

# Political Philosophy in Buddhist Thought



Thesis submitted to the Department of Philosophy,  
University of Kelaniya, Dalugama, Sri Lanka,  
for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
By  
Lim Ah Swan

ප්‍රවේශ අංකය:	789
වර්ෂ අංකය:	

**2011**

## Abstract

*Chapter I* of this seven-chapter thesis gives a brief survey the history of political thought up to modern times. *Chapter II* discusses the Aggañña Sutta in which we find the genesis, evolution of human society, kingship, state and social distinctions that developed in society. Its social contract is contrasted against later Western notion of such. Chapter III provides a panorama view of the political conditions in India during the time of the Buddha including important data pertaining to the education of princes, war exercises and sacrifices performed by kings to consolidate their powers. The administrative machinery with its attributes is surveyed in the *Chapter IV* including the nature and function of mote halls, the role played by Brahmin chaplains in state affairs, military, espionage and warfare. Laws and the development of rules of governance including monastic laws, judiciary and justice in practice at the time of the Buddha by monarchs and confederacies are examined in *Chapter V*. Since *Dhamma* is the basis of Buddhist political thoughts, *Chapter VI* examines it together with its numerous facets focusing attention on its doctrinal and ethical dimensions. Especially pertinent is the term *Dhamma* used in numerous dialectal forms in the Edicts of Emperor **Asoka**. Clearly neither **Asoka's** concept of *Dhamma* nor the Buddhist is Hindu *Dhamma* in its definition and applications. The crucial role of unrighteousness and its spreads in epidemic proportion leading kingdoms to utter disorder, disorganization and chaos are substantiated in several *Jātaka* tales. An important contribution to political thought in India is the Buddhist concept of Universal Monarch, a viable alternative to the then prevailing monarchical system of governance.

**Keywords:** divine rights of kings, Agganna sutta, democracy, monarchies, confederacies,, wars, armies, judiciary, social contract, unrighteousness, Dhamma, Universal Monarch.