

The Ecclesiastical Code of Rājādhirājasimha

BY NANDASENA MUDIYANSE

Ecclesiastical codes promulgated by monarchs for the guidance of the Buddhist clergy and their orderly behaviour are known as *katikāvatas*. The earliest of these codes (as known to us), dating back to the 10th Cent.A.D., is found engraved in the well known tablets at Mihintale. The one promulgated by Rājādhirājasimha (1782-1798) of Kandy is generally known as Rājādhirājasimha Katikāvata and as published¹ by the late Sir D. B. Jayatilaka (*J.Ed.*), it is a shorter document when compared with those of the reigns of Mahinda IV (975-991), Parākramabāhu I (1153-1186), Parākramabāhu II (1234-1269) and Kirtti Śri Rājasimha (1747-1782).

Among the old manuscripts preserved in the library of the Colombo Y.M.B.A., belonging to the collection of the late Sir D. B. Jayatilaka, there is a document marked No. 039-2901 and labelled Rājādhirājasimha Katikāvata (*Rd.K*). It runs into 12 leaves of writing on both sides (ka-kai) except the first (ka) which is confined to the obverse only. The manuscript measures 19 ins × 12 ins and consists of 8 lines of writing per page. The letters are well formed and present no difficulty in reading. The language is Sinhalese prose with Pali verses inter-mixed.

In this document the history of the Buddhist Church from the time of Vikramabāhu of Kandy (who is said to have attained kingship in 2085 B.E.) is briefly narrated. What is of interest in this record is its concluding portion dealing with the reign of Rājādhirājasimha and the ecclesiastical code which he promulgated. From the 4th line of page 10 (klū) the document begins with the description of the reign of this monarch. An eulogy in Pali verse, followed by a Sinhalese translation speaks of this king as learned in the numerous branches of knowledge. His date of accession is given as B.E. 2324, Saka 1703 (1781 A.D.). He is said to have made donations to the Temple of the Tooth at Kandy where he paid reverence. Further he is credited with having lit a hundred thousand lamps in a single night in all the important places of religious worship in this island. Construction of preaching halls, images of the Buddha, restoration of shrines which had fallen into decay, regular gifts of alms to the clergy including *kathina* robes are other deeds of religious significance with which this ruler is credited

1. Sir D. B. Jayatilaka, *Katikāvata-saṅgāra*, Mahabodhi Press, Colombo, 1922, pp. 30-32.