

Functions of Gaing Oks and Gaing Dauks in the reign of King Mindon

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Abstract

Gaing Oks- Local Monk Leaders and Gaing Dauks- Local Monk Assistant Leaders were appointed in various forms and village tracts throughout the Kingdom. They supervised the religious affairs as directed by Venerable Sayadaws from Royal capital. They urged Sanghas to carry out Pariyatti and Patipatti for prosperity of sasana. Reports submitted by Gaing Oks and Gaing Dauks included the list of Sanghas, their teaching and learning activities for Buddhist scriptures in the locality, result of religious examinations. They sent eligible persons for ordination at the capital. They had to instruct the member of Sanghas to accept only offertories and to abstain Alijji practices, to adhere the Vinaya strictly.

Keywords: Gaing Oks, Gaing Dauks, sasana, Sanghas, activities.

Introduction

This research paper is an attempt to study the functions of gaing Oks and Gaing Dauks in the reign of king Mindon. Gaing Oks and Gaing Dauks were appointed in various forms. They supervised the religious affairs as directed by Venerable Sayadaws from the Royal capital. They urged Sanghas to carry out Pariyatti and Pariyatti sasana. The Local Monk Leaders and the Local Monk Assistant Leaders submitted the reports and had to instruct the member of Sanghas to adhere the Vinaya.

Functions of Gaing Oks and Gaing Dauks in the reign of King Mindon

King Mindon was the donor king of the sasana who achieved prosperity for Buddhism. King Mindon very much desired the propagation and prosperity of pariyatti, patipatti and pativedha, the three teachings of Buddha. The monarch as the patron of religion supported the sasana and took care of it for its perpetuation and prosperity by seeing to it that normally upright monks help to make the sasana maintains its unblemished existence.

Local Monk Leaders and Local Monk Assistant Leaders were appointed in various forms and village tracts throughout the kingdom to supervise the religious affairs as directed by the Sudhama Sayadaws. Mindon had 160 Gaing Oks- Local Monk Leaders, and 204 Gaing Dauks - Local Monk Assistant Leaders during his reign, altogether 364 such supervising chief monks of the Sangha sects.

Mindon was a monarch who was a devoted Buddhist. He made supplications to Sudhama Sayadaws for the strict adherence to vinayas by the bhikkhus, and for the study of Buddhist Scriptures in earnest throughout the country. The Local Monk Leaders and Local Monk Assistant Leaders responsible for the Sangha communities of the outlying parts of the country also saw to it that the Venerable Sayadaws' directives from Royal capital were taken to the word, and reminded their charges to live up to the Buddha's expectations on bhikkhus.

Gaing Oks and Gaing Dauks urged Sanghas to carry out pariyatti and patipatti for propagation of sasana. Those with potential abilities were made to impart their knowledge of the scriptures to the rest of the Sangha community in which they were in residence. Dhammacariyas- instructors in doctrine taught Buddhist Scriptures, according to the

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instructions of Gaing Oks and Gaing Dauks. Feedback reports were submitted to the Sudhama Sayadaws as to what was being taught and who studied what.

Sanghas were also reminded not to spend their days without taking classes by Gaing Oks and Gaing Dauks. The devout lay Buddhists were obligated to send in reports on the list of bhikkhus residing in their locality, their teaching and learning activities, and distinguish those who taught scriptures from those who pursued religious meditation-ganthadhura and vipassanadhura. In spite of the ongoing teaching and learning process within the sasana, those who did not even care to study such jatakas as Temiya and Janaka, and simple common suttas as the Mangala and Parittagyi the prescribed eleven verse suttas were reprimanded by the Provincial Leaders of Monks-Gaing Oks and Gaing Dauks. The Local Sangha chiefs who failed to admonish the wayward bhikkhus, and the bhikkhus who failed to abide by the instructions to work for the promotion of the sasana would all be punished.

Neither the chiefs nor the subordinate bhikkhus were to be slack in their daily life. The local Sangha sect chief-Gaing Oks and Gaing Dauks had studied the four volumes vinaya-dvematika, khuddasikkha, mulasikkha and dasadhamma sutta, aditta sutta, andhakavina sutta, anattalekkana sutta, all of which had to be learnt by heart. The Pali, commentaries and subcommentaries on Ubatovibhan was also to be studied. Both the chief Sangha and head of monastery were required to recite all the above-mentioned vinayas and suttas. Bhikkhus had to learn by heart the dvematika, khuddasikkha, mulasikkha and dasadhamma sutta, aditta sutta, andhakavina sutta, anattalekkana sutta. Novices had to learn by heart the paccavekkhana, lin, dan, sekhiya, khandhakavatta, pali exposition of dvattisanara, and anattalekkana sutta. For the promotion of the sasana and its perpetual development, bhikkhus residing in various communities and belonging to various sects had to abide by Sangha codes of conduct and excel in pariyatti sasana.

Gaing Oks- Local Monk Leaders, in accordance with the directives of the Sudhama Sayadaws, gave instructions to their Gaing Dauks- Local Monk Assistant Leaders in various communities as to the bhikkhus sitting for the examinations on Buddhist Scriptures. The presiding monks of the monasteries were directed by Gaing Ok-the local head of Sangha Community to see to it that no novice nor bhikkhu was left out in the teaching and learning process. The Gaing Ok toured around villages for supervision work. The bhikkhus and novices under a sect of Sangha had to sit for viva voce before the Gaing Ok, Gaing Dauk, or the presiding monk once every six months. They had to recite scriptures orally for a month. The orders to commence such examinations were notified by the Royal capital. The actual day and dates were left at the local authorities convenience in the reign of King Mindon.

Gaing Dauks had to submit the list of Sanghas. The lists of candidates had to be put up to Gaing Oks. Reports on those who could not sit for the examination to be submitted with appropriate remarks that they were still in the process of preparing for the examinations. Royal decrees called for biannual examinations to be held and the results were to be sent to the Sayadaws by runners service. Those making the trip to the Sudhama would have to make up for the examination they missed.

The result of examinations submitted to the Sudhama included such inventories as name, age, monastery, bhikkhu level and service, and the components achieved and yet to achieve. It also included further actions taken by local heads and assistant heads of Sangha as to the teaching and learning program in the respective Sangha communities. The list of elderly and the infirmed, as well as the young novice learners were also to be mentioned in such reports. There were those who, in spite of all the admonishing by the assistant heads, failed to cooperate in the teaching and learning program for Buddhist Scriptures and thus, expelled from the Sangha sect. Strict and severe reprimands and appropriate punishment for such wayward

bhikkhus as might arise would certainly be to the advantage of the sasana, the local heads and assistant heads were found to have suggested.

Gaing Oks and Gaing Dauks of Sangha Communities in the provincial area of the kingdom should practise ganthadhura and vipassanadhura, and preach dana, sila. They also urged bikkhus to practise patipatti sasana. The Thathanabaing Sayadaw-Supreme Leader of the Religious Order asked his Gaing Oks-Local Monk Leaders and Gaing Dauks-Local Monk Assistant Leaders throughout the country to nominate eligible persons for the planned ordination of 1000 bhikkhus at the capital, a drive to award those keen on the study of pariyatti.

The king, with the aim of conforming to the Vinaya in the initiation of individuals into the Sangha, chose only those monks who adhered to the scriptures as mentors. Entering the Sangha community as a monk requires a full age of twenty years. The Sudhama Sayadaws were asked to take note of the age limits, and to perform the act properly so that the upasampada act (ordination) will be a success. The Sudhama Sayadaws relayed the king's message to Local Monk Leaders and Local Monk Assistant Leaders throughout the kingdom.

The Supreme Leader of the Religious Order asked the Gaing Oks-Local Monk Leaders to screen out Alijji monks and try them in accordance with Vinaya. The Local Monk Leaders had to instruct the member of Sangha to abandon ritually unlawful belongings, and to accept things offered. The royal patron of the sasana had desired the prosperity of it by doing away with Alijjis, the individuals that stood in the way of the sasana, and at the same time taking necessary steps to increase the numbers of the noble Lijjis. The members of the Sangha who presided over the sasana were to adhere strictly to the Vinaya. The Local Monk Leaders were responsible for the members of Sangha in the township, to suppress Alijjis and to give advise and guidance to turn them into Lijjis.

The Local Chief Monks and the Assistant Local Chief Monks admonished the Sanghas to avoid such Alijji practices, giving out flowers, fruits, exchange of goods, making out loans, breeding cattle, riding carts and boats, smoking for no reason, wearing sandals, using the umbrella, which were making the sasana impure. Thus, these must be avoided and strive in learning scripture and doing meditation which were the two activities much desired by the Lord Buddha.

Gaing Oks- the Local Monk Leaders and Gaing Dauks - Local Monk Assistant Leaders should read out the decrees and the royal orders to their resident charges in the monastery, and make investigations on the Alijji practices. The members of Sangha must be pure in their behaviour to prosper the sasana. The Local Monk Leaders and Local Monk Assistant Leaders must get rid of the Alijjis and promote Lijjis. Only then the sasana would enjoy a lasting prosperity. When monks and novices broke the summons' instructions, the Sudhama Sayadaws must punish the Local Monk Leaders and their Local Monk Assistant Leaders.

The Local Monk Leaders and Local Monk Assistant Leaders had to attend the religious conferences at the Sudhama in the capital. The Local Monk Leaders and Local Monk Assistant Leaders had to make admonition and sermons to villagers in the reign of King Mindon.

Conclusion

Gaing Oks and Gaing Dauks were responsible for the members of Sangha under King Mindon. Local Monk Leaders and Local Monk Assistant Leaders supervised the religious affairs in the locality, in accordance with the directives from Royal capital. They urged

Sanghas to carry out Pariyatti and Patipatti for the propagation of sasana and had to make admonition the Sanghas to adhere the Vinaya. Gaing Oks and Gaing Ducks had to submit report on the religious affairs of the locality.

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