

THE BUDDHIST PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE: AN APPLICATION IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

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Abstract

In abstract, the concept of social justice, which was central to the political thought generating and sustaining the French Revolution of 1789, as conceived by modern theorists, is barely two hundred years old. In the western tradition when we turn to earlier periods, we find that whenever and wherever social institutions like family, clan, occupations etc. arose, justice was sought in thought and beliefs of mankind, and social justice had no role in it. However, the idea of human dignity and the importance of human existence has been the basis of all cultures. Still, almost all of the ancient philosophies and religions paid scant attention to issues of social justice in the modern sense. Walking down the memory lane to Protestantism and the Renaissance, and ultimately back to the Biblical concept of human being, we see that social issues have been addressed from early times. However, it did not concern itself with the basic questions of social justice. It was only from the eighteenth century that social justice emerged as an important issue in political thought and social philosophy in the West; and the use of the term 'social justice' in official documents started from the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Keywords: Buddhist Principles; Social Justice; Social Work

Introduction:

Hence a healthy society would comprise a couple of essential components freedom and morality. Moreover, in the development of an individual, i.e. his talents and capabilities, the role of society is crucial. In

other words, progress of the individual is impossible in the absence of a progressive society, a society which contributes to the progress of the individual. Thus, the most important issue of social justice is how to save morality without undermining individual freedom and moral sense.

In the backdrop of the above discussion it can be safely held that the concept of social justice is quite close to the concept of humanism. Humanism may be defined as a philosophy and an attitude of mind which gives primacy to human individual and recognizes his/her right to live as a free individual with dignity. Such recognition is the basic principle of social justice. Thus, humanism provides philosophical background to the concept of social justice.

Buddha realized the deeper significance of human existence. He concentrated upon the primacy of human interests and felt that no super human or divine entity, other than his deeds, would be able to change man's destiny. Hence, the Buddhist philosophy may be characterized as Humanism. Humanism is not merely a theory but it is predominantly practical in outlook. Basically, it is concerned with the ways that would be helpful in the elimination of human suffering. Buddha fully realized the vividness of mere theoretical solution of suffering. It is due to this reason that his doctrine of 'Four Noble Truths' is not only able to explain clearly the human suffering, but also the way to its elimination in the form of 'Eightfold Path.' Through the recognition of theory and practice Buddha discovered the way to the humanization of man and the regeneration of man as a strictly human being. All this projects Buddha as an ardent supporter of social justice and, thereupon, a champion of human rights.

Interestingly, more than two thousand years back Gautam Buddha raised the issue of liberty, equality and fraternity as a revolt against the tyrannical, hierarchical social system in India. Although Buddhist thought seldom addresses the issue of social justice in the modern sense, that is, in terms of such things as human rights, the fair distribution of resources, the impartial rule of law, and political freedom, still it takes up social issues sincerely and upholds that communal good can be realized through the promotion of individual morality. Search for enlightenment holds primacy in Buddhism. Having taught his disciples and helped them be enlightened, he then urged them to preach to others. Buddha asked his disciples to work for others, but asserted that in order to help others one must first become enlightened and, thereupon, be healed. It has been

clarified through one of Buddhist dictums: ‘One who is sick cannot cure others’. Hence, it would not be proper to claim that Buddhism is oblivious to the interpersonal dimension of human experience. The original belief that one who is sick cannot cure others came to be radically transformed by the *bodhisattva* ideal, which appeared in the later phase of Buddhism known as Mahayana Buddhism.

Although the Buddhism is mainly concerned with ethical problem, viz. that of suffering, it presupposed the metaphysical problem that everything is impermanent. Buddha felt that the two problems are correlated. Therefore, in order to discuss social justice in the Buddhist perspective it is apparently proper to discuss it in the light of the two basic tendencies in Buddhist thinking — metaphysical and ethical.

METAPHYSICAL PERSPECTIVE:

The crux of metaphysical perspective in Buddhism is that all things are subject to change and decay (*sarvam antiyam*). It is based on the Buddhist cardinal doctrine of ‘everything is suffering’ (*sarvam dukkham*). Buddha was absolutely convinced through his own observation that the whole world is full of misery. Long and arduous years of penance made him realize that misery is due to the transient character of reality. Explaining this aspect of Buddhism Rhys Davids says:

According to Buddhist, there is no being, there is only a becoming, the state of every individual being unstable, temporary and sure to pass away. Everything, be it person, a thing or a God, is, therefore merely a putting together, of component elements. Further, in each individual without exception, the relation of its component parts is eternally changing and never the same for two consecutive moments. Putting together implies becoming; becoming means becoming different, and becoming different cannot arise without dissolution, a passing away, which must inevitably at some time or other be complete (Rhys Davids, 1998, p. 135).

Apropos to the thesis of impermanence, it appears that the concept of ‘social justice’ would be alien in relation to Buddhist philosophy. This is for the simple reason that the basic precept of social justice involves an autonomous and free individual, which appears to be contradictory to the principle of impermanence. Moreover, justice presupposes others as well;

and it is the other which makes the concept of justice meaningful.

Undoubtedly, Buddhism is a man centered religion, but the centrality of man does not in any way go against the theory of impermanence. However, Buddhist's concept of man is somewhat different from the common view that there is an abiding substance in man. The general belief is that while body goes through changes, *atma* does not change. However, according to Buddha, there is no such soul, as there is no continuity of an identical substance in man. But he does not deny the continuity of the stream of successive states that compose one's life. In his view, life is an unbroken series of states in which each of the state depends on the condition just preceding and gives rise to one just succeeding it. Thus, Buddha explained continuity of life series on the basis of causal connection running through different series. Hence, in order to focus Buddhist view on social justice, it is seemingly plausible to project it in the light of their concept of man.

CONCEPT OF MAN IN BUDDHISM:

By denying the existence of any super-natural controlling power, Buddhists reject ritualism and emphasize upon human will and action. They posit man as the maker of his destiny. The importance of human action and will may be derived from the last sermon of Buddha to his disciples whom he preached to take only themselves as their guide and light. Buddha says,

«You should be carried away in favour of a doctrine... neither by hearsay, nor by tradition, nor by scriptural authority nor by mere logic or argumentation, nor even by teacher's personal charm, and such other things. You should accept a doctrine only after employing your own reason and discretion, after having known it to your utter satisfaction and conviction»(Kindered Sayings 1995, p. 73)

Such views of Buddha led early Buddhists to adopt a consistently dynamic and analytic approach to personal identity. But Buddhists were not interested in understanding man's nature for its own sake. Their highest goal was *Nirvana*, which they characterized as the cessation of all suffering. Being a thorough realist and empiricist, Buddha not only accepted the reality of man, he also did not rest content with the realization of the plight

of man.

However, Buddhists view of man is an implication of their doctrine of 'self'. They used the word 'self' to denote two separate entities, one is metaphysical and another is psychological. The latter sense of self is identified with that of 'man'. Hence, the denial of self, in the former sense, does not mean the denial of man. The denial is restricted to a unitary, homogeneous, non-empirical substance called *atta*, 'self'. Either such a substance itself has been held illusory or the identification of empirical self with it has been questioned. This is signified by the *anatta* (no-self) doctrine. But denial of unitary self is not denial of soul»(Pratap Chandra,1991,p.151).

Additionally, in the Pali Texts man is viewed as a union of body (form, i.e. *nama*) and consciousness (*rupa*). While consciousness denotes the mental aspect of man, body denotes the physical. Hence, personhood is ascribed as a composition of body, feelings, cognition, activities and consciousness. These five factors are supposed to be the base of the cosmos as well. Hence, man is microcosm of the macrocosm. Birth is explained as the unification of the said factors, and death as their breaking up which leads consciousness to move on to start a new person. The stream flows on a continual flux that still retains a distinct identity. Every link of the series influences the following links and the links that come later. All links belonging to the same chain automatically accept the responsibility for the deeds by the preceding link. The series or link of lives reaches a final end only when one succeeds in overpowering one's ignorance (inability to see the truth) and attachments which requires arduous mental and physical training and a special kind of intellectual ability. Realizing the peculiarity of human existence, Buddhists assert that man recognizes the distinction between what he is and what he is destined to be. Hence, what man is destined to be is not unconcerned with what man is. In other words, the goal is enlightenment which is concerned with the spiritual aspect of life; it cannot be separated from the other aspects of life, such as social, political, psychological, cultural etc. Since all these are concerned with the ethical life of man, it is now appropriate to discuss Buddhist's ethical view-point (Payasi – sutta' in Digha-nikaya, Vol.II,p.129).

ETHICAL POINT-OF-VIEW:

Emphasizing on human will and action, Buddhists assert that man is the ultimate architect of his own destiny. Besides, they put equal stress on wisdom and on the development of character towards moral excel-

lence for the benefit of both individual and society. Buddha ascribes man with profound freedom. Buddhists purport that towards the attainment of a higher state of existence this freedom should be exercised by anybody. Buddhism, however, is humanism in the sense that it rejoices in the possibility of a true freedom as something inherent in human nature. For Buddhism, the ultimate freedom is to achieve full release from the root causes of all suffering: greed, hatred and delusion, which clearly are also the root causes of all social evils.

It will not be an exaggeration to state that the Buddhist ethics fully rests on a rational basis rather than on theological basis as is found in early Vedic ethics. Hence, Buddhists enjoined a short list of responsibilities to individuals through the five precepts which were taught in the Buddhist world from the time of Buddha. The precepts are as follows:

I undertake the precept (I) to abstain from the taking of life; (II) not to take that which is not given; (III) to abstain from misconduct in sensual actions; (IV) to abstain from false speech; (V) to abstain from liquor that causes Intoxication and indolence (Sallie B. King, 1995, p. 129.).

These precepts were applicable to each individual and, thereupon, to all sections of society. To weaken, and finally get rid of them in oneself, and, in society, is the basis of Buddhist ethics. And here Buddhist social action plays a predominant role.

In Buddhist social philosophy we find that the society was supposed to involve three divisions. These divisions were the *Sangha* i.e. the spiritual community, the society of the common people or householders and the state which was supposed to take care of the former. The three were conceived as interlinked and interdependent, as the well being of one depended upon the well-being of the other two.

As the we have discussed elsewhere, society is a world comprising individual persons, each intrinsically valuable. Every rational society tries to foster and encourage the highest possible development of all the capacities of personality in all of its members. The end is justice or right ordering of a society and is called social justice. It is a balance between individual rights and social control. It ensures the fulfillment of the legitimate expectations of the individual under the existing laws. It is also an assurance to provide him benefits and protection in case of any violation or encroachment of one's rights. In other words, social justice is an integrative concept. Therefore, in order to ascertain social justice in Buddhist's

perspective, it appears plausible to discuss it with equal stress on all the three aspects of it viz. legal justice, political justice and economic justice, as the *Tripitakas* do contain social, political and economic teachings (Abha Singh,2001,p.169)

LEGAL JUSTICE :

Legal justice is equality in the eyes of law. Every strata of people are subject to the same legal system. Although at the time of Buddha there was no full fledged system of law as today, still the spirit of legal justice was, undoubtedly, inherent in the idea of equality, as Buddha was in favour of providing equal platform to each and every individual irrespective of caste, creed and sex.

Buddhists viewed all human beings as equal; therefore Buddhism was committed to the principle of human equality. Buddha attacked the caste system which divided the society in upper and lower castes, thereby depriving the lower castes of certain rights such as the study of *Vedas*. Repudiating the superiority by birth, he declared that:

No Brahman is such by birth
 No outcaste is such by birth
 An outcaste is such by his deeds
 A Brahman is such by his deeds.(Sutta Nipata,p.110)

Buddha has been considered as a democratic crusader against the inequalities of the caste system and the empty pretensions of the Brahmanical theology. He is regarded as having weakened the foundations of the prevalent religious and social structure by repudiating the revelatory character of the *Vedas* and by challenging the arrogant claims to dignity, importance and merit to Brahmin priests. The following lines clearly depict the rejection of ascriptive superiority based on the physical fact of birth in a particular *gotra* and family :

“Ask not of race, but ask of conduct,
 From the stick is born the sacred fire;
 The wise ascetic though lowly born
 Is noble in his modest self control.” (Samyutta,p.19)

Again, in the *Brahmanavagga* of the Dhammapada we find some

of the classic verses eulogizing the moral attributes of a Brahmin:

“I do not call a man a *brahmana* because of his origin or of his mother; he is indeed arrogant, and he is wealthy. But the poor who is free from all attachments, him I call indeed a *brahmana*.”

“I call a brahmana who does not cling to sensual pleasures, like water on a lotus leaf, like a mustard seed on the point of a needle.” (Dhammapada,p.394-401)

Another prime feature of social justice at the age of Buddha featured in the treatment of slaves. Buddha condemned slavery in every form. Buddha may be declared as the pioneer of abolition of slavery. He avers five ways in which a master should serve his employees (Prabha Chopra,1983,p.127). These are (a) work should be assigned in proportion to the employee's health, (b) due food and wages be given to them, (c) proper care should be taken in his sickness, (d) specially tasty luxuries should be shared with him and (e) holidays should be given to them at due intervals. Buddha was so much compassionate for the working class that he stressed that they be treated with as much consideration as a member of one's own family.

Again, at the time of Buddha the status of women had considerably gone down. Buddha tried to give a place of honour to women. He did not accept the prevailing *Brahmanic* view that a son was indispensable for a man's salvation. Although in the early years Buddha refused to admit women to the *Sangha* or community of celibates but later on he allowed the order of the nuns to be found. Nevertheless, «he enjoined on a young girl of marriageable age the universal virtue of loyalty, respect and obedience to elders, efficiency in house-keeping, love of peace etc. But nowhere in *Pativriyam* (loyalty and devotion to husband) the later Brahmanic ideal of surrender and all absorbing devotion to husband was preached (Ibid.,p.129). Buddhism recognized the individuality and independence of women, and their parity with men. Hence, a girl could remain unmarried by becoming a *Bhikkuni*. Even a widow could find respite in renunciation. Buddhism also checked the spread of *purdah* (veil) system that was prevalent in some royal households.

From the evidence of the Buddha's discourses or *suttas* in the

Digha Nikaya, it is clear that early Buddhists were very much concerned with the creation of social conditions favorable to the individual cultivation of Buddhist values. An outstanding example of this, in later times, is the remarkable «welfare state» created by the Buddhist emperor, Asoka (B.C. 274-236). Walpola Rahula (1978) stated the situation perhaps at its strongest when he wrote that «Buddhism arose in India as a spiritual force against social injustices, against degrading superstitious rites, ceremonies and sacrifices; it denounced the tyranny of the caste system and advocated the equality of all men; it emancipated woman and gave her complete spiritual freedom.»

It is clear from the facts, stated above, that we cannot characterize Buddha as having begun with the explicit intention of challenging the Brahmin priesthood, and raising the economic and social status of the downtrodden, the slaves and the outcasts. But he stressed the cultivation of those elevated sentiments such as a sense of universal compassion (*metta*) and creative altruism, the fostering of which was bound to reduce social exploitation and social tension.

Through the cultivation of compassion it is possible to rise above the drives of physical nature and also above the socially antipathetic forces of opposition, conflict and antagonistic competition. Social accommodation and adaptation are bound to follow as the consequences of the practice of *metta*. With its notions of *maitri* and *karuna*, Buddhism teaches man to cultivate that softness of feelings which shudders to commit the least injury to the creatures.

In the language of modern social sciences, the message of Buddha conveys that merit has to replace all kinds of subjective considerations like bias, caste preference, prejudice etc. The *Madhuriya Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikaya* propounds absolute equality of all the four orders so far as the punishment for evil deeds and reward for meritorious actions, both in this secular world and beyond, are concerned. It ridicules the claims of *Brahmanical* superiority as unfounded and illogical.

In short, Buddhist social action is justified ultimately and, above all, by the existence of social, as well as individual *karma*. It is concerned with relieving suffering immediately, and ultimately believes in creating social conditions which will favour the end of suffering through the individual achievement of transcendent wisdom.

POLITICAL JUSTICE:

The basis of political justice is that politically or economically stronger people must not be empowered to violate legal system. Verily in Buddhism there is no explicit body of social and political theory comparable to its psychology or metaphysics. Nevertheless, a Buddhist political theory can be deduced primarily from basic Buddhism i.e. from *Dharma*. Buddhism is of the view that political power is essential to fashion and sustain a society whose citizens are free to live in dignity, harmony and mutual respect, free of the degradation of poverty and war. In such a society of good heart, all men and women find encouragement and support in making the best use of their human condition in the practice of wisdom and compassion.

Political action, thus, involves the Buddhist ideal of approaching each situation without prejudice, but with deserved circumspection in questions of power and conflict, social oppression and justice. These social and political conflicts are the great public *samsaric* driving energies of our life to which an individual responds with both aggression and self-repression. The *Buddha Dharma* offers the possibility of transmuting the energies of the individual into wisdom and compassion.

This may indicate that Buddhist movement was mainly concerned with ethical advancement and psychic illumination and not with political affairs. Nevertheless, political repercussions did ensue from Buddhism. In the *Brahmajala Sutta*, Gautama Buddha emphatically states that he is vitally interested in social cohesion and co-operation and in the act of reconciling those people who are divided. Early Buddhism did have significant political consequences. From the evidence of the Buddha's discourses, or *suttas* in the *Digha Nikaya*, it is clear that early Buddhists were very much concerned with the creation of political conditions favorable to the individual cultivation of Buddhist values(*Mahaparinibbana-sutta*,p.110). An outstanding example of this, in later times, is the remarkable «welfare state» created by the Buddhist emperor, Asoka (B.C. 274-236).

The Buddhist political justice enjoins special responsibility to the king. As the head of state he must adhere to specific code of conduct, as he is at the helm of affairs of the state. Buddha felt that the personal moral conduct of the king, along with his officials, would be expressed in the political affairs of the state. Thus, the righteous character of the state would help to prevail universal righteousness on earth. Hence, deliverance

through peaceful coexistence would become easily attainable for all. In some passages of the Pali Texts a parallel has been drawn between a Buddha and a monarch, as both held the same esteemed place in the eyes of the people. The two have the same objective, i.e. the well-being of people. Both are also an integral part of the ordinary empirical existence, and the political good and well-being is assured through them. The *Kutadana sutta* of the Digha-Nikaya explains that the safety of the people and their economic, as well as material prosperity should be of special concern for the state and the government. Political power may manifest and sustain social and economic structures, which breed both material deprivation and spiritual degradation for millions of people.

Buddhists are, thus, concerned with political action, first, in the direct relief of non-volitionally caused suffering now and in the future, and, secondly, with the creation of social *karmic* conditions favourable to the following of the way that leads to the cessation of volitionally-caused suffering, the creation of a society which tends to the ripening of wisdom and compassion rather than the withering of them.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE:

The basis of economic justice is that although people differ in mental and physical capabilities still everyone must have enough. Buddhist economic justice follows from the precept of non-stealing — I will not steal (Sallie B. King, 1995, p.131-132). Buddha spoke against individual stealing as he felt that it causes suffering. Similarly, stealing (or exploitation), which a powerful group or society practices against less powerful group or society, would cause suffering and, thus, is antithetical to the basic Buddhist principle. Buddha felt that it is not right for some to feast while many starve. Buddhism is the Middle Path between luxury and need; hence all people must have sufficient for health and well being, and in order to support efforts to fulfill higher needs. Inequality fuels resentment, anger and, ultimately, violence. In order to prevent violence there must be rough equity.

As the attitude of Buddhists was inclined towards ethical quests and psychological perfections, its philosophy did not provide any exclusive program for the economic betterment of the mass. If any person was economically thwarted then he could join the *Samgha* and, thus, escape the stigma and privations of the economic world. But there was no relief provided by Buddhism to him if he continued to remain in active social life. At

the time of Buddha economy was not industrial. The trade and commerce was in agricultural products and not in industrial commodities. There was no large scale manufacturing system prevalent at that time in spite of the mention of '*shresthis*.' The prevailing economy of the time was rural(C.A.F.Rhys Davids,176).

Nevertheless, Buddhist scripture for economic mores can be classified in two, one for the house-holder and the other for monarch or king. While preaching to the house-holder, need of hard work with righteous duties without any speculations was emphasized. Stressing upon economic order to be cultivated by the monarch, Buddha held that the root of social evil was poverty and employment. This was not to be bribed by charity and donations, which would only further stimulate evil action. The correct way was to supply food and seed to those who lived by agriculture and cattle breeding. Those who lived by trade should be furnished with the necessary capital. Servants of the state should be paid properly and regularly so that they should not find ways to squeeze the *janapadas*. New wealth would, thus, be generated and the *janapadas* liberated from robbers and cheats. A citizen could bring up his children in comfort and happiness, free from want and fear in such a productive and contented environment. The best way of spending surplus accumulation, whether in treasury or voluntary private donations, would be in public works, such as digging of wells and water-ponds, and planting groves, along the trade routes(P.T.Barole,p.32).

This is a startling modern view of political economy. To have propounded it at a time of Vedic *Yajna* to a society that had just begun to conquer the primeval jungle was an intellectual achievement of the higher order. Schumacher puts the essence of Buddhist economics as follows:

«While the materialist is mainly interested in goods, the Buddhist is mainly interested in liberation. But Buddhism is 'The Middle Way' and therefore in no way antagonistic to physical well-being... The keynote of Buddhist economics is simplicity and non-violence. From an economist's point of view, the marvel of the Buddhist way of life is the utter rationality of its pattern — amazingly small means leading to extraordinarily satisfying results» (E. F. Schumacher,1973,p.52).

The Buddhists lay emphasis on the purification of human character. Character necessarily is formed by, besides other social influences, the nature of a man's work. And work properly conducted in conditions of human dignity and freedom, is beneficial both for the workers and his products. From the Buddhist point-of-view, the function of work is at least three-fold:

- (i) to give a man a chance to utilize and develop his faculties;
- (ii) to enable him to overcome his ego-centeredness by joining with other people in a common task; and
- (iii) to bring forth the goods and services needed for existence.

This attitude has in itself the grains of distinctly far reaching consequences. If one goes by this view of labour, it will imply that any organization or management of work in a manner that becomes "meaningless, boring, stultifying and nerve-racking", for the worker would tantamount to being both asocial for human beings and an inhuman lack of compassion coupled with the basest form of profit motive. At the same time, any comprehension of leisure as an alternative to work would tantamount to a complete misunderstanding of one of the basic truths of human existence, i.e. work and leisure complement each other, and any lopsided emphasis will destroy either the joy of work or the bliss of leisure.

The Buddhist concept of labour, which aims at enabling the individual to overcome his ego-centeredness by joining him with others in a common task, finds fulfillment in a Marxist economic system. In a communist society also the whole community works for the common good and not for the good of any individual. In the process it gives every individual a chance to utilize and develop his faculties. The Marxist motto "From each according to his capacity, to each according to his need" underlines the dignity of human labour and common good which is really a momentous fact of any economic system. Once the whole human community accepts this principle of common good the society will restructure itself, address itself to the welfare of the people and pave the way for social justice. Thus, collective co-operative system was for the first time introduced through Buddhist *Samgha*, which can be said to be an ancient socialism.

Conclusion:

Lord Buddha opposed the *Brahmanical* social system, their dogma-

tism and superstition and priesthood. He taught people to exercise reason and not to be led like dumb-cattle. He brought about many-sided advance in the culture and civilization of different countries by his social order and his humanistic movement. Buddha did not limit himself to curing Indian society, his aim was to cure mankind as he sought to deliver man from his bondage. Important Buddhist contribution to Indian and world culture as well, is the idea of social and religious equality. The Buddha carried out a vigorous campaign against social discrimination. Throughout Buddhist literature, we find him leading debates and discussions with the *Brahmanas*, always maintaining equal claims of all classes to purity. He declared that the purity of a man does not depend upon his birth, but upon his actions. He destroyed the fundamental basis of the *Brahmanic* society. Buddha knew that if all men are equal in suffering, they ought also to be equal in deliverance. He endeavours to teach them to free themselves from disease, old age and death; and, as all beings are exposed to these necessary evils, they all have a right to the teaching, which by enlightening them is to free them. In presence of same type of suffering, he perceives no social distinction; the slave is for him as great as a king's son. He is stuck, not so much by the abuses and the evils of the society in which he lives, as by those which are inseparable from humanity itself, and it is to the suppression of these that he devotes himself, the others appearing to him very insignificant in comparison.

Although Buddha was a spiritual and moral teacher, and reformer, social, economic political and legal implications do follow from his teachings. He construed every human individual as being divested with certain duties, and the excellence and salvation of individuals depend upon ideal performance of their given duties. In other words, individual rights and dignities are strongly intertwined with corresponding duties. Rather duty is more important than right, and the individual is responsible for the society as well as for himself. Therefore, one has to play one's role well as one's internal change, personal perfection and spiritual excellence are primary. The foundation of Buddhist path is the understanding of one's moral responsibilities towards other. Buddhists never entertained the possibility of limiting man to his physical frame and, thereupon, to one life. Buddha held that each and every man is a potential Buddha, therefore every one must enjoy equal rights and freedom. Only in a free society one can pursue one's goal. As the goal is same for everyone, as far as the quest for the highest goal is concerned, all are equal. Thus, the concept of social justice is quite in tune of Buddhist Philosophy. Apparently taking a cue to it, the

principles of equality, fraternity and liberty are the most important ideals and guidelines in the Constitution of most of the countries across the globe and people are striving to attain this ideal.

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