CHAPTER III

THE HISTORICAL ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SAṄGHA

III. 1. Understanding the Saṅgha

III. 1. 1. The Meaning of the Saṅgha

The word "saṅgha" means “multitude” or “assemblage” an assemblage of anything especially used with reference to various living things.¹ For Buddhists, it became the technical term for their religious community and the term in this sense was also adopted by followers of Jainism and of other contemporary religious groups.² Saṅgha in Buddhism means the Buddhist community and it refers to the fourfold saṅgha or four assemblies (pariṣad), those are the bhikkhus (Buddhist monks), bhikkhuṇīs (Buddhist nuns), upāsakas (laymen) and upāsikās (laywomen).³ Laymen and laywomen are expected to keep pañcasīla (five precepts) or aṭṭhasīla (eight precepts) while bhikkhus and bhikkhuṇīs follow the pātimokkha code of 227 and 311 rules.⁴

Despite the fact that the term 'saṅgha' is used today in a more extended and comprehensive fashion than originally, referring to almost

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³ A. II. 132; also see E. Lamotte, History of Indian Buddhism from Origins to the Śaka Era, p. 54.
⁴ According to Rhys Davids and Oldenberg, the oldest portion of the Vinaya is the Pātimokkha, the list of 227 rules, or the courses of training to be observed. See S. Dutt, Early Buddhist Monachism, p. 92, and B. C. Law, Hist. of Pāli Lit., i. 20 f., for notes on variant numbers of the rules. Also Winternitz, Hist. of Ind. Lit., ii. 23, n. 5, for numbers of rules recognised by various schools. Cf. Damien Keown, A Dictionary of Buddhism, p. 247.
any community or group loosely associated with Buddhism. In the time of the Buddha, the term was used in a radically different fashion. It simply connotes a society or company or a number of people living together for a certain purpose.

Literally, *saṅgha* means community. In its broadest sense, the term covers both the lay and the monastic communities. From the doctrinal perspective, it refers to those who have achieved any of the four stages of transcendent spiritual attainment. Such *saṅgha* members are known as ‘noble disciples' (*ariyasaṅgha*). Technically, these are called *sotāpanna* (streamenterer), *sakadāgāmi* (once-returner), *anāgāmī* (non-returner), and *arahanta* (worthy one).¹ These noble disciples constitute the *saṅgha* of the Triple Gem; they are *saṅgha* by virtue of their special attainments. Thus anyone who has attained to that higher level is qualified to be included in this category of *saṅgha*.

“The Lord’s Order of disciples is good conduct, the Lord’s Order of disciples is upright, the Lord’s of disciples is of wise conduct, the Lord’s of disciples is of dutiful conduct, that is to say the four pairs of men, the eight individuals. This Order of the Lord’s disciples is worthy of alms, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of reverence, it is a matchless field of merit for the word.”²

In this definition, there is nothing to indicate that it refers especially to the Order of ordained recluses, the *bhikkhu saṅgha* or *bhikkhuṇī saṅgha*. It refers generally and inclusively to the *sāvaka saṅgha*, the Community of Disciples of the Buddha.

¹ D. I. 229, III. 107, 227; S. V. 225, 405; A. III. 272, 441.
² M. I. 38; A. I. 208.
"The saṅgha of the Triple-Jewel which is called savaka saṅgha ("the Community of Disciples"), consisting of those eight holy persons indiscriminately from all four categories of the Buddha’s disciples, both lay and monastic, male and female, may be considered as the “spiritual saṅgha”. This is not an organized body controlled by a set of rules. This “Holy Community” exists in the world of the Dhamma, in the spiritual realm of our world. This is the saṅgha of the Triple-Jewel in the purest and the highest sense."¹

From the perspective of the Vinaya (Discipline), saṅgha refers to a community of monks (bhikkhu saṅgha), specifically a group of four or more monks, who are required to be present at certain ecclesiastical rites where a quorum of monastic members is needed. This is the saṅgha according to the Vinaya definition, but not necessarily as part of the Triple Gem. Thus, there are two categories of saṅgha, namely, Noble Saṅgha and Conventional Saṅgha. Of course, individual monks may belong to both if they are so qualified. Kondañña and his colleagues, and many of their contemporaries, were some of these noble monk disciples.

In brief, because the role of the monks is so distinct and prominent, the term saṅgha is often used exclusively in reference to the community of monks and does not cover the laity as in its broader sense. In the Theravāda tradition, especially, this term is never used in connection with the lay community.

III. 1. 2. The Classification of the Saṅgha

The term 'Dhamma-Vinaya', used by the Buddha in reference to the religion he established, represents the two aspects of the Buddha's teachings, and these two aspects of the Buddha's teachings are the basic underlying principles for the two kinds of saṅgha.

III. 1. 2. 1. The Conventional Saṅgha

A man, for instance, is admitted into membership of the monastic Order or Conventional saṅgha through an ordination process prescribed by the Vinaya. He lives by the Vinaya rules. The Vinaya regulates his conduct both in regard to himself and in his interaction with others. His Dhamma practice is almost considered an extension of his effort to train according to the Vinaya, not a separate exercise in itself, and it is always kept in line with the Vinaya rules.

Thus, the life of a conventional saṅgha member is essentially dependent upon the Vinaya. Obviously, this is also true of the saṅgha as a community. Without the Vinaya, the whole structure of conventional saṅgha would collapse. It is in this sense that, according to Theravāda Buddhism, the Vinaya is said to provide the mainstay for the religion.

III. 1. 2. 2. The Noble Saṅgha

The Dhamma, on the other hand, is the life and soul of the Noble saṅgha, its essence, its inner quality. Just as Kondañña entered into membership of the Noble saṅgha through the realization of Dhamma,¹ even so the existence of the Noble saṅgha must necessarily rest on the Dhamma. Unlike Vinaya, the Dhamma has little to do with institutional or ceremonial procedures, although such things may provide a basic

¹ Vin. I. 12.
framework or support for its realization. The Dhamma also has a much broader application than the Vinaya and is equally important for both monks and the lay community. It places no restrictions with regard to individual status. Like monks, lay people may practice the Dhamma and achieve, on their own virtue, admission into the Noble saṅgha. This is purely a matter of personal training and self-development.

There are the four levels of Noble saṅgha. The four levels of transcendent attainment may be described as follows:

1. **Sotāpanna**

This literally means Stream Entry, a metaphorical expression suggesting a stage where one 'enters' into the stream of nibbāna. It is a spiritual sphere beyond the mundane and is therefore not liable to relapse. Once this stage is attained, the noble disciple will be inexorably swept toward the ultimate attainment of Arahantship and nothing can stand in his way. He will not be reborn more than seven times at the most before attaining Arahantship, neither will he ever be born in any woeful states (below that of human).

2. **Sakadāgāmi**

This is a further refinement from Stream-Entry. Literally, the term means Once-Returner, referring to the fact that a noble disciple who has attained this stage is subject to only one more birth before attaining Arahantship. This means that a Once-Returner will attain the final liberation in the very next life if not in the present.

3. **Anāgāmī**

The term is usually translated as Non-Returner. This is an even higher stage of spiritual development, which the noble disciple attains on
eliminating the remaining two of the five Lower Fetters (the first three have been destroyed at the attainment of Stream-Entry). These two are lust or attachment to sensual pleasure (kāmarāga) and the defilement of aversion (paṭigha), which causes anger, irritation, ill will, and so on.

4. Arahanta

Arahanta is the highest stage of spiritual attainment, which a noble disciple reaches through the complete eradication of all defilements, including the five higher fetters, which are attachment to the realms of form (rūparūga), attachment to immaterial or formless planes of existence (arūparūga), conceit (māna), restlessness (uddhacca), and ignorance or delusion (avijjā).¹

An Arahanta, or Worthy One, is said to have accomplished what needs to be accomplished: being perfect, the Arahanta has no further need to practice for his own sake. Although continuing to serve fellow beings, teaching and giving them advice, the Arahanta accumulates no fresh kamma, working not for his or her own good but solely for the good of others. Being free from all kinds of defilements, the Arahanta lives in perfect calm and equanimity, not given to such negative emotions as lust, greed, jealousy, anger, and aggression. The Arahanta becomes one with the Buddha in purity of heart, wisdom and compassion. This is the ultimate achievement, the highest spiritual development any individual may strive for. It is the same state which the Buddha attained in his enlightenment.

The Worthy One transcends the conditions of birth and death. At the final moment of his present life, he is said to pass away "like an oil

¹ D. I. 229; III. 107, 277; S. V. 25, 405; A. III. 272, 441, IV. 174, 292, 373.
lamp being extinguished," with no residue of kamma remaining to cause further rebirth. He lives a useful life, dedicating himself to the service of mankind, yet he is not attached (in the sense of selfish grasping) to blame and praise, happiness or unhappiness. In this way, he truly represents the ideals of a holy life.

In Buddhist meditation, there is a method of practice in which meditators learn to contemplate on the virtues of the saṅgha (saṅghanussati). In addition, the Buddhist system of worship includes a recitation of the saṅgha's virtues as a means of reflection and as a concentration exercise. Nine attributes of the Saṅgha are enumerated. The saṅgha is said to be of good conduct, of upright conduct, of wise conduct, of seemly conduct; the saṅgha is worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of reverential salutation; the saṅgha is the incomparable field of merits to the world.

Attaining one of the four stages of transcendent spirituality is a prerequisite for qualification as a member of the Noble saṅgha. In fact, these four stages can be attained only in successive order starting from the first. It, therefore, follows that once an individual achieves the first stage, he becomes, immediately and permanently, a member of the Noble saṅgha by the very virtue of that achievement. It is this very first stage that the expression Eye of Truth refers to. Subsequent attainment of the more exalted stages hardly affects one's status as a member of the Noble saṅgha, although it does mean higher development and greater progress in spiritual advancement.
III. 1. 3. Relationship between the Noble and Conventional Saṅghas

Like the Dhamma and the Vinaya, the Noble and the Conventional saṅghas do not exclude one another. They are, in fact, more related to one another than may appear at first glance.

Within the framework of the Conventional saṅgha, the Vinaya defines the roles and responsibilities of each member and also decides how members relate to one another. Respect is shown to another monk in accordance with seniority, those who were ordained later pay respect to those who received earlier ordination, even if it were a matter of hours or minutes. A monk of less than five years seniority, no matter how knowledgeable he may be, will have to live and train under his preceptor's or teacher's supervision. But within the Noble saṅgha, recognition is given according to individuals' achievements in spiritual practice. An Arahanta, though of younger age and seniority, receives greater respect and recognition than those worldlings (puthujjana), who are more advanced in age and seniority; a Non-Returner is considered more advanced than a Once-Returner in terms of spiritual achievement, and so forth.

However, since the conventional saṅgha is an institution, which must be governed by a defined set of rules and regulations, the Vinaya naturally takes precedence within it. The Vinaya provides a certain amount of consistency necessary for the smooth functioning and growth of the institution. It also helps to preserve peace and harmony among the members of the community. Thus, a member of the Noble saṅgha living within the context of the conventional saṅgha takes upon himself the responsibility of following the injunctions of the Vinaya, no matter how
exalted his spiritual position may be. This may seem a little strange, but it is both practical and appropriate.

The conventional saṅgha, on the other hand, can look upon the Noble saṅgha as the embodiment of virtues and religious ideals, whose presence provides a strong inspiration and encouragement for them to strive for the attainment of higher goals. The structured environments so well-grounded on the Vinaya should prove an advantage to Dhamma practice. Even members of the Noble saṅgha who have not attained Arahantship may benefit from such environments. Moreover, while the conventional saṅgha is capable of creating excellent conditions to achieve membership in the Noble saṅgha, it is the latter that will prove excellent members of the former and may, eventually, best preserve the institution of the former. In this way, the Noble and the Conventional saṅghas complement one other.

Dhamma and Vinaya are reciprocally complementary and supportive. Just as a good person, well-educated and in high position, would endeavor to abide by the laws of the country, even so, advancement in the Dhamma by no means nurtures a contempt for the Vinaya. A noble disciple, though advanced in the Dhamma, recognizes the importance of the Vinaya in religious life. Because he has been able to remove most or all of the defilements, it becomes more natural for him to show respect for rules and regulations that are formulated for the common good of the community. Thus, whereas ordinary worldlings, who are still full of selfishness, greed, and pride, would at times find rules and laws cumbersome, especially when they are at variance with their interests, a noble disciple would feel at home with them.
In addition, to preserve communal peace and harmony, the Vinaya is also of great value in the practice to realize the Dhamma. Progress in spiritual practice is not possible without self-discipline, and this can be inculcated through commitment to the Vinaya. On the other hand, as one becomes more advanced in the Dhamma, one will find it more natural to follow the Vinaya. In this way, the Dhamma helps to maintain the Vinaya. Once a noble disciple reaches the highest stage of spiritual development, that is, Arahattship, and has no more training to do, he may no longer need the Vinaya for his own further progress, yet he will discern its value for the good of the community and will be willing to follow it with clear understanding and respect. There is abundant evidence to substantiate this in Buddhist canonical literature.

III. 1. 4. The Position and Importance of Saṅgha

The saṅgha forms the third component of the Triple Gem (the Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha). The saṅgha members represent the embodiment of the Dhamma and they have been, by and large, responsible for the preservation and promotion of the religion, both during and after the time of the Buddha.

By realizing the Dhamma, members of the saṅgha most effectively vindicate the Buddha's claim of enlightenment, thereby bringing his supreme achievement to full fruition. The Buddha's enlightenment was, no doubt, the fruit of a long and difficult process, but it was meant for a much broader purpose than his own exclusive benefit; his effort was based on universal compassion and inspired by the selfless desire to serve mankind. If there was no one to understand the Dhamma after him, his enlightenment would be of no use to others. Thus, the saṅgha was instrumental in enabling Buddhahood to accomplish its full purpose and
fruition. In this way, the Buddha achieved both his own benefit as well as benefit for the world.

Members of the saṅgha were indispensable in the spread and preservation of the Buddha's message, both during his lifetime and long after his death, down to the present time. They act as the principal guardians of the faith. Without the saṅgha, the religion could not endure and prosper. This is evident from the fact that even in the areas where Buddhism was introduced earlier, if the saṅgha were not well established, the religion would soon die out. Thanks to the saṅgha, the world now has relatively convenient access to the Buddha's teachings and can still enjoy the fruit of the Buddha's enlightenment.

The saṅgha demonstrates to us that it is possible to realize the Dhamma and become enlightened. Their examples are a vivid and important source of moral support to all of us who are not yet well established in the path of spiritual practice. In time of doubt and uncertainty, we can always turn to them for advice and instruction. If the Buddha's teachings appear too idealistic, we have assurance and encouragement in the saṅgha, who show us that it is humanly possible to lead such an ideal life and to realize the highest religious goal.

III. 2. The Historical Establishment of the Saṅgha in Early Buddhism

III. 2. 1. The Establishment of the Saṅgha

After his enlightenment, when the Buddha began spreading Dhamma, he said: “open for those who have ears are the doors of immortality (the noble path). Let them give up their wrong faith (saddhā).”¹ He wanted his

¹Vin. I. 7.
disciples to learn from the teachings and for society to grow prosperously and smoothly without any violation from moral precepts.

In a few months when the followers of the Buddhist Path swelled in large numbers, an organised institution became necessary to be established.

The Buddha himself having come from the Sakya clan which had a republican form, and also having his past experience and knowledge in the administrative affairs of his father's kingdom, had modelled his religious organisation on the republican pattern. Rules of conduct also included holding of periodical meetings, protocol system and voting by ballot, which were systematically observed in the monasteries.

The monastic life in Buddhism was generally confined to men, with a few exceptions here and there. Although no woman was admitted at the beginning, but later at the request of the senior monks, the Buddha agreed to ordain women and start nunneries. He was afraid if the admission of women would damage the growth of the faith. The women, however, were accepted as the 'mothers' or the 'sisters' in monasteries. The nuns took part in daily religious duties in the monasteries. They were required to shave their hair and wear yellow robes and follow similar discipline as that of men.\(^1\) They lived in separate adjoining establishments.

A person joining the Buddhist Order is received in a public ceremony, while he gives a declaration of the Threefold Refuge: “I go to

\(^1\) Vin. I. 22.
the Buddha for refuge, I go to the Dhamma for refuge, I go to the Saṅgha for refuge'.”¹

Each statement is repeated three times. He then receives ordination as a bhikkhu. After ten years, he becomes an Elder (Thera), after twenty years a Great Elder (Mahāthera).²

From Mahāvagga I, we are told that the Buddha’s first disciples were the five monks to whom he preached at Sarnath.³ According to the earlier biographies of the Buddha, he next converted Yaśas, the son of a wealthy elder (śreṣṭhin) of Benares.⁴ And Yaśas’ parents and wife became Buddhist laymen (upāsaka) and lay women (upāsikā) then.⁵ Fifty-four of Yasa friends entered the order and were ordained as monks. All of them are said to have become Arahanta.⁶ The Buddha sent them out to spread his teachings, saying:

“Go out and preach, monks, out of compassion for sentient beings, and out of concern for the world. Bring benefits, happiness, and caring to gods and men. No two of you should go to the same place. Preach the Dhamma with reason eloquence so that it will be good at the beginning, middle, and end.”⁷

Because of compassion, the Buddha wished to convey to common people at least some of the truths he had realized.

The Buddha subsequently returned to Magadha, where he converted many people. The Buddha’s victory over a noted religious

¹ Vin. I. 22.
² Peter Harvey, An Introduction to Buddhism: Teaching, History and Practices, p. 236.
³ Vin. I. 8.
⁴ Vin. I. 14.
⁵ Vin. I. 15.
⁶ Vin. I. 18.
⁷ Vin. I. 20.
teacher Uruvelā Kasspa, through a demonstration of superhuman powers, resulted in the conversion to Buddhism of Uruvelā Kasspa, his two younger brothers, and their disciples.¹ The Buddha’s fame spread as a result of these and other conversions. When he led his retinue to Rājagaha, King Seniya Bimbisāra became a lay disciple and offered the Buddha a bamboo grove, which was used as quarters for monks. Bimbisāra thus became the first head of state to protect, and the bamboo grove became the base for the order’s activities.²

Two disciples of the skeptic Sanjayin, Mahāmoggallāna and Sāriputta, became the Buddha’s disciples.³ Sāriputta was converted when he heard one of the Buddha’s first five monastic converts Assaji, recite: “Of all things that arise from cause, the Tathāgata as explain their causes and their cessations. Thus has the great samaṇa taught.”⁴

Sāriputta then persuaded Mahāmoggallāna also to become the Buddha’s disciple. The Buddha is said to have predicted that the two men would become leaders of the order; and, in fact, they played major roles in spreading the Buddha’s teaching.

Around the same time, Mahākassapa converted to Buddhism when he saw the Buddha near the Bahuputraka Caitya.⁵ He is said to have practiced religious austerities assiduously. After the Buddha’s death, he assembled the order and supervised recitation of the Buddha’s teachings at the First Council.

A number of years after his enlightenment, the Buddha returned to

¹ Vin. I. 24.
³ Vin. I. 39-34.
⁴ Vin. I. 41.
⁵ Mhvt. III. 50.
Kapilavatthu to see his father, the King, and his foster mother, the Queen. At that time he initiated his son Rāhula, who was still a child, as a novice (sāmaṇera) and assigned Sāriputta to instruct Rāhula.¹ The Buddha subsequently initiated many other young men including his cousins Devadatta and Nanda, his half-brother Ānanda, and a barber named Upāli, who had served the Sakya nobility. Upāli eventually became an expert in monastic discipline and played an important role in the early Buddhist order.

After many of the young men of the Sakyas had become monks, the Buddha’s foster mother and aunt, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, expressed her desire to become a nun. She went before the Buddha together with a number of young women to ask permission to become nuns, but the Buddha refused her request even after she had repeated it several times. Only after Ānanda interceded with the Buddha the establishment of an order of nuns (bhikkhuṇīs) reluctantly was permitted. To govern the relations between monks and nuns and to prevent unwholesome activities, the Buddha established stringent restrictions concerning the interactions between them. In addition, nuns were required to observe "eight important rules" (garudhammā),² that made them subordinate to the order of monks. Despite such restrictions on their activities, many able nuns were active during the lifetime of the Buddha. Kṣemā and Dhammadinnā were famous for their knowledge and frequently lectured to men. Utpalavarnā was skilled in the use of superhuman abilities, and Kṛśāgautami attained a remarkably profound level of enlightenment. The

¹ Vin. I. 82.
² Vin. II. 255 (Cv. X. 1.4); A. IV. 276.
names of many other nuns are recorded in early Buddhist literature.¹

Details about many of the Buddha’s lay disciples are known. Citra was well versed in the Buddhist doctrine, and Ugra of Vesālī and Mahānāma of the Sakyas were famed for their almsgiving.

The names of many of the Buddha’s monastic disciples are known, as are details about them. The bandit Aṅgulimāla was taught by the Buddha and became his disciple.² Kṣullapanthaka could not memorize even one verse of the Buddha’s teaching, but he still attained a deep level of enlightenment through the Buddha’s guidance. Pūrṇa Maitrāyaṇīputra was an able preacher. Mahākātyāyana and Mahākauṣṭhila were skilled at explaining the Dhamma. Mahākātyāyana spread Buddhism to Avanti, south of central India. Pūrṇa was responsible for spreading Buddhism to Sunāparantaka on the west coast of India. According to a story that probably dates from the period after Buddhism had already spread to South India, a Brahman named Bāvarī from the Deccan in South India sent sixteen of his disciples to central India to hear the Buddha’s teachings. The sixteen disciples journeyed along the old trade route known as the Southern Road (Dakṣiṇāpatha) from Pratiṣṭhāna in the Deccan through Ujjayinī in the country of Avanti, on to Vidiśā, Kauśāmbi, and Sāketa, finally arriving in Sāvatthī. Because the Buddha was no longer in Sāvatthī, they continued traveling up the Northern Road (Uttarāpatha) to Rājagaha, where they met the Buddha and became his disciples. Among their number were Ajita and Tissa-Metteya, two men who later may have been somehow identified with Metteya (S. Maitreya), the future Buddha.

¹ A. I. 25.
² The Aṅgulimāla Sutta, The Sutta No. 86, M. II.
In conclusion, during the time period immediately following the Buddha's attainment of enlightenment, many disciples became an integral part of the early history of the Buddhist community. What follows is a brief mention of some of the most important disciples, classified under the headings of 'The Buddha's prominent disciples', 'The prominent Laities', and 'Royal patrons towards the Buddhist saṅgha'.

III. 2. 2. The Buddha's Prominent Disciples in Early Saṅgha

III. 2. 2. 1. Ānanda Thera

Ānanda\(^1\) was born in Kapilavatthu and was the Buddha’s cousin, being the son of Amitodana, the brother of the Buddha’s father, Suddhodana. It was during the Buddha’s first trip back to Kapilavatthu after his enlightenment that Ānanda, along with his brother Anuruddha and his cousin Devadatta, became a monk.

The Buddha was always accompanied by an attendant whose job it was to run messages for him, prepare his seat and to attend to his personal needs. For the first twenty years of his ministry, he had several attendants, Nagasamala, Upavana, Nagita, Cunda, Radha and others, but none of them proved to be suitable. One day, when he decided to replace his present attendant, he called all the monks together and addressed them: “I am now getting old and wish to have someone as a permanent attendant who will obey my wishes in every way. Which of you would like to be my attendant?” All the monks enthusiastically offered their services, except Ānanda, who modestly sat at the back in silence. Later, when asked why he had not volunteered he replied that the Buddha knew best who to pick. When the Buddha indicated that he would like Ānanda

to be his personal attendant, Ānanda said he would accept the position, but only on several conditions. The first four conditions were that the Buddha should never give him any of the food that he received, nor any of the robes, that he should not be given any special accommodation, and that he would not have to accompany the Buddha when he accepted invitations to people’s homes. Ānanda insisted on these four conditions because he did not want people to think that he was serving the Buddha out of desire for material gain. The last four conditions were related to Ānanda’s desire to help in the promotion of the Dhamma. These conditions were: that if he was invited to a meal, he could transfer the invitation to the Buddha; that if people came from outlying areas to see the Buddha, he would have the privilege of introducing them; that if he had any doubts about the Dhamma, he should be able to talk to the Buddha about them at any time and that if the Buddha gave a discourse in his absence, he would later repeat it in his presence. The Buddha smilingly accepted these conditions and thus began a relationship between the two men that was to last for the next twenty-five years.

Most notable among his accomplishments were his recitation of all the suttas at the first council after the Buddha's death, and his role in helping to establish the order of nuns by coming to the aid of Mahāpajāpatī, who became the first nun.

**III. 2. 2. Upāli Thera**

Belonging to a barber’s family, Upāli\(^1\) also became a monk at Kapilavatthu, eventually becoming a master of the Vinaya, which he recited in total at the first council. He was seeking to be a forest dweller,

\(^{1}\) A. I. 24.
but the Buddha dissuaded him from doing so. If he were to be with the Buddha, he would have learning to his credit. He listened to the Blessed One who taught him the whole of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and he was doubly rewarded. He became in no long time an authority on Discipline or *Vinaya*. At the first council was held three months after the passing away of the Blessed One, it was this *Thera* who gave to the world the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. The Buddha addressing monks declared that Venerable Upāli was foremost for the knowledge of Discipline or *Vinaya*.

III. 2. 2. 3. Rāhula Thera

Following his enlightenment, the Buddha eventually returned to Kapilavathu to visit his family. At that time the Buddha's former wife Yasodharā sent their son Rāhula to receive his birthright. Instead, however, the Buddha ordained the young boy (who was only seven years old at the time) as a novice (*sāmaṇera*). Rāhula is known as the chief of the novices. The Buddha, addressing monks said that among his *Mahā Arahants* Venerable Rāhula was preeminent for the observance of the precepts.¹

III. 2. 2. 4. Sāriputta and Moggallāna Thera

Sāriputta was originally a follower of a wanderer named Sanjaya. One day, he met a novice Buddhist monk named Assaji, who expounded to Dhamma to him. Sāriputta immediately perceived the true meaning of the teaching and became an *Arahanta*. Sāriputta then recited the Dhamma to his close friend Moggallāna, who also immediately became enlightened. The two young men became monks, and established themselves as two of the Buddha's closest and wisest disciples. Sāriputta is often associated

with the *Abhidhamma*, while Moggallāna was known for his miraculous powers.¹

**III. 2. 2. 5. Mahākassapa Thera**

Mahākassapa was born in the *brahmin* village of Mahātittha in Magadha, and was the son of the *brahmin* Kapila, his mother being Sumanādevi; he himself was called Pippali. A very senior and highly disciplined monk, Mahākasspa was selected to head the first council, held at Rājagaha in the first rainy season following the Buddha's death. He is reputed to have selected the 500 monks who attended, and to have personally questioned Ānanda on the *Suttas* and Upāli on the *Vinaya*. For practice of The Dhutangas or Austerities (Dhuta-anga means shaking off) 13 in number, he was unsurpassed among the 80 *Mahā Arahants* of the Buddha. This was the fulfilment of a previous resolve under the Buddha Padumuttara who prophesied his coming. For self abnegation, he was a supreme Master. He came closest to the Buddha in physical appearance. His feet resembled Buddha's most.²

He was the only *Arahanta* who had the privilege of exchanging robes with the Buddha. It was his fashion to enjoy the bliss of *nibbāna* off and on. This is called the *niruddha-sarnapatti*. Mahākassapa possessed to the highest degree the "ten qualities that inspire confidence."

Once a woman mistook the Buddha for Mahākassapa in offering alms. Realising her mistake, she quickly took it back to put into the bowl of Mahākassapa. It is said that she was one of the rare mortals who was not the object of the Buddha's generosity during the many aeons of His apprenticeship. Since that incident, the *thera* forsook the place to live in

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¹ A. I. 23.
the Himalayas. He returned only after the passing away of the Buddha. It was on this occasion that owing to the wish of the deities as it was willed by the Buddha, the funeral pyre at Kusināra remained unlit till the arrival of Mahākassapa. It was left to Mahā Anuruddha to interpret the omen.

### III. 2. 2. 6. Devadatta Thera

Devadatta is the Buddha’s greatest personal enemy. Devadatta was the son of King Suppabuddha and Pamita, an aunt of the Buddha. His sister was Yasodharā. He was thus a cousin and brother-in-law of the Buddha. Together with Ānanda and other Sakyan princes, he entered the Order of monks in the early part of the Buddha's ministry. Unable to attain any stage of Sainthood, he worked hard for worldly psychic powers which he got. Devadatta became a monk but, unlike the Buddha's other followers, was a threat to the saṅgha by constantly, toward the end of the Buddha’s ministry, trying to usurp leadership of the community. After several unsuccessful attempts to murder the Buddha, Devadatta founded his own order based on more austere religious practices. When his followers eventually left him to return to the Buddha’s saṅgha, he coughed up blood and died.

### III. 2. 2. 7. Aṅgulimāla Thera

Aṅgulimāla was a man of extremes. His life is a unique record. A bandit who has made good. His career offered a contrast. Born to a counsellor called Baggawa to the king of Kosala, he was named "Hin Saka", so called because the weapons shone throughout the country in the hour of his birth. The king of Kosala had a sleepless night when he observed the phenomenon of the shining of weapons in his armoury.
According to custom, the child was sent to the university Taxila where he had a distinguished career. His name was converted to "Ahinsaka" harming none partly. He excelled in study and in sports. Soon he incurred the jealousy and hostility of his colleagues who plotted against him. His enemies could not prevail against him. He was a favourite of the Vice Chancellor of the University. Soon he incurred his hostility due to the whispering campaign of his enemies. They spoke of his illicit love to his wife. But he, too, being a clever and learned man, bided his time to compass his death.

When the leave taking took place, he asked for the usual tribute due from a student to a teacher in the shape of an extra ordinary request. He asked for 1000 right thumbs of human-beings. Ahimsaka was taken aback and Promptly refused so sanguinary a request. But the chancellor was adamant. In the event of refusal, a curse would be on him. Again and again he pleaded in vain for another tribute. There was no escape from the rigid ancient' custom as this tribute was in lieu of past tuition fees. So Ahimsaka demurred - consented in order to preserve the learning, for a refusal would act as a blight. Having armed himself, he repaired to the forest called Jalita in the Kosala kingdom. He killed all and sundry who ventured into his domain. But the thumbs could not be preserved.

Either the wild animals ate them, or they became rotten. He therefore got a garland made and was wearing it. Hence he was called "Aṅgulimāla". He had 999 thumbs and was anxious to secure one more to close this bloody chapter. His teacher thought Aṅgulimāla would never survive the campaign. He would assuredly be slain in the process, or taken captive by the King.
The Buddha saw his impending doom. He knew that he was destined to be an *Arahanta* in this very life. Finally, the Buddha converted him. At the end of the sermon, he became an *Arahanta* by the application of *'Ehi Bhikku'* formula of the Buddha. With Aṅgulimāla, the *Arahanta*, the Buddha went back to the temple.

Aṅgulimāla was introduced to the King who offered his precious shawl to him. But Venerable Aṅgulimāla was an adept in the practice of austerities. He declined as it was no longer of any use to him. The king invited him to the palace for alms. The king was struck by the radical transformation of the recruit.

The bandit whom he came to capture has become an *Arahanta* by the might of the Buddha. But Venerable Aṅgulimāla was not entirely immune from his bloody past. Whether a stone aimed at a crow or whether at play among the children, Aṅgulimāla on his round for alms invariably became the target of the missile. Often he arrived at the temple with bleeding wounds, as a soldier would return after a battle. So inexorable was *kamma* that it hastens to operate in his last life as it did with Venerable Mahā Moggallāna. For the rest and residue of *kamma* would be a spent force on his final release (*nibbāna*).

One day on his rounds, Venerable Aṅgulimāla heard the birth pangs of an expectant mother in labour. Other *Mahā Arahants* must have heard the cries. But none of them was moved to the extent of Venerable Aṅgulimāla. He approached the Buddha and confessed his concern at such suffering and begged the Buddha to allay the anguish. The Buddha asked him to meditate upon the power of Truth: In-as-much as Aṅgulimāla was entirely devoid, since birth of cruelty, so by virtue of that
truth, the suffering may be assuaged. Such was the blessing he was asked to give. It was a short sermon called Aṅgulimāla Sutta.

Venerable Aṅgulimāla was one of the 80 Mahā Arahants of the Noble Order.

III. 2. 3. The Order of Nuns.

III. 2. 3. 1. Buddhist Attitude towards Women in Ancient India

Before we analyze Buddhist attitude towards women in ancient India, it is important to keep in mind that the history of the world has been men's history as it was written without much reference to women. The role of women in society has been severely restricted, stereotyped and minimized. Language, culture and habitual thought patterns of mankind are the creations of males.¹ Thus, men have looked at women as bizarre and often troubling objects rather than as co-partners in the creation and progress of this world. They were given very little to choose from as only meaner things were placed within their reach. The course of their lives, from birth to death, was set by fathers, brothers and above all, husbands - the male citizens who formed governments and raised armies. In a male dominated world such as this, not much, which speaks favourably of women, could be expected because men found it hard to accept that women, like them, could also be capable of passion and pain, growth and decay. Interestingly, in most religious traditions, those who kept the records chose to record men's experiences and mental images much more frequently than women's ones. Thus, it is not surprising that the texts of different religions have focussed on male characters, male themes and

¹ The archetypal expression of this vision can be observed in the writings of feminist intellectuals such as Simone de Beauvoir, (Second Sex, New York: Knopf, 1953) and Dorothy Sayer (Are Women Human?, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971).
male fantasies. Even when information about women was recorded, later commentators often neglected to keep those records alive in communal consciousness and memory. Sadly, the current academic scholarship also usually focuses on what the religious tradition itself has emphasized, i.e., the records of its male heroes. The habit of thinking and doing research in the generic masculine (which simply does not cover the feminine) is so ingrained in modern scholarship that many scholars are genuinely unaware of it.

In spite of formal equality and access to education, women are still accorded a subordinate position in our society. They are exclusively expected to bear children. The result is the well-known bourgeois ideal of the protected housewife and mother— an ideal which is directly transferred to women in ancient contexts. The presence of a few and isolated women worthies here and there did not have any perceivable influence on the overall position of women or the attitude of men toward them. Thus, for the proper understanding of humanity, there is the need of a model which would strictly avoid placing one gender in the centre and the other on the fringes. Such a model would acknowledge that humans come in two sexes and that both are equally human. It would also recognize the fact that gender roles and stereotypes in every society have shown men and women as more distinct and divergent from each other than is biologically dictated. However, neither human creativity nor its experience is gender neutral and the concepts of gender and sexuality are crucial variables in the understanding of the world in which humans live and interact. Thus, such a model would also acknowledge that expression of human creativity, whether it is artistic, social or intellectual, is both created and experienced by gendered sexual beings.
In the light of the above stated, we have expanded and elaborated on the following conclusions:

(1) By the time of the birth of Gotama, the Buddha, androcentrism and patriarchy had become the mainstay of Indian society in which it was considered imperative to protect and control women by a social structure like the family. Birth of a female child was seen not only as undesirable but also as unfortunate. Social institutions like polygamy, harems and prostitution which degrade women had become an integral part of the Indian social and economic fabric.1 Wife-beating had become fairly common and a woman who completely surrendered herself to a husband, worshipped him (patidevatā)2 and found solace at his feet (pādaparicārikā)3 was perceived as the ideal wife. Dowry (itthidhana)4 was a reality then, as it is now, and women were occasionally put up as goods for sale.5

In the Vinaya, there are several examples of brāhmaṇas who spoke of bhikkhunīs as harlots. These stories provide a glimpse of bhikkhunīs in the midst of the Brahmanical social milieu during the time of the Buddha. For example:

"Now at that time several nuns, going to Sāvatthī through the Kosalan districts, having arrived at a certain village in the evening, having approached a certain brāhmaṇa family, asked for accommodation. Then that brāhmaṇa woman spoke thus to these nuns: "Wait, ladies, until the brāhmaṇa comes."

2 J. II. 406.
3 S. I. 125; J. II. 95, VI. 268; DhsA. II. 194.
4 Vin. II. 116.
5 DhsA. II. 390; S. I. 43.
Then that *brāhmaṇa* having come during the night, spoke thus to that *brāhmaṇa* women: "Who are these?"

"They are nuns, master."

Saying: “Throw out these shaven-headed strumpets,” he threw them out from the house.¹

(2) The Buddha and some of his like-minded colleagues like Ānanda had a very positive and revolutionary attitude towards women. The Buddha opened the doors of his *Dhamma* for the equal benefit of both men and women- a position that was exceptional for the time and was perceived as radical and dangerous by his critics. Adoption of such a position reflects an attempt on the part of the Buddha and Ānanda to locate virtue and spiritual potential beyond conventional gender distortions. A large number of women took advantage of such an opportunity. The Buddha regarded the feminine as wise, maternal, creative, gentle, and compassionate. There were many women among the Buddha's followers who could and did become *Arahants*, fully liberated from the psycho-physiological suffering that actualizes human existence. Some of the *bhikkhuṇīs* had their own following, and were capable not only of introducing the *Dhamma*, but also of bringing new aspirants to full liberation without the mediation of the Buddha or some other senior *bhikkhus*. There is enough evidence to suggest that women not only were conspicuously present in the earliest community, but also seem to have held prominent and honoured places both as practioners and teachers. It cannot be denied that the Buddha unfolded new horizons for women by laying the foundations of the *bhikkhuṇī saṅgha*. This social and spiritual

¹ Vin. IV. 275.
advancement for women was ahead of the times and, therefore, must have
drawn many objections from men, including bhikkhus. But the powerful
and magnificent personality of the Buddha was able to keep such
objections at an arm's length. Various restrictions and disadvantages,
referred to in early Buddhist literature, were imposed after the death of
the Buddha and thus, interpolations of post-Mahāparinibbāna period.
Despite various forms of disadvantages and harassments, the combination
of education in monasteries, free time, and a sense of personal moral
superiority must have led many women into an organized life of unknown
possibilities. Here, women were able to indulge in activities outside the
home, including proselyting, development of organizational skills, and
above all, an atmosphere where they could experience a sense of
accomplishment. Unfortunately, the bhikkhuṇī saṅgha did not survive for
long.

(3) The death of the Buddha created a void at least as far as women
were concerned. In the absence of a towering personality like the Buddha,
the few remaining supporters of women like Ānanda were simply
overwhelmed by those elements within the saṅgha, who considered their
entry as an affront. This became quite apparent in the First Buddhist
Council at Rājagaha where Ānanda was vilified for being instrumental in
the entry of women into the saṅgha. In the post Mahāparinibbāna period,
the Buddhist saṅgha became an institution dominated by an
overwhelmingly androcentric-patriarchal power structure. The canon was
edited and revised to go with this kind of mentality. With the passage of
time, ascetical misogyny of Brahmanism was adopted by the Buddhist
saṅgha which associated women almost invariably with adjectives like
imperfect, wicked, base, deceitful, destructive, treacherous, ungrateful,
untrustworthy, vile, degraded, lustful, envious, greedy, unbridled, foolish and profligate. ¹ Such an attitude asserted that women must be suppressed, controlled and conquered by men. This type of logic obviously rooted out the existence of the bhikkhuṇī saṅgha and reduced women in general to a state of marginal existence.

III. 2. 3. 2. The Foundation of the Bhikkhuṇīs’ Saṅgha

III. 2. 3. 2. 1. The Mahāpajāpati Gotamī’s Request

Five years after the enlightenment of the Prince Siddhattha,² His father, the King Suddhodana died. At that time, there was a great quarrel between Sakya and the Koliya over taking the water of Rohinī river.³ After the solution of this quarrel, the Buddha was staying in Nigrodharama of Kapilavatthu.⁴ Then the Mahāpajāpati Gotamī⁵ approached the Buddha and entreatling the Buddha to grant permission for women entering the saṅgha. She said: “Lord, it would be well, if women should be allowed to go forth from the home to homeless life into the discipline of Dhamma proclaimed by the Tathāgata.”⁶

The Buddha definitively refused without any reasons and said: “Enough, Gotamī, let it not please you that women should be allowed to do so.”⁷ The Mahāpajāpati Gotamī three times repeated the request but the Buddha gave the same reply. Then the Mahāpajāpati Gotamī afflicted and grieved with a tearful face and crying that the Buddha would not

¹ J. I. 111, 285; II. 474, 478, 527; IV.124-25.
² I. B. Horner, Women under Primitive Buddhism, Laywomen and Almswomen, p. 103.
³ K. Sri Dhammananda, The Dhammapada, p. 400.
⁴ A. IV. 274-9; Vin. II. 253; Rachita Chaudhuri, Buddhist Education in Ancient India, p. 50.
⁵ The foster-mother of the Buddha.
⁶ Vin. II. 253; A. IV. 274.
⁷ Vin. II. 253; A. IV. 274.
permit women to enter the homeless state. She bowed down before the Buddha, departed keeping her right side towards Him.¹

III. 2. 3. 2. 2. The Venerable Ānanda’s Intervention

After having remained at Kapilavatthu as long as he thought fit, the Buddha went to Vesālī and resided at the Great Grove in the Gabled Hall. Then the Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī with a large company of Sakyan women had hair cut off, donned yellow robes and walked from Kapilavatthu to Vesālī. When they had arrived Vesālī, their feet were swollen, body covered with dust, tearful face and crying and stood outside the porch of the gateway. The venerable Ānanda saw the Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and knew the cause of her grief. He approached the Buddha and said that the Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī was standing outside the porch, with swollen feet, body covered with dust, and sad. He requested the Buddha to permit women to renounce home and enter the homeless state under the Dhamma and discipline proclaimed by the Buddha. It was well if women should be allowed to renounce their homes and enter the homeless state. The Buddha replied: “Enough, Ānanda, let it not please you that women should be allowed to do so!” After three times venerable Ānanda interceded but the Buddha replied the same.²

III. 2. 3. 2. 3. The Women Join into the Saṅgha

Although the Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī requested three times, the Buddha did not allow the women to join into the saṅgha so the Venerable Ānanda tried some other methods. This time, the venerable Ānanda thus spoke to the Lord that if women went forth from the home to the homeless life into discipline of Dhamma declared by the Tathāgata could they realize the

¹ Vin. II. 253; A. IV. 274.
² Vin. II. 254.
fruit of a Sotāpanna (stream-winner), Sakadāgāmi (once-returner), Anāgāmī (never-returner) and Arahantship?.”¹ The Buddha replied that they were capable of realizing Saintship. Then the venerable Ānanda again said:

“Lord, if they can attain Saintship and the Mahāpajāpastī Gotamī was of great service to the Lord, She was the Lord’s aunt, She was foster-mother, nurse, giver of milk. When the Lord’s mother passed away she suckled Him. Lord those women should be given permission to the going forth from home into homeless state under the Dhamma and discipline proclaimed by the Tathāgata.”²

This time the Buddha said: “If, Ānanda, Mahāpajāpastī Gotamī accepts the 'Eight Important Rules' (Garudhammā),³ it shall be for her the ordination.”⁴

Then the Venerable Ānanda mentioned the "Eight Important Rules" to the Mahāpajāpastī Gotamī and these rules are honoured, respected, revered, venerated, never to be transgressed during her life. They are as following:

(1) A nun who has been ordained (even) for a century must greet respectfully, rise up from her seat, salute with joined palms, do proper homage to a monk ordained but that day.

(2) A nun must not spend the rains in a residence where there is no monk.

¹ D. III. 277; Vbh. 335.
² M. III. 253.
³ Vin. II. 255 (Cv. X. 1.4); A. IV. 276.
⁴ Vin. II. 254; A. IV. 275.
(3) Every half month, a nun should desire two things from the Order of monks: the asking (as to the date) of the Observance day, and the coming for the exhortation.

(4) After the rains a nun must ‘invite’ before both Orders in respect of three matters: what was seen, what was heard, what was suspected.

(5) A nun, offending against an important rule, must undergo mānatta (discipline) for half a month before both Orders.

(6) When, as a probationer, she has trained in the six rules for two years, she should seek ordination from both Orders.

(7) A monk must not be abused or reviled in any way by a nun.

(8) From today, admonition of monks by nuns is forbidden, admonition of nuns by monks is not forbidden.¹

And after hearing Eight Important Rules, she gladly agreed and said:

“And, honoured Ānanda, as a woman or a man when young, of tender years, and fond of ornaments, having washed (himself and his) head, having obtained a garland of lotus flowers or a garland of jasmine flowers or a garland of some sweet-scented creeper, having taken it with both hands, should place it on top of his head – even so do I, honoured Ānanda, accept these ‘eight important rules’ never to be transgressed during my life.”²

Then the Venerable Ānanda returned to the Buddha and said that the Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī has taken upon herself the “Eight Important

¹ Vin. II. 255 (Cv. X. 1.4); A. IV. 276.
² Vin. II. 255; A. IV. 277.
rules”, by their acceptance, she automatically received the Higher Ordination.

In foundation of the bhikkhunīs saṅgha, the Buddha predicted the future of true Dhamma life thus:

“If, Ānanda, women had not obtained the going forth from home into homelessness in the Dhamma and discipline proclaimed by the Truth-finder, the Brāhma-faring, Ānanda, would have lasted long, true Dhamma would have endured for a thousand years. But since, Ānanda, women have gone forth from home into homelessness in the Dhamma and discipline proclaimed by the Truth-finder, now, Ānanda, the Brāhma-faring will not last long, true Dhamma will endure only for five hundred years.”

On this matter, the Buddha had explained that as those households which had many women and few men easily fallen a prey to robbers, to pot-thieves; as when the disease known as mildew attacked a whole field of rice that field of rice did not last long and as when the disease known as red rust attacked a whole field of sugar-cane, that field of sugar-cane did not last long. Even so, in whatever Dhamma and discipline women obtained the going forth from home into homelessness, that Brāhma-faring would not last long. Just as a man, looking forward, might build a dyke to a great reservoir so that the water may not overflow; even so with a view to the future, had laid down for nuns the eight important rules which not be transgressed during their life.” After the ordination, the Buddha gladdened and the Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī with talk on Dhamma.

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1 Vin. II. 256.
2 M. III. 96; A. III. 28.
3 Vin. II. 256.
On that occasion, the Buddha allowed nuns to be ordained (upasampadā) by monks. Five hundred Sākya women who followed her were also ordained at the same time.¹

III. 2. 3. 2. 4. The Controversies of the First Bhikkhuṇī

Yasodharā was another Sakya woman. She entered the bhikkhuṇī saṅgha. She was the wife of Śākyaputra Gautam.² Apadāna mentions that there was a therī named Yasodharā who was the wife of Sakya Prince. She was the chief bhikkhuṇī among the 90,000 bhikkhuṇīs.³ Some scholars were of opinion that Yasodharā was the first woman who preached the religion to be free from the bondage of the world.⁴ According to this tradition, Yasodharā was the founder of the bhikkhuṇī saṅgha. A problem may arise as to who was the first woman to enter the order to nuns as a bhikkhuṇī. I. B. Horner holds the opinion "A good deal of uncertainty surrounds the actual foundation of the Buddhist order of Almswomen and its beginnings are wrapped in mists. It is possible that Mahāpājpatī Gotamī came late into the order, after her husband died, and that the first woman really to make the order open for women was Yasodharā possibly the former wife of Gotama, who in her verse in the Apadāna is said to represent many women and herself.⁵

(1) The name of Gopā or Yasodharā as in the Apadāna, is said to have taken the leading part in formation of the order of nuns, bhikkhuṇī saṅgha.⁶

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¹ Vin. II. 255ff; A. IV. 276ff.
² Ap. II. 19.
³ Ap. II. 19.
⁴ Meena Talim, Life of Women in Buddhist Literature, p. 19.
⁶ Ibid.
(2) Again Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī as in the *Cullavagga* of *Vinaya Piṭaka* and in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* moved a request for the formation of the order of nuns; *Vinaya Piṭaka* is, however, silent about the account of Yasodharā as the founder of the bhikkhuṇī saṅgha.

Following Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and Yasodharā many other women from high and respectable family and also even from miserable condition, prostitute and deserted by husband namely, Ambapālī, Khemā, Paṭacārā, Bhaddā Kuṇḍalikesā, Kīsāgotamī, Sumedhā, Subhā Jivakambavaraniṇī, Sāmā, Vajirā, Uppalavaṇṇā, Puṇṇikā, etc., joined the saṅgha as nuns (therīs), caused for the spread of Buddhism, made spiritual progress and composed beautiful poems and lyrics of first grade importance. Thus, the entire Buddhist saṅgha consisting of its two branches bhikkhu saṅgha and bhikkhuṇī saṅgha was formed and established.

**III. 2. 3. 3. Some Women Leaders in Early Buddhism**

In the commentary called *Manorathapūrāṇī* of Buddhaghosha in *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, there is an interesting chapter concerning those ladies whom the Buddha regarded as his chief disciples. Among them are to be noticed several who entered the Order and were known as Therīs. There are some such typical Therīs specially mention here for their merit.

**III. 2. 3. 3. 1. Dhammadinnā Therī**

The most distinguished of them was Dhammadinnā. Her husband, resolving to renounce the world in the interests of his spiritual life, offered her as much treasure as she desired while taking her leave. The offer was proudly rejected by her. She herself took to the religious life and in due time became fit to be a teacher of the Doctrine. The
commentator then describes how the tables were turned when her husband sought spiritual wisdom from his wife who solved all difficult metaphysical questions with the ease of one who severs the stalk of a lotus with the sword.' She was ranked as the foremost among the Sisters who could preach.¹

III. 2. 3. 3. 2. Mahāpajāpatī Therī

Further information regarding these women leaders of the Buddhist Reformation is given in the commentary of Dhammapada on the Therīgāthā which is believed to be the collection of verses of the women who were the first to join the Buddha’s Order in his very life-time. We have already seen how it was the piety and persistence of Mahāpajāpatī, the sister of the Buddha’s mother, that overcame his opposition and secured for deserving women the right of entry into the Order and religious life. She entered the Order and was followed of 500 other Śākya ladies and constituted with them the Order of Nuns that was hardly inferior to that of Monks in piety and learning.

III. 2. 3. 3. 3. Somā Therī

This nucleus of the Order was formed of members representing different classes and ranks of society. Thus, one such member was Somā, daughter of King Bimbisāra’s chaplain, converted by the Buddha at the gate of Rājagaha. She embraced the Order not as a means of escape from the ills of life, but out of deliberate preference for its inherent ideals. In course of time, after marriage, she became the mother of ten sons and was known as Bahuputtikā. The Dhammapada Commentary says that she had seven

¹ A. I. 25.
sons and seven daughters. On her husband's renouncing the world, she divided all her riches equally among her sons. In a very short time, her sons and daughters-in-law ceased to show her respect. She then entered the Order of the bhikkhuṇīs and began to practise insight strenuously in her old age. The Master gave her suitable instructions. Somā bhikkhuṇī then attained Arahantship. She occupied the foremost place among the bhikkhuṇīs making great exertions.

III. 2. 3. 3. 4. Anupamā Therī

Anupamā, peerless, so named for her unrivalled beauty, daughter of wealthy parents, with no want of suitors courting her, "cutting off the glory of her hair, entered on the lonely paths of life and wandered forth to lose the sense of home," is another example of self-sacrifice among the aristocratic womanhood. Low life also made its contributions to the Order. The wives of a poor straw-plaiter and basket-maker and of a crook-backed Brāhmaṇa took orders to escape from their hard lot; “from three crooked things, from pestle and mortar and my crook-backed lord,” as one Gāthā puts it. She went to the Master and heard his teachings. Her intelligence matured. She strove hard for insight and was established in the third fruition. On the seventh day thereafter she attained Arahantship.

III. 2. 3. 3. 5. Khemā Therī

Such members of the Order as Queen Khemā, is an example of the quest of the ideal for its own sake, renouncing happy conditions of life. She was born in the royal family of Sāgala. She was very beautiful and her skin was like gold. She became the consort of Bimbisāra. One day, she

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1 DhpA. II. 276-278.  
2 A. I. 25.  
3 ThīA. 138-139.
heard that the Buddha was in the habit of speaking ill of beauty. Since then she did not appear before the Buddha. The king was a chief supporter of the Buddha. He asked his court-poets to compose a song on the glories of the Veluvana hermitage and to sing the song so loudly that the queen might hear it. The royal order was carried out. Khemā heard of the beauty of the hermitage and with the king's consent she came to the Veluvana vihāra where the Buddha was staying at this time. When she was led before the Buddha, the latter conjured up a woman like a celestial nymph stood fanning him with a palm leaf. Khemā observed this woman to be more beautiful than her and was ashamed of her own grace. Sometime after she noticed again that the woman passed from youth to middle age and then to old age till with broken teeth, grey hair, and wrinkled skin, she fell on earth with her palm leaf. Then, thought Khemā that her beautiful body would 'meet with the same fate as that of the nymph. Then the Master knew her thoughts and said that persons subject to lust suffer from the result of their action, while those freed from all bondage forsake the world. When the Master had finished speaking, Khemā, according to the commentary, attained Arahantship, and according to the Apadāna, she was established in the fruition of the first stage of sanctification and with the king's permission she entered the order before she became an Arahanta. Thereafter, she made a name for her insight and was ranked foremost amongst the bhikkhuṇīs possessing great wisdom.¹

III. 2. 3. 3. 6. Kisāgotamī Therī

The Order counted among its members some bereaved mothers, the loss of whose sons made them renounce the world and seek peace in religion.

The most distinguished of such is Kisāgotamī. The story goes how she approached the Blessed One for medicine that would restore life of the dead child she carried in her arms. The Buddha bade her fetch a little white mustard from a family of which no member had ever died. Thus, she was consoled by the realization that what afflicted her afflicted all. She was subsequently known for her progress in virtue and philosophical learning which made the Buddha appoint her as the superintendent of the Convent at Jetavana.¹

III. 2. 3. 7. Paṭācārā Therī

Some of these Therīs, when they advanced in spirituality, did not give themselves wholly to the subjective, meditative life in cloistered seclusion, but took an honourable share in social service and missionary work for their faith. The most renowned of such women leaders was Paṭācārā, the bereaved mother, who was sought for solace by other 500 bereaved mothers. As these 500 nuns under their head were taking their daily meal, a wretched woman approached them for alms, a homeless, childless widow disowned by her people for her infectious disease. Immediately, the Sisters of Mercy, the saviours and good shepherds of the heedless and the lost, adopted her as one of their own.²

III. 2. 4. The Buddhist Laity Community

III. 2. 4. 1. The Relationship between the Monk and the Laity

We have already seen how intimately was the Buddhist saṅgha concerned and connected with a laity upon whom it depended for its very support and maintenance. The laity was those who believed in Buddhism but did

¹ Ibid., p. 610.
not choose to belong to the Order and be ruled by its discipline. Now the Order or the monastery educated those who were its members living under a common roof and did not admit day scholars to its education. Thus, the laity had to seek other centres and means of education. Nevertheless, the young monastery was very vitally interested in the growth of a believing and pious laity for the regulation of whose life rules are accordingly laid down. The laity are sought to be marked out from the general public by applying to them the terms *upāsaka* (for the males) and *upāsikā* (for the females) when they formally declare that they take refuge with the Buddha, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sāṅgha*. But this declaration was not insisted upon as a rule. We find ordinary people, honouring and entertaining the monks, being called *upāsakas*, and also Buddhist *upāsakas* being *upāsakas* of another Monastery.¹ There were also laid down certain duties of temperance and rectitude, but the Monastery had no part in securing their fulfilment. The only step that the Monastery took to keep the laity in order was by a declaration of boycott whereby “the bowl was turned down” in respect of the offenders, but this step affected the Monastery not less than the offenders, for it meant only the prohibition of giving and receiving material gifts and spiritual instruction as between the two parties. Certain business pursuits were also forbidden the laity, e.g. dealing in arms, in intoxicating liquors, in poison, etc. A comprehensive list of the duties of the laity is given in the *Sigālavada Sutta* which classifies them according to the several capacities or relationships householders have. The duties, for instance, of parents

¹ Cv. V. 20. 3.
and children, of pupils and teachers, of laymen and monks are laid down. It is the duty of parents to have their children taught arts or sciences.”

Among the duties of the monk towards the layman are to instruct him in religion, to solve his doubts, etc. A specimen of the instruction of the laity by monks is given in the Vinaya where the emperor Bimbisāra, holding his rule and sovereignty over 80,000 townships, asks the Overseers of those townships to wait upon the Buddha for “instruction in the things of eternity.” The Buddha “held to them a discourse in due order,” speaking of “giving, righteousness, heaven, the danger, worthlessness and depravity of lusts, and of the advantage of renunciation”.

It is thus clear that the laity depended for their religious education upon the monasteries which were the exclusive centres of such education because the monks alone had the monopoly as specialists and experts in the knowledge of the sacred lore. It is also clear that for their general, non-religious or secular education the laity and the public at large had to depend upon the systems and centres of education that existed in the Buddhist monasteries.

As far as the daily necessities of life were concerned, householders were accustomed to recluses and to supplying them with food and clothing irrespective of their religious opinions; Buddhist recluses could rely on the householders for alms as much as could any other recluses.

During the rainy season, well-disposed householders attended specifically to the bhikkhus’ wants, often taking them their food so that

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1 D. III. 188-193.
2 Mv. V. 1. 9.
3 This is called “sojourn of rainy season” (vassāvāsa), similar to keeping Lent. See Vin. III. 10.
they did not need to make their daily round for it. This custom is still
maintained even in countries where the three months’ rainy season does
not occur. At the end of the rains, the householders made the bhikkhus
gifts of robes. As would be expected, householders came to like and
respect the bhikkhus, listened to their discourses on uposatha days, and
frequently declared themselves upāsakas or upāsikās.

The contribution of the Buddhist laity would then (as in the case of
other religions and “ways of life” which are not supported by state grant)
consist in studying the teaching, beginning with the keeping of the
Precepts, and helping to support the bhikkhus or similar personages.

Besides the upāsakas and upasikās, the Nikāyas refer to parisās1
(literally, “company, association, assembly”) as being also listeners to the
Buddha’s discourses. The range of parisās included the samaṇa-parisā
and parisās of the deva worlds, while for the laity of the present world
three classes were distinguished:

The Khattiya-parisā (from the warrior class),

The Brāhmaṇa-parisā (from the Brahmin or priestly class),

And the Gahapati-parisā (from the householders)

In these three cases, the terms mahāsālas or paṇḍitas are employed
as an alternative to parisā. In view of the grouping of gahapati together
with khattiya and brāhmaṇa, it seems that gahattiya is intended for
“householders” of the upper classes, otherwise professional or business
men and craftsmen. The only other one of the four classes considered as
forerunners of the caste system, namely, the suddas, or servant class, is
not mentioned in this connection, but it cannot be inferred that such a

1 D. II. 109; D. III. 260; M. I. 72; A. IV. 307.
class was excluded from the Buddha’s teaching. We have, in fact, the notable discourse in Sāmaññaphala Sutta which states at the outset: “A householder or householder’s son, or one of some other clan, comes to hear the Dhamma. Having heard it, he gets confidence in the Tathāgata.”

Of the three parissās, the khattiya produced the smallest number of followers of the Buddha, the gahapatis produced the largest, but in the towns suggested specifically to the Buddha as suitable places for his parinibbāna, namely, Campā, Rājagaha, Sāvatthi, Saketa, Kosambi, Banaras, there were very appreciable numbers of all three mahāsālās.

Of the numerous vaggas in the Nikāyas bearing the titles Brahmavagga and Gahapativagga, the term brāhmaṇa does not generally refer to members of the Brahmin caste; “Brāhmaṇ” is taken, in the titles, to signify the ideal type. The Gahapativaggas, on the other hand, invariably concern householders, professional men and craftsmen. The extent of the instruction given to the gahapatis varied according to the capacity for understanding of the person or persons addressed.

III. 2. 4. 2. The Moral life of the Laity in Early Buddhism

In the first two Gahapativaggas of Samyutta Nikāya the householder was told to observe the Five sīlas, develop confidence in the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha), and understand the law of causation including the Four Noble Truths. The duties of a householder as:

“The maintaining of one’s parents,

Paying reverence to elders of the family,

Using gentle words,

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1 D. I. 62ff.
2 D. II. 146.
3 S. II. 68-70.
Avoiding malicious talk,
Giving up of miserliness,
Practising generosity,
Speaking the truth,
Avoiding anger.”

Gahapativagga of Aṅguttara Nikāya gives the special virtues of the householder as: firm confidence in the Three Jewels, charity and generosity, interest in religious discourses, lack of pride in spiritual advancement, and destruction of the five fetters of belief in personality, doubt, belief in the efficacy of rules and ritual, sensuous craving, and ill-will. Householders were also expected to possess the virtues of confidence (saddhā), morality (sīla), modesty (hiri), shame (ottappa), much learning (bahussuta), charity (cāga), and knowledge (paññā).

These, however, involve a certain amount of understanding, or at least of Buddhist philosophical learning, and for the more strictly ethical teaching one turns to the Dīgha Nikāya. Here it is most concisely put in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta where the Buddha, on his final tour, was asked by the upāsakas of Pāṭaligāma to visit their local rest-house. The Buddha did so and in his discourse to them addressed them as “Gahapatis.” He gave five bad consequences to the offender against the moralities:

"The falling into poverty by reason of indolence,
The acquiring of an evil reputation,

1 Quoted from Hammalawa Saddhatissa, Buddhist Ethics, The Path to Nirvāṇa, p. 104.
2 A. IV. 206-235.
3 D. II. 145.
The lack of confidence with which such a person approaches a company the warrior caste, of brahmans, householders or samaṇas,

The fear of death,

The rebirth in a state of suffering.

The five good consequences of keeping the moralities were given in corresponding terms.\textsuperscript{1}

\textit{Lakkhaṇa Sutta} of \textit{Dīgha Nikāya},\textsuperscript{2} describing the high standard of conduct maintained by the Buddha in his previous existences, still keeps to the strictly ethical side of that conduct, referring to the performance of good deeds, restraint in body, speech and thought, charitable actions, observances of the sīlas and uposatha days, care for parents, samaṇas and brahmans, exertion for the good of others, and so on.\textsuperscript{3}

\textit{Sigālovāda Sutta},\textsuperscript{4} explicitly prescribing the duties for the householder, gives: abstinence from killing, lying, stealing, and sexual offences; avoiding offences committed through impulse, hatred, delusion, or fear, abstinence from drinking, merrymaking, from attendance at fairs, and associating with bad companions, avoiding idleness, avoiding enemies posing as friends, the caring for parents, teachers, sons, wife, friends and advisers, servants and workers, samaṇas and brahmans.\textsuperscript{5} The goal held before the householder consisted in rebirth in one of the deva-worlds, but this conception was pre-Buddhistic and was endorsed by all opinions holding the doctrine of \textit{kamma}. The Nikāyas have many instances of good householders being reborn as devas. In an address

\textsuperscript{1} Vin. I. 227; A. III. 252- 253; D. II. 85-86, III. 236; Ud. 86.
\textsuperscript{2} The Sutta No.30, D. III.
\textsuperscript{3} D. III. 142-162.
\textsuperscript{4} The Sutta No.31, D. III.
\textsuperscript{5} D. III. 142-79, 180-93.
delivered to Venerable Ānanda on the final tour, the Buddha stated that
some of the most distinguished of his upāsaka followers had been reborn
as anāgāmī, sakadāgāmi and sotāpanna, while others who had taken the
Three Refuges and observed the moralities had been reborn among the
devas of the Kāmāvacara. But an advanced upāsaka would not wish for
rebirth in any of the lokas or āvacaras, however exalted, since they were
all conditioned by birth and death.

The question as to whether a gahapati could or could not become an Arahanta in this life and so avoid rebirth entirely was highly debatable
and continued to be the subject of controversy. The view that the
householder cannot attain to Arahanthood is, however, not supported by
the early scriptures. Hence, it may be a postulated view which crept into
the Buddhist scholarship. Arahantship is a transcendental state beyond
the states of bhikkhu, bhikkhuṇī, upāsaka or upāsikā. According to the
scriptures many householders have attained to nibbāna. Ananda K
Coomaraswamy rightly say: “It is true that the layman Arahanta is not
altogether unknown to Early Buddhism (twenty-one are mentioned in the
Aṅguttara Nikāya,\textsuperscript{1} and Suddhodana, Gotama’s father is also specially
mentioned), but the fulfillment of worldly duties, however selflessly, was
never preached as a way of salvation.”\textsuperscript{2} The Milindapañha states that the
householder who becomes an Arahanta “must enter the Order, else die.”\textsuperscript{3}
This view is also not sanctioned by the early canonical works. It may be a
contemporary Indian belief incorporated into his work by its author. It is
obvious that a householder, after becoming an Arahanta, does not remain
attached to his home or family.

\textsuperscript{1} A. III. 451.
\textsuperscript{3} Miln. 264ff.
The oldest of the Buddhist texts, such as Dhammapada and the first half of the Dīgha Nikāya, all stress the āsavas, representing their destruction as coinciding with realization of the Four Noble Truths; Dhammapada does not mention the fetters (saṃyojana), except in the general sense of bonds. Recollecting the Buddha’s statement quoted above that his distinguished upāsakas and upāsikās were reborn as sotāpannas, sakadāgāmīs, it can be shown that they could expect, as upāsikās, to destroy the āsavas in this life and so become arahanta. Taking the term with its full implications, we have the traditional Indian view that knowledge (vidyā) was “higher” (parāvidyā) or “lower” (aparāvidyā), according to whether it concerned Brāhmaṇa as Absolute Reality, or nāma-rūpa, the things of common experience. Parāvidyā does not supply details of particular things but is an insight into the principle of being, and to those possessing the higher knowledge, the lower knowledge is not knowledge at all but merely a form of ignorance. Hence, the alternative translation of avijjā as “ignorance” or “lack of the Higher Knowledge”. But since the entire destruction of lack of the Higher Knowledge coincides with the realization of the Four Noble Truths, and since the Buddha stated this to be the ultimate reason why the bhikkhus led the religious life under him, it would appear that the householder could expect less chance to attain to Arahanta rank in the present life.

On the other hand, one is not entirely justified in maintaining that only those leading the homeless life could attain to the ideal here in the present existence. In the account given in Sāmaññaphala Sutta of the Buddha’s discourse to King Ajātasattu, when the King had risen and gone away, the Buddha remarked that for the murder of his father “the Eye of
Truth would have arisen in him even as he sat there.”

Again, the *Dhammapada* says: “Even though a person wears ornaments, if he conducts himself calmly, is constantly tranquil, controlled, leads a life of chastity, and has laid aside sticks in his dealings with other living beings, he is a *brahman*, he is a *samaṇa*, he is a *bhikkhu*.”

And again: “A man is not a *bhikkhu* merely because he seeks alms from others. He is not a *bhikkhu* merely for having taken all the Rules of the *Dhamma*. He who, having gone beyond merit and evil, leads a life of chastity, walks in this world as though it were an appearance, that one is truly a *bhikkhu*.”

The Comprehensive view is perhaps most succinctly expressed in two *gāthās* peculiar to the *Dhammapada*: “There is no track in space; externally one is not a recluse. Mankind delights in manifoldness; *Tathāgatas* are without variety of expansion,” and “there is no track in space; externally one is not a recluse. Conditioned things are not eternal; there is no instability in the Buddhas.”

According to the Buddha teachings, a lay-disciple not only helps on his own welfare but also helps on both his own welfare and the welfare of another. When the Mahānāma asked the Buddha a lay-disciple help on both his own welfare and the welfare of another, the Buddha said that:

“He has achieved faith himself and strives to compass faith in another; has achieved virtue himself and strives to compass virtue in another; has achieved himself renunciation and strives to compass renunciation in another; longs himself to see monks and

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1 D. I. 86.
2 Dhp. v142.
3 Dhp. vv266, 267; Uv. Xxxxii. vv18, 19.
4 Dhp. v254.
5 Dhp. vv254, 255.
strives for this sight for another; longs himself to hear Saddhamma, but strives for this hearing for another; is mindful himself of Dhamma he has heard and strives that another should be mindful of it; reflects himself upon the meaning of Dhamma he is mindful of and strives for another to reflect thereon; when he knows himself both the letter and the spirit of Dhamma and walks in conformity therewith and strives to make another so to walk.”

Besides a lay follower of Buddhism, he has taken refuge in the Ti-sarana and a virtuous must be:

*Sīla-samppanno*, he observes the five precepts (*pañcasīla*).

*Saddha-samppanno*, he has firm faith the Buddha, the Blessed One.

*Caṇḍa-samppanno*, he practises in the charity, generosity, and gives alms to those who deserve it.

*Paññā-samppanno*, he develops wisdom which leads to the cessation of suffering and realization of nibbāna.

And in *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha said that:

“A layman who has five qualities is a jewel of laymen, is like a lily, like a lotus. What are these five qualities? He has faith, he has morals, he is not a diviner by curious ceremonies, he believes in action (*kamma*) and not in luck or omen, he does not seek outside (the Order) for a gift-worthy person and there first offers service.”

Not by external appearance does one become holy. In the *Dhammapada*, the Buddha says:

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1 A. IV. 220.
2 *Ti-sarana*: Threefold Refuge (in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha).
4 A. III. 175.
“Though gaily decked if he should live in peace, (with passion) subdued, (and senses) controlled, certain (of the four Paths of Saithood), perfectly pure, laying aside the rod (in his relations) towards all living beings a Brāhmaṇa indeed is he, an ascetic is he, a bhikkhu is he.”¹

Thus, the upāsakas and upāsikās have been placed in the highest spiritual in the Buddhist saṅgha. The Samyutta Nikāya had mentioned that the Sakka, rule of gods worshipped not only the monks but also upāsakas who performed meritorious deeds, were virtuous, and maintain their families righteously:

“They of the Triple Lore do honour me,
And all the nobly born that dwell on earth,
The Four Great Kings and the renowned Thrice Ten.
But I my homage render unto them
Who, in all virtours habit graduates,
Long-time experts in mastery of mind,
Leaving the world, by highest motives led,
Find in the higher life support and goal.
And householders besides, who merit work,
Laymen of virtue and of piety,
Who with integrity maintain their wife,
To them I pay my homage, Mātali.”²

¹ Dhp. v142.
² S. I. 234.
The lay Buddhist can develop *satipaṭṭhāna*\(^1\) and even attain enlightenment if practice the *Dhamma*. For example, when the venerable Piṇḍola of Bhāradvāja was staying at Kosambi in Ghosita Park, the King Udena asked the venerable Piṇḍola of Bhāradvāja how young monks have had no dalliance with the passions and practise the righteous life in its fullness and perfection and live out their span of life to the full. The venerable Piṇḍola answered that the Buddha had told the monks in the case of those who were just mothers, sisters and daughters and to see all them the mothers-mind, the sisters-mind and the daughters-mind. When the King asked that if the heart was wanton, the venerable Piṇḍola said that the Buddha had told the monks to regard the body, upwards from the soles of the feet, downwards form the top of the head, enclosed by skin, full of manifold impurities. The King said that it was easy for the monks who train the body, moral, mind and insight, but hard for those who were untrained. The King asked whether there was another condition for the monks to practise the righteous life. Thereupon, Piṇḍola said that the Buddha had explained how the six doors are guarded by mindfulness: Seeing an object with the eye, be not misled by its outer view, nor by its lesser details. But since coveting and dejection, evil, unprofitable states, might overwhelm one who dwells with the faculty of the eye uncontrolled, do you apply yourselves to such control, set a guard over the faculty of the eye and attain control of it ... \(^2\)

\(^1\) Application of mindfulness.
\(^2\) S. IV. 110.
III. 2. 4. 3. Royal Patrons towards the Buddhist Saṅgha

III. 2. 4. 3. 1. King Bimbisāra

Bimbisāra ruled Magadha from his chief city of Rājagaha. Having become a disciple of the Buddha after hearing a Dhamma discourse, he built the very first monastery offered to the saṅgha: Venuvana Arama (literally ‘Bamboo Grove Park’). He was responsible for the Buddha’s adoption of the twice-monthly confessional meeting known as uposatha. He was eventually caught in a court intrigue involving his son, Prince Ajātasattu and the murderous Devadatta, and briefly imprisoned before regaining his freedom.

III. 2. 4. 3. 2. King Pasenadi

King Pasenadi (C. 6th century BCE) was a Aikṣvāka dynasty (a dynasty founded by King Ikṣvāku) ruler of Kosala. He succeeded his father Sanjaya Mahākosala.¹ He was a prominent upāsaka (lay follower) of Gautama Buddha, who built many Buddhist monasteries.

Pasenadi studied in Taxila in his early life. His first queen was a Magadhan princess. His second queen was Vāsavakhattiyā, daughter of Mahānāma, a Śākya by a slave girl Nāgamundā, though she was a slave girl not the original daughter of Mahānāma. From this marriage, he had a son, Viḍūḍabha and a daughter Princess Vajira, whom he married to Ajātasattu. His third and chief queen was Mallikā, daughter of the chief of garland-makers. Once, while he was away from his capital Shravasti, his minister Dīgha Chārāyana placed his son Viḍūḍabha on the throne. He went to Magadha to seek help from Ajātasattu in order to regain his throne. But before being able to meet him, Pasenadi died of exposure.

¹ Raychaudhuri H, Political History of Ancient India, pp. 90, 176.
outside the gates of Rājagaha. The Puranas instead of Viḍūḍabha mention the name of Kṣudraka as his successor.2

Unlike King Bimbisāra, Prasenajit, King of Kośala, did not give his unqualified support to the Buddha, although he did offer gifts to the saṅgha. Eventually, though, he became a Buddhist lay disciple and ardent patron of the religion.

III. 2. 4. 3. 3. King Kaniṣka

Kaniṣka was a king of the Kuśāṇa dynasty from about the first century A.D who is remembered as a great patron of Buddhist institutions. Buddhist sources portray Kaniṣka as convening a council of monks during his reign. The goals of this council are described variously in different courses. Some versions portray Kaniṣka convening the council out of his puzzlement over the variety of doctrines held by different Buddhist schools. Other sources depict the council as being held to standardize of the canon of the Buddhist scriptures and they say that Kaniṣka had the canon copied and distributed after the council; it is unlikely that this actually took place, but it does indicate that later Buddhists saw Kaniṣka as helping to preserve a complete and fixed canon, although such a canon probably did not exist at his time. Mahāyāna sources associate the appearance of the Mahāyāna itself with Kaniṣka's council. The Sarvāstivādins depict Kaniṣka's council as under the leadership of Katyāyanīputra and his Foundations of Knowledge as a product of this council. It does seem most likely that Kaniṣkas council was only a Sarvāstivādins event.

1 Ibid., pp. 176-8, 186.
2 Misra V. S., Ancient Indian Dynasties, pp. 287-8.
III. 2. 4. 4. The Prominent Laities

In praising particular disciples, the Buddha also includes a number of lay-women as excelling in various qualities:¹ Sujātā (being first to take refuge), Visākhā (giving to the saṅgha), Khujjuttarā (being learned), Sāmavātī (dwelling in lovingkindness), Uttarā (meditation), Suppavāsā (giving choice alms-food), Suppiyā (nursing the sick), Kātiyāni (being of unwavering faith), Kāḷī (having faith even from hearsay) and Nakulamātā (conversing intimately),² the Buddha tells the latter’s husband that he is lucky to have such a compassionate wife as his counsellor and teacher. The Buddha also gave a similar list for laymen who excel in various qualities: Tapassu and Bhalluka (being the first lay followers),³ Cita (Dhamma teacher), Hatthaka of Āḷavī (gather a following by the four bases of sympathy), Mahānāma (giving choice alms food), Ugga (giving pleasant gifts), Uggata (waiting on the Order), Sūra Ambaṭṭha (unwavering loyalty).⁴

Among of these laywomen and laymen, Visākhā and Anāthapiṇḍika became notably.

III. 2. 4. 4. 1. Visākhā Upāsikā

Visākhā is particularly notable, a rich, self-assured housewife who supported and attended to the needs of the saṅgha with great care, and to whom the Buddha gave a long discourse."⁵ Born into a Buddhist family,

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¹ A. I. 26.
² A. III. 298.
³ When the Buddha spent six more weeks in lonely retreat at six different spots in the vicinity of the Bodhi Tree, at the end of this period, there were two merchants: Tapassu and Bhallika, who were passing that way, they offered rice cake and honey to the Buddha. After then, they inclined their heads towards the Lord’s feet, spoke thus to the Lord: “We, Lord, are those going to the Lord for refuge and to Dhamma; let the Lord accept us as lay-disciples gone for refuge for life from this day forth.” Thus these came to be the first lay-disciples in the world using the two-word formula. Cf. Vin. I. 4.
⁴ A. I. 25.
⁵ A. I. 205-214.
she was eventually married into a family who followed a rival religious system. Although instructed by her father-in-law to support this new system and its followers, she rebelled, eventually bringing her father-in-law to Buddhism. She is known for having performed social services for the saṅgha, engaging in activities such as offering daily food for the monks, offering medicine to the sick, and providing robes for the monks. Elsewhere, the Buddha advises Visākhā to use her own judgement regarding whether or not the quarrelsome monks of Kosambī taught in accordance with Dhamma.¹ Her action also causes the Buddha to make a rule that the word of a trustworthy laywoman disciple should be listened to if she says that a monk has sat down in a secluded place with a woman and indulged in some form of sensual behaviour.²

III. 2. 4. 2. Anāthapiṇḍika Upāsaka

If Visākhā gives more in the form of a constant supply of the daily necessities of life for monks and nuns, Anāthapiṇḍika was noted for periodic large gifts such as the buying of land for the Jetavana monastery with a huge amount of gold.

His name was Sudatta, a wealthy merchant in Sāvatthi (S. Sravasti). He was known the epithet Anāthapiṇḍika or “Feeder of the Helpless” because of the much alms he helped to orphans. Anāthapiṇḍika attained the Sotāpanna after hearing the Dhamma and became the Buddha’s disciple. He invited the Buddha to spend the rainy season at Sāvatthi and the Buddha accepted his invitation. To provide residences for the Buddha and the saṅgha, he purchased a park from Prince Jeta of Sāvatthi to built monastery. That monastery was known as Jetavana.

¹ Vin. I. 355-6.
² Vin. III. 187-8.
There the Buddha spent nineteen rainy seasons and there many sermons were preached by Him.¹

In brief, it is difficult to overstate the centrality of the *saṅgha* for the practice of Buddhism. Buddhist nations tend to tell their histories around the founding of monasteries. After the death of the Buddha the decline of the *Dhamma* is measured in degrees of deviation of monks from their vows. Buddhist history and Buddhist texts agree that without monks there can be no Buddhism.

The Buddha and his followers probably began as a group of wandering ascetics, who required only four things: a tree to sleep beneath, alms food to eat, rag robes to wear, and cow's fermented urine for medicine. The traditional possessions of a monk (greatly expanded in practice in many places throughout the Buddhist world) were a set of three robes, a begging bowl, a belt, a razor for shaving the head, a needle for sewing the robes, a water strainer to prevent the unintentional consumption of insects, a walking staff, and 1 toothpick. Sandals for feet, a sitting pad for the ground, an umbrella for the sun, and a fan for heat were also permitted. Although in the early years, the Buddha and his monks are said to have wandered during all seasons, they soon adopted the practice of other ascetic groups of remaining in one place during the months of the rainy season that occurs in northern India from the middle to July to the middle of October. Wealthy patrons had shelters built for their use, with the end of the rainy season marking a special occasion for making offerings of food and provisions (especially cloth for robes) to monks. These shelters eventually evolved into monasteries that were inhabited throughout the year. It seems that early on a, the tradition, the

₁ S. I. 210.
saṅgha became largely sedentary, although the tradition of the wandering monk continued. Whether they wandered without a fixed abode or lived in monasteries, monks and nuns who lived in a designated region were expected to gather twice a month, at the full moon and new moon, to confess and affirm their vows communally. This practice leads to ideal life of the monks that were followed strictly by the saṅgha and the Laity in their daily life. This matter will be discussed with all details in the next chapter.