

Zeitschrift: Asiatische Studien : Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Asiengesellschaft = Études asiatiques : revue de la Société Suisse-Asie

Herausgeber: Schweizerische Asiengesellschaft

Band: 46 (1992)

Heft: 1: Études bouddhiques offertes à Jacques May

Artikel: ryadeva and Candrakrti on the dharma of kings

Autor: Lang, Karen C.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-146956>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 11.01.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

ĀRYADEVA AND CANDRAKĪRTI ON THE *DHARMA* OF KINGS

Karen C. Lang, Charlottesville, Virginia

How can the *dharma* of liberation in which calm prevails be compatible with the *dharma* of kings in which force prevails?
If a king's desire is for calm, his kingdom is neglected;
if his mind is on his kingdom, his calm is destroyed,
for calm and ferocity are as incompatible as
cold and heat, water and fire.¹

The discussion of the king's *dharma* in Candrakīrti's commentary on the fourth chapter of Āryadeva's *Catuhśataka* reflects the conflict between an ascetic's pursuit of calm and a king's active involvement in mundane affairs. In this chapter Āryadeva examines the last of the set of four conceptual errors (*viparyāsa*), namely, the view that there is a self (*ātman*). He is not concerned here with philosophical concepts about the nature of the self² but instead concentrates on the ideas that ordinary people have regarding a self or 'I' that appropriates and possesses things. Candrakīrti's commentary presents Āryadeva's views on the king's *dharma* in the form of a dialogue between Āryadeva and an unnamed Indian king. A king, as Candrakīrti notes (D f.76a), best exemplifies a person under the influence of egotism (*ahamkāra*) and selfishness (*mamakāra*). The commentary demonstrates Candrakīrti's familiarity with the classical epic and *dharmaśāstra* positions on the function of the king as the embodiment of *dharma*. The king (in the *pūrvapakṣa*) argues that his royal duties, including the right to use force (*danda*), are sanctioned by the authority of ancient customs and treatises and that he has every right to be proud of his position and the duty that is his alone. The Buddhists counter with arguments designed to destroy this egotistical attitude, which they regard as a major impediment to the pursuit of liberation. The Buddhists' concept of a king's duty differs considerably from the positions expressed in the epic and *dharmaśāstra* literature. "This difference," Richard Gombrich says, "can be expressed as the absence of the very idea of *svadharma*; a king has the same duties as everyone else, except that his greater power

1 Aśvaghoṣa, *Buddhacarita*, IX.48cd-49.

2 This is the topic of chapter 10 of the *Catuhśataka*; see Karen Lang, *Āryadeva's Catuhśataka* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1986) pp. 95-103.

naturally gives him greater responsibilities.”³ In his advice to the king Āryadeva informs him about the nature and limits of his power.

The *Mahābhārata* (12.67-20-32) tells the story of how the gods created the first king to avoid the pitfalls of anarchy, the “law of the fishes” (*mātsyanyāya*), in which the strong overpower and consume the weak. The people agree to pay into the king’s treasury a share of their grain. Kauṭilya refers to this story in the *Arthaśāstra* (I.13.5-7) and indicates that kings in exchange for the financial support provided by a sixth of their subjects’ harvest provide them with protection. Numerous *dharmaśāstra* texts establish a correlation between the subjects’ payment of taxes to the king and his duty of protecting their interests. Nārada (XVIII.48) speaks of a tax of a sixth of the land’s produce as a wage (*vetana*) given to the king in return for his performing his duty.⁴ In the *Rāmāyaṇa* (III.6.II) also it is said that a king who receives one sixth of the harvest as wages and fails to protect kingdom fails in his duty. *Manusmṛti* (VII.130) also allots the king a sixth share of the harvest as a tax. This text prescribes that the king should gradually draw taxes from his people like the sun god – from whose eternal particles and that of the seven other “world protectors” (*lokapālas*) kings are made – draws water (IX.305). Although this exchange of protection for taxes amounts to a contract between the king and his people, this contract does not exclude the divine origins of kingship in the epic and *dharmaśāstra* accounts.⁵

The idea of kings’ receiving a sixth share of the harvest in exchange for their services is accepted in Buddhist texts but the divine origin of kings is explicitly rejected in the *Agañña Suttanta* (DN III, 85-97), which Candrakīrti draws upon and summarizes in his commentaries to verses 2 and 21 of the *Catuhśataka*. Āryadeva attacks the king’s pride in his position by reminding him that his job is an appointive one and his wages are paid by his people:

3 Richard F. Gombrich, “The Duty of a Buddhist according to the Pali Scriptures” in *The Concept of Duty in South Asia*, eds. Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty and J. Duncan M. Derrett (Delhi: Vikas, 1978), pp. 111-12.

4 Robert Lingat, *The Classical Law of India*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 213.

5 On the divine origins of kings see Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966) p. 24ff; Louis Dumont, *Religion/Politics and History in India* (Paris: Mouton Publishers, 1970) pp. 70-6; and Ariel Glucklich, *Religious Jurisprudence in the Dharmaśāstra* (New York: Macmillan, 1988) pp. 26-33.

2. Supported by one-sixth of your subjects' [harvest]
 what pride do you have?
 On every occasion your work
 depends upon your being appointed [by the people].

Candrakīrti explains: “When people of the first eon began to take what had not been given to them, the majority of the populace paid a man who was strong enough to protect the fields with wages amounting to one-sixth of their harvested grain.⁶ Thus he came to be called “a king” because he made the people happy with his work of protecting the fields.”⁷ (D f. 76b) From that time on, the people supported every king with wages of one-sixth amounting to one sixth of the harvested grain. The Buddhist myth, which is a deliberate rejection of the Vedic myth (RV 10. 90) of the divine origins of social classes, and of the preeminence of the brahmanical class, presents, in S.J. Tambiah’s words “an elective and contractual theory of kingship” in which the king is chosen — “in two senses of the word: he is both elective and elect” — by the people.⁸ Candrakīrti’s retelling of the story places the emphasis on the king’s strength and capability, rather than on his handsome appearance.⁹

The *Manusmṛti* indicates that kings should be of the warrior class, since it is the *ksatriya* class that is given the right to bear arms and protect lives and property (I.89-91; VII.2) and advises people to leave countries in which low class *śūdras* rule (IV.61).¹⁰ Āryadeva and Candrakīrti reject the idea that there are innate distinctions traceable back to class origins. There is nothing innate in those who are born into the *ksatriya* class that predisposes them towards the performance of royal duties.

- 6 This practice is mentioned in *Manusmṛti* VII.130-32,37. See also P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, 1962) vol. III, pp. 185-196 on the king’s taxes. Several of the sources he draws upon (listed on p. 189) argue that taxes are the wages of the king. *Rāmāyaṇa* III.6.11 also says that a king who receives one sixth of the harvest as wages and does not protect his kingdom will fail in his duty.
- 7 Candrakīrti in this passage derives the Sanskrit term *rāja* from the root *raj* “to delight.” The Pāli canonical version (D III 93) says that the king “delights others with the *dhamma*.” Cf. Lingat, p. 215: “he pleases his subjects (*rājayate*) because of his military might furnished with the Four Arms (Brh. Aiy I.66).”
- 8 S.J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror, World Renouncer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) pp. 13-22.
- 9 The Pāli canonical version (D:III.93) indicates the people choose the handsomest and best-looking among them to be king.
- 10 Lingat, p. 210, indicates that this is a minority opinion: “We can say that, in spite of Manu, the great majority of interpreters do not require that the king should be a Kṣatriya.”

IV.21 All methods of livelihood
 are designated in society as “caste.”
 Consequently, no [intrinsic] distinction due to caste
 is found among all human beings.

Candrakīrti again (D f. 86b) draws on the *Agañña Suttanta* to explain that different classes came about because of the acceptance of different livelihoods; the royal class arose in the past from the need of past generations to protect the fields from thieves. “The kings of today,” he says “mainly have their origins in the lower class (*sūdra*).”

Aiming a low blow at the king’s pride, Āryadeva suggests (v.22) that the king cannot be certain that his father even was a member of the royal class, since his mother may have been unfaithful with men of other classes. The sons of mixed unions, according to *Manusmṛti* (X.1-11) are not of the royal class.¹¹

While Hindu texts refer to the king’s charitable duties, his donations are frequently connected with sacrifices and are gifts to brahmins.¹² Buddhist texts shift the emphasis from the king’s duty as sacrificer to his role as donor and patron of the Buddhist community. Both Āryadeva (v.3) and Candrakīrti, however, stress that the king’s pride in his role as donor is inappropriate because he has only given back wealth that ought to be returned, wealth that was produced from his subjects’ labor and given to him as taxes.

The gods created sovereign power (*ksatra*) so that people would be protected. The principal duty of the king, according to Yājñavalkya (I.323), is the protection of his people, the gift of security (*abhaya-dāna*).¹³ Candrakīrti, however, does not associate the gift of security with the *dharma* of kings but with the bodhisattva’s actions in perfecting moral conduct (*sīla*) and patience (*ksānti*) (D f.113b). In the debate set out in Candrakīrti’s commentary on v.5, the king argues that his pride is justified because he protects his people. If he were not their protector and if traditional customs were not observed, all of society would be ruined. His argument is in line with the position of the *Mahābhārata*: (12.68.10ff): If the king does not exercise the duty of protection, the strong would steal from the weak, murderers would go unpunished, elders would receive no

11 *Manusmṛti* IX.14-15 denounces women for their fickle minds and willingness to be unfaithful to their husbands. A similar passage occurs in *Rāmāyaṇa* II.45-29-30.

12 See Gonda, pp. 13-14; P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, II,2,856ff.; III, p. 44.

13 See Lingat, p. 207. On the king’s duty as a protector see *Manusmṛti* VII, 2-3, 35, 88, 144; VII, 172, 303-5; and IX, 253. See also Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, vol. III, pp. 57-63.

respect, and all of civilized society would be destroyed. Āryadeva's response indicates the reciprocal nature of the relationship between a king and his people: without the support of his people the king's reign would cease. Unworthy kings may be dethroned.¹⁴

The king now clarifies his position. When a king protects all his people in the same way as he does his son, he will receive one sixth of the merit which belongs to his people who perform meritorious acts. According to *dharmaśāstra* literature, the king must compel his subjects to follow their respective *dharma*. He must know and oversee the duties appropriate to each caste, since he receives one sixth of the merit derived from the virtuous actions of his subjects who perform duties according to their caste.¹⁵ The merit which his subjects accumulate from the proper performance of their caste duties will also increase his lifespan and wealth (*Manusmṛti* VII, 136), but a king who fails to supervise properly his subjects will likewise receive a share of their demerit according to *Manusmṛti* VIII.304: "One sixth of the merit from all belongs to the king who protects [his people]. Also one sixth of the demerit belongs to the king who does not protect [them]." The future of the king depends upon his ability to protect his people properly; it is because of the protection that he has granted them that they have been able to perform their respective caste duties.¹⁶ Āryadeva reminds the king of this when he says:

IV.6. It is difficult to find among all the castes
 People who are satisfied with their own work.
 If you incur their demerit,
 It will be hard for you to have a good rebirth.

Candrakīrti adds (D f. 78a) that in this degenerate age it is rare to find people who perform their duties well. Most of their actions are demeritorious, and since a portion of their demerit is added onto his own, the king cannot possibly obtain a good rebirth. This bears out David Shulman's comments that "at no point is the king safely beyond the sorrows of his subjects. In effect, he is one with them, but far more constrained than any other member of the kingdom by the accumulated burden of their ills and demands."¹⁷

14 Gonda, pp. 33-34, cites several cases from epic literature and the *Jātakas*.

15 See *Manusmṛti* VIII, 304-8 and *Arthaśāstra* I.13.8; Glucklich, pp. 32, 112-113; and Lingat, pp. 211-12.

16 Lingat, p. 211.

17 David Dean Shulman, *The King and the Clown in South Indian Myth and Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) p. 92.

The king's duty of protecting his subjects primarily involves the infliction of punishment (*danda*) on criminals¹⁸ and the use of military force against rival kings. It is these functions which involve force and violence that are the main reasons that Buddhists regard kingship in an ambivalent way ("kingship is at the same time a delight and a disaster").¹⁹ In his role as the people's protector the king must use force;²⁰ and for Āryadeva and other Buddhists whose concept of *dharma* is defined by non-violence²¹ this fact inextricably links the king with evil (*pāpa*) "The king's contamination by evil must be seen as bound up with the very essence of his activity as a ruler, or, in the language of royal symbols, with his exercise of force – *danda*, the power of the staff, symbol of his right and duty to punish."²² Āryadeva implies (V.8) that in receiving wages from the people and protecting them by violent means the king commits himself to evil actions and thus reveals his lack of compassion. Candrakīrti explains (D f.79a) that if the king takes wages from his people, then, following the tradition of the good kings of the past, he must make an effort to protect the poor. But instead he resorts to such evil actions as threatening, beating, imprisoning, banishing and executing, criminals and other people who are unable to pay his wages. He cruelly deprives them of their lives and all their possessions. Because he is so adept at carrying out evil actions, he is singled out as someone who shows no compassion.

The king should not show compassion to people who are criminals, the king responds, for if he does not punish criminals, all his people will become degenerate. If the king punishes wicked people in order to protect his people, he incurs no evil, since he is engaged in benefiting the virtuous. Properly protecting his people is the king's *dharma* which leads him to heaven. *Manusmṛti* IX.253 states that kings who protect their people go to heaven because they have kept safe those who are virtuous and punished the wicked. Āryadeva disagrees, for if the king has no mercy for those who do wrong, ordinary people will not be protected (V.9). Candrakīrti comments (D f. 79b) that if people who do wrong do not become the

18 See Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, III, 399-406 on the variety of punishments at the king's disposal.

19 Āsvaghosa, *Buddhacarita* 9.41.

20 On the king's use of the *danda* see Gonda, pp. 17-19; Lingat, pp. 214-5; and Ariel Glucklich "The Royal Scepter (Danda) as Legal Punishment and Sacred Symbol" in *History of Religions* 28/2 (1988): 97-122.

21 See CŚ XII.23: "In brief, the Tathāgatas explain non-violence as virtuous conduct" (*dharmaḥ samāsato 'himsāḥ varmayanti tathāgatāḥ//*)

22 Shulman, p. 28.

object of the king's mercy, then no one will ever become an object of his mercy. Further, Aryadeva (vv. 10-11) and Candrakīrti (D ff. 80a-81a) assert that the king's own demerit (*apunya*) results from his duty to protect his subjects by showing no mercy in his punishment of law-breakers. Moreover, his evil actions and those of fishermen, butchers, and weapons-makers are equally demeritorious and liable to result in a bad rebirth, despite the *śāstra* arguments that these actions are appropriate for members of their castes. In order to deny the demerit, evil people may comfort themselves by citing the authority of *śāstras* but the demerit remains.

The king now attempts to defend his actions through an appeal to scriptural authority; the sages (*rṣi*) say that though a king may harm someone in the pursuit of his duty this is not a demeritorious action for him. Aryadeva responds that an intelligent person would not follow every action prescribed by such people since even among them inferior, middling and superior types occur (V. 14). Candrakīrti defines (D f. 82b) inferior sages as those who uphold violence as the king's *dharma* and superior sages as those who do not. As examples of brahmin sages whose conduct is not virtuous he cites Viśvāmitra's theft of dog meat from a *candāla*'s hut,²³ Vasiṣṭha's liaison with a *candāla* woman²⁴ and Jāmadagnya's annihilation of the entire royal class.²⁵

The *Mahābhārata* (12.29.138; 59.126) indicates that if kings protect their subjects in the same manner as parents protect their sons, their happiness is assured.²⁶ Yājñavalkya (I.334) also declares that a king should behave like a father to his subjects.²⁷ Buddhists agree that ancient kings who relied upon the authority of *śāstras* protected their people "like a son":

IV.15. Previously the virtuous kings protected society
 Just like [they protected] a son.
 Now those [kings] who rely on the law of an age of discord
 Have made it into a hunting ground.

23 See *Manusmṛti* X, 108, *Mahābhārata* 12.139, and verse 25 of the *rṣiparīcakajātaka* ed. and trans. by Ratna Handurukande, *Five Buddhist Legends in the Cāmpu Style* (Bonn: Indica et Tibetica Verlag, 1984), p. 10; and Glucklich, p. 138.

24 *Manusmṛti* IX.23 refers to this story.

25 See MBh III.116.43-62 and XII.59.30-33); and Robert P. Goldman, *Gods, Priests, and Warriors* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), pp. 23-5.

26 Gonda, p. 3.

27 Lingat, p. 211: "but Mitra-miśra glosses this text by adding that he must be qualified (like a father with regard to the members of his family) to secure their protection and control their actions and behavior."

Candrakīrti comments (D f.83a-b) that *cakravartins*²⁸ born before the age of discord (*kali yuga*), investigated which actions were proper and improper and took as authoritative only those treatises that upheld virtuous conduct. But, he says, “kings, born in the age of discord, rely on the evil nature of their own opinions, and are devoted to their desire for wealth alone.” These merciless kings devastate this world, just as if it were a hunting ground. In the *Mahābhārata* (III.37.186) the sage Mārkaṇḍeya describes the rule of the age of discord as a time when barbarian kings will rule with evil policies, proper caste duties will not be performed, people will be weak physically and morally, and the land will be overrun by predators. Hunting, as Shulman points out, “may well be a paradigmatic royal activity” but “like battle it stains the king with the evil consequences of *himsā*, “harm” to living beings.”²⁹ Several *Jātaka* stories illustrate the evil consequences of hunting.³⁰

In wielding the *danda* the king uses fear of punishment to restrain the wicked and in doing so protects the virtuous from internal aggression. To protect his people against the threat of external aggression he must wield the sword. The king contends that his actions in battle are not evil since the *śāstras* support the king’s role as a warrior.³¹ Candrakīrti (D f.84a) puts the following words in the mouth of the king: “After a king in the jaws of battle has triumphed over his enemies, he has great satisfaction in seeing the abundance of wealth that he has acquired through his heroism. But alternatively if he dies in battle, he surely will go to heaven, since he has sacrificed himself.³² [The *Bhagavad Gītā* says]:³³

28 The reign of a righteous king (*dhammarāja*) is described in M II 74-83; A I 109-110; D III 59-77. Tambiah, pp. 9-18, 32-53 discusses the development of this concept in early Buddhist literature; on the *cakravartin* see also Gonda, and John S. Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka* (Princeton:Princeton University Press), 1983, pp. 44-9.

29 Shulman, p. 28.

30 Discussed in John Garrett Jones, *Tales and Teachings of the Buddha* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979) pp. 59-66.

31 *Manusmṛti* VII 86 sanctions the king’s attacks on his enemies weaknesses, as does the *Arthaśāstra*.

32 Lingat, p. 223, provides numerous *Dharmaśāstra* references on the glorious end of a king who dies on the battlefield.

33 The Tibetan translation of Candrakīrti’s commentary quotes this verse in the *pūrvapakṣa* but it is not present in the Sanskrit fragments, edited by Haraprasad Shastri, “Catuhśatika of Ārya Deva,” *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. III, no. 8 (1914).

II.37 If you are killed, you will gain heaven;
 Or if you conquer, you will enjoy the earth.
 Therefore, son of Kunti, rise up,
 Determined to fight the battle

Āryadeva (V.17) and Candrakīrti question why people who relinquish their lives in battle are respected when people who give up all of their possessions for dice, liquor, and prostitutes are not entitled to respect.³⁴ Candrakīrti asks, (D f.84b) “how can it be right for someone who has no compassion, who has cruel intentions towards his enemy, who enthusiastically attacks in order to kill, and raises his sword with a view towards bringing it down on his enemy’s head, to go to heaven when the enemy kills him?” Both deny that heaven is certain for a warrior who has died in battle.

They also condemn the king’s practice of conquering his enemies and procuring his enemies’ wealth and compare the king to a thief (v. 16). Candrakīrti comments (D ff. 83b-84a) that the king’s action of protecting the people by attacking the weaknesses of his enemies has no more merit than the actions of thieves who prey on the weaknesses of those who guard houses and steal their employers’ wealth. The comparison is appropriate, since both thieves and kings use force to acquire wealth. Force, moreover, is the threat that underlies the gathering of taxes, the king’s wages that are paid in exchange for his role as a protector of his people. The king who collected taxes but failed to protect his people was regarded as a thief.³⁵ The opinions which Āryadeva and Candrakīrti hold on kings confirm Shulman’s observation that “the king is either a wholly righteous king or the exact antithesis, a thief.”³⁶ The kings of a past golden age were wholly righteous but kings of the present age are thieves disguised as kings.

Not only is the king compared to a thief, but Āryadeva (V. 7) and Candrakīrti consider him a fool as well. The king claims that he is independent, the lord of the world. Sovereignty, according to Nārada I.32-33, gives the king the right to please himself without depending upon anyone else.³⁷ But Āryadeva and Candrakīrti point out that in fact a king

34 On the evils of drinking liquor and penalties prescribed see *Manusmṛti* XI.91-98, and on gambling: IX.221-29. Cf. The *Kumbha Jātaka* in which Sakra counsels a king against the evils of drinking and induces him to give it up.

35 Gonda, p. 11.

36 Shulman, p. 63.

37 Lingat, p. 211.

never acts independently, since others must advise him on what should be done and not done. "When many associates advise him," Candrakīrti says, "he becomes indecisive. Most of the time he remains dependent on others (D f. 78b)." Because of his dependence on other people Candrakīrti compares the king to a trained dog or monkey that must obey the commands of its trainer.³⁸ Implicit here is a criticism of the king's dependence on his main advisor (*purohita*). "In reality," Lingat says, "the *purohita* is the brain of the king."³⁹

The king is further characterized as a fool because he lacks compassion (V. 13). Because of his attachment to sovereignty, Candrakīrti says (D f. 81b), he rejects "the path that benefits himself and others" and instead directs his mind towards the excitement of worldly action. Like a blind man, he does not see that he and his pleasures are impermanent. He should turn his mind towards moral behavior (*sīla*), since its results are not impermanent.

Although the king contends he is proud of his status because he can enjoy whatever objects he desire, Āryadeva points out that intelligent people see that the experiences a king claims as delightful place him in a disastrous position (V. 4). The king may indulge himself with the pleasures of fine jewels, fine women and fine wines, but sovereignty is a painful position to be in and will lead to disaster in future, Candrakīrti explains (D f.77b), since the king's senses are not under control. Moreover, the king's subjects avoid wrong actions because they fear the loss of their lives or property, but because a king has no one to advise him against demeritorious actions he will fail to do what is right and fail to reject actions that have disastrous consequences in the future. For these reasons, the kingship is "a reason for anxiety, not delight (D f.85a-b)."

The *dharmaśāstras* do not concern themselves with the manner in which a king comes to the throne; "no rule lays down why or how a particular individual is fit to qualify."⁴⁰ The exception is Nārada XVIII.25 which says that the austerities (*tapas*) that a king has performed are responsible for his assuming sovereignty over his subjects; this statement

38 Candrakīrti says the king also is subject to the control of others because he has secret agents as his eyes. The *Kāmandīya-nīti-sāra* XII.28 says that spies are the king's eyes (*cāracaksur mahīpatih*), quoted in Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, III, p. 131 along with similar passages from other works. Nāgārjuna in *Ratnāvalī* IV.38 always advises the king to watch over his kingdom "with the eyes of spies" (*cāracaksusā*).

39 Lingat, p. 217. On the role of the *purohita* see Gonda, pp. 17, 65-66; Dumont, pp. 64-65; and Shulman, p. 104.

40 Lingat, pp. 208-9.

however, “has a Buddhist sound.”⁴¹ In the *Kummāsapinda Jātaka* the bodhisattva explains that meritorious acts of generosity in his previous lives accounts for his sovereignty in the present life. A king’s past merit – not his royal birth – is the reason that he now rules a kingdom (v. 20). There is nothing remarkable about how one becomes a king. Many people can acquire the meritorious karma that will result in the acquisition of a kingdom, *Candrakīrti* notes (D f.86a).

A king who oppresses his people will suffer the consequences of this demeritorious karma in the future. The *Gandatindu-Jātaka* tells of a king who oppressed his people with heavy taxes. The bodhisattva advised him that kings who are careless in their rule meet with disaster in this world and in the world to come they are re-born in hell. Āryadeva reminds the king that although he can share his power with his subjects, he alone must experience the future suffering that will result from his oppressive rule. (v.24) A king, *Candrakīrti* claims, (D f. 88a-b) cannot rule without the use of force. He will necessarily incur evil (*pāpa*) because he has oppressed his people and it cannot be shared; he alone must experience the pain.

“Two prerogatives are attached to the royal function: the right to tax and the right to punish.”⁴² Both of these prerogatives seen from a Buddhist perspective inevitably involve the king in demeritorious actions. The king receives taxes, his wages for protecting his people from harm, but in using force he inflicts harm upon his own people and in doing so fails to protect them properly. He is a thief for taking their money without giving them the security that only a king who rules in accord with *dharma*, i.e., non-violently, can provide. He is, moreover, a fool because he focuses his attention on the present delights of sovereignty and fails to take notice of the disaster that awaits him in the future. The ambivalence (“kingship is at the same time a delight and a disaster”) with which Buddhist texts regard kingship is also associated with the Buddhist concept of the righteous king (*dharmarāja*), the ideal monarch who rules in accord with the principles of *dharma*. The welfare of his people depends on the king upholding *dharma*. If the king is compassionate he delights his people; if not, he is a disaster. The righteous king represents an ideal paradigm upon which the entire kingdom should then model itself. For the Buddhists the wheel (*cakra*) of the *cakravartin* kings replaces the *danda* as a the symbol for authority but even *cakravartin* kings may be subject to the unpleasant

41 Ibid., p. 215 n. 256.

42 Ibid., p. 213.

consequences connected with the exercise of sovereign power. The great emperor Kaniṣka is said to have been reborn as a fish with a thousand heads; because of his evil actions during his reign, a wheel of knives continually cut off these heads. In each of his successive rebirths he was decapitated; the wheel of the *cakravartin* continues to turn after his death and his heads filled the vast ocean.⁴³

43 Shulman, p. 93.