

## Kyoto Abstract

### Dharmarāja in the Mahābhārata, dhammarāja in early Buddhist literature

This paper is a further contribution to a series of papers exploring apparent parallels between early Buddhist literature in Pāli/Sanskrit and the Mahābhārata. Given the centrality of Yudhiṣṭhira in the Mahābhārata as one kind of exemplar of a (flawed) model for kingship, as an embodiment of dharma in various manifestations and as a figure exemplifying a realistically fractured persona, and that dharmarāja is one of his most prominent epithets, it is only to be expected that he has been recently compared with Aśoka, himself a leading exponent of the need for the king to manifest dharma in all of his activities.

Less attention, however, has been paid to the fact that the Buddha himself receives the epithet dhammarāja in certain passages in the *DN*, *SN*, and *AN* as well as at least once in the Jātakas. Certain early texts in Buddhist Sanskrit also use this epithet of him. Similarly this epithet is used of kings such as Bimbisāra and idealized kings who are regarded as cakravartins. In this paper I explore some of these passages to determine if they are being used in a political or a religious sense, and what the sense of dhamma/dharma is in the compounds where they occur. I also ask whether there is a direct relation between the use of this epithet and the qualities expected of the cakravartin.

Finally, I explore any parallels or disjuncts between the Buddha as dhammarāja and Yudhiṣṭhira as dharmarāja, and speculate on the question of intertextual influence.