CHAPTER I

Social ideal in PÉli Literature

1. 0. Pre-Buddhism in India

India is well known as the land of spirituality and philosophy. Since ancient time Hinduism developed in India with four Vedas. Later Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism came up. Islam came to India from Central Asia.

India’s religions can be divided into two groups: religions of Indian origins and religions of non-Indian origins. Among these religions Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Judaism of are non-Indian origins. They come from outside. The followers of these different religions arrived in India at different times.¹

In India, religion plays an important role in the lives of people. India is a composite entity of people of different religions living together in peace and harmony. The main religions are Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism Muslim, Christian and sikh. The majority of the people in India are Hindus. In India the lives of the people are often entirely controlled by the dictates of their respective religions. It determines their upbringing, education, customs and habits, diet, occupations, dwelling-place, type of

¹. N. 59, A. L Basham, PP. 342-45.
home and in fact their whole social environment. Hence, in India also are referred to cultures.\(^2\)

### 1.0.1. The Indus Valley Civilization in India

The river Ganges and the river Sindhu were the cradle of civilization in India. In the third millennium B.C. a highly developed civilization became established, contemporary with the civilization of Egypt and Babylon. This was the dominant civilization in India from 2,800 B.C until at least 1,800 B.C. there is evidence of trading connections with Babylon, Egypt, Iraq and Iran. Excavations at Mohenjodaro and Harappa have revealed well-developed cities, with evidence of careful town planning with streets laid out on a grid system, brick-built buildings, drains, wells, watchtowers and street-lighting. Some houses had up to 30 rooms. Much pottery had been found, well-decorated. Steatite seals show importance of the bull. They were a literate people but until now their script cannot be read. They had an agrarian economy with cotton being grown in addition to subsistence crops.\(^3\) This predates the growing of cotton in Egypt. Their rulers may have been clergy and there was a highly developed spiritual culture. There is evidence of the worship of natural phenomena such as fire, trees and streams. There is a stone sculpture of what appears to be a

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\(^3\) Indian Philosophy, Vol, by S.Radhakrishnan, New Delhi, 1996, P.63-66.
man seated in meditation. The presence of burial objects indicates a belief in the hereafter, and all bodies were placed in a north direction with the head facing north.

The civilization collapsed between 1,800 and 1,500 B.C. We are not sure of the reasons for this. Certainly there were invasions by people known as Aryans who came from the area of what is now Syria and Iran, but it seems that the Indus valley civilization may already have been in decline before the arrival of the Aryans. There is some evidence that the city of Mohenjodaro was destroyed by repeated flooding. However, the literature of the Aryans does refer to frequent conflict and destruction of cities, so we may suppose there was fighting between them and the Indus valley dwellers and some of their cities may have been destroyed in this way. The indigenous people were forced to move south; they are known as Dravidians or Tamils.  

The Aryans came from the West and during a period of 1,000 years spread steadily. They consisted of many, independent tribes, ruled by kings, but they were united by a common language which was an early form of Sanskrit, known as the Vedic language. They also had a common way of life and religion. In terms of urban development the Aryans were inferior

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5. Sanskrit Arya= ancient Bactr. Airya=ancient Persian. Ariya, “the loyal ones”, people of one’s own clan. Herodotus (VII, 62) says that the Medes were called Arioi, “Arier” is therefore the common term used for Indians and Iranians. On the close relationship of the language of Veda with ancient Iranian.
to the Indus valley people. They lacked the technology and perhaps the will to keep their large cities in operation, preferring to live in small villages with houses made of wood, not brick. The cities of the Indus valley civilization were left abandoned.

The economy of the Aryans was a mixture of pastoralism and agriculture, with a position of prominence being given to the cow. Their society was organized into villages and tribes, ruled by kings with the assistance of assemblies. There was a division of labour: rulers, priests, and Ś|dras who may represent non-Aryans (i.e. conquered people from the Indus valley civilization) being integrated into the Aryan scheme of things. There was a reverence for natural phenomena and a gradual development of both political and religious culture. About 800-600 B.C. city life began again in a small way, and the state replaced the tribe as the political unit.⁶

There were two distinct religious and cultural traditions. The tradition of the Munis and ŚramaÓas going back to pre-Aryan time: wandering ascetics, yogis, sanctity attached to water. They had the doctrine of samsara, the idea that there is something basically unsatisfactory with the world and ultimate happiness can only be found in renunciation. The doctrines also included Karma (=action), an eternal soul, and mukti (=release).

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There was the orthodox, Aryan tradition, called Brahmanism, which was led by priests called Brahmins. Their ideas and philosophy can be understood from their writings which are known as the Vedas and the Upaniṣdas. The Vedas are the first literary scriptures of the Aryans and they are four in number. The word Veda means “knowledge” and the Vedas are considered the most sacred scripture of Hinduism referred to as the Sruti, meaning what was heard by or revealed to the rishis or seers. The most holy hymns and mantras put together into four collections called the Rig, SĒma, Yajur, and Atharva Vedas are difficult to date, because they were passed on orally for about a thousand years before they were written down. More recent categories of Vedas include the Brahmanas or manuals for ritual and prayer, the ĒraŌyakas or forest texts for religious hermits, and the Upaniṣdas or mystical discourses.

1. 1. Hinduism in India

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7. The word Upanisad comes from upa ni sad, “sitting down near.” It means “sitting down near” the as teacher to receive instruction. It gradually came to mean what we receive from the teacher, as sort of secret doctrine or rahasyam. Sometime it is made to mean what enables us to destroy error, and approach truth. Sa~kara, in his introduction to Taittiriya Upaniṣda, says: “Knowledge of BrÊhmaṇa is called Upanisad because in the case of those who devote themselves to it, the bonds of conception, birth decay, etc., become unloosed, or because it destroys them altogether, or because it leads the pupil very near to Brahmān, or because therein the highest God is seated.” See Indian philosophy, 1996, P. 137-138.

Hinduism is nothing but believing in a supreme being called Brahma, the Generator or creator, VisÓu, the operator or preserver; and Shiva, the destroyer. There are hundreds of other Gods and Goddesses. Some of them are Ganesh – the elephant headed God who is worshipped before starting any holy ceremony and Saraswati, who is the goddess of education; and LakshmÊ the goddess of wealth.

The Hindu religion had its origin in the concepts of the early Aryans who came to India more than 4,000 years ago. It is not merely a religion but also a Philosophy and way of life. It does not originate in the teachings of any one prophet or holy book. It respects other religions and it teaches the immortality of the human soul and three principal paths to ultimate union of the individual soul with the all-pervasive spirit.

Hindus worship gods with many different ways. Some go to the temple to offer flowers, fruits and sweets. Some people have a small shrine in their home usually in a corner of the house or a separate room where all members of the family worship. Some Hindus do neither. In Hinduism, going to a temple and worshiping god is not compulsory. The basic belief of Hinduism is that a person’s fate is determined according to his deeds. These deeds in Hinduism are called ‘Karma’.

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Hindus believe in reincarnation (rebirth) of life, that is, when a person dies, he or she is born again as a different living being in a different part of the world. The soul of a living is always alive. It is the body of that person that gets old or worn out and dies. Once the person dies, the soul is transferred to another body. Therefore, the aim of a Hindu is to get a way from this cycle of birth and rebirth. It is believed that, if one leads a good life, is kind and helpful to others, then that person will be more likely to get out of this cycle, or to say, will receive Moksha.\textsuperscript{13}

The main Hindu books are the four Vedas. They are Rig-Veda, Sama-Vedas, Yajur-Veda and Atharva-Veda. The concluding portions of the Vedas are called Upanisadas.\textsuperscript{14} Here are also other holy books like PurÜōas, RamÉyÈÓa, and MahÈbhÈrata etc. The different gods and goddesses in the Hindu mythology are derived from those books. Ramayana and Mahabharata are the most popular Hindu books.\textsuperscript{15}

There are four castes in Hindu religion arranged in a hierarchy. The highest caste is Brahman, and they are the priests of Hinduism, after them are the Kṣatriya, who are the warrior castes. After them are the Vaiśya castes, who are business people. The fourth one is Ś|dra castes. The people belonging to it are the common sevvents and workers. Below

\textsuperscript{13} S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1940 (Indian edition), vol-Part-I PP.. 151.209.
\textsuperscript{14} N. 62, PP. 47, 51.
\textsuperscript{15} N. 59, A. L Basham, P.299.
these four castes there are casteless, the untouchables. The four castes were not allowed to have any physical contact with the untouchables. Each caste is divided into many Sub-castes. The religious word for caste is variya (VarÓa) which means primarily the color and for Sub-caste JÈti. In the secondary verse religiously, people are born in a caste and it cannot be changed.

Each caste has some compulsory duties, which its members must do. Each caste has professional limits, which decides what profession each caste can follow. Each caste members can have social relations only with its caste members. Religiously this includes marriage and even eating with that caste member. It is to be noted that socially the caste system is different from the religious form of caste system.

Before Hinduism there existed another religion in India called Brahmanism and its followers were called BrÈhmanas. The BrÈhmanas were the spiritual and moral guides of the Indian society. The members of this religion were a close sect and others could not join it. They maintained their superior position in Hinduism. They also created the customs and traditions as per the teachings of the Vedas. One of the reasons why the Brahmanas accepted others to their religion was the

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18. For detail information about the castes and their compulsory duties please see A. L. Basham, The Wonder that was India, Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1956 (reprint), entitled Society: Class, Family and Individual, PP. 137-151.
fear\textsuperscript{20} of loosing their status as moral guides of priesthood of new religions that started in India, namely Buddhism and Jainism. The Brahmanas even accepted the Buddha as a Hindu God and part of his teachings and philosophy like non-violence is in accordance with their religion.

1. 1. 1. Social Situation At the time in India

Social life in India mainly rested “on the bedrock of Var\'\'{\v{e}}\v{s}rama organization, the classification of the members of society in four categories, and of each individual life into four stages, with an orthodox arrangement, fortified by sacred scriptural authority, of the duties and obligations of each caste and each stage.”\textsuperscript{21} The Var\'\{\v{O}\}a system, as an ideology of social determinism, was made instrument of controlling the production-relation. The social determinists subsequently suppressed people’s urge for freedom, equality and democracy. “The rituals and sacrifices of Vedic society gradually developed into a highly precise, elaborate and bloody cult that only profited the priests and outraged the conscience of an increasing section of the people.”\textsuperscript{22}

Next to the Vedas are the religious books known as the Brahman. Both were held as sacred books. Indeed the

\textsuperscript{20} N. 80, Vol- III, PP. 79-81.
\textsuperscript{21} Studies in the Buddhistic Culture of India, by L.M. Joshi, Delhi, 1967, P. 140.
brahmanas are a part of the Vedas. The two went together and were called by a common name the Śruti. There were four theses on which the Brahmanic Philosophy rested.

The first thesis was that the Vedas are not only sacred but that they are infallible and they are not to be questioned.

The second thesis of the Brahmanic Philosophy was that salvation of the soul- that is escape from transmigration – can be had only by the due performance of Vedic sacrifices and observances of religious rites and ceremonies and the offering of gifts to Brahmins. The Brahmins had not only a theory of an ideal religion as contained in the Vedas but they also had a theory for an ideal society.

The pattern of this ideal society they named ChaturvarÓa. It is imbedded in the Vedas and as the Vedas are infallible and as their authority cannot be questioned so also Chaturvarna as a pattern of society was binding and unquestionable. This pattern of society was based upon certain rules.

The first rule was that society should be divided into four classes:

1) Brahmins; 2) Kṣatriyas; 3) Vaiśyas; 4) Śdras.

The second rule was that there cannot be social equality among these four classes. They must be bound together by the rule of graded inequality. The Brahmins to be at the top, the
Ksatriyas to be kept below the Brahmins but above the Vaiśyas, the Vaiśyas to be below the Kṣatriyas but above the Ś|dras and the Ś|dras to be the lowest of all.²³

These four classes were not to be equal to one another in the matter of rights and privileges. The rule of graded inequality governed the question of rights and privileges. The Brahmin had all the rights and privileges which he wished to claim.

The caste system based on color (varōa) was now established, though not as rigidly as it became later. The essential difference was between the fair-skinned Aryans, who made up the top three castes of the priestly Brahmins, warrior Kṣatriyas, and artisan Vaiśyas, and the dark-skinned DĒsas, who were the servant Śudras, like women, could not own property, and only rarely did they rise above service positions. The Vaiśyas were the basis of the economic system of trade, crafts, and farming. The Vaiśyas were considered inferior by the Brahmins and Kṣatriyas, and a female was generally not allowed to marry below her caste, though it was common for a male to

²³ The following is the Hindu version of the origin of caste. “Brahmana created a son from his mouth and named Brahmana and bade him study and teach the Veda. But fearing the attack of wild beast, he prayed for help and a second son was created from his arms and named Kṣatriya to protect him. But employed as he was in defense, he could not provide the necessaries of life, so a third son Vaiśya was sent to till the soil, and finally to serve the other three classes a fourth son was created and was named Ś|dra.” See Rig Veda PP. 90-97.
do so. Even a Brahmin’s daughter was not supposed to marry a Kṣatriya.

The third rule of Chaturvarṇa related to the division of occupations. The occupation of the Brahmin was learning and teaching and the performance of religious observances. The occupation of the Kṣatriya was for protection of land. Trade was assigned to the Vaiṣyas. The occupation of the Śudras was service of the three superior classes. These occupations assigned to different classes were exclusive. One class could not trespass upon the occupation of the other.

The four rules of Chaturvarṇa related to the right to education. The pattern of Chaturvarṇa gave the right to education to the first three classes, the Brahmins, Kṣatriyas and Vaiṣyas. The Śdra were denied the right to education. This rule of Chaturvarṇa did not deny the right to education to the Śdras only. It denied the right to education to all women including those belonging to the class of Brahmins, Kṣatriyas and Vaiṣyas.

There was a fifth rule. According to it, man’s life was divided into four stages. The first stage was called Brahmachariya; the second stage was called Grahasthēshrama; the third stage was called Vēna prastha and the fourth stage was called Sannyasa. The object of the first stage was study and education. The object of the second stage was to live a married life. The object of the third stage was to familiarize a man with the life of a hermit, i.e. severing family ties, but without
deserting his home. The object of the fourth stage was to enable a man to go in search of God and seek union with him. The benefits of these stages were open only to the male members of the three superior classes. The first stage was not open to the Ś|dras and women. Similarly the last stage was not open to the Ś|dras and women. Such was the divine pattern of an ideal society called Chaturvarna. The Brahmins had idealized the rule and had realized the ideal without leaving any cracks or loopholes.

The fourth thesis of Brahmanic philosophy was the doctrine of Karma. It was part of the thesis of transmigration of the soul. The Karma of the Brahmins was an answer to the question: “Where did the soul land on transmigration with his new body on new birth?” The answer of the Brahmanic philosophy was that it depended on a man’s deeds in his past life. In other words, it depended on his Karma.

The Buddha was strongly opposed to the first tenet of Brahmanism. He repudiated their thesis that the Vedas are infallible and their authority could never be questioned. In his opinion, nothing was infallible and nothing could be final. Everything must be open to re-examination and reconsideration arises. Man must know the truth and real truth. To him freedom of thought was the most essential thing. And he was sure that freedom of thought was the only way to the discovery of truth.
Infallibility of the Vedas meant complete denial of freedom of thought.

For these reasons this thesis of the Brahmanic philosophy was most obnoxious to him. He was equally an opponent of the second thesis of the Brahmanic philosophy. The Buddha did admit that there was some virtue in a sacrifice. But he made a distinction between true sacrifice and false sacrifice. Sacrifice in the sense of self-denial for the good of others he called true sacrifice. Sacrifice in the sense of killing an animal as an offering to God for personal benefit he regarded as a false sacrifice. The Brahmanic sacrifices were mostly sacrifices of animals to please their gods. He condemned them as false sacrifices. He would not allow them even though they are performed with the object of getting salvation for the soul. The opponents of sacrifice used to ridicule the Brahmins by saying: “If one can go to heaven by sacrificing an animal why should not one sacrifice one’s own father. That would be a quicker way of going to heaven” the Buddha wholeheartedly agreed with this view.

The theory of ChaturvarÓa was as repugnant to the Buddha as the theory of sacrifices was repulsive to him. The organization of society set up by Brahmanism in the name of ChaturvarÓa did not appear to him a natural organization. Its class composition was compulsory and arbitrary. It was a

24. The BhagavadgÊtÊ presents her dishnct view on the Vedic sacrifice in the concept of YajÔacakra.
society made to order. He preferred an open society and a free society. The ChaturvarÓa of the Brahmins was a fixed order never to be changed. Once a Brahmin always a Brahmin. Once a Kṣatriya always a Kṣatriya, once a Vaiśya always a Vaiśya and once a Ś|dra always a Ś|dra. Society was based on status conferred upon an individual by the accident of his birth. Vice, however heinous, was no ground from degrading a man from his status, and virtue, however great, had no value to raise him above it. There was no room for worth nor for growth.

Inequality exists in every society. But it was different with Brahmanism. The inequality preached by Brahmins was its official doctrine. It was not a mere growth. Brahmanism did not believe in equality. The soul of Brahmanism lay in graded inequality. Far from producing harmony, graded inequality, the Buddha thought, might produce in society an ascending scale of hatred and a descending scale of contempt, and might be a source of perpetual conflict. The occupations of the four were also fixed. There was no freedom of choice. Besides, they were fixed not in accordance with skill but in accordance with birth.

On a careful review of the rules of Charutvarña the Buddha had no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that the philosophic foundation on which the social order was reared by Brahmanism was wrong if not selfish. It was clear to him that it did not serve the interests of all, much less did it advance the welfare of all. Indeed, it was deliberately designed to make
many serve the interests of the few. In it man was made to serve a class of self-styled supermen. It was calculated to suppress and exploit the weak and to keep them in a state of complete subjugation.

The law of *karma* as formulated by the Brahmins, thought the Buddha, was calculated to sap the spirit of revolt completely. No one was responsible for the suffering of man except himself. Revolt could not alter the state of suffering; for suffering was fixed by his past Karma as his lot in this life. The Ś|dras and women—the two classes whose humanity was most mutilated by Brahmanism, had no power to rebel against the system. They were denied the right to knowledge with the result that by reason of their enforced ignorance they could not realize what had made their condition so degraded. They could not know that Brahmanism had robbed them completely of the significance of their life. Instead of rebelling against Brahmanism they had become the devotees and upholders of Brahmanism.

The right to bear arms is the ultimate means of achieving freedom which a human being has. But the Ś|dras were denied the right to bear arms. Under Brahmanism the Ś|dras were left as helpless victims of a conspiracy of selfish Brahmanism, powerful and deadly Kṣatriyas and wealthy Vaiśyas. Could it be amended? Knowing that it was a divinely ordained social order, he knew that it could not be. It could only be ended. For these
reasons the Buddha rejected Brahmanism as being opposed to the true way of life.\textsuperscript{25}

Buddhism is a religion of kindness, humanity and equality. While the religion of the Vedas allowed animal sacrifice to propitiate the gods, Buddhism set its face against such sacrifices; on the contrary, it waged a merciless campaign against this practice. The complicated nature of the sacrificial ritual required the services of Brahmanas, who had specialized in that lore. The Brahman therefore came to hold a unique position in the social structure of the Indo-\textsuperscript{g}arian. Even K\textsuperscript{s}atriya and the Vai\textsuperscript{s}ya, who as dvijas (twice-born) enjoyed certain privileges in common with the Br\textsuperscript{h}mana, could not take as prominent a part as the Brahmana in the performance of the sacrifice. The \textsuperscript{Ś}dra on other hand was assigned menial tasks such as chopping wood and cutting grass for the sacrifices, and dragging to the sacrificial ground dumb animals like cows, bullocks and rams, with tears trickling down their faces. In this regard, Buddhist text describes as follows;\textsuperscript{26}

\begin{quote}
\textit{“tena kho pana samayena, k|Ôadanta brahmaÔassa, mahayaÔo upakkhaÔo hoti, satta ca ubasatÊni, satta ca vacchatarasatÊni, satta ca vacchatarÊsatÊni, satta ca azasatÊni, satta ca urabbasatÊni, Ôh|Ó|panÊtÊni honti yaÔatthÊya”}
\end{quote}

The Brahmin Kutadanta planned a great sacrifice: seven hundred bulls, seven hundred bullocks, seven hundred heifers, and seven hundred goats and seven hundred rams were all tied up to the sacrificial posts.\footnote{27} During the time of the Buddha, the Brahmin dominance and the caste system were so right in the Hindu social order, that the Ś|dras were completely degraded as a kind of non-humans. As Ghurye observes, “Manu declared roundly that a Ś|dra cannot commit an offence causing loss of his caste, so degraded was he”.\footnote{28} As Jayatilleke and Malalasekara explain, all basic human civil rights were denied to them. They were denied the equality of political opportunity. “Even if a Ś|dra mentions the name and class of the twice-born arrogantly, an iron nail ten fingers long shall be thrust red hot into his mouth.”\footnote{29} They were denied the equality of economic opportunity. The Laws of Manu say, “A Ś|dra, whether bought or unbought, may be compelled to do servile work; for he was created by the Self-Existent to be the slave of a Brahmin.”\footnote{30} they were denied the equality of social opportunity. A Brahmin “who instructs Ś|dra pupils” was penalized”\footnote{31} free access to wells and sometimes even the use of roads was denied to them”\footnote{32} Ś|dras were denied

\footnote{28}. Caste and Race in India, by Ghury, London, 1932, P. 84.  
\footnote{30}. The Laws of Manu, Tr. Buhler Sacred Book of the East, Voi. XXv, VIII, 271.  
\footnote{31}. Ibid., III. 183.  
\footnote{32}. Buddhism and the Race Question, G. P. by Malalasekara and K. N. Jayatilleke, Paris, Unesco:
religious freedom. “Not only was the Ś|dra denied access to religious instruction, he had no right, unlike the ‘superior’ castes (i.e. Brahmins, Kṣatriyas and Vaiṣyas) to be initiated or to have religious ceremonies performed for him. And lastly, the Ś|dras were denied equality before the law. “A Ś|dra committing homicide or theft suffered confiscation of his property and capital punishment, but a Brahmin was only blinded for such crimes.” It was in this social context that the Buddha preached his social philosophy.

It is important to realize that Buddha was the first religious thinker in the history to emphasize the equality of humanity. He firmly stated this by insisting that “the four classes equal to one another” (CattEro vannasmÈ). 33

In most other religions in the world, and in all religions prior to the Buddha, there is always a conception of an “elite or a superior group. Towards the end of the Agganna sutta, the Buddha shows how people from all classes could enter the Buddhist order of monks. 34 Here he gives two strong arguments to prove the equality of the human race. One is that before the moral law, persons of all four classes are completely equal. Whether it be a Brahmin or a Ś|dra, if one does bad action one will reap bad results. The second argument is those human beings have no difference at all in their spiritual capacities and

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33. MN, I.
34. DN, III.
therefore are all equal before the Law of Spiritual Development.  

1.2. Buddhism in India

The Buddha introduced his religion in the sixth century B.C. to Indian society dominated by Vedic culture. It is critical to glance briefly at the life of the Buddha, the founder of Buddhism. On the full moon day of May\(^3\), in the year 623 B.C,\(^4\) there was born at the Lumbini\(^5\) Park in Kapilavatthu\(^6\) on the Indian border of present Nepal, a noble prince named Siddhattha\(^7\) Gotama,\(^8\) who was destined to be the greatest teacher in the world. His father was king Sudhodana of the aristocratic Sakya\(^9\) clan and

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\(^4\) Corresponding to PÆli Vesakha, Sanskrit-Vaisakha

\(^5\) Unlike the Christian era the Buddha Era is reckoned from the death of the Buddha, which occurred in 543 B.C. (in His 80 year), and not from His birth. In the book of “Indian Buddhism P. 44-45” written by A.K. Warder the differences of the date regarding Prince Siddhattha’s life are found that 566 B.C. is for the date of birth, 537 B.C. for the renunciation of the Buddha and 531 B.C becomes for the enlightenment of the Buddha.

\(^6\) To mark the spot as the birthplace of the Buddha of mankind, and as a token of his reverence for him, The Emperor Asoka in 239 B.C, erected a pillar.

\(^7\) The site of Kapilavatthu has been identified with Bhuila (Bhulya) in the Basti district, three miles from Bengal and N. W. Railway station of Bahuan.

\(^8\) Sanskrit-siddhartha. Its meaning is ‘he who has achieved his object’.

\(^9\) This is the name of his gotra or gens and roughly corresponds to a surname.

\(^9\) This is the name of the race to which the Buddha belonged. Tradition holds that the sons of King OkkÈka of the MahÈsammata line, were exiled through the plotting of their step-mother. These princes, in the course of their wanderings, arrived at the foothills of the Himalayas. Here they met the sage Kapila, on whose advise, and after whom, they founded the city of Kapilavatthu, the site of Kapila. King OkkÈka, hearing of the enterprise of the princes, exclaimed- “Sakya vata bho rajakumara- Capable, indeed, are the noble princes.”
his mother was Queen Mahê Mêyê. His mother, on seven the
day after his birth, died and Pajêpati Gotamê, her younger
sister, who was also married to the king, adopted the child to the
care of the nurses.

According to the custom of the time, Siddhattha Gotama
married quite young, at the age of sixteen, with a beautiful
young princess named Yasodhara. The young prince lived in his
palace with every imaginable luxury available at his command.

King Soddhodana took all measures to prevent his son
from leaving the world as ascetic mendicant. He did all possible
arrangements for Siddhattha's enjoyments in order to prevent
him from undertaking a vow of homeless solitary ascetic life
style. But all of a sudden, confronted with the reality of life and
the suffering of mankind, he decided to find the solution- the way
out of this universal suffering.

At the age of 29, soon after the birth of his only child,
Rêhula, he renounced all worldly pleasures and donning the
simple yellow garb of an ascetic, alone, penniless, wandered
forth in search of Truth and Peace. It was an unprecedented
historic renunciation because he did it at the prime of manhood,
not due to poverty but in plenty.

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Hence the race and the kingdom they originated were known by the name Sakya. The Sakya
kingdom was situated in South Nepal and extended over much of modern Oudh. (See E. J.
Thomas, Life of Buddha, P. 6.)
For six years the ascetic Gotama wandered about the valley of the Ganges, meeting famous religious teachers, studying and following their systems and methods, and submitting himself to rigorous ascetic practices. They did not satisfy him, so he abandoned all traditional religions and their methods and went his own way. The new way, which He himself discovered was the Middle path, *Majjhima Paññipayā*, which subsequently became one of the salient characteristics of His teaching.

It was thus that one evening, while he was deeply absorbed in meditation seated under a tree (since then known as the Bodhi-or Bo-tree, ‘the Tree of Wisdom’), on the bank of the river Neranjara at Buddha-Gaya (near Gaya in modern Bihar), at the age 35, eradicated all defilements, purified himself and attained Enlightenment after which he was known as the Buddha, 'The Enlightened One'.

He was not born a Buddha, but He became a Buddha by His own striving. As the perfect embodiment of all the virtues He preached, endowed with deep wisdom commensurate with His boundless compassion. He devoted the remainder of His precious life to serve humanity both by example and precept, dominated by no personal motive whatsoever.

The exertions of the ascetic Gotama were ended; but those of the Supreme Buddha had only just begun. He had

43. Bv II. P. 380; BvA, P. 326.
strenuously worked for the attainment of liberation not for himself alone, but for all who were able to benefit by it. So began the task of his ministry, the spreading of the *Dhamma*, which he was to carry out untiringly for forty-five years.

After a very successful ministry of 45 long years the Buddha, as every other human being, succumbed to the inexorable law of change, and finally passed away in His 80th year, exhorting His disciples to regard His doctrine as their teacher.

Buddhism began as an intellectual and ethical movement in the six century B.C., with the first sermon preached by the Buddha to the five ascetics at Isipatana near Benares. It gradually spread during the lifetime of the Buddha along the Ganges valley and found its way into several kingdoms in North India between the Vindhya Mountains and the Himalayas. Kings and ministers, bankers and wealthy merchants, Brahmins and peasants became as the Buddha's preaching was a revolt against some of the accepted theories and practices of the day.

At the time of the Buddha's death, about 438 B.C., almost all the states in North India seemed to have been deeply influenced by Buddhism. According to the *MahaparinibbÈna sutta*, eight countries claimed on various grounds a portion of

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44. Athakho bhagavÈ anupubbena cÈrikaÑ caramÈno yena bÈranasi isipatanaÑ migadayo, yena PaÈ cavaggiyÈ Bhikkhu, tenupasaÈ kami. Vi, I, P.8.
45. Bhagavato sarÈEni aÈOhadhÈ samaÑ savibhattaÑ vibhajahi. DN, II, P.166.
the relics of the Buddha, which shows that he had already gained many ardent devotees in these states. Yet there is no evidence to show that the teaching of the Buddha had been adopted as the state religion in any of these kingdoms until long after his death.

1. 2. 1. Buddhism and Caste (VarÔa)

It was the Buddha who, for the first time as known to the history of mankind, attempted to abolish slavery and “invented the higher morality and the idea of the brotherhood of the entire human race, and in striking terms condemned” the degrading caste-system which in Indian society at time was firmly rooted. The Buddha declared:

“By birth is not one an outcaste,

By birth is not one a Brahmin,

By deeds is one an outcaste’

By deed is one a Brahmin” 46

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The Vēseṭṭha Sutta of the Nipāta (p. 112) relates that two young brahmins had a discussion with regard to what constitutes a Brahmin. One maintained that birth made a Brahmin, while the other contended that conduct made a Brahmin. As neither could convince the other both of them agreed to refer the mater to the Buddha.

So they approached the Buddha and presented their case before him.

The Buddha at first reminded the questioners that although in the case of plants, insects, quadripeds, serpents, fishes and birds there are many species and marks by which they could be distinguished, yet in the case of men there are no such species and marks. Then he explained how men differentiated themselves according to their various occupations. In conclusion the Buddha commented:

“Birth makes no Brahmin, nor non-brahmin makes;
This life and doing that mould the Brahmin true.
Their lives mould farmers, tradesmen, merchants, serfs;
Their lives mould robbers, soldiers, chaplains, kings.”
Another interesting dialogue concerning this problem of caste appears in the Madhura Sutta.\textsuperscript{47} The king of Madhura makes the following report to the Venerable KaccÈna.

“The Brahmins say thus, KaccÈna: ‘The Brahmins are the most distinguished of the four divisions into which the people are classified; every other division is inferior.’ The Brahmins alone are accounted pure, not those who are not Brahmins. The Brahmins are the legitimate sons of BrahmÈ, born from his mouth, specially made by him, heirs of BrahmÈ. What do you, Sir, say to this?”

The Venerable KaccÈna replied that it was an empty assertion and pointed out how a wealthy person could employ as his servant a member of any class or caste and how a vicious person could be born in a woeful state and a virtuous person in a blissful state despite their particular castes, adding that a criminal, irrespective of his caste, would be punished for his crime. He emphasized the fact that all joining the order receive equal honour and reverence without any discrimination.

According to Buddhism, caste or colour does not preclude one from becoming an adherent to the Buddha or from entering the noble order of the Sangha where all are treated as Ariyas. Fisher-men, scavengers, courtesans,

\textsuperscript{47} Majjhima NikÈya, II, 84, PP.83ff.
together with warriors and Brahmins were freely admitted into the order and were also given positions of rank.

Upāli, the barber, was made, in preference to all others, chief disciple in matters pertaining to the Vinaya discipline. Sunēta, who was honoured by kings and nobles as an Arahanta, was a timid scavenger. The philosophic SĒti was the son of a fisherman. The courtesan Ambapēlē joined the order and attained Arahantship. Rajjumēlē, who was converted by the Buddha as she was about to commit suicide, was a slave girl. So was Punnē whose invitation to spend a rainy season was accepted by the Buddha in preference to that of the millionaire Anēthapindika, her own master. Subhē was the daughter of a smith. Cēpē was the daughter of a deer-stalker. Such instances could be multiplied from the books to show that the portals of Buddhism were wide open to all without any distinction.

The Buddha provided equal opportunities for all and raised, rather than lowered, the status of people. In Buddhism one finds milk for the babe and meat for the strong, and it appeals equally to both the rich and the poor.

1.3. Women’s position in Buddhism

In Buddhism women’s position is unique. The Buddha gave women full freedom to participate in a religious life. The
Buddha was the first religious Teacher who gave this religious freedom to women. Before the Buddha, women’s duties had been restricted to the kitchen; women were not even allowed to enter any place of worship or to recite any religious scripture.

During the Buddha’s time in India, women’s position in society was very sub-ordinate to other members. The Buddha was criticized by the prevailing establishment when He gave this freedom to women. His move to allow women to enter the Holy Order was extremely radical for the times. Yet the Buddha allowed women to prove themselves and to show that they too had the capacity like men to attain the highest position in the religious way of life by attaining Arahantahood. Every woman in the world must be grateful to the Buddha for showing them the real religious way of living and for giving such freedom to them for the first time in the world history.

A good illustration of the prevailing attitude towards women during the Buddha’s time is found in these words of MÈra: ‘No women, with the two-finger wisdom (narrow) which is hers, could ever hope to reach those heights which are attained only by the sages’. The nun (bhikkhunÈ) to whom MÈra addressed these words, gave the following reply: ‘When one’s mind is well concentrated and wisdom never fails, does the fact of being a woman make any difference?’

The Buddha has confirmed that man is not always the only wise one; woman is also wise. King Kosala was very
disappointed when he heard that his Queen had given birth to a baby girl. He had expected a boy. Undoubtedly, the Buddha was vehement in contradicting such attitudes. To console the sad king, the Buddha said:

‘A female child, O Lord of men, may prove to be even a better offspring than a male. For she may grow up wise and virtuous, her husband’s mother reverencing a true wife. The boy that she may bear may do great deeds, rule great realm. Yes, such a son of noble wife becomes his country’s guide.’

1.3.1. Men and women are equal by spiritually

According to Agganna sutta, it says that the first people who occupied the earth came from Abhãsarakãya, the world of radiance. The people who came from Abhãsarakãya were called ‘satta’, the beings. They were not either man or woman. This was not created feature. They were the beings that were earlier in the process of resolution of earth plan. When the situation was restored on the earth, they came back. This is what the story says. These beings have lived so many thousand years ‘vassasatam vassatasa hassm accayena’. The different gender appeared simultaneously among beings as man and woman. Both man and woman came into existence from the

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48. Mallika sutta, Sagathavagga Pali of SN
original beings, *satta*. That is why both man and woman have the same position in the human race.

Buddhism does not prescribe sacrifice even for men. There is no sacrifice in Buddhism but it has various religious rights. These religious rights can be performed together by men and women. ‘*Upasatham*’ all observance in Buddhism can be participated in by women also. They can observe five precepts, then eight precept, then ten precepts and they can become *pabbajja* (*sikkhamana*) and finally they can become fully ordained nuns, full membership of the community of order that the Buddha had established. In Buddhism, it is not said that the duty of a woman is only to be a servant to her husband.

Spiritual equality of man and woman is accepted in Buddhism. There is a difference as far as physical stature is concerned. It is accepted and it is not major problem because women are weak by nature. There are two positions regarding human beings. The second one is called ‘*Puggalavemattata*’. Under the spirituality between two men is also different. The spiritual capacity of woman is also different from man. Nobody could say that women could not achieve anything spiritual. That is what Buddhism said. Buddhism says both man and woman are spiritually equal. All the attainments mentioned in Buddhism could be gained by woman. They can attain *sotapanna* and finally can become *arahan* also.
Generally a belief in the Indian society is that women could not achieve in spiritual highest. The dialogue between Somabhikkhunī and Mīra is very popular found in Saññyuttaniṃkhīya. Bhikkhuni says when one’s mind is well concentrated and wisdom never fails, does the fact of being a woman make any difference. According to Buddhism, women can achieve all positions that man has achieved.

So the only specific canonical texts that could be assigned to female disciples are ‘Theragāthā and Therāpadāna’ which are doctrinally not very important. Therefore the question that we should ask if both male and female disciples are spiritually equal and if the women attain arhatship as well as to extend the male attained why should not they preach the Dhamma to extend that male disciples preach? There is a problem like these when we take the spiritual equality into consideration.

Nowadays many religionists like to claim that their religions give women equal rights. We only have to look at the world around us today to see the position of women in many societies. It seems that they have no property rights, are discriminated against in various fields and generally suffer abuse in many subtle forms.

Even in the western countries, women like the suffragettes had to fight very hard for their rights. According to Buddhism, it is not justifiable to regard women as inferior. The Buddha Himself was born as a woman on several occasions during His
previous births in Samsara and even as a woman He developed the noble qualities and wisdom at that until He gained Enlightenment or Buddhahood. 

1. 3. 2. Bhikkhunī order in Buddhism

After the death of King Suddhodan, as both Princes Siddhattha and Nanda had renounced the world, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī also decided to enter the Sangha and lead the holy life. When the Buddha visited Kapilavatthu to settle a dispute between the Sākyas and Koliyas with regard to the irrigation of channels from the river Rohini, and was residing at the Nigrodha park, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī approached the Buddha and begging him to grant permission for women to enter the Sangha, pleaded thus:

“It would be well, Lord, if women should be allowed to renounce their homes and enter the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Tathāgata.”

Without stating his reasons, the Buddha straightway refused, saying:

50. Vinaya Texts, III, P. 320. Āguttara Nikāya, IV, 8, 6, 1, P.274.
“Enough, O GotamÊ, let it not please you that women should be allowed to do so.”

For the second and third time MahÊ PajÊpatÊ GotamÊ repeated her request, and the Buddha gave the same reply. Later, the Buddha having stayed at Kapilavatthu as long as he liked, journeyed to Vesali, and arriving there in due course, resided at the MahÊEvana in the K|tÊgÊra Hall.

Resolute PajÊpatÊ GotamÊ, without being discouraged by her disappointment, got her hair cut off, donned yellow garments, and surrounded by a great number of SÈkya ladies, walked from Kapilavatthu to Vesali, a distance of about 150 miles, experiencing many a hardship. With swollen feet, her body covered with dust, she arrived at Vesali and stood outside the porch of the Pinnacled Hall. Venerable Ānanda found her weeping and learning the cause of her grief, approached the Buddha and said:

“Behold, Lord, MahÊ PajÊpatÊ GotamÊ is standing outside the porch, with swollen feet, body covered with dust, and sad. Please permit women to renounce home and enter the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Exalted One. It were well, Lord, if women should be allowed to renounce their homes and enter the homeless state.”

“Enough, Ānanda, let it not please you that women should be allowed to do so.” Was the Buddha’s reply.
So Venerable Ānanda made a different approach and respectfully questioned the Buddha: “Are women, Lord, capable of realizing the state of a Stream-Winner (sotEPanna), Once-Returner (SakadÈgÈmi), Never-Returner (AnÈgÈmi) and an Arahant, when they have gone forth from home to the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Exalted One?”

The Buddha replied that they were capable of realizing saint-hood. Encouraged by this favourable reply, Venerable Ānanda appealed again, saying: If then, Lord, they are capable of attaining sainthood, since MahÈ PajÈpatÊ GotamÊ had been of great service to the Exalted One, when as aunt and nurse she nourished him and gave him milk, and on the death of his mother suckled the Exalted One at her own breast, it were well, Lord, that women should be given permission to renounce the world and enter the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the TathÈgata.”

“If, Ānanda, MahÈ PajÈpatÊ GotamÊ accepts the eight chief rules, let that be reckoned to her as the form of her ordination,” said the Buddha, finally yielding to the entreaties of Venerable Ānanda.

The eight chief rules are as follows:51

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51 Some of these rules will not be intelligible to the lay readers as they pertain to Vinaya discipline.
1), A Bhikkhunī, even of a hundred years’ standing by Upasampadā, should salute a Bhikkhu, rise up before him, reverence him, and perform all proper duties towards him though he had received the Higher Ordination that very day.

2), A Bhikkhunī should not spend a Retreat (Vassa) in a place where there is no Bhikkhu.

3), Every fortnight a Bhikkhunī should ask from the Order of Bhikkhus the time of Uposatha meeting and when a Bhikkhu would come to admonish them.

4), The Pavēraōa ceremony after the Retreat should be held by a Bhikkhunī in the presence of both Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunīs (to inquire whether through any of the three ways of seeing, hearing, or suspicion a wrong has been done).

5), A Bhikkhunī who has committed a major offence should under MĒnatta discipline in the presence of the Order of both Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunīs.

6), A female novice who is trained in the six rules for two years, should receive the higher ordination from the Order of both Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunīs.

7), A Bhikkhunī should on no account rebuke or abuse a Bhikkhu.

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52. The higher ordination.
53. The full moon and new moon days when Bhikkhus assemble to recite their fundamental rules.
54. The formal termination of the rainy season.
55. A form of disciplinary action.
8), Henceforth Bhikkhunīs should not give admonition to Bhikkhus, but Bhikkhus should admonish Bhikkhunīs.

These rules are to be revered, reverenced, honoured and respected as long as life lasts and should not be transgressed. When Venerable Ānanda mentioned them to Mahī Pajīpatī Gotamī she gladly agreed to abide by those eight chief rules. By their acceptance she automatically received the highest ordination.

Although for several valid reasons the Buddha reluctantly permitted women to enter the Sangha, it should be stated that it was the Buddha who, for the first time in the history of the world, founded a Sangha for women with rules and regulations. Just as he appointed two chief disciples, Venerable Śīriputta and Moggallāna for the order of monks, two chief female disciples- Venerable Khemī and Uppalavannī- were appointed for the order of nuns as well.

1.3.3. Social Attitude towards Women

In the pre-Buddhist days the status of women in India, on the whole, was inferior to others without honour. A daughter was nothing but a source of anxiety to her parents, for it was a disgrace to them, and inauspicious as well if they could not marry her: yet, if they could, they were often nearly ruined by their lavish expenditure on the wedding festivities.
The size of the dowry expected of the parents of a daughter, in order to procure her settlement in marriage, was of great significance and probably the chief factor in such arranged marriages, any prospective husband really marrying for this end. Following marriage the life of the wife was spent in complete subservience to her husband and his parents, and she was allowed little authority in the home and no part in public activities. If widowed, she became the possession of her father again, or of her son.

During the epoch there was a change, and women came to enjoy more equality, greater respect and authority than ever accorded them hitherto. The exclusive supremacy of man began to give way before the increasing emancipation of women. This was accelerated by the innate intelligence of the women themselves, until it was acknowledged that they were silently claiming to be responsible, rational creatures with intelligence and will. It became impossible for the men, steeped as they were in the Buddha’s teachings, not to respond to the constant proofs in daily life of the women’s capacity of devotion, self-sacrifice, courage and endurance. Thus they ceased to the animals than to themselves, and, on the contrary, became more acutely aware of the resemblances between men and women.

The Buddha preached to both men and women, and he gave talks to householders and their wives. The women set fine examples in conduct and intelligence, while the men, for their part, appreciated the Buddha’s teaching in the widening of the
field of women’s activities. Thus the tide turned, with the position of women becoming not only bearable but honourable: they were acknowledged at last to be capable of working as a constructive force in the society of the day.

The birth of a girl was therefore no longer met with despair, for girls had ceased to be despised and looked upon as encumbrances. They were allowed a good deal of liberty, and matrimony was not held before them as the end and aim of their existence. They were no longer regarded as shameful if they did not marry, and if they did they were neither hastened off to an early child-marriage, nor bound to accept the man of their parent’s selection.

As a wife a woman was no more a mere household drudge, but had considerable authority in the home and ranked as her husband’s helpmate, companion and guardian in matters both temporal and spiritual; she became regarded as his equal, and worthy of respect. As a mother she was definitely honoured and revered, and her position was unassailable. As a widow she could go on her way unabused, free from any suspicion of ill-women, no longer excluded from domestic festivities, considered capable of inheriting property and certainly of managing it. Under Buddhism, more than ever before, she was an individual in command of her own life.

1. 4. Buddha’s Attitude towards Human Welfare
The Buddha addressed sometimes himself to people who were in trouble. The PÈli texts depict him discussing with his hearers what he judged to be immediately relevant to and profitable for their respective present conditions. Everything he taught had a beneficial bearing upon someone's concrete quest and search. The immediate need, according to the Buddha, is to realize the nature of the difficulties and problems of human life and to adopt the right ways of removing them so that humanity may reach its supreme bliss. Thus the Buddha's main concern is to remedy and remove the suffering of mankind.

His gospel is the gospel of love advocating generosity, justice, gentleness, loyalty, serenity and compassion among human beings.\(^56\) His heart was full of love for mankind and for all living beings and his sole purpose was to dedicate his life to the propagation of his religion for the sake of mankind.\(^57\) He taught his religion to people for the purification of their minds, words and deeds, for the overcoming of sorrow and despair, the disappearance of grief and dejection, the reaching of the way, and the realization of security and salvation.\(^58\)

Compassion and concern for the welfare of mankind and of all living beings is frequently spoken of and recommended by the Buddha,\(^59\) and his compassionate nature has been famous down the centuries. It seems inconceivable that this should have

\(^{56}\) C P. SN. I, P. 89ff; AN. III, P. 39ff.


\(^{58}\) C p. AN. V, P. 194.

\(^{59}\) C p. A. K. Warder: India Buddhism, P. 64.
been without a very real foundation in history. In his declaration, "Then in speaking rightly of me one should say: 'A being (the Buddha) not liable to bewilderment has arisen in the world for the welfare, the profit and the happiness of many folk, out of compassion for the world, for the good, the interest, the well-being both of divine and human beings."  

Elsewhere, we learn that the Buddha does not assert a statement (a) which he knows to be untrue (abhita°), lacking in fact (ataccha°), unprofitable (anatthasañña°), unpleasant (appiya°) and disagreeable (amanāpā°) to others, (b) which he knows to be untrue, factual, but unprofitable, unpleasant and disagreeable to others, (c) which he knows to be untrue, lacking in fact, unprofitable, though pleasant and agreeable to others, and (d) which he knows to be unprofitable, though true, factual, pleasant and agreeable to others, and that he would assert at a proper time a statement (a) which he knows to be true, factual and profitable, though unpleasant and disagreeable to others and (b) which he knows to be true, factual, profitable, pleasant and agreeable to others.  

And the Buddha’s sound reason and purpose in justifying this attitude culminates in the statement, "It is that the Tathāgata has infinite compassion for the sake of all living beings." From the above passages it appears that special emphasis is laid on a
high estimation of the relationship of truth to its utility, which
further shows the coherence and consistency between the
doctrines themselves and their practical utilization on the part of
the believers 'Now, brÈhmin, I declare: one should not speak of
such things seen, heard, thought and known, by saying which,
unprofitable things increase and profitable things decrease.
Contrarily, one should speak of such things seen, heard, thought
and known, by saying which unprofitable things decrease and
profitable things increase.'\textsuperscript{64}

Thus, not every thing was revealed and taught by the
Buddha to his disciples, but only those things that he considered
profitable, benevolent, useful and good for them. 'Monks much
more in number are those things which I have realized and have
not revealed to you. Only few are the things I have revealed.
And why, monks, have I not revealed them? Because they are
not profitable and do not conduce to the principles of holy life,
aversion, detachment, elimination (of desires), tranquility, higher
knowledge, enlightenment and salvation. \textsuperscript{65} With his
compassionate purpose of promoting human interest and
welfare material, moral and spiritual, the Buddha, too,
recognized human dignity and free choice and never wanted
blind followers of his authority, who would accept and carry out
his instruction without examining, testing and trying its value,
necessity and reason. \textsuperscript{66} He encouraged people to follow him,

\textsuperscript{64} AN.II, P. 173f.
\textsuperscript{65} SN. V, P. 438; c p. V, P. 370.
\textsuperscript{66} C p. L. A. Govind: Psychological Attitude of Early Buddhist Philosophy, P. 67.
not for the sake of himself\textsuperscript{67} and not merely because of their faith in a claim of his 'Omniscience',\textsuperscript{68} but of their own free will, experimentation and insight into the truth of his teaching and, above all, because of their individual interest and welfare.

‘Now, look you, KÊlÈmas, be ye not misled by report or tradition or hearsay, nor by the authority of the Collection, nor by mere reasoning, nor by logic, nor by examination of reasons, nor after reflection on and approval of some theories, nor because it has a fitting (\textit{bhavya}) form, nor out of consideration; ‘The recluse is our teacher’ ...But KÊlÈmas, whenever you know for yourselves:‘ These things (\textit{Dhamma}) are...blameworthy ...to the wise, these things, when performed and undertaken, conduce to loss and suffering’,- then indeed, do ye reject them...But if at any time you know of yourselves: "These things are salutary, blameless and praiseworthy to the wise, these things, when performed and undertaken, conduce to well-being and happiness',-then, KÊlÈmas do ye undertake, conduce them and abide therein...\textsuperscript{69} When asked by King PasenadÊ as to whether there is any quality (\textit{dhamma}) by which man is able to acquire and maintain both kinds of welfare in this life and in the life to come, the Buddha replies, "Surely, \textit{MahÊrÊja}, diligence (\textit{appamÊda}) is the one quality by which man can acquire and maintain both kinds of welfare in this life and in the life to come, the Buddha replies, "Surely, \textit{MahÊrÊja}, diligence (\textit{appamÊda}) is

\textsuperscript{67} Cp. MN. I, P. 465,468. 
\textsuperscript{68} On his claim of 'Omniscience' and its exact meaning, MN. I, P. 483. 
\textsuperscript{69} AN. I, P.190ff.
the one quality by which man can acquire and maintain welfare in this very life and in the life to come"\textsuperscript{70} and in addition he utters the following verses:

Whose to length of days aspires, to health,
To beauty, or to heaven, or to the joys
Of the hightborn, if he in virtuous deeds
Shows diligence, he wins the wise man's praise.

He that is wise and diligent doth win
Twofold advantage: wins that which is good
In this life and wins good in life to come.
The strong in mind doth win the name of Wise,
Because he grasps where in his vantage lies.\textsuperscript{71}

\textbf{1. 5. \textit{Buddhism for Human Being in Society}}

This religion can be practiced by individual as well as in society. There are some who believe that Buddhism is so lofty and sublime a system that it cannot be practiced by ordinary men and women in the workday world. They think that one has

\textsuperscript{70} SN. I, P.86; cp. BKS. I, P. 111f.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.; C.A.F. Rhys Davids; cp. BKS.I, P.112.
to retire to a monastery or to some quiet place if one desires to be a true Buddhist.

This is a sad misconception that comes from a lack of understanding of the Buddhist way of life. People jump to such conclusion after casually reading or hearing something about Buddhism. Some people from their impression of Buddhism after reading articles or books that give only a partial or lopsided view of Buddhism. The authors of such articles and books have only a limited understanding of the Buddha's Teaching. His Teaching is not meant only for monks in monasteries but also for ordinary men and women living at home with their families. The Noble Eightfold Path is the Buddhist way of life that is intended for all people. This way of life is offered to all mankind without any distinction. When four aspects of life i.e., family life, business life, social life and spiritual life are satisfactorily harmonized, lasting happiness is gained.

The vast majority of people in the world cannot become monks or retire into caves or forests. However noble and pure Buddhism may be, it would be useless to the masses if they could not follow it in their daily life in the modern world. But if one understands the spirit of Buddhism correctly, one can surely follow and practise it while living the life of an ordinary person.

There may be some who find it easier and more convenient to practise Buddhism by living in a remote place; in other words, by cutting themselves off from the society of others.
Yet, other people may find that this kind of retirement dulls and depresses their whole being both physically and mentally, and that it may therefore not be conducive to the development of their spiritual and intellectual life.

True renunciation does not mean running away physically from the world. Sīriputta the chief disciple of the Buddha said that one man might live in a forest devoting himself to ascetic practices, but might be full of impure thoughts and 'defilements'. Another might live in a village or a town, practising no ascetic discipline, but his mind might be pure, and free from 'defilements'. 'Of these two', said Sīriputta, 'the one who lives a pure life in the village or town is definitely far superior to, and greater than, the one who lives in the forest'.

The common belief that to follow the Buddha’s teaching one has to retire from a normal family life is a misconception. It is really an unconscious defense against practicing it. There are numerous references in Buddhist literature to men and women living ordinary, normal family lives who successfully practiced what the Buddha taught and realized Nirvana. Vacchagotta the Wanderer,72 once asked the Buddha directly whether there were laymen and women leading the family life who followed His Teaching successfully and attained the high spiritual states. The Buddha categorically stated that there were many laymen and

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72. Vacchagotta Sutta of SN, IV
women leading the family life who had followed His teaching successfully and attained the high spiritual states.

It may be agreeable for certain people to live a retired life in a quiet place away from noise and disturbances. But it is certainly more praiseworthy and courageous to practise Buddhism living among fellow beings, helping them and offering service to them. It may perhaps be useful in some cases for a person to live in retirement for a time in order to improve the mind and character, as a preliminary to moral, spiritual and intellectual training, to be strong enough to come out later and help others. But if a person lives all his or her life in solitude, thinking only of personal happiness and salvation, without caring for his or her fellowmen, this surely is not completely in keeping with the Buddha’s Teaching which is based on love, compassion and service to others.

One might now ask, 'If a person can follow Buddhism while living the life of an ordinary person, why was the Sangha, the Order of monks, established by the Buddha? The Order provides an opportunity for those who are willing to devote their lives not only to their own spiritual and intellectual development, but also to the service to others. An ordinary layperson with his family cannot be expected to devote a life to the service of others, whereas a monk or nun, who has no family responsibilities or any other worldly ties, is in a position to devote his or her life 'for the good of the many'.

And what is this 'good' that many can benefit from monks and nuns cannot give material comfort to a layperson, but they can provide spiritual guidance to those who are troubled by worldly, family, emotional problems and so on. Monks and nuns devote their lives to the pursuit of knowledge of the Dhamma as taught by the Buddha. They explain the Teaching in simplified form to the untutored layperson. And if the layperson is well educated, they are there to discuss the deeper aspects of the teaching so that both parties can gain intellectually from the discussion.

In Buddhist countries, the Sangha are largely responsible for the education of the young. As a result of their contribution, Buddhist countries have populations which are literate and well-versed in spiritual values. The Sangha also comfort those who are bereaved and emotionally upset by explaining how all humanity is subject to similar disturbances.

In turn, the layperson is expected to look after the material well being of the Sangha who do not earn income to provide themselves with food, shelter, medicine and clothing. In common Buddhist practice, it is considered meritorious for laypeople to contribute to the well being of the Sangha to continue to minister to the spiritual needs of the people and to develop their own mental purity.\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{73} What Buddhist Believe, Dr K. Sri Dhammananda, Kuala Lumpur. 2002. P. 185.
1.6. Buddhism and The Modern Society in the world

It is the manifest suffering and folly in the world that invokes humane and compassionate social action in its many different forms. For Buddhists this situation raises fundamental and controversial questions. And here, also, Buddhism has implications of some significance for Christians, humanists and other non-Buddhists.

By 'social action' we meant the many different kinds of action intended to benefit mankind. These range from simple individual acts of charity, teaching and training, organized kinds of service, 'Right Livelihood' in and outside the helping professions, and through various kinds of community development as well as to political activity in working for a better society.

Buddhism is a pragmatic teaching which starts from certain fundamental propositions about how we experience the world and how we act in it. It teaches that it is possible to transcend this sorrow-laden world of our experience and is concerned first and last with ways of achieving that transcendence. What finally leads to such transcendence is what we shall call Wisdom. The enormous literature of Buddhism is not a literature of revelation and authority. Instead, it uses ethics and meditation, philosophy and science, art and poetry to point a Way to this Wisdom. Similarly, Buddhist writing
on social action, unlike secular writings, makes finite proposals which must ultimately refer to this Wisdom, but which also are arguable in terms of our common experience.

In the east, Buddhism developed different schools or 'traditions', serving the experiences of different cultures, ranging from Sri Lanka through Tibet and Mongolia to Japan. Buddhism may thus appear variously as sublime humanism, magical mysticism, poetic paradox and much else. These modes of expression, however, all converge upon the fundamental teaching, the 'perennial Buddhism'. This pamphlet is based upon the latter, drawing upon the different oriental traditions to present the teachings in an attempt to relate them to our modern industrial society.

From the evidence of the Buddha's discourses, or *suttas* in the *Dêgha Nikaya*, it is clear that early Buddhists were very much concerned with the creation of social conditions favourable to the individual cultivation of Buddhist emperor, Asoka (B.C. 274-236). Walpola Rahula stated the situation when he wrote that 'Buddhism arose in India as a spiritual force against social injustices, against degrading superstitious rites, ceremonies and sacrifices; it denounced the tyranny of the caste system and advocated the equality of all men; it emancipated woman and gave her complete spiritual freedom'. The Buddhist scriptures do indicate the general direction of Buddhist social

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thinking, and to that extent they are suggestive for our own times. Nevertheless it would be pedantic, and in some cases absurd, to apply directly to modern industrial society social prescriptions detailed to meet the needs of a social order which flourished twenty-three centuries ago. The Buddhist householder of the *Sigalovada Sutta* experienced a different way of life from that of a computer consultant in Tokyo or an unemployed black youth in Liverpool. And the conditions which might be favour their cultivation of the Middle Way must be secured by correspondingly different and more complex-social, economic and political strategies.

It is thus essential to attempt to distinguish between perennial Buddhism on the one hand and, on the other, the specific social prescriptions attributed to the historical Buddha which related the basic, perennial teaching to the specific conditions of his day. We believe that it is unscholarly to transfer the scriptural social teaching uncritically and without careful qualification to modern societies, or to proclaim that the Buddha was a democrat and an internationalist. The modern terms 'democracy' and 'internationalism' did not exist in the sense in which we understand them in the emergent feudal society in which the Buddha lived. Buddhism is ill-served in the long run by such special pleading. On the other hand, it is arguable that there are democratic and internationalist implications in the basic Buddhist teachings.
In the last two hundred years society in the West has undergone a more fundamental transformation than at any period since Neolithic times, whether in terms of technology or the world of ideas. And now in the East while this complex revolution is undercutting traditional Buddhism, it is also stimulating oriental Buddhism; and in the West it is creating problems and perceptions to which Buddhism seems particularly relevant. Throughout its history, Buddhism has been successively reinterpreted in accordance with different cultures, whilst at the same time preserving its inner truths. Thus has Buddhism spread and survived. The historic task of Buddhists in both East and West in the twenty-first century is to interpret perennial Buddhism in terms of the needs of industrial man and woman in the social conditions of their time, and to demonstrate its acute and urgent relevance to the ills of that society. To this great and difficult task the Buddhists will bring as their traditional boldness and humility. For certainly this is no time for clinging to dogma and defensiveness.\(^75\)

1. 10. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have delineated the situation in the pre-buddhist India while referring to the Indus Valley Civilisation and Hinduism. In addition to that I have discussed the social, ethical,

economic and political situation in comparison with ancient Indian culture.

After that I have shown about Buddhism with a brief biography of the Buddha and the Buddha's point of view on caste system. In this chapter, especially I have mentioned women's position from Buddhist point of view including Bhikkhunī order. And then I have discussed the Buddha's attitude for human welfare and how Buddhism is important to practice for their life to develop individual as well as in the society.

There are some who believe that Buddhism is so lofty and sublime a system that it cannot be practiced by ordinary men and women in the workaday world. These same people think that one has to retire to a monastery or to some quiet place if one desires to be a true Buddhist.

This is a sad misconception that comes from a lack of understanding of the Buddhism. People jump to such conclusions after casually reading or hearing something about Buddhism. Some people form their impression of Buddhism after reading articles or book that view only a partial or lopsided view of Buddhism. The authors of such articles and books have only a limited understanding of the Buddha's teaching. His teaching is not meant only for monks in monasteries. The Teaching is also for ordinary men and women living at home with their families. The Noble Eightfold Path is the Buddhist way
of life that is intended for all people. This way of life is offered to all mankind without any distinction.

According to Buddhism man's position is supreme. He is his own master and there is no other being or power higher than himself judging over his destiny: his success or failure lies in his own will, choice and strength that I have explained in this chapter. Apart from this, the Buddha taught his religion to people for the purification of their minds, words and deeds, for the overcoming of sorrow and despair, the disappearance of grief and dejection, the reaching of the way, and the realization of security and salvation.

In the next chapter, I will discuss about social relationship. The Buddha out-lined certain social responsibilities for his lay-followers. These focus on a series of paternalistic relationships between parents and children, husband and wife, teacher and pupil, and master and worker, and these are the basis of an ordered society according to SigalovEdasutta, which has been called the layman's social vinaya, is of considerable significance in depicting the responsiveness of Buddhism to its social milieu.