

DEPICTIONS OF CASTE AND GENDER RELATIONS IN THE
VINAYA PIṬAKA AND THE DĪGHA NIKĀYA.

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SANGMU THENDUP



CENTRE FOR HISTORICAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI- 110067

INDIA

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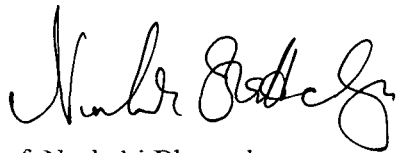
CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**Depictions of Caste and Gender Relations in the Vinaya Piṭaka and the Dīgha Nikāya**” submitted by me for the award of **Master of Philosophy** is my original work. The dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University.



SANGMU THENDUP

We recommend that the dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.



Prof. Neeladri Bhattacharya

(Chairperson)



CHAIRPERSON
Centre for Historical Studies
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110 067, INDIA



Prof. Kumkum Roy

(Supervisor)



Centre for Historical Studies,
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110 067, INDIA

ABBREVIATIONS

1. D.N Dīgha Nikāya
2. D.O.B Dialogues of the Buddha
3. PGW Painted Grey Ware
4. V.P Vinaya Piṭaka

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Hierarchy and inequality are two significant aspects of virtually every society. But the four fold division in the form of the *varṇa*/caste system is present only in Indian society. It had its beginnings in the later Vedic period. Even gender hierarchy can be related to the beginning of caste based hierarchy within Indian society in the later Vedic period. The deterioration in the position of women in society can be traced from this period onwards. The presence of the caste system and gender hierarchy in Indian society can be witnessed even today.

The topic of my dissertation is ‘Depictions of Caste and Gender Relations in the *Vinaya Pitaka* and the *Dīgha Nikāya*’.

I would like to look at the way in which caste and gender issues are represented through these Buddhist texts. I will look into the concept of *varṇa* divisions in society and their acceptance or rejection within the folds of Buddhism, the attitude of the Buddhists towards the four different castes and also the treatment of women within the Buddhist *saṃgha* in comparison with their treatment in the parallel lay society.

The word ‘caste’ can be used in various ways – as a noun to denote an abstract principle or to designate a particular kind of social group, and as an adjective to denote the quality of this principle or the character of the group.

According to the Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, caste is an institution of considerable internal complexity, which has been oversimplified by those seeking an ideal type of rigid hierarchical social stratification, based on extreme closure criteria.

The meaning of the term ‘caste’ has been traced from the Portuguese word ‘casta’ meaning ‘race’ or ‘pure stock’. “The Portuguese seafarers who traded mainly on the west coast of India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries described groups they called castas (from which derives the English and French words ‘caste’) meaning ‘species’ or breeds of animals or plants or ‘tribes’, ‘races’, ‘clans’ or ‘lineages’ among men (Marriot and Inden 1985:348).

Declan Quigley in his book, *The Interpretation of Caste*, writes that the sense of *jāti* is of those people who are in some fundamental way alien because of their common origins and fundamentally different from those who do not share these origins. He says that “one cannot

choose one's *jāti*; it is defined by birth" (Declan Quigley 1993: 5). He writes that the sense of *varṇa* is quite different from the basic idea of birth, it is also functional which is necessary to ensure that social harmony and cosmic stability are maintained. He says that though *varṇa* and *jāti* are two different concepts, yet both have been translated as 'caste'.

The concept of *varṇa* is first mentioned in one of the later hymn of the *R̥g Veda* (c.1000 B.C.) The Puruṣasūkta hymn mentions that when Puruṣa was divided, his mouth became the *brāhmaṇa*; his two arms were made into the *rājanya*; his two thighs the *vaiśyas*, and from his two feet, the *śūda* was born (*R̥g Veda* 10.90.11-12). Each *varṇa* is represented as fundamentally different in function in the Law books of Manu (c. 300 B.C. - A.D. 200).

HISTORIOGRAPHY

One of the classic works on caste is that of Louis Dumont. In his book *Homo Hierarchicus* (1980), he has reviewed the past theories on the origins of the Indian caste system. He finds a tendency to look at individual elements of the caste system in isolation, to reduce religious factors to non-religious ones and to under-estimate the importance of hierarchy. Dumont disagrees with the view of western scholars who see the Indian caste system as nothing but a variant of other systems of social stratification. He insists that knowledge of the past and present Hindu ideology is essential for correctly ascertaining the basic features of the caste system. However, he points out that while looking at the caste system through Hindu ideologies, we must also observe actual social life in a specific local setting. He disassociates himself from a purely cultural view of caste and also from a rigidly structural interpretation. He argues for a comprehensive approach, which he describes as 'typifying'.

Dumont in his work has stressed on three essential characteristics of the caste system, namely – separation, interdependence and hierarchy. Following Bougle, who has defined caste in terms of purity and pollution, Dumont insists that the three principles of separation, interdependence and hierarchy are reducible to a 'single true principle' – namely, the opposition of the pure and the impure. According to Dumont, the opposition between pure

and impure is sustained by the disjunction between ritual, status and secular power which characterises Hindu society. Dumont claims that there is a disjunction of power and status, which is implicit in the hierarchical opposition of pure and impure.

Dumont has been critiqued by Declan Quigley among others (1993), who says that it is impossible to explain caste as the product of a particular ideology. Quigley says that the version of caste values which Dumont presents is much more consistent than the version which Hindus themselves normally present.

Dumont views the caste system as a uniquely Indian expression of a pure form of hierarchy in which the values of the king and of politics are subordinated to the purer values of the priest which alone reflect the social whole. Quigley argues that if this were so, then the *brāhmaṇas* would have to be credited with powers of imagination to conjure up the disjunction between status and power. Quigley says that by making 'purity' a priestly substance or attribute, Dumont has demonstrated his misunderstanding of the connection between caste and ritual functions and the connection between caste and kinship. He stresses that 'purity' is a rational concept and not a substance.

Dumont in his work gives too much importance to the concept of 'ideology' of the caste system and does not seem to realise that ideology is not the only factor for the origin of the caste system. Dumont also does not focus on gender issues and is almost silent about the position of the *śūdras*.

Another scholar who has worked extensively on caste is Suvira Jaiswal. In her book *Caste: Origin, function and Dimensions of Change (1998)*, she points out the reasons for the strong and continued hold of the Indian caste system on the process of restructuring Indian society. She blames the institution of the caste system with its *varṇa* system of hierarchy for obstructing Indian society from becoming completely egalitarian. But in actuality no society can be completely egalitarian. Jaiswal disagrees with the earlier theories which regard the present notion of the caste system to be a result of the transformation and changes in the institution which originated due to the process of endogamy, patriarchy and state formation during the Vedic times. She lays emphasis on the historical specificities which led to the emergence of the *varṇa* system and their crystallisation into castes. She says that the main agents who spread the notion and ideologies of the caste system were the *kṣatriyas* because they benefitted from the notions of a hierarchical caste system. She also focuses on ideology and states that though the caste ideology went through significant conceptual modifications

over the centuries, it did not abandon the basic principles of the caste system. Jaiswal's analysis of the works of different scholars such as Nesfield, Bougle, Ketkar, Hutton, Dumont and others help us in understanding the contribution and influence of these theories on historical studies of the post-independence period. Jaiswal has also examined the paradigms of scholars such as G.S.Ghurye, R.S.Sharma, Romila Thapar and Bruce Lincoln so as to understand the social stratification during Rg Vedic times. Her analysis points out that Ghurye presents the view that the *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriya* and *vaiśyas* were already caste-like categories in Rg Vedic times, whereas both R.S.Sharma and Romila Thapar look on the society during Rg Vedic times as being essentially pastoral. Jaiswal opines that by the later Vedic age, the process of fission and fusion led to the formation of separate categories of *brāhmaṇa* and *kṣatriya varṇas*. The common people involved with agriculture comprised of the *vaiśyas*. She also suggests that Pāli texts mention the presence of *śūdras* and *cāṇḍālas* who were tribals on the borderlines or periphery of Brahmanical society. In her work, Jaiswal traces a close relationship between the caste system and Hinduism or Hindu ideology. Her work contains the most well analysed historiography on caste and gender. However, she too does not talk much about the *śūdras*.

The *śūdras* have been much written about by R.S.Sharma in his book *Śūdras in Ancient India: A Social History of the lower order down to c.A.D.600 (1958)*. With the help of archaeological evidence of the PGW and the literary sources, Sharma traces the developments in the *varṇa* system from the Vedic period upto the Gupta age. According to him, the origin of the *śūdra varṇa* can be placed in the period subsequent to the *Atharva Veda* or the post-Vedic period. Sharma works out a framework for the history of social differentiation and marks the main stages in the evolution of ancient Indian society. However, he does not elaborate on the relationship of the *śūdras* vis-à-vis *kṣatriyas* and *vaiśyas*.

Yamazaki Gen'ichi, a scholar from Japan has worked on the *varṇa* system in his book *The Structure of Ancient Indian Society: Theory and Reality of the Varṇa System (2005)*. According to him, Indian social structure is made up of four stratified *varṇas*– *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* and *śūdra*– in addition to the sub-*varṇa* inferior classes. The *varṇa* system was established in the upper Ganga basin during the middle of the later Vedic age (c.1000–600 BC), and from that time on spread throughout the Indian subcontinent along with Aryan migration and cultural transmission. Then, from the medieval period onwards, castes (*jāti*) began to be formed within the larger *varṇa* framework, and a social system was formed based on an inter – caste division of labour. He says that there has always been a gap between the

ideals of the *varṇa* system and its actual implication; also, the system (including sub-*varṇa* classes) formed during the ancient period varied in influence depending on any particular region or era. Nevertheless, the most important characteristic is that the system has stubbornly survived to the present day. He has used source materials from three different genres: the works of Hindu law (the *Dharmasūtras* and *Dharmaśāstras*), the Pāli Buddhist texts and Kautīlya's *Arthaśāstra*. In his work, he has attempted to approach reality by comparing the three genres (especially orthodox [*brāhmaṇa*] and unorthodox [Buddhist] views), which were compiled in Ganga basin at about the same time in history.

For the study of caste and gender at the time of the Buddha, we can use the works of scholars like T.W.Rhys Davids, Uma Chakravarti, Narendra Wagle, Suvira Jaiswal, Diana Y Paul and others.

According to T.W. Rhys Davids (1970), at the time of the Buddha, the caste system in any proper or exact use of the term did not exist till long afterwards. He says that during those times the basis of social distinction was relationship. While talking about the four grades called *varṇa*, which was already existing during those times, he places the *ksatriyas* at the head, followed by the Brahmins, below them were the peasantry or *vaiśyas* and last of all came the *sūdras*, which included the bulk of the non-Aryan descent. He also cites the presence of *cāṇḍālas* and *Pukkāsas* in the Jain and Buddhist texts. He says that the priest put themselves first and had a theological legend in support of their contention but this was not admitted by the nobles (T.W.Rhys Davids 1970: 32)

Uma Chakravarti in her book *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism* (1987) has used epigraphic evidence ranging from c.200B.C. to A.D. 200 along with Pāli texts to substantiate the theories on social stratification. She says that earlier studies were flawed because they assume that the society with which early Buddhism interacted conformed to the rigid systems of the four *varṇas* as portrayed in the brahmanical texts of the period. On the contrary, through an analysis of social stratification within the early Buddhist texts, she demonstrates that the Buddhists used an alternative, simpler –high or low stratification system which was applied to the categories of lineage (*jāti*), clan (*kula*), work (*kamma*) and craft (*sippa*). She writes: “it is important to point out that the system of stratification as portrayed in the Pāli canon depicts a social phenomenon or an essential reality, without religious sanctions, unlike the brahmanical conception of hierarchy. The Buddhist texts were merely reflecting the

situation prevailing in the region in which early Buddhism was located” (Chakravarti 1987: 109). Chakravarti points out that the tremendous expansion of agriculture and consequently of the economy in that period was the major factor in the phenomenon of second urbanisation, growth of craft production, trade and complexities of the economy, which further led to the emergence of a stratified society. Increase in the number of occupational groups led to the bringing in of tribal groups within the folds of stratified society.

While talking about social stratification she emphasises the Buddhist point of view by giving more importance to Buddhist texts. She differentiates between the two different schemes of categorisation- the brahmanical scheme of division into the four *varṇas* and the Buddhist scheme of division into the – *khattiyas*, *brāhmaṇas* and the *gahapatis*. She gives importance to the threefold division of society during the time of the Buddha, by placing the *khattiyas* higher than the *brāhmaṇas* in terms of social position. This often leads one to wonder whether this was because of the *Khattiya* birth of the Buddha.

Regarding gender issues she says that patriarchal values in relation to women have been reflected in early Buddhist literature. In general, the attitude of society was against women. This has been indicated in the narrations which point out that in the beginning Buddha did not want *bhikkhunīs* in the *saṃgha*. She says that women have been represented as adulterous, secretive, evil smelling and not trust worthy etc (Chakravarti 1987: 31). She states that the Buddhist texts have provided us with an account of the way women perceived the unequal relations between men and women and sought to achieve an identity outside of domestic roles. Women struggled to enter the *saṃgha* against a great deal of misogyny from the Buddha himself as founder of the *saṃgha*. However once they were in, they carved out a niche for themselves despite a gender-based inequality within the *saṃgha* at the structural level, the *bhikkhunīs* being placed firmly under the authority of the *bhikkhus*. Entry into the *saṃgha* in a way did provide with an important resource through which they succeeded partially in escaping patriarchal structures (Chakravarti 2003: 94 & 95).

Chakravarti states that evidence from the Buddhist and Jaina texts for the period c.B.C.600 to B.C.300 is useful in outlining the process of class, caste and gender stratification in more details and also in depicting contestations of the process of development of caste, which appear to be clearly spearheaded by the *brāhmaṇas* (Chakravarti 2003: 45).

In her essay ‘Brahmanical Patriarchy in Early India’, Chakravarti relates the emergence of caste and class divisions with the shift to an agricultural economy and the second

urbanisation (800-600 B.C.). She writes that the *brāhmaṇas*, as a group were a force to reckon with and patrilineal succession was fairly well established within the larger context of a defined family structure that was distinct from the earlier structure. “The relations of production inherent in the new society provided the backdrop in which social hierarchy and gender hierarchy were crystallised into permanent institutions” (Chakravarti 2006: 124). Changes like the emergence of a fairly stratified society, the collapse of a tribal economy and polity in the post Vedic period, especially with the establishment of private control over land held and transmitted within a patrilineal system, and accompanied by the beginning also of patrilineal succession to kinship and the preservation of caste purity- meant that the sexual behaviour of certain categories of women needed to be closely guarded (Chakravarti 2006: 143).

Narendra Wagle in his book ‘*Society at the Time of the Buddha*’ (1995) has based the main accounts of the social structure at the time of the Buddha on the four *Nikāyas*, the *Vinaya* and the *Sutta Nipāta* which are the mass of the literary material, mainly religious in character. He has used archaeological finds from excavations at Rājagaha and Kosāmbi as his source material. He has also used anthropological methods in his study, so as to be more precise in the methods of social structure analysis in his approach to historical data. Wagle writes about social groups and ranking in society by focusing on the interpersonal relationships found in the texts. These relationships are found in the description of instances of actual behaviour between various persons. The descriptions consist of a limited number of phrases and terms which recur in a large number of instances. Wagle refers to these as ‘formalisations’. Wagle points out that there are direct statements in the Pāli texts about the position of the *Khattiyas* being superior to that of the *brāhmaṇas*, wherever the texts refer to the theoretical four class groupings of *Khattiya*, *brāhmaṇa*, *Vessa* and *Suddas*. The *Khattiyas* are invariably mentioned first in order of preference. The textual bias in favour of *Khattiyas* to which the Buddha belonged is obvious. He suggests the triple system of ranking of people into social, religious and political categories. This system indicated that the *brāhmaṇas* recognised no superior in society although politically, they were subservient to the ruling aristocracy of the day.

With regard to society during those times, as reflected in the texts, Wagle points out to a two dimensional view of society: horizontal solidarity indicating equality of similar status groups and vertically ranked hierarchy indicating differentiated social classes. Talking about the caste system and the fourfold division of society, he says that sometimes the fourfold society

was replaced by a threefold one consisting of *khattiyas*, *brāhmaṇas* and *gahapatis*. He says that the presence of caste like elements in Buddhist society however does not necessarily imply the presence of a developed caste system. Commensality and endogamy, the two fundamental characteristics of modern castes were absent during those times. Wagle also says that the evidence suggests that *varṇa* (*vanna*) is a two category system with *brāhmaṇa* and *Khattiya* forming the upper category and the *Vaiśyas* (*Vessas*) and *sūdras* (*suddas*) forming the lower one. He says that although there was considerable division of labour and trade, the society during those times did not seem to have crystallised into a rigid caste system. Though the fundamental characteristics of a modern caste system were absent, the notion of status and rank, which were the benchmark of caste of the later Vedic period was fully present in the society at the time of the Buddha.

While talking about gender relations he shows through textual references that ideally the parents desired a son to be born because a son would add to the possessions, perform familial duties, perpetuate the lineage, transmit the inheritance to his sons etc. Succession of office was from father to son. The son inherited the property of both the mother and father. He writes that both wife and daughter seem to be excluded from inheritance which was indicated as being patrilineal in the texts. Daughters were the responsibility of the parents, and like sons, the daughters also had to seek the permission of the parents in order to become nuns (*bhikkhunīs*). At the proper age, daughters were married to suitable husbands and sent to their husbands' homes. Marriage is shown as polygamous in the texts, where no special reason is given as to why a man took another wife. Although Wagle's work is very important in order to get a picture of society during the time of the Buddha, he seems to be giving a confusing explanation about social stratification that existed during those times. He sometimes talks about society being four-fold and at times he replaces this concept with a three-fold one. At places he also mentions the two-fold division of society into the upper category and the lower category.

A scholar who has extensively worked on women in Buddhism is I.B.Horner. In her book *Women under Primitive Buddhism: Laywomen and Almswomen* (1930), she attempts to present the position of laywomen and almswomen in historical focus. For the study of laywomen she has used material found in canonical literature, the commentaries thereon, the *Jātakas* and the *Milindapañha*, while most of the material for the account of the almswomen is gathered from the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, the *Therīgāthā* and the commentaries along with references found scattered throughout Pāli literature. She writes that in pre-Buddhist days the

status of women in India was on the whole low and without honour, but during the Buddhist epoch there was a change. Women came to enjoy more equality, and greater respect and authority than ever hitherto accorded them. Although their activities were confined within certain spheres – principally the domestic, social and religious – their position in general began to improve. The exclusive supremacy of man began to give way before the increasing emancipation of woman. It was impossible for the men, steeped as they were in the Buddhist teachings, not to respond to the constant proofs in daily life of women's powers of devotion, self-sacrifice, courage and endurance. They ceased to regard women as approximating in degree more nearly to animals than to themselves; and, on the contrary, became more acutely aware of the resemblances between men and women. The Buddha gave *Dhamma* to both; he also gave talks to householders and their wives. Added to this the women set fine examples in conduct and intelligence. The men, for their part, appreciated the *Dhamma*, and acquiesced – though tardily – in the widening of the field of women's activities. Thus, amid many currents, intricate but potent, the tide turned; and in its flow the position of women, as manifested in secular affairs, became one which was no longer intolerable and degraded, but one which was honourable and therefore bearable; women were acknowledged at last to be capable of working as a constructive force in the society of the day. The marks of the change became visible (Horner 1930: 1 & 2). She talks about laywomen in various roles such as the mother, daughter, wife, widow and woman worker.

In the second part of her book she talks exclusively about almswomen, their admission into the order, the Eight Chief Rules, the *Therīgāthā*, and life in the Order. Horner writes that with the growing perception that their lives had worth as an end in itself, there was liberation of a spirit of independence in women and for women. It sought to express itself in domestic and worldly matters, many of which were also largely religious in character. It soon became apparent that one of the drifts of this new-found power and freedom was away from purely domestic-religious occupations. A new drift set within the lives of women where they began to lead a life devoted entirely to holiness and they became totally free of worldly interests, impediments and bonds. As this freedom grew under Buddhism, women fell into two divisions: those who remained in the world as lay-votaries of the religion and those who went forth from the world into homelessness and became *bhikkhunīs*, nuns, sisters or almswomen. Horner writes that the emergence of women as almswomen was a logical and almost inevitable development.

Diana Y. Paul in her book *Women in Buddhism: Images of the Feminine in the Mahāyāna Tradition* (1985) talks about how women have never been accorded the same kind of universal respect conferred upon men. She uses Mahāyāna Buddhist texts as her source material to portray the ambivalent attitude towards women that has been apparent in Buddhist lands in all ages. The text reveals that on the one hand, woman was regarded as a danger, potential and actual to a man's perilous progress, and on the other hand she was shown as in the guise of a Nāga princess or Bodhisattva. Paul says that Buddhism like Judaism and Christianity is an overwhelmingly male created institution dominated by a patriarchal power structure. As a consequence of this male dominance, the feminine is frequently associated with the secular, powerless profane and imperfect. Paul has mainly focused her work on the gender relations prevailing in society when the Mahāyāna Buddhist texts were written.

PRIMARY SOURCES:

The primary sources that I have used are the translated version of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* texts and the *Dīgha Nikāya* of the *Sutta Piṭaka*. (*Vinaya Piṭaka* from the 'Sacred Books of the East series' translated by T.W. Rhys Davids and Herman Oldenberg edit. (1968) & *Dīgha Nikāya* translated by T.W. Rhys Davids (2000).

The *Vinaya Piṭaka* is made up of rules of discipline laid down for regulating the conduct of the Buddha's disciples who were admitted as *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs* into the order. The rules embody authoritative injunctions of the Buddha on modes of conduct and restraints on both physical and verbal actions. They deal with the transgression of discipline and various categories of restraints and admonitions in accordance with the nature of the offence e.g. incurring penalty on the guilty *bhikkhus*, admission of *bhikkhunīs* into the order etc.

The *Vinaya Piṭaka* is made up of 5 books

Pārājika

Pācittiya

Mahāvagga

Cullavagga

Parivara patha

The *Pārājika* and *Pācittiya* are collectively called the '*Sutta Vibhanga*', and the *Mahāvagga* and *Cullavagga* collectively comprise of the *khaṇḍakas*.

The *Pārājika* pali (major offences) gives an elaborate explanation of the important rules of discipline concerning major and minor offences.

The *Pācittiya* pali deals with the rules for the *bhikkhus* and the corresponding disciplinary rules for the *bhikkhunīs*. These are rules regarding matters requiring repentance and expiation.

The *Mahāvagga* pali {greater section} gives an historical account of how the Buddha attained Supreme Enlightenment upto the conversion of his two chief disciple, Sāriputta and Mogallāna. The *Khaṇḍakas* of the *Mahāvagga* give detailed accounts of the admission into the *saṃgha*, of the ceremony of the *Uposatha*, of the annually recurring observations connected with the beginning and the end of the rain retreat (*vassā*) and *Kathina* ceremony where annual making and offering of robes takes place. It also deals with the principal disciplinary proceedings; and with miscellaneous details regarding medicine, food, dwellings etc.

The *Cullavagga* {minor disciplinary proceedings} continues to deal with more rules and proceedings for institutional acts or functions e.g- rules for observance of penance, rules for reinstatement of a *bhikkhu*, duties of tutors and novices.

The *Parivara Pali* {Epitome of the *Vinaya*} serves as a kind of manual and is compiled in the form of a catechism, enabling the reader to make an analytical survey of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. It also explains how rules of the Order are drawn up to regulate the conduct of the *bhikkhus* as well as the administrative affairs of the Order.

The *Vinaya* texts constitute that part of the sacred literature of the Buddhists which contains the regulations for the outward life of the members of the *saṃgha*. Gradual changes of circumstances in the fraternity of monks also resulted in gradual changes in the *Vinaya*. In the *Sutta-Vibhaṅga* as well as the *Mahāvagga*, the outward form is arranged in such a way that in the case of every regulation, a history was given of the occasion upon which the Buddha was supposed to have made it. According to T.W.Rhys Davids and H. Oldenberg, these histories

again lead up in most cases, to a liturgical formulary by which the regulation was to be carried out (V.P, 1986: xix).

The *Dīgha Nikāya* is part of the *Sutta Piṭaka*. The *Sutta Piṭaka* is the second division of the *Tripitaka*, and consists of more than 10000 *suttas*(discourses) delivered by the Buddha and his close disciples during and shortly after the Buddha's 45 year teaching career as well as many additional verses by other members of the *samgha*. The *suttas* are grouped into 5 *Nikāyas* or collections namely, *Dīgha Nikāya*, *Majjhima Nikāya*, *Samyutta Nikāya*, *Anguttara Nikāya* and the *Khuddaka Nikāya*.

The *Dīgha Nikāya* or the long discourses consists of 34 *suttas*, including the longest ones in the canon. The subject matter of these *suttas* ranges widely from colourful folkloric accounts of the beings inhabiting the *deva* world to down to earth practical meditation instructions and everything in between. It has been suggested that a distinguishing trait of the *Dīgha Nikāya* may be that it was intended for the purpose of propaganda to attract converts to the new religion. The *Dīgha Nikāya* is grouped into 3 parts... the *Sīlakkhandhavagga*, the *Mahāvagga* and the *Patikavagga*. The *vaggas* (chapters) differ in content and character, but they all contain a mixture of older and later material. The earliest stratum is found mainly in the first *vagga*, and the latest in the last, while the longest *suttas* are in the second *vagga*. The *Dīgha Nikāya* contains a full exposition of what the early Buddhist considered the teaching of the Buddha to have been and they contain a large number of references to the social, political and religious condition during those times.

CHAPTERISATION:

The first chapter deals with the *brāhmaṇas* as a social group within the four fold *varna* system. It talks about the religious leanings of the *brāhmaṇas*, their beliefs, practices, their social and economic background, their occupational practices, their attitude towards the other social groups and the attitude of the other groups towards them. The chapter explores the norms which were to be followed by the *brāhmaṇas* and also talks about the diversion of some *brāhmaṇas* from the norms which were laid out for them. Another important aspect that the chapter looks into is the acceptance or rejection of the brahmanical ideology by the Buddha and his *samgha*. The chapter has five sections, the first is: defining the *brāhmaṇa*, the second is: attitude towards sacrifices and rituals, the third is: *brāhmaṇas* as teachers of the

Vedas, the fourth is: other occupations and lifestyles followed by the *brāhmaṇas*, and the last is: deviation from the brahmanical norms. The chapter tries to bring out the difference in the way the *brāhmaṇas* have been portrayed in the two set of texts depending on the readers for whom the texts were meant.

The second chapter explores the position of the *kṣatriyas* in the social order, their religious leanings, the duties attributed to them, their affiliations and their patronage to religious institutions. Through textual references the chapter shows that some of the *kṣatriyas* had also been influenced by the teachings of the Buddha. In order to understand the position of the *kṣatriyas* it is important to understand the political systems during those times because the *kṣatriyas* were supposed to be political heads. Therefore, I have incorporated the views of different scholars on the political systems during the rise and spread of Buddhism. The chapter analyses the treatment of the *kṣatriyas* by other sections of the society as well as the Buddhist *saṃgha*. Another aspect that this chapter would look into is the attitude of the *kṣatriyas* towards the Buddha and his fraternity of monks, and also the way they were treated by the Buddha and his monks. The texts suggest a clear affinity of the Buddha towards the *kṣatriya* monarchs and this can be reasoned as the Buddha's loyalty towards his own clan, since he himself had been a prince before he renounced the world. The chapter gives many textual references to land grants, parks (*ārāmas*), robes, and other necessary items of everyday use being donated by *kṣatriyas* to the Buddha and his fraternity of monks. The chapter has been divided into three sections. The first section discusses the superior position given to *kṣatriyas* by the Buddha, the second section focuses on religious patronage given by *kṣatriya* monarchs and the last section deals with the *kṣatriyas* who adopted Buddhism.

The third chapter focuses on the other social groups mentioned in the texts, besides the *brāhmaṇas* and the *kṣatriyas*. If the other social groups mentioned in the *Dīgha Nikāya* and the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, are to be categorised according to the brahmanical *varṇa* system, they can be grouped into *vaiśyas* and *sūdras*. Although there are very few references of people being specifically categorised as *vaiśyas* and *sūdras*, we find a number of references which talk about various occupational groups like the *setṭhis*, *gahapatis*(householders), smiths, barbers, slaves and other groups practicing the so called 'low arts'. In these Buddhist texts it is noticed that the concept of high/*ucca* birth and low/*nīca/hīna* birth features more often than the concept of the four *varṇas*. Hence the chapter tries to explain these features. A person's lineage on the father's side or the mother's side decided his or her birth status as *ucca*/higher and *hīna*/low/inferior. Even the occupations followed by people in those times seem to have

been divided into *ucca*/high crafts and low crafts. Occupations like agriculture, cattle-rearing, trading have been rated as 'high' and other occupations where people worked for others or produced and created for other have been rated as 'low' e.g barbers, smiths, snake charmers, astrologers, cooks, attendants, basket-makers, potters, weavers etc. The references in both sets of texts bring out the features of the society in which the Buddha lived. The picture of the society at the time of the Buddha's lifetime has been reflected as being divided into various caste groups and the economy being rapidly developed into a money economy with the use of metallic money and the rise of urban economic activity.

Although the references in both set of texts do not specifically mention people of the *vaiśya* caste and the *sūdra* caste, we find numerous reference to people belonging to different groups such as the *gahapatis*, *setthi*, other occupational groups, slaves etc. We do not see a clear cut identification of people into *vaiśyas* and *sūdras*. Therefore the chapter has been divided into three sections, the first section talks about the *gahapatis*, the second about the *setthi* and the third sections talks about the other occupational groups like the barbers, tailors, smiths and slaves.

The fourth chapter looks at gender issues through various references to women in both sets of texts. Women have been frequently mentioned in both the *Dīgha Nikāya* and the *Vinaya Pitaka* in different roles. In different contexts, they have been described as the *bhikkhunīs* of the Buddhist *saṃgha*, as queen consorts, as laywomen, as wives, as mothers, daughters or as courtesans. This chapter explores the different roles of women and their relations with the other gender as an individual in various roles and also talks about their status in society. The chapter brings forth both the positive and negative references to women in the texts. Acceptance of women into the *saṃgha* by the Buddha, which marks a diversion from the patriarchal regime, has been discussed in the chapter. The chapter has been divided into three sections. The first section describes the entry of women into the *saṃgha* and the various rules and regulations for them. The second section deals with laywomen and the third section talks about courtesans as an economically independent group of women. Various aspects of a patriarchal society have also been discussed in this chapter to some extent e.g polygamy, absence of inheritance rights for women and the discriminations that women faced within the *saṃgha* as well as in the parallel society.

CHAPTER-II

BRĀHMAṆAS IN BUDDHIST TEXTS: BIRTH, RITUALS AND VARIATIONS FROM THE NORM.

This chapter deals with the treatment of the *brāhmaṇas* as given in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and the *Dīgha Nikāya* of the *Sutta Piṭaka*.

The *Vinaya Piṭaka* consists of rules of discipline laid down for regulating the conduct of the Buddha's disciples who were admitted as *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs*. On the other hand, the *Dīgha Nikāya* consists of discourses ascribed to the Buddha or (rarely) to a disciple. Since the *Vinaya Piṭaka* texts were rule books for the monks and the *Sutta Piṭaka* was used within the wider society, we find some differences in the treatment of the *brāhmaṇas* as represented in these texts.

I have tried to analyse the treatment of the *brāhmaṇas* during the time of the Buddha, through numerous references, narrations and stories as given in these texts. The texts indicate that the *brāhmaṇas* as a social group was one of the dominant ones among others; such as – *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas* and *sūdras*. The references to the *brāhmaṇas* in these texts help us to understand the religious leanings of the *brāhmaṇas* – their beliefs and practices, their social and economic background, their attitude towards other social groups and the attitude of the other social groups towards them. The narrations contain both derogatory as well as positive references to the *brāhmaṇas*. The texts talk about certain norms that the *brāhmaṇas* as a group, were expected to follow, however there are many references of the *brāhmaṇas* who differed from the norms and went against their own ideologies.

DEFINING THE BRĀHAMANA

This section deals with what the Buddhist texts say about being born a *brāhmaṇa*; the norms that were laid down for them and the behaviour that was expected of them as part of the social milieu. The texts talk about both the brahmanical view as well as the Buddhist view regarding the specific characteristics of a *brāhmaṇa*. There was a certain behaviour expected

from a *brāhmaṇa* because the wider society treated the *brāhmaṇas* as possessors of spiritual merit for whom the social norms were different from those for ordinary people.

Also the presence of the perception of a ‘true *brhāmaṇa*’ is reflected in the Buddha’s view about the characteristics of a ‘true *brhāmaṇa*’ in the *Vinaya Piṭaka (Mahāvagga I.2.1)*. The narration states that the Buddha at the end of seven days’ meditation went from the foot of the Bodhi tree to the Ajapāla banyan tree, where he was approached by a haughty *brāhmaṇa* who questioned “by what, Gotama, does one become a *brāhmaṇa*, and what are the characteristics that make a man a *brāhmaṇa*?” (*V. P. Mahāvagga I.2.1*). The Buddha answers by listing down the characteristics expected from a true *brāhmaṇa* by saying “that *brāhmaṇa* who has removed (from himself) all sinfulness, who is free from haughtiness, free from impurity, self-restrained, who is an accomplished master of knowledge (or of the Vedas), who has fulfilled the duties of holiness, such a *brāhmaṇa* may justly call himself a *brāhmaṇa*, whose behaviour is uneven to nothing in this world.”

Another reference to the essential quality which makes a man a *brāhmaṇa* is found in the *Sonadaṇḍa sutta* of the *Digha Nikāya*. The *sutta* talks about both the brahmanical view as well as the Buddhist views on the essential qualities required for a man to be a *brāhmaṇa*. The brahmanical view is expressed by Sonadaṇḍa in the *Sonadaṇḍasutta*. He lists down five essential qualities for a man to be a true *brāhmaṇa*, and these were...

1. The *brāhmaṇa* should be well born on both sides, on the mother’s side and on the father’s side, of pure descent back through seven generations, with no slur put upon him and reproach, in respect of birth.
2. He should be a repeater of the sacred verses and should know the mystic verses by heart.
3. He should be handsome, pleasant to look upon, inspiring trust, gifted with great beauty of complexion, fair in colour, fine in presence and stately to behold.
4. He should be virtuous, increased in virtue and gifted with virtue.
5. Lastly he should be learned and wise (*D.N. Sonadaṇḍa sutta:146*)

On the other hand, the Buddhist view is expressed by the Buddha who stresses only on two important qualities of ‘virtue’ and ‘wisdom’ from those five qualities, which distinguished a man as a true *brāhmaṇa*.

The views of *brāhmaṇas* on the precepts of morality are expressed by prince Pāyāsi in the *Pāyāsi suttānta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. The *brāhmaṇas* held different views about morality, death, rebirth, and soul vis-à-vis the views of the Buddha. Prince Pāyāsi talks about the brahmanical view and says “according to the views and opinion held, sirs, by certain wanderers and *brāhmaṇas*, they who break the precepts of morality, when the body breaks up after death are reborn into the waste, the woeful way, the pit . . . and they who keep the precepts of morality, when the body breaks up, are after death reborn into the bright and happy world” (*D.N. Pāyāsi suttānta: 352*).

Kassapa, while talking about the moral and virtuous *brāhmaṇa* says “moral and virtuous wanderers and *brāhmaṇas* do not force maturity on that which is un-ripe, they being wise wait for that maturity” (*D.N. Pāyāsi suttānta: 358*).

ATTITUDES TOWARDS SACRIFICES AND RITUALS

The texts show that at the time of the Buddha, a *brāhmaṇa* was represented as a repeater of the sacred words knowing the mystic verses by heart, one who mastered in the Vedas, the rituals, sacrifices, phonology (the system of relationships between the basic speech sounds of languages) and exegesis (explanation of texts) as well as legends. They had to be learned in the idioms and the grammar, versed in Lokāyata sophistry (false arguments) and the theory of the signs on the body of a great man (*D.N. Ambaṭṭha Sutta: 109*)

The *brāhmaṇas* practiced sacrifices and complicated rituals which involved the giving of a lot of material and cattle as oblations to the brahmanical gods and goddesses. The Buddha is said to have no belief in the brahmanical sacrifices and rituals; they were not acceptable to him and were looked down upon as sheer wastage of material goods and animals. The anti-brahmanical view of the Buddha in terms of the sacrificial rituals practiced

by the *brāhmaṇas* is given in the *Kūṭadanta sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. The *sutta* narrates the story of a *brāhmaṇa* Kūṭadanta who goes to Gotama to seek advice on the modes of rituals to be performed at the sacrifices, the requisite utensils and the altar furniture to be used in making the sacrifice. The Buddha answers by narrating a story of king Mahāvijita and his sacrifice, so as to give the list of requirements for a sacrifice. The three ‘modes’ of sacrifice which the *brāhmaṇa* seeks to know are declared in the legend as being the three simple conditions of the mind or rather one condition of mind at three different times, the harbouring of no regrets, either before or during or after the sacrifice, at the expenditure involved. And the material accessories required for the sacrifice are said to be the hearty co-operation with the king, of the four divisions of his people – the nobles, officials, *brāhmaṇas* and the householders. The Buddha explains the Buddhist form of sacrifice which harmed neither animals nor vegetables and consisted only of food offered on behalf of the king along with all the good people of his kingdom. The Buddha then gives a list of alternative practices which would bring forth greater fruit and greater advantage than the *brahmanical* form of sacrifices. The Buddha lists down the following practices, which if followed would bring about greater rewards.

- The putting up of dwelling place (*Vihāra*) on behalf of the Order in all the four directions.
- The giving of perpetual gifts kept up in a family to virtuous recluses.
- He who with a trusting heart took the Buddha as his guide, and Truth, and the Order – this would be a better sacrifice than open largesse, better than perpetual alms, and better than the gift of a dwelling place.
- When a man with trusting heart took upon himself the precepts like abstinence from evil conduct in respect of lusts; abstinence from taking what has not been given, abstinence from lying words; abstinence from strong intoxicating drinks which was the root of carelessness – these practices would prove to be a better sacrifice than open largesse, better than perpetual alms, better than the gift of dwelling places, and better than accepting guidance. (*D.N. Kūṭadanta sutta: 182*)

This reference clearly brings out the view that the Buddha was not in favour of the brahmanical form of sacrifice and the alternatives that he gave, suggested that people should instead adopt his Buddhist ways.

The texts also mention that the *brāhmaṇas* believed in the ‘soul theory’ which claimed that the soul is perfectly happy and healthy after death. This view of the *brāhmaṇas* is illustrated in the *Poṭṭhapāda sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, where in the wandering mendicant Poṭṭhapāda discusses about the mysteries of trance and soul.

BRĀHMAṆAS AS TEACHERS OF THE VEDAS

According to the texts, the most common occupation expected out of a *brāhmaṇa* was that of teaching and priesthood. However, there are many references in the Pāli texts which refer to various other occupations besides teaching and priesthood, which were taken up by the *brāhmaṇas* during those times.

The role of *brāhmaṇas* as teachers is dealt with in the *Lohicca sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, which talks about some points regarding the ethics of teaching in the sixth century BC, around the Ganga valley. The *Piṭakas* themselves give ample proof that besides the priests (*brāhmaṇas*), there were many base-born people who succeeded in that time at least, not only in getting taught, but also became teachers, for example the Buddha, Mahāvīra and many others in the years to come. Although there were bigots among the *brāhmaṇas* and though they were strong enough to establish rules regarding the restrictions of teaching which no one in the priestly circles could venture to dispute, yet there was also always a strong party to which many of the liberal minded *brāhmaṇas* belonged. They looked with sympathy on the relaxation of these rules. According to T.W.Rhys Davids, “the general practice must have been that the hereditary priest kept the magic of the sacrifice and the emoluments and privileges that went with the knowledge of it in their own hands. Even the higher teaching of

the mysteries of theosophy was to be handed down from priest-father to son, or from priestly teacher to pupil” (D.O.B, *Dīgha Nikāya*: 286).

Though the higher teaching of the mysteries of theosophy were to be handed down from priest father to the son, or from priestly teacher to pupil, as suggested by T.W.Rhys Davids, there were many exceptions. The numerous *brāhmaṇas* who were not priests, emphasized the importance of birth rather than of knowledge. The bigot *brāhmaṇa* is represented by Lohicca in the *Lohicca sutta*. He is represented as the *brāhmaṇa* who harboured a wicked opinion that one should not preach and teach what one knows.

OTHER OCCUPATIONS AND LIFESTYLES FOLLOWED BY THE BRĀHMAṆAS

There are many references in the texts which show that the *brāhmaṇas* followed other occupations besides being teachers and priests. The texts show that many *brāhmaṇas* were closely related to the nobles, *kṣatriyas* (kings) as their advisors, messengers, friends, prime ministers or chaplains. In *Mahāvagga X 2.5* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, the *brāhmaṇa* is represented as a domestic chaplain to king Brahmadatta of Kāśi, in a story narrated by the Buddha. The king is said to have listened to the advice of the *brāhmaṇa* domestic chaplain by saying “do my friend, what the *brāhmaṇa*, my domestic chaplain, tells you.”

The son of the Saṅgika woman, who was a young *brāhmaṇa* acts as a messenger for the king’s son Bodhi, although Bodhi calls him ‘my friend’ in *Cullavagga V. 21.1* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*.

The *Mahā Parinibbāna suttānta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* refers to the *brāhmaṇa* Vassakāra who was the prime-minister of Magadha. Also in the *Mahā-Govinda suttānta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the *brāhmaṇa* is represented as the high steward of six nobles and he is said to be administering all the affairs of the six nobles.

These references contradict the views expressed by Uma Chakravarti about the occupation of the *brāhmaṇas*. She says that “the Pāli texts depict a picture of *brāhmaṇas* being entrenched in agriculture. There is no indication of their living on alms.”(Chakravarti 1986: 43)

This view given by Chakravarti, has been contradicted by the references to *brāhmaṇas* living on food provided by the faithful and the list of various occupations (besides agriculture) being followed by them in the *Brahmajāla sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. There are various examples of the practices followed by some *brāhmaṇas* as listed by the Buddha in the *Sīlakkhandavagga* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. In the *Brahmajāla sutta* the Buddha says that some recluses and *brāhmaṇas* while living on food provided by the faithful continued addiction to the injury of seedlings and growing plants whether propagated from roots or cutting of joints or budding of seeds. Some *brāhmaṇas* are said to be addicted to the use of things stored up; stores, to wit, of food, drinks, clothing, equipages, bedding, perfumes and curry-stuff. Some *brāhmaṇas*, according to the Buddha were addicted to visiting shows like the nautch dances, singing of songs, instrumental music, shows at fairs, ballad recitations, the chanting of bards, acrobatic feats by *cāṇḍālas* etc. These activities were not expected of a *brāhmaṇa*.

Some *brāhmaṇas* are said to have been addicted to games and recreations; that is to say – games on boards with eight, or with ten rows of squares, throwing dice, games with balls, turning somersaults playing with toy-carts or toy bows, mimicry of deformities etc.

Some *brāhmaṇas* are said to have been addicted to the use of high and large couches like moveable settees with high and six feet long *Āsandi* (a seat made of wood and interlaced cane or wickerwork), divans with animal figures carved on the supports, white blankets, woollen coverlets embroidered with flowers, quilts stuffed with cotton wool etc.

Some *brāhmaṇas* are said to have continued being addicted to the use of means for adorning and beautifying themselves like scrubbing in scented powder on one's body, shampooing it and bathing it. The use of mirrors, eye-ointments, garlands, rouge, cosmetics, bracelets, necklaces, walking sticks, reed cases for drugs, rapiers, sun shades, embroidered slippers, turbans, diadems etc was also popular.

Some *brāhmaṇas* are said to have involved themselves in such low conversations as: tales of kings, of robbers, of ministers of state, tales of war, of terror, of battles, talks about food and drinks, clothes, bed, garlands, perfumes, talks about relationships, equipages, tales about women; gossip at street corners; ghost stories and desultory talks.

Some *brāhmaṇas* are said to have been addicted to the use of wrangling phrases as “you do not understand this doctrine and discipline, I do.” “You have fallen into wrong views. It is

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I who am in the right.” “You are proved to be wrong.” and many other derogatory remarks which were not expected out of a *brāhmaṇa*.

Some *brāhmaṇas* are said to be addicted to take messages, go on errands and act as go betweens for kings, ministers of state, *kṣatriyas*, *brāhmaṇas* or young men.

Some *brāhmaṇas* are said to have been tricksters, droning out holy words for payment, they were diviners and exorcists ever hungering to add gain to gain.

Some *brāhmaṇas* are said to have earned their living by the wrong means of livelihood such as soothsaying to the effect, foretelling, arranging lucky day for marriages, lucky time, using charms to make people lucky, unlucky, incantations to bring about various diseases and deformities etc.

This list of occupations and practices followed by the *brāhmaṇas* as given by the Buddha in the *Brahmajāla suttānta* contains both the acceptable and the unacceptable or low occupations which they practised. Even the worst addictions and indulgences of the *brāhmaṇas* have been mentioned. The Buddha criticizes the *brāhmaṇas*, stating that though they lived on food provided by the faithful, they still continued many of these loathsome practices which they were not supposed to do. The *brāhmaṇas* were regarded as the guardians of the Vedic knowledge and the social norm did not allow them to practice other occupations besides teaching and becoming a priest. However, these examples of other crafts and occupations followed by the *brāhmaṇas* points out that the *brāhmaṇas* themselves did not follow the brahmanical norms strictly. Where as the *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs* of the *saṃgha* had given up the material world and lived only on the alms provided by the faithful. However, this view has come from the Buddhist texts so it reflects the Buddhist views towards the various practices of the *brāhmaṇas*. The practices which have been termed as loathsome and derogatory in the text might not have appeared to be so to the *brāhmaṇas* who practised them. Another reason for these practices of the *brāhmaṇas* being termed as ‘low’ or derogatory could be to portray the other practices of the *brāhmaṇas* in poor light by the writers of these Buddhist texts.

According to the texts, the *brāhmaṇas* who held religious sanctions to the conception of hierarchy and had a superior position in society, were supposed to be the possessors of knowledge and merit. None of the other *varṇas* are described in these terms except for the *brāhmaṇas* because the *brāhmaṇas* were the possessors of Vedic knowledge and were

experts at performing sacrificial rituals. However, some of them are represented as being stained by their faults. Some of these faults have been mentioned in *Cullavagga XII.1.3* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, where the Buddha talks about the four faults of the *brāhmaṇas*. They were...

1. The drinking of strong intoxicating drinks.
2. Acceptance of silver and gold.
3. Non abstinence from using material goods.
4. Gaining their livelihood by low arts.

The Buddha blamed these faults as the reasons for the repeated rebirth of the *brāhmaṇas* as they continually died.

DEVIATION FROM THE BRAHMANICAL NORMS

The texts reflect that the *brāhmaṇas* were looked upon as men possessing knowledge of the Vedas and sacrifices, and were expected to behave in a different way from other sections of the society. There were certain norms regarding their conduct, their religious leanings as well as the occupations which they were to follow. However there are numerous references in the texts which talk about the deviations of *brāhmaṇas* from the norms of the brahmanical society. Many *brāhmaṇas* are said to have taken up derogatory and low arts as their profession and their vices include pride, deceit, avarice and even crimes such as matricide and patricide, besides milder human failings such as gluttony.

The deviation of some of the *brāhmaṇas* from societal norms is depicted in many of the representations in the texts; where the *brāhmaṇas* are seen as accepting the greatness of the Buddha and getting themselves ordained into the order or just becoming lay followers of the Buddha.

In *Mahāvagga I.15* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, Jaṭila Uruvela Kassapa, the chief leader of five- hundred Jaṭilas (the ascetics wearing matted hair) accepts the greatness of the Buddha by calling him a 'great *Samaṇa*'.

One thousand Jaṭilas are said to have turned into *bhikkhus* so as to follow the Buddha in *Mahāvagga I.21* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*.

When Uruvela Kassapa was asked by the Magadha *brāhmaṇas* about the reason for his conversion and desertion of his fire sacrifice (*V. P. Mahāvagga I.22.5*), he says “I have seen the state of peace [*nirvāna*] in which the basis of existence *upādhi* (stratum of being) and the obstacle to perfection *kiṅkana* (a state of being in which lust, malice and delusion have ceased to be) have ceased, which is free from attachment to sensual existence, which cannot be led to another state; therefore I took no more delight in sacrifices and offerings.” This episode led the Magadha *brāhmaṇas* to become lay followers of the Buddha.

Sāriputta and Mogallāna, the two important disciples of the Buddha had earlier been *brāhmaṇas*. *Mahāvagga I .23...24* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* narrates the story of the ordination of two *brāhmaṇas* – Sāriputta and Mogallāna into the Buddhist order. They had earlier been the followers of Sañjaya the *Paribbājakas* (wandering religious mendicant, not necessarily Buddhist), before they became the followers of the Buddha. Along with Sāriputta and Mogallāna, two hundred and fifty *Paribbājakas* followers of Sañjaya also agreed to follow the Buddha.

Uma Chakravarti, in her book *Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism*, writes that the *brāhmaṇas* did not wander around meeting other thinkers and having discussions with them, the *brāhmaṇas* remained in their own settlements, except when they travelled in connection with their work. If the *bhikkhus* or the Buddha met some of the *brāhmaṇas*, it was because the *bhikkhus* toured from one place to another (Chakravarti 1987: 43).

However, the texts show that it was the *brāhmaṇas* who initiated the meetings with the Buddha when they got to know that the Buddha was passing through their towns or villages. There are many references in the texts which talk about *brāhmaṇas* going to meet the Buddha, listening to his discourse and becoming his followers after listening to him and understanding the Buddhist teachings about life and death.

The *Ambaṭṭha sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* narrates the story of the conversion of the *brāhmaṇa* Pokkharasādi into a devout disciple of the Buddha. According to the story, the *brāhmaṇa* Pokkharasādi of Ukkattha when hears about the Buddha and his knowledge, sends his young pupil *brāhmaṇa* Ambaṭṭha to see if the Gotama possessed all the thirty two bodily signs of a great man (the *brāhmaṇas* were experts in the theory of the signs on the body of

great men). All the *brāhmaṇas* went along with Ambaṭṭha to meet the Buddha and exchanged greetings with the Blessed One. But Ambaṭṭha shows disrespect by fidgeting and standing up. When the Buddha asks Ambaṭṭha if he would behave in the same way with any other aged teacher, Ambaṭṭha replies that he would show respect, stand if a *brāhmaṇa* is standing and sit only when the aged *brāhmaṇa* sits. However, with ‘shavelings’, ‘shamfriars’, and menial black fellows he would not show his respect. Buddhaghosa refers to the expression ‘black fellows’ as used by Ambaṭṭha to indicate the *brāhmaṇa* theory that the *sūdras* were born from Brahmā’s heels. This may have been the meaning according to T.W Rhys Davids, because though Gotama and the majority of his order were well born, still others of low caste were admitted to it, and Ambaṭṭha may be represented as giving vent to caste prejudice when he calls the brethren ‘black fellows’ (*D.N. Ambaṭṭha sutta:112*).

The Buddha calls Ambaṭṭha rude and ill-bred. Ambaṭṭha gets angry with the Buddha and calls the Buddha’s breed — the *Sākyas* – rough, touchy, rude, violent and menial. Ambaṭṭha claims that there are four grades (*varṇa*) of people – the *brāhmaṇas*, the *kṣatriyas*, the trade folk and the work people. Of these four, the nobles, the trades folk and the work people he says are attendants on the *Brāhmaṇas*. This view of Ambaṭṭha reflects their prejudiced brahmanical attitude towards other social groups. Hence Ambaṭṭha was set on humbling the *Sākyas* with his charge of servile origin.

However, the Buddha gives examples of the banishment in both the *brāhmaṇa* and *kṣatriya* communities to emphasize the higher position of the *kṣatriyas* as compared to the *brāhmaṇas*. The Buddha tells Ambaṭṭha that if a *brāhmaṇa* for some offence or other were to outlaw a *brāhmaṇa* by shaving him and pouring ashes over his head, were to banish him from the land or from the township, he would not be offered a seat or water among the *brāhmaṇas* any more. Neither would the *brāhmaṇa* be allowed to partake of the food offered to the dead, or of the food boiled in milk, or of the offering to the gods, or of food sent as a present. He would also lose his right to learn the verses and would be shut off from *brāhmaṇa* women. However, in the case of the *kṣatriyas*, the banished *kṣatriya* would still be offered water and seat among the *kṣatriyas*, he would be allowed to partake the food offered to the dead, or the food boiled in milk, or of the offering to the gods, or of food sent as a present. The *brāhmaṇas* would still teach him their verses and he would not be shut off from their women. The Buddha thus says –“so that, even when a *kṣatriya* has fallen into the deepest degradation, still it holds good that the *kṣatriyas* are higher and *brāhmaṇas* inferior” (*D.N. Ambaṭṭha sutta*

120,121). Then the *brāhmaṇa* Pokkharasādi, (Ambatṭha's teacher) also goes to visit the Buddha and after seeing the signs of a '*mahā puruṣa*' in the Buddha and after listening to his discourse, becomes the Buddha's devout disciple.

Another reference of a *brāhmaṇa* accepting the greatness of the Buddha is given in the *Mahā Parinibbāna sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. In this *sutta*, a *brāhmaṇa* accepts the greatness of the Buddha by claiming a portion of the relics of the Buddha. According to the story, when the *brāhmaṇa* of Vethadīpa hears the news that the Buddha had died at Kusinārā, he sends a messenger to the Mallas, saying –“the Exalted one was a *kṣatriya*, and I am a *brahmaṇa*, I am worthy to receive a portion of the relics of the Exalted one. Over the remains of the Exalted One will I put up a sacred cairn, and in their honour will I celebrate a feast.” (*Dīgha Nikāya Mahā Parinibbāna sutta 6.24*)

The Mallas of Kusinārā did not agree to part with the remains of the Exalted One, claiming that the Exalted One had died in their village. Then, the *brāhmaṇa* Dona says – “unseemly is it that over the division of the remains of who was the best of beings, strife should arise, and wounds, and war! Let us all, sirs, with one accord unite in friendly harmony to make eight portions.”

Thence, the *brāhmaṇa* Dona divided the remains of the Exalted One equally into eight parts with fair division. This *sutta* reveals the clever and quick wit of the *brāhmaṇa* Dona and the claim of the *brāhmaṇas* that since they were *brāhmaṇas*, they were worthy of receiving a portion of the relics of Buddha, who was earlier a *kṣatriya*. This episode also reflects the deviation of the *brāhmaṇas* from their own norms and their habit of glorifying their own social group. By asking for the remains of the Buddha, they show their acceptance of the Buddha's knowledge and their reverence for a person belonging to some other social group who was the teacher of a different sect.

According to the texts, some of the *brāhmaṇas* genuinely became *bhikkhus* or lay followers of the Buddha after being impressed by the teachings of the Buddha. However, some *brāhmaṇas* are said to have joined the order to satisfy their own needs and wants in terms of material and luxury goods. *Mahāvagga I .30* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* refers to a *brāhmaṇa* who gets ordained into the order only to satisfy his greed for good meals and a protected life. The story narrates that at Rājagaha, the *bhikkhus* received excellent meals in houses of different rich upāsakas (lay followers). One day, a certain *brāhmaṇa* gets tempted and greedy and thinks “indeed the precepts which these *Sākyaputtiya samāṇas* keep and the

life they live is commodious, they have good meals and lie down on beds protected from the wind. What if I were to embrace the religious life among the *Sākyaputtiya samanās*?" (*V.P. Mahāvagga I.30*). Then the *brāhmaṇa* goes to the *bhikkhus* and gets himself ordained, but the *brāhmaṇa* disagrees to go with the other *bhikkhus* on their round of alms. Hence, this story reflects the negative aspects of the *brāhmaṇa* as being lazy and greedy who became a *bhikkhu*, not for gaining knowledge and salvation but material goods and pleasure.

While some of the *brāhmaṇas* are shown to have renounced their position as *brāhmaṇas* and joined the *saṃgha* or become lay followers of the Buddha, the other *brāhmaṇas* who stuck to their norms, are said to have looked down upon them and criticized their act. The *Aggañña sutānta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* narrates the story of the conversion of the two *brāhmaṇas* Vāsetṭha and Bhāradvāja, and how they were reviled by other *brāhmaṇas*. Vāsetṭha and Bhāradvāja were *brāhmaṇas* by birth and had gone forth from a *brāhmaṇa* family and home into the homeless state. These two were blamed and reviled with characteristic abuse by other *brāhmaṇas*. The other *brāhmaṇas* claimed that the *brahmaṇa* class was the best by saying –“only a *brāhmaṇa* is of the best social grade: other grades are low. Only a *brāhmaṇa* is of a clear complexion, other complexions are swarthy. Only *brāhmaṇas* are of pure breed, not they that are not of *brāhmaṇas*. Only *brāhmaṇas* are genuine children of Brahmā, born of his mouth, offspring of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of the Brahmā.” Vāsetṭha and Bhāradvāja were blamed by other *brāhmaṇas* who said “as for you, you have renounced the best rank and have gone over to the low class -- to shaven recluses, to the vulgar rich, to them of swarthy skins, to the foot born descendants. Such a course is not good, such a course is not proper, even this, that you having forsaken that upper class, to wit with shaveling, friar-folks, menials, swarthy of skin, the off-scouring of our kinsman’s heels” (*D.N Aggañña sutānta:78*)

But the Buddha rejected the brahmanical claim to be the best caste. He narrated the story of the beginning of the world to show that there were no caste segregations in the beginning and all people were alike. The Buddha traced the origin of the caste system to the adoption of various different occupations by different people. He claims that righteousness is above lineage, although of those who do put their trust in lineage, the *ksatriya* is the best.

Some narrations in the texts reflect the personal bias of the authors who must have been Buddhists. The Buddhist authors of the texts must have wanted to popularise their

religion so they included stories and instances which would act as a propaganda mechanism to persuade non Buddhists to adopt Buddhism. They clearly reflect their perspectives about the *brāhmaṇas* and their lifestyle. This is clearly reflected in the *Mahā Govinda suttānta* which portrays Gods and the *brāhmaṇas* themselves acting and speaking as good Buddhists and taking Buddhist position on ethical matters. The *suttānta* narrates a story where a steward *brāhmaṇa* goes from the home and family state into the homeless state. According to T.W. Rhys Davids, this seems logically absurd because no militant *brāhmaṇa* in favour of the social advantages allowed to the *brāhmaṇas* by birth would speak or act thus.

In the story as narrated in the *suttānta*, the six nobles of the *brāhmaṇa* steward try to stop him by gaining him over through greed of money and women. When the *brāhmaṇa* tells the six nobles to seek another minister to administer their affairs because he wished to leave the world for the homeless life, the six nobles go aside together and deliberate “these *brāhmaṇa* folk are greedy for money. What if we were to gain him over through money?”(D. N. *Mahā Govinda suttānta*: 276). “These *brahmaṇa* folk are greedy about women, what if we were to gain him over through women?”(D.N. *Maha Govinda suttānta*: 276).

But, the high steward does not give in to greed and goes from the home to the homeless state along with his forty wives. The practice of polygamy among the *brāhmaṇas* is also reflected from this story.

Besides becoming followers of the Buddha and joining the *saṃgha*, the *brāhmaṇas* are also said to have invited the Buddha and his fraternity of monks for meals to their homes. Sometimes they donated food and other material goods like robes, bowls etc to the fraternity of monks.

The *Nissaggiya Pācittiya Dhamma*10 of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* talks about the generosity of the *brāhmaṇas*, who donated robes to the *bhikkhus*. In *Mahāvagga I.28* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, a kind *brāhmaṇa* of Rājagaha is said to have given a spoonful of food to Sāriputta. *Mahāvagga VI.18* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* also narrates a story wherein a certain *brāhmaṇa* invites the Buddha and his fraternity of monks to his house for a meal. The *brāhmaṇa* had received some fresh tila (sesame) seeds and fresh honey so he thought “what if I were to give these fresh tila seeds and fresh honey to the *bhikkhu saṃgha* with the Buddha at their head, so he goes to the Blessed one and says:”may the venerable Gotama grant me that the Gotama shall take his morrow’s meal at my home tomorrow with the *bhikkhu saṃgha*.”

The Blessed one gives consent and goes to the *brāhmaṇa*'s house for food. The *Brāhmaṇa* forgets to serve the tila seeds and honey to the Buddha while serving him food, hence he takes these goods to the *ārāma* of the *bhikkhus* to give it to them. This story clearly shows the fact that some of the *brāhmaṇas* who were thought to be superior than other social groups by birth, did not hold prejudiced notions about inviting the *bhikkhus* and the Buddha to their homes for food. Acceptance of meals in the *brāhmaṇa* homes by the Buddha and the *bhikkhus* also indicates the absence of inhibitions in terms of the Buddhist attitude towards the *brāhmaṇas*.

Another reference of the acceptance of food by the Buddha and the *bhikkhus* from *brāhmaṇas* comes from a story in the *Mahāvagga VI.24* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, wherein a *brāhmaṇa* is gladdened by the Buddha's remark on the benefits received by giving rice milk to the Buddha. The story involves a certain *brāhmaṇa* who waits for two months to make meals for the Buddha and his fraternity of monks. Since his turn did not come, many of his household affairs were getting ruined. Hence, he decided to look into the provision room and prepare the items, which was missing there. He finds out that there was absence of rice milk and honey lumps, therefore he prepares rice milk and honey lumps to offer the blessed one. The Buddha accepts the honey lumps and rice milk from the *brāhmaṇa* and tells him about the ten fold benefits attached to rice milk.

These references in the texts reflect the presence of the caste system during the time of the Buddha. Although we do not see strict customs of endogamy, connubium and commensality (which were the two main characteristics of the caste system of India) during those times, there was some form of gradation within the society where each social group had their specific norms and rules. However, the boundaries and norms were often broken. The *brāhmaṇas* who enjoyed higher position by birth were expected to behave in a certain manner and they also had specific occupations laid out for them for example priesthood and teachers of the Vedas. However, not all the *brāhmaṇas* are said to have stuck to the rules laid out for them and they also took up other professions which were considered as low arts for the *brāhmaṇas* to follow. Moreover, some *brāhmaṇas* also invited the Buddha and his fraternity of monks for meals to their homes and often joined the *saṃghas* or became lay followers of the Buddha. The acceptance of the greatness of the Buddha's knowledge led some of the *brāhmaṇas* to deviate from the norms of the society. They opened up their homes and their minds to adopt the Buddhist form of life. The *saṃgha* on the other hand was open to people

from all castes and creeds so there was no segregation among the different people who joined it. The brahmanical emphasis on social hierarchy based on *varṇa* divisions were countered by the Buddha with the practice of equal access to the *saṃgha* for all. When the people joined the *saṃgha*, they lost their identities in terms of caste and social groups. In *Cullavagga IV.1.4* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, the Buddha tells Ānanda that when people belonging to the four different castes entered the *saṃgha*, they lost their previous identities and became equals, just like the different rivers which became one when they entered the vast ocean: “just, o *Bhikkhu*, as the great rivers -- that is to say, the Gangā, the Yamunā, the Aciravatī, the Sarabhū and the Mahī, when they have fallen into the great ocean, renounce their names and lineage and thenceforth reckoned as the great ocean -- just so, o *bhikkhus* do these four castes -- the *ḷṣatriyas*, the *brāhmaṇas*, the *vessas* and the *suddas*- when they have gone forth from the world under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Tathāgata, renounced their names and lineage and entered into the number of *Sākyaputtiya Samaṇas*” (V.P. Cullavagga IV. 1:4)

Though the *brāhmaṇas* were accepted within the fold of Buddhism, the Buddha and his brethren are said to have harboured anti brahmanical views, about their sacrificial rituals and their practice of low arts as their profession even after accepting food provided by the faithful. The wider society is shown to have treated the *brāhmaṇas* ideally as possessors of spiritual merits for whom the norms were different from those for ordinary people. Hence, any moral lapse on the part of the *brāhmaṇas* which was not accepted out of them was severely criticized. Even amongst the *brāhmaṇas* themselves, criticism was ripe for the *brāhmaṇa* who deviated from their norms and accepted Buddhism, as in the case of Vāsetṭha and Bhāradvāja who were reviled, blamed and criticized for having renounced the best rank to go over to the so called low class shaven recluses.

The *Vinaya Piṭaka* texts and the *Dīgha Nikāya* provide numerous instances regarding the treatment of the *brāhmaṇas* during the time of the Buddha. However, the approach is different in the two texts, because the *Vinaya Piṭaka* mainly comprise of the rules and the instances which lead to the formation of those rules, whereas the *Dīgha Nikāya* is the longest discourse of the *Sutta Piṭaka* which comprises stories and narrations for the use of the wider society. Their realm and field of discussions are more varied.

In the *Vinaya Piṭaka* texts, there are fewer references to the *brāhmaṇas* accepting Buddhism because, they mostly refer to the *brāhmaṇas* donating robes and food to the

Buddhist monks and inviting the Buddha for meals for their homes. These references generally led to the laying down of rules for the objects that could be accepted by the *bhikkhus* from the other people. Since the *Vinaya* texts must have been read more by the *bhikkhus* than the common people, they usually do not act as a propagation mechanism for the Buddhist thought. On the other hand, the *Sutta piṭaka* was meant for the wider society hence, they contain extensive references to the *brāhmaṇas*, their acceptance of the greatness of the Buddha and their deviation from the brahmanical norms. The *brāhmaṇas* are also shown as going to the Buddha to listen to his discourse about various aspects of life and death. The *Dīgha Nikāya* also gives a long list of loathsome practices of the *brāhmaṇas* in the form of a critique. It contains more stories of the acceptance of the Buddhist norms by the *brāhmaṇas*. Even the anti brahmanical concepts about their religious practices and sacrifices are dealt with in more details in the *Dīgha Nikāya*. However, one should keep in mind that the views which are presented in the texts are those which come from Buddhist authors hence they suffer from the author's biases. The text could have been used as a propaganda mechanism for Buddhism.

Both the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and the *Dīgha Nikāya* try to represent the glory of the Buddha and his thought but they are aiming to target different groups of people. The *Vinaya Piṭaka* texts are supposed to be read mostly by the *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs*, whereas the *Dīgha Nikāya* is meant to be read by the wider society. They carry certain messages within their stories which would influence the common folk. Moreover, the two texts make it easier to compare the treatment of the *brāhmaṇas* within the wider society and within the *saṃgha*, so as to bring out the differences.

As is obvious, these texts are very useful to analyse the treatment of the *brāhmaṇas* as a social group during the time of the Buddha.

CHAPTER III

THE KṢĀTRIYAS: KINGS AND PATRONS

There are many references to the *kṣatriya* caste in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and the *Dīgha Nikāya* of the *Sutta Piṭaka*. These references help us in understanding the position of the *kṣatriyas* in the social order, their religious leanings, the duties attributed to them, their affiliations and their patronage of religious institutions.

Although the *Vinaya* texts differ from the *Dīgha Nikāya* in terms of their subject matter and the people who were supposed to read them, both set of texts tend to propagate the glories of the Buddha in different ways. The texts suggest that the *kṣatriyas* (the ruling class) had also been influenced by the teachings of the Buddha and they gave royal patronage to the Buddha and his *saṃgha*. The texts show that the position of the *kṣatriyas* was claimed to be superior to the position of the other classes by the Buddha himself. Through the references to the *kṣatriyas* in the texts, this chapter would analyse the treatment of the *kṣatriyas* during those times as suggested by those references. In order to understand the position of the *kṣatriyas*, it is very important to know about the political systems during those times. Therefore I have incorporated the views of different scholars regarding the polity of those times. Another aspect that this chapter would look into is the attitude of the *kṣatriyas* towards the Buddha and his fraternity of monks, and also the way in which the *kṣatriyas* were treated by the Buddha and the monks. The texts suggest a clear affinity of the Buddha towards the *kṣatriya* kings and this can be reasoned as the Buddha's loyalty towards his own clan, since he himself had been a prince before he renounced the world. The texts give many references which deal with the conversion of *kṣatriya* monarchs into devout followers of the Buddha. The Buddhist literature give many details about the grants of land, parks (*ārāmas*), robes and other necessary everyday items as food, medicines and furnishings to the Buddha and his fraternity of monks by the kings and princes. The Buddha and his fraternity of monks are also said to have been invited for meals to the homes and palaces of the *kṣatriya* monarchs. The *Vinaya Piṭaka* suggests that the Buddha often formulated rules for the *bhikkhus* according to the advice of the kings, and the *Dīgha Nikāya* suggests that the kings often went to the Buddha with queries and asked him for advice regarding various matters. These references try to show that the kings who were the power holders in the political sphere were also dependent upon the Buddha for insights regarding various matters.

SUPERIOR POSITION GIVEN TO THE KṢATRIYAS BY THE BUDDHA

The position of the *kṣatriyas* within the social order can be seen through the references in the *Vinaya Pitaka* and the *Dīgha Nikāya*. A proper understanding of the political systems of those times is very important in order to get a realistic picture of the position of the *kṣatriyas* because the *kṣatriyas* are said to be the political heads of those times. The political system was marked by the existence of two distinct forms of government: monarchical kingdoms and republican territories (*gaṇa-sanghas*). The kingdoms were ruled by monarchs who called themselves *kṣatriyas* and were propped up by standing armies and administrative bureaucracy. The *gaṇa-sangha*, meaning “group” or “community” were polities without a monarch. These polities were rather governed by a group of people referred to as ‘*kṣatriyas*’ or ‘*rājās*’ (Yamazaki Gen’chi, 2005:72). Uma Chakravarti draws attention to the fact that the territories of the *gaṇa-sangha* were actually known by the clans that occupied them. “Significantly, the use of the clan name was a prerogative only of the *kṣatriyas* and it was never used for other inhabitants of the *gaṇa-sangha*, such as the artisans and the *brāhmaṇas*. Thus Upāli the barber is not called a Sākya although he lived in Sākya territory. The geographical location of these units is itself interesting with the monarchical kingdoms occupying the Ganga-Yamuna valley and the *gaṇa-sanghas* being located closer to the foothills of the Himalayas” (Chakravarti, 1986: 7). “Of the monarchies listed among the *solasa mahājanapada*, four appear to have been more important than the others” (T.W.Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, p 1-2). These four were Magadha, Kosala, Vamsa, and Avanti. According to Uma Chakravarti, all four were in conflict with each other, and this conflict forms the main feature of the political history of the period. There was also conflict between the monarchies and *gaṇa-sanghas*. ‘The picture that emerges from the Buddhist and Jaina literature is one of expanding horizons and political consolidation, the beginnings of a process which ended with the establishment of the Mauryan empire’ (N.R.Ray, 1975: 136). Chakravarti states that this process of political consolidation and expansion led to the need for an efficient administrative system, through which political control could be effectively exercised. Furthermore, the conflict between the monarchical kingdoms and the *gaṇa-sanghas* had an additional dimension in that the *gaṇa-sanghas* were fighting with their backs

to the wall, in order to preserve their distinct political and economic structure. Buddhist and Jaina literature indicates their gradual decline in the face of the aggressively expansionist policies of the kingdoms of Kosala and Magadha. The process probably began with the acceptance of over-lordship of a monarchy by the *gaṇa-sanghas* as the first stage of its loss of independence (Chakravarti, 1986:10)

Throughout the texts we see that the Buddha allotted superior a position to the *kṣatriyas* when it came to positions of the four castes within the social order. There are many references which clearly indicate that the *kṣatriyas* have been described by the Buddha as being the best among the other castes. The references show that the *kṣatriyas* belonged to the ruling clan and they usually possessed all the necessary qualities which were required to become successful rulers. A particular instance which refers to the Buddha saying that the kings were invited to rule over the other people and that they received taxes for the protection that they offered to their subjects comes from the *Aggañña sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. The origin of the four castes of beings is illustrated in the *Aggañña sutta*, where the Buddha tells a story about the beginning of the world. The Buddha gives etymological explanations for the arising of king Mahāsammata, the *khattiyas*, the *rājās*, *brāhmaṇas*, *vessas* and *suddas*. This *sutta* suggests that righteousness is above lineage, although of those who do put their trust in lineage the *khattiya* is the best. While talking about the origin of the four castes, the Buddha says that the *khattiyas* were chosen from the most handsome, favourable, attractive and capable people, to rule over the others. The people are said to have invited them by saying: “come now, good being, be indignant at that where at one should rightly be indignant, censure that which should be censured, banish him who deserves to be banished. And we will contribute to thee, a portion of our rice.”(*D.N Aggañña sutta:88*)

The Buddha is shown as explaining to Vāsetṭha (an important priest according to the Vedic and epic tradition), that a *Mahā-Sammata* or the ‘Great Elect’ was the first standing phrase to arise. “Lord of the fields is what is meant by *khattiya*; so *khattiya* (noble) was the next expression to arise. He charms the others by the Norm (*Dhamma*) – by what ought (to charm) -- is what is meant by *Rājā*; so this was the third standing phrase to arise. Thus then, Vāsetṭha was the origin of the social circle of the nobles, according to the ancient primordial phrase”. In the same *sutta* the Buddha is also shown as explaining to Vāsetṭha that both bad and good qualities, blamed and praised respectively by the wise, are distributed among each of the four classes. The Buddha is seen as telling Vāsetṭha that “there are four classes,

Vāsetṭha, nobles, *brāhmaṇas*, trades-folk and the workpeople (*khattiya*, *brāhmaṇa*, *vessa* and *sudda*). Now here and there a noble deprives a living being of life, is a thief, is unchaste, speaker of lies, slanders, uses rough words, is a gossip, or greedy, or malevolent, or holds wrong views. Thus we see that qualities which are immoral and considered to be so, which ought not be sought after are so considered, qualities sinister and of sinister effect, discountenanced by the wise, are to be found here and there in a noble. And we may say as much concerning *brāhmaṇas*, trades-folk and workpeople.”(D.N, *Aggaññasutta*:83). In the same *sutta*, the Buddha also talks about the good qualities and deeds which were well distributed among all the four castes. He says: “again, here and there a noble abstains from murder, theft, in chastity, lying, slandering, gossiping, greed, malevolence and false opinions. Thus we see that qualities which are, and are considered moral, inoffensive, unexceptional, truly Ariyan, benign and of benign effect, commended by the wise, are to be found here and there in a noble. And we may say as much concerning each of the others- Brahmins, trades-folk and workpeople” (D.N, *Aggaññasutta*:83)

The references suggest that the kings and monarchs who belonged to the *kṣatriya* caste were supposed to perform the Ariyan duty of a wheel-turning monarch. In the *Cakkavattisihanāda sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the Buddha narrates a story about the righteous monarch. The righteous king of the story is said to be king ‘Strong Tyre’, who ruled in righteousness and was the lord of the four quarters of the earth, the conqueror, the protector of his people and the possessor of the seven precious things — his were the seven treasures — the wheel, the elephant, the horse, the gem, the woman, the house-father, and the councillor. When the time came for him to die, he established his eldest son on the throne and told him about the Ariyan duty of a wheel turning monarch. According to the law of truth and righteousness, a monarch had to perform the Ariyan duty by becoming a Norm (*dhamma*)-banner, a Norm (*dhamma*)-signal, should have the Norm (*dhamma*) as his master, should provide the right watch, word, and protection for his own folks, for the army, for the nobles, for vassals, for *brāhmaṇas*, and householders (*gahapatis*), for town and country dwellers, for the religious world, and for beasts and birds. The monarch should not let any wrong doing prevail throughout the kingdom. He should give wealth to the poor, and whenever anyone came to the king with their problems, he was supposed to hear what they had to say and deter them from evil and bid them to take up what is good.

In the *Ambaṭṭha sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* the young Brahmin visits the Buddha to see if he carries the thirty two marks of a great man (*mahā-puruṣa*) and gets involved in a discussion about castes. In the discussion, the Buddha is seen asserting that the *ḷṣatriya* Sākyas were superior to the *brāhmaṇas*. The Buddha says: “whether one compares women with women or men with men, the *ḷṣatriyas* are higher and *brāhmaṇas* inferior.” The Buddha then goes on to sing the stanza which was sung by the Brahma God Sanam. The words of the song as given in the *sutta* are: “the *ḷṣatriya* is the best of those among his folk who put their trust in lineage. But he who is perfect in wisdom and righteousness, he is the best among Gods and men.” (*D.N. Ambaṭṭha sutta:122*)

We can find the Buddha’s comparison of the careers of a *rājā* and a recluse who has renounced the world in the *Lakkhana Suttānta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. In this *sutta*, the Buddha talks about the thirty two marks of the superman (*maha -puruṣa*) and says that there were two careers which lay open for a superman who possessed all the thirty two marks. The Buddha says: “if he lives the life of the house, he becomes Monarch, turner of the wheel, a righteous lord of the Right, ruler of the four quarters, conqueror, guardian of the people’s good, owner of the seven treasures. His do these seven treasures become, to wit, the wheel treasure, the elephant treasure, the horse treasure, the gem treasure, the woman treasure, the housefather treasure, and the adviser treasure making the seventh. But if he goes from the life of a householder into the homeless state, he becomes an *Arahant*, a Buddha supreme, rolling back the veil from the world.” (*D.N Lakkhana Suttanta:137*). The Buddha further explains that as a monarch he would have a great retinue, he would be surrounded by *brāhmaṇas*, householders, townsmen, country-folk, treasury officials, body guards, ministers, courtiers, tributary kings, feudatories, and youths of high degree. And if he leaves the home for the homeless state he becomes the Buddha and he too has a great retinue; many would surround him such as *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunis*, lay brethren and lay sisters, *devas* and men, *Asuras*, *Nāgas* and *Gandharvas*. As a monarch one would have great wisdom, there would neither be anyone equal to him nor be anyone superior to him among those who have worldly wealth. On the other hand, as a Buddha he too would have great wisdom in many fields and the wisdom of a glad heart, the wisdom of swift thought, the wisdom of discrimination and the wisdom of revulsion. There would be none equal to him or superior to him in wisdom among all beings .The *Lakkhana sutta*, thus provides the Buddhist views in terms of comparative analysis of the careers of a monarch and that of the Buddha.

The texts reflect that the *bhikkhus* were told to respect and honour the king. In the *Pācittiya Dhamma* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, it is a given rule that: “whatsoever *Bhikkhu* shall cross the threshold of an anointed *khattiya* king, when the king has not gone forth, and the queen has not withdrawn, without first having had himself announced - that is a *Pācittiya* (offence requiring expiation).

All over the texts, the stories of *ṣatriya* kings are seen to be used very commonly by the Blessed One to set examples for the *bhikkhus* as well as the other classes of people. In the *Mahāvagga X.2* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, the Buddha narrates the story of king Brahmadatta of Kāśī and king Dīghīti of Kosala to set an example for the *bhikkhus*. The Buddha says:” now, O *bhikkhus*, if such is the fore-bearance and mildness of kings who wield the sceptre and bear the sword, so much more, O *bhikkhus*, must you so let your light shine before the word that you, having embraced the religious life according to so well taught a doctrine and a discipline, are seen to be forbearing and mild.”(*Mahāvagga X.2.20*).

The Buddha is also said to have used the story of the great king Mahā-Suddassana in the *Mahā Parinibbāna suttānta*, so as to justify his death at Kusinārā. The story states that at the time of the Buddha’s approaching death, they were based at Kusinārā. Ānanda did not want the Exalted One to die at Kusinārā, so he said: “let not the Exalted One die in this little wattle and daub town, in this township in the midst of the jungle, in this branch township. For lord, there are other great cities, such as Champā, Rājagaha, Sāvathī, Sāketa, Kosambi, and Benaras. Let the Exalted One die in one of them. There are many wealthy nobles and Brahmins and heads of houses (*gahapatis*), believers in the Tathāgata, who will pay due honour to the remains of the Tathāgata” (D.N. *Mahā Parinibbāna suttānta:161*). At this suggestion by Ānanda, the Buddha tells him a story of king Sudassana, who had inhabited Kusinārā when it was a great city. The Buddha tells Ānanda that a long time ago, there was a king named Mahā-Suddassana, a king of kings and a righteous ruler who was the lord of the four quarters of the earth, the conqueror, and the protector of his people. The king is said to have possessed the seven royal treasures. The city Kusinārā was the royal city of king Mahā - Sudassana under the name of Kusāvati, and on the east and on the west it was twelve leagues in length, and on the north and on the south it was seven leagues in breadth. By narrating the story about the greatness of the king Sudassana and the great city that he ruled, the Buddha justifies his death in the city of Kusinārā which was a small and insignificant city now but was glorious and great during the rule of king Sudassana.

The Buddha is also seen claiming to be a king in his previous birth. He tries to prove that the greatness of a king is due to his generosity (*dāna*), self-conquest (*dama*), and self-control (*samyama*). This story is found in the *Mahā sudassana sutta* which seems to be aimed towards the laity since it tells the story of the king's greatness which came about through his personal attributes such as generosity, self-conquest and self-control. In the story, the great king dies and comes to life again in the happy world of Brahmā. At the end of the story the Buddha admits that it was he, who was king Sudassana in his previous birth. "Now it may be, Ānanda that you may think — the great king of glory of that time was another person, but Ānanda, you should not view the matter thus. I at that time was the great king of glory" (D.N. *Mahā sudassana sutta*:229). This story in the *sutta* highlights the essential qualities that a *kṣatriya rājā* should possess so as to become a great king. The fact that the Buddha claims to be the king in his previous birth reflects the Buddha's attitude towards the *kṣatriyas*, it shows that he took pride in claiming to be a *kṣatriya* and allotted superior position to the *kṣatriyas* in comparison with the other castes. No where else in the texts do we find the Buddha claiming to belong to the *brāhmaṇa*, *śūdras* or the *vaiśya* caste.

However when it came to matters concerning religious rituals and sacrifices the *kṣatriyas* are said to have depended on the *brāhmaṇa*'s advice. This view is suggested by references in the texts. In the *Kūṭadanta sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the Buddha talks about the greatness of king Mahāvijita and the kind of sacrifice he had to perform. The story is about a king named Mahāvijita, who was mighty with great wealth and large property; with stores of silver and gold, of aids to enjoyment, of goods and corn with his treasure houses and his gardens full. In the guise of the legend about the king, the Buddha is seen as propagating the Buddhist form of sacrifice; which did not involve any animal sacrifice or harm to any vegetable. The Buddhist form of sacrifice consisted only of largesse of food offered on behalf of the king and his subject.

Some of the references suggest that although the Buddha allotted the superior position to the *kṣatriyas* in the social order, he treated the people of all the castes alike. He accepted people from all the castes into his *saṃgha* and also dined with them when he was invited for meals to their homes. The Buddha is said to have been very fair even to the courtesan Ambapālī. He did not show special favour to the Licchavis when they asked him to have his meal at their palace rather than at Ambapālī's house. This story is found in the second chapter of the *Mahā Parinibbāna suttānta*. In the story, the Licchavis of Vesālī get to know that the Exalted One

had arrived at Vesāli and was staying at Ambapālī's grove. When they hear that Ambapālī had invited the Exalted One for a meal to her house they ask Ambapālī to give up the meal invitation to them for a hundred thousand. But, Ambapālī refuses to accept their offer so the Licchavis cast up their hands, exclaiming: "we are outdone by this mango girl! We are outreached by this mango girl!" (*D.N. Mahā Parinibbāna suttānta: 104*) The Licchavis then go to the place where the Exalted One was and listen to his discourse. Then the Licchavis ask the Exalted One to honour them by taking his meal together with the brethren at their palace but the Exalted One declines the invitation because he had already promised to dine with Ambapālī — the courtesan.

RELIGIOUS PATRONAGE GIVEN BY THE KṢATRIYA MONARCHS

The texts have many references to *kṣatriya* monarchs and chieftains granting land, *ārāmas* or parks, robes, other necessary items and privileges to the Buddha and his fraternity of monks. These references show that the Buddha and the *saṃgha* received royal patronage from the kings who were gladdened by the teachings of the Buddha.

In the *Brahma-Jāla sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the blessed one is said to have put up at the royal rest-house in the Ambalatthikā pleasance to pass the night.

In the *Cullavagga V.21.1*, there is a story which talks about the king's son – Bodhi's mansion called Kokananda. This mansion had just been finished and had not as yet been used by any human being, and Bodhi invited the Blessed One to take his meal with him at his new built mansion. This reference shows that the *kṣatriya* monarch wanted the Buddha to do the honour of using the newly built mansion. His presence would bring honour to the king and his son. This reference also shows how much the king and his son respected the Buddha. Another similar reference is found in the *Sāṅgīti suttānta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. The narration in the sutta states that a new mote –hall of the Pāvā Mallas named as Ubbhataka had just been built, and had not been occupied by any human being. When the Pāvā Mallas heard that the Exalted One on his tour had arrived with his following at Pāvā, they went to visit him and invited him to be the first one to make use of the mote –hall since that would bring lasting goodness and happiness to the Pāvā Mallas.

The gifting of land by the *kṣatriya* monarch seems to be a common feature during. There are many references to land being gifted by kings to different people. Land was not only gifted to the Buddha and his *saṃgha*, but also to other people such as the *brāhmaṇas*, chieftains, *vessas* (*vaiśyas*) and others. In the *Lohicca sutta*, the *brāhmaṇa* Lohicca is said to be established at Sālavātīkā, a spot teeming with life, with much grassland, wood land and corn, on a royal domain granted to him by king Pasenadi of Kosala, as a royal gift, along with power over it as if he were the king.

Cullavagga V.5.1 narrates a story about the grant of mangoes to the *bhikkhus* by king Bimbisāra. At that time the mangoes were ripe in the park of Seniya Bimbisāra, the king of Magadha and he gave command saying “let the venerable ones have as much fruit as they like”, then the Chabbaggiya *bhikkhus* plucked even the young fruits and ate them all. There was no mango left for the king to eat, but the king said: “The mangoes have been well used, my good men, by the venerable ones. Notwithstanding it in moderation that has been exalted by the Blessed One.” We can see a slight difference in the nature of land grant given to the *bhikkhus* in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and the land grant given to the *brāhmaṇas* by the *kṣatriya* kings in the *Dīgha Nikāya*. The *bhikkhus* were only given right to use the land and sometimes to consume the fruit derived from the land, but the *brāhmaṇas* received all the other rights over them which the king usually possessed.

Besides the grant of land by *kṣatriyas* to the Buddha and his fraternity of monks, they were also given gifts in the form of robes, food, alms, right to use parks or *ārāmas* as their resting place, and the consumption of fruits from those parks for their consumption.

Mahāvagga VIII.2 of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* has a story which states that the king of Kāśī sent woollen garments made half out of Benaras cloth to Jīvaka Komarabhacca. But, Jīvaka Komarabhacca took that woollen garment and went to the place where the Blessed One was and offered it to him by saying:” may the Blessed One, lord, accept this woollen garment, which may be to me, a long time for a good and a blessing.” This reference suggests that sometimes offerings were made to the Buddha by the people in the same way like the offerings made to the *brāhmaṇas*.

In the *Nissaggiya Pācittiyā Dhamma* of the *Pātimokkha* in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, a rule states that: in case a *Rājā*, or a *khattiya*, or a *brāhmaṇa*, or a *gahapati* should send by messenger for a particular *bhikkhu*, the value in barter of a set of robes, saying: “get a set of robes in

exchange for this robe-fund, and provide a dress for such and such a *bhikkhu!*” the *bhikkhu* when he receives the message should say: “we do not, my friend, accept the value in barter for a set of robes, but we may accept a set of robes, at the right time, and of the suitable kind”(Nissaggiya Pācittiyā Dhamma.10). This reference shows that although the *bhikkhus* were not permitted to receive a robe fund they were allowed to receive robes from kings.

The fact that the Blessed One and the *bhikkhus* received royal patronage from kings is suggested by a particular reference found in the *Mahāvagga I.39.I*. In this *vagga*, the story narrates that the people who were affected with the five diseases approached Jīvaka Komarabhacca for a cure. But when they asked Jīvaka to cure them, he says:” I have too many duties, sirs, and am too occupied. I have to treat the Magadha king Seniya Bimbisāra, and the royal seraglio, and the fraternity of *bhikkhus* with the Buddha at their head. I cannot cure you.”(V.P. *Mahāvagga I.39.I*). This incident suggests that the *bhikkhus* and the Buddha received aid in terms of medical treatment from the royal household and were given the first preference after the king and his royal seraglio when it came to treatment and cure from diseases.

In *Mahāvagga I.22.11* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, the Magadhan king Seniya Bimbisāra, a *ksatriya* king invites the Blessed one along with his fraternity of monks to take his meal with him. The Blessed one goes to the king’s palace for his meal and king Bimbisāra, with his own hands serves and offers excellent food, both hard and soft, to the fraternity of *bhikkhus* with the Buddha at its head. Seniya Bimbisāra then dedicates Veluvana (his pleasure garden) to the Blessed one to live in. The king chooses this park as the perfect gift for the Buddha because it would not be too far from the town and not too near, suitable for going and coming, easily accessible for all people who wanted (to see the Buddha), by day, not too crowded, at night not too exposed to much noise and alarm, clean of the smell of people, hidden from men and well fitted for a retired life.

Both the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and the *Dīgha Nikāya* try to portray a picture wherein the *ḷḷatriya* monarchs are influenced by the teachings of the Buddha and become his followers or lay disciples. There are numerous references which reflect this view. Some of them are as follows:

In the *Mahā Parinibbāna sutta* the king's belief in what the Buddha says is clearly understood when he says: "for the Buddha speak nothing untrue!" (*D.N Mahā Parinibbāna sutta: 79*)

In the *Mahā Govinda Suttānta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the High Steward is said to have gone from the home to the homeless state. He let his hair and beard be cut off and donned the yellow robes. He having so acted, the seven kings also anointed *ḷḷatriyas* as well as the seven eminent and wealthy *brāhmāṇas* and the seven hundred graduates, the forty wives all on an equality, several thousand nobles, several thousand *brāhmaṇas*, several thousand commoners and several young women from the women's quarters let their hair be cut, donned the yellow robes and went forth from their homes to the homeless state.

Cullavagga VII.1.1 has the story of the conversion of Bhaddiya the Sākyā *rājā*, Anuruddha, Ānanda, Bhagu and Kimbila, Devadatta and Upāli into the Buddha's disciples. It is mentioned that at that time, the most distinguished of the young men of the Sākyā clan had renounced the world in imitation of the Blessed One. The story involves two Sākyā brothers — Mahānāma and Anuruddha. Among the two, Anuruddha was delicately nurtured. Mahānāma thought that since most distinguished young men of the Sākyā clan had already renounced the world in imitation of the Blessed One, and from his own family no one had gone forth from the household life into the houseless state, he asked Anuruddha to renounce the world. He explained to Anuruddha about the futility of their labour in the present state. Anuruddha thus agreed with his brother and went to his mother to ask for permission to go forth from the household state into the homeless state. His mother refuses to give permission. At that time Bhaddiya the Sākyā *rājā* held rule over the Sākyas; and he was a friend of Anuruddha. Thinking that Bhaddiya being Anuruddha's friend as well as the *rājā* of the Sākyas, he would not be able to renounce the world, Anuruddha's mother said to him: "if beloved Anuruddha, Bhaddiya the Sākyā *rājā* will renounce the world, thou, also mayest go forth into the houseless state." Then Anuruddha went to Bhaddiya and said: "my renunciation

of the world, dear friend is being obstructed by thou.” “Then let that obstruction, dear friend, be removed. Even with thee I renounce thou the world according to thy wish” says the rājā. So Bhaddiya the Sākya rājā, Anuruddha, Ānanda, Bhagu, Kimbala and Devadatta just as they had so often previously gone out to the pleasure ground with fourfold array — even so did they go out to renounce the world. Upāli the barber also went along with them, making seven in all.

The texts refer to the Magadha king Seniya Bimbisāra and Ajātsattu as being followers of the blessed one. These monarchs are said to have invited the Blessed one and his fraternity of monks for meals to their homes. At times the king is also said to have made rules to protect the *bhikkhus* and asked the common people to welcome the Blessed one to their homes for meals and alms.

Mahāvagga I.42 of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, mentions that at that time the Magadha king Seniya Bimbisāra had issued a decree saying: “no one is to do any harm to those who are ordained among the *Sākyaputtiya Samaṇas*; well taught is their doctrine; let them lead a holy life for the sake of the complete extinction of suffering.”

The *Vinaya* texts often show that the Buddha agreed to what the king suggested, and in turn the Buddha and his Saṃgha received religious patronage from the kings and also protection from harm by other elements. At times, the Buddha is also said to have formulated rules for the *bhikkhus* according to the advice of the *ksatriya* kings. References to the formation of rules by the Buddha where he follows the advice of the king is found in the *Mahāvagga*. *Mahāvagga I.40* has a story where the border province of the Magadha king Seniya Bimbisāra was agitated. The king gave order to the officers who were at the head of the army to go and search through the border province. Many distinguished warriors thought that they were fighting wars, doing evil and producing great demerit; thus, they wanted to desist from evil-doing. These warriors thought that the *Sākyaputtiya Samaṇas*, in contrast to them led a virtuous, tranquil and holy life, they spoke the truth, kept the precepts of morality and were endowed with all virtues. Hence, they wanted to obtain the *Pabbajjā* (to leave the world and adopt the ascetic life of the *bhikkhus* or the ceremony of admission to the Buddha’s order) with the *Sākyaputtiya Samaṇas*, so as to desist from evil-doing. The warriors then went to the *bhikkhus* and asked them for the *Pabbajjā* ordination and the *bhikkhus* conferred on them the

Pabbajjā ordination. When the king got to know about this, he went to the place where the Blessed One was and said: “lord, there are unbelieving kings who are disinclined (to the faith); these might harass the *bhikkhus* even on trifling occasion. Pray, lord, let their reverences not confer the *Pabbajjā* ordination on persons in the royal service. Then the Blessed one instructed the *bhikkhus* that no one who is in the royal service, should receive the *Pabbajjā* ordination. He who conferred the *Pabbajjā* on such a person would be guilty of a *dukkata* offence.

The *Mahāvagga II* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* mentions that the *Paribbājakas* (wandering religious mendicant, not necessarily Buddhist) who belonged to the Tatthiya School assembled on the fourteenth, fifteenth and eighth day of each half month to recite their *Dhamma*. The people went to them in order to listen to the *Dhamma*. They were filled with favour and faith in the *Paribbājakas* and the *Paribbājakas* gained adherents. The Magadha king Seniya Bimbisāra, who is said to have observed all this then went to the Blessed one and suggested “what if the reverend ones were to assemble also on the fourteenth, fifteenth, and eighth day of each half month? Well, Lord, let the reverend ones assemble also on the fourteenth, fifteenth and each day of each half month.” In consequence of that, the blessed one, after having delivered a religious discourse, thus addressed the *bhikkhus* by saying: “I prescribe, O *bhikkhus*, that you assemble on the fourteenth, fifteenth, and eighth day of each half month.”(*V.P Mahāvagga II.1*)

In *Mahāvagga III 4.3*, the Magadha king Seniya Bimbisāra, who wished that the *Vassā* period be postponed, sent a messenger to the *bhikkhus* by saying: “what if their reverences were to enter upon *Vassā* on the next full moon day?” They told this thing to the Blessed one, and the Blessed one said “I prescribe, O *bhikkhus*, that they obey the king.”

The texts mention that many wealthy and powerful *kṣatriya* kings had become devout followers of the Buddha. In *Mahāvagga V* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, the king of Magadha, Seniya Bimbisāra, who held rule and sovereignty over eighty thousand townships is said to have instructed his eighty thousand overseers to go and wait upon the Blessed One. He tells them: “ye have now received from me instruction in the things of this world. Go now, and wait upon the Blessed one. The Blessed One himself shall instruct you in the things of eternity.”(*Mahāvagga V.I.1*)

At some places in the texts, it is observed that the *kṣatriyas* who followed the Buddha influenced others to adopt the Buddha's *dhamma*. *Mahāvagga VI. 31*, of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* narrates an incident that at that time, many distinguished Licchavis were sitting together assembled in the town-hall and spoke in many ways in praise of the Buddha, of the *dhamma*, and of the *saṃgha*. At that time, Sīla, the general in-chief of the Licchavis, who was a disciple of the Nigaṇṭha (Jain) sect, was sitting in that assembly. On seeing the devotion of the Licchavis, Sīla thought: "truly he, the Blessed One, must be the Arahāt Buddha, since these many distinguished Licchavis, who are sitting here together assembled in the town-hall, speak in so many ways in praise of the Buddha, of the *Dhamma*, and of the *saṃgha* what if I were to go and visit him, the Arahāt Buddha?" Thus the *kṣatriya* kings who were followers of the Buddha influenced others and acted as propagators of the Buddha and his teachings.

The texts, at certain places suggest that the *kṣatriya* kings not only influenced their subjects to follow the Buddha but sometimes also forced them to welcome the Blessed One against their wishes. *Mahāvagga VI.36*, of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* narrates a story, where the Mallas of Kusinārā had established a compact to the effect that whoever went not forth to welcome the Blessed One should pay a fine of five hundred. And Roja, the Malla, having gone forth to welcome the Blessed One, went on to the place where the venerable Ānanda was. Ānanda thought it to be most excellent that Roja had come forth to welcome the Blessed One. When Ānanda tells Roja how nice it was of him to come to welcome the Blessed One, he answers by saying that: "it is not I, O Ānanda, who am much moved by the Buddha or the *Dhamma*, or the *saṃgha*. But by the clansmen a compact was made to the effect that whosoever went not forth to welcome the Blessed One should pay a fine of five hundred, so that it was through fear of being fined by my clansmen that even I went forth to welcome the Blessed One."

A particular reference in the *Pātika sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* suggests that a certain *kṣatriya* from the Licchavi clan named Sunakkhava gave up his belief in the Exalted One due to the reason that the Exalted One did not work mystic wonders and did not reveal the beginning of things. This kind of reference shows that not all *kṣatriyas* were deeply moved by the Buddha and his *Dhamma*. As insignificant a matter like working mystic wonders could shake their faith in the Buddha. Working mystic wonders must have been an important aspect of other faiths and teachings of other religious teachers, but it was insignificant for the Buddha and his teachings.

In the *Jana-Vasabha suttānta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, Ānanda is said to have claimed that the dead king of Magadha –Seniya Bimbisāra had been a follower of the Buddha. Ānanda says: “then too there was Seniya Bimbisāra, king of Magadha, righteous and ruling righteously, benign to priests and laymen, to towns-folk and country-folk. His fame is men verily spreading abroad saying ‘dead is our righteous king of righteous rule who made us so happy!’ now he too had entire faith in the Buddha, the law and the order, and fulfilled the moral precepts. And people verily have also said, Seniya Bimbisāra, king of Magadha, who up to the day of his death was given to praises of the Exalted One, is dead.”(*D.N Jana-Vasabha sutta: 238*)

In the *Ātānātiya suttānta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, king Vessavana is shown reciting the ward-rune of Atanata which glorifies the Exalted One. He recites: “the conqueror do ye worship Gotama? Therefore do we on this utterance make: the conqueror we do worship, Gotama; in wisdom’s lore and conduct thoroughly versed; the Buddha do we worship, Gotama!”(*D.N, Ātānātiya sutta:191*).

When certain *ksatriyas* joined the *saṃgha*, they received patronage from their own clan. In the *Mahāvagga VI.19.1*, it is mentioned that a family who were devoted to the venerable Upananda of the Sākya clan sent hard food for the *saṃgha*, by saying: “this is to be given to the *saṃgha* with special reference to the venerable Upananda.”(*V.P Mahāvagga VI.19.1*).

The *Mahāpadāna sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* traces the lives of the seven Buddhas, i.e- Gotama and his six predecessors as a preliminary to laying down the general conditions necessary for the arising of a Buddha. This *sutta* shows that among the six predecessors of the Buddha, five belonged to the *kṣatriya* clan. These five were- Vipassi, Sikhi, Vessabhu, Konagamana and Kassapa. The only predecessor of the Buddha who did not belong to the *kṣatriya* clan was Kakusandha, the son of a *brāhmaṇa*.

The faith and dependence of the *kṣatriya* monarch on the Blessed One can be seen in the textual references which suggest that the kings consulted with the Buddha and asked for his advice regarding various matters. In the first chapter of the *Mahā-Parinibbāna sutta*, it is mentioned that Ajātasattu, the son of the king of Magadha had already made up his mind to attack the Vajjians. He sent his chaplain to the Buddha for predictions because he believed that “the Buddha speaks nothing untrue!” The Buddha advised Ajātasattu not to attack the Vajjians because they could never be vanquished. The Buddha sends his advice to king

Ajātasattu through the Brahmin chaplain by saying: “when I was once staying, O *brāhmaṇa*, at Vesālī at the Sarandada shrine, I taught the Vajjians these conditions of warfare; and so long as these conditions shall continue to exist among the Vajjians, so long as the Vajjians shall be well instructed in those conditions, so long may we expect them not to decline, but to prosper” (D.N, *Mahā Parinibbāna sutta*:80).

Both sets of texts and the *Dīgha Nikāya* in particular tries to show that the Buddha and the *bhikkhus* were honoured and respected by the *kṣatriya* kings. The reference which suggests this kind of attitude of the *kṣatriya* monarchs towards the *bhikkhus* is found in the *Sāmañña-phala sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. This sutta states that king Ajātasattu of Magadha goes to visit the Buddha after failing to get answers to his questions from other religious leaders. King Ajātasattu asks the Buddha whether members of the *saṃgha* who have given up the world gained any benefit from their action. The Buddha answers in the form of a counter question to the king by saying: “the very man whom, under ordinary circumstances you would treat as slave or servant — what treatment would you mete out to him after he had joined an order?” the king answers that he would treat him as a person worthy of honour and respect. It is seen that the Buddha as well as the king took for granted that anyone who had devoted himself to the religious life, whatever the views or opinions he held, or the associations he had joined, would in accordance with the remarkable tolerance of the age and country, be treated with equal respect and courtesy. When the Blessed One had spoken about the benefits of the life of a recluse, king Ajātasattu says to the Blessed One: “most excellent, lord, most excellent! Just as if a man were to set up that which has been thrown away, or were to point out the right road to him who has gone astray, or were to bring a lamp into the darkness so that those who have eyes could see external forms, just even so lord, has the truth been made known to me, in many a figure, by the Blessed One. And now I betake myself, lord, to the Blessed One as my refuge, to the truth and to the order. May the Blessed One accept me as a disciple, as one who, from this day forth, as long as life endures, has taken his refuge in thee”(D.N *Sāmañña-phala sutta*:94)

Honour and respect to the Buddha from the *kṣatriyas* as well as *brāhmaṇas* is reflected from references like the one in chapter six of the *Mahā-Parinibbāna sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. The story in the *sutta* states that after the death of the Exalted One, Ānanda goes to

inform the Mallas of Kusinārā about it. When the Mallas hear about the Buddha's death, they become deeply grieved, saddened and afflicted at heart. The Mallas give orders to their attendants to gather together perfumes, garlands and all the music in Kusinārā. Then they proceed towards the Sāla grove, where the body of the Exalted One lay. Then on the seventh day after the death of the Buddha, the eight chieftains of the Mallas bathe their heads, and clad themselves in new garments with the intention of bearing the body of the Exalted One. The Mallas then wrap the body of the Exalted One in a new cloth and then in carded cotton wool and so on till they had wrapped the body in five hundred layers. Then they place the body in an oil vessel and cover it with another oil vessel. And then they build a funeral pyre of all kinds of perfumes and upon it they place the body of the Exalted One.

When Ajātasattu, the king of Magadha, son of the queen of the Videha clan, hears the news of the Buddha's death at Kusinārā, he sends a message to the Mallas saying:” the Exalted One was a *kṣatriya* and so am I. I am worthy to receive a portion of the relics of the Exalted One. Over the remains of the Exalted One will I put up a sacred cairn and in their honour will I celebrate a feast!”

When the Licchavis of Vesālī, hear that the Exalted One had died at Kusinārā, they too send the same message to the Mallas of Kusinārā as king Ajātasattu of Magadha had sent.

When the Sākyas of Kapila-vatthu get the news of the Buddha's death, they send a message to the Mallas of Kusinārā, saying:” the Exalted One was the pride of our race. We are worthy to receive a portion of the relics of the Exalted One. Over the remains of the Exalted One will we put up a sacred cairn and in their honour will we celebrate a feast!

The Bulis of Allakappa, the Koliyas of Rāmagāmma and the Mallas of Pāvā, send the same message to the Mallas of Kusinārā, as king Ajātsattu of Magadha had sent when he heard that the Exalted One had died at Kusinārā.

Along with the other *kṣatriyas*, the *brāhmaṇa* of Vethadīpaka also sends a message to the Mallas of Kusinārā saying: “the Exalted One was a *kṣatriya* and I am a *brāhmaṇa*. I am worthy to receive a portion of the remains of the Exalted One. Over the remains of the Exalted One will I put up a sacred cairn and in their honour will I celebrate a feast.

Thus the relics of the Buddha was divided into eight parts and the major portion of it went to the different *kṣatriya* clans.

The references to *kṣatriyas* in the texts suggest that *kṣatriyas* have been given superior position within the social order as the political heads or ruling class people of those times. The political system of those times being marked by the existence of the monarchical kingdoms and *gaṇa-sanghas*, had many *kṣatriya* ruling powers e.g. the Licchavis, Mallas, Sākyas and others from the *gaṇa-sanghas* and Kings of monarchies like Ajātasattu, Bimbisāra, Pasenadi and others. Certain references in the texts suggest that some *kṣatriyas* were deeply moved by the teachings of the Buddha and they gave royal patronage to the Buddha and his *saṃgha*. The texts suggest a clear affinity of the Buddha towards the *kṣatriya* kings and this could be due to the Buddha's loyalty towards his own clan or could also have been because of the rich royal patronage that the *saṃgha* received from royal households. Another reason for cordial relations between the Buddha and the *kṣatriya* kings could have been the security and protection of the *saṃgha* from attacks by other groups. There are references which point to grants of land, parks, robes and other necessary items to the Buddha and his monks by kings and princes. The Buddha and his monks are also said to have been invited for meals to royal palaces. Some references also show the conversion of certain *kṣatriyas* into devout followers of the Buddha and entering the homeless state, whereas others just became lay followers of the Buddha. Some of the references in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* indicate that the Buddha, at times, formulated rules for the *bhikkhus* according to the advice of important kings. We also find references of kings going to the Buddha for advice regarding various matters in the *Dīgha Nikāya*. Between the two sets of texts i.e – the *Vinaya* and the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the latter seems to be giving more references to kings who listened to the advices and adopted the teachings of the Buddha. Hence, the real motive of these references become apparent.

The references in the texts thus help us in understanding the concept of *varṇa* divisions and the '*kṣatriyas*' as a caste group in the social order during those times.

CHAPTER IV

THE OTHER SOCIAL AND OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS

If the other social groups mentioned in the *Dīgha Nikāya* and the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, are to be categorised according to the brahmanical *varṇa* system, they can be grouped into *vaiśyas* and *śūdras*. Although there are very few references of people being specifically categorised as *vaiśyas* and *śūdras*, we find a number of references which talk about various occupational groups like the *setṭhis*, *gahapatis*(householders), smiths, barbers, slaves and other groups practicing the so called ‘low arts’. In these Buddhist texts it is noticed that the concept of high/*ucca* birth and low/*nīca/hīna* birth features more often than the concept of the four *varṇas*. A person’s lineage on the father’s side or the mother’s side decided his or her birth status as *ucca*/higher and *hīna*/low/inferior. Even the occupations followed by people in those times seem to have been divided into *ucca*/high crafts and low crafts. Occupations like agriculture, cattle-rearing, trading have been rated as ‘high’ and other occupations where people worked for others or produced and created for other have been rated as ‘low’ e.g barbers, smiths, snake charmers, astrologers, cooks, attendants, basket-makers, potters, weavers etc.

Yamazaki Gen’ichi in his book *The Structure of Ancient Indian Society: Theory and Reality of the Varṇa System*, states that the *vaiśya* was the third ranked *varṇa* in ancient India, whose obligations involved the occupations of cultivator, herder and merchant. He says that with the formation of *varṇa* society, *vaiśya* came to mean the commoner, freeman class, whose duty it was to support the two ruling class, whose duty it was to support the two ruling *varṇas* (*brāhmaṇas* and *kṣatriyas*) through their economic activities.(Gen’ichi 2005: 129) Regarding the *śūdras*, he states that much of the research done on them refers to the name of a tribe living in north-western India at the time when the Aryans of Vedic persuasion entered the region (Gen’ichi 2005:166).

The references in both set of texts bring out the features of the society in which the Buddha lived. The picture of society at the time of the Buddha’s lifetime has been reflected as being divided into various caste groups and the economy being rapidly developed into a money economy with the use of metallic money and the rise of urban economic activity. The texts reflect a picture of both urban growth and development of agrarian society.

We find the reference to the origin of *vaiśya varṇa* and the *śūdra varṇa* in the Aggaññasutta of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. In this *sutta*, the Buddha rejects the brahmanical claim to be the best caste and in defence of his view he explains the origins of the four castes. The Buddha tells Vāsetṭha that at the beginning of the world, when different caste groups were being created, the vaiśyas comprised of those people who adopted the married state and set on foot various trades (*vis'sa*). The meaning of the term vaiśya or *vessā* meaning trades folk. And the people who remained over took to hunting. The people who lived on hunting and other “trifling” pursuits came to be known as the śūdras (*suddās*). The Buddha says these were the lowest grade of folk.

Although the references in both set of texts do not specifically mention people of the *vaiśya* caste and the *śūdra* caste, we find numerous reference to people belonging to different groups such as the *gahapatis*, *setṭhis*, other occupational groups, slaves etc. We do not see a clear cut identification of people into *vaiśyas* and *śūdras*. Hence I am going to discuss the *gahapatis* first, and then move on to the *setṭhis* and then to the other occupational groups. These were the people whose social and economic activities characterised the *gana-sanghas* and monarchies of northern India during those times.

THE GAHAPATI

The word *gahapati* is the Pāli equivalent of the Sanskrit word *grhapati* (*griha+pati*). Uma Chakravarti states that the term *gahapati* is of crucial significance to the understanding of society at the time of the Buddha. The term appears frequently in Buddhist literature in a variety of situations and does not appear to have a fixed or constant meaning. The term *grhapati* which is the Sanskrit equivalent of the Pāli word *Gahapati*, appears from the *Rg Veda* onwards and is used for the householder as master of the house. However, she does not agree with the view that the definition of *gahapati* as householder is enough to describe the range of characteristics that *gahapati* carries with it (Chakravarti 1986: 65 & 66).

According to the old commentary of the *Pātimokkha* (collection of various precepts contained in the *Vinaya* to be recited on *Uposatha* days for the purpose of confession), which

was incorporated in the Vinaya texts, the term *gahapati* is explained as, 'he who lives in a house'. (*V.P Pārājika: 307*).

Narendra Wagle in his book *Society at the time of the Buddha* (1995) says that it is most likely that the definition of *gahapati* given in the *Vinaya* as pointed out by I.B. Horner, refers not so much to "one who lives in a house", but to one who has the full ownership rights of the household. The term *gahapati* is applied to a household head and had to bear the full responsibility of the household and handed over the responsibility to his successors before his retirement. Wagle says that the general application of the term *gahapati* appears to be to persons whose growing wealth and influence marks them out as separate from their extended kin groups (Wagle 1995: 185).

Yamazaki Gen'ichi in his book *The Structure of Ancient Indian Society: Theory and Reality of the Varṇa System* (2005), states that the *gahapati* class, both urban and rural comprised the most important fiscal source for the state as taxpayers. The Pāli literature contains many items concerning respectable *gahapatis* never failing to give alms to the Buddhist *saṃgha*, thus constituting along with the *ḷṣatriyas* the main providers of food, clothing and shelter for *bhikkhus*. (Gen'ichi, 2005: 133)

We find many references to the *gahapatis* in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* as well as the *Dīgha Nikāya* which help us in analysing the true nature of the group of people who were called the *gahapatis*. *Gahapatis* as a group seems to be the most frequently mentioned people in the texts. They are mentioned in various contexts. These references usually suggest that the *gahapatis* were a group of wealthy people, who were basically connected with agrarian activities and they made donations of alms, robes and other necessary items to the Buddha and the *saṃgha*. The *gahapatis* were also an important group for the kings of monarchical kingdoms since they have been listed as one of the so-called seven treasures possessed by the *cakravartin* in the *Lakkhana suttānta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* (*D.N Lakkhana suttānta:137*). However the term *gahapati* cannot be taken as a caste group, because it does not identify with the features of the brahmanical caste or *varṇa*. The term *gahapati* is not only used to identify people belonging to the *gahapati* group, but even a *brāhmaṇa* or a *setṭhi* could be a householder or a *gahapati*, hence we find terms such as *setṭhi-gahapati* and *Brahman-gahapati* in the texts. Yasa's father is called a *setṭhi-gahapati* in the story involving the conversion of Yasa and his father in *Mahāvagga I* of the *Vinaya*.

Many references in both sets of texts suggest that a large number of *gahapatis* invited the Buddha and his fraternity of monks for meals to their homes. They provided meals, robes and bowls for the monks and listened to the teachings of the Buddha. Some became lay followers of the Buddha, whereas others also joined the *saṃgha* so as to go from the household life into the homeless state. Since the *gahapatis* formed an important social group of those times, the stories which talk about their generosity to the Buddha and the *saṃgha* could have been used by the author of the texts to influence the readers of the texts. The references of patronage by the *gahapatis* to the *saṃgha* tried to portray the popularity of the Buddha among the people of the social milieu.

The association of *gahapatis* with agricultural activities has been suggested by certain references in the texts. One of the references is found in a story about Meṇḍaka, the *gahapati* in *Mahāvagga VI, 34.1* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. In the story, Meṇḍaka the *gahapati* is said to have possessed certain miraculous powers along with other members of his household. When he bathed his head and had his granary swept, he could sit outside and fill the granary by making showers of grain fall down from the sky. His wife could sit down beside only one bowl and one helping of curry and condiments and she could serve food to all the slaves, workmen and servants. His son could give six months food to each slave, workman, and servant from a purse which contained only a thousand *kahāpaṇas*. His daughter in law could give six months food to each slave, workman and servant. Even his slave possessed a miraculous power and that was, when he ploughed the field with one plough-share, seven furrows would be formed. This reference relates to the occupation of the *gahapati*, which in most probability was land based agricultural activity.

The story further states that Meṇḍaka and his family members were taught by the Buddha and they took refuge in the Buddha, the *dhamma* and the *saṃgha*. Meṇḍaka invites the Buddha and his fraternity of monks to his house for a meal and also promises to provide food for the *bhikkhu saṃgha* as long as they stayed at Bhaddiya.

Besides being owners of fields and granaries, the *gahapatis* are also said to be owners of gardens and orchards. In *Mahāvagga X 5.1*. there is a story which narrates that at that time, the Blessed One dwelt at Sāvathī/ Śrāvastī, in the Jetavana which was the garden of the *gahapati* Anātha piṇḍika. There was a group of litigious, contentious, quarrelsome, disputatious *bhikkhus* of Kosambi/Kauśāmbī, who constantly raised questions before the

saṃgha and they were coming to Sāvattihī/Srāvastī. The *gahapati* Anātha-Piṇḍika heard that those *bhikkhus* were coming to Sāvattihī so he asked: ‘how am I to behave, lord towards those *bhikkhus*?’ (*Mahāvagga X 5.1*)

The Buddha tells *gahapati* Anātha-Piṇḍika to bestow gifts on both sides, and listen to the *Dhamma* on both sides. Having heard the *Dhamma* on both sides, the *gahapati* was to accept the opinion and the belief, the doctrine and the cause of those *bhikkhus* who were right according to the *Dhamma*. The Buddha gives the *gahapatis* the freedom to choose the belief and opinion of those whom they believed were correct according to the *Dhamma*.

Another reference which suggests that the *gahapatis* were possessors of wealth is found in *Cullavagga IV, 4.6*, which tells the story of a certain *gahapati* who possessed good food, and used to give perpetual alms to the *saṃgha*. He, along with his wife and children are said to have stood at the place of alms and serve; and offer to some *bhikkhus* boiled rice and to some, congey and to some, they gave oil and to some they offered dainty bits.

Gahapatis are often mentioned as donating robes to the *bhikkhu saṃgha*. However, there were certain rules and regulations regarding the acceptance of robes by the *bhikkhus* from the *gahapatis*. A certain rule in the *Nissaggiya Pācittiyā Dhamma* of the *Pātimokkha* states that: ‘whatsoever *Bhikkhu* shall ask a *gahapati* or a *gahapati*’s wife, not being related to him, for a robe, except at the right season, that is a *Pācittiya* offence involving forfeiture. (*Nissaggiya Pācittiyā Dhammā, 6*)

Another rule states that in case a king or a *kṣatriya*, or a *brāhmaṇa*, or a *gahapati* should send by messenger, for a particular *bhikkhu*, the value in barter of a set of robes, saying: “ get a set of robes in exchange for this robe –fund, and provide a dress for such and such a *bhikkhu* !” if then the messenger should go to that *bhikkhu* with the offer of robe-fund, the *bhikkhu* was to decline the offer of the value in barter for a set of robes. But, he could accept a set of robes at the right time and of the suitable kind (*Nissaggiya Pācittiya Dhammā: 10*).

There are many references in the texts which talk about the conversion of *gahapatis* into the disciples of the Buddha as members of the *saṃgha* or becoming lay followers. They are shown in the texts as going to visit the Blessed One when he arrived to their cities. The references generally talk about the *gahapatis* being taught by the Buddha about various aspects of life and death.

The *Sonadaṇḍa sutta* narrates a story where the *brāhmaṇas* and *gahapatis* of Campā began to leave Campā in companies and in bands from each district, so that they could be counted to go to the Gaggara lake, where the Blessed One had arrived with a great multitude of the brethren and was lodging on the banks of the Gaggara lake (*D.N Sonadaṇḍa Sutta: 145*).

In the *Kevaddha Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* there is a story where a *gahapati* asks the Blessed One to perform a mystic wonder so that the people of Nālandā would be more devoted to the Blessed One. According to the story, the Blessed One was staying at Nālandā in the Pāvārika mango grove at that time. Kevaddha, a young *gahapati* comes to the Exalted One and asks him to give command to some brother to perform, by power surpassing that of ordinary men, a mystic wonder, so that Nālandā which was an influential and prosperous city, full of folk and crowded with people would be more devoted to the Exalted One. This reference suggests that people had belief in mystic wonders and they could be easily influenced by performing such wonders (*D.N Kevaddha Sutta: 277*).

Gahapatis were wealthy and influential people who could give commands to slaves and work people. There is a story about a wealthy and influential *gahapati* in *Cullavagga VI 4.1* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. The story narrates that at that time, the *gahapati* Anātha Piṇḍika, who was the husband of the sister of the Rājagaha *setthi* went to Rājagaha on some business. At that time, the Buddha and his *saṃgha*, had been bidden by the *setthi* of Rājagaha for the next day's meal. The *setthi* gave command to his slaves and workpeople to get up early in the morning, cook congee, rice, curries and other delicacies. When Anātha Piṇḍika, the *gahapati* asks the *setthi* the reason behind such preparations, the *setthi* tells him that he had invited the Buddha and his *saṃgha* for a meal to his house the following day. Anātha Piṇḍika, gets influenced by the *setthi*, so the next morning, he also goes to visit the Blessed One. The Blessed One teaches the *gahapati* Anātha Piṇḍika in due order about giving, the vanity, the defilement of lust and of the advantages of renunciation. The *gahapati* is also taught about the special doctrine of the Buddha on issues like suffering, its origin, its cessation and the path to salvation. The *gahapati* (Anātha Piṇḍika) accepts the Buddha's knowledge and teachings, just like a clean cloth which readily takes up the dye. The *gahapati* Antāha Piṇḍika had many friends and acquaintances and his word was held of weight among his friends. Hence, he gave orders to people to build dwellings and prepare gifts for the Buddha. The *gahapati* Anātha Piṇḍika also acquired the garden of Jeta the Kumāra, as a gift and built

dwelling-rooms, and retiring-rooms, store-rooms, service halls, halls with fire places in them, store houses, closets, cloisters, halls for exercise, wells, sheds for wells, bathrooms, halls attached to bath-rooms, ponds and open-roofed sheds for the Blessed One and his monks.

In the *Tevijja Suttānta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, there is a story where the Blessed One is seen explaining to Vāsetṭha, the *brāhmaṇa* about how a *gahapati* gets influenced by the words of a Tathāgata and renounces the world. In the story, the Buddha tells Vāsetṭha, that when a householder (*gahapati*) or one of his children or a man of inferior birth in any class listens to the truth that the Tathāgata preaches, they have faith in the Tathāgata. This faith leads the *gahapati* to consider the household life to be full of hindrances and a path defiled by passion. He considers the life of a person who has renounced the world as free as air. He starts thinking about how difficult it was for the man who dwells at home to live the higher life in all its fullness, in all its purity, and in all its perfections. Thus, he decides to cut off his hair and beard, clothe himself in the orange-coloured robes and go forth from a household life into the homeless state. The *gahapati* who renounces the world forsakes his portion of wealth, be it great or small and also forsakes his circle of relatives be they many or be they few. The Buddha then explains the advantages which the *gahapati* obtains by becoming a recluse. He says that when the *gahapati* becomes a recluse, he lives a self-restrained life. Uprightness becomes his delight and he sees danger in the least of those things that he should avoid. He adopts and trains himself in the precepts and encompasses himself with goodness in word and deed. He sustains his life by pure means, good conduct and guards the door of his senses. He becomes mindful and self-possessed which makes him altogether happy (*D.N, Tevigga Sutta: 316*).

This story reflects the propaganda mechanism used by the author of the *sutta*, where the author has tried to portray a picture of complete accomplishment by renouncing the world. Moreover the fact that the Buddha is narrating the achievements of a *gahapati* who renounced the world clearly indicates that it was meant for influencing other *gahapatis* to adopt the teachings of the Buddha.

A common reference is found in the *Mahā-Parinibbāna Suttānta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* and the *Mahāvagga VI 23.4* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* where the Blessed One is seen addressing *gahapatis* on the fivefold loss of the wrongdoer through his want of rectitude and also the fivefold gain of the well-doer through his practice of rectitude. The Blessed One in these two

references talks to the *gahapatis* about the fivefold loss of the wrongdoer through his want of rectitude and these fivefold losses were listed as —

1. Falling into great poverty through sloth.
2. Evil repute of the person being noised abroad.
3. Whatever society the wrongdoer enters, whether noble-men, *brāhmaṇas*, head of houses or *Samaṇas*, he enters shyly and confused.
4. The person is full of anxiety when he dies.
5. On the dissolution of his body, after death, he is reborn into some state of distress and punishment, a state of woe, and hell.

The Buddha lists the fivefold gain of the well-doer through his practice of rectitude as follows-

1. The well-doer acquires great wealth through his industry.
2. Good reports are spread abroad.
3. Whatever society the well-doer enters, he enters confident and self possessed.
4. The well-doer dies without anxiety.
5. Finally the well-doer on the dissolution of his body, after death, is reborn into some happy state in heaven.

The *Sigālovāda sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* narrates a story about how Sigāla came to take refuge in the Blessed One. The *sutta* narrates how Sigāla, who was the son of a *gahapati* practised the worship of the six directions (*disās*) as a result of his father's death-bed wish. The Buddha sees him doing this, and interprets the six quarters in a Buddhist manner- in a way in which his doctrine of love and good will between man and man is set forth with a lot of details. The Buddha teaches him about the vices and the evil actions which had to be put away so as to be reborn to a happy destiny in heaven after death. When the Exalted One had spoken, Sigāla the young *gahapati* said that he had been enlightened and the hidden truth had been disclosed to him just like a lamp which brightens up the darkness. He says that the truth

had been manifested to him in many ways. Thereafter he takes refuge in the Exalted One (*D.N, Sigālovāda Suttanta:173*).

The texts reveal that the *gahapatis* were one of the many groups who followed the Buddha either as lay followers or they became members of the *samgha*. However there also must have been some *gahapatis* who did not take part in the activities of alms giving and following the Buddha. At some places the Buddha himself is seen claiming that the *gahapatis* formed a major chunk of his disciples and patrons as in the *Pāsādika Suttanta*. In this sutta, the Buddha addresses Cunda about how his followers would be propagating the truth after his death. This *sutta* is said to have been delivered soon after the death of the Jain leader named Nāthaputta, which had resulted in a quarrel among his followers. When Cunda the Novice told the Blessed One about the quarrel among the followers of Nāthaputta, the Blessed One is seen telling Cunda that although he too had come to his journey's end (approaching death), he had many followers like the senior *bhikkhus*, the middle aged *bhikkhus*, the novice and the lay followers like the *gahapatis* of the white robe, men of holy life and men of wealth and laywomen would propagate his teachings after his death. The Buddha claims that his religion was successful, prosperous, widespread and popular, in all its full extent and well proclaimed among men (*D.N, Pāsādika Suttanta: 116*).

A particular reference in *Cullavagga I, 18.1* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* talks about how the *bhikkhu* Sudhamma was asked to obtain pardon of the *gahapati* Citta. The story narrates that at that time the venerable Sudhamma was residing at Makkhikāsanda in dependence upon the *gahapati* Citta and was superintending the new building he erected. In return he was given food and shelter by Citta. Whenever the *gahapati* Citta invited the *samgha* or other *Bhikkhus*, he always invited Sudhamma too. At that time, a number of Thera *Bhikkhus* including Sāriputta, Moggallāna, Kaḅḅāna, Koṭṭhita, Kappina, Cunda, Anuruddha, Revata, Upāli, Ānanda and Rāhula had arrived at Makkhikāsanda as they were journeying through the country of Kāśi. *Gahapati* Citta invited the Thera *bhikkhu* for a meal to his house the following day. Then he went to Sudhamma and also invited him for a meal the following day. Sudhamma felt humiliated that Citta had invited the Thera *bhikkhus* before inviting him so he refused the invitation. However, at the end of the night Sudhamma changed his mind and went to see what the *gahapati* Citta had prepared for the Thera *Bhikkhus*. When Sudhamma saw the great store of food he pointed out that there was absence of *tila* (sesame) seed cakes. When Citta tells Sudhamma that he was being very critical of everything, Sudhamma feels

offended so he goes to the Blessed One to inform him about the incident. On hearing about the incident the Buddha rebuked Sudhamma and called him foolish and unworthy of a *Samāna*. The Blessed One questions Sudhamma by saying: ‘how is it that you, o foolish one, could put down and could lower by your censure Citta the *gahapati*, he being a man of faith, a believing disciple, and a donor, a provider and a supporter of the *saṃgha*?’ The Buddha tells Sudhamma that this kind of attitude would not conduce to either the conversion of the converted, or to the increase of the converted; but rather it would conduce to the unconverted not being converted and to the turning back of those who have been converted. And after the Buddha rebuked Sudhamma, he addressed the *bhikkhus* and said: ‘let therefore the *saṃgha*, o *bhikkhus*, carry out the *Patisāraṇiya – kamma* (act of reconciliation) against the *bhikkhu* Sudhamma saying: ‘you are to ask and obtain pardon of Citta the householder (*gahapati*).’ (Cullavagga I, 18.4) This reference shows that *gahapatis* were major donors to the *Samgha* and they also kept *bhikkhus* at their residence to superintend construction work of buildings and *vihāras* while in return they provided shelter and food to those *bhikkhus*. The reference also points out that the Buddha was concerned about the misdeeds of the *bhikkhus*, which would in turn decrease the number of conversions to Buddhism. The *bhikkhus* were thus told by the Buddha that *gahapatis* were resourceful people who could provide support to the *Samgha*. The Buddha calls the *gahapati* Citta as a man of faith, a believing disciple, a donor and supporter of the *Samgha* in the reference, thus suggesting why he did not want the *bhikkhus* to rebuke the *gahapati*.

The *gahapatis* are mentioned in both the *Dīgha Nikāya* and the *Vinaya Pīṭaka* texts. However, an analysis of the references and their context brings forth the messages that these references wanted to project. Since the *Vinaya* texts were meant mostly for the monks and the *Dīgha Nikāya* for the common people, the references to *gahapatis* in them reflect their real purpose. In the *Vinaya* texts the *gahapatis* are generally mentioned as being wealthy and prosperous people who were involved in agricultural activities and they generously donated alms, robes and other necessary items to the *bhikkhus* of the *saṃgha*. In the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the *gahapatis* have been mentioned as an important group of people among the followers of the Buddha. Their importance in society has also been reflected in the reference which states that they were one of the seven treasures that a king possessed. Many references also talk about the conversion of *gahapatis* into members of the *saṃgha* and their loyalty to the Buddha as lay followers. The stories about the conversion of the *gahapatis* could have led to

the conversion of other people of the society. Thus the propaganda mechanism used by the authors of the *Dīgha Nikāya* is clearly reflected in such references.

THE *SETTHIS*

The *setthis* are another group of people who have been frequently mentioned in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. However we do not find any reference to *setthis* in the *Dīgha Nikāya*. Since the *setthis* have only been mentioned in the *Vinaya* texts it might be possible that the *setthis* were more important for the Buddhist *saṃgha* than other groups of people. This could have been due to the larger number of donations and patronage that the *saṃgha* received from the *setthis* community. The *setthis*, being major donors of the *saṃgha* could have been mentioned more frequently to assert their significance as followers and disciples of the Buddha and since they were wealthy and powerful they could have made an impact on the other social groups. The question of a wider audience is not the main issue in the case where the *setthis* have been mentioned only in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, but it is about the importance of the *setthis* community for the *saṃgha*.

According to the Pāli dictionary a *setthi* is a foreman of a guild, treasurer, banker, 'cityman', and a wealthy merchant (T.W. Rhys Davids and W.Stede, *The Pāli English Dictionary*: 722).

Yamazaki Gen'ichi in his book states that *setthis* (Sanskrit- *śresthin*) were the most influential members of the *gahapati* class and were respected by people from the royal family to urban and rural subjects (Gen'ichi 2005:139).

Uma Chakravarti in her work states that *setthis* belonged to sections of the *gahapatis* who were occupied with other economic functions besides agriculture (Chakravarti 1986: 73).

According to the numerous references in the *Vinaya Pitaka*, the *setthis* were wealthy people who were beneficial to both the king and his subjects. They were mostly located in the big urban centres of Varanasi and Rājagaha, followed by Campā and Sāketa. The wealthy *setthis* were involved in philanthropic activities like giving alms to religious institutions e.g the *saṃgha*. Even the first monastery given to the *saṃgha* was denoted by a *setthi* of Rājagaha/Rājagrha (*V.P II p 146.*)

Many *setthi*s are also seen as becoming lay followers of the Buddha after they were influenced by the teachings of the Buddha. Some of them are even said to have joined the Buddhist *saṃgha*.

The idea that the *setthi*s were wealthy people and were beneficial to both the king and his subjects is suggested by a reference found in the *Mahāvagga VIII.2*, of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, where the *setthi* advises king Bimbisāra on how to make Rājagaha more flourishing and prosperous. The story narrates that a *setthi* from Rājagaha had gone to Vesālī on a certain business. That *setthi* saw the opulence and prosperity of Vesālī. After having done his business in Vesālī, he returned to Rājagaha and went to the place where the Māgadhan king Seniya Bimbisāra was and told him about the opulence and prosperity of Vesālī and how the city had become more and more flourishing because of the courtesan Ambapālī. The *setthi* suggested to the king that they too should install a courtesan in their kingdom, so as to make the city more prosperous. Hence, Sālavatī was installed as the courtesan of Rājagaha. This reference shows that wealthy *setthi*s were very close to the Kings and they even advised the Kings on certain matters.

A number of references to *setthi*s are made in the *Jīvaka Vatthu* of the *Mahāvagga*, which indicate their wealth and influence. In *Mahāvagga VIII.I.14*, the reference states the Jīvaka Komārabhaccha (the physician) drives away the disease which the *setthi*'s wife had for the past seven years. The *setthi*'s wife had the disease in her head for the past seven years, before Jīvaka restored her to health. As his payment for curing the disease, Jīvaka was given 4,000 *kahāpaṇas* by the *setthi*'s wife, 4000 *kahāpaṇas* by the *setthi*'s son, yet another 4,000 *kahāpaṇas* by the daughter in law and finally another 4,000 *kahāpaṇas*, a man servant, a maid servant and a coach with horses.

In *Mahāvagga VIII, I.17*, a *setthi* at Rājagaha who had been suffering for seven years from a disease in the head gets treated by the physician Jīvaka. The *setthi* having regained his health, gives a hundred thousand (*kahāpaṇas*) to the king and a hundred thousand to Jīvaka Komārabhaccha.

Another reference in *Mahāvagga VIII.I.21*, states that at that time, the son of a *setthi* from Benaras used to amuse himself by tumbling. The tumbling led to an entanglement of his intestines, in consequence of which he could not digest his food or drink. The physician Jīvaka cured the *setthi*'s son of his disease and in turn was given sixteen thousand *kahāpaṇas*.

These references suggest that the *setthi*s were wealthy, they conducted business, were travelling to and fro into different cities and they had abundant wealth and power. They possessed slaves and gave generous payments for the work done by professionals like Jīvaka the physician.

Another reference in *Cullavagga VI, 4.1* narrates that the *setthi* of Rājagaha who was the brother-in-law of Anātha Piṇḍika was once busy with preparations for a special meal at his house. The huge preparation made Antāha Piṇḍika wonder whether the huge meal was being prepared for the king's visit. This reference depicts that the wealthy *setthi* could even host the king for meals at their homes. It also reflects the relation which the wealthy *setthi*s shared with the kings.

Some wealthy *setthi*s also got influenced by the teachings of the Buddha and became lay followers or joined the *saṃgha*.

A particular reference in the *first* Khaṇḍaka of the *Mahāvagga* shows that the first lay disciples of the Buddha were two *setthi*s. The story in the Khaṇḍaka states that Tapussa and Bhallika, the two merchants (*setthi*s) were travelling from Ukkala (Orissa) to the foot of the Rājāyatana tree where the Blessed One was staying. They had been directed by a deity who had been (in a former life) a blood-relation of the *setthi*s to go and show their reverence to the Blessed One by offering him rice-cakes and lumps of honey. The Buddha accepted the offering. Tapussa and Bhallika, when they saw that the Blessed One had cleansed his bowl and hands, bowed down in reverence at the feet of the Blessed One and thus addressed the Blessed One: 'we take our refuge lord, in the Blessed One and in the *Dhamma*; may the Blessed One receive us as disciples who from this day forth while our life lasts, have taken their refuge in him'. These two *setthi*s were the first in the world to become lay-disciples of the Buddha by the formula of the dyad (because there was no *saṃgha* at that time, their declaration of taking refuge, by which they became *upāsakas*/lay followers, could refer only to the Dyad- the Buddha and the *Dhamma*, instead of the triad of the Buddha, *Dhamma* and the *saṃgha*).

Another reference which clearly suggests that the *setthi*s were wealthy people is found in *Mahāvagga I.7*, where there is a story about Yasa, the son of a *setthi*. Yasa's wealth can be compared to a king because he is said to have many palaces, attendants and even gilt slippers (golden sandals). In the story, there lived a noble youth named Yasa at Benaras (Varanasi).

He was the son of a *seṭṭhi* and was delicately nurtured. He had three palaces — one for winter, one for summer and another for the rainy season. In the palace for the rainy season he lived during the four months of that season, surrounded with female musicians. One day Yasa, who was endowed with and possessed of the five pleasures of the senses (pleasures of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and touch), while he was attended by those female musicians, fell asleep sooner than usual. After him his attendants also fell asleep. When Yasa awoke sooner than usual, he saw his attendants sleeping in a dishevelled state: one had her lute against her arm-pit, one had her tabor leaning against her neck; one had saliva flowing from her mouth and they were muttering in their sleep. The site looked like a cemetery and when Yasa saw that, the evils of the life he led manifested themselves to him, hence his mind became weary of wordly pleasures. Yasa realised the distress and danger of his present life so he put on his gilt slippers and went away to the deer park Isipatana, where the Blessed One was staying. The Blessed One preached to the distressed Yasa about the merits of alms-giving, about the duties of morality, about heaven, evils, vanity and the sinfulness of desire and also the blessings of the abandonment of desires. Just as a clean cloth free from black specks properly takes the dye, thus Yasa obtained the pure and spotless Eye of the Truth and Knowledge.

When Yasa's father (the *seṭṭhi*) learned that his son was missing, he went looking for him to the deer park Isipatana. There he met the Blessed One and he too was preached to by the Blessed One on the same lines as Yasa. The *seṭṭhi*, thus having seen the Truth, having penetrated the truth, having mastered the truth, having overcome uncertainty, having dispelled all doubts, having gained full knowledge and dependent on nobody else for the knowledge of the doctrine of the Teacher, took refuge in the Blessed One, the *Dhamma* and the fraternity of Bhikkhus. This was the first person in the world who became a lay-disciple by the formula of the holy triad.

A story found in *Mahāvagga I.9* states that four lay persons who were the friends of Yasa, and belonging to *seṭṭhi* families of Benaras, and to the highest after the *seṭṭhi* families, by name Vimāla, Subālu, Punnagi and Gaṇapati also followed Yasa and became ordained into the *saṃgha*.

A reference in *Mahāvagga V.1*, talks about how Sona Kolivisa, the son of a *seṭṭhi*, followed the eighty thousand overseers and went about to obtain the houseless state. He desired to cut off his hair and beard and put on yellow robes and give up the world. He asked

the Blessed One to ordain him. Thus Sona Kolivisa received from the Blessed One the *Pabbajja* and *Upasampadā* (acquiring *bhikkhuship*, higher ordination, admission to the privileges of recognized *bhikkhus*) ordinations.

The *setthi*s are said to have made generous donations to the Buddhist *saṃgha*. Even the rule which allowed five kinds of dwellings for the *bhikkhus* to live in, was actually formulated by the Buddha after the *setthi* of Rājagaha offered to build dwellings for the *bhikkhus*. *Cullavagga VI: 1.2*, narrates that at that time the Buddha was staying at Rājagaha in Veluvana, in the Kalandaka Nivaka. At that time no permission had been given to the *bhikkhus* by the Blessed One with respect to dwellings. So the *bhikkhus* dwelt in the woods, at the foot of trees, on hill-sides, in grottoes, caves, forests, plains and heaps of straw. The *setthi* saw those *bhikkhus* coming in from the woods so he asked them if he could erect dwellings for them to live in. The *bhikkhus* told the *setthi* that they had not been allowed to live in dwellings by the Blessed One. The *setthi* then suggested to the *bhikkhus* to ask permission from the Buddha so that they could be allowed to live in dwelling places. When the Blessed One came to know about the matter, he allowed the *bhikkhus* five kinds of dwellings e.g. *vihāras*, *addhayagas*, storied dwellings, attics and caves. And then, the *setthi* built sixty dwelling places put up in one day and dedicated those to the use of the *saṃgha*.

OTHER OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS

There are many references to various occupational groups in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and the *Dīgha Nikāya*. The references in these sources reflect that the newly rising urban society did not oppose the existence of the *varṇa* system which divided society into four groups- the *kṣatriyas*, *brāhmaṇas*, *vessas* (*vaiśyas*) and *suddas* (*sūdras*). The members from all the four *varṇas* are seen as being allowed to join the Buddhist *saṃgha*. A certain reference which shows that the Buddha himself acknowledged the presence of the four *varṇas* in society and the fact that they were all to be treated as equals when they had joined the *saṃgha* is found in *Cullavagga IX, 1.4*. In this episode, the Buddha while explaining the eight marvellous qualities of the doctrine and discipline of the *saṃgha* explains about the people from different backgrounds who entered the *saṃgha*. The Buddha says that just as the great rivers like the Gangā, the Yamunā, the Aciravati, the Sarabhū, and the Mahī, when they fall into the great

ocean, renounce their names and lineage and are therefore reckoned as the great ocean – just as did the four castes- the *khattiyas*, the *brāhmaṇas*, the *vessas* and *suddas*, when they went forth from the world into the life of doctrines and discipline of the Tathāgata, renounced their names and lineage and entered into the number of the *Sākyaputiya Samaṇas*.

Another reference to the presence of four *varṇas* is found in the *Ambaṭṭhasutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* where Ambattha claims that there are four grades of people — the nobles, the Brahmins, the trades-folk and the work people. He says that of these four grades of people, the nobles, the trades-folk and the work people were attendants on the *brāhmaṇas*. In this way Ambattha claims superiority for the *brāhmaṇas*. The terms which Ambattha uses for the *vessas* and *suddas* shows that although the *brāhmaṇas* and *kṣatriyas* are referred to by their *varṇa* names, the members of the two lower *varṇas* are referred to in terms of occupations, background, wealth and other abstract social demarcations of *varṇa*. The members of the two lower *varṇas* have not been identified in terms of their *varṇa* status but in terms of their occupation, art and craft. A reference which explains the concept of ‘lower lineage’ or a person being ‘low born’ is found in the same *sutta*. In this *sutta* there is a story about contested origin where Ambattha calls the Sākyas as menial beings. Ambattha was set on humbling the Sākyas with his charge of servile origin. So the Buddha asks Ambattha about his lineage. Ambattha claims that he belonged to the Kanhāyana clan. Thereafter the Buddha narrates the story of the humble origin of the Kanhāyanas and brings to light that Ambattha who belonged to the Kanhāyana lineage was actually the descendent of a slave girl called Disā and that the Sākyas were once the masters of the Kanhāyanas. When the *brāhmaṇas* heard this story, they called Ambattha ‘low born’ since his family was not of good standing and he was a descendent of a slave girl. However the Buddha does not agree with the Brahmins who went too far in their depreciation of Ambattha as the offspring of a slave girl (*D.N, Ambaṭṭha Suttanta: 114,115*).

In the second chapter of the same *sutta*, the Buddha says that there is no reference to the question of birth, or of lineage or of pride, in the supreme perfection of wisdom and righteousness. He further explains that reference to birth and lineage should only be made in matters relating to marriage. People who were bound to the notions of birth or lineage or to the pride of social position were far from the best wisdom and righteousness. It was only by having got rid of all such bondages that one could realise for himself the supreme perfections in wisdom and in conduct (*D.N, Ambaṭṭha Suttanta: 123*).

The occupational groups which have been mentioned more frequently in the texts are the barbers, tailors, smiths and slaves. Besides these groups the people belonging to other occupations have been identified according to a list of arts and craft that they practised. We find stray references to occupations such as butchers, trumpeters, cooks, potters, weavers etc.

The presence of barbers as an important occupational group is found in a couple of references in the texts. These references talk about their craft, their employers, their position in society, the way they were treated by the members of the higher *varṇas* and their religious leanings. Upāli, who was one of the closest disciples of the Buddha, was a barber before he became the follower of the Buddha. *Cullavagga VII, I. 4* has the reference which talks about the conversion of Upāli the barber. The story in this *vagga* talks about the conversion of seven youths namely — Bhaddiya (the Sākya rājā), Anuruddha, Ānanda, Bhagu, Kimbila, Devadatta and Upāli (the barber). When these men were leaving their homes for the homeless state, and had travelled some distance, they sent their retinue back, and crossed over onto the neighbouring district. They took off their fine things and wrapped them in their robes, made a bundle of them and giving them to Upāli the barber, told him to return back. But as Upāli was returning back he thought about the Sākyas, who were fierce and would think that if young men of the Sākya clan could go forth from the household life into the houseless state, why could not he? Thus, Upāli hung the bundle of things on a tree and returned back to the place where the young Sākyas were. The Sākya youths asked Upāli why he had come back and he told them about what he had thought. The Sākyas then took Upāli with them to the place where the Blessed One was. The Sākyas requested the Blessed One to admit Upāli into the Order before them, so that they could render him respect and reverence and bow down with outstretched hands before him (as their senior). This would humble the pride in the Sākyas. Upāli the barber had long been an attendant to the Sākyas and the Sākyas who were the employers were known to be haughty. Hence the Blessed One first received Upāli and afterwards those young men of the Sākya clan, into the ranks of the Order. This reference clearly brings out the high social position that the Sākyas enjoyed and the low position which was given to barbers who belonged to the lower strata in society.

The references in the texts suggest that the barbers functioned as attendants to members of the two higher *varṇas*. In the *Lohicca sutta*, there is a reference to Lohicca and his attendant Bhesika who was a barber. In the *sutta*, Lohicca the *brāhmaṇa* sends his attendant Bhesika to call upon the Blessed One (*D.N XII Lohicca Sutta: 289*)

Another reference which talks about barbers is found in *Mahāvagga VI 37.1* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. This reference narrates that the Blessed One goes to Ātumā with a great company of two hundred and fifty *bhikkhus*. At that time, there was a certain man who had entered the order in his old age and he had previously been a barber and had two sons who were handsome, skilled in discourse, able, fully educated in all the arts which belonged to the barber's craft handed down to them by their teachers. Now, when the barber who had gone forth from the household state to the homeless life of the order, heard the news that the Blessed One was coming to Ātumā, he ordered his sons to take their barbers' lad with them, and collect in quart pots from house to house, salt, oil and rice. The children did accordingly and the dotard (the barber who had gone into the homeless state in his old age), when the night was far spent, offered congey to the Blessed One. The Blessed One enquired about the congey, so the dotard informed him of the whole matter related to the congey cooking. The Buddha rebuked him, saying: 'this is improper, o foolish one, not according to rule, unsuitable, unworthy of a *Samaṇa*, unbecoming, and ought not to be done. How can you, o foolish one, having gone forth from the world into the order, instigate others to do what is unlawful. This will not conduce, o foolish one, to the conversion of the unconverted.' And when the Buddha had rebuked him and had delivered a religious discourse he addressed the *bhikkhus* and said: "one who has gone forth ought not, o *bhikkhus*, to instigate others to an unlawful act. Whoever does so, is guilty of a *dukkata*. And one, o *bhikkhus*, who has formely been a barber is not to keep a barber boy. Whoever does so is guilty of a *dukkata*' (*Mahāvagga VI 37.1*). This story suggests that barbers were allowed to join the *samgha* but once they had joined the order they had to give up all their associations with their earlier practice, even keeping a barber boy was not allowed. Since a person went from the household state to the homeless state when he entered the order, all associations of the material world had to be left behind.

A particular reference which mentions a tailor is found in *Cullavagga VI 5.1*. The story narrates that at that time the Blessed One was at Vesālī and he stayed at the peak-roofed hall at the Mahāvana. At that time, the people were zealously engaged in putting up new buildings for the use of the Order and they zealously provided the requisite clothes, food, lodging and medicine for the sick and the *bhikkhus* so provided superintended their work

There was a certain poor tailor who thought: “this can be no every-day matter on which the people are so zealously engaged. Let me too set to work on a new building.’ And that poor tailor himself kneaded the clay, and laid the bricks to raise the walls. But by his want of experience, the laying was out of line so the wall fell down. The poor tailor murmured, was annoyed and became indignant and accused the *Sākyaputiya Samaṇas* of teaching only those men who provided them with requisite clothes, food, lodging and medicines and superintend their buildings for them. But since he was a poor tailor no one would exhort or teach him or help him in his building. The *bhikkhus* heard him and told the matter to the Blessed One. Then the Blessed One on that occasion and in that connection made a religious discourse and gave command to the *bhikkhus* saying: ‘I permit you, o *bhikkhus*, to give new buildings in course of erection (for the use of the Order) in charge (to a *bhikkhu* who shall superintend the work). And the *bhikkhu* who is overseer shall zealously exert himself to the end that the work on the *vihāra* may be brought to a rapid conclusion, and shall afterwards cause repairs to be executed wherever the buildings have become broken or worn out’. This reference suggests that tailors did not hold a high position in the society and were generally poor people who felt neglected by the Buddha and his *saṃgha*, hence the tailor accuses the *Sākyaputiya Samaṇas* of teachings only those men, who provided them with requisite clothes, food, lodging, medicines and superintend their buildings.

Tailors have not been mentioned in the *Dīgha Nikāya*. Their absence can be linked with their ‘low’ status in society, both socially and economically. Since there are no references to patronage and donation being given by the tailors to the *saṃgha*, their contribution to the Buddhist *saṃgha* being almost negligible, they must have been overlooked by the authors of the texts.

Both men and women slaves have been frequently mentioned in the texts. It is very likely that most of the lower echelons of society including slaves belonged to the *śūdra varna*, although nowhere in the text have they been referred to as *śūdras*. The references suggest that

slaves were owned by members of other three *varṇas* as their private property. The slaves were either made to work in the household or in the agricultural fields. Slaves could also be given as gifts to other people. Since the owners of slaves had full rights and authority over slaves, the slaves could not join the *saṃgha* without being emancipated by the owners. Slaves have also been termed as foolish, lacking knowledge and ‘low born’, menial beings.

The references suggest that the slaves were meant to do menial jobs and lived a life of hardship. The slaves performed many duties for their masters, whether they worked at home or in the fields. A reference found in the *Sāmañña-phala sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* describes the various duties and chores which a slave had to perform for his master. In the *sutta*, the Buddha is said to have asked the king if his household slave, who did work for him, rose up in the morning before him and retired later to rest, who was keen to carry out the king’s pleasure, anxious to make himself agreeable in what he did and said, who basically watched the king’s every look, were to go forth from the household state and renounce the world? The Buddha asks the king if his slave would renounce the world what treatment would be meted out to him after he had joined the order. The king confesses that he would treat his previous slave as a person worthy of honour and respect. This reference shows that the slaves were not worthy of honour and respect and they achieved these only after they joined the Buddhist order. (*D.N, Sāmañña-phala Sutta: 76, 77*) The slaves who joined the order were freed of their ‘low’ social position. However a slave could not join the order without having the permission of his master or without getting emancipated. This was one of the rules of admission into the *saṃgha*. This reference is found in *Mahāvagga I.47*, of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. According to the story, at that time, a slave ran away from his master and got himself ordained with the *bhikkhus*. When his masters saw him, they said: ‘there is our slave, come let us lead him away back to our house’, the people got to know about this incident and became angry that their slaves could now join the order and escape their duties. The Blessed One on hearing about this incident made a rule by saying: ‘let no slave, o *bhikkhus*, receive the *Pabbajjā* (the ceremony of admission to the priesthood/ *bhikkhuhood*) ordination, he, who confers the *Pabbajjā* ordination (on a slave), is guilty of a *dukkata* offence.’

Another reference to slaves is found in *Mahāvagga VII, I.26*, which talks about the slave owned by King Pajjota of Ujjaini. The slave was called Kāka and he could travel sixty *yojanas* in one day. The slave Kāka was said to have begotten by a non-human being.

A particular reference which suggests the general attributes of slaves being foolish and wanting of intelligence is found in *Mahāvagga VIII, 15.3*. The reference narrates the story of Visākhā, the mother of Migāra and her slave girl. Visākhā commands her slave girl to go to the *Ārāma* and announce to the *bhikkhus* that the meal was ready. The slave girl goes to the *Ārāma* and beholds the *bhikkhus*, with their robes thrown off and letting themselves be rained upon. She returns back and tells her mistress Visākhā that there were no *bhikkhus* in the *Ārāma*, but only naked ascetics there. Then it occurs to Visākhā, who was learned expert and wise, that the *bhikkhus* must have taken off their robes in order to let themselves be rained upon and the ‘foolish’ slave girl took them to be naked ascetics.

Many references indicate that the slaves were treated by their masters as private property and were also given as gifts to other people. In *Mahāvagga VIII, 1.14*, the physician Jīvaka is given a man-servant and maid servant along with his payment for curing the *setthi*’s wife of her disease.

In the *Brahma-jāla sutta*, a recluse is said to have abstained from accepting bondmen and bond-women (*D.N I Brahma-jāla Sutta: 5*).

Slaves have been more frequently mentioned in the *Dīgha Nikāya* than in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, and this could be reasoned as slaves being used only in the society outside the *saṃgha*. The *bhikkhus* were not permitted to have slaves to do their work in the *saṃgha*; thus they have not been mentioned in the *Vinaya* texts. The references found in the *Dīgha Nikāya* suggest that slaves were bonded labour and had many duties to perform, whereas references in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* give more details about the lives of slaves, the way they were treated, how they were viewed by other sections of the society and also the rules and regulations which governed their entry into the *saṃgha*.

Smiths as an occupational group or as individuals feature in the texts. There are references to the Buddha and his fraternity of monks being invited for meals to the homes of smiths. There are also references of the Buddha and his *bhikkhus* residing at *ārāmas* belonging to smiths. Some smiths also joined got themselves ordained into the Order according to some references.

A story in the *Mahā parinibbāna sutta* narrates the incident before the Buddha's death and the last meal that the Buddha had consumed at the house of Cunda (the smith). According to the story, the Exalted One while touring various cities before his death had reached Pava. There he stayed at the mango grove of Cunda, who was by family a smith. There Cunda got instructed, aroused, incited and gladdened with religious discourse by the Exalted One. Cunda invited the Exalted One and his brethren for a meal to his house the next day. Cunda prepared a meal of sweet rice, cakes and a quantity of truffles (*sūkara-khaṇḍa*). The next day the Exalted One went with the brethren to the dwelling place of Cunda. When the Exalted One was seated for the meal, he asked Cunda to serve him only with the truffles and other food like sweet rice and cakes he asked Cunda to serve the brethren. Cunda did accordingly. The Exalted One then told Cunda to bury in a hole, all the left over truffles. Thus, Cunda buried the left over truffles in a hole. When the Exalted One had eaten the meal prepared by Cunda, there fell upon him a dire sickness, the disease of dysentery and a sharp pain came upon him even unto death. But the Exalted One, mindful and self-possessed, bore it without complaint. From there the Exalted One went to Kusinārā where he died. Before his death, the Exalted One told Ānanda that some people might stir up remorse in Cunda and blame him for the death of the Exalted One. The Exalted One told Ānanda that any such remorse and blame in Cunda should be checked.

The reference of the Buddha residing at the mango grove of Cunda is also found in the *Sangiti sutānta*.

Another reference to smiths is found in *Mahāvagga I.48*, which states that a certain smith who was bald-headed, having had a quarrel with his father and mother went and received the Pabbajjā with the *bhikkhus*. The father and mother of the smith, searching after him, came to the *ārāmas* and asked the *bhikkhus* if they had seen such and such a boy. The *bhikkhus* who did not know him as such said that they had not seen him. However the parents of the boy found him among the *bhikkhus* and they got annoyed with the *bhikkhus* who had said that they did not know the boy for whom they were searching. The parents called the *Sākyaputtiya Samaṇas* 'shameless', 'wicked', and 'liars'. The *bhikkhus* heard this abuse and related the matter to the Blessed One. On learning about the incident the Blessed One prescribed to the *bhikkhus* that permission should be obtained from the *saṃgha* to permit a new person into *saṃgha* before he got shaved.

Along with these references to specific occupations, there are many other occupations which have been listed at various places in the texts. A reference in *Mahāvagga V.I* talks about overseers. Eighty thousand overseers who were in the service of Seniya Bimbisāra, the King of Magadha have been mentioned. The king tells those overseers that they had already received instructions from him regarding the worldly things, so now they should go to the Blessed One to receive instructions about things of eternity.

In the *Pāyāsi suttānta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* we find references to different occupations taken up by people e.g- a trumpeter who taking his trumpet of chank shell travelled to the folk on the border, caravan leaders of great caravans having a thousand carts, a swine herd who reared pigs, gamesters who played with dice etc (*D.N, Pāyāsi Suttānta: 361, 365, 367.*)

In the *Mahā Satipatthāna Suttānta*, a cattle-butcher and his apprentice have been mentioned (*D.N, Mahā Satipatthāna Suttānta: 331*)

A reference in the *Sāmañña-phala Sutta* lists a number of ordinary crafts such as — mahouts, horsemen, charioteers, archers, standard bearers, camp marshal, camp followers, high military officers of royal birth, military scouts, men brave as elephants, champions, heroes, warriors in buckskin, cooks, bath attendants, confectioners, garland-makers, washermen, weavers, basket-makers, potters, mathematicians, accountants and people of other kinds of crafts. These craftsmen are said to have visible fruits of their crafts. They maintained themselves and their parents, children and friends in happiness and comfort. These people are also said to have given gifts to recluses and *brāhmaṇas* so that they would be led to rebirth in heaven (*D.N Sāmañña-phala Sutta: 68*).

In the *Brahma-jāla sutta*, wrong means of livelihood by low arts have been mentioned in the context that some recluse and *brāhmaṇas*, while living on food provided by the faithful, earned their living by means of livelihood which were ‘low arts’. Some of the so considered ‘low arts’ were — palmistry, prognostication by interpreting dreams, fortune-telling, advising on customary law, laying ghosts, snake charming, the poison craft, soothsaying, foretelling rainfall, good harvest and disturbances, offering sacrifices, oiling people’s ears, administering drugs through the nose, practising as an occultist, practising as a surgeon, arranging a lucky day for marriages, fixing a lucky time for all activities of beings etc. Besides these, there are many other crafts and arts which have been called ‘low’ (*D.N, Brahma-jāla sutta*)

A surgeon or a physician's craft has been called 'low' in this reference but other references in the texts show that Jīvaka who was a practicing physician received wide acclaim for his services. Even the Buddhist monks and the Buddha are said to have gone to Jīvaka for medical treatment from diseases.

Besides the low arts and crafts, there are stray references to despised tribes and groups. In the *Mahā parinibbāna suttānta*, there is a story about the conversion of Pukkasa who belonged to the community of despised tribes. When the Exalted One was seated at the foot of a tree along the high road from Kusināra to Pava, the young Mallian Pukkasa passed along and stopped to talk to the Blessed One. He got involved in a conversation with the Blessed One and got instructed and aroused with religious discourse. He too became a follower of the Buddha after being taught by him (*D.N, Mahā parinibbāna suttānta: 141*).

In the *Patika Suttānta*, there is an incident which refers to the Kālakañjas, who were supposed to be the lowest of the Asura groups. In the *sutta*, the Buddha predicts that the naked cynic, Kora the *ḷṣatriya* would die within seven days and would be reborn as one of the Kālakañjas, the very lowest of the Asura groups (*D.N Patika Suttānta: 12*).

These references thus help us in understanding the social position held by different groups of people in those times. A concept of 'high' and 'inferior/low' birth existed in the society. Professions were also divided into 'higher crafts' and 'low crafts'. This kind of division between 'higher birth' and 'low birth', 'ucca' and 'hīna' along with 'high' or 'low crafts' is brought out more prominently in the *Dīgha Nikāya*. This suggests that the concept was valid only in the parallel society beyond the *saṃgha*. Once the common people entered the Order they had to do away with their notions about *ucca* or *hīna* birth and professions. Although the Buddha did not object the *varṇa* system directly, he did not allow the vices of the system to creep into the folds of the *saṃgha*. The references frequently talk about the wealth, prosperity and power of the groups like the *gahapatis* and *setthi*s. The frequency points out to the important role that these wealthy groups played as the patrons and donors to the *saṃgha*. The members of the *saṃgha* were non-professionals, thus they had to depend on the other groups for religious patronage.

We can hence conclude that although the fourfold *varṇa* system was adopted in the middle and lower Ganga basin, the two lower *varṇas* of *vaiśya* and *śūdra* did not function as distinct

social classes and they were not identified either as *vaiśyas* or as *śūdras*. Rather they were identified on the basis of their occupation. The list of ordinary occupations and the so considered 'low craft' is interesting evidence of social conditions in the lower Ganga valley at the time when the texts were composed.

CHAPTER V

GENDER RELATIONS: BHIKKHUNĪS, LAYWOMEN, AND COURTESANS.

Women have been frequently mentioned in both the *Dīgha Nikāya* and the *Vinaya Piṭaka* in different roles. In different contexts, they have been described as *bhikkhunīs* of the Buddhist *saṃgha*, as queen consorts, as laywomen, as wives, as mothers, daughters or as courtesans. The study of women and their relations with the other gender as an individual in different roles help us to get an insight about their status in society.

There are many scholars who have written about gender relations during the time of the Buddha. They have based their studies on the various literary Pāli texts. Uma Chakravarti states that “patriarchal values in relation to women are reflected in early Buddhist literature.”(Chakravarti 1987: 31) She says that in general, the attitude of society was against women. This idea, she says, has been indicated in the narratives which point out that the Buddha did not want *bhikkhunīs* in the *saṃgha*. The Buddhist texts often describe women as not being trustworthy, adulterous, secretive, evil smelling etc. But this view cannot be taken as a representation for all the women in the Buddhist texts because there are many positive references to them as well, where they have been described as beautiful, kind hearted, honoured and respected.

Another scholar who has written on women is Diana.Y.Paul. In her book *Women in Buddhism: Images of the Feminine in Māhāyāna Tradition*, (1985) she talks about how women have never been accorded the same kind of universal respect conferred upon men. She uses Mahāyāna Buddhist texts as her source material to portray the ambivalent attitude towards women that has been apparent in Buddhist lands in all ages. The text reveals that on the one hand, woman was regarded as a danger, potential and actual to a man’s perilous progress, and on the other hand she was shown as in the guise of the Nāga princess or *Bodhisattva*. Paul says that Buddhism like Judaism and Christianity is an overwhelmingly male created institution dominated by patriarchal power structures. As a consequence of this male dominance, the feminine is frequently associated with the secular, powerless, profane and imperfect. Paul has mainly focused her work on gender relations prevailing in society at the time when Mahāyāna Buddhism became popular.

I.B.Horner in her book *Women under Primitive Buddhism: laywomen and almswomen (1930)*, says that in the pre-Buddhist days the status of women in India was on the whole low and without honour, but during the Buddhist epoch there was a change. “Women came to enjoy more equality, and greater respect and authority than ever hitherto accorded them. Although their activities were confined within certain spheres — principally the domestic, social and religious — their position in general began to improve. The exclusive supremacy of man began to give way before the increasing emancipation of woman. It was impossible for the men, steeped as they were in the Buddhist teachings, not to respond to the constant proofs in daily life of the women’s powers of devotion, self-sacrifice, courage and endurance. They ceased to regard women as approximating in degree more nearly to the animals than to themselves; and, on the contrary, became more acutely aware of the resemblances between men and women. The Buddha gave *Dhamma* to both; he also gave talks to householders and wives. Added to this the women set fine examples in conduct and intelligence. The men, for their part, appreciated the *Dhamma*, and acquiesced — though tardily — in the widening of the field of women’s activities. Thus, amid many currents, intricate but potent, the tide turned; and in its flow the position of women, as manifested in secular affairs, became one which was no longer intolerable and degraded, but one which was honourable and therefore bearable; women were acknowledged at last to be capable of working as a constructive force in the society of the day. The marks of the change became visible”(Horner 1930: 1, 2).

According to Uma Chakravarti-“the relations of production inherent in the society provided the backdrop in which social and gender hierarchies were crystallised into permanent institutions (Chakravarti 1986: 199-221).

Chakravarti, in her essay ‘Brahmanical Patriarchy in Early India’, states that the shift to an agricultural economy and the second urbanisation (800-600 B.C.) was marked by the emergence of caste and class divisions. The *brāhmaṇa* was a force to reckon with and patrilineal succession was fairly well established within the larger context of defined family structures that were distinct from the earlier state (Chakravarti 2006: 143).

An analysis of the various references to women in both the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and the *Dīgha Nikāya* helps us to understand the position of women during those times. We learn about the attitude towards women, their status in society, the rights of women, their duties as wives, mothers or daughters, their personal equations with the male members of their families and also their religious beliefs and leanings. There are fewer references to women in the *Dīgha*

Nikāya as compared to the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. This is because in the *Vinaya*, there is a complete section (tenth *Khaṇḍaka*), of the *Cullavagga* which only deals with rules and duties for *bhikkhunis*. The references to women found in the *Vinaya* reflect both the negative aspects as well as the positive aspects of women. The negative aspect of the nature of women is not as prominent in the references found in the *Dīgha Nikāya* as in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*.

In the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, at certain places women are shown to be wicked and evil, their company representing a ‘world of entanglement’, whereas at other places they are also depicted as being beautiful, nurturing and kind. A particular reference found in the *Mahāvagga*, 1.7, shows how women have been symbolically represented as the world of entanglement, attachment and pleasure. In the reference, Yasa, the son of a *setthi* is endowed with and possessed of the five pleasures of the senses and attended by female musicians. It is in seeing the women in their dishevelled condition that Yasa develops the perspective that entitles him to special treatment by the Buddha. It is in women that delusion, death and suffering are most evident in the story; and women are said to be asleep, muttering in their sleep, with saliva flowing from their mouths, when Yasa “wakes up” and realises the futility of being surrounded by female attendants.

On the other hand, there were women like Visākhā, the laywoman who is said to have invited the Buddha and his fraternity of monks for meals to her house and she is said to have donated generously to the *saṃgha* (*Mahāvagga VIII, 15.1*). The women of those times seem to have had the right to donate articles as well as property in the form of parks and buildings to religious institutions. The courtesans like Āmbapālī and Sālavatī could also contribute to the wealth and prosperity of their respective towns (*Mahāvagga VIII, 1.1*). As a mother or an aunt, a woman nourished and raised her child e.g Mahā-pajāpati the Gotamī who looked after the Buddha when his mother died during child birth (*Cullavagga X*).

At some places in the texts, the Buddha himself is seen as telling the *bhikkhus* that women should not be saluted (*Cullavagga VI, 6.5*) and were to be avoided. In the fifth chapter of the *Mahā-Parinibbāna Suttānta*, Ānanda asks the Blessed One about their (*bhikkhus*) conduct towards womankind after the Blessed One’s death, and receives as answer that they should conduct themselves as ‘not seeing them’, ‘not talking to them’, and ‘keep wide awake’. This reference suggests that the Blessed One was trying to warn Ānanda about womankind. The *Vinaya* reveals that in the introductory frame narrative which initiated

the expansion process, women are omitted and the newly awakened Buddha encounters only males and no females. Throughout the *Khaṇḍakas*, *bhikkhunīs* are systematically excluded: like non-renunciants, transgressors and novices. The *bhikkhunīs* were to be outside the boundaries during the *bhikkhus*' recitation of the *Pātimokkha* (collection of various precepts contained in the *Vinaya*, as they were recited on *Uposatha* days for the purpose of confession) (*Mahāvagga II*, 36.1, 2). Similarly, *bhikkhunīs* could not be present at the *Pavāraṇa* (a ceremony at the termination of the *Vassā/varṣa*/rains) according to a rule in *Mahāvagga IV*, 2...4. There are many other rules which bring out the discriminative nature of rules for *bhikkhunīs* which will be discussed in the section under the subheading of *bhikkhunīs* in this chapter.

However, in some other instances, the Buddha is also seen as formulating rules to protect the women within the *saṃgha* as well outside the *saṃgha*. In the *Samghādisesā Dhammā*, there are certain rules which forbid the *bhikkhus* to come into bodily contact with a woman with a perverted mind and wrong intentions. Other rules prohibit *bhikkhus* from addressing a woman with wicked words or exciting passion in them (*V.P Samghādisesā Dhammā 2 & 3*).

Besides the references which project the image of women in poor light, there are certain references which epitomise the positive aspects of womanhood in general. A woman has been often described as one of the seven treasures of a monarch in various references found in the *Dīgha Nikāya*. In the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta*, while talking about the thirty two bodily signs of a great man, Pokkharasādi the *brāhmaṇa* tells his pupil Ambaṭṭha that if a person with the thirty two bodily signs dwells at home, he will become a sovereign of the world and will possess the seven royal treasures. The seven royal treasures would comprise of the wheel, elephant, horse, gem, woman, treasurer and adviser. (D.N *Ambaṭṭha Sutta*: 110) Another reference to woman as a royal treasure is found in the *Lakkhaṇa Suttānta*. (D.N *Lakkhaṇa Suttānta*: 137). A story in the *Chakkavatti-Sīhanāda Suttānta*, talks about a Sovran overlord named Strongtyre, who was a righteous monarch and was the owner of the seven precious treasures; woman treasure being one of them (D.N *Chakkavatti-Sīhanāda Suttānta*: 60). A beautiful and detailed description of the woman as one of the seven royal treasures is found in the *Mahā-Sudassana Suttānta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. In this *sutta*, the Buddha is said to have described the woman- treasure (*Itthī-ratnam*) of the Great King of Glory. He describes her as being graceful in figure, beautiful in appearance, charming in manner, and of the most fine complexion; neither very tall, nor very short; neither very stout, nor very slim; neither very dark, nor very fair; surpassing human beauty, she had attained unto the beauty of

the gods. The touch of her skin was as the touch of cotton; in the cold her limbs were warm, in the heat her limbs were cool; while from her body, the perfume of sandal wood wafted and from her mouth the perfume of the lotus. She is said to have risen up before the Great King of Glory, and retired to rest after him; she was pleasant in speech, and she was ever on the watch to hear what she might do in order so to act as to give him pleasure. She was a pearl among women and was never, even in thought, unfaithful to the Great King of Glory (*D.N Mahā-Sudassana Suttānta: 175*).

The importance of a woman in the role of a mother has also been suggested by some of the references in the texts. As a mother or an aunt, a woman nourished and raised her child e.g Mahā-pajāpatī the Gomatī who is supposed to have looked after the Buddha when his mother died during child birth (*Cullavagga X*). In the *Mahāpadāna Suttānta*, there are certain rules regarding the well-being of the mother of a Bodhisat, when the Bodhisat was descending into a mother's womb. The rules required the mother of a Bodhisat to be a woman who was virtuous, averse from taking life, averse from taking what is not given, averse from lying, averse from indulging in strong desires etc (*D.N Mahāpadāna Suttānta:10*). The belief in these rules pertaining to the well-being of the mother of a Bodhisat, even before he was born; shows how important the role of a mother was, in the life of the child that she would be bringing forth into the world.

In most of the references to the king of Magadha, he is called the 'son of the Videha Princess' e.g in the *Sāmañña-phala sutta* the King of Magadha, Ajātasattu is referred to as the son of the Videha Princess (*D.N Sāmañña-phala sutta:65*). In the second chapter of the *Mahā-Parinibbāna Suttānta*, we find another reference where the king of Magadha was called the son of the Queen-consort of the Videha clan (*D.N Mahā-Parinibbāna Suttānta: 78*). Some references show that a mother's lineage was equally important as that of the father's. The importance of lineage on the mother's side can be understood by a reference in the *Ambatṭha Suttānta*, where the Blessed One questions Ambatṭha about the ancient name and lineage on his father's and mother's side. Ambatṭha belonged to the Kanhāyana lineage and the Kanhāyanas were the off-springs of the slave girls of the Sākya. The fact that the lineage issue on the mother's side, where the mother was a slave girl had an impact on the lineage of Ambatṭha shows the importance attached to lineage on the mother's side in those days. A pure descent from the mother's side was very important for *ksatriyas* in order to receive the consecration ceremony. If a *ksatriya* did not belong to a pure descent on the

mother's side the other *ksatriyas* would not allow him to receive the consecration ceremony of a *kṣatriya* (*D.N Ambaṭṭha Suttānta: 119*).

The woman as a wife was a significant half of a man's married life and he was advised to respect and honour her. A reference in the *Sigālovāda Suttānta* shows what the Buddha has to say about how a wife should be treated by the husband. In this *sutta*, the Buddha advised Sigāla, the young householder, that there were five ways in which a wife should be ministered by her husband. She should be treated with respect, courtesy and faithfulness, she should be handed over the authority by her husband and provided with adornment. These were the five ways, if ministered to by her husband, would a wife love him. Only then would she perform her duties well, be hospitable to both his and her kin, be faithful to him. She would faithfully watch over the goods brought by him and discharge her business with skill and industry. If these ways were followed then a man would be able to protect and secure his wife and children (*D.N Sigālovāda Suttānta: 181*).

A couple of references show that the practice of polygamy was quite common in society during those times. In the *Mahā-Govinda Suttānta*, the High Steward, who was a *brāhmaṇa*, had forty wives. When he wanted to leave the world for the homeless state, he went to his forty wives, and told them to go back to their own families or seek another husband if they wished to do so. But the forty wives did not want to leave him when he was leaving for the homeless state so they all cut their hair, donned the yellow robes and went forth into the homeless state. This reference shows that ideally, the wives followed what their husbands did. However there might have been some exceptions too. (*D.N Mahā-Govinda Suttānta: 238*)

There is another story which shows the presence of polygamy in society and the norms of inheritance in the *Pāyāsi Suttānta*. In the *sutta*, Pāyāsi, the chieftain, narrates a story to Kumāra Kassapa about a *brāhmaṇa* who had two wives. By one wife he had a son, ten or twelve years of age; the other wife was pregnant and near her time. The *brāhmaṇa* suddenly died so the boy told his mother's co-wife that all the treasure that the *brāhmaṇa* had, would now belong to him. The boy claimed to be the sole inheritor of his father's wealth. The *brāhminee* asked the young boy to wait till the baby was born. She tells him that if the child were a son, one portion of the *brāhmaṇa*'s property would be his; and if it was a girl, she would wait on him. But the boy reiterated his claim again and yet again. Then the *brāhminee*, took a knife and ripped up her belly so that she could find out whether the baby was a boy or

a girl. Thus she destroyed both her own life and her unborn infant's life and also lost the wealth that could have been her child's share. (*D.N Pāyāsi Suttānta: 357*). This reference shows that only the sons possessed the right to inheritance. A daughter could not inherit her father's property. Hence, the birth of a son must have been more desirable than the birth of a daughter.

In the *Brahma-jāla Sutta*, we find references to the practice of obtaining oracular answers through a girl possessed (*kumārī-pañho* through a girl of good family and repute) and obtaining oracular answers from a God (*Deva-pañho*-Also obtained through a girl, but through a *deva-dāsī* or temple prostitute). It is instructive to find, even under the patriarchal regime of the sixth century B.C., that men thought they could best have communications from the gods through the medium of a woman (*D.N Brahma-jāla Sutta: 24*).

According to the different roles portrayed by women in both sets of texts we can group them into rough categories of *bhikkhunīs*, laywomen, and courtesans.

BHIKKHUNĪS

The stories about *bhikkhunīs* and the rules and regulations for them as given in the *Vinaya* texts help us in interpreting the gender relations which prevailed within the *saṃgha*, at the time of the Buddha. The texts mention that in the beginning, women were not allowed to join the *saṃgha*. However, they were later permitted into the *saṃgha*, but on various conditions. However, just the fact that women were permitted into the *saṃgha* and there was a section of rules for the *bhikkhunīs* in the *bhikkhunī vibhaṅga* shows that women formed an important part of the society during those times. Their devotion, loyalty and patronage to the Buddha and his *saṃgha*, was equally important. The story which led to the acceptance of women into the *saṃgha* is found in the *Cullavagga X* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. In the story the Buddha was staying among the Sākyas in Kapilavatthu. Mahā-pajāpatī the Gotamī who was the aunt of the Buddha goes to the Blessed One and asks for permission so that women could be allowed to renounce their homes and enter the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the *Tathāgata*. But the Blessed One does not agree and says: "enough, O Gotamī ! Let it not please thee that women should be allowed to do so."

Mahā-pajāpatī the Gotamī made the same request three times but received the same answer for the third time from the Blessed One.

The Blessed One would not permit women to enter the homeless state so Mahā-pajāpatī the Gotamī became sad and sorrowful. Hence she departed from there in tears.

The Blessed One went to Vesālī from Kapilavatthu. Meanwhile, Mahā-pajāpatī the Gotamī cut off her hair, put on orange coloured robes, and set out with a number of women of the Sākya clan, towards Vesālī; and in due course she arrived at Vesālī with swollen feet and covered with dust, sad and sorrowful, weeping and in tears.

The venerable Ānanda saw her in that condition so he asked her why she was standing there, outside the porch with swollen feet and covered with dust, sad and sorrowful, weeping and in tears. Mahā-pajāpatī the Gotamī tells him that she was sad because the Blessed One did not permit women to renounce their homes and enter the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Tathāgata. Thereafter Ānanda goes to the Blessed One and asks him to grant permission to women so that they could renounce their homes and enter the homeless state.

The Blessed One refuses even when Ānanda makes the same request for the third time.

Since the Blessed One does not agree, Ānanda tries to convince the Blessed One by using another ground. He asks the Blessed One if women were capable of realising the fruit of conversion, or of the second path, or of the third path or of Arahatsip when they went forth from the household life and entered the homeless state, under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Blessed One.

The Blessed One replies that women too were capable of realising the fruit of conversion. Then Ānanda asks why Mahā-pajāpatī the Gotamī was not allowed to join the *sangha* if women too were capable of realising the fruit of conversion. Ānanda reminds the Buddha of the great service that Mahā-pajāpatī the Gotamī had done for him when as aunt and nurse she had nourished him and given him milk when his mother had died at childbirth.

Finally, the Blessed One tells Ānanda that if Mahā-pajāpatī the Gotamī would take upon herself the Eight Chief Rules, then she could reckon that as her initiation.

The Eight Chief Rules were:

1. 'A *bhikkhunī* even if of a hundred years standing, shall make salutation to, shall rise up in the presence of, shall bow down before, and shall perform all proper duties towards a *bhikkhu*, if only just initiated'.

2. 'A *bhikkhunī* is not to spend the rainy season in a district in which there is no *bhikkhu*.'
3. 'Every half month a *bhikkhunī* is to await from the *bhikkhu saṃgha* two things, the asking as to (the date of) the *Uposatha* (the day preceding four stages of the moon's waning, viz. 1st, 8th, 15th, 23rd nights of the lunar month that is to say, a weekly sacred day, a Sabbath) ceremony, and the (time when the *bhikkhu*) will come to give the Exhortation'.
4. 'After keeping the rainy season, the *bhikkhunī* is to hold *Pavāranā* (to enquire whether any fault can be laid to her charge) before both *saṃghas* — as well that of *bhikkhus* as that of *bhikkhunīs* — with respect to three matters, namely, what has been seen, and what has been heard, and what has been suspected.'
5. 'A *bhikkhunī* who has been guilty of a serious offence is to undergo the *Mānatta* discipline (a sort of penance, attached to the commission of a *samghādisesa* offence) towards both the *saṃghas* – the *bhikkhu saṃgha* and *bhikkhunī saṃgha*.
6. 'When a *bhikkhunī*, as novice, has been trained for two years in the six rules, she is to ask leave for the *Upasampadā* initiation (taking up or acquiring *bhikkhuship* and admission to the privileges of recognized *bhikkhus*), from both *saṃghas* (*bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs*).
7. 'A *bhikkhunī* is on no pretext to revile or abuse a *bhikkhu*.
8. 'From henceforth official admonition by *bhikkhunīs* of *bhikkhus* is forbidden, whereas the official admonition of *bhikkhunīs* by *bhikkhus* is not forbidden'.(V.P Cullavagga X,I: 323)

These were the rules which had to be revered, honoured and observed by a woman to get initiated into the *saṃgha*.

Mahā-pajāpatī the Gotamī readily took upon the Eight Chief Rules and promised that they would never be transgressed throughout her life.

The implications of the eight rules only for the *bhikkhunīs* seems to suggest that women's entry into the *saṃgha* was both significant as well as dangerous. It was significant because it was the first time that women were formally allowed into the *saṃgha* which had earlier been a specifically male domain. The entry of women as being a danger for the *saṃgha* has been

suggested by the metaphors used by the Buddha to describe their presence in the Buddhist *saṃgha*.

Regarding the entrance of women into the *saṃgha*, the Blessed One uses certain metaphors and relates them to how the presence of women in the *saṃgha* would hasten its downfall. He tells Ānanda that if women were not allowed to enter the homeless state then the pure religion would have lasted longer and the good law would have stood fast for a thousand years. But, since women would now be allowed to join the *saṃgha*, the pure religion would stand fast only for five hundred years. He tells Ānanda that just as houses in which there are many women and fewer men are easily robbed by burglars, just so, under whatever doctrine and discipline women were allowed to go out from household life into the homeless state, that religion would not last long.

The other metaphors that he uses is that of a disease called mildew which when it falls upon a field of rice in fine condition, that field of rice does not last long, and a disease called blight which when it falls upon a sugar-cane field destroys the crop, similarly under whatsoever doctrine and discipline, women were allowed to go forth from the household life into the homeless state, that religion would not last long.

The Blessed One gives the reason behind the Eight Chief Rules being the same as that of a man who would in anticipation build an embankment to a great reservoir, beyond which the water should not overflow.

The Blessed One is also seen as using the description of the behaviour of a woman as a metaphor in another instance in the *Cullavagga V.8.2*. In this *vagga*, the Buddha compares Pindola Bhāradvāja's behaviour to that of a woman. Bhāradvāja the *bhikkhu*, had displayed his miraculous power of *Iddhi* before the laity to achieve a wooden pot from the *setṭhi* of Rājagaha. So the Buddha uses the metaphor of a woman who displays herself for the sake of a miserable piece of money to compare the act of Bhāradvāja, who for the sake of a miserable wooden pot had displayed before the laity, the superhuman quality of his miraculous power of *Iddhi*.

After the entry of women into the *saṃgha* was permitted by the Buddha, the *bhikkhunī vibhaṅga* was created which comprised of the rules and regulations for the *bhikkhunīs*. We

find different kinds of rules regarding various matters. These rules reflect the kind of life style that the *bhikkhunīs* had and also the reasons behind the formulations of those rules.

In *Cullavagga X 2.1*, Mahā-pajāpatī the Gotamī asks the Blessed One about the course that she should pursue towards the women of the Sākya clan. Then the Blessed One teaches and gladdens her with religious discourse. Thereafter, the Blessed One in that connection allows the *bhikkhunīs* to receive the *Upasampadā* initiation from the *bhikkhus*.

In *Cullavagga X 6.1*, it is mentioned that the Blessed One allowed the *Pātimokkha* to be recited to the *bhikkhunīs* because at that time the *Pātimokkha* was not recited to the *bhikkhunīs*. At that time, *bhikkhus* went to the residence of the *bhikkhunīs* and recited the *Pātimokkha* to the *bhikkhunīs* there. The people murmured, and were indignant saying: “there are their wives, there are their mistresses; now will they take pleasure together”. The *bhikkhus* heard this and told the matter to the Blessed One. Hence he stopped the practice of *bhikkhus* going to the residence of the *bhikkhunīs* to recite the *Pātimokkha*. The *bhikkhunīs* did not know how to recite the *Pātimokkha*, so the Blessed One allowed the *bhikkhus* to tell the *bhikkhunīs* how to recite the *Pātimokkha*. In the same *vagga*, the Blessed One allows the *bhikkhunīs* to receive the confession of a fault from other *bhikkhunīs*. The Blessed One also allowed *bhikkhunīs* to carry out disciplinary proceedings against guilty *bhikkhunīs*. These references suggest that some amount of autonomy was given to the *bhikkhunīs*. They were allowed to recite the *Pātimokkha*, which was not allowed earlier, to receive the confession of a guilty *bhikkhunī* and even carry out the disciplinary proceedings against the guilty *bhikkhunīs*, which was earlier carried out only by the *bhikkhus*.

In *Cullavagga X 8.1*, the Blessed One is said to have allowed the *bhikkhus* to teach the *Vinaya* to *bhikkhunīs*.

Although the Buddha allows the entry of women into the *saṃgha* he does not concede on the issue of equal rights to the *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs*. The story connected with this matter is found in the *Cullavagga X 3*, where Mahā-pajāpatī the Gotamī asks if the Blessed One would allow the making of salutations, the rising up in presence of another, the paying of reverence, and the performance of proper duties one towards another, to take place as between both *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs* (equally) according to seniority. But the Blessed One says that it was impossible and unallowable because even the teachers of ill doctrine did not allow such conduct towards women, so how could he allow such liberties. The Blessed One thus addresses the *bhikkhus* that they were not to bow down before a woman, or to rise

up in their presence, or to stretch out their joined hands towards them or to perform towards the women, those duties which were proper (from an inferior to a superior). Whosoever did so would be guilty of a *dukkata*.

In *Mahāvagga II 36*, the Blessed One says: “let no one, O *bhikkhus*, recite the Pātimokkha in a seated assembly (of *bhikkhus*) before a *bhikkhunī*. He, who does, commits a *dukkata* offence.

In *Mahāvagga IX 4.7*, the Blessed One tells the *bhikkhus* that protests against official acts in the Saṃgha could be raised only by *bhikkhus* and not by *bhikkhunīs*. He says that the protest raised in the assembly by a *bhikkhunī*, a mad man, a *sikhamānā*, a person guilty of an extreme offence, or a person of unhinged mind and a person suffering from bodily pain were ineffectual, whereas the protests raised by a healthy *bhikkhu* of the same communion, who stayed within the same boundary, even if he had committed a sin which brings about immediate punishment in hell — if he protested at the meeting — it would be effectual (showing gender bias in raising opinions and protests).

In the *Cullavagga VII, 5.1*, the venerable Upāli questions the Blessed One on “disunity in the *saṃgha*”, and “schism in the *saṃgha*”. The Blessed One while explaining to Upāli about these two issues refers to the role of women in causing a schism in the *saṃghas*. He tells Upāli that a *bhikkhunī* cannot make a schism, though she may help to produce a schism in the *saṃgha*. It was only a *bhikkhu* who was in full possession of all his privileges, and belonging to the same communion, and who was domiciled in the same district could make one of the number to form a schism.

The *bhikkhunīs* were supposed to salute and show respect to the *bhikkhus* regardless of the seniority and age difference between them and the *bhikkhus*.

Cullavagga XII has a story about a certain woman who had formerly belonged to the clan of the Mallas and had entered the Order of the *bhikkhunīs*. She had struck up against a weakly *bhikkhu* with the edge of her shoulder and knocked him over, while walking on the road. The *bhikkhus* complained about this incident to the Blessed one. The Blessed One in turn made a rule which did not allow *bhikkhunīs* to assault a *bhikkhu*. He prescribed that a *bhikkhunī*, on seeing a *bhikkhu* was to get out of the way when he is still at a distance and make room for him to pass. Another rule for the *bhikkhunīs* made them pull out their bowls and show it to a *bhikkhu* on seeing him (*Cullavagga XIII*). The Blessed One only allowed *bhikkhunīs* to enjoy

the food that had been stored up for them after they have had it given over to them by the *bhikkhus*. They could not enjoy the food if it had not been given over to them by the *bhikkhus* (*Cullavagga XV*).

In case of *Pavāranā* for the *bhikkhunīs*, there was a certain rule which had to be followed so that a *bhikkhunī* could go and invite the *bhikkhu-saṃgha* to speak to the *bhikkhunī-saṃgha*. The incident which led to the formation of rules regarding the *Pavāranā* ceremony is found in the *Cullavagga XIX*. This *vagga* narrates that at that time the *bhikkhunīs* did not hold *Pavāranā*. When the Blessed One got to know about this, he prescribed that a *bhikkhunī* was not to omit holding *Pavāranā*, whosoever did so would be dealt with according to the law. The Blessed One also prescribed that the *bhikkhunīs* were not to hold *Pavāranā* apart from the *bhikkhu-saṃgha*. Some learned and competent *bhikkhunī* was to be deputed to go on behalf of the *bhikkhunī-saṃgha* before the *bhikkhu-saṃgha* to make the *Pavāranā* invitation. When the *bhikkhunī* had been deputed, she along with the *bhikkhunī-saṃgha* was to go before the *bhikkhu-saṃgha* and bow down and stretch her joined palms and invite the *bhikkhu-saṃgha* to point out to them any faults they may have committed in respect of things heard, or seen or suspected. Then the *bhikkhunī* would perceive the offence if pointed out by the *bhikkhu-saṃgha* and confess the same. (*Cullavagga XIX.1, 2 & 3*)

Cullavagga X 20, narrates that at that time *bhikkhunīs* inhibited *bhikkhus* from the *Uposatha*, or from the *Pavāranā*, or from the Exhortation, or issued commands to them, or asked them to give them leave to rebuke them, or warned them of some offence they supposed they were committing, or called upon them to remember whether or not they had committed an offence. When the Blessed One got to know about this matter, he recommended that a *bhikkhunī* was not to perform anyone of those official acts towards a *bhikkhu*. Should she do so, the act was itself invalid, and she would be guilty of a *dukkata* (serious transgression).

The 'Eight Chief Rules', along with these discriminative rules, often tend to portray a generalised view of discrimination against the *bhikkhunī* within the Buddhist *saṃgha*. Some scholars, writers and practitioners believe that the rules in the *Pātimokkha* subordinate the *bhikkhunīs* to the *bhikkhus*. We are led into thinking that the rules in the *Vinaya* are unfairly harsh for *bhikkhunīs* because of the 'Eight Chief Rules', which were only meant for the *bhikkhunīs*. As a result, the idea that the *bhikkhunīs* as women have been discriminated against, in the monastic rules come up. However, if we closely look at the other rules, besides the 'Eight Chief Rules', we can see that a number of rules were protective in nature. Those

rules tried to protect women and *bhikkhunīs* in particular. It might be possible that the rules for *bhikkhunīs* were based on practical regulations of daily life of both men and women and the social conditions of those times. Hence, it would be wrong to totally depend on the view that the additional monastic rules for *bhikkhunīs* were meant for subordinating them. The reason for the additional rules for *bhikkhunīs* could have been designed to protect the *bhikkhunīs* and their chastity and safeguard them from falling prey to the abuse and lustful desires of men.

Through some of the references in the *Vinaya* text, we can see that there were certain rules which protected the *bhikkhunīs* from being mistreated and abused by the *bhikkhus* of the *Samgha*. For example, the rule which was formulated by the Buddha in *Cullavagga X9.1*, says that a *bhikkhu* was not to throw water at a *bhikkhunī*, because at that time the Chabbaggiya *bhikkhus* threw dirty water over *bhikkhunīs* thinking that perhaps they would fall in love with them. Whosoever did so would be guilty of a *dukkata*. A penalty was to be imposed on the guilty *bhikkhu* and the penalty was that, the guilty was not to be saluted by the *bhikkhunī samgha*. The same penalty was to be given also to those *bhikkhus* who uncovered their bodies, or their thighs, or their private parts, and showed them to *bhikkhus*, or addressed *bhikkhunīs* with wicked words, or associated with *bhikkhunīs*, thinking, perhaps, they would fall in love with them. However, in case the same actions were done by the *bhikkhunīs*, the penalty for them or for her was that she would be prohibited to enter a *Vihāra* (a habitation place for a Buddhist mendicant). In case the prohibition laid upon them was not accepted, they would be inhibited by the *bhikkhus* from the Exhortation.

In the *Nissaggiya Pācittiyā Dhammā*, there is a rule which states that if a *bhikkhu* shall have his soiled robe washed, or dyed, or beaten by a *bhikkhunī* who is not related to him, that was a *Pācittiyā* offence involving forfeiture (*V.P Nissaggiya Pācittiyā Dhammā* 4). Another rule states that if a *bhikkhu* should receive a robe from the hands of a *bhikkhunī* not related to him, except in exchange would be guilty of a *Pācittiyā* offence involving forfeiture (*V.P Nissaggiya Pācittiyā Dhammā* 5). And if any *bhikkhu* gave a robe to a *bhikkhunī* who was not related to him except in exchange –that would be a *Pācittiyā* (*V.P Pācittiyā Dhammā*: 25). A *bhikkhu* was also not allowed to make up a robe or have it made up for a *bhikkhunī* who was not related to him (*V.P Pācittiyā Dhammā*: 26). A rule stating that whosoever *bhikkhu* not thereto deputed who exhorted the *bhikkhunīs* would be guilty of a *pācittiyā*, is found in the *Pācittiyā Dhammā* rule number 21. If a *bhikkhu*, even when there to deputed, exhorted the *bhikkhunīs* after the sun had set would also be guilty of a *Pācittiyā*. The *bhikkhus* were not

allowed to go to the dwelling place of the *bhikkhunīs* to exhort them except on occasions when the *bhikkhunīs* were sick or else it would be considered as a *Pācittiyā* (*V.P Pācittiyā Dhammā*: 23). A *bhikkhu* was not to travel along a highway with a *bhikkhunī* except on occasions like when the road was so insecure and dangerous that travellers on it would have to carry arms (*V.P Pācittiyā Dhammā*: 27). The *bhikkhus* were not allowed to go on board the same boat in company with a *bhikkhunī* except for the purpose of crossing over to the other side (*V.P Pācittiyā Dhammā*: 28). A *bhikkhu* was not to take a seat, one man with one woman, in company with a *bhikkhunī* in a secret place (*V.P Pācittiyā Dhammā*: 30).

In the *Pātidēsaniya Dhamma* of the *Vinaya* are the rules regarding matters which ought to be confessed. The first rule in this section states that if a *bhikkhu* enters into the house of a *bhikkhunī* who is not related to him and accepts food into his hands from her hands, and enjoys it, the matter needed to be confessed by the *bhikkhu* saying, “I have fallen, Brethren, into a blameworthy offence, unbecoming, which ought to be confessed; and I confess it!” (*V.P, Pātidēsaniya Dhamma 1*).

Another reference which shows the protective nature of rules for the *bhikkhunī* is found in *Mahāvagga I. 67*. This *vagga* narrates an incident which led to the formulation of the rule by the Buddha which did not permit a person who had violated a *bhikkhunī* to receive the *upasampadā* ordination (admission to the privileges of recognized *bhikkhus*). According to the story, a number of *bhikkhunīs* were once travelling on the road from Sāketa to Sāvathī. On the road robbers broke forth, robbed some of the *bhikkhunīs*, and violated some of them. Then royal soldiers came from Sāvathī and caught some of the robbers; and the rest escaped. Those who had escaped went and received *pabbajjā* with the *bhikkhus*. The *bhikkhus* told the Blessed One about this incident, so the Blessed One formulated a rule which barred the entry of persons who had violated the *bhikkhunīs* into the *saṃgha* and also from receiving the *upasampadā* ordination. In case the violator had received it, he was to be expelled.

Cullavagga X.23, states that at that time *bhikkhunīs* dwelt in the forest and men of abandoned life violated them. The Blessed One got to know about this so he told the *bhikkhunīs* not to adopt the forest life so that they would not have to tolerate the violations of the men of abandoned life.

Another rule which seems to have been formulated so as to provide protection to the *bhikkhunīs* is found in the *Cullavagga XXVII 4* of the *Vinaya*. According to the *vagga*, the *bhikkhunīs* at that time bathed in a place which was not a common bathing-place, and they

were violated by men of abandoned life. When the Blessed One got to know about this, he prescribed that a *bhikkhunī* was not to bathe at an un-common bathing place. So the *bhikkhunīs* began to bathe at the bathing-place which was also used by men. People murmured, were indignant, and complained to the Blessed One that the *bhikkhunīs* were behaving like those women who were still living in the pleasures of the world. Thus the Blessed One prescribed a rule according to which a *bhikkhunī* was not to bathe at a bathing-place used also by men. Whosoever did so would be guilty of *dukkata*. However *bhikkhunīs* were allowed to bathe at a bathing-place used by women.

In the *Cullavagga X.1*, the Blessed One does not allow a *bhikkhunī* to wear a long girdle. Whosoever did so would be guilty of a *dukkata*. The Blessed One allowed the *bhikkhunīs* to wear girdles without fringes and those which would go round the body once.

The second rule of the same *vagga* (*Cullavagga X.2*) states that *bhikkhunīs* were not to get their backs scrubbed with the steak-bone of an ox, or slapped with the jaw-bone of an ox. They were also not allowed to get their bodies so slapped with those bones because these actions were performed by women who enjoyed the pleasures of the world. The *bhikkhunīs* were expected to give up worldly pleasures when they became members of the *saṃgha*.

A *bhikkhunī* was also barred from beautifying herself by anointing her face with ointments, chunnam, arsenic or paint (*Cullavagga X, 3*).

A *bhikkhunī* was not to make tattoo marks by the corner of her eyes, or on her cheeks, nor was she allowed to peep out of the window or to stand in the light of a half-opened door. She was not to have dances performed, nor to keep courtesans, nor to keep a tavern, nor to keep a slaughter-house, nor to open a shop, nor to practice usury, nor to supply slaves, servants or animals, nor to carry on the business of a florist or a seedsman. She also could not carry a razor case (*Cullavagga X 4*).

Whosoever *bhikkhunī* did not follow these rules would be guilty of a *dukkata*. These rules could also have been protective in nature. The rules regarding the clothes and beautification of the *bhikkhunīs* could have been created so that they would not become the cause of distraction for the male members of the *saṃgha*, as well as outside the *saṃgha*. These rules might have been formulated to guard the chastity of the *bhikkhunīs* from the lustful thoughts of men.

Regarding the personal belongings of a *bhikkhunī*, *Cullavagga X, II*, states that at that time a certain *bhikkhunī* on her death-bed had said that after her death, her set of necessary belongings would go to the *saṃgha*. The necessary belongings would include the eight things over which a member of the Buddhist order was allowed propriety rights — the three robes, the alms-bowl, razor, needle, girdle and water-strainer. The *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs* disputed over those items as to whom they would ultimately belong. The Blessed One got to know about this dispute so he said that if a *bhikkhunī*, or a novice under training to become a *Sikkhamnāna* (a person training himself or herself towards *nibbāna/nirvāna*), when on her death-bed, should leave her belongings to the *saṃgha*, then it was the *bhikkhunī-saṃgha* and not the *bhikkhu-saṃgha* which could claim the belongings of the dead *bhikkhunī*.

Mahāvagga III 5.8 has a rule where the Blessed One allows the *bhikkhunīs* to go if they were called by *upāsakas* for any matter which could be resolved within seven days. In this *vagga*, the Blessed One says that in case an *upāsakas* had built a *Vihāra* for the sisterhood of *bhikkhunīs*, and invited the *bhikkhunīs* to receive the gift and preach the *Dhamma*, and if the whole affair could be accomplished within a period of seven days, the *Bhikkhunīs* were allowed to go. This rule shows that the Buddha gave *bhikkhunīs* the liberty to visit *upāsakas* if they were required to go. In *Mahāvagga III 6.12*, there is a rule which allows *bhikkhus* to visit sick *bhikkhunīs* if the *bhikkhunī* so desired. But the visit was to last not more than seven days. These two rules suggest that the movement of *bhikkhunīs* was not restricted within the boundaries the *saṃgha*. Important and necessary matters could be brought into consideration to let a *bhikkhunī* visit people from the parallel society.

However there were rules to punish *bhikkhunīs* who broke the precepts of the *saṃgha*. In *Cullavagga X 26.1*, there are rule for *bhikkhunīs* who abandoned the precepts of the Order. A story in *Cullavagga XXVI 1*, narrates that at that time a certain *bhikkhunī* first abandoned the precepts, and then threw off the robes. Afterwards she came back, and asked the *bhikkhunīs* to admit her into the Order again. However the Blessed one instructed that the *bhikkhunī* who had abandoned the precepts and thrown off her robes would then be ipso facto incapable of being a *bhikkhunī*.

In case a *bhikkhunī*, while still wearing the orange-coloured robe, joined the *Titthiyas* and again came back asking the *bhikkhunīs* to receive her into the Order, she was not to be allowed into the Order (*Cullavagga X 26.2*).

Cullavagga X.27 states that at that time *bhikkhunīs*, fearing to offend, would not let men salute them, or cut their hair or nails, or dress their wounds. When the Blessed One got to know about this, he allowed the *bhikkhunīs* those privileges.

LAYWOMEN

The second group of women who have been frequently mentioned in the texts is the laywomen. These women were disciples of the Buddha, but they had not left their homes to enter the homeless state of the *saṃgha*. They visited the Buddha, offered gifts in the form of alms, robes, *Vihāras* and gardens. They often came to religious gatherings where the Buddha was preaching his *Dhamma* and listened to the teachings of the Buddha. The first female in the world, who became the lay-disciples of the Buddha were the mother and former wife of Yasa. They became disciples of the Buddha after Yasa, the youth had joined the *saṃgha*. The Blessed One had gone with Yasa to Yasa's fathers' house for a meal. There, the mother and former wife of Yasa listened to the Buddha's discourse about truth and knowledge. After having obtained the teachings, they took refuge in the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the fraternity of *bhikkhus* (the holy triad). One of the most devoted laywoman, who has been mentioned at many instances, is Visākhā. According to the references, she was a very faithful lay disciple of the Blessed One, who offered her services and patronage to the Buddha and his *saṃgha* whenever she could.

In *Mahāvagga VIII 15.1*, there is a story about the Blessed One and Visākhā. In the story, the Blessed One goes to Savatthi and stays at Jetavana, Anātha-Pindika's *Ārāma*. And Visākhā the mother of Migāra goes to the Blessed One, salutes him and takes her seat on one side. The Blessed One then teaches, incites, arouses and gladdens her with religious discourse. After being taught she invites the Blessed One and his company of *bhikkhus* for a meal to her house. The Blessed One accepts her invitation. It is said that Visākhā had a life long desire to bestow robes for the rainy season on the *saṃgha*, and food for in-coming and out-going *bhikkhus*, food and medicines for the sick, and a constant supply of congey and bathing robes for the nuns (*bhikkhunīs*).

In *Mahāvagga VIII 18.1*, it is said that Visākhā, took a cloth for wiping the face, and went up to the place where the Blessed One was. She asked the Blessed One to accept the cloth for wiping the face so that it would be a life time blessing for her. The Blessed One accepted the

cloth for wiping the face and on that occasion, he addressed the *bhikkhus* that from then onwards he allowed the *bhikkhus* to have a cloth to wipe their faces.

In *Cullavagga VI, 14.1*, there is an incident which led that Blessed One to allow the *bhikkhus*; the use of all appurtenances to a storeyed building. Visākhā was anxious to have a storeyed building (*pāsāda*), with a veranda (*ālinda*) to it, supported on pillars with capitals of elephant heads, built for the use of the *saṃgha*. The *bhikkhus* were not sure if the Blessed One would allow such a building for them so they asked the Blessed One, and the Blessed One thus allowed them the use of all appurtenances to a storeyed building.

In the *Cullavagga V. 21.3*, of the *Vinaya*, (which deals with rules regarding the daily life of the *bhikkhus*) talks about a laywoman and her belief that *bhikkhus* would bring her good luck if they stepped on the cloth laid out by her. The Buddha had earlier formulated a rule for the *bhikkhus* which did not allow them to walk upon cloth laid down (for ceremonial purposes). Whosoever did so, would be guilty of a *dukkata*. Now at that time a certain woman who had had a miscarriage, and had invited the *bhikkhus* and spread a cloth in their honour told them to step over it for good luck's sake. But the *bhikkhus*, fearing to offend did not step on the cloth. Then that laywoman murmured and was annoyed. The *bhikkhus* informed the Blessed One about this matter so he formulated a rule allowing the *bhikkhus* to step over a piece of cloth for the sake of good luck when they were asked to do so. This story shows that the Buddha did not want to annoy his laywomen disciples, hence he formulated the new rule.

There are fewer references to the laywomen in the *Dīgha Nikāya*, but a very interesting legend about a laywoman is found in the *Sakka-Pañha Suttanta*. According to the legend, there was, at Kapilavatthu, a daughter of the Sākyas named Gopikā, who trusted in the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the Order, and she fulfilled the precepts. She, having abandoned a woman's thought and cultivated the thoughts of a man, was at the dissolution of the body after her death, reborn as a man into the communion of the thirty three gods. There she was called Gopaka, the son of the gods. This reference in some ways projects the patriarchal pattern of the society during those times; where there was always a desire for the birth of sons.

COURTESANS

The courtesans were another group of women who have been frequently mentioned in the texts. They seem to be functioning as an economic group who could contribute to the

prosperity of a kingdom. Courtesans like Ambapālī invited the Buddha and his *saṃgha* for meals to her house and also gifted robes, alms and *Vihāras* to them.

In *Mahāvagga VI.30.I*, there is a story about how the courtesan Ambapālī refused to give up her invitation to the Buddha, even when she was offered a huge amount of money by the Licchavis. The same story is also found in the *Mahā Parinibbāna Suttānta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. The story narrates that the courtesan Ambapālī heard that the Blessed One had arrived at Kotigāma, so she ordered magnificent vehicles to be made ready. She mounted one of those vehicles and left Vesālī in order to visit the Blessed One. She reached the place where the Blessed One was and respectfully saluting him, sat down near him. There she was taught, incited, animated, and gladdened with religious discourse by the Blessed One. The courtesan Ambapālī then invited the Buddha and his fraternity of monks for a meal to her house, the following day. The Blessed one expressed his consent by remaining silent. Thereafter, the courtesan Ambapālī went away to make preparations for the meal. When the Licchavis of Vesālī heard that the Blessed One had arrived at Kotigāma, they too ordered magnificent vehicles to be made ready, mounted those vehicles and left Vesālī in order to visit the Blessed One. While they were driving towards Kotigāma, they met Ambapālī, who drove against them. The Licchavis asked Ambapālī where she was driving from, and received as answer that she was coming from the place where the Blessed One was. She told them that she had just invited the Blessed One with his fraternity of monks for the next day's meal to her house. The Licchavis then asked Ambapālī to give up that meal to them for a hundred thousand. But she refused their offer and said that she would not give up that meal invitation even if the Licchavis were to offer her the whole of Vesālī along with its subject to her. The Licchavis snapped their finger exclaiming "we are outdone by this woman! We are out-reached by this woman!"

The Licchavis then went to the place where the Blessed One was. They too were taught, incited and gladdened with religious discourse by the Blessed One. Then, they invited the Blessed One and his fraternity of monks for the next day's meal. But since the Blessed One had already promised to dine at Ambapālī's house he refused their invitation and the following day he along with his fraternity of monks went to have their meal at Ambapālī's house. Ambapālī offered excellent food to the Blessed One and his fraternity of monks. Ambapālī also gifted her mango grove to the fraternity of *bhikkhus* with the Buddha at its head, and the Buddha accepted the gift of the *Ārāma* from Ambapālī.

Ambapālī, the courtesan is also said to have been the entity through whom Vesālī had become a flourishing and prosperous town. A reference which suggests this is found in the *Mahāvagga VIII, 1.1*, where it is mentioned that at that time Vesālī was an opulent, prosperous town, populous, crowded with people, abundant with food; there were seven thousand seven hundred and seven storeyed buildings, seven thousand seven hundred and seven pinnacle buildings, seven thousand seven hundred and seven pleasure grounds (*Ārāmas*), and seven thousand seven hundred and seven lotus ponds. There was also the courtesan Ambapālikā, who was beautiful, graceful, pleasant, gifted with the highest beauty of complexion, well versed in dancing, singing, and lute-playing, much visited by desirous people. She asked fifty (*kahāpaṇas*) for one night. Through her Vesālī had become more and more flourishing.

A certain merchant from Rājagaha had gone to Vesālī on a certain business. When he saw the prosperity of Vesālī and how populous, crowded with people, and abundant with food it was, with numerous beautiful buildings, pleasure grounds and ponds he was surprised with the wealth of the town. He also got to know the reason behind such wealth and prosperity. After completing his business there, he returned to Rājagaha. He then went to the Magadha king Seniya Bimbisāra and told hi about the opulence and prosperity of Vesālī and Ambapālī, through whom the town had become so flourishing. He suggested that a courtesan should be installed at Rājagaha too. Thus, a girl named Sālavatī, who was beautiful, graceful, pleasant, and gifted with the highest beauty of complexion; was installed as the courtesan of Rājagaha. And before long, the courtesan Sālavatī became well versed in dancing, singing and playing the lute. Many desirable people started visiting her and she asked for one hundred *kahāpaṇas* for one night. Before long the courtesan Sālavatī became pregnant. She thought that men do not like a pregnant woman so she would be losing all her customers. She would lose her position as the famous courtesan of Rājagaha. Hence she gave orders to the doorkeeper to let no man enter her quarters and if a man called for her, the doorkeeper was to tell him that she was sick. In this way Sālavatī, the courtesan hid her pregnancy from other people. She gave birth to a boy, but soon after the child was born, she gave orders to her maid-servant to put away the baby boy into a basket and throw him away. This story shows the economic viability of courtesans for flourishing towns, but it also shows the sad fact that a courtesan had to sacrifice her personal life of a mother and give away her child. She had to separate her private life from her professional life so as to be successful.

Some courtesans are said to have adopted the religious life under the *bhikkhunīs* besides providing food and robes to the *saṃgha*. In *Cullavagga X 22*, it is said that a courtesan named Addhakāsī had adopted the religious life under the *bhikkhunīs*, and she wanted to so to Sāvatti to be received as full member of the Order (to receive the *Upasampadā* initiation) by the Blessed One himself. But when men of abandoned life heard of it, they beset the road. The courtesan Addhakāsī sent a message to the Blessed One asking what course was she to adopt so as to receive the *Upasampadā* initiation. When the Blessed One got her message he allowed the conferment of the *Upasampadā* initiation even by a messenger. The messenger was not to be a *bhikkhu* but a learned, competent *bhikkhunī*. The *bhikkhunī* messenger was to respectfully go before the *saṃgha* and ask for the initiation of the particular lady. The *bhikkhus* of the *saṃgha* were to teach her how to go about while initiating the *Upasampadā*.

In *Mahāvagga VIII, 15.1*, the laywoman Visākhā is asked by the Blessed One as to why she wanted to donate bathing robes to the *bhikkhunīs*. She says that at that time the *bhikkhunīs* were in the habit of bathing in the river Acirāvati with the courtesans, at the same landing-place and naked. The courtesans ridiculed the *bhikkhunīs* for maintaining chastity when they were still young. The courtesans told the *bhikkhunīs*, that they should indulge in passion and maintain chastity only when they grew old, so as to be obtainers of both ends. The *bhikkhunīs* when thus ridiculed by the courtesans got confused. Thinking that nakedness was impure, disgusting and revolting for a woman Visākhā desired to provide the *bhikkhunī-saṃgha* with dresses to bathe in.

QUEENS

The references to queens and the way they were treated by their husbands also in some way bring out the gender relations that prevailed within the royal families. In *Mahāvagga X 3* the Buddha narrates a story which shows that the king tried his best to fulfil the needs and wants of the queen under all circumstances. The story narrates that there was a king of Kāśī called Brahmadata, who was wealthy, rich in treasures, revenue, troops and vehicles, was the overlord of a great realm and with his treasuries storehouses full. And there was also a king of Kosala named Dīghīti, who was not wealthy, poor in treasures, poor in revenue, poor in troops and vehicles, lord over smaller realm with empty treasures and storehouses. King Brahmadata went out to war with king Dīghīti of Kosala.

King Dīghīti thought that since he was not wealthy, he would not be able to stand against the attack of king Brahmadata, so he took his queen consort with him and fled from the town

before the attack. He and his queen went forth to Benares and dwelt there at a certain place near the town in a potter's dwelling, in the disguise of a wandering ascetic. And before long, the queen-consort of king Dīghīti became pregnant. There came upon her the longing of a pregnant woman; and she desired at sunrise, to see an army, with its four hosts set in array, clad in armour, standing on auspicious ground, and to drink the water in which the swords were washed. The queen told the king about her desires and that she would die if she did not obtain her desires. At that time, the Brāhmana who was the domestic chaplain to king Brahmadatta, was a friend of king Dīghīti. King Dīghīti went to the Brāhmana and told him about his wife and her longing which was that of a pregnant woman. The Brāhmana then went to king Brahmadatta of Kāśī and told him the signs were such that the next day at sunrise an array with four hosts, set in array, clad in armour, should be stationed on auspicious ground and there the swords were to be washed. The king Brahmadatta of Kāśī gave orders to his attendants to do what his chaplain said. Thus the queen-consort of king Dīghīti got her desires fulfilled.

A reference to the queen is found in the *Mahā-Sudassana Suttānta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, where the Blessed One is telling Ānanda a story about king Sudassana. In the second chapter of this *sutta*, the Blessed One explains how the Queen of Glory goes to visit the Great king of Glory. The Queen of Glory had not beheld the Great king of Glory for long so she wanted to go and visit him. She asks the women of the harem to dress their hair and clothe themselves in fresh raiment so as to go to visit the king. Then the Queen asks the Great Adviser for an array of fourfold army so that she could go for the visit. The arrangements were made and the Queen of Glory, with the fourfold army, repaired with the women of the harem went to the palace of Righteousness to meet the king.

An analysis of the references to women in both set of texts brings forth the picture of a patriarchal society during those times. Although the references are of different kind in both the texts; the *Vinaya Piṭaka* mostly dealing with *bhikkhunīs* and the rules for them, and the *Dīgha Nikāya* dealing with stories related to the laity and laywomen. In the *Vinaya*, we find the portrayal of women in both negative as well as positive roles, where they are sometimes represented to be 'evil', 'wicked' etc, and sometimes they are shown as being kind and nurturing. The *Vinaya Piṭaka* reflects the position of women within the folds of the *saṃgha*. Some of the rules such as the 'Eight Chief Rules', if viewed in isolation suggest their

discriminative nature against the *bhikkhunīs*, but again the rules which seem to have protected the *bhikkhunīs* brings a doubt in our minds about whether the rules were actually meant for discriminating against the *bhikkhunīs* or to protect them. Nevertheless, the fact that, even though with initial refusal and hesitation, the Buddha still allowed the entry of women into the *saṃgha* is a very significant development of those times. However there was no complete equality between men and women within the *saṃgha*, because the inclusion of women into the *saṃgha* was made conditional on their acceptance of the authority of the *bhikkhus*, regardless of the seniority principle which otherwise determined the internal organisation of the *saṃgha*.

In the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the negativities of a woman's nature are not represented as frequently as in the *Vinaya*. The *Dīgha Nikāya* mostly has stories which reflect the position of women outside the *saṃgha* and social conditions prevailing in the society during those times. The references suggest that the society was patriarchal and sons were more desired than daughters. Only the son had the right to inherit the father's property. Although the society seems to be patriarchal, women had the right to donate to religious institutions. Women as courtesans were an important part of the economy of flourishing towns like Vesāli and Rājagaha. Courtesans like Ambapālī and Sālavatī charged fifty and hundred *kahāpaṇas* per night. But they were expected to maintain a distance between their private and professional lives. Practices such as *kumārī-pañho*, (obtaining oracular answers through a girl of good family and repute) and obtaining oracular answers from a God, called *Deva-pañho*, also obtained through a girl, but through a *deva-dāsi* or temple prostitute seems to have been followed by some recluses and *Brāhmanas* of those times.

The practice of polygamy where a husband could take many wives was quite common. An ideal wife was expected to love and respect her husband. The references suggest that a mother's lineage was important for a man. The mother's lineage along with that of the father's was equally important for a person to prove his descent. In case of royalty, the King was to take care of the Queen and her needs. The presence of a harem is also suggested. The position of women in the royal families and wealthy families seems to have been better than the position of women belonging to the lower strata of society.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION:

This study brings us to the conclusion that caste like elements along with gender inequality had already spread its roots in the society where the Buddha lived and taught. The numerous references to people on the basis of their caste suggest that caste could have been used as a demarcation between people belonging to various groups. But, we do not see the rigidity of the fourfold *varṇa* system during those times. The references indicate the presence of the *brāhmaṇas* and *kṣatriyas* as two distinct caste groups but the *vaiśyas* and *sūdras* as such have not been segregated clearly. The frequency references dealing with the concept of high/*ucca* birth contrasted with low/*hīna* birth suggests that it was more popular than the concept of the four-fold *varṇa* system during those times. There are references to various occupational groups like the *gahapatis*, *setṭhis*, barbers, smiths, tailors, slaves, trumpeters, cooks, charioteers, attendants, potters, craftsmen etc. These occupational groups may be equated with the *vaiśya* and *sūdra varṇas* but they have not been mentioned as separate *varṇas* in the references where we find them. However there are many references which show the presence of the concept of the fourfold *varṇa* system in the society of those times e.g. in *Cullavagga IX, I. 4*, the Buddha talks about the four different castes. Even in the *Ambaṭṭha sutta*, Ambaṭṭha claims that there were four grades of people – the nobles (*kṣatriyas*), *brāhmaṇas*, trades-folk (*vaiśyas*) and work-people (*sūdras*).

The numerous references to *brāhmaṇas* in both sets of texts define the *brāhmaṇas*, the brahmanical norms laid out for them, their rituals, their occupations and also the deviation from norms by some of the *brāhmaṇas*. The references suggest that there were certain norms laid out just for the *brāhmaṇas* to follow. There were also certain behavioural processes expected from a *brāhmaṇa* because the wider society treated the *brāhmaṇas* as possessors of spiritual merit and Vedic knowledge. The most common occupation expected out of a *brāhmaṇa* was that of teaching and priesthood, but there are references which show that other occupations like agriculture, fortune-telling, soothsaying etc was followed by many *brāhmaṇas*. Many *brāhmaṇas* are said to have taken up derogatory and low arts as their profession and their vices included pride, deceit, avarice and even crimes such as matricide and patricide, besides milder human failings such as gluttony. The deviation of some *brāhmaṇas* from societal norms is depicted in certain representations in the texts, where the *brāhmaṇas* are seen as accepting the greatness of the Buddha and getting themselves

ordained into the *saṃgha* or just becoming lay followers of the Buddha. Although the references to *brāhmaṇas* are found in both the *Vinaya Piṭaka* as well as the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the approach to their description in the two sets of texts varies. In the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, there are fewer references to the *brāhmaṇas* accepting Buddhism and most of the references deal with the donation of robes and food by some *brāhmaṇas* to the Buddhist monks and the invitation of the monks and the Buddha to *brāhmaṇa* homes for meals. The references to *brāhmaṇas* in the *Vinaya* texts do not seem to function as a propagation mechanism for the Buddhist thought of the authors of the texts, who must have certainly been Buddhists. But, the *Dīgha Nikāya* which was meant for the wider sections of society, contain extensive references to *brāhmaṇas* accepting the greatness of the Buddha and deviating from the brahmanical norms.

The references to *kṣatriyas* in the texts suggest that *kṣatriyas* have been given superior position within the social order as the political heads or ruling class people of those times. The political system of those times being marked by the existence of the monarchical kingdoms and *gaṇa-sanghas*, had many *kṣatriya* ruling powers e.g. the Licchavis, Mallas, Sākya and others from the *gaṇa-sanghas* and Kings of monarchies like Ajātasattu, Bimbisāra, Pasenadi and others. Certain references in the texts suggest that some *kṣatriyas* were deeply moved by the teachings of the Buddha and they gave royal patronage to the Buddha and his *saṃgha*. The texts suggest a clear affinity of the Buddha towards the *kṣatriya* kings and this could be due to the Buddha's loyalty towards his own clan or could also have been because of the rich royal patronage that the *saṃgha* received from royal households. Another reason for cordial relations between the Buddha and the *kṣatriya* kings could have been the security and protection of the *saṃgha* from attacks by other groups. There are references which point to grants of land, parks, robes and other necessary items to the Buddha and his monks by kings and princes. The Buddha and his monks are also said to have been invited for meals to royal palaces. Some references also show the conversion of certain *kṣatriyas* into devout followers of the Buddha and entering the homeless state, whereas others just became lay followers of the Buddha. Some of the references in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* indicate that the Buddha, at times, formulated rules for the *bhikkhus* according to the advice of important kings. We also find references of kings going to the Buddha for advice regarding various matters in the *Dīgha Nikāya*. Between the two sets of texts i.e – the *Vinaya* and the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the latter seems to be giving more references to kings who listened to the advices and adopted the teachings of the Buddha. Hence, the real motive of these references become apparent.

Gahapatis, *setṭhis*, barbers, tailors, cooks, attendants, slaves, smiths, craftsmen and many more occupational and social groups find mention in the texts. The *gahapati* seems to be an important occupational group of those times, and their popularity can be judged from their frequent representation in the texts. References suggest that *gahapatis* were a group of wealthy people, basically involved with agrarian activities, and many of them made generous donations to the *saṃgha*. They also invited the Buddha and his fraternity of monks for meals to their homes and the Buddha usually accepted those invitations. Some *gahapatis* are said to have become lay followers of the Buddha whereas some others joined the *saṃgha*.

The *setṭhis* are another group of people who have been very frequently mentioned in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* but not mentioned at all in the *Dīgha Nikāya*. The *setṭhi* community being more important as donors and patrons to the Buddhist *saṃgha* could have found mention only in the *Vinaya* texts and not in the *Dīgha Nikāya*. The references which talk about the *setṭhis* suggest that *setṭhis* were wealthy people, mostly located in urban centres and were involved in philanthropic activities like giving alms to religious institutions like the *saṃgha*. Many *setṭhis* got influenced by the teachings of the Buddha and joined the *saṃgha* and some *setṭhis* although being influenced by the Buddha's teachings did not join the *saṃgha* but became his lay followers.

Besides the *gahapatis* and *setṭhis*, there are references to numerous other occupations and crafts. A long list of arts and crafts has also been termed as 'low arts'. This kind of demarcation between 'low' and 'high' crafts suggests that a person's occupation could also be a measure for his status in society. The divisions between 'high' and 'low' crafts or occupations are brought about more clearly in the *Dīgha Nikāya* than the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. The *Dīgha Nikāya* being a text for a wider audience in society must have dealt more with the social issues of those times. People from mostly all occupational backgrounds were allowed to join the Buddhist *saṃgha* but once they entered the Order, they had to discard all notions about *ucca* or *hīna* birth and occupations.

Although the Buddha did not object to the presence of the *varṇa* system in the parallel lay society, he did not allow the vices of the system to affect the *saṃgha*. The Buddha preached and allowed people from all social and occupational groups to join the *saṃgha*, with a few exceptions e.g – robbers, slaves who were not yet emancipated, people in the royal service etc. People from different groups were all treated as one when they entered the *saṃgha*.

Even women were allowed to join the *saṃgha*, although the Buddha allowed the entry of the first woman – Mahā-pajāpatī, after immense persuasion from his beloved disciple Ānanda. Though women were given permission to join the *saṃgha* and become *bhikkhunīs*, they had to follow the ‘Eight Chief Rules’, which seem to show the unequal nature of the rules for women in the *saṃgha*. However the rules can also be seen as being protective towards women in certain cases.

An analysis of the references to women in various roles in both set of texts brings forth a patriarchal picture of society during those times. The references to women in the two texts differ in nature; the *Vinaya Piṭaka* mostly talks about *bhikkhunīs* and the rules meant for them, and the *Dīgha Nikāya* deals with stories related to the laity and laywomen. In the *Vinaya*, women have been portrayed in both positive as well as negative roles. Sometimes their negative nature in the form of ‘evil’ and ‘wickedness’ have been highlighted and at other times their ‘kindness’ and ‘devotion’ to their families and the *saṃgha* have been focused. The *Vinaya* deals with the position of women within the folds of the *saṃgha* and the *Dīgha Nikāya* deals with their status in the wider lay society. References to women in the *Vinaya* indicate that though women were allowed into the *saṃgha*, there was no complete equality between *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs* within the *saṃgha* because the *bhikkhunīs* were bound to accept the authority of the *bhikkhus*, regardless of the seniority principle which determined the internal organisation of the *saṃgha*. Some women like Visākhā also became lay followers of the Buddha and made generous donations to the *saṃgha* and invited them for meals to her house. The references in both set of texts suggest that since society was largely patriarchal, the birth of a son was more desired than the birth of daughters. Only a son had the right to inherit the father’s property, and women as wives or daughters did were not the inheritors of property. However, women seem to have had the right to make donations to religious institutions from their own belongings or wealth, which they could have achieved in the form of ‘*śtrī-dhana*’. Women as courtesans also formed an important economic group of those times. They are said to have made great contributions to the wealth of cities like Vesālī and Rājagaha. But the courtesans had sacrifice personal happiness in order to achieve professional gains. The practice of polygamy seems to have been common in society. An ideal wife was expected to love, respect and honour her husband. Though the society seems to be patriarchal, the lineage of a mother was equally important as that of a father when a person wanted to prove his descent. References to queens and women from prosperous

families suggest that women from these sections were treated better by the other gender, than their counterparts who belonged to the lower strata of society.

The analysis of references to caste and gender relations in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and the *Dīgha Nikāya* thus help us in formulating a clear picture of their depictions in these texts. However we should always be careful to judge the true nature of several references which suffer from the authors' biases and try to propagate the glories of the Buddha and his *saṃgha* at all times.

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