive and we will be able to influence others to follow it as a living religion. We can say that cultural practices that are religious in nature are the stepping stone to understanding the religious way of life. Those who are not religious minded at the beginning will eventually get used to attending and appreciating religious activities. By attending such activities people will gradually get the opportunity to improve their proper religious knowledge and understanding. Otherwise they will tend to shun religion altogether. If people are well-educated and have improved their understanding and are personally noble, it is not very important for them to actively participate in traditional or cultural activities to be religious. Religion can contribute a great deal to enrich culture. It may be true to say that in Asian countries generally, the practice of a religion is clearly linked to cultural activities. Dances, songs, art and drama very largely
draw their inspiration from religious subjects. Without culture religious activities may turn out to be very dry and uninteresting. At the same time, when we practice Buddhism without disturbing other traditions or the followers of other religions, this form of tolerance and peaceful coexistence along with our respectable behavior and gentle attitude can also be regarded as a cultural aspect.

**Devotion:**

The devotional aspect is very important in a religion. Whatever we believe in or practice, without devotion, confidence can only be regarded as academic. Since devotion is related to human emotion, proper religious knowledge is essential. Otherwise, the devotion based on beliefs alone can become blind faith. Devotional activities in a religion naturally calm the mind and create inspiration. When the mind is thus inspired, fear, tension, anger and many other mental disturbances will be subdued, or even eradicated. Then such devotion can be strengthened to further enhance our faith; enabling us to carry out our religious way of life with confidence. Devotional activities fall in the category of SILA which we discussed earlier. The proper practice of SILA paves the way for mind purification and wisdom which are the higher stages in spiritual development. Mere belief and devotion without understanding can lead one to religious fanaticism. Paying homage to the Buddha, offering of flowers, etc., Sutra chanting, religious recitals, ceremonies, religious performances, singing of devotional songs and similar practices inspire and calm the mind. Devotees can develop their confidence through such practices. Deeply rooted devotion fosters patience to endure any kind of suffering. Devotion strengthens the mind to face difficulties.

**Intellect:**

The intellectual aspect is yet another method to understand and practice the religion. Having gone through traditional, cultural and devotional practices, many people `graduate' to the intellectual aspect. This would mean that through intense study and diligent practice, they can gain more knowledge and understanding to
clarify their doubts on the significance of religious beliefs and practices, the precise meaning and purpose of life, the nature of worldly conditions and their unsatisfactoriness, as well as the phenomena and the universal nature of impermanence. Through study, observation and concentration they will be able to gain a clear vision of reality, an understanding of universal phenomena and confidence in religion. The confidence that they do gain through understanding is unshakeable. But there are many who do not take the trouble to gain a clear understanding of the Buddha's teachings. First we must learn. After having learned, we must practice what we have learned; and finally, only after practicing can we experience the beneficial results. Anyone can practice this method without having to depend on theories, philosophy and traditional beliefs. We also must not depend on personality cults - in other words depending on other persons for our salvation. Granted some people do gain a good knowledge of the Dharma. Verily, if they do not follow the religious principles to cultivate their moral conduct, they are like a spoon which does not know the taste of soup. Mere book knowledge does not contribute anything for the betterment of their lives. Without mental purity, knowledge alone may in the end become scepticism.

**Spiritual:**

The last method is the spiritual aspect and that is to gain purity, wisdom and eternal bliss. In fact, whatever religious knowledge we gain, whatever we practice in the name of religion, we can never gain perfection or liberation without mental purity. It is true that without eradicating mental impurities, we can do lots of good deeds' but that in itself will not be enough. We also must try to be morally good, otherwise selfishness; greed, jealousy, anger and egoism can still disturb the mind. Since the untrained mind is a very delicate instrument and always in a vulnerable state, any temptation or irritation can easily influence it to commit evil deeds. Spiritual development can only be gained through proper mental training. That is why meditation is the only proven method for mental purity. The main purpose of practicing Buddhism is:

- to gain peace and happiness within this life,
- to have a contented and fortunate life hereafter and finally,
- to achieve the ultimate aim of life: everlasting happiness or supreme bliss.
Several methods have been outlined here to tell you how to practice Buddhism. So, if you really want to see the good results and to know what the Buddha taught, try to study and follow the basic teachings taught by the Buddha, without depending on theories or different schools of Buddhism.

7.13. Buddhism-A Symbol of Dignity to the Converts:

Millions have followed into Buddhism since 1956. This is a very complex phenomenon, as it involves every aspect of life, political, social, economic and educational.

The oppressed castes have found in Buddhism a means of advancement, not by any concrete political or economic gain, which it does not provide, but in psychological liberation. Dr. Ambedkar’s book “The Buddha and his Dhamma“, written to guide his followers and provide them with a Buddhist bible, makes clear what he looked for in Buddhism and its scriptures. Buddha was to him a social revolutionary.

Whether they are illiterate villagers or well educated lawyers and politicians, all repeat one thing that to be Buddhist means to become a human being, no longer to feel untouchable, degraded, polluting, but to have hope and dignity for themselves and their children. The political awakening through the work of Republican Party of India and emergence of Bahujan Samaj Party has been responsible has been responsible to great extent for the inclination of scheduled castes and other Backward Classes towards Buddhism. Shri. B.P. Maurya, Shri. S. P. Gautam, Shri. P.N. Maurya, Shri. Kashi Ram, Ms. Mayawati, have played a great role in linking political awakening with Buddhism. Some other persons who linked social service to Buddhism and sense of dignity are Professor Angne Lal, Dr. Dauji, Dr. D.S. Ashok, Shri. K.K. Chaudhary, Shri. Revti Ram.

Had there been no conversion of the Scheduled Castes and other backward classes, there would have been greater resentment in Indian Society. By now, majority of the depressed castes would have embraced Islam or Christianity.

Depressed castes had never been Hindus in the full sense, having been excluded from temples and from the knowledge of the Vedas, forbidden even to learn Sanskrit. Today Hinduism is hated as the cause and symbol of their former degradation. This has enabled them to make a remarkable clean break with former religious practices that included many superstitions, magic and fear, this hatred has also been expressed in terms difficult to reconcile with Buddhist doctrines of Universal love and compassion. Hindu organisations have become liberal to purify Hinduism having inspiration from Buddhism. Buddhism has played the role of the saviour of the inspirations from culture.

7.15. Intellectual’s Learning’s towards Buddhism:

The Maha Bodhi Society did indeed stimulate interest in Buddhism among intellectuals, but study of Indian philosophy and thought leads many to the consideration of Buddhist logic and metaphysics. There are today many centres of Buddhist logic and Universities. Intellectual tend to become secularist. They may be critical about many gods of Hinduism and remain Hindu only for the census, but they consider Buddhism as a practical form of Hinduism. Some intellectuals in India do not consider that Buddhism is different from Hinduism. For them Buddha is an incarnation of Vishnu.

Dr. Murti of Banaras University says “The revival of Buddhist Studies at Universities and institutes does not mean that they become Buddhists. Buddhism is a part of the history of Indian philosophy. In fact it is not a religion at all.”

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2 The cultural political and religions significance of Buddhism in the Modern world. Henrich Dumoulin, General Editor, page.133.
To express rationality before the world, they fulfil this need by including Buddhism in Hinduism because if they do not do so their intellectual status is in peril before the world where the importance of rationality is growing day by day. At the same time such intellectuals cannot afford to sacrifice their high caste social claims by embracing Buddhism.

7.16. Buddhism- The Socio-political Changes and the Social Order:

The principle of ever-changing nature or the impermanent condition of the society is a very important to consider when one studies the relationship between Buddhism and society. It is argued that at the time when the Gotama was seeking enlightenment there had been rapid socio-political changes in the homeland of Buddhism, i.e., present Northern India. The Buddha considered that the ever-changing or impermanent conditions were causes of suffering and societal problems. He therefore devoted himself to the search for truth to remedy human suffering. The suffering and problems, which the Buddha perceived, were: (1) natural changes in human beings and (2) changes caused by man.

Firstly, natural changes in human beings, these were the causes of suffering inherent in human beings, for example, birth, sickness, death, happiness, suffering, satisfaction, disappointment, etc. Though they are the natural phenomena, yet they can cause suffering to people. The Buddha believed that there must be a remedy to end or at least to minimize those causes of suffering. Thus, he set forth in search of the truth. Secondly, changes caused by man includes: (1) political changes and (2) socio-economic changes.

Firstly, political changes during the lifetime of the Buddha and the political environment could be characterized as pertaining to two major forms of government. The first one was absolute monarchy. The other was a system based on co-operation between the ruling elites of small principalities within the states. This form of government is said to be equivalent to a loosely structured republican system and the mode of government was democratic. The absolute monarchy form of government had been adopted by the four northern states of India and they proved to be very politically strong and stable. Among these states,
two of them had adopted democratic procedures in their government. Legislation, policy making, and judicial processes were based on consultation in the assembly of the assigned ruling elite. Majority opinion was adopted to arrive at final decisions and resolutions. However, the democratic form of government was gradually weakened by the stronger authoritarian governments and finally became absorbed by the absolute monarchical system.

Secondly, it is the socio-economic changes. The expansion of the absolute monarchical states contributed to the expansion of trade. The growth of trade generated the bourgeois and capitalist classes. Those who were economically strong became politically influential and dominated the government. 3

The characteristics and nature of socio-political and economic changes became integral parts of the teachings of the Buddha. Since the Buddha gave heavy importance to the forces of socio-political and economic change, this contributed to Buddhist ability to adjust to changes without losing its essence.

In the context of socio-political changes, Buddhism has played a very important role in regulating and organizing society for the survival and continuity of the society. These functions can be summarized as followings:

A. Socialization function: In Buddhist societies, culture, values and customs are deeply rooted in Buddhism. Although there are normative and substantive socializing agents, the monks and monasteries are another important socializing institution. They have served as ethical and moral socializing agents. They persuade the people to follow social rules and regulations and to lead their lives according to the Buddhist way of life. Such virtues as loving and kindness (Metta-Karuna), kind-heartedness, being helpful to each other, courtesy and social relationships between persons of different status constitute this way of life.

B. Social control function: Social control is indispensable for human society. In order to keep society in order and its members behaving correctly, so as to maintain peace and order, there must be laws and regulations governing the society. It is necessary to have an authoritative body, i.e., a government to enact and enforce such secular laws and regulations. In addition there are also traditions and customary laws that enhance the social control of any society.

3 Phra Rajavoramuni 1983, pp.11-12
However, those secular social control mechanisms are aimed at regulating men’s activities and overt behavior. They will be effective only when men feel morally obligated to follow the laws and regulations. Religion can play a very important role in instilling in the people a sense of morality and edifying them. The monks and monasteries are essential religious socializing agents that train Buddhists to be good citizens. Buddhist principles, which function as a social control mechanism, are, for example, the Five Precepts, Brahmavihāra (sublime states of mind), Sangahavatthu (virtues making for group integration and leadership and principle of services), Nathakaranadhamma (virtues which make for protection), Saraniyadhamma (virtues for fraternal living), Adhipateyya (dominant influence, supremacy, Dithadhammikattha (sources of happiness in the present life), etc. People, who are trained, edified, and keep to the teachings of the Buddha will have shared norms and follow a common way of life. Such a society will face minimal conflicts, people will live together with reason and social problems are minimized.

C. Buddhism serves as a unifying force for the society. The fact that the faithful follow the teaching of the Buddha, and adopt Dhamma as guidance in their life, reinforces national integration and solidarity. Good racial integration and a healthy religion enhance national security. In addition to the teachings of the Buddha, religious rituals and calendar festivals foster the unity of the people.

Ambedkar’s movement towards Buddhism began in 1908, when he first received a book on the Buddha’s life. He followed it with reading on Indian tradition and whatever Buddhist texts he could get access to, with discussions, with visits to the ancient sites of Buddhist caves in Maharashtra. It reached a climax in 1935 when Ambedkar announced, ‘Although I have been born a Hindu, I will not die a Hindu.’ And it culminated in October 1956 in the city of Nagpur in central India when he and 400,000 followers took the ‘three refuges’ of traditional Buddhism and an additional 22 vows. This was a major turning point for Dalits and for the religious–cultural identity of India.
7.17. Government Towards Buddhism Practices:

Even the parliamentary system of today bears strong resemblance to the practices known in the Buddhism. Plato’s definition of philosopher king refer to one who is going to seek the truth; And truth can only be won by knowledge and wisdom. The best government for him is the one, which has a philosopher king in power. The other virtue, which is stressed by Plato, is justice. He says that justice is the whole duty of man. He further explains that it is justice went each class does its own proper work. In each of us also, if our inward faculties do severally their proper work, we will live in the virtue of justice; we will do just men, and doers of proper work.

Aristotle (born 884 B.C.) wrote how the powers of government should be expressed. According to him, the government would be good if it worked in the interest of the community as a whole. And on the contrary it would be bad if it worked for the governing body and for selfish purposes. Aristotle focused on the practitioner of government who, by his power, would make the common good, good of life for all.

He mentions that political justice exists among people who are associated in a common life with a view to self-sufficiency and who enjoy freedom and equality. Justice must be administered not merely for a private group but for the whole world. Aristotle explains that government will be best if it serves the common good for the people. The political thinkers emphasize the moral virtues of the ruler who should do justice to all and bring good to all, a government working for the public good.  

The basis of religion is morality and faith, while that for politics is power. Religion was used to justify wars and conquest, persecutions, atrocities, rebellions, destruction of works of art and culture. When religion is used to pander to political whims, it has to forego its high moral ideals and become debased by worldly political demands.

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4 Phra Rajavoramuni 1982 pp.21-22.
The thrust of the Buddha Dhamma is not directed to the creation of new political institutions and establishing political arrangements. Basically, it seeks to approach the problems of society by reforming the individuals constituting that society and suggesting some general principles, through which the society can be guided towards greater humanism, improved welfare of its members, and more equitable sharing of resources.

There is a limit to the extent to which a political system can safeguard the happiness and prosperity of its people. No political system, no matter how ideal it may appear to be, can bring about peace and happiness as long as the no matter what political system is adopted, there are certain universal factors which the members of that society will have to experience: the effects of good and bad kamma, the lack of real satisfaction or everlasting happiness in the world characterized by dukkha (unsatisfactoriness), anicca (impermanence), and anatta (egolessness). To the Buddhist, nowhere in Samsara is there real freedom, not even in the heavens or the world of Brahm.

Although a good and just political system which guarantees basic human rights and contains checks and balances to the use of power is an important condition for a happy life in society, people should mot fritter away their time by endlessly searching for the ultimate political system where men can be completely free, because complete freedom cannot be found in any system but only in minds which are free.

To be free, people will have to look within their own minds and work towards freeing themselves from the chains of ignorance and craving. Freedom in the truest sense is only possible when a person use Dhamma to develop his character through good speech and action and to train his mind so as to expand his mental potential and achieve his ultimate aim of enlightenment. While recognizing the use fullness of separating religion from politics and the limitations of political systems in bringing about peace and happiness, there are several aspects of the Buddha’s teaching, which have close correspondence to the political arrangements of the present day.
1) Firstly, the Buddha spoke about the equality of all human beings long before Abraham Lincoln, and the classes and castes are artificial barriers erected by society. According to the Buddha, the only classification of human beings is based on the quality of their moral conduct.

2) Secondly, the Buddha encouraged the spirit of social co-operation and active participation in society. This spirit is actively promoted in the political process of modern societies.

3) Thirdly, since no one was appointed as the Buddha’s successor, the members of the Order were to be guided by the Dhamma and Vinaya, or in short, the Rule of Law. Until today every member of the Sangha is to abide by the Rule of Law, which governs and guides their conduct.

4) Fourthly, the Buddha encouraged the spirit of consultation and the democratic process. This is shown within the community of the Order in which all members have the right to decide on matters of general concern. When a serious question arose demanding attention, the issues were put before the monks and discussed in a manner similar to the democratic parliamentary system used today.

   As the Marques of Zetland, a former Viceroy of India, reveals: this self-governing procedure may come as a surprise to many to learn that in the assemblies of Buddhists in India 2,500 years ago and more are to be found the rudiments of the parliamentary practice of the present day. A special officer similar to “Mr. Speaker” was appointed to preserve the dignity of the assembly.

   A second officer, who played a role similar to the Parliamentary Chief Whip, was also appointed to see if the quorum was secured. Matters were put forward in the form of a motion, which was open to discussion. In some cases it was done once, in others three times, thus anticipating the practice of Parliament in requiring that a bill should be read a third time before it becomes law. If the discussion shows a difference of opinion, it was to be settled by the vote of the majority through balloting.
7.18. Economic Development:

Within a Buddhist framework, the possibility of economic development on a dynamic and meaningful basis is receiving greater attention in the more affluent as well as in the developing countries. Modern development theory has failed to grapple with the increasing environmental and social problems in most developed societies and Buddhism offers a way out of this impasse.

The Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutra in the Digha Nikaya clearly states that poverty is the cause of crime and immorality. The Buddha and his disciples taught the people the value of earning wealth and the importance of economic development for their well-being and happiness. In the Kutadanta Sutra in the Digha Nikaya the Buddha also expounded that crimes such as stealing could not be stopped by punishment. For such crimes to be adequately and properly controlled and stopped, opportunities should be provided for the people to be happily engaged in their occupations to enable them to lead comfortable lives:

- Economic security (atthi-sukha)
- Enjoyment of wealth (bhoga-sukha)
- Freedom from debts (anana-sukha)
- Leading a faultless life (anavajja-sukha)

These are four kinds of happiness for a layman. Ability in one’s occupation (utthana sampada), protection of wealth (arakkha sampada), association with good friends (kalyana mittata), expenditure in proportion to income (sama jivikata); these four are said to be conducive to the well-being of people in this world.

Many ideas for the advancement of society, as well as duties and obligations both by the family and the society for their mutual benefit are mentioned in the discourses such as the Sigalovada, Parabhava and Vasala Sutras. It is evident from the Dhammapada commentary that the Buddha directed his attention even towards the serious problem of government through compassion (karuna), with a view to promoting a form of justice that would not harm and hurt the people. Justice should prevent suffering under the tyranny and the heavy taxes imposed on them by unrighteous rulers.
Buddhism teaches that a country should be governed in accordance with the Ten Duties of the King (dasa raja dharma), namely:

- Liberality (dana)
- Morality (sila)
- Giving everything for the good of the people (pariccaga)
- Honesty and integrity (ajjava)
- Kindness and gentleness (maddava)
- Austerity in habits (tapa)
- Freedom from hatred, ill-will, enmity (akkadha)
- Non violence (avihimsa)
- Patience, forbearance, tolerance, understanding (khanti) and
- Non-opposition, non-obstruction, i.e. not to obstruct any measures conductive to the welfare of the people (avirodha).

In this way the Buddha and his disciples taught such important ideas pertaining to health, sanitation, earning wealth, mutual relationships, well being of society, and righteous government - all for the good of the people.

Madame H.P. Blavatsky, President of the Theosophical Society at the end of 18th century said, “The Buddha was the first to embody these lofty ethics in his public teachings and to make them the foundation and the very essence of his public system. It is herein that lays the immense difference between exoteric Buddhism and every other religion. For while in other religions ritualism and dogma hold the first and most importance place, in Buddhism it is the ethics which have always been the most insisted upon.”

The Buddha suggested economic development instead of force to reduce crime. The government should use the country’s resources to improve the economic conditions of the country. It could embark on agricultural and rural development; provide financial support to those who undertake an enterprise and business; provide adequate wages for workers to maintain a decent life with

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human dignity. If a man, who is unfit, incompetent, immoral, improper, unable and unworthy of kingship, has enthroned himself a king or a ruler with great authority, he is subject to a variety of punishment by the people, because, being unfit and unworthy, he has placed himself unrighteously in the seat of sovereignty. The ruler, like others who violate and transgress moral codes and basic rules of all social laws of mankind, is equally subject to punishment; and moreover, to be censured is the ruler who conducts himself as a robber of the public.

7.19. Buddhism and Human Rights

Notions of rights derive from ethical principles. There is a clear convergence between Buddhist ethics and modern discussions on human rights, particularly in the common focus on responsibility and indivisibility/interdependence. The non-dual understanding of Buddhism gives rise to an ethics of inter-responsibility, or Bodhicitta - what His Holiness the Dalai Lama calls Universal Responsibility. In the Theravada we speak of Samma-sankappa or Right Thought, which leads to Bodhi, the Awakened Mind. This principle is expressed in everyday terms by the teaching of loving-kindness, non-violence, compassion, and particular responsibilities. For monks and nuns these are set down in the rule or Vinaya; for lay people in the Sigalovada Sutta and for rulers in the Dasarajadhamma.

All human beings, according to Buddhism, are equal, and each has the potential to realize the truth by his or her own will and endeavour, and can help others to realize it. Buddhist concepts recognize the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all human beings. The teaching of the Buddha holds that all human beings are endowed with reason and conscience. It recommends a Universal spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood. Buddhist theory holds that the "three poisons" of hatred, greed and delusion are at the root of violence in the world, and that the solution is for us to see so deeply into these factors that we are no longer dominated by them.

6 http://www.buddhanetz.org/projekte/rights.html Retrieved on 21/03/09
In the early, organic, societies the Buddha was addressing, these specific responsibilities were assumed to be adequate guidelines for human behaviour, with no need to identify the corresponding rights. In modern, fragmented societies, however, where the fulfillment of responsibilities cannot be guaranteed by the immediate community, these guidelines or skillful means (upaya) have been supplemented by corresponding rights. These are specified and protected by States and International Organisations. In large part these bodies derive their legitimacy from their promotion and protection of human rights. A State which does not guarantee the enjoyment of human rights by its people loses its claim to legitimacy.

Buddhism is widely regarded as the most tolerant of all religious traditions. However, Buddhist countries like Sri Lanka, Burma, and Cambodia have seen some of the highest levels of religious and ethnic intolerance in the world, with Buddhists among the main perpetrators. In other places it is Buddhists who are persecuted by the State, which fears the influence of Buddhism on the people. In Burma, Tibet and Viet Nam, for instance, thousands of Buddhists (especially monks and nuns) have been persecuted, with well-documented instances of torture and executions. In Tibet most of the country's monasteries have been demolished. The depiction of rights as simply a Western invention fails to understand the relationship of rights to responsibilities and ethical norms. The central values of all societies are very much the same. All ethical systems encourage people to respect each other, and discourage killing, violence and so on. Rights are skilful means designed to assist the implementation of these ethics.

Human Rights discourse has moved on during the past 50 years and has expanded and enriched the somewhat individualistic principles set out in the 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' which was adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December 1948. The dialectic of universalism and cultural relativism, for instance, is an immensely creative process as well as a cause for countless conflicts. The work since 1982 on the rights of indigenous peoples - group rights - is another important development.
The cultural, social and political development of a nation is a dynamic process. The orientation of the process should not only be based in our own roots and traditions, but must also be shaped by innovative new ideas. Cultural diversity is a factor that enriches the modern approach to human rights, rather than hindering the universal respect for and observance of human rights.\(^7\)

7.20. Buddhist Education in the 20\(^{th}\) Century:

Religious education and moral training according to Buddhists discipline is provided in Buddha Viharas but the institutions established after the name of Lord Buddha. Dr. Ambedkar and other great personalities have also been providing a platform for all Indian for interaction with Buddhism. These institutions are providing intellectual energy for the cause of rationalism, spirit of enquiry, curiosity and scientific temper. These institutions introduce Buddhism to new generation of all castes and creeds. Therefore both types of educational instructions have been making efforts to spread the message of Bahujan Hitaya and Bahujan Sukhaya.

Education in Buddhism is not limited to religiosity. All Buddhist institutions in general provide secular education. There is no compulsion of even the recitation of Buddhist prayers.

Religious education in fact depends on the work of monks or lay leaders. The laymen Buddhacharyas, who have had one or two months training at a Buddhist centre and perform ceremonies such as diksha, naming, marriages, and funerals, and the dedicated young men who more or less spontaneously assume the task of teaching their people at education centres after the name of Lord Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar have provided stimulus to education movement among depressed classes. The depressed classes have taken education as a part of their aim of Ambedkarite movement.

\(^7\) Kittadanta Sutta (LDB, p.135).
General Features of Buddhist Art During 20th Century:

1. Lord Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar are the main subjects of Buddhist art. A few statues of local staunch Buddhists are also available. Chakra Pravartana Image is very popular.

2. Seated Buddha, standing Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar holding the constitution in left hand are mainly found in U.P.

3. Cement, Brass, Marble and Clay have been used as the material for statues. Small statues of Brass as Moradabad and Mathura are very popular.

   There are three qualities of statues. The best qualities of statutes have been installed in big cities. They have been established either by the government or by some reputed organisations. Medium qualities of statues have been installed in small distant and town areas. The third or the poor quality of statues has been established in rural areas by local organizations. The represents blind dedication to their hero i.e., Dr. Ambedkar.