

## BACKGROUND TO THE ORIGIN OF EARLIEST BUDDHISM

During the middle of the first millenium B.C. urbanization sprang up in the Gaᅅgā plains. It has generally been argued that this urbanization was caused by the increased use of iron technology. The birth of Buddhism is further linked with the rise of urbanization. In other words, the birth of Buddhism is seen as resulting from the increased use of iron tools in the Gaᅅgā plains. We propose to discuss this issue in two parts:

1. Role of iron in the origin and development of urbanization;
2. relationship between the origin of Buddhism and development of urbanization.

### 1. *Role of iron*

D.D. Kosambi was the first scholar who laid stress on the use of iron in the age of the Buddha<sup>1</sup>. After him this issue was further taken up and supported by a number of scholars and they assigned a significant and epoch-making role to iron technology<sup>2</sup>. In the

---

1. D.D. KOSAMBI, *Ancient Kosala and Magadha*, «Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society», 27 (1952), pp. 108-123; *The beginning of the Iron Age in India*, «Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient», 6, pt. 3 (1963), pp. 309-318; *The culture and civilization of ancient India*, Delhi, 1973, pp. 459-524; *An introduction to the study of Indian history*, Bombay, 1975, pp. 144-170.

2. E.g. N.R. BANERJEE, *Iron age in India*, Delhi, 1965; D.P. AGRAWAL, *Steps towards urban revolution in the Doab: archaeological and ecological data*,

opinion of the proponents of this hypothesis, from about sixth century B.C. onwards, iron implements played a significant role in the clearing of thick vegetation in the middle-Gaṅgā basin for cultivation as well as settlement. This group, though, accepts that fire may have been helpful, but is not prepared to concede the vanguard role of clearing the jungles to anything but iron tools. The burnt stumps after all could not be removed without the iron-axe, we are told, even if fire was used<sup>3</sup>. Further, in the middle-Gaṅgā basin, this group feels, trees strike horizontal roots and cultivation becomes difficult unless the roots are cleared with iron axe and hoe. The Northern Black Polished Ware settlements in this region did not have enough population and the stone tools were insufficient to accomplish this job. In other words, the clearing of roots could not be done without the help of iron technology<sup>4</sup>. The soil in most of the middle-Gaṅgā basin is hard, they say, and could not have been cultivable with the use of wooden plugh<sup>5</sup>. The mention of terms in early Buddhist books and some other pre-Mauryan texts, for various tools meant for crafts and agriculture, is also seen as a proof of the use of iron technology in the age of the Buddha<sup>6</sup>. The absence of iron tools meant for agriculture in this period is explained away through ecological effect. We are told

---

ciclostyled paper; *Copper Bronze Age in India*, Delhi, 1971; *The Archaeology of India*, London, 1982, p. 249; K. DEVA, *Observations on Chakrabarti's paper*, «Purātattva», 6 (New Delhi, 1972-73), pp. 33-34; M.C. JOSHI, *Observations on Chakrabarti's paper*, «Purātattva», 6 (New Delhi, 1972-73), p. 35; *Early historical urban growth in India: some observations*, «Purātattva», 7 (New Delhi, 1974), pp. 90-91; R.S. SHARMA, *Material background of the origin of Buddhism*, in M. SEN & M.B. RAO, (ed.), *Das Capital Centenary Volume: A Symposium*, Delhi, 1968, pp. 58-66; *Material milieu of the birth of Buddhism*, paper read at the 29th Congress of the Orientalists, Paris, 1974; *Iron and urbanization in the Ganga plain*, «Indian Historical Review», 1 (1974), pp. 98-103; *Perspectives in social and economic history of early India*, New Delhi, 1983, pp. 105-127; *Material culture and social formations in ancient India*, New Delhi, 1983, pp. 89-134; R. THAPAR, *Ancient Indian social history*, Delhi, 1978, pp. 236-237; S.P. GUPTA, *Two urbanizations in India: a side study in their social structure*, «Purātattva», 7 (New Delhi, 1974), pp. 53-60.

3. R.S. SHARMA, *Perspectives...*, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

Though the date of NBPW is not still settled, c. 700-200 B.C. may be taken as reasonably representative of the Gaṅgā valley.

4. R.S. SHARMA, *Material Culture...*, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

5. R.S. SHARMA, *Perspectives...*, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

6. R.S. SHARMA, *Material Culture...*, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

that the acidic, humid, warm-alluvial soil of western U.P. and Bihar has proved to be highly corrosive and hence bad for the preservation of iron artifacts<sup>7</sup>. In the later period, when steel came into use as against wrought iron, the tools proved more lasting and serviceable and moreover, we are told that the sites that have been dug so far are administrative, commercial, craft or religious centres such as Campā, Rājgīr, Bārāṇasī etc. and are not the right places for agricultural tools. Apart from this, defectiveness of the excavational methods is also blamed for the absence of these tools<sup>8</sup>. Some indirect evidence is also seen for the use of iron technology in the cutting of puñc-marked coins, as early as 500 B.C. We are told that large scale wooden structures which were seen by Megasthenes could not have been possible without the use of iron technology. Use of iron on this scale is seen as resulting in a revolution in agriculture, which in turn produced surplus and this surplus led to the origin of trade, commerce and urbanization; and ultimately to the birth of Buddhism<sup>9</sup>. In a nutshell, it is argued that *unprecedented growth* of the crafts, industries and some occupations was initiated by iron technology<sup>10</sup>.

This theory of the revolutionary role of iron has never found full acceptance amongst scholars. Niharranjan Ray was amongst the first to raise objections on the ground that the introduction of iron technology and iron implements in the Gaṅgā-Yamunā valley before 320 B.C. was of such a scale as to induce the sort of social changes which are held to have been triggered off by the technological changes associated with the use of iron<sup>11</sup>. He wrote further that the archaeological evidence did not indicate any large scale clearance of the jungles through the use of iron technology. Further more iron technology was neither qualitatively nor quanti-

---

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94; Sharma takes this cue from H.C. BHARDWAJ, *Aspects of early technology in India*, in D.P. AGRAWAL & A. GHOSH (ed.), *Radiocarbon and Indian Archaeology*, Bombay, 1973, pp. 393-397, *Aspects of ancient Indian technology*, Delhi, 1979, pp. 158-159.

8. R.S. SHARMA, *Material Culture...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-94.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

11. NIHARRANJAN RAY, *Technology and social change*, «Purātattva», 8 (1978), p. 133.

tatively diversified enough to bring about significant social change<sup>12</sup>. His objections appeared valid on the ground that at the Painted Grey Ware level (c. 1000-500 B.C.)<sup>13</sup> the iron implements that were discovered included slags and shapeless bits, arrow-heads, spear-heads, knife-blades, daggers, spades, adges, hoes etc. and noticeably the list did not include any iron axe (socketed or unsocketed), iron ploughshare or any other iron implement that could possibly be useful for large scale forest clearance and land reclamation leading to extensive agricultural operations which could possibly yield a surplus for rearing up towns and cities<sup>14</sup>. Wooden ploughshare may have been used in cultivation, though hoe-cultivation could have been more universal. Hoe (*kuddāla*) finds mention in early Buddhist literature<sup>15</sup>. Some hoes have been found in the excavations and iron technology could not have come into full play before the Mauryas<sup>16</sup>. Though iron becomes the basic technological element from the Northern Black Polished Ware (c. 700-200 B.C.) level, but an extensive use of iron artifacts is not testified by the early Northern Black Polished Ware levels of any site. In a slow moving society effect of iron is likely to have been slow<sup>17</sup> and «did not produce any *spurt* in the material prosperity of the society»<sup>18</sup>. So the role of iron could not be seen more than a stabilizer as against an initiator<sup>19</sup>.

It may be pointed out here that iron was known in the Gaṅgā valley as a whole by about c. 1000 B.C. or thereabouts and iron technology got widely disseminated in the valley in the first half of the first millennium B.C.<sup>20</sup>. The hypothesis about absence of agri-

12. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

13. Though these dates of PGW are not acceptable to all.

14. RAY, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

15. *Vin.* III.90.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 130-138.

17. A. GHOSH, *Observations* on Chakrabarti's paper, «Purātattva», 6 (1972), p. 35.

18. A. GHOSH, *The city in early historic India*, Simla, 1973, p. 10.

19. D.K. CHAKRABARTI, *Beginning of iron and social change in India*, «Indian Studies: Past and Present», 14, No. 4, (1973), pp. 336-338.

20. D.K. CHAKRABARTI, *The issues of the Indian iron age*, in S.B. DEO & K. PADDAYYA (ed.), *Recent advances in Indian archaeology*, Poona, 1985, p. 76. For



cultural tools because of unrewarding soil does not appear tenable. As the acidic soil would not have discriminated against agricultural tools, the availability of pins, nails etc. shows that iron tools of the type which certain scholars looked for were not available. Hence the idea of a sudden and revolutionary role of iron technology in the age of the Buddha does not appear to be convincing. It is also interesting to know that the iron deposits of Bihār were not in use till the end of the Mughal Empire<sup>21</sup>. Iron must have been imported from outside, possibly from one of the iron-mines at Mālpur (Rājasthān), Narwār (Rājasthān), Kalinjar (about 70 miles south-west of Allāhābād), Maṇḍī (Himāchal Pradesh), Rāmgarh (Kumāon hills), Burhānpur (Central India), Gañjam (Orissā) and Gwāliyar region<sup>22</sup>.

As far as the question of clearing the jungles is concerned, there were ample number of possibilities. The role of fire cannot be minimised, especially when we know that even with modern equipment it is very difficult to tackle wild fire. Even if some stumps could not be destroyed by fire, there may not have been an immediate need of removing each and every stump, especially when enough land was available. After all, we are not talking of modern agriculturing where stumps would prove irritants for modern machinery. Moreover all the land surely could not have been covered with forests and considering the population of those days large portion of which depended on hunting and various types of wild growth, it is a moot point whether there was any serious need of claiming forest land for cultivation. Early Buddhist literature is full of stories and references to jungles and it will be

---

details and discussion on the beginning of iron in India see D.H. GORDON, *The early use of metals in India and Pakistan*, «Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute», 80 (1950), pp. 58-78; N.R. BANERJEE, *The Iron age of India*, Delhi, 1955, pp. 4-5, 224-225; D.K. CHAKRABARTI, *Beginning of iron and social change in India*, «Indian Studies: Past and Present», 14, No. 4 (1973), pp. 336-338, *Iron in the early Indian literature*, «Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society», 1979, No. 1, p. 74, *The beginning of iron in India*, «Antiquity», 50, No. 198 (1976), pp. 114-124; *The study of the Iron Age in India*, «Purātattva», 13-14 (1984), pp. 81-85; B. ALLCHIN & F.R. ALLCHIN, *The rise of civilization in India and Pakistan*, Delhi, 1982, p. 345.

21. See for example the detailed study done by I. Habib in his *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire* (Delhi, 1982), map 10B & p. 41.

22. I. HABIB, *op. cit.*, map 4B, 6B, 8B, 9B and p. 38.

unwise to believe that most jungles were cleared before the Mauryan period. It may also be interesting to note that all the forest clearing tool kit was very much present in the Painted Grey Ware period and there is no appreciable change in the number of the tools from the Painted Grey Ware to the Northern Black Polished Ware period. Thus, jungles could have been equally effectively with copper-bronze tools if need be. Though the number of tools in the Northern Black Polished Ware period increases almost two-fold, the area for this ware is also almost double and the increase in number is basically made by smaller objects like nails etc. We do not find any appreciable change either in the technology or in the extensiveness of use of tools from the Painted Grey Ware to the Northern Black Polished Ware period<sup>23</sup>. Survey conducted in certain areas in the Gaṅgā valley shows that possibly there was not much need for any forest clearance at all. E.g. In Kānpur district, which quite well represents the Gaṅgā plains, survey has shown that during our period not more than 3% of the total land was actually needed for cultivation and most of it was available on the soft alluvial soils along the rivers and lakes and other open areas in the forests<sup>24</sup>. Early Buddhist literature is atleast silent about the jungle clearing activity; especially when some scholars have made it to be such an important issue. It seems that cue from the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* has been taken too far. It may further be pointed out that soil is ploughed only when it has sufficient quantity of humidity in it, because without humidity seeds simply would not germinate. It may be difficult to hear of a peasant who would try to plough his land for rice cultivation (staple food of Gaṅgā basin) unless there is not only enough supply of water for a longer period of time but also the soil is quite wet at the time of ploughing. Therefore a wooden plough may prove equally useful though not as lasting. Moreover before rice sapplings are planted the land is thoroughly grilled with a heavy wooden-plank and this process is the most important part of wet-rice cultivation.

---

23. M. LAL, *Iron tools, forest clearance and urbanization in the Gangetic plains*, «Man and Environments», 10 (1986), p. 85.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

Though iron had been in use in the Gaṅgā valley from about c. 1000 B.C., one can not see real changes in size category and the general settlement pattern till during the Northern Black Polished Ware period, a time by which urbanism had become an established fact. If iron was the main causative factor in the early historic urban growth in the Gaṅgā valley, this departure in size category and settlement pattern would have taken place in the Painted Grey Ware period itself<sup>25</sup>.

Thus, it may be reasonable to assume that before iron technology became fully established in the Gaṅgā basin, its development was spread over a long span of time, atleast between 700 B.C. and the Mauryas. This new technological element may have indeed strengthened the economic base which was primarily laid down by the neolithic-chalcolithic settlers, but it may not be taken for granted that the advent of iron was the basic causative factor of urbanization in Gaṅgā valley.

Furthermore, the date of the Buddha is still far from settled. There is every possibility that Gautama Buddha was active around the end of the 5th century B.C. and not in the sixth century B.C.<sup>26</sup> This is also more or less certain that urbanization made its feeble beginning around the seventh century B.C. Whole of early Buddhist literature presupposes the existence of urbanization, though urbanization saw its real glory under Buddhism itself. Regarding relationship between urbanization saw its real glory under Buddhism itself. Regarding relationship between urbanization and iron it may be said that this hypothesis appears quite unacceptable. Urbanization did not develop suddenly and had its history of development in the Gaṅgā valley. Urbanization developed as an integral part of the overall development of the society in this area and various institutions which played their role in the origin and development of urbanization in the Gaṅgā valley had a long history of their own development. Iron in no case appears to be playing any sudden and revolutionary role. Almost all the important

---

25. D.K. CHAKRABARTI, *The issues of the Indian iron age*, in S.B. DEO & K. PADDAYYA (ed.), *Recent advances in Indian archaeology*, Poona, 1985, p. 77.

26. See H. BECHERT, *The date of the Buddha reconsidered*, «Indologica Taurinensia», 10 (Torino, 1982), pp. 29-36.

cities in the age of the Buddha were capitals of various kingdoms and hence centres of political power. They were extensions of rural settlements where, with the passage of time, the ruling classes had established themselves with all their pomp and glory. Moreover the number and size of those settlements which could be called cities was not large enough before the fifth-century B.C. so as to give the impression that they needed a revolution in agriculture for survival. Use of effective political power can easily extract *surplus* out of the common population. After all even if there was a shortage of food, the rulers would not have been the first to go hungry, provided the political mechanism was strong enough (as it was) to squeeze out the *surplus*. In fact some scholars have held the so-called theory of surplus almost to a ridicule<sup>27</sup> because if a common man needed, say, 1.5 kg of foodgrains for a proper meal everyday and would die if he ate less than 1 kg a day, then there was always the possibility of extracting the difference between these two quantities provided the political power was capable of doing it. Buddhism was born as a response to various types of problems which had especially cropped up in the society of the days of the Buddha and whose overall impact provided a rich soil for the mushrooming of so many *heterodox* sects. The days in which the Buddha lived the Vedic equation of work and worship, wealth and welfare, man and nature was rudely broken<sup>28</sup>. It was this problem-infected society that stimulated the Buddha to flee his home to find out the solutions to its problems. In fact, full maturity of his teachings took place over a long period of time perhaps going beyond his own life-time. It was certainly not something like «the accidental discovery by a traveller of an old, buried and forgotten city as well of the path leading to it»<sup>29</sup>. Even after the Enlightenment, the Buddha was not confident of himself and perhaps had doubts even about the practicality of his teachings. In the *Mahāpadāna Suttanta*, Gautama tells that «I have

---

27. See H. W. PEARSON, *The economy has no surplus: a critique of the theory of surplus*, in K. POLANYI et al., *Trade and economy in the early empires*, Glencoe, Illinois, 1957, pp. 320-341.

28. G.C. PANDE, *Dimensions of ancient Indian social history*, Vol. II, New Delhi, 1984, p. 62.

29. SN.II.104-105.

penetrated this Truth, deep, hard to perceive, hard to understand... no mere dialectic (not to be grasped by mere logic, *atakkāvacarō*), subtle, intelligible only to the wise. But this is a race devoting itself to the things to which it clings, devoted thereto delighted therein». But, finally he decided to preach for the benefit of those who were like lotuses out of the water i.e. mature enough to understand the meaning of his teachings<sup>30</sup> as well as for the good and happiness of the great multitudes, out of love for the world, to the good and the weal of Devas and men<sup>31</sup>, because he found men like fish in a stream which had nearly dried up due to the excessive heat of the sun during long summer<sup>32</sup>. Finding them so, he decided to «beat the drum of *dhamma* in the world enveloped with darkness of ignorance»<sup>33</sup> and set forth for a continuous *Dhamma* way-faring.

But we must not judge Buddhism as if it had nothing to do with theological or metaphysical beliefs. Buddhism was more than «merely as the expression of a type of social motivation and values».<sup>34</sup> But this does not mean that there was no connection between the movement that the Buddha started and the state of the society in which it began. But this connection is an indirect one and though it is «relevant for the purpose of contextual understanding, is not essential as far as validation is concerned»<sup>35</sup>. It appears that social tensions and suffering basically provided an occasion for the awakening of the Buddha to existential suffering. Social and physical suffering of a common man did not really fall within the sphere of early Buddhism<sup>36</sup>.

To say that the rise of sects like Buddhism represented a protest by the kṣatriya order against brāhmaṇical pretensions, is also

---

30. SBE.XIII.88.

31. DB.III.12.

32. SBE.X (ii).1.

33. *Vin.*I.212.

34. G.C. PANDE, *On the question of the social origins of Buddhism*, in M. TIWARY (ed.), *Bodhi-Raśmi*, New Delhi, 1984, p. 5.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

36. K.T.S. SARAO, *Buddhism versus Marxism on liberty and equality*, paper read at the *Conference on Buddhism and Marxism* held at the Sanskrit University, Varanasi, Feb. 17-20, 1985.

not adequate explanation, though there may be some truth in the suggestion. Undoubtedly, the Buddha came from the *kṣatriya* stock, accepting the brāhmaṇical four-tier caste system. Buddhism places *kṣatriyas* before *brāhmaṇas* in the class hierarchy, and the kings of the time gave considerable patronage to Buddhism as well as other *heterodox* movements. Though there may have existed some friction (as was expected) between the two ruling classes, but too much emphasis cannot be placed upon it.

Various types of social, economic and political changes had dislocated the society at various levels and there co-existed distinct sets of social groups in various stages of development<sup>37</sup>. The tribal organization had already begun to disintegrate from within<sup>38</sup>. In their frantic drive for conquest and expansion, the early monarchies were systematically annihilating the surviving free tribes. And within the orbits of their direct domination new phenomena — «base greed, brutal sensuality, sordid avarice, selfish plunder of common possessions» — phenomena that were unknown to tribal life recently left behind, were emerging<sup>39</sup>. Alongside all this, «a congeries of conflicting theories and guesses, accepted by some and denied by others, changing with men, reflecting individual characters, emotions and wishes for their authors, filled the air»<sup>40</sup>. In this way, momentous social upheavals in the Gaṅgā valley were experienced by the age of the Buddha. With the transition from the tribe to the state, the administrative machinery took an about turn and from an organization of tribes for the free administration of their own affairs, it became an organization of tribes for plundering and oppressing their neighbours; and correspondingly, its organs were transformed from instruments of the will of the people into independent organs for ruling and oppressing their own people<sup>41</sup>. The drunkenness, cruelty, corrupti-

---

37. D.D. KOSAMBI, *An Introduction to the study of Indian history*, Bombay, 1956, p. 140.

38. DEBIPRASAD CHATTOPADHYAYA, *Lokāyata: A study in ancient Indian materialism*, New Delhi, 1978, p. 468.

39. *Ibid.*

40. S. RADHAKRISHNAN, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, London, 1923, p. 352.

41. Quoted at Chattopadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p. 475.

bility, untruthfulness, uprighteousness of many kings and the help of many *purohitas* often helping kings to carry up their desires may have created difficult times for common folks<sup>42</sup>. Now a new type of army had developed which replaced the former armed tribe as a whole. This army which was without a tribal basis now owed loyalty to the king only and it could not have been maintained without regular taxes and extensive revenues. This resulted in the horror of taxation. Now the exactions took place not only at the hands of the kings alone, but the change in the society is manifested by a new set of institutions: mortgage, interest, usury etc. All this took various shapes like alienation, starvation, rich-poor gap and various types of new crimes. The unreal problems of the other world along with the real problems of this one, gave an added colour to fear of impermanence, death and suffering. Many men like Gautama Buddha must have felt disgusted at the sight of «destitute poverty, violence... lying... immorality... wanton greed... covetousness and ill will»<sup>43</sup> and the thought of old age, disease, decay, death, impermanence must have created the fear that «we have not got beyond the reach of illness... (and)... death»<sup>44</sup>. It were all these problems which drove many thoughtful persons like Gautama to the jungles in search of happiness which was so elusive. Many went away never to return to the material world and most met with abject failure, despite going through various kinds of penances ranging from virtual suicide through starvation to continuance of life on spirituous drinks and what not<sup>45</sup>. Gautama himself went through extremely severe penances and experimentation for over a decade. Finally, he found his place somewhere between a life total seclusion and a typical household life — the Middle Path — which he felt was the best way to attain to Buddhahood.

---

42. R. FICK, *The social organisation in North-East India in Buddha's time*, Calcutta, 1920, pp. 101-102.

43. DB.III.66-67.

44. DB.II.20-21.

45. E.g. according to the *Pāṭka Suttanta*, Kandarā-Masuka maintained himself by spirituous drinks and flesh (DB.III.14).

## 2. Urbanism vs. Buddhism

Weber perhaps was the first scholar to put forward the idea that Buddhism was the creation of a city culture. According to him «Buddhism presents itself as a product of the time of urban development, of urban kingship and the city nobles»<sup>46</sup>. He further emphasized the point that «as a whole early Buddhism was the product not of the underprivileged but of very positively privileged strata»<sup>47</sup>. Buddhism of early days depended very heavily on the donations and munificence of the rich and the influential and there is no doubt that Buddhism reflects its dependence on cities and their rich inhabitants in more than one ways<sup>48</sup>. Apart from the literary evidence, the epigraphical sources also carry the impression home and the names of donors to Buddhist establishments prove the solid support of guild leaders. «The urban palace with its elephant-riding kings were characteristic of Buddha's time. Moreover, the dialect form reflects the advent of city culture»<sup>49</sup>.

With the rise of urbanism various types of new social, economic, religious and political phenomena had come into existence. Buddhism gave its sanction to most of them. The case of Ambapāli is one example. The Buddha gave his sanction to the existence of evil customs like prostitution by not only time and again eating at the houses of prostitutes, but also by glorifying at more than one place the helping hand which such prostitutes gave to the prosperity of various urban centres by attracting people. Young people, debtors, soldiers, diseased people and married women had all sorts of restrictions imposed upon them by Buddhism regarding their entry in the organisation, but prostitutes were free to join the faith of the Buddha.

The following table prepared on the basis of the information provided by the *Jātakas* further proves our point. The Bodhisatta

---

46. M. WEBER, *The religion of India*, tr. & ed. H.H. GARTH & D. MARTINDALE, Glencoe, Illinois, 1958, p. 204.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 227.

48. SARAO, *op. cit.*

49. WEBER, *op. cit.*, p. 205.



was born 315 times as a human being in the *Jātakas*. In 51 cases it is not possible to know the place of birth of the Bodhisatta. Out of the remaining births, he is born about 85% of the time in a city.

| Place of birth | Number of times born | % age |
|----------------|----------------------|-------|
| City           | 223                  | 84.47 |
| Village        | 41                   | 15.53 |

This is further proved in the *Jātakas* by the number of times the Bodhisatta was born as a king, courtier, king's treasurer, minister or as a prince, all of whom naturally lived in the cities.

Throughout the early Buddhist texts city-richness, pomp and show are glorified almost with obsession. Though the great master professed to give up worldly pleasures in theory, but in practice the life style of Buddhist monks gave birth to jealousy in the hearts of common masses. The story of a youngman is too well known to be told who became a monk thinking «day and night I am toiling away with my hands at all sorts of tasks, yet never do I taste food so sweet. I must turn Brother myself»<sup>50</sup>.

Anāthapiṇḍika, who was one of the richest urbanites of his days is regarded by the Buddha as a saviour of the faith. His house «was to the Brotherhood like a pool dug where few roads meet»<sup>51</sup>. We are told in the *Jātakas* that Anāthapiṇḍika alone lavished 54 crores on the monastery of the Buddha<sup>52</sup>. Anāthapiṇḍika is the most popular figure in the *Jātakas* (he is mentioned 66 times), after the Bodhisatta and Ānanda. Jetavana, was a pleasure garden which most kings could not afford in those days and the Buddha spent most of his time after Enlightenment in this garden. One of the Nikāyas was recited almost to the full in this garden alone. The mention of this garden with Buddha staying in it makes a very interesting reading:

---

50. J.I.311.

51. J.I.227.

52. J.I.226.

| Name of the text        | Number of times Jetavana is mentioned |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Vinaya Piṭaka</i>    | 196                                   |
| <i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>     | 5                                     |
| <i>Majjhima Nikāya</i>  | 78                                    |
| <i>Samyutta Nikāya</i>  | 75                                    |
| <i>Aṅguttara Nikāya</i> | 50                                    |
| <i>Jātakas</i>          | 574                                   |

Buddhism actually provided the ideological superstructure of the growing urbanization<sup>53</sup> and it may be said in conclusion that as the rise of urbanization in the Gaṅgā valley cannot be linked with the increased use of iron technology, the origin of Buddhism did not in any way depend upon the role of iron.

---

53. KOSAMBI, (1975), *op. cit.*, pp. 100-104.