There is no denying the fact that without the patronage of the rulers, nobles and clans of the time a religion can not flourish in the country. It is true that Christianity would not have been what it is now without the interference and patronage of emperors like Constantine. The fame of several rulers in Sri Lanka rests not so much on their conquests, as on their patronage of the religion of the Buddha. Buddhism received great impetus during their reigns. They occupied important places in the country’s religious world because they showed their great devotion and faith in Buddhism. In order to honour Buddhism and for its progress and prosperity, they constructed stupas, monasteries, parivenas and supported monk-scholars. They became famous in the history of Buddhism of Sri Lanka for their patronage extended to the cause of Buddhism and their subsequent zeal for the religion of the Buddha. By doing all their meritorious acts they wanted to establish Buddhism at the peak of its popularity. Several historical sources give us sufficient
evidence to show that the kings, nobles and common people patronised Buddhism and extended their whole-hearted co-operation to its progress. The reigns of several rulers were regarded as the most inspiring periods for the religion of Sākyamuni and they were ages of great Buddhist activities in Sri Lanka. The inclination of several rulers towards Buddhism and their valuable contribution to the Buddhist world for its glorification are fairly well-known from archaeological and literary sources. The great interest taken by them in the affairs of the religion of Sākyamuni gave a new life in the world of Buddhist learning which created a rich literature during their reigns. They were really great patrons of Buddhism.

Here is given a brief account of several rulers of Sri Lanka who played their vital roles for the establishment and growth of Buddhism in their kingdoms. It is to be noted here that we have already mentioned the progress of Buddhism under the patronage of several Sri Lankan rulers in Chapter III. So in Chapter IV we give a short account of royal patronage of Buddhism in Sri Lanka.
King Devanampiya Tissa was a prominent figure in Sri Lanka's history of Buddhism. During his reign the religion of the Buddha made a fair progress in Sri Lanka. His period can be mentioned as an important epoch in the island's history. The Buddha's religion received a great impetus and developed remarkably in this age. Buddhism was introduced in Sri Lanka in his reign in the 3rd century B.C. by Mahinda from India. The king not only embraced the doctrine of the Buddha, but also advised his subjects to accept Buddhism as their religion and told them to do something for the progress of Buddhism. Under his patronage it flourished to a great extent in his kingdom. It can be said that during his rule it made phenomenal progress in Sri Lanka. It was because of him the religion of the Buddha was able to establish its root firmly there and it began to spread rapidly to various parts of the country. He made generous gifts to the Buddhist Sangha. Thus with the royal patronage and popular enthusiasm Buddhism was able to occupy the hearts of the

1. Ājīvakaṁsa, vii, 18, 19; xii, 39-54; Samantapāśādīka (Simon Huvavitarue Bequest Series), (Colombo), pp. 29, 40; Mahāvaṁsa, v.195, XIII, XIV.
people of Sri Lanka and it became the accepted religion of the country. Due to the efforts of Mahinda and the unbounded patronage of king Devanampiya Tissa we find that Mahinda's mission was remarkably successful and in a very short time the religion of the Buddha flourished rapidly in Sri Lanka and the island became a great centre of Buddhism.

The next ruler was Dutthagamini. He gave a new life to Buddhism and his aim was to do something for the advancement of Buddhism. He wanted to liberate Buddhism from foreign rule. His war-cry was "not for kingdom, but for Buddhism". He was a supporter of Buddhism and he was always ready to play a great role for Buddhism. He built several stupas in his kingdom. Many learned monks used to live in his reign. This clearly indicates that Sri Lanka became a popular centre of Buddhism under his patronage. Many episodes in the Pāli commentaries refer to him as a great patron of Buddhism.

1. Walpola Rahula, History of Buddhism in Ceylon, p. 79.
2. Ibid, p. 79; Mahāvaṃsa, XXV, 2: "pārāgāṇāṃ gamissāmi joterum sāsanaṃ ahaq"; Mahāvaṃsa, XXV, 17: "rajasukhāya vāyāmo hāyam mama kadāpi ca, Sambuddhasāsanaseeva thapanāya ayaṃ mama".
Dutthagamani's younger brother was Saddhatissa or Saddhātissa. He made a valuable contribution to the progress of Buddhism. Many vihāras were built under his patronage.

The reign of Vaṭṭagāmaṇī Abhaya was an important period in the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. During his reign the monk-scholars for the first time began to write the Buddhist Tipitaka. They convened a council to preserve the teachings of the Buddha in their pristine purity and they began to write them. Under the patronage of king Vaṭṭagāmaṇī Abhaya the council was held at Aluvihāra at Mātale and about five hundred monks took part in it and they recited and reduced to writing the whole of the Tipitaka with the commentaries thereon. They did this "in order that the true doctrine might endure". His reign also witnessed the first schism in the Buddhist Sangha in Sri Lanka. But it is to be noted here that the dissensions in the Sangha "were by no means a symptom of decay.

1. Walpola Rahula, History of Buddhism in Ceylon, p. 80; Mahāvaṃsa, xxxiii, 7.
2. Ibid, p. 81.
3. Ibid, p. 82; Mahāvaṃsa, xxxiii, 100-101; Dīpavaṃsa, xx, 45.
and degeneration but a sign of movement and progress". King Vatti-
gamani had his great regard for Buddhism and it was due to him
the religion of the Buddha gained a very wide popularity in his
kingdom and made a valuable progress there. His services to the
cause of Buddhism were no doubt significant.

King Vohārika Tissa\(^1\) in the third century A.D. played a
prominent part for the popularity and advancement of the religion of
the Buddha in his kingdom. He patronised the Mahāvihāra and the
Abhayagirivihāra\(^2\) monks and purified the religion by suppressing the
Vetulyavāda\(^3\) which took its appearance and growth in his reign.

Gothābhaya (Negavanna Abhaya) ascended the throne of the
island in the fourth century A.D.\(^4\) He also suppressed the Vetulya-
vada which again appeared in the island. He burnt its books and
expelled its many prominent teachers from the island. It was due to
the king's devotion to Buddhism Sri Lanka became famous as an

\(^1\) Walpola Rahula, History of Buddhism in Ceylon, p. 87.
\(^2\) Mahāvamsa, xxxvi, 31-33.
\(^3\) Ibid, xxxvi, 41.
\(^4\) Ibid, xxxvi, 110-112.
important centre of Buddhism. The king was a zealous patron of Buddhism and offered his valuable services to its cause.

Buddhadasa was the ruler of Sri Lanka in the fifth century A.D. In his reign Fa-hsien, the famous Chinese pilgrim, visited Sri Lanka. Buddhaghosa, the great Pāli commentator, arrived in the island in the fifth century A.D. and stayed at the Mahāvihāra at Anurādhapura and translated the Aṭṭhakathās (commentaries) on the Tipiṭaka into Pāli from Sinhalese. Buddhaghosa's activities were able to inspire the learning of Pāli in Sri Lanka and many other Pāli commentaries and literary works were written and it was because of these activities Sri Lanka became pre-eminence as the house of Theravāda Buddhism.

Owing to political disruption and internal trouble Sri Lanka suffered very much from the sixth century A.D. to the eleventh century A.D. and for this reason Buddhism did not progress during these periods. Vijayabāhu occupied the throne of Sri Lanka in

2. Mahāvaṃsa, xxxvii, 243-244.
A.D. 1055 after defeating the Colas. He played a great role to popularise Buddhism in his kingdom. He was an enthusiast in the cause of Buddhism and sincerely offered his services to its progress in his kingdom. He patronised the Saṅgha heartily and reformed it which was in bad state during the period of war and foreign rules. For this purpose he sent an embassy to the king of Myanmar for his help to revive Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Thus he reformed the Buddhist Saṅgha in Sri Lanka by bringing Buddhist monks from Myanmar. He brought about a reconciliation of the Mahāvihāra, the Abhayagiri and the Jetavanavihāra. Many people joined the Buddhist Saṅgha and for the popularity of Buddhism many monasteries and stūpas were built. "The religious revival inaugurated by king Vijayabāhu I led to a great intellectual re-awakening and a large number of religious literary works in Pāli and Sanskrit were written"¹ He encouraged learned monks to come and to settle down in Sri Lanka and helped them very much. Thus due to the king's patronage to Buddhism and

Its Saṅgha, Sri Lanka became a great centre of Buddhism.

Immediately after the death of Vijayabahu I internal trouble broke out in Sri Lanka and the kings of this period were weak rulers and they were unable to play their roles for the progress of Buddhism. It was due to their inefficiency and weak administration, Buddhism declined. But when Parakkamabahu I or Parakramabahu the Great ascended the throne (A.D. 1155 - 1186) then we find again the prosperity of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. It was due to him Buddhism obtained a great footing again and Sri Lanka acquired a great importance as a centre of Theravāda Buddhism. He showed his remarkable veneration towards the religion of the Buddha and patronised it strongly. He purified and unified the Buddhist Saṅgha and established Buddhism to its former purity, unity and glory. For its good progress in his kingdom he erected many vihāras. He used to make various gifts to the Saṅgha for the maintenance of the monks and he used to look always for their welfare. For the guidance of the monks and for the proper observance of the Vinaya rules the king introduced a code of

2. Ibid., Lxxviii, 27.
regulations which became a royal proclamation and he asked his people to engrave it on the rock surface of the Uttara-rama or the Gal-vihara. It became known as Polonnaru-Katikavata or the Parākkamabāhu or Parā-kramabāhu-Katikavata. All these facts indicate that the king took his great interest in the affairs of Buddhism and he also played a prominent part for the revival of Buddhist learning in his kingdom.

After the death of Parākkamabāhu I, internal trouble broke out again in Sri Lanka and foreigners invaded it for some time and for these reasons Buddhism declined again. Parākkamabāhu I's immediate successor was Vijayabāhu II (1186 - 87 A.D.)¹. He ruled only one year and he was killed by an usurper. But, even then, he tried to do something for the advancement of Buddhism. He established religious relations between the Buddhist Saggha of Myanmar and Sri Lanka. Nissan-Kamalla (1187 - 96 A.D.)² was a great benefactor of Buddhism. He was greatly influenced by it. We may presume that it received a favourable treatment from him. For the advancement of

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² Amaradasa, Liyanagamage, The Decline of Polonnaruwa And the Rise of Dambadeniya, pp. 46 ff.
the religion he erected several notable religious edifices in his capital, Polonnaruwa. Now and then he used to visit holy places in his kingdom. For the purification of the religion he expelled corrupt monks from the Saṅgha and also constructed alms-houses at several important places in his kingdom. This shows that for the progress of Buddhism he patronised it heartily. Thus he contributed much to its spread and popularity.

The next prominent ruler of Sri Lanka was Parākammapāhu II who ruled from Dambadeniya from A.D. 1236. He was mentioned as a ruler of great learning and he became well-known as Kaḷikāla Saḥitya Sarvajña Pāṇḍita. Under his patronage many Pāli and Sinhalese works were written. He patronised monks scholars and religious institutions in his kingdom. His reign was an important epoch in the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. He was a zealous Buddhist and his efforts were solely responsible for the advancement of Buddhism and the Buddhist Saṅgha in Sri Lanka. He devoted his time and energy to the cause of Buddhism and for the progress of

Buddhism, he erected many religious edifices in his kingdom. Like Parākramabāhu I, he also formulated rules for the guidance of the Buddhist monks and the code of these rules became known as Dambadeni Katikāvata. His two successors were Vijayabahu IV (A.D. 1270-72) and Parakramabahu III (A.D. 1288-93). They patronised Buddhism and the Buddhist Sangha and they also espoused the cause of Buddhism in solving the problems which had disturbed the religious world for some time due to internal trouble. All these facts show the widespread of Buddhist faith in their kingdom and its influence in the life of kings, nobles and common people.

The religious revival done by Parākramabāhu II continued to exist until about the fifteenth century A.D. though the country did not face much political stability during that period. Bhuvanekabāhu IV (A.D. 1347), Parākramabāhu V and Vikramabāhu III (A.D. 1356), Bhuvanekabāhu V and Virabahu II (A.D. 1372-97) were rulers of Sri Lanka. In the reign of the latter king a synod of Buddhist monks

2. H.R. Perera, Buddhism in Ceylon, Its Past and its present, p. 48
was held for the suppression of unorthodox doctrines and for the purification of the religion.

The fifteenth century A.D. was an important epoch in the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Parākramabahu VI ruled in Sri Lanka from A.D. 1412 to A.D. 1468. He made a valuable contribution to the progress of Buddhism in his country. He was a sincere and zealous patron of the Buddhist faith. His efforts were solely responsible for the development of Buddhism and the Buddhist Saṅgha in Sri Lanka at this time. Under his patronage Sri Lanka became well-known as a great centre of Theravāda Buddhism. His reign witnessed regular religious intercourse with neighbouring Buddhist countries in South-East Asia. It is very probable that Buddhism flourished in Sri Lanka and several well-organised educational and religious institutions existed there at that time and it was for this reason many Buddhist monks from foreign countries used to come there to study under the able guidance of Sri Lanka's Buddhist scholars.

In the reign of king Bhuvanekabahu VI (A.D. 1470-78)\(^1\)

Buddhism prospered to a great extent in Sri Lanka. In A.D. 1476...king Dhammaceti of Myanmar sent a religious mission composed of twenty-two theras of twenty-two novices to receive the valid form of the Upasampadā ordination at the hands of the monks of the Mahāvihāra in Sri Lanka and to re-establish it in Myanmar and to arrange a consecrated simā for the performance of religious acts in Myanmar. He sent the following message to the chief theras of Sri Lanka. "My Lords, I am sending many articles to be offered to the Sacred Tooth Relic, etc., and I request you to make an endeavour to offer those to the Sacred Tooth Relic. May the Noble ones obtain facilities for the twenty-two bhikkhus to assist them in worshipping honouring and viewing the Sacred Tooth Relic if they are so fortunate as to get an opportunity to do so, after which may the Noble Ones be pleased with their endeavours to enable the twenty-two bhikkhus and their pupils to be ordained in the community of succession from Mahāvihāra fraternity founded by the Great Thera Mahinda by selecting

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such bhikkhus who hold and established high reputation and giving the ordination of Upasampadā in the Simā in the river Kalyāṇī which has been made sacred by its association with our Great Lord. The King of Sri Lanka granted the request made by the king of Myanmar and the Myanmarese monks were ordained in the Simā in the Kalyāṇī river near Colombo and they then returned to Myanmar. All these facts clearly show the flourishing condition of Buddhism in Sri Lanka under the patronage of the king, nobles and the common people. King Bhuvanekabāhu VI played a great role for the purification of the Buddhist Saṅgha in Myanmar and for the establishment and development of the Siṅhala Saṅgha there. During this period the Siṅhala Saṅgha occupied a prominent place in the religious world of Myanmar.

The Portuguese arrived in Sri Lanka in A.D. 1505 and they gradually occupied all maritime provinces and several parts of the island and in their possessions they kept them up to 1658 A.D. From Sri Lankan chronicles and other historical records we learn that

they were cruel, inhuman, rapacious, bigoted and savage persecutors of Buddhism. They tried to impose their own faith—Roman Catholicism on the people of Sri Lanka. The period of the Portuguese rule can be described as one of the darkest periods of Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

The Portuguese, with the help of the ruler of Kotė, who was converted to Christianity in A.D. 1557 and who took the name of Don Juan Dharmapala or Don Joan Periya Bandara or Dom Joas Periya Bandara¹, preached the Christian doctrine in Sri Lanka and in the maritime provinces of Sri Lanka this doctrine was established, and they suppressed its accepted religion and they did their best to propagate their own religion Catholicism in Sri Lanka. They destroyed Buddhist monasteries, religious and educational institutions and killed many Buddhist monks. Buddhism suffered very much at their hands.

King Rājasinhe I², (A.D. 1580-1592), the son of Māyādunne, ruled from Sitawaka. At that time Kotė was under the influence of


the Portuguese. King Rājasimha I accepted Saivism as his religion. Like the Portuguese he was also a cruel persecutor of Buddhism. During his rule many Buddhist monks left the Buddhist Saṅgha and the religion of the Buddha did not prosper.

In A.D. 1592 Rājasimha died and Vimala Dharmaśūriya I, a Sinhalese ruler, ascended the throne of Kandy and he reigned there for about twelve years (A.D. 1592 - 1604). He drove out the Portuguese and then devoted his time to the welfare of Buddhism. Due to king Rājasimha's inhuman behaviour towards Buddhism and its Saṅgha, there were not many ordained monks in Sri Lanka. King Vimala Dharmaśūriya I, in order to purify and to restore the Buddhist Saṅgha, sent ministers to the Rakkhaṅga country (Arakan in Myanmar) to obtain monks to restore ordination and to establish Buddhist in Sri Lanka. In A.D. 1597 under royal patronage and with the help of several monks from the Rakkhaṅga country an ordination ceremony was held in the Udakukhāpa Sīmā at Getambe near Kandy in Sri Lanka.

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Thus the Upagampada ordination was restored in Sri Lanka and king Vimala Dhammasuriya I played a great role in it. He brought the Tooth Relic from the Delgamuvihara and he kept it in a storeyed pavilion which was erected by him in Kandy. He took the control of Sripada from the Saivities and he asked the Buddhist monks to take its administration. Thus the above facts give an idea that under Vimala Dhammasuriya I patronised Buddhism in his kingdom and it prospered very much there. The king took keen interest in its welfare and he played a prominent part in the religious history of the country during his reign.

Senart took the throne of Kandy after Vimala Dhammasuriya I. He was a zealous Buddhist. In his reign the Portuguese attacked Kandy and the king, in order to save the Tooth Relic from their attack, took it away to Mahiyangana. He did this for its safety. His son and successor was Rajāśīra II (A.D. 1634 - 1687). His reign witnessed

2. Ibid, p. 56; ibid, p. 270.
the end of the Portuguese rule in the maritime provinces of Sri Lanka. The Dutch visited the Court of Kandy in A.D. 1602 and King Rajasimha II in A.D. 1658 expelled the Portuguese from Sri Lanka with the help of the Dutch and later occupied those reigns which were under the control of the former.

Vimala Dharmasuriya II succeeded his father Rajasimha II. He reigned in Kandy for over twenty years (A.D. 1687 - 1706). His rule marked an important epoch in the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. He can be mentioned as the great champion of Buddhism and he carried out his vigorous religious activities to make it popular throughout his kingdom. He built a three-storeyed pavilion for the Tooth Relic. For the propagation of Buddhism in his kingdom he visited the Sri Pāde. Under his patronage an ordination ceremony was held at Getambe with the monks of the Rakkhaṅga country (Arakan in Myanmar) and the king sent an embassy to that country for monks. Thus from the above facts it is clear that Buddhism was patronised by him during his rule.

The next ruler of Kandy was Vira-parâkrama Narendrasimha (A.D. 1706 - 1739). He was a son of Vimala Dharmasüriya II. He was a pious ruler. He patronised Buddhism. He built a two-storeyed building for the Tooth Relic. His important contribution helped Buddhism to flourish during his reign. His successor was Sri Vijaya Räjasimha (A.D. 1739 - 1747). He was a zealous Buddhist. During his rule Buddhism made very steady progress. He tried to popularise the Buddhist Saṅgha and under his patronage many people joined it and many religious books were written. He spent money lavishly for this purpose. For the propagation of the Buddhist doctrine in his kingdom he built preaching halls at several places. He was not happy with the affairs of the Buddhist Saṅgha and for its progress and to bring monks from Thailand he with the help of Dutch sent missions to Thailand. But he died before he received any help from that country.

Kirti Sri Räjasimha, who was regarded as one of the greatest kings of Sri Lanka, succeeded Sri Vijaya Räjasimha. He was a patron

2. Ibid., pp. 58-59; ibid, pp. 274-275.
of Buddhism. He looked after the welfare of the Buddhist monks and helped the Sangha in various ways. With the help of the Dutch, he sent an embassy to King Dhammika of Thailand and the higher ordination in Sri Lanka was re-established by him. For the guidance of the Buddhist monks he introduced a code of conduct (Katikāvata).

It is to be noted here that in his religious activities he was always guided by a well-known Buddhist monk who was Valivita Saranankara. The latter gave his whole-hearted co-operation in the affairs of Buddhism and the king took his help in the revival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka in the second half of the eighteenth century A.D. This shows that Buddhism received favourable treatment from the king, who bestowed his patronage for its propagation in Sri Lanka. Thus he made a significant contribution to the cause of the religion of the Buddha during his reign.

King Kirti Sri Rājasimha's brother was Rājādhi Rājasimha or Rājadhirāja-Simha. The latter ascended the throne after him.

He was a religious person. He gave his full support for the progress of Buddhism. He extended his patronage to preserve its purity and showed his great reverence to it. He convened an assembly of monks and introduced a new Katikāvata. He revised his brother Kirti Sri Rājasimha's Katikavata¹. In his reign the Dutch were defeated by the British and they left Sri Lanka. This took place in A.D.1796. Thus the Dutch territories came under the control of the British Government.

The next ruler was Sri Vikrama Rājasimha² who was a nephew of Rājadhi Rājasimha. From several historical records it is known that he was the last king of Sri Lanka and the last ruler of Kandy. His Adigārs or Prime Ministers Pilima Talawe or Talaуве, Ehelepola and their allies did not allow him to reign peacefully. For their activities the king not only killed Pilima Talawe, but he also behaved very cruelly with the wife and children of Ehelepola and other people who had any connection with the latter. For this reason

his reign witnessed disorder and unrest in his kingdom. At the request of Chelopola, the British Governor took action against the Sinhalese king and a British army in January 1815 captured Kandy and its king. The British Governor at that time was Lt. General Robert Brownrigg (A.D. 1812 - 1822). On the 2nd of March 1815 the Kandyan kingdom came under the control of the British Crown. This was the end of the Sinhalese rule in the kingdom of Kandy. All these facts clearly show that in the reign of the last two rulers did not prosper. These rulers were busy with political affairs of the country and they did not get any opportunity to do something for the progress of Buddhism. The British made a pact with the Kandyan chiefs in an assembly of 2nd March 1815 at Kandy and they told them that they would look after the affairs of Buddhism and they would show their respect and honour and would play a great part to keep the religion in its proper place. Thus from March 1815 to 1948 Buddhism flourished in Sri Lanka under the rule of the British Government.