

Tracing the socio-economic roots of the Buddhist concept of Universal Monarch (Cakkavatti)

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ABSTARCT

Universal monarch (*Cakkavatti*) who is also called the virtuous king (*dhammiko dhammaraja*) is a well-known concept in Buddhism. In cakkavatti sīhanadasutta of Dīghanikaya Buddha discusses the Universal Monarch. This idea focuses on the early Buddhist perspective of kingship and governance and the relationship between the king and his subjects. The mythical king Dalhanemi has been idealized in the sutta as the dhamma king who rules his kingdom according to the Buddhist law. The question here is how this concept emerged and why it was included in the Buddhist scriptures. One significant answer may be the development of the socio-economic condition of that particular period that led to the emergence of this concept.

Based on the socio-economic and historical background during the time of Buddha, this paper attempts to explore the roots of the concept of the Universal Monarch in the contemporary socio-economic system and why this concept was incorporated into Buddhism.

Keywords: Universal monarch, socio-economic condition of ancient India, Buddhist view on governance