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# THE BUDDHIST MONASTIC LAW IN ANCIENT SRI LANKA

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ANURADHA SENEVIRATNA

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PROF. ANURADHA SENEVIRATNA\*

Vinayao nāma Buddhasāsanassa āyu  
Discipline is the life of Buddhist Dispensation.

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Buddhism originated in Northern India in the sixth century BC with Gautama Buddha as its founder. He established the Order of Monks known as *saṅgha* with five members at the beginning. But this number soon increased to hundreds and thousands who decided to devote themselves to higher spiritual status and also to continue the teachings of Buddha. His doctrine as one could see is both Truth and Law. Today Buddhism has become a powerful religion in the world influencing the lives of many millions living in the east, west, south and north. It was due to the efforts of Emperor Asoka in India in the third century BC that Buddhism was introduced to countries outside India with the royal patronage provided by him. Buddhism in the course of its development branched into two sections namely Theravāda and Mahāyāna. Theravāda is the branch of Buddhism now preserved in Sri Lanka, and it is so called because the original teachings of Buddha were preserved by the Elderly monks-*Theras*. Hence, Theravada means the doctrine of the Elders just suggesting the idea of its conservative nature.

With the rapid development of the Order of *Sangha* during the very lifetime of Buddha, it was felt essential to guide these monks in keeping with their holy life. Therefore a code of discipline was formulated. This was called *Vinaya* or monastic discipline and the text in which all the rules were compiled was called *Vinaya Piṭaka*. These guidelines, which originated during the lifetime of the Buddha, went through a number of changes from time to time depending on the social demands and other reasons. The following essay will illustrate some of the

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changes that took place in Sri Lanka during the past two thousand years in its history in the island deviating from the original code of discipline.

Buddha, lying on his death bed at Kusinara, addressed the venerable Ananda, his follower and beloved attendant and said: "Ananda, you may think the words of the Teacher (Buddha) is a thing of the past now that we have no more any teacher. But you should not regard it so. The law (*dhamma*) and discipline (*vinaya*) taught and described to you by me are your teacher after I am gone."<sup>1</sup>

This statement by Buddha clearly shows that he did not appoint any one of his followers to be his successor, but only his teachings and the discipline that went along with it. However, after the demise of the Buddha, there were forces among his followers who pushed for more relaxation of the rules of discipline; and this led to a rehearsal (*saṅgāyanā*) of the *dhamma* and *vinaya* to confirm the original teachings of the Buddha. The first such rehearsal was held after three months of the Master's demise in the eighth year of King Ajatasattu's reign. It is said that five hundred monks who were concerned about the purity of the doctrine held a convocation at Rajagaha city to rehearse the *dhamma* and *vinaya*. Two more councils were held, one after a hundred years and the next, the third one, two hundred and thirty-six years after the demise of the Buddha.<sup>2</sup> So, within a period of nearly two hundred and fifty years, three consecutive rehearsals were held in order to maintain the purity of the teachings of the Buddha and also to get rid of all heretics and heretical views that would harm the future course of the Buddhist dispensation (*sāsana*).

According to Buddhism life is a cycle of birth and death and hence it is called *saṃsāra*. This *saṃsāric* life is basically suffering and unsatisfying (*dukkha*). This is because life is subjected to birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), sickness (*viyādhī*) and death (*maraṇa*). Therefore our goal in life should be to get out of this *saṃsāric* life and achieve salvation which we call *nirvāṇa*. The path found by the Buddha to cross this *saṃsāric* life is that of morality (*sīla*) concentration (*saṃādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*).

<sup>1</sup> Mahāparinibbana Sutta, in *The Dīgha Nikāya*, hereafter DN (London: Pali Text Society/H. Frowde, 1890–1911) 2.154.

<sup>2</sup> Samantapasādikā, hereafter Smp. Trans. as *The Inception of Discipline, and the Vinaya Nidāna*, ed. and trans. N.A. Jayawickrama (London: Pali Text Society/Luzac, 1962) 1–55; Mahāvamsa, hereafter Mhv. Trans. as *The Mahāvamsa*, ed. and trans. Wilhelm Geiger (London: Pali Text Society/Luzac, 1964) chapters 3–5.

*Sīla* is explained as virtuous behavior, of which a detailed analysis is found in the *Brahmajāla Sutta*.<sup>3</sup>

The Buddha, at the very beginning of the formation of his dispensation (*sāsana*), advised his follower monks to wander for the well-being and happiness of mankind as a whole. These wandering monks (*bhikkhu*) or mendicants who were collectively called *saṅgha* were responsible for taking the message of the Buddha to the common man. The rules of discipline for their conduct developed out of their ascetic life. The conduct of the early Buddhist monks during the times of Buddha is found in the *vinaya* texts. Though we cannot say for certain that all the rules of discipline or conduct found in the *vinaya* texts go back to the times of the Buddha, certainly they go back at least to the times of King Asoka in the third century BC, in whose time the final compilation of the Buddhist canon was completed.<sup>4</sup> Therefore not every rule that is found in the *vinaya* texts may correspond to the days of the Buddha. As I. B. Horner observed, two essential points to grasp in connection with original Buddhism are these: in the first place, the texts do not date from Gautama's (Buddha) time, but are about two centuries later; and in the second place, they are very largely the fruits of monkish labor.<sup>5</sup> These rules of discipline reflect the religious frame of reference of the early Buddhist *saṅgha*, and the *Vinaya Piṭaka* itself is concerned with about two hundred rules of discipline ranging from sanctions to prohibitions.<sup>6</sup>

The wandering life of the ascetic was broken during the monsoon (*vassānakāla*) and the monks went into retreat. This sedentary interlude later developed into a full-fledged monastic order with residences (*āvāsa*) and a code of discipline for the monks (*saṅgha*). The term *saṅgha* includes both *bhikkhu saṅgha* and *bhikkhuni saṅgha*, the order of monks and the order of nuns. The acquisition of virtue was the main objective of the monk who was now leading a monastic life. Soon *pātimokkha* or conduct par excellence was interpreted as the source of all good activities or *sīla*. It is described as *pātimokkha saṃvaro eva hi*

<sup>3</sup> *Brahmajāla Sutta*, *DN* 1.1.

<sup>4</sup> A.L. Basja, "The Background to the Rise of Buddhism," *The Maha Bodhi Journal*, special centenary ed. (1993) 24.

<sup>5</sup> Isaline Blew Horner, *The Early Buddhist Theory of Man Perfected: A Study of the Arahant Concept and of the Implications of the Aim to Perfection in Religious Life, Traced in Early Canonical and Post-Canonical Pali Literature* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1936) 32.

<sup>6</sup> John Clifford Holt, *Discipline: The Canonical Buddhism of the Vinayapitaka* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981) 2.

*sīlam*. If we look back to the origins of the Buddhist religious organization, which is called *sāsana*, we see that the Buddha was wandering in the country with his retinue of monks preaching the doctrine. He was traveling far and wide taking the noble message of the *dhamma* throughout the year, observing the retreat only during the rainy season (which was in fact not observed at the very beginning of the formation of the *sasana* when they continued traveling). The monks were advised to spend the rainy season in one place.

The Buddhist *saṅgha*, who were very different from the rest of the wandering ascetics and *Paribrājakas* of the day, still followed some of the old religious practices followed by the early ascetics such as the *vassa* and the *uposatha*. However, as time passed, the communal character of the Buddhist *saṅgha* appeared more distinctive.<sup>7</sup> The first step in this process was the drawing up of a compendium of rules known as *Pātimokkha*. The Pali term *Pātimokkha* has no standard definition. Various scholars have given all sorts of interpretations. A reasonable definition that could be given to this word is "that which binds" or, as Sukumar Dutt suggests, a bond.<sup>8</sup> *Pātimokkha* originally may have consisted in periodical meetings of the monks for the purpose of holding a communal confession of faith. The early wandering Buddhist monks erected crude shelters in a forest, next to a river, in a valley, or at the foot of a mountain, but always close to a village or town. For the most part monks observed the retreat in cells constructed by the lay-followers.<sup>9</sup> These temporary residences would have been known as *āvāsas*, a monastic colony.

The third chapter of the Book of Discipline, the *Mahāvagga* deals with the *āvāsas*, its construction, maintenance, regulations for living in it, and manners and etiquette to be observed. Apart from the *āvāsas* were the *ārāmas* or gardens which came to be known as *vihāra* also indicating their greater sense of permanence.<sup>10</sup> Many scholars who have studied the early history of monastic life believe that the life style of the monks changed with the demise of the Buddha. The wandering monks at this stage adopted a more established and settled life. Prebish believes that

<sup>7</sup> Sukumar Dutt, *Early Buddhist Monachism, 600 B.C.—1000 B.C.* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Company, 1924) 17.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 88–90.

<sup>9</sup> Mohan Wijayaratna, *Buddhist Monastic Life* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 20–21.

<sup>10</sup> Holt, 32.

this change took place after one hundred years after Buddha's death<sup>11</sup> while Dutt believes it to be just fifty years.<sup>12</sup>

*Cullavagga* gives us a description of an occasion where the *saṅgha* accepted a lodging at Rajagaha. It says that a great merchant from Rajagaha wanted to build lodgings for the use of the monks because they were living in forests under the trees, in caves and cemeteries, and in the open air. When he inquired, he was informed that the Buddha had not given them permission to accept such gifts. The merchant wanted the monks to clarify this position from the Buddha himself and requested the monks to go back to the Buddha to ask for his opinion. The monks did so and the answer given by the Buddha was that he would allow five kinds of dwelling places for the monks. These are: an ordinary residence (*vihāra*), a residence which is round (*addhayoga*), long (*pāsāda*) or with several stories (*hammiya*) and a cave (*guhā*).<sup>13</sup> Accordingly the merchant built residences for the monks. The great banker Anathapindika from Savatthi brought a park for the Buddha himself and his disciples and built an *ārāma* which included cells, store rooms, meeting rooms, a fireplace, places to store gifts, toilets, meditation rooms, walk ways, rooms for hot baths, and lotus ponds etc. This was gifted to the community of monks headed by the Buddha (*Buddha pamukha agatānagata catuddisa saṅghassa*).<sup>14</sup> Similarly we come across many such instances where devotees have gifted residences to the community of monks. The female lay devotee Visakha built a monastery in Savatthi which had seven stories.<sup>15</sup> The banker Kukkuta built an *ārāma* in Kosambi. King Bimbisara gifted his Royal Park in Rajagaha and Anathapindika built a monastery in Savatthi. It is calculated that the Buddhist *saṅgha* owned twenty-nine large monasteries; eighteen in Rajagaha, four in Vesali, three in Savatthi, and four in Kosambi.<sup>16</sup>

The term *ārāma* denoted at first a pleasure park but later on residential monasteries like Jetavanārāma, Veluvanārāma and Kukkuṭārāma above

<sup>11</sup> Charles S. Prebish, ed., *Buddhist Monastic Discipline: The Sanskrit Pratimoksa Sutras of the Mahasamghikas and Mulasarvastivādins* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975) 8–9.

<sup>12</sup> Dutt, 10.

<sup>13</sup> Wijayaratna 22: *Cullavagga*, in *The Vinaya Pitakam: One of the Principal Buddhist Holy Scriptures in the Pali Language*, (hereafter VP) ed. Hermann Oldenberg (London: Pali Text Society/Luzac, 1964–1982) 2.146.

<sup>14</sup> VP 1.305, 2.147.

<sup>15</sup> Mahavagga, in VP 3.1; Sutta Vibhanga, VP 4.269–270.

<sup>16</sup> Etienne Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism: From the Origins of the Saka Era* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, Université Catholique de Louvain, 1988) 17.

mentioned. These *vana-ārāmas* or garden monasteries were located on flat lands close to a village or a city. There was another category called *giri* or *pabbata-ārāma* meaning mountain monastery more suitable for the meditating monk who sought peace. Instructions for the formation of an *ārāma* are also laid down. The boundaries or *sīmā* had to be fixed by a formal act of the *saṅgha*. The *Mahāvagga* gives a detailed description of the boundaries.<sup>17</sup>

The Buddha, while accepting and allowing the community of monks to accept the gifts, also had rules promulgated giving conditions for such acceptances. In the first instance, the monks were advised not to abuse the generosity of the donor; secondly, they were advised not to stray from the simple way of life.<sup>18</sup> The monks were advised not to trouble their benefactor by asking for more things to be done. This advice was promulgated as rules which are found among the *saṅghādisesa*.<sup>19</sup> Special care was taken to safeguard the environment at the time of building. The constructor was advised not to entail the destruction of plant life or of ancient sanctuaries belonging to other religions, and there had to be an open space around the building.<sup>20</sup>

The religious life of the monks was further symbolized by their dress. The rules of discipline were clear on this. There were two kinds of rag that made up the garment of the Buddhist monk, namely pieces of cloth collected from the burial grounds and scraps of cloth collected in streets and near shops. This practice was changed after twenty years, and monks were allowed to accept pieces of material given by the lay people and to prepare and wear the robes from them.<sup>21</sup> The word *kāsāyavattḥāni* refers to this dress of the monks meaning 'yellow or saffron colored robe.' The robe was cut into pieces in order to reduce in value. At the end of each retreat the devotees offer the monks this cut cloth or robe which is known as *kaṭhina cīvara*.<sup>22</sup> It further symbolizes the simple and detached life of a Buddhist monk. The monks had to depend on the donor not only for the cloth but for all the four requisites (*cattāro paccaya*) namely robes

<sup>17</sup> Mahāvagga, in VP 2.6–7, 12.7.

<sup>18</sup> VP 3.144–157.

<sup>19</sup> Sanghadisesa rules 6–7, VN 3.144–157.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. See also Anuradha Seneviratna, "Buddhist Monastic Life in Sri Lanka," in *Uvasara-Ananda Kulasuriya Felicitation Volume* (Colombo, Sri Lanka: R.C. Godge and Bros., 1999).

<sup>21</sup> Mahavagga, in VP 1.280.

<sup>22</sup> VP 1.253.

(*cīvara*), food (*pindapāta*), living place (*senāsana*) and medicine (*gilā-  
napaccaya*) as well.<sup>23</sup> They are also described as four basic sustenances  
(*cattāro nissaya*). As renouncers of the worldly life the monks have to  
depend on the donors for a living. They go for food with a begging bowl  
in hand; they are designated beggars or mendicants and hence called  
*bhikkhus*. The wealth and strength of a monk were his virtue or *sīla* and  
not money or property.

Money has no value for his life. The Buddha prohibited his monks  
from accepting money or consenting to have it deposited for him.<sup>24</sup> But  
he also realized the importance of money when living in a society in case  
of an emergency. Therefore he allowed the service of a lay person who  
would help the community with monetary problems. The latter was  
called a *kappiyakāraka*.<sup>25</sup> He was also deprived of sexual life completely.  
A monk who had sexual intercourse was no longer considered a monk.<sup>26</sup>  
Such monks or nuns were expelled from the community. Not only sex but  
enjoying sensual pleasure too was deemed a hindrance to the realization  
of the final goal. The rules of good conduct were put into use by asking  
the monks to meet fortnightly and recite the code of discipline, the act of  
the *saṅgha* described above as *pātimokkha*. The total number of rules for  
the monks at the beginning was a little over one hundred fifty. But as time  
went on the number went up to two hundred twenty *sikkhapadas*.

The primitive *saṅgha* was often called the *saṅgha* of the four quarters  
(*cātuddisa bhikkhu saṅgha*).<sup>27</sup> They were so called because when the  
donors made an endowment, it was not offered to an individual but to the  
whole community of *saṅgha* representing the four quarters. Monks were  
not allowed to accept gifts individually. This fact is further illustrated by  
the early Buddhist inscriptions found in India as well as in Sri Lanka.

We find several interpretations of the above phrase given by various  
scholars. Senart, Dutt, and Hazara are among them.<sup>28</sup> But it is a simple

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 1.30.

<sup>24</sup> Nissaggiya Pacittiya 10, 18, in VP 3.219–223, 3.237.

<sup>25</sup> VP 1.245.

<sup>26</sup> Mahavagga, in VP 1.96.

<sup>27</sup> Cullavagga, in VP 6.1–4; *Dialogues of the Buddha*, ed. and trans. T. W. Rhys-  
Davids and C. A. F. Rhys-Davids (London: H. Frowde/Oxford University Press,  
1899–1921).

<sup>28</sup> Kanai Lal Hazra, *Constitution of the Buddhist Sangha* (Delhi: B. R. Publishing  
Company, 1988) 81; Dutt, 83; E. Senart, *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. VII (Calcutta: Govt. of  
India, 1903) 59–60.

phrase to understand. The early monks were called *cātuddisa* or of the  
four quarters because they did not stick to one place or locality but spent  
all the time traveling. Such monks were found everywhere. That was the  
nature of the early *saṅgha*. This is further defined by the advice of the  
Buddha to his followers. He said: Monks, take to the road: travel for  
the good of the of many, travel for the happiness of the many out of com-  
passion for the world, travel for the good, benefit, and happiness of men  
and gods. Preach the doctrine.<sup>29</sup> It is therefore clear that the monks had  
no fixed abode or place and they belonged to the four quarters. These  
abodes are still found everywhere. This was the situation at the beginning  
of the Buddhist monastic life but things changed as time went on. With  
the offering of dwelling places for the monks, at least some, if not all,  
preferred to stay in one place and look after the interests of the lay devo-  
tees, who by this time had become accustomed to the Buddhist monks.  
These monks anyhow did not consider the dwelling places offered by the  
devotees as their personal property; they belonged to the community of  
*saṅgha* as a whole. Similarly the devotees also offered the dwellings  
to the community of the *saṅgha* of the four quarters present and non-  
present (*agatānagata*) because any monk had the right to live in these  
dwellings because they belonged to the *saṅgha*. Therefore the donors got  
used to the standard phrase *agatānagata cātuddisa bhikkhu saṅghassa* to  
the *saṅgha* of the four quarters who are present and absent- and inscribed  
it on the rock as a record of their donation. Thus the property became  
*sāṅghika* or belonging to the *saṅgha*.

The condition of the society of *saṅgha* by about two hundred fifty  
years after the Buddha's demise can be gauged from the events that led to  
the holding of the third great council at Pataliputra under the patronage  
of King Dharmasoka. Though some scholars believe that there was no  
such council held at Pataliputra because such an event is not recorded in  
the inscriptions of Asoka, the Pāli chronicles in Sri Lanka preserve a de-  
tailed description of this council. Further evidence is provided by the  
Buddhist missions that took place immediately after. If these missions  
are accepted as historical facts, there is no reason to ignore the accounts  
of the *saṅgha* council. Let us therefore proceed from here relying on the  
Pāli chronicles and commentaries available in Sri Lanka. As we can see  
from the accounts, at least seventeen schools excluding the Theravada

<sup>29</sup> Caratha Bhikkhave cārikam bahujanahitāya bahujanasukhāya lokanukampāya  
atthāya hitāya sukhāya devamanussānam. Ma ekena dve agamittha. Desetha bhikkhave  
dammam adikalyānam majjhakalyānam pariyojanakalyānam (VP 1.21).

are said to have been active after the second century of the Buddha's demise.<sup>30</sup> The disunity of the *saṅgha*, as seen by this division, was due mainly to the interruption of the *uposatha* and *saṅghakamma* or *pātimokkha*. The *samantapāsādikā* or the *Vinaya* commentary has the details. The heretics, who according to *Samantapāsādikā* had dwindled their gain and honor to the extent of failing to obtain even their food and raiment, now gained admission to the Buddhist dispensation, claiming to be the custodians of *Dhamma* and *vinaya*. Wearing yellow robes they wandered about in monasteries intruding on the *uposatha* and *pavāraṇa* ceremonies and on formal acts of the order and of the chapter. The monks did not perform the *uposatha* ceremony in their company. The *uposatha* at Asokarama was interrupted for seven years. The monks informed the king of this matter, and he in turn commanded a minister to go to the monastery and settle the dispute and revive the *uposatha*. The minister punished those monks by beheading them, which upset the king for he was deemed responsible for the killings. At this crucial hour of need, Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa pacified the king with the teaching of the *dhamma*. The king had the order of monks assembled at Asokarama, questioned them on the doctrine, and disrobed those who are not following the true doctrine of the Buddha. Having purified the *sāsana* he allowed the monks to carry on their religious rites as usual. King Asoka brought about unity among the monks (*saṅgha samaggo*), had a rehearsal of *dhamma* and *vinaya*, and, at the end of it, missionaries were sent to the neighboring countries including Sri Lanka,<sup>31</sup> thus making Buddhism an international religion and belief system.

Thus law and discipline played an important role in the development of the Buddhist dispensation throughout its development. It was through the three stages of self training (*tisso sikkhā*) mentioned above that brought about a complete development of Buddhist monastic life which led to the acquisition of true knowledge (*paññā*) and the elimination of lust (*rāgo*), hatred (*doso*) and delusion (*moho*) which are described as attaining *nibbāna* (Skt *Nirvāna*) or extinction or freedom from desire as the commentaries often describe. Buddha once told a Vajjiputtaka monk that the purpose of the monastic life was to discipline oneself in terms of

the threefold *sikkhā*.<sup>32</sup> This habit continued to be practiced as a basic requirement for a monk. This was an accepted practice even in the fifth century in Sri Lanka. Buddhagosha relates this in one of the commentaries written by him while living in Sri Lanka.<sup>33</sup>

A perfect character of a good monk is analyzed in the *Sāmaññapala Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. They constituted the following *sikkhās* or rules: disciplined by the restraints of the Pātimokkha; endowed with propriety of behavior and conduct; heedful even of the slightest misdeeds, disciplining himself in terms of moral injunctions, possessed of blameless word and deeds, endowed with mindfulness and awareness and full of contentment.<sup>34</sup>

This was the conduct expected of a Buddhist monk at the time of the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka during the reign of King Devanampiya Tissa in the third century BC. The introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka was the result of King Asoka's contribution to the propagation of Buddhism outside his dominion. It was none other than his son Arahant Mahinda who was sent for this purpose. One year later his sister Theri Sanghamitta arrived in the island bringing a sapling of the Bodhi tree. We see from the above that the community of *saṅgha* had divided into eighteen sects during the time of Asoka, but it was the original Theravada or the doctrine preserved by the Elder monks that was introduced to Sri Lanka. The disciplinary rules that were followed by the venerable monks during that period too were simultaneously introduced. Most scholars believe that the Theravadins when compared with other sects can be described as conservative in their attitude toward the interpretation of the doctrine and in the observance of the *vinaya* rules. They believe that the early monks permitted no laxity in monastic observances, and were not prepared to waive even minor rules of *vinaya* (conduct) to which the Buddha had given permission.<sup>35</sup> The Mahavihara founded by

<sup>30</sup> *The Mahāvamsa*, ed. H. Sumangala and D. A. De Silvan Batuwantudawe (Colombo, Ceylon: Govt. Printer, 1908) 5.2.

<sup>31</sup> *Snp* 1.60ff; N. A. Jayawickrama, "Asoka's Edicts and the Third Buddhist Council," *King Asoka and Buddhism: Historical and Literary Studies*, ed. Anuradha Seneviratna (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1994) 67–78.

<sup>32</sup> *The Angutiara Nikāya of the Sutta Pitaka Eka Duka and Tika Nipaka: Translated from the Pali Text Published by the Pali Text Society in 1885* (Galle, Ceylon: C. Calyaneratne, 1913) 1.230

<sup>33</sup> *Majjhimanikāyaṭṭhakathā*, Trans. as *Papañcasudani Majjhimanikayattakatha of Buddhaghosācariya* (London: Pali Text Society/Oxford University Press, 1922) 2.313.

<sup>34</sup> *Evam pabbajito samano pātimokkasam vasam vuto viharati, ācāragocarasampanno, anumattesu vajjesu bhayadassāvi samādāya sikkhati sikkhapadesu, kāyahamma vācikkamena samannāgato kulasena, pārisuddhajivo, silasampanno, indriyesu gattadvaro, silasampaññena samannāgato santuṭṭho* (DN 1.631).

<sup>35</sup> The University of Ceylon, *History of Ceylon* (Peradeniya, Ceylon: University of Ceylon Press Board, 1969) 1.1:253–254.

Arahant Mahinda became the center of Buddhism in Sri Lanka's capital at Anuradhapura. Arahant Mahinda himself with his followers took residence in cave dwellings at Mihintale close to the city. It was a very simple way of life befitting a monk who had given up worldly pleasures for spiritual happiness.<sup>36</sup> Buddhism had now become the religion of the state and it soon began to spread all over the island receiving royal patronage. All the *bhikkhus* in the island acknowledged the authority of the Mahavihara.

These monks had two options open to them. They could either take to strenuous spiritual exercise leading to the state of *arahant* called the *vi-darsanādhura*, the path of meditation; or they would devote their time to studying the canonical texts. This process was called the *granthadhura*, meaning 'studying the texts'.<sup>37</sup>

This early situation is summarized in the *Concise History of Ceylon* in the following words.

A novice attached himself to a teacher and served the latter while he was trained in the rules of conduct. The large number of caves dedicated to the *saṅgha*, in the two or three centuries following the introduction of Buddhism, indicates that there were many *bhikkhus* who adopted the life of the recluse and strove for spiritual attainments. But such *bhikkhus* themselves may periodically have resided regularly in monasteries near the capital and villages. They as well as others who resided regularly in monasteries, visited the house of the laity when invited for meals, guided them in their religious observations, and gave them counsel when they were in need of it.<sup>38</sup>

Arahant Mahinda not only introduced Buddhism to Sri Lanka but also made the *saṅgha* a national church by further encouraging the members to play an important role in national activities. A century later we see the result: Buddhist monks played a prominent role in the national movement and supported a Sinhala King, Dutthagamini, who marched as the champion of Buddhism against the Tamil ruler of Anuradhapura. When

Dutthagamini ascended the throne he was grateful to the community of monks who supported him and built monastic edifices and shrines for them and further gave them the four requisites.<sup>39</sup> However, it was seen that individual monks did not ask for, or receive, any personal rewards for the services rendered to the king. After another century we see that things have changed again. This time the *saṅgha* intervened on behalf of a disposed king to regain his lost sovereignty. The grateful king made a gift of land to the *vihāra* of the *thera* who aided him in his exile. This was seen by the Mahavihara monks as going against the ideals of Buddhism. The Mahavihara monks accused the *thera* of frequenting the families of laymen (*kulasamsaggadosa*) and imposed on them the punishment of expulsion known as *pabbajaniyakamma*.<sup>40</sup> But this offense is not mentioned in the *Vinaya*. Instead we find the word *kuladūsaka* which means "defiler of good families," for which the above punishment was prescribed. Therefore the punishment for frequenting lay families as a rule for monks may suggest a new law of the Theravadins, and that may be the reason for the monks to disagree and protest. This again goes to show how disciplined the early monks were.

Under the procedure of taking up action against a monk on *pabbajaniyakamma*, the accused is summoned before the assembly of monks and interrogated for his offense. The accused monk should admit his commitments. He is then reminded of the *pātimokkha* or the rules of *vinaya* and then charged with the particular offense. A competent monk will move the motion (*ñatti*) of his offense and request the community of monks to pronounce the *pabbajaniyakamma* if the *saṅgha* finds him guilty. He moves the motion thrice. A monk so punished is required to leave the monastery and behave properly at his new residence observing some eighteen restrictions scrupulously. The punished monk is also entitled to ask for a revocation of his punishment.<sup>41</sup> In the case of the above monk who was supported by a few others, they left the Mahavihara monastery, formed the Abhayagiri Vihara and resided there, refusing to return to the original monastery. This incident marks the beginning of dissension in the *saṅgha*. A little later this monastery came under the influence of a teacher called Dhammaruci who belonged to the Vajjiputta

<sup>36</sup> Anuradha Seneviratna, *Mihintale: The Dawn of a Civilization* (Colombo, Sri Lanka: Associated Newspapers of Ceylon, 1993).

<sup>37</sup> Cyril Wace Nicholas and Senarat Paranavitana, *A Concise History of Ceylon: From the Earliest Times to the Arrival of the Portuguese in 1505* (Colombo, Ceylon: Ceylon University Press, 1961) 110.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Mhv 25.

<sup>40</sup> Mhv 33.95–98; Walpola Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon: The Amaradhapura Period, Third Century BC—Tenth Century AC*, 3rd ed. (Dehiwala, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Cultural Centre, 1993) 83.

<sup>41</sup> Chandriak Singh Upasak, *Dictionary of Early Buddhist Monastic Terms Based on Pali Literature* (Varanasi: Bharati Prakashan, 1975) 139–140.

sect in India and came to be known as *Dhammaruci nikāya*. They held some views on the question of *Anatta* (No soul) which went against the Theravada point of view. The famous teacher of *Vajrayāna* named Vajrabodhi also spent some time at Abhayagiri in the fifth century AD.<sup>42</sup> It was likely that the liberal attitude of the Abhayagiri monks towards the teachings of the non-Theravada school of Buddhism attracted many men of intellect from both the laity and the clergy (across the oceans).<sup>43</sup> Later it seems that a faction of the *Abhayagiri vihara* left this fraternity and took up residence at *Dakkhina vihara* which followed the teachings of a *thera* named Sagali. This was because some monks did not want to follow the teachings of the Dhammaruci or *Vaitulya* doctrine of Abhayagiri monastery. This faction was called the *Sāgaliyas*. When the third monastery, Jetavana was founded in the fourth century by King Mahasen, it was dedicated to a monk of this sect; and it became the third most important monastery or *nikāya* in Sri Lanka. The *saṅgha* in Sri Lanka was thus divided into three fraternities and remained so until the twelfth century.<sup>44</sup>

Of the three, the Abhayagiri vihara was recognized for the study of the *Vaitulya* or *Mahāyāna* doctrines.<sup>45</sup> Fa Hsien, the Chinese pilgrim who spent some time in this monastery, left behind an account of the place as he saw it in the fifth century. The Mahavihara on the other hand remained orthodox and studied and practiced only the Theravada.

Fa Hsien in his notes says that there were five thousand monks at the Abhayagiri monastery, three thousand at Mahavihara, and two thousand at Mihintale. The total number of monks residing in the Anuradhapura kingdom would have been at least twenty-five thousand.<sup>46</sup> All the *vihāras* or temples in the country belonged to these three main monasteries, and the majority of them no doubt came under the orthodox Mahavihara.

As far as we can see, the reason for the conflict between the Mahavihara and Abhayagiri monasteries was due to differences in the interpretation of *vinaya* rules. This hypothesis is further strengthened by *Mahā-*

*vamsatīkā* or *Vamsatthappakāsini* when it says that the Abhayagiri monastery gave variant interpretations of the *khandaka* and *parivāra* sections of the *Vinaya Pitaka*.<sup>47</sup> The *Vinaya* commentary, *Samantapāsādikā*, also speaks of a discrepancy between the Mahavihara and Abhayagiri monasteries on the *Suttavibhanga* section of the *Vinaya Pitaka*.<sup>48</sup> There were instances where the two monasteries accused each other of lack of discipline. For example, during the reign of Mahasen in the third century, the monks of the Abhayagiri monastery found that the monks of the Mahavihara monastery were violating the basic *vinaya* rules by using ivory fans, conferring ordination by messenger, reckoning the ordination from the date of conception, fixing the *sīmā* boundaries at the wrong places, spitting on the ground during morning ablutions and so on.<sup>49</sup> The Mahavihara monks answered these allegations by citing the relevant sections from the *Vinaya Pitaka*.<sup>50</sup> The use of a stand by Mahavihara monks to accept offerings of food was another issue on which the two factions disagreed.<sup>51</sup> Apart from these differences of opinion, there were also disagreements on textual matters too. Some of these are seen in books like the *Vimuttimagga* of the Abhayagiri monastery and the commentaries written by the Mahavihara.<sup>52</sup> The *Mahāvamsa tīkā* says that in certain sections of the *Vinaya Pitaka*, for example *Khandaka* and *Parivāra*, the canon as studied in the Abhayagiri Vihara contained readings differing from the corresponding texts of the Mahavihara; and in interpretation too the two communities had different views.<sup>53</sup> This shows that the two monasteries had differed on *Vinaya* matters too. However, it must be emphasized that the two monasteries despite their differences remained two divisions within the Theravada. On the other hand, though we see that the founders of Jetavana monastery were hostile to the *Vaitulyavāda*, within two centuries they had come closer. We see in the sixth century the custodians of the Jetavana monastery holding a festival in honor of *dhammadhātu*,<sup>54</sup> scriptures of Vaitulyas, suggestive of Ma-

<sup>47</sup> *Vamsatthappakasini*, ed. G.P. Malalasekara (London: Pali Text Society/Oxford University Press, 1935) 1.175–176.

<sup>48</sup> *Samantapāsādikā*, ed. Junjiro Takakusu and Makoto Nagai (London: Pali Text Society, 1930) 3.582–584.

<sup>49</sup> Mhv 37.3–5.

<sup>50</sup> VP 1.93, 1.106, 2.130, 2.277; *Vamsatthappakasini* 2.676–677.

<sup>51</sup> Smp 4.846.

<sup>52</sup> For a detailed account, see Gunawardana, 24–31.

<sup>53</sup> *History of Ceylon*, 1.1:246.

<sup>54</sup> *Culavamsa*, ed. and trans. Wilhelm Geiger and Christian Mabel Rickmers (Colombo, Ceylon: Ceylon Government Information Department, 1953) 41.37–40; *History of Ceylon* 1.1:380.

<sup>42</sup> *Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 34 (1915) 107.

<sup>43</sup> R. A. L. H. Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough: Monasticism and Economic Interest in Early Medieval Sri Lanka* (Tucson: Association for Asian Studies/University of Arizona Press, 1979) 16.

<sup>44</sup> *History of Ceylon* 1.1:254–255; *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, 84.

<sup>45</sup> *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, 85.

<sup>46</sup> Fa-hsien. *A Record of the Buddhistic Kingdoms*, trans. James Legge (Oxford, 1886) 107.

hayana ritual. The Mihintale monastery which was then known as Cetiya-pabbata vihāra also came under the administration of the Abhayagiri monastery and lasted through the twelfth century.<sup>55</sup>

The above examples clearly illustrate the differences of opinions on *Vinaya* points held by the three main monasteries at the time in Sri Lanka. This further leads to the conclusion that each monastery maintained its own conduct, and monastic law according to one's own belief and practice. Though we do not have concrete evidence to prove this (except what we find in Pali commentaries and Chronicles) some later texts on *Vinaya* written in Sinhala further support our hypothesis.

The earliest written record available to us in Sinhala on the conduct of the monks dates back to the tenth century. It is called *Sikhavalaṇḍa* or *Mulsikha Valaṇḍa*. But before this period, there were two other books in Pali named *Mūlasikkhā* written by a *thera* called Mahasami and the other called *Khudda Sikkhā* written by a *thera* named Dhammasiri. The Sinhala names of the originals, if they were in Sinhala, would have been *Mulsikha* and *Kudusikha*.<sup>56</sup> We are not quite certain about the dates of compilation of these two works in Pali, but they could be translations from the Sinhalese. Judging by what had happened in the three monasteries at Anuradhapurra, it is certain that each monastery maintained its own code of *Vinaya* rules. The *Sikhavalaṇḍa* which is available to us today may be the Sinhala translation of a Pali version of which the original would have been again Sinhala. An explanatory work (*tīkā*) on the *Sikhavalaṇḍa* appears as *Sikhavalaṇḍa Vinisa* and both works are treated as one whole text today.<sup>57</sup> It contains rules and regulations that should be followed by a monk who had just received the higher ordination (*upasampadā*). They are written in short sentences in order to help the monk to memorize them. The *tīkā* explains the meanings of the rules further. From internal evidence it is clear that both the Sinhala versions contain sentences taken from *Samantapāsādikā*, the *Vinaya* commentary written by Buddhaghosa in the fifth century while living in the Mahavihara. Therefore the two books in Sinhala would have been used by the monks belonging to the Mahavihara and Abhayagiri as there was nothing controversial in them. The word *sikhakarani* is found in the Mihintale Slab

<sup>55</sup> *Culavamas* 38.75.

<sup>56</sup> Ananda S. Kulasuriya, *Simhala Sahitya* (Colombo, Ceylon: Maharagama Saman Press, 1961) 1:96–97.

<sup>57</sup> *Sikhavalaṇḍa na Sikhavalaṇḍa Vinisa*, ed. D.B. Jayatilake (Colombo, Ceylon: Lankabhinava Bishruta Yantralaya, 1934).

Inscription of Mahinda IV of the tenth century. The words *mulsikha* and *sikhavalaṇḍa Vinisa* in the Polonnaruwa Inscription of Parakramabahu I in the twelfth century may refer to the two Sinhala books mentioned above and further illustrate how popular they were as texts of authority on *Vinaya*. These two books were so highly regarded that *Sikhavalaṇḍa* was translated into Pali during the thirteenth century, and the Sinhala text was a prescribed text book for the monks even in the fifteenth century. This is demonstrated by a reference in the *Hansa Sandesaya*.<sup>58</sup>

There are about one hundred fifty disciplinary rules in the *Sikhavalaṇḍa*. They are: four *Pārājikās*, seven *Sanghādisesas*, fourteen *Nissaggiyas*, forty-one *Pācittiyas*, eighty *Pākinas*, which include details of the observance of *uposatha*, *Vassāna* etc. There are *sikkhās* to follow and restrain (*Cāritta-vāritta*). The majority are rules to restrain and the number is one hundred forty six. It is difficult to say something about the composition of *Sikhavalaṇḍa*, but it is certain that it was compiled after careful consultation of the Pali commentaries written in the fifth century. However, there is evidence to prove that at least *Samantapāsādikā* and *Vinayavinishcaya* were two books that had been consulted. There is also evidence to show that a number of rules were compiled from experiences faced by the monks in society from time to time. Though the final compilation of the present text is dated to the tenth century on the evidence of the language of the Sinhala *Sikhavalaṇḍa*, the original text must have been compiled at least two or three centuries earlier. The *Sikhavalaṇḍa* is the final result of a long history and evolution of the *Vinaya* rules that were followed by the *saṅgha* of Sri Lanka before the dawn of the tenth century.

There is another book named *Heranasikha* in Sinhala which is a *Vinaya* book used by the novice monk. This book deals with the daily routine of a novice monk. Besides his own discipline it also recommends to the novice how to treat his teachers and elders, and the moral practices to be followed when going on alms and so on. This is a sort of handbook that helps the novice who is now under the guidance of an experienced and elderly teacher. We are not quite certain about the date of the compilation of this work, but it could be a work belonging to the thirteenth century and has a reference in the Dambaderiya *Katikāvata*. The *Hansa Sandesaya* once again mentions its name and says that his book *Her-*

<sup>58</sup> Kulasuriya 97–98; *Hansa Sandesaya*, ed. C.E. Godakumbure (Colombo, Ceylon: 1953) vs. 173.

*anasikha* was seen recited by novice monks in the centers of learning at the time (15<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>59</sup>

The codified law for the community of Buddhist monks is the result of the promulgation of *Sikkhāpadas*, which were introduced as a result of laxity in discipline (*sīla*) in the monastic life. These rules began to grow and change from time to time according to day to day experiences. They were put into use through the fortnightly recital which was called *Uddesa* or *Pātimokkhuddesa*. According to the *Anguttara Nikāya*,<sup>60</sup> the number of such *sikkhāpadas* which were regularly recited at *Pātimokkhas* were over one hundred fifty. But over the centuries of development the number had risen to two hundred twenty *sikkhāpadas*. They are divided into seven groups namely: four *Pārājikās*, the violation of which involves permanent expulsion from the monastic community; thirteen *Saṅghādisesas* or rules which refer to offenses that require the offender to spend a period of penance before he can be reinstated by a formal act of the *saṅgha*; two *aniyatas* or undetermined cases in which an offender might be charged with the breaking of one or another of the rules in the disciplinary code depending on the nature of the offense; thirty *Nissaggiya Pācittiya* rules that require explanation and forfeiture if transgressed, the offenses such as the outright possession of requisites and articles; ninety two *Pācittiyas*, the miscellany of concerns intended to help the individual avoid leading a life of luxury that might distract him from progressing along the path; the four *Patidesaniya* precepts governing etiquette while making an alms round, and the seventy five *Sekhiyas* or rules of a minor nature that deal with the daily routine of the monk such as his behavior while making an alms round, preaching to the laity, partaking of food, etc. The final form of this set of two hundred twenty rules is found in the *Suttavibhanga*.<sup>61</sup>

What is the place of the *Pātimokkha* in the *Vinaya Pitaka*? The *Vinaya Pitaka* is divided into five sections, namely; *Pārājikā*, *Pācittiya*, *Mahāvagga*, *Cullavagga* and *Parivāra Pata*. The first two are called *Sutta Vibhanga* and the third and fourth are called *Khandhaka*. *Pātimokkha* belongs to the *Suttavibhanga*.

<sup>59</sup> *The Anguttara Nikāya of the Sutta Pitaka Translated From the Pali Text Published by the Pali Society in 1885*, 1.230.

<sup>60</sup> *Hansa Sandesaya*, vs. 172; *Heranasikha hā Dinacariyāwa*, ed. K.B. Perera (Colombo, 1897).

<sup>61</sup> Holt 34–35; Jotiya Dhirasekara, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline: A Study of its Origin and Development in Relation to the Sutta and Vinaya Pitakas* (Colombo, Sri Lanka: Ministry of Higher Education, 1982) 77.

The fourfold assembly (*catuparisa*) of the Buddha *Sāsana* which included *Bhikkhus* and *Bhikkhunis* (*Ubhaya Sangho*) *Upāsakha* and *upasikās* (lay men and women) gave the religion a vital support. The presence of the *bhikkhunis* is accepted as a reality, and most admonitions which were addressed to the *bhikkhus* were equally applicable to the *bhikkhunis* as well. However, there soon evolved a separate code of conduct for the *bhikkhunis*.<sup>62</sup> The *Bhikkhuni Sāsana*, which originated in Sri Lanka in the third century BC introduced by Thēri Sanghamittā, lasted until about the twelfth century and disappeared completely from the Sri Lankan soil. However, there is now a growing interest to revive it; and the process is already in progress.

The promulgation of rules in the form of *sikkhāpadas* was necessitated by the inadequacy of the moral injunctions of *sīla* to curb miscreants. In the evolution of monastic discipline, we see many instances where minor rules were adjusted by the monks with the consent of the community of monks.

Besides the *sikkhāpadas* which are closely related to *sīla* or the moral life of a monk, there are additional rules in the *Pātimokkha* that strengthen the communal harmony of the monks. Such rules are found among the *saṅghādisesa* group. They include *sikkhāpadas* such as attempting to despise and discredit fellow members of the *saṅgha*, attempting to disrupt the united organization of the *saṅgha*, attempting to resist, unworthy behavior of fellow members etc.<sup>63</sup> Therefore the importance of the *Pātimokkha* is not only to safeguard the conduct and the moral life of the *saṅgha* but also to protect the “machinery which was set up to achieve this end.”<sup>64</sup> The ritual of *Pātimokkha* as ordered by Buddha himself allowed the monks to get together every fortnight and recite the *sikkhāpadas* which he had laid down for the well being and guidance of his disciples.<sup>65</sup> Further, the performance of *Pātimokkha* ritual empowers the collective organization of the *saṅgha* on the authority of the *dhamma* and the instructions to sit in judgement over the conduct of its members.

A *thera* who recites the *Pātimokkha* in the assembly questions the members who are gathered with regard to their purity in terms of each

<sup>62</sup> Dhirasekara, 137–158.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>65</sup> VP 3.9.

group of *sikkhāpadas* recited by him.<sup>66</sup> The offenders, those monks who have violated the rules of discipline, will confess before the assembly with regard to their commitments. Disciplinary actions or legal actions (*adikarana*) are then taken against the offenders. There are four disciplinary actions which lead to discipline the guilty monk as well as the group in terms of word and deed (*kāyikavācasika*). The *Pātimokkha*, in dealing with major offenses or *pārājikās*, admit no remedies; but the penalty is complete excommunication and loss of monastic status. The punishment for all other offenses other than *pārājikās* is the good behavior in accordance with law. The four serious offenses or *pārājikās* are: sexual intercourse of any kind, taking what is not given, taking of human life or conspiring to do so, and falsely claiming to have achieved a superior spiritual status. The *saṅghādisesas* have recommended specified penalties for such monks taking into account the circumstances under which the crime was committed. Terms such as *mānatta* (penance) and *parivāsa* (living apart) indicate the two ways the punishments are carried out. If a monk commits an offense of *saṅghādisesa* (an offense second to *pārājikā* and numbered thirteen), he is required to undergo ecclesiastical penance losing all his privileges as a monk for six nights. This penance is called *mānatta*.<sup>67</sup> It is attached to *Parivāsa* also. *Parivāsa* punishment forces a monk to lead an isolated life as an unclean person as a punishment for concealing the *saṅghādisesa* offenses. A monk who is punished under *Parivāsa* has to observe as many as ninety four restrictions.<sup>68</sup> This course of action also puts the offender in a humiliating position, and he is repeatedly reminded in the *saṅgha* assembly when he has to pronounce publicly about his punishment. His privileges as a monk are withdrawn too; his authority is reduced; and his freedom of action curtailed.<sup>69</sup>

The life of disciplined monk was highly regarded and respected. In this regard a good example is the recitation of *Ariyavamsa sutta* by the monks in ancient Sri Lanka who performed it with the patronage of the king.<sup>70</sup> The *Ariyavamsa sutta* deals with the four basic requisites of the monks and further contains the essence of the life of a *bhikkhu* on whom the *sāsana* depends.<sup>71</sup> Having said this, let us now focus our attention on

<sup>66</sup> See for details, Dhirasekara, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, 91–107.

<sup>67</sup> Upasak, 183.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 142–143.

<sup>69</sup> Dhirasekara, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, 110–113.

<sup>70</sup> Mhv 36.38; *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, ed. for the Government of Ceylon (London: Oxford University Press, 1927) 3:177–178.

<sup>71</sup> *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, 268–273.

the development of the Buddhist monastic law in the early days of its history.

According to the Buddha, nothing is permanent in this world; and everything is subject to change (*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*). Likewise, the disciplinary rules he introduced to the monks were subjected to change even during the lifetime of the Buddha. They were changed to suit the times and countries in keeping with the different economic and social conditions. The Venerable Rahula gives two examples to illustrate the changes:

“At the beginning *bhikkhus* used robes made only of pieces of cloth discarded by the people at cemeteries and elsewhere. Later, on the request of Jivaka, the Buddha approved the acceptance of other robes offered to them by devoted lay men. With this change in the earlier practice, people began to offer robes to *bhikkhus*. Sometimes devotees who went to the monastery with offerings of robes returned home, taking them back as they could not find a *bhikkhu* to accept them. Thereafter the Buddha allowed the appointment of a robe receiving *bhikkhu* for this purpose. However, those robe receiving *bhikkhus* did not store them carefully and the robes were damaged and destroyed. Thereupon the Buddha approved the appointment of a robe-depositor *Bhikkhu* whose responsibility it was to store the robes. Nevertheless there was no appropriate place to store these robes and this resulted in the robes being destroyed by rats, white ants, and the like. Then the Buddha authorized the establishment of a store to keep the robes safely and also the appointment of a store keeper *bhikkhu* to be in charge. Differences of opinion arose among *bhikkhus* in distributing the robes collected in the store, whereupon the Buddha approved the appointment of a robe-distributor *bhikkhu* to distribute the collected robes among the members of the community. In this manner more and more rules about robes were introduced.”<sup>72</sup>

Rahula says that the *Vinaya* rules were changed to suit certain localities, occasions, and circumstances. He also points out how certain rules in regard to food and drink were relaxed and changed in times of famine

<sup>72</sup> Walpola Rhula, *The Heritage of the Bhikku: A Short History of the Bhikku in Educational, Cultural, Social, and Political Life* (New York: Grove Press/Random House, 1974) 8–9.

for the convenience of the *bhikkhus*. It must be said that the Buddha never wanted to be the Guardian of the *sāsana* so that the monks should depend on him. Instead he requested the monks to make democratic decisions and take *dhamma* (truth) as their refuge. Therefore the *Vinaya* rules cannot remain an absolute truth<sup>73</sup> but are subject to change. So this is what happened to the rules of conduct in the development of the *sāsana* from country to country from time to time. The rules of discipline in Sri Lanka developed in keeping with the fundamentals of Buddhist teachings as the foundation.

Whatever the locality was, the life of a disciplined monk was always highly regarded and respected. The changes in the *vinaya* occurred when it was necessary, and they were for the happiness of the majority even though some would have felt unhappy. We took notice above that the Sinhala monks played a major role in the Dutthagāmini-Elara war fought in the second century BC. The *saṅgha* at the time decided to overthrow a Tamil king although he was reasonable because he was controlling a greater part of the county and was considered an outsider who would not protect the Buddha *sāsana*. The monks were keen to install a Sinhala-Buddhist king in order to ensure the future of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. From the religious point of view, this incident might seem irregular on the part of Buddhist monks; but it happened and nobody objected. Dutthagāmini on the other hand showed his gratitude to the community of monks by building *vihāras*, *dāgabas*, and *ārāmas*. But he did not donate them to individuals in keeping with the *sāsanic* tradition. When Mahatissa received a *vihāra* with land from Vatthagāmini Abhaya in the first century AD (for the help he received from this monk, for the protection he received during his exile, and also for being reinstated on the throne by driving out the Dravida king), a faction of the monks at Mahavihara vehemently objected. This was because he received personal compensation. This dispute resulted in some of the monks breaking away from the Mahavihara and forming the Abhayagiri monastery. Granting *vihāras* with land to the community of monks was the practice up to this time. But it changed with this incident and it seems that the monks were divided in their opinions on the matter. Thus the practice of accepting personal gifts from donors was allowed and this practice spread thereafter. The early *Brāhmi* inscriptions belonging to the pre-Christian era record no such incidents of individual donations but we see the change from the first century onwards. The *saṅgha*, in order to satisfy their conscience,

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 11.

was expected to refuse when an offer of a land grant was made, but to be silent when it was said that the grant was made to the *stūpa* or *viāra* of the establishment.<sup>74</sup> Here is an early example of inscriptions indicating the common offer:

“Maharaja Gamini Tisasa bariya upasika Kitakaya lene sagasa:  
The cave of the female lay devotee, Kitaka, wife of the Great King Tissa is given to the *saṅgha*.<sup>75</sup>

Parumaka Vesamana-puta Bariya lene devaha ca catudisa  
sagasa. The cave of Barani, son of the chief Vesamana and Deva,  
is given to the *saṅgha* of the four quarters.”<sup>76</sup>

These two examples alone illustrate that the donors at this stage of events offered caves to the community of monks of the four quarters present and absent. The following example will illustrate how things changed after the first century:

King Lanjatissa having built a *vihāra* for the Elder Gadhatatissa gave to this *vihāra* the two categories of revenue of the tank Vakaravi of the lake named Nikula and of the channel of Kalahanagara.<sup>77</sup>

The custom duties of the port of Godapavata, King Gamini Abhaya granted to the *vihāra*.<sup>78</sup>

The granting of possessions, revenue, or wealth for the community which is termed *saṅgha bhoga* has now started. Hereafter we come across many instances where kings and laymen alike grant to the *vihāras* lands, fields, villages, lakes, canals, and other sources of income such as port taxes water and fish taxes and even interest on money deposited in banks. The income so earned was utilized by the monks to meet their daily expenses. The Thuparama slab Inscription of Gajabaha I of the second century states that the water tax and the royal dues were given to the

<sup>74</sup> *History of Ceylon* 1.1:245.

<sup>75</sup> *Epigraphia Zeylanica* 5.2:211.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>77</sup> Senarat Paranavitana, *Inscriptions of Ceylon* (Colombo, Ceylon: Department of Archaeology, 1970) 2.1:23.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 101.

community of monks at the Ratana Araba Monastery hoping that they might enjoy the four requisites.<sup>79</sup>

With land and money in hand the holy spiritual life of the Buddhist monks had now taken a new turn. The life of a world renouncer now seemed meaningless. In order to get rid of the mental worry, guilty mind, and blame from the laity, a remedy was introduced. Buddhagosa has phrased it in this manner in *Samantapāsādikā*, the *Vinaya* commentary. It says that neither the Buddha nor his disciplines has ever sanctioned the *lābhasīmā*, the income area. When kings and ministers construct *vihāras* to the *saṅgha*, they define boundaries and set up pillars stating that it is the income area. Whatever is produced within this is included in the *lābha sīmā*.<sup>80</sup> This means that the income became a part of the *vihāra* and was therefore dedicated to the *saṅgha*. When a tank is offered, it should be accepted because it is offered to the *saṅgha* for the purpose of enjoying the four requisites.<sup>81</sup>

As we have observed above, the acceptance of lands, tanks and revenue was an act that went against the ideals of Buddhism. By about the fourth or fifth century a remedy was found by the Sri Lankan monks to get rid of this obstacle. This was done by giving a new interpretation to justify the acceptance of such donations under the four requisites. The *Samantapāsādikā* states that monks may not accept a tank or land unless it is provided under the four requisites (Smp 490). We have inscriptions from the second century expressing the same idea (. . . *biku sagahataya catari pacami paribujanaka kotu dine*—gave to the community *bhikkhus* for them to enjoy the four requisites—(Inscriptions of Ceylon, Vol. 2. Pt. 1 No. 58). The grants covered any one of the four requisites such as food, lodging, medicine and robes (*pindapāta*, *senāsana*, *gilānapaccaya* and *cīvara*). The income was utilized for one of them. With regard to the acceptance of land another remedy was adopted. Instead of donating a land direct to the monks they were made for the benefit of a *cetiya*, *uposathaghara dānasālā* or *ārāma* (*stūpa*, chapterhouse, refectory or monastery). This was no doubt a method adopted by the monks of those days to satisfy their conscience with regard to the acceptance of land. With all kinds of such donations, the life of a monk became more complicated and there were instances of such endowments being utilized by

some monks to buy land for the monasteries. This is evident from inscriptions such as from Hinguregala dating from the fourth century (EZ. Vol. V, pt. 1. No. 8).

As sanctioned by *Vinaya* rules, the help of a *Kappiyakāraka* was sought in order to deal with money matters. *Kappiyakāraka* offered his service faithfully to the *saṅgha*. We see in the *Vinaya* that such permission was granted to the monks so that he could take control of the money and see to the needs of the monks. Buddha said “Monks, I allow you to accept what is suitable from the *Kappiyakāraka* but you must never in any way accept or seek money.”<sup>82</sup> This practice was maintained by the monks in several monasteries from the fifth century as is evident from the *Vinaya* commentary, *Samantapāsādikā*.<sup>83</sup>

However, with the growth of wealth and property, the Sri Lankan monks became a powerful and influential community in the political, social, and religious life after the first century, strengthening themselves day by day.

These monks not only became landlords with village grants (called *bhogagāma*, *ārāmagāma*, and *lābhagāma* meaning ‘service village’ or revenue village); but they also inherited large revenues which were called *mahābhoga*. Further, these monasteries were also involved in irrigational activities. The *Kappiyakārakas*, who were supposed to look after the wealth and property on the *vihāras* and administer them properly, also started to cheat the monastic wealth. We have instances of such frauds recorded in the *vinaya* commentary, *Samanthapāsādikā*.<sup>84</sup> No doubt some of the monastic estates were productive agricultural lands that were maintained by the temple through a *Kappiyakāraka* and the surplus of agricultural products were sold in the open market. There would have been thousands of people living in the *vihāra* lands and working in these estates for the *vihāra*.<sup>85</sup> In return they enjoyed parts of the *vihāra* land while living in them. Though it was prohibited, slaves were also attached to the *vihāras*. There are instances where captured Tamil soldiers were sent to temples by the king to work. Donating slaves to Buddhist *vihāras* was a common practice in those days, and such

<sup>79</sup> *Epigraphia Zeylanica* 3:116.

<sup>80</sup> Smp 3.260.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 490.

<sup>82</sup> VP 1.245.

<sup>83</sup> Smp. 3:673; 685; 5:1001.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:679; 5:1238.

<sup>85</sup> For details, see Gunawardana, 57–94.

instances are recorded in Sinhala inscriptions from the sixth century. The slaves were termed *vaharala*. *Papancasūdani*, the *Majjhima Nikāya-aṭṭhakatha*<sup>86</sup> says they were offered to the temple as *kappiyakārakas* or *ārāmikas*. This may have been done in order to bypass the *Vinaya* injunction. But *Samantapāsādikā*<sup>87</sup> says that poor people became *kappiyakārakas* in the monastery in the belief that they would live depending on the *saṅgha*.

Some of the above practices of the monks certainly went against the *vinaya* rules. But during Buddhagosa's time in the fifth century the monks seem to have found a way to get rid of such *vinaya* rules not by means of ignoring them but by introducing new amendments. Employment of slaves in temples is a case in point. Here is another example to illustrate this point from *Samantapāsādikā*:

"It behoves the *Bhikkhusaṅgha* not to administer, accept or consent to the acceptance of any immovable property like a field, land holding, irrigation reservoir or a canal. But it is impossible to accept 'allowable articles' from the proceeds of such property, if they be administered by a *Kappiyakāraka*."<sup>88</sup>

Therefore we see that a layman named *Kappiyakāraka*'s services were sought by the monks to accept and administer the property. The original *vinaya* rule was thus amended to suit their convenience and to bypass the *vinaya* restrictions. While one section of the community of monks led a corrupted life, moving away from the holy life, there arose the need to purify the *sāsana* of corrupt monks; and it was the duty of the ruling monarch to interfere at this hour of need, to promulgate rules and regulations to maintain discipline. There were instances where corrupt monks were expelled from the *sāsana* and rules of discipline introduced to suit the occasion. But again not all the monks were corrupt. There were at least a few who led the exemplary life of a holy man. This was a period of transition from the life of a simple monk to that of a established monastic monk who is moving away from his spiritual life to a more complicated social life. By the tenth century, there were two sects of

monks who led ascetic lives. They were called *Araññikas* and *Pāṇsakūlikas*. They both belonged either to the *Mahavihara* or *Abhaya-giri*. The *Vimuttimaggā* of the *Abhayagirivasins* laid down that it would be a transgression of precepts for *Pāṇsakūlikas* to accept a present of robes or for an *Araññika* to live close to a village.<sup>89</sup> The *Pāṇsakūlikas* on the other hand were a set of ascetics who wore robes made of rags. These monks received the support of the ruling kings from time to time and they were greatly respected by society. Monasteries of these monks spread over a wide area and they lived a life of solitude.<sup>90</sup> *Araññika* monks lived in the forest away from the busy life of a society and the luxuries provided by the laymen. This led the society to identify monks separately as *Granthadhura* (career of scholarship) and *Vidarsanādhura* (a life of contemplation).<sup>91</sup> Those monks who took to the path of meditation lived in the forest as *araññikas*, and those monks who led the life of studying *dhamma-vinaya* and further looked after the spiritual happiness of the lay people lived in the village. The first category of monks was called *Araññavāsins* and the second category *Grāmaवासins*.

In the course of the development of the Budhha *sāsana* in Sri Lanka, we come across a set of *vinaya* rules known as *Katikāvat* promulgated by the ruling king in consultation with the most powerful and leading scholarly monks of the period. *Katikāvatas* are the laws of the Buddhist order that were added to the existing rules. They can be further explained as a code of regulations agreed upon by the *saṅgha* for the guidance of its members.<sup>92</sup> We have about fourteen such *katikāvatas* dating from the tenth century and proceeding up to about the nineteenth century. Many scholars have divided these *Katikāvatas* into two sections, namely 1. *Vihāra Katikāvat*—Laws of the Monasteries and 2. *Sāsana Katikāvat*—Laws of the Buddhist order.<sup>93</sup> However, when one examines them carefully, we find no room for such a division; for the rules are meant for the monks and it is the Buddhist monk that lives in the *vihāra*; and those

<sup>86</sup> Majjhimanikāya-aṭṭhakatha, ed. Siri Dhammarama. (Colombo, Ceylon: Vidyāsāgara Press, 1926) 204.

<sup>87</sup> Smp 4.1001: "duggata manussa sangham nissāya jivissāmiti vihare kappiakārakā honti."

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 6.1238.

<sup>89</sup> *Vimuttimaggā*, ed. Galketiya-gama Siri Ratanajoti and Karalliyadde Siri Ratanapala (Colombo, Ceylon: 1964) 17, 20.

<sup>90</sup> Gunawardana, 40–47.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>92</sup> Nandasena Ratnapala, *The Katikāvatas: Laws of the Buddhist Order of Ceylon from the Twelfth Century to the Eighteenth Century* (Munich: Kitzinger, 1971) 6.

<sup>93</sup> Kulasuriya 1:113; *Katikāvatas* 7–8; A.V. Suraweera, *Sinhala Katikāvat ha Bhikshu Samajaya* (Colombo, Ceylon: M.D. Gunaseas and Co., 1971) 5.

rules and regulations are applicable only to them. Therefore without a division of the law let us examine them very briefly. We have the following examples as *Katikāvatas* in Sri Lanka:

1. Anuradhapura Slab Inscription of Kasyapa V
2. Vessagiriya or Virankurarama Slab Inscription
3. Puliyankulama Inscription of Uda Mahaya
4. Kaludiya Pokuna Inscription of Sena IV.
5. Abhayagiri Slab Inscription of Mahinda IV.
6. Vessagiriya Slab Inscription of Mahinda IV.
7. Mihintale Slab Inscription of Mahinda IV
8. Abhayagiriya Sanskrit Inscription
9. Polonnaruwa Galvihara Inscription of Parakramabahu I
10. Polonnaruwa Heta-da-ge Inscription of Nissankamalla
11. Dambadeni Katikavata
12. Pepiliyana Inscription of Parakramabahu VI
13. Katikavata of Kirtisri Rajasinha
14. Katikavata of Rajadhirajasingha

Some of these rules (nos. 1-8) were intended solely for the occupants of the relevant monastery, and the rest (nos. 9-14) were intended for the whole of the *saṅgha* community in the country. The last mentioned set of *Katikāvatas* was so important that they were read when the monks assembled in the *uposatha* house (*poya-ge*) every fortnight at the time of reciting the *Pātimokkha*. This practice was there in the thirteenth century as is attested by the *Dambadeniya Katikāvata* when it says that every *poya* day all must recite the *Katikāvata* (*poyen pohoya hāma denāma Katikāvata kiyaviya yutu*).

We will now deal with the first eight inscriptions (nos. 1-8) listed above and later come to the remaining six which are labeled as proper *Katikāvatas* intended for the whole community of *saṅgha* in the country. Here our main concern will be *bhikkhu vinaya* and not rules and regulations governing the monastic administration listed therein. The first is an inscription by King Kasyapa V in the tenth century, found close to Rat-

naprasada in Anuradhapura.<sup>94</sup> The first part of the inscription deals with the greatness of the king; and the second part lays down a few regulations intended for the royal officers such as *Rajkol Kāmiyan* (royal servicemen) and *Rajkol samdaruwan* (royal family members) who are in service in connection with this monastery. The third portion of the inscription lays down rules of discipline for the monks living here and they are our concern. They say that those admitted to the order of *saṅgha* should consist only of novice monks who are familiar with the four *banavāras* (basic lessons for novices) and furthermore that young ones should not be ordained. It was also prohibited for the elders to accept gifts from the novices at the time of their ordination. Monks who either give or take gifts should not live in the monastery. It also says that unfriendly monks as well as those who violate the regulations of the *vihāra* should not reside there. Any person banished from the country (to India) or one who is already being punished should also not be re-admitted to the temple. There were the monks who were assigned various duties in the *vihāra*, and they are described here with their entitled honorarium. The income of the *vihāra* should be utilized for repairs and only the remainder should be utilized for buying new land. The annual budget must be presented to the *saṅgha* and approval must be obtained. This shows that the monks were interested in buying and selling lands, and they were very much involved with the temple administration more than their spiritual gains.

The *Virankurārāma Inscription*<sup>95</sup> of the same century deals with rules for the monks residing in that monastery and explains how they should spend some two hundred gold coins given for the supply of the requisites on the two *uposathas* days at the end of *vassāna* such as for robes and alms. Those who violate these rules were advised to leave the monastery. This is good evidence to show that the monks were in the habit of misappropriating money. The *Puliyankulama Inscription of Uda Mahaya*<sup>96</sup> reveals that there was a special officer appointed to look after the affairs of the monastery.

The *Kaludiya Pokuna Inscription*<sup>97</sup> also belonging to the tenth century has laid down rules for the inmate monks and monastic officers and royal officers. It was expected that the novice monks should be well versed in

<sup>94</sup> *Epigraphia Zeylanica* 1:49-57.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-29.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 182-190.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:253-269.

the four *banavāras* before they were ordained. It was also a precondition to obtain the approval of the *mahāsaṅgha* before a boy was ordained. Monks were forbidden to live in the *vihāra* if they failed to pay the wages of their servants. It was also forbidden for any person to be allowed into the *vihāra* after committing murder outside. The monks are warned that they should not show such offenders any mercy. The *Abhayagiri Inscription of Mahinda IV*<sup>98</sup> lays down rules as to how the repairs should be carried out in the *vihāra*. Whenever there is a balance of unspent money, after seeing to the necessities such as robes and alms, the rest could be spent on repairs. The *Vessagiri Inscription of Mahinda IV*<sup>99</sup> deals with the administration of *vihāra* property. It is significant that we do not find rules for the monks but only those with regard to general administration. The *Mihintale Slab Inscription*<sup>100</sup> is by far the most important of the above list. It is divided into three sections. The second part deals with the rules for the monks living in the monastery, and the third part, which is very important, deals with rules and regulations governing the monastic administration. The rules laid down here are the final outcome of a discussion held by the leading monk of both the Cetiyaḡiri monastery and the Abhayagiri monastery. The reason was that the former was at this time under the supervision of the Abhayagiri monastery (in the tenth century). These regulations speak about the daily routine of the monks in the monastery. The monks must arise at dawn, meditate, and, having finished cleaning their teeth, put on their robes. They should then go to the check room exercising a spirit of benevolence and, reciting *Paritta*, should descend into the refectory and receive gruel and boiled rice. The monks who are unable to attend through illness should be granted a *vasag* when recommended by the physician. To the monks who reside in this *vihāra* and read the *Vinaya Pitakas* should be assigned five *vasag* of food and raiment; to the monks who read the *Sutta Pitaka* seven *vasag* and to the monks who read the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* twelve *vasag*. Those monks who reside here permanently shall enjoy lands and villages attached to all the *āvāsa* residences of the *vihāra*.<sup>101</sup>

The third portion of the inscription is full of details regarding the temple administration and it is not within our scope to deal with them. The final inscription of the above list is the *Abhayagiri Sanskrit Inscription*.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 1:230–241.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 23–29.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 98–113.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 9–37.

*tion*.<sup>102</sup> The intention of the inscription was to lay down rules and regulations for the inmate monks and the lay staff of the monastery. A certain lay devotee had built the monastery to accommodate some hundred monks from the four *nikāyas* (fraternities). It is interesting to note that for the first time there is the mention of novice monks and their duties.<sup>103</sup> Rules are clearly laid down about the portion of robes and alms to which the monastic monks are entitled, about how the lands and other properties of the *vihāra* should be administered, and about how income and expenditure should be accounted. It was forbidden for monks guilty of various offenses or expelled from other monasteries to live here. The *vihāra* is also prohibited to monks whose relatives live in the villages belonging to the monastery and also to those who have taken the robes for the second time. To those who own even a foot of land anywhere neither food nor raiment shall be allowed by the monastery. The *vihāra* shall not be inhabited by anyone leading an improper life or by one who supports a woman. The *vihāra* shall not be inhabited by one who sends betel leaves (indicating respect) and so forth to the royal household either for the sake of gain or out of regard.<sup>104</sup> This is a clear indication that there were corrupt monks at the time who led a lay life and expected favors from the royal palace.

The above eight inscriptions no doubt tell us about the sad state of things relating to the *Buddha sāsaṇa* in Sri Lanka during the tenth century, forcing the ruling monarchs to introduce new rules compelling the monks to observe them in addition to their usual *vinaya* rules.

Immediately after the Cola invasion of Sri Lanka at the beginning of the tenth century many monks left the country either for India or to live in other safe areas in the country. It took nearly a century for the country to return to normality. It was during the reign of Parakramabahu I in the twelfth century that the country settled down for serious business. This became a period of prosperity for the people as well as for the community of *saṅgha*. It is said that King Parakramabahu took a great interest in Buddhist affairs and following the age old traditions purified the *sāsaṇa* and further introduced a *Katikāwata* with the help of the leading monk of the time named Dimbulāgala Kasyapa.<sup>105</sup> The *Katikāwata* named after the king and listed as the Polannaruwa Galvihāra Inscription of

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 6–9.

<sup>103</sup> Suraweera, 30.

<sup>104</sup> *Epigraphia Zeylanica* 1:8–9.

<sup>105</sup> *History of Ceylon* 1.2:567–569.

Parakramabahu,<sup>106</sup> speaks of the situation of the *Buddha sāsana* at the time. It says that the three fraternities (Mahāvihāra, Abhayagiri and Jetavana) still existed but that they were against each other. The unity of the *saṅgha* was destroyed when they refused to perform *sanghakamma*. There were divisions even within the Mahāvihāra.

As was seen in the tenth century, the *saṅgha* was extremely corrupt and lax in discipline. The *Mahāvamsa* summarizes the situation in a few words when it says that the majority of the monks were not as diligent in the observance of precepts as in "filling their bellies" which they considered their sole duty.<sup>107</sup> The irony was that they even maintained families. The *Buddha sāsana* in Sri Lanka on many occasions experienced such disasters; and, in order to purify the *sāsana* (*sāsana visodhana*), kings on various occasions took actions to get rid of corrupt *bhikkhus* and introduce fresh rules and regulations. We have several instances of such purifications in the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, perhaps in every hundred years from the first century AD. In the twelfth century Parakramabahu I too achieved this goal first by the unification of the *saṅgha*, followed by its purification, and then by introducing new laws through the *Katikāwata*. According to the Polonnaruwa *Katikāwata*, it was the learned *mahāsaṅgha* that formulated the laws after consulting *dhamma* and *vinaya*. The king caused these rules and regulations to be inscribed on a rock at Galvihāra at Polonnaruwa.

A century later, the country faced a similar situation with regard to the *sāsana*. Therefore the ruling king at the time, Vijayabahu III, had to introduce another *Katikāwata* on the advice of Venerable *Sangharakkhita Mahāsami* and *Araññaka Medhankara Mahāsāmi*.<sup>108</sup> They were both pupils of *Dimbulagala Kasyapa* of the *Grāmavasi* fraternity. The *Katikāwata* says that the *saṅgha* inquired into the various points of dispute among the members of the *saṅgha* and, settling these in accordance with the *vinaya* rules, drew up a code of regulations to be followed by the order. But we have found no trace of this code. *Parākramabāhu* II in the thirteenth century had the *Damabaeniya Katikāwata* issued by an assembly of elders presided over by *Dimbulagala Aranya Medhankara*.<sup>109</sup> In this the authors of the *Katikāwata* have included practically the whole of the *Parākrama Katikāwata*. Taking this as the prece-

dent, Velivita Saranakara drafted the *Kirti sri Rajasinha Katikāwata* in the eighteenth century, incorporating the contents of the *Dambadeni Katikāwata*.<sup>110</sup> The *Rājādhirajasinha Katikāwata* too was promulgated almost at the same time.<sup>111</sup> Therefore the basis for all these *katikāwatas*, namely the Polonnaruwa *Galvihāra Katikāwata*, must be studied in detail. I will now give examples directly from this valuable document:

The head *Theras* of chapters of monks should not permit any negligence on the part of those among their respective co-resident *saddhivihārikas* and *antevāsikas* who are eligible either to be vouchsafed the *nissaya* or to be released from it, but should set them to the task of studying the scriptures. They should not be allowed to neglect the learning at least of the *Kudusikha* and the *Pāmok* from the *Vinaya* and the three *Dasadhamma suttas* and the *Anumāna sutta* from the *Suttanta Pitaka*. They should be dissuaded from taking delight in society. Those who study the scriptures should always cultivate concentration of thought in seclusion (*viveka-vat piruva manāva*). They should remain engrossed in meditation and promote their own welfare as well as that of others. Those *antevāsikas* and *saddhivihārikas* who are unable to master a great portion of the prescribed course of study should be made to learn by heart *Mulsikha* and *Sekhiya* and to rehearse the *Sikhavalaṇḍa Vinisa*. Novices should also learn and rehearse the *Heranasikha*, the *Sekhiya* and the *Dasadhamma sutta*.

No permission to enter the village at the wrong times shall be given to any of these monks and novices on any business whatsoever, save on account of a journey for begging food in order to succor their unsupported parents who had given birth to them, likewise their consanguineous and widowed elder and younger sisters as well as the co-followers of the religious life or in case of illness, on account of a journey to procure medicine (for parents and sisters) or to beg for medicine and other requirements of the co-followers of the religious life or on account of a journey to recite the *Paritta* at an appointed place.

<sup>106</sup> *Epigraphia Zeylanica* 3:256.

<sup>107</sup> *Mhv* 73.5-7.

<sup>108</sup> *History of Ceylon* 1.1:745-748.

<sup>109</sup> *Epigraphia Zeylanica* 2:262.

<sup>110</sup> Lorna Srimathie Dewaraja, *Kandyan Kingdom of Ceylon, A Study of the Political, Administrative, and Social Structure of the Kandyan Kingdom of Ceylon, 1707-1760* (Colombo, Ceylon: Lake House Investments, 1972) 106.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

Those preceptors who grant permission to those not versed in the Buddhist regulations shall be guilty of *dukkhata* offense. So no permission should be given to such monks.

A monk coming from another monastic community should not be given accommodation except after seeing either a letter of recommendation or a *bhikkhu* emissary from the Head *Thera* of the monastic establishment where he had lived before. All monks should rise at dawn and should pass the morning perambulating and immersed in meditation. They should then rehearse a text which they have learnt. Thereafter they should don the yellow robe, clean the teeth and attend to the duties specified in the *Khandaka* and conduct in places like the *dāgabas*, *bodhi* tree, the temple terrace, the preceptors, the *theras*, the sick and the lodging places. Enter the refectory, partake of the gruel and attend to the requirements. Pass the time then in meditation. After the mid-day meal also they should study and meditate.

Oh *Bhikkhus*! either engage in religious conversation or remain noble silence. The *bhikkhu* wayfarers should take up their lodgings at an appropriate place such as the hermit hut, the image house and the like. They should not talk in private even with the mother or sister. They should not be angry with servants. Even if rain falls while a monk is walking, he should continue at a natural pace and take shelter. Even if there be a cause for laughter, he should show his mirth with his mouth closed. The disputes in the monastery should not be made known outside. He should not desire material enjoyment. The monks should not converse with the lay person of the village on matters of requisites or on orthodox subjects.

When admitting persons into the priesthood, admit them after examination, ordain them after examination, give them your protection after examination. For, when even one son of a respectable family receives admission into the priesthood and subsequently the *upasampadā* ordination, he is instrumental in the establishment of even the whole Buddhist church. Therefore admission into the Buddhist Order should be made after examination. Likewise the *upasampadā* ordination as well as the *nissaya* protection ought to be conferred after examination. One should cultivate the *Dhūtāṅga* ascetic practices as much as one can. No ill shall be spoken of any one.

Whosoever conducts himself in disobedience to and in violation of the disciplinary injunctions which have thus been enacted, shall receive the punishment due to the offense committed and be warned. But if he cannot be corrected then he should be expelled. The heads of chapters should not neglect their duties and bring their *bhikkhus* under discipline. If not they should receive the punishments determined by the senior *Theras*.<sup>112</sup>

The rules and regulations cited above from the *Galvihara Katikāwata* of *Polonnaruwa* show that they have their origins in the *Vinaya Pitaka*, *Paṭimokkha sikhavalaṇḍa*, and earlier *Katikāwatas* in inscriptions. The early *Katikāwatas* in stone have their origins in *Vinaya Pitaka* and commentaries as well as in *vinaya* texts compiled in Sri Lanka like the *Mūla Sikkhā*. We see a set pattern in the development of the *Katikāwatas*; each one is derived from the former with small amendments to suit immediate problems and demands. Under these circumstances, the monks had to observe strict rules under pain of expulsion. The *Nissankamalla Katikāwata* is only a fragmentary document and therefore we are unable to make use of it.<sup>113</sup> The *Dambadeniya Katikāwata*, on the other hand, is important because it shows to what extent the *saṅgha* society had changed within a hundred years after the *Galvihara Katikāwata* of *Parakramabahu I*. It clearly says that the present *Katikāwata* is a renewed version of the previous one (*pūrvā katikāvat bahā amutukala*). There are about one hundred regulations in the *Dambadeiya Katikāwata*, almost four times as many as in the *Polonnaruwa Katikāwata*. One remarkable amendment found in the present one is about the qualifications for ordination. It introduces new rules that are not found anywhere in previous documents. The *Polonnaruwa Katikāwata* simply says in *Pali-pabbā jento sodetvā*, meaning admit into the priesthood after examination of the candidate. But the *Dambadeniya Katikāwata* goes on to elaborate on this in an exciting way. It says that the candidate should be examined as to his ethnicity and caste amidst the *saṅgha*, among whom there should be at least three *sthaviras*; and, when presented to those in attendance, they should examine him as to everything, inquire into illnesses and his ability to read and write. When a *bhikkhu* who knows him gives the assurance that he has no defect with regard to his birth and actions, when he is at least twelve years of age to live in the village and thirteen years of age to live in the forest, the *Nāyaka* (his fraternity) should hand him over to the *upādyāya*

<sup>112</sup> *Epigraphia Zeylanica* 2:16.

<sup>113</sup> *Katikāwatas*, 11; 15.

(teacher) after giving proper admonitions,<sup>114</sup> (*yaṭat pīreseyin theratun-namakā tulu vū sesu upayukta sanghayā madyayehi jāti gotra vicārā vidhānāyehi sītiyavun dākva kala un vīsin sīyalla sāla koṭa kuladosa kriyā-dosāyak nāidāy dannā saha kenekun pratiṅnā kala gamvasayata . . .*). It also says that “a novice who is admitted into the order by a *bhikkhu* who has not received the approval for such admission should be taken away from the tutelage of that *bhikkhu* and placed under another *bhikkhu*. If not, the *bhikkhu* who admitted him should be severely punished.”<sup>115</sup>

In this manner there are several rules and regulations incorporated into this *Katikāwata* to meet the demands of the *saṅgha* society of the day. The intention of the authors of this document was to see a well-disciplined community of *saṅgha*, and therefore regulations needed for such were provided in this *Katikāwata*. On the *uposatha* days the *bhikkhus* should be with teachers and perform the *uposatha*. The *kaṭhina* robe when received should be spread out after drying it properly. A *bhikkhu* who has obtained things in excess should utilize them to supply the co-residents with the four requisites and engage them in the study and practice of the *dhmma*. When accepting male and female slaves, land, tanks, cattle and buffalos, a well-disciplined, wise, and modest *bhikkhu* should first be consulted. A *bhikkhu* should not accept houses in the village and dwell in them even for one night. Any items such as robes should neither be bought nor sold. Axes, mamoties, adzes, etc. should not be used by a *bhikkhu*. A *bhikkhu* should not extol the virtues and wisdom of the co-residents in front of laymen such as kings. All should read the *Katikāwata* on every *uposatha* day.<sup>116</sup>

These and many other similar rules and regulations illustrate the extent to which the *sāsana* has fallen down in ethics. It is clear, therefore, that the introduction of such rules and regulations was felt to be an absolute necessity. The two *Parākramabāhu Katikāwatas* in this respect are very significant; and the credit for introducing such a piece of legislation must go to the two *Parākramabāhus* who deserve the praise of the people.

The *Katikāwata* of *Parākramabāhu* IV of Kotte in the fifteenth century comes to us only in a fragment, and we are therefore unable to comment on it. The Sri Vikrama Rājasinha *katikāwata* of the eighteenth

century was introduced at a time the *sāsana* had fallen to the lowest level of its existence. As the *Katikāwata* itself confesses: “. . . the *sāsana* continued its gradual decline unto this day when without even a single *bhikkhu* in the entire island of Lanka only a few *sāmaneras* remained. Out of these *sāmaneras* too, excepting some who were endowed with the quality of modesty and who were well disciplined, the majority of others, having engaged in the study of worldly arts such as astrology, medicine, and exorcism which are prohibited by the Buddha, and having received gains such as villages and land by waiting upon kings and chief ministers and having indulged in various improper activities such as trade and agriculture, and having clung to relatives and families, supported wife and children as a result of which the *sāsana* degenerated and was on the brink of destruction.”<sup>117</sup>

Though the same ideas of the *Dambadeniya Katikāwata* are incorporated in the present one, more new rules are seen as a result of the conditions prevailed during this period. Here are a few examples:

“No *bhikkhu* who lives in the villages of the *vihāra* should engage himself in activities such as the cultivation of land by constructing tanks and embankments, ploughing, sowing of paddy, presenting others with proper and improper articles, giving bribes, buying villages, land and fields, going to court as litigants either for his own gain or for the sake of the other *bhikkhus* or for the sake of his relatives.”

“The requisites presented by the laymen should be divided into a number of portions equal to the number of *bhikkhus*. One portion should be given to the *vihāra*, two portions should be kept for oneself, including the portion that one receives personally, and the rest should be given to the *saṅgha*.”

“Other than the treatment of the parents (such a treatment is sanctioned [in the *Vinaya*]) and the treatment of the ten-fold relatives, their children and grandchildren etc. with medicinal requirement, no other proper items such as clothes and alms bowls should be given to one's own relatives. Improper articles such as gold and silver offered by laymen should be rejected. The *bhikkhus* should not live all alone according to their desires, in villages claiming their ownership. The rulers and the

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 142–161.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 166–167.

*Mahāsthaviras* who become the chiefs of the *saṅgha* should maintain these injunctions without transgression."<sup>118</sup>

There is also an opinion that Kirti Sri Rajasinha issued a second injunction prohibiting the monks from ordaining anyone other than the *govikula*, which was considered at the time as a high caste. The others who are servants and engaged in low trades and low-caste people should not be ordained, and this was a royal decree.<sup>119</sup> This practice that goes against the teaching of the Buddha is still followed by the *Sīyam Nikāya*. The reason for this, as far as we can see, was that the kings thought that it was their duty to give pride of place to the *saṅgha* in society because the king himself knelt down before them. This practice was started in the thirteenth century with some background to it which is not clear to us.

We see another *Katikāwata* during the reign of Rajādhi Rājasinha in the same century seven years after the death of his predecessor. Why such a thing was necessary at this time is not clear to us, but it can be assumed that in spite of several injunctions the monks were still carrying on their illegal practices. According to this *Katikāwata* the reasons for introducing new rules were that they had heard about the manner in which the *sāsana* was polluted as in the past by the increase of some individuals in the *sāsana* who were bereft of faith, shame and modesty; and it was a duty that they be removed. Therefore, having assembled the *Mahāsaṅgha* of the two *vihāras* namely *Malwatta* and *Asgiriya* in the Audience Hall, the *Katikāwata* was enacted. A few new rules are seen introduced here. Among them the following are important. "The *bhikkhus* themselves should not receive payments on things loaned or given on interest by the *Kappiyakāraṅkas*. The *bhikkhus* should not go to the residences of aristocrats with lawsuits connected with anyone, whether relatives or non-relatives. Those despicable arts such as the exorcism of *yakkhas*, divination by light reading, catching thieves by reciting *mantras*, divination by means of sign and omens should neither be studied nor practiced."<sup>120</sup>

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 172–178.

<sup>119</sup> Labugama Lankananda, *Maṇḍāram Pura Piṇvata* (Colombo, Ceylon: Maradana Samayawardhana, 1958) chapters 13–15.

<sup>120</sup> *Katikāvatās* 178–183; for a text, see *Katikavatā Sangarava*, ed. D. B. Jayatilake (Colombo, Ceylon: Mahabodhi Press, 1922).

### Summary

The above essay briefly deals with the origin and development of monastic law in Sri Lanka from its introduction to the island in the third century BC and continuing up to the end of 1815 AD, the year the whole country fell into the hands of the British, thus ending a long history of an unbroken tradition of kingship that went along with the assurance of ensuring the safety and development of the *Buddha sāsana*. The rules and regulations thus promulgated by the ruling kings at different periods of time with the help of the learned and highly disciplined supreme *bhikkhu* patriarchs of the country do not really reflect the pathetic condition of the *sāsana*. They are just rules introduced for the safety of the *sāsana* in the light of isolated incidents that would have taken place sometimes. A punishment introduced for murder does not mean that the whole country is full of murderers and full of such crimes. Precautions taken by means of new legislation prevented crimes and mistakes. Laws are enacted as a precaution for the well-being of the society. Similarly the kings of the past would have taken such actions in preventing crime and punishing the guilty for the welfare of both the lay and *saṅgha* community. It helped to safeguard and uplift the morality of the *saṅgha* on the one hand and the society on the other hand. It also helped to ensure the dignity of the *sāsana*. However, these rules only reflect the level of the threats that the *sāsana* faced from time to time. These rules and regulations are important to us only from that point of view.

The *saṅgha sāsana* was a very liberal society and the rules too were very flexible. It allowed the monks to get together and decide for themselves what rules and regulations should be adopted from time to time to meet the immediate demands of the community and safeguard the *sāsana* from internal as well as from external threats. Therefore the rules were not rigid and static but adjustable at any time. Therefore we see the democratic nature of the *saṅgha* community.

The rules and regulations as reflected in the *Katikāvatās* show that they governed several areas such as rules for ordination (*pabbajjā*), higher ordination (*upasampadā*) *nissaya* rules pertaining to the daily routine, requisites, and ceremonies, rules governing the attitude of laymen, the general conduct of the *saṅgha*, rules pertaining to titles, offices, and honors, forbidden engagements, rules governing dwellings and rules for punishments.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>121</sup> *Katikāvatās*, 255.

The rules that governed ordination clearly indicate that the candidate should spend at least a year in proximity to the teacher and study the basic lessons to become a monk. In this regard knowing the *sātara baṇavara*, *dasa dhamma suttas*, *Dhammapada*, *Sikhavalaṇḍa*, and *Heranāsikha* were prerequisites. To be concerned about the candidate's birth and his ethnic and caste background was not essential at all because it goes against the fundamental teachings of the Buddha. But this rule was replaced as a result of the socio-religious changes that took place in society after the twelfth century. The caste system began to work in Sri Lanka on the model of Indian society after the Cola occupation of the island in the tenth century. As a result, the monks and the rulers alike preferred the *govikula*-caste in Sri Lanka to represent the *Brahmin* caste in India. In the thirteenth century we also see that the ordination was conducted only after obtaining the sanction of the assembly of monks comprising at least three elderly *theras*. In the thirteenth century it was also prohibited to grant ordination to someone seeking it for the second time.

*Upasampadā* or higher ordination was a necessary act of the *sāsana*, and it had to be held regularly once a year with the active participation of the elderly monks. The candidate on this occasion was questioned about his knowledge of the *dhamma* and *vinaya* at the time of the granting of the *upasampadā*. The injunctions pertaining to the daily routine of the *bhikkhus* remained the same. They were asked to rise up at dawn and meditate, clean themselves, partake the morning meal, attend to the needs of the temple, and then go to meditate. The monks were advised not to waste their time unnecessarily. They had a similar program for the afternoon also. Meditation took an important place in their daily routine. Monks should not engage in chatting to each other on meaningless matters. They were also prohibited from entering the village at inappropriate times.

*Katikāvatas* had many things to say about the moral conduct of the monks. There were rules governing the requisites of the monks and how the gifts so given by the laymen should be divided among themselves. Learning was acknowledged and honored. Accordingly learned monks were given recognition above the others. The *Abhidhamma* monks were ranked first in the list, followed by monks versed in *vinaya* and *sutta pitaka*. The monks were also advised with regard to buying and selling land and occupations such as agriculture, and cattle farming. Employing slaves was prohibited, but we see at the same time monks being advised not to displease them and have quarrels. Engaging servants and practicing agriculture and cattle farming and things like that must be done in ac-

cordance with the advice of elderly and learned monks. This, I suppose, was done to discourage the monks by presenting such advice as coming from the learned monks. Another development we see during the thirteenth century is that of maintaining the pupillary successions to maintain the legal rights of the *vihāras* which again goes against the *vinaya* rules. During the eighteenth century we also come across a new tradition called *ṇāli-sīsyā paramparāva* meaning relative-pupillary succession. The monastic property which once passed from teacher to student now passed to one's own relative who was a monk. Young children who were relatives of the elderly monks were thus ordained in order to prevent the monastic property from going into the hands of others. This is very selfish and goes against the virtues of a monk who has given up worldly attachment and taken to the life of a mendicant.

The *Saṅghakamma* or acts of the *saṅgha* are many. One is the fortnightly meeting of the *saṅgha* where the *pātimokkha* is recited and the monks confess their commitments. Today the *pātimokkha* means two hundred twenty-seven *vinaya* rules included in the *Sutta Vibhanga* and the *Vinaya Pitaka*. This act of the *saṅgha* was something that was continued without a break. *Vassāna* and *pavārana* are two other rituals coming under the act of *saṅghakamma*. Normally the *saṅghakamma* requires the presence of a certain number of monks in order to make it valid. The *Dambadeniya Katikāvata* includes injunctions on *parivāsa* and *mānatta*. These punishments may be imposed upon monks who are guilty of the thirteen *saṅghādisesa* offenses. The *saṅgha sabhā* or the assembly of elderly monks constitutes a court.<sup>122</sup>

The relationship between the monks and laymen was another aspect of the *vinaya* rules. The *Polonnaruwa* and *Dambadeniy Katikāvatas* prohibit the monks from talking in private either with women or with young boys or with one's mother and sister. The monks are also prohibited from receiving gifts from lay people for ordaining their children. The *Dambadeniya Katikāvatas* prohibits monks from composing and reciting *slokas* or stanzas in praise of laymen. *Bhikkhus* are also prohibited from attending on sick people and, further, from engaging in exorcism, devil dancing, performing *Bali*, and practicing astrology and medicine.

During the thirteenth century in the *Dambadeniya* period we see a series of titles, offices, and honors that were introduced. Some of them are

<sup>122</sup> For details, see Nandasena Ratnapala, *Crime and Punishment in the Buddhist Tradition* (New Delhi: Mittal Publication, 1993).

recorded in the *Damabadeniya Katikāvata*. Titles like *Mahāsāmi* were replaced by the title *sangharāja* (king of the *saṅgha*). The titles of the high priests of the *grāmaṇḍī* and the *araññayāsi* were replaced by the title *Mahā sthāvira* (high priest). During the eighteenth century the titles *sangharāja*, *mahānāyaka* and *anunāyaka* were associated with the Malwatta and Asgiriya monasteries in Kandy.

When it comes to the question of the discipline of a monk, he was advised not to study such worldly arts as poetry and drama. They were referred to as “animal sciences” (*tirascina vidyā*). They are also referred to as *garhiṭa vidyā* (despised sciences) in the *Damabadeniya Katikāvata*. But on the other hand we see prominent monks like Totagamuwe Rahula and Vidagama Maitreya of the *grāmaṇḍī nikāya* composing poetry in the fifteenth century.

There are punishments prescribed for monks who violate *vinaya* rules. Some of them are mentioned in the *Dambadeniya Katikāvata*. Among them are punishments for monks who ordain novices without the approval of the *saṅgha*. The punishment is not cited there though in the late Anuradhapura period in the tenth century we see that such monks were prohibited from living in *vihāras*. Therefore the monks were compelled to obtain pardon from the senior monks when they failed to follow the injunctions of the *Katikāvatas*. Sometimes the punishment was bringing one hundred boxes of sand.<sup>123</sup>

The rules of the *Katikāvatas* found in the monastic establishments in Sri Lanka over a period of nearly eight or nine hundred years speak of the history of the Buddhist dispensation with its religious, cultural, and social background. In this regard the historical introduction to each of the *Katikāvatas* is important, for they speak about the reasons for promulgating such injunctions. The *Katikāvatas* on the other hand reveal the weaknesses of the *saṅgha* with frankness. The *Katikāvatas* are also important for the study of *Buddha sāsaṇa*; for it clearly gives us a picture of the monastic organization, starting from a *vihāra* and proceeding further to deal with monasteries and finally the whole of the *saṅgha* community in the island.<sup>124</sup>

Finally, the reflection of all these changes and developments in the *vinaya* rules described above goes to show the extent to which the inten-

tions and goals of the original Buddhism differed from the present as an organized institution. I suppose this is the case with all the religions in the world.

Buddha said:

Having left parents, son and wife,  
Relations, wealth and land,  
And all desires of sense,  
Let him wander alone like the rhinoceros  
*Sutta Nipāta.60*

Have the monks listened to him or have they gone beyond this limit over the past two thousand five hundred years?

<sup>123</sup> For details, see *Katikāvatas*, 255–271.

<sup>124</sup> For a detailed discussion of the monastic organization in Sri Lanka after AD 1815, see Kitsiri Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society 1750–1900: A Study of Religious Revival and Change* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1976).