As a student of history I confine my observations to "anti-caste tendencies" in Buddhism. Eminent Indian scholars like the late P.C. Bagchi (d. 1949) and Professor N. K. Bose have held that the Buddha (Gautama Siddhartha) had no positive anti-caste objective in political sense or that he was above such mundane considerations. While I subscribe to this view, I submit that the Buddha was positively hostile to any inequalities between man and man. Buddhism did not succeed (survive) as a denominational religion in India while Brahmanism did not succeed (survive) as a denominational religion outside India. Buddhism succeeded outside India because it was not based on ethnic or caste considerations. For example, in Iran, Buddhism easily captured the ground from Zoroastrian and Sino-Confucian spheres of influence because Buddhism did not have a sense of 'civilized' and 'barbarian'. In India Buddhism failed partly because of its own weakness which prompted and facilitated Brahmanical revival. If however Buddhism had succeeded in India it would have made the history of India altogether different and among other things it would have ended or avoided the caste.

Gautama Siddhartha came in a milieu full of doubts and misgivings about the viability of ancient sacrificial and infallibility of high birth, Deussen: The Philosophy of the Upanisads (1906), Banade: A Comparative Survey of Upanisadic Philosophy (1927), and Dutt: Early Monotheistic Buddhism (1910) throw ample light on the crisis in Vedic thought.
On merit accruing to birth, we have the famous story of Satyakama (Bhandaya Up. IV, 4), who was admitted to highest Vedic learning even though he said his mother could not remember the caste affiliation and was thus found to be adherent to truth (satya/dharma). For centuries Nooka's commentary glanced over the fact of the matter. Modern thinkers like Tagore have found that Satyakama was admitted to highest knowledge because he was truthful; he did not conceal that his mother got him when she was a maid servant in the house of her master. Inference is clear that an anti-caste tendency was already strong at the time of the Buddha's advent and that the highest knowledge was open to talent and was by no means a privilege of the high born.

Gautama Siddhāchāra was a Kāshtriya by birth, was admitted to highest Brahmanical knowledge by masters like Alara Kalama and Rudraka Ramaputta, preached to Brahmana disciples as the Buddha and admitted merchants, untouchables and cowherds to his Dharma. Yet, the Buddha was very particular about his own caste Kāshtriya at the highest of the four castes, even though he claimed that he himself was a Brahman. His veneration for the Brahmanas as holymen is clearly expressed in Dharmapada and Milindapatha, I have discussed elsewhere the significance of the Brahmana-Kāshtriya equation in the political thought of Buddhism (Prolegomena to Laminist Polity, Cal. 1969). I call below data from Upanishads to suggest that the Brahmana-Kāshtriya parity was a live issue of history before or at the advent of the Buddha. I also contend that it was symbolized in a tense between Knowledge and Power.

The Katha Upanishad in a verse (1.2.15) describes the majesty or absolute power of God (let us use this conventional term) that:

"He for whom Brähmana (priesthood) and Kshatriya (nobility) both are as food and death is as a source, how shall one know of him where He abides?" In mystic language it is implied here that the power of God transcends the two highest powers (on earth), namely, Brähmana and Kshatriya. The anxiety to record both priesthood and ruling class on the same spiritual plane is significant in a discussion about the hereafter as in the Katha Upanishad.

The Chandogya Upanishad (5.3.7) relates how Gautama, a Brähmana sage, had to seek the knowledge of the hereafter etc from a Kshatriya prince who made it clear that "this truth has never reached the Brahmans until now". The same Upanishad brackets in the list of sciences Brähnavidyā and Kshatrawidyā as not far from each other (7.1.3.7, 1.4. & 7.1.5).
The Bhādarānyaka offers an apology as to why the priest (Brahmana) sits below the ruler (Kshatriya) at the Rajasuya sacrifice (1.4.11 & 1.4.14). "Though the Brahmana sits below he is the source of power of the Kshatriya and that finally Law (Dharma) is superior to even the Kshatriya."

The Bhādarānyaka affirms (1.4.9) that the dear objects of material world like consort or wealth are prized not for the sake of the objects themselves but for the sake of the Self (Atman). In the schedule of such prized objects the attribute of Kshatriya takes immediate precedence after the attribute of Brahmana. In other words Brahmanhood or priestly rank is no more dear than Kshatriyahood or nobility.

This exaltation of Kshatriya finds spiritual fulfillment in the Bhagavadgītā composed c2000 B.C. according to Radhākrishnan, and of pre-Buddhist origin according to S.N. Das Gupta. Here Gād (Krishna) confides the mystic lore of the Upanishads to a Kshatriya through the Upanishadic dialectic dressed in heroic grandeur. The verse of the divine dissertation is the battlefield. The great kṣṇa for Arjuna, namely, "There is no greater merit for a Kshatriya than to fight a righteous war" (2.11), remains a political testament for all cases with Kshatriya in the van. The Buddha's dialogue affirming Kshatriya as the best of mankind (Dhāraṇī Nikāya: Aggamūatta) does not surprise a Brahmana who comprehends the dialogue between Parītha (Arjuna) and Sarathī (Krishna).

The Buddha by his life and sermon no doubt sublimated Kshatriya to divinity. In Mahāyana, royalty or Kshatriyahood was considered an attribute worthy of Bodhisattva. In Tibet, Kshatriya ancestry of Gautama Siddhartha and Asoka or of Santarakṣita, Padmasambhava and Aksa was fully played up along with the concepts of Dharma (Chos-rgyal) and Chakravarthi (Bkhor-lo-bseg). The Mahāyana concept of Buddha (or Bodhisattva) as jīva (or Śrīputra) had inevitable temporal aura. The Lama wielding political power would be, in temporal sense also, RGYA WA, that is, JINA (Victorious or Conqueror). The Dalai Lama is popularly called RGYA WA RINPOCHE, that is, JINA RATNA (Precious Conqueror). If the popular Tibetan notion of the priest-king as a Buddhist ideal is accepted one has to trace the concept back to the pre-Buddhist Upanishadic milieus in which the Brahmana and the Kshatriya vied with each other for Knowledge as well as Power.
In conclusion, Gautama Śrāvakā's affirmation that the Kshatriya is the best of men may be quoted along with the Chandasgaṇya that the divine knowledge was transmitted to the Brahmana caste through the Kshatriya caste.

क्षत्रियो में प्रत्येकेण, वे मोत्थरित्सामि।
विज्ञानवहनावर्नाम, ते में विद्यार्थि लि।

अष्टमभ्रु

तथा नि स्वम, धीम, अतः वयेरें न प्रह त्वस्म।
पुरा विप्रा ब्राह्मणान्त प्रजावित तयांगृः वर्मृ
वेदेनु तत्तर्त्र वद्यालम्ब अनु य्रू योग।

श्रव्योऽभ्रवितः