



Beyond Institutional Revival: A Study of Vinaya-Based Monastic Reform and Ethical Transformation in Eighteenth-Century Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

Following a long-term decline that had persisted in the 17th and 18th centuries, Vālivīṭa Saraṇaṃkara Saṃgharāja is credited as the pioneer in the revival of Sri Lankan Buddhism and the monastic order in the mid-eighteenth century. The establishment of the Siamese higher ordination, the reformation of the Buddhist order and the traditional educational system, the preservation of ancient Buddhist sites, and the safeguarding of the customs, rituals, and cultural identities are the main areas of his mission that have been extensively studied by numerous researchers. Even though these might be regarded as significant components of his mission, there is a long term, sustainable reform project that tries to reform the mindset of the bhikkhus. This might be regarded as a Vinaya reform, designed to establish a monastic community in which discipline was highly prized, especially at a time of acute decline in the order. In an effort to fill this gap, the present study adopts a qualitative methodology to analyse the Saṃgharāja's efforts to reform the Buddhist order. It does this by examining the text of three important papers ascribed to him, the Anusāsanā Vattōruva, the Saṃgharājānuśāsanāva, and the instruction letter to Mūlagiri Vihāra, together with other primary and secondary sources. The study shows that the Vinaya was formulated as the main pillar of reform in the Saṃgharāja's mission which consisted of the restoration of a disciplined monastic life, the introduction of systematic monastic education, an emphasis on moral integrity and accountability, a focus on changing the conduct of the monastic community rather than just regulating behaviour, and a primary goal to ensure the continuity and purity of the Saṃgha monastic lifestyle, the implementation of a comprehensive monastic education program, and a key purpose of sustaining the purity and continuity of the Saṃgha

1. Introduction

Since the sixteenth century, the Sri Lankan Buddhist order experienced a considerable decline due to internal political struggles and Portuguese invasions in the coastal areas of the country. The *Mahāvamsa* (MV), *Samgharāja Sādhū Cariyāva* (SSCV), *Saṅgharajavata* (SRV), and several historical documents related to the Samgharāja provide considerable details regarding the condition of the Buddhist order during this period, as it had widely violated the monastic discipline and experienced the loss of traditional monastic practices. In the mid-eighteenth century, through the mission led by Venerable Vāliṇṇa Saraṇaṃkara Samgharāja, the Buddhist order was reorganized in accordance with monastic discipline, and traditional practices such as *piṇḍapāta* were revived, replacing the authority of the Gaṇinnānsēs.

The aim of this study is to identify the condition of the Buddhist order before and after the revival led by Venerable Vāliṇṇa Saraṇaṃkara Samgharāja and to analyse how Buddhist monastic community were transformed during this period through adherence to monastic discipline. This study is conducted based on three notable documents authored by the Samgharāja: the *Anusāsana Vattōruva*, the *Samgharājānuśāsana*, and a document sent to Venerable Vaṭṭarakkoḍa Dhammapāla of Mūlagiri Vihāra. These documents provide guidance for the betterment of the Buddhist order and reflect the vision and perspective that he had regarding the progress of the Buddhist order. The study also takes into consideration other primary and secondary sources.

Objectives

The decline of Sri Lankan Buddhism and the Buddhist order in the 16th–17th centuries CE, as well as the revival led by Venerable Vāliṇṇa Saraṇaṃkara Samgharāja in the 18th century through the re-establishment of higher ordination and the restoration of the Buddhist order, have been widely examined in various studies. However, the transformation of the attitudes of the Bhikkhus — from a stage in which there was little concern for monastic discipline to one in which strict adherence to the *Vinaya* became central—has received comparatively less attention.

Addressing this gap, the main objective of this study is to examine how the Buddhist monastic community changed through the revival led by the Samgharāja, and to identify the measures he implemented to transform the attitudes of the community in accordance with monastic discipline, while also ensuring the continuity of the Buddhist order.

2. Literature Review

The biography of Venerable Vālivīṭa Saraṇaṃkara Saṃgharāja and his mission for the revival of the Buddhist order in the eighteenth century have been widely examined in various studies. Contemporary historical sources, including the fifth part of the *Mahāvamsa* and the *Syāmapasampadāvata*, authored by Venerable Thibbatuvāvē Buddharakkhita, the *Saṃgharāja Sādhū Cariyāva*, authored by Āyittāliyaddē Muhandiram, and the *Saṅgharajavata*, authored by Muṃkoṭuvē Abēsiṃha, provide detailed accounts of the mission led by the Saṃgharāja as primary historical sources.

Beyond these primary sources, several modern studies analyse historical sources to examine the mission of the Saṃgharāja to reorganize the Buddhist order in the eighteenth century. Among these, *The Saraṇaṃkara Saṃgharāja Samaya*, authored by Venerable Koṭagama Vācissara in 1969, provides a detailed analysis of the biography of the Saṃgharāja, his mission, and the historical, social, and cultural background of the period. In this work, the reforms initiated by the Saṃgharāja are analysed to a certain extent, and the documents *Anusāsanā Vattōruva*, *Saṃgharājānuśāsanāva*, and the document sent to Mūlagiri Vihāra are also presented as evidence to demonstrate the significance of the mission. However, the author does not provide a detailed analysis of the *Vinaya*-based monastic reform and ethical transformation in eighteenth-century Sri Lanka pioneered by the Saṃgharāja based on these historical documents. Rather, he merely presents the documents and explains them briefly.

In *Buddhist Learning and Textual Practice in Eighteenth-Century Lankan Monastic Culture* (2001), Anne M. Blackburn specifically argues that the mission led by the Saṃgharāja was not merely an institutional restoration but also a dynamic ethical and intellectual transformation. She uses the concept of “textual communities” to explain the process of reform that took place in the eighteenth century under the leadership of the Saṃgharāja. She further notes that this process included the systematization of monastic education and *Vinaya* discipline through the collaborative efforts of individuals from different parts of the country who shared a common purpose, with the *Vinaya* serving as the foundation of these reforms.

In *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society, 1750–1900: A Study of Religious Revival and Change* (1976), K. Malalgoda also highlights that the mission led by the Saṃgharāja was not merely an institutional reform but also a sociopolitical realignment of Theravāda orthodoxy. He further explains how the enforcement of monastic discipline restored institutional autonomy and established the structural foundation for the Buddhist order in the late nineteenth century. However, although both of these studies examine the mission led by the Saṃgharāja based on historical sources, they do not critically analyse it

through the above-mentioned historical documents, which are among the best-preserved sources for understanding and demonstrating the revival that took place in the eighteenth century within the Buddhist order of Sri Lanka under the leadership of the Saṃgharāja.

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative methodology through the textual and historical analysis of primary sources composed in the eighteenth century in both Pāli and Sinhalese. The primary sources contain a number of historical records which are directly related to the Saṃgharāja and key historical sources like the MV, SSCV and SRV. It is used to examine the results of the restructuring of the Buddhist order after the revival of the mid-eighteenth century. In the critical examination of the primary sources, pertinent secondary sources including books and scholarly articles on the history of Buddhism from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries are also used.

The present study analyses some historical documents to verify the facts gathered from the above-mentioned primary sources so as to ensure textual integrity and reliability. These primary sources can be identified as partisan or hagiographical texts composed by individuals who themselves contributed to or actively participated in the mission led by the Saṃgharāja for the reformation of the Buddhist order in the eighteenth century. Therefore, these sources may record the situation of the period partially, sometimes presenting it from the perspective of one side. Therefore, to maintain a balanced and transparent analysis, the following documents and further secondary sources are also studied. The following documents were thoroughly analysed in this study:

1. The *Anusāsanā Vaṭṭōruva*, sent by the Saṃgharāja to the members of the Sīlavat Samāgama;
2. The *Saṃgharājānuśāsanāva*, addressed to the monks following his appointment as Saṃgharāja;
3. A document sent to Mūlagiri Vihāra containing guidance on the training of novices.

In addition to these, secondary sources, including books and scholarly articles published by various authors on this subject, are also examined. These sources are analysed to explore the transformation of the monastic community as a result of the revival.

4. Discussion

The Decline of the Monastic Order in the 16th–17th Centuries

According to the fifth *khāṇḍa* (part) of *MV*, in the 16th century, the country experienced massive political and religious disturbances since the reign of

King Sītāvaka Rājasimha, also known as Rājasimha the First. At that time, the coastal areas were under Portuguese control, and in their efforts to strengthen their power, they attempted to capture parts of the Kingdom of Sītāvaka, frequently engaging in warfare with its ruler. Moreover, they conducted missionary activities to propagate their religion in the coastal regions, posing a considerable threat to the survival of Buddhism in those areas. (Vikramagē, 2015, p.349)

Meanwhile, according to many historical accounts, it is widely accepted that King Sītāvaka Rājasimha ascended the throne by murdering his own father, King Māyādunnē. (Medhaṅkara, 2013, p.36) This act can be identified as a grave offence in Buddhism, believed to result in rebirth in hell and the experience of immense suffering. As a consequence of this act and its karmic implications as taught in Buddhism, the king is said to have rejected Buddhism and adopted Śaivism. (Medhaṅkara, 2013, p.36) He ceased extending royal patronage for the well-being of Buddhism and instead began to support Śaivism in the country. Furthermore, he is reported to have undertaken anti-Buddhist measures, which included the killing of Buddhist monks, the burning of doctrinal texts, the plundering of monasteries and their valuables, and forcing many monks either to flee abroad or to disrobe (Vikramage, 2015, p.349). These actions posed a serious challenge to the continuity of Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

Amidst such a challenging time, the Buddhist order was unable to secure the fundamental practices that determine the continuity of the order such as higher ordination (*upasampadā*). As Buddhism did not receive royal patronage which is widely required for its betterment, the procedures such as maintenance of the monasteries, preserving the doctrine, following the fundamental practices of monastic life were seriously disturbed. Due to the lack of doctrinal treatises, it was challenging for the monks to continue their monastic practices. The disciplinary acts such as higher ordination which is considered to be the foundation of the Buddhist order were highly required the royal patronage, it was abandoned and that leads to the decline of the Buddhist order in the country. As the education in the country was widely handled by the Buddhist monks and was centralized within Buddhist monasteries, the education system in both monastic and lay communities in the country collapsed to some extent.

Verses 57–70 of the SRV, a Sinhalese poem composed by Muṃkoṭuvē Abēsīṃha in the eighteenth century, record the biography of the Saṃgharāja and provide considerable information about the condition of the Buddhist monastic community in Sri Lanka in the early eighteenth century, known as the “*Gaṇinnānsēs*.” According to these verses, the *Gaṇinnānsēs* conferred ordination only upon children from their own lineage—that is, their own children or relatives—while prohibiting others who wished to be ordained (Nāgasimha, 2017, pp.10-12).

Instead of following the teachings of the Buddha and studying the Buddhist doctrine, they frequently practiced soothsaying, astrology, and medicine, functioning as physicians. Through these activities, they accumulated considerable wealth compared to the others in the society and maintained family lives, including wives and children. Although they wore monastic robes, they did not observe the monastic rules prescribed by the Buddha. They accepted offerings given by lay devotees, accumulated them, and distributed them among their own relatives (Nāgasimha, 2017, pp.10-12).

Furthermore, they abandoned the practice of going on alms rounds and consumed food prepared by their own wives. In this way, they led luxurious and powerful lives, comparable to lay ministers in society, and enjoyed considerable social prestige. They refrained from ordaining sincere candidates and from training them in monastic discipline or providing proper education (Nāgasimha, 2017, pp.10-12).

Thus, they failed to uphold the principles of the monastic community as prescribed in the *Vinaya*; they possessed only the outward appearance of monks, without the corresponding inner reality.

The *SSCV* also provides similar information regarding the condition of the monastic community in the 18th century. It mentions that monks were involved in activities prohibited for monastic life, such as soothsaying, astrology, practicing medicine, farming, and engaging in business. As mentioned further, they also accepted gold and silver, brought women to prepare meals, and led an unethical life (Vimalavaṃśa & Seneviratna, 1997, p.3).

Notably, these primary sources—the fifth *Khaṇḍa* of the *MV*, *SSCV*, and the *SRV*—can be identified as partisan or hagiographical texts composed by the individuals who themselves contributed to or actively participated in the mission led by the Saṃgharāja for the reformation of the Buddhist order in the 18th century. Therefore, it should be noted that the records contained in these texts may portray the Gaṇinnānsēs as violators of the monastic code to a greater extent than warranted, primarily to highlight and praise the mission of the reformation and to preserve it for posterity. Therefore, these records need to be studied critically and impartially as historical sources, together with other relevant sources, in order to obtain a balanced understanding of the situation.

In *An Historical Relation of Ceylon*, authored by Robert Knox, the nature of the monastic community in Sri Lanka in the seventeenth century is described in detail. As mentioned in the chapter “*Of Their Religion, Gods, Temples, Priests*,” Knox states that he witnessed many antient temples in the country and was unable to determine who had constructed them, as those

who dwelt there had no knowledge of it (Knox, 1911, p.115). This statement shows the level of literacy among the monks at the time. As Knox mentions, they were not even aware of the history of the places in which they resided, indicating a low level of historical literacy.

Knox further notes that there were two principal divisions within the monastic community: the “Tirinanxes” (probably *Terunnnānsē*) (Knox, 1911, p.117) and the “Gonni” (probably *Gaṇin* or *Gaṇinnānsē*) (Knox, 1911, p.118). The *Teruninnānsēs*, regarded as the higher order of monks, were typically ordained from aristocratic families and were considered noble by birth. Knox specifically remarks that the primary ambition within the monkhood was to attain the position of chief priest, a leading title conferred by the king. As explained by Knox, “Mahāthera” was the highest rank among these titles, and at the time there were three or four *Teruninnānsēs* appointed by the king to this position, who enjoyed considerable wealth. Typically, temples possessed extensive lands that were leased out, and the incumbents functioned effectively as landlords, receiving rent from tenant cultivators (Knox, 1911, p.118).

The other group, known as the *Gaṇinnānsēs*, is described by Knox as having similar external habits. All wore yellow robes gathered around the waist and draped over the left shoulder, secured with a belt made of fine thread. Their heads were shaved, they went bareheaded, and they carried a round fan with a wooden handle to shield themselves from the sun (Knox, 1911, p.119).

According to Knox, monks occupied a highly respected position in society. They enjoyed significant privileges and honors, including the right to possess land without paying taxes to the king. They were venerated to such an extent that people bowed to them as they would to their gods, in contrast, the monks themselves bowed to no one. They were also granted honors typically reserved for royalty, such as carrying the *talpot* (palm-leaf fan) with the broad end held foremost over their heads—a privilege otherwise exclusive to the king. Wherever they went, a mat and a white cloth were laid upon a stool for them to sit on, another honor shared only with the king (Knox, 1911, p.119).

However, when compared with the accounts in the *SRV* and *SSCV*, Knox’s description of monastic behavior differs significantly. According to Knox, monks did not engage in labor, did not marry, and refrained from physical relations with women. They consumed only one meal a day, taken after noon, consisting strictly of fruit, rice (often as porridge), and water, and they abstained entirely from alcohol. If a monk wished to marry, he would disrobe before doing so. Disrobing, as described by Knox, involved removing one’s robe, casting it into a river, and bathing (Knox, 1911, p.119).

From the descriptions in the *SRV*, *SSCV*, and *An Historical Relation of Ceylon*, it can be determined that, since the *SRV* and *SSCV* were composed in

the eighteenth century and the latter in the seventeenth century, the condition of the Buddhist monastic community appears to have adhered more closely to the *Vinaya* in the earlier period. Knox's descriptions of monastic behavior do not indicate serious violations of the *Vinaya*, unlike the accounts found in the *SRV* and *SSCV*. However, from this comparison, it can be identified that within a century, by the eighteenth century, the Buddhist order in the country had undergone a significant transformation into a form that was largely contrary to the *Vinaya*.

Some Gaṇinnānsēs held notable positions in society that were quite incompatible with monastic life. During the reign of King Rājasimha II, a Gaṇinnānsē named Kobbēkaḍuvē Gaṇē Baṇḍāra Hāmuduruvō, who held the position of *Mahānāyaka* of Pōyamaḷu Vihāra, was sent by the king as an ambassador of the Kandyan Kingdom to the Dutch in 1668 CE to form an alliance between the king and the Dutch (Bell and Gunasekara, 1916, p. 149). During the reign of King Vīra Parākrama Narēndrasimha, he was appointed as the chief (*Disāpati* or *Disāva*) of the district of Puttalam and as the Basnāyaka of the four *Dēvālayas* in Uḍunuvara (Bell and Gunasekara, 1916, p.149). He also acted as a *mohottāla* (royal clerk), inscribing the name of the king at the coronation of Kīrti Śrī Rājasimha in 1747 CE (Vācissara, 2014, p.59).

There is nearly a century's gap between Knox's records and the above-mentioned descriptions found in the primary sources, including the *MV*, *SSCV*, and *SRV*. Therefore, the historical developments that led to the decline of the Buddhist order during that century must be examined. In addition, Knox viewed the nature of the Buddhist order as an outsider, for whom the entire society in which he lived was a new experience, whereas the authors of the above-mentioned primary sources were highly engaged in praising the revival that took place under the leadership of the Saṃgharāja. Accepting this view, Anne M. Blackburn, in her article *Buddhist Learning and Textual Practice in Eighteenth-Century Lankan Monastic Culture*, argues that the authors of the above-mentioned primary sources deliberately emphasized the “decay” of the Gaṇinnānsēs as a literary strategy to justify the Saṃgharāja's revival (Blackburn, 2001, p.8). Therefore, relying solely on these two different accounts, it is quite difficult to clearly determine the true situation of the Buddhist order at that time.

During the reigns of King Vimaladharmasūriya I and King Vimaladharmasūriya II, monks from the region of Rāmañña in Burma were brought to Sri Lanka to restore the declined higher ordination in the country. During these ceremonies, many Sri Lankan novices received higher ordination. However, it can be seen that they were unable to preserve it for the future. Venerable Vācissara suggests that, at that time, Rāmañña in Burma experienced various invasions from China, and that Buddhism there had become mixed with many influences of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Therefore, the tradition upheld by

these Burmese monks cannot be regarded as the pure Theravāda tradition, and their intervention was not sufficiently effective to restore the declined Buddhist order in Sri Lanka. To support this argument, he presents evidence from the *Kaḍadora Sīttuva*, a historical document related to that period. It is mentioned there that, after conferring higher ordination upon the Gaṇin-nānsē called Labutala, a head ornament belonging to the Burmese monks was presented to him. Wearing such an ornament is severely against the Theravāda monastic code. If the Burmese monks themselves followed such a practice, it suggests that they too did not adhere to the pure Theravāda tradition. Therefore, he further argues that, because these Burmese monks did not practise the pure Theravāda tradition, they were not capable of bringing about a reformation of the declined Buddhist order in Sri Lanka (Vācissara, 2014, p.54)

Kitsiri Malalgoda, in his work *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society, 1750–1900*, also mentions that the conduct of the monastic community during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had deviated from the monastic code. Their conduct usually included practising forbidden arts (despised sciences), including magical and occult practices that are condemned as despised sciences in the monastic code, performing forbidden rituals involving spirits, making sacrifices, divining by means of omens, preparing charms, and conducting rituals related to the deceased. Moreover, they widely engaged in astrology. It is also mentioned that they infringed the disciplinary regulations by maintaining families similar to the laity, having wives and children in violation of the rule of celibacy. Instead of pursuing spiritual advancement, they sought material advancement through the properties belonging to the Buddhist order. Through this, their institutional power and economic benefits increased, and these properties were used for their own well-being (Malalgoda, 1976, pp.25-28).

The revival of the Buddhist dispensation and the monastic order

During such a challenging period, when the Buddhist order of Sri Lanka was experiencing a serious decline, the efforts of Venerable Vālivīṭa Saraṇaṃkara Saṃgharāja to reform the monastic order and re-establish proper conduct—such as *piṇḍapāta*—as well as to reinstate essential disciplinary practices, including higher ordination, were unparalleled and commendable. Through his mission, measures were taken not only to reform the Buddhist dispensation in the country, but also to restructure the educational system. The development of monastic education, which became centralized within Buddhist monasteries, and the study of Buddhism and Oriental languages including Pali were significantly revitalized.

During this revival movement, it is evident that the Saṃgharāja focused not only on the material development and well-being of the monastic community, but also on its spiritual development. This is clearly reflected in the advisory messages he conveyed to his disciples on various occasions.

Therefore, the Buddhist revival of the 18th century, led by the Saṃgharāja, can be understood as a mission directed toward both the material and spiritual well-being of the Buddhist order in the country.

The Saṃgharāja was born in 1698 CE, during the reign of King Vimaladharmasūriya II. He entered the monastic order at the age of sixteen under Venerable Sūriyagoda Kitsirimevan Rājasundara, one of the few *terunnānsēs* of that time (Vimalavaṃśa & Seneviratna, 1997, pp.2-3). Soon after his ordination, his teacher was beheaded on charges of treason, leaving the young Saṃgharāja without guidance for continuing his monastic life. Nevertheless, despite numerous difficulties and challenges, he sought out learned individuals, collected rare doctrinal treatises and texts, and studied Buddhism, monastic discipline, proper traditional conduct, the Pāli language, and other Oriental languages.

Observing the unethical and inappropriate lifestyles of many members of the monastic community, he began to lead a disciplined life, practicing proper conduct such as piṇḍapāta, with the intention of restoring the Buddhist order to its original form as prescribed in the *Vinaya*. Gradually, others who shared his vision gathered around him, and he established a group known as the *Silvat Samāgama* (the company of the virtuous), which upheld a life of discipline in contrast to the *Gaṇinnānsēs*, who held considerable social influence at the time (Vimalavaṃśa & Seneviratna, 1997, p.7).

As society increasingly came to admire the Saṃgharāja and his group, the influence of the *Gaṇinnānsēs* began to decline due to their unethical conduct. Members of the *Silvat Samāgama* openly opposed their way of life and refrained from paying them respect. On several occasions, the *Gaṇinnānsēs* falsely accused the Saṃgharāja and his followers before the king. Owing to the considerable social power they wielded, King Narēndrasimha once had the Saṃgharāja imprisoned in a rural area called Laggala in the district of Mātālē, in an attempt to compel them to show proper respect.

The *SSCV* and *SRV* record in detail the measures taken by the Saṃgharāja to re-establish proper conduct within the Buddhist order. As mentioned at the outset, the Saṃgharāja began by going on alms round, carrying an alms bowl as his predecessors had done. However, although the majority of Sri Lankan society identified as followers of Buddhism, no one recognized the significance of the alms round, and the Saṃgharāja had to travel long distances to receive food. As described in the *SSCV*, people were confused and stared at him as though he were a spectacle, as they had never witnessed such a practice before (Vimalavaṃśa & Seneviratna, 1997, pp.5-6). This incident clearly demonstrates that not only the monastic community, but also the lay society, had lost an understanding of the fundamental elements of Buddhist tradition. Therefore, it can be observed that the Saṃgharāja had to begin his

revival from the very foundation.

Accordingly, he encouraged his followers to undertake austerity practices (*dhutaṅga*), while he himself observed the *piṇḍapātikaṅga* (obtaining food solely through alms rounds) and the *pattapiṇḍikaṅga* (eating only from the alms bowl) (Vimalavaṃśa & Seneviratna, 1997, p.11). He urged them to refrain from unethical conduct and from engaging in inappropriate activities practiced by others, such as farming, practicing medicine, soothsaying, and astrology. He instructed them to lead a life in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha and the discipline of the *Vinaya*.

Gradually, the number of his followers increased significantly, and royal patronage was extended to support his reform movement. Subsequently, in order to reorganize the educational system and promote the study of the Pāli language and other Oriental languages, an institution was established with royal support of King Narēndrasimha, known as the Niyamakanda Piriveṇa, located near the Āmbākka Dēvālaya in Udunuvāra (Vimalavaṃśa & Seneviratna, 1997, pp.13-14). This is considered the first institution in the modern Sri Lankan piriveṇa educational system. Through this initiative, monastic education developed considerably, leading to the establishment of many such institutions across the country.

Many followers of the Saṃgharāja became distinguished scholars in Pāli and other Oriental studies. Reviving the declining Sinhalese and Pāli literary traditions, numerous works—including doctrinal, grammatical, historical, and poetic compositions—were produced by the Saṃgharāja himself and his students.

As these reforms gained momentum, the followers of the Saṃgharāja became well-versed in Buddhist doctrine, monastic and cultural norms related to Sinhalese Buddhist culture, leading ethical lives grounded in proper conduct and austerity practices. This gradually diminished the influence of the *Gaṇinnānsēs*, who had deviated from monastic discipline. Although the Buddhist order thus underwent a significant ethical transformation, it could not be sustained fully, as the disciplinary procedures of the *Vinaya* could not be properly carried out due to the absence of higher-ordained monks.

Since the higher ordination (*upasampadā*) is the foundation for the continuity of the Buddhist order, it became essential to re-establish it. Accordingly, in 1753 CE, during the reign of King Kīrti Śrī Rājasimha, after two unsuccessful missions to Thailand during the previous reign, a third mission was undertaken. With the support of the King Borommakot of Ayutthaya - Thailand (referred to in Sri Lankan sources as King Parama Dhammika), a group of Siamese monks led by Phra Upāli arrived in Sri Lanka and re-established higher ordination at the Malwatta Monastery (also known in ancient sources as

Dhammikārāmayā) (Dhammananda, 2016, pp.249-250), conferring higher ordination upon hundreds of Sri Lankan novices (Medhaṅkara, 2013, p.49).

King Borommakot sent a second group of Siamese monks to Sri Lanka a few years after the establishment of the Siamese higher ordination in the country. This group included monks who had mastered both the study of scriptures (*gantha-dhūra*) and the practice of insight meditation (*vipassanā-dhūra*), and they brought with them numerous doctrinal treatises that were unavailable in Sri Lanka, as well as letters of guidance from the Saṃgharāja of Siam, the king, and the sub-king of Siam (Vimalavaṃśa & Seneviratna, 1997, p.21) (Medhaṅkara, 2013, p.52). These monks reestablished the two major practices that had been abandoned in the Sri Lankan Buddhist order: the study of scriptures and the practice of insight meditation.

Moreover, they spent time in the country instructing Sri Lankan monks in the proper conduct of disciplinary acts (*Vinaya-kamma*), including the chanting of specific Pāli formulas (*kammavācā*) used in such acts. They also constructed and authorized observance halls or boundary halls (*uposathāgāra*) across the country, thereby creating the necessary conditions for the Sri Lankan Buddhist order to properly perform disciplinary acts and maintain its continuity in accordance with the *Vinaya* (Vimalavaṃśa & Seneviratna, 1997, p.21).

Thus, in cooperation with the Saṃgharāja, the Siamese monks provided their full support in reforming the country's dwindling Buddhist order, without restricting their role to the mere reestablishment of higher ordination. However, the Saṃgharāja closely monitored all of these changes to make sure they adhered to both the customs of the ancient Sri Lankan Buddhist context and monastic discipline. This is evident from the record that when the Siamese monks, led by Phra Upāli, attempted to introduce certain practices inherent to the Siamese Buddhist tradition—such as temporary ordination, the custom of crowning Buddha statues, and the Thai style of continuous, uninterrupted chanting (in contrast to the Sri Lankan tradition, which includes distinct pauses)—the Saṃgharāja firmly refused to adopt these practices, directly rejecting the proposals of Phra Upāli (Meegaskumbura, 2020, pp.1003-1004).

In re-establishing the administrative authorities necessary for the continuity of the Buddhist order, and drawing on traditions that had persisted since the ancient Polonnaruva period, King Kīrti Śrī Rājasimha—under the guidance of the Siamese Saṃgha led by Phra Upāli—appointed Venerable Vālivīṭa Saraṇaṃkara as the Saṃgharāja (Supreme Patriarch) of the country in 1760. Subsequently, Venerable Tibbatuvāvē Buddhārakkhita and Venerable Urulēvattē Dhammasiddhi were appointed as the Mahānāyakas (Chief Prelates) of the Pōyamaḷu Vihāra (present-day Malwatta Chapter) and Asgiriya Vihāra (present-day Asgiriya Chapter) respectively (Vimalavaṃśa & Seneviratna, 1997, pp.19–20). Thereafter, Anunāyakas (Deputy Prelates) and other key

monastic officials were appointed, thereby systematically organizing the administrative structure of the Buddhist order.

Thus, the Saṃgharāja consistently assumed responsibility in guiding the reform of Sri Lankan Buddhism, ensuring its continuity in accordance with the Mahāvihāra tradition that had been preserved for more than two thousand years since the early Anurādhapura period.

The transformation of the Buddhist monastic community

In the mission led by the Saṃgharāja to reform the Sri Lankan Buddhist order, he placed primary emphasis on transforming the monastic community adhering mostly to the monastic discipline. This is evident in the documents sent by the Saṃgharāja himself, providing guidance to monks in his capacity as the supreme head of the Sri Lankan Buddhist order, which are preserved and published in various sources. Three such documents can be identified as follows:

1. the *Anusāsanā Vaṭṭōruva*, sent by the Saṃgharāja to the members of the Silvat Saṃāgama;
2. the *Saṃgharājānuśāsanāva*, addressed to the monks following his appointment as Saṃgharāja;
3. A document sent to Venerable Vaṭarakgoḍa Dhammapāla in Mūlagiri Vihāra of Southern province of Sri Lanka, containing guidance on the training of novices.

When critically analysing these documents, it is possible to clearly identify the Saṃgharāja's intention to shape the the Buddhist monastic community. It can be understood that he considered adherence to the *Vinaya*, or the monastic discipline prescribed by the Buddha, as the most essential aspect of the life of a bhikkhu. In all three documents, he devotes considerable attention to emphasising the importance of the *Vinaya* and providing guidance on how to uphold its rules in daily life.

***Vinaya* as the Foundation of Monastic Reform**

The absolute centrality of monastic discipline (*Vinaya*) can be identified as the core of the mission led by the Saṃgharāja for the reformation of the Buddhist order. Through the guidance he extended to the bhikkhus, it can be observed that the *Vinaya* is treated not merely as a regulatory code but as a defining identity of a bhikkhu. Within these reformative measures, even one's verbal and physical conduct comes under the scrutiny of the *Vinaya*. Furthermore, the statements found in the above-mentioned documents of the Saṃgharāja indicate that the *Vinaya* is elevated to a level at which it is regarded as even more important than the life itself. Therefore, in the

Samgharāja's mission to transform the living of the bhikkhus, the process begins with the establishment of the *Vinaya* as the supreme criterion.

This can be evidenced through the instructions provided in the *Anusāsanā Vatṭōruva*, in which the Samgharāja advises his followers belonging to the *Silvat Samāgama* to lead an ethical life in accordance with the *Vinaya*, although none of them, including the Samgharāja himself, had received higher ordination.

In Buddhist *Vinaya*, a person becomes a fully responsible and permanent member of the monastic community only after receiving higher ordination. Prior to that, one must first be ordained as a novice and observe the ten precepts prescribed for novices. Responsibility for observing all 227 *Vinaya* rules, as well as the ability to participate in and conduct disciplinary acts such as the recitation of the monastic code, is conferred only after higher ordination; novices are not permitted to engage in such matters.

However, In the *Anusāsanā Vatṭōruva*, the Samgharāja urges his followers to meet on full moon days to confess and discuss the offences they have done (Vācissara, 2014, pp.162-163). This practice can be identified as similar to the confession of offences associated with the recitation of the monastic code (*pātimokkhuḍḍesa* and *Upasatha Kamma*). Although, as novices, they were not permitted to perform the *Upasatha Kamma* in the same manner as fully ordained monks, the Samgharāja, understanding its underlying purpose, instructed them to adopt a similar practice. This was a good platform to identify their misconduct and members were asked to speak about their faults openly and were given directions to avoid such actions in the future. This clearly reflects the extent to which the Samgharāja valued discipline in monastic life.

In the *Samgharājānuśāsanāva*, which was issued after his appointment as the supreme head of the monastic community and addressed to bhikkhus who had received higher ordination, the Samgharāja again devotes considerable attention to emphasising the importance of monastic discipline. In its opening section, he instructs the bhikkhus to refrain from the four actions that must not be committed (*cattāri akaraṇīyāni* - refers to the four major offences known as *pārājikā*), as taught immediately after higher ordination (Vācissara, 2014, pp.204-205). Here, bhikkhus are instructed to value the *Vinaya* even above their own lives, reflecting the idea that discipline is more important than life itself. Accordingly, they are encouraged to uphold the *Vinaya* even at the cost of their lives, since a monastic life loses its purpose when the disciplinary code is violated.

Furthermore, drawing on the commentaries to the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* and the *Accharā Saṅghāta Sutta*, the Samgharāja instructs bhikkhus to confess without hesitation if they have committed a major offence, ideally in the

presence of a monk well-versed in the *Vinaya*. If such an offence has indeed been committed, they are advised to renounce the monastic life and continue as a faithful lay follower or novice, observing the ten precepts with sincerity and striving diligently for the realization of *Nibbāna* within the same lifetime (Vācissara, 2014, pp.204-205). Through this instruction, the Saṅgharāja stresses that the purpose of monastic life is the attainment of *Nibbāna* and encourages the bhikkhus to practice the *Vinaya* to the utmost extent feasible. Even a lay follower (or novice) who is unable to keep monastic discipline can reach Nibbana. Hence, he admits that *Nibbāna* is available outside the monastic order but also emphasizes the importance of honesty. According to his explanations, If a person has committed a significant offence, yet continues to live in the monastic order, in contravention of the *Vinaya*, then his present life and future prospects are ruined. This would then be an obstacle for the realization of Nibbana.

He speculates that this could have contributed to the Buddhist order's downfall because its adherents led unclean and misguided lives. Therefore, the Saṅgharāja recommends that such individuals leave the monastic community and continue to practice the Buddha's teachings as outlined in the *Vinaya*, rather than ruining both their own and the order's future. He emphasizes that being banished from the order does not prevent one from realizing Nibbāna. This illustrates how the Saṅgharāja's reforms prioritize moral integrity over institutional preservation.

He further advises the bhikkhus that if someone has committed a *Garukāpatti* (*Garukāpatti* refers to severe offenses—specifically the four *Pārājikā* and thirteen *Samghādisesa* offenses—an offence requiring formal meeting and suspension), it should be confessed before those who are well-versed in the *Vinaya*, and that one should follow the instructions given in the *Vinaya* in order to become purified (Vācissara, 2014, pp.204-205). Here, the Saṅgharāja intends strict adherence to the monastic code within the Buddhist order, which secures its continuity.

Communal Discipline, Accountability and monastic governance

In the text, the Saṅgharāja further urged them to refrain from humiliating or mocking those who had committed offences, and instead to offer appropriate advice in accordance with the Dhamma. Offenders were encouraged to accept the punishments prescribed to them in accordance with the *Vinaya* and the Dhamma. Those offering guidance were instructed to do so with loving-kindness and compassion, while offenders were expected to accept such advice and disciplinary measures without anger, and with respect and devotion (Vācissara, 2014, pp.162-163).

In the letter sent to Mūlagiri Vihāra, the Saṅgharāja highlights the im-

portance of knowledge of the monastic discipline for novices and instructs the bhikkhus to train them with a deep understanding of the monastic code. He further instructs that novices should follow the rules prescribed in the traditional monastic code known as the “*Heraṇasika*.” (Sumanajoti, 2002, pp.181-183).

Refraining from accepting gold and silver, which are prohibited for monastics in the *Vinaya* is specifically highlighted in his advices. If such offerings are received in case, they should be redirected towards charitable or meritorious purposes. To maintain discipline and proper conduct within the community, residing in the homes of laypeople is instructed to be avoided (Vācissara, 2014, pp.162-163). These instructions demonstrate that the Saṃgharāja addressed all aspects of the monastic order requiring reform in accordance with the *Vinaya*, extending even to the simplest verbal and physical actions of the bhikkhus.

Ethical and behavioural transformation of Bhikkhus

The instructions of the Saṃgharāja for his followers aim at the psychological and ethical reshaping of their behaviour, rather than focusing solely on external regulation. The objective of these instructions is to steer his followers away from ethical misconduct that hinders the aims of monastic life. Thus, these reforms influence the reshaping of mindset, speech, and emotional discipline of the Bhikkhus, rather than merely regulating adherence to the monastic rules prescribed in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*.

This is evident in that the Saṃgharāja was consistently concerned with the ethical behaviour of the order, which sustains unity among its members—something that cannot be achieved solely through *Vinaya* rules. In the *Anusāsana Vattōruva*, the Saṃgharāja specifically instructs his followers to refrain from slanderous, malicious, or divisive speech that leads to conflict and disunity within the community. He also emphasises that no one should humiliate another based on birth, clan, or similar factors, since upon entering the monastic community, such distinctions become irrelevant; all become sons of the Buddha. He further instructs them to abstain from words and actions that generate conflict among members. All these instructions are aimed at maintaining unity within the order (Vācissara, 2014, pp.162–163).

The Saṃgharāja is also concerned with the values of his followers and instructs them to lead a life focused on the realisation of *Nibbāna*, which is considered the primary objective of monastic life. Accordingly, he advises them to maintain conduct free from useless laughter and frivolous play arising from youthful intoxication. He encourages them to remember and appreciate even the smallest acts of kindness, reflecting the importance a sense of gratitude in their lives. Moreover, to support progress on the path to *Nibbāna*, he instructs his followers to engage in discussions of the Dhamma

as much as possible and definitely on full moon days, thereby fostering faith and developing disenchantment with *saṃsāra* (Vācissara, 2014, pp.162-163).

At the end of the document, he states that the main intention of his mission is to promote the welfare of both this life and the next, which is why he offers such advice to his followers. If, because of these instructions, anyone becomes displeased with him, he states that he forgives them, as his guidance is intended solely for their well-being in both this life and the next, and not for any harm (Vācissara, 2014, pp.162-163).

Emotional and ethical refinement of community life

Through his mission to reform the Buddhist order in accordance with the Dhamma and *Vinaya*, the Saṃgharāja promoted a new monastic emotional culture that directly contrasted with the unethical state of the monkhood at the time. In this regard, he emphasised compassion instead of a punishment-based hierarchy, as well as gratitude, humility, and contentment (*appicchatā*, *santuṭṭhi*). He also encouraged his followers in the reduction of ego-driven conflict and the cultivation of a harmonious communal life. Thus, beyond mere legal obedience, the reforms led by the Saṃgharāja incorporated emotional discipline and the fostering of communal harmony.

In the *Saṃgharājānuśāsanāva*, he emphasises the importance of having few wishes (*appicchatā*), contentment (*santuṭṭhitā*), and self-control or austerity (*tapa*) for the well-being of monastic life. The observance of the seven principles of non-decline (*Satta Aparihānīya Dhamma*) and gentleness (*mudutā*) are also highlighted as qualities that should be cultivated by the bhikkhus (Vācissara, 2014, pp.204-205).

Restoration of ideal monastic life-time

In contrast to the contemporary monastic life, which was associated with various practices inappropriate to the *Vinaya*—including farming, soothsaying, performing black magic, practising medicine, and even marrying and maintaining families—the Saṃgharāja reconstructed the daily behavioural model of bhikkhus. This included a traditional daily routine (*dinacariyā*), regular worship, *paritta* chanting, and Dhamma discussions. He also emphasised the restriction of idle behaviour and contact with luxuries (such as gold and silver and residence in lay households), as well as the observance of the *sekhiya* training rules. Thus, the reform extended into everyday lifestyle discipline, going beyond mere adherence to monastic rules.

The Saṃgharāja instructs bhikkhus to follow the traditional daily routine that was practiced since the antient times (*dinacariyāva*) and observe the training rules (*sekhiyā*) in order to lead a disciplined and proper monastic life

(Vācissara, 2014, pp.162-163). These can be identified as the fundamentals of an ideal monastic lifestyle.

In addition to these, he emphasises the daily worship of the Buddha, the recitation of traditional sacred *paritta* chants (*vata pirita*), and the conducting of Dhamma discussions as frequently as possible with those who dwell in the same place. If it is not possible to do so regularly, such practices should at least be observed on full moon days. These activities help to develop faith, deepen knowledge of the Dhamma, and foster disenchantment with worldly desires and *samsāra* (Vācissara, 2014, pp.162-163).

Educational reforms and formation of monastic identity

One of the most methodical and long-term strategic measures for ensuring the future improvement of the Buddhist order is the prescribed training curriculum for novices, which is one of the reforms related to the mission led by the Saṅgharāja. This curriculum incorporates knowledge of legal disciplinary acts (the *Vinaya kamma* procedures), study of the *Pātimokkha* and its commentaries, and *Vinaya* memorization and applied training while upholding the *Vinaya*'s supremacy. It also includes mastery of the Pāli language and its grammar, austerities (*dhutaṅga*), *sīla*, and moral formation based on the *Visuddhimagga*. These components collectively cover the *Vinaya*'s practical aspects, doctrine, and language studies that are vital to the monastic life. Therefore, systematic monastic education and doctrinal literacy are used in this structured approach to ensure institutional renewal.

The Saṅgharāja describes how novices should be prepared for monastic life and identifies the doctrinal elements that should be taught to them as required subjects in the letter sent to Mūlagiri Vihāra. Memorization of pertinent parts of the doctrine is heavily stressed in this set of instructions. Both the Dhamma and the *Vinaya*, as well as the practical knowledge needed to carry out disciplinary acts, are encouraged to be mastered by novices.

The educational framework for novices recommended by the Saṅgharāja can be summarised as follows:

1. Memorising the *Heranāsika* (the traditional duties and training of novice monks)
2. Memorising the disadvantages of immoral conduct and the proper behaviours described in the *Cullavagga-pāli* of the *Vinaya-piṭaka*, including the proper conduct of a teacher (*ācariyavatta*)
3. Memorising the monastic code (*Pātimokkha*) in full, together with its meaning, and studying it alongside its commentary, the *Kaṅkhāvitaraṇī*

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4. Studying the *Vinaya* rules together with their origin stories as found in the *Pārājika* and *Pācittiya* sections of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*
 5. Memorising and understanding compendiums of monastic discipline such as the *Khuddakasikkhā*, *Mūlasikkhā*, or *Sikkhā Valaṅjanaya*
 6. Training in the performance of essential disciplinary acts, including: the Motion Act (*Ñatti Kamma*), Motion-and-Second Act (*Ñatti Duttiya Kamma*), Motion-and-Fourth Act (*Ñatti Catuttha Kamma*), Act of Announcement (*Apalokana Kamma*), conferring a *Sīmā*, the Observance Act (*Uposatha Kamma*), Invitation to Admonish (*Pavāraṇā*), disciplinary penance (*Mānatta*), and the Act of Reinstatement (*Abbhāna Kamma*), based on *Vinaya* texts such as the *Cullavagga*, *Mahāvagga*, *Parivāra*, and other *Vinaya* compendiums
 7. Studying the *Sīlaniddesa* of the *Visuddhimagga*, along with its detailed explanations and verbatim paraphrases, in order to understand the fourfold purity of morality
 8. Studying the *Dhutaṅganiddesa* of the *Visuddhimagga* to understand the thirteen ascetic practices, with encouragement to undertake at least two of them
 9. Studying *Jātaka* stories.

In the *Samgharājānuśāsanāva*, the *Samgharāja* specifically highlights the importance of learning the Pāli language and its grammar, as they are essential for understanding the Buddhist doctrine, which is preserved in Pāli (Vācissara, 2014, pp.204-205).

When analysing the above curriculum prescribed by the *Samgharāja* for the training of novices, it can be identified that he was primarily concerned with monastic discipline above all else. This may be because, when he himself entered the order, the entire monastic community was leading lives contrary to the monastic discipline, even to the extent of violating the four major offences that result in expulsion from the order. Therefore, in his mission to revive the Buddhist order, his objective was to establish a monastic community that strictly adhered to the monastic discipline

Since the reign of King Rājasimha I, two higher ordination ceremonies were conducted during the reigns of King Vimaladharmasūriya I and King Vimaladharmasūriya II, respectively, with the assistance of the Burmese *Saṅgha*, who arrived in the country from the region of Rāmañña. However, this higher ordination lineage could not be sustained, as the monastic community failed to adhere to the monastic discipline. The *Samgharāja* had a proper understanding on this situation, which may explain why he placed such strong emphasis on maintaining discipline within the community—for the preservation and continuity of both the higher ordination and the Buddhist order.

Blackburn also agrees that, although the descriptions in the *MV*, *SSCV*, and *SRV* record the revival led by the Saṃgharāja in a manner that honours his service, the other historical documents, including the above-mentioned three documents authored by the Saṃgharāja himself, show a shared textual community in which monks and laypeople from different parts of the country came together and developed a common understanding of the proper conduct of the monastic community by adhering to the instructions contained in these documents.

It should be noted that, although the Saṃgharāja engaged in transforming the corrupted Sri Lankan Buddhist order on the basis of Buddhist monastic discipline, the influence of certain external factors created challenges to the full achievement of his objectives. The issuance of the royal order by King Kīrti Śrī Rājasimha forbidding people who did not belong to the Govigama caste from receiving Siamese higher ordination is a clear example of this. Through this order, higher ordination and monkhood were restricted only to members of the Govigama caste, since the Govigama caste was the highest caste in the Kandyan caste system. It can be seen that even the Saṃgharāja was unable to oppose this order, although it clearly violated Buddhist monastic discipline and the basic principles promulgated by the Buddha himself.

Nevertheless, historical sources, including the *Mandārapura Puvata*, confirm that some monks from different parts of the country who had received higher ordination engaged in various unsuitable activities in order to maintain the customs of the castes to which they belonged. As mentioned in the *Mandārapura Puvata*, a monk from the southern part of the country who belonged to a Beravā clan (those engaged in drumming and dancing) once taught drumming and dancing while playing the drum himself because there was no one else to teach these arts to the younger generation and thereby preserve the customs of the caste (Candānanda, 2013, p.140). The text also records that some monks belonging to lower castes engaged in activities considered unsuitable for monastic life merely to maintain the customs and traditions of their castes and performed various services for the laity in order to maintain the lands belonging to their families (Candānanda, 2013, pp.139-141). Some of them were accustomed to standing up in the presence of the king and the aristocracy as a gesture of respect, despite being monks.

Following these developments, and in order to maintain the integrity of the Siamese higher ordination established with great effort, the king issued the order restricting higher ordination to members of the Govigama caste. This later became a cause of the division of the Buddhist order and the emergence of various sects within the country influenced by different parts of Myanmar. This royal decree became a major challenge to the objectives of the mission led by the Saṃgharāja, and some modern scholars identify it as a significant

weakness in the Saṃgharāja's reform movement.

In addition to that, one of the major accusations against the Saṃgharāja is that he enabled and facilitated the transfer of the Sri Lankan monarchy to the Nāyakkar dynasty in the eighteenth century. It is evident from the historical sources that King Śrī Vīra Parākrama Narēndrasimha requested the Saṃgharāja to educate and prepare his brother-in-law, referred to as “Nāyakkar Hāmuduruvō” (the younger brother of his queen, the future King Śrī Vijaya Rājasimha), for the future monarchy and to make arrangements for him to succeed to the throne (Candānanda, 2013, pp.100-102). This can later be supported by the fact that, as soon as he became king, he conferred upon the Saṃgharāja the title of “*Rājaguru*” (Royal Teacher) as a gesture of gratitude (Candānanda, 2013, p.102).

The Saṃgharāja might have decided to make him the king as the late king had requested him to do so and the new king was his beloved student. Furthermore, with the support of the new king, it would have been possible to re-establish the declined higher ordination in the country, which had long been the principal objective of his mission for the revival of the Buddhist order. However, later scholars have expressed the view that this was not an appropriate course of action, as the Sinhalese monarchy, which had continued in the country for more than two thousand years, was transferred to a dynasty of foreign origin (Vācissara, 2014, p.256). Whatever the case may be, the revival was successfully carried out under the patronage of the Nāyakkar dynasty. It can also be seen that King Kīrti Śrī Rājasimha may have used this revival, by extending his fullest support for the betterment of the Buddhist order, to gain popularity and favour among the monks and the people of the country, as he was originally of foreign origin and professed a religion other than Buddhism. Whether this should be identified as a political agenda or not remains open to interpretation. However, the support extended by the kings of the Nāyakkar dynasty to the revival led by the Saṃgharāja cannot be underestimated, as it may have been one of the major reasons for the success of the mission, since the country was politically stable under their reign and provided favourable conditions for the reformation of the Buddhist order.

5. Conclusion

The mission led by the Saṃgharāja for the revival of Buddhism and the Buddhist order in the eighteenth century included the establishment of Siamese higher ordination, the reformation of the Buddhist order and the traditional educational system, the preservation of ancient Buddhist sites, and the protection of customs, rituals, and cultural identities. Although these are considered the fundamental and prominent aspects of his mission, beyond them he undertook a far-sighted, long-term, and sustainable reform initiative aimed at transforming the conduct of the bhikkhus behind the broader revival.

This initiative was a *Vinaya*-centric reform that placed strong emphasis on monastic discipline as the foundation for the continuity and betterment of the Buddhist order. Prior to the revival, the order had largely deviated from the *Vinaya*; in response, the Saṃgharāja, together with his followers, initiated a movement to lead a monastic life in strict accordance with it.

Within the reforms introduced by the Saṃgharāja for the transformation of conduct, the *Vinaya* was established as the central foundation while including a focus on transforming the conduct of the Bhikkhus rather than merely regulating behaviour, an emphasis on moral integrity and accountability, the restoration of a disciplined monastic lifestyle, the introduction of systematic monastic education, and an overarching aim to ensure the spiritual purpose, purity and the institutional continuity of the Saṅgha. These elements are evident in the three documents attributed to the Saṃgharāja: the Anusāsanā Vatṭōruva, the Saṃgharājānuśāsanāva, and the instructional letter to Mūlagiri Vihāra.

Abbreviations

<i>MV</i>	Mahāvamsa
<i>SRV</i>	Saṅgharajavata
<i>SSCV</i>	Saṃgharāja Sādhu Cariyāva

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