

Buddhist Bhikkhuni Sangha and Its Royal Patronage Scheme in the Milieu of Premature Indian Buddhism

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Abstract

The sustainability of early Buddhist civilization and philosophical development was contingent upon the economic and pastoral structures of neighboring cities in the Indian Subcontinent. Formally ordained Buddhist individuals and institutions encountered significant challenges in maintaining their existence, as the Vinaya (laws for monks and nuns) strictly prohibited the accumulation of assets and investments for future use. Buddhist monastic communities maintain their livelihood through the regular chanting of prayers and the seeking of alms. The royal patronage system has fulfilled the commercial needs of the monastic community throughout history, dating back to the early eras of Buddha and continuing after Mahaparinirvana. However, the establishment of the Bhikkhuni Sangha did not gain widespread acceptance until the Buddha fully accepted women as legitimate practitioners of Buddhism. There are ongoing concerns regarding the survival of this tradition. The kings and royalty of the early Indian subcontinent demonstrated their support for Buddhist institutions and groups by including them in their royal patronage system. They provided financial support and space for their establishment. This study explores an early patronage system supporting women practicing Buddhism and its evolution over time.

Keywords: Royal, Buddhism, Bhikkhuni, Patronage, King

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I. Introduction

Buddha commenced his teaching of the Dharma at the age of 35, which was also the year of his enlightenment. He pursued this vocation for a further 45 years until he attained Nirvana at the age of 80. Nevertheless, his legacy endures and continues to flourish. The Buddha undertook frequent journeys from one place to another, sometimes accompanied by his disciples and at other times alone. The Buddha delivered discourses that were both insightful and illustrative of his role as a model for his followers. He expounded on several key concepts, including causation, the four noble truths, and the path to enlightenment. During the Indian monsoon season, which spans from July to November, he elected to reside in hermitages for instruction. In all countries where Buddhism is practiced, monks and nuns observe the Vassa (summer retreat) tradition. During the summer retreat, individuals with a strong devotion and an interest in Buddhism congregate at the residences of the Buddha and monks. These locations comprise several monasteries and parks that function as settings for participating in sermons and offering spiritual leaders' gifts.

The Sangha and the Bhikkhuni Sangha were both established between the first and fifth retreat seasons. During this period, the Buddha elevated his most prominent disciples, persuading them to garner support from influential political and religious leaders, and established four major monasteries to serve as the foundation for the education of both monks and nuns. The monastery of Veluvana is located in the capital city of Rjagaha in Magadha, the monastery of Jetavana is situated in the capital city of Svatti in Kosal, the monastery of Mahvana is located in the capital city of Vesl in Vajj, and the monastery of Nigrodha is situated in the capital city of Kapilavatthu in Sky. The two most significant territories within the Ganges River basin during this period were Magadha and Kosala. Both King Pasenadi of Kosala and King Bimbisara of Magadha were devoted followers of the Buddha.

1. The Royal Patronage of the Bhikkhuni Sangha Before Buddha's Nirvana

1.1. King Bimbisāra of Magadha

King Bimbisāra, a member of the Haryanka Royal Dynasty, ruled the Magadha Empire from 544 BC - 491 BC. During the formative years of Buddhism, the benevolent reign of King Bimbisāra of Magadha constituted a cornerstone for the propagation of the Buddha's teachings. As the monarch's first disciple, King Bimbisāra exemplified unwavering devotion to Buddhism, evidenced by his patronage of monastic establishments such as Veluvana. The establishment of monastic infrastructures, coupled with the monarch's adherence to Buddhist principles, fostered an environment conducive to the growth of the Sangha. At the age of 25, he encountered the Buddha for the first time and became the monarch's inaugural disciple of Shakyamuni

Buddha. He was the inaugural monarch to adopt Buddhism. The site of Veluvana, situated in proximity to the Northern City of Rājagriha, the erstwhile capital of Magadha, was where King Bimbisāra made donations to the Buddha and Sangha. The Buddha was invited to take up residence in the vicinity of the city. The site is accessible to visitors due to low daytime traffic and minimal night-time disruptions, which makes it an ideal location for meditation. The area is secluded from public view, yet easily reachable.¹

Per the teachings of Buddhaghosa, as outlined in the Udāna Ahakatha, Veluvana is a vihāra, a monastery that is enclosed by an 18-elbow-high barrier (Ahrasahatthubbedhena). The Enlightened One or the Blessed One resides in a spacious chamber, which is referred to as the incense room (Gandhakuiy). The monastery comprises lecture halls, a dome, a meditation path, and an impressive entrance gate. The name Veluvana is derived from two sources: its external adornment (Paimaita Bahi) and the beautifully painted bamboo walls in a vibrant green hue (Vehi Parikkhitta).² The Buddhist Sangha is acknowledged by the King as an association of individuals who aspire to live in a state of tranquility and spiritual purity. The Buddha and his envoys personified the qualities of a righteous person. Members of the Sangha are distinguished by celibacy, nonviolence, and the absence of material possessions, as outlined in "Buddhism: Its Essence and Development". The Sangha was highly esteemed as a self-regulating order with its own distinct set of laws, which differed from the regular legal protocols. The Royal patronage of Buddhism and admiration are interrelated, supporting the progression and prosperity of Buddhism.³

Before the assassination of his son Ajatashatru, King Bimbisara remained unwavering in his devotion to the Buddha. He publicly directed ministers to refrain from engaging in actions that were incongruent with the tenets espoused by the Buddha. The Pāli Canon records two instances in which individuals were shielded from legal prosecution under the prevailing local legislation. To join the Bhikkhuni Sangha, the husband of a Liccavi woman accused of adultery made a financial contribution. In the second case, Bhikkhu Dhaniya gained access to King Bimbisara's woodshed to procure planks for the construction of a miniature pagoda. Although the monarch merely issued a cautionary statement, he enacted draconian penalties, including capital punishment, tongue-cutting, and rib-breaking, for any monk who divulged the edict to military personnel, largely due to concerns about national security. In conclusion, the relationship between the monarch, the Sangha, and the laity is tripartite. The ruler is responsible for ensuring national safety and for governing fairly and impartially. Charitable contributions are facilitated with sufficient resources. Constructing parks, dams, reservoirs, wells, and residences provides the monarch with a distinct opportunity to earn greater merit than the general population. The majority of the citizens expressed satisfaction with the King's accomplishments, despite frequent instances of perceived abuse of his authority and excessive demands from certain bhikkhus while begging for alms. There was no rebellion from either the state or the Sangha. On occasion, objections were raised against monks and Samanas perceived to be idle. However, these animosities were transient and did not indicate a widespread antipathy towards monasticism.⁴

1.2. King Pasenadi of Kosala

King Pasenadi of Kosala is regarded as a pivotal figure in the history of Buddhism, exemplifying the role of royal patronage through the construction of monasteries and his ardent endorsement of the Buddha's teachings. The establishment of Jetavana Vihāra serves as an exemplar of King Pasenadi's dedication to Buddhism, elucidating the symbiotic relationship between monarchy and religious propagation. The Buddha delivered his teachings, the Dharma, for 45 years, during which time he visited numerous locations situated along the Ganges River. Nevertheless, most of his time was spent in Savatthi, which served as the capital of the Kosala monarchy. King Pasenadi of Kosala can be considered a significant patron of the Buddha and the monks, in a similar manner to Anāthapindika. The Rajakārama monastery was established in Savatthi by King Pasenadi, and his Jetavana Vihāra was an offering to the Buddha. The King's wife, Queen Malika, is a seasoned spiritual advisor to the King and a devoted practitioner of Buddhism. At one point, Brahmin priests in the court suggested to the King that it was an omen and advocated for the construction of an altar and the sacrifice of numerous creatures to ward off the sixteen consecutive bizarre dreams the King had been experiencing. This was done to prevent the recurrence of sixteen consecutive, anomalous dreams that had been causing the King considerable distress. As a result, the King initiated preparations for the altar. Upon learning of the situation,

¹Bhante Indacanda, *Mahavaggapali, mahakhandhakam*, p.74.

²Udāna Aṭṭhakatha. Bodhivaggo. 6, Mahākāpasasuttavaṇṇanā: Veḷuvanantitassavihārassanāmaṃ. Taṃkīraaṭṭhārasahatthubbedhenapākārenaparikkhittambuddhassabhagavatovasanānucchavikāyamahatīyāgandha kuṭiyāññehi ca pāsādakuṭīleṇamaṇḍapacaṅkamadvārakoṭṭhakādīhipaṭimaṇḍitambahiveḷūhiparikkhittamaḥosinīlobhāsammaṇa maṃ, tena “veḷuvana”ntivuccati.

³Edward Conze, *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development* (1st ed., Dover Publication, Inc 2003).

⁴M.O' C. Walshe, *The Historical Buddha*, 1989, p.153.

Queen Malika advised the King to seek counsel from the Buddha regarding the import of his sixteen dreams, rather than proceeding with the altar. After receiving an explanation from the Buddha, King Pasenadi was reassured. The Buddha's teachings frequently brought the King joy. The majority of the Buddha's teachings to King Pasenadi can be found in the Kosalasamyutta chapter of the SamyuttaNikaya.⁵

Pasenadi's objective was to reinforce the ties that bound him to the Buddha's family. He provided alms to the Buddha and one thousand monks for seven days. On the seventh day, he petitioned the Buddha to accept his hospitality at the palace, where he would provide meals for five hundred monks regularly. However, the Buddha declined the request and instead nominated Ananda to take his place. Ananda arrived daily with five hundred others, but the King was otherwise engaged and thus unable to attend to them. As a consequence, the monks experienced a sense of abandonment and ceased to attend, leaving only Ananda to fulfill his obligation. Upon learning of this, the King was incensed. To re-establish the trust of the monks, he resolved to marry Vāsabhakkhattiyā, a relative of the Buddha and the daughter of Mahānāma, as well as a female slave named Nāgamundā. Pasenadi gave birth to a son, named Vidūdabha. Upon his arrival in Kapilavatthu, he discovered the deceit that had been committed against his father and vowed to seek retribution. Upon ascending the throne, he invaded the land of the Sākiyans and indiscriminately slaughtered numerous members of the clan, regardless of age or gender. Upon learning of Vāsakkhattiyā's ancestry, Pasenadi bestowed upon her the royal honors that had been previously conferred upon her family. Upon learning that the mother and her son had been stripped of their royal titles, the Buddha informed Pasenadi of the KatthahārikaJātaka and ordered him to restore their titles.

Pasenadi had a sister named Sumanā. She was present at the inaugural interview between the Buddha and her brother and expressed her intention to join the Order. However, she postponed her decision due to the necessity of caring for their grandmother. Pasenadi was profoundly distressed by the demise of his grandmother, who had reached the age of 120. After her demise, Sumanā assumed the monastic vows and ultimately attained the state of arahantship. (ThigA.22; S.i.97; A.iii.32). The old lady's possessions were donated to the monks with the Buddha's special permission for them to receive them (Vin.ii.169). Pasenadi erected a monastery in front of Jetavana called the Rājākārāma, where the Buddha occasionally stayed (J.ii.15). Additionally, Pasenadi built a monastery for PajāpatiGotamī, according to Xuan Zang (Beal, Records ii.2).

King Pasenadi had a son named Prince Jeta, who was the proprietor of the most exquisite garden in Savatthi. The elder Anathapindika wished to extend an invitation to the Buddha to deliver a discourse in an aesthetically pleasing setting. Consequently, he requested to purchase the garden. Prince Jeta requested gold as payment for the garden, and Anathapindika acquiesced. Upon acquiring the garden, he promptly invited the Buddha to return. Initially surprised, Prince Jeta later came to respect the Buddha, becoming a Dharma protector. The prince offered all the trees in the garden for both of them to build Jetavana. During the summer retreat, the Buddha settled in Jetavana 24 times. This is also the place where the Buddha stayed the longest and preached the majority of his scriptures.

1.3. The Patronage of Jivaka

The prominent position held by Jivaka, a celebrated physician and patron of Buddhism, illustrates the convergence of medical practice and spiritual beliefs in ancient India. Jivaka's patronage extended beyond the provision of medical assistance, as evidenced by his contributions to the construction of monastic establishments such as Jivakarama Vihara. His advocacy for the well-being of the Sangha exemplifies the holistic nature of royal patronage, encompassing both the physical and spiritual realms. Jivaka was a renowned physician and surgeon during the time of the Buddha. The Theravada Sutras in Pali and the Sarvastivada Sutras in Sanskrit contain a plethora of anecdotes about Jivaka. In the Mahavagga VIII of the Theravada, it is recorded that Jivaka was born as the son of a nobleman named Salavati in Rajgriha (Rajagaha). Jivaka, the son or grandson of Bimbisara, was born to a courtesan named Amrapali (or Salavati in various versions) from the Republic of Vaishali (depending on the source). Despite being abandoned in a garbage dump in Ratnagiri, in the kingdom of Magadha, the child was discovered alive by Prince Abhaya. Impressed by the child's tenacity in surviving such terrible conditions, Prince Abhaya named him 'Jivaka,' which means 'Life'.⁶ The Prince fostered his upbringing and provided him with a royal education, alongside other princes. Notwithstanding his lack of royal lineage, he exhibited remarkable intellectual acuity and perceptiveness. During his formative years, he became aware of his non-royal lineage, which prompted a complex emotional response, encompassing feelings of self-consciousness and gratitude towards Prince Abhaya. He obtained employment to generate income and repay his adoptive father for his upbringing. However, he found the city's medical practices to be ineffective and of low quality, which motivated him to seek out superior solutions. He confidently enrolled in Taxila, India's most esteemed

⁵ Bhikkhu Bodhi, SamyuttaNikaya, Vol. I, p.164.

⁶Pierce SC. The Buddhist medicine king in literary context: Reconsidering an early medieval example of Indian influence on Chinese medicine and surgery. History Religions 2009.

institution at the time. He passed a challenging deductive reasoning examination to gain admission and excelled under the tutelage of the renowned Guru Atreya Punarvasu.⁷

It seems reasonable to posit that this Guru descended from the old Atreya. Jivaka engaged in seven years of study and training, thereby demonstrating his suitability for the role of disciple to his esteemed Guru. In place of remuneration for his education, the master presented him with a departing examination. He directed Jivaka to identify a plant or herb in the area that had no therapeutic value, thus allowing him to demonstrate the full extent of his abilities. After an exhaustive search, Jivaka identified all the plants and herbs in the area and outlined their respective uses and benefits. However, he concluded that none of these plants or herbs possessed therapeutic value in isolation. Jivaka asserted that "everything on Earth is nothing but medicine."

He subsequently returned to Magadha, where he performed numerous medicinal and surgical procedures, amassing a considerable fortune from affluent individuals in exchange for his services. Upon his return to Magadha, he attempted to present the money to his adoptive father, Abhaya, who declined and instead established an infirmary for his son to treat patients. Additionally, there is documentation of a magical tree stick that enables Jivaka to examine the body in a manner analogous to that of ultrasound or X-rays.⁸ One variant of this magical implement incorporates a stone within its composition. Jivaka assumed the role of physician to King Bimbisara, a devotee of Gautama Buddha. His reputation and the efficacy of his therapies for infectious diseases, pediatrics, and internal medicine were disseminated throughout the globe. He subsequently became the most highly regarded surgeon and gynecologist of his generation, with patients traveling considerable distances to seek his care. Jivaka assumed the role of the Buddha's physical body healer, while the Buddha, regarded as an "enlightened one," addressed the spiritual needs of humanity. He treated the entire Sangha, including the disciples of Mahavira Jain, who was the spiritual guru of Prince Abhaya. Notwithstanding his continued status as a lay disciple of the Buddha, he was responsible for a considerable number of beneficial alterations to the lives of the Bhikkhus. In Rajgir, he constructed a vihara (Jivakarama Vihara) for the Enlightened One, where he could deliver his teachings. Archaeological excavations have revealed the foundation of the monastery. The area was considerable in size and comprised two rows of substantial oval structures, separated by a vast courtyard. Another row of substantial oval-shaped residences was situated in front of this structure. Additionally, there were expansive and compact suites positioned at the front and sides, arranged in a vertical and horizontal configuration. Both the front and rear yards were considerable in size and enclosed by a wall. To the left of the structure, near the border, was a cellar housing pottery. The site also yielded iron nails, baked bricks, animal sculptures, and raw earth ceramics. It can be reasonably deduced that the walls were constructed from mud bricks, while the roof was likely thatched. The Jivaka Sutra is a well-known discourse in which Jivaka questions the rationale behind Buddha's acceptance and consumption of meat, which is incongruous with the principle of nonviolence. It is permissible to consume meat if the animal has not been slaughtered for the consumption of the Buddha or the Bhikkhus. To exemplify absolute detachment, monks would don rags plucked from the corpses of the deceased, which resulted in a plethora of ailments. A benevolent monarch once bestowed upon Jivaka an expensive shawl in exchange for his efficacious treatment. Jivaka sought for Buddha to utilize it during the winter season. Buddha received the gift but had it torn into rags and then reconstructed, rendering it devoid of material value.⁹

Jivaka's influence led to the acceptance of freshly stitched robes for monks, which had the effect of preventing several illnesses. Furthermore, Jivaka persuaded Buddha to encourage monks to engage in physical exercise to avoid the metabolic disorders that could result from an unhealthy diet and lack of exercise. Jivaka was also instrumental in the dissemination of Buddhism. As he treated bhikkhus, many patients converted to Buddhism and subsequently became monks.¹⁰ Ajatshatru, the other son and heir of King Bimbisara, imprisoned his father on multiple occasions and attempted to assassinate him. Jivaka ultimately prevented Ajatshatru from killing his father, who subsequently died. Jivaka then brought the young King to the Buddha, burdened with regret. Ajatshatru subsequently adopted the Buddha's path and disseminated the faith on a far-reaching scale.

⁷Cures CP Karma II. Some miraculous healings in the Indian Buddhist story tradition. *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 1998.

⁸Zysk Kenneth G. *Asceticism and Healing in Ancient India: Medicine in the Buddhist Monastery*. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers; 1998.

⁹Perera HR. Jivaka. In: Malalasekera GP, Weeraratne WG, editors. *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*. 6th ed. Princeton, New Jersey: Government of Sri Lanka; 1996.

¹⁰Cures GP, Karma II. Some miraculous healings in the Indian Buddhist story tradition. *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 1998.

1.4. The Patronage of King Ajatasattu

The reign of King Ajatashatru of Magadha is characterized by a complex interplay of power dynamics and religious fervor. Despite the tumultuous circumstances surrounding his ascension to the throne, King Ajatashatru's eventual embrace of Buddhism marked a significant turning point in the history of royal patronage. His repentance for the patricidal act and subsequent patronage of Buddhist institutions demonstrated a profound spiritual transformation, thereby exemplifying the potential for redemption through royal patronage. Ajatashatru was the monarch of Magadha, an ancient kingdom situated in the northern part of the Indian subcontinent. He ruled Magadha for the last eight years of Shakyamuni Buddha's life and the next 22 years (circa 491 - 461 BC). In Buddhist traditions, Ajatasattu is said to have murdered his father Bimbisara at the behest of the schismatic Buddhist monk Devadatta, thereby committing patricide, which is one of the five "crimes of the immediate karmic result [of descent into hell in the next birth]" (nantarya-karmi), the most serious crimes according to Indian Buddhist ethics. Ultimately, he attained enlightenment according to the Buddha and dedicated himself to the Buddhadharmā. During Ajatashatru's rule, Magadha became the most powerful kingdom in Northern India.

Prince Ajatashatru was informed that Bhikkhu Devadatta, a disciple who had betrayed the Buddha, was inciting unrest. Consequently, he devised a plot to usurp his father's throne. The case was revealed, but King Bimbisara was reluctant to kill Ajatashatru; instead, he voluntarily abdicated the throne in favor of his son. However, Ajatashatru, who had recently ascended the throne, imprisoned his father in prison and forbade anyone, including his biological mother Vaidehi, from providing him with sustenance. Subsequently, Ajatashatru dispatched assassins to the prison intending to inflict torture upon Bimbisara by peeling his heels and setting them on fire, which ultimately resulted in the former king's demise. On the same day, Ajatashatru received news that his first son had just been born. He promptly proceeded to locate his mother, Videhi, to convey his elation and affection for the infant. Videhi informed the King of her father's devoted and affectionate care for him during his formative years. This information resonated with Ajatashatru, prompting him to dispatch an individual to liberate Bimbisara's father from incarceration. Regrettably, Bimbisara perished before he could be rescued.

Following the demise of his father, King Bimbisara, Ajatashatru experienced profound distress and fell seriously ill. Despite the dispatch of numerous renowned physicians, the court was unable to find a cure. Subsequently, the physician Jivaka counselled Ajatashatru to seek the Buddha's intercession through repentance. In light of Jivaka's counsel, Ajatashatru undertook a personal visit to Jetavana in Sāvattihī (Kosala) to seek the Buddha's pardon. "I was overcome by transgression," he states. "I was foolish, erring, and wicked, and for the sake of the throne, I deprived my father, that good man and just King, of his life. I ask the Teacher to accept my confession of this evil deed so that I may refrain from such actions in the future!"¹¹ Ajatashatru's growing respect for the Buddha Shakyamuni and the Sangha has resulted in a certain degree of enlightenment. Following the Buddha's passing into Nirvana, Ajatashatru erected a tower for the veneration of the Buddha's relics. Additionally, he was the primary patron of the First Council. As documented in the Mahāvamsa, Ajatashatru reigned for 32 years before being assassinated and deposed by his son, Udayabhaddaka, in a manner analogous to his ascension.

2. The Royal Patronage of the Bhikkhuni Sangha from the Mahāparinirvāṇa of Buddha till the Second Council

The period following the rise of Nirvana saw a continuation of the tradition of royal patronage, with monarchs such as King Subāhu of Magadha upholding the custom of supporting the Sangha and the Bhikkhuni Sangha. The scarcity of historical records detailing the patronage of bhikkhunis notwithstanding, the overarching narrative of royal support for Buddhism serves to underscore the enduring influence of monarchs on the proliferation of Buddhist teachings. It is challenging to ascertain facts regarding the protection of bhikkhunis in the period following the Buddha's Parinirvāṇa. The majority of Buddhist literature addresses the royal patronage of the Sangha in general, with a paucity of information concerning the nuns. Additionally, some kings are not prominent, and there is a dearth of documents that mention and describe them. There are only a few suttas related to royal figures, and the number is limited.

King Ajatashatru is renowned for his actions in killing his father, King Bimbisara, to secure the throne for himself. However, following the death of King Bimbisara, he repented to the Buddha. From that point onwards, he began to protect the Sangha, which included both monks and nuns, until the end of his life. Following the Buddha's Nirvana, Buddhism entered a new phase. When the sayings of the Teacher Samyaksambuddha were collected, the gods offered their praises, and happiness, and prosperity prevailed throughout the human world, both gods and men lived in bliss, and the piety of King Kṣemadarśin – also

¹¹ Walshe, *Digha Nikaya* 2, 1995, p. 108.

renowned as Ajatasatru – increased spontaneously. He brought all the five cities under control except Vaisali without recourse to warfare. In his book “*History of Buddhism in India*,” Taranatha described that:¹²

With the passing of the Tathagata and his two disciples, along with 168,000 arhats, into eternal sleep and Mahakasyapa into nirvana, a profound sense of sadness pervaded the entire community. Upon beholding the esteemed Teacher in person, the bhikkhus collectively reflected on their shortcomings, recognizing that they had failed to achieve distinction during the Buddha's lifetime due to their negligence. Furthermore, they pledged to dedicate their entire lives to the Doctrine. The venerable preceptors were likewise inclined to follow suit. The younger bhikkhus, who had never had the opportunity to meet the Teacher in person, reasoned that they were unable to properly implement the Doctrine due to their lack of personal interaction with the Teacher. "It is probable that erroneous conclusions will be drawn if one does not engage in the pursuit of the Law." This was the rationale they employed in their pursuit of morality. Consequently, the number of individuals who attained the 'four phases of perfection' increased significantly. Arya Ananda frequently delivered sermons to the four categories of adherents. Those who were proficient in the Pitaka also elucidated the Doctrine. Consequently, the ordained monks led lives characterized by rigorous moral scrutiny. The Law was bestowed upon Mahakasyapa by the Teacher. He bestowed the Law upon Arya Ananda. This was a genuinely significant occurrence.

The king and all the householders, as well as the other kings, the merit of whose virtue was difficult to quantify, became disillusioned with the multitude of worldly affairs and felt that they had previously encountered the world's foremost Teacher but now could only see his students. As a result, they came to appreciate the value of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, continuing to worship them with deep reverence. They strove after virtue, and thus quarrels and conflicts vanished. It is stated that the world remained virtuous in this manner for almost forty years. The historian also mentions that he worshipped for five years with all sorts of gifts five thousand arhats, inclusive of Arya Ananda.¹³

It is worthy of note that the majority of Buddhist kings were inclined to safeguard the tenets of Buddhism. During the reign of King Subāhu, the son of King Ajashatru, Buddhism was further reinforced and continued to flourish for a considerable period. This period serves to illustrate that monastic institutions, both for men and women, flourished under the patronage of the royal authorities throughout the Indian subcontinent. Taranatha indicated that Subahu, son of King Ajatasatru, subsequently ascended the throne and engaged in the worship of the Law of the Buddha for approximately seventeen years. Subahu's successor was his son, Sudhanu. At this juncture, Madhyantika initiated the conversion of Kashmir. It can be proposed that this is the initial predestined cause of the subsequent prosperity of Buddhism in the Kashmir region. The role of women in Buddhism is of considerable significance. However, the influence of Indian society on class has resulted in a paucity of references to women by historians and Buddhist writers. It is therefore challenging to identify sources that address the lives of bhikkhunis under the protection of the royal family. Notwithstanding their copious writings on Buddhist monasticism, Xuanzang and I-Ching do not venture into the personal lives of monks and nuns. It can therefore be posited that the royal patronage of Buddhism for bhikkhunis is analogous to that extended to monks.¹⁴

II. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be argued that the royal patronage of Buddhism in ancient India played a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of the Buddhist faith. The unwavering support of monarchs such as King Bimbisāra, King Pasenadi, Jivaka, and King Ajatashatru was instrumental in the flourishing and thriving of Buddhism, which left an indelible mark on the socio-cultural fabric of ancient Indian society. As custodians of Buddhist principles, these royal figures exemplified the symbiotic relationship between monarchy and spirituality, paving the way for the enduring legacy of Buddhism in the annals of history. Furthermore, Bikkshuni Sangha was established with the support of the kings. Without the royal patronage system, the entire Buddhist management and academic system would have collapsed. Nevertheless, Buddhism found its foundation in its profound philosophy of interdependence.

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¹²Taranatha's *History of Buddhism in India*, trans. Lama Chimpa Alaka and Chattopadhyaya, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970, p. 20

¹³Taranatha's *History of Buddhism in India*, trans. Lama Chimpa Alaka and Chattopadhyaya, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970, p. 22

¹⁴ See “*Record of Buddhist Kingdoms*” of Xuanzang; and “*A Record Of The Buddhist Religion As Practised in India and The Malay Archipelago A D. 671-695*” of I-Ching.

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