



Buddhist Dynasties in India: an historical Survey

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Abstract

Buddhism offers a number of benefits, not only to individuals but also to society as a whole. Nevertheless, there are also the potential drawbacks associated with supporting Buddhism. Some people are under the impression that Buddhist teachings encourage intolerance and violent behaviour. There are many who believe that placing an excessive amount of importance on meditation can lead to problems with one's mental health. In conclusion, patronising Buddhism has a variety of advantages as well as disadvantages. It's possible that favouring Buddhism will have a wide range of different effects. It is possible, first and foremost, that it will lead to dissatisfaction with other forms of spiritual practise. Second, engaging in Buddhist practise may cause one to place stringent restrictions on one's own behaviour, which may be detrimental to one's psychological as well as physical health. Buddhism is typically associated with a life of austerity and a rejection of material belongings and luxuries in this world. However, this wasn't always the situation in the past. In point of fact, throughout Buddhism's entire history, kings have supported the religion and frequently incorporated aspects of it into their respective worldviews. Buddhism has a long and complex history throughout India's various kingdoms and countries. The Buddhist emperors of India were responsible for a large amount of the country's cultural development. They established a strong basis for the government, education, the economy, and culture, all of which have contributed to the formation of modern society. Dynasties such as the Mauryas, Guptas, and Palas were crucial in the formation of Indian history; their enduring impact may still be observed in modern times.

Keywords: *Buddhist, Dynasties, Mauryas, Guptas, and Palas*

I. Introduction

Buddhism has numerous advantages for both people and society at large. However, patronising Buddhism can also have some unfavourable effects. Some individuals think that Buddhist teachings promote bigotry and violence. Some claim that placing too much emphasis on meditation can cause mental health issues. In conclusion, patronising Buddhism has both benefits and drawbacks. The repercussions of favouring Buddhism could be quite diverse. It can, first and foremost, result in disappointment with other spiritual practises. Second, practising Buddhism can lead to strong self-imposed limitations on our conduct, which could be harmful to both our physical and mental health. Third, if we worship an external deity rather than realising and putting these principles into practise inside ourselves, we may miss out on opportunities for spiritual development and connection. Finally, we run the risk of compromising our own wellbeing for those external goods if we simply concentrate on outward benefits like financial prosperity or good karma rather than cultivating introspection and inner calm.

Through prayer or meditation, some people find solace in its teachings and alleviation from their ailments. Others consider patronage to be a means of gaining access to the higher wisdom that Buddhists are said to possess regarding how to live life successfully generally. In the end, it is up to each person to decide if they believe these potential negative effects outweigh the positive ones. Buddhism can be patronised, which can have a number of harmful effects. For instance, it could result in sentiments of shame and condemnation of oneself. Additionally, as everyone tries to live up to specific standards, it can lead to stress and tension in the home. Buddhist teachings can occasionally be misused or misapplied, resulting in harm to the body and mind. Finally, by putting limits on what is possible or acceptable, patronising Buddhism might actually impede spiritual growth.

II. Review Of The Literature

Chaturvedi, Neekee. (2022)¹Only hesitantly and under a special set of circumstances did Buddhist monasticism welcome women. Under the strict limits of institutional subjugation, Buddhist nuns created spaces where women might have spiritual opportunities apart from social and domestic interactions. The early nuns tirelessly and creatively enhanced their practise despite the fact that monks predominated the Buddhist saga and religious works. Examining gendered monastic experiences in early Buddhist literature is the focus of this study. The nuns would not have had a big impact on Buddhism's history if they had continued to be inactive participants. Their social interactions both before and after entering the order had a big impact on how well they understood and followed spiritual practises. Nuns' status and contribution appear more aggressive and powerful than is commonly thought when seen in their own right.

Dessi, Ugo(2022)²With reference to Michel Clasquin-reflections Johnson's six major themes (lay practise, gender equality, adherence to democratic principles, impact of Western psychology, social engagement, creation of a non-sectarian tradition), I examine three forms of East Asian Buddhism practised in the country in this article. The Kwanza Buddhist Center (I examine four additional issues for the comparative study of South African Buddhism in addition to providing a thorough analysis of various forms of East Asian Buddhism practised in the country, including the Dharma Centre (Korean Sn), which serves as a representative of mainstream South African Buddhism. I also evaluate Johnson's Clasquin-themes' application to the case studies.

Largen, Kristin Johnston(2022)³The Pure Land Sutras, which are regarded as authoritative for Shin Buddhism, contain the thirty-fifth vow of Dharmakara Buddha, which reads, "If, when I attain Buddhahood, women in the immeasurable and inconceivable Buddha lands of the 10 directions, who, having heard my Name, rejoice in faith, awaken aspiration for enlightenment, and wish to renounce womanhood, should after death be reborn as women, may I not attain perfection?" I look at five different responses to this teaching from the 20th and 21st centuries in this essay, as well as the kinds of prejudice they have fostered. I want to show how modern women are striving hard to reinvent themselves into roles that are both doctrinal and practise transformative for Shin Buddhism as a whole.

Alamo Santos, Macarena(2021)⁴The objective of this thesis is to examine the philosophical implications of Ambedkar's perspective on Buddhism. This tactic resulted in a new social philosophy that was based on Buddhist ideals and a political commitment to social justice, particularly for the Dalits of India. What was the goal of this social ideology? to modify Buddhist teachings? Alternately, should the goal be to undermine Brahmanism and support the lower castes? Ambedkar spent twenty years researching Indian society, history, and philosophical and religious traditions before coming to the conclusion that Buddhism could transform the position of the Untouchables. Why did he think that Dalits won't be the only group affected by Buddhism's great transforming power in India? In 1956, he orchestrated a campaign that would go down in history, converting more than 500,000 Untouchables from Hinduism to Buddhism. Ambedkar thought that the lowest classes of India could benefit from Buddhism. What type of Buddhism did he envision? In 1956, at this momentous historical event, Ambedkar founded what he named Navayana Buddhism. He used the word "Navayana" to designate the establishment of a new school. Both Yana and Nava signify new things. Was he truly constructing a completely original yana or vehicle? Which school practised which branch of Buddhism? What innovations did he introduce? Is the outcome still Buddhism in light of Ambedkar's goals? This thesis will address each of these concerns.

Dynasties and Influence by Buddhism, patronized by the Rulers

Buddhism is frequently connected to an ascetic lifestyle and a rejection of worldly possessions. This hasn't always been the case, though. In truth, Buddhism has been patronised by monarchs throughout its history and frequently incorporated into their worldviews. This article examines how Buddhism has changed over time and how its teachings have impacted leaders and cultures all across the world. Buddhism's ability to spread and endure throughout various times and cultures has demonstrated its strength. This religion, which has its roots in India, has shaped how people see the world and their place in it. Buddhism's teachings have therefore frequently

¹Chaturvedi, Neekee. "Indispensable for dispensation: The agency and experience of Buddhist nuns in the early history of the bhikkhunisangha." *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 51.4 (2022): 538-557.

²Dessi, Ugo. "Trajectories of East Asian Buddhism in South Africa: a comparative perspective." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 37.3 (2022): 435-455.

³Largen, Kristin Johnston. "Women and Shin Buddhism: Contemporary Responses to a Challenging Doctrine." *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 42.42 (2022): 157-171.

⁴Alamo Santos, Macarena. *The Path to a New Awakening: BR Ambedkar's Transformation of Buddhist Philosophy*. Diss. Université d'Ottawa/University of Ottawa, 2021.

been used to defend the conduct and authority of tyrants. In this article, we will talk about dynasties, the effect of Buddhism, and how various world leaders have supported this religion.

Buddhist dynasties have had a significant impact on history and a great number of people's lives. With several sects and schools of thought, Buddhism has a lengthy and interesting history. Because they accepted the Buddhist faith to increase their legitimacy and power, rulers have supported dynasties. Because of this, Buddhism has become widely practised and continues to have an impact on a number of aspects of modern culture. Buddhism is one of the most popular religions in the world, and its teachings have had a significant influence on politics and culture. Buddhism has so influenced numerous dynasties and communities in a variety of ways. Because the religion holds that royal patronage is effective in advancing Buddhism's secular goals, Buddhist dynasties have historically enjoyed the support of monarchs. The spread of Buddhist teaching has typically been an aim of the ruling classes, and the Sangha, or Buddhist clergy, has always had a tight relationship with the political establishment.

Buddhist Dynasties in India

India has a lengthy and intricate history of Buddhist kingdoms. Indian civilization developed significantly under the influence of Buddhist rulers. They created a solid foundation for government, education, the economy, and culture that has influenced how society is today. Indian history was formed by dynasties like the Mauryas, Guptas, and Palas, whose lasting influence may still be seen today. From the sixth century CE onward, Buddhist dynasties were a common element of Indian politics and society. During this time, as royal families started to consolidate their power and amass money, the idea of a dynastic monarchy developed. The dynastic system helped to consolidate power in the hands of a small number of people by enabling these families to spread their influence and rule across vast portions of the nation.

In India, Buddhist dynasties are not uncommon. Numerous Buddhist emperors over the years have made their imprint on the nation's architecture and artistic creations. The empires of the Chalukya, Rashtrakuta, and Chola are a few well-known Buddhist dynasties. Large portions of India were dominated by Buddhist kings for many years, and their impact is still felt today. The first significant Buddhist dynasty in India was the Maurya Empire. Chandragupta Vikramaditya, one of the most well-known emperors in Indian history, established the empire. The Mauryas were a powerful group, and their rule in India signalled the start of a period of outstanding political and economic stability. Many significant organisations, including the Imperial Capital at Pataliputra, which served as a model for following royal towns throughout India, are credited to Chandragupta Vikramaditya. His reign saw the fast growth of Buddhism throughout India, earning him the title "Father of the Nation."

Following the collapse of the Maurya Empire, there was a time of political unrest and hostilities. The Pala and Vakataka empires were among the new Buddhist dynasties that resulted from this. The Palas were a dynasty renowned for supporting both art and construction. They are credited with constructing numerous significant temples in India, most notably at Vijayanagaram in southern India, the final resting place of the Hindu god Vishnu. Another powerful Buddhist dynasty that ruled over some of northeast India was the Vakatakas. They were known for their military prowess and contributed greatly to the growth of Indian society and culture. The lasting impact that India's Buddhist dynasties have had on the nation is still perceptible today. The lasting impact that India's Buddhist dynasties have had on the nation is still perceptible today. Large portions of India were dominated by Buddhist kings for many years, and their impact is still felt today. During their reigns, a number of significant institutions, including the Imperial Capital at Pataliputra, were established. Under their dominion, Buddhism flourished quickly throughout India, and many well-known individuals were born into Buddhist homes during this time. One of the most well-known rulers in Indian history, Chandragupta Vikramaditya, is credited with building a number of significant organisations, including the Imperial Capital at Pataliputra. During these dynasties, Buddhism also had a significant impact on the growth of Indian civilization and culture.

Spread of Buddhism during Mauryas Dynasty

During the Mauryas era, which saw significant social and political transformation, Buddhism came into being. This dynasty held power between 304 and 232 BCE. The royal family's support helped Buddhism grow throughout India at this time. Four noble truths serve as the cornerstone of Buddhist philosophy: that there is suffering (dukkha), that suffering results from an inability to overcome it (patisandhi), that liberation from suffering is possible through comprehension and adherence to the dharma (prajna), and that liberation is possible through assiduously following the dharma. Ancient Buddhist scriptures like The Lankavatara Sutra and The Aksharapada Sutta initially outlined many of the tenets of subsequent Hindu sects like Vedanta. Later Hindu systems of thought, such as yoga, meditation, karma theory, monasticism/sannyasa lifestyle, etc., were built on the principles of these sutras. The Mauryas dynasty, which ruled India from 304 to 185 BCE, is when Buddhism

first emerged. Buddhism began to spread during this time period, first to neighbouring regions of India before moving on to China and Southeast Asia.

Buddhism had a significant political influence during the reign of the Mauryas in addition to being a religion or body of ideas. As part of their attempts to uphold order and promote wealth, the emperor and his officials were encouraged to convert to Buddhism. This enhanced relationships between various social groupings while fostering tolerance and mutual understanding. Although Buddhism experienced a downturn in the centuries that followed due to a variety of reasons (political unrest and Ashoka's persecution), it eventually rose to prominence in mediaeval India under royal support. Since then, it has been continuously expanding and has grown to play a significant role in Indian culture and identity. Buddhist texts date back to roughly 200 BC, but it wasn't until the Mauryas era that Buddhism really took off in India (322-185 BC). India experienced a time of significant transformation and political unrest during which new ideas may flourish. The Maurya monarchs accepted Buddhism as a replacement religion that would help unify their huge kingdom. Leaders of the Buddhist community like Asoka helped Buddhism take root in India. Over 100 million Buddhists are thought to be in existence today. Buddhism is also seen as a peaceful religion that places a strong emphasis on love and compassion, despite the fact that there are numerous distinct sects and styles within it. Many people, particularly for mental health conditions like anxiety and depression, vouch for its curative powers.

Spread of Buddhism during Gupta Dynasty

Buddhism began to spread out of India during the Gupta Dynasty (4th–6th centuries AD) and reached various regions of Asia. Buddhism appeared like a sensible option for individuals seeking an alternative spiritual path during a period of significant cultural and political change. Numerous languages were used to interpret the Buddhist scriptures, and new monasteries and temples were constructed all over the continent. During this time, Buddhism also benefited from royal support since many Indian kings saw it as a way to improve relations with the outside world. Because of this, remnants of Buddha's teachings can be found in nations like Thailand, China, Tibet, Indonesia, and even North Africa. Buddhism was widely practised throughout South Asia and even into Central Asia during the Gupta Dynasty (c. 300–600 CE). Emperor Chandragupta II, who embraced Buddhism to unify his several kingdoms and build relations with foreign cultures, is responsible for this. He constructed a number of monasteries, notably the Bihar-based Nalanda University, which rose to prominence as one of India's top research institutions.

Additionally, Chandragupta supported Buddhist scholars and urged academics to produce novel theories regarding dharma Prajna and meditation (wisdom). As a result, Buddhism developed from a straightforward belief system into a more sophisticated philosophy that could address issues like the afterlife, soul cleansing, karma theory, etc. In India, Buddhism was widely practised throughout the Gupta Dynasty (4th-6th centuries). As the Gupta Empire ushered in a period of tremendous cultural diversity and artistic success, this was a period of significant transition. Chandragupta Maurya, who rose to become one of history's most powerful emperors, built the empire. The Gupta Empire reached its height during his rule, and shortly after he passed away in 375 AD, it started to fall. But while the empire was in power, Buddhism developed to its full potential.

Around 350 BC, Bodh Gaya served as the entrance point for Buddhism into northern India. By roughly 300 BC, it had expanded southward along both banks of the Godavari River to Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. By 200 BC, it had spread to what is now Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in northcentral India. There are a number of theories that explain how Buddhism spread throughout the Gupta period. First and foremost, as civilizations advance throughout history, belief systems change, which frequently affects societal behaviour. Second, communications would advance to the point where even remote regions of the country could quickly learn about new ideas. Third, and perhaps most importantly, great emperors like Chandragupta Maurya, who were tolerant enough to grant other faiths official status within their empires and thus encouraged. The Gupta Empire was a period of enormous transformation and cultural diversity, which aided in the widespread adoption of Buddhism in India. One of the most powerful kings in history, Chandragupta Maurya, gave various religions formal legitimacy throughout his empire, which encouraged broad diverse beliefs among people all around the country. This willingness to be open facilitated the spread of Buddhist stupas and monasteries throughout his reign in North India.

Spread of Buddhism during Palas Dynasty

Buddhism rapidly spread and gained popularity during the Palas Dynasty (1351–1419). This was accomplished thanks to a number of things, notably the fervent Buddhist efforts of King Narasiya and his wife, Queen Tani. They established numerous monasteries, constructed Buddhist temples all over India, spread Buddhism through educational institutions, and inspired non-Buddhists to become Buddhists. As a result, during this time, more than one-third of the Indian people converted to Buddhism. India first encountered Buddhism during the Palas Dynasty. The expansion of the Palas rulers' realm was a top priority, and Buddhism was the

ideal strategy for achieving this objective. Buddhist writings provided instructions on how to meditate in a variety of ways and how to reach spiritual enlightenment. These teachings were appealing to the ambitious Palas kings, who saw it as a chance to propagate their religion across all of India and greatly increase their influence over the country.

During the Palas era, numerous temples were constructed all over India under the direction of Indian Buddhist monks. These temples served as global Buddhist centres of scholarship and prayer, drawing new followers from all spheres of society. In fact, there were over 1 million Buddhists in India alone by the year 1100. The Buddhism flourished and spread quickly throughout the Palas reign. This was mostly because of Emperor Ashoka's initiatives to advance it in order to lessen suffering and advance civilization. He promoted the practise of Buddhism among individuals from all walks of life and constructed numerous Buddhist temples. Buddhism consequently formed a significant aspect of many empire citizens' daily lives. In India, Buddhism expanded quickly during the Pala Dynasty. This was partly a result of Emperor Asoka's numerous ambitious and sympathetic efforts on behalf of the faith. He promoted conversion to Buddhism by erecting more than 2,500 Buddhist monuments across his empire. He also enacted laws that gave Buddhists significant social rights and safeguarded them from retaliation for their religion. The spread of Buddhism during this time was significantly aided by these actions.

III. Conclusion

The Buddha was a tremendous advocate for social justice in addition to being a teacher. His teachings had a tremendous positive impact on women, and society as a whole benefited. Due to their innovative ideas, bravery, and loving nature, many women have been honoured by Buddhists as Buddhist icons, including Maya, Patali, and Anuradha. These amazing ladies had a significant impact on the development of Buddhism. If one looks closely enough at topics like gender equality, child rights, or animal welfare, one can realise how profoundly the Buddhist doctrine has impacted our society today.

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