CHAPTER VII

WAS ANCIENT INDIA A WELFARE STATE?
In the first five chapters of this thesis some important ancient Indian texts are reviewed and their ideas on the state and other related subjects are discussed. In the preceding chapter the development of the concept of welfare state and its philosophy have been briefly discussed. The basic assumption is that the welfare state is one which assumes the responsibility for providing all the people with necessary material welfare. The underlying philosophy is that when such responsibility is undertaken by the state the individual will be free from the hold of arbitrary restraints caused by economic and political conditions. Such liberation is found essential for the full realisation of man's potentialities. In this chapter it will be examined to what extent the ideals of the ancient Indian state are congruous with welfare state ideology.

As already seen in most of the Indian texts the functions of the state (ksh) are clearly recorded. The well being of the people was one of the important concerns of the state. This aspect is well emphasised in their scriptures on the origin of the state. Kautilya, one of the great authorities on statecraft is emphasising this when he maintained that provision of security and welfare (Yogakshemam) is the responsibility of the king and the state. Elsewhere Kautilya clearly maintained that it is the concern of the state to secure happiness and welfare (hitam) to the people. We have noticed that several other treatises like the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, and the Dharmaśastras ordain that a king should take up the
Responsibility of securing happiness and welfare to all his people. It is often observed that the king should look after the happiness (sukha) and welfare (hitam) of the people just like a father who looks after the happiness and welfare of his own children. The above objective of the state suggests that people ought after sukha (happiness) and hitam (welfare) and that the kings were there to provide them. If we view these two as goals that people have set before them, then state becomes a means through which they wanted to secure these ends. Before examining the nature of such a state, it is necessary to understand the true meaning of these two terms.

According to Sanskrit-English Dictionary¹ the word 'sukha' means 'happy', 'delighted', 'joyful' and 'pleased'. In the same dictionary² 'hitam' is explained as anything 'proper', 'suitable well-being', 'welfare', 'good'. Thus these two terms, whether in Sanskrit or in translation, are not easy to define. For the terms 'sukha' and 'hitam' refer to psychological attitudes. There is no standard measuring rod by which they can be decided upon and explained. They are multidimensional. For example, a thing that gives 'sukha' to an individual may not give the same feeling to another individual. There cannot be a single worldly object that will give happiness or pleasure to every individual, without any exception. But it is the nature of normal beings to seek pleasure and avoid its opposite, pain³. This impulse to seek

---

2. Ibid., p. 1028.
pleasure and avoid pain is not only a natural impulse but also a primitive one. It is observed that the sentient animal can hear, see, and pain. Pursuit of pain for its own sake can seem only extinction. Further it is stated that the wise are those who avoid actions that lead to pain and pursue those that lead to happiness. But things of this world are mixtures of both happiness and pain. They are inseparably intermingled, and naturally pursuit of the one will lead to the experience of the other as well. We already saw that the primary goal of Indian philosophy from the very beginning was to escape from suffering. Some schools like Buddhism viewed the state without suffering as one devoid of all happiness, but a few other Indian philosophical schools conceived such a state as one of eternal happiness. The concept of heaven (svarga) also symbolized happiness. This, however, is not eternal happiness. The importance of several such worlds of happiness is well elucidated in the Kama Upanishad, where several worlds of happiness are enumerated and where it is shown that the happiness in each world is different from the other. It is the world of Brahman which alone provides a state of eternal bliss. i.e., it is a condition where one achieves everlasting freedom from suffering. This suggests a broad classification of happiness into two categories - impermanent and the permanent. Permanent happiness is an eternal and everlasting state and as
such there is no scope for gradation. It is an absolute state. 
Immediate happiness is one that allows gradation. Man's 
experiences in this world provide only fleeting happiness 
because invariably suffering in one form or the other follows 
it. Discussing the concept of 'bhukta', Prof. Mitra distinguishes it into two categories. According to him one is a 
 lively and fleeting pleasure. Such pleasures arise from 
 some titillations and include as well as the pleasures of 
 reminiscence and choice. All these arise from attraction 
towards the object and consist in a feeling of restlessness. 
Another category of pleasure is related to a quieter and more 
 permanent form of satisfaction, pleasure in self-controlled 
 repose, and a calm which is free from the feeling of restlessness. The superiority of the second category of pleasure over 
 the first is acknowledged and it is said that the second 
 category of pleasure arises wholly from within, being the 
 manifestation of the felicity that belongs by nature to the 
 self. However, it must be noted that in the Vedas and Brahmana 
texts not much attention is paid to such categorisation of 
happiness. They were aware of the pleasures and pains of life 
here and now. Their conceptions of svarga (heaven) and naraka 
(hell) only point out to states of unblemished happiness and 
suffering that an individual can achieve. But these are not 
considered eternal states.

The striking nature of the two categories of happiness

2. Ibid.,
mentioned earlier is well elucidated in the Upanishads, particularly in the Katha Upanishad. According to it there are two paths — that of karmas and that of karmas — that lead an individual to these types of happiness. The karmas means that which is pleasing while karmas means that which ought to be sought after because it is the good. The path of karmas will lead an individual to an experience of short-lived happiness gained through possessions such as wealth, wife and progeny. The path of karmas is the path that will lead an individual to permanent and everlasting happiness. The path of the karmas is emotional and fleeting as well as mingled with sorrow. The path of karmas is that which a man ought to seek for.

While it does not give immediate pleasure, it leads to that bliss which is everlasting. It is said that the knowledge of the self is that which will help men to achieve everlasting happiness. When Nachiketas, the seeker of knowledge of that which is ultimately real, was offered material wealth he declined it, stating that he would not want things that lead one to momentary happiness and later dissolution. He completely disregards the first category of happiness and seeks only the second. It can be said, however, that such an extreme anti-hedonistic attitude is not a general feature of Indian philosophy. It can be noted that several sages accepted wealth as reward for their knowledge of the Brahman. Yajñavalkya who was a Brahmanvi,² had wives and accepted wealth as a gift for demonstrating his superior knowledge of the ultimate reality.

1. A knower of Brahman.
Since the seekers of the true knowledge of the self, that which keeps suffering away and leads to everlasting bliss, were not prohibited from the experience of happiness of the first category. This attitude to worldly wealth is significant. For, the Brahmanical texts in general maintain that the happiness of the first category could be complementary rather than contradictory to the pursuit of the higher goal. Naturally some constraints had to be imposed on individual behaviour if it were to lead to the second type of bliss. But this does not deny happiness derived from worldly wealth. This is clearly brought out in the scheme of life envisaged by the early treatises. The four stages of life (śārmasa) and the four values of life (puruṣārthas) which were said to be vital to their scheme of life clearly demonstrate the complementary nature of these two categories of happiness. In the first three stages of life - brahmacarya, āśrama and viñapraśṭha - an individual was required to stay within the fold of the society and perform appropriate duties. It is only during the stage of life of a sanyasin that an individual is social and transcends the limits of social life. During the first three stages of life an individual certainly has the experience of happiness of the first category. Among the four puruṣārthas, dharm, artha, kama and moksa, - artha and kama - are basically related to the happiness of the first category. The scheme of life envisaged by Brahmanical texts presupposes an individual going through all the stages of life one after another. The stages of life and the values of life are closely interrelated. In
the Āstāṅga-avata, which covers the major part of an individual's life, artha and kāma, are of significant value. This will show that experience of happiness of the first category was not denied to an individual. That is, an individual has to live within the family and perform the duties and discharge the obligations pertaining to each stage of life. An individual has to get married at a suitable age and maintain the family by acquiring wealth. But such experiences were considered to give only a fleeting happiness. They are not devoid of pain for one is subjected to suffering even while enjoying. As a first step to minimise suffering an individual should be cautious in his craving for the happiness of the first category. This is because an excessive indulgence in such experiences would not only bring excessive happiness but also lead to excessive suffering. The Mahābhārata says that this kind of happiness will flare up like clarified butter poured into the fire and ultimately will lead to suffering. So one has to be very cautious in seeking such experiences. One important fallacy of this approach is when there are no limits to excessive indulgence there are also no limits to the restrictions that could be imposed on acquiring it. This will lead to two extreme positions of happiness. The two extremes are of course evident in those philosophies which enjoin either total acceptance or total renunciation - the pravṛtti and nītrṛtti sargās. Thus we can see that the problems posed by this category of happiness have far reaching consequences.
As already noticed, all the philosophical schools of India aiming at an escape from suffering. Since suffering is related to the experience of happiness of the first category, a simple way to escape from it is to refrain from the pursuit of happiness of the first category. That is, to accept sannyasa, a stage of life that is approved by the Brahmanical scheme of life only when one is sufficiently old and learned and has fulfilled the obligations of the other stages of life. If renunciation is approved at an earlier stage of life, it will deprive the society of an active member. And also it will impose a total barrier to the fulfillment of the psychological and biological instincts of an individual, which, experience has shown, is not easy to overcome. A total denial of the experiences of the first category of happiness being not conducive to all the stages of life of an individual, it is not indicated in the Brahmanical texts in general. However, even in the first three stages of life several restrictions are imposed on the individual's desire for this happiness so as to give a gradual training for the last stage. Thus, according to this view, an individual has to live a life that is a mixture of happiness and suffering. All the Indian schools agree that an individual, particularly the ordinary man, has to pass through this experience as an inevitable course to achieve freedom from suffering or a state of everlasting happiness. Such freedom is to be achieved gradually by conditioning the mind and the body to degrees of equipoise. First, a mental equilibrium is sought to
be established by the control of the body. This is not nega-
tivism. While positively living amidst pleasures and sorrows, 
man is taught to consider both with equanimity. This attitude 
leads finally to a state of freedom from all desire, sorrow 
and suffering.

As already noticed, the other objective set before the 
state by these ancient Indians is that the state should look 
after the 'hitam' of the people. The term 'hitam' is like the 
term 'udana', difficult to define. The meaning of the term 
changes depending upon the circumstances and time. In a limited 
sense, it is relative to time and content. For example, the 
medicine that is of hitam (good) to a diseased man cannot be 
of the same value to one who is healthy. Society is a combi-
nation of various types of men having various tastes and needs. 
Thus what is hitam to one individual may not be hitam to 
another. If hitam is of such a diverse nature then how can it 
be possible for the state to secure hitam of the people? And 
in what is the hitam of people located? For answers to these 
questions we have to turn to Indian view of life. According to 
the Indian view of life there is one ultimate good (hitam) 
towards which all the efforts of an individual are directed. 
This ultimate good is one that does not lead to the conflict 
of individual interests. It is hitam to all people, of all 
periods. As already observed a fundamental postulate of 
Indian philosophy is that this life is full of suffering. 
Escape from suffering is the goal set for all people — all
should strive to achieve this independently without conflict with their other interests. And according to this view the individual is subjected to suffering because of his involvement in the inescapable cycle of births and deaths (samsāra), owing to the unseen potency karma. But however an individual is not permanently bound by the effect of karma. One is free to act and get relieved of the effects of karma. It is karma that sets the whole thing in motion and keeps an individual in bondage and thus in suffering. Every action has positive or negative worth. The good action will secure merit and bad action demerit. An individual has necessarily to act because in the absence of action even good cannot be enjoyed. But the individual should act in such a way that merit alone would result. An individual has to choose from among the several actions those which secure his merit. But one has to act in a society which is complex, and where different individuals get to act in a variety of ways. The society consists not only of different types of individuals but also expects those people to act in different ways. Thus it gives rise to the question: what should be the right way in which those individuals should act? Ancient Indian texts state that all these individuals should act in accordance with the principles of dharma. It is dharma that provides a direction to man to act in the right way and to acquire merit. One who lives according to dharma will in the natural course, achieve eternal bliss. Human action at every stage is governed by this principle of dharma.
Thus the path of dharma is the right course of action.

From the above discussion it follows that the question of right and wrong, good and bad is decided in ancient India with reference to dharma. The concept of dharma is thus significant in moulding the social life of an individual. It is not a static principle. It is a dynamic principle being flexible and rational. The sources of knowledge of dharma reveal the fact that sufficient deliberation has gone into deciding what is dharma and adharma. Another factor which decides between these two is the importance attached to the opinion of varjat consisting of sages, learned people. This shows that dharma is an outcome of the decision of learned people. Dharma does not merely give direction to action. It also provides a measuring rod to correct the very source of action. The source of action is desire; it is the satisfaction of a desire that drives an individual to act. So desires have to be properly assessed. In Brahmanical texts which subordinate artha and kama which represent the desires of an individual, one can see the stress laid on dharma. The idea is, if desires are controlled and properly directed such control will enable an individual to perform actions well and thus avoid suffering. Another aspect of the same point is that an action will be performed well only when it is in conformity with the nature of the individual, who performs it. That is, to perform an action well an individual has to choose those actions to which he is suited well by his nature. Performance of such actions constitutes dharma to him. This is
the svadharma of an individual. Hence, under normal conditions an individual should perform duties to which he is suited by nature. He should adhere to his svadharma rather than take up the duties to which he is not suited well. Apart from this, biological and psychological changes occurring during a lifetime make one fit to perform certain kinds of action. These also have to be taken into consideration in deciding the right course of action for an individual. Hence the Brahmanical texts systematized human actions and incorporated them into the four varnas, and the four castes. The social order consisted of four principal castes — brahmana, kshatriya, vaisya and sudra. They were assigned particular types of action taking into consideration their potentialities, and the needs of society. According to this scheme the brahmana was assigned actions related to learning, the kshatriya, actions related to valour, the vaisya, actions related to trade and the sudra, actions related to service. Still it is conceded that even to the effect of previous karma one might take birth in a particular family e.g., in the house of a brahmana. If such a person performed the action of an brahmana then alone he could be called a brahmana. But if he failed in upholding this then he did not deserve the treatment that a virtuous brahmana was accorded. Thus according to Brahmanical texts, adherence to svadharma is the right course of action to an individual and the best of all possible societies was that where svadharma coincided with the varna and asrama dharma.
Consequently the dharma that one should follow is moulded to suit one’s dharma as an individual. Thus the dharma or the dharma that guides his actions also constitutes the dharma for him.

That the state emerged to secure the dharma of people, i.e., to preserve dharma which is dharma in very broad terms from the speculations on the origin of the state. According to the ancient Indian view, long long ago people were observing principles of dharma and they were very happy. There was no state or king because there was no need for them. Everyone was adhering to his dharma. Peace and serenity were prevailing in society. People could live for hundreds of years without suffering old age and disease. They could even visit heaven and other worlds at their will, and return. But gradually dharma secured ground and drove away dharma. Then everything went wrong. People were unhappy and suffering entered human life. To arrest this and to keep things in order kingship and the state emerged. So the justification for the existence of the state lies in its capacity to uphold dharma and all that dharma meant. King and the state were essential for the accomplishment of dharma. Anarchy was the result of adharma. As stated in the Mahabharata, where anarchy prevailed dharma could not exist and men would eat each other. Anarchy was always the cause of sorrow. There was an absolute need for the king and it is acknowledged in the earliest literature of ancient India.
The main objective set for the king by the texts is preservation of dharma. That is one of the reasons why it is often stated that the king is the upholder of dharma. As the varna-srama scheme completely covers the action of an individual throughout his life, it is emphasized that the king should protect these two institutions.

Let us examine to what extent these ideals are incorporated in the policies of the state in those days. As already pointed out in the 6th chapter, very little information is available to understand the nature of the organization and policy of the state till the end of the Upanisadic period. The king was the head of the state. But functions of the king are not enumerated clearly in these texts. Occasional statements on statecraft lend support only to an inference on the nature of the state. It should be noted here that State is one of the several institutions that the intellect of the ancient people had evolved for the fulfillment of goals of life. The true nature of the State can be better understood if it is studied in the background of aspirations and intellectual achievements of people. This is reflected in the goals that the people have set before them; and the means that they have adopted to secure them. The ultimate goals that people have set before them provide the direction towards which the society strives to develop. Several social institutions which were developed have this as their objective. Obviously, in an important sense, the ultimate goals
and the social philosophy of a people bear the relationship of ends and means. To understand the true nature of means we have to take into consideration the goals that these means are supposed to achieve. I feel that for an evaluation of the true nature of the state, it is necessary to examine the ideas of state provided by the background of goals that those people had set before then.

In the Vedas there is no open evidence for any organisation and functions of the state. The way in which the king was addressed gives us some ideas of the functions of the kingship. The king was generally addressed as Dhoja, 'rājā', and 'Gopajayasya'. 'Dhoja' means one who is beautiful. 'Rājā' means gladness, and 'Gopajayasya' means the protector of herdsmen. The wealth of the Vedic people consisted of cattle thus indicating that most of the people must have been herdsmen. Protection of these people occupies an important place amongst the functions of the State. This is suggested more clearly, in the speculation of the later texts on the origin of the kingship. In these texts the origin of kingship is attributed to the needs for wars to protect the people from external aggression. Even though there is no speculation on the origin of kingship in the Vedas there are references to kings winning wars. This clearly shows that there were frequent wars and that the king played an important role in the protection of people from external aggressions. The titles of king as 'Dhoja' and 'Rājā' are of particular interest to us here. These titles suggest
that the king is distributed wealth among people and thus made them happy. Such statements do not convey that the king adopted this as a universal policy nor that he extended such help to all people who were in need of such help. For example, the victory hymn of Atharva Veda gives expression to the pleasant feelings of the people towards king Parikshit for his good rule but does not explain how such a happy condition of plenty was brought about by the god-like king Parikshit.

In the absence of authentic supporting information on the nature of the state we cannot take these statements for granted and conclude that it represents the true picture of the nature of state of those times. To be called as 'gladdener' of a people the king should take active measures which would bring happiness to people. The happiness of people lies in the fulfilment of their aspirations. The aspirations of people as depicted in the Vedic hymns show that they were naive and sought after pleasures of this world. They desired wealth, grain and other things in plenty. They were afraid of disease and death. They viewed a life of plenty as a happy one and strived to achieve it. To secure what they wanted and could not, and to keep away from that which they disliked, they prayed to the gods. They also looked to the help of the king and pleaded for generous gifts. Even there they prayed to the gods to route the help through the king. This will show the enormous faith that these people had in the powers of gods in bestowing on them what they want. And as such they did not
view the king as a protector of all their interests. This indicates that the notion kingship was still only a developing institution during this period. This can be strengthened if we consider the true nature of other institutions and concepts that developed during those times.

The Vedas demonstrate man's effort to understand the ultimate reality. But they do not arrive at satisfactory answers to fundamental questions on the true nature of such reality. In the absence of true conception of the reality they imagined gods who were supreme and omnipotent and ultimate sources of reward. So then the ultimate and the individual are clearly distinct. The ultimate has to be pleased before it could yield the desired effects. Nature is the giver. Man is the receiver. One is the omnipotent and the other is the dependent. The effort of man was only confined to pleasing the gods. More often this took the form of performing ritual worship. Society was not yet organised into the castes; and the stages of life were yet to be introduced. The pattern of life of an individual was not well systematised as it was centered round such ritual worship and they did not conceive of a plan of life for an individual. People who were in this stage of development did not imagine that the king could do anything beyond rendering protection. Such protection was from external threats, rather than for preservation of order. This was the function of the king. Hence, distribution of wealth and preservation of order were not looked upon as duties
of the king. However, it is strange that people who were so concerned about secular life and its safety did not imagine the king to perform wider role in the life of the society. It can be observed at this stage that these people were not yet completely got rid of their nomadic life and temperament, and could not think of any thing beyond what God could have accomplished for them. This point will become strikingly clear when it is viewed against the background of their enquiries about metaphysical problems. While these treatises are silent about their immediate problems such as defining the nature and powers of king, which would have been more relevant to their times, we find them devoting a great deal of their attention to solving metaphysical problems. Obviously, this attitude has made the temporal ruler insignificant before the omnipotent god.

The Brahmana texts do not suggest any breakthrough in the philosophy and life of the ancient Indian. This literature was greatly committed to sacrifices and their glory. In an important sense dharma means yajña (sacrifice). A king was called as kṣatrabhu, because by upholding dharma he upholds the whole realm. Thus it follows that by performing yajña the king will be upholding the whole realm. The kings remained true to this as they encouraged and performed sacrifices regularly. The power of sacrifice was also believed to be immense. An important consequence of this belief was it greatly affected
their faith in the extraordinary powers of the gods. The kings and gods could be empowered only through the potency of sacrifices. So these texts did not hesitate to equate a few kings with the gods. Another important development of this outlook was to people who possessed key knowledge of the performance of sacrifices, secured an important place in the society like the kings. These people, the brahmans, continued to play an important role in the development of Indian thought all through the ages. It was they who conceived the theoretical background for the construction of an ideal state in the later period. However, these people who commanded the equal status with the kings were prohibited from taking up reign of kingdom. This is one of the strong reasons for the failure of the ancient Indians to develop either diffusion of power or a strong counter force to the king. The brahmans who possessed the necessary background to assume such a position remained only as advisers to kings and thus became king-makers in later history.

The philosophy of Upanisads presents a synthesis of the thought of the earlier and later portions of the Vedas. The Vedas believed that relief from suffering and fulfillment of their desires of life depend upon the pleasure of the Gods. On the other hand the Brahmana texts maintained that such power lies exclusively in the performance of the yajna. For them neither Gods nor men possess any power. The source of all
spiritual and secular power in the yajna. The central theme of these philosophies suggests that for the fulfillment of one's desires an individual has to depend upon an external agency like the God or sacrifice rather than look forward to the help of social institutions like kinship. A remarkable outcome of the synthesis of the Upanisadic philosophy is the development of an extraordinary faith in the expiation of sin, for, it holds that an individual can secure relief from suffering by his own power, and one need not depend on the power of any external agency like gods or sacrifices. According to Upanisads man is divine, but due to ignorance he is not conscious of this truth and is subjected to a cycle of births and deaths. As it is coercion which involves an individual in suffering one has to escape from it to avoid suffering. An individual has to transcend the cravings of this world to become conscious of his true self. All actions bind an individual to thoughts of this world alone. As such he cannot get out of ignorance and know about true nature of the self. In this sense all schools of Indian philosophy stress that good actions must be performed to overcome ignorance, because it is an obstacle to Brahmavidya. To notice that after the Upanisadic period a stress on good life, explained as life according to the principles of dharma becomes increasingly evident.

Upunigada have not received the functions and ideals of the state. From the activities of the kings we can infer that they were, as the pursuit of higher knowledge. They should have also tried to bring about conditions that were conducive for the usual life of the people. The statement of Anunigada, an Upunigada king, highlights this point. According to him in his kingdom there was no theft, no lying, no drunkenness, no one ignorant and none uneasy. It shows that people were adhering to principles laid down by Upunigada and following the principles of dharmas. There is absolutely no evidence available to show how and by what policy of the king such an ideal was put into practice.

A partial answer to these questions might be found in the Mahasuttaravas. The Mahasuttaravas present a fairly developed form of society. In the title suggests the nature of these texts explain the principles of dharmas. They explain the right and the wrong. Observance of principles of dharmas had become an important factor in the life of a man. The four varnas and several jatis, castes and their duties were established. The goals that are set before men are clear. An escape from suffering and realization of release is the goal that man has to achieve. In this process of liberation that is involved in samsara, an individual has to pay attention towards intermediary goals. He has to avoid hell and try to realize heaven. All depend upon the merit an individual gains by adhering to principles of dharmas. An individual dharma is
Amma,ocrates or the varamitasadharma are individual responsibilities to live according to them. From the individual's point of view, varamitasadharma are very important. Hence, the king is ordained to uphold varami and maintain discipline. These texts also call the king as sustainer, 'varamitra vatsara'. The relief measures suggested by dharmastra texts to the distressed are quite striking. These texts suggest tax reductions to certain categories of people like students, wards in Vedas learning, women, orphans, widows, children, sick, old and a few others. According to these ancient texts, 1/6 of the wealth of an individual was collected as tax. But the above categories of people possessed no personal wealth and no such tax exception may not bring about any change in their living conditions.

For other categories listed down by these texts, not this demand. It is ordained that various categories of people who cannot earn their living should be provided with necessary living conditions at the king's expense.

According to these texts, no one in the kingdom should suffer from hunger and violence. The king was expected to provide food, clothing, lodging, and medicine to the needy. And also the widows, the disabled people, aged people and infirm were to be taken care of by the king. This responsibility of the king to render necessary help to the needy indicates the concept of dharmastra over kingly obligation towards his subjects. It also suggests identity of interests of the ruler and the people. However, except these few statements there is
no other information in chramacatra texts regarding public relief undertaken by the king. The ideals expressed here are lofty, and we see that the later texts also have borrowed these lofty ideals. The information available in these texts is inadequate to arrive at any conclusion on the real nature of the state and the public relief policy adopted in ancient India during chramacatra period.

The motivating force of Buddhism was also an escape from samsara, which is the cause of suffering. The solution was found in the idea of a 'middle way', a doctrine which was rooted in the Upanisadic tradition, but was considered to be more within the reach of the common man. The main emphasis of Buddhism was laid on righteousness. Buddhism revolted against the abuses of the caste system. It tried to rectify the dangers of sandala system by introducing the cācavattī ideal. Even in the consolidation of the kingdom under the rule of a universal king, Buddhism slightly deviated from Brahmanical tradition and preserved its own character. The pattern of consolidation is similar to that of the Horse sacrifice (āvasamadha yāga). In the Horse sacrifice the conquering king followed the horse and conquered those kings who captured the horse and resisted his advance, in a dharm yuddha; whereas the universal king of Buddhism follows the policy of ahimsa. The universal king does not fight but brings others under the rule of dharma nokka through the policy
of diet. To this extent Buddhism was a protest against the
mispractices which had crept into the Brahmical thought and
ritual. Buddhist texts give utmost importance to the righteous
rule of the king. Hence it holds that the happiness and
suffering of people depend on chassis of the king. The cardinal
principle of Buddhist texts is its chimera. Buddhist texts
advocate that not only the end but even the means should be
righteous. This appears to be one of the stumbling blocks to
the development of Buddhist political philosophy. In view of
this outlook a clear line could not be drawn between political
life and practical life in Buddhist thought. The righteousness
of king and righteousness of people was sufficient to bring
about an ideal kingdom where every individual can live happily.
There are occasional references to state relief in these texts.

Occasionally we come across statements in these texts
that advise the king to distribute certain goods to the needy.
For example, it is stated that the wheel of righteousness
(Dhammacakkha) that had disappeared will reappear if a Cakkavatti
performs among many things, distribution of wealth to the poor.
These measures are only palliative rather than curative. The
right way of improving conditions of people according to
Buddhists is to furnish seeds to the peasants, capital to the
trader and suitable employment for those who wish to serve the
state. The best way of spending surplus accumulation of
wealth would be in public works such as digging wells and water
ponds and planting groves along the roads. This suggests that the Buddhist texts are paying more attention towards policies leading to permanent solutions rather than short lived services of the state. This is reflected in their policy concerned with the improvement of the economy of the society as a whole rather than in the distribution of wealth and goods to the people. For Buddhist permanent relief is possible only when the cause that affects is eliminated at the root.

The Buddhist monastery has played a very important role in rendering the necessary help to the needy. The accumulated monastic wealth often provided some of the capital so badly needed to undertake this task. The ecclesiastical institution of the Buddhists was a very large body of organization and it could penetrate deep into the social structure. These monasteries participated in relief activities and offered loans to farmers and traders, and offered generous charities in times of famines. Monasteries could effectively participate in relief activities on account of two important factors. Firstly they could secure the necessary funds through grants from kings and other rich private individuals, and also from the revenue received from the orchards and farms of monasteries. The second and most important factor is that the monks were not selfish but compassionate and hence were well suited to render such relief. This is because compassion, and lack of selfishness are basic to the right understanding of the miseries of

2. Mahavamsa, especially ch.33-36.
fellow human beings. The direction given to the monks will
pin-point the characteristics that were expected of the monks.
4 much was addressed thus: 'Go forth, O Bhikkhus, on your
wanderings, for the good of the mony, for the happiness of the
society, in compassion for the world, for the good, for the wel-
fare, for the happiness of gods and men, but not too of you
go the same way'.

The Buddhist seems to have purposefully kept the state
away from rendering help to the needy on large scale. This
is because the main emphasis of Buddhism is on righteousness.
Buddhism considers that when the king is righteous people
also become righteous because they follow the footsteps of
the king. Everything, even nature, gives a helping hand and
makes all people happy in such a kingdom. Hence a righteous
rule is sufficient to ensure prosperity. There is hardly any
need for state relief as every one will be prosperous by
virtue of their charity. This seems to be one of the main
reasons that made Buddhism, which is humanistic in its approach,
to pay very little attention to relief programmes in the state.

The post Buddhist period witnessed changes in several
aspects of social life. An important development is to be
seen in the conception of kingship. It is often repeated in
the texts of this period that the king is the custodian of the
welfare and happiness of the people. This function of the king

1. Nalavanga, I, 12, 1.
was not treated as merely an obligation but rather looked upon as similar to the attitude of the father towards his children. It may be stated that this ideological approach towards the kingship is not a deviation from the trends of the thought of the day. Rather it is a stage in the evolution of their conception of kingship. It was already seen that in the Vedas it is depicted that the people looked forward to the help of superhuman beings, the gods, to escape from suffering and to secure happiness and welfare. On the other hand, to escape from suffering and to secure happiness and welfare, the Upanisads maintained that the source of power lay within the man. This understanding has increased their concern over the actions of man. Naturally the king who is the supreme head of the state assumed importance in upholding the right actions of men. He has become the focal point now.

Two important strains of thought that are relevant to the understanding of the ultimate and for an escape from suffering yet established during this period. The higher speculative philosophy accepted in principle the Upanisadic stand that the reality is one with the individual. Another strain of thought accepted the reality of gods endowed with powers to secure for men what he desires. They also accepted the idea of svarga and naraka as the former as a goal worthwhile to pursue. The philosophy of life depicted in the dharmasastras, epics and other related treatises clearly shows, that the real middle path between two extremes of materialism
and spiritualism, is conceived and upheld by these thinkers. The general plan of life suggested in these texts shows that an individual can escape from suffering by following the varnasramadharma.

This is implicit in the statement that the king should preserve dharma and look into the welfare of the people. It means that the actions of the people should be properly directed as their welfare and happiness are dependent on actions they perform. In a sense king is the custodian of actions of all people. Society is a complex of people. Each individual acts in his self interest. While acting the individual has to take into consideration not only his interest but also the interest of others. Otherwise there will be a clash between interests of several individuals. The principle of dharma was expected to correct this situation. It not only guides an individual's action from the point of view of individual's interest, but also from the point of view of interest of the other individual or individuals. We have already seen that the purpose of action is to avoid suffering and also to secure happiness. All individuals of the society, with an exception of the sanyasi, who is associated to whom action and dharma are of no value, act in one way or other. All people do not act in the same way. At least in the context of a civilized society all cannot act in the same way. If the society is a complex one and the boundaries of the state are wide, as in the case of post Buddhist Indian empire the inter-
action between people will be more intense. In such a society the clash between the actions of different individuals could be more frequent and consequences will be extremely grave. People belonging to different regions will show lesser concern to the interests of the people of the other regions. To arrest the mutual conflict between these people and also between the people of the same region the state has to take up a very effective measure. The post Buddhist India achieved this by re-interpreting the concept of dharma. To assure the knowledge of dharma several sources were mentioned. The king was vested with power not only to uphold but also to establish what dharma is. The establishment of dharma itself was a stupendous task. Naturally the king was expected to be in possession of good qualities to accomplish this task. The king being the important authority in establishing dharma, the quality of dharma that is preserved depends upon the qualities of the king. If the qualities of king are high he will preserve and uphold dharma to a high degree. As a consequence suffering will be reduced to a minimum level. Figuratively it is explained that dharma is said to be on four legs, when it is implemented fully. This will lead to a very stable society where suffering is absent. When dharma is on three legs the stability is reduced and some degree of suffering is present. And for example when dharma is on one leg stability of society is brought down very far and a state of anarchy will be on the threshold. In such a state, suffering is present to a high degree. The king has to
strive hard to establish the dharma. The condition of the society depends on the stage at which the dharma is preserved. Obviously the king is the maker of the age. In the absence of a king, dharma cannot be preserved and anarchy will follow. People will live in suffering. As pointed out relief from the suffering was an important goal of ancient Indian thinkers. So the king as preserving of dharma was an important person to count upon. Hence, preservation of the institution of kingship assumed great importance during this period. This is well reflected in the measures taken for the justification and preservation of the kingship. As already seen one valuable contribution of Brahmanical religion of the post-Buddhist period was the significant place it assigned to the principle of apakā-dharma. It accorded apakā-dharma principle an important place and viewed it as a salvation of dharma. It did not adhere blindly to righteousness. It allowed one to adopt unrighteousness if the ultimate purpose was the preservation of dharma. Owing to this one ordained to be put into practice in selective situations. The spic, charaṇāutra, and other texts tried to emphasise this aspect. Nevertheless it appears that it might have been practiced more as a rule than an exception. This principle also given its fullest expression in the Arthasastra of Kautilya. Kautilya holds that the state should be preserved by any means. If situation warrant it should not be any hesitation to adopt even foul means to preserve the state. The spirit of approach of Kautilya is consistent with
A philosophico-historical viewpoint. According to speculations of the philosophical texts pertaining to this period, the state emerged to uphold dharma. That is, it came into existence when dharma began to vanish. In a way, the state is the true custodian of dharma. The state had to be preserved first if dharma has to be protected from destruction. This is justified in preserving the state even if it were to be by evil means. Ancient Indians did not conceive of election to this office. Especially when the kingdom expanded into a vast empire the king could not be chosen by popular will of the people. The people were not the source of king's power. The king's power had to be located in such a source that it could be justified. These texts attributed divine origin to kingship.

The divinity attributed to kings justifies his power. On the other hand, the divinity of kingship makes it obligatory for the king to uphold dharma. Like the gods he should make an effort to preserve dharma. In the Cita, Lord Krishna declares that he will emerge from time to time to preserve dharma. From this it can be inferred that when the king fails to preserve dharma and annul dharma, naturally the God would take up the responsibility on himself. As long as the king preserves dharma they can claim divinity. What follows from this is that if the king fails to preserve dharma his divinity also vanishes.

At times the king is also referred to as servant of the people. The reason behind such an opinion should have been this.
The institution of kingship was created to uphold dharma. That is, the duty of the king is to provide necessary conditions for people to enable them to pursue their respective dharma. Hence the justification of kingship lies in the service he renders by providing the necessary conditions for the pursuit of dharma.

The emphasis laid on āpādharma, the divinity attributed to the king and the consideration of king as the servant of the people – all these aspects of ancient Indian political outlook point out the authority vested with the king and also the responsibility entrusted to him. The authority vested with the king finds its justification only when he fulfills the responsibility of preservation of dharma. Obviously this means, preservation of the Varnāśramadharma. That is, the state should provide the necessary conditions and enable the people to pursue their respective varna and āśrama dharmas. If adharma prevails, the people do not adhere to their respective dharmas and also the strong try to exploit the weak. When adharma prevails in a society where economic activity is brisk and dependence of the people on the state is increased, the producer, the trader and the consumer will try to exploit one another and thus transgress the principles of dharma. The post Buddhist period presents the same situation. Certain measures are contemplated in the texts of this period to keep things in order, in trade and commerce. The state also took the responsibility of undertaking works like digging wells, construction of tanks and laying of roads in the interest of the public. These functions of the state indicate the development in the ideology of state during this period. The progress
seen in economic planning and in the execution of public works loses its value if we consider the relief measures of the state in times of calamities. The relief rendered by the state is too meager to compensate the probable loss and inconvenience of the people.

Thus we can see that even in the most developed form of theory on state craft, the ancient Indians did not consider the state to assume the responsibility of securing material well-being to all the people. Their conception of welfare also vastly differs from the modern concept of welfare. The modern concept of welfare is tied to material well-being of the people. Accordingly as suggested by Beveridge, the state should assume the responsibility of providing the necessary assistance to individuals to fight against the five evils - want, sickness, unemployment, squalor and ignorance. The underlying philosophy is that when such assistance is provided, the individuals will be free from the arbitrary restraints that are created by the society, and thus will be in a position to seek liberty in their own way. Nevertheless material welfare is subjected to the whims of market mechanisms, that is, demand and supply. If the supply of an important commodity is controlled or its supply gradually becomes depleted, it gradually affects the people and subjects them to great suffering. This is because, the people whose wants are already in increase find it difficult to adjust to the new situation. The very purpose of industrialisation and the creation of wealth which
aimed at reducing suffering seems to be failing. In the present conditions, the only control over the individual's wants is the availability of funds. An individual is supposed to have lived successfully if he had possessed abundant wealth and what wealth could procure him. The chief characteristic of the ancient Indian outlook is to be seen in providing a way of life that suggests moderation in wants. An extreme of this outlook is complete denial of material possessions—the sanyāsa. Sanyāsa is definitely looked upon as an ideal, but one must be competent to accept this asrama. The general opinion is that one should be sufficiently old to enter this asrama. Only exceptional people could enter sanyāsa immediately after the brahmachārya asrama. Even in the Grhastra asrama an individual is expected to live a life of restraint. He is cautioned against nourishing desires as they flare up like fire, when clarified butter is poured in. If we view from this angle, the ancient Indians definitely expected great moderation in the acquisition of material goods. This shows that spirituality is the keynote of Indian civilization. This is because they did not see this life as an end in itself. They viewed this life as one among the several births that an individual will take. It is extreme craving for the things of the world that makes the cycle of births everlasting. An individual can escape from this cycle if he trained his will and knowledge. Thus trained, he could become the spirit.