

**THE SOCIETAL RELEVANCE OF
THE THREE JEWELS AND
BUDDHIST ETHICS**



P K GOGOI (Editor)



**Buddha Study and Research Centre
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The Societal Relevance Of The Three Jewels And Buddhist Ethics : A collection of three essays on Buddhist philosophy, edited by Dr. P.K. Gogoi, Professor, Department of Chemistry, Dibrugarh University and published by Buddha Study and Research Centre, Sonari College, P.O. Sonari Dist. Sivasagar (Assam) PIN-785690.

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Co-ordinator's note

The present monograph entitled "The Societal Relevance of the Three Jewels and Buddhist Ethics" is the second publication from the Buddha Study and Research Centre, Sonari College, Sonari, Assam, which is an outcome of the research project "The Present Societal Relevance of Buddhist Ethics with Special Reference to Three Refugees." The title of the monograph speaks about its contents. We are grateful to the members of the advisory committee of the centre for suggesting the topic and its periodic monitoring. I acknowledge with gratitude the UGC, New Delhi for sponsoring the centre with financial assistance. I also thank Dr R Tamuli, Principal, Sonari College for his generosity in functioning the centre. Thanks also go to the contributors for their efforts to enrich the Buddhist studies, and the editor Prof. P K Gogoi for the pains taken to make this publication possible.

05 September, 2012

Paranan Konwar
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Foreword

The advent of Buddha, his rediscovery of noble truths and the ethical ways of living is a trailblazing event in the history of mankind. Just two thousand years prior to his appearance, the nomadic Aryan tribe invaded the urban centres of Sind valley, i.e. Mahenjodaro and Harappan people, and this is one of the causes, though sometimes controversial, leading to the disappearance of their rich culture.¹ The Harappan people were highly cultured, familiar to urban life, had their own script and had trade contacts with present western Asia. Regarding Aryan invasion, prominent historian D.N.Jha² writes "... even the Rigveda, the earliest text of Aryans, contains reference to the destruction of cities of the non-Aryans" The main source on the pre history of these people are the Vedas, the so called storehouse of knowledge and wisdom which was considered to be very sacred because of their assumed divine source. After Aryan invasion and occupation of north west part of present India, there were sporadic conflicts between the earlier non-Aryan and the Aryan group of people. In Rigveda itself there are many passages indicating great hostility towards the aboriginal people. The early Aryans were semi-nomadic cattle breeding people and did not have much knowledge of settled agriculture nor habituated to urban lifestyle. Jha has rightly said³ "... the early Aryans did not have an advanced technology even though their use of horses and chariots, and possibly of some better arms of bronze did give them an edge over their opponents. Their

¹ D.N. Jha : Ancient India- In Historical Outline, Manohar Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 2009, p. 41.

² D.N. Jha: Ancient India- In Historical Outline, Manohar Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 2009, p. 40.

³ D.N. Jha: Ancient India - In Historical Outline, Manohar Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 2009, p. 45.

knowledge of metals seems to have been limited...". In long run they developed tribal society with kingship equivalent to tribal chiefship. The king (rajan) ruled over his people (Jana). In the post vedic period, the political units called *janapada* developed and the instrument of administration were the tribal assemblies like *sabha* and *samiti*. The subjugated people of different culture and physical features were called *Sudra* and were treated more or less like slaves. Later on the rigid system of caste developed and the top of that hierarchy was occupied by brahmana caste who played the role of the teachers, social policy maker and worshipper of vedic gods on behalf of the people. Of the vedic gods the prominent were *Indra*, the vanquisher of cities and enemies; *Agni* – the fire god, a benevolent friend of humanity; *Varuna* – the moon god and god of rain. To get mercy of these gods the effective way was the proper sacrifice and prayer. During this period the great works of "Rsis" the priest poets appeared – who formulated the hymns for the gods for getting boons, made the inebriating *soma* for *Indra* and taught people how to make alters for *Agni*. The magic property of sacrifice, the concept of ultimate reality, Brahman, soul or *atman*, reincarnation / rebirth according to ones *karma* evolved during post-vedic period. Also formulated were the Brahminical texts called Upanisads where life and afterlife, dynamics and origin of the universe were discussed. But there were inner contradiction in such texts.

During and before Buddha's time, there developed several 'Ganas' or tribal clannish societies where one was elected to look after the welfare of the people and he got one sixth of the surplus produce. Chandrakirti, a fifth century compiler of Middle Way philosophy speaks of the king as a servant of the people (*ganadasa*) "Thou art only the servant of the people and thy salary is there in the form of the sixth part of the harvest. Thou must not be vain."⁴ Buddha was born in the Sakya *gana* which was subjugated

⁴ D.P. Chattopadhyaya: in *Buddhism: The Marxist Approach*, Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1990, p. 23.

by the chief of Kosala. Chattopadhyay has observed⁵ "if by *gana* is meant the tribal society (or at least strong relics of such society) and if the organization of such society up to the period of its disintegration (i.e. up to the period of the middle stage of barbarism) is known as primitive communism, then we are led by the Buddhist records to view Buddhist India as containing considerable patches of primitive communism..."

"The reference to so many *ganas* during Buddha's time shows how he was surrounded by primitive communistic societies, or at least very strong relics of such societies. What is more remarkable about the early Buddhist tradition is that the fact probably lingered in its memory as to how class-divided society with monarchical power, emerged on the ruins of an egalitarian society, and further how the growth of private property, consequent on the discovery of agriculture, was at the root of this great change" Although no full fledged state has yet emerged with the paraphernalia of standing army, courts etc. but because of accumulation of private property, power to drive the society concentrated in the hands of a few families, from whom the tribe's chief was elected.⁶ Thus the *ganas* were small tribal unit or society which later developed to a feudal state when the Brahmins and Kshatriyas became very powerful.

By the middle of the first millennium B.C. the people were already fed up with feudal exploitation and were waiting for new deliverance. With accumulation of wealth and power the people felt the assertion of new identity. In this connection the observation of Kosambi⁷ is worth noting: "The neo-vedic pastoral class of *vaisyas* within the tribe was replaced by agriculturists for whom the tribe had ceased to exist. Traders had

⁵ D.P. Chattopadhyaya: in *Buddhism: The Marxist Approach*, Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 20-21.

⁶ R.B. Sharma: in *Buddhism: The Marxist Approach*, Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1990, p. 55.

⁷ D.D. Kosambi: *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 2002, p. 100.

become so wealthy that the most important person in an eastern town was generally the *sreshthi*. The term, not known earlier, is derived from the word for 'superior', or 'pre-eminent'. The *sreshthi* was actually a financier or banker, sometimes the head of a trade guild. Even absolute, despotic kings treated these *sreshthis* with respect, though they had no direct voice in politics. However, the prime indicator for the new class in the changed significance of the word '*gabapati*' (Sanskrit, *grihapati*); literally 'lord of the house', equivalent hereafter to the Roman *pater familias*. ... The *gabapati*, as the executive member of the new propertied class, could do what he liked with the riches at his disposal, though obliged to support member of the household and bound by the inheritance laws of his kinship group; but he was no longer bound by tribal regulations." No wonder that in such a social structure, the people refused to accept the sacrificial rituals, including Brahmin teachers. The social background was also fertile for development of materialistic philosophy. Generally goes by the name of *Lokayata* school, mainly due to Ajitakesakambali, though chief propounder was Carvaka whose works are lost. For the Carvakas, the followers of Brihaspati, the matter is held primary, mind and consciousness are its secondary derivatives. "Consciousness is a quality of the body. It originates from material particles when they mysteriously combine and become transformed into a human organism ... with the dissolution of the body, consciousness disappears and each of its constituent element is mingled with its kind leaving behind only ashes".⁸

The idealist school based on speculative philosophy on the other hand believed on a supreme cause – the Brahman and each living entity has an *atman*, the root of consciousness, which has infinite cycles of birth and death. Oldenburg

⁸ Tarapada Chowdhury: History of Philosophy: Eastern and Western, Vol-I, Pp 135; cited by R.B. Sharma in *Buddhism: the Marxist Approach*, Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 58-59.

observed⁹ "an enquiry into the otherworldly order of things behind and beyond their world, the related problems of death and everything that comes after death has seriously occupied the minds of the Indian thinkers from very ancient times.

"They begin where the chaos of ancient concepts of life in the world and happening clears up. There concepts emerges mostly from the primitive past, paving the way for the powerful idea of the Brahman, the Supreme Being. Here emerges, beside the hope of joyful afterlife in the company of divine world-rulers, an outsoaring longing for departing into the peaceful quietude of eternity.

"This stage of development exists in those older texts which are attributed to the Veda and which are called 'Upanisads'".

As opposed to both extremes i.e. materialism and idealism, Buddhism took position in between, with teachings based on social reality related to mundane world. Buddha opposed "unrestrained individualistic self-indulgence and equally individualistic but preposterous ascetic punishment of the body. Hence its steady rise, and its name 'The Middle way'¹⁰. The four noble truths and noble eightfold path are most useful not only for the society but also in individual level for attaining Nibbana, the snapping of causal chain of birth and death. The law of dependent origination is the central point in the Buddhist theory of causality. In the world we live in, everything is relative, impermanent, subject to change, birth and death. There are twelve links in the causal wheel of dependent origination. The world is a flux "a conglomeration not of things but of events".¹¹

⁹ Hermann Oldenburg : The Doctrine of the Upanisads and the Early Buddhism (Tr S.B.Shrotri) Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi, 1991, p. 1

¹⁰ D.D. Kosambi : The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 2002, p. 105.

¹¹ R.Sankrityayan: in *Buddhism: The Marxist Approach*, Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1990, p. 5

Regarding mind and matter there are some minor differences in Buddhist Philosophy. The Buddhist idealist consider the mind to be only reality – which is in dynamic flux, while others consider separate identity for mind and matter. Even the dualists consider that mind is not absolutely different from matter, they say that “like water and the waves, the world of matter is a transmutation (*parinama*) of mind. This is akin to Hegelian philosophy¹¹. Along with the four noble truths the noble eightfold path form the foundations of Buddhist ethical ways of life. Buddha’s views on society, *kamma*, and *anatta*, impermanence, moral values, dependent origination brought about a radical social change; with his principle of equality contained in *catuvanna parisuddhi*, he freed all from the prevailing caste prejudices started by the Aryan tribes thousand year prior to him. As a social reformer Buddha was per excellent. Like in all tribal societies, the ideas of Buddha helped to germinate the seeds of primitive communism in the form of *Sangha* and his advice “that the essence of the strength of a corporation lies in the unity among its member”¹⁴ is significant.

In the following pages, the authors have discussed the present societal relevance of Buddha’s ideals and ethical ways. This was the subject matter of a minor research project conceived in the advisory committee meeting of the Buddha Study and Research Centre, Sonari College, Sonari, Assam. We are grateful to the University Grants Commission, New Delhi for sponsoring the project with financial assistance and the College Authority for generosity. We also thank the authors for their contribution and efforts to enrich Buddhist Studies.

Dibrugarh
15 September 2012

P.K. Gogoi
Editor

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Buddhism and Its Relevance to Contemporary Thoughts

Dr. Girish Baruah

Introduction

Buddhism is a religion without metaphysics. It relies mainly on moral conduct. Its overall importance on ethics has compelled it to deny God, Who is supposed to play a role in human affairs. Moreover when we bring into the concept of God, man's responsibility for his work remains diminished. The Buddhist maxim '*bahujana hitaya bahujana sukhaya*' presents an import of socio-economic goodness. Monks and nuns of this cult are enjoined to dedicate their life for the good of the world. It prescribes economic communism for them. The *Sangha* concept brings up the idea of the commune. So the philosophy of *Sangha* depicts a community life without impairing the importance of the individual. Properties or wealth do not belong to individual persons but to the community as a whole.

Eternal dynamism is the 'chief tenet of Buddhism. That nothing is eternally static is the motto put forward by it. Transience is the chief characteristic of the things of the world. That means a thing or phenomenon exists for a moment only. It means that every moment a thing is changing. A thing does not change at a particular moment; it changes incessantly without any break or gap, although this change is not always perceptible. Buddha has risen at a time when the Upanisadic philosophy which believes in eternal motionlessness of reality has been in the ebb. Atmavada is the main theme of the Upanisads which lay over-all

emphasis on the reality of the atman and its identification with Brahman, the so called ultimate reality. Both the atman and Brahman are eternal and unchangeable. Buddha has risen against this eternal philosophy and has put forward the philosophy of transience (ksanikavāda) instead. Against the atmavada of the Upanisads it presents anātmavāda. Any eternal substance, either spiritual or material, is denied by Buddhism. In this way Buddha is very critical of the established tenets of the Upanisadic philosophy. Dharmakīrti, for example, a seventh century Buddhist philosopher, has made violent attack against the established tenets of Upanisadic philosophy. He has mentioned five characteristics of stupidity of this philosophy in the following language: "Vedaprāmāyāṃ kasyacit kartrivādah snane dharmechhā jativadvalepah. Sanatapaamth papahanaya ceti dhvastaprajnanam panca lingani jady." Rahul Sankritayan translates it in the following language: "Accepting the authority of the Veda and someone as the creator, the desire of getting merit through the holy dip, the vanity of casteism and torturing the body to redeem the sins — these are the five characteristics of stupidity."

Buddha, as we know well, has been the champion of the oppressed. He has championed the cause of the humble and the wretched who have been neglected by the Upanisadic philosophers. He has fought for the poor and despised the rich and privileged classes. This is the reason why people of mean origin have occupied important places in the Buddhist order. Upati, for example, has been a barber who has been the chief after Gotama. Sunita has been a pukusa (one of the low tribes), Sati has been of the son of the fisher folk and Nanda and Purnikā have been slave girls, Sumangalamata has been the daughter of a mat-weaver and Subha has been the daughter of a smith.

Buddha has prescribed certain conditions for the welfare of a community and in this context he says, "So long, O mendicants, as the brethren foregather often, and frequent the formal meetings of their order, so long as they meet together in concord,

and rise in concord, and carry out in concord the duties of the order... so long may the brethren be expected not to decline but to prosper...". The purport of this statement is that the real vitality of a society is derived from its group life.

Buddha has been mainly concerned with human suffering and has been interested in finding out the way out. His four noble truths stand for the teaching that suffering is inevitable and it has causes or conditions. When these causes can be eradicated suffering can also be eradicated. Man needs to free himself from the tyranny of pain.

Buddha is respected and revered by all in India and abroad as a great social reformer. He raises his philosophy by revolting against scholastic philosophy which does not have any social role. He believes in free thinking and therefore comes out of the web of scholasticism. Reality is not a thing as the scholastics teach, but a process. Flow is the essence of this process. Every moment the cause is giving rise to its effect thereby bringing an end to itself.

Buddhism plays a revolutionary role by preaching equality, attacking the system of varnas, and giving hope to the downtrodden. His philosophy of transience preaches that what is going on in society cannot go on forever. The old things must give way to the new ones, as the newness is bound to come. What is in existence now must pass away. The new thing must come into existence. The old is not always gold, it must give way to the new. The time factor is very vital in this context, because time changes everything.

Buddha's revolutionary ideas have worked in every field: physics, chemistry, logic, poetry, social customs, language and even in script. His philosophy serves as a lever of social transformation. Engels, an astute Marxist thinker, speaks rightly of Buddhism in the following language, "Great historical turning points have been accompanied by religious changes only so far as the three world religions which have existed up to the present

— Buddhism, Christianity and Islam — are concerned”.¹ Buddha is a follower of the middle path. It is a wholesome path, because it avoids extremism of the sides. (He preaches this middle path in his first sermon.) The two extreme sides are excessive worldly enjoyments and too much self-mortification. Nagarjuna has given it the philosophical implication by bringing into the concept of sunyata. By sunyata he means that the things which appear to us do so not in their own svabhava i.e. nature, but in those characteristics which are imposed on them by our ignorance. The real nature of things remains elsewhere to which we have no access with our limited knowledge. This theory reminds us of the Upanisadic concept of ‘neti neti’ which implies that ultimate reality is not in the world we sensuously know.

In Buddhism there is no place to selfishness. It demands a rigorous renunciation of almost all the worldly pleasures. Buddha’s own life indicates this philosophy. Impressed by the emptiness of the things of sense he renounces the ease and power of the monarchy. He is interested in the suppression of all desires. He says that until man abandons desire he has no peace. One desire leads to another and in this way there will be no end of desires. This philosophy does not however instruct us to turn our back towards the world. We have to live in the world so long as we are alive. Simply we should not be too much involved in the affairs of the world. A sort of detachment is warranted so that we may live peacefully.

While discussing the relevance of Buddhism in contemporary India we have to see whether we deal with real Buddhism or not. If we indulge ourselves in dealing with the spurious forms of Buddhism there is every possibility to bark on a wrong conclusion. It is known to all that various evils have crept into this philosophy in course of time. As it has traveled a long period of time there is every possibility that it might have been fabricated in different ways. So we must be careful to assess the true teachings of Buddha avoiding the grafted things on it.

Many Buddhist sects have come under the influence of Hinduism, that too of the perverted kind. This tragedy happens to almost all the religions. They lose the original beauty and purity at the hands of motivated persons. Due to this reason Buddhism has been practiced differently by different sects. In this way sectarianism has grown in this religion and its universal appeal has been lost. The bauddha bhiksus (monks) also have begun to misuse their authorities. It is now, therefore, difficult to say which sect is the genuine Buddhism. Had Buddha lived at the present age he would have said like Marx, ‘Thank God, I am not a Buddhist’.

In spite of the above circumstances, we should not abandon our duty to assess the true Buddhist tenets in their proper perspectives. Avoiding the metaphysical speculations connected with this philosophy we should try to trace out its sociological aspects so that it may to some extent come to our help in solving present intricate problems. In this context we must undertake the task of highlighting the problems like sunyavada and ksanikavada and understand the social problems in the light of these concepts.

Buddha and His Personality

Buddha has led a perfect life. Therefore his life has continued to excite us to do something good and imagine something beautiful. The life of this great man bears not only meaning for enlightened people alone but also to laymen. His mystical power of love induces a man to love others. He has been the prophetic soul of the world imagining on things to come in future. His genius lies in the struggle that has gone on ceaselessly in his own soul between his faith in man and his doubt as to the existence of God. He, wrestling with hidden distresses, has been a cultured person in the profoundest sense. His personality is so singular that very few persons of the world can be compared with him.

The personalities of the world have many things to say of

him. Radhakrishnan, for example, a critical appreciator of Indian philosophy, has not lagged behind in appreciating Buddha's personality as being a friend of humanity and the ascetic hero. The description made by one of the celebrated thinkers, Barth is worth mentioning in this context: "We must set clearly before us the admirable figure ... that finished model of calm and set majesty of infinite tenderness for all that breathes and compassion for all that suffers, of perfect moral freedom and exemption from every prejudice."² Buddha's words have been so bold and grand that people soon have begun to regard him as a god.

With a strong anti-establishment sentiment Buddha asks, "How is it that there can be anything for culture in a despotic and persecuting society?" All the aspects of this establishment have been abhorrent to Buddha. He has stood for the bitter struggle between faith and un-faith.

Buddha is not a supernatural being nor a veritable God, but a supremely good person. There is nothing miraculous in his life. He is mainly a teacher. He never poses as savior like Jesus Christ or Kṛṣṇa. He never poses as a god to do something miraculous. He is simply a man with flesh and blood. With his human wisdom he definitely points a way from the world of suffering. This way consists not in forcefully changing the social system, but in changing man's nature. He shows the path of light to the inwardly discordant man. As there is a possibility in the grain to give rise to the plant, similarly there is the possibility in the discordant man to rise above discordance. This is the process through which we may rise from animality to humanity, from sexuality to lovability, from individuality to universality, from materiality to spirituality etc. Buddha acts like a mid-wife to deliver the latter from the former. But he never boasts that he propounds or founds a new religion. He says that he simply tries to establish a society full of safety, fearlessness and liberty; to elevate man above earthly things, to surpass the world of sense, to relieve man from gross consumerism, to make him desist from selfish

craving and passion. He says that the highest goal of man is the stage at which there will be no anxieties and suffering. He does not allure man to heaven.

Buddha as a Social Reformer

Philosophy remains obsolete if it does not bear social import. Buddhism would also have been obsolete had it not undertaken the task of formulating theories concerning social issues. The main duty of a philosophy is to culturally educate the people. Until man is culturally enlightened he cannot be a happy man. Simply economic prosperity cannot make man happy. Though Buddha is primarily a religious man he is not wanting in the rational approach with which he tries to tackle the intricate social problems.

Man lives in a society. He cannot live without society. So the questions like freedom etc. come in the context of society. One can enjoy freedom in the bosom of the society he lives in. Man cannot enjoy freedom until he develops his latent potentialities. Here society plays a crucial role in developing these potentialities. These potentialities indicate talents and capabilities of man. Society is to be progressive so that its individuals can develop their capabilities in their upward trend. As individuals are intrinsically valuable to society so society should take care of them in proper perspective. A philosophy is to look into this question and guide the society to play its role in a proper way. As individuals are necessary for society so every individual should look for a better society so as to make it a livable society. In this matter every individual should inculcate in himself a strict discipline. Buddhism teaches this discipline and so it preaches a dedicated way of life making man forget individual likes and dislikes. An individual should be a responsible person and this responsibility is taught in a pertinent way in Buddhism. Buddha has diagnosed the human character in such a way as to make it a welcoming force for the betterment of society.

With his message of *catuvanna-parisuddhi* he wants to emancipate all from caste prejudices. According to him each has a right to be shown respect. We are to show respect to all other beings of the world. All these beings have a right not to be harmed. In Nagarjuna's message 'sarva drsti prahana' also bears such an import.

The society in which Buddha has lived is full of contradictions and conflicts of different interpretations of the Vedic and Upanisadic versions. Many Brahmins therefore have approached him for resolution of those conflicts. Buddha tells them that the path to liberation leading to the state of Brahman without having seen and known him is a foolish talk. Instead of knowing Brahman, he says, one should emphasize the practice of the five silas with a view to liberating oneself from misery. A person has to tread his path by himself.

There should be no doubt as to the fact that Buddhism has given a new dimension to the social culture of India. It has impregnated the Indian culture with the content of ethicality. That man should cross the boundary of morality and rise to the ethical standard is the goal of Buddhist teaching. It has not advised us to eradicate or extinguish our natural instincts as it is not possible to do so; but advised us to sublimate them with proper ethical training. The inculcation of purposive action is necessary in human life and Buddhism presents us such a logic which examines the principles of this action. If we can discover what is right through logic then we can bring about the good in society.

Western philosophy starts with doubt and wonder, while Indian philosophy starts with the concept of suffering. Buddhism is no exception to it. *Duhkha* or suffering presents us a clue to understand the nature of man. Because of this Buddha asks us to learn how to suffer. To suffer also is a matter of learning, as it is mostly a voluntary action. He teaches *karuna* in this respect as it enables man to suffer at the sufferance of other people. To

suffer at the sufferance of others is a means to ease the sufferings of others. Thus Buddha introduces an altruistic element in his ethics.

Western scholar Ludwig Alsdorf has alleged that *ahimsa* is a magico-ritualistic taboo against taking life. He is wrong in alleging so. Actually taking life in the name of religion is a taboo. Not to kill is advancement in civilization, because the aboriginals killed animals and birds for livelihood only because at that time cultivation was not there. The advancement from non-vegetarianism to vegetarianism is a cultural advancement, because man has overcome the natural instinct of taking meat. The barbaric man has become the civilized one when he has given up the habit of killing animals for eating purpose. Non-killing involves the positive action of showing kindness to them. Man cannot be civilized unless he entertains a loving kindness to all. To kill means to inflict pain and to inflict pain is not a human affair. Man should not do anything which will give rise to suffering. Man's entire aim should be to establish peace by removing pain and anxiety from the world. He should make the world free from suffering. He should fight against the natural forces including biological and viral attack causing illness and disease. So the question of causing moral suffering does not arise at all if we regard ourselves to be the civilized and cultured persons.

Animal suffering is definitely a sad fact. Unthinking men wantonly and callously inflict suffering to them. Following Buddhist tenets, therefore, many men have come forward to save animal from extinction as a result of unscrupulous activities of man. 'Live and let others live' — this maxim has taught us that animals' life is also precious like that of man. So they are to be saved at any cost. Being enlightened with such maxims people at the present age has transformed the religiously inspired precept of *ahimsa* to the secular principle of pragmatic scientific humanism. This humanism condemns deliberate killing and injuring animals.

Man is very near to animals especially in the question of feeling. An animal is not an alien to man. It comes within the brotherhood of man. If we can understand this then we impart a deeper meaning to the concept of ahimsa. It is high time to extend the scope this concept from the individual to the social level. We should not forget the motive behind the fact as to why non-killing has been given the first place in the list of the virtues as elaborated in pancha-sila.

Buddha as a Political Reformer

Buddha can very well be described as a political reformer with his democratic ideals. His democratic ideals are well known. If a man has no definite political ideology he cannot be a political reformer. Buddha has the definite political ideals and with these ideals he wants to change the society politically. He mingles his political ideals with his religious ones and with this attempt he fights for the poor and despises the rich and privileged classes. He has attempted to abolish castes, as he thinks that castes are not divinely bestowed upon man, but man made. In support of this I am allured to refer to Rhys David's feeling in this regard, "Some writers on Buddhism do not hesitate to ascribe to Gotama the role of a successful political reformer, by representing him as having fought for the poor and despised against the rich and privileged classes, and as having gone far to abolish caste."³

Buddha wants to curtail the power and supremacy of a king as he thinks that a king is nothing but a servant of the people. One of the Buddhist monks, for example, addresses a naughty king and warns him in this way, "What is your pride with O' king, who is a mere servant of the gana (i.e. people) and receives the sixth part as wages."³ Buddha wants to build a communistic society without any classes. He wants to change the forces operating in the class society. We cannot however say that Buddha has established a real communistic society as envisaged by Marx, as during his time the society simply passed from slavery to serfdom.

Buddha is of the opinion that the ruling classes must give up greed if they want to rule democratically. Greed leads to suffering because it makes the ruling classes to dominate over their subjects. Even as warnings against ruling classes as mentioned above are there yet the ruling classes are attracted to Buddhism, as they think that without adopting Buddhism they cannot maintain their rule.

Buddha is committed to the democratic ideals because at his time the remnants of primitive communism have been there and he is very much impressed by those primitive communistic ideals. His ethical ideal of being desire-free may be applied to the ruling classes in particular. We cannot expect from Buddha to propagate scientific socialism as at that time there has been no such scope, since the society has not been ripe to this effect. Yet we cannot deny his democratic ideals decrying the priestly authorities. It requires courage to stand against the priestly authorities.

Buddha and Other Personalities : Indian and Western

A) Nagarjuna

Buddhism would have been out of date long ago had there been no later interpreters of it. Interpreters like Dinnaga, Dharmakirti, Nagarjuna, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Dharmottara etc. have not only interpreted Buddhism by adjusting it to their own ideologies but also have made it relevant to their contemporary time. They have created new methodologies and logic as tools of their arguments. It is not possible here to discuss the philosophies these thinkers. But we have a mind to assess Nagarjuna's philosophy. I have selected him because people are interested to know about his philosophy of sunyavada.

The main theme of Nagarjuna's philosophy is 'Everything

is empty'. This philosophy is generally designated as sunyavada. This is not a new discovery of Nāgārjuna. Its germ may be had in Buddha's philosophy itself. Therefore Buddha has been vehemently criticized by the Upanisadic philosophers. But it is interesting to note that in the *Maitrayana Upanisad* Brahman is described as empty (esah suddha sunya santah, 2/4). It is to be noted that Nagarjuna's philosophy comes very near to Sankara's and what Sankara fundamentally does is the denial of the world in the line of the Upanisadic philosophy.

Now let us study what the word 'empty' actually means. Does it mean something fictitious? It is not fictitious. What it actually means is that everything is emptied of any intrinsic nature as we have earlier hinted. Nagarjuna denies intrinsic nature, because for such a thing self-dependent existence is necessary which is against the Buddhist tenet of praitiyasamutpada.

Nagarjuna's notion that all concepts are relative reminds us of the developments in the contemporary philosophy of science. We find many Buddhist elements in recent works in the philosophy of science. This epistemic enterprise undertaken by these works is foreshadowed in the works of the philosophers like Nagarjuna.

b) Buddha and Dalai Lama

Dalai Lama thinks that there is no contradiction between Buddhism and Marxism, since both of them approach life and reality dialectically. Dalai Lama is mainly responsible for making Buddhism relevant to modern world. He has been spreading the message of Buddha world wide. He is very reactive to the contemporary issues and trying to bring about some remedy to many of them with the Buddhist message. He says, "... we must develop a sense of universal responsibility not only in the geographic sense, but also in respect to the different issues that confront our planet."¹

c) Buddha and Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi, the modern apostle of peace, has been enlightened with the Buddhist teaching of ahimsa. Christianity also influences him in this teaching. He has been very much influenced by its maxim, *viz.*, 'If somebody slaps you on one cheek give him the other'. Being educated in these two philosophies Gandhi has started his non-violent movement for India's liberation. What is dhamma for Buddha has become satya for Mahatma. Buddha's avaira concept has taught him to behave even with a stranger or enemy in a peaceful manner.

d) Buddha and Western Scholars

Many western scholars, both ancient and modern, have been attracted to the Buddhist philosophy. Marco Polo of the 13th/14th century is very much impressed by Buddhist teachings. He goes to the extent of comparing Buddhism with Christianity highlighting the common characteristics in both of them. He says, "Had he been a Christian, he would have been a great saint of our Lord Jesus Christ, so holy and pure was the life he led..... There is unquestionably much in common between the character and teaching of the founders of the two religions. Both are represented as infinitely critical and infinitely wise. Both desired beyond all things the salvation of mankind. Both proclaimed a royal law of love, the love of our neighbor and ourselves,..... Both required of their disciples the forsaking of all and the following of the master. Both taught the utter vanity of earthly good, insisted on self-denial and exhibited compassion as the highest law of life. Both inculcated the supreme merits of purity of thought and intention. Both prescribed the non-resistance of evil, the overcoming of evil with good. Both had a special tenderness for the young, the poor, the suffering, and the outcast. In the accounts which have come down to us of the lives of both, there are the most remarkable parallelisms, and what is more important and significant, the personality of both

must be accounted even now the strongest religious forces in the world, drawing the hearts of men by spiritual magnetism through so many ages."⁵

Marco Polo has laid emphasis on the maxim 'Thou shalt hurt no living being'. Not only this maxim but also other maxims which have been neglected by many writers are also to be taken into account. Let me mention some of them considering their modern relevance:

- (1) Never in this world does hatred cease by hatred — hatred ceases by love.
- (2) Victory breeds hatred, for the conquered is unhappy.
- (3) One may conquer a thousand men in battle, but he who conquers himself is the greatest victor.
- (4) Let a man overcome anger by kindness, evil by good.
- (5) Not by birth, but by his conduct alone, does a man become a low caste or a Brahmin.
- (6) Hide your good deeds and confess before the world the sins you have committed.
- (7) Never use hard speech to those who have done a sinful deed, because it strews salt, as it were, upon the wound of their fault.

These maxims are relevant even today. If we all follow these maxims then surely there would be peace in the world.

We have cited Marco Polo as an example of his interest in Buddhism. In this way the Buddhist studies have aroused much interest in the West where men's minds are swayed by too much metaphysical way of thinking. This proves Buddha's popularity in the western world as he teaches a non-metaphysical philosophy. Schopenhauer, another western thinker, has great reverence to Buddha and he has kept a bronze bust of the latter in his study. Russell also puts Buddha's thought ahead of Schopenhauer's as

regards the question of suffering, because when Schopenhauer verges on pessimism, Buddha offers us an optimistic outlook as he visualizes the possibility of eradicating misery. Moreover Russell finds out an emotional basis in universal sympathy in Buddha's ethics. He elaborates as to how Buddha shows sympathy to "the lepers, outcast and miserable, the poor, toiling with aching limbs and barely kept alive by scanty nourishment; the wounded in battle, dying in slow agony; the orphans, ill-treated by cruel guardians; ..." ⁶ From all this load of sorrow Buddha shows a way of salvation which must be found and salvation as he says, can only come through love. Russell refutes Nietzsche's criticism of Buddha's so called negative philosophy. Posing himself as Buddha Russell enters into a dispute with Nietzsche as follows: "You are mistaken Professor Nietzsche, in thinking my ideal a purely negative one. True, it includes a negative element, the absence of suffering; but it has in addition quite as much that is positive as is to be found in your doctrine. Though I have no special admiration for Alcibiades and Napoleon, I, too, have my heroes: my successor Jesus, because he told men to love their enemies; the men who discovered how to master the forces of nature and secure food with less labour; the medical men who have shown how to diminish disease; the poets and artists and musicians who have caught glimpses of the Divine beatitude. Love and knowledge and delight in beauty are not negations; they are enough to fill the lives of the greatest men that have ever lived." ⁷ It is to be remembered that although Nietzsche has criticized Buddha for his alleged negative philosophy he prefers it to Christianity.

Bergson, a French philosopher, "begins his last major work with a confirmation of the same; viz. that by self-observation we establish in ourselves a constant process of change in which we can distinguish sensations, feelings, wishes and presentations, i.e. like the four groups of psychic elements of the Buddhists... and no single integral soul."⁸ Bergson, like Buddha, does not

regard the soul to be a substance or a substratum, but a simple conventional sign. According to him consciousness is nothing but a mental process constituted of states succeeding one after another.

Freud's (1856-1940) interpretation of religion comes nearer to that of Buddha. Freud says that religion is nothing but the concretization of a life force (*eros*).⁹ Bergson's *élan vital* has become the life force in Freud which approaches Buddha's dynamic principle working in all cultural and physico-biological phenomena. Buddha however tries to tranquilize this life process to avoid its agitation. In the fourth noble truth he teaches the principle of self-absorption and the concentration of thought. Buddha has been criticized for his alleged sunyavada or nihilism emphasizing nothingness. But the critics forget that nothingness has been a dominant concept in the twentieth century philosophy. Heidegger, a German philosopher, has dealt with this concept in an elaborate way. All existential philosophers including Heidegger have laid importance on this concept. Then why should we blame Buddha alone for this importance? Buddha brings about this concept with a view to dissolving the essentialist views held by his contemporaries and earlier philosophers.

e) Buddha and David Hume

The philosophy of David Hume, a modern British philosopher, comes very near to Buddhism. There are even certain thinkers who think that Hume is very much influenced by Buddha so far as the Buddhist philosophy has been carried to the West by way of Chinese cultural traditions. Along with causality Hume also agrees with Buddha's concept of the self. Hume rejects the self because we do not have any impression of it. For Buddha also the self is made of five *khandas* (*skandhas* in Sanskrit) which are impermanent. So the notion of the self as a permanent entity is nothing but an illusion. So for both Buddha and Hume there is no thinker, but only thought; no perceiver, but only perception.

This proves that in the areas like philosophy, ethics, education and political thought Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been much influenced by oriental ideas, especially by Buddhist thoughts. Like Buddha European thinkers also have been interested not in the question of knowledge alone but also in those concerning life and ethical bearings on it.

Stcherbatsky says that Europe has had to wait for a long time to formulate theories as like as of Buddha, especially of the soul. He says, "We cannot help noticing the similarity of this view (i.e. the Buddhist view) of the soul to the view at which, after long history, our contemporary European philosophy has arrived. The British philosopher, Hume, was the first to build his psychology without soul from detached mental phenomena alone, and his point of view is accepted in modern psychology."¹⁰

Buddha's teachings have become more relevant at present because of their utility in motivating our actions and concerns in anti-war activism. War relies on violence and violence is incompatible with Buddhist values. In war virtues like love, faith, patience, forgiveness, gentleness, temperance etc. are pushed back to the background. In it they are to take rear seats. Hatred rules the human mind. War always promotes fear and anxiety. It does not allow both the attacker and the attacked to live in peace. This is so in civil war and violent revolution also. In it both the oppressor and the oppressed are apprehensive of each other's role. The oppressed will think that justice is denied to them and the oppressor will be afraid of being overthrown by the oppressed. Against all this Buddhism wants to shape the society in such a way so that cohesion, restoration, reconciliation will rule in it.

Buddhism as a Philosophy

As a philosopher one is to take all the concepts – positive and negative – into consideration. Then only we can transform

man's attitude and moral behaviour. All the concepts produced by human consciousness are important to understand and change the world. He teaches how man can go to a higher plane transcending the present set up. Working out his insights Buddha tries to conceive of a higher moral plane in which man can behave in the expected ways. This requires going beyond the anthropocentric morality to the cosmocentric one.

Buddhism is an early system of philosophy. As a philosophy it has stepped forward in a steady line of progress. We, the Indians, have been irradiated with the inward glow of Buddhism as it has heightened and quickened every pulse of our life. It has been able to harmonize the intellect, the imagination and the senses of man. It may, therefore, be recommended of a wide reading. Another reason for its reading is that "it gives both the skepticism to stand up against every dogmatic claim and the imagination to treat with reverence and humility every original hint and illuminating suggestion."

Let us examine the questions: What does Buddhism have to offer? What is there in the historic reservoir stored up in Buddhism? What does one get from it? Is it something more spiritual than merely ethical? Is there an intellectual temper in it? Is it a habitual artistry of the mind? The relevance of Buddhism with the modern world lies in the answers of these questions. In this paper we are trying to answer some of these questions highlighting the modernistic concepts lying latent in the teachings of Buddha's philosophy and we shall do so as we progress in our discussion on the relevance of Buddhism in the contemporary thoughts.

Buddhism as a Religion

The present age is marked by a person's dealing with and handling a religion with a skeptical and agnostic view point. The origin of Buddhism as a religion is also marked with similar

attitude. Buddhism produces an orthodox school the name of which is Hinayâna. Hinayâna is really a nickname given by its rival camp, the Mahayâna. *Hina* means small, *yâna* means vehicle. Hinayâna, therefore, means a small vehicle in which only one man can go to the domain of nirvana, i.e., man should try for nirvana for himself alone, not for others. It has strictly adhered to the canonical rules of Buddhism. So at present its followers are fewer.

Buddhism is an old religion and it has gathered up into its daily rites many of the hidden psychic attitudes. Our aim here is to examine whether this old religion can survive amidst the hue and cry of the present day world. It is our duty also to find out the most crucial point of our present-day human situation. It is a day of breaking up of the old age traditions. The tradition of Buddhism may be found in its long discipline particularly in the ethical field. If it has provided us a good religion then it is sure that people will welcome it.

The rise of Buddhism is marked by its opposition to the stuffy and treacherous authority which imprisons free thought thereby inflicting mental and moral tyranny. This authority gives rise to a despotic and persecuting society. It is abhorrent to all free souls. No lovely qualities can be plucked from this situation. The allegation that Buddhism preaches atheism is the charge that comes from orthodox sections. In this way, a bitter struggle has erupted between two antagonistic groups, i.e. between Buddhism and the Vedic authority.

Buddhism, as a religion, has not been confined to India alone; it has spread far and wide. It has been received by all irrespective of age, young and old. The Buddhist texts have very beautifully been translated into Tibetan, Chinese, Japanese and to other languages. In this way this religion has become the blood of our blood and bone of our bone. It has been so possible because Buddhism has had the unfathomably appealing qualities.

The orthodoxy of a religion does not last long. Soon people are fed up with it. This same thing has happened to Hinayana. So a new school has sprung up with a catholic spirit. It is Mahayâna. Its meaning is the great vehicle which facilitates liberation for all. It means that the liberated person can help other persons to go to the domain of nirvâna.

Buddhism is a radical religion which tries to get down to the roots of the human conditions attempting to pull these roots up by the very roots. This is surely a revolutionary attempt unknown to other religions. Buddha is not satisfied with giving sermons alone; he approaches the human problems including suffering and violence in a pragmatic way. This approach of him deals a moral blow to all sorts of dogmatic philosophical ideas and irrational speculations current at his time.

To make a religion relevant to the contemporary thoughts of the modern world we have to exploit the relevant points of it. In this context if we examine Buddhism we find that it does not entertain spurious dogmas behind the ritual. There are some scholars who assign to the non-existence of ritualism in Buddhism and this is the reason which has made it a reality to lose its ground in its own birth place, i.e., India. It is true that this religion has to some extent suffered defeat in its own country. The main reason of it is that many of its tenets have been taken over by other religions like Vaisnavism. We know, while commenting on the *Mandukya Upanisad*,³ Gaudapada, the grand teacher of Sankarâcârya, takes up many Buddhist tenets in his interpretation. It is said that Sankarâcârya while commenting on the Upanisads and the *Brâhmasutra* is much influenced by Gaudapada's interpretation of the Vedanta. In this way its strong opposition to Brâhmanism has lost its ground in course of time. But thereby we cannot say that Buddhism has been completely wiped out in India. Still now many followers are there in India. In Assam also we find so many sects of Buddhism, although some of them have lost the original fervor. So the total extermination of

Buddhism in India has not been possible.

We see many Buddhist marks in Indian culture. The cult of Vaisnavism has adopted many ethical tenets of Buddhism. Buddhism has no doubt died in some areas, but its influence is felt in those faiths which have been taken up by the people instead. In spite of the merits of Buddhism it has been polluted by the contemporary vices as other religions are. Now-a-days all religions have been polluted by economic, political, social and sexual matters. It is not possible in this small space to deal with all these problems. But let me hint on a fact on sexual matters that too in a particular Buddhist country viz. Thailand. I have gone through a piece of news supplied by New York Times News Service and published in the *Telegraph* of 21st November, 2010 issue under the caption "2000 fetuses found in Bangkok temple" in which it has been stated, "Two thousand fetuses from illegal abortion clinics have been found hidden at a Buddhist temple..." Three persons have been involved in this case as they delivered the fetuses to the temple from several clinics. In Bangkok itself there are at least 20 clinics performing illegal abortions. We expect a high standard of morality in a Buddhist country. But if such things happen in it we may feel that even Buddhism cannot cure the evil behaviors of the people. If the religion like Buddhism cannot reform the people on the moral side then we will have to rethink on the question of the role of religion in moral uplift and think of some alternative measures to cure the society of the moral evils. We cannot allow this situation to go on forever. We cannot allow the fat priests of opulent *maths* to replace the mendicant monks devoted to a pure life nor the subtle metaphysical arguments to replace the "simple discourses" calculated to awaken the moral consciousness. We cannot allow the most exalted religion taught by Buddha to be swamped by the rubbish of myth and legend.

Buddhism and Its Relevance to Two Major Contemporary Schools of Philosophy : Phenomenology and Marxism

a) Buddhism and Phenomenology

We know that phenomenology (as introduced by Husserl) is a very recent philosophy. It has many followers in India also. We find the elements of this philosophy in the writings of Dinnaga, a Buddhist logician of the fifth century A.D. As in phenomenology Dinnaga's concept of sensibility has been transcendently controlled. To him both knowledge and its objects are on the phenomenal plane. In this way the Buddhist way of thinking has the fruitful application with respect to the contemporary way of thinking.

That there is a Buddhist appeal to modern phenomenology may be proved on the possibility of providing an analysis of the states of consciousness. It is so because the states of consciousness may be interpreted as phenomenological data. Especially the school of Yogacara is phenomenologically interesting with its theory of *alaya-vijnana* (store-house of consciousness). Its active continuum of consciousness giving rise to the momentary reality of all existentially relative phenomenal construction (*prapanca*) seems to have resemblance with the Husserlian doctrine of consciousness as flux. In Husserl also consciousness is a temporal phenomenon constituting its unity as an enduring ego. His phenomenology may be regarded as transcendental phenomenology and it has affinity with Yogacara's concept of consciousness.

Like Vijnanavada of Yogacara School, Husserl's idealism insists on the flux of consciousness. What is *alaya* in Yogacara has become flux in Husserl. Yogacara advocates pure consciousness as the absolute or perfected reality. Husserl also presents a transcendental ego as absolute consciousness. The constitution of an empirical ego, in his opinion, as a temporal

and historical being, is dependent upon the constitution of the transcendental ego. The Yogacaras also hold that the appearance of a mundane ego is dependent on the *alaya* consciousness. Its absolute is independent in its being, a concept analogous to Husserl's notion of self-constitution. The motivational aspect of Husserl's philosophy parallels the Yogacara emphasis on the mutual causation between the *alaya* and its seeds, specially the seeds of past actions which fall into the *alaya* motivating the latter. This motivation causes further actions conditioned by past actions.

Husserl admits that transcendental consciousness is not in empirical time. Similarly Yogacara's *alaya* is also not in empirical time.

b) Buddhism and Marxism

Both Buddhism and Marxism appeal to a sense of justice and decency. Both provide us with a rationale for our activism. Both furnish a coherent analysis of the world. Both Buddha and Marx start with the problem of estranged consciousness and end with a resolution of this estrangement. Both of them present compelling pictures of reality. The philosophy of both of them is of action and practice.

Marx is of the opinion that any comprehensive criticism must begin with the criticism of religion. Buddha also does the same thing. He starts his philosophy with a criticism of religion which he finds it among its contemporaries in the sixth century B.C. India. Like Marx, Buddha also attacks religion in the very first text of the Buddhist canon of the Brahmajala Sutta of the *Digha Nikaya*. Buddha is critical of the Vedic religion as it is used to maintain an unjust and irrational caste system. In it the masses are offered the solace in notions such as the self, God and the hope for a better life in heaven. This solace is equivalent to Marx's "opium of the people". It is so because this solace is a means to delude the common masses. The priestly class of that time presents before the masses an "illusory sun which revolves round

man as long as he does not revolve round himself". (Marx) Like Marx, Buddha also does not allow religion to be a sway of reinforcing the class structures and that of denying human responsibility for his actions. Both of them exert a conscious opposition to the mainstream in the field of religion. While Marx fights against idealistic Hegelianism, Buddha fights against Upanisadic spiritualism. Both Hegel and the Upanisads hold that human life is simply a manifestation of some universal principle. Marx and Buddha stand against this principle. Both of them study human life on its own terms. Both of them think that human suffering cannot be explained in an absolutistic manner, but in a humanistic manner. For both suffering arises when man alienates himself from his true nature. For both an object is a reification of experience; it is a product of an alienated consciousness. It is so because an object is a combination of various natural materials and human labour. So an object is a humanized thing. No product can be there without human effort upon nature.

It is true that Buddha has not risen to the Marxian standard of analysis because at his time the social structures of the present days are absent. But his analysis of human suffering that it is not divinely ordained is to be acclaimed as it has foreshadowed the Marxist concept. He explains suffering purely on human terms delineating the point that suffering is a human problem. The following ideas are shared by both Buddha and Marx:

- (1) Consciousness is not final. It is predicated of an alienated mode of being.
- (2) This alienation is a human problem. As it is a human construction so it can be eradicated by human endeavour alone.
- (3) The way in which we think and the process of rectification support oppressive structures and, therefore, any solution to suffering involves a reversal of thought and action.

Marx's historical process reminds us of Buddha's theory of dependent co-origination (*pratityasamutpada*). The present conditions are determined by the past conditions. We cannot avoid the past while explaining the present. This interlink of events is due to the causal nexus. The historical events are bound by this causal nexus. While Buddha gives us a hint as to how we can free ourselves from this nexus, Marx is silent in this.

Buddhism and Modern Science

Sir Edwin Arnold has seen a close intellectual bond between Buddhism and modern science. He says, "I have often said, and I shall say again and again, that between Buddhism and modern science there exists a close intellectual bond."¹¹ According to U. Chan Htoon a science cannot stand if it refutes Buddhism. He says, "In the case of Buddhism – all the modern scientific concepts have been present from the beginning. There is no principle of science from biological to the general theory of Relativity that runs counter to any teaching of Goutama Buddha. There cannot be any achievement of Science, no matter how revolutionary, that will ever contradict the teaching of Buddhism."¹²

The scientific approach of Buddhism is evident from his allowance of free thinking. He considers each problem rationally. He is not only rational but also logical in his approach. This approach is evident from his following statements, "Believe nothing, merely because you have been told it, or because it is traditional or because you yourselves have imagined it. Do not believe what your teacher tells you merely out of respect for your teacher. But whatever after due consideration and analysis you find to be conducive to the good, the benefit, the welfare, believe and cling to and take it as your guide." This scientific approach of Buddha gives him the courage to accept ethics as pure science without any reference to theology. He therefore wants to make the *sangha* one of the intellectual sects of teachers

of Buddhism. He introduces it to educate and enlighten the people in a scientific way. The *bhikkhus* are not like Hindu *sannyasins* who simply try for their own liberation. This is so because the *bhikkhus* are the disciples of Buddha.

The Ethico-Philosophical Concepts in Buddhism

a) The Ethical Good

The Buddhist concept of good does not bear the idea of good in itself, because good in itself is an independent concept falling outside the scope of *pratityasamudpada*. The virtue based ethics of Buddhism does not welcome the good in itself.

Ethics teaches to do the right thing. When can we do the right thing? It is said that when our knowledge is governed by *prajna* i.e. wisdom, we do the right thing. According to Socrates and Plato also one who is wise cannot but do the right thing. As 'right' involves 'ought' and 'duty', so wisdom is necessary to the right thing. Therefore Advaita Vedānta puts wisdom above devotion so as to reach the world of Brahman surpassing the world of God Who is reached through *niskama bhakti* (devotion without desire and attachment).

Buddha presents a philosophy of nobility in conduct which implies *karuna* i.e. piety and *maitri* i.e. amity. It means friendship with all in thought and action. This friendship is not to be between man and man alone but also man and animal and plants. Thus in Buddhism ethics has extended its domain to the both animate and inanimate world. It has been possible so, as he stands against theistic morality. Morality is a comprehensive term which includes within its scope the customs, rules, principles, values and ideals. Buddha's ethics guides and regulates man's conduct and his relation with his fellow beings.

Man in the modern world is generally interested in unorthodox and revolutionary ideals and actions. Dogmatic ideals cannot alleviate man's suffering. Conservatism is to be avoided

at any cost. We can evaluate a person's conduct with an open mind without any preconceptions and presuppositions. Only a man with an open mind can take a secular view. Conservatism makes man blind and with this outlook man cannot fight injustice. Not by birth but by conduct and character a man is to be judged. The extolment of high birth leads to social injustice.

b) The Concept of Ahimsa

Ahimsa i.e. non-violence is regarded as a virtue, because it bears social value. Buddha is very much interested in maintaining an atmosphere of peace and tranquility in society. Of course in certain quarters violence is also regarded as a value as it may be necessary to prevent the exploiters from exploiting common masses or to prevent the criminals from inflicting punishment on innocent people. Such a position proves that every social value is relative. Circumstance decides whether a particular value is to be accepted or rejected. There is no absolute or abstract value and it is more so in respect of social phenomena. Under these circumstances we have to examine or evaluate the Buddhist concept of ahimsa.

Buddha advises us not to violate the sanctity of life. With this advice he presents ahimsa with a stricter interpretation. He has transformed it to a cardinal principle so that people cannot violate it under any circumstances. So that man inculcates in himself an ethical attitude Buddha prescribes this strict rule of observance. It is due to this reason that the present India has adopted this as the state policy and advises its citizens to abide by it. Under this principle it has adopted this policy and with this guideline it has introduced pacifism and a policy of eschewing violence as a political weapon. Ashoka in the past and Mahatma Gandhi in recent times have championed for it in their thought and action.

The concept of ahimsa not only has attracted the Indian celebrities but also the Western ones. Especially in the last two

centuries it has attracted western philosophers like Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill etc.¹³ Bentham and Mill are two

prominent English utilitarian philosophers. The former is famous

for his arguments in favour of animal rights. He has articulated

the views which have an inner affinity with the concept of ahimsa.

He has raised many psycho-ethical issues concerning non-

violence to animals in the light of Buddhist teachings. He has

played a pioneering role in bringing the claims of animals to the

threshold of western philosophy as a distinct moral issue.

According to him animals have not only the biological status but

also the moral status. Man should not look to the welfare of

man alone but also to that of animals. Animals to him are as

sacred as man. So animals should be raised to the standard of

man. In the same line a contemporary philosopher of the West

Martin Heidegger has adopted a view that man should not think

for man alone, he should think of other animate and inanimate

things and do something for their welfare and wellbeing.

Buddha opts for vegetarianism with a view to preventing

the deprivation of any sensitive creature of life. He deems the

violence against living beings a heinous transgression of religious

and moral duty. So vegetarianism to him is not just a superstition,

but a sincere effort to save the lives of the sentient beings. This

approach eulogizes sensitivity to the feelings of animated

creatures. Vegetarianism implies the prohibition of animal killing.

Buddha not only prohibits animal killing but also raising animals

for meat. Some sort of self-denial is necessary to practice

vegetarianism. Modern vegetarians also prescribe vegetarianism

for the sake of health and long life. This habit lowers the rates

of heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer and obesity. They say

that sufficient protein can be obtained from vegetable foods.

Vitamins, iron, calcium etc. are obtained from such food items.

Thus vegetarianism is necessary not only to preserve our health

but also to preserve the animal kingdom. Therefore in countries

like Great Britain, the U.S.A., Germany etc., most people have

begin to practice vegetarianism thanks to the teachings of Buddha.

The Middle Path

The middle path of Buddhism signifies a mean between two

extreme courses. It believes neither in Being nor in non-Being.

In this respect the middle course is becoming. This middle course

of becoming indicates a belief neither in chance nor in necessity

exclusively. What it believes is in conditioned happening. This

is the metaphysical position of the middle path. In ethics also

Buddha speaks of a middle path. This middle path is in between

self-indulgence and self-mortification. While self-indulgence is

the harbinger of pain, self-mortification is the pain itself. Our

life is something like a lute which emits melody when its strings

are stretched neither too loose nor too tight. Buddha, in his

celebrated sermon at Varanasi, states this middle path in a very

eloquent way as follows: "There are two extremes, O monks,

from which he who leads a religious life must abstain. What are

those two extremes? One is a life of pleasure, devoted to desire

and enjoyment: that is base, ignoble, non-spiritual, unworthy,

animal. The other is a life of mortification: it is gloomy, unworthy,

animal. The perfect one, O monks, is removed from both these

extremes and has discovered the way which lies between them,

the middle way which ... enlightens the mind, which leads to

wisdom, to knowledge, to enlightenment, to nirvana."¹⁴

The significance of this statement is that truth lies beyond

all dichotomies and oppositions. It implies relative or phenomenal

knowledge of things. "The middle way", as Simon Blackburn

states, "is in some respects similar to the Kantian conjunction of

the unknowable nature of the noumenal and possibility of a

presence of the phenomenal."¹⁵ The middle way "neither claims

that nothing at all exists nor does it embrace the view that there

is a plurality of distinct things."

The middle path is simply hinted by Buddha. He has not

elaborated it. Only in the later days the Madhyamikas hadhamma implies the middle path. Buddha introduces this elaborated it. As we know the Madhyamika school is introduced by the celebrated philosopher Nagarjuna. He denies two extreme views (antas). The two extreme views are existent and non-existent, eternal and non-eternal, self and not-self etc. According

to Nagarjuna the extreme views are harmful, because if one holds

such views there are no possibilities of one's emancipation. *Nila* means virtue and *panca* means five. So *pancasila* means this case Nâgârjuna refers to Buddha who is said to have warned one of his disciples, "As mostly, O Kâtyâyana, the people are engrossed in the notion of existence and non-existence, they do not emancipated."¹⁶ According to Nagarjuna those who do not see existence and non-existence are ignorant people.¹⁷ He says that through the middle path alone we can examine truly the elements of existence.¹⁸

Any two extreme ascertainties involve dilemma or contradiction. So when we take the middle way we can avoid such dilemmas. If we say something to be existent then we think of its non-existence and *vice versa*. This possibility makes us fail to understand the phenomena of the world. Again when we characterize something to be so and so we face similar difficulties also. Let us take the character of heat of fire. When we say heat is the inner nature (svabhava) of fire, we are puzzled immediately when we examine truth of the proposition. It is because heat is generated by its cause or conditions. It is not existent before it comes into existence. It cannot come into existence by itself without depending on others. If it be so, heat cannot be the natural quality of fire. To be an inner characteristic of something this characteristic must be present for all the three periods of time — past, present and future. This is not possible in any of the characters of things. This situation speaks of the truth that no character is natural but imposed. This truth refers to Buddhist theory of sunyata which really means sarva-dharma-sunya i.e. all elements of existence are void.

The above discussion indicates that the Buddhist concept

The Doctrine of Pancasila

Nila means virtue and *panca* means five. So *pancasila* means fundamental virtues. The five *silas* are: (1) abstaining from harming and causing injury and pain to a life; (2) abstaining from false speech; (3) abstaining from stealing; (4) abstaining from evil, lustful conduct and illicit relation i.e. adultery and (5) abstaining from taking or offering intoxicating and maddening drinks. From the examination of these five virtues we may be sure that these virtues are concerned with ethics. These *silas* are elaborated in the line of Vedic prohibitions or Judaic Ten commandments. Of course these prohibitions imply injunctions such as one should respect the life of others. Similarly when it is said one should not tell a lie, it means that one should speak the truth. In this way non-stealing means that one has the duty to guard the properties of others or one should regard others' property to be a thing of no importance. Fourthly to abstain from adultery means to practice chastity. The fifth implies that one's food should be of *sattvika* nature.

The character building is the main purpose of the *pancasila* doctrine. So that human good can be achieved, for this purpose the doctrine has been presented. Practicing *pancasila* is something characteristic of something this characteristic must be present for all the three periods of time — past, present and future. This is not possible in any of the characters of things. This situation speaks of the truth that no character is natural but imposed. This truth refers to Buddhist theory of sunyata which really means sarva-dharma-sunya i.e. all elements of existence are void.

The above discussion indicates that the Buddhist concept

objects. In this way it contributes to help the eco-systems not sure to pass away. Everything, be it person, a thing or a god, survive. Thus the concept of *pancasila* not only takes the social, therefore merely a putting together, of component elements, values into account, but also it includes within its scope the whole other, in each individual without exception, the relation of its atmospheric conditions. It teaches the philosophy of respect and concern for others, as altruistic motives are involved in it.

e) Pratityasamutpada

Buddha's theory of *pratityasamutpada* can very well compete with the modern theory of science that every event has a cause. This theory has enabled us to predict and manipulate phenomena. That things and events do not occur randomly is very well elaborated by this theory. It denies that there is any occult causal power. According to *Santaraksita* and *Kamalasila*, two later Buddhist thinkers, the cause itself produces the effect by its mere existence. In this production there is no necessity of an additional efficacy. They elaborate their point in this way, "... the basis for the relation of cause and effect consists in immediate sequence, and not in any efficacious action."¹⁹ These are the marks of social upheaval. They are especially interested in the upheaval of the weaker classes including women. Both these inequalities – as regards class and gender – are disliked by them. They are against slavery in the hands of the usurers. In tune with these two philosophers Hume also says that causal relation is relation of uniform sequence between events.

Becoming is the process in which a thing changes every moment. It denies eternal motionlessness of reality. This process denies all eternalist philosophies. Buddha's philosophy of becoming denies any eternal substance either spiritual or material. Therefore rejects the unrelated Absolute. The *Buddhacarita* is vocal as to the non-existence of the Absolute. It says, "If the absolute is meant something out of relation to all known things, its existence cannot be established by any reasoning. The whole universe is a system of relations. We know nothing that is unrelated. If the absolute is devoid of qualities, then all things arising from him, ought likewise to be devoid of qualities. But in reality all things are circumscribed by qualities. Hence the absolute cannot be their cause."

f) Being and Becoming

Being and becoming are two philosophical concepts which have drawn attention of many philosophers both of the eastern and western worlds. Buddha's emphasis on becoming is well known. He presents his *sunyavada* with a view to nullifying being. For him being is non-existent. His philosophy of becoming has been elaborately discussed by Rhys Davids in the following way "according to Buddhism, there is no being, there is only becoming, the state of every individual being unstable, temporary and relative. The philosophy of becoming reminds us of Einstein's theory of relativity. That all phenomena are relative is the very crux of his theory. The dialectical method as adopted by Buddha enabled

him to take a relativistic view of the world. As Heraclitus, a Greek contemporary of Buddha, denies Parmenides's non-dialectic theory. Similarly Buddha also opposes the Upanisadic theory of unchangeableness. Buddha sees a flux not only in the physical world but also in consciousness as we see in the *alaya vijnana* of Yogacara Buddhism. As he is opposed Upanisadic unchangeableness, his philosophy of becoming is regarded as radical.

Like Hegel and Marx, Buddha applies his theory of becoming to society also and therefore he envisages social change and transformation. Transformation in thought is not enough; it has to be extended to the concrete world. We can bring about change and transformation on antecedent conditions. To change the society we must have the idea what a phenomenon wants to be. Man should not be satisfied with what a thing is but what it should be. This needs a transformation in becoming. Keeping these things in mind Buddha addresses the issue of social change with his philosophy of becoming.

We are not satisfied with the present society. A static society always becomes reactionary. Such a society is to be driven away. We should introduce a new society in its place. Every society is expected to give birth a new society in which new values will be realized. If we allow to let the state and society remain what they are we shall not be progressive minded and we shall lag behind in the context of the world change. If we remain what we are we cannot liberate humanity from suffering.

Buddhism and Women

Women constitute an integral part of society. They need such a religion which might enjoy freedom from the shackles of social bondage.

Let us mention the feeling of a Brahmin woman *Mutta* by that name after she has been converted to Buddhism:

"O free, indeed! O gloriously free

Am I in freedom from three crooked things:
From quern, from mortar, from my cook back'd lord!
Ay, but I'm free from rebirth and from death,
And all that dragged me back is hurled away."²¹

Another woman *Sumangalam* sings in the similar tune:

"O women well set free! How free am I
How thoroughly free from kitchen drudgery!
Me stained and squalid among my cooking-pots
My brutal husband ranked as even less
Than the sunshades he sits and weavers away.
Purged now of all my former lust and hate,
I dwell, musing at ease beneath the shade,
Of spreading boughs – O, 'but it's well with me.'"²²

These are the marks of social upheaval. Buddha is especially interested in the upheaval of the weaker classes including women. Both the inequalities – as regards class and gender – are disliked by him.

The Adaptability of Buddhist Culture

To adapt means to make something suitable for a new use in a new situation. So when we speak of the adaptability of Buddhist culture we are to look into the question whether we can adapt it to the modern situations or we are to modify it to meet new situations.

To qualify a culture as Buddhist we are to know how much it is influenced by Buddhist religion. It is true that culture is not only a religious phenomenon; factors like social, psychological and economic conditions are connected with it. Now we live in such a society in which we have been compelled to live a commercially oriented life. We are beset with confusion and disorientation. Our society is at the verge of collapse. The present society seems to take a reversible course. We have begun to lose the humane elements from our being. To reverse this downward

tendency is to import to it the natural human goodness, because without this goodness culture would be infected with extreme disconcerting effect. In our present industrialized society a culture with goodness has become imperative. The present world is infected with horrible atmospheres which are to be curbed if we want to maintain our life in it. Modern thinkers with their puzzlingly obscure words are vitiating the whole atmosphere.

The culture which is prevalent at this time is to be evaluated philosophically. Buddhism is one of the means on the basis of which we may do so. We may do so on experimental basis, because it is no good to stick to a traditional religion with a slavish respect thinking it to be the final solution of all the knotty problems of the world once and for all.

Although presently we are living in a world of science, we should know that science is not everything. It must be complemented with a spiritual culture. Science survives on the intellectual attitude. But this attitude is not enough for all round human development. It needs a spiritual attitude on which culture survives. So that man is not dehumanized, he is to be initiated into a cultural attitude. So that we may view the world as ordered and beautiful, we have to take this attitude. Moreover to take an optimistic attitude we need a cultural atmosphere.

Every one has his own philosophy in the light of which he may adopt a culture. But his philosophy should be given a form on the basis of a general philosophical system like Buddhism. Only then philosophy can be transformed to a life-vision. We should not adopt such a philosophy which would give us a life-illusion. A life-illusion will give us an erroneous view of life which is to be avoided at any cost.

So that we may be culturally enlightened we are to find a philosophy which we accept as our vocation. To read philosophy is not enough. Culture reveals in the practical affairs of man. That is why Buddha is not interested in the riddles which are eternally insoluble. He tries to experiment his philosophy with

ordinary life. He adjusts his appreciative and analytical powers to all the human sensations and to all those small daily happenings which make up our life upon earth. With this philosophy he wants to build such a culture in which we might not allow ourselves to be destroyed by fret and fever. Only in such a culture we can cope with the chaos of objective situations. By selecting the good and beautiful things of the world we may make our culture continue in its desired line. With this dynamism of culture we can transform our life to an ever-increasing momentum.

Man may be educated, but not cultured. Only formal education cannot make man cultured. To be cultured one should take training spiritually and genuine religion without much external paraphernalia and rituals might impart this spiritual education. Pure uncorrupted Buddhism can fulfill this function.

IV. Conclusion

We may deem Buddhism to be successful if it can be useful in the problems of the modern man who faces many crises not only in going to live in a better way but even to live at all. Does Buddhism provide a scope to make people live on this earth for a considerable time to come? Will it allow the world to face the catastrophe or the doomsday? Is there the healing point in it not only to cure man of his mental diseases but also to prevent them? Does Buddhism offer any relief from the sins of the soul? Has it been able to foster the world unity? If we can answer these questions in affirmative then we may assure that Buddhism is relevant to the contemporary world.

The success of Buddhism depends on as to how it changes its response to the needs of the age. The present age is infected with dogmatism and intolerance. People have become aggressive beyond the limit. Moreover the technological developments have made them dehumanized. They have lost the humane feelings of sympathy, love, affection, kindness, understanding etc. If

the message of Buddha can bring back these feelings then we may rely on it and make our life enjoyable.

Being primarily an Indian religion Buddhism is not exclusive minded. It is the very characteristic of Indian religions to allow alternative approaches to survive. The catholic mindedness of Buddhism as an Indian religion has allowed it to think of the salvation for all religions. It is so because it understands that all religions manifest the essentials of life. So it is not unlikely that Buddhism should not have respect for other faiths. Buddhism has never tried to convert the people to it. Of course if anybody wants to come to it, it opens its doors to all.

Man's life is a journey from the incomplete or imperfect man to the complete or perfect man. This is an upward journey. The most of the Indian philosophical and religious systems have therefore thought of rebirth to complete the journey of life and Buddhism is no exception to it. It is interesting to note that although it does not believe in the soul and in its immortality, yet it thinks of rebirth until one reaches nirvana, the full spiritual growth of life.

Buddhism has passed twenty-five hundred years through trial and error. It has spread to far flung areas especially in Asia. There must be something in it as it has attracted so many people to it fold. Its forms may be different in different areas, but the basic tenets are maintained by all these forms. In India also many Buddhist faiths are there especially in the North-East. All of them are living peacefully without troubling others in any matter. Therefore we the Hindus have lessons to be taken from them without being converted to Buddhism. I hope that people will learn the moral lessons preached by this august religion and nurture them wholeheartedly. It is true that Buddhism cannot solve all the intricate problems of the modern life, yet it is helpful to us to diminish to some extent our mental tensions. It is true that Buddhism cannot prevent physical sufferings. The objective measures are necessary to curb natural sufferings. But Buddhist

provides us with subjective measures through which we may get rid of our subjective sufferings springing from our mental tensions.

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The Present Societal Relevance of Buddhist Ethics with Special Reference to Three Refugees

Malaya Borah

Buddhism is the fourth largest religion in the world, after Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism.¹ Today, the population of Buddhists are considered about 350 million in the world and the population of ordained monks and nuns about 700,000.²

Buddhism has originated from the teachings of the historical figure of Gotama (S: Gautama) the Buddha.³ Though it was originated in north India, today, it is the major faith of Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam.⁴ In present time, Buddhism is also practiced in most of the Western countries also like America, Europe, Oceania, Australia etc.⁵

After the death of the Buddha, different schools of Buddhism has been evolved. *Theravada*, considered to be the original teaching, is widely practiced in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos, whilst *Mahayana* is found mostly in China, Japan and Korea. A further form, known as *Vajrayana* is practiced in Tibet.⁶

Zen is another branch of Mahayana Buddhism. It is probably the most common form of Buddhism in the West.⁷

Buddhism signifies the existence of man, his total personality and his ethical and social practices without any metaphysical or divine foundation or grace. This is an approach which envisages progress in morality through the progress in the evolution of person.⁸ Buddhism had a noble ethical system, but it appeared

to be a religion of self-help.⁹

The ancient form of Buddhist ethics was a philosophy of life, a view of man and world. Buddhist morality is considered as a way of life for him who wants to reach Nirvana. Redemption from suffering is the motive of Buddha's teaching.¹⁰

Humanism is an attitude of mind attaching prime importance to human beings and human values. In recent years, the term "humanism" has often been used to refer to value systems that emphasize the personal worth of each individual but that do not include a belief in God. The 19th century French positivist Auguste Comte established a non-theistic religion of humanity designed to promote social reform.¹¹ Though Buddhism is considered as atheistic in nature, it teaches that everyone has the responsibility within himself in order to reawakening the humanity through the practice of spiritual and moral virtues. Buddhism is considered as a complete civilization of man. It is a system of culture and social welfare. The one and ultimate aim of Buddhism is to achieve enlightenment for each and every human being from the life of flux and ills. The one path to reach this aim is that everyone has to work out his salvation with diligence.¹² The Four Noble Truth and the ethical teaching of Buddhism especially the Noble Eight-fold path is useful for all grades of people in the society. The practice of this path leads to enlightenment or perfect wisdom.¹³

Buddhist ethical principles are very noble and in an ideal world their practice would lead to peace and harmony.¹⁴

Buddhism is basically a way of life. It is not a dogmatic religion. It is also not a system of rites, rituals or prayers. It is a religion of full of purity in thinking, speaking and acting. The Buddha was the first rationalist of the world who asserted that he was one's own saviour without reference to any extra-natural power.¹⁵ In Buddhism, three things are most important. They are – The Buddha, The *Dharma* and The *Sangha*. They are called three Jewels, three Refuges or Refuges of

Buddhism. Every Buddhist, such as a monk, nun, laymen, laywomen etc. should repeat the formula –

I take refuge in Buddha (*Buddham Saranam Gacchami*)
 I take refuge in Dharma (*Dharmam Saranam Gacchami*)
 I take refuge in Sangha (*Sangham Saranam Gacchami*)¹⁶

For better understanding an example is given – here Lord Buddha has been compared to a physician who diagnoses and prescribes the cure of human suffering, *Dharma* is the medicine prescribed, and *Sangha* is the nurse who administers the medicine.¹⁷

The Buddha :

Among the *tri-ratna* or the three Jewels, the first is the Buddha or the enlightened one. The Buddha signifies a historical figure who founded the religion Buddhism.¹⁸

*"I am the Buddha of to-day, Gotama of Sakya growth. Striving in my striving, I have attained to Supreme Enlightenment. My city is called Kapilavasthu, my father King Suddhodana, my mother who bore me Maya the Queen."*¹⁹

As a human being, the Buddha's first name was Siddhartha and his family name was Gautama. He was a member of Shaky clan, so he is called Shakyamuni, 'the wise of the Shakyas'. He is also known as Tathagata.²⁰

Siddhartha was born in approximately 563 B. C. at the Lumbini garden near Kapilavastu on the Nepalese border.²¹ He was the son of the ksatriya or Sakya king Suddhodana and Mahamaya. His mother Mahamaya died seven days after his birth. After that, Mahamaya's younger sister, Maha Pajapati Gotami was married to Suddhodana. For that reason, Siddhartha was brought up by his foster mother.²²

Many legends, full of supernatural events or happenings are surrounded in the birth, career and overall the whole life of the Buddha.²³

Some legends shows :

*"He was not born as ordinary men are; he had no earthly father; he descended of his own accord into his mother's womb from his throne in heaven; and he gave unmistakable signs, immediately after his birth, of his high character and of his future greatness. Earth and heaven at his birth united to pay him homage, the very trees bent of their own accord over his mother, and the angels and archangels were present with their help. His mother was the best and the purest of the daughters of men, and his father was of royal lineage, a king of wealth and power. It was a pious task to make his abnegation and his renunciation greater by the comparison between the splendour of the position he was to abandon, and the poverty in which he afterwards lived. And in countries distant from Kapila-vastu the inconsistencies between such glowing accounts, and the very names they contain, passed unnoticed by credulous bearers."*²⁴

Siddhartha married Yashodhara and their son's name was Mahabala. Till the age of 29 he enjoyed his homely life. On seeing the four signs he left the home at the age of 29 in order to solve the illness of life.²⁵ The 'Legend of four signs' shows that they are the guiding source for Gautama towards Buddhahood. The four signs are an old man, a sick man, a dead man and a Bhikkhu. Bhikkhu means a wandering ascetic. He has renounced the world for the sake of public welfare. Gautama has renounced the world for the sake of solution of suffering of an old man, a sick man, and a dead man and like the Bhikkhu he has also renounced the world for the good and welfare of human beings.²⁶

*"Then, disciples, after some time, while I was still young, a dark-haired stripling, endowed with happy youth, in the prime of manhood, against the wishes of my father and mother who lamented with tearful eyes, I had my head and beard shaved, and, wearing yellow garments, went forth from home to the homeless state."*²⁷

Buddha is generally described as a historical personality and

as a great teacher who not only abandoned his well-known and wealthy Kshatriya family but also renounced the whole world in order to attain enlightenment or nirvana. After that enlightenment he was considered as 'the Lord' and 'the Arhat'.²⁸

In his journey for truth or search for truth, the Siddhartha met several persons. First he met a shramana guru, Arada Kalama. Arada Kalama's technique of meditation taught one to acquire the goal of 'state of nothingness'. But Siddhartha found that it is of very little value.²⁹

Siddhartha thought,

*'This teaching does not lead me to disgust, detachment, cessation, tranquility, intuition, enlightenment and Nibbana, but only to the attainment of The Realm-of-Nothingness.'*³⁰

Then he met Udraka Ramaputra whose main teaching was the experience of 'neither perception nor non perception'. But it also of a limited value towards the goal for him. After that he met five other men who taught him to practice a rigorous ascetic way including strict fasting, breath control, and long periods seated in unmoving meditation. He practiced this path for six years but soon he felt the insecurity of this path and rejected it. He found that the middle way between the two extremes, self-indulgence and self-mortification, was the best way to practice.³¹ At the age of 35, he sat under the Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya and at that time he realized by his intuitive knowledge or meditative insight about the things as they really are, by overcoming temptation or the Evil One, symbolized as Mara, entered into absolute mindfulness and bliss and became a Buddha, an enlightened being.³²

The Buddha thought that nirvana is the extinction of suffering and the eternal bliss of nirvana can be gained by the noble ideal of selfless service.³³

The Buddha shows the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eight Fold Path. This Noble Eight Fold Path leads to the cessation of suffering or nirvana. This path consists of moral virtue

and mindfulness or *Samadhi*, and wisdom or *prajna*.³⁴

After enlightenment, for forty-five years the Buddha preached friendliness and charity towards others. He taught morality, purity, and concentration of wisdom and compassion. His path is the path of peace.³⁵

After enlightenment the Buddha guided his enlightened disciples, called *Arhats*, to admit the qualified seekers of truth into the Sangha. The Buddha told that such entering disciples should have thirst to meditate and eagerness to teach the Dharma.³⁶

He taught that not only men but also women have a great importance in the society.³⁷ Around 510 BCE, the Buddha permitted to establish a Sangha for female emphasizing that women have the capability to realize enlightenment. But he permitted some rules and regulations for the nuns, or *bhikkhunis*.³⁸ The Buddha put maximum emphasis on the self-effort and self-education in the matter of moral development of a person.³⁹

The Buddha is not only considered as a historical personality but by gradual process various legends, myths are associated with him. Many stories about Buddha's prior births are depicted in the Jataka books. Various inscriptions, stupas, images show the life points of the prior Buddhas.⁴¹

Bimbisara, the king of Magadha and his son Ajatasatru was deeply inspired by the Buddha very much.⁴²

The Buddha (awakened one) was an Arahant. Every Arahant is Buddha (awakened).⁴³ The Buddha states the relationship between him and his followers as:

You yourselves should make the exertion.

*The Tathagatas are mere teachers.*⁴⁴

*By oneself is one purified; by oneself is one defiled.*⁴⁴

The Buddha did not leave any one as the supreme authority. After his death, he only told his closest disciple Ananda that the Dharma and Vinaya would be the supreme authority in future.⁴⁵

*"That, verily, is a safe refuge, that is the best refuge; after having got to that refuge a man is delivered from all pains."*⁴⁶

The Buddha or the Blessed One addressed the brethren and said

"Behold now, brethren, I exhort you, saying, "Decay is inherent in all component things!"

This was the last word of the Tathagata!⁴⁷

The date of the Parinirvana of the Buddha is not quite certain. According to the Raga-parampara, or line of kings, in the Ceylon chronicles, the date would be 543 B.C.⁴⁸ The Buddha passed away in a grove of sala trees in Kusinara in India.⁴⁹ When the Blessed One died, the venerable Ananda, at the moment of his passing away from existence, uttered this stanza:

"Then was there terror!

Then stood the hair on end!

When he endowed with every grace—

*The supreme Buddha ——— died!"*⁵⁰

Before attainment of enlightenment Buddha was named as 'Siddharta Gautama'. When he had attained enlightenment, he was called as 'Buddha' (enlightened one). When he was on the road to enlightenment Gautama is called 'the bodhisattva' by Buddhists.⁵¹

Buddha's life history, his personality, his spiritual insight to see the reality of life has inspired the people to feel their real existence in the world and try to make the life meaningful and also try to awakening the Buddha nature within them.

The Arhat Ideal or the Arhathood

The term 'Arhat' signifies the one who has reached perfection *nibbana*.⁵² The highest stage of development of an ideal man, a saint or a sage is called as an 'Arhat'.⁵³

*"There is no suffering for him who has completed his journey, who is freed from sorrow, who has freed himself on all sides, who has shaken of all fetters."*⁵⁴

*"The conquest of self is indeed better than the conquest of other persons; of one who has disciplined himself, who always practices self-control."*⁵⁵

In Theravada Buddhism, the ideal saint is *Arhat* who obtains personal salvation or extinction of all misery and sorrow. On the other hand, Bodhisattva is the ideal saint of Mahayana Buddhism.⁵⁶

In Theravada Buddhism, *Arhat* is one who has reached the final Awakening and attained Nirvana, including the Buddha. An *Arhat* is a person who has destroyed greed, hatred, and delusion, will not be reborn in any world, free from the realm of *samsara*.⁵⁷

In Theravada sects of Buddhism, one does not expected to become Buddhas, but *Arhats*. According to it, each *kalpa* (aeon or age) has only one Buddha. There is a very limited number of future Buddhas or Bodhisattvas. The Maitreya is one such future Buddha. The conception of Maitreya is not prevalent amongst Theravada Buddhists.⁵⁸

In Theravada Buddhism, the Buddha is considered as a teacher. Here, he is considered as human Buddha.⁵⁹

Theravada expert Ven. Dr. H. Saddhatissa states that Buddhism does not recognize a Creator God but rather states that we are the architects of our own destinies.⁶⁰

The three awakened beings are classified as Arhat. They are as follows:

- (1) *Sammāsambuddha*: It is usually called Buddha, who discovers the truth by himself and teaches the path to awakening to others.
- (2) *Paccekabuddha*: it is that one who discovers the truth by himself but lacks the skill to teach others.
- (3) *Anāgārabuddha*: who receive the truth directly or indirectly from a *Sammāsambuddha*.⁶¹

The Bodhisattva Ideal

The Bodhisattva ideal is rooted in the life of Buddha. But it is considered a central feature of Mahayana Buddhism. The Tibetan or *Vajrayana* or Tantric Buddhism is a part of Mahayana Buddhism. The ideal of this Buddhism is also bodhisattva vow. In the west, the Zen Buddhism (Chan Buddhism in China) is also followers of Mahayana bodhisattva vow.⁶²

The conception of *Maitreya* is popular among Mahayana Buddhists.⁶³ Mahayana Buddhism holds that there are five Buddhas who have/will manifest themselves in the earthly realm. Mahayana Buddhism holds that *Maitreya* is considered as the Buddha who is expected to come in the future, known to all schools of Buddhism. He is worshipped as a being who guides those who confess their wrongs, and teachers who become discouraged. He is sometimes depicted as the 'Laughing Buddha' with his hands stretched over his head, a smile on his face, and a large, bare stomach. He represents all-encompassing love.⁶⁴

In Mahayana Buddhism, the Buddha is considered as an image of divinity and worship and prayer could be directed to him. It was believed that various people had acquired Buddhahood or enlightenment both in the present and past. And it is thought that more Buddhas would come in future. Many people could become a Bodhisattva, but it is believed that few Bodhisattvas may be considered as a successful saint.⁶⁵

For the Mahayana Buddhism, everybody can become a Buddha and before achieving complete Buddhahood, everybody goes through the path of *bodhisattva*.⁶⁶ A bodhisattva is that whose goal is not only liberate himself but liberation for all or bringing enlightenment to everybody.⁶⁷

The perfection of wisdom (*prajna-paramita*) and compassion are the two main virtues of a bodhisattva.⁶⁸ The bodhisattva practices six virtues known as the 'Six Perfections' (*paramita*). They are – Generosity (*dana*), Morality (*sila*), Patience (*ksanti*), Perseverance (*virya*), Meditation (*Samadhi*), Insight (*prajna*).⁶⁹

The ten stages (*bhumi*) or the ten path of the bodhisattva, which leads to the realization of Buddhahood are as follows-

1. The Joyful (*paramudita*): This stage is characterized as the stage of joy and pleasure. In this stage, the aspirant renounced the world and becomes a wandering monk. In this stage, he becomes free from all kind of fear and acquires the virtue of generosity or *dana*.⁷⁰

2. Immaculate (*vimala*): In this stage, the aspirant practices the good conducts like, abstention from killing, abstention from lying, etc. He guides the human beings to give up ill-thinking, anger, delusion etc.

Here, the perfection of morality is realized.⁷¹

3. The shining (*prabhakari*): In this stage, the aspirant realizes love, compassion, gladness and equanimity. Here, the perfection of forbearance is realized.⁷²

4. The Brilliant (*Arcismati*): In this stage, the aspirant realizes the perfection of energy which leads to enlightenment.⁷³ In this stage, the notion of selfhood is totally extinguished.⁷⁴

5. The Invincible (*Sudurjaya*): In this stage, the aspirant realizes the Four Noble Truths. He achieves the knowledge of the reality of life and preaches happiness to all mankind.⁷⁵ Here, the perfection of meditation is realized.⁷⁶

6. The Friendly (*Abhimukhi*): In this stage, the doctrine of dependent origination is realized. Here, the perfection of wisdom is realized.⁷⁷ The aspirant realizes the mystic contemplation of emptiness.⁷⁸

7. The Far Advanced (*Durangama*): It is that stage which leads the way to find emancipation for all living-beings.⁷⁹ In this stage, the aspirant realizes perfection in method, viz. equipped with great merit and knowledge; comprehend the nature of the phenomena; stand with compassion, love, and equanimity; free from all affliction and free others

from it; realize the emptiness of things; merge in the Truth of all Buddhas; show on the body the marks of a Buddha; experience past, present and future as one moment; appear in various aeons.⁸⁰

- (8) The Immovable (*Acala*): In this stage, the aspirant realizes the perfection of resolution. He attains peace.⁸¹ Here, he has acquired the capability to attain the knowledge of the whole universe.⁸²
- (9) The Well-Intentioned (*Sadbumati*): In this stage, the aspirant realizes the perfection of powers. He now knows all the knowledge of whole phenomena and preaches the Dharma delivered by the Buddha to all the sentient beings.⁸³
- (10) The Dharma Cloud (*Dharmamegha*): In this stage, the aspirant realizes the perfection of true knowledge. Here, he realizes the complete illumination and becomes the Buddha himself. Now, he has acquired the supernatural powers.⁸⁴

Some names are considered as saviour beings full of specific spiritual qualities. Some instances are as follows -

Amitabha Buddha is the name of the bodhisattva who established the Pure Land form of Buddhism.⁸⁵

He became of central importance of the Pure Land schools of Eastern Buddhism, where he is known as Amita in China and Amida in Japan.⁸⁶

The power he gained from his merit as a bodhisattva enabled him to establish the Pure Land and now allows him to help others enter the Pure Land. The laity in particular can now enter the Pure Land with Amitabha's help.⁸⁷

Avalokiteshvara is popularly known as the Bodhisattva of Compassion. He has reincarnated in this world numerous times (in both male and female forms). First, in Mahayana Buddhism, he is considered to be the manifestation of Amitabha Buddha, the founder of the Pure Land school of Buddhism, and is often

represented at Amitabha's right hand. As such he is available to help all in dire need. Second, in China, she appears as Kuan Yin, the Goddess of Compassion. In folk belief, she keeps people safe from natural catastrophe. Third, in Tibet, he appears in several forms. The most important of these are as Chenrezig, the male partner of the couple who gave birth to the Tibetan people, Tara, and as the Dalai Lama.⁸⁸

Manjushri is the Bodhisattva of Wisdom (*prajna*). His two main symbols are the sword of knowledge and a book of the Prajñā Paramita Sutra. His wisdom removes all the darkness of ignorance.⁸⁹

Tara is a female manifestation in Tibet of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, whose Tibetan form is Chenrezig. She can appear in 21 different forms, which differ in attributes and are known by their color. She appears in both peaceful and wrathful manifestations. The most commonly appearing forms are Green Tara and White Tara. She is often treated as a yidam, guiding Vajrayana monks towards enlightenment. King Songtsen Gampo who brought Buddhism to Tibet in the seventh century, who is himself considered as a manifestation of Chenrezig.⁹⁰

The Trikaya

The *Trikaya* (Sanskrit) doctrine literally means 'three bodies' or 'three personalities'. It is an important Buddhist teaching both about the nature of reality, and the real nature of Buddha.⁹¹ According to this Mahayana doctrine of the *Trikaya*, each Buddha has three bodies. They are - *dharmakaya*, *sambogakaya* and *nirmanakaya*. *Dharmakaya* is the body of absolute truth, *sambogakaya* is the body that experiences the bliss of enlightenment, and *nirmanakaya* is the body that manifests in the world. In other words, *dharmakaya* is considered as the absolute nature of all beings, *sambogakaya* as the blissful experience of

enlightenment, and *nirmanakaya* as the embodiment of the Buddha in human form.⁹²

The *Dharmakaya* literally means 'truth body' or 'reality body'. It is a central idea in Mahayana Buddhism. The Buddha explained that he has always and will always exist to lead beings to their salvation. This eternal aspect of Buddha is the *Dharmakaya*. It may be considered the truest reality in the universe. It has three great qualities- great purity, great realization and great mind.⁹³

Dharma-Kaya is the invisible transcendental essence of the enlightenment teaching of the Buddha. It is the ultimate end of all Buddhas and of all efforts towards enlightenment.⁹⁴

The *Sambhogakaya* is that aspect of the Buddha, or the Dharma, that one meets in visions and in deep meditation. It could be considered an interface with the *Dharmakaya*. What the doctrine does, as well as that of the *Tathagatagarbha*, is to bring the transcendental within reach—it places the transcendental within the plane of immanence. Gyaltrul Rinpoche's Dharmakaya organization was founded for the specific purpose of bringing the teachings and meditation practices from the Trungrin Tradition of the Karma Kagyu lineage to North America.⁹⁵

Nirmana-Kaya Buddha is that in which the Buddha appears like an ordinary mortal and teaches the *dhamma* through ordinary language.⁹⁶

The *trikaya* doctrine explains the spiritual experience of the devotees of the Buddha in their deep eagerness to know the Absolute Reality.⁹⁷

The place of Guru

*"Rely on the teachings to evaluate a guru:
Do not have blind faith, but also no blind criticism."*

His Holiness the Dalai Lama

The Buddha compared his teachings to medicine, and

the teacher to the doctor who can accurately prescribe the correct medicine for the disciple the patient.⁹⁹

Guru is a teacher or guide for a novice. This is an important concept in Vajrayana Buddhism. In Vajrayana, the term 'Lama' is used for teacher or guru. He is usually the head of a monastery or perhaps several monasteries. Some important lamas are considered to be bodhisattvas, such as the Dalai Lama.¹⁰⁰

Dalai Lama provides a spiritual significance in Tibetan Buddhism. It is believed that Dalai Lama is the divine embodiment (*nirmanakaya*) of Bodhisattva *Avalokitesvara*, the Lord of Compassion, who undertakes rebirths for the welfare of human beings. The line of the Dalai Lamas had started from 13th century.

In Buddhist tradition, there is seen a relationship of friendship between the pupil and the learned Buddhist teacher.¹⁰²

The 14th Dalai Lama or the current Dalai Lama won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. He is also well known for his lifelong advocacy for Tibetans inside and outside Tibet. He has traveled all over the world, advocating for the welfare of Tibetans, teaching Tibetan Buddhism and talking about the importance of Buddhism as the source of a happy life. He has spoken about topics such as abortion, economics, firearms, and sexuality, and human rights.¹⁰³

In Buddhism, a guru or a teacher plays a very important role because he or she leads one to realize their own wisdom or their own nature (guru). One needs to develop his or her own wisdom and insight to become a teacher and even a Buddha themselves. At the beginning of the path, a guru is like a spiritual teacher to guide and guide one but afterwards one should be able to stand on one's own feet and be self-sufficient.¹⁰⁴

Some spiritual qualities are essential for spiritual teachers or gurus. It follows:

- (1) They should practice proper ethical behaviour. He should not harm anyone but try to help others.
- (2) They should practice single pointed concentration.
- (3) They should not have any egoistic thoughts.
- (4) They should teach love and compassion towards others.
- (5) They should have a proper intellectual understanding just like emptiness.
- (6) They should have perseverance of teaching.
- (7) They should have proper scriptural knowledge.
- (8) They should be more learned person than the disciples.
- (9) They should be skillful speaker.
- (10) They should give up disappointment in the performance of the students.¹⁰⁵

In Mahayana Buddhism, spiritual teachers or spiritual gurus should have eight particular qualities. They are as follows:

- (1) They must first of all follow the precepts and vows of a bodhisattva.
- (2) They must have studied in depth the teachings of the path of the bodhisattva.
- (3) Their understanding must be deep and not purely intellectual they must have truly experienced the teachings.
- (4) They must feel sincere compassion towards all sentient beings.
- (5) They must be fearless and show a lot of courage, not only in their own actions but also when they teach others.
- (6) They must be tolerant and patient with their students.
- (7) They must be tenacious and not allow themselves to be carried away by discouragement or disappointment.
- (8) Finally, they must be capable of communicating effectively with students.¹⁰⁶

Venerable Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche was one of the great Tibetan Masters. Lama Zopa Rinpoche has said of Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche as –

*"He is a great Kadampa who shows real Kadampa Tradition...so completely renounced. There's not one slightest worldly activity, not the slightest eight world dharmas, no self cherishing thought. Even talking, everything is as much as possible pleasing to sentient being's mind."*¹⁰⁷

This spiritual leader died in 2006.

Venerable Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche was another well-known spiritual leader who was born in 1946 in Nepal. The Dalai Lama states:

*"Rinpoche is someone who follows my guidance sincerely, very compassionately and with one hundred percent trust. He possesses unwavering faith and pure samaya; not only has he pure samaya and faith, but whatever I instruct, Zopa Rinpoche has the capability to accomplish it. So whatever dedications Lama Zopa Rinpoche makes, I also pray to accomplish this and you should do the same thing."*¹⁰⁸

According to Venerable Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche,

*"That peace and happiness has to come from the heart, from within. Therefore, to eliminate wars and destroying each other, to eliminate famine, disease and earthquakes, and to eliminate all other disasters and untimely experiences, all this can be stopped by having loving kindness toward each other. From having a good heart with loving kindness, negative action cannot arise."*¹⁰⁹

Today, in present time, the 14th Dalai Lama is regarded as the spiritual leader in Tibet. In the year 2011, month of October, the Tibetan spiritual leader the 76-year-old Dalai Lama, has been awarded 'The Mahatma Gandhi International Award for Peace and Reconciliation' in South Africa. It shows the wider spreadness of Buddhist ethical teachings through the spiritual teachers in the world.¹¹⁰

The Dharma

The term 'Dharma' has many meanings. But here it is described as the ethical teachings of the Buddha.

The ethics of Buddhism is considered as the precious or valuable teachings of the enlightened being, the Buddha and the other enlightened beings who practice his teaching. At first the moral teachings of the Buddha were oral. Then those moral instructions are written down and those are named as Buddhist scriptures. They are also handed down through tradition.¹¹¹

Buddha was mainly an ethical teacher and social reformer. He refused the metaphysical concepts. The Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eight-Fold Path can be regarded as the foundation of his ethical teachings.¹¹²

Immediately two months after the Buddha's enlightenment he provided the first sermon or the first discourse to his five disciples, namely, Kondanna, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mohanama, and Assaji. They are Brahmin in clan. His first discourse was called as *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. *Dhammacakkappavattana* would mean The Turning or The Establishment of the Wheel of Truth. This discourse was delivered in the Deer Park in Isipatana near Benares.¹¹³

The First Noble Truth is that there is suffering. Men are struggling any where any time because life is surrounded by misery and pain.¹¹⁴

The Buddha or the Blessed One said –

Now this, O Bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning suffering.

Birth is attended with pain, decay is painful, disease is painful, death is painful. Union with the unpleasant is painful, painful is separation from the pleasant; and any craving that is unsatisfied that too is painful. In brief, the five aggregates which spring from attachment (the conditions of individuality and their cause) are

*painful. This then, O Bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning suffering.*¹¹⁵

Human existence is consists of five kinds of aggregates, called *skandhas*, namely,

- 1) Body (*rupa*): all perceptible forms.
- 2) Feeling (*vedana*): all feelings of pleasure and pain.
- 3) Perception (*samjna*): all that can be perceived or imagined.
- 4) Motive forces (*samskara*): the power that produces something as well as that which has been produced.
- 5) Consciousness (*vijnana*): the element that transmigrates in a new rebirth.

These aggregates are transient and subject to suffering.¹¹⁶

So, according to Buddha, the self is impermanent. It is considered as an aggregate. It is a series of successive mental and bodily processes. In this case they are impermanent.¹¹⁷

Though Buddha considers the soul as impermanent, yet he believes in transmigration or rebirth. He believes in the rebirth of the same series of cognitions or consciousness.¹¹⁸ The Buddha gives the example of the flame of a lamp. The flame of the lamp changes in every moment of time. There is no identity but there is continuity in different flames of light of the lamp. Similarly, the first conscious act in the new birth is produced by the last conscious act in the preceding birth. There is no identity of the permanent soul, there is seen the transmigration or rebirth of the impermanent psychical series or the same series of consciousness.¹¹⁹ so, rebirth also cause suffering.

The Buddha's theory of Impermanence (*anityavada*) also leads to suffering. Existence is considered as impermanent. Every physical and mental object is impermanent. Everything is changing, transient or flux. So, they are painful.¹²⁰

For an *Ariya* or a Noble person, life is full of suffering and happiness is only a temporary flux. Men cannot get the real

happiness which he wishes to deserve. Material happiness cannot fulfill men's desire fully. All men can suffer pain originated from birth, decay, disease and death. Men cannot ever get relief from the four causes of suffering.¹²¹

The Buddha tried to teach the reality of life. Human existence is full of pain, impermanence and dissatisfaction. In other words, the First Noble Truth shows the real insight of incomplete and painful life.¹²²

The second Noble Truth is that there is a cause of suffering. Everything in this world has a cause. If suffering is supposed to be the effect then it must surely have a cause. 'This being, that arises' is the causal law of dependent origination or *Patticca-Samuppada*.¹²³ *Patticca* means 'dependent upon' and *Sammuppada* means 'arising or origination'. So, *Patticca-Sammuppada* means 'dependent arising'.¹²⁴

According to *Patticca-Sammuppada*, in the empirical world everything is relative, conditional, dependent, subject to birth and death and therefore impermanent. The Buddha says that ignorance is the chief cause of suffering. The twelve links of the Causal Wheel of Dependent Origination are as follows-

- (1) Ignorance (*avidya*).
- (2) Impressions of Karmic forces (*samskara*).
- (3) Initial consciousness of the embryo (*vijnana*).
- (4) Psycho-physical organism (*nama-rupa*).
- (5) Six sense-organs including mind (*sadayatana*).
- (6) Sense-object-contact (*sparsa*).
- (7) Sense-experience (*vedana*).
- (8) Thirst for sense-enjoyment (*trana*).
- (9) Clinging to this enjoyment (*upadana*).
- (10) Will to be born. (*bhava*).
- (11) Birth or rebirth (*jati*).
- (12) Old age and death (*jara-marana*).

These twelve links are considered as the cycle of birth and death. The first two links are related to past life, the last two links to future life and the rest to present life.¹²⁵

Ignorance is the not knowingness of things as they really are. It hides all right knowledge or right understanding. So, ignorance is considered as the root cause of suffering.¹²⁶ The third Noble Truth is that there is a cessation of suffering. As ignorance is regarded as the cause of suffering, nirvana is regarded as the cessation of suffering.¹²⁷

The term 'Nirvana' means 'blowing out'. It is regarded as the cessation of five *skandhas*, of all activities and of all becoming. It is the positive and even the highest bliss.¹²⁸

As a spiritual teacher, the Buddha tried to advise the peoples to remove their ignorance of truth and their desire for happiness. The cessation of suffering is called nirvana, the *summum bonum*, beyond logical reasoning and beyond description. When men practise the constant spiritual exercise and contemplation then he can fully achieved the ideal, nirvana.¹²⁹

*Ignorance is the worst of diseases; propensities are the greatest of dangers. To him who has known this truly, nirvana is the highest bliss.*¹³⁰

*Health is the greatest of gifts, contentment is the greatest wealth; peace is the best of relationships. Nirvana is the highest happiness.*¹³¹

The fourth Noble Truth is that there is a way leading to this cessation of suffering. The Noble Eight Fold Path is the ethical and spiritual path delivered by the Buddha to the cessation of suffering or nirvana.¹³² The Buddha and the Blessed One gathered the company of the five Bhikkhus and said:

There are two extremes, O Bhikkhus, which the man who has renounced the world ought not to follow-the habitual practice, on the one hand, of those things whose attraction depends upon the passions, and especially of sensuality - a low and pagan way (of seeking pleasure) unworthy, unprofitable, and fit only for the worldly-

mind and the habitual practice, on the other hand, of asceticism (or self-mortification), which is painful, unworthy, and unprofitable.

“There is a middle path, O Bhikkhus, avoiding these two extremes, discovered by the Tathagata – a path which opens the eyes, and bestows understanding, which leads to peace of mind, to the higher wisdom, to full enlightenment, to Nirvana.”¹³³

The Noble Eight Fold Path is as follows –

Right view, Right aspiration, Right speech, Right conduct, Right livelihood, Right effort, Right mindfulness, and Right contemplation.¹³⁴

Right view: it concerns with the right knowledge of the four noble truths, which leads to nirvana.¹³⁵ It directly knows the world as a constant flux of conditioned phenomena.¹³⁶ This step provides Buddhism its rational basis. It shows one's own powers of pure reasoning.¹³⁷

Right aspiration or right resolve: it consists in the strict determination to avoid the attachment from sensual pleasures, ill-thoughts towards others and any harmful activities towards others.¹³⁸

Right speech: it consists in the abstention from harsh words, false talking, backbiting etc. Every seeker of truth should speak the right and appropriate words.¹³⁹

Right conduct: it consists in the abstention from killing, stealing, self-indulgence, drinking intoxicants etc. This is its negative side. In the positive side, it includes charity, truth, service, kindness etc.¹⁴⁰

Right livelihood: it consists in the abstention from any kind of impure earning like, hypocrisy, boasting, indirect asking, threat etc.¹⁴¹ According to this path, one should live by honest means. Trades in arms, animals, flesh, liquor, and poison are prohibited.¹⁴²

Right effort: it consists in vigorous endeavour by one for his own moral and mental upliftment. One should give up all

habits and practice the good ones.¹⁴³ It is necessary for self-control, and sense-restraint. It consists in abstention from evil thinking. It consists in concentration of the mind on universal goodness.¹⁴⁴

“A man should hasten towards the good; he should restrain his thoughts from evil. If a man is slack in doing what is good, his mind (comes to) rejoice in evil.”¹⁴⁵

Right mindfulness: it consists in recollection of the purity of the body, any kinds of feelings like pleasure, pain, means to enlightenment etc.¹⁴⁶

Right contemplation: it consists of four kinds of meditation. The first stage is a stage of reflection, investigation, delight, bliss and tranquility. In the second stage, reflection and investigation disappear. In the third stage, delight disappears. In the fourth stage, bliss also disappears and only tranquility and equanimity remain. These four kinds of meditation are necessary for an *Arhat*.¹⁴⁷

Right contemplation is considered as the end and the crown of the Eight Fold Path.¹⁴⁸

A man who can reach this end and fully practice this Eight Fold Path becomes an *Arhat*. He is free from all craving in this world or after life or rebirth.¹⁴⁹

“Understanding, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the noble eightfold path which leads to the cessation of suffering.”¹⁵⁰

The Eight Fold Path considers moral progress as the foundation of successful meditation and successful meditation as the awakening factor of prajna or wisdom.¹⁵¹

In Buddhist ethics, there is also a triple path constituting *Sila* or right conduct or morality, *Samadhi* or right concentration and *Prajna* or right knowledge. *Sila* and *Samadhi* lead to *Prajna*, direct to liberation.¹⁵²

Among the Eight Noble Path the first two directs to *Prajna*,

the last three to *Samadhi* and the rest to *Sila* or morality.¹⁵³

In Buddhist ethical purview, *sila* or morality is considered as the foundation of a sacred or holy life. *Sila* signifies the practice of *Pancasila*, *Atthasila*, *Dasasila* and *Catu-parisuddhisila*.¹⁵⁴ The five precepts or *Pancasila* consists in abstention from killing, stealing, committing adultery, lying and intoxicating drinks. These precepts are applicable for all lay devotees.¹⁵⁵

The eight precepts or *Atthasila* are for such Buddhist lay people, both lay men and women, who want to practice more strictly than the usual five precepts. The primary objective of these eight precepts is to avoid morally bad behaviors or wrong deeds and to lead a more ascetic livelihood. In Theravada Buddhist countries such as Sri Lanka and Thailand, Buddhist laymen and laywomen often spend one day a week (on the Uposatha days, viz., the new moon, first-quarter moon, full moon and last-quarter moon days) for practicing the eight precepts.¹⁵⁶

The eight precepts are -

- (1) Abstention from causing harm and taking life (both human and non-human).
- (2) Abstention from taking what is not given (for example, stealing)
- (3) Abstention from sexual activity.
- (4) Abstention from wrong speech like telling lies, deceiving others, manipulating others, using hurtful words.
- (5) Abstention from using intoxicating drinks.
- (6) Abstention from eating at the wrong time (the right time is after sunrise, before noon).
- (7) Abstention from singing, dancing, playing music, attending entertainment performances, wearing perfume, and using cosmetics and garlands (decorative accessories)
- (8) Abstention from luxurious places for sitting or sleeping, and overindulging in sleep.¹⁵⁷

The ten precepts are *Dasasila* are practiced especially by a twice monks or nuns. They are as follows -

- 1) Abstention from taking life.
- 2) Abstention from theft.
- 3) Abstention from self-indulgence.
- 4) Abstention from telling lies.
- 5) Abstention from slander.
- 6) Abstention from impolite speech.
- 7) Abstention from talking senselessly.
- 8) Abstention from avariciousness.
- 9) Abstention from maliciousness.
- 10) Abstention from false views.¹⁵⁸

The four-fold purification of morality or *Catu-parisuddhi-sila* follows -

- 1) *Pannokkhasamvarasila* - it means restraint with regard to the monastic rules. There are 227 precepts for monks and 311 precepts for nuns.
- 2) *Bhikkhusamvarasila* - it means restraint of the monk's sense-organs.
- 3) *Uposathaparisuddhisila* - it means livelihood by honest means without harm any one.
- 4) *Pannaya sammisita-sila* - it means that monk should have right mental attitude whenever using their necessary usage such as robes, almsfood, dwelling and medicine.¹⁵⁹

The other 'tenfold wholesome behaviour' consists of -

- 1) Giving (*dana*);
- 2) Morality (*sila*);
- 3) Meditation (*bhavana*);
- 4) Humoring;

- (5) Giving service;
- (6) Surrendering what was given;
- (7) Reflecting with joy on the attainment of merit;
- (8) Listening to the Dharma;
- (9) Preaching Dharma;
- (10) Setting one's views straight.¹⁶⁰

The ethics of non-injury or ahimsa is the basic virtue of Buddhist ethics.¹⁶¹

*"Not reviling, not injuring, (practicing) restraint according to the law, moderation in eating, dwelling in solitude, diligence in higher thought, this is the teaching of the awakened."*¹⁶²

It is believed that, in all the time the man who was fit or who has the victory will survive in the struggle for existence. But in Buddhist ethics, victory does not matter to account for survival. The measure of victory is to be determined by love and kindness.¹⁶³

*"Victory breeds hatred; the conquered dwells in sorrow. He who has given up (thoughts of both) victory and defeat, he is calm and lives happily."*¹⁶⁴

The Buddha had forbidden any kind of violence. The sacrifices of animals and the battles where innocent men were killed were strictly prohibited by Buddha. For him, everyone should practice the virtue of patience.¹⁶⁵

Any kind of hatred should be conquered by love and hate should also be conquered by good will.¹⁶⁶

*"There is no fire like passion, no ill like hatred, there is no sorrow like this physical existence (individuality), there is no happiness higher than tranquility."*¹⁶⁷

The ethics of non-violence is a way to save from all kinds of destruction because its motto is love and co-operation which leads to peace.¹⁶⁸

*"He who guides others by a procedure that is non-violent and equitable, he is said to be a guardian of the law, wise and righteous."*¹⁶⁹

Ashoka was an Indian emperor who after successful military conquests, converted to Buddhism, promoted it across South and Central Asia, and began displaying religious tolerance, supported animal rights, built hospitals, and promoted non-violence.¹⁷⁰

Ethics of Buddhism signifies purity of the inner life. The mind must be purged of all impurities. Greed, hatred, delusion, anger, envy, and jealousy should be given up.¹⁷¹

*"The eschewing of all evil, the perfecting of good deeds, the purifying of one's mind, this is the teaching of the Buddhas (the awakened)."*¹⁷²

In Buddhist ethical sphere, *nirvāṇa* is considered as the highest good of an individual which is realized through universal love and will and love. Universal love, compassion for the distressed, and the virtuous are motto of Buddhist ethics.¹⁷³

Metta or loving-kindness, *karuna* or compassion, *mudita* or sympathetic joy and *upekkha* or equanimity is four kinds of virtues in Buddhist ethics.¹⁷⁴

Metta or loving-kindness: One should spread loving-kindness to all others including his near and dear ones irrespective of race, colour, sex etc.¹⁷⁵

Karuna or compassion: One should practice compassion to relieve the grief of others. A compassionate person is always ready to serve other human beings.¹⁷⁶

Mudita or sympathetic joy: A person who practices *Mudita* can overcome the evil factor of mankind.¹⁷⁷

Upekkha or equanimity: One should practice equanimity to remain balanced in an ill-balanced world including loss and gain, fame and infamy, praise and blame, and happiness.¹⁷⁸

Dana means 'giving' or 'generosity'. It is considered as an important virtue practiced widely by Buddhist lay devotee and monastic community. Lay people give all kinds of needs including food, robes, medicine even the money to build the residence for the community of monks. In return, the monks provide the Dharma teaching towards them.¹⁷⁹

Abortion or intentional killing of a human being is vehemently prohibited by the Buddhists.¹⁸⁰ According to the *Vinaya*, if a bhikkhu or bhikkhuni should facilitate an abortion or if a woman should get an abortion based on their recommendation, then that bhikkhu or bhikkhuni is immediately expelled from the Sangha, having broken one of the four cardinal rules of monastic conduct.¹⁸¹

The Dalai Lama considered abortion as negative. But for him, there are exceptions and the approval or disapproval of abortion depended on according to each circumstance.¹⁸²

In other words, The Dalai Lama reminds that according to Buddhist precepts abortion is an act of killing, although he has said that there can be an exception "if the unborn child will be retarded or if the birth will create serious problems for the parent", qualifying his approval or disapproval. In Tibet, meat is believed to be the most common food. When he visited the White House and was offered a vegetarian menu, he rejected it and replied "I'm a Tibetan monk, not a vegetarian".¹⁸³

The first of the five precepts shows non-destroying of life. But some Buddhist argues that death penalty is possible in some particular circumstances. So, today, death penalty is practiced in Sri Lanka, Japan, Korea and Taiwan.¹⁸⁴

The Dalai Lama said that it is permissible to shoot someone with a gun if the person was "trying to kill you", but added that the shot should not be fatal.¹⁸⁵

Regarding Economics the Dalai Lama states —

"Of all the modern economic theories, the economic system of

*Marxism is founded on moral principles, while capitalism is concerned only with gain and profitability. Marxism is concerned with the distribution of wealth on an equal basis and the equitable utilization of the means of production. It is also concerned with the fate of the working classes — that is, the majority — as well as with the fate of those who are underprivileged and in need, and Marxism cares about the victims of minority-imposed exploitation. For those reasons the system appeals to me, and it seems fair."*¹⁸⁶

Buddhists have taken many activities to solve the problem of global warming. Buddhism alone can not solve the real solution of environmental problem, global warming or climate change, every part of the world must participate and give the importance in solving this problem, otherwise this world will be destroyed with what everyone behave in everyday life. Just as one should not harm oneself, one should not harm nature. The studies of Buddhist ethic teach people to deal with nature the same way as they should deal with themselves nonviolently. The way of life of Buddhism and environmental ethic is to live with dependence.¹⁸⁷

Regarding Environment, the Dalai Lama's opinion is — "Ecology should be part of our daily life".¹⁸⁸

Around 2005, he has started campaigning for wildlife conservation, including by issuing a religious ruling against wearing tiger and leopard skins as garments. Ahead of the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference, he insisted the world leaders to put aside domestic concerns and take collective action against climate change.¹⁸⁹

Regarding Sexual context, the Dalai Lama states that oral, anal and anal sex (both homosexual and heterosexual) are acceptable in Buddhism or for Buddhists, but society should keep gays and lesbians from a secular point of view. He says, *"Buddhist sexual proscriptions ban homosexual activity and heterosexual sex through orifices other than the vagina, including*

*masturbation or other sexual activity with the hand... From a Buddhist point of view, lesbian and gay sex is generally considered sexual misconduct.*¹⁹⁰

In 1994, the Dalai Lama explained in *OUT Magazine* as –

"If someone comes to me and asks whether homosexuality is okay or not, I will ask 'What is your companion's opinion?'. If you both agree, then I think I would say 'if two males or two females voluntarily agree to have mutual satisfaction without further implication of harming others, then it is okay.'"¹⁹¹

In 1996, he states in his book *'Beyond Dogma'* as –

*"A sexual act is deemed proper when the couples use the organs intended for sexual intercourse and nothing else....Homosexuality, whether it is between men or between women, is not improper in itself. What is improper is the use of organs already defined as inappropriate for sexual contact."*¹⁹²

He has said that sex spelled fleeting satisfaction and trouble later, while chastity offered a better life and 'more independence more freedom'. The Dalai Lama has said that all religions had the same idea about adultery.¹⁹³

In Buddhism, marriage is governed by civil law and Buddhist is expected to observe the prevailing law in whatever country they live. In the Theravadin tradition, monks are prohibited by their *Vinaya* rules to encourage or perform marriage ceremony. In many Theravadin countries, the couple following their marriage as a civil ceremony, invites the monks to their home to perform a blessing ceremony. They offer food and other requisites to the monks and invite their family and friends to participate. In Western countries, following Christian precedent, many Mahayana monks become registered marriage celebrants so that, if called upon, a marriage ceremony can be performed in the temple.¹⁹⁴

In Theravada Buddhism marriage is regarded as a

contract, not as a spiritual or religious union. In Buddhist countries a couple might pay a visit to the local monastery shortly before or after their wedding to offer food to the monastic community, recite the refuges and precepts in a formal way, receive a little Dhamma instruction, and possibly receive a blessing from two from the monks. In Theravada Buddhism divorce (like marriage) is regarded as a civil matter, rather than a religious or spiritual one.¹⁹⁵ As one of the essential Buddhist teachings is that everything is impermanent and subject to change, the inevitable breakdown of a relationship between a couple would be understood in this light, so divorce would not be considered improper.¹⁹⁶

Marriage is a partnership of equality, gentleness, generosity, and dedication. In Buddhism, one can find all the necessary things which can help one to lead a happy married life. One should not neglect the advice given by the Enlightened Teacher if one really wants to lead a happy married life. In His discourses, the Buddha gave various kinds of advice for married couples and for those who are contemplating marriage. The Buddha has said "If a man can find a suitable and understanding wife and a woman can find a suitable and understanding husband, both are fortunate indeed."¹⁹⁷

Ananāpānā is the second stage of the Path of Purity. It is one-pointedness of the mind. It is control of mind.¹⁹⁸ Concentration, meditation and trance are often used as synonyms. It is divided into eight stages or *jhanas*. At the first stage, there is reflection, concentration and experience of happiness. At the second stage, there is inner peace. At the third stage, there is experience of equanimity, awareness and attention. At the fourth stage, there is complete cessation of suffering. At the fifth stage, there is the experience of infinity of space. At the sixth stage, there is the experience of infinity of consciousness. At the seventh stage, there is the experience of nothingness. At the eighth stage, there is the experience of 'neither discernment nor non-discernment.'¹⁹⁹

The subjects of meditation are as follows-

- (1) Ten Devices (*Kasinas, Sanskrit kritsna*).
- (2) Ten Repulsive Things (*asubhas*)
- (3) Ten Recollections (*anussatis*)
- (4) Four Immeasurable Thoughts (*Brahmaviharas*)
- (5) Four Formless states (*aruppas*)
- (6) One Perception (*samjna*)
- (7) One Analysis (*avattthana*)²⁰⁰

The Pali word *Kasina* (*Sanskrit kritsna*) means 'whole', 'entire' etc.²⁰¹ It is so called because the projected light issuing from the conceptualized image of the *Kasina* object could be extended everywhere without limitation.²⁰² It is used to signify a physical shape (the *mandala*) and also a mental image (*nimitta*, 'sign'). In that stage through which the higher state of consciousness could be obtained.²⁰³ The ten *Kasinas* are – earth *Kasina*, water *Kasina*, fire *Kasina*, air *Kasina*, blue *Kasina*, yellow *Kasina*, red *Kasina*, white *Kasina*, light *Kasina*, space *Kasina*.²⁰⁴ In the first sense, earth *Kasina* signifies a round shape of clay, perhaps 25 cm in diameter, which the meditator forms and places vertically in front of him/herself either attached to a wall or hanging from a string. It is used to serve as a mechanical aid in focusing concentration. In the second sense, it means the mental imprint (*nimitta*) obtained by gazing fixedly at this device, a mental image of the entire earth with its qualities of solidity, extension and unity. In the third sense, it means the state of consciousness which is obtained by concentrating on the mental image.²⁰⁵ For the water *Kasina* the meditator may take a vessel full of colourless water and concentrate on it by saying water, water. This process is repeated again and again until the meditator achieves the complete control of the mind. The rest *Kasinas* may be done in the same manner.

The ten repulsive things denote ten states through a cycle of passes before its utter destruction. They are – swollen corpse,

bluish corpse, festering corpse, fissured corpse, gnawed corpse, rotted corpse, hacked and scattered corpse, bloody corpse, worm-eaten corpse, and skeleton.²⁰⁷

These ten kinds were seen in ancient times. In modern times it is not possible to count them as subjects for meditation.²⁰⁸

The ten recollections or constant mindfulness are the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha, morality, charity, divinities, the four contents of the physical body, respiration, quiescence.²⁰⁹

The Four immeasurable thoughts are loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity.²¹⁰

The Four Formless states are the sphere of endless space, the sphere of endless consciousness, the sphere of nothingness, the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception.²¹¹

The One Perception is the perception of the loathsomeness of material food.²¹² Botheration of going out for alms, impermanence etc. are some of the instances of this subject of meditation.²¹³

The One Analysis is the analysis of four elements, earth, water, air and fire. The meditator realizes the voidness of the self of the self.²¹⁴

Wisdom or *prajna* is connected with *samadhi*. Wisdom is threefold – remembrance of former births; knowledge of the law of karma, and knowledge of the four holy truths.²¹⁵ By wisdom one overcomes all greed, hatred and delusion and ultimately obtains liberation.²¹⁶

The practice of the process of meditation helps one to control the mind and this development is called *Bhavana*. *Bhavana* is of two types –

1. Development of tranquility (*Samatha-bhavana*),
 2. Development of Insight (*Vipassana-bhavana*).²¹⁷
- Samatha* is generally translated as 'calm meditation'.²¹⁸

When one stops thinking, one's mind only concentrate to

follow either the breath in and out or a single object with wakefulness and clear consciousness, that stage is called *Samatha*.²¹⁹

The four objects of mindfulness are body (*kaya*), feeling (*vedana*), states of mind (*citta*), and objects (*dhamma*).²¹ Concentrating the mind on these objects is called *Samatha*.²²¹

Vipassana or 'insight meditation' leads to *prajna*.²²² It means to see things as they really are. It is one of India's most ancient techniques of meditation. It is a way of self-transformation through self-observation. It is the self-exploratory journey to the common root of mind and body that removes mental impurity, resulting in a balanced mind full of love and compassion. Since the time of Buddha to the present time, there has been seen several *vipassana* teachers. The current teacher is Mr. S. N. Goenka, who was Indian by descent, was born and raised in Burma (Myanmar). He settled in India and began to teach *vipassana* in 1969. He practices *vipassana* many peoples of all races and religions in both East and West. In 1982 he began to appoint assistant teachers to help him to teach others the *vipassana* meditation. It mainly dealt with mind developing. It can be practiced without any cost. The course fees of *vipassana* meditation is filled up by the donation provided by the people who inspired by the *vipassana* meditation. The inspired people also have eagerness to provide others to benefit by this meditation training. Continued practice of this meditation helps one to overcome from misery and leads one into closer approach towards the ultimate goal of full realization.²²³

Regular practice of *Vipassana* makes one more sensitive towards the sufferings of others and he or she try to remove sufferings of others as far as possible - with mind full of love, compassion and equanimity. The three steps of the meditation course are—

Firstly, one must abstain from any action, physical or vocal

which disturbs the peace and harmony of others. One undertakes not to kill, not to steal, not to commit sexual misconduct, not to drink, and not to use intoxicants. Secondly, one is concentrating the mind on a single object as long as possible. In this way, one's mind calms the mind so that it is no longer overpowered by various negativities.

These first two steps, living a moral life, and controlling the mind are very necessary and beneficial in themselves, but they will lead to suppression of negativities unless one takes the third step which is *Vipassana*. The main feature of this training is that self-purification by self-observation. *Vipassana* is a universal path. In other words, it can be practiced by all.²²⁴

Sila or morality signifies moral culture and self-discipline. *Samadhi* or concentration is not possible without *Sila*. *Samadhi* signifies control of mind, purity of mind, mindfulness and equanimity. Without *Samadhi*, *Prajna* or Wisdom is not possible. *Prajna* signifies the right understanding of the four noble truths and an insight into the reality of things as they are.²²⁵

People are benefited by Buddhist meditation which lead to a peaceful mind, and that is the real peace that everyone can attain in the present time. That peace is the happiness that is more comfort than the rest. When there are more people understand this teaching, the world will understand, and that is the way that one can apply the Buddhist teaching to reduce the problem of the world.²²⁶

The Sangha

Sangha is considered as that community which consists of monks, nuns, laymen or women, even near or remote, follows the spiritual path taught by Lord Buddha to achieve enlightenment. Every member of the *Sangha* is spiritually related to each-other.²²⁷

After his enlightenment the Buddha went to *Isipattana*

(modern *Saranath*) to provide his valuable and first discourse to the five monks which was named as *Dharma-chakra-pravartana* or the Turning of the Wheel of the Law. Having that long discourse delivered by the Buddha the five monks were converted to the Buddhist faith and it is believed that the discourse along with the five monks laid the foundation of Buddhist Sangha.²²⁸ The five ascetics were the first members of the Sangha. They were instructed to spread the Dharma or the teachings delivered by the Buddha.²²⁹

Members of the *Sangha* were indispensable in the spread and preservation of the Buddha's message, both during his lifetime and long after his death, down to the present time. They act as the principal guardians of the faith. Without the *Sangha* the religion could not endure and prosper.²³⁰

It is said that *Anathpindaka*, a great banker of *Sravasti*, purchased a garden from prince Jeta in order to build a Buddhist monastery named as *Jetavana* monastery.²³¹

The *upasaka* is a Buddhist male lay-devotee and the *upasika* is a female lay-devotee whose have faith and gratitude in the three refuges, the Buddha, Dharma and *Sangha*. The first *upasaka* were two traders, namely *Tapassu* and *Bhallika*. They were the former lay-devotees before the formation of *Sangha*. They only provide their gratitude only in the Buddha and the Dharma. After the formation of the first *Sangha* the father of *Yasa Thera* was considered as the first lay-devotee.²³²

Yasa Thera's mother and his wife were the first female lay-devotees. The *upasaka* and *upasika* are not allowed to do any work of the Sangha's ritualistic ceremonies.²³³

In present time, *Sangha* is mostly used as the assembly of bhiksus and bhiksunis.²³⁴ Bhiksu is a fully ordained Buddhist monk, who is minimum twenty years old. A Bhiksu who continuously obeys the rules of the Sangha for ten years long then he is called as *Thera Bhiksu* and he alone can become an

Variya of a monk and also he alone has the capacity to ordain a person. Similarly, Bhiksunis is a fully ordained Buddhist nun.²³⁵

A female novice of Buddhist Bhiksuni Sangha is called *Amuneri*. This is the first stage towards the Bhiksunihood.²³⁶

Pabbajja usually denotes the adoption of the ascetic life by abandoning the household life and putting on the yellow robe, the ascetic dress.²³⁷ *Samanera* is a novice of the Buddhist order. *Amuneri* is the first stage towards the Bhiksuhood. When a person tries to enter into the Buddhist *Sangha* as a *Samanera* at first the ceremony of *Pabbajja* held.²³⁸

For this purpose, the person firstly having his hair and moustache cut off, having got (some one) to offer him a yellow robe, arranges his upper robe over one shoulder, sits down on the haunches, and salutes the assembly with joined palms.²³⁹ Then he undergoes the three refuges, the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. After the *Pabbajja*, the *Samanera* is required to live under the guidance of a Bhiksu till he gets his 'higher ordination', the *Upasampada*.²⁴⁰

Upasampada is one of the most important ceremonies of the Buddhist order. After full training in the Dhamma, a person who has attained twenty years of age is allowed to have his *Upasampada* or 'higher ordination'. Any person, other than the *Samanera* (novice), if selected for the *Upasampada*, is required to shave his head and moustache and beard. He then looks for an *Upajjhaya* (preceptor) who can present him before the Sangha. He is provided with the Bhiksu's robe and alms-bowl. He is also instructed how to behave when presented before the Sangha for his *Upasampada*. These instructions may be given by a capable and 'competent' monk. This is known as 'Anusasana'. After this *anusasana*, he is presented before the Sangha where he sits down on his legs in *Ukkutika* posture and begs the Sangha for his *Upasampada*. This he does for three times. Then the preceptor puts certain questions, which he is expected to reply

honestly.²⁴¹

Ukkutika Posture or Ukkutika-Nisidana is a special mode of squatting. The soles of the feet are firmly on the ground, the man sinks down, the heels slightly rising as he does so, until the thighs rest on the calves, and the hams are about six inches or more from the ground. Then with elbows on knees he balances himself.²⁴²

No Upasampada should be conferred upon any person without an Upajjhaya.²⁴³ Upajjhaya is the guardian or the spiritual teacher of a Buddhist monk. He acts as a preceptor during the Pabbajja or Upasampada of a monk. The Bhiksu who agrees to become the Upajjhaya must have spent at least ten years after his own Upasampada.²⁴⁴

A female novice (having crossed her Samaneri stage) who is undergoing a training of two years preceding to her higher ordination (Upasampada), is known as Sikhamana.²⁴⁵

An assembly of at least four monks or nuns is called Sangha. An assembly of two or three monks is known as 'Gana' (a group) and a solitary person is called 'puggala'.²⁴⁶

Patimokkha is a collection of various monastic rules contained in the *Vinaya Pitaka*. It is laid down that this must be recited by the fraternity fortnightly, on the Upasatha day (i.e. on the 14th or 15th day of the month). The recitation of this must be done collectively by the Sangha. There are two Patimokkhas, viz. Bhikkhu-patimokkha and Bhikkhuni Patimokkha. The former consists of 227 rules while in the latter there are 311 rules.²⁴⁷

The *Avasa* or the *Arama* represents the primitive monastic settlements of Buddhism.²⁴⁸ During vassa or the period of 'rain retreat' these two types of settlements came into existence. *Avasa* was a monk-built colony and temporary set-up. *Arama* denotes a site which was donated by a wealthy or rich lay man to the monks, in or near a town. The *Arama* was looked after by the donor. In Mahavagga, I, 22, 18, it is written down that King

Bimbisara donated the first *Arama*, named Venuvana, in Rajagaha to the Buddha and his Sangha.²⁵⁰ *Avasa* and *Arama* divided into many fraternities, but a *lena* consists of some unitary body of monks. Legends show that there are five kinds of *lenas*. They are Vihara, Addhayoga, Pasada, Hammiya and Guha.²⁵¹

A Vihara or monastery is a residential building for the Buddhist mendicants. It is one of five kinds of 'lodgings' allowed by the Buddha for the residence of the monks. It is regarded as the property of the Buddhist Sangha at all the places and for all the times to come. It may be plastered one, or coated or coloured with white, black, or Geruka (reddish) materials. It may be decorated with the paintings of flowers, creepers, etc., but never with the pictures of men or women. It may have three kinds of apartments or chambers, viz. a square, a long quadrangle, a chamber on the upper storey. In a large Vihara, the chamber may be in the middle, but in a small Vihara, it may be constructed on one side. The Vihara should be provided with wooden pegs, a bamboo or string to hang the robes. There should be a refectory for the purpose of taking meals. Near this place a small room should be built to keep the drinking water. The water room should be provided with cups, glasses etc. A fire-place and a courtyard should also be provided in a Vihara. For the protection of the Vihara the Buddha recommended fence, hedge, gates, etc. The roof of the Vihara may be of brick, stone, lime, grass or mud. A Vihara is located neither very far from the village or town nor too close to it. No monk should turn out any monk from the Vihara out of danger if the latter is already allowed to reside there.

The Buddhist laymen and women are not the main constituent in monasteries; they get the religious discourses in the monasteries on some particular days. In monasteries or *lenas*, the monks and nuns are the main constituent.²⁵³

Buddhaghosa explains *Addhayoga* as a 'gold-coloured Bengal house' or as a Bengali type house.²⁵⁴

Pasada is a large building with high plinth, terraces, and domes. If the monk constructed this type of *Pasada*, then the construction period should not be more than ten to twelve years.²⁵⁵ *Hammiya* is a large multi-storeyed mansion with an upper chamber at the top, but without a dome.²⁵⁶

Buddhaghosa explains Guha as a 'hutment made of bricks or scooped out of rock or made of wood or laterite (*pamsu*).'²⁵⁷

Two kinds of Sanghakammas are as follows-

- (1) Non-disputatious: Sangha's acts of normal community life including settlement of the boundaries of an avasa; holding the upasatha service, arrangement of pavarana ceremony, distributing robes to the monks after the vassa period etc.
- (2) Disputatious: Any acts of dispute including a dispute on a point of Dhamma and Vinaya or on the nature of an offence, a dispute regarding a Bhikkhus opinions, morals, conduct etc.²⁵⁸

The monks' social roles are more vital or more visible in the rural areas than the urban areas in the present time. Monks are needed in some activities like giving guidance and leadership such as formation of schools, hospitals, roads etc. In modern Thai society, school facilities are often found located on monastic property donated by the Sangha.²⁵⁹

The monks acquire their daily foods from the laity. But they are not considered as the ordinary beggars. They take alms and provide the opportunity to acquire merit and their upliftment of their spiritual yearnings in return. The moral and spiritual light of the Sangha has spread far and wide even outside of its monasteries.²⁶⁰

The lay people are totally ignorant about the reality of the world or their existence in the world because their mind is full of craving, desires and ignorance. But they are very much inspired by the ethical teachings or the virtues taught by the Buddha. Among the ten precepts the five precepts are obligatory for the

lay people which were taught by Buddha. Metta or loving kindness can be regarded as the main virtue which should be followed by the lay devotee.²⁶¹

Buddhist tolerance should not mean apathy and indifference. When wrong statements about Buddhism were made by people in the Buddha's time, the Buddha kindly corrected them. He even expelled his cousin Devadatta from the Sangha when he brought schism among the members of the Sangha, in order to preserve the purity of the Doctrine and the unity of the Sangha. Yet, the Buddha was the perfect example of tolerance and compassion.²⁶²

The Buddha advocated equality for all whether they are rich or poor, fishermen, scavengers, barbers, warriors, Brahmins etc.²⁶³ He rejected the evil nature of caste system. He taught that caste system is standing against progress of mankind.²⁶⁴ His chief disciple Upali was a barber. Sunita, one of the brethren, was a Pukkusa, one of the low tribes. Kapa was the daughter of a deer-stalker. Punna and Punnika were slave girls. These instances show the rejection of caste system according to the Buddha. He avoids completely the advantages or disadvantages arising from birth, occupation and social status and removes all barriers arising from the social impurities.²⁶⁵

Still in Hinduism, there are four castes – Brahman (priests), Kshatriya (warriors), Vaisya (traders) and Sudra (labourers). The Buddha rejected this class distinction because this discrimination leads one to hope as a high caste and neglects the low caste. Even, in Hindu society, outcaste is considered as the lowest of the low, the outsider who does not belong to the region of caste system.²⁶⁶ The Buddha declared,

"Not by birth is one an outcaste.

Not by birth is one a Brahmin.

By deeds one becomes an outcaste.

*By deeds one becomes a Brahmin.*²⁶⁷

It is not hoped that following the teachings delivered by the Buddha will bring the enlightenment or nirvana to the lay people; they only believe that by their good deeds it is possible for them to get a good rebirth and such rebirth will enable him to follow the eight-fold path step by step in the right manner. Only the monks can be hoped to reach nirvana. Good karma should be one of the virtues of lay devotees. They should be responsible to the monks and they provide their respect to the monks. This act of the lay devotees also counts to be a good karma. The building of pagodas, the decoration of temples and images of Buddha, helping hand to monasteries, worship or meditation before an image of Buddha, visiting the holy sites of Buddhist and the kind act of alms giving are regarded as virtuous act of the lay people.²⁶⁸

"He who will wear the yellow robe without having cleansed himself from impurity, who is devoid of truth and self-control, is not deserving of the yellow robe."

*"But he who puts away depravity, is well grounded in all virtues, and is possessed of self-restraint and truth is indeed worthy of the yellow robe."*²⁶

The Order of nuns was first established in Kapilavattu five years after the Buddha's Enlightenment to recognize Buddhist women's spirituality.²⁷⁰ A number of 150 lay women established a worldwide organization called Shakyaditya in the international conference held in Bodh Gaya in 1987. Since 2000, it has been seen that over four hundred women practicing in all the Theravadi countries have gone to receive the nun's official ordination as nuns.²⁷¹

Gautama Buddha first ordained women as nuns five years after his enlightenment and five years after first ordaining men into the sangha. The first Buddhist nun was his aunt and foster mother Mahapajapati Gotami. Bhikkhunis have to follow the eight rules of respect, which are vows called The Eight

Garudhammas. The wife of Gautama Buddha, Yasodhara, was the mother of one son named Rahula, who became a Buddhist monk at the age of seven and Yasodhara also eventually became a nun.²⁷² Khandro Rinpoche, a female lama in Tibetan Buddhism states, "When there is a talk about women and Buddhism, I have noticed that people often regard the topic as something new and different. They believe that women in Buddhism have become an important topic because we live in modern times and so many women are practicing the Dharma now. However, this is not the case. The female sangha has been here for centuries. We are not bringing something new into a twenty-five hundred-year-old tradition. The roots are there, and we are simply re-energizing them."²⁷³

Some well-known Buddhist Nuns are as follows²⁷⁴—

Master Cheng Yen is a Taiwanese Buddhist nun (bhikkhuni), teacher, and philanthropist. She founded the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation, commonly known as Tzu Chi. Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo is a Tibetan Buddhist nun, author, teacher and founder of the Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery in Himachal Pradesh, India. She spent twelve years living in a remote cave in the Himalayas, three of those years in strict meditation retreat. Pema Chodron is an ordained Tibetan Buddhist nun, author, and teacher. She has conducted workshops, seminars, and meditation retreats in Europe, Australia, and throughout North America. She is resident and teacher of Champo Abbey, a monastery in rural Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada. Thubten Chodron is an American Tibetan Buddhist nun and a central figure in reinstating the Tibetan Bhikshuni (Gelongma) ordination of women. She is a student of H. H. XIVth Dalai Lama, Tsenzhab Serkong Rinpoche, Thubten Zopa Rinpoche and other Tibetan masters.

The 1st International Bhikkhuni Day was celebrated on Saturday, 17th September, 2011. In future, the celebration will

take place on the full moon Saturday in September or on the first Saturday immediately following the full moon. On this auspicious day Bhikkhunis and the women who have guided people are honored, beginning with Bhikkhuni Maha Pajapati Theri, as well as rejoice in the continuance of the Bhikkhuni Sangha. Sharing stories about Bhikkhunis and laywomen will help to recall that they are all a vital part of the Fourfold Assembly created by the Buddha.²⁷⁵

All monks, nuns and lay followers require meditation to achieve the final goal nirvana. The main meditative practice is called mindfulness meditation (vipashyana): a careful attending to, or being mindful of, the three characteristics of suffering, impermanence, and non-self.²⁷⁶

Festivals are the unitary factor of human beings. Buddhist festivals show their cultural and religious side very well. Buddhist Festivals are always joyful occasions. Generally, on a festival day, lay people will go the local temple or monastery and offer food to the monks and take the moral teachings from them. In the afternoon, they distribute food to the poor and in the evening perhaps join in a ceremony of circumambulation of a stupa three times as a sign of respect to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. This festival day will conclude with evening chanting of the Buddha's teachings and meditation. The dates of Buddhist festivals vary from country to country and between Buddhist traditions.²⁷⁷ Some of the Buddhist festivals are as follows -

The New Year is a festival of great joy. It is celebrated by the Buddhists all around the world. In this ceremony, Buddha's statues are clean up and worshipped by devotees. Other Buddhist gods are also paid homage. Candles are lighted in the temples to give honor and gratitude to these gods. Buddhist people clean up their houses, put on new dress and visits their friends and relatives to provide wishes and gifts. Traditional foods are prepared and served. Fireworks on street also show the charm ness of New

Year celebration. Because of local customs and traditions this celebration is different in different country. In Theravadi Countries like Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Bangladesh the new year celebration is different from that of Mahayana Countries, viz. Tibet, Korea, China, Japan, Mongolia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Nepal etc.²⁷⁸ In Theravadin countries, Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Laos, the New Year is celebrated for three days from the first full moon day in April.²⁷⁹

In 2012, this New Year will be celebrating on Friday, 6 April.²⁸⁰

In Mahayana countries, the New Year starts on the first full moon day in January. However, the Buddhist New Year depends on the country of origin or ethnic background of the people. As for example, Chinese, Koreans and Vietnamese celebrate late January or early February according to the lunar calendar, whilst the Tibetans usually celebrate about one month later.²⁸¹

Magha Puja is very important festival of Buddhist Sangha. It is celebrated on the full moon day of March. It is celebrated because 1250 *Arhats* gathered together without any prior invitation and listen the rules and recitations delivered by Buddha on the full moon day of Magha month. This festival gives the opportunity to the people to reaffirm their faiths and commitment to Buddhist practices and traditions.²⁸² In 2012, the day of this festival is Tuesday, 7 February.²⁸³

Uposatha is a sort of ecclesiastical congregation of the Buddhist order (twice in a month) with a view to expounding the Dhamma and to reciting the ecclesiastical rules laid down in the Patimokha. It was a pre-Buddhistic tradition prevalent amongst the other religious sects who used to assemble on the eve of every week. They utilized these days for their religious discourses and for the exposition of their doctrines.²⁸⁴

Asalha Puja Day or the Dhamma Day is an important festival of the Theravada Buddhists. The reason of this Puja celebration

is rooted in the first teaching of the Buddha to his five disciples. It is celebrated on the full moon day of the 8th lunar month, Asalha, of the old Indian calendar. It is the month of the starting of the monsoon. It is often celebrated on the month of July. The other signification of this celebration is that during this month Rahula, the Buddha's son, was born and immediately after the birth of his son he renounced all the worldly pleasures and went in order to search the truth of life or the reality of life. During this period the Buddha and His monks and nuns would hold their wanderings. Today, monasteries keep a three month 'rains retreat' which commences on the Dhamma day and concludes on Pavarana day. Short time ordination is also possible for this period for whom who wishes to join the order, yet cannot give up their present life.²⁸⁵ In 2012, the day of celebration of this festival is Tuesday, 3rd July.²⁸⁶

The Pavarna ceremony is organized often in the month of October. Pavarna literally means 'inviting admonition or inviting others to advice one'. On this auspicious day, the monks of each monastery invite and reprimand one another and discuss the good and bad points of the monastic life. The reprimands are done with love and compassion for each other. This ceremony helps in bringing about requisite changes and promotes unity. In other words, it leads to the betterment or the prosperity of the community.²⁸⁷

Loy Krathong is a beautiful festival of Thailand. It is celebrated in the 12th month of the traditional Thai lunar calendar. According to the western calendar, this festival is celebrated in the month of November. The term 'Loi' means 'to float' and 'Krathong' means a lotus shaped vessel that is made of banana leaves. The Krathong is decorated with flowers, candles and incense sticks and has some coins in it. In Thailand, Buddhists celebrated this festival in the honour of the Buddha. The candle raft (Krathong) is floated in the water signifies the symbol of respect for the Buddha. The popular places of celebrating the

festival are Bangkok, Sukhothai, Chiang Mai.²⁸⁸

Bodhi Day (Enlightenment Day) is celebrated in the honour of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha.²⁸⁹ Some Buddhists celebrate this day for the reason of Gautama's attainment of enlightenment under the Bodhi tree at Bodhgaya in India.²⁹⁰ In this day, many activities can be done including prayer, meditation and teachings. This day is usually celebrated on the 8th of December.²⁹¹ In 2012 also, the day of celebration is Saturday, 8th of December.²⁹²

Kathina means a wooden-frame when stitching the robes. Its use was allowed by the Buddha for the monks.²⁹³ Kathina ceremony is celebrated after the end of the first Vassavasa (rainy resort) in which a Civara (a piece of cloth) is offered to a monk who is found poor in respect of his robes and also has lived righteously during the 'rainy resort'.²⁹⁴ Today, it is celebrated as the largest alms giving festival of the Buddhist world. The festival is most important for the Burmese, Sri Lankans and the Thai Theravada Buddhists.²⁹⁵

Buddha Purnima is one of the most important festivals of the Buddhists. This festival is celebrated on the full moon day of Vaisakh which signifies three main events in the life of the Buddha - his birth, his enlightenment and his death.²⁹⁶ Buddha Purnima or Buddha Jayanti is generally celebrated by lighting oil lamps before the image of the Buddha, by reciting prayers or reading from the Buddhist scriptures and worshipping the statue of Buddha. Meditation and offerings of flowers, silk scarves, incense and fruit are also part of the worship rituals.²⁹⁷

Though this festival is celebrated at any place where the Buddhist population resides, Bodhgaya (Bihar) and Sarnath (Uttar Pradesh) are two best places for the Buddha Purnima celebrations.²⁹⁸

The signification of Bodhgaya is that it is this place where the Buddha attained enlightenment. The Mahabodhi Temple in Bodhgaya is decorated with colorful prayer flags and flowers.

The Buddhist sermons offer special prayers under the Bodhi tree, where the Lord Buddha attained enlightenment. Sarnath is the place, where the Buddha after enlightenment, taught his learning to the followers. A lot of visitors from around the world come to these places to participate in and celebrate the festival.²⁹⁹ In 2012, the date of this festival is Saturday, 5th of May.³⁰⁰

The monks and nuns of the Sangha lived for spiritual purpose. All the requirements or the material needs of the monks and nuns were provided by the institution and by the householders as they calmly meditate and study without any harm. After the Buddha's death there were established many separate monastic colonies to spread the Buddhist faith. Within the first three centuries several councils were organized to focus the rules of monastic practice.³⁰¹

Sangha and the lay society are related to each-other. Sangha gives the lay people an opportunity to teach spiritual and educational empowerment. And the lay society donated to the Sangha to build the monasteries and shrines to improve their karma, to meditate, to study and to store worldly blessings for themselves, their families, and their communities.³⁰²

Buddhist basic teachings about life, mortality and spiritual development have remained their importance even amidst the changeable past centuries. In almost many countries of the world, many venerable social and religious institutions and reformist groups try to establish moral community, to secure worldly blessings, and to realize nirvana.³⁰³

On December 26, 2004, tsunami had stricken the Indian Ocean and immediately, small groups of Buddhist house holders came and helped them. They provided medicines, bandages, clothes and food as could as possible. This Buddhist humanitarian response shows the relevance of Buddhist doctrines in present time also.³⁰⁴

At present, Buddhism in practice has promoted

compassionate, medically advanced, disciplined, and literate societies. Buddhist's prescribed ways of addressing suffering and mortality have enduring value, even in the midst of changes.³⁰⁵

The present society, the 21st century's society is confronted with many problems. Here human beings are attacked by corruption, mental distressed, running for wealth, black money earning etc. Society is consisting of individuals. So, if individual mind is not free from evil thinking, evil doings then society cannot be harmonized. Everyone of this world is aware of the scientific progression. Scientific inventions provide us all that by which we make our life better. But material happiness cannot satisfy us wholly. To be happy one has to get moral happiness and religious faith in the higher spiritual value of life. Without spiritual and moral value the life of mankind is like a beast. Morality can purify all impurities of mind and brings mankind towards a better life.

Terrorism is also considered a big disease in the society. It can never be a result of a peaceful society. It not only destroys the outer portion of the world it also destroys the inner hopes of each and every mankind. Osama bin Laden of Saudi Arabia, born on March 10, 1957, was considered as a dangerous face of terror. He established a terror organization, Al Qaeda on August 11, 1988. Many dangerous attacks were caused by him. For example, the notorious US Embassy bombings in 1998. More than 200 people were killed. On September 11, 2001, Nineteen Al Qaeda terrorists hijacked four commercial passenger jet airliners. Three buildings in the World Trade Centre complex collapsed due to structural failure on the day of the attack. There were a total of 2,996 deaths, including the 19 hijackers. On May 1, 2011, in Washington, DC, President Obama announced the arrest of death of this face of terror, this most wanted person. War also does not provide any glorious endings.³⁰⁶ Mahatma Gandhi also advocated non-violence on a large scale.³⁰⁷ He symbolizes the soul of India. People came up to him and said, "You are trying to win freedom for the country but look at history."

History tells us no country has even won its freedom by the methods of truth and love as you suggest.³⁰⁸ His answer was, "Let us not follow the bad example of history. Let us set a good example by trying to achieve national freedom in this country by the methods of non-violence, non-hatred, friendship, *karuna, adroha, maitri*."³⁰⁹ The idea of non-violence was very important to his thinking and actions as a leader during India's approach to independence in 1947. He wrote, "I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent."³¹⁰

The Dalai Lama says that he is active in spreading India's message of non-violence and religious harmony throughout the world. He says, "I am the messenger of India's ancient thoughts to the world over."³¹¹

He has said that democracy has deep roots in India. He says he considers India the master and Tibet its disciple as great scholars like Nagarjuna went from Nalanda to Tibet to preach Buddhism in the eighth century. He has noted that millions of people had lost their lives in violence and the economies of many countries were ruined due to conflicts in the 20th century. So, he gives the message – "Let the 21st century be a century of tolerance and dialogue."³¹²

The German philosopher, Prof. Max Muller said, "The Buddhist moral code taken by itself is one of the most perfect that the world has ever known."³¹³

The eightfold path introduced by the Buddha is a gradual course of inward culture and progress. By merely resorting to external worship, ceremonies and prayers, one can never make progress in righteousness and inner development. Mere prayer for salvation, the Buddha says, is like "asking the farther bank of a river to come over so that one may get to the other side without personal effort."³¹⁴

The path that the Buddha showed us is, I believe, the only path humanity

must tread if it is to escape disaster".³¹⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru

Mental stress is a growing problem in the society. It can be purified only by proper yoga practice. It is thought that Buddhist practice of meditation has cured such a problem.

B. R. Ambedkar, A Contemporary thinker of India, follows the precious teaching of Buddhism. He preferred Buddhism because of its rational, scientific, moral and equal outlook. He also preferred Buddhism of its teachings of prajna (insight), karuna (love) and samata (equality).³¹⁶ For his gratitude for Lord Buddha and his tremendous efforts, it has been seen that the Buddhist Wheel of Law (Dharma Chakra) was incorporated in the National Flag, and the 'Lions from an Asokan Pillar' at Sarnath were adopted as National Emblem by the Constituent Assembly of India. It signifies the glory of Buddhism and its noble teachings.³¹⁷ He even provided Dana of wealth to whom, who were not given any privileges or social, political rights till now.³¹⁸ In the 1950s, Ambedkar started a Neo-Buddhist movement.³¹⁹ On 14th October, 1956 a great conversion ceremony was held at Nagpur and there he was able to convert about half a million people to Buddhist and it was his great effort.³²⁰ The important emphasis is on gaining political and social rights for lowest castes. He died shortly after founding this revival. Since then it has been headed by Sangharakshita, an Englishman who founded the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order as a new form of Buddhism especially designed for Western.³²¹

This Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO) was founded in 1967 by Sangharakshita. Today, this FWBO is known as The Triratna Buddhist Community. It is now an international movement with activities in more than 20 countries, including India. It is a non-sectarian Buddhist movement which seeks to promote the practice of Buddhism in a form appropriate to the modern world.³²²

More than 900 Buddhist scholars, leaders and practitioners

including the Dalai Lama from 46 countries deliberated the relevance of the Buddha's teachings 2600 years after his enlightenment at a Global Buddhist Congregation 2011 in New Delhi. (source: IANS)³²³ It shows the importance of Buddhist noble teachings in the present time.

Buddhist "Dharmacenters" of all traditions are found in more than eighty countries around the world on every continent in the present time. These are mostly frequented by non-Asians and emphasize meditation, study and the practice of rituals. The vast proportions of these centers are from the Tibetan, Zen and Theravada traditions. The teachers at these centers include both Westerners as well as ethnic Buddhists from Asia. The largest numbers are found in the United States, France and Germany. There are Buddhist study programs in numerous universities throughout the world.³²⁴

Gradual decline of Buddhism from India was started in the early 1st millennium by the foreign, Islamic invasion. Nalanda University was also destroyed by the conquerors.³²⁵ At the end of the nineteenth century, the Sri Lankans with the help of British scholars founded the Maha Bodhi Society for the purpose of restoring the holy Buddhist pilgrimage sites in India. They have been very successful and now have temples with monks at each of these sites, as do several other Buddhist traditions.³²⁶

The Buddha's stupas remind one to recall the Buddha's great works. In Mahayana, Buddhist stupas show the omnipresence of Buddhahood. Later Buddhists consider Buddhist stupas as the physical representations of the eternal teachings.³²⁷

Buddhist ethical teachings are not just to follow but to learn, understand, and to practice to gain experience and bliss. The teaching of Buddha removes superstition, hatred, and fear and gives lesson to mankind to reach a new world of light, love, happiness and dignity. Sir Edwin Arnold described the Buddha in this way, in his poem "Light of Asia":

*"This is the blossom on our human tree
Which opens in many a myriad years
But opened, fills the world
with wisdom's scent
and love's drop honey".³²⁸*

The Buddha is like a flower and the Dharma and the Sangha are its perfume that is spread all over the world. Still, well-organized Buddhist monasteries, stupas, shrines, images of Buddha, the well-constructed Buddhist art and archeology, the well established libraries, health centers, the charities etc. shows the relevance of the three jewels in present time.

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Buddhist Philosophy, its Social and Ethical Values

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Buddhism is a religion rich in spiritual, philosophical and ethical content. It is all comprehensive, elaborate and touches life at all points. There are degrees of profundity in its principles. Some are simple and easily comprehended while others are tense and profound and demand deep study and concentration for their correct understanding. Its appeal is universal as it has its roots in the spirit of reason and to tolerance, believes in love and purity and propagates the gospel of peace and spirituality. Among the world's religions, Buddhism is more than others perceived as religion of peace.

Superficially, Buddhism is a very simple religion, with a few basic tenets, but even if one delves deeper and deeper, one can hardly reach the bottom of the ocean of this profound philosophy.

Buddhism is a way of living, not merely a theory of life. The moral, philosophical, practical and ethical system expounded by the Buddha is called the Dhamma which is more popularly known as Buddhism. Strictly speaking, Buddhism is not a religion and that is not a system of faith and worship owing any allegiance to a supernatural supreme being. Buddhism is a course or way that guides a disciple through pure living and pure thinking, to gain supreme wisdom and deliverance from all evils and defilements.

The Buddha saw the world as a theatre of misery, with pangs of suffering, disease and death for all, and so, he sought an

answer or a way out of life's problems and an escape from all miseries in order to achieve ultimate happiness. After years of penance and pursuit of the truth, he attained enlightenment and founded Buddhism. He showed the Middle-Path – a path between self-gratification and self-mortification, the four truths of suffering, the eight fold path, the three virtues of conduct of speech, action and livelihood, the discipline of mindfulness, efforts and concentration; the intelligence of thoughts and understanding and lastly, the two essentials of compassion and wisdom.

Buddhism can be termed as a religion of moral code- to abstain from all evil or error, to do all good, to purify the mind. This is Buddha's sayings.

The exalted Buddha gained the great truth on his thirty fifth year, the stage of ultimate reality. He realized that the mind (Chitta) of all in existence is in a state of perpetual change. All matter is impermanent (*Anicca*); the truth of suffering (*Dukha*).

The universe is evolved, not created; it functions according to the law, not according to the whims of God. The world is shaped according to the karmic principle fashioned according to the laws of causality.

The universe is an expression of law and all effects of cause and men's character is a sum total of his previous thoughts etc., life is one and indivisible, ever changing, beyond death.

Suffering is omnipresent. It has causes, and it can be cured through the noble eight fold path. Ignorance creates desire, leading to a series of births. The highest aim of beings is to escape the cycle of birth, death, rebirth and to seek deliverance. Our restless mind is the cause of great suffering.

Five principles (Panchasila) of Buddhism teach not to kill, not to steal, no promiscuity, no lying and no intoxication.

To get rid of destruction, one must cultivate tolerance or forbearance, brotherly love and compassion to all. In the same

way, one must develop kindness to all animals or human beings or other beings.

Buddhist ideology exhorts teaching all human beings the fundamental science and literature, based on reason. All sentient beings are pure and altruism is the essence of Buddhism.

The Buddha offered ten principles or 'Dasa-Silas' for monks. These silas basically prescribe the avoidance of the three evils of the body, the three evils of the mind and the three evils of the tongue.

The eight fold path of Buddhism consists of right belief, right thought, right action,, right speech, right means of livelihood, right exertion, right remembrance and right meditation which is also known as the Middle Path following which one can attain Nirvana or salvation. The Summum Bonum of a Buddhist is the attainment of Arahathood or the realization of Nirvana.

We can study the Buddhist principles from the following points of view.

1. Buddhist view on the Cosmos.
2. Buddhist view of the Truth.
3. Buddhist view on Kamma or Action.
4. Buddhist view on Casteism.
5. Buddhist view on Democracy and politics.
6. Buddhist view on Impermanence.
7. Buddhist view on Nirvana.
8. Buddhist view on Soul and God.
9. The Middle Way.

The Buddhist concept of the Cosmos

The Buddhist concept of the cosmos or universe is nearest to science. According to the Buddhist theory of impermanence (*Anitya*), the Universe is in a state of flux, i.e. of continuous change

in all forms, material and living. Buddhist texts state all kinds of changes in every form, everywhere in space, at all times. The Paticca Samuppada or 'Law of Dependent Origination' can clearly be the precursor even of modern atomic science, that is, all the matters of nuclear science and space, and the key elements in research of energy, particularly of time and space.

Buddhists believe that both the material world and the world of sentiency came into existence out of a great flux. The Akasha Loka (Universe and space) contains in it the mind and matter (Nama and Rupa). Nama-Rupa is constantly influenced by cause and effect. Mind in conjunction with matter causes Sankhara (Universe of mental forces) and they cause the Satta Loka (Universe of sentient beings). They are inseparable from one another.

There are world systems (Chakra Loka), each with thirty-one planes. Ten thousands of such systems are a Jatikhetta (field of origin of Buddha). The Buddha could and can still send forth his thoughts of compassion to sentient beings of ten hundred crores of such world systems (infinite space), called the Visayakhetra. There are thirty one places of existence in a world system consisting of ArupaLoka (the material world of Brahma), and Kama-Loka of the sensuous world of devas, mankind and lower beings. The universe is infinite, but it cannot be viewed in isolation. Everything has a connection with every other thing. We are affected by the whole cosmos. Emanations from distant planets pour on us and through us. Everything is related to everything else. Thou cannot still a flower without disturbing a star. So, Christmas Humphrey remarked about the Buddha – in the 'approach to life, the Buddha was the world's first scientist.

The Buddha founded his philosophy on the sharp analytical method of cause-and-effect relations known as 'Paticca Samuppada' or Law of Dependent Origination. All phenomena must have a cause and every cause must have an effect and this

cause –and-effect relation analyses the intricate network or interaction of events and action. The Buddhist causation may be likened to Newton's Law of Motion which says that action and reaction are equal and opposite and are bound each other.

The cosmic and the worldly existence move in a cycle with some purpose. The universe evolves with a silent purpose in order to single with the basic essence of existence to achieve the highest and the best, through efforts, through both pleasure and pain and through a lot of meritorious work. That is why every being deserves love and compassion and loving kindness, so that by helping one another the world or world systems can evolve and achieve the highest attainment possible in the universe.

The Buddha concludes rightly that – 'action is a technique in the cosmic plan and a field that connects one with another.

Buddhism is the religion closest to science. Its methods are based on spirituality. It is a dynamic religion based on logic and rationality.

In Buddhism, the whole process of mental and physical phenomena, are constantly arising, continuing and passing away like the part of the wheel at one point of time touching the ground and then moving on, in the process of eternal cycles. In fact, that keeps the mind and matter in a state of continuous flux.

According to cosmic science, the Buddhist doctrines solve certain problems of modern physics. The universe is always in a constant state of flux. New existence comes into being, following the destruction of the old; the logical reason in all kinds of change lies in all substances. This happens whether one is a man or an organisation or a star. The depth of knowledge of the Buddha cannot be simply measured or understood. The theories that the Buddha propounded, are definitely in accord with the theories which modern scientists have tried to prove in the laboratory. In the world history, solely the Buddha spoke about spiritualism in

scientific terms. None have spoken of the scope of change and denounced rigidity and fixedness as the Buddha did. No religions propagator or prophet taught religion as if in a laboratory class. Besides logic and reasoning, the Buddha allows every word or theory, or teaching of his to be measured, experimented and to be applied for the good of all. During his life time the Buddha taught certain laws which were part and parcel of the eternal verities. On one hand, there are the divine laws, pure and true laws; and on the other hand, he gave another set of mundane laws based on exigency or expediency, governing the day-to-day functioning of the mundane existence. Between these two sets of laws exists the entire universe of sentiency and materialism. The eternal laws are absolute and immutable; the mundane laws are relative and subject to change.

Buddhist view of the Truth

The Buddha said that He was not revealing anything new but was only interpreting the truth as it exists in the eternal stream of life. This is, however, not as simple as it is said because to discover the Truth beyond the veneer of appearances is the most challenging task that thinkers and philosophers confronted time and again in history. The Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eight Fold Path are not dictums but are sheet anchors of the Truth showing the Path for liberation from the endless cycle of sufferings into self-enlightenment. There is no element of devotion, mysticism or unquestioned acceptance of a spiritual dictum, one has to live and practice the Noble Eight Fold Path as guidelines for moral, intellectual as well as spiritual elevation.

The Buddha spoke of the Truth as the highest, omnipresent, eternal, immutable and the most excellent thing in existence. Truth is the most relative that can be seen in absolute terms. The Buddha's truth is a relative truth, like the first truth of sorrow,

the second truth of sorrow's cause, the third truth of sorrow's cessation, and the fourth truth of 'the way'. There are many other relative truths. The Buddha said – truth can be investigated. Though He explained the crucial aspects of truth, many minor truths remained unsaid. In mundane truth, all '*samsaric*' and '*nirvanic*' things exist, the ultimate truth manifests the void of existence and non-existence.

In Buddhism, a man's emancipation depends on his own realization of the truth; not on the benevolence or grace of a god or any external power. So, the truth is like a guiding lamp, like the sun- it is self-luminous.

The Buddha narrated the truth in all his teaching. Everywhere there is truth. The truth is a living power for the good, indestructible and invincible. Holiness is the spirit of truth. Truth has to be secured by efforts.

Truth 'knows neither birth nor death, no beginning no end.' Truth is immortal part of the mind. Truth is the image of the eternal; it portrays the immutable, it reveals the everlasting, it gives the mortals the boon of eternity. One gains eternity by filling the minds with truth. One must free oneself of evil and sanctify life. Truth is also the savior. The '*samsara*' changes, truth remains in it, hidden as the Law. Truth desires to emerge in full light, in any being.

Buddhist view on Karma

The Buddha emphasized '*Kamma*' or Action as determining a man's way – his future '*Kamma*' can make a man into what he wills to be and the right kind of '*Kamma*' as enunciated in Noble Eight Fold Path can free him from suffering and exercise tremendous power in changing his destiny. Buddhist *Kamma* is the very antithesis of fatalism. It inducts us not to ascribe our success or failure to any outside force but on our own actions. In

Dhammapad, the Buddha poetically utters – “Not in the sky, not in the midst-of sea, nor anywhere else on earth is there a spot where man may be freed from the consequences of his evil deed.” Man is the sole moulder, creator and master of what he is. From this point of view the Buddha explored into the realm of mind which he describes as the forerunner of all thoughts and actions.

Kamma or Action is the observance of the Law on which the Buddhist philosophy and doctrine of the cycle of birth, death and rebirth lie. We are affected by the whole cosmos and kamma is a technique of the cosmic plan. The Buddhists believe that all things in the universe are subject to cause and effect and consequently, nothing exists independently of other things and nothing can arise of its own accord. The eternal law teaches the world that the only safe means to the realization of the ultimate truth-everything is based on kamma.

In kamma, the causal Law relations have twenty four types of relations based on Hetu (Causal). Each action (kamma) produces moral (Kusala), immoral (akusala) and neutral (acyokta) effects. Moral forces are positive and arise from one's action, word and thoughts. Moral action is based on good thoughts, good work, charity and purification of the mind. The immoral includes lust, anger, desire, hatred etc. and neutral karma, is neither good or bad.

The factor of mind is the most important determinant of karma. Kamma plays its role in Buddhism with mathematical precision. The Buddhist kamma makes one consciously do good work with compassion and loving kindness. The Buddhist insists on doing the right type of work with some mastery over one's mind.

In this way, *kamma* is a law that operates into itself, is responsible for rewards and suffering, and explains the mystery of fate or predestination and inequality in the world.

Buddhist view on Impermanence

The Buddha propounded three original principles viz. *anitya* (impermanence), *anatmaka* (ego-lessness) and *dukkha* (suffering). Among these three, impermanence is the first and the most important principle. To see life and things in a true perspective is to see them in the light of the three characteristics of 'Upasana' (insight), which is the intuitive light exposing the truth of inferences, suffering etc. Because of the operation of the Law of impermanence in existence, anything born or formed are subject to birth and death, to existence and non-existence, creation and destruction, to existence and non-existence, creation and destruction and is bound to continue as a rationalistic thesis or antithesis. Right from the infinitesimal atom to the colossal universe, all that has come into existence out of a flux, by a process of fission, fusion and by conformation, has only a limited existence. Biologists say that in the body of any being, there is a process of anabolism and catabolism subjecting them to their normal maintenance, to growth and eventual decay.

All matter has an atomic action or reaction in constant motion. The planets, the stars, the universe, everything is in constant motion, likewise in a life system, birth, growth and decay are part of an inherent process. Everyone born on earth or anywhere in the universe is always in fear of death. The Law of impermanence is an ultimate escape from the endless chain of suffering and there is a state of deliverance in the realm of truth. The law of changes is in this way applicable 'from a mole to a mountain, from a thought to an empire.' 'Life is a bridge. Do not logically the souls or all that essence of being either born or formed, will also end? But it ends as ultimate reality in the truth. The Buddha says that since there are beings or things that are born, originated, created or formed, there is also a state of the unborn, un-originated, uncreated and unformed which gives one the hope for escape. In this state there is neither earth, nor water,

nor heat, nor air, neither infinity of space, nor infinity of consciousness nor nothingness, nor perception, nor non-perception; neither this world nor that world, neither the sun nor the moon. Thus, impermanence is the rising, passing away and changing things or the disappearance of things that have become not change to anything adhesively, whether it is to body or any other substance, even the ego. These changes are external as well as internal, changes take place in a person's physical, mental and spiritual spheres. Except the truth, all things are subject to change. This is the teaching of the Buddha. Therefore, the logical and rather rational approach to Buddhism means that the vast universe itself is constantly in motion of change. Thus, impermanence is a basic law that covers from the proton or neutron or electron, within the atom or anything from the infinitesimal to the infinite, from a virus to a worm, to the highest living being or person in existence. So, the law of impermanence controls all lives of beings. The Buddha says that truth is permanent, unlike God.

Thus, it is seen that the Law of impermanence is eternal; it affects all beings, all things and even all the spirits. If one understands this truth, one is a step ahead in advance towards wisdom.

Buddhist view on Anatta

The Buddha has said that there are three main characteristics or marks of existence viz, *Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta*. To see them with wisdom (*Panna*) is the Path of Purity – *sayas* the Dhammapada.

Anata means that everything and everyone in the world is without any solid enduring core or permanent substance, call it soul or holy spirit or anything you like. It means that you and I and all things here have nothing inside us that is a constant, fixed, substantial thing, enduring on forever the same. It means that

we are through and through and altogether a continually changing appearance.

Anatta is one of the "Three characteristics of being." The Anatta doctrine teaches us that neither within the bodily and mental phenomena of existence, nor outside of them, can be found anything as a self-existing real Ego-entity, soul. It is the only specific Buddhist doctrine. The doctrine of Anatta States that there is no permanent ego or self in the five Khandhas which make up the personality of a being.

The Anatta doctrine establishes the theory of non-existence of soul. So, Anatta is soul-less.

According to the Pali canon there are two types of Self, the Big Self-Mahatta and the little self Appatuma. The difference between the Big self and the Small Self rests in one being the true self and the other being the false self. The universal self is real self.

Really speaking, "The soul is the abiding separate, constantly existing and indestructible entity Which is generally believed to be found in man from the moment of his birth up to the time of his death, and to exist-atter his death in some other place, either heaven or hell, for all eternity."

The Buddha made no concessions to the doctrine of self. He denied that there is in man an 'atma' or self that is permanent and unchanging. He also denied that man is completely annihilated after death. Man may grow to be divine by his good thoughts, good worlds and good deeds. The Characteristic of soullessness is the second discourse preached by the Buddha after enlightenment to his five followers in the Deer-Park near Benaras. The Anatta-Lakkana Sutta tells us that the individual is a psycho-physical compound constituted of 'Nama' and 'Rupa'. It is the combination of body and mind. Physical and mental elements always undergo change. Our body is subject to change, so also our mind. Feelings or sensations, perceptions, mental

formations, Consciousness are not permanent and not independent. They have no nature of their own and that is why these cannot constitute a permanent entity or soul. All these phenomena are of an impermanent nature and these are also subject to change. The Buddha declared to his disciples that material things are soulless.

'The Mahanidana Sutta' of the Digha Nikaya tells us that Self is feeling which is of three fold nature—pleasant painful and neutral. They are impermanent and as such pass away. According to Buddha's doctrine, one's consciousness continues without break of identity. The Buddha has denied self as belonging to visible form or to mind. All things are impermanent and so they are subject to death and are without self.

The question of self as in the Milindapanho, a non-canonical text deserves special attention. The Milindapanho states that Among the five Khandhas, Vinnana is more identified with 'atta.' In this text, "the illustration is elaborated in great detail and it is pointed out that when a person is indicated by giving him a name, it does not denote a soul but is merely an appellation for the five aggregates which constitute the empirical individual."

Buddhism is unique among all religious systems as far as the concept of existence and soul are concerned. The Buddha is an 'anattavadi.' According to him, existence transmigrates at first as a 'anatta' and then it has changed into nothingness or 'Sunya.' The philosophy evolved by the Buddhists in their concept of Tilakkhana (Dukkha, Anatta, Anicca) had certainly elements leading to conclusion through clarity of thinking and soundness of argumentation.

The Buddha on the creator—God

The Buddha denied the existence of a creator—God. In the Tripitaka there is absolutely no reference whatever to the existence of a God. The Buddha never admitted the existence of a creator

whether in the form of a force or a being.

Despite the fact that the Buddha placed no supernatural God over man some scholars assert that the Buddha was characteristically silent on this important controversial question.

Nibbana

"Nibbana is bliss supreme" — the Dhammapada. Nibbana or Nirvana is the 'Summum Bonum' of Buddhism. Every Buddhist hopes to attain Nibbana, which is a supramundane state unconditioned by time and space and which therefore cannot be expressed in positive terms.

The Pali word 'Nibbana' is composed of 'Ni and Vana'. 'Ni' is a negative particle, 'Vana' means weaving or craving. This craving serves as a cord to connect one life with another.

It is called Nibbana in that it is a departure (Ni) from that craving which is called Vana, lusting.

So long one is bound up by craving or attachment one accumulates fresh Kammic activities which must materialize in one form or other in the eternal cycle of birth and death. When all forms of craving are eradicated, reproductive Kammic forces cease to operate, and one attains Nibbana, escaping the cycle of birth and death. The Buddhist conception of deliverance is escape from ever recurring cycle of life and death.

Nibbana is also explained as the extinction of the fire of lust (lobha), hatred (dosa) and delusion (moha). Nibbana, in one sense, may be interpreted as the extinction of these flames. Here the extinction of the flames is the means of attaining Nibbana. Nibbana is Niroda Saca, the truth of the cessation of sorrow. The Buddha never taught that weeping and mourning was a blessing. He wanted all men to be happy now and here. He recognized that there were the pleasures of the Senses — 'Panca Kama Sampatti'. But those being impermanent (anicca) were necessarily unsatisfactory (Dukkha). The Buddha says-

“Nibbanam Paramam Sukham”, Nibbana is the highest happiness.

Is Nibanna nothingness? To say that Nibbana is nothingness simply because one cannot perceive it with the five senses, is as it logical as to conclude that light does not exist simply because the blind does not see it. If Nibbana is nothingness, then it necessarily must coincide with space (Akasa). Both space and Nibbana are eternal and unchanging. The former is eternal because it is nothing in it-self. The latter is space less and time less. Regarding the difference between space and Nibbana, it may briefly be said that space ‘is not’, but Nibbana ‘is’.

The Buddha, speaking of the different planes of existence, makes special reference to a ‘Realm of Nothingness. The fact that Nibbana is realised as one of the mental objects (Vatthu dhamma) decidedly proves that it is not a state of nothingness.

The Nibbana is neither a state of nothingness nor a mere cessation. What is not, one can definitely say. What precisely it is, one cannot adequately express in conventional terms as it is unique. It is for self-realization.

The Middle Path

The Buddha Showed the Middle Path or way urging his disciples to avoid the two extremes of self-mortification and self-indulgence. Self-abnegation, too much of repression, too much of penance, inflicting pains to the body, torturing the body is not only conducive to worldly knowledge, but much less to any triumph over the senses.

He is free from lust whose self is extinct. He will desire neither worldly nor heavenly pleasures, and the satisfaction of his natural wants will not defile him. However, let him be moderate, let him eat and drink according to the needs of his body. While satisfying the natural wants is not evil, sensuality is enervating, a self-indulgent man is a slave to his passion, and

pleasure seeking is degrading and vulgar. To satisfy the necessities of life, it is essential for wisdom to keep the body trim.

According to the Buddha’s teaching extremes of heat and cold; anger and passion; attachment and hate are not good. They should be avoided. One should safely follow the Middle Path to avoid falling into the world’s trappings. One has to see life ‘beyond both existence and non-existence’ to something that includes both. The middle way teaches life to be seen apart from any duality of self and void, beyond any self-substance and voidism, ignorance and enlightenment. Avoid duality; tread the middle way, beyond any delusion.

The Buddha says that things are not to be taken as transitory and empty, so also as real and permanent and not to take everything as happy, or painful. Stay neutral. ‘It is wrong to cling to the self or ego’, it is wrong to say everything is suffering, better to tread a middle course.

According to Buddhism, ‘In the middle way, duality merges into oneness, the noble path leads to contentment and peace.’

The Middle Path is to be understood properly. When the Buddha advocated love, peace, non-violence, loving kindness and compassion, he never spoke from a high tower of idealism only. The Buddha knew human psychology and human behavior well. He was an idealist as well as a realist.

In practical sense, the Middle path prescribes for the avoidance of any kind of extremism. Moderation in all mundane and spiritual matters is the best course for a righteous life. Moderate approach is quite natural for the majority of mankind. Extremism and Buddhism do not go together. Excess in anything is neither comfortable, nor beneficial. Following the middle way, one can overcome difficulties and avoid the pitfalls of life.

So, the Buddha advises men and women to enjoy life, but within limits. The Middle Path helps one generate compassion, kindness, equanimity, fellow feeling, mindfulness and quickens

one's journey on the path of enlightenment; it extinguishes craving, passion, hatred and violence in life and society, and brings peace and happiness.

Since the days of the Buddha, the Buddhist monks had been residing at places chosen in accordance with the principle of Middle Path.

Buddhism is a religion which is based on kindness, compassion, Metta or Loving kindness for all living beings. The whole history of human civilization is a history of violence. Buddhism does not support any solution by violence or force. 'Ahinsa' or non-violence is the most important factor of Buddhism.

Buddhism's Social Value

Buddhism is a religion of kindness, humanity and equality. It denounced any kind of superiority on the ground of birth or social distinction. As a social entity every human being is considered equal. Renown scholar B.G. Gokhale says - "The whole trend of Buddhist teaching was created on equalitarian ethos, which would cut across tribal lines and the distinction of caste and race." The most significant sociological event was that the Buddha recognized the status of half of the human race as equal to the other half. It was a great leap forward and revolutionary step during his time.

It is in human existence and in no other existence, not even in divine one that it is possible to make one's resolve succeed. As man can observe 'Sila' and give 'Dana' (charity) so his resolve for being Buddha can come to fruition. The Buddha has spoken exultingly about human existence. There are many such passages in the Tripitaka where human existence is praised.

Buddhism also refers to four cordial principles of social life. These principles consist of 'Dana' or sharing, "Priyavachana" or pleasant speech, "Arthacharya" on constructive activity and

"Samanatmata" or equality. 'Dana' stresses equitable distribution of wealth and society free from exploitation. Pleasant speech brings happiness to people. Constructive activity helps in material prosperity and social well-being of people. Equality is non-distinction on the basis of caste, creed or parentage. The well-disciplined selfless groups of monks always went from place to place to preach the teachings of the Buddha. Each individual or each group travelled new areas to make social contact and thus spreading the religious thoughts to new groups of people. The Buddha advised them "Go forth, to different lands for the welfare, happiness and benefit of many and out of compassion for the world. By your activities bring good, welfare and happiness to Gods and men. Proclaim O Bhikkhu, the Doctrine Glorious, preach ye a life of holiness, perfect and pure"- Vinaya Pitaka (Mahavagga).

Ethical or Moral Value

The Buddha emphatically taught the importance of morality as a means to the end of problems of life. His profound ethical concepts, - tolerance, non-violence, respect for life, love for animals and nature and belief in fundamental spiritual qualities of all human beings, remained and still remain ever true. His in mortal of love and peace has become more radiant with the passage of time and it shines to-day as a beacon light showing the right way to the erring humanity. It is significant that it is only Buddhism which faced and solved the problem of evil and suffering. Buddhism goes deep into the cause of man's sufferings and find that by putting an end to desire man will overcome his trials and tribulations.

The Buddha taught that we should exercise right thoughts of selflessness, loving kindness and harmlessness. He encouraged that everyone must eliminate wrong ideas, or notions and must cultivate good ideas to help other moral mental factors to be

diverted to Nibbana. The Buddha stated that one's thoughts mould one's nature and control one's destiny. Evil thoughts tend to debase one just as good thoughts tend to elevate one. We should control our mischievous tongue and speak true, not untrue, speak pleasant, polite, honest, harmony, beneficial and acceptable speech by any other. He taught us to be truthful and trustworthy always. We should ever seek the good and beautiful in others instead of deceiving, defaming, denouncing or disuniting others.

The loving-kindness generates a harmless mind. What we utter in speech must be true, sweet, pleasant, useful, fruitful and beneficial.

The Buddha emphatically taught us to exercise right action by refraining from killing men or animals, from stealing things and from sexual misconduct. These three evil deeds are caused by craving and anger, associated with ignorance. Being pure in mind, we would lead a pure life.

The Buddha emphasized the importance of the expression of the beauty of life to exercise right livelihood which should be free from exploitation, misappropriation or any other illegal means of acquiring wealth or property.

The Buddha preached his noble message of selfless services, morality and boundless loving-kindness and compassion not only to kings, princes, nobles and millionaires but also to the poor, lonely and needy. He provided equal opportunities for all and enhanced the status of people. He declared that the road to spiritual development is open to all in every condition of life, high or low, saint or sinner, who would care to turn a new life and seek perfection of life.

Buddhism is the religion of harmony, tolerance and peace. Buddhism has spread without fire or sword, spread its doctrines of tolerance, peace and compassion to a world in turmoil and sufferings. Buddhism preached universal brotherhood and

equality of man. The Buddha is one of the greatest torch bearers of civilization and humanity. Buddhism was globalised centuries ago, hence it is a globalised religion as it stands for wellbeing of humanity all over the world with spiritualism of peace, non-violence, compassion and loving kindness. Buddhist ideology exhorts teaching all persons the fundamental Science and literature based on reason as already mentioned. Dr. Ananda Guruge, an eminent Buddhist scholar of international repute has remarked – "Buddhism" as "Humanistic and universal Buddhism."

The emergence of Buddhism 2554 years ago heralded a revolutionary transformation in the concept of values and way of the people and also formulated a new rational creed close to what may be called the spirit of science and reason. Since then down the centuries Buddhism spread over the whole of Asia and the world at large as a religion, philosophy, creed and way of life moulding a new culture and civilization. A new creative spirit in arts, architecture, sculpture, literature; the entire gamut of human endeavors in every country of Asia in particular was the most decisive outcome of the influence of Buddhism.

Buddhism to-day, is part of the glorious heritage of mankind, but it particularly shines out as an intellectually rational philosophy in the contemporary world of science and technology amidst stress and strain, violence and threats of war. Buddhism maintains great appeal to modern mind probably because of sharply probing intellectual and analytical approach beyond dogmas or conventional notions.

In his analysis of mind and psychology, the Buddha delved deeper and deeper into subterranean realm which according to him constituted the guiding impulse in every outer manifestation of human action. "Abhidhamma Pitaka" has extraordinary richness and profundity in the analysis of mind.

Here, I would like to mention comments/sayings of some

eminent scholars regarding the Buddha and Buddhism.

Julian Huxley said – “The Buddha is the pillar of wisdom and Buddhism begins where science ends, Buddhism is the complete conceivable victory of mankind over itself. The Buddha’s way of thinking belongs to future.”

Albert Einstein said – “The religion of future will be a cosmic religion. It should transcend a personal God, avoid dogma and theology, covering both the ritual and spiritual, as meaningful unity, Buddhism answers this description.”

Dr. Radhakrishnan said on Buddhist idealism : Ignorance is at the root of evil and knowledge not only finds the way, it shims a whole field of existence and helps a being on the road of evolution.

Mahatma Gandhi said – It is my deliberate opinion, that the essential teachings of the Buddha now form an integral part of Hinduism. It is impossible for Hindu India today, to retrace her steps to go behind the great reformation that Gautama effects in Hinduism.

H G Wells remarked – Buddhism has done more for the advance of world civilization than any other influences in the chronicles of mankind.

The contemporary society in the 21st century looks back to Gautama Buddha’s timeless philosophy of all embracing compassion to all sentient beings, the Panchasila (Five precepts) and the Four Brahma viharas – Metta, Karuna, Mudita and Upekka more intensely than ever before in the world of stress and strain, threatened by arms race, nuclear proliferation, terrorism and prospect of war. The compassionate teachings of the Buddha inspire the peace-loving forces in contemporary times against the arms race, terrorism and nuclear weapon threatening annihilation of mankind.

The Buddha’s teachings are a beacon of light to mankind to rid us from worldly sufferings and provide guidance and spiritual

strength. The teachings of the Buddha remain refreshing and relevant even to-day’s world for the ultimate purpose of Buddhism is to serve and benefit humanity. May all beings in the universe be happy.

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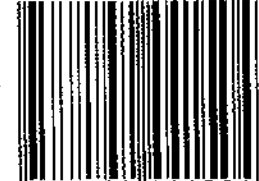
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