

# **Heterodox Buddhism: The School of Abhayagiri**

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## Dedication

This work is respectfully dedicated to  
my beloved parents and teachers



## Preface

This book is the revised version of my PhD research, which I submitted to the University of Hong Kong for my Doctor of Philosophy Degree in 2008. I have made an attempt to make a comprehensive study of the Abhayagiri Fraternity, with special reference to its new Buddhist practices and trends, which made a great contribution to the development of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. The study involves a consideration of both primary and secondary literary sources, and also takes into account archaeological findings, epigraphic material and liturgical artifacts. It contains a detailed examination of how the Abhayagiri School adopted heterodoxy of other Buddhist traditions. The Mahāvihāra and the Abhayagiri both accepted the Pāli *Tipiṭaka* as authoritative texts, but the Abhayagiri went further step by accepting some non-Theravāda teachings including Vetullavāda or Vaitulyavāda (Mahāyāna) and Vājiriyavāda (Vajrayāna), in marked contrast to the Mahāvihāra ideology. I have chosen in this work to focus mainly on the practical issues rather than the philosophical aspects of their influence. I will discuss non-Theravāda influence on ancient Sri Lankan Buddhist literature, and advanced temple administrative systems, specific religious and secular practices, liturgical art and the products of trades such as pottery, glazing, and metallurgy.

Mahāyāna Buddhism played an extensive role in Sri Lanka between the third and twelfth centuries C.E. This work also explores the implications of the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva ideal in Sri Lankan Buddhist thought towards the end of the first millennium. For the Theravāda, the aspiration to individual enlightenment was not a new ideal, but the aspiration of supreme enlightenment for all sentient beings was less pronounced. Here we attempt to highlight and explain this deviation between the Mahāvihāra and the Abhayagiri fraternities. The practice of the Bodhisattva ideal in the early phase of Sri Lankan Buddhism, and its considerable development after the arrival of Mahāyāna Buddhism, are also discussed here. Based on some inscriptions, a new ideal of Bodhisattva practice, the universally applicable bodhicitta, which is completely related to Mahāyāna practice, is explored as a new trend of Abhayagiri Fraternity.

There is clear historical evidence to show that, between the eighth and twelfth centuries C.E., esoteric Buddhism played a considerable role in the history of Sri Lankan Buddhism. We publish here for the first time two very

important *dhāraṇī* inscriptions, which had remained unidentified for five decades. These *dhāraṇīs* have been taken from the *Sarva-Tathāgata-Tattva-Saṃgraha-Mahāyāna-Sūtra* (*STTS*). The contents of these two *dhāraṇīs* and various materials relevant to the *STTS* are discussed. The foreign relations of the Abhayagiri, with special reference to Tantric Buddhism and the impact of Tantric Buddhism on Sri Lankan paritta chanting and its culture, are also considered at this point.

## Epigraph

...The Abāgiri Vehera [Abhayagiri Vihāra], ... where dwell bands of scholars directing their wisdom to great literary works and adorning the Abhayuttara maha sā, ... which with resound of the voice of those versed in the scriptures. Expounding the Dharma; which is adorned by virtuous men as by mines of gems; where flourish like unto an assemblage of coral tendrils numbers of Śākya śramaṇas (Buddhist monks) endowed with the virtues of temperance, contentment, and religious austerity; whose broad and white ramparts rise aloft like waves (of the ocean); which waxes with the offerings to the Lord of Sages; where frequent various teachers of eminence ...

*Epigraphia Zeylanica* Vol. I, p. 226.

(Slab-inscription (no. 1) of Mahinda IV, 956-972 C.E.).

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I pay my gratitude to the Glorious Sun Company in Hong Kong, for offering me a scholarship for my Master's studies at HKU. I am the first student to receive this prestigious scholarship of Glorious Sun Company. I always wish their success. I also thank the University of Hong Kong for offering me four years of studentship for my PhD studies. I express my appreciation to the whole staff of the HKU library for their excellent and efficient service. Without their help, it would have been impossible to have access to the relevant materials from overseas.

I am indeed grateful to the most Ven. Dr. Kwang Sheng, the abbot of Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery and the Rector of Buddhist College of Singapore for providing me a beautiful learning and teaching environment at BCS. He always treats me as if I were his own student. It's really a blessing to live at KMSPKS Monastery. I also thank all academic and non academic staff of Buddhist College of Singapore and KMSPKS Monastery for their goodwill and support.

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I am thankful to my teacher Ven. Attaragama Gnanawimala Nayaka Thera, the Chief Saṅghanāyaka of Asgiri Chapter for Colombo District. He is the one who showed me the way to success. I am also thankful to my Dhamma brothers Ven. Penahetipola Wimaladhamma Thera, Ven. Ankumbure Pannatissa Thera, and my friends Mr. Kapila Gunasekara, Sampath Sudasinghe, Suranga Priyashantha and Nishantha Roshan, for giving me enormous support throughout my studies in Hong Kong, specially finding books I needed from Sri Lanka. I am always very thankful to my nephews, Herath Samarakoon, Prasanna Gunasekara, Sarath Gunasekara and Samira Samarakoon for their help and support in many ways.

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Ven. Rangama Chandawimala Thero  
Buddhist College of Singapore  
May 2016

## List of Abbreviations

A	Āṅguttaranikāya
AA	Āṅguttaranikāyaṭṭhakathā
ARBK	A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms – Being an Account by the Chinese Monk Fā-Hien of his Travels in India and Ceylon
AVA	Abhayagiri Vihāra at Anurādhapura
AP	Abhayagiri Paryeṣaṇa
Av.	Anāgatavaṃsa
BSS	Bauddha-Stotra-Saṃgraha
Bv.	Buddhavaṃsa
CBETA	Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association [Tripiṭaka Series]
CHI	Cultural Horizons of India -4, by Lokesh Chandra
Cv.	Cūlavaṃsa
D	Dīghanikāya
DAG	Dhampiyā Aṭuvā Gāṭapadaya
DDVM	Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramaṇḍala
DPPN	Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names by G.P. Malalasekara
Dv.	Dīpavaṃsa
EHBC	Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon
EZ	Epigraphia Zeylanica
HBC	History of Buddhism in Ceylon
HCUC	History of Ceylon University of Ceylon

HJAS	Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies
JRAS	Journal of Royal Asiatic Society
LMA	Lakdiva Mahāyāna Adahas
M	Majjhima Nikāya
MMC	Mahāyāna Monuments of Ceylon
MNS	Mañjuśrīnāma-saṅgīti
Mv.	Mahāvamsa
Nks.	Nikāyasaṃgrahayaya
Pjv.	Pūjāvaliya
RAP	Robe and Plough – Monastic and Economic Interest in Early Mediaeval Sri Lanka
Sdmp.	Saddhammopāyana
Sdlk.	Saddharmālaṅkāraya
Sdrk.	Saddharmaratnākaraya
SP	Samskṛtika Purāṇaya
STTS	Sarva-Tathāgata-Tattvasaṃgraha-Sūtra
Svp.	Sahassavatthuppakaraṇa
THBI	Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India
UVDS	Uṣṇīṣa-vijaya-dhāraṇī Sūtra
Vin.	Vinayaṭṭaka
Vmg.	Vimuttimagga
Vsp.	Vamsatthappakāsini

Vsm. Visuddhimagga

Vsmsn. Viśuddhimārgasannaya

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## Introduction

The two major Buddhist fraternities in ancient Sri Lanka which, as two great seats of learning, made great contributions to the development of Buddhist thought and culture were the Mahāvihāra and the Abhayagiri. They were established during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C., respectively. A number of well-documented scholarly works assessing the contribution made by the Mahāvihāra, have already been published. However, due to the non-availability of primary literary sources, the overall contribution made by the Abhayagiri fraternity has not yet been properly explored and correctly assessed. As far as Sri Lankan Buddhism is concerned, the Abhayagiri Fraternity is very important since it was instrumental in changing the history of the country as well as Buddhism. Hettiarachchi is of the view that the ‘Golden Doors’ of Sinhalese Buddhism were opened with the emergence of the Abhayagiri fraternity.<sup>1</sup> It seems that the emergence of the Abhayagiri is the result of long felt necessity as well as being a predetermined project, but not a chance happening. Had the Abhayagiri fraternity not introduced new rites, rituals and practices, perhaps we would be dealing with a different history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka today. According to archaeological surveys carried out in Sri Lanka, the Abhayagiri complex spread over an area of 500 - 600 acres.<sup>2</sup> Historical records tell us that the biggest, the most beautiful and the richest monastery of the Island during the ancient period, was the Abhayagiri.<sup>3</sup>

The Abhayagiri fraternity was always ready to welcome new ideas, and adjusted its monastic system in accordance with time and socio-religious needs, whereas the Mahāvihāra considered this as an unwelcome and unacceptable transformation. In other words we can say that the Abhayagiri was radical and innovative whereas the Mahāvihāra was traditional and conservative. This research seeks to examine the liberal views of the Abhayagiri and popular ideas it introduced to Sri Lankan Buddhism, and assess its overall contribution for the development of Sri Lankan Buddhism. As radicals the Abhayagirivāsīns adopted popular practices and introduced them to Sri Lankan Buddhism in order to reinforce the close relationship

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<sup>1</sup> See the forward of *Abhayagiriyan Jetavanayata*, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> AVA, Kulatunga, T.G., Colombo, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> See “Slab Inscription 1 of King Mahinda 4”, EZ, Vol. I, pp. 224-229. See also Chapter XXXVIII of *ARBK*, tr. James Legge, Delhi, 1993.

between monastic and lay society. The accounts in the Sri Lankan chronicles show that the Abhayagirivāsīns had showed a liberal attitude towards the views of other Buddhist schools and also welcomed the members of those schools in a friendly manner. There is enough evidence to prove that several sectarian Buddhist schools dwelt together at the Abhayagiri in total harmony. As a result of this friendly atmosphere, new concepts and practices penetrated into Sri Lankan Buddhism, and some non Theravāda practices spread throughout the Island. Archaeological findings prove the authenticity of those records and show us how Mahāyāna and Tantric Buddhism played a dynamic and vital role in ancient Sri Lanka.

We will study the changes and improvements of the early Abhayagiri scenario along with the introduction of new Buddhist practices to Sri Lankan Buddhism. Divergent doctrinal interpretations of the Abhaygiri are also very important. The Mahāvihāra treated the Abhayagirivāsīns as heretics, since they presented some views on the *Dhammavinaya* that were different from the Mahāvihāra point of view. As this issue has been discussed in several academic works, the present study is focused specifically on the practices upheld by the Abhayagiri fraternity. This focus is because we find that it is mainly through such practices that the Abhayagiri fraternity had been able to exert a marked influence on the Lankan Buddhist thought and culture, in a manner different from the ideological stance of the Mahāvihāra. The new trends that the Abhayagiri introduced to Sri Lankan Buddhism were widely practised in ancient times. As a result of foreign relations of the Abhayagiri with India, China and Java, Mahāyāna and Tantric Buddhism and their related rituals greatly influenced on Sri Lankan Buddhism and its culture. But adequate attention has not been paid to examine how these ideas gradually entered into Sri Lankan Buddhism. Therefore, I will attempt to make a detailed study of various practices of the Abhayagiri, and assess the extent and nature of the impact of such practices on Sri Lankan Buddhism. The unique aesthetic productions of the Abhayagiri and also artisan knowledge it possessed are very important issues regarding multifaceted activities of the Abhayagiri. Therefore, our intention is to examine these important aspects, which so far have not received attention really due to them.

Valuable scholastic works have been published during the last couple of decades on the history of Sri Lankan Buddhism. Yet among them there is not a single comprehensive study relevant to this research area. Hence from the research available, it is difficult to comment on or assess the value of the service rendered by the Abhayagiri for the development of Sri Lankan Buddhism and its impact on the culture in Sri Lanka. This is because almost all the studies pertaining to the history of Buddhism and impact of Buddhism on Sri Lankan culture largely lean towards the Mahāvihāra Fraternity. For example, ‘*Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon*’ (Adikaram, 1946), ‘*The History of Buddhism in Sri Lanka*’ (Venerable Walpola Rahula, 1956) ‘*History of the Buddhist Saṅgha in India and Sri Lanka*’ (Panabokke, 1969), ‘*Robe and Plough*’ (Gunawardana, 1979) are all scholastic works pertaining to the subject, and all four studies originated as were PhD research works. Adikaram has largely depended on Pāli commentarial literature, whereas venerable Walpola Rahula has consulted a wider range of sources. However, both have shown less interest in the Abhayagiri Fraternity, probably due to lack of sources at that time. Panabokke has tried in his study to elaborate on Monasticism in India and Sri Lanka from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. to the Kandyan period, 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D. It covers the history of Buddhist Monasticism in Sri Lanka. Gunawardana, in his ‘*Robe and Plough*’ has pointed out doctrinal interpretations of the Abhayagiri, which are divergent to those of the Mahāvihāra. But none of these divergent points are discussed in detail. The aim of his work is to study monasticism and its economic interest in early medieval Sri Lanka.

Beside the major works especially focused on History of Buddhism, other important scholarly historical works such as the *History of Ceylon the University of Ceylon*, and the Paranavitana and et al (1959-1960). *Concise History of Ceylon* by Nicholas and Paranavitana (1961) also contains some accounts about the Abhayagiri. The seminal figure in the field of academic studies on Mahāyāna Buddhism in Sri Lanka was Paranavitana (1928) who published an article titled ‘Mahāyānism in Ceylon’ in *Ceylon Journal of Science*. In this important work, he has shown considerable evidence to prove that Mahāyāna had flourished in ancient Sri Lanka. ‘*Lakdiva Mahāyāna Adahas*’ (Mahāyāna Thoughts in Sri Lanka) written by venerable Moratuwe Sāsanaratana (1952), can also be taken as work of considerable value on this subject. This work discusses the origin and history of

Mahāyāna Buddhism and its literature in detail. In the last chapter, the author has pointed out some important points to show that Mahāyāna Buddhism had been practised in Sri Lanka. This was followed by Nandasena Mudiyanse's (1967) work on '*Mahāyāna Monuments in Ceylon*'. Mudiyanse's work is a valuable source on this area, as it contains details about almost every Mahāyāna monument in Sri Lanka that had been found up to that date. Goonatilake (1974) has discussed about some Mahāyāna influences on Sri Lankan Buddhism in her work titled "*The Impact of Some Mahāyāna Concepts of Sinhalese Buddhism*". She has made an attempt to show that Sri Lankan Buddhism has been exposed to many non-Theravāda teachings. But the problem with her work is that she has not consulted enough sources related to the subject and hence, no new light is shed on the problem. Dohanian (1977) made a study under the title '*The Mahāyāna Sculpture of Ceylon*'. In this work he has shown numerous Mahāyāna sculptures and some other statues that can be considered as Mahāyāna monuments. '*The Buddha in the Crown - Avalokiteśvara in the Buddhist Traditions of Sri Lanka*' by Holt (1991) is the most recent study on the subject. He has under taken an attempt to prove that the 'Nātha' cult, which is popularly known as the worship of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara has been prevalent.

Mori (1999) has made an effort to study on Mahāyāna Buddhism in Sri Lanka.<sup>4</sup> This is not a comprehensive study to the previous works on the subject by Paranavitana, Mudiyanse and Holt. He has misunderstood 'Sāgiriya' (Cetiyaṭṭabbata) as Sīgiriya (Sīhagiripabbata).<sup>5</sup> During the time of King Mahāseṇa (277 -304, C.E.), Mahāvihāra monks left the capital (Anuradhapura) and went to Malaya, Rohana and other places. Monks from Sāgiri or Cetiyaṭṭagiri too left the monastery and settled down in the places mentioned above. Recording this incident Sodo Mori assumes that 'Sāgiriya' means 'Sīgiriya'. A monastery in Sīgiriya was built around 200 years after aforesaid incident in 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E. Therefore, his assumption is incorrect.

To the best of my knowledge, the only scholastic work pertaining to the Abhayagiri has done by venerable T. Dhammaratana (2001) in his '*Cultural*

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<sup>4</sup> *Mahāyāna Buddhism in Sri Lanka*, Sodo Mori, Japan, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18.

*History of the Abhayagiri Tradition in Sri Lanka*'.<sup>6</sup> This work also can be taken as the most recent research study related to the Abhayagiri Fraternity. However, this work has been done from the Mahāvihāra perspective that is commonly seen in the Sri Lankan chronicles. His intention has been to prove the hypothesis that the Abhayagiri Tradition too represented the Theravāda. His purpose is clearly mentioned in his introduction: "In fact the principal purpose of this study is to examine carefully the cultural history of the evolution Abhayagiri tradition in order to prove the hypothesis, that the Abhayagiri tradition too represented the school of Theravāda Buddhism".<sup>7</sup> There is no argument that the Abhayagiri School represented the Theravāda tradition but it accepted non-Theravāda teachings as well. But venerable T. Dhammaratana's work, however, represents more a summary of prior works rather than providing independent and original new insights and observations on the Abhayagiri. What is more lacking in his research is that he has not focused his attention on the new archaeological findings on the Abhayagiri or to modern works published related to the subject.<sup>8</sup>

In this research, I will make an attempt to reconstruct a comprehensive history of the 15 centuries Abhayagiri Fraternity, with the help of scattered historical evidences and archeological findings. It seems that the Abhayagiri has not been given its due place in Sri Lankan Buddhist history.<sup>9</sup> Certainly, its real history and contribution could be different from the traditional Theravāda view presented to us through existing historical records. There has been no comprehensive research carried out discussing the overall contribution of the Abhayagiri Fraternity to Sri Lankan Buddhism. Therefore, the present research will pay attention to the outstanding contribution that the Abhayagiri made to Sri Lankan Buddhist thought, through its introduction of new dimensions and concepts. My attempt is to focus on various aspects of the development of Buddhist thought and practices that came into operation in Sri Lanka due to the multifaceted activities of the Abhayagiri Fraternity.

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<sup>6</sup> *Cultural History of the Abhayagiri Tradition in Sri Lanka*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Dhammaratana, T., University of Delhi, 2001.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6.

<sup>8</sup> 'Central Cultural Fund' of Sri Lanka has been excavating Abhayagiri precinct since 1980 and so far hundreds of historical monuments have been found. They are extremely important regarding the history of the Abhayagiri.

<sup>9</sup> See *SP*, Vol. I, no.4, 1993, pp.8-10.

For this reason, the present research is different from the above mentioned studies, since I look at the Abhayagiri from a different perspective, particularly concerning its new trends and practices. Therefore, to fill the gaps, I have made an effort to discuss some selected areas related to Buddhist practice. In doing this, an attempt is also made to reconstruct a comprehensive history of this celebrated school in the light of literary sources, scattered historical evidence and archeological findings available throughout the Island and overseas. This will include a comprehensive study about the changes and improvements that took place in the early Abhayagiri scenario with the introduction of these new trends. In doing this, first, I have examined the circumstances that brought about the origin of the Abhayagiri Fraternity in the first century B.C. The socio-religious and political background that provided the environment for the rise of Abhayagiri will be discussed from a new perspective. Particular attention will be directed to the history of the Abhayagiri Fraternity and its overall contribution on Sri Lankan and overseas Buddhism, not neglecting its contribution to many aspects of Sri Lankan culture in general. Then, turning attention to some of the practical aspects of Buddhism in contemporary Sri Lanka, I will focus on multidimensional and socio-religious practices upheld and promoted by the Abhayagiri Fraternity, and the success of those new practices in terms of the accomplishment of the aims and the objectives of Buddhism as a religion.

By carrying out this study I tried to find answers to the following questions:

1. What were the circumstances that compelled the Abhayagiri and its variant doctrines to come into being?
2. What evidence is there in support of the claim that there is another side to history of the Abhayagiri, which is different from that generally accepted?
3. What was the service rendered by the Abhayagiri for the development of Sri Lankan Buddhism?
4. What was the result of the foreign relations of the Abhayagiri?
5. Was the Abhayagiri a centre for heterodox Buddhism?
6. What was the impact of the Abhayagiri practices on present Sri Lankan Buddhism?

This study is intended to unravel important data relating to the specific role played by the Abhayagiri Monastery in the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. It will certainly help to clear some wrong notions and misunderstandings about the Abhayagiri School, specially, as a group of heretics or pseudo monks who brought only harm for Sri Lankan Buddhism. Such an examination of the facts will help to correctly identify and appraise the contribution made by the Abhayagiri fraternity to Sri Lankan Buddhism and its culture. As a whole, this study will give a credit which the Abhayagiri is deserved.

This book will cover the following areas: the historical background before and after the emergence of the Abhayagiri fraternity; the service it rendered for the development of Sri Lankan Buddhist culture covering various aspects, such as practice of *bodhicitta*, Buddhist rites, rituals, education, economy, art, architecture; and the role it played in enriching other practices, such as the contribution it made to the growth of literature. Though there are some doctrinal and philosophical differences between the Abhayagiri and Mahāvihāra, our focus is limited to some doctrinal differences related to daily practices.

The main problem that one faces in any study of the Abhayagiri is the scarcity of primary sources. I consulted new archeological findings related to the subject; such sources have contributed immensely to shed new light on the Abhayagiri fraternity. However, in dealing with some minor doctrinal differences between the Mahāvihāra and the Abhayagiri fraternities, the *Saddhammopāyana* of Kāvyacakravartī Ānanda and the *Vimuttimagga* of Upatissa are significant works attributed to the Abhayagiri fraternity. Although the original text of the latter is not available, we have the Chinese version of it as well as an English translation. Even though there is an inadequacy of literary works belonging to Abhayagiri there are numerous of Pāli commentarial works that can be fruitfully utilized as invaluable avenues of evidence.

The following sources will be scanned for this study as some of the primary sources.

1. The Pāli Chronicles, i.e., The *Mahāvamsa*, the *Dīpavamsa*, the *Nikāyasamgrahaya*.

2. The *Vimuttimagga*
3. The *Saddhammopāyana*
4. The *Visuddhimagga* and the Pāli Commentaries
5. The Sub-commentaries, e.g. *Vaṃsatthappakāsin*
6. The Sinhala *Sanna* Literature (verbatim translations) and Exegetical Works, i.e., The *Viśuddhimārga Sannaya*.
7. The *Pūjāvaliya*,
8. The *Saddharmaratnākāraya*
9. The *Saddharmālaṅkāraya*
10. The *Dharmapradīpikāva*
11. *Epigraphia Zeylanica* Vols. I-IV
12. The records of Chinese travelers, e.g. Fa-Xian, Xuan-Zang, and Yi-Jing
13. The *Polonnaru Katikāvata* (*Polonnaru Hā Dambadeṇi Katikāvata*)
14. The *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha Sūtra* and other Mahāyāna, Tantric and related sources to the subject.
15. Apart from printed materials, as primary sources, archaeological findings and liturgical sources, both in Sri Lanka and overseas will also be consulted.

As secondary sources, books, monographs, research papers, scholarly articles in modern periodicals, and the electronic resources shall naturally also be consulted.

Apart from the Sri Lankan sources a considerable number of primary and secondary literary sources, some foreign sources from the Chinese and the Tibetan literature have been used. The Chinese travel accounts of Fa Xian, Xuan Zang and Yi Jing and also Tibetan historical record of Tāranātha and also the *Caturāsītisiddhapravṛtti* of Abhayadatta have been scanned. Utilising relevant sources, I made an effort to make an in-depth and comprehensive study of the Abhayagiri Fraternity, appraising and analysing all data from an objective point of view.

The first chapter will be prefaced with this introduction and it will present a detailed account of the historical background that led to the emergence of the Abhayagiri as a separate fraternity. The following aspects will be examined: The origin and the development of the Abhayagiri monastery; the attitude of the Mahāvihāra towards the Abhayagiri and the first schism

in Sri Lankan Buddhism; popularity of the Abhayagiri; and competition and struggle between the two schools for prestige and supremacy.

The second chapter will mainly consider the new trends of the Abhayagiri fraternity. No doubt, we can get a clear picture of the Mahāvihāra tradition by an examination of the vast Pāli literature, especially the commentaries and the sub-commentaries, which provide much information relating to their doctrines and doctrinal interpretations. Unfortunately, due to the inadequacy of primary sources, and to the wilful suppression of information of this rival school, the doctrines and doctrinal interpretations of the Abhayagiri cannot be precisely identified. Only some quotations are found as indirect references in the Pāli commentaries and the sub-commentaries. They appear as views and interpretations rejected by the orthodox Mahāvihāra. Therefore, we had to depend largely on inscriptions, archaeological findings, liturgical sources and foreign accounts. At the same time, in the light of Mahāvihāra references, we can identify the doctrines and doctrinal interpretations of the Abhayagiri to some extent.

As some of those divergent doctrinal differences have been collected by some scholars, special attention will be paid on the historical and philosophical basis for those interpretations. Through such findings we can determine the standpoint of the Abhayagiri tradition up to a certain point in regard to doctrinal interpretations of some aspects of Buddhism. Gunawardana, in his 'Robe and Plough',<sup>10</sup> shows some doctrinal and philosophical differences between the Abhayagiri and the Mahāvihāra teachings.

I have discussed some new trends introduced by the Abhayagiri fraternity to Sri Lankan Buddhism. Many new practices, rites and rituals were used for the popularity and the development of their own school, and also perhaps for the promotion of a close relationship between the monks and the lay followers in terms of the stabilization of the *Sāsana*. The following new trends introduced by the Abhayagiri fraternity to Sri Lankan Buddhism have been discussed in this chapter:

1. New doctrinal interpretations related to practices
2. Providing access to Buddhist thought of other schools

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<sup>10</sup> *RAP*, Gunawardana, Arizona University Press, 1979.

3. An advanced temple administrative system
4. Specific religious and secular practices
5. The multifaceted activities of the Abhayagiri Fraternity

These new trends came into operation due to various reasons such as historical changes, doctrinal matters, socio-religious needs, and political facts. Some of the new trends introduced by the Abhayagiri became the predominant practices in Sri Lankan Buddhism. These facts show that Abhayagiri seems to have been more aware of the social dimensions of the Buddhist teachings than the Mahāvihāra. In fact, most of the new practices, rites and rituals, were introduced with the sole purpose of promoting the close relationship between the monks and the lay followers and the stabilisation of the *Sāsana* as well. Some of the new trends mentioned in the above list became predominant practices in Sri Lankan Buddhism. The temple administration system introduced by the Abhayagiri was highly advanced and efficient. It helped in the stabilisation of the *Sāsana* and promoted good relations between the laity and clergy. In contrast to the Mahāvihāra, the Abhayagiri introduced various practices attracting numerous followers to their side. Among the specific religious practices, yantra and mantra, paritta rituals and astrology have been highly influential in Sri Lanka. It is true that the Mahāvihāra tradition itself has been influenced by the new practices introduced by Abhayagiri tradition. The *Daḷadāpūjā* and *Abhiṣekapūjā* (*nānumura maṅgalyaya*) are still being practised in Sri Lanka with a high esteem, in the manner of a secret ritual. The discussion of these practices will be followed by an explanation of the worship of ‘*dharmadhātu*’ in Sri Lanka which shows that various practices introduced by the Abhayagiri had also been adopted by even the Mahāvihāra in the course of time.

It is quite obvious that the Mahāvihāra and the Abhayagiri unanimously accepted the Pāli *Tipiṭaka* as authoritative texts. Yet the latter further enlarged its ambit by accepting some non-Theravāda teachings, including Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna, showing a completely different attitude from the ideological stance of the Mahāvihāra. The Abhayagiri used Sanskrit not only for Buddhist education but also to teach various secular subjects, while the Mahāvihāra used the Pāli language for Buddhist studies. In this regard, the Jetavana fraternity, i.e. the third Buddhist breakaway fraction in Sri Lanka, also followed the Abhayagiri tradition and used both Pāli and

Sanskrit languages in their literary works. It is interesting to know that the only Pāli verse which has been found in the Jetavana site was written in *Devanāgarī* script, and also the longest Mahāyāna writing ever found in Sri Lanka, a part of the *Pañcaviṃśatsāhasrikāiprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*,<sup>11</sup> was inscribed on seven golden plates using the Sinhala script and not *Devenāgarī*. Possibly in the later period the Jetavana wrote Sanskrit texts using Sinhala scripts so that many people could access them easily.

The art and architecture we find in the Abhayagiri precincts show some unique characteristics of creativity. The oldest and the most beautiful Buddha images in Sri Lanka are also found in the Abhayagiri. Sitting Buddha images, like the world famous Samādhi Buddha, are exquisite masterpieces of the Abhayagiri. The biggest man-made pond, (which is six times bigger than a modern Olympic swimming pool), is also found within the precincts of the Abhayagiri.<sup>12</sup> In order to attract people, the Abhayagiri sought every possible way and means. Therefore, apart from religious practices and literary works, they introduced to the monastery activities some artisan works, such as ceramic, pottery, blacksmithing, and metallurgy. These few examples alone give us a clear idea of the multifaceted role played by this celebrated monastery.

The third chapter is reserved to discuss Mahāyāna Buddhism in Sri Lanka with special reference to the Bodhisattva practice. Historical evidence clearly shows that Mahāyāna Buddhism had played an important role in Sri Lanka during the 3<sup>rd</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> century C.E. Many Mahāyāna monuments on the Island show the extent of its practice and the dynamism with which it flourished. Though the stronghold orthodox Theravāda tradition of Mahāvihāra School always went against non-Theravāda teachings, the Abhayagiri Sect manage to keep their tradition being heterodox than orthodox. It was the Abhayagiri tradition that introduced to Sri Lanka the construction of colossal Buddha images and Bodhisattva images. Even in India we do not find such large statues of Buddha and Bodhisattvas. The world's tallest stone image of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara is found in Sri Lanka. When we consider the seven colossal Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna statues found in Buduruvagala, carved out of a living monolithic rock, we

<sup>11</sup> For Romanized version of these writings, please refer to *Sri Lanka Journal of Buddhist Studies* Vol. 11, 1988, pp. 175-209.

<sup>12</sup> AVA, Kulatunga, T.G., Colombo, 1999. p.42.

can understand how non-Theravāda Buddhism flourished in Sri Lanka during the ancient times. There is enough evidence to suggest that Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism flourished in Sri Lanka both in the north and the south.

This chapter is mainly focused on the implications of the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva ideal in Sri Lankan Buddhist thought during the late part of the first millennium and how it developed accordingly. The aspiration of individual enlightenment is of course not a new ideal for Theravāda, but the aspiration of supreme enlightenment of all sentient beings is less pronounced in the Theravāda. Our attempt is to highlight this deviation of aspiration between the Mahāvihāra and the Abhayagiri fraternities. This study is based on lithic inscriptions, liturgical sources and also literary works. A recently discovered inscription found in the Abhayagiri precincts is extremely important in terms of the religious goals of the Abhayagirivāsīns. This chapter begins with a brief account of the arrival of Mahāyāna Buddhism in Sri Lanka and its development there. It then deals with the Bodhisattva ideal before the arrival of Mahāyāna Buddhism to the Island. Next, it examines the Bodhisattva practices on the Island after the arrival of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Finally, it discusses the Bodhisattva ideals in later literary sources as an influence of the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva concept.

The fourth chapter discusses the impact of Vajrayāna or Tantric Buddhism on the Sri Lankan Buddhist culture. As a result of the liberal attitude of the Abhayagiri towards heterodox Buddhism, not only Mahāyāna Buddhism but Vajrayāna Buddhism also was practised Sri Lanka in the mediaeval period. With the introduction of Tantric Buddhism, a number of esoteric practices interacted with Sri Lankan Buddhism in later time. Historical evidence clearly shows that during the 8th -15th centuries C.E. esoteric Buddhism played a considerable role in the history of Sri Lankan Buddhism. Due to Sri Lanka's close proximity to India, new Buddhist thought found easy access to Sri Lanka, before it spread to other countries. Many monuments on the island related to Vajrayāna Buddhism bear evidence to its prevalence and popularity here. *Dhāraṇīs* found at the Abhayagiri Stūpa, fragments of *Ratnakūṭa Sūtra* found in Cetiyagiri Monastery, the images of Goddess Tārā, Dhāraṇī Gṛha and many mantras found in the *Great Book of*

*Protection*, can be cited as evidence for its wide-ranging impact over Sri Lankan Buddhism.

A major part of the fourth chapter will be reserved to highlight the importance of two inscriptions excavated at the Abhayagiri *Stūpa* during 1940-1945. As a result of my research I was able to identify the source of these two *dhāraṇī* inscriptions, which remained unidentified for seven decades. These *dhāraṇīs* have been taken from the *Sarva-Tathāgata-Tattva-Saṃgraha-Mahāyāna-Sūtra* (*STTS*). Special attention will be paid to the contents of those two *dhāraṇīs* and various materials relevant to the *STTS Sūtra*. Within the chapter, the arrival of Vajrayāna Buddhism in Sri Lanka will be discussed first. The accounts given in the *Nikāyasaṃgrahaya* on esoteric Buddhism in Sri Lanka, and their relations to the *STTS Sūtra* together with a short description about the *STTS Sūtra*, will be given next, and it will go on to analyse the contents of the newly identified *dhāraṇīs*. Concluding the study of the influence of the *STTS*, the chapter will discuss why esoteric Buddhism was severely criticised in the *Nikāyasaṃgrahaya*. Finally, the chapter will examine the Tantric influence on the performance of *Pirit* chanting and its related rituals in Sri Lanka.

Having examined Abhayagiri practices throughout the centuries, intended to be covered in this study, I will make an attempt to resolve the fundamental Abhayagiri questions which have been raised in page number 6.



## Chapter One:

### Pre-Abhaygiri History of Sri Lanka

The Abhayagiri, one of the largest and celebrated monasteries in Sri Lanka, emerged in the first century B.C. during the reign of king Vattagāmiṇī Abhaya (89-77 B.C.), who played a vital role in the Buddhist history of the Island. Without having a clear picture of ancient Sri Lankan history in the second and the first centuries B.C., it is not easy to make a comprehensive study about the emergence of this remarkable Buddhist Fraternity. The background for the origin of the Abhayagiri Monastery is very important as it changed the history of both the country and Buddhism. Considering the historical facts of the above mentioned period, it is quite tenable to assume a hypothesis that the appearance of the Abhayagiri is neither a sudden nor a haphazard event in Sri Lankan history. It could be the outcome of a pre-conceived and long felt need of the state and people to establish a new Buddhist institute, closer to the people, sensitive to the nations' heart beat.

In the ancient times Sri Lanka was frequently attacked by South Indian invaders. In the first century B.C., during the reign of king Vattagāmiṇī Abhaya, it faced numerous difficulties due to inner turmoils as well as South Indian invasions. Seven South Indian invaders arrived in Lanka and declared war against the King. This was an unexpected threat; the king was not strong enough to face this threat of war and have had no alternative but to flee with the family. While the king was fleeing a Jain monk named Giri insulted him yelling "Mahākāla is fleeing". The king felt humiliated and determined to avenge this insult building a vihāra on the very same spot, pulling the Jain temple down.<sup>1</sup> This incident happened at least 14 years earlier to the emergence of the Abhayagiri. As the result of King's determination, immediately after his second ascendance to the throne, the Abhayagiri Vihāra was constructed and offered to the Thera Mahātissa, who supported the king when he was in hiding, giving moral strength to bring the nation back to life. Concurrently, another five monasteries were also built by the generals of the king. In order to pay their gratitude, the generals also offered those monasteries to both Mahātissa Thera and Humbergallaka

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<sup>1</sup> *Mv.* 33, 44, p.232.

Tissa Thera.<sup>2</sup> Undoubtedly, these offerings were made considering yeoman service of the monks for the country and to show their appreciation.

Sri Lankans faced a diversity of problems and challenges due to civil rebellion and South Indian invasions. Of course, throughout its history foreign domination and warfare have caused a great peril to Buddhism in Sri Lanka. An analysis of the state of the *Saṅgha* community shows that by the second and the first centuries, specially from the time of King Duṭṭhagāmiṇī (161-137 B.C.) monks had been gradually changing from the reclusion to patriotism. The ideology of ancient monastic life had got transformed considerably and monks went forth in order to free the motherland from the hands of usurpers. This is because under the power of enemies, it is impossible to keep peace and harmony; hence free the motherland first and then the nation enjoys freedom and religion will prosper.

This country was named *Sīhaḷadīpa* in the chronicles and literature. Just after Buddhism was introduced to this island, *Sīhaḷadīpa* had been conferred the epithet ‘*Dhammadīpa*’,<sup>3</sup> ‘the Island of the *Dhamma*’. The *Pūjāvaliya* states that the ‘this Island of Lanka is a repository for the Triple Gem and it belongs to the Buddha himself’.<sup>4</sup> This small Island deserved to be honored by such an appellation as it had become one of the famous Buddhist kingdoms in the world since 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. Sri Lanka greatly benefited by these Buddhist missionary activities introduced by Arahant Mahinda, who came under the patronage of king Asoka of India. Since there was no other religion firmly rooted there, Buddhism spread all over the Island without any opposition. Due to royal patronage, mutual support and interrelationship among fourfold Buddhist community, Buddhism got firmly rooted in the Island, and subsequently it became the national religion of Sri Lanka.<sup>5</sup> Buddhist *Saṅgha* enjoyed high esteem and respect of the state and was

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 88-93, p.236.

<sup>3</sup> *Evaṃ laṅkāya nātho, hitamamitamātī āyatim pekkhamāno;*  
*tasmim kālami laṅkāsurabhujagagaṇādīnamatthañca passaṃ;*  
*āgā tikhattumetaṃ ativipuladayo lokadīpo sudīpaṃ;*  
*dīpo tenāyamāsi sujanabahumano dhammadīpāva bhāsīti.*

“Thus the Master of boundless wisdom, looking to the salvation of Lankā in time to come, and knowing in that time the highest good for the hosts of asuras and nāgas and so forth in Lanka, visited this fair island three times, - he, the compassionate Enlightener of the world; - therefore this isle, radiant with the light of truth, came to high honour among faithful believers. See *Mv.* 1, 84, p.9.

<sup>4</sup> “Me laṅkādvīpaya budunge ma tunuruvaṃ bhāṇḍāgārayak vāna”, *Pjv.*, p.699.

<sup>5</sup> Buddhism was upgraded as the national religion during the time of king Duṭṭhagāmiṇī.

looked up to by all as the guide of the nation. Before the second century B.C.E. the country was peaceful and secured and Buddhism became the national religion. Hundreds of monasteries were constructed and Buddhism flourished in the country. Pāli *Tiṭṭaka* was handed down orally from generation to generation for a few centuries following the ancient Indian tradition. The Triple Gem was like the jewel in the crown of the nation and these circumstances made it to be called as a ‘*Dhammadīpa*’.

However, this peace and tranquility did not last for long<sup>6</sup> and Sri Lanka was suddenly shocked with the invasion of two South Indians named Sena and Guttika, who were said to be sons of a horse-freighter.<sup>7</sup> This can be regarded as the first ever foreign invasion in Sri Lanka since the time of king Vijaya. This invasion severely affected the peaceful environment in the country. These two invaders ruled in Anurādhapura for twenty two years. This undoubtedly was a dark period for Buddhism and no records are found in the Pāli chronicles or commentaries about socio-economic development and religious activities in the country during this period. Twenty two years means a considerable period of time for a country and with non-Buddhist wielding power anything adverse to Buddhism could have happened. The *Mahāvamsa* explains that Sena and Guttika ruled the country righteously.<sup>8</sup> Commenting on the word “righteous” venerable Walpola Rahula suggests that these two people would have been Buddhists or have followed Buddhist customs. If they were non-Buddhist the word ‘*dhammena*’, would not be used in the *Mahāvamsa*.<sup>9</sup> But the word ‘*dhamma*’ does not necessarily have Buddhist connotation. There is no evidence to prove that these two were Buddhists and some scholars think that they were Jain followers.<sup>10</sup> Irrespective of the religion they belonged to, they had to follow Sri Lankan customs of the period for their survival. Merely their following of Buddhist practices is not sufficient to show that they were Buddhists.

In the course of time, the youngest brother of King Devānampiyatissa, prince Asela (215-205 B.C.), killed Sena and Guttika and ascended the throne.<sup>11</sup> King Asela’s reign lasted for ten years but there is no evidence to show any kind of religious development that took place under this king.

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<sup>6</sup> Buddhism came to Sri Lanka during the time of King Devānampiyatissa 307-267 B.C.

<sup>7</sup> *Mv.* 21, 10-11, pp.142 -143, *Dv.* 18, 47, p.207.

<sup>8</sup> *Mv.* 21, p.11.

<sup>9</sup> *HBC*, p.65.

<sup>10</sup> *Sri Lankāve Itihāsaya* I, p.75.

<sup>11</sup> *Mv.* 21, 12, p.143, *Dv.* 18, 48, p.207.

This may be because of the chaotic situation created by the two invaders. If we calculate from the period King Devānampiyatissa, prince Asela certainly would have been very advanced in age when he ascended the throne. This could be another reason for his failure as a dynamic ruler. However, the country had to face a situation of anarchy, which paved the way for the second foreign revolt in Sri Lanka. Since king Asela ruled the country amidst a lot of troubles, it was easy for Eḷāra, another south Indian prince, to capture the Anurādhapura kingdom. Sri Lankan chronicles credited him as unbiased and just, yet it is clear that he did not patronise Buddhism. It appears that he may have continued some practices performed by ancient Sinhalese monarchs.<sup>12</sup>

As the overwhelming majority of the people were Sinhala Buddhists, even non-Buddhist kings could not but keep on observing age old practices of Buddhist kings. The *Mahāvamsa*, which describes him as an exemplary ruler, and at the same time says that he was a person who had no belief in the Triple Gem. The *Mahāvamsa* records King Eḷāra ruled in Anurādhapura for a long period of 44 years. The *Pūjāvaliya*, a Sri Lanka religious work explains that after having captured Sri Lanka, king Eḷāra appointed 32 South Indians as chieftains throughout the country, except in Rohaṇa (Southern Sri Lanka) as it was not under his authority, and ruled the country destroying Buddhism.<sup>13</sup> Forty-four years amounts to almost double the reign of the great warrior and national hero of the nation, the King Duṭṭhagāmiṇī.<sup>14</sup> However, in between the advent of Buddhism and the reign of Duṭṭhagāmiṇī, Sri Lanka was in foreign hands over for 55 years. This undoubtedly would have greatly contributed to the degeneration and decline of Buddhism and Buddhist monasticism.

The National hero of the nation was made out to be the saviour of the country, nation and religion, (*raṭa*, *dāya*, *samaya*) three factors that symbolize the nation's ethos even today. These three are the most important words for Sinhalese even today. Hence, the origin of this patriotism is traced back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Buddhist era. Prince Duṭṭhagāmiṇī succeeded in gathering Sri Lankans against the foreign forces through his slogan that all his effort was not for sake of kingship but for the establishment of

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 21, 22-23, p.144.

<sup>13</sup> *Pjv.*, p.721.

<sup>14</sup> King Duṭṭhagāmiṇī's ruling period was limited to 22 years.

Buddhism.<sup>15</sup> This energising slogan is very much significant with regard to the Buddhist history of the second century B.C. in Sri Lanka. What kind of circumstances made him raise such a cry? It suggests that Buddhism was in a bad state during this period. Otherwise, there is no necessity for this kind of war cry. The *Mahāvamsa* proves that King Duṭṭhagāmiṇī was the most suitable person to protect Buddhism as he hails from King Amitodhana, who was the younger brother of the Buddha's father, king Suddhodhana.<sup>16</sup> Venerable Rahula states that Duṭṭhagāmiṇī seems to have exploited to the utmost all the religious and national sentiments of the masses in order to unite the people and to rid his motherland of foreign rule.<sup>17</sup> But here we should not forget that the people had also been suffering for over half a century. Therefore, that miserable situation really spurred the people to come forward to free the country from the usurper.

The great warrior king Duṭṭhagāmiṇī killed Eḷāra in the battle field and got the Island released from his power. Sri Lanka was unified under a single sovereign and the country became peaceful again. *Saṅgha* regained its due position and the king built many edifices such as Lohapāsāda, Ratnamāli *Stūpa*, Maricavaṭṭi *Stūpa*. In addition, religious and social activities were conducted throughout the country. Buddhism, receiving unstinted royal patronage, prospered and became steady again. Duṭṭhagāmiṇī's brother Prince Saddhātissa, another devout patron of Buddhism, succeeded to the throne and continued the good service started by his predecessor. He built Dakkhinagiri Vihāra, which is very important regarding our studies and he granted same patronage to Buddhism continuing his brother's socio-religious service.

King Saddhātissa had four sons and his eldest son, Lajjitissa lived in Rohaṇa, southern part of Sri Lanka. Lajjitissa rendered service for the wellbeing of Buddhism in southern Sri Lanka and he built Girikumbhila Vihāra.<sup>18</sup> The *Mahāvamsa* explains that prince Thūlathana built a monastery while living in Rohaṇa and he came to the capital with his father, king Saddhātissa and offered the monastery to the Bhikkhu Order.<sup>19</sup> The *Mahāvamsa* does not mention where this temple was located in the city of Anurādhapura but the *Vamsatthapakāsini* tells us that it was built in

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<sup>15</sup> *Mv.* 25, 17, p.171.

<sup>16</sup> *EHBC*, p.65.

<sup>17</sup> *HBC*, p.80.

<sup>18</sup> *Mv.* 33, 14 -15, p.228.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 -17, p.229.

Rohaṇa. The *Mahāvamsa* further explains that having come to Anurādhapura, Thūlathana never returned to Rohaṇa.<sup>20</sup> The Mahāvihāra monks had associated with Thūlathana for a long time as he lived in the capital. For this reason, probably, Anurādhapura monks developed closer ties with him than with the elder prince, Lajjitissa who lived in Rohaṇa.

King Saddhātissa was a very pious king. He desired to see monks maintaining high standard of discipline. One day having seen a *sāmaṇera*, who was self-restrained while accepting king's special offering, the king was extremely delighted.<sup>21</sup> The king was such a devout Buddhist he once listened to the Dhamma talk standing throughout the whole night.<sup>22</sup> After king Saddhātissa's death, ministers and monks gathered at Thūpārāma and prince Thullatthana was anointed as the king overlooking the seniority of prince Lajjitissa, who was the heir to the throne according to the custom of the Island.<sup>23</sup> Prince Lajjitissa angered by this unlawful decision came to Anurādhapura, killed his brother and ascended the throne. This incident was indeed a blemish in the Sri Lankan history and it is the first ever regicide in the Royal Family for the sake of power. Being gravely hurt by the bias behaviour, king Lajjitissa showed less respect to the *Saṅgha* and neglected them for three years, saying that they did not know the order of succession.<sup>24</sup> But the *Vamsatthappakāsinī* records that his disrespect was directed at *Mahātheras* and not to all monks of the *Saṅgha*. However he did no harm to them.<sup>25</sup> Eventually, after three years of his reign, king Lajjitissa gave up his negative attitude towards the *Saṅgha* and did a lot of meritorious deeds. On the opening ceremony day of Girikumbhila Vihāra in Rohaṇa, which was built by him during his stay in Rohaṇa, the king offered robes for 60,000 monks, giving two sets of robes (six robes) to each.<sup>26</sup> He offered medicine for monks in rural areas and offered rice and other requisites that *Bhikkhūnīs* needed.<sup>27</sup>

King Lajjitissa (119-109 C.E.) was succeeded by his brother prince Khallāṭanāga. During king Khallāṭanāga's reign there was only uneasy

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<sup>20</sup> *Vsp.*, p.448.

<sup>21</sup> *EBHC*, p.71.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Mv.* 33, 17-18, p.229.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>25</sup> *Vsp.*, p.489.

<sup>26</sup> *Mv.* 33, 26, p.230.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 22, 28, p.230.

peace as the rebels were always seeking weak points to dethrone the king. A commander named Kammārahathaka slew the king and seized power; but he was immediately killed by prince Vaṭṭagāmiṇī, the younger brother of king Khallātanāga.<sup>28</sup> Thereafter, it is recorded that he was called as ‘Pitirāja’ or Fatherly King as he adopted his brother’s son whose father was assassinated by an army commander.<sup>29</sup> The insecure state was becoming worse and the King Vaṭṭagāmiṇī had to face an extremely problematic period in his very short reign of five months. One Brahmin called Tissa<sup>30</sup> from Rohaṇa declared war against him and at the same time seven Damiḷas arrived from South India declaring war.<sup>31</sup> The King was in a quandary and suddenly he got a clever idea, and sent a message to the Brāhmaṇatissa: “The kingdom already belongs to you, go to battle and conquer Damiḷas”.<sup>32</sup> Being rather immature and not conversant with political strategy, Tissa went to fight with Damiḷas and was killed in the battle field. After that king Vaṭṭagāmiṇī went to war with Damiḷas but he was defeated by them. However the king was able to flee with his family. He hid in *Vessagiri* forest where he met a great senior monk called Mahātissatthera.

Gāmiṇī Abhaya<sup>33</sup> was the real name of king Vaṭṭagāmiṇī. Why he was called by the name ‘Vaṭṭagāmiṇī’ is a puzzle. Hettiarachchi<sup>34</sup> suggests that the real name of the king should be ‘vanagambā’ (Forest Gāmiṇī Abhaya). As he lived in many years in the forest, there is a possibility to add this adjective ‘*vana*’ to his name. In the course of time this adjective ‘*vana*’ changed as ‘*vala*’ and finally became ‘*vaḷa*’. This word ‘*vaḷa*’ became ‘*vaṭṭa*’ when it was translated into Pāli. In the inscription of Rock Temple (Galvihāra) of Polonnaruva, his named used as ‘Vaḷagam Abhaya Maharaju’.<sup>35</sup> The *Nikāyasamgrahaya* also uses the name ‘Vaḷagambā’.<sup>36</sup> Jayaweera says that probably this king could be a short and fat person.

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<sup>28</sup> *Mv.* 33, 33-34, p.231.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 36, p.231.

<sup>30</sup> Sometimes his name is mentioned as Tiya, there is no any relationship between these two names referring to the meaning. Very often Mahāvamsa uses the name Tissa for all monks related to Abhayagiri such as Kupikkalatissa, Hambugallakatissa, Bahalamassutissa, Ussiliyātissa, and Kohontissa. Brāhmaṇatissa also used in the same manner.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 37-39, p.231.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 41.

<sup>33</sup> *Inscriptions of Ceylon*, pp. 86-104.

<sup>34</sup> *Pāraṇi Anurādhapura Yugaye Laṅkā Itihāsayā*, p.62.

<sup>35</sup> *EZ*, Vol.II, pp.256-283.

<sup>36</sup> *Niks.*, p.14.

Hence he would have been called Vaṭṭagāmiṇī; which means, rotund.<sup>37</sup> As Hettiarachchi's argument is logical, we also prefer to accept it.

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<sup>37</sup> *Abhayagiriyan Jetavanayaṭa*, p.12.

### Constant Camaraderie Between King Vaṭṭagāmiṇī and Mahātissa Thera

King Vaṭṭagāmiṇī had doubts about his victory as a massive multitude had arrived from south India. Hence, before going to the battlefield he took his two wives and two sons and settled them somewhere nearby for safety.<sup>38</sup> When he was vanquished by Daṃiḷas, proving his doubt, he escaped from enemies, taking his family and heading to Vessagiri forest. A Jain monk named Giri insulted the king, who was passing his *ārāma* shouting that “Great Black Sinhalese is fleeing”.<sup>39</sup> The king felt humiliated and vowed to build a Buddhist vihāra at this very same place, rooting out the Jain temple, if he could fulfill his wish of gaining the throne in the future.<sup>40</sup> Though he was escaping for his life, he was thinking how he could win back the throne from the usurpers.<sup>41</sup> As he was being pursued by Daṃiḷas, his second consort, Somādevī suddenly descended from the cart on her own accord in order to reduce the weight of the passenger load. The king gave his splendid diamond-jewel to her so that if necessary she could use it as a proof of her identity. This was one of the greatest sacrifices ever made in Sri Lankan history, as her wish was not only to protect Royal family but also to protect the whole nation. No attention has been paid on this very important incident which saved the future of Sri Lanka. Somādevī seemed to be a great and important figure as Vihāramahādevī who was the mother of King Duṭṭhagāmiṇī and heroine in the *Mahāvamsa*. Probably, these stories would have been presented with detailed accounts in the *Uttaravihāramahāvamsaṭṭhakathā* and other historical works of *Abhayagiri Fraternity*, which have got lost.

Obviously, through her great sacrifice, Somādevī would have intended to change the attention of the enemies who were pursuing the king. One of the Daṃiḷas, fascinated by her beauty and took her to India. Another leader of that group took the Buddha’s bowl-relic which was left by the king at the palace, well contented, left the country.<sup>42</sup> This incident showed that how important the Buddha’s bowl was. Adikaram says that the king hid the bowl

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 47, p.232.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p.44.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> This is the first thought about the Abhayagiri monastery.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid 54-55, p.233.

in the Vessagiri forest and it was taken from there by one of the Damiḷas.<sup>43</sup> It seems that Adikaram had misinterpreted the story by misinterpreting the particular stanza of *Mahāvamsa*. Geiger’s English translation and also the Sinhalese translation by Śrī Sumaṅgala and Baṭuvantuḍāva, render the Pāli stanza to mean that the king fled to the Vessagiri forest and hid there. “Being vanquished he took flight and, unable to take with him the alms bowl used by the Conqueror, he hid in the Vessagiri forest.<sup>44</sup> The *Mahāvamsaṭīkā* also comments that unable to take the bowl used by the Buddha which was brought here (Sri Lanka) by Sāmaṇera Sumana, the king hid in the forest with the family.<sup>45</sup>

The above mentioned record proved that Adikaram’s explanation seems to be wrong. If the invaders entered Vessagiri forest they could have easily captured the king. Malalasekera<sup>46</sup> also explained that the bowl relic was stolen by a Damiḷa from Vessagiri forest. But we already have discussed that the king forgot it at the palace while he was fleeing. Probably, Adikaram repeated the idea of Malalasekera without making proper investigation.

The remaining five Damiḷa invaders ruled the country for 14 years killing one after the other. During this period many people died due to a severe famine and many *Bhikkhūs* left the country and the temples were deserted. Even Mahāvihāra and Mahāthūpa were entirely abandoned by the *bhikkhūs* for the first time in the history. Castor-oil plants had grown in the precincts of the Mahāvihāra.<sup>47</sup> This is very significant in the history of Sri Lanka, because Anurādhapura was completely abandoned by Buddhist monks. The chronicles kept silent on this issue but *Aṭṭhakathās* mentioned those incidents considering their historical significance. It is said that during the time of the great famine monks faced much hardships. They suffered due to lack of food. According to Pāli commentaries they ate lotus roots and banana stalks.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> *EHBC*, p.139.

<sup>44</sup> *Mv.* 33, 48-49, p.232, *Mv.* Part 1, 33.49 (Sin. tr.), p.154. See the stanza:

*Asakkuṇitvā gāhetuṃ pattamaṃ bhuttaṃ jinena taṃ - palāyitvā vessagirivane abhinilīyi so.*

<sup>45</sup> *Vsp.*, p.493.

<sup>46</sup> *DPPN*, Vol. II, p.944.

<sup>47</sup> *HBC*, p.81.

<sup>48</sup> *Sammohavinodanī*, pp.446-468.

In the *Rasavāhinī*, many stories were recorded of how people struggled to survive. Many of them subsisted consuming a kind of green leaves named ‘*kara*’.<sup>49</sup> Due to lack of food, people who suffered starvation were tempted to even feed on human flesh.<sup>50</sup> Some monks went to Sakka and asked his support; but his answer was very humorous. “Sirs, it is not possible to ward off the rebel that has arisen. May you go abroad. I shall protect you (while) on the sea.”<sup>51</sup> Though these stories looked like some kind of fabrications, the message we get through them is very important. Sakka is said to be capable of doing anything; but here he too failed in helping monks to overcome the fear and danger they were facing.

The king and his family hid in the Vessagiri grove and Mahātissa Thera of Kupikkala became the protector of the Royal Family. He fed the king and his family with the food he collected by his regular alms round (*piṇḍapāta*).<sup>52</sup> Being pleased with the act of the Mahāthera, the king, writing on a ‘*ketakī-leaf*’ (pandanus odoratissimus) offered the surrounding Vessagiri forest to the temple showing his obligation to the monk.<sup>53</sup> In Buddhist history not many monks were called by the epithet ‘*mahā*’, which means the great. Definitely, he seems to be an eminent and erudite *bhikkhu* well versed in the *Dhammavinaya*. That is why his name is specified ‘*mahā*’. Even in the Buddha’s time not many monks got this specific epithet. In fact, according to the accounts given in the *Mahāvamsa*, Mahātissa Thera must be a highly respected monk both in the capital and rural areas.<sup>54</sup> From the whole story of the Mahātissa Thera, it appears that he was a prudent monk. As far as Sri Lankan Buddhism is concerned, king Vaṭṭagāminī Abhaya and Kupikkala Mahātissa Thera are very important and significant characters. If King Vaṭṭagāminī and Mahātissa Thera had not work together to get back power from the foreign hands, perhaps, today, we would be talking about a different history of Sri Lanka.

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<sup>49</sup> See *Rasavāhinī*.

<sup>50</sup> *EHBC*, p.75.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p.74.

<sup>52</sup> *Mv.* 33, 49-50, p. 232.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*50, pp. 232-233.

<sup>54</sup> At Vessagiri, Mātuvelaṅga, Sāmagalla and many other places, he was highly venerated and even considered as a leader of the Saṅgha in that time. The offering ceremony at Acchagalla Vihāra is an example.

Due to problems of security, the king immediately left Vessagiri and went to Silāsobbakaṇḍaka and from there he went to Mātuvelaṅga near Sāmagalla, where he met his patron monk again.<sup>55</sup> Actually, what really had happened was Mahātissa Thera had gone to Mātuvelaṅga earlier to make necessary arrangements to welcome the royalty. But he kept it a secret without exposing them to the public. Mahātissa Thera introduced his guests to Taṇasīva, the chieftain of the village. The *Mahāvamsa* explains that ‘the Thera entrusted the king with due carefulness to Taṇasīva, who was his attendant’.<sup>56</sup> As Thera was responsible for protecting the king, he took every possible step with regard to the safety as well as the comfort of the royalty. It was a risky and difficult job to provide shelter for the king. That would be the reason for introducing the royalty to the village head, where the king could get the highest security and comfortable life than in any other place.

One day, an unexpected thing happened. The queen, Anulādevī went to Taṇasīva’s wife to take daily portion of rice but the latter kicked the basket of the former and then they quarrelled with each other. The *Mahāvamsa* or other chronicles do not present enough evidence about this incident. It is said that Anulādevī got angry and went to the king crying and reported the story to him. At the same time on hearing the news Taṇasīva came to the king aiming his arrows. The King took his two sons and wife and hastened forth towards Taṇasīva and shot him to death before the latter could shoot him. We are not sure whether he had known the identity of his guests. If they were known to him as royalty, this kind of disaster would have never happened. The *Vamsatthappakāsinī* says that in order to prevent others’ being attacked and for the self-protection, the king shouted announcing that he is the son of King Saddhātissa and he is known as Piturāja.<sup>57</sup> The word Piturāja seems to be more familiar to people than the name Vaṭṭagāminī. This name makes sense as he was the father of the nation but not only for his kids. People gathered around and joined hands with him for the independence campaign. Undoubtedly Mahātissa must have been displeased with this killing, but he did not show any unpleasant feeling towards the king considering that he was the only one who could liberate the country from the chaotic conditions to which it had fallen.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 51-52, p.233.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 52.

<sup>57</sup> *Mv.* 33, 65, p.234.

From *Sāmagalla*, gradually, the king went to Rohaṇa. Scholars have doubt whether King Vaṭṭagāmiṇī went to Rohaṇa or not. But, according to Karaṇdahela (in Rohaṇa) inscription this doubt is finally cleared. In this inscription the phrase Habutagala viharahi<sup>58</sup> is found to occur. This monastery must be the Hambugallaka Vihāra where Hambugallakatissa Thera<sup>59</sup> lived. Therefore, king Vaṭṭagāmiṇī had gone to Rohaṇa from Sāmagalla, otherwise known as Moragalla.<sup>60</sup> Eventually, the king collected many brave people including eight commanders and strengthened his army. Until the right time came the king lived for 14 years in many places with indomitable courage. The disastrous famine was a hindrance for declaring war against enemies. The wise King having understood the situation during the time of famine abstained from declaring war. When the right time came, armed with forces, he was ready to fight.

When king Vaṭṭagāmiṇī was about to leave to fight with Coḷas, following an ancient custom, he went to Accagallavihāra Vihāra to make an offering to the Buddha in order to invoking blessings of the Triple Gem. Mahātissa Thera, who was the constant companion of the king, led the ceremony.<sup>61</sup> The king slayed one of his ministers by mistake and as the result other ministers were disappointed and immediately left the king. All the endeavour and expectations made up with enormous effort for fourteen years by the king and Mahātissa Thera and also the wishes of the suffering nation were almost about to come to an abrupt end. Mahātissa Thera, understood the gravity of the terrible situation faced by the nation and went seeking for those soldiers who left the king. The aforementioned ministers were captured by a predatory group and extorted by them. Disappointed ministers with confused mind went to Hambugallaka Vihāra seeking shelter and met the learned Hambugallaka Tissa Thera, who was well versed in the Four *Nikāyas*.<sup>62</sup> The Thera asked them: “Joining with whom can you protect Buddhism, with Damiḷas or with the King?” The ministers understood their mistake and decided to join the king. Having travelled a long distance, at the

<sup>58</sup> “Habutagala viharahi kākavan tisa maha rajaha ...”, Lakdiva Sellipi, p.78.

<sup>59</sup> We will find him very soon.

<sup>60</sup> Vsp, p.493.

<sup>61</sup> Mv.33, 65, p.234.

<sup>62</sup> The Four *Nikāyas* are the Dīgha, the Majjhima, the Saṃyutta and the Aṅguttara. But the Khuddaka *Nikāya* is not counted here.

same time, Mahātissa Thera came to this temple and met the ministers. Both Theras took them back to the king and reconciled them. The king and the ministers were very happy and said: “If our undertaking prospers then must ye come to us when the message is sent to you”.<sup>63</sup>

King Vaṭṭagāmiṇī went to Anurādhapura and declared war against Damiḷa Dāṭika who was ruling there, defeated him and ascended the throne. No other monarch in Sri Lankan history faced so many political conspiracies, social tribulations and natural disasters. Yet his personality was free from despondency and discouragement. Mahātissa Thera and the king, who forged a close friendship for the sole purpose of fostering Buddhism, really deserved to be credited. Their main purpose was to regain power and bring peace and stability to the country.

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<sup>63</sup> *Mv.* 33, 77, p.235.

### The Emergence of the Abhayagiri Fraternity and the New Phase of Sri Lankan Buddhism

According to archaeological surveys in Sri Lanka, the Abhayagiri complex spread over 500 - 600 acres.<sup>64</sup> Historical records and inscriptions tell us that the biggest, the most beautiful and the richest monastery of the Island during the ancient period was the Abhayagiri. Some scholars believe that the ‘Golden Doors’ of Sinhalese Buddhism were opened with the emergence of the Abhayagiri fraternity.<sup>65</sup> The Abhayagiri, which existed over a thousand years, was the first and the most influential Buddhist fraternity separated from the Mahāvihāra. The true history and the practice of this great institution are still not quite clear. New archeological findings have begun to throw more light on these, enriching the existing knowledge.

The extensive ruins spreading out over more than 500 acres bear silent but eloquent evidence for its remarkable history that has been concealed in the course of time. The *Mahāvamsa* indicates the exact day on which the Abhayagiri was established. It was 10 days 10 months and 217 years after the establishment of the Mahāvihāra.<sup>66</sup> This exact calculation shows us how much the Mahāvihāra had paid its attention over this significant event in Buddhist history of Sri Lanka. Both the *Dīpavamsa* and the *Mahāvamsa* record that the Abhayagiri Monastery was named for the combination of King Vattagāmiṇī and a Jain monk called Giri, who was residing at a Jain temple which was said to have been located at the very same place where the present Abhayagiri *Stūpa* is located.<sup>67</sup>

The literal meaning of Abhayagiri is ‘fearless mountain’. This name is very significant and draws our attention to think more about the socio-political and religious background of the Island of that period. When the Abhayagiri was founded the whole country was in chaos and the people lived in fear. Even the great warriors of King Vattagāmiṇī were subjected to attack by a group of gangsters. If this was so, then what about the security of common people! They always lived with fear-stricken minds. The Pāli commentaries use the word ‘*Brāhmaṇatissabhayaṃ*’ - the fear of Brāhmaṇa

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<sup>64</sup> AVA, by Kulatunga, T.G., 1999.

<sup>65</sup> See the foreword of the *Abhayagiriyeṇ Jetavanayaṭa*, 1997.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. 80-81, p.235.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 83, p.235, Dv., p.209.

Tissa.<sup>68</sup> After building the monastery the king wanted to announce that fear was no more in the Island. Therefore, ‘fearless mountain’ is very suitable for this monastery and it was the symbol of fearlessness. Another important fact is that there were a number of temples named with “*giri*” as the last component of the name, eg. Cetiyaḡiri, Dakkhiṅgiri, Vessagiri, Amaragiri, and so on. Even though the Sri Lankan chronicles explained that this name was given by King Vaṭṭagāmiṅī by combining his name and Giri Nighaṅṭha’s, we have a reasonable doubt that whether the king would name this Buddhist monastery by adding a part of his enemy’s name! Most probably it wouldn’t be.

The newly built temple was offered to Mahātissa Thera, who was the patron of the king while the king was in hiding. Five ministers of the king built five monasteries the Dakkhiṅa *Vihāra* by Uttiya; in the same place, the minister Mūla built the Mūlovakāsa *Vihāra*, the minister Sāliya built the Sāliyārāma, the minister Pabbata built Pabbatārāma and the minister Tissa built the Uttaratissārāma. All these monasteries were offered to two *bhikkhūs*, Mahātissa and Hambugallaka Tissa. No records are found to show that the king helped the Mahāvihāra or the other four great monasteries in Anurādhapura. But the *Dīpavaṃsa* recorded that the king invited the *Bhikkhūṅīs* who had gone to India during the famine.<sup>69</sup> King Vaṭṭagāmiṅī’s elder brother Lajjitissa, who criticised and neglected the Mahāvihāra for three years also helped *Bhikkhūṅīs* by paying a great respect to them. It is no wonder that, as a younger brother of Lajjitissa, Vaṭṭagāmiṅī had followed suit.

The Mahāvihāra fraternity would have been unhappy with the king since he helped only Abhayagiri monks. The monks had faced immense hardships for 14 years before the king’s ascension to the throne but all the ministers and the king had close connection with the Abhayagiri but not with the Mahāvihāra. Most probably, the isolation of the Mahāvihāra would have generated fear among the Mahāvihāra *Saṅgha* regarding their survival, rather than jealousy of Mahātissa Thera. The Mahāvihāra charged Mahātissa Thera and expelled him from the community of the *Saṅgha*. They accused him of *kulasamaṣaṭṭhadosa* (the offence of frequenting with

<sup>68</sup> “...brāhṃaṇatissabhayaṃ udapādī”, “brāhṃaṇatissacore mate... bhayaṃ vūpasannaṃ”.

*Vibhaṅgaṭṭhakathā*, PTS, p.448.

<sup>69</sup> *Dv.* 18, 31-33, p.206.

families), a violation of *Vinaya* rules. This is the offence that he was said to have committed, to be punished by excommunication. It also is the only accusation that the Mahāvihāra could bring against him. Perhaps the charge leveled against Mahātissa could be the result of the apprehension of the Mahāvihāra about Mahātissa's great reputation, for by that time, everything had been settled in favour of Mahātissa Thera. Though the Mahāvihāra hoped to subdue Thera Mahātissa by excommunicating him, it did not work as they expected.

Scholars have presented various views regarding the charge on Mahātissa Thera by Mahāvihāra. Paranavitana advocates the position that Mahātissa was punished as he was involved with politics.<sup>70</sup> It is difficult to take this idea into consideration since other monks had already been directly involved in politics before Mahātissa Thera. We have discussed earlier in this chapter how monks got involved with politics during the time of king Duṭṭhagāmiṇī and at later times they even had selected the king. Therefore, Paranavitāna's idea seems to be not convincing. Venerable Walpola Rahula believes that this happened as Mahātissa Thera accepted the monastery as a private gift.

Rahula held the opinion that Mahātissa Thera first lived in a rural area and came to live in the city of Anurādhapura on the invitation of the king. Further he says that Mahāvihāra had the supreme authority and the support from the state as well as the public. Therefore, the Mahāvihāra did not want to share their prestige with another group.<sup>71</sup> The first idea he presented is important. It seems that Mahātissa Thera lived most probably in Rohaṇa or somewhere far from Anurādhapura city. But we know that the first meeting of King Vaṭṭagāmiṇī and Mahātissa Thera happened in Vessagiri forest. It implies that later time Mahātissa Thera had come to Vessagiri which had been located near Anurādhapura city. The Issarasamaṇārāma and the Vessagiri *vihāra* were built together by King Devānampiyatissa at the same time. At that time there were no temples far away from Anurādhapura city. But still we do not know whether Mahātissa Thera lived in the forest of Vessagiri or he went there to meet the king who was hiding there.

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<sup>70</sup> *UCHC*, Vol. I, p.245.

<sup>71</sup> *HBC*, pp.83-85.

The second point that venerable Walpola Rahula presents is logical. He says that it is a matter of supremacy and authority between the Abhayagiri and the Mahāvihāra. Actually, from the time Buddhism was established in Sri Lanka, the Mahāvihāra was the supreme Buddhist headquarters and this situation prevailed for 217 years until the Abhayagiri was established. The Abhayagiri got royal support from its beginning whereas the Mahāvihāra was neglected by the king Vattagāmiṇī. During the Brāhmaṇatissa famine, Mahāvihāra was a deserted place since almost all the inhabitants left the city for their survival. If any place is deserted for fourteen years, what would be the result? After king Vattagāmiṇī ascended the throne for the second time, monks returned to the capital from Malaya, Rohana and also from India, where they lived during the chaos. However, after the conflict occurred between the two fraternities, the Mahāvihāra faced hardships again.

The *Mahāvamsa* records that a disciple of Mahātissa Thera called Bahalamassutissa Thera was unhappy on the charge given by the Mahāvihāra to Mahātissa Thera by expelling him from the Mahāvihāra Saṅgha community. Therefore, Bahalamassutissa Thera left the Mahāvihāra with another five hundred monks and settled down at the Abhayagiri and never returned. The *Dīpavamsa* is completely silent on this issue and it does not mention that there arose a dissension among the *Saṅgha*. The *Nikāyasamgrahaya* explains that Bahalamassutissa Thera opposed this charge and urged the Mahāvihāra monks not to impose this kind of penalty against his teacher. He too was charged by the Mahāvihāra for siding with the ‘impure’ monk (*aśuddhānuvartī*).<sup>72</sup> This penalty imposed on Bahalamassutissa Thera seems to be unlawful according to *Vinaya* because it is a duty of a student (*saddhivihārika* or *antevāsika*) to ask the *Saṅgha* to reduce or withdraw the penalty imposed on his teacher (*upajjhāya* or *ācariya*) for his mistakes or misdeeds.

Therefore, by monastic law, Bahalamassutissa was obliged to protect his teacher’s rights. It is clearly proved that the Saṅgha had acted on this particular issue with bias, wrongly applying the code of discipline. A number of monks were unhappy with this unjustifiable decision and they all left Mahāvihāra with Bhalamassutissa Thera. They never returned to the

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<sup>72</sup> *Niks.*, p.13.

Mahāvihāra and they had no connection with it either.<sup>73</sup> This is the beginning of the Abhayagiri as an independent fraternity. Regarding the origin of the Abhayagiri, Xuan Zang explained that the *Saṅgha* was divided into two fraternities as result of a debate between two groups.<sup>74</sup> He did not mention what the debate was. Another important fact we find in the *Vaṃsatthappakāsini* is also related to the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. Before the commencement of the Abhayagiri, some monks rejected some teachings from *Khandhaka* and *Parivāra*, and after King Vaṭṭagāmiṇī build the Abhayagiri, they went and settled down there.<sup>75</sup> Mahāsaṅghikas did not accept the Parivāra Pāli. Abhayagirivāsīns also rejected it as a canonical text: “Rejecting the following texts, viz.: the *Parivāra* which is an abstract of the contents (of the *Vinaya*), the six sections of the *Abhidhamma*, the *Paṭisambhidā*, the *Niddesa*, and some portions of the *Jātaka*, they composed new ones”.<sup>76</sup> This story clearly states that even before the emergence of the Abhayagiri, some monks held different ideas regarding the authenticity of some texts. This view would be the consequences of the debate that they had at Maṅḍalārāma. Even this in early Buddhist history, there arose a schism in the *Saṅgha* due to disagreement of some points related to monastic discipline.

The Abhayagiri monks are also called ‘Dhammarucikās’. The *Nikāyasaṃgrahaya* states that some disciples of a monk called Dhammaruci from Pallārāma in South India came to Sri Lanka and took abode at the Abhayagiri. Abhayagiri monks accepted their views, and since then they were called Dhammarucikās.<sup>77</sup> But the oldest chronicles the *Dīpavaṃsa*, the *Mahāvāṃsa*, Pāli commentaries and the *Mahāvāṃsaṭṭikā* do not mention this story. Gunawardana quotes Bareau and shows that the word ‘*dhammaruci*’ could be an epithet that Abhayagiri used: “It is also possible, as Bareau pointed out, that *Dhammarucikā* was an epithet adopted by members of this *nikāya* since it means “those who take pleasure in the *dhamma*”<sup>78</sup> The

<sup>73</sup> *Mv.* 33, 96-98, pp.236-237.

<sup>74</sup> *Buddhist Records of Western World*, p.247.

<sup>75</sup> *Vsp.*, Vol.1, pp.175-176.

<sup>76</sup> *Dv.* 5.35, p.141.

*Parivāraṃ atthuddhāraṃ abhidhammappakaraṇaṃ  
paṭisambodhiṃ ca niddesaṃ ekadesaṃ ca jātaṃ  
ettakaṃ vissajjettvāna aññāni akariṃsu te.*

<sup>77</sup> *Niks.*, p.14.

<sup>78</sup> *RAP*, p.16. The Sinhala usage of this term is “Dahamrusi”.

Sinhala usage of this name ‘Dhammarucci’ is ‘Dahamrusi’,<sup>79</sup> which means those who delight in the Dharma. However we cannot see a close relation between the two words *dhammakathika* and *dhammarucika*. Therefore, we should not be side with Bareau without sufficient evidence and also there is no strong point to reject the comment of Dharmakīrti on the origin of the appalation ‘*Dhammaruci*’ as explained in the *Nikāyasamgrahaya*.

The Abhayagiri fraternity was always ready to welcome new ideas and change their monastic system in accordance with time and socio-religious needs, whereas the Mahāvihāra considered it their onerous duty to maintain the teaching as handed down by the tradition. The Abhayagiri introduced popular practices to Sri Lankan Buddhism considering their importance for the endurance of Buddhism. As radicals and innovatives they even changed the prevailing monastic system and brought major changes in its out-dated framework in order to reinforce a close relationship between monastic and lay society. Gunawardana says that the liberal attitude of the Abhayagiri monks towards the non-Theravāda schools attracted many intellectual followers of both laity and clergy.<sup>80</sup> As a result new concepts and practices were introduced to Sri Lankan Buddhism. Later on they gradually embraced even some Mahāyāna and Tantric practices and spread them throughout the Island. Some doctrinal and philosophical interpretations which they introduced are different from the orthodox ideology of the Mahāvihāra. As the result of the multifaceted activities of the Abhayagiri fraternity, its service expanded into various dimensions.<sup>81</sup> Venerable Walpola Rahula says that “it was not possible to suppress new developments, which were the natural outcome of various changes, social, political and economic”<sup>82</sup> This is indeed different from the ideological stance of the Mahāvihāra and completely changed the early Buddhist scenario of *Saṅgha* and monasticism as well. The Abhayagiri, being a great seat of learning, expanded their service even beyond the sea attracting foreign attention.

As long as their practices are concerned, the Abhayagiri and the Mahāvihāra developed as diametrically opposite fraternities. Therefore, each fraternity always tried to outdo the other. As a new institution, the

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<sup>79</sup> See *EZ*, Vol. I, p.221.

<sup>80</sup> *RAP*, p.16.

<sup>81</sup> For details, see chapter two of this book.

<sup>82</sup> *HBC*, p.85.

Abhayagiri attempted to be more progressive and also different from the Mahāvihāra. This difference encompassed doctrinal, philosophical and disciplinary deviations and practices as well. They had a continuous struggle for their prestige and supremacy. In the third chapter we will discuss the new trends that the Abhayagiri introduced to Sri Lankan Buddhism. As the initial step at this stage we are going to discuss the challenging atmosphere of the Abhayagiri against the Mahāvihāra.

If we look at the Abhayagiri from any perspective, we can see that its priority was about the matters related to social concerns of ordinary followers. Abhayagirivāsīns used every possible way and means to attract and serve people with regard to their religious and social consciousness. The main goal of Abhayagiri was attracting more adherents. Being a breakaway fraction, they had to face challenges from their opponents. They always attempted to cut a figure over and above the Mahāvihāravāsīns. The Abhayagiri started to build massive constructions, attracting more followers. In Sri Lanka, the *stūpa* gets the first place among most venerated religious items in a temple. The Ratnamāli *Stūpa* of Mahāvihāra was the largest among the *stūpas* in ancient Sri Lanka but the Abhayagiri wanted to show its supremacy by possessing the largest *stūpa*. The Abhayagiri *stūpa* is significant as it has a connection with the life of the Buddha. According to the record of Fa-Xian, the Abhayagiri *Stūpa* has been constructed encircling a rock on which the Buddha had left His footprints.<sup>83</sup> Fa-Xian may have learnt this story from Abhayagiri monks and recorded it. Recently a stone engraved with the Buddha's footprints has found at the Abhayagiri precinct. Kulatunga emphasises that these footprints are very significant as they were made as sunken footprints on a stone slab. It could be a model or a replica of the original footprints of the rock on which the Abhayagiri *Stūpa* has been constructed. However, by doing so the Abhayagirivāsīns wanted to show that definitely the Buddha stepped on the Abhayagiri rock.<sup>84</sup> Kulatunga further says that after making an excavation under the lower part of the *Stūpa* he understood that the Abhayagiri *stūpa* is located on bedrock.<sup>85</sup> The Abhayagiri monks wanted to gain a high reputation for their main religious symbol, the *stūpa* making it not only the biggest *stūpa* but also recording that this was at a place where the Buddha put his footprint.

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<sup>83</sup> ARBK, p.102.

<sup>84</sup> AP, p.7.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p.8.

Another important fact is that this particular *stūpa* was built over a former Jain temple. This incident is also very important regarding its reputation. People who suffered due to foreign invasion would have had special interest to venerate to this *stūpa*, treating it as a symbol of victory made in the name of the Buddha. Both Mahāthūpa and the Abhayagiri *stūpa* are commemorative symbols of victories of local heroes over foreign usurpers.<sup>86</sup> Mizuno sees the difference between the Mahāvihāra and the Abhayagiri as follows:

The Mahāvihāra sect was conservative and puritanic, while the Abhayagiri sect was progressive and liberal. The Mahāvihāra excelled in observing the Buddha's precepts and faithfully preserving the sacred texts together with their commentaries. The Abhayagiri sect evidently was more active in monastic duties. This has been confirmed not only by books dealing with the history of Ceylon, but also by the travel books of Chinese monks, like Fa-hsien [Fa-Xian] and Hsüan-tsang [Xuan-Zang]. The fact that the sacred books which were taken from Ceylon and translated into Chinese after the third century, e.g., the *Dhammapada*, the *Aṭṭakavagga* of the *Suttanipāta*, the *Vimuttimaggā*, &c., probably belonged to the Abhayagiri sect and not to the Mahāvihāra sect, proves the vast influence of the Abhayagirivāsīns. The sect seems to have flourished on the Indian mainland as well as in Ceylon.<sup>87</sup>

The Abhayagiri turned out to be the biggest monastery in the Island encircling 500- 600 acres. Pāli commentaries record that Abhayagiri is one of the biggest temples where there were 12,000 monks.<sup>88</sup> According to Fa-Xian, there were 5000 monks at Abhayagiri while 3,000 monks at Mahāvihāra. At the same time Cetiyaḡiri also belonged to the Abhayagiri and there were 2,000 monks there.<sup>89</sup> The *Mahāvamsa* states that as

<sup>86</sup> Both stūpas were built after great victories.

<sup>87</sup> "Abhidharma Literature", *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, by Kōgen Mizuno, Vol. I, ed. by Malalasekera, Government of Ceylon, 1961-1965, pp.64-80.

<sup>88</sup> *EHBC*, p.125. See also *Sumaṅgalavilāsīnī*, Vol. II, p.477. *Caturāsīti vihārasahassāni. Te sabbepi dvādasasahassabhikkhugaṇhanakā mahāvihārabhayagiricetiyaḡapabbatacittalapabbatamahāvihāra-sadisāva ahesuṃ.*

<sup>89</sup> *ARBK*, pp.102-107.

requisites were numerous there were lots of monks at the Abhayagiri.<sup>90</sup> If the monks were not endorsing the stance adopted by the Abhayagiri, by the 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E., how was it possible to have such big numbers of monks at the Abhayagiri? In the 3rd century C.E. Mahāvihāra monks left Anurādhapura and stayed for nine years in Malaya and Rohana.<sup>91</sup> The most significant thing that happened in this period was Abhayagiri monks took control of the Cetiyaḡiri, the birth place of Sri Lankan Buddhism. The two slab inscriptions of Mahinda IV clearly mention that *Bhikkhūs* from Cetiyaḡiri and Abhayagiri came together and held an assembly before the writing of these inscriptions and agreed to follow the particular customs and traditions that both monasteries had been following for a long time.<sup>92</sup> In a later period King Dhāthusena (463 – 479 C.E.) having renovated Cetiyaḡiri tried to give it back to the Mahāvihāra monks but due to strong objections of the Abhayagiri monks his plan did not work.<sup>93</sup> The Abhayagirivāsīns seemed to have been very popular among the people. That would be the reason for failure of the king's effort to return the Cetiyaḡiri to the Mahāvihāra. However, the *Mahāvamsa* records that the Dhammarucikās were able to entreat the king so that they could get it back.<sup>94</sup>

The most venerated Bo Tree in Sri Lanka is *Jayaśrīmahābodhi* of Mahāvihāra. But Abhayagiri did not want to possess only the second most venerated Bo Tree, and so wanted to show that they too have a Bo Tree that hails from the original one in Buddhagaya. Fa-Xian's records are very important regarding this matter. One king<sup>95</sup> sent messengers to India and brought a seed from Buddhagayā and planted it at Abhayagiri.<sup>96</sup> Fa-Xian beautifully explained about the Bo Tree of Abhayagiri. Of course, these records are very important to Sri Lanka since we do not find these historical events in Sri Lankan recorded chronicles or in any other literary works.

Further we see the competitive atmosphere between the Mahāvihāra and the Abhayagiri when we see the names of their *Uposathāgharas*. The Mahāvihāra named their *Uposathāghara* as Lohapāsāda (Copper Mansion)

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<sup>90</sup> *Mv.*33, 94, p.236.

<sup>91</sup> *Mv.*37, 6-7, p.267.

<sup>92</sup> *EZ.* Vol. I, p.91.

<sup>93</sup> *Mv.*38, 76-77, p.37.

<sup>94</sup> *Mv.*37, 76, p.37.

<sup>95</sup> Fa-Xian did not give the name of this king.

<sup>96</sup> *ARBK*, p.103.

whereas the Abhayagiri *Uposathāghara* was named as Ratnapāsāda (Jewelled Mansion). Most probably, Fa-Xian talks about this special building as the image house of Abhayagiri. In Thailand this custom is still being practised. The main image of the Buddha is found in the Uposathāghara.

Some other constructions found in Abhayagiri precincts are bigger in size than corresponding items at the Mahāvihāra. For instance, the biggest rice-bowl in the world (*bhattanāvā*) is found in Abhayagiri refectory. The capacity of Abhayagiri rice-bowl amounts to cover 5,000 ordinary bowls. Kulatunga says that the stone canoe found here is 19 meters long and has the capacity to hold food sufficient for over 5,000 monks.<sup>97</sup> The biggest monastery assembly hall (*sannipātasālā*) in Sri Lanka is also found there and it showed that there had lived a huge number of monks at the temple, for otherwise such a big assembly hall would not have been necessary. The biggest man-made pond named *Ātpokuna* (Elephant Pond) is also found at the Abhayagiri.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, the most beautiful pond was also in the precincts of the Abhayagiri: “The Twin Ponds surpass all other ponds in Anurādhapura in terms of the high level of technical and artistic workmanship and they are the most outstanding among ponds in Sri Lanka.”<sup>99</sup> The art and architecture we find in the Abhayagiri precincts show some unique characteristics of creativity. The oldest and the most beautiful Buddha images in Sri Lanka are also found at the Abhayagiri. Sitting Buddha images like the world famous *Samādhi* Buddha are exclusively exquisite masterpieces of the Abhayagiri. Another important thing is that the oldest Buddha images found in Sri Lanka are not from Mahāvihāra but from Abhayagiri.<sup>100</sup>

In the fifth century C.E., a very important historical event happened in Sri Lanka: the arrival of the Buddha’s Tooth Relic from Kāliṅga. Later on it became the national palladium and the most precious religious item in the Island. King Sirimeghavaṇṇa (298 – 326 C.E.) accepted the relic with veneration and built a special chamber to house it. Every year it was taken to the Abhayagiri Vihāra and exhibited for three months. This was

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<sup>97</sup> AVA, p.35.

<sup>98</sup> This pond is 160m long and 54m wide.

<sup>99</sup> AVA, p.44.

<sup>100</sup> See *Buddhist Sculptures of Sri Lanka*.

considered as a very highly sacred and solemn ceremony in which people of the country participated. The *Mahāvamsa* briefly explains the significance of this event and the many related festivals.<sup>101</sup> Fa-Xian's records are very important and it is the only source we find, which explains the *Daḷadāpūjā* performed in the fifth century in Sri Lanka. The Pāli commentaries maintain silence about the Tooth Relic. Venerable Walpola Rahula says: "The only explanation that can be offered for the absence of any reference in the Pāli Commentaries to this most important relic is that it was brought to Ceylon under the aegis of Mahāyānism, and that it became the property of the Abhayagiri monastery".<sup>102</sup>

The Buddha's Bowl Relic and Hair Relic were also under custody of the Abhayagiri. All these clearly prove that the Abhayagiri was more sensitive to the religious needs and aspirations of the people, and was more in line with religious thinking and behaviour of the people. In addition to the abovementioned instances, Sri Lankan literary works also seem to have started from the Abhayagiri. On the basis of some supportive evidence, we can argue that Abhayagiri started literary works before Mahāvihāra. According to evidence found in the *Vamsatthappakāsinī*, the composition of chronicles in Sri Lanka first began at the Abhayagiri.<sup>103</sup> Chandaratana also holds the same opinion, writing that "We cannot deny that the reputation of the Abhayagiri of composing a historical chronicle for the first time [in Sri Lanka]".<sup>104</sup>

The *Visuddhimagga*, perhaps the greatest work of Mahāvihāra, was composed after the *Vimuttimagga* of the Abhayagiri and the former was structured following structure of the latter. An important point we have to consider here is that the *Visuddhimagga* is not a work of Mahāvihāra monks, but by Buddhaghosa Thera who came from South India. The *Vimuttimagga* is attributed to Upatissa Thera who was a member of the Abhayagiri fraternity.<sup>105</sup> The oldest Sinhalese work which exists in Sri Lanka is the *Siyabaslakara*, a work on prosody. The 'Kalaṇamite Viyatun' (Paṇḍit Kalyāṇamitra), who is said to be the composer of the ancient works

<sup>101</sup> *Cūlavamsa* 37, 92-97, pp.7-8.

<sup>102</sup> *HBC*, p.128.

<sup>103</sup> "The Mahāvamsa – A Study of ancient historiography of Sri Lanka", by Sirima Kiribamune, *Senarath Paranavitana Commemoration Volume*, pp.125 – 136.

<sup>104</sup> Chandaratana, L., *Dhārā - Rhys Davids Memorial Volume*, 1965, p. 141.

<sup>105</sup> See, *A Comparative Study of Vimuttimagga and Visuddhimagga*, by K.V.Bapat, 1937.

which were utilised as primary sources in composing the *Siyabaslakara*, was a member of the Abhayagiri Monastery.<sup>106</sup> This is sound evidence to prove that the first Sri Lankan literary works came from the Abhayagiri fraternity. Another important fact is that the author of the *Siyabaslakara*, king Sena II (866 – 901 C.E.), was a great patron of the Abhayagiri. Gunawardana has pointed out that in the two inscriptions found in the precincts of the Abhayagiri, the Abhayagirivāsīns have been described as follows.

...These monks constantly strove to conquer passion and carefully observe the precepts, avoiding even the most trivial of transgression. They were ready to lay down their lives for the preservation of the Buddhist order (*sasun*). Among them were scholars of great wisdom, endowed with the virtues of temperance, contentment and religious austerity, who were always engaged in literary pursuits...<sup>107</sup>

Among the Abhayagirivāsīns there were some monks who practiced *dhūtāṅga* (reclusive practice).<sup>108</sup> The meditation centre of the Abhayagiri was named as ‘Sudassana Tapovana’. Originally the Sudassana Tapovana must have belonged to Mahāvihāra but later it had become a property of the Abhayagiri. Archeological excavations have brought to light 11 meditation caves in this particular place.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> *Siyabaslakaradīpanī*, p.1.

<sup>107</sup> *RAP*, p.17.

<sup>108</sup> See *Mv.* 51 & 53 Chapters.

<sup>109</sup> *AP*, p.3.

## The Development, Controversy and Unexpected Disappearance of the Abhayagiri

The popularity of the Abhayagiri fraternity in Anurādhapura period can be certified through its multitude of names which were assigned by both local and foreign sources to designate it. There is no other monastery in Sri Lanka and also perhaps in the Buddhist world, which is known by the multitude of names that the Abhayagiri monastery was known. It signifies that, even if it is mentioned by any name given below, it would have been popular enough in the world to identify it as the Abhayagiri Monastery. Not only in Sri Lanka, the Abhayagiri was well known in India, Kāṣmīr,<sup>110</sup> Kāliṅga,<sup>111</sup> Jāva,<sup>112</sup> China,<sup>113</sup> Tibet,<sup>114</sup> Myanmar<sup>115</sup> and the Buddhist world in ancient time. The different names are found in different sources such as inscriptions, literary works and foreign accounts.

The following names have been used to designate the Abhayagiri monastery: Abhayagiri Vihāra,<sup>116</sup> Abhayācala<sup>117</sup> Abagiri Maha Vihara,<sup>118</sup> Abāgiri Veherā,<sup>119</sup> Abahaigiri Veherā,<sup>120</sup> Abhāgiri Veher,<sup>121</sup> Abhaya Vihāra,<sup>122</sup> Abhayuttara Vihāra,<sup>123</sup> Abhayaturā Bagirivehera,<sup>124</sup> Abhayarāja Vihāra,<sup>125</sup> Bagirinaka,<sup>126</sup> Apayagara-vahara,<sup>127</sup> Apahaya-gara-vehera,<sup>128</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Prince Guṇavarman from Kāṣmīr came to Siṃhaladīpa Abhayagiri and then went to Jāvā and China. He became a one of the sūtra translators in China. See T 2059.

<sup>111</sup> The Tooth Relic was brought to Sri Lanka from Kāliṅga and the Abhayagiri became its custodian. Mv.37.92.

<sup>112</sup> Abhayagiri-vihāraḥ kārītaḥ Siṃhalānāṃ, See de Casparis, *Artibus Asia*, 24, 1961, pp.241-248.

<sup>113</sup> See records of Faxian, Xuang Xang, I-Jing, Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra.

<sup>114</sup> See *Eighty-Four Mahāsiddhas*, and *Tāranātha's Records*.

<sup>115</sup> See *Vajrabuddhiṭkā*.

<sup>116</sup> *Tadā dinesu dasasu atikkantesu sādaro;*

*abhayagiri vihāraṃ so patīṭṭhāpesi bhūpatī. Mahāvamsa* 33. 82.

In present time, the name “Abhayagiri Vihāra” is used around the world.

<sup>117</sup> Mv. 48.135. “Mahālekhaṅca kāresi - parivenāmahayācale”.

<sup>118</sup> EZ, Vol. I, p. 255, “Jetavana [Abhayagiri] Inscription of Maḷu-tisa”.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 218. “Slab-Inscription (No.I) of Mahinda IV”.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., P. 43. “Slab-Inscription of Kassapa V”.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 203. “Moragoḍa Pillar Inscription of King Kassapa IV”.

<sup>122</sup> Svp., p.160.

<sup>123</sup> Mv. and many other sources.

<sup>124</sup> EZ, Vol. II, p.18 “Nāgama Pillar-inscription”.

<sup>125</sup> It is interesting to know that the great Indian Tantric monk named Vajrabodhi who was a Tantric force in China came to Sri Lanka and lived at the Abhayagiri Vihāra. Vajrabodhi used the term “**Abhayarāja Vihāra**” (Chin. Wuweiwangsi), to designate the Abhayagiri Monastery, so it is clear that this name was popular during the 7<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> centuries. See “Tantrism in China”, Appendix G., *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 8, No. ¾, (March, 1945), pp. 241-332. And also see the “Introduction” of Study of

Apahagara-vehera,<sup>129</sup> Bagiri Vehera,<sup>130</sup> Bhayāgiriya,<sup>131</sup> Bahayigiri,<sup>132</sup> and Uttara Vihāra.<sup>133</sup>

The most significant religious structure of the Abhayagiri monastery, the Abhayagiri *Stūpa* is also named by several names such as Utaramahaceta,<sup>134</sup> Abhaya Gamiṇi Utara Mahaceta,<sup>135</sup> Abhayuttaracetiya,<sup>136</sup> Abhayuttara Mahātūpa,<sup>137</sup> Abahaigirisā,<sup>138</sup> Abayaturā Mahasā,<sup>139</sup> Abhayasundara Mahāthūpa,<sup>140</sup> Abhayagiri Caitya,<sup>141</sup> Abhayagiri Dāgāba,<sup>142</sup> and so on. The monks of this fraternity were also known by several names such as Abhayagirivāsino,<sup>143</sup> Abhayagiri vāsīn,<sup>144</sup> Abhayagiri vāsiyan,<sup>145</sup> Abhayagiri Bhikṣūn,<sup>146</sup> Dhammarucikā,<sup>147</sup> Dammaruci,<sup>148</sup> Dahamrusi,<sup>149</sup> Bagiriyan,<sup>150</sup> Uttaravihāravāsino.<sup>151</sup>

As discussed earlier even in the very beginning at the Abhayagiri monastery there would have been room enough to accommodate at least 500 monks. Three Mahātheras, Kupikkala Mahātissa, Hambugallaka Mahātissa and

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Mahāvairocana Sūtra, by Tajima, R., 1992, p.229. “He [Vajrabodhi] went to Ceylon and worshipped the tooth-relic of the Buddha at the monastery of **Abhayarāja** (present Anurādhapura)”.

<sup>126</sup> In some Sinhalese literary sources such as “Vihāra Asna” in *Pirivānāpotvahanse*.

<sup>127</sup> *EZ*, Vol. IV, pp. 139-140.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>130</sup> *Niks*.

<sup>131</sup> One of the Pāli stanzas, which is used to respect the Aṣṭamahāsthāna Stūpas in Sri Lanka employs this name “Bhayāgiri” to designate the Abhayagiri Vihāra and Stūpa.

<sup>132</sup> In Sinhalese inscriptions we find this name.

<sup>133</sup> *Svp.* and in many Sri Lankan literary works.

<sup>134</sup> *EZ*, Vol.I, p. 254 “Jetavana [Abhayagiri] Inscription of Maḷu-tisa”.

<sup>135</sup> In Sinhalese inscriptions we find this name.

<sup>136</sup> *Sahassavatthupakaraṇa*, p. 46. See also *Rasavāhinī*.

<sup>137</sup> *Mv*.35.119, p. 255.

<sup>138</sup> *EZ*., Vol.I, p.232.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 218. “Slab-Inscription (No.I) of Mahinda IV”.

<sup>140</sup> *Svp.*, p.46.

<sup>141</sup> Presently used by Sri Lankans.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>143</sup> In Pāli sub-commentaries (*ṭīkā*s).

<sup>144</sup> Sinhalese names to designate them.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>147</sup> *Mv.* and *Niks*.

<sup>148</sup> *Niks*.

<sup>149</sup> In Sinhalese inscriptions we find this name.

<sup>150</sup> *Niks*. This usage has been used in the sense of a derogatory term.

<sup>151</sup> In Pāli sub-commentaries (*ṭīkā*s).

Bahalamassu Tissa were the leading monks of the new sect. The five monasteries built by the ministers were also considered as monastic residences belonging to the Abhayagiri. The sources which provide us information on the development of this monastery can be divided into two categories, namely literary sources and archaeological findings such as inscriptions and artifacts.

After King Vaṭṭagāmiṇī, many kings, other members of the royalty, philanthropists as well as devotees have rendered their services for the development of the Abhayagiri monastery. In the history of Sri Lankan Buddhism both the Mahāvihāra and the Abhayagiri had faced certain unpleasant incidents during the reign of some particular rulers. Some inscriptions and archaeological artifacts found in the Abhayagiri precincts are very important as they provide evidence to prove some records occurring in the chronicles. Here our attempt is to examine and appraise the remarkable royal support given by certain kings and royal families for the development of the Abhayagiri.

For about a period of 50 years, after the death of king Vaṭṭagāmiṇī, no records are found about the Abhayagiri. King Subha (60- 66 C.E.) openly favoured the Abhayagiri. He added a *pariveṇa* to the monastery under his own name as Subharāja *Pariveṇa*. King Gajbāhu (113-135 C.E.) also was concerned about the Abhayagiri Stūpa and he enlarged it adding *ādimukhas* or entrance-gates as well. He had the Gāmiṇī tank made after which he offered it to the monastery.

The Abhayagiri fraternity had several special royal patrons in its history. Scholars have not paid their attention to the services of those kings. King Kaṇiṭṭhatissa's (165-193 C.E.)<sup>152</sup> service can be regarded as most important for the Abhayagiri after the service of king Vaṭṭagāmiṇī. He is the first king who tried to provide additional constructions for the Abhayagiri in the precincts of the Mahāvihāra. This is evidence to show that king Kaṇiṭṭhatissa was more favourable towards the Abhayagiri. Some of the information was not mentioned in the chronicles but we found them in an

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<sup>152</sup> *The Mahāvamsaṭīkā* explains: "In some sources it is wrongly interpreted that this king reigned 18 years (atthārasa samā). It is a mistake". Guiger puts 18 years without making any neglecting this specific note found in the *Mahāvamsaṭīkā*. But the Sinhalese translation of the *Mahāvamsa* correctly explains this king reigned for 28 years. – See the *Vsp.*, chapter 37 Sinhalese translation of the *Mahāvamsa*.

inscription discovered at the Abhayagiri.<sup>153</sup> This king added four “*āyikas*” for the *stūpa* and also being pleased with Bhikkhu Mahānāga of Bhūtārāma, built a splendid building at the Abhayagiri which is named the Ratanapāsāda (Gem Mansion). He built a wall around the Abhayagiri *Vihāra*, a *pariveṇa* named the Maṇisoma, and also erected a relic chamber. Disregarding the boundary of the Mahāvihāra, he built a range of buildings called the Kukkuṭagiri and provided necessary requisites for monks. Again shifting the boundary of the Mahāmeghavanārāma of the Mahāvihāra, he built a refectory in the Dakkhiṇa Vihāra and also moved the wall of the Mahāvihāra he made a highway to the Dakkhiṇa Vihāra. Thus king Kaṇiṭṭhatissa on three occasions had disrupted the Mahāvihāra boundary, showing his partiality to Abhayagiri. This could be due to the great service rendered by the Abhayagiri at that time enlightening people religiously and educationally. When the number of monks and devotees increased more space and facilities it needed.

King Vohārikatissa (215-237 C.E.), who was said to be knowledgeable in law and tradition, built a pavilion in the monastery and put a parasol to the Abhayagiri *Stūpa*. It is during his reign that we hear for the first time in the history about Vaitulyavāda (Mahāyāna Buddhism) in Sri Lanka but the king took steps to suppress this teaching. During the reign of king Goṭhābhaya (248 – 261 C.E.), Vaitulyavāda Buddhism came to be active in Sri Lanka. But king Goṭhābhaya suppressed it and exiled 60 monks to India branding them. But later on the King accepted another Vaitulyavāda monk named Saṅghamitta, who arrived in Sri Lanka from Kāvīrapaṭṭanam in South India and appointed him as a royal preceptor for his two sons. By this act he shows his favour towards Vaitulyavāda teaching, which he rejected at first. The *Mahāvamsa* accuses Saṅghamitta saying that he is the one, who came to destroy Thūpārāma.<sup>154</sup> Again both the *Mahāvamsa* and the *Nikāyasamgrahaya* extremely criticised him as lawless *bhikkhu* who was expert in black-magic and demonology.<sup>155</sup>

King Mahāsena (277-304 C.E.) was very antagonistic towards the Mahāvihāra. An Indian monk called Saṅghamitta was his preceptor and the chronicles say that the king ill-treated the Mahāvihāra. On Saṅghamitta’s

<sup>153</sup> See “Jetavanārāma Inscription of Malu- Tisa”, *EZ*, Vol. I, pp.252-229.

<sup>154</sup> *Mv.*37.27, p.269.

<sup>155</sup> *Mv.*36. 112-113, p.264, *Nks.*, p.16.

instruction the king proclaimed a royal decree prohibiting people to offer food for Mahāvihāra monks. If anyone were to violate this rule he had to give 100 gold coins as penalty. The Mahāvihāravāsīns suffered a lot, left Anurādhapura, and settled down in Malaya and Rohana. This was a very disastrous period for the Mahāvihāra. With the help of a minister called Soṇa, Saṅghamitta carried out his activities the power of the Abhayagiri order developed into its climax while the Mahāvihāra declined in its power.

Another important point is that during the reign of king Mahāsenā, the Mahāvihāra lost its power and the Mahāvihāravāsīns were even unable to continue with their literary activities. The best existing evidence for this is the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvāṃsa*. Both chronicles stop their narratives after the reign of king Mahāsenā. According to the *Mahāvāṃsa* and the *Vāṃsatthappakāsinī* it is clear that *Mahāvāṃsa* is a reproduction of the *Sīhalaṭṭhakathā Mahāvāṃsa*.<sup>156</sup> The *Dīpavaṃsa*'s explanation of king Mahāsenā is very different from the explanations of the *Mahāvāṃsa*. Therefore, the continuation of these *Sīhalaṭṭhakathā* suddenly has stopped as the Mahāvihāravāsīns deserted the Mahāvihāra. After nine years they returned to the Mahāvihāra but again they left Anurādhapura as king Mahāsenā tried to uproot Mahāvihāra boundaries in order to build a new monastery, which later came to be known as the Jetavanavihāra, the third *Bhikkhu* fraternity in Sri Lanka. Having built Jetavana monastery within the boundary of Mahāvihāra, the king granted it to the monk called Tissa. In fact, the Mahāvihāra severely criticized the Jetavana sect as a heretical school consisting of a group of sinful and lawless Bhikkhūs.<sup>157</sup> It seems that the Mahāvihāra was extremely unhappy about Jetavana due to two reasons. The first is that Sāgalikas or Jetavana bhikkhūs descended from the Abhayagiri fraternity; and the other reason is that the Jetavana Monastery was built in the precincts of Mahāvihāra, despite strong opposition by the latter. According to the *Nikāyasamgrahaya*, Tissa Thera<sup>158</sup> was criticized as

<sup>156</sup> The *Mahāvāṃsa* says that it is based on *Sīhalaṭṭhakathā*. Following this information the commentary to the *Mahāvāṃsa*, the *Vāṃsatthappakāsinī* is considered as a ṭīkā. However, if the *Mahāvāṃsa* is considered as a commentary, there is no contradiction with this usage “ṭīkā” or “sub-commentary”.

<sup>157</sup> *Mv.* 37.32, p.269.

<sup>158</sup> An inscription found in the Jetavana precincts says that “the Jetavana Royal monastery which is given to Tissa Mahāthera who is known as Sāgala is contented and moderate in living”. “*Sāguli māhimiyan naming pālāvū apis sotos tis maha teranata pihīti denā rajamaha veherehi*”. This epithet implies that he had a virtuous and disciplined character. Therefore this idea contradicts the idea of the *Nks*.

an evasive and deceitful monk.<sup>159</sup> Finally he was accused by the Mahāvihāra with the *Pārājikā* offence and disrobed, despite the king's unhappiness about the decision. Any monk that goes against the Mahāvihāra tradition has been labelled as a lawless and sinful character. However, an inscription found in the Jetavana monastery eulogizes the simple and excellent qualities that he possessed. After this incident during the King Mahāsena's reign, another important event happened, that is the arrival of the Buddha's Tooth Relic in Sri Lanka. The son of king Mahāsena, king Sirimeghavaṇṇa (298 – 326 C.E.), organised a grand religious ceremony at the Abhayagiri for the exhibition of the Tooth Relic. Had the reputation of the Abhayagiri declined in that period, such kind of ceremony, which was important for all islanders, would not taken place there. In addition, the king sent out a royal decree for future rulers to continue this grand ceremony annually at the Abhayagiri monastery. Even after the three fraternities were unified during the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the main chapter of the Abhayagiri, the Uttaramūla, was the custodian of the Tooth Relic.<sup>160</sup> Therefore, we can clearly see the power of the Abhayagiri until Sri Lankan *Bhikkhu* Order disappeared in the 16<sup>th</sup> century C.E.

King Mahānāma (412-434 C.E.) also showed a keen interest on the Abahaygiri. He built three *vihāras* and offered them to the Abhayagiri. By the urging of his queen he offered one monastery to the Mahāvihāra.<sup>161</sup> During this period Chinese traveller Fa-Xian came to Sri Lanka and lived two years in the Abhayagiri. The name “*Cha-cha Mo-ho-nan*” (*Rājā Mahānāma*) or “*T'sa-li Mo-ho-nan*” (*Kṣatrīya Mahānāma*) in Chinese sources has been identified as Rājā Mahānāma.<sup>162</sup> If Fa-Xian came to Sri Lanka solely for the purpose of taking *vinaya* books, no point for him to live two years there. Perhaps he studied at the Abhayagiri and paved the way for future relations too.

During the 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E., the greatest Pāli commentator, Buddhagosācariya came to Sri Lanka and settled down at the Mahāvihāra. But Mizuno says that Buddhaghosa was a monk, who ordained in the Abhayagiri fraternity.

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<sup>159</sup> *Nks.*, p.18.

<sup>160</sup> See *Daḷadāsirita*.

<sup>161</sup> *Cv.* 37, 212-214, p.22.

<sup>162</sup> *A History of Cultural Relations Between Sri Lanka and China*, p.40 and 119.

According to tradition, Buddhaghosa was born near Buddhagayā on the Indian mainland and was ordained at the Mahābodhi-vihāra there, as a member of the Abhayagiri sect. There he studied the Pāli *Tipiṭaka*, but, coming across many obscurities, went over to Ceylon for further study. He is said to have written *Atthasālinī*, the commentary on the *Dhammasaṅghaṇī*, in his Indian days. He evidently studied the *Vimuttimaggā*, which was a manual of the Abhayagirivihāra sect.<sup>163</sup>

Neither the *Buddhaghosuppattikathā* nor Pāli commentaries have any record related to Mizuno's idea. But Mizuno argues that the *Atthasālinī* is different from other commentaries of Buddhaghosa. He believes that the *Atthasālinī* was composed in India by Buddhaghosa before his arrival in Sri Lanka. The *Atthasālinī* which exists today may not be the original one but has been modified to some extent, but still it shows some signs of Abhayagiri influence. Some interpretations found in the *Atthasālinī* cannot be found in other commentaries.<sup>164</sup> Leggett also writes that having arrived in Sri Lanka Buddhaghosa first went to the Abhayagiri Vihāra rather than to the Mahāvihāra: "Crossing to the island, he was first at Abhayagiri; but finding only a few materials there for his study, he moved to Mahāvihāra".<sup>165</sup>

During the 5<sup>th</sup> century the Abhayagirivāsīns had much more power and also they were popular among the people. King Dhātusena, having done some renovations to Cetiyaḡiri monastery, decided to give it back to the Mahāvihāra, but the Dhammarucika *bhikkhūs* were against this idea and they were able keep Cetiyaḡiri under their possession. Actually this incident cannot be taken as simple an issue as Mahāvihāra tradition makes it appears to be. We can guess that due to the popularity of the Abhayagiri, even the

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<sup>163</sup> "Abhidharma Literature", *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, Vol. 1, ed. G.P. Malalasekera, Facsimile reprinted by Ministry of Buddhasāsana, Sri Lanka, 1997, p. 78. \*Regarding Mizuno's view on Buddhaghosa's ordination under the Abhayagiri School in Buddhagayā and his first arrival at the Abhayagiri monastery in Anurādhapura, I consulted Dr. Toshishi Endo. He wrote to me that this information is controversial. However, Mizuno's view is a crucial point. I am not sure anybody has commented on this. Even Malalasekera, the editor of *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, has not made any comment or note on this view.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid*, p.79.

<sup>165</sup> "Sri Lanka, Island of the Three Treasures" tr. from Japanese by Trevor Leggett, *The Middle Way*, Vol. 78:1, May 2003, p.15.

king could not take a decision against Dhammarucikās. King Silākāla (526 – 539 C.E.), who was also known as Aṃbasāmaṇera or Aṃbaheraṇa (Mango Novice), was a benefactor of the Abhayagiri. He was ordained in India and lived there several years. As he offered mangoes for *bhikkhūs* he got that nickname. On his arrival in Sri Lanka he brought the Hair Relic of the Buddha and gave it to king Moggallāna (497 – 515 C.E.) who appointed Silākāla as the guardian of the relic (*Asiggāhaka*). After Silākāla came to power he supported the Abhayagiri by increasing its revenue, granting a canal called ‘Rahera’ to the monastery.<sup>166</sup> King Mahānāga (561-654 C.E.) renovated the Abhayagiri *stūpa* and offered the ‘Village of Weavers’ for its maintenance.<sup>167</sup>

When we consider the art and architecture in the Abhayagiri, the Twin-Ponds gets a very special place among them. There are about 30 different kinds of ponds that have been found in the precincts of the Abhayagiri. This instance alone is enough to understand the prosperity of the Abhayagiri and its vast monastic community because the main purpose of these ponds is to utilize water for daily consumption and other needs such as bathing. However, the construction of the unique Twin-pond is ascribed to king Aggabodhi I (564-598 C.E.) who also made a golden umbrella (*chatra*) for the Abhayagiri *Stūpa*.<sup>168</sup> The next king Aggabodhi II (598-608 C.E.) granted Aṅgaṇasālaka village to the monastery and also he constructed a building in the Abhayagiri, naming it as Dāṭhaggabodhi by adding his name and the name of his queen.<sup>169</sup> This queen built another new vihāra named Kapālanāga and granted it to the Abhayagiri Saṅgha and also provided the four requisites for them.<sup>170</sup>

King Silāmeghavaṇṇa (614-623 C.E.) renovated ruined temples at the Abhayagiri and made offerings to the Silābuddha image and also he offered precious stones to decorate the image. A tank named Kolavāpi was offered for the maintenance of the image and he himself organised frequent-offering ceremonies at the Abhayagiri spending a large amount of money.<sup>171</sup> However, there had been living some miscreants among the saṅgha of the

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<sup>166</sup> Cv. 41, 31, p.54.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid, 95-96.

<sup>168</sup> Cv. 42, 28-31.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid. 63-65.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. 65-66.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. 44, 68-69.

Abhayagiri Sect. As the *Mahāvamsa* records a young *bhikkhu* called Bodhi from the Abhayagiri urged the king to inquire into the indiscipline of monks there. The king after inquiry expelled miscreants from the monastery. Those expelled ones got angry with the young monk and killed him secretly. The king became angry, caught the culprits and cut their hands and dumped them in the bathing tank. Some of them were expelled to India. After that the king wanted to purify the Order. He invited the Mahāvihāra monks to perform *Vinayakamma* together with all other *bhikkhūs* that belonged to different fraternities; but they refused to do so. Mahāvihāra's refusal demonstrates that how strong their rivalry. Then the king got angry and abused and reviled them with harsh words and went back without apologizing to the *bhikkhūs*. On his way back he suffered from a heart attack and died.<sup>172\*</sup>

King Dāthopātissa I (640-652 C.E.) also went against the Mahāvihāra and decided to do constructions for the Abhayagiri. The Mahāvihāravāsīns objected saying that the land belonged to them. But the king built a monastery there, named it Kapitul and offered it to the Dhammarucikas. As the result of being rude to the Mahāvihāra, according to the Vinaya, the monks imposed upon him “*pattanikkujjana kamma*” or the turning the alms-bowl upside down, showing refusal to accept his offerings.<sup>173</sup> Some kings treated the three fraternities equally. King Aggabodhi IV (673-689 C.E.) was such a king who offered ten thousand villages to all three fraternities and also made necessary arrangements for refectories.<sup>174</sup> It is interesting to mention that a Tamil servant of the king built a pavilion in the precincts of Kapārā *Pariveṇa* of the Abhayagiri fraternity.<sup>175</sup> This is a symbolic gesture to show their devotion to the Triple Gem and also to venerate them with outmost respect. Another residential hall named Sabbattuddesabhoga was constructed in the Abhayagiri by king Aggabodhi VI (741-781 C.E.)<sup>176</sup>

It is a custom of ancient Sri Lankan kings to dedicate the whole Island to the most sacred places and venerated items. Having done renovation of

<sup>172</sup> Cv.44, 74-82. \* He flew into a rage and offending all respect; he abused and reviled them with harsh words. Then he betook himself without demanding pardon of the bhikkhūs, to Dakkhinadesa. There he was attacked by a fell disease and died suddenly.

<sup>173</sup> Cv. 45, 29-32. This is a fever penalty the monks impose on the offending laity.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid. 45, 46, 16-17.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. 21-22.

<sup>176</sup> Cv. 48, 64-65.

Ratanapāsāda of the Abhayagiri, king Mahinda dedicated the whole Island to the sovereign Buddha image in it. Spending three hundred *kaḥāpaṇas* he built a *Pariveṇa* named Mahālekhā for the monastery. The superb golden statue of the Abhayagiri was embellished with precious jewels and also to it a diadem was offered.<sup>177</sup> The Abhayagiri reached apex of its development in every aspect by this time. Hundreds of various types of mansions, pavilions, buildings, images, decorated ponds and so many precious items were there and it became the richest monastery. The records of Fa-Xian who visited the Abhayagiri can be shown as reliable evidence of an eyewitness. He recounts that once a king entered the treasure house of the Abhayagiri and he felt an urge to take its wealth by force. After a few days the king went to the monastery, met *bhikkhūs*, and in the assembly he repented over his bad thoughts and apologised to the community. Further he urged monks to make regulations prohibiting entrance to the treasure house of the monastery to future kings and to monks who are not of forty years standing after their ordination.<sup>178</sup>

During the reign of king Sena I (846-866 C.E.) Pāṇḍya king Māra Śrī Vallabha and his army invaded Sri Lanka and there was a terrible war in the precincts of the Abhayagiri. They plundered all monasteries and looted all the precious items of monasteries in Anurādhapura. The Abhayagiri was badly destroyed and all precious and movable asserts including the golden Buddha image were taken to Pāṇḍya kingdom.<sup>179</sup> Kulatunga opines that Pāṇḍya invasion targeted the treasures of the Abhayagiri, but not the capture of the Island, as they returned to their own country after looting and plundering the monasteries.<sup>180</sup> Pāṇḍya invasion seriously damaged the Abhayagiri monastery. Archeological evidence shows that there had been such plundering.<sup>181</sup> Subsequently too many kings and queens added numerous buildings and granted abundant properties to the monastery. King Sena I and his queen rendered great service to Abhayagiri. The Vīrāṅkurārāma monastery was built there by the king and he helped Abhayagiri Mūlāyatanas or institutes such as Uttaramūla, Kapārāmūla and Mahanettapāmūla. Four residential halls named Mahindasena, Vajirasena,

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid. 135-139.

<sup>178</sup> *ARBK*, p.104.

<sup>179</sup> *Cv.* 50, 26-35.

<sup>180</sup> *SP*, Vol.II, p.31.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

Uttarasena and Rakkhasa were added his queen.<sup>182</sup> King Sena II (866-901 C.E.) became a hero after he invaded Pāṇḍya kingdom and brought back the looted properties to the Island and placed them where they were earlier. One of the sacred items that existed at the Abhayagiri monastery, mentioned often in the *Mahāvamsa*, is Silābuddha. Both king Sena II and his queen paid attention to this particular Buddha image. The king renovated the image house while the queen crowned it with a diadem.<sup>183</sup> King Kassapa IV (912-929 C.E.) having built a mansion, he offered it to the community together with a village to defray maintenance expenses.<sup>184</sup> Thereafter two newly built *Pariveṇas* named, Bhaṇḍikā and Silāmeghapabbata along with two villages were also offered by king Kassapa V (929-939 C.E.). Apart from helping the monastery, he set up a better administrative system and took steps to purify the *bhikkhu* community therein.<sup>185</sup>

For almost one thousand years the compound around the Abhayagiri *Stūpa* existed without being well paved. King Sena III (955-964 C.E.) had paid attention to this issue and spent forty thousand *kahāpaṇas* to spread stone slabs there.<sup>186</sup> It was not easy to maintain all these buildings without paying special attention to them. Therefore, king Mahinda IV (975-991 C.E.) made regulations as to how to utilise the income gained from monastery properties for the purpose of maintenance works. We find his royal decree regarding the maintenance in an inscription as follows: The income obtained from villages belonging to the monastery should be used for this purpose but not for supplying alms for *bhikkhūs*. If there is no surplus after spending for alms and raiment, then a half of the amount which was reserved for raiment should be utilised for maintenance works”. Further it says that the superintendents who failed in their duty should be sent away from the monastery.<sup>187</sup> This inscription indicates that by the time of 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. it was not easy to maintain the Abhayagiri monastery due to its massive size. Around twenty years after king Mahinda IV, the situation became bad. This was mainly due to the weakness of the king Sena IV and king Mahinda V (1001-1001 C.E.). Sri Lanka was captured by the Coḷas and the king moved to Rohaṇa. Monasteries were looted and monks faced

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<sup>182</sup> Cv. 50, 68-84.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid. 50, 77-87.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid. 52, 13-14.

<sup>185</sup> EZ, Vol. I, pp. 46-49.

<sup>186</sup> Cv. 53, 33-34.

<sup>187</sup> EZ, Vol. I, p.239.

hardships. The splendid golden Buddha images and other properties of many monasteries were looted and violently destroyed.<sup>188</sup> Many people suffered loss of life and property. The texts say that the Coḷas acted as blood-sucking yakṣas. Anurādhapura again became a deserted place. Monks left to Rohaṇa seeking refuge, but Coḷas invaded Rohaṇa too. Therefore they had to seek refuge in countries like South India and Rāmañña of Myanmar.<sup>189</sup> However, the majority did not go abroad. Quite a number of monks may have been killed and a large number disrobed.

It was king Vijayabāhu I (1056-1111 C.E.), who liberated the country from the dreadful clutches of the Coḷas. He shifted the capital to Pulatthinagara (Polonnaruva). We can think that there were two reasons for King Vijayabāhu to select Polonnaruva as the capital. One is for security: Anurādhapura was of easy access and therefore was open to attack by enemies. The other reason was that Anurādhapura was irreparably ruined.<sup>190</sup> After having freed the country, the king's attention was focussed on reinstating Buddhism. It is strange to know that in that period there were not at least four monks available to perform the higher ordination ceremony. Therefore the king had to bring monks from Rāmañña. He organised ordination ceremonies and provided all sorts of requisites for monks. Monasteries were built and donated to the monks of three fraternities. It is interesting to know that after building a splendid mansion with five stories, he granted it to *bhikkhūs* of all the three fraternities.<sup>191</sup> This incident clearly indicates that the monks suffered severely and were nearly extinguished, lived in the same building, forgetting the competitive atmosphere. In several times in history Mahāvihāravāsīns strongly refused to do any kind of ecclesiastical performances with the other two fraternities, the Abhayagiri and the Jetavana. Perhaps the hardships the monks of the three fraternities had to undergo made them realise the reality of life. This also made them to think out their differences and co-exist in the same premises. These developments may have paved the way for king Parakkamabāhu (1057-1059 C.E.) to forge a unity among the three fraternities.

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<sup>188</sup> Cv. 55, 18-22.

<sup>189</sup> *Śrīlankāve Itihāsayā* II, p.179.

<sup>190</sup> It is not easy to think that how monks deserted Anurādhapura, which was the heart of Sri Lankan Buddhist culture. Probably *bhikkhūs* would have been terrified by invaders and it was not easy for them to forget the incident they faced.

<sup>191</sup> Cv. 60, 11-14.

It was king Parakkamabāhu I, who was able to resuscitate the Sri Lankan Buddhist Order in the 12<sup>th</sup> century after freeing the country from invaders. Unquestionably he was a great supporter of Buddhism who did a yeoman service to foster Buddhism and the whole *Sāsana*. One may feel that the disappearance of the Abhayagiri is shrouded in mystery. Actually, if one examines closely the history in the 10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> centuries, matters will become clear. Due to social and political problems during the above mentioned period *Saṅgha* was completely deteriorating in all spheres spiritual, ethical and educational, in a manner unprecedented. The *Mahāvamsa* provides sufficient evidence to show that monks had nothing to do except the maintenance of wives and their children. *Bhikkhūs* belonging to the three fraternities had forgotten the aims and objectives of monastic life. Running families is the sole purpose of their monastic life.<sup>192\*</sup> Therefore, the *Bhikkhu* Order needed a complete change at that time. King Parakkamabāhu I decided to purify and unify the Order before it got completely extinguished. This unification was the main reason for the disappearance of the name Abhayagiri. The *Mahāvamsa* further says that the conciliation of monks of three fraternities was an exceedingly difficult task as ‘the hurling of the mount *Sineru*’.<sup>193</sup> The reason is that the various monks held different views and speculations. Because of this purification many monks had to disrobe as they were polluted in monastic practice. Some were not happy with sitting together or seeing sinful and lawless *bhikkhūs* perform ecclesiastical activities with them.<sup>194</sup> Anyhow the king was able to bring about a great reformation unifying and purifying them.

But even after the unification of the *Saṅgha* two fraternities of the Abhayagiri the Mahānettapāsāda<sup>195</sup> and the Uttaramūla successfully continued until the 16<sup>th</sup> century C.E. The greatest scholar of the Kotte Period, the Venerable Toṭagamuve Śrī Rāhula Thera, belonged to the Uttaramūla (the Northern Faculty) of the Abhayagiri tradition. He made a

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<sup>192</sup> Cv. 78, 2-5. \*Actually this is not strange, during the colonial period of Sri Lanka from this kind of excessive change was there in the Order and monks were even participated ceremonies as lay people. They were called by a nickname as ‘Gaṇinnāṇse’ which means according to Sri Lankan language duplicate śramaṇas.

<sup>193</sup> Cv. 78, 14 -15.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid. 78, 5.

<sup>195</sup> The Mahānettapāmula or Mahānettaprāsāda is one of the four mūlas or institutes of the Abhayagiri.

self-introduction saying that he is a “grand son” (*munuburu*) of the Uttaramūla of the Abhayagiri fraternity.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> See *Siri Rahal Pabaṇḍa*, “*Toḷagamu väsi sonduru – uturumula maha terindu munuburu*”, *Kāvyaśekharaya*, p.44. “*Nattā uttaramūlarāhulamahātherassa sikkhāgaru*”, *Buddhippasādinī*, p.522.

## **Chapter Two: New Doctrinal Interpretations of the Abhayagiri**

In this chapter I will discuss some of the new trends introduced by the Abhayagiri Fraternity to Sri Lankan Buddhist culture. Though there are considerable new doctrinal and philosophical standpoints that the Abhayagiri presented, our attention is mainly focused on the practical aspects rather than philosophical side. We try to investigate the significance of these new developments with reference to the practical side and their relations to historical, socio-religious, and political aspects.

The following are the new trends that we discuss in this chapter.

1. New Doctrinal Interpretations Related to Practices
2. Providing Access to Buddhist Thought of Other Schools
3. An Advanced Temple Administrative System
4. Specific Religious and Secular Practices
5. The Multifaceted Activities of the Abhayagiri Fraternity

These new trends played a significant role in moulding Sri Lankan Buddhism. In contrast to the Mahāvihāra, the Abhayagiri introduced various practices attracting numerous followers to their side. These new trends were so influential that in the course of time, the Mahāvihāra tradition also had to at least tacitly accept these practices.

Besides this main focus, this chapter will also be focused on specific doctrinal interpretations, which are mainly related to daily practices. No doubt, we can get a clear picture of the Mahāvihāra tradition by an examination of the vast Pāli literature, especially the commentaries and the sub-commentaries, which provide much information relating to their doctrines and doctrinal interpretations. Unfortunately, due to the inadequacy of primary sources, the doctrines and doctrinal interpretations of the Abhayagiri cannot be precisely identified. The Pāli commentaries occasionally present alternative views and interpretations prevalent in Sri Lanka, and these are cited as views and interpretations rejected by the orthodox Mahāvihāra. In the light of such references we can identify to some extent the doctrines and doctrinal interpretations of the Abhayagiri.

As some of these data have been collected by some scholars,<sup>1</sup> my special attention will be directed to the practical basis for those interpretations. Based on these interpretations we can determine the standpoint of the Abhayagiri tradition in regard to social consciousness. Gunawardana, in his ‘Robe and Plough’<sup>2</sup> has pointed out some doctrinal and philosophical differences between the Abhayagiri and the Mahāvihāra teachings found in the Pāli commentarial literature and the *Vimuttimaggā*. He has not given adequate attention to *Saddhammopāyana*, which belongs to the Abhayagiri Fraternity. The only difference that he has pointed as evidence from the *Saddhammopāyana* is the idea of the three states of deprivation (*tayo apāyā*). According to the Mahāvihāra four states of deprivation exist but for the Abhayagiri the number is three. We will discuss about this matter later. However, a close scrutiny shows that the *Saddhammopāyana* provides us with more important facts, which are quite helpful with reference to day-to-day practice. The new interpretations of the Abhayagiri appear to reflect their marked awareness of the social dimensions and, also besides their arguments appear to be more logical than those of the Mahāvihāra.

The information produced by the *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī* is very important with reference to the different standpoints of the two fraternities.

During the reign of king Mahāsenā (A.D. 274-301) [271-298 C.E.] the monks of the Abhayagiri monastery accused the residents of the Mahāvihāra of being “undisciplined,” citing their use of ivory fans, their practice of conferring the Ordination by messenger and their practice of reckoning the qualifying age for Ordination from the date of conception to back their charge.<sup>3</sup>

The *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī* records the Mahāvihāra view on those points mentioned above and says that the Mahāvihāra refutes Abhayagiri’s accusations. Mahāvihāra quotes some examples from the *Vinaya* and proves that the Mahāvihāra view is correct.<sup>4</sup> According to the *Cullavagga* the Buddha has given permission to use three types of fans, namely, barked

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<sup>1</sup> See *RAP*, Chapter I.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *RAP*, p.25.

<sup>4</sup> *Vin.*, Vol. I, pp. 93, 106, Vol. II, p. 130, Vol. II, 277.

(*vākamaya* - made of wooden barks), grassed (*usīramaya* - made of a certain fragrant grass called *usīra* – Bot. *Andropogon muricatum*) and peacock-tailed (*morapiñjamaya*).<sup>5</sup> But the Buddha has not specified what kind of handle is suitable for those fans. It is in the *Cullavagga* commentary we find that fans, which are fixed with a handle made of ivory (*dantamaya*), horn of rhinoceros (*visānamaya*) and wooden (*daṇḍaka*) are recommended as suitable for monks.<sup>6</sup> We can bring four possible reasons for Abhayagiri fraternity's refusal to use ivory fans. One is that it is not recommended by the Buddha but the commentators. The second is an ivory product is an expensive and luxury item mainly used by sophisticated people such as royalty, aristocratic and so on. The third reason is that elephant is recognised as one of the precious and useful animals in Sri Lanka. People kill tuskers in order to get their tusks. Probably, Abhayagirivāsīns would have thought that accepting ivory fans is an indirect threat to elephants.<sup>7</sup> Another reason is to comply with simplicity to avoid public criticism for being luxurious.

The next accusation of the Abhayagiri against the Mahāvihāra is practice of conferring the Fully Ordination (*Upasampadā*) by a messenger. The Buddha allowed conferring the higher ordination through a messenger but only for *bhikkhuṇīs*. The messenger also should be a *bhikkhuṇī* and also she should be a wise one too.<sup>8</sup> It is not clear from the argument in the *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī* refers only to *upasampadā* of *bhikkhuṇīs* or otherwise *ubhatośaṅgha* (both *bhikkhūs* and *bhikkhuṇīs*). If the disagreement is with reference to *ubhatośaṅgha*, then the Abhayagiri view is correct because the Buddha has given permission to confer *upasampadā* through a messenger only for *bhikkhuṇīs* and not for *bhikkhūs*.

The *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī* records another point in which Abhayagiri disagreed with the Mahāvihāra. That is also related to the method of higher ordination (*upasampadāvidhi*). Either a novice or any person, who wishes to enter the *sāsana* as a fully ordained monk, should be of twenty years of age or over. One of the questions that *Saṅgha* should ask from the *upasampadā* candidate is whether he is completed his 20<sup>th</sup> year

<sup>5</sup> *Vin.* II, p.130. “*Anujānāmi bhikkhave tisso vijjīniyo vākamayaṃ usīramayaṃ morapiñjamayaṃ tī*”.

<sup>6</sup> *Vin.* VI, p.1210. “*dantamayavisānamayadaṇḍakāpi vaṭṭati*”.

<sup>7</sup> In *Jātakas* we find some incidents people kill living elephants to get their tusks.

<sup>8</sup> *Vin.* II, p.277. “*Anujānāmi bhikkhave byattāya bhikkhuniyā paṭibālāya dūtena upasampādetuntī*”.

(*Paripuṇṇavāsativassosi?*).<sup>9</sup> *Bhikkhu* Kumārakassapa was a famous monk during the time of the Buddha.<sup>10</sup> He had received *upasampadā* before the completion of this specified age by reckoning the age from his conception.<sup>11</sup> Later on he had a doubt whether he really received the *upasampadā* or not because the Buddha had given permission to confer *upasampadā* only on those who had reached the age of 20 years or over.

He went to the Buddha and asked whether his *upasampadā* is acceptable or not. Referring to this particular case, the Buddha gave His permission to consider one's age from his conception if the candidate is nearly 20 years old. The Mahāvihāra accepted this rule but the Abhayagiri was reluctant to do so. Unfortunately, no details are given for their refusal. We do not know whether other Buddhist schools except Theravāda had followed that custom of reckoning the age from conception. But in Mahāyāna monasticism there is no such a practice. Mahāyāna monks follow the Vinaya of the Dharmagupta School and earlier the Chinese Mahāyāna followed the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāsivāda School. Therefore, it is clear these two schools, namely the Dharmaguptaka and the Mūlasarvāstivāda do not have such a practice. Based on that, we can infer that since the Abhayagiri had accepted the teachings of other Buddhist schools, they would have been influenced by those teachings and practices and consequently did not uphold the Mahāvihāra view.

There is another practice on which Abhayagirivāsīns differed from the Mahāvihāravāsīns. As the *Vamsatthappakāsinī* records, that practice is spitting on the ground after morning ablution. The available information shows that the Mahāvihāra did not see it as a wrong doing.<sup>12</sup> But the Abhayagiri says that it is not befitting for monks to spit on the ground after morning ablution. This also shows that the Abhayagirivāsīns were more concerned about good behaviour and more sensitive to matters of decorum.

<sup>9</sup> Vin. Vol. I, p.94.

<sup>10</sup> See *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, 3. p.806.

<sup>11</sup> Vin. Vol. I, p.93. *Tena kho pana samayena āyasmā kumārakassapo gabbhavīso upasampanno ahoṣi. Atha koho āyasmā kamārakassapassa etadahosi – “bhagavā paññattaṃ ‘na ūnavāsativasso puggalo upasampādetabbo’ti. Ahañcamhi gabbhavīso upasampanno. Upasampan no nu khomhi, nanu kho upasampanno”ti. Bhagavato etamattaṃ ārocesuṃ. Yaṃ, bhikkhave, mātukucchismiṃ paṭhamaṃ cittaṃ uppannaṃ paṭhamaṃ viññānaṃ pātubhūtaṃ, tadupādāya sāvassa jāti. Anujānāmi, bhikkhave, gabbhavīsaṃ upasampādetuntī.*

<sup>12</sup> See *Vsp.*, p.548.

Referring to the above discussed *Vinaya* points Gunawardana assumes that: “Presumably the Abhayagiri’s recession of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* differed on these points”.<sup>13</sup> The *Samantapāsādikā* provides details on another issue, which the Abhayagiri did not agree with the Mahāvihāra. This is pertaining to using an *ādhāraka* (holder) while accepting offerings. The story goes as follows: People offered milk-rice (*pāyāsam*) to monks filling their bowls. Due to hotness, it was difficult to carry the bowls with bare-hands. The monks began to carry the bowls, holding them by their top edge. Yet it was not possible to do so due to its heat, so they were allowed to use a holder.<sup>14</sup> Further explaining this, commentaries give more details as to how it can be used on different occasions. If a monk falls asleep in the refectory without knowing what to accept and what to, the offering he receives is not appropriate. If a monk lays down, having thought about [about receiving], still he is suitable for receiving. If a monk sleeps without touching the stand with his hand but touching it by leg, his receiving is acceptable. But if a monk sleeps without touching the holder with leg, he is not suitable to receive.<sup>15</sup> When we examine these explanations, what is clear is that the Abhayagiri was not against the use of the stand per se, but rather did not see eye to eye with the commentary on how to use it. We shall examine the following quotation, which explains the Mahāvihāra’s rejection of the accusation brought by the Abhayagiri against them.

*Keci evaṃ ādhārekena paṭiggahaṇaṃ kāyapaṭibaddha-paṭibaddhena paṭiggahaṇaṃ nāma hoti, tasmā na vaṭṭatīti vadanti. Taṃ tesam vacanamattameva. Atthato pana sabbampetaṃ kāyapaṭibaddhameva hoti. Kāyasamsagge-pi cesa nayo dassitova. Yampi bhikkhussa dīyyamānaṃ patati, taṃ pi sāmaṃ gahetvā paribhuñjituṃ vaṭṭati. Tatr’ īdaṃ suttaṃ, anujānāmi bhikkhave yaṃ dīyyamānaṃ patati taṃ sāmaṃ gahetvāparibhiñjituṃ.*<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> RAP, p.25.

<sup>14</sup> *Pāyāsassa pūretvā pattaṃ denti, uṇhattā gāhetuṃ na sakkoti, mukhavaṭṭiyāpi gāhetuṃ vaṭṭati. Sace tathāpi na sakkoti, ādhārakena gaṇhitabbo. Samantapāsādikā, Vol. IV, p.846.*

<sup>15</sup> *Samantapāsādikā, Vol. IV, p. 846. Āsanasālāya pattaṃ gahetvā nisinnō bhikkhu niddā okkanto hoti, neva āhariyamānaṃ na diyyanānaṃ jānāti, appaṭiggahitaṃ hoti. Sace pana ābhogaṃ katvā nisinnō hoti, vaṭṭati. Sace so hatthena ādhārakaṃ muñcivā pādena pelletvā niddāyati, vaṭṭati yeva. Pādena ādhārakaṃ akkamitvā paṭiggahaṇantassa pana jāgarantassāpi anādarapaṭiggahaṇaṃ hoti, tasmā na kātabbā.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 846-847.

From this it is clear that the Abhayagiri was against these ambiguous comments in the *Samantapāsādikā* on how to use a holder when accepting offerings. Accepting things while sleeping and also touching the stand with the leg and so on seem to be over- simplifications adopted by the Mahāvihāra which Abhayagiri did not accept. Besides, such kind of practices really do not appear to be compatible with the spirit of some of the objectives of laying down the *Vinaya* rules, such as conversion of the new adherents and the enhancement of the faith of those already converted.<sup>17</sup> Gunawardana says: “According to the *Samantapāsādikā* and the *Sāratthadīpanī*, the monks of the Abhayagiri monastery believed that the use of a stand [*ādhāraka*] limited physical participation in the act of acceptance and, therefore, considered this practice inappropriate.”<sup>18</sup> However, there are a few unclear points in this. We do not know what kind of holder is meant and how it is connected with the bowl, whether it is used as a separate gadget from the bowl. On the other hand, if it is not connected with the bowl, a question arises whether this holder was sufficient by itself to accept offering, without the bowl? Neither in the scriptures nor in the commentaries is there any description about this so called *ādhāraka*.<sup>19</sup>

In relation to the practice of *dhutaṅgas* (ascetic practices), the Abhayagiri had a different view from the Mahāvihāra. *Dhutaṅgas* are: *kusalatthikavinimuttam*, (out of Profitable Triad), *nāmapaññatti* (merely nominal), and *asantam* (do not exist as ultimate sense).<sup>20</sup> The *Visuddhimagga* and its *Sannaya* provide details on this issue. But the Abhayagiri view on this particular issue cannot be found in the *Vimuttimagga*. Perhaps, this issue may have come up after the composition of the *Vimuttimagga* but before the composition of *Visuddhimagga*. The *Visuddhimagga* of the Mahāvihāra has explained 13 *dhutaṅgas* and the *Vimuttimagga* of the Abhayagiri fraternity also accepts these *dhutaṅgas* without any differentiation.<sup>21</sup> The evidence which we have from

<sup>17</sup> These are two points among the points of the objectives of promulgating *Vinaya* rules. See *Vinaya Piṭaka* Vol. I, p.21. “*Appasannānaṃ vā pasādāya pasannānaṃ vā bhīyobhāvāya*”.

<sup>18</sup> *RAP*, p.25.

<sup>19</sup> Thai saṅgha uses a piece of cloth as an *ādhāraka* when they receive offerings from upāsikās (female devotees).

<sup>20</sup> *RAP*, p.27.

<sup>21</sup> i. Using dirt-rags for robes (*Pamsakūlika-aṅga*), ii. Three robes (*Tecīravarika-aṅga*), iii. Begged food (*Pinḍapātika-aṅga*), iv. Regular alms round (*Sapadānacārika-aṅga*), v. One seating (*Ekāsanika-aṅga*),

Mahāvihāra sources does not provide evidence as to on what basis the Abhayagiri rejected the profitable trial of *dhutaṅgas*. For them, *dhutaṅgas* are merely symbols of simplicity of life style but not an effective means of getting rid of defilements. In the miscellaneous teachings of the *dhutaṅgas* the *Vimuttimaggā* further explains the salient characteristic, function and manifestation and also the initial, medial and final stages of the austerities.

Q. What is the salient characteristic, function and manifestation of the austerities?

A. Paucity of wishes is the salient characteristic. Contentment is the function. Non-doubting is the manifestation. And again non-attachment is the salient characteristic. Moderation is the function. Non-retrogression is the manifestation. What are the initial, medial and final stages of austerities? The undertaking taking to observe is the initial stage. Practice is medial stage and rejoicing is the final stage.<sup>22</sup>

The above discussion does not show any disagreement with relation to profitable triads. Probably, the Abhayagiri had discussed this issue in another work belonging to them but not extant now. The Abhayagirivāsīns were criticised in the *Visuddhimaggā* by Buddhaghosa for rejecting *dhutaṅgas* as unprofitable triads and he further says that the Abhayagiri view cannot be accepted.

And those who hold that an ascetic practice is outside the Profitable Triad have no ascetic practice as regards meaning. Owing to the shaking off of what could what is non-existent be called an ascetic practice? Also there are the words ‘Proceeded to undertake the ascetic qualities’ and it follows that those words are contradicted. So that should not be accepted.<sup>23</sup>

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vi. Measured food (*Pattapiṇḍika-aṅga*), vii. No food after time (*Khalupacchābhatika-aṅga*), viii. Dwelling in a peaceful place (*Āraññika-aṅga*), ix. Dwelling under a tree (*Rukkhāmūlika-aṅga*), x. Dwelling in a dewy place (*Abbhokāsika-aṅga*), xi. Dwelling among the graves (*Sosānika-aṅga*), xii. Any chance upon place (*Yathāsanthatika-aṅga*), xi. Always sitting and not lying down (*Nesajjika-aṅga*). See *The Path of Freedom*, p.27, *The Path of Purification*, p.59.

<sup>21</sup> *The Path of Freedom*, p.38.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80. See also *Visuddhimaggo Dhutaṅganiddeso*, p. 60. “*Yesampi kusalattikavinimuttaṃ dhutaṅgaṃ, tesam atthato dhutaṅgameva natthi. Asantaṃ kassa dhutaṅgaṃ nāma bhavissati.*”

In the *Visuddhimagga* Buddhaghosa does not directly name the opponents. He used the word “*yesam*”, which means ‘they’, that could be referred to Abhayagirivāsins. The *Visuddhimārga Sannaya* composed by King Kalikālasāhityasarvajñapaṇḍita Parākramabāhu identifies “*yesam*” as Abhayagirivāsins.

To whom (for Abhayagiri dwellers) the [*dhutaṅgas* are] out of profitable triads (Abhayagiri dwellers say that *dhutaṅgas* are *prajñapti* – concepts), for those Abhayagiri dwellers, *duthaṅgas* do not exist since they are not ultimate. [They argue] why it is called *duthaṅga* and what kind of defilement is eradicated by it? For those Abhayagiri dwellers, even the statement, which is called “observing *dhutaṅga*” itself appears as incorrect.<sup>24</sup>

The *Visuddhimagga-mahāṭikā* also accepts “*yesam*” as referring Abhayagirivāsins. “*yesanti abhayagirivāsike sandhāyāha, te hi dhutaṅgam nāma paññattīti vadanti*”.<sup>25</sup>

The *Visuddhimagga* unlike the *Vimuttimaggā* devotes a long section to explain *dhutaṅgas* in details. Though the practice of *dhutaṅgas* has been praised by the Buddha He did not make their observance compulsory for His disciples. Monks like Devadatta insisted on making *dhutaṅgas* like dwelling under trees and wearing rags as compulsory practices. But the Buddha refused such requests. Then what made Abhayagiri reject the profitable triads of *dhutaṅgas*? Especially, a *dhutaṅga* such as *nessajjiya-aṅga* or not-sitting practice is a kind of severe austerity. What kind of fruit can one get practising it? A monk name Cakkhupāla went blind after practising “not-lying down *dhutaṅga*”,<sup>26</sup> so, his *dhutaṅga* practice brought

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*Dhutaṅge samādāya vattatīti vacanavirodhapi ca nesaṃ āpajjati, tasmā taṃ na gahetabban’ti ayam tāva kasalatthiko vaṇṇanā*”.

<sup>24</sup> *Visuddhimārga Sannaya*, p.289. “*yam (abhayagiri vāsi) keneknāta kuśalatrika vinirmukta veda (abhayagirivāsīhu vanāhi dhutāṅga nam prajñaptiyī yet) e abhayagiri vāssanata paramārthayen avidyāmāna bāvin dhutāṅga nam nāt*”. *Kavara kelesakhu nasana bāvin dhutāna nam veda; dhugunayan samādanva vesei yana me vacanayata virodhayada; e abhayagirivāssanta pāmine*”.

<sup>25</sup> See *Visuddhamaggamahāṭikā, Dhutaṅgapakiṇṇakathāvaṇṇanā, Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyanā CD ROM*, version 3, p.144.

<sup>26</sup> See *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*, PTS, Vol. I, Part I, p.10.

him an unprofitable result. Besides, to some ascetic practices hindered the monks attempt to follow the advice of the Buddha: “Oh, monks go forth for the benefit of the many, happiness of the many ...”<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, dhutaṅga practice is somewhat similar to the observance of severe austerities or *attakhilamathānuyoga* (self-mortification). The Buddha in His first discourse itself described it as an extreme and hence to be avoided by monks who seek the truth. When considered in this manner the logic behind Abhayagiri view regarding the “profitable triads” of the practice of *dhutaṅgas* can be understood.

Most of the contentious issues between the Abhayagiri and the Mahāvihāra seem to be on trivial matters. However, the way the Abhayagirivāsīns present their arguments seemed to be more critical and reasonable than that of Mahāvihāra. In the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* there is reference to an issue which brought them to debate. According to the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*, once King Ajātasattu went to see the Buddha in the night and failed to recognise Him at once and asked Jīvaka where the Buddha was. The *Samantapāsādikā* records the views of both fraternities. The Abhayagiri presents their view as follows: King Ajātasattu had seen the Buddha many years ago when he came to see Him with his father while he was a young prince. Since then he did not see him and due to this long time gap King Ajātasattu was unable to recognise the Buddha. The Mahāvihāra had different view which says: He must have recognised the Buddha easily because the Buddha possessed 32 great marks and also He was radiating a six-coloured aura around His head. King Ajātasattu just pretended that he did not see the Buddha as he wanted to show his pride as he is a Khattiya and it is a characteristic of a Khattiyas to be proud of themselves.<sup>28</sup> The Abhayagiri explanation sounds more sane and acceptable than the view of the Mahāvihāra. It is quite possible for someone to recognise a person if he had not seen him for a long time. We find some stories in the *Suttapīṭaka* showing how some people failed to recognise the Buddha when they met Him.<sup>29</sup> According to the Sutta, King Ajātasattu had great enthusiasm to meet the Buddha and he went to see Him in order to discuss some Dhamma,

<sup>27</sup> Vin. Vol. I. p.20. “*Caratha, bhikkhave, cārikaṃ bahujanahitāya bahujanasukhā lokānukampāya atthāya hitāya sukhāya devamanussānaṃ*”.

<sup>28</sup> See *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* I, p.51.

<sup>29</sup> *M.3*, p.238 and *M.1*, p.301.

so, it is hard to accept that the king pretended that he did not see the Buddha.

The *Samantapāsādikā* records a story about a dispute between Mahāvihāra and the Abhayagiri, which occurred during the time of King Bhātikābhaya or Bhātikatissa (141-165 C.E.) due to a disagreement about a statement in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. This incident shows that though these two schools lived separately as rivals they had always been concerned about the teachings of one another. As explained in the *Samantapāsādikā*, a *bhikkhuṇī* named Mettiyā made a false accusation against a bhikkhu named Dabbamallaputta of raping her. The Buddha summoned bhikkhu Dabbamallaputta and asked whether he committed such an offence. *Bhikkhu* Dabbamallaputta denied the commission of such an offence. Then the Buddha asked monks to excommunicate *bhikkhuṇī* Mettiyā from the *Sāsana*. Regarding this expulsion the Abhayagiri presented their view saying that the Buddha asked to expel her from the *Sāsana* after she accepted her guilt of wrong accusation (*sakāya paṭiññāya nāsitā*). But the Mahāvihāra version says that she was expelled without her admission of making a false accusation. However, this dispute between these two fraternities was forwarded to the Royal Court. The king ordered a Brahmin minister named Dīghakārāyana, who was well versed in linguistics, to solve the problem.

It is very strange to see such an issue being forwarded to the Royal Court for settlement, especially as this related to Vinaya rules and not a dispute that arose due to an external matter. How can a layman resolve such a problem while there are many Vinayadhara Mahātheras within two fraternities? Some think that the liturgical language of the Abhayagiri would have been Sanskrit but not Pāli.<sup>30</sup> The King wanted to get the help of a Brahmin minister Dīghakārāyana who was well versed in linguistics. However, the minister gave his verdict in favour of the Mahāvihāra.<sup>31</sup> We do not know the reason behind his decision but we can infer that he had considered the ancient version of the Mahāvihāra to be more authoritative than the recension of the Abhayagiri. The *Vajirabuddhiṭkā* explains why the Abhayagiri held such a view: the expulsion of Mettiyā implies that she

<sup>30</sup> Based on the *Abhayagiri Sanskrit Inscription of King Mahinda IV*, Ven. Piṭipana Sumaṅgala thinks that the Abhayagiri used Sanskrit as their liturgical language. Otherwise, there is not necessary to state rules and regulations of the Abhayagiri in Sanskrit. See *Abhayagiri Saṃskṛtiya*, Dhammika, p.83.

<sup>31</sup> *Samantapāsādikā*, Vol. III, p.582.

had committed a *Pārājikā* offence, just as for a *dukkata* offence expulsion is not meted out. Therefore she accepted her guilt as wrong accusation and left the Order with her consent.<sup>32</sup> Regarding this matter, it is clear that the Abhayagiri view is more logical, democratic and humanitarian than the view of the Mahāvihāra. The Mahāvihāra view implies that the Buddha did not consider about *Bhikkhuṇī* Mettiyā but had showed favour towards Bhikkhu Dabbamalla. But there is no room for such a doubt in the view of the Abhayagiri.

The *Vimativinodanī* and the *Sāratthappakāsinī* record another disagreement between the two fraternities. That is also regarding a *Vinaya* issue. Abhayagiri says that if a monk were to drink alcohol without knowing, that cannot be taken as an immoral action and in doing he did not violate the rule prohibiting drinking alcohol. But Mahāvihāra says that this idea is wrong and even if a monk were to take liquor without knowing, still he commits an offence and if it were consumed even by a novice it is an immoral act for him. The Abhayagiri clearly says if they were to drink alcohol without knowing, neither a monk nor a novice is guilty of violating any rule and there is no any immoral conduct in that action.<sup>33</sup> There is an ambiguity with regard to the Mahāvihāra view. How could it be possible that the same offence brings different results for monk and a novice? Therefore, the Abhayagiri view is more logical and compatible with the teaching of kamma in Buddhism. According to Buddhism only a volitional action can be taken as a kamma not the actions without volition.<sup>34</sup> Gunawardana shows that this Abhayagiri view has been accepted by some teachers of the Mahāvihāra, but later on another monk has criticised it as a misconception.<sup>35</sup>

Apart from *Vinaya* teaching some other new trends also have presented by the Abhayagiri fraternity. A well-known deviation by the Abhayagiri is seen in their accepting three *apāyas* instead of conventional acceptance of four states of deprivation or *apāyas* (*duggati* or *durgati*). The

<sup>32</sup> *Vajirabuddhiṭīkā*, p.196.

<sup>33</sup> *Vimativinodanī*, pp. 94-100.

<sup>34</sup> A.3, p.415., “*Cetanāhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi , cetayivā kammaṃ karoti, kāyena, vācāya, manasā*”. (Monks, it is volitional action that I call kamma. Having thought, one acts; physically, verbally and mentally.)

<sup>35</sup> See *RAP*, p.25.

*Saddhammopānaya* of the Abhayagiri explains only three apāyas.<sup>36</sup> The Mahāvihāra accepted four apāyas namely, the *Naraka* (hell), the *Tiracchānayani* (animal realm), the *Pettivisaya* (the world of hungry ghosts) and the *Asurayoni* (the world of Asura).<sup>37</sup> But the Abhayagiri accepts only the first three apāyas without the fourth one, the *Asura*. According to the information found in the literary sources the *Asura* world looks more like a heaven than a durgati. Even the *Pūjāviliya*, a Sinhala text of repute, accepts Asura loka as a divine world and *Asuras* do not suffer as other beings in other durgatīs such as *Preta loka*. Explaining the story of ascetic Sumedha, the author of *Pūjāviliya* describes that ascetic Sumedha could bring divine flowers from the *Asura* world in order to spread out on the muddy spot so that the Dīpaṅkara Buddha would walk on that spot without getting smeared by mud.<sup>38</sup> The *Asura* world is also named as ‘*Asurabhavana*’<sup>39</sup> which means the Palace of Asuras or divine abode. Another important thing is, in Pāli suttas we find some *Asuras* come to the Buddha. Rāhu Asurindo and Vepacitti Asurindo are popular names occurring in Pāli Buddhist suttas. Their names imply that they are kings or leaders of *Asuras*. However, it is clear that *Asura* world is not a state of suffering such as *Niraya* and *Petti* (*Peta* or *Preta*) worlds.

The Abhayagiri view of the *Tayo Apāyā*, has been accepted by at least one of the Mahāvihāra commentaries. The *Vimānavatthu Aṭṭhakathā* composed by Dhammapālācariya of Badaratitthavihāra in South India has been influenced by the Abhayagiri teachings. Dhammapāla accepts *aṭṭhakkhaṇas* of the Abhayagiri tradition<sup>40</sup> but not the Mahāvihāra’s.<sup>41</sup> The *aṭṭhakkhaṇas* found in the Dhammapāla’s *Vimānavatthu Aṭṭhakathā* are exactly the same as the Abhayagiri *aṭṭhakkhaṇas* found in the *Saddhammopāyana*.<sup>42</sup> Some

<sup>36</sup> *Sdmp.*, 5, p.80. “*Tayo apāyā āruppā saññaṃ paccantimampi ca - pañcindriyāni vekallaṃ micchādīṭṭhī ca dāruṇā*”.

<sup>37</sup> *Sumaṅgalavilāsini* 2, p.473., *Visuddhimagga*, pp. 319 -320., *The Path of Purification*, pp.468-469.

<sup>38</sup> See *Pjv.*, p.23.

<sup>39</sup> See *Anussatiniddesa* in *Visuddhimagga*.

<sup>40</sup> “*Tattha aṭṭhakkhaṇā nāma tayo apāyā arūpāsāññasattā paccantadeso indriyānaṃ vekallaṃ niyatamicchādīṭṭhikatā apātubhāvo buddhassātīti, Vimānavatthu aṭṭhakathā*, p.193.

<sup>41</sup> Mahāvihāra’s *aṭṭhakkhaṇas* are: “*ayaṅca puggalo nirayaṃ upapanno hoti ... tiracchānayoṇiṃ ... pettivisayaṃ ... aññataraṃ dīghāyukaṃ devanikāyaṃ ... paccantimesu janapadesu paccājāto ... micchādīṭṭhiko viparītadassano ... duppañño jāto elamugo appaṭibalo subhāsītadubbhāsītassa atthamaññātuṃ ... tathāgato ca loka anuppanno hoti arahaṃ sammāsambuddho [abuddhuppādo]*”, *Aṅguttaranikāya* IV, p.225.

<sup>42</sup> Abhayagiri *aṭṭhakkhaṇas* are: “*Tayo apāyā, āruppā sañña, paccantadesa, indriyānaṃ vekallaṃ, micchādīṭṭhī, apātubhāvo buddhassa*”, *Sdmp.*, p.80.

Pāli commentaries written in South India seemed to have been influenced also by non-Theravāda schools of Buddhism.<sup>43</sup>

Another divergent teaching between Mahāvihāra and the Abhayagiri is on lokas. The two texts belonging to the Abhayagiri Fraternity, the *Vimuttimaggā* and the *Saddhammopāyana* share the same view on some issues, whereas Mahāvihāra view is different from them. The *Visuddhimaggā*<sup>44</sup> accepts three worlds, namely, *Sattaloka*, *Samkhāraloka* and *Avakāsaloka* but both the *Saddhammopāyana*<sup>45</sup> and the *Vimuttimaggā*<sup>46</sup> posit only about two worlds, namely *Sattaloka* and *Samkhāraloka* but do not mention about *Avakāsaloka*. Again, explaining contemplation of the body (*kāyagatāsatiyaṃ*), the *Visuddhimaggā* of the Mahāvihāra tradition explains 32 repulsive parts of the body but the *Vimuttimaggā*<sup>47</sup> and the *Saddhammopāyana*<sup>48</sup> explain 80,000 worms in the human body apart from the 32 repulsive parts. The *Vimuttimaggā* just mentions the 32 parts of the body devoting just half of a page but gives details about 80,000 worms (*kimi*). On the other hand, the *Visuddhimaggā* devotes a long section to discuss the 32 body parts one by one and how those parts can be taken as meditative objects and so on, but no mention is made about the 80,000 worms in the body. This is a considerable difference found between the *Visuddhimaggā* and the *Vimuttimaggā* explanations.

There are 40 meditative objects<sup>49</sup> given in the *Visuddhimaggā* but the *Vimuttimaggā* prescribes only 38 such objects.<sup>50</sup> The two objects that not included by Abhayagiri are *āloka* and *paricchinnākāsa*. However, these two

<sup>43</sup> See the note on “Bodhisatta Mahāsatta” in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter of this book.

<sup>44</sup> “Moreover, there are three worlds: the world of formations, the world of beings and the world of location”. *The Path of Purification*, p.217. “*Tayo lokā saṅkhāraloko, sattaloko, okāsaloko’iti*”, p.151.

<sup>45</sup> “*Tato tā sattasamkhāre asiliṭṭhassa bhāvato ...*” *Sdmp.* 489, p.151, See also *Sdmp.* 613, p.172.

<sup>46</sup> “World is of two kinds, i.e., the world of beings and the world of formations”, *The Path of Freedom*, p.143.

<sup>47</sup> *The Path of Freedom*, pp.174-176.

<sup>48</sup> “*Atha imasmiṃ dehepi sakalāsuci ākare - Asūtikulamattā kimīnaṃ niyatāni hī*”, *Sdmp.*, 134, p.99.

<sup>49</sup> “Herein, the forty meditation subjects are these: ten kasiṇas (totalities), ten kinds of foulness, ten recollections, four divine abidings, four immaterial states, one perception, one defining”. *The Path of Purification*, p.112.

“*Tatrimāni cattālīsa kammaṭṭhānāni: dasa kasiṇā, dasa asubhā, dasa anussatiyo, cattāro brahmavihārā, cattāro āruppā, ekā saññā, ekaṃ vavatthānanti*”, *Visuddhimaggā*, p.82.

<sup>50</sup> “What are thirty-eight subjects of meditation? Namely, the ten kasiṇas, ... the ten perceptions of putrescence, ... the ten recollections, ... the four immeasurable thoughts, ... the determining of elements, ... the perception of the foulness of the food, ... the sphere of nothingness, the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception”, *The Path of Freedom*, p.63.

objects have been explained in the *Vimuttimaggā* in another place. In some of the Mahāvihāra works, there are only 38 meditative objects mentioned.<sup>51</sup> Referring to *paṭhavi kasīṇa*, the traditional view is that it should be a circle. The Mahāvihāra strongly believed it to be so and advised practitioners to make it as a circle. But the Abhayagiri had a free view in this regard and the *Vimuttimaggā* prescribes different shapes such as circular, rectangular, triangular or square. It further adds that according to the instructions of great masters, a circular *kasīṇa* is the best.<sup>52</sup>

According to the *Saddhammopāyana*, there are minor differences to be seen between the Abhayagiri and the Mahāvihāra regarding various doctrinal issues such as 10 *puññakiriyavatthūni* or meritorious acts, five precepts, and so on. According to the *puññakiriyavatthu* list of Mahāvihāra, there are ten; but for the Abhayagiri they are 12 in number.<sup>53</sup> The Abhayagiri does not accept *diṭṭhijukamma* or “straightening one’s view” as a *puññakiriya*. The Mahāvihāra accuses the Abhayagirivāsīns that they share the view of the Mahāsaṅghika concerning this point.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> See Bapat, pp. 38-39.

<sup>52</sup> *The Path of Freedom*, p.73. See also *The Path of Purification*, pp. 126-127.

<sup>53</sup> See *Sdmp.* 213, p. 46.

<sup>54</sup> Please refer to footnote no. 20 of chapter four of this book.

### Providing Access to Buddhist Thought of Other Schools

In on slab inscription of Mahinda IV, the great scholars of the Abhayagiri monastery have been highly esteemed as follows: “The Abhayagiri Vihāra ... where dwell bands of scholars directing their wisdom to great literary works and adorning the *Abhayuttara maha sā*, just as a flight of *garuḍas* hovers with widespread wing over rows of serpents on the Himalayan range; which with resound of the voice of those versed in the scriptures”.<sup>55</sup> This shows that the Abhayagiri School is not just a breakaway faction but a great Buddhist Institute, which had an innovative and radical view. As it is shown by its name, “The Mahālekha” institute, which means “The Great-Writing” or “The Great Inscription” of the Abhayagiri, would have been built probably for the purpose of training scholars.<sup>56</sup>

This well-known academic institute, Abhayagiri was open for both religious and secular subjects. “The Abhayagiri ... reached international recognition by the first century of this era. Going beyond the orthodox Mahāvihāra, it entertained various shades of Buddhist opinion and thus fostered lively intellectual discussion”.<sup>57</sup> The Abhayagiri produced great scholars such as Upatissa,<sup>58</sup> Kavacakravarti Ānanda,<sup>59</sup> Āryadeva,<sup>60</sup> Āryaśūra,<sup>61</sup> Jayabhadra, and Candramāli,<sup>62</sup> and so on. The Abhayagiri was always ready to accept and provide shelter to foreign scholars and visitors. This issue is to be discussed in the fourth chapter and it will show that many Mahāyāna and Tantric masters visited there. Kulatunga says: “While other such institutions operated within a narrow sectarian theological framework, Abhayagiri opened itself up to the world for universal knowledge, pioneering in the ancient world the modern concept of University”.<sup>63</sup> Hettiarachchi thinks that the Abhayagiri was the only one University in the ancient world which consisted of four faculties same as in a modern University.

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<sup>55</sup> *EZ*, Vol. I, p. 226.

<sup>56</sup> *Cv.48*. 135, p.123.

<sup>57</sup> *A Guide to Cultural Triangle of Sri Lanka*, p.21.

<sup>58</sup> The author of the *Vimuttimagga*, Upatissa Thera is considered as a member of the Abhayagiri Fraternity.

<sup>59</sup> Being a member of the Abhayagiri he composed the *Saddhammopāyana*.

<sup>60</sup> Both Chinese and Tibetan sources record that Āryadeva is from Siṃhaladvīpa or Sri Lanka.

<sup>61</sup> Accounts on Āryaśūra will be followed in an immediate paragraph.

<sup>62</sup> Please refer to chapter four of this book for details on Jayabhadra and Candramāli.

<sup>63</sup> *AVA*, p.1.

Except Sri Lanka, in the ancient world there was no University, which consisted of four faculties similar to the modern University system. This University was located in the Abhayagiri monastery exceeding 500 acres of its vicinity and these four great faculties were known as Uttarolha Mūla, Vahadu Mūla, Mahanetpā Mūla and Kapārāmūla. Some information of these four faculties can be found in historical records and inscriptions. For example, in one inscription it is recorded that these four great faculties located centering the Ratnaprāsāda in the same way that four great continents located centering the Mount Semeru.<sup>64</sup>

Hettiarachchi's view seems to be a new interpretation regarding the four institutes or mūlas of the Abhayagiri, but we are not sure whether these four mūlas really represented as faculties, which are similar to the modern University system. However, the aforementioned inscription clearly proves without doubt the Abhayagiri was a great seat of learning.

With the introduction of Mahāyāna Buddhism (Vaitulyavāda) Buddhism and Vājiriyavāda (Vajrayāna, Tantrayāna), non-Theravāda ideas gradually amalgamated with Sri Lankan Buddhism. According to the records of Fa-Xian and Xuan-Zang, it is very clear that the Abhayagiri had taught non-Theravāda teachings. Fa-Xian lived two years in Sri Lanka and collected at the Abhayagiri some *Sanskrit Tripiṭaka* texts belonging to different Schools of Buddhism. Among them were the *Vinyapiṭaka* of the *Mahīsāsaka* (school); the *Dīrghāgama* and *Samyuttāgama* (*Sūtras*); and also the *Samyukta-sañchayapiṭaka*, which were not available in the land of Han.<sup>65</sup>

Xuan-Zang clearly records that the curriculum at the Abhayagiri School included both *yānas*, the Theravāda and the Mahāyāna and constituted immensely to spread Buddhism in the county.

There are several hundreds monasteries with more than twenty thousand monks who follow the teachings of both the Mahāyāna and the Sthavira schools. More than two hundred

<sup>64</sup> *SP*, Vol.1, 1<sup>st</sup> Issue, Jan-March 1992, pp.20.

<sup>65</sup> *ARBK*, Chapter XL, p.111.

years after the arrival of the *Buddha-dharma*, they were divided into two separate sects, each specialising in its own theories. One was the Mahāvihāra sect, which refuted the Mahāyāna teachings and advocated Hinayana tenets. The other one was the Abhayagiri sect, which studied the teachings of both *yānas* (vehicles) and propagated the *Tripitaka*.<sup>66</sup>

Xuan-Zang met 300 monks at Kāñcipura (Kañcīvaram – golden robe) in South India and he learnt from those monks that Sri Lanka was not a secure state to visit during that time. The king of the Sri Lanka had passed away and the country was in chaos. Xuan-Zang was very anxious to go there and learn Buddhism but he had to be contented with the information that he received from Sri Lankan monks whom he met in Kāñcipura. Xuan-Zang had heard that Sri Lankan *Mahātheras* were well versed in the *Yogācāra* Buddhism. Therefore, he was curious to know more about the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra*. Having selected some passages from long and short sections of the *Yogācāra-bhūmi-śāstra*, Xuan-Zang put some questions to two eminent Sinhalese monks, out of 300, named *Abhayadaṃṣṭrā* and *Bodhimegheśvara*, who claimed that there are no other monks in their country who can surpass their knowledge.

“The Master of the Law [Xuan-Zang] then gave examples of choice passages of the *Yoga-śāstra*, both long and short sections, but they were not able to explain any of them as Śīlabhadra<sup>67</sup> did”.<sup>68</sup> However, it does not mean that those monks couldn’t answer his questions but their answer could not satisfy Xuan-Zang. What is important here is that it apparently shows that the Abhayagirivāsīns studied the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra* and the Mahāyāna texts. Actually, according to the *Mahāvamsa*, Mahāyāna Buddhism came to Sri Lanka during the third century C.E. This was the time that *Yogācāra* master Asaṅga spread his teaching in India. Therefore, Xuan-Zang’s records about *Yogācāra* study in Sri Lanka could be considered true and correct.

Another interesting story is found in the Chinese Tripitaka. Chinese monk Fazang, in the “*Biography of Those who Recited Avataṃsaka Sūtra*”,

<sup>66</sup> *The Great Tang Dynasty Records of the Western Regions*, p.331.

<sup>67</sup> Śīlabhadra is an Indian monk, who is said to be a teacher of Xuan-Zang.

<sup>68</sup> *The Life of Hiuen-Tsiang* by the Shaman Hwui Li, p.140.

records that a monk from Siṃhaladvīpa, named Śakyamitra, who is also known to Chinese people as “Competent Friend” (śakya+mitra), came to China during the time of the Emperor Gao Zhong (664-666). Śakyamitra was a reciter of *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. The Emperor greatly respected him and provided all necessities and also invited him to stay in the Royal Palace together with a Taoist follower, who was also said to be a general of the Emperor. Mitra (Śakyamitra) asked Emperor’s permission to go on a pilgrimage to visit sacred mountains in China. Then he visited Ching-Liang-Shan, which is today called Wu-Tai-Shan, where Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī resides. Having paid respect to Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, Mitra visited Tai Yuang monastery, which was located to the western part of the Capital. Therein Mitra found some monks who were reciting a *sūtra*. He asked those monks the name of the *sūtra* that they recited. They explained him that it is the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. Mitra was excited and exclaimed with joined palms that he did not know that *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* existed in China. Mitra respected the *Sūtra* and said that this *Vaipulya Sūtra* contains immeasurable merit and in the West (such as Oḍḍiyāna, Yākānd, Khotān, and so on), people believed that this *Sūtra* consists a great power. If one recites this *Sūtra* having some water in hand and sprinkle the water over insects and ants, after death all of them will reborn in the heaven. So, how much merit one can obtain reciting this? It is immeasurable.<sup>69</sup> This story is a very important source regarding Sinhalese monks who followed and studied Mahāyāna Buddhism and also visited China. Since Fa-Xian had paved the way for a close Sino-Sinhala relationship and Sri Lankan *Bhikṣuṇīs* had visited Nankin in 433 C.E. and established the Chinese *Bhikṣuṇī* Order,<sup>70</sup> Śakyamitra’s story can also be granted here. The *Ennin’s Diary* further supported the fact that Sri Lankan monks had lived in China even during the 10<sup>th</sup> century C.E.<sup>71</sup>

*The Abhayagiri Sanskrit Inscription*<sup>72</sup> talks about four *nikāyas*, whose members should equally share one hundred quotas of study place by

<sup>69</sup> CBETA, T51, no.2073, p.169, C23-p.170, a5.

<sup>70</sup> “Biographies of Buddhist Nuns” Lives of Great Monks and Nuns, tr. from the Chinese of Baochang (T. 50, no. 2063), by Li Rongse, Berkeley, CA, 2002, p.104.

<sup>71</sup> For details, please refer to chapter four of this book.

<sup>72</sup> Earlier archaeologists had erroneously identified this inscription as “Jetavana Sanskrit Inscription” until the Abhayagiri Stūpa and the Jetavana Stūpa correctly identified with the help of King Malutisa’s (Kaṇiṭṭhatissa) inscription, in which the name “Utara maha ceta” or “Northern Great Stūpa” is inscribed.

enrolling 25 students from each *nikāya* to the institute, probably, Kapārā Institute (Kapārāmūla). “[There shall reside] twenty-five monks from each of the four great fraternities (*nikāyas*), thus [making] one hundred residents [in all]. [Of these, there shall be] forty monks who are versed in the *Śāstra*. [They shall be] those who have received tutelage void of any sectarian difference”.<sup>73</sup> Gunawardana thinks these four *Nikāyas* are the Sarvāstivāda, the Mahāsaṅghika, the Sthaviravāda and the Sammitīya schools.<sup>74</sup> It is significant that the regulation for tutelages did not take into consideration the different sectarian affiliation among them. Therefore, this statement suggests that the community of monks lived in the same monastery in brotherhood. Going in accordance with this regulation we learnt that Mahāsaṅghikas and the Sthaviravādins lived together in the Vīrāṅkurārāma. The Vaitulyavādins and the Vajrayānists arrived in Sri Lanka from Vajji and Pallārāma in India also took abode at the Abhayagiri and one of its branched temples the Vīrāṅkurārāma respectively.<sup>75</sup>

Certainly, as a result of the liberal attitude of the Abhayagiri towards other Buddhist schools, non-Theravāda ideas got amalgamated with Sri Lankan Theravāda. Though the Abhayagiri School has nominally disappeared, its great impact on Sri Lankan Buddhism can still be seen. Not only by Buddhist practice but also through Sri Lankan Buddhist literary works, the great contribution that the Abhayagiri rendered to the Sri Lankan culture is clearly proven. During the Polonnaruva period, the Sanskrit language had become very popular among scholars and, they tended to use a Sanskrit-mixed Sinhala language in composing their works, rather than the Pāli or *Śuddhasinhala*<sup>76</sup> languages (pure Sinhala). This is a noteworthy modification introduced by the Abhayagiri tradition. Consequently, several Sanskrit works also have been added to Sri Lankan literature by their authors.

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The Abhayagiri Monastery is named as Uttara Mahā Vihāra since it is located in the North of Anuradhapura city, which was the capital of Sri Lanka over a thousand years.

<sup>73</sup> “*Cāturmahānikāyeṣu pañcavṃśatistapavvīnaḥ tena śatannaivāsikānāṃ catvāriṃśat śāstrābhīyuktāstapasvīnaḥ nikāyabhedam vināpi gṛhītaniśrayāḥ...*”, *EZ*. Vol. I, pp.5-9.

<sup>74</sup> *RAP*, p. 253.

<sup>75</sup> Please refer to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> chapters of this book for details.

<sup>76</sup> We find *Śuddhasinhala* in the ancient Sinhalese works such as *Dhampiyāṭuvā Gāṭapadaya*, *Sikavalaṅḍa*, *Sikavalaṅḍavinisa*, and *Siyabaslakara* and also *Sīgiri Graffiti*.

The authors of Sri Lankan Buddhist literary works, which have been composed after the unification of the *Saṅgha* by King Parakkamabāhu I in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, have quoted non-Theravāda texts in their works and some of those texts have been utilized as primary sources for their works as well. Further more, some quotations from non-Theravāda texts have been used as supporting evidence to establish their views. We will examine the influence of non-Theravāda works on Sri Lankan Buddhist literature based on Sri Lankan literary works, inscriptions and some related foreign sources.

Venerable Moratuwe Sāsanaratana, in his work “*Lakdiva Mahāyāna Adahas*” [Mahāyāna Thoughts in Sri Lanka] has made an effort to find out some non-Theravāda quotations extant in Sri Lankan literary sources. This work was published in the Sinhala language over five decades ago, but no one has made an attempt to study the contribution of the Abhayagiri with regard to the drastic changes they introduced to Sri Lankan Buddhism. The Abhayagirivāsīns, accepting the teachings and practices of other Buddhist schools, introduced a multi-sectarian Buddhist tradition to Sri Lanka facing much hardship and opposition. According to venerable Walpola Rahula (1956), Abhayagirivāsīns faced chaos and challenging situations as a result of their new approaches and changes. Elsewhere we have mentioned that the members of this school have been targeted and criticized as indisciplined and sinners who behaved in the guise of genuine monks. Though the traditional view is presented in such a partisan manner, the true picture of the Abhayagiri’s contribution to the Sri Lankan Buddhism and its culture clearly shows how onesided and erroneous such a view is.

Ācārya Śāntideva’s *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is a well known work which explains Mahāyāna Bodhisattva practice. This book has greatly influenced Sinhalese Buddhist culture. The following *śloka* occurs in the chapter 10 of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, has been translated into Pāli, is a very popular stanza in Sri Lanka, and almost all the Buddhists can recite it by memory.

*Devo varṣatu kālena – śaṣya sampattirastucaḥ*  
*Sphīto bhavatu lokāśca – rājā bhavatu dhārmikaḥ*<sup>77</sup>

The corresponding Pāli *gāthā* is:

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<sup>77</sup> *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 10.39.

*Devo vassatu kālena – sassa sampatti hetu ca  
Phīto bhavatu loko ca – rājā bhavtu dhammiko*<sup>78</sup>

The great Pāli commentators Bhadantācariyabuddhaghosa,<sup>79</sup> Dhammapālācariya<sup>80</sup> and also Buddhadattācariya<sup>81</sup> had also composed different *pattanā gāthās* (wishing stanzas) somewhat similar to Śāntideva's but in Sri Lanka no one use those *pattanās*, preferring Śāntideva's.

Guruḷugomi, a Sri Lankan Paṇḍit, who lived in the 12<sup>th</sup> century C.E., wrote a classical work named the *Dharmapradīpikā*, in which he seemed to have accessed many *Sanskrit* texts including Mahāyāna works such as the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, the *Pramāṇavārtika*, and the *Śiṣyalekhā* and also *Sanskrit* drama such as the *Ratnāvalī*. The *Dharmapradīpikā* is one of the most *Sanskritized* Sinhalese works composed in Sri Lanka. Guruḷugomi has quoted many *Sanskrit ślokas* and statements from other works in order to prove and to illuminate his ideas. Explaining how to get rid of hatred Guruḷugomi quotes two *ślokas* from the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* and enlightens the readers to refrain from hatred because one can never overcome hatred through hatred.<sup>82</sup>

*Mukhyaṃ daṇḍādikaṃ hitvā prerake yadi kupyati  
Dveṣeṇa preritasso 'pi dveṣe dveṣestu me varam*<sup>83</sup>

*Kiyanto mārayiṣyāmi durjanān gaganopamān  
Mārite krodhacitte tu māritāssarvaśtravaḥ*<sup>84</sup>

<sup>78</sup> The origin of this gāthā is not known. It cannot be found within the Pāli canonical literature but has been inserted in to the *Great Book of Protection (The Mahāpiruvāṇā Potvahanse)*. See explanation of abhiṣeka in this chapter.

<sup>79</sup> *Ciraṃ tiṭṭhatu saddhammo, dhamme hontu sagāravā;  
Sabbepi sattā kālena, sammā devo pavassatu.*

<sup>80</sup> *Sammā vassatu kālena, devopi jagatippati;  
Saddhammanirato lokam dhammeneva pasāsatūti.*

<sup>81</sup> *Tathā sijjhantu saṅkappā, sattānaṃ dhammasaṃyutā;  
Rājā pātu mahiṃ sammā, kāle devo pavassatu.*

<sup>82</sup> *Dharmapradīpikā*, p.150.

<sup>83</sup> *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 6.41, “If, disregarding the principal cause, such as a tick or other weapon, I become angry with the person who impels it, he too is impelled by hatred. It is better that I hate that hatred”.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.12, “How many wicked people, as unending as the sky, can I kill? But when the mental attitude of anger is slain, slain is every enemy”.

Paranavitana thinks that Guruḷugomi is not a Sri Lankan but from Vijaya Nagar of Kāliṅgadeśa.<sup>85</sup> Rammandala, who is of the same view, thinks, that Guruḷugomi, having studied Mahāyāna Buddhism in India, arrived in Sri Lanka during the time of King Nissaṅkamalla and learnt the Sinhala language.<sup>86</sup> Probably Guruḷugomi had studied in Sanskrit medium and he thought in Sanskrit pattern when he composed books. Therefore, the Pāli word “*Suttantika*” has been used in Sanskrit form as “*Sautrāntika*” and the “*Paṭisambhidhāmagga*” as “*Pratisaṃvin mārga paryāya*”.<sup>87</sup> There are many Sanskrit quotations found in the *Dharmapradīpikā* but most of them have not been unidentified. The following *śloka*, which is found in the *Ratnāvalī* of King Harṣa, has been quoted in the *Dharmapradīpikā*.<sup>88</sup>

*Dvīpādanyasmādapi - madhyādapi jalanirdiśo 'pyantāt*  
*Ānīyajhaṭṭi ghaṭayati - vidhirabhimatamabhimukhībhūtaḥ*<sup>89</sup>

Explaining the preposition “*eva*” of the Pāli verb “*nisinnova*”, Guruḷugomi has quoted four *ślokas* from the *Pramāṇavārtikam* composed by Dharmakīrtipāda, the greatest Indian Buddhist logician.<sup>90</sup> Śrī Rāhula Thera also has quoted a *śloka* from the *Pramāṇavārtikam*<sup>91</sup> in his *Pañcīkāpradīpaya* and also treated Dharmakīrtipāda as “the Round Jewel of the All Logics”, “*Sakalatārkkīkacakracūḍāmaṇī Dharmakīrtipādayo*”.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>85</sup> See *Sajñāpana* [introduction] of *Dharmapradīpikāva*.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Dharmapradīpikāva*, p.259.

<sup>89</sup> *Ratnāvalī*, p.4.

<sup>90</sup> *Dharmapradīpikāva*, *Abhisambodhi Kathā*, p.2, See also *Pramāṇavārtikam*, *Caturthaḥ Paricchedaḥ*, *Parārthānumānanāma*, *śloka* 290-293, p.401.

*Ayogaṃ yogamaparairatyantāyogameva ca*  
*Vyavacchanti dharmasya nipāto vyavati recakaḥ.*

*Viṣeṣaṇaviṣeṣaṇabhāṃ kriyayā ca sahoditaḥ*  
*Vivakṣāto 'prayoge' pi tasyārtho 'yaṃ pratiyate.*

*Vyavacchedaphalaṃ vākyaṃ yataścaitro dhanurdharaḥ*  
*Pārtho dhanurdharo nīlaṃ sarojamasti vā yathā.*

*Pratiyogavyavacchedastatrāpyartheṣu gamyate*  
*Tathā prasiddhessādharmyādavivakṣānugamāddhvaneḥ.*

<sup>91</sup> *Sambandhyanugūṇopāyampuruṣārthābhīdhāyakaṃ*  
*Parīkṣādhikṛtaṃ vākyaṃ 'nadhikṛtamparam*, *Pramāṇavārtikam*, *Tṛtīyaḥ Paricchedaḥ* 215, p.282.

<sup>92</sup> “*Pañcīkāpradīpa*” in *Sirirahal Pabanda*

The *Viśuddhimārgasanna*, a Sinhalese verbatim translation of the *Visuddhimaggaṭīkā* of Dhammapālācariya, has quoted a *śloka* from *Saundarānanda* of Mahākavi Aśvaghōṣa.

*Kleśāṅkurāṇṇa pratanoti śīlaṃ - bījāṅkurāṇ kāla ivātivṛttaḥ*  
*Suchauhi śīle puruṣasya daṣā - manaḥ salajjā iva dharśayanti*<sup>93</sup>

Theravādācariyas have learnt Mahāyāna teachings at least in order to establish their own ideas. For an example we can quote a statement found in the *Visuddhimaggaṭīkā* and the *Visuddhimārgasannaya*. In this *Visuddhimaggaṭīkā*, Dhammapālācariya has criticised Nāgārjuna's eight *abhāvas* that he has presented in the *Mūlamadhyamaka Kārikā*.

*Anirodhamanuppāda manucchedamaśāstvatam*  
*Anekārthamanānārthamanāgamamanirgamam.*<sup>94</sup>

Dhammapālācariya says that there are people whose teaching explains the meaning of the *Paṭīccasamuppāda* wrongly [in a way] such as “*anirodhaṃ anuppādaṃ*”. “*Yathā ca eke “anirodhaṃ anuppādan”ti ādinā paṭīccasamuppādassa atthaṃ micchā gāhenti*”.<sup>95</sup> In the *Visuddhimārgasannaya*, King Parakkamabāhu V (1346-1348 C.E.) has given the Sinhalese meaning of this very same statement as follows. “*Yam se samaharu “anirodhaya anutpādaya” yanādīn anik paryāyekin pratīyasamutpādārthaya varadavā ganvadda ...*”<sup>96</sup>

The *Jātakamālā* of Āryaśūra has had much influence on Sri Lankan Buddhism. Āryaśūrapāda is considered as a native of Sri Lanka. The *Dharmapradīpikā* and the *Nikāyasamgrahaya* mention his name as Śūrapāda, which is the short form of Āryaśūra. Āryadeva, who is also considered a Sri Lankan is called ‘Deva Bodhisattva’. For example, Xuan-Zang has used the word as ‘Deva Bodhisattva’ for Āryadeva without the first name ‘Ārya’. This is also evidence to prove that Āryaśūra is from Sri Lanka. The word ‘Ārya’ is always used in Sri Lanka as an honorific designation. The Sinhalese nation is called ‘Ārya Sinhala’, Sinhala national

<sup>93</sup> *Saundarānanda* 16.34, p.116.

<sup>94</sup> *Mūlamadhyamamakārikā* 1.1, ed. Kalupahana, 1991, p.101.

<sup>95</sup> *Paramatthajjotikā* 2.241 (Myanmar), *Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyanā Tipiṭaka CD ROM* version 3.

<sup>96</sup> *Viśuddhimārgasannaya* VI, p.125.

dress is also named as ‘Ārya Sinhala āṅduma’, the language is named as ‘Ārya Sinhala bhāṣāva’. There are many Sinhala male and female names in the country start with Ārya, such as Āriyasena,<sup>97</sup> Āriyavati, Āriyaratna, Āriyavaṃsa, Ariyajothi, Āriyawimal and so on. Sāsanaratana and Godakumbura share the same view that Āryaśūra is a Sri Lankan. Godakumbura says:

Some say that Āryaśūra is not Sinhalese. It also implies that he is a Sinhalese [because they try to negate the idea that ryaśūra was a Sri Lankan]. Some say that Śūrapāda learnt at Nālandā University. That is also possible. It is also possible that Āryaśūra having come to Anuradhapura from Nālandā would have composed books living there. However, there is a strong connection between Āryaśūrapāda and Sri Lanka.<sup>98</sup>

The *Bodhisattvāvadānamālā* is another name for the *Jātakamālā*. The *gāthās* found in the *Sutasoma Jātaka* of the *Jātakamālā* have been quoted from the *Jātakaṭṭhakathā*, which was composed in Sri Lanka but not from the *Jātakapāli*. This is another clue to prove that the *Jātakamālā* was composed in Sri Lanka.<sup>99</sup> We find very interesting information related to this issue from Fa-Xian’s records. Ten days before the exhibition of the Tooth Relic, the king sends a messenger, who in royal attire goes around the city on a caparisoned elephant beating a drum and announcing the king’s message to the people. In this message, the birth stories of the bodhisattva are explained as follows.

The Bodhisattva, during three *Asaṅkhyeya-kalpas* manifested his activity, and did not spare his own life. He gave up kingdom, city, wife, and son; he plucked out his eyes and gave them to another; he cut off a piece of his flesh to ransom the life of a dove; he cut off his head and gave it as an alms; he gave his body to feed a starving tigress; ...<sup>100</sup>

<sup>97</sup> ‘Āriya’ is the Sinhala form of the Sanskrit word ‘Ārya’.

<sup>98</sup> *LMA*, p.289.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p.288.

<sup>100</sup> *ARBK*, pp.106-107.

This is a very important record but scholars haven't paid attention to this. Among the *Jātaka* stories mentioned in this message, there are two *Jātaka* stories named: the *Sibi Jātaka*<sup>101</sup> and the *Vyāgrī Jātaka*, both not included in the *Pāli Jātakaṭṭhakathā* or *Sinhala Jātaka* stories. However, the *Sibi Jātaka*, which Fa-Xian herein refers, is not found in the *Jātakamālā*, the *Vyāgrī Jātaka* does occur. A question arises here: if these *Jātaka* stories were not familiar to the Abhayagirivāsīns, how were they included in the Sri Lankan king's message? We can assume that the *Jātakamālā* had been used at the Abhayagiri during the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Another factor is that the *Vyāgrī Jātaka* is very popular in Sri Lanka though not found in the *Pāli Jātakaṭṭhakathā* and *Sinhala Jātaka Book*. Both the *Sibi Jātaka* and the *Vyāgrī Jātaka* are popular stories in China.<sup>102</sup> The main Chinese source of the *Sibi Jātaka* is from the *Dazhidu Lun*,<sup>103</sup> a commentary on the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*, translated by Kumārajīva. Its authorship is attributed to Nāgārjuna, who most modern scholars consider to be from Southern India.\*

The *Saddharmālaṅkāra*, a Sinhalese Buddhist story book, written in the Gampola period also gives the summaries of the *Subhāṣa* and the *Vyāgrī Jātakas* of the *Jātakamālā*. Several statements, ideas and also 20 *ślokas*

<sup>101</sup> The "Sibi Jātaka" found in the *Jātakamālā* and the "Sivi Jātaka" found in the *Pāli Jātakaṭṭhakathā* and the *Jātaka Book*, are not the same one that Fa-Xian refers here.

<sup>102</sup> In the above we see that there are two versions of Sibi Jātaka in Indian literature: one is King Sibi's parting with his own eyes, and another his willingly having his flesh cut off in order to save the dove. The Chinese have bifurcated these two according to the narratives of the scriptures. The king who sacrifices his eyes is named "Kuaimu Wang" (the king with happy eyes) which is the Chinese translation of Sanskrit "Sudhira". The Chinese name for "Sibi" is "Shibi" which transcribes the Sanskrit sound. A very interesting painting in Mogao Cave No. 275, illustrated during the period of Northern Liang (421-439), is a panel of the size of 76.5 x 312.5 cm. The panel has five Jataka tales in a roll horizontally arranged. This picture on the extreme right is the story of King Sudhira's donating his eyes to a blind Brahmin. The next picture on its left depicts King Sibi's sacrificing his flesh. The copy of this panel was exhibited in IGNCA in 1991-92, and the artist who copied it, Prof. Shi Weixiang, was also a guest of IGNCA at the time. There are a number of paintings pertaining to the story of King Sibi (sacrificing his flesh) inside the Dunhuang caves. Two paintings came to the IGNCA exhibition. Apart from the Northern Liang painting mentioned just now, there is another in cave No. 254 in the Mogao Grottoes of the vintage of Northern Wei of the size of 122.5 x 164cm. Once again, this was copied by Prof. Duan Wenjie. The painting makes an excellent depiction of the king who occupies of the story. There is the hawk, and also the scale. The cutting of flesh and other details are also in the painting. The central figure of the painting, i.e. King Sibi, is ably presented as a kind-hearted Bodhisattva without any fear of self-sacrifice. The illustration has brought out the enlightened Bodhisattva spirit to the fore which is exactly what the Jatakas have aimed at. See "[Some Aspects of Jātaka Paintings in Indian and Chinese \(Central Asian\) Art](#)" *Across the Himalayan Gap, Indian Quest for understanding China*, IGNCA, Delhi, 1998. pp.173-179.

<sup>103</sup> *Dazhilu Lun*, T31, n 1509.

from the *Jātakamālā* have been quoted in the *Hatthavanagalla Vihāravamsa*. Explaining the consequences of taking liquor, *Dharmapradīpikā* has quoted 6 *ślokas* from the *Jātakamālā* and the *Mahārūpasiddhi* also has quoted 3 *ślokas* from it.<sup>104</sup> Considering the above facts related to the *Jātakamālā* we can safely assume that the Abhayagirivāsīns have been very familiar with the *Jātakamālā*.

Tāranātha has given several names to Mātṛceṭa. He says: “This Ācārya Mātṛceṭa was the same as the brāhmaṇa Durdharṣakāla mentioned a little earlier. The same person was known under the following names: Śūra, Aśvaghōṣa, Mātṛceṭa, Pitṛceṭa, Durdharṣa, Dhārmika, Subhūti, Maticitra, etc”.<sup>105</sup> But Tulka says: “Tibetan historians equate Mātṛceṭa with Aśvaghōṣa, author of the Buddhacarita, an epic poem on the life of the Buddha preserved in the *Tanjur*, although recent scholars doubts that association”.<sup>106</sup> Hahn also refuses Tāranātha’s view and says:

Except for equation of Mātṛceṭa with Aśvaghōṣa in one of the works of Atīśa (eleventh century C.E.), there is no further evidence for the authenticity of this claim. For the time being it seems best to treat the well-known authors Aśvaghōṣa, Śūra, Mātṛceṭa, and Dhārmika Subhūti as different individuals.<sup>107</sup>

We have showed that several scholars do not identify Mātṛceṭa with Aśvaghōṣa, Āryaśūra etc. Probably what Tāranātha has recorded in his work would be a belief that prevailed during the time.

The *Mahārūpasiddhi* is a Pāli grammar book written in the Polonnaru period by Colīya Buddhappriya. A Sinhala *Sanna* or a verbatim translation of this work named the *Purāṇamahārūpasiddhi Sannaya* has quoted a *śloka* from the *Varṇārharvaṇa* of Mātṛceṭa. That is the 10<sup>th</sup> *śloka* from the third chapter of the *Varṇārharvaṇa*. Therein is found the statement in Sinhala: “*eyin kīha māṛceṭakayo*”, “(Therefore, Mātṛceṭa expressed:)”

*Namaste buddharatnāya - dharmaratnāya te namaḥ*

<sup>104</sup> See *LMA*, pp. 288-289.

<sup>105</sup> See *THBII*, pp.131-132.

<sup>106</sup> See *Invitation to Enlightenment*, Publisher’s preface by Tarthang Tulku, p.xiii.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, “Introduction”, p.xxxiv.

*Namaste saṃgharatnāya - triratna samavāyine*<sup>108</sup>

There is a slight difference between the śloka in the *Varṇārḥavarṇa* and the *Mahārūpasiddhi Sannaya*. Probably the author of the *Mahārūpasiddhi Sannaya* accessed a copy which is little bit different from the copy found in Eastern Turkestan.

This śloka is given in the *Varṇārḥavarṇa* as follows.

*Namaḥ sambuddharatnāya - dharmaratnasvabhāvine*  
*Saṃgharatnākarāyastu - tiratnasamavāyine*<sup>109</sup>

“Hail to the perfect Buddha Jewel which is the every nature of the Dharma Jewel and the mine containing the *Saṅgha* Jewel, (thus) combining the Three Jewels”!<sup>110</sup> There is another instance to show that the *Varṇārḥavarṇa* has been used in Sri Lanka in the Polonnaruva period. There is a śloka in the *Nāmāṣṭaśataka*,<sup>111</sup> which is similar to a śloka found in the *Varṇārḥavarṇa*. Probably, the *Nāmāṣṭaśataka* has directly taken one śloka from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter, *Sarvajñatāsiddhiḥ* of the *Varṇārḥavarṇanā* of Mātṛceṭa.

*Mahābalaṃ mahāvīraṃ mahābhijñāṃ mahorjasam*  
*Raṇocchritamaheṣvāsam mahaye tvā mahāmahaṃ*<sup>112</sup>

The śloka found in the *Nāmāṣṭaśataka* which is compatible with the above mentioned śloka as given below.

*Mahāmatim mahāvīryam mahābhijñam mahābalaṃ*  
*Mahodhyamaṃ mahādhayryam mahābhāhum namāmyahaṃ*.<sup>113</sup>

The highlights of the above śloka of the *Varṇārḥavarṇa* are conjecturally supplied by the editor. By this instance, we can assume that the differentiation between the two ślokas could have occurred due to that reason.

<sup>108</sup> *Purānarūpasiddha Sannaya*, p.3.

<sup>109</sup> “The *Varṇārḥavarṇa* of Mātṛceṭa”, *BSOAS* Vol. 13, No.30. (1950), pp.671-701.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> For details of the *Nāmāṣṭaśataka*, please refer to the 4<sup>th</sup> Chapter.

<sup>112</sup> “The *Varṇārḥavarṇa* of Mātṛceṭa”, *BSOAS* Vol. 13, No.30. (1950), pp.671-701.

<sup>113</sup> *Nāmāṣṭaśataka* 11, p.4.

According to Tibetan sources Candragomi is a renowned *anagārika* (homeless) Buddhist scholar.<sup>114</sup> He has composed several books including *Cāndravyākaraṇa* and *Śiṣyalekhā*.<sup>115</sup> Sāsanaratana says that according the *Cāndravyākaraṇa*, the *Moggallānavyākaraṇa* has been composed in Sri Lanka by Mugalan (*Pāli*. Moggallāna) Thera in the Polonnaruva period. Most of the formulae (*sūtras*) of the *Cāndravyākaraṇa* have been translated into Pāli in the *Moggallānavyākaraṇa*. Not only that even the *gāthā* of salutation (*namaskāragāthā*) of the *Moggallāna* has followed the corresponding *śloka* of the *Cāndra*.<sup>116</sup> He also writes that Candragomi visited Sri Lanka, associated scholars there and returned to India.<sup>117</sup>

The *Dharmapradīpikā* has quoted many Sanskrit *ślokas* from different works. Explaining the awful and dreadful condition of hells it quoted ten consecutive *ślokas* from the *Śiṣyalekhā*, number 42-51. Following *śloka* is an example for this.

*Dhāvañjavena niṣitakṣurasamstareṣu*  
*Vicchinnamūrtir asipatralatāvaneṣu*  
*Kūpe patatyaśaraṇaśītaśulaśakti*  
*Prāsāsihāsa nīcitāntakavaktrarandhre*<sup>118</sup>

The *Dharmapradīpikā* does not mention about the source from which these *ślokas* have been quoted. It always uses “*eyin kīha*” “[because of that] it is said thus”. The word “*nīcitā*” highlighted in the above *śloka* is significant since the Tibetan manuscript, The *Dharmapradīpikā* and also the editor<sup>119</sup> of *Śiṣyalekhā* use this word differently. The editor of the *Śiṣyalekhā* says that Tibetan version has used “*nijitā*” which seems to be meaningless. So he suggests “*nīcitā*”. It is interesting to know that the *Dharmapradīpikā* does not use either of these two but uses “*vijitā*”. There are some other different words found within these quoted *ślokas*. If one makes a thorough study of these distorted words, Sri Lankan work perhaps could be made use of to reconstruct the original words. We are pretty sure about this matter because

<sup>114</sup> See *Invitation to Enlightenment*, Publisher’s preface by Tarthang Tulku, p.xvi.

<sup>115</sup> For more details please see *THBII*, p.402.

<sup>116</sup> *LMA*, p.282.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>118</sup> *Dharmapradīpikā*, p.73, See also *Śiṣyalekhā*, *The Letter to a Disciple*, *śloka* 42, p.80.

<sup>119</sup> I refer to the *Śiṣyalekhā*, which has been ed. by Michael Hahn, Berkeley, CA, 1998.

the words “*meṣayuga*” in the *śloka* 45 and the word “*kartum*” in the *śloka* 51 of the *Śiṣyalekhā* have been used in the Tibetan version as “*meṣayūtha*” and “*harum*” respectively.<sup>120</sup> According to the editor of the *Śiṣyalekhā* these words are meaningless and in their place he suggests “*meṣayuga*” and “*kartum*”. His suggestions are quite compatible with the corresponding words in the *ślokas*, which have been quoted in the *Dharmapradīpikā*. The following table shows those *ślokas* in the above mentioned two sources.

<i>Ślokas in the Dharmapradīpikā</i>	<i>Ślokas in the Śiṣyalekhā</i>
<i>Śailābhibhīṣaṇavisāṅkaṭameṣayugma</i> <i>Samghaṭṭacūrṇitaviśīrṇasamastagātraḥ</i> <i>Āpātavātalava śaityasampitāṅga</i> <sup>121</sup> <i>Sañcūrṇyate punarasau śataśastathaiva</i>	<i>Śailābhibhīṣaṇavisāṅkaṭameṣayugma</i> <sup>122</sup> <i>Samghaṭṭacūrṇitaviśīrṇasamastagātraḥ</i> <i>Āpātavātalava śaityasampitāsuh</i> <i>Samcūrṇyate punarasau śataśastathaiva</i>
<i>Eke punassimisimāyitasūkṣmajantu</i> <i>Saṅghātarjaritasūnavipūtikāyaḥ</i> <i>Sañcālamātramapi kartumaśaknuvanto</i> <i>Jīvanti karmayapāśanibaddhajīvāḥ</i>	<i>Eke punassimisimāyitasūkṣmajantu</i> <i>Saṅghātarjaritasūnavipūtikāyaḥ</i> <i>Sañcālamātramapi kartumaśaknuvanto</i> <i>Jīvanti karmayapāśanibaddhajīvāḥ</i>

Therefore, Sri Lankan literary sources and inscriptions which contain some Mahāyāna terms can be of some help in making a comparative study between them. The readable parts of the *Trikāyastava Stotra* inscription at Mihintale helped to compare it with Tibetan version and proved useful in identifying some *Sanskrit* words wrongly reconstructed by Sylvian Levi based on the Chinese transliteration of *Trikāyastava* of Fa-tien (Dharmadeva).<sup>123</sup> The Sri Lankan version and the Tibetan version looked almost identical.<sup>124</sup>

Aśvaghōṣa is a great Mahāyānist poet, who lived in the first century C.E. His *Saundarānanda*, a *Mahākāvya* (epic) deals with the story of prince Nanda, Buddha’s step brother and princess Sundrā otherwise known as

<sup>120</sup> See *Invitation to Enlightenment*, p.75.

<sup>121</sup> The words highlighted are different from the each other.

<sup>122</sup> The underlined words are the corrected words by the editor of the *Śiṣyalekhā*.

<sup>123</sup> Later on this name Fā-Thien [Fatien] was changed into Fā-hhien [Faxian] after he was given the title “Kwhān- kiāo-tā-sh [Chuanjio Dashi] by Chinese Emperor Thāi-tsun [Taizong] (976-997 C.E.). See Bunyiu Nanjio, *A Catalogue of The Chinese Translation of The Buddhist Tripitaka, The Sacred Canon of the Buddhists in China and Japan*, Delhi, 1989, p.450.

<sup>124</sup> For details, read Paranavitana’s explanation of the “*Trikāya Stotra of Mihintale*” in the *EZ*, Vol. IV, pp. 242-246.

Janapadakalyāṇī. Explaining *kleśas* or defilements, the *Viśuddhimārgasannaya*<sup>125</sup> has quoted a *śloka* from this great work.

*Kleśāṅkurāṇna pratanoti śīlaṃ - bījāṅkurān kāla ivātivṛttaḥ*  
*Śuchauhi śīle puruṣasya daṣā - manaḥ salajjā iva darśayanti*<sup>126</sup>

Considering the frequent occurrence of the non-Theravāda quotations in the Sri Lankan literary works, it is not difficult to conclude that many Mahāyāna sources had been in circulation in Sri Lanka even after the unification of the *Saṅgha* in the 12<sup>th</sup> century C.E. It is hard to believe that all such non-Theravāda works were brought to Sri Lanka just after the unification of the *Saṅgha*. Those works must have been in circulation since the arrival of Mahāyāna Buddhism in Sri Lanka in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E. What is interesting here is that the authors who quoted and utilised non-Theravāda works were well aware of Mahāyāna ideas, most of which are not in strict harmony with the Theravāda point of view. However, these authors were cautious enough not to include ideas not compatible with Theravāda. Nevertheless, the infinite Buddha concept and the teaching of *Trikāya*, and aspiration of the Buddhahood of the Mahāyāna Buddhism have greatly influenced works such as the *Saddharmālaṅkāraya*, *Saddharmaratnākaraya* and the *Pūjāvaliya*.

The *Saddharmālaṅkāraya* speaks about thousands of Bodhisattvas and hundred thousands of Buddhas, showing that in the later period Theravāda had adopted the Mahāyāna concepts of infinite Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The *Saddharmālaṅkāraya* says that while the Gautama Bodhisattva was practising *manopraṇidhāna* (the act of wishing by thought to become a Buddha) and *vāgpraṇidhāna* (the act of wishing by expression to become a Buddha), he had seen 125,000 and 187,000 Buddhas respectively.

There is another story in the *Saddharmālaṅkāraya* related to thousands of Bodhisattvas. Once a Brahma, who became an arahant in the Brahma realm, noticed that there were a fewer number of Brahmas in the pureland (*Śuddhāvāsa*) and examining the reason for this decrease found that for a long time a Buddha did not appear in the human world. Being disappointed,

<sup>125</sup> *Viśuddhimārgasannaya*, p.42.

<sup>126</sup> *Saundarānanda* 16.34, p.116.

he looked at the human world to check whether there is any *Vīrapuruṣa* (heroic person), who is aspiring for Buddhahood. Surprisingly, he saw many thousands of bodhisattvas who practice *pāramitās* aspiring for Buddhahood, just as lotus buds awaiting for the sunrays to blossom.<sup>127</sup> This is purely a sign of Mahāyāna literature.

The *Saddharmaratnākaraya* gives explanation about four *kāyas* of the Buddha which is very much similar to teachings of the *Trikāya* (Three Bodies) in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. They are the *Rūpakāya*, the *Dharmakāya*, the *Nimittakāya* and the *Śūnyatākāya*. The *rūpakāya* is the human body of the Buddha and it can be seen by every being (*sakalasattva*). It has been created to please the *ajñānasattvas* or common people. This explanation of *rūpakāya* is compatible with the *nirmāṇakāya* in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. But Theravādīns do not accept this *rūpakāya* as a created image of Amitābha Buddha or any other Buddha, who lives in the Pureland. It is just a human body, which constantly changes before the different conditions of the four great elements *paṭhavi* (solidity), *āpo* (fluidity), *tejo* (heat) and *vāyo* (motion). Sarvāstivādīns also talk about a *rūpakāya* of the Buddha but for them it is impure. Therefore, Sarvāstivāda *rūpakāya* is similar to the Theravāda idea of the *buddhakāya*, which is impermanent. “The *rūpakāya* of the Buddha was born from *āśravas*, it is therefore said to be impure, and as it can also cause *āśrava* in others, it is not pure”<sup>128</sup>

The *Dharmakāya*, which is not visible to the flesh-eyes (Sin. *masāsa* or Skt. *māṃṣacakṣu*) can be seen only by *prajñāsattvas* or wise community. The *Āryasattvas* (noble beings) who attained the Four Paths and the Fruits (Sin. *Sataramaga sataraphala*) and divine beings, devas and Brahmas can see the *Nimittakāya*. The *Śūnyatākāya* is to be seen by *anāśravasattvas* or beings who attained the *Nirupadhiśeṣaparīnirvāṇadhātu*.<sup>129</sup> Mudiyanse says that the author of *Saddharmaratnākaraya* seems to be familiar with the *Trikāya* doctrine of *Mahāyāna* and also has been inspired by it to introduce such a concept of four bodies of the Buddha.<sup>130</sup>

<sup>127</sup> *Nīvanamaga Theravādaya*, Vol. 27, 1996, See also the “Bāhira Nidāna” of *Saddharmālaṅkāraya*.

<sup>128</sup> *The Concept of the Buddha*, Guang Xing, 2005, p.23.

<sup>129</sup> *Sdrk*, p.13-16.

<sup>130</sup> *MMC.*, p.23.

Heinz Bechert is of the view that the *Buddhāpadāna* in the *Apadāna* is an early Sri Lanka *Mahāyāna* work composed in the 1<sup>st</sup> century or in the beginning of the 2nd C.E. He further says that the *Buddhāpadāna* is similar to the *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra*.

The *Buddhāpadāna* therefore, can be considered the earliest reliable source of information on particular views held by the Mahāyāna Buddhists of Ceylon. It testifies to the development of some of the ideas known from a group of Indian Mahāyāna works presented by the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* and simile texts, but the *Buddhāpadāna* is clear a work of indigenous Ceylonese origin, and not imported from India. Its unique importance is due to this fact.<sup>131</sup>

Kalupahana has made a comparative study of *Sahṛdlekḥā* of Nāgārjuna and *Lōvāḍasangarāva* of Vīdāgama Mahāmaitrīya Thera.<sup>132</sup> He has showed that *Lōvāḍasangarāva* has been influenced by *Sahṛdlekḥā*. He says that “Anyone reading Nāgārjuna’s *Sahṛdlekḥā* and the modified of the *Lōvāḍasangarāva* by Maitreya cannot fail to notice the kinship between the two treatises. As far as the basic theme is connected, there is no difference whatsoever”<sup>133</sup>

Some scholars think that the *Saddhammopāyana* of Kavicakravartī Ānanda has been greatly influenced on the *Lōvāḍasangarāva* and it seems as a copy of the *Saddhammopāyana*.<sup>134</sup> If one has a close look at the *Saddhammopāyana* and the *Śiṣyalekhā* there is a big similarity between these two works. The *Saddhammopāyana* seems to be an expanded version of *Śiṣyalekhā*. The *Śiṣyalekhā* is a small treatise compare to the *Saddhammopāyana*. The chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, of the *Saddhammopāyana* are similar to the contents of the *Śiṣyalekhā*.<sup>135</sup> The *Śiṣyalekhā* and the above mentioned chapters of the *Saddhammopāyana* mainly focus on suffering status of purgatory states.

<sup>131</sup> *Prajñāpāramitā and Related Systems: Studies in Honor of Edward Conze*, p.364.

<sup>132</sup> See *Nagarjuna’s Moral Philosophy and Sinhala Buddhism*, Kalupahana, D.J., Colombo, 1995.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, p.31.

<sup>134</sup> *Saddhammopāyanaya*, ed. Pallegama Samita, Colombo, 1999, pp.74-76.

<sup>135</sup> See *Invitation to Enlightenment*, ed. Michael Hahn, Berkeley, CA, 1998.

## Advanced Temple Administrative System

According to the records that we have found in many sources it is clear that the practices of the Abhayagiri had been very popular among common people. At the very beginning, the Abhayagiri fraternity consisted of five monasteries and again king Vaṭṭagāminī added a cluster of attached-buildings to its headquarters;<sup>136</sup> and then it became a huge monastery complex consisting hundreds of buildings. We have discussed in the first chapter that in the later period several hundred buildings were added to the Abhayagiri monastery by many supporters. As it was expanded, the Abhayagiri Fraternity was divided into four institutions or *mūlas* (in Sinhala), namely Uttaramūla, Uturulu or Uturolu, Kapārāmūla, Kapuru, or Kappūra, Vādumūla or Vahadumūla, and Mahanettapāsādamūla or Mahanetpā. These *mūlas* or institutions were run as affiliated institutes but they had their own administrative systems. The Uttaramūla, which is the oldest and the most popular among them, was considered the headquarters of these institutions. *The Velaikkāra Tamil Inscription* of Polonnaruva supports this view. “*Mūlasthānamābhiya abhayagiri vihārattu agrāyatana nāma uttorul mūleyil*”.<sup>137</sup> Kulatunga assumes that the main reason for Uttaramūla to be placed the first among the four *mūlas* is that this particular ‘mūla’ possessed the Tooth Relic of the Buddha. He further says that by the time of receiving the Tooth Relic, the other *mūlas* did not exist. He quotes another inscription to show Uttaramūla’s headship among those *mūlas*. “*Uturumūla ayatān hā karanduva as kaḍā daḷadā sāmīn eḷiyaṭa vaḍā uturumūla aṭatān siṭi tān hā... boho denāṭa dakvanu isā*”.<sup>138</sup>

After shifting the capital to Polonnaruva, these *mūlas* still continued and even in the 15<sup>th</sup> century Uttaramūla and the Mahānettapāsādamūla were surviving. Information on these two *mūlas* are recoded in the literary works belonging to the Kotte period. Toṭagamuve Śrī Rāhula Mahāthera has declared that he is a grandson of Uttaramūla lineage. Nowadays this *mūla* system or ancient monastic administrative system in the Sinhalese *Sanṅha* has almost completely disappeared. But some features of this ancient

<sup>136</sup> Before adding a cluster of buildings to the Abhayagiri monastery, another four monasteries built in its vicinity by four generals of King Vaṭṭagāminī, had already offered to Mahātissa Thera and Hambugallaka Tissa Thera and these monasteries were affiliated to the Abhayagiri.

<sup>137</sup> See AP, p.22.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, p.23.

monastic tradition can be seen in Thai *Saṅgha* community.<sup>139</sup> A somewhat similar practice to this system is still continued in Mahāyāna Buddhist countries such as China, Korea, Japan and Taiwan.

After Dhammarucikās took over the Cetiyaḡiri monastery, these two monasteries, the Abhayagiri and the Cetiyaḡiri worked in cooperation and they had similar pattern of monastic administrative system. The two slab-inscriptions of King Mahinda IV found at the Cetiyaḡiri provide accounts in this regard. The first part of the inscription (A) says that the Abhayagiri and the Cetiyaḡiri follow the same rules and system descended from the ancient tradition.

... The Island of Laṅkā with his majestic effulgence – convened an assembly of the great community of monks resident in Sey-giri-vehera and Abahay-giri-vehera.

[At this assembly, His Majesty] conferred with competent persons as to the expediency of selecting such of the [monastic] rules as pleased him out of those [in force] at his own Abahay-giri-vehera and out of those formerly instituted as Sey-giri-vehera by his brother, the master of religious ceremonies, and of establishing the same at this vihāra also.<sup>140</sup>

According to the information found in this inscription the administrative system seems to be advanced and well organised. As seen from the Mihintalā inscription there was a management staff which consisted of 8 senior staff members and many other minor staff members. They have been assigned different jobs and responsibilities. The senior staff was as follows: The head of the monastery was designated as “*Nakābalana himi*”. This

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<sup>139</sup> In the present day, monasteries in Sri Lanka are becoming smaller and smaller and population of monks adversely decreasing. The number of the Saṅgha is limited to one or two in many monasteries. But a similar system to ancient temple administration is still being practised in Thailand. In huge monasteries, where a number of monks are dwelling, a well organised administrative system can be seen. The monastery is divided into several sections and according to numerical order each section is named as Section I, Section II and so on. In Thai language a section is named “Khaṇā” or “Ghaṇa” in Pāli, which means ‘community’. Khaṇā I, most probably, in which the abbot of the monastery lives, is considered as the main section in the monastery. Each section has a leader, who is responsible for leading the monks in that particular section, leading religious activities, communicating and working with the abbot with cooperation. There is a secretary monk named “Lekhā” for the whole monastery, whereas the abbot has an assistant secretary.

<sup>140</sup> *EZ*, Vol. I, pp.98-99.

implies that he was the overall supervisor or the leader, who looks after the *Nikāya* or the *Saṅgha* belonging to that particular monastery. Under him there were hundreds of staff members consisting of both monks and lay community. This shows that the administrative system was similar to that of an institute or an organisation in modern world. All the staff members were paid and there were rules, which they have to follow and obey. If they violate the rules, they were penalized, fined or sacked from their jobs.

We will examine in brief the above-mentioned monastic administrative system. The temple administrative system was introduced by the Buddha. In the Vinaya its initial features can be seen. Different positions and duties have been ascribed to monks by the Buddha, but no lay people were involved in it. The Abhayagiri system has gone further having lay officers, and also both *bhikkhu* and lay officers were paid for their jobs. The importance and responsibility of those duties is evident through the involvement of the king with this administration system. It is not monks but the king who made the rules and regulations to be followed by the staff and workers.

The major positions of the management committee, their duties and the payments are shown in the table below.

	Position	Duty	Remuneration
1	<i>Nakā balana himiyan</i> - the chief monk or the abbot of the monastery.	Supervising management committee	Obtains one <i>nāliya</i> * of raw rice per day. One <i>kaḷanda</i> <sup>141</sup> * and four <i>aka</i> * of gold for the opening ceremony of <i>vassa</i> and closing festival of <i>vassa</i> season.
2	<i>Veherpiruvahanuvā</i> - a lay officer who is the chief administrator	Administration	This is an honorary position held by an aristocratic person.
3	<i>Niyam jeṭu</i> - administrator of rules	Administration (of the market place)	Obtains five <i>kiriya</i> * of land for maintenance, as well as one <i>nāliya</i> * of raw rice

<sup>141</sup> Gunawardana (in RAP, pp. 104-105) states that it is three *kalaṇḍ* of gold and four *akas*, but according to the inscription it is one *kaḷand* and four *akas*. “*Nakā balana himiyaṇṭ davas patā sāl eknāliyak isā vasan baṇā ran ek kaland satar akak isā* EZ, Vol. I, p.94.

\*These are the different type of measurements of weight in ancient Sri Lanka.

			daily and fifteen <i>kaḷand*</i> of gold yearly.
4	<i>Ākāmiyā</i> - collector of the income <sup>142</sup>	Collecting income	Obtains five <i>kiri*</i> of land
5	<i>Pasak kāmiyā</i> - Accountant <sup>143</sup>	Accounting	Obtains five <i>kiri*</i> of land
6	<i>Veher leyā</i> - a head officer in the monastery.	Probably responsible for Nakā balana himiyan	Obtains five <i>kiri*</i> of land
7	<i>Karaṇḍ leyā</i> - protector of the relic casket or income	Protecting income	Obtains five <i>kiri*</i> of land
8	<i>Karaṇḍ atsamu</i> - in charge of the relic casket	Keeping the casket and its related jobs	Obtains one <i>kiri*</i> and two <i>paya*</i> one and half manā of rice daily.

Apart from those eight officers there were a large number of minor staff members and workers mentioned in the Mihintale (*Cetiyaḡiri, Sāḡiri*) inscription. The following table contains a list of such workers.

Title shown in the inscription	English translations of the titles
1. <i>Piṭissamak</i>	Three possible renderings have been suggested for this title. One who arranges outside affairs, scavenger, and the one who throws away dead flowers. <sup>144</sup>
2. <i>Oḷ-kāmiyā</i>	The servant who attends to matters arising in [connection with] the royal house. <sup>145</sup>
3. <i>Perevāliya</i>	The meaning of this title is not certain but suggests that he is the person who spreads clothes on the stone ceiling. Wickramasinghe does not accept that meaning. <sup>146</sup>
4. <i>Ālināvak</i>	The maestro musician <sup>147</sup>
5. <i>Āḷi ekaḷosak</i>	The Eleven musicians

<sup>142</sup> See *RAP*, p. 104, Gunawardana suggests this term but Wickramasinghe uses the term “principal workman” See *EZ*, Vol. I, p.101.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> For this designation also there are three renderings. See *EZ*, Vol. I, p.108.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Wickramasinghe (*EZ*, Vol. I) thinks that they are painters. But Gunawardana suggests that since painters are mentioned by the name “sittarak”, the name “ālinā” should be musicians.

6. <i>Vaṭ-nā vāri satarak</i>	Four servants or four goldsmiths <sup>148</sup>
7. <i>Atsam dejanak</i>	Receivers of the Vihāra revenue
8. <i>Koṭa-rākināvak</i>	Head caretaker of the granary
9. <i>Koṭa-rākiyak</i>	Caretaker of the granary
10. <i>Jeṭ-mavaṭ</i>	Old cleaner lady
11. <i>Bat-ge lādiyaṭ</i>	Warder of the refectory
12. <i>Mīṇḍi-vājāramak</i>	One who issues orders to slaves or female servants <sup>149</sup>
13. <i>Vaṭ-mīṇḍi-sū-visi janaku</i>	Twenty-four hired servants
14. <i>Sanvāli-upānikāmiyak</i>	The servant that attends to affairs at Sanvālla <sup>150</sup>
15. <i>Pisana salayin doḷos janak-hu</i>	Twelve cooks
16. <i>Salā-jeṭak</i>	Chef
17. <i>Dar nāṅgā bat pak salayak</i>	Servant who procures firewood and cooks food
18. <i>No pisā dar nāṅgū salayak</i>	Servant who procures firewood but not cook
19. <i>Gamanvar giya salayak</i>	Person who goes on errands
20. <i>Nāṅgū darā bat pak salayak</i>	Servant who cooks on firewood fetched by others
21. <i>Pahā-vāsi-jeṭak</i>	Chief attendants living in the monastery
22. <i>Pahā-vāsi ekaḷosak</i>	Eleven attendants living in the monastery
23. <i>Davas patā yalā pasak dena kumbal pas janak</i>	Five potters who supply pots everyday
24. <i>Mas mas patā pā dasayak hā kumbu dasayak dena pā-kumbalak</i>	Alms-bowl maker who supplies every month ten alms-bowls and ten water-pots
25. <i>Masakaṭ pārahānak dena pārahādīyak</i>	One who supplies water-strainer every month
26. <i>Vedak</i>	Physician
27. <i>Puhundā vedak</i>	Physician who applies leeches

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p.109.

<sup>149</sup> See EZ. Vol. I, p.109.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

28. <i>Maṇḍovuvā</i>	Person who prepares medical decoctions
29. <i>Nākāṭiyak</i>	Astrologer
30. <i>Nāvīyak</i>	Barber
31. <i>Dāge atsamak</i>	Keeper of the 'relic-house'
32. <i>Gaṇa-jeṭuvak</i>	Chief of the retinue
33. <i>Karand-leyak</i>	Registrar of shrines
34. <i>Var-jeṭu tun janak</i>	Three superintendents of service by turns
35. <i>Dummalassamṇaṭ</i>	Those who supply incense and flowers
36. <i>Dāge vaṭṭelaṭ me gāmin</i>	Those who supply wicks and oil for the 'relic-house'.
37. <i>Dāgehi heḷ-mal onā malvarde janak</i>	Two servants who place white lotuses in the 'relic-house'
38. <i>Masakaṭ ek-siya-ṣi bāgin mal dena maha-nel-govuvak</i>	Person who supplies 120 blue water-lilies per month
39. <i>Sittarak</i>	Painter
40. <i>Dāge raknā raṭ laduvak</i>	District headman who takes care of the relic chamber
41. <i>Maha-budun-gehi dummalassam sa janak</i>	Six servants who supply incense and flowers to the main shrine
42. <i>Baṇ-vajārana dāmīnaṭ</i>	The devotee who preaches
43. <i>Ādura dāmīnaṭ</i>	Devotee who is a teacher
44. <i>Damīn sa janak</i>	Six other devotees
45. <i>Maha-budun-gehi mal-varak</i>	Devotees who supply flowers to the main shrine hall
46. <i>Me gāmā dummalassam</i>	Devotees who supply incense and flowers live in this village
47. <i>Pūṇā kāmiyak</i>	Person who attend to the sacred pūṇā pot ceremony
48. <i>Kam assamak</i>	Person who officiating the monastery
49. <i>Dāgehi bud-bisovaṭ tel gannā ek poṭāk gannā</i>	Official who provides a cup to take oil for the relic house
50. <i>Vaḍu-maha-ādurak</i>	Master-artisan or master-carpenter
51. <i>Ādura-vaḍu de janak</i>	Two master-artisans
52. <i>Sir-vaḍu aṭṭjanak</i>	Eight carvers
53. <i>Uḷu-vaḍu de janak</i>	Two brick-layers
54. <i>Kaṭu-vaḍu de janak</i>	Two wood-cutters
55. <i>Mīṇir-maha-ādu de janak</i>	Two master-lapidaries
56. <i>Kambur de janak</i>	Two blacksmiths
57. <i>Sunu-balnaṭ</i>	Lime-burners
58. <i>Gālan sa janak</i>	Six cartmen
59. <i>Kam-navāmā kābili-jeṭak</i>	Overseer of workers
60. <i>Kābili dolos janak</i>	Twelve workers

61. <i>Sā-govuvan tun janak</i>	Three warders of the stūpa
62. <i>Dāgūb äy ämändä</i>	Person who sweeps the compound of the stūpa
63. <i>Dāgā raknaṭ</i>	Person who circumbulates the stūpa
64. <i>Dāgehi, piḷima gehi, bat gehi isā mehe-karana minisun</i>	Servants who work in the stupa chamber, shrine hall, and refectory
65. <i>Apulana radavun de janak-hu</i>	Two dhobies
66. <i>Man maha-var kulī malāṭṣī</i>	Hired servants to clean the roads and highways

When we examine the working group together with the management committee it is very clear how strong and well organised of the temple management system of the Abhayagiri fraternity had been. The organisation consisted of 74 different jobs involving a large number of workers. All are paid workers except the second officer, the Administrator of the monastery (*Veherpiruvahanuvā*). He rendered service on a voluntary basis in an honorary capacity. Undoubtedly the Cetiyaḡiri monastery must have been very dynamic and prosperous to handle all these activities systematically and efficiently.

According to the inscription the Abhayagiri monks and the Cetiyaḡiri monks worked in cooperation. The staff employed in different positions had its own uniform, including a hat or a turban.<sup>151</sup> The inscription reads as follows. “To the laundrymen who wash clothes, yellow robes for covering the body with, and head-vestments – to [all] these [servants], three *kiriya* [of land] in the village Maṅgulāva”.<sup>152</sup> To run the day to-day chores an efficient batch of minor workers were employed.

Apart from above mentioned titles, the inscription provides details about bhāṇakas or reciters of the *Tipiṭaka*. The interesting thing is that they also received monthly remunerations as other workers in the temple.<sup>153</sup> The *Abhidhamma Bhāṇakas* were paid more than the *Sutta Bhāṇakas* and *Vinaya Bhāṇakas*. The reason could be that there were not many Abhidhamma teachers and the Abhidhamma was considered profound and

<sup>151</sup> See title no. 65 in the above table.

<sup>152</sup> *EZ*, Vol. I, p.112.

<sup>153</sup> A similar system is still being practised in Thailand. Twice a month Thai monks assemble in the *Simā* and recite *Pātimokkha* together. The monk who recites *Pātimokkha* is paid by the monastery.

most difficult to be memorized. However, The *Abhidhamma Bhāṇakas* would have been fewer in number compared to other *bhāṇakas*. “To the monks, who reside in this *vihāra* and read the *Vinaya-piṭaka*, shall be assigned five *vasag* of food and raiment; to the monks who read the *Sutta-piṭaka*, seven *vasag*; and to the monks who read the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*, twelve *vasag*”.<sup>154</sup> The aim of this practice was to train scholar monks, who are well versed in the particular areas of Buddhism and also to continue the ancient practice of *bhāṇaka* tradition further. Abhayagiri produced many scholars and they have been praised and honoured with a great respect. According to Abhayagiri inscription<sup>155</sup> of Mahinda IV, many scholastic monks resided at the Abhayagiri monastery.

... Where dwell bands of scholars directing their wisdom to great literary works and adorning the Abhayuttara maha sā, just as a flight of *garuḍas* hovers with widespread wing over rows of serpents on the Himalayan range; which with resound of the voice of those versed in the scriptures.<sup>156</sup>

Various rules and regulations were set up by the monastery authority or by the kings regarding day to day practice, and monastic life of Abhayagirivāsīns.<sup>157</sup> However, our focus was on specific practices, which are relevant to our study.

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<sup>154</sup> *EZ*, Vol. I, p.100.

<sup>155</sup> This inscription had been wrongly identified as the ‘Jetavana inscription’ since the Abhayagiri and Jetavana stūpas were correctly identified only recently.

<sup>156</sup> *EZ*, Vol. I, p. 126.

<sup>157</sup> For more details please refer to *RAP*.

### Specific Religious and Secular Practices

Among many of the sacred objects and places in Sri Lanka, there are three items, which are considered the most sacred and venerated namely, the Tooth-relic in Kandy, the Sacred Bodhi Tree, and the Ratnamāli *Stūpa* in Anurādhapura. The Abhayagirivāsīns are credited as the custodians and the protectors of the Tooth-relic whereas the Mahāvihāravāsīns are credited as the protectors of the other two. The Tooth-relic of the Buddha is the most venerated and important relic in Sri Lanka as well as the Buddhist world. Sri Lankan Buddhists show honour and reverence to the Tooth-relic as a living Buddha. Originally the Abhayagirivāsīns were the custodians of both the Tooth-relic and the Bowl-relic of the Buddha.

His Majesty gave directions to Nuvarakal Deva Senavirattar and through him had the great Temple of the Tooth-relic built at Vijayarājapuram, otherwise called Pulanari [Polonnaruva]; and it became the permanent repository of the Tooth and the Bowl-relics of the Buddha [which are like unto] the crest gems of the Three Worlds (and which were) at Uttorūla-mūla, the chief fane at the Abhayagiri Mahāvihāra, the original place of deposit [of the relics]<sup>158</sup>

Even after the unification of the *Saṅgha*, these two relics were under custody of Uttaramūla of the Abhayagiri. The accounts found in the *Daḷadā Sīrita* proves this. “Having taken out the Tooth-relic after having opened the *Daḷadā* casket by the chief monk of the Uttaramūla in order to exhibit for the masses.”<sup>159</sup> Venerable Walpola Rahula expresses his view as follows. “The eye-tooth of the Buddha ... was the most important and precious of all Buddhist relics ever brought to Ceylon”<sup>160</sup> The *slab-inscription (No.1) of Mahinda IV* says that the Tooth Relic was considered as the crown of Anurādhapura kingdom. “He made a noble casket for the tooth relic of the King of Sages, like unto the crest jewel on the crown of Anurāpura ...”<sup>161</sup>

<sup>158</sup> EZ, Vol. II, p.254 (*Slab-inscription of the Velaikkāra*).

<sup>159</sup> AP, p. 23. “Uttaramūla ayatā hā karaṇḍuva as kaḍā daḷadā sāmīn eḷiyaṭa vadā uturumūla ayatān siṭi tān hā... boho denāṭa dakvanu isā”.

<sup>160</sup> HBC, p.280.

<sup>161</sup> EZ, I, p.228. “Anurāpura vuṭun sādu siḷ-muni-rad-hu vara daḷadā karaṇḍu karā...”.

It was the Abhayagirivāsīns who promoted the Tooth-relic as the living Buddha and also as a national palladium. What is more important is that the Abhayagirivāsīns were able to promote the belief that the Tooth Relic as the power behind the crown of Sri Lanka. The king's duty is to protect it as the symbol of Royal Power.

It is a well known fact that the Tooth Relic was regarded as a property of the state and the national palladium. In later times the possession of these two relics, namely, the Tooth and the Alms-bowl, was considered essential for a prince who wished to be the recognised king of Ceylon.<sup>162</sup>

After the last king was exiled from the country, no one was considered fit to reside in the royal palace except the Tooth-relic and it still resides there as the king of the country. During the colonial period it was the responsibility of British government to give full protection to the Tooth-relic. It is one of the conditions laid down in the Kandyan constitution. Even in modern times, the President must pay respect to the Tooth-relic before or immediately after he or she has taken an oath as the Head of the State.

The Abhayagirivāsīns introduced new religious and secular practices to Sri Lankan Buddhism. They were much concerned about the social consciousness of common people and took every possible step to come closer to the society. *Abhiṣeka Maṅgalya* (consecrating ceremony) is one of the special religious rituals that the Abhayagiri introduced to Sri Lankan culture. This has been a ritual practice since very ancient times, even in India. We know that King Dharmāśoka sent *abhiṣeka* items together with virgins to Sri Lankan King Devānampiyatissa to receive his *abhiṣeka* according to Buddhist way. In the Pāli commentarial literature several stories are found related to *abhiṣeka*, and also in the *Mahāvamsa*, accounts are found about *abhiṣeka* ceremony. Later time, probably, the Abhayagirivāsīns developed this practice making it a popular religious ritual.

For the first time in Sri Lankan history a Vaitulyavāda [Mahāyāna] style *abhiṣeka* was conducted by Saṅghamitta, a Vaitulyavāda monk, who came

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<sup>162</sup> See *HBC*, p.74.

to Sri Lanka during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E. He anointed King Mahāsenā, his patron, probably in the Indian Mahāyāna way. “...And to consecrate him as king, thera Saṅghamitta came thither from further coast, when he heard the time (of king Jetṭhatissa’s (261-271 C.E.) death). When he had carried out the consecration and the other ceremonies of various kind...”.<sup>163</sup> The *Vamsatthappakāsini* gives accounts of this ceremony and explains that it was done in the same way as it was conducted as King Vessavaṇa (Skt. Vaiśravaṇa). This consecration ceremony included bathing, make offerings and performing many great royal ceremonies in different ways.<sup>164</sup> This special practice was popular in the Sri Lankan royal families. The one who received such *abhiṣeka* was considered a very respectable and honoured person. After Bodhisattva king Saṅghabodhi donated his head to a poor man, the people from nearby villages came to see the bodies of the King and the Queen and expressed their feeling as follows. “People like us should not touch the body of the King and the Queen, who had received *abhiṣeka* ...”<sup>165</sup> The *Hatthavanagallavīhāravaṃsa* uses the Pāli word “*muddhāvasittena*” to designate the word “*abhiṣeka*”. The Pāli commentaries and sub-commentaries give the meaning of this special term. “*Muddhāvasittenāti tīhi saṅkhehi khattiyābhiṣekena muddhani abhisittenā’ti*”,<sup>166</sup> which means to consecrate a king using three conch-shells, golden, silver and gem sprinkling holy oil or water on the top of the head.<sup>167</sup>

There had been a very special image at the Abhayagiri monastery which is named the “*Abhiṣekavhaya*” (the *Abhiṣeka Buddha*). This is of much importance to Sri Lankan Buddhism, since it is a unique image of its kind. This image had been built exclusively for the performance of the *abhiṣeka* ceremony on the Buddha. This shows how much this particular practice had got rooted in ancient Sri Lanka, even making it necessarily to have a

<sup>163</sup> *Mv.* 37.1-3, p.267.

*Tassa rajjābhiṣekaṃ taṃ kāretuṃ paratīrato  
So saṅghamittatthero tu kālaṃ ṇātvā idhāgato  
Tassābhiṣekaṃ kāretvā aññaṃ kiccaṅcanekadā...*

<sup>164</sup> *Vsp.* 37. 3-4, p.548.

<sup>165</sup> *Samīpagāmaṃsino sannipatitvā muddhābhisittassa rañño ca mahesiyā ca sarīraṃ amhādisēhi phusituñca na yoggaṃ ...*” See *Hatthavanagallavīhāravaṃsa*.

<sup>166</sup> *Papañcasūdanī*, p.160. See also *Sīlakkhandhavagga Abhinavatīkā, Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyanā CD Rom* version 3.

<sup>167</sup> These are natural but a rare type of sea conch-shells, which are curved to right-side (*dakṣiṇāvṛta*) but decorated with gold, silver and gem. The *Sīlakkhandha Abhinavatīkā* gives more details and says that they are originally born in the sea. (*suvaṇṇamayasaṃmuddikadakkhiṇāvṛttasankhaṃ*).

separate Buddha image by the very name of the ceremony of “*abhiṣeka*”. King Dhātusena had offered an ornament to the *Abhiṣeka Buddha*<sup>168</sup> He also had set up sixteen bronze bathtubs, adorned the *Abiṣeka Buddha* image with royal costumes as a king and performed the *abhiṣeka*.<sup>169</sup>

A story mentioned in the *Mahāvamsa* shows that the people were much interested in performing an *abhiṣeka* ceremony for this Buddha image. The commander (*Senāpati*) named Migāra of King Kassapa, built a shrine hall for the above mentioned *Abhiṣeka Buddha* and asked permission of the king to perform a grand *abhiṣeka* ceremony to this particular image, even surpassing the ceremonies performed for the Great Stone Image at the Abhayagiri monastery. But he could not do that since the king did not grant permission. The commander was so keen to perform this ritual and he determined to do it under a rightful ruler. This story is important for two reasons; one is it explains about *abhiṣeka* ceremony and the second is that *Abhiṣeka Buddha* image had surpassed the popularity of the “*Mahāsilāpaṭimā*” (the Great Stone Buddha image), which had been greatly venerated from the very early period of Sri Lankan Buddhism.<sup>170</sup> However, this implies that new practices at the Abhayagiri had become more popular attracting people. The *Mahāvamsa* further explains that Migāra was able to fulfill his wish during the reign of King Moggallāna (497-515 C.E.), the successor of King Kassapa (479-497 C.E.): “And the Senāpati Migāra who had sent him reports in a fitting manner, instituted a dedication festival for *Abhiṣeka-Buddha* according to his desire”.<sup>171</sup> The Velaikkāra inscription of Polonnaruva explains that an *abhiṣeka* ceremony was held annually for the colossal stone Buddha image inside the Tooth Relic House. “It became also the auspicious house for [holding] the first anointment ceremony and Hall of Fragrance for the auspicious and colossal stone statue of the Holy Buddha, in which is held annually the ceremony of unloosening the sacred eyes (of the image) and applying collyrium to them”.<sup>172</sup>

<sup>168</sup> *Mv.* 38.67, p.36.

<sup>169</sup> See *Mahāvamsa* Sinhalese translation. Geiger translates “sixteen bronze bathtubs” as “sixteen bath maidens”. This must be due to scribal errors in the manuscripts. See Geiger’s note no. 4, *Mv.* 38.56, p.34.

<sup>170</sup> The *Mahāvamsa* records that this Stone Buddha was made during the time of King Devānampiyatissa at the Thūpārāma and later on it was transferred to different places by kings. Finally, it was placed at the Abhayagiri monastery by King Mahāsena.

<sup>171</sup> *Mv.* 39.40, p.47.

<sup>172</sup> *EZ*, II, p.254 (*Slab-inscription of the Velaikkāras*).

The Chinese records have immense value since they stand as authentic supportive evidence to prove the records of Sri Lankan historical accounts. The first Tantric master who went to China had received *abhiṣeka* from Dharmagupta<sup>173</sup> but in his biography no records were found to say that he consecrated anybody in China. Another Tantric master to arrive in China was Vajrabodhi, and he had erected altars for *abhiṣeka* ceremony at whatever monastery he stayed in China.<sup>174</sup> Subsequently, *abhiṣeka* ceremony became a very important event among Chinese emperors and high ranking officials in the Tang Dynasty Court, and they received *abhiṣeka* with a great respect and honour. Tu Hung-chien, the Assistant Secretary of the Imperial Secretariat, had received *abhiṣeka* from Vajrayāna master Vajrabodhi.<sup>175</sup> A Chinese monk named I-hsing himself had an altar and received *abhiṣeka* from Vajrabodhi. But still this practice was not popular among emperors. It became really popular within Royal Court Tang Dynasty in China after the arrival of Amoghavajra. It is said that Vajrabodhi imparted to him the method of *abhiṣeka*<sup>176</sup> but he received *abhiṣeka* in Sri Lanka under Samantabhadra at the Abhayagiri monastery<sup>177</sup> and he permitted Han-kuang, Hui-pien, and other disciples to receive *abhiṣeka* under same Ācārya.<sup>178</sup>

The biography of Amoghavajra further explains that after his arrival in Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese king and queen, together with the crown prince and ministers, bathed Amoghavajra everyday with fragrant water in the royal palace for a week. “The king himself bathed Amoghavajra daily, using a golden barrel full of fragrant waters. The crown prince, the queens and the ministers acted similarly.”<sup>179</sup> “Governor General of Tang Dynasty made an earnest request for *abhiṣeka*”.<sup>180</sup> The Emperor Ch’ien-yüan received the *abhiṣeka* of a cakravarti king (universal monarch) from Amoghavajra.<sup>181</sup> During the time of Emperor Tai-tsung when there was a chanting ceremony

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<sup>173</sup> “Tantrism in China”, (p.257) in *HJAS*, Vol.8, No.3/4. (Mar.1945), pp.241-332.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p.275.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, p.284.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, p.287.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p.285, See also *Study of Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, p.228.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, p.291.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, p.291.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.288-289.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, p.295.

at Hsing-shan monastery, the emperor had ordered the eunuch attendants, the ministers, and the commanders to attend the ceremony and receive *abhiṣeka*. It is recorded in Amoghavajra's biography that he was ordered by Emperor Hsüan-tsung to erect an altar for *abhiṣeka* and also said that the Emperor Su-tsung performed a *homa pūjā* and *abhiṣeka* in the palace.<sup>182</sup> On the evidence that we cited here, we can assume that the *abhiṣeka* ceremony became very popular in the Tang Dynasty Court after the arrival of Amoghavajra in China. Probably this would be due to the influence of Sri Lanka but not from India. If Amoghavajra had received *abhiṣeka* either in India or China it would have not been necessary for him and his followers to receive *abhiṣeka* again in Sri Lanka. Also we know that the Abhayagiri had a close relationship with Javanese Borobudur monastery. Within the vast architectural art works at the Borobudur monastery, there is a stone panel, which depicts a consecration of the Buddha by two devotees with water pots together with many devotees, who were represented holding various offering objects.<sup>183</sup>

The *Abhiṣekamaṇḍapa* or the *Abhiṣeka* pavilion, which is a very special type of building located on the left side of the entrance of the Abhayagiri *Stūpa* shows the prominence given to this ceremony at Abhayagiri. The specific features seen within this building have been explained as follows.

At the middle is a small enclosure on each side of which are two raised platforms with an entrance to each. These two may have used for depositing various items that were brought here for anointing. The water used for anointing was subsequently collected in the stone conduits, would have been used for various purposes as sacred water. At the foot of each platform are hollows carved out of the stone slabs, which were perhaps meant to place the pots of fragrant water used for anointing.<sup>184</sup>

Though there are enough records about consecration or *abhiṣeka* in other Buddhist countries, it is hard to find evidence about buildings, which had been built exclusively for purpose of performing *abhiṣeka*. So the Abhayagiri *Abhiṣeka Pavilion* could be a unique specimen of its kind.

<sup>182</sup> See "Tantrism in China", *HJAS*, Vol.8, No.3/4. (Mar.1945), pp.241-332.

<sup>183</sup> See *Buddhābhiṣeka Hā Nānumara Maṅgalyaya*, Wickramagama, 2002.

<sup>184</sup> *Abhayagiriya*, p.11.

Except for the Chinese records on Amoghavajra's and his followers' *abhiṣeka* ceremonies, which had been taken place in Sri Lanka, there is not much information found in Sri Lanka related to the *abhiṣeka* of monks. Fortunately, however, we have found one inscription, which explained something related to the *abhiṣeka* of a monk. The Buddhāhāla inscription is unique in this sense. "... *Nāgiriya vādavū harseyan vahanse vaḷandu anantarayen mekun vahanse abhiṣekayen daru buddhamitra ācāryān vahanse vaḷandanukoṭ isā.*"<sup>185</sup> "... Soon after the reverend Harsa [Harṣa], who built ... in the Sāgiri district and was the incumbent at Nāgiri, had enjoyed all this property, his son by sacred sprinkling [namely,] the reverend teacher, Buddhamitra shall enjoy the same".

In this inscription the two names mentioned "Harṣa" and "Buddhamitra" are not familiar names in the Theravāda, unlike in Mahāyāna. As we explained elsewhere, a Sinhala monk named Śakyamitra who was an expert in reciting *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* in China. Therefore, Buddhamitra in the Buddhāhāla inscription could be a Sri Lankan Mahāyāna monk such as Śakyamitra. On the other hand, since, the Buddhāhāla monastery belonged to the Abhayagiri fraternity, probably, these two *bhikṣūs* mentioned in the inscription could have been Mahāyāna monks. Commenting on the contents of the inscription Wickramasinghe expresses his opinion as follows.

The expression *abhiṣekayen daru*, 'son by sacred sprinkling', however, connotes the prevalence of certain Brahmanic or more likely northern Buddhist (*Mahāyāna*) rites not sanctioned by the southern Buddhist Church. The Vinaya rules, it is true, state that the preceptor (*upajjhāya*) ought to consider the pupil (*saddhivihārika*) as a son, but, so far I know, there are no rites to be performed in connection with the initiation of a pupil.<sup>186</sup>

Wickramasinghe's comment suggests that Buddhāhāla inscription talks about an *abhiṣeka* of a novice monk probably belonged to a non-Theravāda school. However, what is important here is that monks and novices had been consecrated in ancient Sri Lanka.

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<sup>185</sup> *EZ*, I, pp.195-199.

<sup>186</sup> *EZ*, Vol. I, p.192.

The strong influence of *abhiṣeka* on Sri Lankan Buddhist culture can still be seen in the *abhiṣeka* ceremonies (*nānumura maṅgalya*) held at the Srī Daḷadā Māligāva (the Temple of Tooth Relic) and the Srī Mahābodhi in Anurādhapura. The *abhiṣeka* ceremonies held at above mentioned places are similar to Mahāyāna *abhiṣeka* described in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* of Śāntideva. In the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 16 modes of offerings are explained and in the *Daḷadāpūjā* also there are 16 offerings included. 1. *abhiṣeka pūjā* (bathing), 2. *cīvara pūjā* (offering robes), 3. *nisīdana pūjā* (offering seats), 4. *candana pūjā* (offering sandalwood), 5. *puppha pūjā* (offering flowers), 6. *gandha pūjā* (offering incense), 7. *kappūra pūjā* (offering camphor), 8. *vijini pūjā* (offering fans), 9. *cāmara pūjā* (offering flywhisks), 10. *maṇi pūjā* (offering jems), 11. *yāgu pūjā* (offering porridge), 12. *āhāra pūjā* (offering food), 13. *vyañjana pūjā* (offering curries), 14. *pānīya udaka pūjā* (offering drinking water), 15. *bhesajja pūjā* (offering medicine), 16. *puppha pūjā* (offering flowers).<sup>187</sup> In the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* *abhiṣeka* and its corresponding offerings are described in the second chapter. Among these rituals, bathing the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, offering food and drinks, robes, flowers, garlands, perfumes, light, umbrellas, adorning bodhisattvas with various garments and ornaments, entrancing with songs and poems of praise, offering music and so on are described.<sup>188</sup>

The *Soḷasa Pūjā Gāthās* or “Sixteen Offering Verses” and the way of performing *abhiṣeka* at the Daḷadā Māligāva and the Sri Mahābodhi are very significant. The third verse is addressed to the Buddha as he is yet living. “O, the Blessed One, as far as Your *Sāsana* exists in the world, may You live so long, and accept our offerings out of the compassion towards world beings.”<sup>189</sup> The last *gāthā* of these 16 *gāthās* is also very important. This *gāthā* is very popular in Sri Lanka and it is recited after the every chanting ceremony. But we do not find it in the early Pāli literature. This *gāthā* is the Pāli copy of the original Sanskrit *śloka* found in the chapter 10 of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* of Śāntideva.

<sup>187</sup> *Buddhābhiṣeka Hā Nānumura Maṅgalyaya*, p.39.

<sup>188</sup> See *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 2. *śloka*s 11-20.

<sup>189</sup> *Buddhābhiṣeka Hā Nānumura Maṅgalyaya*, p.59.

“Yāvata bhagavā loke - tiṭṭheyya tavaśāsanam  
Tāva tatvāna gaṇhātu - pūjaṃ lokānukampayā”

Sanskrit version	Pāli version
<i>Devo varṣatu kālena</i>	<i>Devo vassatu kālena</i>
<i>Sasyasampattirastu ca</i>	<i>Sassa sampatti hetu ca</i>
<i>Sphīto bhavatu lokāśca</i>	<i>Pīto bhavatu loko ca</i>
<i>Rājā bhavatu dhārmikah</i> <sup>190</sup>	<i>Rājā bhavatu dhammiko</i>

The meaning of this Pāli *gāthā* and the Sanskrit *śloka* is the same. “May the rains fall in time and the harvest be bountiful. May the world be prosperous and the rulers be righteous.”<sup>191</sup>\* In all probability the Bodhicaryāvatāra is the source for this Pāli *gāthā*.

The process of the *abhiṣeka* at the Sri Daḷadā Māḷigāva and Srī Mahābodhi looks similar and some duties performed at those ceremonies remind us the way of paying reverence and respect for a living king.<sup>192</sup> The following items are used at Śrī Daḷadā Māḷigāva for *abhiṣeka*.

1. Three Robes (*ticīvara*)
2. Two mirrors
3. Fan
4. Flywhisk
5. Bell
6. *Āmalaka* vessel
7. Spittoon
8. Toothpicks
9. Golden pitcher (for pouring water to head)
10. Vessel (for bathing)
11. Vessel for fragrant ointment
12. Fragrant-oil vessel

These objects are similar to the objects used at Tibetan monasteries for their daily offerings to the Buddha. According to Tantric Buddhism these objects are very important and significant for Buddhist rituals. It is completely a Tantric practice to use a mirror to see the face after the *abhiṣeka*. The

<sup>190</sup> *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, Chapter 10, śloka 39.

<sup>191</sup> *Buddhist Rituals and Ceremonies: Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic in Sri Lanka*, p.50. \*However, Alan Wallace thinks that ‘devo’ means ‘a god’, probably the ‘the god of rain’, but it is a wrong translation. ‘Devo’ means rain but not ‘the god of rain’ or any other super power. Sri Lankan translation is: “Kalaṭa vāsi vaśīvā”, which means, “May the rains fall in time”.

<sup>192</sup> See *Buddhābhiṣeka Hā Nānumura Maṅgalyaya*, pp.29-38.

*Sarvatathāgata-tattva-saṃgraha Sūtra* gives advice that the student who receives *abhiṣeka* from the master should look at his face through a mirror. Therefore, using mirrors in the *abhiṣeka* ceremony in the Śrī Daḷadā Māligāva shows the influence of Tantric practice. From such features it is clear that *abhiṣeka* ceremony in Sri Lanka has been influenced by non-Theravāda Buddhist traditions such as Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna.

Every Wednesday and Saturday, an *abhiṣeka* ceremony is held at Śrī Daḷadā Māligāva in Kandy, Sri Lanka. Usually, the *abhiṣeka* ceremony at Śrī Mahābodhi is held on an auspicious day<sup>193</sup> between Sinhalese New Year and Vesak full moon day. In the evening of this particular day before the *abhiṣeka* ceremony all the Bodhi trees were adorned with red clothes and ornaments. The Jayaśrīmahā Bodhi Tree was draped with a valuable robe and adorned with ornaments. The upper compound was well swept in a decorative way. In the night soft drinks, flowers, incense, light and other offerings were offered to the Stūpa, Shrine Hall and the Bodhi Tree. All offering items were taken to those places in a palanquin. The items needed for performing for *abhiṣeka* were prepared. Normally, the *abhiṣeka* ceremony is conducted by the chief monk of the monastery. On this particular occasion also it was headed by him together with other resident monks. The following day the *abhiṣeka* was held. At the time it was performed all the doors and windows of the shrine hall were closed. Two drummers were playing at the main gate. They kept on beating drums until the doors and windows were open until the *abhiṣeka* is over. The *abhiṣeka* held at the Buddha image opposite of the Jayaśrīmahā Bodhi Tree was conducted according to the instruction of the “*Book of Sixteen Gāthās*”. First of all the Buddha was invited to accept the offering out of compassion towards of the world beings living as long as the *Buddhasāsana* exists in this world. Then fragrant ointment was applied on the image and *abhiṣeka* (bathing the image) performed.

The following *gāthā* was recited while bathing the image.

*Parissāvita suddhena suvaṇṇakalsambunā*  
*Sugandharasmisenābhisekaṃ munino kare*<sup>194</sup>

<sup>193</sup> The auspicious day or time is decided according to Astrology. It's a common practice in Sri Lanka to perform many religious and social ceremonies in an auspicious moment decided by an astrologer.

<sup>194</sup> *Buddhābhiṣeka Hā Nānumura Maṅgalyaya*, p.59.

The meaning is: “I do consecrate the Buddha with the filtered and purified fragrant water, which is in the golden pot.” After that image is wiped with a cheese-cloth and the Buddha is bathed in the way that Venerable Ānanda bathed the Buddha. After bathing, toothpicks and water are offered for washing the face. Though the *gāthā* says that the toothpicks, *Nāgalatā*<sup>195</sup> (Piper Betel) and water are from the Lake Anavatapta in the Himālayas, it has only a symbolic significance. After that water is poured to the Buddha’s hands signifying hand washing. Then Three Robes (*ticīvara*) are offered. After the offering robes, a seat is offered. Again the feet of the Buddha are washed, and sandalwood, followers, incense, camphor, fan, flywhisk, and music are offered in that order. The drinking water (*dakḥhiṇodaka*) is offered for washing the hands before having the meal. Porridge is offered next followed by solid food, curries and water. This is followed by the invitation to the Buddha for the meal. After sometime, the Buddha’s hands are washed. It implies that the Buddha has finished His meal. Then betel (*dāhāt*) and next flowers are offered. In this manner 16 offerings are offered in order. After finishing all these offerings, a humble request is made to the Buddha for forgiveness. This is followed by recitation of the stanza containing the wish: “May the rains fall in time and the harvest be bountiful. May the world be prosperous, and the rulers be righteous.”<sup>196</sup> This above discussed *abhiṣeka* is quite similar to the *abhiṣeka* explained in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. Hence, our conclusion is that even though *abhiṣeka* was practised within Theravāda Buddhist culture, Abhayagirivāsīns amalgamating Mahāyāna and Tantric features developed it as a special Buddhist ritual.

The Abhayagiri is also credited for the continuation of the most important and colorful Buddhist religious pageant in Sri Lanka. That is the *Daḷadā Perahāra* or otherwise known as Kandy *Perahāra*. The Kandy *Perahāra*, which colourfully highlights cultural features, presents a heart-captivating panoramic view of Sri Lankan culture. One and half millennium years earlier, the Abhayagiri fraternity organized the “*Daḷadā Pageant*” to honour the Tooth Relic. We are fortunate to have an eye witness account of this

<sup>195</sup> See *A Sanskrit English Dictionary*, Monnier Monnier Williams.

<sup>196</sup> See footnote 191. The corresponding *gāthā* of this wish is very popular in Sri Lanka, at least it is recited on National Radio and Television two times a day before commencement of their programmes and the transmission is off.

historical event, which was held 1500 years ago. The great Chinese Buddhist pilgrim of the fifth century C.E., Fa-Xian, who was a visitor at the Abhayagiri, provides this invaluable record. Fa-Xian explains that ten days before the Tooth Relic exhibition at the Abhayagiri Monastery, the king sends a messenger adorned with royal attire, mounted on a large elephant that is caparisoned, and proclaims that people who like to acquire merit can clean and decorate roads and avenues, gather mass of various flowers and incense to offer to the Tooth Relic. Again the king gets the Jātaka stories of the Buddha painted and set up in the Abhayagiri monastery. Those paintings are attractive and appear like living figures.

After this the tooth of Buddha is brought forth, and is carried along in the middle of the road. Everywhere on the way of offerings are presented to it, and thus it arrives at the hall of Buddha in the Abhayagiri-vihāra. There monks and laics are collected in crowds. They burn incense, light lamps, and perform all the prescribed services, day and night without ceasing, till ninety days have been completed, when (the tooth) is returned to the vihāra within the city.<sup>197</sup>

Apart from the Daladā Perahāra, the Abhayagiri introduced veneration of the *Dharmadhātu*<sup>198</sup> and performing a pageant in its honour. Probably the Abhayagiri had practised this much earlier before *Dharmadhātu* came to Sri Lanka, during the time of King Silākāla (526-539 C.E.). That is the reason why the Abhayagiri gave advice to the Sāgalīyas (Jetavana monks) explaining the importance of the *Dharmadhātu* in many ways, despite the Sāgalīyas being reluctant to accept it. Finally, the Abhayagirivāsīns were able to make the Sāgalīyas agree with the Abhayagiri view of worshiping the *Dharmadhātu*. If the Abhayagiri did not practice *Dharmadhātu* worship, there is no point for them to make Sāgalīyas worship it. However, King Silākāla venerated *Dharmadhātu* and held a grand pageant to honour it and announced that it's a duty of the king to continue this practice. The Mahāvihāra was very angry with the King's attitude and the *Mahāvamsa* and the *Nikāyasamgrahaya* severely criticised King Silākāla as a foolish king.

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<sup>197</sup> ARBK, pp.106-107.

<sup>198</sup> "Dharmadhātu" means Mahāyāna texts. See the *Niks*.

The *Mahāvamsa* records that after the twelfth year of King Silākāla, a Sri Lankan merchant brought the *Dharmadhātu* from Kāsipura or Vārānasī to Sri Lanka. The *Nikāyasaṃgrahaya* explains that he offered it to the king as a gift. However the King being foolish and incapable of distinguishing what is the true Dharma received this gift with a ceremony in the same way a moth reached the flame without knowing its danger. According to the accounts of the *Nikāyasaṃgrahaya* after *Dharmadhātu* arrived again Mahāyāna Buddhism again started to spread in the Island, in spite of being suppressed three times before this.

The Vaitulyavāda came to Sri Lanka but was reduced to ashes (*bhaṣmībhūta*) by early kings. After 852 years elapsed from the establishment of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and when 1008 years from the parinirvāṇa of the Buddha, elapsed, this Vaitulyavāda has been believed by ignorant generations in this island since the *Dharmadhātu* was brought here by a merchant called Pūrṇa during the reign of King Ambaheṛaṇa Salamevan [Silākāla].<sup>199</sup>

The King placed it in a special house near the royal palace and paid his reverence with a great honour and wanted to take it over to the Jetavana monastery to have a festival, and he declared that this festival should be held by future kings too.<sup>200</sup> The *Nikāyasaṃgrahaya* provides greater details on this issue and says *Dharmadhātu* means texts belonging to Vaitulyavāda heretics, which is the old Sri Lankan usage means Mahāyāna. The *Nikāyasaṃgrahaya* criticises both the King and Abhayagirivāsīns and also Sāgalīyas for accepting the words of Abhayagiri heretics.

Sāgalīyas, having heard that monks who accepted the Vaitulyavāda were punished by ancient kings, were reluctant to worship the Vaitulyavāda. At that time, the Abhayagirivāsīns made them agreeable to worship to the *Dharmadhātu* after talking, in the same manner that vilest people cheat youngsters by giving beetles instead *damba* fruits as both beetles and

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<sup>199</sup> *Niks*, p.21

<sup>200</sup> See *Mahāvamsa* 41. 37-41, p.55.

*daṃba* fruits appear same in colour.<sup>201</sup> In this manner, the Dharmadhātu was venerated by Sāgalīyas.<sup>202</sup>

Though the later Mahāvihāra sources explained the episode in that manner, this king's support would have led to a grand ceremony and people probably enthusiastically accepted it. That would be the reason why the *Nikāyasamgrahaya* further emphasises that “however, the Mahāvihāravāsīns and the majority of the population of Anuradhapura did not worship it.”<sup>203</sup> The *Dharmadhātu* would not have been one book or a simple work; it could have been a series of Mahāyāna literature. The golden plates, which are named as “*Jetavana Ran Banapota*” (the *Golden Dharma Text of the Jetavana Monastery*), found by archaeological excavations at the Jetavana monastery, would be a part of this *Dharmadhātu*. Because these Sanskrit *sūtric* fragments have been written on golden plates in Sinhalese scripts, they are very significant for two reasons; the high esteem and respect the Mahāyāna sūtras were shown in ancient Sri Lanka, and as well Srī Lankan contributions to preservation of Mahāyāna literature, at least up to a certain point. At a later time the Mahāvihāra could not escape being influenced by the popular practice of worshipping *Dharmadhātu*. So in the course of time, when the Mahāyāna and the Vajrayāna practices began to influence Sinhala culture, Mahāvihāra introduced “*Dhammadhātu*” to the public, venerating and respecting them in the same way the Abhayagiri and the Jetavana fraternities did. The *Mahāvamsa* explains that King Kassapa (913-923 C.E.) got the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* written down on golden plates and held festivals and processions with a great pomp and honour.

He had the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka* written on tablets of gold, the book *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, adorned with all kinds of jewels, and having built a splendid temple in the midst of the town he placed the book in it and caused festival processions to be held for it... Every year the king had town festively decorated as the town of the gods, and surrounded by his decked-out army, resplendent as the King of the gods in all his royal robes, riding on the back of his elephant, he marched through the streets of

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<sup>201</sup> Daṃba is a kind of berry in dark purple colour something looks like black olive. In India it is called Jamun (Indian Blackberry).

<sup>202</sup> *Niks*, p.20.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid*.

the town and brought with great pomp (that book containing) the summary of the true doctrine to the vihāra built by himself.<sup>204</sup>

The *Saddharmaratnākaraya*, a Sinhalese Buddhist book of legends further proves our point when it reads that idea that the *Dharmadhātu* was even deposited in the *stūpas* for veneration in the same way Buddha's relics are enshrined.<sup>205</sup> The *Pūjāvāliya* and the *Jātaka* books were also venerated after their composition. But the *Visuddhimagga*, the greatest work added by the Theravādins to the Pāli Buddhism, was not venerated or respected by organising festivals or processions when it was handed over to the Mahāvihāra by Buddhaghosa. This can be explained easily because that practice of dharmadhātu worship was not that in-vogue here. According to the *Mahāvamsa* the *Dharmadhātu* was introduced to Sri Lanka at least 100 years after the composition of the *Visuddhimagga*. So, it is very clear that the Abhayagiri started the *Dharmadhātu pūjā* and the Mahāvihāra adopted this practice in the course of time. Some features of this practice are being still continued in Sri Lanka and Dharma books are venerated with a great honour. Sri Lankan Buddhists pay honour to the *Tripitaka* in the same manner they pay homage to the Buddha and the *Saṅgha*. When they venerate the Triple Gem, there is a phrase which says: "All the time I pay homage to the *Dhamma*, which belongs to the past, the future and the present. I do not have any other refuge except the *Dhamma*. By the power of this truth, may victory be with me".<sup>206</sup> So, the Dharma is considered here as a living thing in triporial period of times same as the *Dharmakāya* of Mahāyāna teaching.

*Pirit* chanting is one of the religious practices that prevailed from the very beginning of Sri Lankan Buddhism. This practice became the most important as well as the most popular ritual in the day to day life of Sri Lankan Buddhists. The Abhayagirivāsīns had realised this correctly and they added some other Buddhist chantings and their related rituals to Sri Lanka *Pirit* chanting practice. Doing so, they promoted the *Pirit* chanting introducing *mantras* and *yantras* too as a part of it. As a religious practice

<sup>204</sup> *Mv.* 52, 50-56, p.167.

<sup>205</sup> Please refer to the chapter four of this book.

<sup>206</sup> *Ye ca dhammā atītā ca ye ca dhammā anāgatā puccuppannācaye dhammā ahaṃ vandāmi sabbadā. Natthi me saraṇaṃ aññaṃ dhammo me saraṇaṃ varaṃ. Etena sacca vajjena hotu me jayamaṅgalaṃ.*

chanting Pirit has become part and parcel of religious practices of Sri Lankan Buddhists. It is being practised even in this modern era as it was centuries ago. What is very significant is *Pirit* chanting is that it has greatly influenced the secular life too. Most of the minor *Parittas* are used as spells and also for secular purposes such as assuring success in different undertakings and gaining material prosperity. Therefore, not only in religious aspects but also secular aspects, *Pirit* plays an important role even in modern Sri Lankan Buddhist society. When we examine the *Piruvāṇāpotvahanse* (the *Great Book of Protective Blessings*) that is in vogue in Sri Lanka, it appears that at least many of the minor *Parittas* included in it could be compositions of the followers of the Abhayagiri fraternity or display non-Theravāda influence, because many *Parittas* have been greatly influenced by Tantric formulas.<sup>207</sup>

Bodhisattva worship in Sri Lanka is also a new trend that the Abhayagirivāsīns introduced to Sri Lankan Buddhism. It has been greatly influencing Sri Lankan culture from the mid-Anuradhapura period. As a result of this practice many Bodhisattva statues had been erected in the Island. The Bahumaṅgala Cetiya of the Abhayagiri monastery is very important and it could have been a sacred place for worshipping Bodhisattvas and consecrating the Buddha images.<sup>208</sup> Finally, by the time of 10<sup>th</sup> century there was a thought circulated in Sri Lanka, to the effect that “none but the Bodhisattvas could become kings of prosperous Lanka ...”<sup>209</sup> (*Siri lakhi no bohosat-hu no raj-vanhayi...*)<sup>210</sup>. Because of this special prophecy many works attached to Bodhisattva cult based on the Bodhisattva biography of Gotama Buddha have been composed. The *Muvadeudāvata* (based on *Makhādeva Jātaka*), the *Sasadāvata* (based on *Sasa Jātaka*) the *Kusadāvata* (based *Kusa Jātaka*) the *Guttila Kāvya* (based *Guttila Jātaka*), the *Kāvyaśekharaya* (based *Sattubhatta Jātaka*), and the *Pūjāvalīya*, which explains the importance of aspiring the Buddhahood as the final goal instead of seeking *nirvāṇa* through *arahantaship*, have been composed. What is evident from all those is most of the practices introduced by Abhayagiri have been at least surreptitiously adopted by Mahāvihāra in the later period.

<sup>207</sup> Four details, please, refer to the last part of the chapter four.

<sup>208</sup> Please refer to the chapter three of this book.

<sup>209</sup> *EZ*, Vol. I, p.240.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid*, p.237.

### The Multifaceted Activities of the Abhayagiri Fraternity

The arts and architecture we find in the Abhayagiri-precincts show some unique characteristics of creativity. The oldest and the most beautiful Buddha images in Sri Lanka are also found at the Abhayagiri. Seated Buddha images like the world-famous Samādhi Buddha are exclusively exquisite masterpieces of Abhayagiri. Industrial works, such as ceramic, pottery, iron and gold, have also been introduced. The biggest man-made pond, which is six times bigger than a modern Olympic swimming pool, is also found within the precincts of the Abhayagiri. The most beautiful, well designed and exquisitely decorated ponds in Sri Lanka are found at the Abhayagiri monastery. In brief, according to new archaeological excavations by the Abhayagiri Project, the monastery had its own mint for gold coins among many other factories, such as iron, copper and also glazed-tiles. These few examples alone give us a clear idea of the multifaceted role played by this celebrated monastery.

When we consider the multifaceted activities of the Abhayagiri fraternity, the creative potentiality of the Abhayagirivāsīns seems to be very advanced, possessing a technology of higher standard. The exemplary standard reached by the educational institutes (*mūlas*) affiliated to it are remarkable, for those institutes were highly recognised both locally and internationally. Some scholars believe that the Abhayagiri is credited with the introduction of the Buddha image to the world. The oldest Buddhist sites such as Bhārut and Sānchi do not have Buddha images within their reliquaries. Sri Lankan scholars such as venerable K. Vanaratana,<sup>211</sup> venerable Walpola Rahula,<sup>212</sup> Devendra<sup>213</sup> and Siri Gunasinghe<sup>214</sup> are of the view that the Buddha image was introduced to the world by Sri Lankans. These scholars presented this view based on the records of the *Mahāvamsa*, which explains that during the time of King Devānampiyatissa a Buddha image was sculpted from a stone, which is called Silābuddha. This image was transferred from Thūpārāma to other places by different kings and finally, King Mahāsena

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<sup>211</sup> *Lakdiva Budupīlimaya*, p.9.

<sup>212</sup> *HBC*, pp. 122-124.

<sup>213</sup> *Classical Sinhalese Sculpture* 300 B.C.- 1000 A.D., p.1.

<sup>214</sup> "Ceylon and Buddha Image in the Round", *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. XIX, p. 258.

brought it to the Abhayagiri. Even according to the research of Schroeder, the oldest Buddha image in Sri Lanka is found at the Abhayagiri.<sup>215</sup>

Fa-Xian was fascinated by the serene and elegant look of the Buddha image of the Abhayagiri and he records that its appearance of solemn dignity is beyond words of expression.<sup>216</sup> Probably, this image could be the image of the Ratnapāsāda of the Abhayagiri. He explains about another Buddha image which is located under the Bodhi Tree of the Abhayagiri. “Beneath the tree there has been built a vihāra, in which there is an image (of Buddha) seated, which the monks and commonality reverence and look up to without ever becoming wearied”.<sup>217</sup> It is true that the Samādhi Statues of the Abhayagiri, Toḷuvila<sup>218</sup> and the seated Buddha of Paṅkuliya<sup>219</sup> are masterpieces among the Abhayagiri images and can pacify the mind of any person by their peaceful and serene appearance.<sup>220</sup> One of the colossal standing Buddha images in Sri Lanka is Avukana, and this also represents the refined artistic talents of the Abhayagiri tradition.

The infinite Buddhas in the caves of Dambulla Vihāra<sup>221</sup> also show the artistic features of the Abhayagiri tradition. The Sīgiri *Apsarā* portraits are also said to represent the paintings of the Abhayagiri tradition. The Mahāvihāra was against King Sīgiri Kāśyapa but Abhayagiri appreciated his great effort of making Sīgiri a magnificent palace providing a glory for Sri Lankan arts. We discussed in the second chapter that abbot of the Abhayagiri gave instructions to the King Kāśyapa when he faced financial difficulties while building Sīgiri. Fa-Xian’s record and inscriptions from the Abhayagiri and Mihintale refer to other instances that show the contribution it made. Fa-Xian records that the paintings of *Jātaka* stories at the Abhayagiri during the Tooth Relic exhibition almost looked like living

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<sup>215</sup> *Buddhist Sculptures of Sri Lanka*, p.98 ff.

<sup>216</sup> *ARBK*, p.102.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid*, p.104.

<sup>218</sup> This colossal samādhi Buddha image is located in Colombo museum.

<sup>219</sup> This image can be taken as the most beautiful Buddha image in Sri Lanka and it shows the highest degree of the creativity of ancient Sri Lankan sculptor. Chandra Wickramagama says that it is the highest creativity among the Buddha image in Sri Lanka. See *Ape Saṃskṛtika Urumaya*, p.121.

<sup>220</sup> The late Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru has said that he found solace by looking at a photograph of the image [Samādhi Buddha of the Abhayagiri] during his period of imprisonment by the British. See *Abhayagiri*, p.35.

<sup>221</sup> Chandra Wickramagama thinks that the Daṃbulla Vihāra belongs to the Abhayagiri fraternity. See *Ape Saṃskṛtika Urumaya*, Vol. I, p.119.

figures. The paintings of the Sīgiri are also belonged to the 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E., the period in which Fa-Xian lived in Sri Lanka. The Mihintale slab-inscriptions of King Mahinda IV (975-991 C.E.)<sup>222</sup> provide accounts of the painters (*sittarak*) of the monastery and the remunerations they received for their services. Some scholars say that it is the Abhayagiri that promoted many artistic works in Sri Lanka. The reason for this is that the Mahāvihāra did not show much interest in these fields, perhaps because indulgence in such areas was considered a hindrance to the attainment of the goal that ending samsāric dukkha. The Abhayagiri technology of making Buddha images went to Indonesia too. Many Buddha images found in the precinct of the Borodudur show the influence of the Abhayagiri arts. The preaching posture which shows living features of the Buddha seems to be very popular among the different postures of the Buddha images of the Abhayagiri.

The so called Second and the Third Samādhi Buddha images<sup>223</sup> and the Paṅkuliya image represent this specific style. Instead of representing samādhi posture, the Abhayagiri introduced new style of images which represent the preaching posture of the Buddha. The preaching gesture, being more dynamic and lively, seems to have greatly appealed to feelings of ordinary devotees.

Besides the Buddha images, other artistic works of the Abhayagiri are of very high artistic creativity. The most beautiful two Moonstones found in Sri Lanka are located in the precincts of the Abhayagiri. These exquisitely carved moonstones are found at the foot of the steps leading to a Pañcāvāsa building, presently known as Mahāsena's palace (Mahasen Māḷigaya) in front of the building which is named as Queen's Palace (Bisomāḷigaya).<sup>224</sup> The guardstone<sup>225</sup> at the entrance of the Ratnapāsāda, the Chapter House of the Abhayagiri is the most artistic and beautiful art work of its kind found in Sri Lanka. Unfortunately, only one of these two guardstones is remaining while its counterpart is missing.

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<sup>222</sup> For details see Advance Temple Administration System in this chapter.

<sup>223</sup> These images are erroneously named as Samādhi images, but they represent the gesture of preaching.

<sup>224</sup> See the AVA, p.29.

<sup>225</sup> The rectangular blocks of stone which stand on each side of the steps at the entrance to ancient Buddhist shrines in Ceylon are widely called Guardstones. See D.T. Devendra "The Symbol of the Sinhalese Guardstone", *Artibus Asiae*, Vol.21, No.3/4, 1958, pp.259-268.

According to archaeological findings the most exquisite building in ancient Sri Lanka was the Ratnaprāsāda or the Jewel Mansion, which was the Chapter House (*Uposathāghara*) of the Abhayagiri. This was built by King Malutisa (Kaṇiṭṭhatissa, 165-193 C.E.). King Mahinda II (787-807 C.E.) renovated this building and gave it a majestic and grand look. Even the writer of the *Mahāvamsa* seems to have been fascinated and delighted with its excellent appearance. The *Mahāvamsa* records: “Then the wealthy (prince) having built at a cost of three hundred thousand (*kahāpanas*) the superb, many-storeyed *Ratanaprāsāda*, like a second *Vejayanta*”.<sup>226</sup>

The irrigation system of the Abhayagiri is not second to any local or international monastery. There are more than 30 ponds found at the Abhayagiri. This aspect itself speaks for its uniqueness. These ponds not only served the needs of the monastery but also added beauty to it, while bringing a cool atmosphere. Among those ponds there are two large ones. The biggest one is the Elephant Pond (*Āt Pokuṇa*): at 160m long and 54m wide is six times bigger than a modern Olympic swimming pool. There are three conduits through which water was supplied to the pond from two other water tanks, namely the Basavakkulama and the Periyankulama located in the shorter distance from the *Āt Pokuṇa*. It is said that one conduit still functions even when the Periyakulama tank is full.<sup>227</sup> Among the thousands of ponds in ancient Sri Lankan monasteries, the ones which are most beautiful as well as of excellent workmanship are to be found at Abhayagiri. The Twin Ponds are indeed a marvellous creation. The most outstanding Twin Ponds is located in the Kapārāmūla of the Abhayagiri and it is believed that this pond has been built by King Aggabodhi I (564-598 C.E.).<sup>228</sup>

The *Mahāvamsa* tells us that during the time of the King Mahāsena the Abhayagiri Vihāra was stately to see.<sup>229</sup> Again, explaining about the Ratnapāsāda it says that this building looked like the *Vaijayanta Prāsāda* of Śakra.<sup>230</sup> Fa-Xian’s records about the image house clearly shows that

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<sup>226</sup> *Mv.* 48.136, p.123. The Vejayanta or the Vaijayanta in celestial abode of God Śakra.

<sup>227</sup> *AVA*, p.44.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>229</sup> *Mv.* 37.16, p.268.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.* 48.136, p.123.

Abhayagiri was rich and affluent, possessing precious items and enormous wealth.

By the side of the tope he further built a monastery, called the Abhayagiri, where there are (now) five thousand monks. There is a hall of Buddha, adorned with carved and inlaid work of gold and silver, and rich in the seven precious substances, in which there is an image (of Buddha) in green jade, more than twenty cubits in height, glittering all over with those substances, and having an appearance of solemn dignity which words cannot express. In the palm of the right hand there is a priceless pearl.<sup>231</sup>

Fa-Xian further recorded that the Abhayagiri treasure house was full of gems and precious items. Monasteries got rich and had priceless maṇīs and gems. Once a king, having seen this wealth, developed a stealthy feeling and felt guilty about his craving and confessed to monks and urged them not to show the treasure house to any future king or any member of the Saṅgha community who has not passed 40 *vassas*.<sup>232</sup>

Several foundries, both temporary and permanent, have been discovered at the Abhayagiri. These foundries would have supplied instruments and different metal accessories needed for constructions and also for daily needs. Since Sri Lanka is an agricultural country, the instruments for farming were necessary. These foundries may have supplied some of these. Not only a foundry but also a gold-factory has been discovered. 5 gold ingots, 22 gold coins, 8 moulds, as well as jewelries have been found. Kulatunga says that these gold ingots and coins had been found in the pond located near the refectory of the Abhayagiri.<sup>233</sup> The goldsmith's workshop has been discovered adjacent to the western bank of this pond. The weight of each gold ingot has been marked in Sinhalese character belonged to the 9<sup>th</sup> century C.E. These ingots are in different weights; from the biggest one to the smallest one their weights are 438g, 400g, 384g, 381g, and 370g. Altogether the weight of those gold ingots is nearly 2 Kg. For what reason they were used for and for what reason they were put into the pond? We

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<sup>231</sup> ARBK, p.102.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., p.104.

<sup>233</sup> AVA, p.55.

have to find answer for this. After excavation of the Jantāghara near by the aforesaid pond, archaeologists determined that this building was destroyed by fire. Kulatunga reminds us just after King Sena 1 (846-866 C.E.) ascended the throne, the Pāṇḍyan ruler, Māraśrī Vallabha with an army attacked Anuradhapura and plundered all the precious wealth of the city and the returned to India.<sup>234</sup> The *Mahāvamsa* records that they plundered all the precious items of the Abhayagiri including the golden image of the Ratnaprāsāda and the gem-eyes of the Silābuddha. Probably during this unexpected attacked, those gold ingots and other golden items must have been thrown into the pond for safe keeping.

The jewelleryes such as necklaces, bangles, and anklets show the craftsmanship of the ancient Sri Lankan goldsmiths. Kulatunga thinks that these jewelries must have been used to decorate Bodhisattva statues. But the most significant findings among gold items are gold coins and their moulds. It is a puzzle for us why these coins have been made in the monastery. We do not know whether the ancient kings had given permission for people to make money for the state. Whether the Abhayagiri also had been given such permission to supply money to the state is a question to be investigated.

The recently discovered paint factory and glazed tiles prove that the Abhayagiri had produced glaze in their own factory. Kulatunga says: “Roofs of the buildings to the monastery were covered with glaze tiles. There are also clay utensils with a glaze finish. There is sufficient evidence that such glaze was prepared here [at the Abhayagiri glaze production centre]”.<sup>235</sup> Experiments show that the components of the glaze of those tiles are very much similar to the glaze found in China. This shows the close relation they cultivated with China. Nowhere in the world is this type of glaze found, except in China. The Abhayagiri may have imported the glaze from China and painted the tiles in their own factory.<sup>236</sup>

However, there remains a question unanswered. We do not know whether the productions of these factories in the monastery were limited to cater to the needs of the monastery or it catered to the needs of the public. One of the main objectives of the Abhayagiri fraternity is to promote a close

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<sup>234</sup> See *AP*, p.71.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, p.50.

<sup>236</sup> See *SP*, Vol. 3, 2001 July-September, pp.30-36.

relationship between the monastery and the people. Therefore, Abhayagirivāsīns had taken every possible effort to win the hearts of the people. As a bhikkhu community who went beyond the traditional framework, they sacrificed their lives from the beginning for the wellbeing of Buddhism and as well as for progress of the society. To achieve their goals the Abhayagirvāsīns gradually introduced multifaceted activities to the monastic and rendered better service to the society. The recently unearthed archaeological findings vividly speak about this past glory that had been lying hidden under the soil for one thousand year.

## Chapter Three:

### Bodhisattva Concept in the Early Phase of Sri Lankan Buddhism

It is quite obvious that the Mahāvihāra and the Abhayagiri unanimously accepted the Pāli *Tipiṭaka* as authoritative texts, yet the latter stepped further in accepting some non-Theravāda teachings including Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna, which are completely different from the ideological stance of the Mahāvihāra. Historical evidence clearly shows that Mahāyāna Buddhism had played an extensive role in Sri Lanka during the 3<sup>rd</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> century C.E. This chapter will explore the implications of the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva ideal in Sri Lankan Buddhist thought during the late part of the first millennium. The aspiration of individual enlightenment is not a new ideal for Theravāda but the aspiration of supreme enlightenment of all sentient beings is less pronounced in the Theravāda. Our attempt is to highlight this deviation between the Mahāvihāra and the Abhayagiri fraternities. This study is based on historical evidence, literary sources, ancient inscriptions and some selected liturgical sources. A recently discovered inscription found in the Abhayagiri precincts is extremely important in terms of the religious goal of the Abhayagirivāsīns. This chapter will firstly try to give a brief account of Bodhisattva ideal in the early phase of Sri Lankan Buddhism;<sup>1</sup> secondly present a discussion of the Bodhisattva ideal in the Island after the arrival of Mahāyāna Buddhism; and thirdly, it will discuss the Abhayagiri fraternity and the universally applied Bodhisattva path.

As far as Buddhism's ultimate liberation is concerned, the Bodhisattva path is recognised in a high esteem as the supreme practice both in Theravāda and Mahāyāna. While Theravāda recommends three entries for the enlightenment, Mahāyāna prefers to advocate only the Bodhisattva practice as the unique path to free oneself from Saṃsāra. Buddhaghosa defines the term Bodhisattva as follows. “*Bodhimā satto bodhisatto, ñāṇavā paññavā*

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<sup>1</sup> The early phase of Sri Lankan Buddhism can be traced back to the period of its arrival in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.E. up to 3<sup>th</sup> century C.E. before arrival of Mahāyāna Buddhism (Vaitulyavāda).

*paṇḍitoti attho*”.<sup>2</sup> Bodhisattva means ‘the being who is attached to the *Bodhi* (enlightenment) and is knowledgeable, wise and erudite’. Here our attempt is not to make a study of the Bodhisattva ideal in Mahāyāna or Theravāda but to discuss the practice and development of *Bodhicitta* in Sri Lankan Buddhism with special reference to the Abhayagiri fraternity.

Scholars like venerable Walpola Rahula<sup>3</sup> and Samuel<sup>4</sup> have made their contribution regarding the Bodhisattva ideal in Theravāda Buddhism. Both scholars have referred to Theravāda literature and also Theravāda countries such as Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand to highlight their view about the Bodhisattva ideal in Theravāda Buddhism. Even though both scholars have discussed this particular issue with regard to Sri Lanka, they haven’t paid much attention to explaining when and how this idea really came into vogue and evolved to be a new trend in the Island. It seems that the main attempt of both scholars is to highlight the Bodhisattva ideal in Theravāda, emphasising the fact that it is a well-known and practical notion among Theravādins but not a new concept introduced by Mahāyānists. Samuel has referred to the three great Mahāyāna Masters, namely Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga and Candrakīrti, who had denied the existence of the Bodhisattva ideology in Theravāda.<sup>5</sup> He further argues that the path is opened to any one who desires Buddhahood in Theravāda.<sup>6</sup> Peter Skilling has shown three types of bodhisattva namely, *ugghaṭitaññū*, *vipañcitaññū* and *neyya* in Theravāda Tradition in Burma.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Sāratthappakāsinī* I, PTS, p.356. (Vol II, p.21)

Bodhi is knowledge; a being endowed with bodhi is a bodhisatta, a knowing one, a wise one, a sagely one. For from the time he forms his aspiration at the feet of former Buddhas, that being is always wise, never a blind fool. Or else, just as a mature lotus that has been risen up above the water and is due to blossom when touched by the sun’s rays is called “an awakening lotus”, so a being who has obtained the prediction (to future Buddhahood) from the Buddhas and who will inevitably fulfill the perfections (*pāramī*) and attain enlightenment is called an awakening being (*bujjhanasatta*); he is a bodhisatta. One who lives yearning for enlightenment – the knowledge of the four paths – is devoted to, attached to enlightenment (*bodhiyaṃ satto āsatto*); he is a bodhisatta. *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha – A New Translation* by Bhikkhu Bodhi, Vol. I, note 12, p.728.

<sup>3</sup> “Bodhisattva Ideal in Buddhism”, *Gems of Buddhist Wisdom*, pp. 461-471.

<sup>4</sup> *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 47, Number 3, July 1997, pp. 399-416.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> “Three Types of Bodhisatta in Theravādin Tradition: A Bibliographical Excursion”, *Buddhist and Indian Studies in Honour of Professor Sodo Mori*, 2002, Nagoya, Japan, pp. 91-102.

Ratnayaka has done a comprehensive study on the Bodhisattva Ideal of Theravāda.<sup>8</sup> He has scanned a number of primary and secondary sources explaining the Bodhisattva ideal in Theravāda. His work also seems to be somewhat similar to Samuel's. Dohanian, in his work "The Mahāyāna Buddhist Sculpture of Ceylon"<sup>9</sup> has indicated some inscriptions which refer to the devotional aspiration of Buddhahood by the ancient Sri Lankans as supportive evidence to show that Mahāyāna Buddhism was practised in the Island. Goonatilake in her work "The Impact of Some Mahāyāna Concepts on Sinhalese Buddhism"<sup>10</sup> has also discussed the topic in brief. I will not reiterate what has already been pointed out in the existing works; rather our attempt is somewhat different from previous works as we confine ourselves to make a comprehensive study of how this unique practice gradually came to be injected into Sri Lankan Buddhist thought until it developed to the very same level of Mahāyāna Buddhism with a universally applicable notion of *bodhicitta*.

Though the Bodhisattva ideal was not a new concept for Sri Lankans, the practice of aspiring for Buddhahood as a common ideal cannot be seen in the early phase of Sri Lankan Buddhism. Sri Lankan Pāli commentaries and the *Mahāvamsa*, were composed in the 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E.<sup>11</sup> But the *Dīpavamsa*, the oldest chronicle of the Island, is said to have been composed in the 4<sup>th</sup> century C.E., or earlier<sup>12</sup>. Numerous ancient inscriptions which belonged to early Anurādhapura period have been found, but nowhere can we find any information about Bodhisattvas or the aspiration of the Buddhahood. This clearly shows that the practice of the Bodhisattva ideal was not popular in ancient Sri Lanka though it was extant in the Theravāda scriptures. With the influence of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the

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<sup>8</sup> See "The Bodhisattva Ideal of Theravāda", Ratnayake, *Journal of International Association of Buddhist Studies*, Vol.8, pp. 85-110, 1985.

<sup>9</sup> See *The Mahāyāna Buddhist Sculpture of Ceylon*, Diran Kavork Dohanian, Garland Publishing, Inc., New York & London, 1977.

<sup>10</sup> See *The Impact of Some Mahāyāna Concepts on Sinhalese Buddhism*, unpublished PhD Dissertation by Goonatilake, S. A. H., submitted to SOAS, 1974.

<sup>11</sup> If Bodhisattva practice prevailed in Sri Lanka before 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E., it would have been mentioned there. But we find information about Bodhisattva practice after only 4<sup>th</sup> century C.E. Pāli commentaries are the translations of ancient Sinhalese commentaries. The *Mahāvamsa* is also a translation of *Sīhalatthakathā Mahāvamsa*. See The Introduction to the *Vamsatthappakāsīnī, The commentary on the Mahāvamsa*, Vol. I, by G.P. Malalasekera, Published for the Pāli Text Society, Oxford University Press, London, 1935.

<sup>12</sup> See Introduction of the *Dīpavamsa* by Hermann Oldenberg, Third AES Reprint, Asian Educational Service, New Delhi, 2001.

Bodhisattva ideal came to be a popular practice both within monastic and lay communities. In order to justify my standpoint in this paper I will utilise some historical records, liturgical evidence epigraphical artifacts and literary sources.

If one makes a thorough study of Sri Lankan Buddhist history, he might clearly understand that the Bodhisattva ideal is less pronounced there. In the 5th century C.E., for the first time, the Maitreya Buddha is mentioned in the *Mahāvamsa* around two centuries after the arrival of the Mahāyāna Buddhism in Sri Lanka. .

The great king Duṭṭhagāmiṇī, he who is worthy of the name of king, will be the first disciple of the sublime Metteyya, the king's father (will be) his father and the mother his mother. The younger brother Saddhātissa will be his second disciple, but Sāliyarājakumāra, the king's son, will be the son of the sublime Metteyya.<sup>13</sup>

King Duṭṭhagāmiṇī is the hero of the *Mahāvamsa* and his mother Vihāramahādevī is the heroine there. Therefore, they have been upgraded to a higher position in the lay Buddhist community in Sri Lanka, showing that they are worthy of respect. Since none of them has been treated as a Bodhisattva, it is clear that in the early phase of Sri Lankan Buddhism up 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E., the practice of the Bodhisattva ideal was not popular. But one of the very pious and righteous kings in ancient Sri Lanka named Sirisaṅghabodhi (252-254 C.E.) has been treated as a Bodhisattva and a specific epithet '*Mahāsatta*' (Skt. *Mahāsattva*, the great being) is designated to him.<sup>14</sup> He is the first ever Bodhisattva mentioned in Sri Lankan history apart from Maitreya Bodhisattva. The word *Mahāsatta* is frequently used in Theravāda commentaries to signify a Bodhisattva. It is significant in the sense that this epithet has been used for king Saṅghabodhi, who lived in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E. That is a unique occurrence in the *Mahāvamsa*. In Mahāyāna Buddhism,<sup>15</sup> the two words '*Bodhisattva Mahāsatta*' are used

<sup>13</sup> *Mv.* 32, 81-83, p.227.

<sup>14</sup> Later in the 13<sup>th</sup> century C.E., a chronicle named *Hatthavanagalla-vihāravamsa* was composed to explain this king's Bodhisattva life. See *Hatthavanagalla-vihāravamsa*, Hazelwood, A, PTS, 1986.

<sup>15</sup> According to the *Mahāvamsa*, the Mahāyāna Buddhism came to Sri Lanka during the time of king Vohārikatissa (215-237 C.E.) The *Mahāvamsa* named this teaching as Vetullavāda (Skt. Vaitulyavāda). Buddhaghosa used the term 'Mahāsuññavāda' to identify it. The *Dīpavamsa* called it 'Vitaṇḍavāda.

together in relation to Bodhisattvas. It is the only occasion in which this specific usage “*bodhisatto mahāsatto*”<sup>16</sup> is found in Pāli commentaries and that is in connection with the Bodhisattva life of Kassapa Buddha and the Dīpaṅkara Buddha in the *Madhuratthavilāsini*<sup>17</sup>, the commentary to the *Buddhavaṃsa*,<sup>18</sup> which was composed at Kāvīrapaṭṭanam by Buddhadatta, a contemporary of Buddhaghosa. The Venerable Saṅghamitra, the champion of Sri Lankan Mahāyāna movement, also came to Sri Lanka from Kāvīrapaṭṭhanam.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, this particular word ‘*Mahāsatta*’ used for king Saṅghabodhi in the *Mahāvāṃsa* could possibly be a result of the influence of the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva practice, which had been adopted by the Abhayagiri. The Mahāvihāravāsīns had never used this epithet before referring to any personage other than the Gautama Bodhisattva and the twenty three previous Buddhas.

Another significant occurrence in the *Madhuratthavilāsini*<sup>20</sup> and the *Sumaṅgalavilāsini*<sup>21</sup> is the omniscience status of Bodhisattvas. According to the Theravāda view, no Bodhisattva is regarded as an omniscient being but for the Mahāyāna, they are omniscient bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, Ākāśagarbha, Kṣitigarbha, and so on. Turning back to our argument, which we stated above, the aforementioned two commentaries have used the term “*sabbaññubodhisattesu*”, which means ‘in the omniscience bodhisattvas’. This specific usage could have come to Theravāda literature as a result of Mahāyāna influence. Though the term “*sabbaññū sabbadassāvī*” has been found in the Pāli canon, every time it has been utilised referring to the Buddha and His contemporary religious figures such as Nāthaputta and Pūrṇakāśyapa. Nowhere has it been used to refer to any Bodhisattva.

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Scholars like Paranavitana, Kern and venerable Walpola Rahula accept Vaitulyavāda means nothing but Mahāyāna Buddhism. According to the Abhidharmasamuccaya, Vaidalya and Vaitulya denote the same thing. Vaitullya is defined by him [Asaṅga] as Bodhisattva Piṭaka. [*Abhidharmasamuccaya*, ed. Pradhan, Santiniketan, 1950, p.79]. See *HBC*.

<sup>16</sup> Its accusative case “*bodhisattaṃ mahāsattaṃ*” has been used twice in this story.

<sup>17</sup> *Atha bodhisatto mahāsatto paṭhaviyaṃ patiṭṭhahitvā devadattaṃ arahattaddhajaṃādāya pabbaji.*, *Madhuratthavilāsini*, PTS, p.263.

<sup>18</sup> *Buddhavaṃsa* is a Theravāda canonical text belonging to the *Khuddaka Nikāya*. In this text the Theravāda Bodhisattva Ideal was developed to the greatest extent.

<sup>19</sup> Ceylon bhikkhūs who were in exile in Kāveri became intimately connected with a powerful and able young monk named Saṅghamitra, who later became the champion of Mahāyānism in Ceylon, See *HBC*, p.94.

<sup>20</sup> *Madhuratthavilāsini*, p.79.

<sup>21</sup> *Sumaṅgalavilāsini*, PTS II, p.412.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E. the great Pāli commentator, Buddhaghosa arrived in Sri Lanka, where his first work, the *Visuddhimagga*, was composed. The Mahāvihāra monks were extremely happy about this great work and exclaimed that certainly he must be the Maitreya Bodhisattva. The *Cūlavamsa* reports: “then the community, satisfied and exceedingly well pleased, cried again and again: “without doubt this is Metteyya!”<sup>22</sup> Mahāvihāravāsīns did not accept Buddhaghosa as a new Bodhisattva but treated him as the Maitreya Bodhisattva, the unique future Bodhisattva mentioned in the Theravāda literature. But Buddhaghosa has made a vow to become an arahant in the *Sāsana* of Maitreya Buddha.<sup>23</sup> However, the above mentioned story tells us something about the view of the Mahāvihāra towards the Bodhisattva ideal. That means until the 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E. they haven’t recognised any other future Bodhisattva except Maitreya. The aspiration of Bodhisattvahood is also for those who are wise and well versed in the *Dhamma*. In addition, Buddhaghosa’s own definition of Bodhisattva<sup>24</sup> signifies that Bodhisattva is a rare type of being who had made a vow to fulfill the ten perfections at the feet of former Buddhas and who had obtained the prediction for future Buddhahood from them. But when we turn to the Bodhisattva ideal in Mahāyāna Buddhism, it is apparent that this has been oversimplified and it is not necessary to make a vow at the feet of the Buddhas and to have their prediction. This newly introduced system has been practised in Sri Lanka since Mahāyāna Buddhism was introduced to the Island.

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<sup>22</sup> *Cv.* 37, 242-243, p. 26.

<sup>23</sup> See *Vsm.*, p. 838. ... “And having in my last life seen Metteyya, Lord of Sages, Highest of persons in the world ...” See also *EHBC*, p.153.

<sup>24</sup> Refer to footnote 2 of this chapter.

### The Development of the Bodhisattva Ideal in the Mid-Anuradhapura Period

After Mahāyāna Buddhism had been introduced to Sri Lanka, the Bodhisattva ideal developed and spread rapidly in the Sri Lankan culture. Many Bodhisattva statues were constructed in various places on the island and the people were fascinated by the Bodhisattva ideal. The Mahāyāna Bodhisattva worship got amalgamated into the Sri Lankan Buddhist culture after the third century C.E. The inscription found in Tiriyāya and the Mahāyāna *Trikāyastava* Inscription at Mihintale are very important regarding this practice. Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuvāḥ (Mañjuśrī or Mañjughoṣa) and some other Bodhisattvas are venerated by their names in the Tiriyāi inscription.<sup>25</sup> The *Trikāyastava* Inscription at Mihintale clearly shows the worship of the Three Bodies of the Buddha. Paranavitana has translated these *ślokas* and the last strophe of the each *śloka* is as below.

I worship that incomparable Dharmakāya of the Buddhas  
which, though not one is also not many...

I here do worship that Sambhogakāya of the Buddhas which is  
transcendental and unthinkable...

I worship, by all sorts of means, that Nirmānakāya of the  
Buddhas which, for the purpose of ripening [the intellect of]  
beings...<sup>26</sup>

Paranavitana also mentions that this work has been inscribed by a monk who aspired to the Buddhahood. “These verses cannot, however, be fully read and the name of the person is not preserved; but he seems to have been a monk who aspired to Buddhahood, for in one verse we can read *bhikṣurbodhisattvo guṇākarah*”.

<sup>25</sup> *Śilālekhaṇa Samgraha* V, pp. 110-11.

*Makuṭa maṇi kṛta sphuṭa mahāmuni bimbadharo – nivasati yatra siddha sura kinnara pūjyatamaḥ  
Guruvaralokiteśvara iti prathito bhagavān – tadaharar namāmi girikaṇḍika caityamaham  
Munirapi mañjuvāḥ madanadoṣa viśādaharah - kaṇaka vibhūsaṇo (jva)la vicitragātra rucir  
Niyatamupeti yatra sukumāra tanurbhagavān – tadahamapi pranau girikaṇḍika caityamvaram*

<sup>26</sup> *EZ*, Vol. IV, p.245.

*...Vande pratyātama-vedaṃ taṃ ahaṃ anupamam dharmakāyaṃ jinānāṃ  
...Vande sambhogakāyaṃ taṃ ahaṃ iha mahā-dharma-rājyā-pratiṣṭhāṃ  
...Vande nirmāṇa-kāyan-daśa-dig-anu-gatan taṃ mahārthaṃ munī-nāṃ*

Sri Lankan Theravāda monks do not worship Bodhisattvas since bodhisattvas are not ordained ones. Still this phenomenon is continued in Sri Lankan monastic tradition. Recently Peter Skilling has found interesting quotation from Tibetan sources, which says that Abhayagiri monks worshiped lay Bodhisattvas. The *Tarkajvāla* is Bhavya's auto-commentary to the *Madhyamakahrādaya-kārikā*. The fourth chapter of the *Tarkajvāla*, *Śrāvakatattvāvātāra* provides various information on *Śrāvaka* schools. Skilling says:

The Abhayagiri citation occurs in the context of Bhavya's response to the connection that monks should not honour or worship a layman, that is an unordained bodhisattva. He [Bhavya] states that "in the texts of most of the eighteen schools (*nikāya*), it is clearly stated that a bodhisattva should be honoured" and goes on to cite examples from the scriptures of seventeen schools. Of these, the Abhayagiri citation is seven.<sup>27</sup>

Skilling has quoted Bhavya and shown the following citation. "‘*phags pa gnas brtan pa' jigs med ri la gnas pa rnam kyī sañs rgyas kyī rigs khri ñis ston*: "the Twelve-thousand lineage of the Buddhas of the Ārya sthavira Abhayagirivāsins".<sup>28</sup> One of the translations of Skilling from the Tibetan verses of above mentioned citation is quoted below.

The Buddha's son, the bodhisatta,  
Should be honoured by all the world (*loka*):  
[he is] limitless in wisdom (*paññā*),  
Virtue (*sīla*), and the wisdom of liberation (*paññāvimutti*).<sup>29</sup>

The *Madhuratthavilāsini*<sup>30</sup> gives accounts that Dīpaṅkara Buddha together with 400,000 Arahantas worshiped Bodhisatta Sumedha offering him

<sup>27</sup> "A Citation from the Buddhavaṃsa of the Abhayagiri School" *JPTS*, Vol.XVIII, 1983, pp. 165-175.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Dīpaṅkaradasabalo bodhisattaṃ mahāsattaṃ pasamsitvā aṭṭhahi pupphamuṭṭhīhi pūjetvā padakkhiṇaṃ katvā pakkāmi. Tepi catusatasahassā khūṇāsavā bodhisattaṃ pupphehi ca gandhehi ca pūjetvā padakkhiṇaṃ katvā pakkamimsu. Devamanussā pana tatheva pūjetvā vanditvā pakkamimsu. Buddhavaṃsa*, PTS, p.94.

jasmine flowers, whereas the *Buddhavaṃsa*<sup>31</sup> mentions that only arahantas (*jinaputtā*) worshiped him but not Dīpaṅkara Buddha. The *Saddharmaratnākaraya* and the *Pūjāvaliya* too explain that Dīpaṅkara Buddha and arahantas offered flowers to ascetic Sumedha. “At that time Omniscience Dīpaṅkara offered flowers [to ascetic Sumedha] by His own hands. Four hundred thousand arahantas, who accompanied Dīpaṅkara Buddha, also offered flowers [to him] one after the other”.<sup>32</sup> The *Pūjāvaliya* describes this story as follows. “Then [Dīpaṅkara] Buddha, with compassion, without stepping on the bodhisattva’s back, which won’t be shown to the Māra in future [go beyond Māra’s domain], encircled the Bodhisattva Sumedha thrice and offered him with eight lumps of jasmine flowers and left. Four hundred thousand arahantas also offered him four hundred thousand jasmine flowers and left.”<sup>33</sup>

Turning to the *Mahāvamsa* some accounts can be quoted regarding the Bodhisattva practice in ancient Sri Lanka. Prince Jetthatissa II, the younger son of king Mahāsena<sup>34</sup>, who was said to be the first Mahāyāna king<sup>35</sup> in Sri Lanka, carved a fascinating Bodhisattva image from ivory. “At his father’s request he made a beautiful charming figure representing the Bodhisattva, as beautiful as if it had been produced by miraculous power.”<sup>36</sup> This story is very important for us in terms of sculpting Bodhisattva images in Sri Lanka. It happened about 500 years after the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka. From the beginning there was no such kind of practice in Sri Lankan Buddhist culture.<sup>37</sup> In the 5<sup>th</sup> century king Dhātusena (463-479 C.E.) got

<sup>31</sup> *Ye tatthāsuṃ jinaputtā, padakkhiṇamakamsu, maṃ devā manussā asurā ca, abhivādetvāna pakkamuṃ, Buddhavaṃsa*, p.10.

<sup>32</sup> *Sdrk*, p.84. “*Ekalhi dīpaṅkara sarvajñāyan vahanse taman vahansege śrī hastayen ma mal pūjā koṭa vaḍi seka. Passehi vaḍina sāralakṣayak rahatun vahanseda, va nena ma mal atul pudā vadisekayi.*

<sup>33</sup> *Pūjāvaliya*, p.24.

<sup>34</sup> King Mahāsena openly accepted Mahāyāna Buddhism. According to one of his inscriptions found at Jetavana monastery, which was built by him, the Mahāvihāra monks have been accused for splitting the Saṅgha and also for not accepting Vaitullyavāda (the word used here for Mahāyāna Buddhism is Vayatūdalaka). The inscription reveals that the king had tried to say that Mahāyāna Buddhism teaches the true teaching. See *EZ*, Vol. IV, pp. 273-285. As the result of king’s enforcing Mahāvihāravāsīns to accept the new teaching, they left the Mahāvihāra and then the monastery was a deserted place for nine years. See, *Mv*. 37.

<sup>35</sup> “Abhayagiri Sampradāya” by Wickramagama, C., *Ape Saṃskṛtika Urumaya*, p.113.

<sup>36</sup> *Cv*. 37, 102-103, p.9.

<sup>37</sup> For Mahāyānist Bodhisattvas are same as Buddhas. For instance, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva already has attained the Supreme Enlightenment but still he appears in a form of a Bodhisattva in order to help numerous beings representing as a Bodhisattva.

made several Bodhisattva figures at the Bahumaṅgalacetiya of the Abhayagiri Monastery.

He erected Bodhisatta figures and ... also he had the ornament described above made for the Buddha image known as *Abhiṣeka* and Bodhisatta temple on the left side of the Bodhi Tree. For the (Metteyya) Bodhisattva he had the complete equipment of a king prepared and ordained a guard...<sup>38</sup>

Mudiyanse affirms that these Bodhisattva images must be Mahāyānist. “Theravādins reckon Maitreya as the only Bodhisattva and therefore these images of Bodhisattva might have been of Mahāyānist origin to a large extent.”<sup>39</sup> Commenting on the *Abhiṣeka* Buddha venerable K. Vanaratana says that this image is a representation of Vajragarbha Bodhisattva who is mentioned in the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* of the Mahāsaṅghikas.<sup>40</sup> But the logic behind this statement is not clear.

The construction of the Bodhisattva images became a popular practice as colossal images were built in the same way as constructing massive *stūpas* in the Island. A statue of Maitreya Bodhisattva, 15 cubits tall, was erected by King Aggabodhi IV.<sup>41</sup> Again we find several Bodhisattva images made by king Sena II (866-901 C.E.), who is also accredited to have got constructed the building named Maṇimekhalā-pāsāda, together with several Bodhisattva images and a shrine.<sup>42</sup>

*The Buddhist Sculptures of Sri Lanka*<sup>43</sup> shows several hundreds of bodhisattva statues in Sri Lanka, especially the images of the most popular Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Together with a colossal Buddha image of Amitābha Buddha,<sup>44</sup> which is the tallest Buddha image in Sri Lanka (50 feet), there are six Mahāyāna figures at Buduruvagala<sup>45</sup> in Wellavāya,

<sup>38</sup> Cv. 38, 65-69, p.36.

<sup>39</sup> MMC, p.55.

<sup>40</sup> *Lakdiva Budupīlimaya*, p.85.

<sup>41</sup> Cv. 45, 62, p.95.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 48, 77, p.154, (Sinhalese tr.) Geiger’s translation for this stanza is different from the Sinhalese.

<sup>43</sup> See *Buddhist Sculptures of Sri Lanka* by Ulrich Von Schroeder.

<sup>44</sup> *Lakdiva Budupīlimaya*, p.176.

<sup>45</sup> There are two sets of Bodhisattva images each set consists of three figures. One set represents Avalokiteśvara with his śakti Tārā and his attendant Sudhanakumāra. The other set represents Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya and Vajrapāṇi.

Southern Sri Lanka and the world's highest lithic Bodhisattva image (33 feet) at Dambegoda<sup>46</sup> and a well preserved colossal Avalokiteśvara image of Kuṣṭarājagala (12 feet)<sup>47</sup> also from Southern Sri Lanka, provide sufficient evidence to understand the popularity of the Bodhisattva practice in medieval Lanka. A very special miniature Bodhisattva image is found in northern Sri Lanka, Tiriyāi where Vajrayāna Buddhism had been widely practised. The image represents Ādibuddha or Vajradhara. "The elaborately worked *jaṭāmaḥa* is decorated with a representation of the five Tathāgatas: Akṣobhya, Amitābha, Amoghasiddhi, Ratnasambhava and Vairocana."<sup>48</sup> According to our discussion we can understand that by the time of mid-Anuradhapura period the Bodhisattva ideal had become more popular among the islanders and naturally the Bodhisattva practice amalgamated into Sri Lankan culture as a new trend.

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<sup>46</sup> See *Buddhist Sculptures in Ceylon* by Ulrich Von Schroeder.

<sup>47</sup> In the headdress of this image four miniature Dhyānī Buddhas can be seen, two images in front (one above the other) and two on left and right. See "A search for Mahāyāna in Sri Lanka", *JIAS*, Vol.22, Number 2, 1999.

<sup>48</sup> *Buddhist Sculptures in Sri Lanka*, p.232.

## The Practice of Bodhisattva Path and Universally Applied Bodhicitta

The main objective of the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvāṃsa* was to explain the history of Buddhism and the great dynasties in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the chroniclers paid special attention to the royal families and their personalities and activities. In this regard the *Mahāvāṃsa* is extremely important as it provides accounts of the aspiration of the Buddhahood by ancient Sri Lankan kings. If we inquire into this in greater detail, it becomes clear that this practice was particularly adopted by many Sri Lankan kings like Nissamkamalla (1187-1196 C.E.), who openly declared that he wished to attain the Buddhahood.

I will show myself in my [true] body which is endowed with benevolent regard for and attachment to the virtuous qualities of a bodhisattva king, who like a parent, protects the world and the religion<sup>49</sup>

Later on a new idea came to prevail in Sri Lanka, which emphasised that “none but Bodhisattva would become king of prosperous Lanka.”<sup>50</sup> Referring to this special statement Dohanian expressed his view as follows: “By the tenth century, the monks of the Abhayagirivihāra had come to hold as an idea of faith the notion that every king of Ceylon was a Bodhisattva”.<sup>51</sup> He came to this view because the aforementioned inscription was found at the Abhayagiri precincts. Schroeder also has expressed a view similar to Dohanian’s. He says that “It has to be realised that not all rulers were considered worthy of the Bodhisattva status, which was restricted to those who endorsed in particular the Abhayagirivāsīns.”<sup>52</sup>

King Buddhadāsa, who lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> century C.E., is attributed with Bodhisattva qualities, which are somewhat similar to the wishes of Śāntideva in *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> “The Bodhisattva Ideal in Theravāda ...”, by Samuels, *Philosophy East and West*, Vol.47, Number 3, pp.399-416,. See also *EZ*, Vol.II, p.76.

<sup>50</sup> Being a Bodhisattva King Mahinda made this statement in the inscription which has been found in the precinct of the Abhayagiri Monastery.

<sup>51</sup> *The Mahāyāna Sculptures of Ceylon*, p.25.

<sup>52</sup> *Buddhist Sculptures of Sri Lanka*, p.209.

<sup>53</sup> See *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, chapter 3.

The Ruler lived openly before the people the life that Bodhisattas lead and had pity filled the wishes of the poor by gifts of money, those of the rich by protecting their property and their life. Great in discernment he treated the good with winning friendliness, the wicked with sternness, the sick with remedies.<sup>54</sup>

King Upatissa also lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> century is said to have practised the ten *pāramitās* (perfections) and other wholesome deeds. *Pāramitās* or perfections are practised by Bodhisattvas. Therefore, he should be a Bodhisattva whose aspiration was the Buddhahood. "... He practised the ten meritorious works; the king fulfilled the ten royal duties and the ten *pāramitās*,"<sup>55\*</sup>

King Dhātusena too aspired Buddhahood according to the Sinhalese translation of the *Mahāvamsa*. With the aspiration for the Buddhahood he instituted a special *Bodhipūjā* festival similar to the one conducted by King Devānampiyatissa.<sup>56</sup> It is said that King Aggabodhi I (564-598 C.E.) also aspired Buddhahood and conducted himself as a Bodhisattva. Since his life was full of good human qualities, the author of the *Cūlavamsa* seemed to have been very much inspired by his character. Therefore, the *Cūlavamsa* credited him as follows.

Aggabodhi the highly favoured of fortune, sisters son of King Mahānāga, now became king whose aspiration was the attainment of the highest enlightenment. In splendour imitating the sun, in charm the moon with full disk, in steadfastness the

<sup>54</sup> Cv. 37, 109-111, p.10.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 179-180, p.17. \* "The ten "meritorious works" (*puññakiriyavatthu*) are *dāna* "giving of alms", *sīla* "leading a moral life", *bhāvanā* "spiritual discipline", *apaciti* "reverence", *veyyāvacca* "diligence", *pattianuppādāna* "transference of one's own merits to another", *abbhanumodanā* "gratitude", *desanā* "instruction", *savana* "hearkening (to sermons)", *diṭṭhujukakamma* "right views". The ten *pāramitā* (perfections) which must be perfected by each future Buddha (bodhisatta) are *dāna*, *sīla*, *nekkhamma* "renunciation", *paññā* "knowledge", *virīya* "energy", *khanti* "patience", *sacca* "truthfulness" *adhiṭṭhāna* "will power", *mettā* "loving-kindness", *upekkhā* "tranquility". See Cv. notes, p.17.

The ten royal duties (*dasarājadhamma*) *dāna* "giving", *sīla* "morality", *pariccāga* "liberality", *ajjava* "fair dealing", *maddava* "gentleness", *tapa* "self-discipline", *akkodha* "without wrath", *avihiṃsā* "non-violence", *khanti* "patience", *avirodha* "amicability". See Cv. notes, p.10.

<sup>56</sup> Cv. 38, 55-56, p.14 (Sinhalese tr.) Geiger's tr. is different from Sinhalese, Cv. 38, 55-56, P.34.

Sumeru mountain, in depth the ocean, in firmness the earth, in impartially the wind, in insight the magician among gods, in purity the autumn heavens, in the enjoyment of wishes fulfilled the King of the gods, in wealth the commander of treasures, in justice the upright Vasetṭha, in courage the king of beasts, in royal virtues a ruler of the world, in generosity a Vessantara, it was thus his people knew him<sup>57</sup>

King Sena I was another Bodhisattva in Sri Lanka, whose aspiration was directed to the Buddhahood.<sup>58</sup> Here the word “Buddha plane (*Budhabhūmi*)” is very significant. According to Geiger, this particular word is very significant in Mahāyāna Buddhism.<sup>59</sup> Parakkamabāhu II (1220-1224 C.E.) also seems to have wished to become a Buddha and one of his ministers named Devapatirāja also aspired Buddhahood and gave his wives and children<sup>60</sup> to a poor man.

Unidentified people also have made vows to become Buddha. For instance, we can quote some inscriptions which were found at temples which belonged to the Abhayagiri such as Kapārārāma and Mihintale. One inscription which has been excavated from Kapārārāma refers to an aspiration of a devotee to attain supreme Enlightenment in order to quench the thirst of all beings.<sup>61</sup> One of the ancient Bodhigharas which has been preserved in Sri Lanka is Nillakkagama of Anurādhapura District. Here the donor has made a vow to become a Buddha.<sup>62</sup> The Abhayagiri *Stūpa* in encircled with a stone-paved terrace. The *Cūlavamsa* records that king Sena III (955-964 C.E.) paved this stone terrace. One monk named Baduvarika has offered a stone slab for the construction of the terrace. While offering his stone slab, he did not forget to inscribe his aspiration on the stone. It is read thus: “This is the stone slab offered by *bhikkhu* Baduvarika Abhaya. By the power of this meritorious act, may I become a Buddha”.<sup>63</sup> The most important message we find within this kind of statement is that people have

<sup>57</sup> Cv. 42, 1-5, p.65. See also Geiger’s comments on this passage.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 50, 65-66, p.143.

<sup>59</sup> Geiger says: “Note the Mahāyānistic idea of striving after the attainment of future Buddhahood. It occurs here for the first time in the *Mahāvamsa*.”

<sup>60</sup> “Once when he beheld a poor man, he to whom mercy was the highest, gave him all possessions together with children and wives and uttered the wish: I will become a Buddha.” Cv. 86, 1-9, p.171.

<sup>61</sup> *Archeological Survey of Ceylon*, pp.11-30.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p.27.

<sup>63</sup> “*Baduvarika abahimiyan tābū pahaṇayi; mehi belen buduветvayi*”, See, AP, p.107.

wished to attain the Buddhahood even by doing a slight meritorious act. It clearly shows that common people had been inspired by the teaching of the Abhayagiri. One Bodhisattva poet tells us in one of the Abhayagiri poetic inscriptions that the life is impermanent. Therefore, one should strive for Samyaksambodhi as soon as possible.

The life is like a water drop on a lotus leaf. Mundane pleasure such as universal kingship is impermanent. The life is easily subjected to age and death in the same way a filament like wildflower (*Imperata arundinacea*) which is caught by the wildfire. Youth is constantly changing and also instantly disappears as a design of fungus in the water. There is no refuge here and hereafter except good deeds. Sowing paddy, you will reap paddy. Therefore, I strive for Samyaksambodhi.

<sup>64</sup>

A Sanskrit inscription discovered at Kuccaveli in Trincomale District contains the following wish of a devotee:

By this merit, may I be able in every succeeding rebirth, to relieve all the suffering of the world and to bestow complete happiness [on humanity]. [May I also always] be full of forbearance and compassion.

By this merit, may I vanquish the foes, Māra .. .. and sin; having attained to that supreme state of Buddhahood, may I, with my hand of great compassion, deliver suffering humanity from the extensive quagmire of *saṃsāra*.<sup>65</sup>

According to Theravāda practice, transformation of merit (*pattidāna*) is one of the ten wholesome deeds<sup>66</sup> (*daśapuṇyakriyā*). This practice had been widely prevailing in Sri Lanka since Buddhism was introduced to the

<sup>64</sup> AP, p.101.

<sup>65</sup> EZ, Vol. III, p.161.

*Aneka duḥkhaṃ vyapanīya sarvvaṃ - puṇyena lokasya sukhaṃ samagram*

*Dātuṃ prabhūrjjanmani janmani syāṃ - sadā kṣamāvī karuṇānvito 'haṃ*

*Puṇyena māra ... doṣa ripūn anena - jītvā parāṃ samadhigamya jīnendratāṃ tām*

*Saṃsāra-paṃka-visarād-aham-uddhareyyaṃ - ārtitaṃ jagan mama mahā-karuṇā kareṇa*

<sup>66</sup> See *Pāli Dictionary* on 'puṇṇa', Malalasekera, G. P., PTS.

Island. People from different strata of society had offered caves and a number of offerings to the Triple Gem but it is hard to see an inscription belonging to the early period of Anurādhapura which explains about the practice of transferring merit. But in the inscriptions which have been inscribed after mid Anurādhapura period, that is around 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E., a special phrase “*pala sava satanata*”<sup>67</sup> which means ‘the fruit (merit) is given to all beings’ is found. In the eight inscriptions found in the Abhayagiri near the Baros Pavilion, this distinctive phrase can be located. For example, one inscription records that three people from Mahadaragala village offered two thousand *kahavaṇas* (golden coins) to Apahayagara [Abhayagiri] monastery. “We, Pajana, Adasana, and Vasadevaya, residing in Mahadaragalaha, gave two thousand *kahavaṇas* to the Apahayagara monastery for maintenance of slaves. The merit [is given] to all [beings].”<sup>68</sup>

Later on this idea further expanded not only to transfer merit but also to wish Buddhahood for all beings as well. This practice is purely a Mahāyānist one. Even though Theravāda does not deny the possibility of the Buddhahood for anybody, yet it never emphasises the Bodhisattva path as the unique practice for attaining emancipation. The Theravāda idea is that the universally applicable Bodhicitta (to practice the Bodhisattva ideal by all beings without any exception for their final liberation) is something impracticable. Regarding this practice venerable Walpola Rahula expresses his view as follows: “Although the Theravāda holds that anybody can be a Bodhisattva, it does not stipulate or insist that all must be Bodhisattvas which is considered not practicable.” Any Theravādins in the past or in the living traditions do not say that all beings can become Buddhas. Ratnayake represents the Theravāda orthodox view on the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva Ideal.

Everyone is a Bodhisattva. If everyone waits till everyone else attains *nirvāṇa*, no one will attain *nirvāṇa*. So, this principle of bodhisattvahood is unpracticable [impracticable]. If it is practised totally, all beings will remain in *samsāra*. And *samsāra* is not the Goal of Buddhist Path.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> EZ, Vol. IV, pp.139-141.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, p.141. “*Maha-daragalaha vasana Pajana Adasana Vasa-devayama Apa-haya gara vaharata vahala vaṭa kaṭa dajahasa kahavaṇa da pala sava-sa(tanata)*.”

<sup>69</sup> supra, JIABS Vol.8, 1985, pp.85-110.

However, the case is that the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva Ideal had been widely practised in ancient Sri Lanka. Had it not been practised, it wouldn't have been recorded in the inscriptions. It does not necessarily mean that all ancient Sri Lankans followed the Bodhisattva path but definitely it had much influence on Sri Lankan Buddhist practices in the late Anurādhapura period.

Some inscriptions found in Vessagiri monastery of Anurādhapura are very important for our study. The second inscription<sup>70</sup> of Vessagiri explains thus: “Hail! I, Boyagonula, the brick-layer residing in Durusava, caused [my] children to be freed from slavery. May the fruit [of this action] be for the benefit of all beings. May there be Buddhahood as desired.”<sup>71</sup>

The third inscription found in the same monastery describes the donor's wish in the same manner. “Hail! I, Patisalala, residing at Abagamaya, caused [my] child to be freed from slavery. [May] the fruit [of this action be] for the benefit of all beings. May there be Buddhahood as desired.”<sup>72</sup> Another Abhayagiri inscription, which refers to making a granite rice bowl for the Community by a novice monk named Gonnā, is also very important regarding the wishing of the Buddhahood for all beings. “Hail ! I Gonnā, the novice, give to all beings the merit of this stone boat granted by me. May all beings, having taken that merit, become enlightened.”<sup>73</sup>

A Sri Lankan pilgrim monk named Prakhyātakīrti had set up a Sanskrit inscription dating back to 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E. at Buddhagayā in India, explaining his final wish for all sentient beings including his teacher, preceptor and parents. By the power of his meritorious deed, he had wished the Supreme Enlightenment for his teacher, preceptor and all sentient beings.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>70</sup> According to the sequence given in the *Śilālekhaṇa Saṃgrahaya V*.

<sup>71</sup> *EZ*, Vol. IV, pp.132-133. “*Durusava vasana uluvaḍu Boya-gonulami daruyana cidavi veherala pala sava-satanaṭa vayavaya rici Budubava vayavaya*”.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, p.133. “*Abagamayahi vasana Patisalalami darusaya cidavi veherala pala sava-satanaṭa rici Budubava-veyavaya*”.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, pp.149-150. “*Svasti Heraṇ Gonnāyemi me may lu gal-nāvhi phala sav-satnaṭ dinmi e phala [gen]ä sav-sat-hu bud vetvay*”.

<sup>74</sup> *Mahāyāna Buddhist Sculptures of Ceylon*, p.25.

In 1995 a very important inscription was discovered at the Abhayagiri monastery which is still unknown to many scholars. This inscription has been made in Sinhalese characters belonging to the 9<sup>th</sup> century C.E. The current Director of the Abhayagiri project, Prof. Kulatunga endeavored to explain the meaning of this extremely important inscription.<sup>75</sup> As he did not intend to explain the Bodhisattva practice, he had not paid much attention to the hidden meaning of this inscription. If one observes the meaning of this inscription, it gives us a clue that in the late Anuradhapura period all the Abhayagiri monks have been inclined towards developing *bodhicitta*. The inscription reads as follows. “*Budu viyāṭi kenekun me nisavattehi lā sunu behet pala me kisi kavariḍāyak n(o)vaṭavanu.*”<sup>76</sup> The meaning goes thus: Those who aspire to attain the Supreme Enlightenment should not grind any kind of paste, medicine, and berries and so on, on this stone pavement [which is set up for keeping alms-bowls for ventilation].

Let us examine the idea hidden behind this order. If any rule or regulation is set up at a monastery, that rule is common to all members of the Community there. The phrase, which has been inscribed there ‘those who aspire to attain the Supreme Enlightenment’, implies that in late part of Anurādhapura period, most if not all probably, most of the Abhayagirivāsīns would have aspired the Supreme Enlightenment (*Samyaksambodhi*) as their final liberation. Not only that particular inscription but also preceding four inscriptions, which contain aspiration of the Buddhahood of all beings, evidently show that the Abhayagiri monks and their adherents seem to have had the notion that all beings should try to escape *samsāra* by attaining the Supreme Enlightenment.

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<sup>75</sup> See *Abhayagiri Paryeṣaṇa*. Kulatunga had reserved a long part in his work, *Abhayagiri Paryeṣaṇa* to elaborate the real meaning of the word ‘nisavatta’ which is mentioned in the inscription. With the support of sufficient evidence he has come to a conclusion that ‘nisavatta’ means a special place where monks’ alms bowls were kept for ventilation.

<sup>76</sup> *Abhayagiri Paryeṣaṇa*, p.103.

### The Practice of Bodhisattva Path after Unification of the Saṅgha: Literary Evidence

As we discussed in the first part of this chapter, from the mid-Anuradhapura period the Bodhisattva concept gradually developed. Many people wanted to practise the bodhisattva path for their liberation instead of seeking arahantahood. This idea further developed and by the Polonnaruva period a new tendency can be seen in Sri Lankan Buddhist literary works. This new tendency is the propensity towards the aspiration of Buddhahood by many authors of Sinhala texts.

As it is well known it is not customary for the followers of Theravāda Buddhism to aspire for Buddhahood. Of the three available ideals *Sammāsambodhi*, *Paccekabodhi*, and *Sāvakabodhi* what is considered as being generally open to all is the *Sāvakabodhi*. This is quite in keeping with the Theravāda belief of the appearance of one Buddha at one particular time period. Though Mahāyāna considered the arahantahood as a lesser ideal the Theravādins do not show any sign of differentiation or entertaining any inferiority feeling regarding their aspiration for *Sāvakabodhi* in spite of the availability of other two *bodhīs* viz. *Sammāsambodhi* and *Paccekabuddhabodhi*. This shift of focus on the ideal of aspiration, that is from *Sāvakabodhi* to *Sammāsambodhi*, refers to a very distinctive deviation in the belief and practice, and this would not have happened if there was no special impact of Mahāyāna Buddhism. This gradual inclination towards Mahāyāna is also indicated by the belief that certain kings are Bodhisattvas. However, there is no evidence to show that this became the common aspiration of the average follower of Buddhism.

Theravādins wish for all beings' happiness, good health, wellbeing, and also *nirvāṇa*.<sup>77</sup> Wishing for the emancipation of all beings and wishing that oneself become capable of leading others to emancipation are two distinctly different aspirations. One refers to the successful attainment of the Sāvaka ideal, which is the Theravāda ideal, and the other which is the Mahāyāna ideal. If someone wishes to free all beings from *saṃsāra* by his own effort,

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<sup>77</sup> In Sri Lanka after doing any kind of merit Buddhists wish *nirvāṇa* for all beings. Specially, after practising the *Mettā* meditation, they wish as follows. May all beings be well, may they be happy, may they be free from suffering, may they be free from anger, ... May they attain *Nirvāṇa*!

he has to go through the bodhisattva career. The aspiration of ascetic Sumedha<sup>78</sup> was such a great wish that he postponed his final attainment, having compassion towards all suffering beings, despite being able to attaining arahantahood under the feet of Dīpaṅkara Buddha.<sup>79</sup> This is a sporadic instance found in the Theravāda tradition; but in Mahāyāna this becomes the common ideal of aspiration.

This is a marked difference in the two traditions. As the *Ariyapariyesana Sutta* shows the Bodhisatta renounced the world not only to find solution for his *dukkha* but also for *dukkha* of others, for *dukkha* is common to all. This is why, after His enlightenment the Buddha decided to take a chance by communicating his new revolutionary message. The Theravāda ideal of attaining Buddhahood is to first release oneself and then bring about the release of others (*muttohaṃ mocaye pare*). This prompted Mahāyāna to consider Theravāda aspiration as rather selfish and hence they advocated the more altruistic concept of attaining freedom of oneself through making others free. Thus the emancipation of others became the predominant motive of attainment of Buddhahood according to Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is this belief that seems to have motivated many authors to aspire for Buddhahood.

Not only monastics but also lay people also had wished to attain enlightenment.<sup>80</sup> Some of the authors have declared that they wished to attain arahantahood while some authors wished to attain the supreme enlightenment. That this aspiration was gaining popularity is seen from some texts where the authors wished Buddhahood not only for themselves but also for their patrons. This indirectly suggested that the belief that the attainment of Sāvaka-bodhi a lesser attainment, was gaining ground. Another important thing we find related to the final goal of the authors is that this aspiration is particularly found in the works, dealing with religious subjects. The works, which dealt with secular subjects, rarely provide accounts of the religious goal of the authors.<sup>81</sup> Therefore, it clearly shows that the authors

<sup>78</sup> Ascetic Sumedha is a previous life of Śākyamini Buddha before he determines to follow the bodhisattva path. Many eons ago he met Dīpaṅkara Buddha and received his affirmation of Sumedha's future enlightenment as Śākyamuni Buddha.

<sup>79</sup> See *Buddhavaṃsa*.

<sup>80</sup> King Sena I and Rāmacandra Kavibhāratī can be quoted as examples.

<sup>81</sup> See *Āgama Hā Samājaya*, p.159. K. Paññākitti believes that the author gives a clue that he aspires to attain the Buddhahood. He has presented that idea based on the following poem.

who composed books in order to promote or spread Buddhism seemed to have been believed that they were achieving merit by the act of composing such works, whereas the authors of secular works did not seem to have this view. Besides, these authors also appear to have believed that acquisition of merit enables one to attain Buddhahood.

Though we mentioned that the aspiration of the Buddhahood was popular among writers beginning from the Polonnaruva period, at least one literary work among three of the existing works belonged to Anuradhapura period gives a clue about the bodhisattva ideal. This special work is the *Siyabaslakara*, which has been composed by King Sena I, who is said to be a bodhisattva according to the *Mahāvamsa*.<sup>82</sup> The *Siyabaslakara* is not a Buddhist work but a prosody, which gives instructions for poets. Based on one poem found at the end of the *Siyabaslakara*, venerable K. Paññākitti Thera states that this particular poem gives a clue about the practice of bodhisattva path of this king. This king had close relations with the Abhayagiri and also favoured to Mahāsaṅghikas and Vajrayānists who lived at the Vīrāṅkurārāma monastery of the Abhayagiri Vihāra.<sup>83</sup> This king was very pious and he practised the bodhisattva path attentively. The *Mahāvamsa* used the term “*Buddhabhūmi gatāsayo*”. But the *Nikāyasamgrahaya* severely criticises this king as a stupid one. Venerable K. Paññākitti also expresses his idea saying that it is not clear why the author of the *Nikāyasamgrahaya* did so.<sup>84</sup> But based on the accounts regarding him, we can infer that the *Nikāyasamgrahaya* was biased against him since this king favoured the Abhayagiri and he even accepted Vajrayāna Buddhism.

The *Saddhammopāyana* is one of the existing works of the Abhayagiri fraternity. It is believed that this work has been composed in the Polonnaruva period by venerable Kavicakravartī Ānanda Thera of the

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“*Vaḷanda vā sat lovāta sanda miduludu mahat mo  
Pahan menen pavatnaṭa kerethu mana piṇidahan*”

The literary meaning is: “The great people perform meritorious acts even offering their flesh and marrowbones with pleasant mind in order to feed the hunger of the world-beings”. See *Siyabaslakara*, pp.324-25.

<sup>82</sup> *Mv.*50, 65-66, p.143.

<sup>83</sup> For details, please refer to the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of this book.

<sup>84</sup> *Āgama Hā Samājaya*, p.159.

Abhayagiri Vihāra. At the end of the work the author has expressed his final goal of attaining the Supreme Enlightenment.

*Mama saddhammopāyana racanussāhena janita puññena  
Bhavatu sakalopi loko tilokanittaraṇasamatthiyo.*<sup>85</sup>

“By the merit that I have accumulated composing the *Saddhammopāyana*, may the whole world (the beings of the whole world) be the able to free the beings of the Triple World!” Wishing for emancipation of all beings is not a new wish for Theravādins. The author of the *Vaṃsatthapakāsinī*, the sub-commentary<sup>86</sup> to the *Mahāvamsa*, also wished to attend the Buddhahood. He has devoted five *gāthās* to declare his aspiration.<sup>87</sup>

The author of *Mahābodhivaṃsa* [The Chronicle of the Great Bodhi Tree] venerable Upatissa, who is said to have lived around the 10<sup>th</sup> century C.E., and who declared his many aspirations at the end of this composition, says also; “ I too having attained Supreme Enlightenment and having preached the Supreme Doctrine would release all beings from bounds of existence.”<sup>88</sup> The Sinhala *Mahābodhivaṃsaya* is an enlarged adaptation of the above mentioned Pāli *Mahābodhivaṃsa*. This is ascribed to an erudite Sinhala *bhikkhu* called Vilgammūla Mahāthera of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. He also expresses almost the similar aspiration. He says:

May I having attained Perfect Supreme Enlightenment, and having constantly preached the Doctrine, be able to free all beings from the bounds to Samsāric existence. Just as the Sun simultaneously drives away the darkness and provides light, may I wandering in *Samsāra* also always be able to destroy the suffering of all beings and give them happiness. Just as a “Wish Granting-tree” (*Kalpavṛkṣa*) that fulfills all wishes of beings in existence, may my wisdom, the “Gracious Queen” (*Śrīdevī*) always pleasing the True Doctrine, may the *devas*

<sup>85</sup> The *Sdmp.* 619, p.173.

<sup>86</sup> In the first chapter we have mentioned that a possible reason why this commentary has named as a sub-commentary.

<sup>87</sup> See *Vsp.* ed. by Malalasekera. The author of the *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī* shows a favorable attitude to Abhayagiri fraternity and talk about its *Uttaravihāraṭṭhakathā* with great respect.

<sup>88</sup> *Ahaṃ tu paramaṃ bodhiṃ patvā dhammamanuttaraṃ  
Desitvā pāṇino sabe moceyyaṃ bhavabandhanā*, See *Pāli Bodhivaṃsa*, p.104.

constantly grow more and more. May I be the best among those who are wise!<sup>89</sup>

In this it is interesting to note that *Prajñā* (wisdom) is addressed as a Gracious Queen (*Śrīdevī*). In Mahāyāna *Prajñā* is considered as a goddess or devī (*Prajñā Pāramitā Devī*) and this, perhaps, shows the familiarity of writers with Mahāyāna concepts. In another work name the Sinhala *Anāgatavaṃsaya* (the Chronicle of the Buddha To Be), the same author aspire the Buddhahood he is wishing to have *Vivaraṇa* from the Maithreya Buddha and all the future Buddhas after Maitreya, practice the Ten Perfections and attain the Samyaksambodhi in order to free all beings from the Ocean of *Samsāra*.<sup>90</sup>

The *Pūjāvaliya*, which was composed by venerable Buddhaputra of Mayūrapāda *Pariveṇa*, is a very important work in Sinhalese Buddhist literature. This special work has been written in order to inspire King Parakkamabāhu II (1220-1224 C.E.) to aspire for Buddhahood. What is interesting here is the author, the King, and the minister who invited the author to compose this book, all wished to attain Buddhahood. The author emphasises that one should aspire for Buddhahood but not arahantahood. Those who are with *hīnavīrya* (less effort) wish emancipation through arahantahood but those who are endowed with right effort and vigilance aspire for Supreme Enlightenment. He further says that by the aspiration of Buddhahood, one fails to attain that goal, at least he can attain the Paccekabuddhahood or Arahantahood.<sup>91</sup> So, he emphasises that the people who follow the bodhisattva path always stand to gain when compared to the followers who seek their deliverance by attaining arahantahood.<sup>92</sup> This clearly shows the supercession of the Mahāyāna ideal over the Theravāda ideal thus reflecting the gradual rise into prominence of Mahāyāna belief.

The *Pūjāvaliya* gives accounts of aspirations to Buddhahood by the masses together with a host of celestial beings at the time of the miraculous *devāvarohaṇa* (descending from the *Tusita devaloka* to the earth on a golden ladder) of the Buddha. It further says that all the people and the

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<sup>89</sup> *Sinhala Bodhivaṃsaya*, p.292.

<sup>90</sup> *Anāgatavaṃsaya*, p.185.

<sup>91</sup> *Pjv.*, p.61.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

divine beings who were present there in this precious moment wished for the supreme enlightenment. Then the arahant Śārīputra questioned the Buddha on whether all these human beings and the divine beings would attain the Buddhahood. The Buddha replied that it is possible for all of them to attain the Buddhahood. Thereafter Śārīputra asked how it could be possible through a delighted wish alone without practising perfections. The greatest wish in the Triple world for the one who is with full of effort and less effort is “the wish of Buddhahood”. Therefore, the one who is with full of effort and wishes Buddhahood can attain Buddhahood. One who has middle effort attains the Paccekabuddhahood and also the one who has reasonable effort attains the Arahantahood. Therefore, for the one who wishes Buddhahood that one may definitely attain one of the *bodhīs* from three *bodhīs*, the Buddhahood, the Paccekabuddhahood and the Arahantahood.<sup>93</sup>

The author of the *Saddharmaratnākaraya* also has the same view as the author of the *Pūjāvaliya*. He aspires to Buddhahood not only for himself but also for the king to whom this work is dedicated. Having taking *vivaraṇa* from the Maitreya Buddha he wishes to practise *Buddhakāradharmas* (*pāramitās*) and attains the Samyaksambodhi. Having composed the *Saddharmaratnākaraya*, the author Wimalakīrti Thera invites king Parakkamabāhu VI to rejoice with the merit which he acquired by composing it. He further blesses the king to enjoy a life full of happiness, being blessed with four qualities (*āyu* (longevity), *vaṇṇa* (good complexion), *suhka* (happiness) and *bala* (strength)). Finally he wishes him to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all beings. In this very long journey to Buddhahood, he wishes all sort of happiness for the king both in the human and divine worlds. Even having enjoyed life as a universal monarch, having lived in the six divine worlds and ten *brahmalokas*, the king should wish “the gift of *nirvāṇa* through Supreme Enlightenment which is the tastiest” (*paramarasānvita nirvāṇasampatti saṅkhyāta samyaksambodhijñāna*). He also admonishes all people to strive for Buddhahood as did the ascetic Sumedha and all the other Buddhas who remained in the *saṃsāra* by accepting all suffering as happiness because of

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<sup>93</sup> *Pjv.*, p.504.

great compassion towards all beings and finally wish to attain Buddhahood with all beings.<sup>94</sup>

The *Saddharmālaṅkāraya* refers to numerous Buddhas and bodhisattvas such as *noyek siyaganan sarvajñavarayan* (many hundreds of Bodhisattvas), *noyek dahas ganan bodhisattvavarayan* (many thousands of bodhisattvas), and *anantāpariyanta sarvajñayan* (infinite Buddhas). The author of *Saddharmālaṅkāraya* wishes to become a *Lovuturābudu* (*Samyaksumbuddha*). He has marvelous aspirations that are very much similar to the Buddhas in the Mahāyāna literature. He is aspiring to illuminate the ten thousand of world systems or *cakravāṭas* (*dasasahasricakravāṭas*) through his radiant body and to make showers of lotus in the entire *cakravāṭas*, turning the Wheel of the Dharma (*Dharmacakra*), promoting understanding of the Dharma for twenty-four *asaṅkhyā* (numberless) nine *koṭīs* (ten million) and sixty thousand people and finally to enter the *nivan pura* (the city of *nirvāṇa*) together with them.<sup>95</sup>

The *Jinacarita*, which was composed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century C.E. by venerable Vanaratana Medhaṅkara, provides accounts on his final goal. The author elaborately expresses his wish using 10 *gāthās*. He wishes to be born in the time of the Maitreya Buddha and ordain under Him and get His prediction of confirmation of future Buddhahood. Thus, like ascetic Sumedha he postpones his emancipation in order to save many.

*Vyākato tena buddho yaṃ hessatīti anāgate;*  
*Uppannuppannabuddhānaṃ dānaṃ datvā sukhāvahaṃ.*  
*Pāramisikharaṃ patvā buddho hutvā anuttaro;*  
*Desetvā madhuraṃ dhammaṃ jantūnaṃ sivamāvahaṃ.*<sup>96</sup>

The author of the *Karmavibhāga* also wishes to attain the Supreme Enlightenment. He determines to fulfill his wish only through *samyaksambodhi* though many beings attain *nirvāṇa* through *śrāvakabodhi*. He firmly says that he is not hesitating to give up even the *cakravartirājasampatti* (universal kingship) in order to attain Buddhahood.

<sup>94</sup> *Sdrk.*, pp.498-502.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.86-87.

<sup>96</sup> See *Jinacarita*.

He is willing to face any hardship for seeking Buddhahood. If this *cakravāṭa* is filled with water or various sharp weapons, he is still ready to cross it, if he is told that Buddhahood is possible only for the person who crosses this dreadful ocean of weapons.<sup>97</sup>

The author of the *Jinālaṅkāra*, a Pāli poem wishes to have *vivarāṇa* from the Buddha Maitreya, fulfill *pāramitās*, defeating *pañcamāra* and eradicating all the defilements, attain Buddhahood.

*Mahāpariccāgaṃ katvā pañca - Sambodhimaggaṃ avirādhayanto;  
Chetvā kilese jītapañcamāro - Buddho bhavissāmi anāgatesu.*<sup>98</sup>

The *Milindaṭṭhā* is a Pāli sub-commentary composed by Mahātipiṭaka-Cūlābhaya Thera to the Pāli *Milindapañha*. Tipiṭaka-Cūlābhaya Thera also had wished to attain the Buddhahood. At the end of the work his wish has been declared thus.

*Puññenanena vipulena bhavābhavesu  
Puññābhivūḍḍha parisuddhaguṇādhivāso,  
Hutvā narādhikataro (vata) sabbasettho;  
Buddho bhaveyyamahamuttamanāthanātho.*<sup>99</sup>

The *Vimuttimaggā* is one of the works of the Abhayagiri fraternity. Its Pāli original does not exist now. But there is a Chinese version of this book and which has now been translated into English.<sup>100</sup> After this translation in 1961, a Sinhalese copy of the *Vimuttimaggā* was found at Asgiriya Monastery in Kandy, Sri Lanka and that copy was printed by Sri Lankan Government in 1963.<sup>101</sup> At the last section of this work there is an additional

<sup>97</sup> *Karmavibhāga*, pp.129 ff.

<sup>98</sup> *Jinālaṅkāra* ed. by Paṇḍita Rākava Pālita, Matara, 1955, p.267. See also *Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyanā CD ROM* version 3, *gāthā* 250.

<sup>99</sup> See “Milindaṭṭhā”, in *Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyanā CD ROM* version 3.

<sup>100</sup> This work has been translated into English from the Chinese by Rev. N.R.M, Soma Thera, and Kheminda Thera, 1961. For this study I referred to *the Path of Freedom (Vimuttimaggā)* printed by BPS, Kandy, Sri Lanka, 1995.

<sup>101</sup> Bapat and Endo argue that Sinhalese copy is not the exact *Vimuttimaggā* but something else. See Bapat “Vimuttimaggā”, *Journal of the Vidyalaṅkāra University of Ceylon*, Vol. I, No. I, 1972, and Endo “The Asgiriya Manuscript of the Pāli Vimuttimaggā: An Inquiry into its Authenticity”, *Kalyāṇī, Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences of the University of Kelaniya*, Vol. Two, October 1983.

part which is named “*Mahanuvara Asgiri Āraṇya Vaṃśāgata Vidarśanā Pota*”.<sup>102</sup> Therein author’s final goal has been declared as follows.

By this meritorious deed [of composing this book], after my death having born in the beautiful Tusita heaven, listening to the Dhamma delivered by the Bodhisattva Metteyya and being happy with him there for a long time amidst of abundant of wealth, after the *Mahāsattva* attains enlightenment in Ketumatī city, having born in an aristocratic family, having offered exquisite robes, food, dwellings, and medicine to Him, after His affirmation that “this one [the author] will become a Buddha in future”, then, while traveling in *saṃsāra*, having offered *dāna* to the Buddha’s in every birth, being like a *kapparukkha* (a celestial tree yielding all wishes), may I be like a mother for all beings in every birth.<sup>103</sup>

One of the *Śataka* books composed in Sri Lanka is named *Bhaktiśataka* or *Baudhaśataka* by a Brahmin named Rāmacandra Kavibhāratī, who came to Sri Lanka from Gauḍadeśa in India during the Kotte Period, is also a significant work regarding the aspiration of the Buddhahood. Rāmachandra Kavibhāratī has studied under the Great scholar Toṭagamuve Śrī Rāhula Mahāthera. In the *Bhaktiśataka*, the author has aspired the Buddhahood not only for him but also for all beings. This is a very important issue regarding our topic here, since Mahāyānists wish Buddhahood for all beings.

Rāmacandra Kavibhāratī states:

*Tribhuvanamahanīyaṃ tvāmabhiṣṭutya buddhaṃ  
viśadataramadabhraṃ puṇyamātrārjitaṃ yat  
jagati sakala-sattvāstena sambuddha-bodhiṃ*

<sup>102</sup> The meaning is: *The Insight Meditation Book of the Forest Tradition of Asgiri Chapter in Kandy*.

<sup>103</sup> *Iminā puññakammena itohaṃ bhavto cuto-ppajjivāna surāvāse sundare tusite pure Metteyyalokanāthassa sunanto dhammadesanaṃ - tena saddhiṃ ciraṃ kālaṃ vindanto mahatiṃ sirim Buda jāte mahāsatte ramme ketumatīpure - vippavaṃse jāyivā tihetu paṭisandhiko Cīvaraṃ piṇḍapātañca anggaṃ vipulaṃ varaṃ - senāsanañca bhesajjaṃ datvā tassa mahesino Vyākato tena buddhoyaṃ hessatīti anāgate – uppannuppanne buddhānaṃ dānaṃ datvā tepihī Saṃsāre saṃsarantopi kapparukkova pānianṃ - Mātāyiva sabbasattānaṃ jāti jātiyaṃ”. *Vimuttimaggio*, p.288.*

*vidhuta-vividha-pāpā bhāvatābhīrvrajantu*<sup>104</sup>

The meaning of the above mentioned *śloka* is: “If I have accumulated a lot of good *kamma* having composed these *stotras* in order to respect to You [the Buddha], who is capable of seeing all the things in the Triple World and who is deserved to be respected by the beings of the Triple World, by the power of that merit, may all beings be able to attain the Buddhahood destroying all evils such as ignorance by practising meditation”.

At the very end of the work, he reiterates his aspiration once more.

*Utpattiśuddha-vaṃśe vara-puruṣa-pada-prārthanā bodhi  
baudham  
Dīrghāyuśśudhabuddhiḥ daśa-gaja-balavān vajrakāyasya kīrtiḥ  
Dharmāśokasya tejo dhana-dhanada-patiḥ kāmadevasya rūpaṃ  
Dānaṃ vaiśvantaratvaṃ mama bhavatu sadā bodhiparyāṅka-  
lābhāt*<sup>105</sup>

The greatest scholar who also lived in the Kotte period Toṭagamuve Śrī Rāhula Mahāthera of Toṭagamu Vihāra, is considered a Bodhisattva who aspired the Buddhahood. In his poem *Kāvyaśekharaya* he has made a vow to become a Buddha. “*Mamada budu vemvā lovturā*”,\* “May I too become a Buddha”.<sup>106</sup> The *Budugunālaṅkāraya*, another Buddhist poem dealing with the virtues of the Buddha, which was composed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century C.E. in Kotte period, also shows us that the author of this work, Vīdāgama Mahāmaiteya Thera wished to attain the Buddhahood.<sup>107</sup> His wish is read as follows. “Having drawn in the ocean of compassion, which brings happiness for the beings, being vigilant and having attached to fulfill perfections, and having defeated the powerful army of the Māra, and by the power of merit which I acquired composing this work, may I attain the Buddhahood”.<sup>108</sup> Rāhula Thera and Vīdāgama Mahāmaiteya Thera represent the Uttaramūla and the Mahānettapāsādamūla respectively. These two *mūlas*, which belonged to the Abhayagiri Fraternity, successfully

<sup>104</sup> *Bhaktiśatakaya*, 106, p.46. See also “Bhaktiśataka” in *Bauddhastotra*, p.277.

<sup>105</sup> *Bhaktiśatakaya*, p.48. This śloka is cannot be found in the Nepalese manuscript. But in the Sinhalese version, it is the last śloka of the *Bhaktiśataka*.

<sup>106</sup> LMA, p. 378. \*In the *Kāvyaśekharaya* that I used, this poem is not found.

<sup>107</sup> *Budugunālaṅkāraya*, p. 54.

<sup>108</sup> *Gilī kuḷuṇu sayure sat setaṭa sarū - ālī perum kere pudamin vemin surū  
Balī emarasen biṇḍa harimīn kurirū - melī pinin buduvemvā tilogurū*, *Budugunālaṅkāraya*, 612.

continued up to Kotte period. Our discussion clearly shows the great impact of bodhisattva practice on Lankan Buddhist Culture.

**Chapter Four:**  
**Vajrayāna Buddhism in Sri Lanka**  
**The Arrival of Vajrayāna Buddhism in Sri Lanka**

As a result of the liberal attitude of the Abhayagiri fraternity towards heterodox Buddhism, not only Mahāyāna but also Vajrayāna Buddhism came to Sri Lanka around the 9<sup>th</sup> century C.E. It could be that new developments of Buddhist doctrinal interpretations which arose in India would have come to Sri Lanka first before they spread to other countries, because of Sri Lanka's close proximity to the mainland. There are, in fact, many monuments in the island related to Vajrayāna Buddhism. Fragments of *Ratnakūṭa Sūtra* found in the Cetiyagiri Monastery; images of Vajrasattva, Goddess Tārā, *Dhāraṇī Gṛha* mentioned in the *Mahāvamsa*; the so called Abhayagiri *Dhāraṇīs*; the stone panel depicting sexual union at Nālandā Vihāra; votive tablets with Vajrayāna elements and *Dhāraṇī*-like protective sūtras found in the *Piruvāṇāpotvahanse*; and finally some literary sources related to Tantrism can be cited as evidence for esoteric Buddhist influence on Sri Lankan Buddhist practice.

It is apparent that the *Mahāvamsa* sometimes keeps silent about certain important events that happened in the history of Sri Lanka. The origin of the Jetavana fraternity as a breakaway fraction of the Abhaygiri fraternity and the arrival of Vajrayāna Buddhism, and the making of colossal Mahāyāna images such as the Buduruvagala statues, have not been recorded in the *Mahāvamsa*. It is possible that the author of the *Mahāvamsa* consciously refrained from recounting these events. From the Mahāvihāra point of view the aforesaid events would have been seen as hindrances for the existence of orthodox Theravāda Buddhism in the Island. It appears that this biased attitude of the *Mahāvamsa* towards non-Theravāda elements is due to the deep conflict that existed between the two main institutions, the Mahāvihāra and the Abhayagiri traditions.

The *Nikāyasamgrahaya*, which was composed in the 14<sup>th</sup> century C.E. by Jayabāhu Dharmakīrti Thera, appears to be very much a text of the real orthodoxy. The references that have been made to non-Theravāda personages or their views are extremely derogatory. Therefore, this treatment implies that there had been a struggle between the Theravāda and non-Theravāda schools for supremacy. In brief, the aim of the

*Nikāyasamgrahaya* is nothing but to uphold one's own view (*sakavāda*), which means Theravāda, and to condemn downright non-Theravāda views. For these reasons, all information found in the *Nikāyasamgrahaya* cannot be considered as unbiased. In spite of its bias it can be taken as a very important chronicle regarding Buddhist schools in ancient Sri Lanka. It is *Nikāyasamgrahaya* that provides us with the single account of the arrival of Vajrayāna Buddhism in Sri Lanka. There is consensus on the point that the word “*Vājiriyavāda*” used in the *Nikāyasamgrahaya*, is used here to signify the Vajrayāna. ‘*Vājiri*’ is an ancient Sinhala term for *Vajira* (Pāli) or *Vajra* (Skt.).

According to the *Nikāyasamgrahaya* Vājiriyavāda arrived in Sri Lanka from Vajraparvata of India during the reign of King Matvalasen (846-866 C.E.).<sup>1</sup> King Matvalasen has been identified as the Sena I, who preferred the teaching of the Abhayagiri to that of the Mahāvihāra. The *Mahāvamsa* recounts that the king practised religious rituals unheard of before and it is said that *bhikkhūs* and *bhikkhuṇīs* found those activities contained features something in excess when they are compared them with facts given in Pāli texts.<sup>2</sup> King Sena I appeared to have practised the new teachings introduced by Vajraparvata *Bhikkhūs*. It is very interesting that in his investigation of the birthplace of the Vajrayāna Buddhism, Chandra asserts that Vajraparvata means Sriśailam in South India. He says: “It is Śrīparvata of the Tibetan traditions, Vajraparvata in Sri Lanka, and the Diamond Mountain in Korea. Vajrayāna developed here hence is termed Vajraparvata-vāsi-nikāya in the Sri Lankan work *Nikāya-samgrahaya*”.<sup>3</sup> Chandra's view further strengthens the notions that the *Nikāyasamgrahaya* reference to the Vajraparvata denotes the above mentioned location and hence, the teaching is Vajrayāna.

The *Mahāvamsa* records that Vajrayānists had settled down at the Vīrāṅkurārāma of the Abhayagiri Monastery.<sup>4</sup> What is of interest here is that this Vīrāṅkurārāma vihāra was also built by king Sena I in the precincts of the Abhayagiri and offered to the Mahāsaṅghikas and Theravādins of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Niks.*, p.22.

<sup>2</sup> Cv. 50.3 – Geiger translates this stanza “he performed also pious actions before unheard of ...” Geiger does not give good explanation as the Sinhalese translation does.

<sup>3</sup> *Cultural Horizons of India* - 4, Chandra, L., New Delhi, 1995, p.207.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

monastery.<sup>5</sup> This reference provides us with information about the existence of Sri Lankan Mahāsaṅghika monks at the Abhayagiri monastery even before the 9th century. Yijing's records on Sri Lankan Mahāsaṅghikas are also important here. His accounts also supported the fact that Mahāsaṅghikas had lived in Sri Lanka before 6 century. He recounts: "In the Island of the Lion, all monks belong to Sthaviranikāya, while the Mahāsaṅghika-nikāya is repulsed".<sup>6</sup> He might have heard this news when he was in India or elsewhere. Probably, Mahāsaṅghikas of the Abhayagiri monastery would have been expelled together with Vaitulyavādins during the time of king Goṭhabhaya in the third century C.E., but by the ninth century C.E. they have appeared again. While being able to share equal status with Theravāda monks at the Abhayagiri monastery, they also seemed to have enjoyed the royal patronage.

Tantric Buddhism also could have prevailed in Sri Lanka very much earlier than stated the *Nikāyasamgraha* records. The best evidence to support this hypothesis is the Chinese accounts of the biographies of two eminent Indian Tāntric masters namely Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra, who visited in Sri Lanka in the 8 century C.E.<sup>7</sup>

The oldest chronicle of the Island, the *Dīpavaṃsa* criticises monks who created new teachings as heretics as they presented heretical views. It says that these heretics were shameful ones, sinful monks who were like foul corpses and blue flies in conduct, and who were wicked and were not true monks.<sup>8</sup> The *Nikāyasamgraha* also follows the early chronicles and shows a strong negative attitude towards esoteric Buddhism. It records that king Sena I, being stupid, accepted Vajrayāna Buddhism in the same manner that a grasshopper reaches the flame thinking it is gold, unaware of its danger.<sup>9</sup> In this manner the *Nikāyasamgraha* vehemently criticises this King for accepting Vajrayāna, Buddhism. The *Nikāyasamgraha* further says that in

<sup>5</sup> *Mv.*50, 68.

"Katvā viraṅkurārāmaṃ - vihāre abhayuttare  
Mahāsaṅghikabhikkhūnaṃ - teriyānaṃ ca dāpayī".

<sup>6</sup> *Buddhist Monastic traditions of Southern Asia: A Record of the Inner Law Sent Home From the South Seas* by Śramaṇa Yijing, p.12.

<sup>7</sup> See "Tantrism in China", *HJAS*, Vol. 8, pp. 241-332.

<sup>8</sup> "The Spread of Heterodox-Buddhist Doctrines in Early Ceylon", *The Ceylon Historical Journal*, Vol. 19, July 1969 - April 1970, p.18. See also the *Dīpavaṃsa* 22, 67-69, p.220.

<sup>9</sup> *Niks.*, p.22.

accepting Vajrayāna he committed a transgression. As a result of this bad action he lost his kingdom, betrayed the country to South Indians and died in Polonnaruva.<sup>10</sup> However, king Sena I seemed to have been delighted with the new teaching and he had been admonished by Vajrayānist masters emphasising that the Vajrayāna was a top secret preaching (Sin: *rahas bana*).<sup>11</sup> The term “*rahas bana*” that Nikāyasamgrahaya used to designate Vajrayāna teaching is very much compatible with the word “*guhya dharma*” of esoteric Buddhism. In the *Sarvatathāgatattvasamgraha*, when the ‘Maṇḍala of the Four Symbols’ (*Caturmudrāmaṇḍala*) is taught to the pupil, the master gives instructions to the neophyte not to reveal this secret teaching to anyone else. The reason for this because people are ignorant, holders of wrong views, and do evil actions and so on.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the information given in the *Nikāyasamgrahaya* on the secret practice of the Vajrayāna Buddhism is acceptable.

In explaining about sectarian works, the *Nikāyasamgrahaya* gives a long list of 34 books that belonged to various Buddhist schools, namely, Vaitulyavāda (Mahāyāna), Vajraparvata *Nikāya* (Vajrayāna) and other non-Theravāda schools such as Hemavata and Rājagirika. Mudiyanse has taken a laudable effort to identify those Mahāyāna and Tantric works listed in the *Nikāyasamgrahaya*, comparing them with the Chinese and the Tibetan translations of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon and the Taisho edition of the Chinese *Tripitaka*.<sup>13</sup> Elsewhere we observed that the *Nikāyasamgrahaya* was written around the 14<sup>th</sup> century C.E. but Tantric Buddhism would have arrived in Sri Lanka approximately in the 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E., 500 years earlier than the *Nikāyasamgrahaya*. Other than in the *Nikāyasamgrahaya* we do not find any other source in Sri Lanka which provides information about the Mahāyāna and the Vajrayāna texts. Therefore, at least some of those texts mentioned in the *Nikāyasamgrahaya* would have been in circulation among initiated people in Sri Lanka. To support this view we can quote the evidence from the *Nikāyasamgrahaya*. It records that due to its secret practice, the Vajrayāna was protected as a “*secret dharma*”, and it was circulated among stupid, ignorant and ordinary community in this Island

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<sup>10</sup> *Niks*, p.12.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>12</sup> *STTS*, reproduced by Lokesh Chanda and David L. Snellgrove, p. 38.

“*Na tvayā kasyacid imaṃ rahasyapaṭalaṃ udghāṭayitavyaṃ*”, See *STTS* ed. by Isshi Yamada, p.144.

<sup>13</sup> *MMC*, pp. 17-18.

from the time of King Sena I.”<sup>14</sup> Perhaps, its ‘secret practice’ was the secret of its success in Sri Lanka. The best example is that even after the unification of the *Saṅgha*, this practice still continued and some of its elements are being practised up to the present. Even in China, Tantric Buddhism was first popular in the court and as well as among ordinary people. The Chinese experience with esoteric Buddhism is very much similar to the case in Sri Lanka regarding Tantric practice:

Although this school of Buddhism did not have great influence on Chinese thought, it was closely associated with the court as well as the ordinary people who were interested in praying for their own welfare in present and future life but not so keen on the discussion on profound doctrine.<sup>15</sup>

The *Nikāyasamgrahaya* is very important as it refers to a number of non-Theravāda works by their names. Altogether, there are thirtyfour books mentioned therein, in which twenty-six of them are considered as Tantric works. The *Ratnakūṭa Sūtra* is mentioned there as a work of Andhakas. We know that some esoteric sūtras such as the *Tathāgataguhyā* belong to the collection of *Ratnakūṭa* or the “Pinnacle of Gems”. It is possible that Andhaka *bhikṣūs*, who lived in Andhakarāṭṭha would have followed Tantric Buddhism. The following Tantric works can be seen in the list given in the *Nikāyasamgrahaya*.

1. *Gūḍhavinaya*
2. *Māyājālatantra*
3. *Samājatantra*
4. *Mahāsamayatattvatantra*
5. *Tattvasamgrahatantra*
6. *Bhūtaḍāmaratantra*
7. *Vajrāmṛtatantra*
8. *Cakrasamvaratantra*
9. *Dvādaśacakratantra*
10. *Herukādbhūtatantra*
11. *Mahāmāyātantra*

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<sup>14</sup> *Niks.*, p.22.

<sup>15</sup> “Tantrism in China”, *HJAS*, Vol. 8, pp. 241-332.

12. *Padankṣepatantra*
13. *Catuṣpiṣṭatantra*
14. *Parāmarddhatantra*
15. *Mārīcudbhavatantra*
16. *Sarvabuddhatantra*
17. *Sarvaguhyantra*
18. *Samuccayatantra*
19. *Mārīci kalpa*
20. *Herambha kalpa*
21. *Trisamaya kalpa*
22. *Rājakalpa*
23. *Vajragandharakalpa*
24. *Mārīciḡuhya kalpa*
25. *Śuddhasamuccaya kalpa*
26. *Māyāmārīci kalpa*
27. *Ratnakūṭa sūtra of the Āndrakas*

One thing is clear to us from this long list of Tantric books: Tantric Buddhism or Vajrayāna Buddhism was better known more in Sri Lanka than Mahāyāna Buddhism. Another important fact is, a greater collection of Tantric artifacts have been found in Sri Lanka than those belonging to Mahāyāna Buddhism.<sup>16</sup> But in Sri Lankan academic works, both Mahāyāna and Tantrayāna artifacts have been taken together without making any distinction between them and all of them have been treated as Mahāyānic artifacts. The *Nikāyasamgrahaya* mentions that all the aforesaid collections, except the Ratnakūṭa, are the compilations of the Vajraparvatavāsins or more commonly known as Vajrayānists.<sup>17</sup> The *Nikāyasamgrahaya* says that, out of pseudo Buddhist teachings (*saddharma pratirūpa*), some of them like Vaitulyavāda, Vājiriyavāda and Śāstras like *Ratnakūṭa* created by pseudo *bhikṣūs* (*bhikṣupratirūpaka*) also arrived in Sri Lanka but pseudo Buddhist (*dharma pratirūpa*) teaching such as *Vaṇṇapīṭaka*,\* were extinguished in Jambudvīpa before arriving in Sri Lanka.<sup>18</sup> In this sentence the *Nikāyasamgrahaya* uses the word ‘*pratirūpa*’ (‘*pseudo*’) three times referring to designate non-Theravāda schools and

<sup>16</sup> See MMC.

<sup>17</sup> *Niks*, p.10. \* *The Nikāyasamgrahaya* says that *Vaṇṇapīṭaka* was composed by Hemavatas. They are one of the Buddhist sects divided from Mahāsaṅghikas.

<sup>18</sup> *Niks*, p.11.

their teachings. This aggressive usage implies that non-Theravāda teaching had been a big headache for orthodox Theravāda in Sri Lanka.

The *Mahāvamsa* is completely silent about the arrival of the Vajrayāna in Sri Lanka. On the other hand the *Nikāyasaṃgrahaya* does not give any account on the Mahāsaṅghika School. However, what is interesting here is that the records of the Mahāsaṅghikas and the Vajrayānists in the both sources related to King Sena I and the Vīraṅkurārāma monastery of the Abhayagiri. There is evidence to prove that the Abhayagirivāsīns and the Mahāsaṅghikas had a close relationship. It is said that they shared the same view on the *diṭṭhujukamma* of the ten meritorious deeds. The Abhayagirivāsīns did not include “the correction of false views” (*diṭṭhujukammaṃ*) in their list of ten meritorious actions (*puñṇakiriya*). The Mahāvihāravāsīns pointed out that the Abhayagirivāsīns agreed with the Mahāsaṅghikas in this respect.<sup>19</sup> What this statement implies is that there would have been a close relationship between the Abhayagirivāsīns and the Mahāsaṅghikas. Based on these facts, it is very important here to find out whether any kind of relationship existed among the Abhayagirivāsīns, the Mahāsaṅghikas and the Vajrayānists. What circumstances made the Vajrayānists live in the Vīraṅkurārāma of the Abhayagiri monastery where Mahāsaṅghikas were already in residence? We find a tenable answer for this through Tibetan sources. Gunawardana says that the abbots of the Vikramaśīlā monastery such as Buddhaśrījñāna and Dīpaṅkaraśrījñāna were famous Vajrayāna masters and, they have been designated as Mahāsaṅghika *ācāryas*.<sup>20</sup> The most venerated and the greatest Vajrayāna master of Tibetan Buddhism was Dīpaṅkaraśrījñāna otherwise known as Atīśa Dīpaṅkara. He was ordained under a Mahāsaṅghika *ācārya* named Śīlarakṣita at Nālandā. After his ordination, Atīśa Dīpaṅkara devoted himself to study the teachings of the Four Buddhist Schools<sup>21</sup> in which the Mahāsaṅghika School is also included.<sup>22</sup> In another instance it is said that Atīśa studied in Burma. “It will

<sup>19</sup> *RAP*, p. 29. See also *Abhidhammāvātāra-purāṇaṭṭhā*, *Paṭhamoparicchedo*, 22-23 paragraphs, *Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyanā CD ROM*, version 3.

*Mahāsaṅghiyā pana abhayagirivāsīno ca diṭṭhijukammaṃ visuṃ puñṇakiriyabhāvena na gaṇhanti. Tathā hi te dānaṃ sīlaṃ bhāvanā saṃ suti desanānussatimodanaṃ veyyāvaccapūjāsaraṇappattipasaṃsācāti attanā katapuñṇānussaraṇasṃ buddhādīsu saraṇṇāgamaṇaṃ paraguṇapasasāti imāni tīni pakkhipitvādiṭṭhijukammaṃ puñṇakiriyavattḥi pañṇāpentī”.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.256.

<sup>21</sup> The Four Schools of Buddhism are: Mahāsaṅghika, Sarvāstivāda, Sāmmittīya and Sthaviravāda.

<sup>22</sup> *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India: Their History and Their Contribution to Indian Culture*, pp. 363-364.

also be remembered that about 1000 C.E., Atīśa though a Tantrist, studied in Burma and presumably came into contact with Pāli literature”<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, with the help of Tibetan sources it is possible to posit the view that there could have been a close relationship among the Mahāsaṅghikas, the Vajrayānists and the Abhayagirivāsīns.

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<sup>23</sup> *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. III, p.375.

### Vajrayāna Masters' Vistis to Sri Lanka

According to Chinese sources Vajrayāna masters such as Vajrabodhi (Chin: *Chin-kang-chih*) and Amoghavajra (Chin: *Pu-k'ung-chin-kang*) visited Sri Lanka and lived at Abhayagiri. The former had lived six months there and taught Tantric Buddhism in Rohana kingdom.<sup>24</sup> After visiting Sri Lanka, Vajrabodhi sailed with Persian merchants and went to twenty countries. Bhoja is one of them. Gunawardana thinks that Bhoja would be Kāamboja [Cambodia].<sup>25</sup> But Chou Yi-ling says that Bhoja is the present Palembang in Sumatra. It is also called Śrī Bhoja or Śrī Vijaya. Yi-ling's view seems to be more convincing than the view of Gunawardana, considering the close relations that the Abhayagirivāsīns shared with Indonesia. On the other hand, Yi Jing, the Chinese traveler who went to India visited Śrī Bhoja twice and lived there sometime on his way to India and also on his way back to China.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, Śrī Bhoja used to be a very popular place among travelers of that time. The aim of Amoghavajra's visit to Sri Lanka was to collect Tantric Buddhist books to be taken to China. This story is very important as it tells us that many Tantric Buddhist books existed in Sri Lanka.

Yuan-chao and some others record that Amoghavajra was a native of Sri Lanka but Chou Yi-liang quotes from Toganoō Shōun and says: "due to misinterpretation of Liang-pen's work, which calls him "*chi-shi-tzu-kuo kuan-ting san tsang*", meaning a monk who received *abhiṣeka* in Ceylon, not a native of Ceylon".<sup>27</sup> Amoghavajra was a royal preceptor of the Tang Dynasty Court (618-907 C.E.) and had a great reputation in China, India and Sri Lanka as well.<sup>28</sup> He arrived in Sri Lanka during the time of King Aggabodhi VI (otherwise known as Silāmeghavaṇṇa) (741-781 C.E.).

When he arrived in Ceylon, the king sent a deputy to welcome him. The guardsmen on foot and horse were stationed in ranks along the street when he entered the city. The king, having made obeisance at his feet, invited him to stay in the palace to

<sup>24</sup> "Tantrism in China", *HJAS*, Vol. 8, pp. 241-332.

<sup>25</sup> See *RAP*, Chapter 7, footnote 10, p. 243.

<sup>26</sup> *Buddhist Monastic traditions of Southern Asia: A Record of the Inner Law sent Home From the South Seas* by Śramaṇa Yijing, pp.154-155.

<sup>27</sup> "Tantrism in China", *HJAS*, Vol. 8, p.285.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p.291.

be entertained for seven days. The king himself bathed Amoghavajra daily, using golden barrels [water containers] full of fragrant waters. The crown prince, the queens, and the ministers acted similarly.<sup>29</sup>

Above cited passage explains the great reputation and honour that Amoghavajra enjoyed. While he was in Sri Lanka, the Indian king invited him back to India to get his blessings to get rid of the chaos faced during that time. Another important fact we find in the story of Amoghavajra is that he had a teacher in Sri Lanka. He studied not only with Vajrabodhi, but also with a Sinhalese monk Samantabhadra, who Shingon tradition asserts was also called Nāgabodhi or Nāgañña, Vajrabodhi's preceptor. Given the nature of his teachings, Samantabhadra probably lived at the Abhayagiri. According to Chinese sources he was a disciple of Nāgārjuna.<sup>30</sup>

His virtues were well known in South India. Perhaps he went to the Land of the Lions (Simhala=Ceylon) to preach esoterism. He is the same person who under name of Dharmagupta lived in the monastery of Nālanda and under the same name of Fugen Ajari (Samantabhadra-ācārya?) visited Ceylon.<sup>31</sup>

Amoghavajra received his *abhiṣeka* under his guidance.<sup>32</sup> It is said that Amoghavajra helped his master Vajrabodhi with translation of Sanskrit works into Chinese. After the latter's death he went to Sri Lanka in search of Tantric books there. It is very significant and interesting to know that he went to Sri Lanka but not to India where Tantrism originated. Amoghavajra was thoroughly trained by Ācārya Samantabhadra in the doctrine of Yoga of the *Chin-kang-ting ching* [*Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha*] and the method of erecting altar in accordance with the *Mahākaruṇāgarbhadhātu-maṇḍala*

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, pp.290-291.

<sup>30</sup> Definitely, this Nāgārjuna could be a Tantric master is not identical to Ācāryanāgārjunapāda, who is considered as the founder of the Mādhyamaka Philosophy. Tāranātha gives an account about a monk named Nāgabodhi who was an immediate disciple of Ācāryanāgārjunapāda. This Nāgabodhi practised meditation in a cave at Śrī Parvata and attained the Mahāmudrāsiddhi. As a result he could live as long as the Sun and Moon exist. See *Buddha's Lions, The Lives of the Eighty-Four Siddhas*.

<sup>31</sup> *Study of Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, p.228.

<sup>32</sup> *A Study of Chinese Documents concerning the Life of the Tantric Buddhist Patriarch Amoghavajra*, p.25.

in the *Vairocana Sūtra*.<sup>33</sup> Before leaving he had collected more than five hundred sūtras and commentaries of esoteric Buddhism in Sri Lanka.<sup>34</sup> Being one of the most important Esoteric Buddhist masters in China Amoghavajra translated Sanskrit Tantric texts into Chinese.

It is certain, in any case, that Amoghavajra returned to China in 746, bringing back with him a large number of texts which he had obtained in Ceylon with the help of the king, and of which more than eighty were translated under his supervision before his death in 774.<sup>35</sup>

Amoghavajra is considered as the most capable and energetic personage among Indian Buddhist masters who propagated Buddhism there and his name can be found in the several hundred of books in the Chinese canon. Not only he translated esoteric Buddhist books into Chinese, he also acted as the Royal Preceptor (*Rājaguru*) for three emperors namely *Hsüan-tsung* (712-756), *Su-tsung* (756-762) and *Tai-tsung* (762-779).<sup>36</sup> Therefore, regarding Sri Lankan Esoterism, Amoghavajra's role cannot be taken as that of a mere visitor. His contribution to Sri Lankan Vajrayāna practices must be far more significant.

Beside the Chinese sources, some Tibetan sources also explain some important stories related to Tantric Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Tāranātha (Tib. *Kn dga' snying poin* 1575 C.E.), a Tibetan Buddhist monk who lived in the 16<sup>th</sup> century C.E., made his well-known history, Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India. Another interesting work we come across is *Buddha's Lions or Eighty Four Siddhas*. According to the accounts of Eighty Four Siddhas, among the six door-keeper Buddhist scholars (*Dvārapaṇḍitas*), the eastern door-keeper Ācārya Ratnākaraśānti or otherwise known as Śāntipā arrived in Sri Lanka on state invitation by the Sri Lankan king, whose name has been given in the text as Kabina<sup>37</sup>. Even though some information in this work regarding Sri Lankan Buddhism seems to be incorrect, it explains how a Sri Lankan king and people received Śāntipā and his delegation with

<sup>33</sup> "Tantrism in China", *HJAS*, Vol. 8, p.285.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *A Study of Chinese Documents concerning the Life of the Tantric Buddhist Patriarch Amoghavajra*, p.35.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, p.11.

<sup>37</sup> In the line of kings accepted in Sri Lanka there was no king by that name.

great honour<sup>38</sup>. Guru Śāntipā lived in Sri Lanka for years and he taught Tantric Buddhism to the islanders and then he left for Vikramaśīlā.<sup>39</sup> Gunawardhana quotes Grünwedel and says Tāranātha has recorded the visit of a prominent Buddhist scholar Ratnākaraśānti, who was the abbot of Somapuri monastery during that time. He came to Sri Lanka with an envoy dispatched by the Sri Lankan king. On his arrival he had brought two hundred Mahāyāna texts. He taught for seven years in Sri Lanka and it is recorded that he maintained the sūtra schools. Tāranātha returned to India keeping five hundred Mahāyāna disciples in Sri Lanka.<sup>40</sup> However, in the English translation of Tāranātha's account we do not find information on Śānti-pā's visit to Sri Lanka. Gunawardana further says:

The silence of the chronicles of Sri Lanka does not invalidate the evidence of Tāranātha since it is only very rarely that they concern themselves with the affairs of the “heretics,” and hence it would be unwise to reject this testimony as a mere legend in a late chronicle. The visit of a famous teacher like Ratnākaraśānti, if it did in fact take place, must have greatly strengthened the position of the Mahāyāna schools in the island.<sup>41</sup>

Another Tibetan monk named Vanaratana also had visited Sri Lanka according to Tibetan sources.

The precious Great Paṇḍita was born [in 1384 A.D. – Roerich n] as the son of king in the town of Sadnagara in eastern India [Chittagong District, East Bengal]. At the age of eight, he received the novitiate from one named Buddhaghōṣa. At the age of 20, he received the final monastic ordination under Buddhaghōṣa and Sujātaratna. ‘Then having become an ascetic he journeyed to Ceylon. He spent six years there.’<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Here it is explained; “There was also at that time a king of Ceylon, Kabina by name, who by his merit did not lack any desirable quality. Though the teachings of the Buddha had not been previously known in Ceylon, he had heard good things about the Buddha Dharma from men who had come from India”.

See. *Buddha's Lions, The Lives of the Eighty-Four Siddhas*.

<sup>39</sup> *Buddha's Lions, The Lives of the Eighty-Four Siddhas*, pp.61-62.

<sup>40</sup> *RAP*, p.257. Gunawardana has quoted this information from the book named “Tāranāthas Edelesteinmine, das Buch von den Vermittlern der Sieben Inspirationen”, p.93.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>42</sup> *Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India*, Supplementary Notes on Vanaratana , p. 440.

The information we have shown here is sufficient enough to prove the strong connection between Abhayagirivāsīns and Indian Vajrayāna masters.



### Sri Lankan Monks' and Nuns' Visits to India in Search of Tantrism

Apart from reference to Vajrayāna monks who arrived in Sri Lanka, there are some stories and information in Tibetan and in Chinese sources about Sinhalese monks who went to India. We find a very interesting story in the Tāranātha's account related to Sri Lankan monks who went to India to learn Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna. The story of Jayabhadra is very important regarding this matter. Tāranātha recounts that the Tantric master Jayabhadra, who followed Śrāvakayāna, was a native of Sri Lanka. But he went to Vikramaśīlā to study Mahāyāna Buddhism. He was well versed in the Mahāyāna and became a great Tantric master there particularly in the Guhya-tantra-yāna. In Vikramaśīlā he meditated on *Cakrasaṃvara* and received “*divyacakṣu*”. Then he went to Koṅkana and preached *Guhya-tantra-yāna* there to some of his disciples.

He added some commentaries to the corpus of commentarial literature in the Tibetan Buddhism. The *Cakrasaṃvaraguhya* is one of his works.<sup>43</sup> This story tells us that some Sri Lankan monks had gone to India to learn Tantrism. Rockhill notes that the *Tanjur* contains a commentary on the *Lotus Sūtra* written by *Pritivibandhu* [*Prtuvibandhu*], a monk from Ceylon, and Pāli manuscripts have been found in Nepal. It is possible that Sinhalese may have brought Pāli books to northern India and given them to Tibetans whom they met there.<sup>44</sup> According to Twenty-four Patriarchs of Mahāyāna Ācāryas, a Sinhalese monk named *Siṃhalaputra* comes as the 23<sup>rd</sup> of the list. Sir Charles Eliot mentions him as the 24<sup>th</sup> but in the list he provided this name appears as number 23.<sup>45</sup>

From early times of Sri Lankan Buddhism, *Bhikṣuṇīs* have also played a considerable role spreading the Dhamma in the Island as well as beyond the sea. Unfortunately, it is hard to find any information about their literary works in Sri Lankan chronicles. Only the *Dīpavaṃsa* records some information about them. For this reason some scholars think that the *Dīpavaṃsa* is a work of Sri Lankan *Bhikṣuṇīs*. According to Chinese sources, the *Bhikṣuṇī* Order in China has been established by Sri Lankan

<sup>43</sup> See *Tāranāthā's History of Buddhism in India*, p.325.

<sup>44</sup> *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol.III, p.375.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p.307.

nuns in 433 C.E.<sup>46</sup> Even through scanty information we learn about their contribution for both Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism. What about the Vajrayāna? Surprisingly, we find important information about a Sri Lankan Tantric *bhikṣuṇī* who made some significant contribution to Vajrayāna Buddhism. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century C.E., a Sri Lankan Tantric *bhikṣuṇī*, referred to in Tibetan as a Yoginī<sup>47</sup> whose name is given as Candramāle [Sin. Candramāli, Tbt. *Sing ga gling gi rnal sbyor ma tsandra mā le dang*] in the Kanjur *Tripitaka* had gone to Tibet where she translated the Sanskrit work *Śrī-jñānajvala-tantrarāja* into Tibetan (*dpal ye shes 'bar ba'i rgyud kyi rgyal po* in the rGyud section in the Kanjur). She had undertaken this work under guidance of an Indian Tantric master named Śākya ye shes.<sup>48</sup> Devarāja<sup>49</sup> thinks that she translated the *Śrī-Candramāla-Tantrarāja* which has been named after the translator. But this is a misinterpretation. Because the name of this work is identical with *Bhikṣuṇī Candramāli*, one may come to this decision. However, the *Śrī-Candramāla-Tantrarāja* has been translated into Tibetan by Śākya-ye-shes and his master *Gayadhara*.<sup>50</sup>

Referring to Vajrayāna influence in Sri Lanka, Gunawardana presents a hypothesis that Tantric teaching probably came to Sri Lanka through Indian monks from Buddhist Institutes there or through Sinhalese monks who went there to learn.<sup>51</sup> According to the stories of Sinhalese monks mentioned in the Tibetan sources Gunawardana's assumption seems to be correct. However, except on these occasions, monks and nuns may have travelled to Buddhist countries to learn the Buddhist traditions in those countries. Ennin (Jap. *Jikaku Daishi* 794-864), a Japanese monk who went to China to learn Tantrism, left accounts of foreign monks who lived in China during the ninth century, including a record of a Sinhalese monk who resided in the *Tzu-en-ssu* Monastery.<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately, Ennin does not give any more information about him. This evidence tells us that at least during the ninth

<sup>46</sup> "Biographies of Buddhist Nuns" *Lives of Great Monks and Nuns*, tr. from the Chinese of Baochang (T. 50, no. 2063), by Li Rongse, Berkeley, CA, 2002, p.104.

<sup>47</sup> "*Sing ga gling gi rnal sbyor ma tsandra mā le dang*", link: Tibetan Buddhist Resource Centre – <http://www.tbrc.org>.

<sup>48</sup> "*Sing ga gling gi rnal sbyor ma tsandra mā le dang / dge slong shākya ye shes kyi bsgyur ba'o*".

<sup>49</sup> See "Buddhist Women in India and Pre-colonial Sri Lanka", Devarāja, L., *Buddhist Women Across Cultures*, ed. Karma Lekshe, 2000, pp.67-77.

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.tbrc.org>.

<sup>51</sup> *RAP*, p.256.

<sup>52</sup> *Ennin's Diary – The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law*, p.325.

century, some Sinhalese monks had lived in China. Undoubtedly, he couldn't be the only one who lived in China during the ninth century.



## Esoteric Buddhist Practices in Ancient Sri Lanka

### The Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha Sūtra and the Abhayagiri Dhāraṇīs

A greater collection of Tantric artifacts found in archaeological sites in Sri Lanka, provide enough evidence to prove how widely Esoteric Buddhism had been practised in ancient Sri Lanka. Paranavitana [1928] and Mudiyanse [1967], as seminal scholars of the subject, have immensely contributed to bring to light the prevalence of Mahāyāna Buddhism Sri Lanka.<sup>53</sup> They have provided considerable evidence regarding Vajrayāna Buddhism in Sri Lanka and also opened the door for new research.

The information found in the existing works regarding the Tantric artifacts and the archeological findings in Sri Lanka, can be categorised into two groups as follows.

- I. Facts based on fragmentary Tantric writings
- II. Facts based on Tantric iconographies.

Our aim is to further investigate about Tantric Buddhist practice in ancient Sri Lanka by examining some archaeological findings which have not been identified by earlier scholars, and analysing some Tantric elements occurring in Sri Lankan literature and Buddhist practice as well. Even though Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism had been practised in ancient Sri Lanka, surprisingly, they have been forgotten and some liturgical sources and epigraphies also had remained hidden in the folds of time until they were found shortly before Independence. Since then, scholars have begun to pay attention to Tantric elements in the history of Sri Lankan Buddhism. Mudiyanse refers to many Tantric iconographies in his work. The eight *dhāraṇī* inscriptions found at the Abhayagiri Stūpa are very important among the Tantric inscriptions found in Sri Lanka. Paranavitana has read them and Mudiyanse has expressed his views on these writings and has assumed that they probably are the works of Sri Lankan Vajrayānists.

The eight *dhāraṇī* inscriptions discovered near the Northern *dāgāba* [Abhayagiri Sthūpa] seem to have been composed by

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<sup>53</sup> For details refer to the Introduction of this book.

the Vajrayānistis who, as attested by study of the monuments of the 8-10<sup>th</sup> centuries, appear to have commanded a considerable following in Ceylon<sup>54</sup>

Many years after its first discovery, Schopen<sup>55</sup> identified the primary source for six *dhāraṇīs* out of the eight. He has shown the “*Āryasarvatathāgatādhiṣṭhānahṛdaya-dhātukaraṇḍamudra-nāma-dhāraṇī-mahāyāna sūtra*” (here after the *Stūpa Dhāraṇī Sūtra*) as the source for the six *dhāraṇī* tablets nos. I, II, III, IV, VI, and VIII. He has used the Tibetan version of the above mentioned *Sūtra* which is entitled in Tibetan ‘*Phags pa de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi byin gyis rlas kyi snying po gsang ba ring bsrel gyi za ma tog ces bya ba’i gzungs theg pa chen po’i mdo*’.<sup>56</sup> Schopen’s identification is very important for us as it proves that the Abhayagiri has used Mahāyāna literature apart from Theravāda Canon. He further says that “This, in turn would appear to be fairly clear evidence of the fact that the *Stūpa Dhāraṇī Sūtra* circulated and was known in Ceylon in the ninth century C.E. This, in fact, would seem to be the chief significance of the identification.”<sup>57</sup> When we examine the above-mentioned Abhayagiri *dhāraṇīs*, the combination of number IV and number V makes a complete *dhāraṇī*, which can be seen in the *Stūpa Dhāraṇī Sūtra*. The remaining four *dhāraṇīs* nos. I, II, III, VIII and together with *dhāraṇīs* (plate No.37 (c), 37 (h) in the *MMC*), can be compared with the complete *dhāraṇī* and can make another incomplete trio of copies of the same *Dhāraṇī*. We can suggest that because the phrase ‘*om sarvva Tathāgatoṣṇāsa dhātu mudre sarvva tathāgatadhātubhūṣitādhiṣṭhite svāhā*’, which occurs in the later part of the *Dhāraṇī* can be seen in four out of six Abhayagiri *dhāraṇī* inscriptions. Therefore, certainly we can say that together with one complete *Stūpa Dhāraṇī* there are three more incomplete copies of the same *dhāraṇī* found at the Abhayagiri *Stūpa*. Now a question arises as to why several copies of the same *dhāraṇī* had been enshrined in the *Stūpa*. The answer is found in the *Sūtra*.

<sup>54</sup> *MMC*, p.100.

<sup>55</sup> See *Fragments and Fragments of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India*, Chapter XI, pp.306-313, and also *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 5.1 (1982) pp.100-108.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 307-308, Schopen mentions two copies of Tibetan translations which come at Vol. 6, no. 141, 151-3-5-6, and at Vol. 11, no.508, 112-2-2 to 114-4-7 in the Peking *Kanjur*.

<sup>57</sup> *Fragments and Fragments of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India*, p.308.

Vajrapāṇī then says, “If, O Blessed One someone made a copy of this text and put it into a *stūpa*, what root of merit would be produced? The Buddha answers by saying that if someone made a copy of it and put it into a *stūpa*, that *stūpa* would become a *stūpa* of the relics of the “essence” of vajra of all tathāgatas (*de de bzin gshes pa thams cad kyii rdo rje 'I snying po 'I ring bsrel gyi mchod rten du' gyur ro*); it would be come a *stūpa* of ninety-nine millions of Tathāgatas, etc.<sup>58</sup>

This *Sūtra* passage elaborates the importance of making copies of *dhāraṇī* and enshrining it in a *stūpa* or a Buddha statue. Therefore, believing in the power of the *Dhāraṇī*, the person who enshrined these *dhāraṇīs* in the *stūpa* made several copies of it. One of the Sri Lankan Buddhist texts named the ‘*Saddharmaratnākaraya*’, composed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century C.E., provides information that King Kassapa expanded the Abhayagiri *Stūpa* up to 140 feet, enshrining *dharmadhātu* in it.<sup>59</sup> This *Dharmadhātu* could be these stone inscriptions found near ruined Abhayagiri *Stūpa*. Considering the size of the inscriptions, we can say with certainty that these stone tablets would have been enshrined in the Abhayagiri *Stūpa*. The largest tablet measures 16 inches in length, 7 inches in breadth and 3.5 inches in thickness.<sup>60</sup> The *Dhāraṇī* number eight consists of several phrases taken from different sources including the most popular *sūtric* formula of *Pratītyasamuppāda*, “*Ye dharmā hetupprabhavā...*,”<sup>61</sup> and some fragmentary *dhāraṇī* parts of the *Stūpa Dhāraṇī Sūtra*. According to the records of Yi Jing, two relics are enshrined in the Buddha statues and *stūpas*: relics of the Buddha and the verse on dependent origination. “All things are arise from conditions; The Tathāgata has expounded the causes. All things end with the end of the conditions. Thus was spoken by the Great *Śramaṇa*.<sup>62</sup> A similar idea is found in the *Saddharmaratnākaraya*. It explains about three *caityayas* namely, *Pāribhogikacaityaya*, *Dhātucacyaya*, *Dharmacacyaya*, and then gives details about these three types of *caityayas*: “*Dharmacacyaya*: the *caityaya*, which is built enshrining *Dharma* texts such as *Dhammasaṅghaṇī*

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p.309.

<sup>59</sup> *Sdrk.*, Chapter 13, *Caitya Kathā*, p.328.

<sup>60</sup> *MMC*, p.102.

<sup>61</sup> “*Ye dharmā hetupprabhavā hetuṃ teṣāṃ tathāgato hyavadat Teṣaṃ ca yo nirodho evaṃ vādi mahāśramaṇaḥ*”.

<sup>62</sup> *Buddhist Monastic Traditions of Southern Asia*, p.137.

and *Pratītyasamutpāda*, is known as *Dharmacaityaya*.<sup>63</sup> From this record and also the information given in the *Saddharmaratnākara*, it is very clear that “*Ye dharmā hetuprabhavā*” formula has been used for mainly enshrinement in stūpas. According to Paranavitana, this special stanza has been widely used in Sri Lanka. Within the Vijayārāma copper inscriptions, the Pāli version of this formula has been inscribed.<sup>64</sup>

Having conducted research on relics of the Indian stūpas, Bendor 1995 drew the following conclusions: “The great majority of Indian *stūpas* did not contain entire scriptures, but only parts of them. ... The most common piece of scripture deposited in *stūpas* was the verse of independent Origination, considered to be the epitome of the Buddhist teaching”.<sup>65</sup> One of the Abhayagiri *Dhāraṇis* contains this special formula of *Stūpadhāraṇī*, and it proves that these inscriptions would have been enshrined in the *Stūpa*. As the scriptures belonged to the ninth century, they would have been enshrined there approximately eight hundred years after the construction of the *Abhayagiri Stūpa* in the first century B.C. by Mahārāja Vattaḡāmiṇī Abhaya. Because of various invasions and also plundering of ancient monasteries by foreign enemies, it is possible that the precious items of the Abhayagiri Stūpa too would have been plundered by them. Another reason is that since the capital was shifted to Polonnaruva from Anuradhapura for safety approximately one thousand years, this sacred city was left almost forgotten and abandoned until the British government turned its attention towards historical places in the 19<sup>th</sup> century C.E. At that time, all the sacred places were deserted and the stūpas appeared like hillocks covered with trees. The conditions in which these ancient monuments existed have been explained as follows:

Once flourishing, the great monasteries of Anurādhapura fell into melancholy ruin, only to be overgrown with vegetation, their walls and roofs pierced by the thrust of trees and tangled roots, and the great dagaba [*dāgāba*] became a tree-covered hillock the size of a town. After many centuries of oblivion, they are again being explored and cleared, and detailed

<sup>63</sup> “*Dharmacayityaya: Damsaṅṅunu pratītyasamutpādādī vū baṇa pot liyā pihīṭuvā bandana laddāvū caynam veī*”, Sdrk., p.294.

<sup>64</sup> *MMC*, p.93.

<sup>65</sup> “Indian Origins of the Tibetan Practice of Depositing Relics”, *JAOS*, Vol.115, No.2, Apr. –Jun. 1985. pp.248-61.

excavation and conservation work is now leading to the rediscovery of an exquisite royal city of temples and monasteries.<sup>66</sup>

Schopen has compared the Abhayagiri version with the Tibetan version and stated that both versions are identical. To further this path of investigation, we made an attempt to bring the Chinese version and the Abhayagiri version into a table so that we can compare these two and find the differences and similarities between them. The following table shows the Abhayagiri version and the Chinese version of the *Stūpa Dhāraṇī*.

<i>Āryasarvatathāgatādiṣṭhānahrdayaguhyadhātukaraṇḍamudrā-nāma-dhāraṇī-mahāyāna-sūtra.</i>	
Abhayagiri version of the <i>Dhāraṇī</i> <sup>67</sup>	Chinese version of the <i>Dhāraṇī</i> <sup>68</sup>
<p>... <i>Namas traiyadvikānām sarva tathāgatānām om bhuvibuvana dhare dadha ... cala cala dhara dhara sarva tathāgata dhātu dhare padmam bhavatu jaya dhare vimale smara smara sarva tathāgata dharmacakra pravartana vajrabodhi-maṇḍalāṅkrte sarva tathāgatādhi-ṣṭite bodhaya bodhani bodhani budhya budhya sambodhani sambodhani cala cala calantu me sarvāvāraṇāni sarva pāpa vigate hūṃ hūṃ hūṃ hūṃ huru huru sphuru sphuru sarvva stoka [śoka] vigate sarvva tathāgata hṛdaya vajriṇī sambhara sambhara sarva tathāgata-gyhyadhāraṇī mudre Buddhe subuddhe sarvva tathāgatādhiṣṭhita-dhātu mudre svāha. Samayādhiṣṭhita sthūpe sarvva tathāgatādhiṣṭhite huru huru hūṃ hūṃ svāha. Om sarvva</i></p>	<p><i>Na mo strya dvi ka nam (1) sab ba ta thā ga ta nam (2) om (3) bhu vi ba va na va ri (4) va ca ri (5) va ca tai (6) su ru su ru da ra da ra (7) sab ba ta thā ga ta (8) dā tu da ri pa cmam ba va ti (9) ja ya va ri (10) mu dri sma ra (11) ta thā ga ta dar ma ca kra (12) pra va rta na va jri bo di mwan ṇa (13) luṃ kā rā (14) luṃ kṛ te (15) sab ba ta thā ga tā dhi ṣṭi te (16) bo da ya bo da ya (17) bo di bo di (18) bud dya bud dya (19) sam bo da ya sam bo dha ya (20) ca la ca la (21) ca lan tu (22) sav va ra ṇa ni (23) sav va pā pa vi ga te (24) hu ru hu ru (25) sav va śo ka vi ga te (26) sav va ta thā ga ta (27) hṛ da ya va jra ṇi (28) sam ba ra (29) sav va ta tha ga ta (30) gu hya da ra ṇi mu nri (31) bu te su bu te (32) sav va ta thā ga tā di ṣṭi ta (33) da tu ga be svā hā (34) sa ma yā di ṣṭi te svā hā (35) sav va ta tha ga ta hṛ da ya da tu mu dri svā hā (36) su pra</i></p>

<sup>66</sup> <http://www.lankalibrary.com/heritage/abayagiri.htm> by Kulatunga, I. [T] G. and Amarasekera, A.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, pp.102-103.

<sup>68</sup> Sanskrit reconstruction - reconstruction values (with adjustment) based on Tang-period Pronunciation as described in Guanyun [Guo Xiliang (1986): hanzi guyin shouce. Beijing: Peking University Press.] (work in progress – mwb 2007.3.9) I am grateful to Dr. Bill M. Mak in Beijing University for his assistance with the Chinese source.

<p><i>tathāgatoṅīṣa dhātu mudre sarvva tathāgatadhātubhūṣitā-dhiṣṭhite svāhā. Hūṃ hūṃ phaṭ phaṭ svāhā.</i></p>	<p><i>tī stub he ta thā ga tā dhi ṣṭi ta stu be ta tha ga tā di ṣṭi te hu ru hu ru hūṃ hūṃ svā hā (37) om sav va ta tha ga ta (38) u sñi ṣa da tu mu dra ni sav va ta thā ga tan sa da tu vi bu ṣi tā di ṣṭi te (39) hūṃ hūṃ svā hā (40).</i></p>
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According to this table it seems that these two versions are almost the same except for a few minor variations and some slight scribal errors within each other. Of course, a reason for the slight differences of the Abhayagiri version could be due to mistransliterations because of exposure to different weather conditions. Most probably due to transliteration both in the Chinese and Tibetan versions, some differences between them can be seen. Even within three Chinese transliterations of this *Dhāraṇī* some slight differences can be found.<sup>69\*</sup> Referring to the *Dhāraṇī* in the T.1022a it is mentioned that this Sanskrit mantra is based on the “Common Mantras” of Ling Yun Temple version.<sup>70\*</sup> The Tibetan transliteration was done by Vidyākaraprabhā and Devendrarakṣita of Rtsang, who appears to have lived in the second half of the eighth century C.E. or at the beginning of the ninth.<sup>71</sup> Three Chinese translations of this *Sūtra* (T.1022a, T.1022b, and T.1023a) are extant and the first two of them were done by Amoghavajra who lived in the eighth century C.E., the final one being done by Dānapāla in the tenth century.<sup>72\*</sup>

Even though Schopen was able to identify them there were two more *dhāraṇīs* (no.VI and VII) that remained unidentified.<sup>73</sup> However in my studies, I was able to identify these two *dhāraṇīs* and the source from which they have been taken: the *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha*, a cardinal esoteric text which was certainly known in medieval Sri Lanka as it is mentioned in the *Nikāyasaṃgrahaya* as the *Tattvasaṃgrahatantra*, the tenth in the list of esoteric works according to the sequence given in the *Nikāyasaṃgrahaya*.<sup>74</sup> Confronted with this evidence, Mudiyanse held the view that

<sup>69</sup> See *Taisho Edition*, Vol. 19, pp.710-17.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p.711 note 22.

<sup>71</sup> *Figments and Fragments of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India*, p.307.

<sup>72</sup> See *Taisho Edition*, Vol. 19, pp.710-17. \*I am grateful to Dr. Bill M. Mak for assisting me with the *Taisho Edition*.

<sup>73</sup> As far as Vajrayāna Buddhism is concerned, these remained two *dhāraṇīs* are the most important within the collection of the *Dhāraṇīs* found in Sri Lanka. The reason will be cleared in the immediate paragraphs, which we are going to analyse.

<sup>74</sup> *Niks*, pp.10-11, See also *MMC*, p.17.

*Tattvasaṃgrahatantra* could be the *Tattvasaṃgraha* composed by Śāntarakṣita. Writing:

“The *Tattvasaṃgraha* by Śāntarakṣita is a large philosophical work of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. It is a criticism of both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, from the standpoint of the Svatantrika Yogācāra School.<sup>75</sup>

Though Mudiyanse’s assumption is interesting it is not applicable in this particular case. According to the *Nikāyasaṃgrahaya*, the *Tattvasaṃgrahatantra* comes under the category of Tantric Buddhist works such as *Gūḍha Vinaya*, *Māyājālatantra*, *Samājatantra*, *Mahāsamayatattva*, *Bhūtacāmaratantra*, *Vajrāmṛtatantra*, *Cakrasaṃvaratantra*, *Dvādaśacakratantra*, *Herukābuddhatantra* and so on. Mudiyanse also accepts this classification and says that “nos. 6 – 31 were all composed by the Vajraparvatavāsīns, i.e. the Vajrayānists”.<sup>76</sup> Another important feature is the word “*tantra*” which is added to the end of the work. But the *Tattvasaṃgraha* of Śāntarakṣita is devoid of the word “*tantra*” and it is a work that belongs to the Yogācāra Madhyamaka Svatantrika School. There are three Chinese translations of *Sarvatathāgatattattvasaṃgraha*, but two of them, done by Vajrabodhi and his disciple Amoghavajra, are not complete works. The *Jāpa Sūtra*, which is a recital-text translated by Vajrabodhi into Chinese (T.866), is said to be a section of the *Sarvatathāgatattattvasaṃgraha*.<sup>77</sup> As Vajrabodhi lost a big part of the *Sūtra* he translated only the portion remaining with him. Amoghavajra translated the first part comprising chapters 1-5.<sup>78</sup> Giebel says:

Amoghavajra’s translation was completed ca. 754 on the bases of a text that himself had brought back to China from Ceylon ... Amoghavajra translated only the first chapter of *Tattvasaṃgraha* which is named (“*Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍalavidhivistara*” : Extended Rules for the Great Maṇḍala “Adamantine Realms”) of the first section

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> “Esoteric Buddhism in Southeast Asia in the Light of Recent Scholarship” *JSAS*, Vol. 35 (2), p. 339-354.

<sup>78</sup> See *Introduction of the STTS* ed. Chandra, 1987.

(*Sarvatathāgatamahāyānābhisamaya*: Realization of the Great Vehicle of All the Tathāgatas; more commonly know as *Vajradhātu-khaṇḍa* “Adamantine Realm” Section) of this voluminous work.<sup>79</sup>

Giebel’s assumption seems to be correct that Amoghavajra studied specific Tantric practices elaborated in the *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha* in Sri Lanka and not from India or elsewhere. Therefore, *Tattvasaṃgrahatantra* mentioned in the *Nikāyasaṃgrahaya*, must be the *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha* (hereafter *STTS*), which is considered as one of the three most important Tantric works belonging to Vajrayāna. In the *Sūtra* itself it is described as a well expounded *Sarvatathāghata Guḥya Mahāyānābhisamgraha*, which belonged to the Vajrayāna.<sup>80</sup> In the Tibetan *Kanjur Piṭaka* this *Sūtra* belonged to the section of rGyud (Tantra). According to Chinese accounts Amoghavajra studied how to erect altars in Sri Lanka under Samantabhadra, who lived at the Abhayagiri. On his return to China Amoghavajra took back many books including the *STTS*. Later on he translated this book into Chinese.<sup>81</sup> Before Amoghavajra’s visit to Sri Lanka, Vajrabodhi had taken it to China but on the way he lost a part of it when the ship he sailed was caught in a terrible storm. Chinese accounts prove that *STTS* had been circulated in Sri Lanka in the first millennium. I will provide a brief account on the *Sūtra* in order to have a rough idea about it. For a reader who is not familiar with Trantrism, the contents of this text will appear very much ambiguous and meaningless due to its esoteric (*guḥya*) nature.

The *Sarvatatāgatattvasaṃgraha* mainly describes various *maṇḍalas* and extensively explains the rituals and practices, which should be performed accordingly. This voluminous work consists of twenty six chapters. Following the stereotyped style, this particular *Sūtra* also starts with the common phrase which is read as “Evaṃ mayā śrutamekasmim samaye bhagavān...” and so on. The *Bhagavān* refers to here is not Śākyamunī Buddha but Vairocana Buddha, who is residing in a palace of the highest Realm of Form, the Akaniṣṭhaka Braḥmaloka, surrounded by countless

<sup>79</sup> *Two Esoteric Sūtras*, p.5.

<sup>80</sup> “*Subhāṣitamidaṃ sūtraṃ vajrayānāmanuttaraṃ - sarvatathāgataṃ guḥya mahāyānābhisamgrahaṃ*”.

See *STTS* ed. Lokesh Chandra, 1987, p.198.

<sup>81</sup> “Tantrism in China”, *HJAS*, Vol. 8, (Mar., 1945) pp.242-330.

Buddhas from the countless Buddha Realms (*Buddhakṣetras*) and ninety *koṭi* Bodhisattvas headed by eight Great Bodhisattvas, namely Bodhisttva Mahāsattva Vajrapāṇi, Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, Ākāśagarbha, Vajramuṣṭi, Sahacittotpādadharmacakrapravartin, Gaganagañja, and Sarvamārabala - pramardin.<sup>82</sup>

Showing its typical Tantric characteristics, at the very beginning of the *ū* some extraordinary qualities have been attributed to the Buddha. It commences thus:

“Thus I have heard. At one time the Lord, who had accomplished the most excellent knowledge of the samaya of adamantine empowerment of All the Tathāgatas, who had obtained consecration as the Dharma-king of the three realms [of desire, form and nonform] with gemmed diadem of All the Tathāgatas, who had realised the mastery of the yoga of the knowledge of the Omniscient One of All the Tathāgatas, and who was skilled in performing manifold deeds [based upon] the quality of all seals (*mudrā*) of All the Tathāgatas by which all wishes and activities in all realms of sentient beings, inexhaustible and without exception, are all accomplished – [this same Lord, namely,] Vairocana of great compassion, the Tathāgata who eternally abides throughout the three ages [of past, present, and future] and is the *vajra* of all body, speech, and mind, was residing in the Great *Mani* (Jewel) Hall within the palace of the king of the Akaniṣṭha Heaven, a place frequented by All the Tathāgatas.”<sup>83</sup>

The *STTS* belongs to the division of Buddhist Tantric scriptures or Yoga Tantras, the third category of the fourfold Buddhist Tantras and it is the basic text of this category.<sup>84</sup> So we can understand how important this *sūtra* is in the Yoga Tantra Buddhism. A great deal of the content of the *sūtra* has been reserved for the “explanations of the methods” (*vidhivistara*) of the esoteric *maṇḍalas* and the rites associated therewith. In the first chapter it is explained how Bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi called Siddhārtha attained the Supreme Enlightenment with the guidance of All the Tathāgatas. All the Tathāgatas, who filled the Buddha-world just like sesame seeds packed in a sesame pod, assembled in a cloud near the *Bodhimāṇḍa*, where Bodhisattva

<sup>82</sup> See Chandra, 1987, *STTS* Chapter I, p.3.

<sup>83</sup> *Two Esoteric Sūtras*, p.19, See also *STTS* ed. Lokesh Chandra, 1987. p.1.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, p.5.

Sarvārthasiddhi was practising asceticism. Transforming into the Sambhogakāya they all questioned Him as follows: “Good sir, how will you, who endure ascetic practice without knowing the truth of All the Tathāgatas, realise unsurpassed perfect enlightenment?”<sup>85</sup> Then the Bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi, who was aroused by all the Tathāgatas from deep meditation, venerated by them and urged them to instruct him how he could attain the Enlightenment. Thereafter, all the Tathāgatas instructed him step by step how to practise the mantras of the five-stage process of enlightenment (*pañcākārābhīśambodhikarma*).<sup>86</sup> The process is explained as follows.

1. *Om cittaprativedanaṃ karomi* - Om, I penetrate the mind.
2. *Om bodhicittaṃ utpādayāmi* - Om, I generate the mind of enlightenment.
3. *Om tiṣṭha vajra* - Om, stand, O vajra.
4. *Om vajrātmako ’haṃ* - Om, I am the nature of vajra.
5. *Om yathā sarvatathāgatās tathāhaṃ* - Om, as are All the Tathāgatas, so am I.<sup>87</sup>

The five-stage process is something miraculous and it strongly resembles the process through which a sāmaṇera obtains the Higher Ordination (*Upasampadā*) from his *Upādhyāya* in the assembly of the *Saṅgha*. After enlightenment Śākyamunī Buddha pays respect to Vairocana Buddha with one hundred and eight hymns named *Nāmāṣṭaśata*. Giebel says the process of enlightenment elaborated here may be regarded as a recasting in Tantric terms of Śākyamunī Buddha’s own enlightenment.<sup>88</sup>

In the first step, having chanted the *mantra*, Bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi replies to All the Tathāgatas that He sees His heart to be like a lunar disc in shape. Then, consequently, in the second step He sees again His mind really like a lunar disc in shape, in the third step He sees vajra on the lunar disc, in

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p.23,

“*Kataṃ kulaputrānuttaraṃ samyaḥsambodhiṃ abhisambotsyase, yastvaṃ sarvatathāgattvānabhiśatayā sarvaduḥkarāṇyutsahasi?*”, STTS ed. Lokesh Chandra, p.4.

<sup>86</sup> The five stages are: (I) Penetration into the fundamental heart (*bodhi citta*), (II) The asceticism of *bodhi-citta*, (III) The acquisition of the heart of vajra, (IV) The attestation of the body of vajra, (V) The achievement of the total personality of Buddha. See STTS ed. Lokesh Chandra, p.31.

<sup>87</sup> *Two Esoteric Sutras*, pp.23-24.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p.10.

the forth step All the Tathāgatas enter the *sattva-vajra* and consecrate Him as “Vajradhātu”. Then He says, “I am the nature of the vajra” and also says “I see All the Tathāgatas as myself”. Then in the fifth step, having recited the *Mantra*, Bodhisattva Vajradhātu realises Himself to be a Tathāgata and urged All the Tathāgatas to empower Him and make His enlightenment firm. Thereafter, again, All the Tathāgatas consecrate Him with the “*maṇi-gem*” of Bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha, generate “Dharma-knowledge” of Avalokiteśvara, establish “*viśvakarmatā*” (potential of universal creativity) of All the Tathāgatas in Him. After that, from the *Bodhimaṇḍa* they all appear in a pavilion made of *maṇi-gem* and vajras on the peak of the Mount Sumeru and then they enthrone Him on the *Siṃhāsana* (throne) of All the Tathāgatas, faces all directions. The Tathāgatas Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Lokeśvararāja, and Amoghasiddhi empowered themselves as All the Tathāgatas and sit in the four corners centering the *Siṃhāsana*, as Tathāgata Śākyamunī is now fully qualified to be in the centre.<sup>89</sup> This is how *STTS* elaborates the attainment of “*abhisambodhi*” (Enlightenment) of Bodhisattva Siddhārtha. What is really emphasised in this *Sūtra* is that even *Abhisambodhi* is impossible without practising Yoga Tantra.<sup>90</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the *Sūtra* consists of 26 chapters, which are as follows:

1. *Vajradhātu-Mahāmaṇḍala-Vidhi-Vistara*
2. *Vajraguhya-Vajra-Maṇḍala-Vidhi-Vistara*
3. *Vajra-Jñāna-Dharma-Maṇḍala-Vidhi-Vistara*
4. *Vajra-Kāya-Karma-Maṇḍala-Vidhi-Vistara*
5. *Sarvatathāgata-Mahāyānābhisamaya-nāma-Mahā-Kalpa-Raja*
6. *Trayilokyavijaya-Mahā-Maṇḍala-Vidhi-Vistara*
7. *Krodha-Guhya-Mudrā-Maṇḍala-Vidhi-Vistara*
8. *Vajra-Kula-Dharma-Jñāna-Samaya-Maṇḍala-Vidhi-Vistara*
9. *Vajra-Kula-Karma-Maṇḍala-Vidhi-Vistara*
10. *Mahā-Kalpa-Vidhi-Vistara*
11. *Trayilokacakra-Mahā-Maṇḍala-Vidhi-Vistara*
12. *Sarva-Vajra-Kula-Vajra-Maṇḍala-Vidhi-Vistara*
13. *Sarva-Vajra-Kula-Dharma-samaya-Maṇḍala-Vidhi-Vistara*

<sup>89</sup> See *Two Esoteric Sutras*, pp.23-25.

<sup>90</sup> For more information please see Snellgrove’s *Introduction of Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha*, reproduced by Lokesh Chandra and David L Snellgrove, and Rolf Giebel’s *Introduction of Two Esoteric Sutras* by Giebel., R.W.

14. *Sarva-Vajra-Kula-Karma-Maṇḍala-Vidhi-Vistara*
15. *Sarva-Tathāgata-Vajra-samaya-nāma-Mahā-Kalpa-Raja*
16. a. *Sakala-Jagat-Vinaya-samaya-nāma-Mahā-Kalpa-Raja*  
b. *Padma-Guhya-Mudrā-Maṇḍala-Vidhi-Vistara*
17. *Jñāna-Maṇḍala-Vidhi-Vistara*
18. a. *Karma-Maṇḍala-Vidhi-Vistara*  
b. *Sarva-Tathāgata-Dharma-Samaya-Nāma-Mahā-Kalpa-Rāja*
19. *Sarvārthasiddhi-Mahāmaṇḍala-Vidhi-Vistara*
20. *Ratna-Guhya-Mudrā-Maṇḍala-Vidhi-Vistara*
21. *Jñāna-Maṇḍala-Vidhi-Vistara*
22. a. *Karma-Maṇḍala-Vidhi-Vistara*  
b. *Sarva-Tathāgata-Dharma-sama-nāma-Mahā-Kalpa-Rāja*
23. *Sarva-Kalpopāya-Siddhi-Vidhi-Vistara-Tantra*
24. *Sarva-Kula-Kapla-Guhya-Vidhi-Vistara-Tantra*
25. *Sarva-Kalpa-Guhyottara-Tantra-Vidhi-Vistara*<sup>91</sup>
26. *Sarva-Kalpānuttara-Tantra*

The Sanskrit name of the *Sūtra* “*Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha*” or, as sometimes named, the *Vajraṣekhara Sūtra*, has been partially or completely translated into different languages by both earlier and modern scholars under different titles. Śubhakarasiṃha, in his illustrations of this *Sūtra* on a scroll, has used the word *Rta-saṃhāra* (TZ 54, 55, 56) which is named in Japanese *Rta-sogyara-gobu-shinkan*. It is a synonym for *Tattva* (*Rta*) *Samhāra* (*Samhāra*). Vajrabodhi named it in Chinese as *Chin-kang-tang yü-ch’ieh chung liao-ch’u nien-sung ching*, which in Japanese is rendered as *Kongōchō-yuga chū ryaku shutsu nenju-kyo* (Nj 524, T 866, K 429). Amoghavajra’s Chinese translation is named as “*Chin-kang-ting i-ch’ieh ju-lai chen-shih shê ta-sheng hsien-chêng ta-chiao wang ching*”, Jap. “*Kongōchō-issai-nyora-shinjitsu-shō-dajō-genshō-daikyō-ō-kyō*” (Nj 1020, T 865, K 1274). The complete Chinese translation was done by Dānapāla in the eleventh century. This work is named as “*Fo-shuo i-ch’ieh ju-lai chên-shih shê ta-chêng hsien-chêng san-mei ta-chio-wang-ching*”, Jap. “*Issai-nyorai-shinjitsu-shō-dajō-sammai-daikyō-ō-kyō*”. Śraddhākaravarman’s Tibetan translation comes under the title *De-bzhin-gsêgs-pa thams-cad-kyi De-kho-na-ñid bsdus-pa zhes-bya-ba theg-pa-chen-poñ mdo*.<sup>92</sup> Giebel

<sup>91</sup> Most of the chapters of the *STTS* consist of the phrase “*vidhi-vistara*”, which means “explanation of methods”. It implies that this *Sūtra* follows the commentarial system or *Śāstra* in Sanskrit Buddhism.

<sup>92</sup> For details see *STTS* ed. Lokesh Chandra, pp.10-11.

names *STTS* as “*The Adamantine Pinnacle Sūtra*. Probably he names it so considering its alternative name “*Vajraṣekhara Sūtra*”. Snellgrove uses the name “the Compendium of Truth (or Essence) of all the Buddhas.”<sup>93</sup>

Not only as a Tantric philosophical text but also as a basic work of Tantric visual arts such as maṇḍalas, the *STTS* is highly recognised in Tantric Buddhism. On the order of Śubhakarasiṃha (637-735 C.E.) some of its teachings on maṇḍalas were illustrated on a scroll; later on these pictures were given to Enchin [Skt. Jñānavajra] by the Chinese Ācārya Fa-ch‘üan. Several copies of this illustration were done at different times and kept in different places in Japan. Since then, many *maṇḍalas* have been used in Japan and maṇḍala paintings have been preserved until now.<sup>94</sup> In the Tabo monastery in Himachal Pradesh in Tibet, life size stucco images of the *Vajradhātu maṇḍala* have been made. Chandra says this temple is a complete three-dimensional *maṇḍala*. In Indonesia the *Sūtra* has been used widely for building structures. Within the monuments of Chandi Sewu some ruined images of Tantric deities of the *Mahāmaṇḍala* in the *STTS* have been identified. Bailey has identified Khotanese verses of *Cā-Kīmā-śani* pertaining to Vajrayāna. Lokesh Chandra says that these verses concern the deities in the *Vajradhātumaṇḍala* of the *STTS*.<sup>95</sup> At Chandi Plaosan Lor temple in Indonesia, the figures of the *maṇḍalas* are assumed to be the deities and goddesses represented in the *Vajradhātu* and *Vajraguḥya maṇḍalas*. They are also said to be comparable to the figures of goddesses and deities in the *maṇḍala* murals at the Alchi Monastery in Himālayas [Tibet].<sup>96</sup> The recently discovered reliquaries from the stūpa at the *Famensi* [Famen monastery] reveal the figures of the deities and goddesses of the *Vajradhātu-mahā-maṇḍala* that have been engraved in the relic casket in which the Buddha’s finger relic is enshrined.<sup>97</sup>

The *STTS* is of signal importance for the historic development of philosophic speculation in India, Nepal, China, Japan, Korea, Tibet and Mongolia. Moreover, the text could be presented as a ‘visual dharma’, as a maṇḍala, in the form of a

<sup>93</sup> *STTS* reproduced by Lokesh Chandra and David L. Snellgrove, 1981, p.6.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, p.11.

<sup>95</sup> For more details see *STTS* ed. Lokesh Chandra, pp.10-22.

<sup>96</sup> *Cultural Horizons of India*, Vol. 4, Chandra, L., 1995, pp.167-175.

<sup>97</sup> I-mann Lai, *The Famensi Reliquary Deposit: Icons of Esoteric Buddhism in Ninth-century China*, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, SOAS, London, 2005.

large painted scroll, as sculptures, or an intricately sculptured monument. Thus it exerted a mighty influence on the fine arts of several countries.<sup>98</sup>

Earlier we had only Chinese records referring to the usage of this *Sūtra* in Sri Lanka. We have now found evidence to prove the authenticity of the Chinese records and their historical value. Therefore, without doubt we can add Sri Lanka to the list of the countries in which the *STTS* was known during the ancient period.

Now we will turn back to our topic, the Abhayagiri Dhāraṇīs. Having identified the six of eight *dhāraṇīs* at the Abhayagiri, Gregory Schopen states as follows.

In regard to at least six of the eight tablets, however, this is almost certainly not the case. Although I cannot identify the texts on the tablets nos. vi and vii, the text on tablets {102} nos. i, ii, iii, iv, v, and viii has almost certainly been taken from a Mahāyāna *sūtra* entitled, according to the transliterated Sanskrit found at the beginning of its Tibetan translation, *Āryasarvatathāgatādhiṣṭhānahṛdayadhātukaraṇḍamudranā-madhāraṇīmahāyāna sūtra*.<sup>99</sup>

After Schopen's finding, though several studies have been done on the Abhayagiri, no one had paid attention to identify the text of the remaining two tablets until I came across them and identified them as originating in the *STTS*. To begin and analysis of the two unidentified tablets, I will compare both passages from the *STTS* and the Abhayagiri inscriptions.

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<sup>98</sup> *STTS* ed. Lokesh Chandra, p.10.

<sup>99</sup> Please refer to footnote 57 in this chapter.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Abhayagiri Inscription</b> The <i>dhāraṇī</i> no. eight<sup>100</sup></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Text in the <i>STTS Sūtra</i></b><sup>101</sup></p>
<p><i>Oṃ guhya sarvva [sattva] vajri hūṃ //</i>  <i>Oṃ guhya ratna vajri hūṃ //</i>  <i>Oṃ guhya dharmā vajri hūṃ //</i>  <i>Oṃ guhya dharmā [karma] vajri hūṃ //</i></p>	<p><i>Oṃ guhya-sattvavajrī hūṃ</i>  <i>Oṃ guhya-ratnavajrī hūṃ</i>  <i>Oṃ guhya-dharmavajrī hūṃ</i>  <i>Oṃ guhya-dharmavajrī hūṃ</i></p>
<p><i>Oṃ vajra guhya rati pūjā samaye sarvva pūjā pravartaya hūṃ //</i>  <i>Oṃ vajra guhya pūjābhiṣeka [guhyābhiṣeka]<sup>102</sup> pūjā samaye sarvva pūjā pravartaya hūṃ //</i>  <i>Oṃ vajra guhya dhātu [gīta] pūjā samaye sarvva pūjā pravartaya hūṃ //</i>  <i>Oṃ vajra guhya nṛtya pūjā samaye sarvva pūjā pravartaya hūṃ //</i></p>	<p><i>Oṃ vajraguhya-ratipūjāsamaye sarvva-pūjāṃ pravartaya hūṃ.</i>  <i>Oṃ vajraguhyābhiṣeka-pūjāsamaye sarvva pūjāṃ pravartaya hūṃ.</i>  <i>Oṃ vajraguhyagītapūjā-samaye sarvva-pūjāṃ pravartaya hūṃ.</i>  <i>Oṃ vajraguhyānṛtyapūjāsamaye sarvva pūjāṃ pravartaya hūṃ.</i></p>
<p><i>Oṃ vajra dhūpa hūṃ //</i>  <i>Oṃ vajra puṣpa hūṃ //</i>  <i>Oṃ vajra dīpa hūṃ //</i>  <i>Oṃ vajra gandha hūṃ //</i></p> <p><i>Oṃ vajra taila, [?] hūṃ //</i>  <i>Oṃ vajra ... hūṃ //</i>  <i>Oṃ vajra ... hūṃ</i>  ... ..  ... ..</p>	
<p><u>Text no. vi:</u>  <i>Hūṃ // Oṃ vajra guhya pūjābhiṣeka pūjā samaye sarva pūjā pravartaya hūṃ //</i>  <i>Oṃ vajra guhya pāna [?] pūjā samaye sarvva pūjā pravartaya hūṃ //</i>  <i>Oṃ vajra guhya nṛtya pūjā samaye sarvva pūjā pravartaya hūṃ //</i>  <i>Oṃ vajra dhūpa hūṃ //</i>  <i>Oṃ vajra puṣpa hūṃ //</i></p>	

<sup>100</sup> MMC, p.104.

<sup>101</sup> See *STTS* ed. Lokesh Chandra, p. 35 and also *STTS* ed. Isshi Yamada p.104.

<sup>102</sup> Please refer to the explanation of the Four Outer Goddesses.

<i>Oṃ vajra dīpa hūṃ //</i>	
<i>Oṃ vajra gandha hūṃ //</i>	
<i>Oṃ vajra ... .. //</i>	
<i>Oṃ vajra ... .. //</i>	
<i>Oṃ vajra ... .. //</i>	
<i>Oṃ vajra ... .. //</i>	
... ..	

The above table enables us to compare these two versions with each other. Probably due to long time exposure to the different weather conditions some parts of inscriptions have been obliterated and some characters have been distorted. Paranavitana seems to have read a few words without considering the scribal errors. The words within square brackets on the left side chart seem to be scribal errors. However, both versions are almost identical and there is no doubt that the Abhayagiri *dhāraṇīs* have been quoted from the STTS. The Abhayagiri VI inscription almost appears to be a copy of the number VIII, except a slight difference.<sup>103</sup>

Now we will examine the relation of these *dhāraṇīs* to the original *Sūtra*. We earlier mentioned that the *STTS* belongs to Esoteric Buddhism. *STTS* is the basic *Sūtra* of the yoga tantric division in Tantric Buddhism. But the contents of this particular *Sūtra* have not been understood fully despite it being the primordial description of the 24 *Vajradhātu-maṇḍalas* of Tantric Buddhism.<sup>104</sup> There are thirty-seven<sup>105</sup> goddesses of one of these twenty-four, *Vajra-guhya-maṇḍala*, in which Vajriṇī, the consort of Vairocana Buddha, is the chief and she represents the centre of this maṇḍala in the same way as Vairocana represents the centre in the *Vajradhātu-mahā-maṇḍala*. Here we pay more attention only on the *Vajra-guhya-maṇḍala*. The male deities represent the *Vajradhātu-mahā-maṇḍala* including the five Buddhas, i.e. Vairocana, 2. Akṣobhya, 3. Ratnasambhava, 4. Amitābha and,

<sup>103</sup> Vajranṛtya and Vajrapāna are seen as different words, that do not found in the text number VIII.

<sup>104</sup> *Cultural Horizons of India*, Vol.4, Chandra, L., 1995, p.167.

<sup>105</sup> The thirty seven goddesses are: 1. Vajriṇī (the consort of Vairocana), 2. Vajravajriṇī (the consort of Akṣobhya), 3. Ratnavajriṇī (the consort of Ratnasambhava), 4. Dharmavajriṇī (the consort of Amitābha), 5. Karmavajriṇī (the consort of Amoghasiddhi), 6. Samantabhadrā, 7. Tathāgatāṅkuṣī, 8. Ratirāgā, 9. Sadhūmati, 10. Ratnottamā, 11. Ratnolkā, 12. Dhvajāgrakeyūrā, 13. Hāsavatī, 14. Vajrāmbujā, 15. Ādhāraṇī, 16. Sarvacakrā, 17. Sahasrāvartā, 18. Siddhottarā, 19. Sarvarakṣā, 20. Tejahpratyāhāriṇī, 21. Dhāraṇīmudrā, 22. Sattvavajrī, 23. Ratnavajrī, 24. Dharmavajrī, 25. Karmavajrī, 26. Vajralāsī, 27. Vajramālā, 28. Vajragītā, 29. Vajranṛtyā, 30. Guhyadhūpeśvarī, 31. Guhyapuṣpā, 32. Guhyadīpā, 33. Guhyagandhā, 34. Guhyāṅkuṣī, 35. Guhyapāṣa, 36. Guhyasphoṭa, 37. Guhyaghaṇṭā.

5. Amoghasiddhi, while female deities i.e. the consorts of male deities represent the *Vajra-Guhya-Maṇḍala*.

What is the relation of the Abhayagiri *dhāraṇī* with these *maṇḍalas*? There are 26 chapters of the *STTS* and the second chapter is named as *Vajra-guhya-vajramāṇḍala-vidhi-vistara*<sup>106</sup> or in longer name *Sarva-tathāgata-mahāyānābhisamaya-Mahā-kalpa-rājād Vajra-guhya-vajra-maṇḍala-vidhi-vistaraha*.<sup>107</sup> The thirty seven goddesses<sup>108</sup> we mentioned above are divided into nine categories and they represent unique characters in the aforesaid *maṇḍala*. They are:

- i. Five Vajriṇīs - *Vajriṇī, Vajravajriṇī, Ratnavajriṇī, Dharmavajriṇī, Karmavajriṇī*.
- ii. Four Vajradhāriṇīs - *Samantabhadrā, Tathāgatāṅkuṣī, Ratirāgā, Sadhūmatī*.
- iii. Four Ratnadhāraṇīs - *Ratnottamā, Ratnolkā, Dhvajāgrakeyūrā, Hāsavatī*.
- iv. Four Dharmavajriṇīs - *Vajrāmbujā, Ādhāraṇī, Sarvacakrā, Sahasrāvartā*.
- v. Four Sarvadhāraṇīs - *Siddhottarā, Sarvarakṣā, Tejaḥpratyāhāriṇī, Dhāraṇīmudrā*.
- vi. Four Karmavajreśvarīs - *Sattvavajrī, Ratnavajrī, Dharmavajrī, Karmavajrī*.
- vii. Four Vajralāsyās\* - *Vajralāsyā, Vajramālā, Vajragātā, Vajranṛtyā*.
- viii. Four Offering goddesses - *Guhyadhūpeśvarī, Guhyapuṣpā, Guhyadīpā, Guhyagandhā*.
- ix. Four Gatekeepers - *Guhyāṅkuṣī, Guhyapāṣa, Guhyasphoṭa, Guhyaghanṭā*.<sup>109</sup>

According to this classification the Abhayagiri *dhāraṇī* inscriptions number vi and viii are compatible with groups number vi, vii and viii. Now we will examine those inscriptions one by one comparing with the Sūtra. Actually,

<sup>106</sup> *STTS* Sanskrit Text, ed. Chandra, L., 1987, p.6.

<sup>107</sup> *Sarva-Tathāgata-Tattva-Saṅgraha-Mahāyāna-Sūtra*, ed. by Isshi Yamada, 1981, p.7.

<sup>108</sup> Refer to footnote 106.

\*This group is named after the first goddess “Vajra-lāsyā”

<sup>109</sup> For details see the picture of the *Vajraguhya-maṇḍala* in *STTS* ed. Lokesh Chandra, 1987.

Mudiyanse's presumption is correct. He named those writings as *dhāraṇīs*. The *STTS* explains about the mechanism of the 26 six *maṇḍalas* which we mentioned elsewhere and each deity has her own *mantra*. The so-called Abhayagiri *dhāraṇīs* are the *mantras* of the goddesses who represent the group numbers vi, vii and viii in the *Vajra-Guhya-Maṇḍala*. The four Karmavajreśvarīs, *Sattvavajrī*, *Ratnavajrī*, *Dharmavajrī* and *Karmavajrī* are treated as *pāramitās*. In the first part of the Abhayagiri inscription number VIII represent the mantras of them.

The following table elaborates it.

Four Karmavajreśvarīs	Pāramita	Corresponding Mantra
<i>Sattvavajrī</i>	<i>Vajra-pāramitā</i>	<i>Oṃ guhya-sattvavajri hūṃ</i>
<i>Ratnavajrī</i>	<i>Ratna-pāramitā</i>	<i>Oṃ guhya-ratnavajrī hūṃ</i>
<i>Dharmavajrī</i>	<i>Dharma-pāramitā</i>	<i>Oṃ guhya-dharmavajrī hūṃ</i>
<i>Karmavajrī</i>	<i>Karma-pāramitā</i>	<i>Oṃ guhya-dharmavajrī hūṃ</i>

In the second part of the Abhayagiri inscription number VIII represent the mantras of them. The following table elaborates it.

Four Vajralāsyās – Inner Goddesses of Offering	Corresponding Mantra
<i>Vajralāsyā</i> - adamantine amorous dance	<i>Oṃ vajraguhya-ratipūjāsamaye sarvva-pūjām pravartaya hūṃ.</i>
<i>Vajramālā</i> - adamantine garland	<i>Oṃ vajraguhyābhiṣeka-pūjāsamaye sarvva-pūjām pravartaya hūṃ.</i>
<i>Vajragītā</i> - adamantine song	<i>Oṃ vajraguhyagītāpūjā-samaye sarvva-pūjām pravartaya hūṃ.</i>
<i>Vajranṛtyā</i> - adamantine dance	<i>Oṃ vajraguhyānṛtyapūjāsamaye sarvva-pūjām pravartaya hūṃ.</i>

In the third part of the Abhayagiri inscription number VIII represent the mantras of the Four Outer Goddesses. The following table elaborates it.

Four Outer Goddesses of Offering	Corresponding Mantra
<i>Guhyadhūpeśvarī</i> - secret incense	<i>Oṃ vajra dhūpa hūṃ</i>
<i>Guhyapuṣpā</i> - secret flower	<i>Oṃ vajra puṣpa hūṃ</i>
<i>Guhyadīpā</i> - secret lamp	<i>Oṃ vajra dīpa hūṃ</i>
<i>Guhyagandhā</i> - secret scent	<i>Oṃ vajra gandha hūṃ</i>

Here regarding the Four Outer Goddesses we find something interesting in the Abhayagiri inscription. Neither in the Nepalese Sanskrit version nor in the Chinese nor in the Tibetan versions of the *STTS* do we find mantras for the Four Outer Goddesses. However, in the Abhayagiri inscription we find their mantras. Scholars who edited the *STTS* have not paid attention to this issue. In other maṇḍalas of the *STTS* these four goddesses are represented by other names and they all have been ascribed their own mantras. For instance, we can cite the mantras of the Four Buddhapūjāḥ pūjādevyaḥ (Four offering goddesses to the Buddha). Their details and the corresponding mantras are as follows.

Four <i>Buddhapūjāḥ pūjādevyaḥ</i> <sup>110</sup>	Corresponding Mantra <sup>111</sup>
<i>Dhūpa-padminī</i> - lotus incense	<i>Oṃ dhūpa padminī hūṃ</i>
<i>Padma-puṣpā</i> - lotus flower	<i>Oṃ padma puṣpinī hūṃ</i>
<i>Padma-kula-sundarī-Dharmālokā</i> - beautiful <i>Dharma</i> lamp of lotus family	<i>Oṃ padmakulasundarī dharmāloke pūjaya hūṃ</i>
<i>Padma-gandhā</i> - lotus scent	<i>Oṃ padma gandhe hūṃ</i>

The Four Inner and Outer Goddesses of the entire *maṇḍalas* except the outer Goddesses we mentioned earlier, have been ascribed with *mantras*. It is hard to find the reason for this exceptional case. Is it possible that those four mantras of the Outer Goddesses have been dropped from aforementioned versions, or the *Abhayagirivāsins* have extraneously added these mantras to their version? If it is their contribution, *Abhayagirivāsins* are credited for creating those aforementioned four mantras of the Outer Goddesses in the *STTS*.

When we consider the time in which periods these manuscripts were written the Abhayagiri inscription seem to be the oldest among them. Elsewhere we cited that the full version of the Chinese *STTS* was transliterated by Dānapāla in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Tibetan manuscript was written in the early eleventh century by Śraddhākaravarman (958-1055).<sup>112</sup> The Nepalese Sanskrit manuscript is written in Brāhmī-like script and its origin is in 9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> century, Bihar.<sup>113</sup> Mudiyanse says that those Tantric mystic formulas have been inscribed in North-Eastern Nāgarī in vogue around the 9<sup>th</sup>

<sup>110</sup> *STTS* ed. by Lokesh Chandara, "Introduction", p.68.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*, p.120.

<sup>112</sup> *STTS* ed. by Lokesh Chandra, p.11.

<sup>113</sup> *Sarva-Tathāgata-Tattva-Saṅgraha- Nāma- Mahāyāna-Sūtra*, ed. Isshi Yamada, 1981, p.5.

century.<sup>114</sup> Therefore the Abhayagiri inscription must be the oldest. Referring to his second article of “*Cultural Horizons of India*”, Chandra says: “The second paper on the contacts of Abhayagiri of Sri Lanka with Indonesia shows the role of Sri Lanka in the spread of Vajrayāna. The Tantric texts translated into Chinese by Amoghavajra were also procured from Sri Lanka”.<sup>115</sup> Nakamura is of the view that the *STTS* would have been composed in South India by Nāgabodhi. “As for the *Diamond Peak Sūtra* (*Sarvatathāgata-tattva-saṅgraha*), it is generally recognised that it appeared in South India later than the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra*. Nāgabodhi of South India is said to be its writer, or if not, at least the man who completed it”.<sup>116</sup> Since Nāgabodhi had lived at the Abhayagiri, the birth place of this text could be Sri Lanka.

The authenticity of the Abhayagiri inscription can be proven citing two possible reasons. The first reason is that, according to Chinese accounts, both Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra had taken *STTS* from Sri Lanka and not from India. The other fact is that the Abhayagiri mantras are very much similar to the Nepalese Sanskrit version. Referring to the mantra of Vajramālā<sup>117</sup>, Yamada says that in the oldest Nepalese manuscript the mantra is read as “*Oṃ vajraguhya pūjābhiṣeka-pūjāsamaye sarvva- pūjāṃ pravartaya hūṃ.*” But in the Chinese and Tibetan version it is given as “*Oṃ vajraguhyābhiṣeka- pūjāsamaye sarvva- pūjāṃ pravartaya hūṃ.*”<sup>118</sup> In these two versions the word “guhya” has been omitted. But the Abhayagiri inscription is completely compatible with Nepalese Sanskrit version, which can be taken as the oldest manuscript of *STTS* among the three complete works, the Chinese, the Tibetan and the Nepalese. What is more, in his *STTS* edition, Yamada has cited numerous words from the Chinese and Tibetan translations, which are different from the Nepalese Sanskrit version. For instance, the word ‘*pravartaya*’ is used in the Tibetan version ‘*pravartānāya*’. In the Chinese version the term ‘*Cakramaṇḍala*’ is substituted to ‘*Vajramaṇḍala*’.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>114</sup> *MMC*, p.99.

<sup>115</sup> *Cultural Horizons of India*, Vol 4, p.vii.

<sup>116</sup> *Indian Buddhism - A Survey with Bibliographical Notes*, Hajjime Nakamura, p.324.

<sup>117</sup> Please refer to the Vajramāla’s mantra of the Four Outer Goddesses.

<sup>118</sup> *Sarva-Tathāgata-Tattva-Saṅgraha- Nāma- Mahāyāna-Sūtra*, ed. Isshi Yamada, 1981, p.104.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p.104.

The *Nikāyasaṃgrahaya* further refers to another Tantric movement, which was known as “*Nīlapaṭadarśana*”. Explaining the origin of this school the *Nikāyasaṃgrahaya* says it originated in Southern Madhurā in India during the reign of Śrī Harṣa. The founder of this school is from the Sammitīya Nikāya and he associated with *Veśyās* or prostitutes and wore blue robes. Associating with *Veśyās*, sipping liquor, and showing obeisance to *Kāmadeva* (The God of Love) are considered as the incomparable Triple Gem in the Triple-world (*bhuvanatrāyehi asādhāraṇa ratna*). They paid homage to these three and treated the Triple Gem<sup>120</sup> as granite stones. They also composed a text named the *Nīlapaṭadarśana*.<sup>121</sup> Giving information about the colour of robes used by different Buddhist sects, Sodo Mori quotes from *Sharihotsu-mon-kyou* (Taisho vol.24, p.900) and explains that “...Some Hīnayāna schools wore robes of particular colors: deep red for the Sarvāstivāda, black for the Dharmaguptaka, a mixture of yellow, pink and red for the Kāśyapīya, blue for the Mahīśāsaka, yellow for the Mahāsaṅghika”.<sup>122</sup> According to this information, not the Sammitīyas but the Mahīśāsakas had used blue robes. However the accounts provided by the *Nikāyasaṃgraha* on the *Nīlapaṭadarśana* are very much similar to the esoteric teachings and practices found in the Tantric texts such as the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, the *Mahāvairocana Tantra*, the *Hevajja Tantra* and the *Caṇḍamahārosana Tantra*, which were composed approximately during 300 C.E. to 700 C.E. The *Nikāyasaṃgrahaya* quoted two *ślokas* from the *Nīlapaṭadarśana*, the original source of which still remains unidentified. One of these *ślokas* is:

*Veśyā ratnaṃ surā ratnaṃ devo manobhavaḥ*  
*Etadratnatrayaṃ vande hyanyatkācamaṇītrayaṃ.*<sup>123</sup>

Further, the *Nikāyasaṃgrahaya* provides details that these teachings were rejected by king Harṣadeva and burned all the scriptures together with its followers. But some followers who managed to survive the purge continued that practice as a cancer, which is rooted deeply.<sup>124</sup> What the *Nikāyasaṃgrahaya* mentions is very similar to the *Pañca Tattva* or Five

<sup>120</sup> The Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha.

<sup>121</sup> *Nks.*, p.23.

<sup>122</sup> *Mahāyāna Buddhism in Sri Lanka*, p. 26.

<sup>123</sup> *Nks.*, p.23.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

*Makāras* (Five Ms) in Tantrism, namely, wine (*Madya*), meat (*Māṃsa*), fish (*Matsya*), cereal (*Mudrā*) and sexual union (*Maithūna*).

It is possible that the *Nikāyasamgrahya* recorded a legendary account on extreme Tantric practices. In Tantric tradition there is no mention of the *Nīlapaṭadarśana*. But the most important deity of *Guhya* Tantric practice is Heruka, very often represented in blue colour. He and his various other forms such as Dvibhuja Heruka, Buddhakapāla, Saṃvara, and Mahāmāyā, are all represented in blue colour. Therefore Dharmakīrti would have named it as *Nīlapaṭadarśana* or “Blue-dressed Philosophy” and also this kind of strange practice would have been seen as a vulgar one. Perhaps influenced by the dominance of this colour in representing this important god, the people who practised this system used the colour of Heruka, which is blue. When Heruka’s images represent *Samputayoga* or Father-Mother union (*Yab-yum* in Tibetan), for Dharmakīrti, these figures may have appeared as the union of *Kāmadeva* and *veśyās*. Especially Heruka’s form of Buddhakapāla denotes these attributes. The *Sādhanamālā* explains that in the form of Buddhakapāla, Heruka is embraced by his *prajñā* (consort) named Citrasenā, who seems to be intoxicated, nude, fearless, and with disheveled hair; she kisses the god incessantly.<sup>125</sup> Even if these icons are used symbolically to explain *Guhya* practices or as real demonstrations, they are not at all compatible with the practice or the goal of the early Buddhist teachings. Therefore, it is not strange that orthodox Theravāda monks severely criticized and opposed those teachings. According to Tārānātha, Saindhava Śrāvakas together with Siṃhala monks destroyed the silver image of Heruka at the Vajrāsana temple at Buddhagaya and burned the Tāntric scriptures, saying that they are the works of *Māra*.<sup>126</sup> But for Vajrayānists, they do not see any difference between the Buddha and the Heruka. For them Heruka is an emanation of Buddha Śākyamuni.<sup>127</sup>

In Vajrayāna, Heruka is considered as an emanation of Buddha Śākyamuni. Lama Geshe Kelsang Gyatso says:

<sup>125</sup> *The Indian Buddhist Iconography: Mainly Based on the Sādhanamālā and Other Cognate Tāntric Texts of Rituals*, p.64.

<sup>126</sup> See *RAP*, pp. 244-245.

<sup>127</sup> See *Essence of Vajrayana: The Highest Yoga Tantra Practice of Heruka Body Mandala*, p.5.

Buddha Vajradhara, Buddha Shakyamuni, and Buddha Heruka are the same person, differing only in aspect. When Buddha turned the Wheel of Dharma of Sutra he appeared in the form of an ordained person, when he turned the Wheel of Dharma of Tantra in general he appeared in the form of Vajradhara, and when he turned the Wheel of Dharma of Heruka Tantra in particular he appeared in the form of Heruka.<sup>128</sup>

In the last chapter of the *STTS* there is a statement as follows.

Now this is the Secret Tantra of the Pledge-Perfection of the Tathāgatas: Saying ‘You are the Pledge’ one should gratify all women. Do not turn away from the affairs of living beings. Thus one soon gratifies the Buddhas ... Gratification should not be despised. One should gratify all women<sup>129</sup>

Referring to the fifth chapter of the *STTS*, Lokesh Chandra states:

This chapter is mainly concerned with sexual yoga. Hence the strict order command for secrecy, which is repeated below. One brief verse may summarise the contents: Throughout the threefold world there is no evil such as absence of passion. Therefore you should not practice absence of sexual desire (*kānavirāgitvaṃ*).<sup>130</sup>

Probably the author of the *Nikāyasamgrahaya* must have heard about all these teachings of the *STTS*, which is why he vehemently criticised this practice. In Sri Lanka, at the Nālandā monastery in Matale in the Central Province, two granite stone sculptured panels have been found depicting the sexual union of human beings, but one of them has now been misplaced or fallen faced down.<sup>131</sup> Commenting on this specific artifact, Mudiyanse says this picture is sufficient to compare with the erotic figures on the Jagamohan at Konarak, Orissa (13<sup>th</sup> century) and at the Kandariya temple at

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> *STTS* reproduced by Lokesh Chandra and David L. Snellgrove, 1981.p.63.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p.38.

“*Virāgasadṛśaṃ pāpaṃ anyan nāsti tridhātuke*

*Tasmāt kānavirāgatvaṃ na kāryaṃ bhavatā punaḥ*”, *STTS* ed. by Yamadā, 1981, p.150.

<sup>131</sup> *MMC*, p.71.

Khajuharo (11<sup>th</sup> century). He further says that Indian examples are later than the Nālandā which can be dated in the eight century. That epigraphical and sculptural evidence is sufficient to prove that the worst forms of Tantric Buddhist practices prevailed in the Island. The words ‘*Rati-pūjā*’ and ‘*Guhya Pūjā*’ in the inscriptions are inscribed in the stone at Nalanda-gedige.<sup>132</sup> The *Mantra* of ‘*Vajralāsyā*’ is “*Om vajraguhya-ratipūjāsamaye sarvva-pūjāṃ pravartaya hūṃ*”. This mantra seems to be related to ‘*rati-pūjā*’ or sexual ritual. *Vajralāsyā*’s mantras in other maṇḍalas of the *STTS* are related to “*rati-pūjā*”. ‘*Om rati pūje hūṃ jah*’, ‘*Om padma ratipūje hoḥ*’, ‘*Om vajra guhya rativaśamkara sidhya hūṃ*’ are can be quoted as examples.<sup>133</sup> The *STTS*, which would have been circulated in Sri Lanka, explains the worship of union with Lokeśvara. This strongly suggests the prevalence of the practice of intense pleasure of physical union as a part of religious practices.

In union with Lokeśvara gratifying all women, crying ‘O Bliss’, he worships all Buddhas.

In union with Lokeśvara gratifying all women, crying ‘My dear one! My dear one!’ he is the delight of all Buddhas.

In union with Lokeśvara gratifying all women, crying ‘O beloved’, he always is loved. In union with Lokeśvara gratifying all women, crying ‘Bliss O bliss!’ his bliss never ends.<sup>134</sup>

The *Mantra* of ‘*Vajralāsyā*’ is “*Om vajraguhya-ratipūjāsamaye sarvva-pūjāṃ pravartaya hūṃ*”. This mantra seems to be related to ‘*rati-pūjā*’ or sexual ritual. This term gives the strong impression that this refers to a physical union and not just to a practice of a very high state of meditation (*mahāyoga*) as explained in later Vajrayāna Buddhism. One of the Buddhist

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> *STTS* ed. Yamada, 1981, p.368.

<sup>134</sup> *STTS* reproduced by Lokesh Chandra and David L. Snellgrove, 1981, p.54.

*Lokeśvarasamāpatyā ramyaṃ sarvayoṣitaḥ /*

*Aho sukha iti prokte sarvabuddhaṃ sa pūjayet //*

*Lokeśvarasamāpatyā ramyaṃ sarvayoṣitaḥ /*

*Priye priye-ti vai prokte buddhānāṃ bhavī priyaḥ//*

*Lokeśvarasamāpatyā ramyaṃ sarvayoṣitaḥ /*

*Aho rati-ti vai prokte buddhānāṃ bhavī priyaḥ//*

*Lokeśvarasamāpatyā ramyaṃ sarvayoṣitaḥ /*

*Sukha sukha iti prokte tasya sukhaṃ na nasyata // iti //, STTS ed. by Yamadā, pp.372-373.*

Tantric texts named *Chaṇḍamahārosana Tantra* explains the importance of women and physical union with any kind of woman as the greatest offering that one can make in order to respect and honour the Buddha.<sup>135</sup> In the concluding part of the *STTS*, the comments of the Bodhisattvas are important. Some information found here sounds extremely vulgar and immoral. The *Cittavisuddhiprakaraṇa* of Āryadeva also provides instructions to the followers that the wise can get rid of *rāga* and *kāma* only through those very *rāga* and *kāma* and through nothing else. Through *rāga* a wise person can attain enlightenment, but the fool uses it wrongly and attaches himself to *samsāra*. The editor of the *Cittavisiddhiprakaraṇa* states:

He [Āryadeva] proceeds to say that one should not be shocked at the outward features of the means advocated in the system. As a washerman makes a dirty cloth clean with some matter which itself is dirty, as a man infected with poison is sometimes cured of it by poison itself, or as some water accidentally gone into one's ears is taken out by the help of some additional water itself, so, the writer wants to assert, that one can get rid of *rāga* and *kāma* by those *rāga* and *kāma* themselves, which become the cause of bondage only when they are resorted to by the foolish, but not the wise in whose case they are actually the cause of emancipation. ... Some of the Tantric rites, such as the worship of women without any discrimination as regards their beauty, kinship or caste, the use of meat and wine by yogin, are mentioned and advocated unhesitatingly. He advises everybody to resort to *mantravāda* only.<sup>136</sup>

This teaching of the *Cittavisuddhiprakaraṇa* clearly implies that the teaching of human physical union in Tantric practice is not just a symbol of compassion and wisdom but necessarily the real sexual practices similar to

<sup>135</sup> See *Chaṇḍamahārosana Tantra*, Chapters I-VIII, ed. George, C.S., 1941 (microfilm -1971).

<sup>136</sup> "Introduction", *Cittavisuddhiprakaraṇa of Āryadeva*, ed. Prabhupai Bhikhabai Patel, Visva-Bharati 1949.

*Karṇādjalaṃ jalenaiva kaṅṭhakenaiva kaṅṭhakaḥ - rāgenaiva tathārāgamudvaranti maṅṅīṣinaḥ.  
Yathaiva rajako vastraṃ malenaivatu nirmalam - kuryadvijñaiḥ kāmo malenaivatu nirmalam.  
Durvijñayīḥ sevitaḥ kāmaḥ kāmo bhavati bandhanaṃ - sa eva sevīto vijñaiḥ kāmo mokṣaprasādhakaḥ.  
Prasiddhaṃ sakaleloke kṣīraṃ viṣa nāsanam - saeva paṇibhiḥ pūtām śrutarām viṣa vardhanaṃ.  
(37, 38, 42, and 43 śloka)*

those advocated in Hindu Tantricism. For example we can take the stone diagram found near Tisaväva i.e. Lake Tisā in Anuradhapura, which is said to be a portrayal of a Tantric ritual. Scholars such as Senarat Paranavitana have expressed their views on this stone slab. There is a scholarly consensus that this particular diagram symbolizes a kind of Tantric ritual. Dhammika<sup>137</sup> is of the view that, since that particular stone was found in the Royal Pleasure Garden (in Sinhala, *Magul Uyana*), this was used by ancient kings for performing *kāmotsava* i.e. the festivals for the purpose of arousing sensual gratification. Commenting on this, Wickramasinghe also says that Tantric teaching is based on secret rituals and sexual practices.<sup>138</sup>

One may wonder how Sri Lanka being a stronghold of Theravāda Buddhism could accommodate Vajrayāna practices. Could this be the outcome of change of time and environment? Though strange and incompatible with Theravāda teachings, Vajrayāna Buddhism was practised in Sri Lanka. The idea presented by Patel referring to the teachings of the *Cittaviśuddhiprakaraṇa* can be taken as an example regarding the Vajrayāna Buddhism in Sri Lanka. He states: “His [Āryadeva’s] treatment of this thesis, though it deviated from the traditional way of uncompromising renunciation and austerity, is in accordance with the social and religious conditions of that time.”<sup>139</sup> Some may argue that these kinds of Tantric *Sūtras* may have been used within the Abhayagiri monastery by some Tantric monks who visited the monastery or some individual Tantric practitioners there. For two reasons, we cannot accept that view. The first objection we have is, if esoteric Buddhism was only followed by a small group of followers, how were they able to enshrine the dhāraṇīs in the Abhayagiri *Stūpa* without the consent of the authority of the Abhayagiri monastery? The Abhayagiri *Stūpa* does not belong to any particular group. It was an institution of all the Buddhists with a strong management and leadership. The second objection is that these practices were not limited to Abhayagiri. Many Tantric artifacts have been found in many places in Sri Lanka. The best examples are the erotic panel at Nālandā and well preserved Tārā images that we mentioned elsewhere.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> *Abhayagiri Saṃskṛtiya*, p.104.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> *Cittaviśuddhiprakaraṇa*, p.XX.

<sup>140</sup> For more information pl. refer to *MMC* by Mudiyanse.

### Fragmentary Writings Related to the *STTS Sūtra*

Another fragmentary copper inscription, which has been found in Anurādhapura, is also very important regarding Tantric practice. In Mahāyānism in Ceylon, Paranavitana has cited this inscription. In this particular inscription there is a *mantra* which he has read as “*oṃ vajratīkṣa (?) raṃ*”. Paranavitana suggested that the word ‘*vajratīkṣa*’ could be read as either *Vjratīkṣa* or as *vajranīkṣa*. Our suggestion is that the word should be corrected as “*vajratīkṣṇa*”<sup>141</sup> because there is no Tantric deity by the name of ‘*vajranīkṣa*’ or ‘*vajratīkṣa*’. Commenting on this word, Mudiyanse has shown another instance from Nepalese inscription, in which we find a name of a deity called ‘*vajratīkṣṇa*’. In the Anuradhapura inscription ‘*ṇ*’ is missing. Further he suggests that Anurādhapura inscription also could refer to this Bodhisattva. Citing an example from a Chinese Buddhist dictionary Mudiyanse suggests that it could be ‘*Vajrayakṣa*’ which is an emanation of the *Dhyānī-Buddha* Amoghasiddhi, he writes “Assuming that *Vajratīkṣa* or *Vajranīkṣa* here is a scribal error for *Vajrayakṣa* (who probably was a Tantric deity as his name suggests) there is also reason to suppose that it was *Vajrayakṣa* who was thus addressed by a *mantra*.”<sup>142</sup> But when we study on the *STTS* we find two Tantric Bodhisattvas who represent the *Vajradhātumaṇḍala* whose names are read as *Vajrayakṣa* and *Vajratīkṣṇa*.<sup>143</sup> Therefore it is clear the deity mentioned in the Anuradhapura copper inscription should be ‘*Vajratīkṣṇa*’ in the *Vajradhātumaṇḍala*. Both *Vajrayakṣa* and *Vajratīkṣṇa* represent number 24 and 18 in the *Vajradhātumaṇḍala* respectively.<sup>144</sup> Another instance also can be quoted here from the same *Sūtra*. In the *Vajra-kula-karma-maṇḍala-vidhi-vistara* the *mantra* of *Vajramaṇḍale karmamudrā* is also reserved for *Vajratīkṣṇa*. “*Oṃ vajra tīkṣṇa rāge rāgāya hūṃ*”<sup>145</sup>

Tārā worship was also a greatly influential cult in ancient Sri Lanka. Although ancient China was a Mahāyāna country, the Tārā cult was not

<sup>141</sup> We find a *mantra* in the *STTS* as “*oṃ vajratīkṣṇakrodhecchinda vajrakoṣena sarvān diḥ*”, See chapter seven of *STTS* ed. Chandra, p.73.

<sup>142</sup> *MMC*, pp.97-98.

<sup>143</sup> See *STTS* ed. by Chandra, p. 19.

*Vajratīkṣṇa mahāyāna vajrakoṣa mahāyudha - mañjuśrī vajragāmbhīrya vajrabuddha nomostute // Vajrayakṣa mahopāya vajradamaṣṭra mahābhaya – mārapramadhīn vajrogra vajracāṇḍa namostute //* (*śloka* 10 and 11).

<sup>144</sup> See *STTS* ed. by Lokesh Chanrda, pp. 83-84.

<sup>145</sup> *STTS* Chapter 9, ed. by Yamada, p. 239.

quite popular. But in Sri Lanka, Tārā has been venerated with a great honour. In the *STTS* we can see the same *mantra* used to worship Tāntric goddess Tārā. It is stated in the *Padma-Guhya-Mudrā-Manḍala-Vidhi-Vistara* as follows. “*Oṃ tāre tuttāre hūṃ*”<sup>146</sup> In the inscriptions found at the Vijayārāma monastery in Anurādhapura there is a *mantra* referring to this goddess. Paranavitāna has read it thus. “*Oṃ tāre tuntāre ture svāhā*”. Mudiyanse also has shown this *mantra* in his work. He assumes that this *mantra* would have been used by Tantrikas to worship Tārā. Bhattacharya shows a *mantra* quoted from the *Kiñcivistara-Tārā Sādhana*. That is exactly the Tārā *Mantra* found at the Vijayārāma monastery in Anuradhapura. This *mantra* is also found in the “*Magic and Ritual in Tibet – The Cult of Tārā*”.<sup>147</sup>

After doing beneficial deeds for the worldly beings, the worshipper should meditate on the form of Tārā which is identified with the universe. Again he should meditate repeatedly until tired the yellow germ syllable and the Bhagavatī contained therein. He who is unable to meditate in this fashion should mutter the *mantra*, “*Oṃ Tāre Tuttāre Ture Svāhā*”. This is the lord of all *mantras*. It is endowed with great powers, and it is saluted, worshipped and revered by all the Tathāgatas.<sup>148</sup>

In the *mantra* found at the Vijayārāma in Anuradhapura, the word ‘*tuttāre*’ has been read as ‘*tuntāre*’. Actually it could be a scribal error. Judging by the precedent made by Paranavitana when explaining that the word ‘*Vajratīkṣa*’, which can be read as ‘*Vajranīkṣa*’, we suggest here that ‘*tī*’ (𑀮𑀺) and ‘*nī*’ (𑀮𑀻) could be mixed up easily in ancient *Nāgarī* inscriptions due to the close similarity of their shapes, and hence “*tuttāre*” becomes “*tuntāre*”.

<sup>146</sup> *STTS* Chapter 16 ed. by Chandra, p. 119.

<sup>147</sup> *Magic and Ritual in Tibet – The Cult of Tārā*, p.271 ff.

<sup>148</sup> *An Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism*, p.108.

## Vajrayāna Influence on Sinhala Culture

### Vajrayāna Buddhist Influence on Sri Lankan *Pirit* (*Paritta*)

Under this sub-topic we are going to examine what kind of Tantric attributes can be seen in Sri Lankan *Pirit* (Pāli. *Paritta*) chanting and its related rituals practised in Sri Lankan Buddhism today. Several studies have been done on *Pirit* in Sri Lanka and almost all studies have been focused on the development of this specific practice as a special tradition, its social and religious significance and rituals related to it.<sup>149</sup> Since this chapter is mainly focused on Tantric influence on Sri Lankan Buddhism, we will pay attention only on Tantric attributes and mixed Sanskrit terms found in Pāli *Paritta suttas*, customs and rituals related with it.

*Pirit* chanting is a very popular Buddhist ritual in Sri Lanka today. For many reasons, to Sri Lankan Buddhists, *Pirit* is essentially connected with their life-events, from birth to death. De Silva observes that “*Paritta* is a very popular Buddhist ceremony in Sri Lanka. It is not an exaggeration to say that hardly a day passes without this ceremony being performed in some form or other in almost every locality”.<sup>150</sup> In Sri Lankan *Paritta* tradition the Buddha is venerated as one who is capable of averting all harm and danger (*sabbantarāya nivāraṇasamatto*).<sup>151</sup> “The Blessed One, the Supreme Enlightened Buddha, possesses the power to bring happiness, wisdom, mindfulness, glory and victory. He is the possessor of endless virtues and merit, and is capable of averting all dangers”.<sup>152</sup>

Sri Lankan *Pirit* has its unique melodious tone. In the *Anuśāsanāva*<sup>153</sup> of the *Piruvānāpotvahanse*, there is a statement how the Buddha chanted with His

<sup>149</sup> See “Paritta: The Buddhist Ceremony for Peace and Prosperity in Sri Lanka” Spolia Zeylanica by Lily de Silva, a publication of National Museums of Sri Lanka, 1981. See also Piritehi Pariṇāmaya (in Sinhalese) by Gamunu Siri Gamage, Sri Lanka, 2003. Buddhist Paritta Chanting Ritual a Comparative Study of the *Buddhist Benedictory Ritual*, Perera, published by Buddhist Cultural Centre, Dehiwala, Sri Lanka, 2000.

<sup>150</sup> See Silva, *Paritta*, p.3.

<sup>151</sup> See *Jayapirita* in the *Great Book of Protective Blessings*.

<sup>152</sup> *Siridhīmatī tejo jayasiddhi mahiddhi mahāguṇaṃ aparimīta puññādhikāraṣṣa sabbantarāya nivāraṇasamattassa, bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa. The Great Book of Protective Blessings*, compiled by Sārada et al., Singapore, 1999, pp.150-151.

<sup>153</sup> This is also one of the unique characteristics in Sri Lankan *Pirit* Tradition. *Anuśāsanāva* literary means admonition, but here it refers to transferring merit to the deities and devotees who listened to the chanting, especially Seven-day Chanting (Sin. Sati *Pirit*).

melodious tone. There are eight qualities of His melodious voice: charming (*madhu*), inspirational (*mada*), delightful (*mudita*), gentle (*lalita*), pleasurable (*ratikara*), attractive (*manohara*), a voice similar to the cooing of a Kuravīka bird (*kuravīkanāda*), non-variegated (*nirviśeṣa*).<sup>154</sup> The soothing tone of *Pirit* chanting not only pleases the ear of humans but also pleases the ear of *Suras* (divine beings), *Asuras*, and *Uragas* too.<sup>155</sup> The *Pirit* is also considered as the most powerful and protective words of the Buddha. The reason for this miraculous power is, these *sūtras* are said to have been delivered by the Buddha establishing the “Wheel of Command” (*Ājñācakra*) within ten hundred thousand world systems.<sup>156</sup> If a Buddhist encounters with whatever bad luck such as illness, calamities, and disasters and so on, *Pirit* chanting is performed as a kind of therapy for him. Therefore, *Pirit* chanting is one of the common remedies utilized to counteract the ill-effects caused by calamities and misfortunes. In the eyes of Sri Lankan Buddhists, chanting of *Pirit* can bring happiness, good health and prosperity for oneself.

*Pirit* chanting in Sri Lanka has been developed for many centuries in many aspects. The number of *parittas* have increased; these *sūtras* have been compiled into a book named *Mahapirit Pota (The Great Book of Protection)*. It is also known as *Catubhāṇavārapāli* and *Piruvānā Poth vahanse*. In the late Anurādhapura period a royal decree was made by King Kassapa V (929-939 C.E.) regarding giving ordination. It laid down that those who could memorize the *Catubhāṇavārapāli* are qualified to enter the *Sāsana*.<sup>157</sup> This itself suffices to show the importance attached to *Pirit* tradition in early Sri Lankan Buddhist monasticism.

Another important feature that is seen in Sri Lankan *Pirit* tradition is giving of honorary title “*Parittabhāṇaka*” to monks who are very good in *Pirit* chanting. In the *Bhāṇaka* system of the Theravāda Tradition there are many categories named *Sutta Bhāṇakas*, *Vinayabhāṇakas* and *Abhidhammabhāṇakas*, *Jātakabhāṇakas* etc., but there is no category of *Parittabhāṇakas*. While these *Tripiṭaka Bhāṇaka Paramparā (bhāṇaka*

<sup>154</sup>“*madhumadamuditalalita ratikara manohara kuravīkanāda nirviśeṣaṣṭaṅga samūpeta madurasvara...*, *Pirivāṇāpotvahanse* and *Mahapirit Pot Vahanse*, ed. By Vācissara Thera, 1952, p.342.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid. “*Surāsuroraga śravaṇa jana mana karṇa rasāyana...*” .

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> “*Mahan karat pirit satar baṅvar piṇis vūvan maḥaṇa karaṇu isā*”, *EZ.*, Vol. I, p.55.

lineages) have disappeared, *Parittabhāṇakas* can be still found in Sri Lankan *Saṅgha* community in all Three *Nikāyas*<sup>158</sup> and still keeps presenting this honorary title for monks in their fraternities, who are very skilled in *Pirit* chanting. Therefore, this can be cited as the only *Bhāṇaka* system that is in operation in Sri Lanka. Some other titles such as “*sarabhañña* (melodious voice), *pravacanakīrti śrī* (well versed in the *Buddhavacana*) go along with title of *Parittabhāṇaka*.<sup>159</sup>

When we consider the evolution of the *Pirit* chanting system in Sri Lanka we see that *Pirit sūtras* in the Piruvānāpot Vahanse and various *mantra-typed Pirit sūtras* have been in circulation among Sri Lankan Buddhists for many centuries. There is no doubt that the *Pirit* system has been developing in Sri Lanka for over two millenniums. During this long journey it would have become associated with different Buddhist traditions, including sectarian Buddhism<sup>160</sup> and Mahāyāna Buddhism<sup>161</sup>. Though we are not able to find out exact sectarian influences within the chanting system in Sri Lanka, we can identify some Mahāyāna characteristics within it. In the course of time, some Mahāyāna and Tantric influences gradually amalgamated with some minor-parittas.<sup>162</sup> Saṅghamitta, a South Indian Mahāyānist monk who is considered as the champion of Sri Lankan Mahāyāna Buddhism, arrived in Sri Lanka during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and has been described in the *Mahāvamsa* an expert in exorcism (*bhūtavijjādi kovidho*):<sup>163</sup> “A *bhikkhu* from the Coḷa people, named Saṅghamitta, who was versed in the teachings concerning exorcism of spirits, and so forth, ...”<sup>164</sup> This shows that Saṅghamitta was an adept in black-magic and exotic practices.

<sup>158</sup> Siyam Mahānikāya, Amarapura Mahānikāya, Rāmañña Mahānikāya.

<sup>159</sup> The late Venerable Wattala Śrī Sīlaratana was well known *Parittabhāṇaka* in the recent years in Sri Lanka. Most of the Buddhists in the Island know him as a great *parittabhāṇaka*.

<sup>160</sup> Sectarian Buddhism means the non-Theravāda; but so called Hīnayāna Schools. Several non-Theravāda schools had existed in Sri Lanka. Please refer to the second chapter of this thesis.

<sup>161</sup> Since both Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna share the same view regarding some concepts, here I used the word “Mahāyāna” in that generic sense.

<sup>162</sup> Mahinda uses this word to distinguish non-canonical small *Pirit sūtras* from Canonical *Pirit Sūtras* used in the Piruvānāpotvahanse. Read “Textuality of the Jayamaṅgala Gāthā and Its Liturgical Role in Modern Buddhist Marriage Ceremony”, *Buddhist Studies Essays in Honour of Professor Lily de Silva*, ed. Pemasiri, P.D., et al., Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Peradeniya, 2002, pp.183-197.

<sup>163</sup> *Saṅgamittoti nāmena bhūtavijjādi kovidho –mahāvihāre bhikkhūnaṃ kujjihitvāna idhāgamī.*

<sup>164</sup> *Mv.* 36.113, p.264.

As already stated a lot of Tantric influence can be found in Sri Lankan *pirit* chanting system. The story of prince Āyuvaddhana in the Pāli *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā* is very similar to the story of *devaputra* Susthita of the *Uṣṇīṣavijayadhāraṇī Sūtra*.<sup>165</sup> The seven year old prince Āyuvaddhana was said to have been destined to die within seven days, so the Buddha ordered monks to chant for seven days at prince's home, setting him in the middle of the chanting *maṇḍapa* (pavilion). After seven days chanting, he was blessed and protected and his lifespan increased up to 120 years.<sup>166</sup> Devaputra Susthita who was dwelling in Trayatiṃśa heaven once heard that he could live only seven days and would depart from the celestial abode and be reborn as an animal for seven successive lives and so on. He was frightened by this message and rushed to Śakra the king of gods, and told him that he heard someone talking about him that he would face a miserable situation soon. The Śakra went to the Buddha and asked him how Devaputra Susthita could escape from this misfortune. The Buddha taught him the *Uṣṇīṣavijayadhāraṇī Sūtra*<sup>167</sup> and asked him to teach it to Devaputra Susthita. The advised Śakra: “Lord of heaven, please go back and transmit this *Dhāraṇī* to Devaputta Susthita [Susthita]. After seven days, come to see me with Devaputra Susthita [Susthita].”<sup>168</sup> Having learnt the *Dhāraṇī*, Devaputta Susthita practised it for seven days and he was able to lengthen his lifespan for an immeasurable period of time. Even though the content is not exactly the same in the two sources, the stories in both are similar in all essentials.

Some other important details are also in this *Sūtra* that are related to some ritualistic practices prevalent in the *Pirit* tradition in Sri Lanka today. These practices are the use of sand, flowers, and various grasses on the spot where a *Dhāraṇī* is recited, reciting a mantra 21 times or 1000 times. All these features are explained in this *Sūtra* relating to reciting this particular *Dhāraṇī*. In Sri Lanka, “enchanted pure sand” is used to protect the land and homes, driving away and dispelling the evil spirits and bad omens from those places. In the *Uṣṇīṣavijayadhāraṇī Sūtra* the Buddha advised spreading various grass on the spot where chanting is to be performed. In

<sup>165</sup> *Uṣṇīṣa Vijaya Dhāraṇī Sūtra*, ed. By Upāsaka Chau Boon Tuan, Malaysia, 2002. See also T 19, 967, pp.349-352.

<sup>166</sup> *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*, PTS., Vol. 2, pp. 235-239.

<sup>167</sup> This *Sūtra* also named as *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana* (purifying all evil paths) *Uṣṇīṣavijayadhāraṇī Sūtra*, p.102.

<sup>168</sup> *Uṣṇīṣavijayadhāraṇī Sūtra*, p.37.

Sri Lanka, during *Pirit* ceremonies, a kind of grass named *Ītaṇa* (*Andropogon Contortus*) is spread over in the *Piritmaṇḍapa* to ensure purity. This grass is cut into small pieces and mixed up with pop-rice, jasmine flowers and mustard-seeds. Some other tender leaves such as betel, ironwood (*Nāga*), and banyan are hung on the canopy of the *maṇḍapa*. Usually the mixture of pop-rice, jasmine flowers and mustard-seeds are spread by monks inside the *maṇḍapa* while a monk keeps on reciting the stanza to invite *devas* to listen to *Pirit*.

Another popular practice among Buddhists in Sri Lanka is the reciting of spell-like *sūtras* such as the *Ratana Sūtra* (*Precious Gem Sūtra*) 1000 or 100,000 times. As a common practice in Sri Lanka, these mantra-like *sūtras* are recited at least 7 or 21 times. Especially the *Aṅgulimāla Paritta*, which is reserved for the protection of expectant mothers, is recited exactly 21 times. This number 21 is very significant regarding recitation of *Pirit* and *Dhāraṇīs*. It is not possible to say with absolute certainty that the practice of reciting 21 times is directly due to the influence from Tantric Buddhism; however, all circumstantial evidence suggest such a possibility. While presenting a copy of the *Uṣṇīṣavijayadhāraṇī* as a birthday gift to Emperor Tai-tsung, Amoghavajra asked him to carry it with him. Later on the emperor ask monks and nuns to memorize it and recite it 21 times each day, and at the end of each year they had to report how many times they have recited it.<sup>169</sup> “The recital for twenty-one times is assigned in *Shan-wu-wei*’s [*Śubhakarasiṃha*] manual for most purposes”.<sup>170</sup> However it shows that these numbers are very significant in Tantric practices. Seven is an auspicious number, and perhaps, triple seven made it further auspicious.

In the *Piruvānāpotvahanse*, there are some short Parittas, which are exclusively reserved for different purposes such as blessing for expectant mothers, invoking rain, driving away evil spirits, counter-acting of black-magic and so on. Supplementing these *Sūtras* are specific drawings or protective diagrams (*yantras*). It is not at all clear as to when and how these practices were added to the *Piruvānāpotvahanse*. Different type of diagrammatical drawings such as the *Ratana Yantra*, the *Abhisambhidhāna Yantra*, the *Sīvalī Yantra*, and the *Jalanandana Yantra*, are based on the

<sup>169</sup> “Tantrism in China”, *HJAS*, Vol. 8, Appendix N, p.322.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

*Ratana Sūtra*, the *Abhisambhidhāna Paritta*, the *Sīvalī Paritta* and the *Jalanandana Paritta* respectively. These diagrammatical drawings contain in them some particular figures such as the Sun, the Moon and some characters which are used as pictures. The selected parts of parittas are carefully engraved on bronze, silver or gold plates. The most important thing to be observed when making such drawings is that letters should be written without touching each other. If they touch each other, the yantra would lose its efficacy and also it may bring harm and danger to the user, instead of showering blessings and giving protection. This kind of practice is criticised in Theravāda as “*tiracchāna vijjā*” (Skt. *tiraścīna vidyā*) or animal or beast science, which really means vulgar or inferior practices. It is believed that these mantra-typed parittas possessed some magical power.

The *Jalanandana Paritta* is considered to be a very powerful *Paritta*, which has a potent force of negating malicious and harmful effects of powerful black-magic, charms and spells (e.g. *sarvabandhana chedanam*, cutting all spell-bound harm, all mantras and *yantra mantra haram katvā vināsam buddhānubhāvato*, having destroyed the power of all harmful *yantras* and *mantras* by the power of the Buddha). There is a story behind this *Sūtra*. Once, venerable Ānanda was distracted by a *Caṇḍāla* family with the power of particular charm and spell. Being helpless, with tearful eyes, venerable Ānanda wished that the Buddha would come and free him from this spell. The Buddha seeing the plight of venerable Ānanda, saved him using His psychic power.

The above mentioned story is recorded in *Divyāvadāna*<sup>171</sup> a text of Mahayāna, but not found in Theravāda literature. However, this story is very popular in Sri Lanka and it is known to almost every Buddhist. Later on a *Paritta* also has been composed, related to this story. In the Mahāyāna text that mantra is named as ‘*Śaraprasanna*’ but in Sri Lanka it is named as ‘*Jalanandana*’. Literarily, both “*Saraprasanna*” (charming pond) and “*Jalanandana*” (pleasurable water) connote a fairly similar meaning. The *Jalanandana Sūtra* has been composed in corrupt Pāli. Some Sanskrit words

<sup>171</sup> *Saraḥ prasannaṃ nirdoṣaṃ - prasannaṃ sarvato bhayam /*  
*Ītayo yatra sām̐yanti – bhayāni calitāni ca //*  
*Tadvaideva namasyanti - sarvasiddhāś ca yoginaḥ /*  
*Etena satya vākyaena – svastyānandāya bhikṣave //*, *Divyāvadāna*, p.613.

such as “*Sarvabandhana*”, “*śrī loka*”, “*yantra mantra*”, have been added into this particular *Sūtra*.

The *Sīvalī Paritta* and its *yantra*, which have been exclusively reserved for invoking material prosperity, are popular among Sri Lankan business community in particular and among all Buddhists in general. In older times almost in every Buddhist home, at least a picture of Arahant Sīvalī together with a copy of the *Sīvalī Yantra* is used. The *Sīvalī Yantra* or *Sīvalī Dāhāna*, which has been consecrated by chanting for one hundred thousand times, is one of the *yantras* which is in great demand in Sri Lanka. In the beginning of this *Sīvalī Paritta*, a phrase with mysterious syllables occurs. It reads as: “*Na jālitīti jālitāvī ā, ī, ū, āma, ī, svāhā buddhasāmī buddhasatyam...*”.<sup>172</sup> This clearly shows the influence of Tantric *dhāraṇī* style. There is a phrase in the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* containing homage to the Buddha which reads as follows: “*Namaḥ sarvatathāgatebhyo viśvamukhebhyaḥ sarvathā a ā aṃ aḥ*”<sup>173</sup> According to the explanation of seed syllables (*bījākṣara*) of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* each letter of the Sanskrit alphabet has been ascribed to different parts of the body. This explanation shows where to place each syllable; “*i*” and “*ī*” in the two eyes; “*u*” and “*ū*” in the two lips and so on.<sup>174</sup> Syllable “*a*” is the best life.<sup>175</sup> Thus, one could plausibly hold that these are distinct traces of influences of the *bījākṣara* system of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* or some other Tantric *mantra* on this particular usage of “*ā, ī, ū, āma, i svāhā*” in the *Sīvalī Paritta*. We have learnt that Amoghavajra had studied the *Mahākaruṇāgarbhadhātu-maṇḍala* of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* in Sri Lanka under master *Samantabhadra*.<sup>176</sup> Another instance can be quoted here from the *Advayaparamārthā nāmasaṅgītiḥ*.

*A ā ī ī ū ū e ai o au aṃ aḥ sthito hr̥di  
Jñānamūrtirahaṃ buddho buddhānāṃ tryadhvavartinām*<sup>177</sup>

<sup>172</sup> *Mahapirit Pot Vahanse*, ed. by Vācissara Thero, p.347.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid*, p.56.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid*, p.177.

<sup>175</sup> *The Enlightenment of Vairocana*, p.176.

<sup>176</sup> See “Tantrism in China” in *HJAS*, Vol. 8, p. 285.

<sup>177</sup> *Advayaparamārthanāmasaṅgītaḥ*, śloka 26.

The *Sīvalī Dāhāna*<sup>178</sup> (Sīvalī mystical formula) and the *Sīvalī Murapati Yantra* also have been influenced by a Tantric system. The following *Dhāraṇī* type terms are included in the *Sīvalī Dāhāna*.

- i. *Mna ā, u, umanā, ā*
- ii. *Evam sīvalī namaḥ*<sup>179</sup>
- iii. *Namo śrībuddha jaya jaya esvāhā*
- iv. *Buddham siṃ saṃ siddhiṃ namo muni muni śrīmuni muni svāhā*
- v. *Nmo sarvārthakāraṇāni tesam bhagavato iti rājahaṃ te namaḥ*
- vi. *Namo bhava bhava sarvasiddhikāraṇāya sahasrakoṭi bandhanāya nakhajvalohaṃ iti sādgate namaḥ*
- vii. *Namo hana hana dhana prasiva orasiva siddhi sādhakāya hradaḡrī sambandhanāya bhagnamukha te namaḥ*
- viii. *Namo tesam iti saṅgha dharanam koṭi prakoṭi bandhanam ghaṭikam ghaṭikam taprabhavato namaḥ*
- ix. *Namo kūṭa puṭa puṭa yoga dakṣiṇa utra puṭa sīvalī te namaḥ*
- x. *Namo bhogindarāma bhanga jātaḡamsa bhagavato namo namaḥ*
- xi. *Namo sīvalī sūrya tāpanī ī, ū, e, o, ai, na, te, bandhu bhujāṅga dhāraṇāyate bandhu trivaṛṇa yugate namaḥ*

The *Sīvalī Murapati Yantra* has Sanskrit, Sinhalese and mantra syllables are mixed in it, with some Tamil influence probably also seen. Really what has happened in this instance is that Tantric formulas have been reinterpreted to be compatible with Theravāda belief. The *Sīvalī Murapati Yantra* is as follows:

*Oṃ namo sīvalī maṅgala murapati loke svāhaḥ*  
*Oṃ namo sīvalī sivamuni kibaveṭṭu sīvalī dāhāne namaḥ*  
*Oṃ namo sīvalī nīlakha mantra prāṇe dāpane svāhaḥ*  
*Oṃ namo sīvalī śrīmāne tāne svāhaḥ*  
*Oṃ namo sīvalī siri siri esvāhaḥ*  
*Oṃ namo sīvalī cāraṇa yuga cāraṇe dāpane svāhaḥ*  
*Oṃ namo sīvalī śrī buddha dāpane svāhaḥ*  
*Oṃ namo sīvalī kāham haṃ haṃ bhrīm svāhaḥ*  
*Oṃ namo sīvalī nāgam kuru kuru esvāhaḥ*<sup>180</sup>

<sup>178</sup> This word dāhāna is probably a Sinhalese usage of the Sanskrit word *dhyāna*, which means a deep concentration or absorption. It implies that dāhāna is a result of deep concentration on mystic formulas.

<sup>179</sup> “*Namaḥ*” is used in many places in this mystical formula.

The corresponding mantras of *Randēṇe Gāthās* also seem to be influenced by Vajrayāna. In the *Piruvānapotvahanse* we find only *Randēṇe Gāthā* but no corresponding mantras are found. In the *Purāṇa Set Pirit*<sup>181</sup> those mantras have been included. There are seven *gāthās* in the *Randēṇe Gāthā* and each *gāthā* has been ascribed a *dāhāṇa* too. Following are the mantras.

1. *Oṃ tassa virena bhāgo devassi deva mahā caturveda mūlasya bhāvinyā oṃ namo namaḥ*
2. *Namo śrī gatīnaṃ śrī devaṃ śrī buddharāja ne svāhaḥ*
3. *Oṃ jeṃ salli krīta upuṭa vetṭu paṭṭu kiḍa kiḍa poga poga svāmiyāne suṃ suṃ namaḥ*
4. *Namo rāja guru sura guru - bobdhiṃṇāḍale svāhaḥ*
5. *Oṃ oṃ oṃ drom drom drom hrīm hrīm hrīm bhrām bhrām bhrām prom prom prom aṃ iṃ uṃ eṃ oṃ viṣṇu viṣa vināsāya suṃ suṃ namaḥ*
6. *Oṃ kuru kuru dalesvāhaḥ*
7. *Oṃ kuru kuru esvāhaḥ - oṃ namaśrī esvāhaḥ*<sup>182</sup>

The above mentioned *mantras* are very similar to the Tantric Buddhist *mantras* in Vajrayāna. They can be compared with following Vajrayāna *mantras*.

1. *Oṃ hūṃ bāṃ, rīṃ rīṃ, līṃ līṃ, kāṃ khāṃ, gāṃ ghāṃ ngāṃ, tsāṃ tshāṃ, dzhāṃ nyāṃ, trāṃ trāṃ, drāṃ dhrāṃ nāṃ, tāṃ thāṃ, dāṃ dhāṃ nāṃ, pāṃ phāṃ, bāṃ bhāṃ yāṃ, rāṃ lāṃ vāṃ shāṃ kāṃ sām hām hūṃ hūṃ phaṭ aṃ āḥ hūṃ*
2. *Oṃ kara kara kuru kuru bandha bandha ...*
3. *Oṃ kuru kuru hūṃ hūṃ phaṭ*<sup>183</sup>

Another *Dhāraṇī-like* formulae can be seen in several *Pirit sūtras*. The origin of these *sūtras* is not clear but Mahāyāna influence on them is

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<sup>180</sup> *Purāṇa Set Pirit*, p. 81.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.68-69.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> See *Essence of Vajrayāna*, p.258 ff.

obvious. The *Gini Pirita* (the Fire *Paritta*)<sup>184</sup> found in the *Piruvānāpotvahanse* is very much similar to a *dhāraṇī*. Lily de Silva has shown a *dhāraṇī* from *Saddharmapundarīka Sūtra*, which seems to be compatible with some magical words of the *Gini Pirita*.<sup>185</sup> The repetitive usage of double words in the *Ginipirita* follows the system occurring in many *dhāraṇīs* in Tantric Buddhism. Thus the repetition of words “*ritti ritti, litti litti, kitti kitti, citti citti, vittu vittu, mutti mutti, vutti vutti*” reminds one of the similar patterns commonly found in Tantric Buddhist *mantras*. The following *mantra* of offering *torma* (Tibetan ritual cake) in Vajrayāna is an example: “*Om kara kara, kuru kuru ... ham ham, him him, hum hum, kili kili, sili sili, hili hili, dhili dhili, hum hum phat*”<sup>186</sup>. The *Abhisambhidhāna paritta* also has been influenced by *dhāraṇī* system. The phrase which reads as “*yutte yutte pajjalatī pajjalatī tīhum tīhum paramesvahaḥ*” occurs seven times in the aforementioned *Sūtra*. There is another version of *Gini Pirita*, which incorporates of several Sanskrit words. These words can be lined up as follows.

1. *Sarvako – sarvako suta dhāraṇaṃ*
2. *Triloka – Triloka jātisattāraṃ*
3. *Prathame – Prathame satta lokuttaraṃ*
4. *Sarva – Sarva devatā*
5. *Bodhiparyaṃ – odhiparyaṃ kathaṃ sīlaṃ*
6. *Sarvajño – Sarvajño amata pānañca*

The *Āraṇyaka Pirita* and *Māravijaya Yantra*<sup>187</sup> are two secret formulae used by *yogīs*, who practise in forests. The *Māravijaya Yantra* seems to be influenced by Tantrayāna Buddhism. The diagram of the *Māravijaya Yantra* appears as it shown in the following table.

<sup>184</sup> *Jālo mahājālo, jālaṃ mahājālaṃ, jālite mahājālite, jālitaṃ mahājālitaṃ, mukhe mukhe sampatte mukhaṃ mukhaṃ sampattaṃ, sutaṃ gamīti sutaṃ gamīti, migayiti migayiti diṭṭhālā dantalā, rokilā dubbalā ritti ritti litti litti kitti kitti citti citti vittu vittu mutti mutti vutti vutti dhāraṇī dhāraṇī'ti.*

<sup>185</sup> *Paritta*, Silva, p.10.

<sup>186</sup> This is the mantra of offering the *torma* to the Deities of the heart wheel, speech wheel, and body wheel, See *Essence of Vajrayāna*, p.449.

<sup>187</sup> See *Purāṇa Set Pirit*, p.50.

<i>Itipiso om taṃ rāja maṇḍalaṃ 30</i>	<i>Bhagavā om taṃ deva maṇḍalaṃ 16</i>	<i>Arahaṃ om taṃ rāja maṇḍalaṃ 18</i>	<i>Sammā sambuddho om taṃ deva maṇḍalaṃ 36</i>
<i>Vijjācarāna om taṃ deva maṇḍalaṃ 10</i>	<i>Sampanno om taṃ dūta maṇḍalaṃ 44</i>	<i>Sugato om taṃ vajra maṇḍalaṃ 26</i>	<i>Lokavidū om taṃ duka maṇḍalaṃ 24</i>
<i>Om viṣa tim</i>	<i>Praleya</i>	<i>Yakṣa Yakṣiṇī</i>	<i>Pralesvahaṃ</i>
<i>Anuttaro om taṃ brahma maṇḍalaṃ 3</i>	<i>Purisadhamma om taṃ yakṣa maṇḍalaṃ 14</i>	<i>Sārathī om taṃ brahma maṇḍalaṃ 14</i>	<i>Satthā om taṃ yakṣa maṇḍalaṃ 34</i>
<i>Deva</i>	<i>Manussānaṃ</i>	<i>Buddho</i>	<i>Bhagavāti</i>
<i>Om taṃ īśvara maṇḍalaṃ</i>	<i>Om taṃ kahapaṭi- manesvāhaḥ</i>	<i>Om taṃ īśvara maṇḍala</i>	<i>Nenavahaḥ 6</i>

In the above diagram the Nine Qualities of the Buddha have been combined with different *maṇḍalas*. In every square we find the word *maṇḍala* and in the third row of the third column the mantra reads as “*Sugato om taṃ vajra maṇḍalaṃ*”. The term *Vajramaṇḍala* is definite evidence to show influence of *Vajrayāna* or Tantric Buddhism. It is of interest to know that this particular *mantra* has been used among forest dwellers or *Āraṇyakas*. It implies that *Vajrayāna* or esoteric practices have influenced even *Āraṇyakas* in ancient Sri Lanka.

The *Sarvārakṣaka mantra* and its *Yantra* seem to be a corrupt version of a Sanskrit *mantra* and it is mixed with Sinhala. The Sinhalese words in the mantra seemed to be the result of transformations of Sanskrit words into Sinhalese.

*Namo buddhājñāya dhammājñāya saṅghājñāya īśvara  
maheśvara viṣṇu ājñāya ānubhāven ājñāven grahaṇi upadrava  
kaḷa yakṣa yakṣiṇiyan om paṭṭa puleśvāhaḥ. Om aṣṭa  
bodhisattvayange ājñāven aṭavisi yakṣa senādhipatiyange  
ājñāya aṣṭa bhairavayange ājñāya mohuṭa grahaṇi upadrava  
kaḷa yakṣiṇī palayav palayaṃtosvāhaḥ.*

<i>Ve</i>	<i>Hrīm</i>	<i>Ja</i>	<i>Ya</i>	<i>Oṃ</i>	<i>Oṃ</i>	<i>Oṃ</i>	<i>Oṃ</i>	
<i>Śa</i>	<i>Hrīm</i>	<i>Oṃ</i>	*	<i>Oṃ</i>	<i>Oṃ</i>	<i>Oṃ</i>	<i>Oṃ</i>	
<i>Oṃ</i>	<i>Ve</i>	<i>Oṃ</i>	*	<i>Oṃ</i>	<i>Oṃ</i>	<i>Oṃ</i>	<i>Oṃ</i>	
*	<i>Oṃ</i>	<i>Oṃ</i>	<i>Śa</i>					

The reference to the Eight Bodhisattvas (*aṣṭa bodhisattvas*) in the *Sarvārakṣaka Mantra* is a belief completely alien to Theravāda. The Eight Bodhisattvas are venerated in *Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna*. There are a host of Bodhisattvas in Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna pantheon; among them eight bodhisattvas are venerated the most. They are:

1. *Mañjuśrī*
2. *Vajrapāṇi*
3. *Avalokiteśvara*
4. *Kṣitigarbha*
5. *Sarvanivāraṇaviṣkambhin*
6. *Ākāśagarbha*
7. *Maitreya*
8. *Samantabhadra*.

Within Theravāda literature or practice the ideal of the Eight Bodhisattvas is not mentioned and Theravādins do not seek blessings or protection from Bodhisattvas. Bodhisattva worship belongs exclusively to Mahāyāna Buddhism. Referring to the *Maṅgalāṣṭakaṃ* we discussed the Eight Bodhisattvas and how the devotees expect blessings from them.

In the first *śloka* of Vajrayāna *Maṅgalāṣṭaka* four of the Eight Bodhisattvas are mentioned by their names.<sup>188</sup> However, the concept of the Eight Bodhisattvas mentioned in the *Sarvārakṣaka Mantra* must have come to Sri Lankan Theravāda as a result of the Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna influence.

<sup>188</sup> *Mañjuśrī lokanātho jīnavaramakuṭo jambhalo vajrasatvaḥ  
Maitreto vajrapāṇiḥ sukhakarakamalo rāhulo bhadrapālaḥ  
Buddho vairocaādyastribhuvanānamitaḥ kṣīṇaniḥśeṣadaśa  
Stuṣṭāḥ sarvārthasiddhiṃ dadatu samarasā maṅgalam bodhisattvāḥ//*

## Vajrayāna Buddhist Influence on Sri Lankan Literature

A Sinhalese exegetical work on the *Pāli Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā* named the *Dhampiyā Aṭuvā Gāṭapadaya* (A Glossary of the *Dhammapada*) composed by king Abhāsalamēvan<sup>189</sup> (Śīlāmeghavarṇa Abhaya), uses the word “*vajrakāya*” to designate the Buddha’s body. This particular word has been used in the story of Devadatta who made an attempt to kill the Buddha, hurling a stone towards Him, while He was walking beneath the Vulture’s Peak (Pāli. *Gijjhakūṭa Pabbata*, Skt. *Grūddhakūṭa Parvata*). Though, Devadatta’s attempt was unsuccessful, a tiny piece sparked from it, hitting the Buddha’s foot and causing it to bleed. The disciples took the Buddha to the Royal physician, Jīvaka who performed surgery. He used a blade to cut the wound letting impure blood flow out. Commenting on the word “*ruhiruppādakakammaṃ katvā*”, meaning ‘having done a deed that caused bleeding’, the author says that no one can shed blood of the Tathāgata since He possessed a *Vajrakāya*.<sup>190</sup> Jīvaka could use a blade to do so as he did not have a bad thought of harming the Buddha. But Devadatta had such a bad thought of killing the Tathāgata. In Tantric Buddhist texts we find the word *Vajrakāya* used very often. In the *STTS* we find a mantra, which explained the four bodies of the Buddha. The first one is *Vajrakāya*. The mantra is:

“*Vajrakāya, Dharmakāya, Sattvakāya, Buddhakāya*”<sup>191</sup>

And also in the same *Sūtra* *Vajrakāya* is venerated. It is in the stotra, which is named *Nāmāṣṭasata*, i.e. one hundred and eight names.

*Ākāśakāya kāyāgrya trikāyakāyabhāvaka*  
*Srvakāya mahākāya vajrakāya namostu te* //<sup>192</sup>

The *Āryasarvatathāgatādiṣṭhānahṛdayaguhyadhātukaraṇḍamudrānāma dhāraṇī -mahāyāna sūtra*, which also has been used by the Abhayagirivāsīns, contains a statement. “How could it be possible that the *Vajrakāyas* of the Buddhas can be destroyed?”<sup>193</sup> On this evidence it is quite

<sup>189</sup> Gunawardana thinks that Abhāsalamēvan is King Kassapa V (914-923 A.D.), See *RAP*, p.324.

<sup>190</sup> *Dhampiyā Aṭuvā Gāṭapadaya*, p.50.

<sup>191</sup> *STTS* ed. by Chandra, p.48.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid*, p.211.

<sup>193</sup> See T 19/1022A, Vol.19, p.1003.

reasonable to posit that Vajrayāna teachings have influenced the author of *Dhampiyā-Aṭuvā-Gāṭapadaya* in presenting the above cited exegetical comment.

There is a Sanskrit *śotra* text in Sri Lanka named the *Nāmāṣṭaśatakaya*, which eulogizes the Buddha with one hundred and eight epithets. The literary meaning of the word “*Nāmāṣṭaśata*” (*nāma+aṣṭa+śata*) is one hundred and eight names. In Hinduism and Tantric Buddhism one hundred and eight is an auspicious number. Therefore, the deities of both traditions are venerated with *Nāmāṣṭaśata*. We learnt that in the *STTS*, Bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi pays respect to the Vairocana Buddha by one hundred and eight names (*Nāmāṣṭaśata*). The *Nāmāṣṭaśataka* is believed to have been composed in Sri Lanka in the Polonnaruva period by an unknown author. It is seen that the author has given mere consideration to the onomatopoeic quality than to meaning. Some *ślokas* abound in alliteration so as to please the ear of the listener. In the following *śloka* the syllable “*śa*” is repeatedly used from its beginning to the end.

*Śrīghanam śrīmatim śreṣṭham śīlarāṣim śivaṅkaram /*  
*Śrīmantam śrīkaram śāntam śāntaveśam namāmyaham<sup>194</sup> //*

I was able to identify a copy of the *Nāmāṣṭaśataka* lying amongst a large collection of Nepalese manuscripts.<sup>195</sup> It appears that no one has paid attention on this and, perhaps, the main reason for allowing this text to go unidentified is the belief that the *Nāmāṣṭaśataka* is extant only in Sinhalese scripts. There are slight differences between Sri Lankan *Nāmāṣṭaśataka* and the Nepalese *Buddhabhaṭṭārakastotra*. Except for these slight differences<sup>196</sup> both versions are identical. The Sri Lankan version has only eighteen *ślokas* but Nepalese version has 19 *ślokas*.

<sup>194</sup> *Nāmāṣṭaśataka*, *śloka* 2, p.1.

<sup>195</sup> According to the *Annual Report of Pacific Neighborhood Consortium Year 2002*, there are 109 Buddhist Stotras mentioned. *The Buddhabhaṭṭāraka Stotra* comes as number 45 in the list. See “Digitization of Sanskrit Buddhist Texts in Nepal” by Min Bahadur Shakya at <http://pnclink.org/annual/annual2002/pdf/0921/5/e210503.pdf>. For this study I have used the “Buddhabhaṭṭāraka Stotra” in the *Bauddhastotrasamgraha* [A Collection of One Hundred Eight Old Buddhist Hymns – First Series], Prathama Saṃskaraṇa, compiled by Janardan Shastri Pandeya, Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, 1994.

<sup>196</sup> We need another comparative study on this point. In this work, we are not supposed to do that.

The extra *śloka* of Nepalese version is:

*Etaiḥ stutvā muniśreṣṭham narā vigatakalmaṣāḥ /  
Prānuvanti padam mokṣam divyaṃ tvatha sanātanam //*<sup>197</sup>

According to the Bibliography of Palm-leaves Manuscripts in Sri Lanka, the existence of seven copies of this work together with 6 *Sannas* has been recorded.<sup>198</sup> Three names have been given for this work, namely *Nāmāṣṭaśataka*, *Nāmāṣṭotraśataka* and *Śrī Buddhabhaṭṭāra*. The Nepalese manuscript gives only the name *Buddhabhaṭṭārakastotram*. The colophon of the Nepalese Sanskrit version provides the name of the work together with that of its author: “*Buddhabhaṭṭārakasya brahmāviracitaṃ stotraṃ samāptaṃ*”, which means, “[here] ends the *Buddhabhaṭṭārakasya stotra* written by Brahmā”. But as we pointed out earlier, in the Sinhalese version the author remains anonymous but interestingly the name of the text *Srī Buddhabhaṭṭāra* is given in a palm leaf manuscript. In Hinduism, Tantric Buddhism and Jainism the word *Bhaṭṭāraka* is used as an honorific appellation.<sup>199</sup> *Bhaṭṭāraka Viṣṇu*, *Bhaṭṭāraka Īśvara*<sup>200</sup> are examples. In the Tantric section of the Tibetan *bsTan*-‘gyur there are some works named with this appellation, *Bhaṭṭārakasya* or *Bhaṭṭāraka*. The following works are attributed to some of the Mahāsiddhas.

2022 *Ārya-bhaṭṭārakamañjuśrī-paramvrtha-stuti-nāma* - *Nāgārjuna*  
2023 *Ārya-mañjuśrī-bhaṭṭāraka-karuṇā-stotra* - *Nāgārjuna*  
2354 *Śrī-hevajra-bhaṭṭāraka-stotra-nāma* - *Nāropa*  
3225 *Śātākṣara-bhaṭṭārakasya sattvatraya-bhāvanā* - *Sakara*  
3557 *Bhaṭṭārakāryaikādaśa-mūlapatti-vṛtti* - *Lakṣmīnkarā*<sup>201</sup>  
Another work of this type is *Mahābodhibhaṭṭārakastotra*.<sup>202</sup>

<sup>197</sup> See “*Buddhabhaṭṭārakastotram*”, 16, *Buddhastotrasaṃgraha*, p.136.

<sup>198</sup> See *Śrīlankāve Puskola Pot Nāmāvaliya Dvītya Bhāgaya* ed. by Somadasa, K.D., Cultural Department of Sri Lanka, 1964.

<sup>199</sup> *Sanskrit English Dictionary* comments on *Bhaṭṭāraka* as follows. “*Bhaṭṭāraka* means. a great lord, venerable or worshipful person (used of gods and great or learned men, esp. of Buddhist teachers and of a particularly class of Śaiva monks) ... *Bhaṭṭārakāyatana*, n. a temple, Pañcat, *Sanskrit English Dictionary* by Sir Williams, M.M., p.745. See also online Wikipedia Encyclopedia for *Bhaṭṭāraka*.

<sup>200</sup> See “*Advayasādhana*”, *Cultural Horizons of India* - 4, 1995, pp.327-434.

<sup>201</sup> See *Buddha’s Lions = Caturaśīti-siddha-pravṛtti : The Lives of the Eighty-four Siddhas*.

<sup>202</sup> See *Buddhastotrasaṃgraha*, ed. by Janardan Shastri Pandeya

There isn't a single Theravāda work that contains the appellation *Bhaṭṭāra* or *Bhaṭṭāraka* either as the full name or as a component of the name. Hence, we have two questions that need to be answered. One is how did the *Nāmāṣṭasataka* composed in Sri Lanka receive this appellation *Bhaṭṭāraka*? The next question is, how did this Sinhala work find its way to Nepal? How was this honorific appellation “*Bhaṭṭāraka*”, which is found only in the *Nāmāṣṭasataka* within Sri Lankan literature, given to the *Nāmāṣṭasataka* if it was composed in Sri Lanka? We shall discuss the second question, before answering the first. I was able to identify another Sri Lankan work mentioned the list of Nepalese manuscript collections. This is the *Bhaktiśataka* or *Baudhaśataka* composed by Rāmacandra Kavibhāratī, a Bengali Brahmin poet, who visited Sri Lanka in the 15<sup>th</sup> century C.E.<sup>203</sup> He studied Buddhist scriptures under the very respected venerable scholar Toṭagamuve Srī Rāhula Thera of the Kotte period. While living in Sri Lanka Rāmacandra Kavibhāratī composed two poetical works in Sanskrit. One is the *Vṛttaratnākaraṇīkā*, which is a commentary for the *Vṛttaratnākara*, a work on prosody, dealing with the metres in Sanskrit *ślokas*. The other work is the *Bhaktiśataka*, a collection of hundred *ślokas*, containing eulogies on the Buddha and His teaching. Therefore, the *Bhaktiśataka* and the *Nāmāṣṭasataka* both belonged to the *Mahātmya-grantha* category of Mahāyāna literature written for the purpose of extolling the virtues of the Buddha.<sup>204</sup> It is not strange to have Sri Lankan works in Nepal since there has been fairly close relationship between Sri Lanka and Nepal for long

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

*Bhāsvadbhānukulāmbujanmamihire rājādhirājeśvare*  
*Śrīlankādhipatau parākramabhujē nīyā mahīm śāsati /*  
*Sadgaudaḥ kavibhāratikṣītisuraḥ śrīrāmacandraḥ sudhīḥ*  
*Śrīṭṛṇāmakarot sa bhaktiśatakaṃ dharmārthamokṣapradam //*  
*Śrīśākyamunerbhagavataḥ sarvajñāsya paramopāsakena gaṇḍadeśīya-*  
*śrībaudhāgamacakravartinā bhūsureṇācāryeṇa mahāpaṇḍītena*  
*viracitaṃ bhaktiśatakaṃ samāptam /*  
*Nṛpaḥ parākṛāntibhujo mahībhujo śīromaṇiḥ paṇḍītaṃḍalīsakhaḥ /*  
*Sa rāmacandraṃ kavibhāratīdvijaṃ cakāra baudhāgamacakravartinam //*  
*Buddho me jayatām jinaḥ sa bhagavān taddeśanā nirmalā*  
*Stheyāt sattvhitāya bhātu bhaṇitā saṅghastadādhāraḥ /*  
*Laṅkeśapramukhāścīaram vasumatīm rakṣantu nityaṃ nṛpā*  
*Varṣantu stanayitnavasca samaye maitrīm labhantām prajāḥ //*

*Tīrthagṛāmapateryatestripītakācāryāsya bhūpānvayā-*  
*Cāryaśreṣṭhamunīśvarāsya sugīraḥ śrīrāhulasvāmīnaḥ /*  
*Śīṣyo yo 'varaḥ sumanḡalamunirdhūmān svayā bhāṣayā*  
*Kāruṇyena munīndrabhaktiśatakavyākhyānamākhyātavān //*

<sup>204</sup> See MMC, pp. 19-20.

time. Some Nepalese Buddhist art works have been named after Sri Lankan Buddhist arts such as *Siṃhaladvīpe Dīpaṅkara-abhayahasta*.<sup>205</sup> Gregory Sharkey quoting from H.D. Evers, says that Buddhist daily rituals practised in Newar Buddhist shrines in Kathmandu Valley are very much similar to the rituals (*tevāva*) practised at Lankātilaka Rājamahā Vihāra in Kandy, Sri Lanka:

Comparison of these two forms of daily Buddhist ritual gives some credence to the characterization of the daily liturgy as Śrāvakayānist in form and spirit. ... The site chosen for observation was Lankatilaka Vihāra, a raja mahāvihāraya (great royal temple) of the Siyam Nikāya sect.<sup>206</sup>

Our first question is how the *Nāmāṣṭaśataka* received the other name *Śrī Buddhabhaṭṭāra*. The available historical and circumstantial evidence as well as the close relation Sri Lanka had with Nepalese Tantric practices all point toward Tantric influence. The other *śatakakāvyas* such as the *Anuruddhaśataka* and the *Bhaktiśataka*, also composed in Sri Lanka, are not given this appellation. This also shows that the *Nāmāṣṭaśataka* belongs to a special category. The other thing is the *Anuruddhaśataka* and the *Bhaktiśataka* are composed with four lined *ślokas*, but the *ślokas* of the *Nāmāṣṭaśataka* are very much similar to the *ślokas* in Tantric Buddhist works with two line *ślokas*. Sri Lankan *Nāmāṣṭaśataka* and the *Buddhabhaṭṭhāraka* Stotra follow the same pattern with the *Nāmāṣṭaśata ślokas* of the *STTS*, *Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramaṇḍala* (*DVM*) and the *Mañjuśrīnāma-saṅgīti* (*MNS*).

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<sup>205</sup> See *Tantrayāna Art Album* by S.K. Saraswati.

<sup>206</sup> *Buddhist Daily Rituals: The Nitya Puja in Katmandu Valley Shrines*, p.254.

Some of the ślokas of those works share the common adjectives shown in the following table.

The <i>Nāmāṣṭaśataka</i>	The ślokas of the <i>MNS</i> and <i>STTS</i>
<p><i>Mahāmatiṃ mahāvīryaṃ - Mahābhiṇaṃ mahābalaṃ / Mahodyamaṃ mahādhairyaṃ - Mahābāhuṃ namāmyahaṃ //</i><sup>207</sup></p>	<p><i>Mahāprabha mahāloka Mahāvīrya mahābala / Mahāvīra suvīrāgrya Śambhu vīra namostu te // (STTS)</i><sup>208</sup></p> <p><i>Mahāvairocanobuddho Mahāmauni mahāmuniḥ / Mahāmantranayobhūto Mahāmantranayātmakaḥ // (MNS)</i><sup>209</sup></p>
<p><i>Viśveśvaraṃ vimuktijñāṃ Viśvarūpaṃ vināyakaṃ / Viśvalakṣaṇa sampūrṇaṃ Vītarāgaṃ namāmyahaṃ //</i></p>	<p><i>Mañjuśriyaṃ mahāvīraṃ Sarvamāravinaśanam / Sarvasiddhīśvaraṃ nāthaṃ Vāgīśvaraṃ namāmyahaṃ //</i></p> <p><i>Mañjughoṣaṃ mahāvīraṃ Sarvamāravinaśanam / Sarvākārapradātāraṃ Dharmadhātuṃ namāmyahaṃ //</i></p> <p><i>Akṣobhyaṃ ca mahābodhiṃ Vajrasattvaṃ namāmyahaṃ / Vajrarājaṃ vajrarāgaṃ Vajrasādhuṃ namāmyahaṃ //</i><sup>210</sup></p>

Based on the above discussed facts, we can reasonably conclude that the *Nāmāṣṭaśataka* has been influenced by the Stotra literature of Tāntric Buddhism.

Another Stotra work in Sri Lanka named the *Buddha-gajjaya*<sup>211</sup> also seems to have been influenced by Tantric *Stotra* tradition. The very first śloka of this specific work shows Tantric influence. In many mantras of the

<sup>207</sup> *Nāmāṣṭaśataka* 11, p.4

<sup>208</sup> The *STTS* Chapter 26b ed. Lokesh Chandra, p.210.

<sup>209</sup> *The Enlightenment of Vairocana*, Book 1, p.68.

<sup>210</sup> *Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramaṇḍala*.

<sup>211</sup> Venerable Ānandamaitreya in his edition of this work has changed its name as *Buddha-padyaya*. This is a radical changing according to his own view (*attanomati*) but the last śloka of the *Buddha-gajjaya* still emphasizes that the name of the work is *Buddha-gajjaya*.

*Anarghmati mnojñāṃ dharmarājasya gadyaṃ - likhati paṭhati yo vā sādaraṃ yaḥ śruṇoti  
Tribhuvana bhavanātmaṃ prāpyabhogāvaśeṣā – tanubhavati sa niyatam śānta nirvāṇa saukhyam.*

*Mahāvairocanā-bhisambodhitāntra*, we find the stereotyped formulaic phrases used to venerate the all Buddhas as: “*Namaḥ samanta Buddhānām*”, “*Namaḥ samanta buddhānām sarva tathāgatānām*”, “*Namaḥ samanta vajrānām*”, and so on. The *Buddha-Gajjaya* commences respecting the Buddha as “*Namaḥ samanta bhadrāya*” and this, perhaps, is a sign of Tantric influence. Another significant feature found in the *Buddha-gajjaya* is the importance attached to the terms *yantra*, *mantra* and *tantra*.

*Sarasija niḥśruta viracita tantra - Sapadi tiraskṛta bhava bhaya yantra*  
*Budhajana śikṣita bahavidha tantra - Tribhuvana viśruta navagaṇa*  
*mantra*<sup>212</sup>

This is a clear indication of Tantric influence.

The *Jayamaṅgala Gāthā*, the *Maṅgalāṣṭaka* or the *Aṣṭaka*,<sup>213</sup> which is one of the most popular Pāli poetries in Sri Lanka, also shows signs of Tantric *stotra* system. This work is very popular among Theravāda Buddhists in particular and even among some Mahāyāna Buddhists in general. These *gāthās* play a very important role in Buddhist cultural sphere in Sri Lanka and has become unique in Sri Lankan Buddhist culture, as it is the only Pāli chanting, used in both religious and secular ceremonies, i.e., weddings, Independence Day, the oath-taking ceremony of the leader of the country, etc.<sup>214</sup> The *Jayamaṅgala Gāthā* has been added to the *Mahapirit Pota* and it plays a major role in *Mahapirit* chanting, being the initial part to be recited for the success of the *Mahapirit deśanā*. Its soothing melody helps to pacify one’s mind. The impact of this melody deeply penetrated the social consciousness of Sri Lanka, and even British Colonial government started its auspicious ceremonies chanting the *Jayamaṅgala Gāthā*. This practice annoyed the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka and the Church was very much

<sup>212</sup> *The Buddha-gajjaya*, ed. by Ven. Ānandamaitreya Mahā Thera.

<sup>213</sup> Aṣṭaka means that which consisted of eight but in the *Jayamaṅgala Gāthā*, there are 9 verses. The last *gāthā* is to emphasis the power of the first eight *gāthās*. So, the name *Maṅgalāṣṭaka* or *Aṣṭaka* is suitable for it. It explains: “*Etāpi Buddha jayamaṅgala aṣṭha gāthā*”, which means “These Eight Buddha-stanzas of joyous victory”. So, the last stanza is just in terms of emphasising (avadhāraṇārtha) the result of daily reciting of these *Victorious Eight Gāthās*. The core of the text consists of the first eight *gāthās*.

<sup>214</sup> For instance before the commencement of important official meetings of the state, such as the Independence Day.

unhappy with the British practice.<sup>215</sup> However Sri Lankan Catholic Church couldn't resist being influenced by the chanting of the *Jayamaṅgala Gāthā* and therefore the Church copied its metre and composed carols imitating the Buddhist tradition.

The *Jayamaṅgala Gāthā* is based on the stories related to the life of Buddha, which particularly elaborates the quality of *anuttara purisadammasārathī*.<sup>216</sup> The *Jayamaṅgala Gāthā* is composed in *Vasantatilakā Vṛtta* (metre),<sup>217</sup> which evokes the *śāntarasa*.<sup>218</sup> Since a lot of corrupt Pāli words have been found in the *Jayamaṅgala Gāthā*, scholars believe that these verses were composed in Sri Lanka after the 10<sup>th</sup> century C.E.<sup>219</sup> The period of its composition is regarded as a time in which Pāli study was not in a state of decline.<sup>220</sup> Perhaps the *Jayamaṅgala Gāthā* were composed because a need may have felt in the masses for such eulogistic chant and the composition done by a not so erudite person. Almost every Buddhist in Sri Lanka can recite at least several stanzas of them by memory. In many auspicious occasions these stanzas are recited to invoke blessings. For Buddhist weddings the chanting of these stanzas is an essential item.

As mentioned earlier the *Jayamaṅgala Gāthā* is also named as *Aṣṭaka*, i.e., the Eight Auspicious Verses. The term more commonly used in Sri Lanka to refer to this text is *Aṣṭaka* because it is very much connected with Buddhist weddings. In Hinduism special stotras named *Maṅgalāṣṭak* are recited at wedding ceremonies and apart from that, several *Maṅgalāṣṭakas* are extant in Hinduism for invoking blessings from gods such as Viṣṇu. In Vajrayāna Buddhism there is a one poetic work named *Maṅgalāṣṭakaṃ*, which provides the names of many Bodhisattvas, deities and goddesses in the

<sup>215</sup> See “Textuality of the Jayamaṅgala Gāthā and Its Liturgical Role in Modern Buddhist Marriage Ceremony” by Mahinda Deegalle, *Buddhist Studies Essays in Honour of Professor Lily de Silva*, ed. Premasiri and et al., 2002, pp.183-197.

<sup>216</sup> The meaning of this epithet is “the incomparable quality of taming the untamed ones”.

<sup>217</sup> The Vasantatilakā Vṛtta consists of 18 syllables. (tagaṇa, bhagaṇa, jagaṇa, jagaṇa, and two gurūs, ॐ - ॐ - ॐ - ॐ - ॐ - ॐ - ॐ - ॐ - ॐ - ॐ - ॐ - ॐ - ॐ - ॐ - ॐ - ॐ - ॐ - ॐ).

<sup>218</sup> This means “the sentiment of quietism or tranquility”, See, *A Sanskrit – English Dictionary* by Sir Monier Monier Williams.

<sup>219</sup> See “Textuality of the Jayamaṅgalagāthā and Its Liturgical Role in Modern Buddhist Marriage Ceremony” by Mahinda, *Buddhist Studies Essays in Honour of Professor Lily de Silva*, ed. by Premasiri and et al., 2002, pp.183-197.

<sup>220</sup> Ven. W. Sorata has shown numerous grammatical errors in the *Jayamaṅgala Gāthā* and he has corrected them all but still nobody uses his corrected version. Please refer to footnote 222.

Vajrayāna pantheon to be recited to invoke their blessings. It has only eight *ślokas*.

There are some similarities between *Maṅgalāṣṭakam* and *Jayamaṅgala Gāthā*. They are:

1. Both *Jayamaṅgalagāthā* and *Maṅgalāṣṭakam* are referred to “*Maṅgalāṣṭaka*”.
2. Both *Jayamaṅgalagāthā* and *Maṅgalāṣṭakam* have been composed with same objective for invoking blessing and gaining happiness. The structure also appears very similar. Both versions can be recited in a melodious tone. The *Maṅgalāṣṭakam*, however, has been composed in the *Śragdharā* metre.
3. In both works the last line of each stanza ends in same pattern in which the word “*maṅgalam*” is included. In the *Jayamaṅgala Gāthā* the wordings is “*Taṃ tejasā bhavatu te Jayamaṅgalāni*”,<sup>221</sup> while in the *Maṅgalāṣṭaka* it is “*stuṣṭāḥ /tuṣṭāḥ sarvārthasiddhiṃ dadatu samarasā maṅgalam bodhisattvāḥ*”.<sup>222</sup> The objective of both is to invoke blessings. The *Jayamaṅgala Gāthā* wishes: “*By the power of that may you have joy!*” The *Maṅgalāṣṭaka* wishes: “*May Bodhisattvas give equal happiness, joy and accomplishment of all aims!*”

In Vajrayāna, it is a popular belief that the *dhāraṇīs* have power to bring about even the enlightenment for the practitioner. The *Jayamaṅgala Gāthā* presents the same idea in the last stanza:

*Etāpi Buddha jayamaṅgala aṭṭha gāthā  
Yo vācano dina dine sarate matandi  
Hittvāna neka vividhāni cupaddavāni*

<sup>221</sup> *Jayamaṅgala Gāthā*, See the *Great Book of Protective Blessings*, compiled by Sarada et al, Singapore, 1999.

<sup>222</sup> *Baudhastotrasaṅgraha*, p.146.  
*mañjuśrīrlokanātho jinavaramakūṭo jambhalo vajrasattvaḥ  
maitreyo vajrapāṇiḥ sukhakarakamalo rāhulo bhadrāpālaḥ /  
buddho vairocānādyastribhuvanānamitāḥ kṣīṇāniḥśeṣadoṣa-  
stuṣṭāḥ sarvārthasiddhiṃ dadatu samarasā maṅgalam bodhisattvāḥ //*

*Mokkhaṃ sukhaṃ adhigameyya naro sapañño*<sup>223</sup>

The complete translation of the last *gāthā* goes as follows. “A wise one, who earnestly remembers and daily recites these eight Buddha-stanzas of joyous victory, will rid himself of various misfortunes and finally win the Bliss of Deliverance”.<sup>224</sup>

Several replicas of the Mount Sumeru have been found in Sri Lanka from ruined stūpas and the pedestals of the ancient Buddha images. The *Lalāṭadhātuvāṃsa* or *Dhātuvāṃsa*, a Sinhalese chronicle about enshrining Buddha’s relics, provides very interesting accounts of Mount Sumeru and how the Buddha preached on it. Indeed a replica of Mount Sumeru has been enshrined in the Seruvāvila *Stūpa*. The *Lalāṭadhātuvāṃsa* further says that the preaching posture of the Buddha on that Sumeru resembles the delivering of the Dhamma by the Buddha to the celestial beings in the Tāvātimsa heaven seated in the seat of Śakra.<sup>225</sup> According to Buddhist Cosmology the Tāvātimsa heaven is located on Mount Sumeru. None of the Theravāda canonical texts mentions that the Buddha visited Mahāmeru or Mount Sumeru to preach to anybody, but this belief is commonly found in Tantric literature and it is further said that His Enlightenment was sanctified by all the Buddhas on the peak of the Mount Sumeru.<sup>226</sup> Somehow, this Tantric idea has seemingly been incorporated by the author of the *Lalāṭadhātuvāṃsa*. Kulatunga has observed that the foot prints of the Buddha have been engraved on the replica of the Mahāmeru, which was found under the pedestal of a Buddha image, dating from 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, found at Abhayagiri.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> *Jayamaṅgala Gāthā*, See the *Great Book of Protective Blessings*.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> AP, p.52.

<sup>226</sup> See *Two Esoteric Sūtras*, ed. Giebel.

<sup>227</sup> AP, p.52.

## Vajrayāna Buddhist Influence on Sinhala Art and Architecture

There are two other fields, sharing common features, which throw further light on Vajrayāna influence on Sri Lankan Buddhism, art and architecture. As a result of archaeological excavations, a considerable number of artistic works and architectural remains have been unearthed. Together with those findings, remains of some other architectural structures and also historical records provide ample evidence to show the Tantric influence in Sri Lankan Buddhist culture during the ancient time. Perhaps the best known Buddha images that have come under Tantric influence are the monolithic carved statues at Galvihāra (Uttarārāma Vihāra) in Polonnaruva. A clear sign of this influence is seen from Vajras that have been carved under the pedestal of the two seated Buddha images. Several double-headed Vajras<sup>228</sup> have been carved in vertical shape. The four gilded Buddha statues (1153-1186 A.D.) which have been found at Dādigama Koṭavehera temple in Kegalle district also show Tantric influence. Around the pedestals of these Buddha statues, double-headed vajras in vertical form have been carved in the same manner as at Galvihāra in Polonnaruva. Polonnaruva Galvihāra and Dādigama Koṭavehera are the only two places that we find Buddha images with *Vajra* motifs carved in pedestals.

The gilded double-headed *vajra* found at the Abhayagiri monastery is very important regarding Vajrayāna practice in Sri Lanka.<sup>229</sup> This *vajra* is very similar to the ancient vajras found in countries such as China, Japan, Vietnam, Tibet and Mongolia where both Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna prevailed. The Abhayagiri *vajra* would be either an original Sri Lankan masterpiece or a work of some other Buddhist country.<sup>230</sup> In the Colombo museum there is an ancient styled golden bead-necklace discovered at Anuradhapura, whose beads are in the shape of vajras. Really they depict double vajras, where two halves of single vajras have been fixed together to make a joint. This could be an ornament of a Vajrayāna deity.<sup>231</sup> The three

<sup>228</sup> Mudiyanse used the word *viśvavajra* to denote these double-headed vajras. But they are not *viśvavajras*. *Viśvavajras* are two crossed double-headed vajras.

<sup>229</sup> This is a well preserved *vajra* and now kept in Colombo museum.

<sup>230</sup> When I questioned Prof. T.G. Kulatunga, the Director of the Abhayagiri Project, regarding this *vajra*, he told me that this *vajra* probably has come to Sri Lanka through China. He further said that he had seen a *vajra*, which is very much similar to the Abhayagiri *vajra* in Tokyo museum.

<sup>231</sup> An ornamented pair of gilded shoes and a masterpiece of an ear-ornament also have been found. Since they are comparatively much bigger than those used by humans, definitely they had been used to decorate Bodhistvas and deities.

legged special bowl with the eight auspicious symbols<sup>232</sup> (*aṣṭamaṅgala*) is another important Vajrayāna item found at the Abhayagiri monastery. In Tibetan Buddhism this type of bowls with *aṣṭamaṅgala* are specially used as incense burners or religious symbols which bring prosperity. Even *aṣṭamaṅgala* pitcher (a kind of pot with a spout, called *keṇḍiya* in Sri Lanka) and *aṣṭamaṅgala* symbols (Tib. *Ting Shag*, Sin. *Tālampāṭa*) are used for religious purposes. One of the *aṣṭamaṅgala* features is *Śrīvatsa* (an endless knot), found at the Embekka *Devāle*, a shrine internationally famed for its intricate woodcarvings. These also provide reliable evidence to establish Vajrayāna influence on Sri Lankan fine arts and architecture.

Various symbols have been found in Sri Lanka under the pedestals of ancient Buddha statues. Among these symbols, there are *vajras*, *aṅkuṣas*,<sup>233</sup> flywhisks, twine fish, and *svastikas* and *pūrṇaghaṭas*.<sup>234</sup> Explaining the significance of *aṅkuṣa*, some Sri Lankan scholars have wrongly interpreted it as representing a local deity in Sri Lanka named Aiyanāyake or Hindu god Gaṇeṣa.<sup>235</sup> Their identifications are not quite convincing. It is far more plausible to hold that this shows influences of Vajrayāna, which uses *aṅkuṣa* as a hook to summon deities.

A considerable number of statues of Vajrayāna deities have been found in Sri Lanka but many of them are now in the British Museum. The images of Vajradhara, Vajrasattva, Vajrapāṇi, Kuvera (Jambala), and Tārā can be cited here as examples. The image of Vajrasattva which has been found at Vaṭadāge at Medirigiriya is a unique image of that type holding a *vajra* with right hand and seated in *vajrāsana* posture. The Vajradharma or Ādibuddha image too is a unique type found at Tiriyāya Vatadāge in Trincomalee District. This image presents five *Dhyānī* Buddhas<sup>236</sup> on its head-dress. One

<sup>232</sup> Aṣṭamaṅgalas embossed on that bowl are: i. svastika, ii. *Bhadrapīṭha* (auspicious seat), iii. *suvarṇamatsya yugala* (two golden fish), iv. *cāmara* (flywhisk), v. *śrīvatsa* (endless knot), vi. *aṅkuṣa* (elephant goad), vii. *pūrṇaghaṭa* (pot of plenty) viii. *daḥṣiṇāvṛtasaṅkha* (conch circled to the right). Aṣṭamaṅgalas vary according to different cultures and religions. In Tibetan Buddhism some items are different from Abhayagiri Aṣṭamaṅgalas. They are: i. *śrī-vatsya*, ii. *suvarṇa-cakra*, iii. *padma-kuñjara*, iv. *kunda-dhvaja*, v. *sitātapatra*, vi. *nidhighaṭa*, vii. *saṅkha-varta*, viii. *kanaka-matsya*. See *Magic and Ritual in Tibet*, p.154.

<sup>233</sup> Vajrāṅkuṣa, Sūkṣmāṅkuṣa, Padmāṅkuṣa and Vajrāṅkuṣī, padmāṅkuṣī are gods and goddesses in Vajrayāna pantheon. They are represented in the maṅḍalas carrying aṅkuṣas or elephant goads. For details see *STTS*.

<sup>234</sup> See *AP*.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid*, p.54.

<sup>236</sup> Akṣobhya, Amitābha, Amoghasiddhi, Ratnasambhava and Vairocana are five Dhyāṇī Buddhas.

of the colossal Bodhisattva images (850-950 C.E.) at Buduruvagala in Badulla District is represented as holding a vajra. This Bodhisattva image has been recognised as a representation of Vajrapāṇi, which takes its place together with Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya, Sudhanakumāra and Tārā. Apart from these images, the Vajrapāṇi image found at Jetavana Vihāra at Anurādhapura is also very important in this regard. The biggest Jambhala image found in Sri Lanka is the one found at Nālandā Geḍige. It is one meter in height and very similar to the colossal Jambhala image at Chandi Plaosan, a Vajrayāna temple in Central Java.

In the *Cūlavamsa* there is an interesting reference to a vihāra built at Cetiyaḡiri. Its name is Hadayaṅha (Skt. Hṛadayoṣṇa). Sena Ilaṅga, the General king Kassapa IV who was said to have got this constructed and offered to the Dhammarucikas in Cetiyaḡiri. On the Cetiyaḡiri he built a pariveṅa called Hadayaṅha and turned it over to the Dhammarucika bhikkhūs.<sup>237</sup> This bit of information highlights two important facts; one is its name “*Hadayaṅha*”. The *Cūlavamsa* further says that it is an appellation (*abhidhāna*) for this monastery. This is a unique name among the names of Sri Lankan monasteries, and we do not know the exact reason for naming it so. We learn that in Vajrayāna Buddhism there are some Tantric terms such as *Tathāgata Hṛadaya*, *Uṣṇīṣavijaya*, *Tathāgatoṣṇīṣā* and so on. Though the word *uṣṇīṣa* and *uṣṇa* have different meanings, most probably the original name of the monastery could have *Hṛadayoṣṇīṣa* instead *Hṛadayoṣṇa*. Subsequently this name has been rendered into Pāli as *Hadayaṅha*, perhaps due to wrong pronunciation of the original term. This monastery would have been gifted to the Vajrayānist among Dhammaruciakas of the Cetiya Pabbata monastery. Such a hypothesis is tenable as a lot of Vajrayāna and Tantric artifacts have been found within the precincts of the Cetiyaḡiri monastery.

There were several buildings in Polonnaruva associated with Vajrayāna Buddhism. The *Vijjādhara Guhā*, the *Dhāraṅī ghara* and the *Maṅḡalamandira* can be shown as examples. There is a ruined building near the Thūpārāma Vihāra in Polonnaruva and the specific feature of this

<sup>237</sup> Cv. 52.23.

*Hadayaṅhābhidhānaṃ so katvā cetiyapabbate  
Pariveṅenaṃ adā dhammarucikānaṅca bhikkhūnaṃ*

building is *vajra* carvings on the top of the eight stone pillars. Gunawardana says:

Evidence from the site of a ruined building situated to the south of the Thūpārāma seems to lend further support to hypothesis that the monks of the Mahāvihāra Nikāya came to be influenced by non-Theravāda schools of Buddhism. ... The remaining eight pillars, cut into an octagonal shape, are of great interest. Their capitals are ornamented with representations of *Vajra*. These representations were sculpted in such a way that the *vajra* was visible from whichever side a devotee looked at the pillar.<sup>238</sup>

What is the importance of the *Vijjādhara guhā*? The Sanskrit form of the Pāli word *Vijjādhara* is *Vajradhara*. According to the *STTS* *Vajradhara* is one of the Bodhistattva states of the Śākyamunī Buddha. As we noted above, several double *vajras* were found on the pedestal of the Buddha image in the *Vajradhara guhā*.

All these above cited evidence show beyond doubt that Vajrayāna influence was quite strong during this period, much stronger than most of the historians of Sri Lankan Buddhism generally assume it to be. This influence spread to many spheres: day to day Buddhist practice, literature, art, architecture, sculpture, etc. It was not only strong enough to win royal recognition and support locally, but also to exert its influence internationally.

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<sup>238</sup> *RAP*, p.326. See also *AP*.

### Chapter Five: Conclusion

In this research we have mainly focused on new Buddhist practices and trends, which the Abhayagiri fraternity introduced to Sri Lankan Buddhism. We have made an attempt to discuss how these practices have impacted on the development of Theravāda Buddhism in Sri Lanka. The Abhayagiri fraternity was a celebrated school in ancient Sri Lanka, and was the very first breakaway faction separated from the main stream of Sri Lankan Buddhism, the Mahāvihāra School. King Vaṭṭagāmiṇī Abhaya built the Abhayagiri Vihāra and offered it to Mahātissa Thera who was of much help when the king was in hiding. The *Mahāvamsa* records that Mahātissa Thera was expelled from the community on the disciplinary ground that he had committed the offence of frequenting with families (*kulasamsatṭhadosa*). As a result of this expulsion, the Abhayagiri *Nikāya* severed its connection with the Mahāvihāra and commenced its existence as a separate fraternity. The common view regarding the cause of separation is said to be that it was due to the acceptance of the Abhayagiri monastery by Mahātissa Thera as a private gift. Another view is that he was a political monk, who went against the law of the Mahāvihāra. The *Vamsatthapakāsinī* records that monks who had new ideas regarding the *Dhammavinaya*, left the Mahāvihāra and settled down at the Abhayagiri Vihāra, when king Vaṭṭagāmiṇī built it.

After having made a comprehensive study on the subject, especially the religious and historical background from the time of King Asela (155-145 B.C.) up to King Vaṭṭagāmiṇī (89-77 B.C), a new view has been presented here, namely that the origin of the Abhayagiri monastery was not a haphazard event or a suddenly arisen idea, but a culmination of a pre-conceived plan. As a result of tremendous support of the nation and strong effort and determination of King Vaṭṭagāmiṇī and Mahātissa Thera, it was possible to defeat the usurpers and bring peace and stability to the country. By that time, Buddhism was facing a precarious situation due to political turmoil, a long lasting famine and other factors. When the situation returned to normal, monks who had gone abroad and monks who had left the capital returned and gathered at Maṅḍalārāma at Kallagāma. A debate occurred in the *Saṅgha*, who finally came together after a long time, the topic being: which is more important, the practice (*paṭipatti*) or the learning (*pariyatti*)? The monks who argued that *paṭipatti* is more important than *pariyatti*, were defeated in the debate, giving the victory to the monks who argued that *pariyatti* is more important than *paṭipatti*. The majority would have

supported the second view, since they had already experienced the problem of preserving the oral transmission of the *Tipiṭaka*. On this ground, learning must have been considered as the most important factor for the stability and the ongoing life of Buddhism. The lack of Bhāṇakas was a real threat for the continuation of the oral transmission of the *Tipiṭaka*. The Abhayagirivāsīns were called Dhammarucikas (Sin. *Dahamrusi*) or ‘those who are delighted in the Dhamma’. Most probably the Abhayagirivāsīns also sided with the group that stood for the importance of learning the *Tipiṭaka* or the practice of *pariyatti*. The Abhayagiri inscription of King Mahinda IV is sufficient evidence to show how the Abhayagirivāsīns had been respected by kings and the people as great scholars who were well versed in the *Tipiṭaka* and directing their wisdom to great literary works.

After a careful study of all events behind the origin of the Abhayagiri, we came to the conclusion that Abhayagiri was established as a fulfillment of the wish of the king and the nation to have such a monastic tradition, having close relations with the people and serving their daily social and religious needs. In the very beginning, the difference between the Mahāvihāra and the Abhayagiri fraternities were centered on *Vinaya*. These two schools presented different views on particular points in the Monastic Code. Therefore, the common accusation of Mahāvihāravāsīns towards Abhayagirivāsīns, was that they were *avinayavādīno* or upholders of non-discipline and later on they were also considered as *adhammavādīno* or “heterodox”. History records that the some members of the Abhayagiri were punished and banished from the country for accepting Mahāyāna Buddhism. Several times non-Theravāda texts were burnt during the reigns of some biased rulers. The greatest disaster for the Abhayagiri was Māgha’s invasion, where invaders plundered the monastery and almost completely destroyed this great institute. However, despite of all these disasters, this great school survived up to the unification of the *Saṅgha* in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Two of its great institutes, the Uttaramūla and the Mahānettapāsāda survived even up to 16<sup>th</sup> century C.E.

It is interesting to know how the Abhayagiri developed as a popular institution, both in Sri Lanka and overseas. We have shown over 15 names used to designate the Abhayagiri Vihāra. It clearly shows how this monastery attained success as a well known institute with a high reputation, and gradually came up to a university level, having four affiliated faculties

or campuses. Probably there had not been any other institute in the ancient world similar to the Abhayagiri displaying features of a modern university. The Abhayagiri Institute was very much earlier than Nālandā, Vikramaśīlā and other ancient Buddhist universities in India. Therefore, the Abhayagiri Institute could be credited as the first university-type Buddhist monastic education institute in the world. Though the Mahāvihāra was the first and the earliest institute, it was not wide open to the world and to wide variety of subjects as the Abhayagiri institution was. The university nature of Abhayagiri is proved by Fa-Xian's accounts. Several non-Theravāda texts had been taken from Abhayagiri to China by Fa-Xian. Perhaps the above mentioned Indian universities may have been influenced by the educational system followed at Abhayagiri, because Nālandā was established very much later than the Abhayagiri (around the mid 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E.) while Vikramaśīlā was founded only in the 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E. There is no evidence to prove that there were Buddhist universities in India that were earlier than the Abhayagiri institute.

The new practices of the Abhayagiri gave a new perspective to Sri Lankan Buddhism, developing it in many aspects. The Mahāvihāra tradition was conservative and opposed any kind of changes in the *Saṅgha*, and did not welcome views of non-Theravāda schools. The accusation of the Mahāvihāra against the Abhayagiri centred on its non-traditional stance. Despite these accusations, the Abhayagirivāsīns expanded the horizons of Sri Lankan Buddhism by welcoming other schools of Buddhist thought with an impartial manner. Our discussion on the doctrinal differences between the Mahāvihāra and the Abhayagiri shows that the new ideas and arguments presented by the Abhayagirivāsīns were more critical and reasonable than those of the Mahāvihāravāsīns. This study shows how the Abhayagiri gradually developed and expanded the boundaries of Theravāda ideology, introducing new trends to Sri Lankan Buddhism and its culture. The archeological findings and literary sources provide sufficient evidence to prove that the newly introduced religious practices became popular among the Buddhist community in Sri Lanka in the mid-Anuradhapura period. These influences include *Abhiṣekapūjā*, *Daḷadāpūjā*, *Dharmadhātupūjā* and some other religious and secular practices which became a part and parcel of Buddhist ritual and secular practices of the time.

Another important contribution of Abhayagiri was the procession of access to the teachings of other Buddhist schools, and the consequent impact of such teachings on Sri Lankan Buddhist literature. As a new trend, non-Theravāda influence can be seen in Sri Lankan literary works which were composed around the 12<sup>th</sup> century C.E. Many of the writers in Polonnaruva period preferred to use Sanskritised Sinhala language. The *Saddharmaratnākaraya* of Vimalakīrti and the *Dharmapradīpikā* of Guruḷugomi can be cited here as instances. It is crystal clear that non-Theravāda texts had been circulating in the country for several centuries. The *Dharmapradīpikā* quotes several Mahāyāna works such as *Bodhicaryāvatāra* of Ācārya Śāntidevapāda, *Pramāṇavartika* of Dharmakīrtipāda, *Śiṣyalekhā* of Candragomin, and *Ratnāvalī* of Harṣa.

Various inscriptions found at the Abhayagiri and some other monasteries around the country are substantial evidence to show that the practice of universally applicable *bodhicitta* from Mahāyāna Buddhism had considerable impact on Sri Lankan Buddhism in the mid-Anurādhapura period. This is the time that Mahāyāna Buddhism had reached its climax in Sri Lanka. Hundreds of Mahāyāna Bodhisattva images, the Mihintale *Trikāya* inscription, and the Kuccaveli inscription *ślokas* eulogizing Bodhisattvas show two aspects of Sri Lankan Mahāyāna ideology. One is the impact of Mahāyāna Bodhisattva practice in Sri Lanka and the other is scholastic knowledge of the Sanskrit language by Lankan Mahāyānists.

Vajrayāna Buddhism has greatly influenced Sri Lankan Buddhism in different aspects. One of the most important *sūtras* of Tantric Buddhism, the *Sarvatathāgatātattvasaṃgraha Sūtra*, had been used by the Abhayagirivāsīns. Some scholars think that the complete work of the *Sarvatathāgatātattvasaṃgraha Sūtra*, or at least a part of it, may have been composed in Sri Lanka. Our identification of two *dhāraṇīs* of the *STTS* among the ‘*Dhāraṇī* Stones’ of the Abhayagiri is very important due to two reasons: one is that these *dhāraṇīs* remained unidentified from their discovery during 1940-1945 C.E., and the second reason is that we have been able to identify four unique *mantras* which are exclusively found only in the Abhayagiri *Dhāraṇīs*. The *mantras* of the Outer Goddesses of the *Vajraguhyadhātumaṇḍala* cannot be found in any of the existing versions of the *STTS* in Chinese, Tibetan or Nepalese Sanskrit. The answer is clear: the

Abhayagirivāsīns are credited with creating the *mantras* of the Four Outer Goddesses of the *Vajraguhyadhātumaṇḍala*.

The so-called “Anurādhapura copper plate” is a very important finding pertaining to our study. Most probably due to a scribal error, Parānavitana has read the word “Vajratīkṣṇa” as “Vajratīkṣa” or “Vajranīkṣa”. Vajratīkṣṇa is one of the 37 male deities represented in the *Vajradhātumaṇḍala* of the *STTS*. Therefore, our suggestion to read “Vajratīkṣṇa” instead of “Vajranīkṣa” or “Vajratīkṣa” is quite plausible. What is very significant here is that this inscription further proves the *STTS* had been circulated not only at the Abhayagiri monastery, but also at least at its affiliated branches such as Vijayārāma.

Vajrayāna has deeply influenced Sri Lankan culture, including art, architecture, literature and especially religious practices, such as *Pirit* chanting. A considerable number of literary sources and *Pirit sūtras* have been quoted by us to clearly prove Tantric influence on Buddhism here. One of the most popular chants in Sri Lanka is *Jayamaṅgala Gāthā* or *Aṣṭaka*, which is usually considered indispensable both in religious and secular ceremonies. The Tantric influence on this special work on the *Nāmāṣṭasatakaya* and the *Buddhagajjaya* has been clearly demonstrated in this study. The vajra motif is an auspicious symbol in Vajrayāna Buddhism. The examples cited in this study clearly demonstrate the influence of this vajra motif on different aspects of Sri Lankan art and architecture.

This study is mainly focused on the practices and trends of the Abhayagiri School. The evidence obtained even in this limited area is considerably diverse and large. What this shows is that there remain vast areas still unexplored. I am certain that anyone who is interested in exploring this area further would find the effort rewarding. Such a study will shed new light on the great contribution of the Abhayagirivāsīns on the development of Sri Lankan Buddhism.

## APPENDIX:

### The Chronological Order of Sri Lankan Dynasties

Abbreviation “r.” refers to the years of the “reign” of the ruler in question.

The chronological order is according to the Sinhalese translation of the *Mahāvamsa*, by Sumaṅgala Thera and Paṇḍit Baṭuvantudāva.

### The Chronological Order of Sri Lankan Dynasties

Name of the Ruler	Period of Reign	Name of Rājadhāni
1. Vijaya .....	r. 543 – 505 B.C.	Tambapaṇṇi
Interregnum .....	505	
2. Paṇḍuvāsadeva .....	r. 504 – 474	Vijitapura
3. Abhaya .....	r. 474 – 454	
Interregnum .....	r. 454 – 437	
4. Paṇḍukābhaya .....	r. 437 – 367	Anuradhapura
5. Muṭasīva .....	r. 367 – 307	
6. Devānampiyatissa .....	r. 307 – 267	
7. Uttiya .....	r. 267 – 257	
8. Mahāsiva .....	r. 257 – 247	
9. Sūratissa .....	r. 247 – 237	
10. Sena and Guttika .....	r. 237 – 215	
11. Asela .....	r. 215 – 205	
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