



ceylon

and

people

Vol: 2

N. E. Weerasooria

JPL



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# CEYLON AND HER PEOPLE

## Volume 2

N. E. Weerasooria

This volume stresses the historical and cultural background of Ceylon, its banners and battles, its literature and folklore, and proceeds to relate its resistance to foreign invasion. In this respect it is a continuation of Volume 1. From the political angle, the emergence of the Kandyan Kingdom and the genius of Raja Sinha II is its main theme.

The volume also surveys the rise of the Netherlands as a great European power through the tenacity and courage of her people. But luxury corrupts and the great Dutch Empire decays and falls due to internal strife and external aggression. The Kandyan Kingdom also disintegrates through corruption and nepotism.

The volume ends with the arrival of the British.

Printed in Ceylon



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Colombo 2





WITH DRAWN  
FROM  
CIRCULATION

புத்தக நூலகப் பிரிவு  
மாண்புமிகு நூலக செயலாளர்  
யாழ்ப்பாணம்

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# CEYLON AND HER PEOPLE

Volume Two



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by

N. E. WEERASOORIA



தேசிய நூலகப் பிரிவு  
மாநகர நூலக சென்னை  
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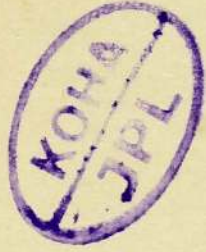
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*Printed in Ceylon*





To  
the Memory  
of  
Kathleen

தேசிய நாகைப் பரிஷத்  
மாநகர் நூலகச் சேவை  
மாநகர் நூலகச் சேவை



A Sinhalese king makes a financial deal with a foreign nation and comes to grief. The foreigner takes all his produce, but his debt ever increases. A Sinhalese proverb says: "Do not try contortions that you do not understand, for you destroy your race, a wise admonition for Ceylon politicians and planners at all times."



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## P R E F A C E

It was no easy task to get together the material on which this book is based. I here express my debt to my friends who made works of reference available. One, in fact, read the typescript and made useful suggestions; that is an unpleasant task, rarely undertaken, still less done. As Gibbon said, "some will promise from politeness, and some will criticise from vanity".

This book began to take shape during my convalescence from a serious illness several years ago; that was the only break I had from arduous engagements, professional, business, educational, coupled with important government assignments. It snapped the chain of my daily routine and tucked me up in bed. I had at last time to think; it was a refreshing experience.

Only a writer enjoys the delight of watching page after page of manuscript taking its proper place. It is an absorbing occupation to get the right word, like a gem well set, the right sentence, the right paragraph; then to tear them all up and start again, dissatisfied with the result. This book has undergone many such operations.

It was suggested to me to write my memoirs but I was rightly advised by my son Norman that memoirs generally die with the author; posterity does not concern itself with ancestors. But incidents in the story of our people attract because they are our heritage; so I have, wherever possible, eliminated myself, and substituted the story of Ceylon and Her People. It is, as I have said in my Introduction, an epic.

It is a singular coincidence that this book was written in part in a village within the ancient kingdom of Kotte and, in part in a village near Panduwasnuvara in the Kurunegala District; both were areas at one time beset by foreign invasions; the former felt the first blast of the Portuguese tornado, the latter the receding waves of the South Indian assaults. I was, therefore, sitting in the silent hours of the night and holding communion, as it were, with Ceylon's memorable past. It was an incomparable setting in which to reconstruct scenes once enacted.

But for the skill of my physician and the care of the nursing staff of the institutions in which I was lodged during my illness, this book would not have been written. Among those who gave me



references, otherwise unavailable I cannot omit the name of Mr. Harris de Silva, Assistant Director of the National Archives and my son, Wickrema, an indefatigable purveyor of books.

A co-sharer in this enterprise was my clerk, Mr. Albert Perera, who typed the manuscript and re-typed the typescripts through their many revisions, my clerk, Mr. S. Attygalle, who checked the typescripts, in particular the Sinhalese verses; at one stage, Mr. B. N. Jayawardene was of assistance. My friend who read the typescript I leave anonymous as I know that he would so prefer; may all these contributors to this effort, share in its merit.

*Ettavata ca amhehi  
Sambhatam Puñña Sampadam  
Sabbe Satta anumodantu  
Sabba Sampatti Siddhiya.*

May all beings too enjoy whatever merits we have accumulated, so that success and happiness may come to them.



## KANDE UDARATA

The sounding cataract haunts me like a passion; the tall rock,  
the mountain and the deep and gloomy wood, their colours and  
their forms are still to me a feeling and a love.

—WORDSWORTH (ADAPTED)

செவ்விய நூலகப் பிரிவு  
மாநகர நூலக சேவை  
யாழ்ப்பணம்.





## CHAPTER I

### KANDE UDARATA

On the death of Raja Sinha I the spectre of the strong arm had vanished from Ceylon's grey horizon; petty kingdoms rose in revolt; Portuguese policy reversed from outposts and trade into conquest and subjugation. Lisbon erroneously formed the view that she could now take over and hold with ease the areas which Raja Sinha I had subdued; Lopes de Souza was accordingly instructed to subjugate Jaffnapatam and Kande Udarata. Two Sinhalese princes, who had been long residents of Colombo and had served in the Portuguese forces, Konappu Bandara and Jayavira Bandara, were despatched by him to Kandy, carrying the Portuguese banners.

De Souza, however, soon lost control both of himself and of his own actions; his behaviour towards Dona Catherina, the young claimant to the throne of Kandy, was indiscreet; his next fatal lapse was to send Jayavira's dagger through Jayavira's heart; this wild behaviour incensed the people and Jayavira's troops; they transferred their allegiance to Konappu Bandara.

Konappu Bandara was a man of consummate ability; his long associations with the Portuguese had made him a master of intrigue and he was also an expert swordsman; the versatility of his genius won him the highest encomiums from both foes and friends; verbal praise of him is a surplusage, for deeds proclaimed the man.<sup>1</sup>

The Portuguese force was trapped at Balana and destroyed at the battle of Danture (A.D. 1594); the Captain-General and his two nephews were slain. Konappu Bandara moved fast; he doffed the prosaic name Konappu Bandara and assumed an attractive title Vimaladharmasuriya, making himself one with the popular tradition and the ancient religion; he had himself proclaimed as the King of Kandy.<sup>2</sup>

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1. *Culavamsa* (Geiger) Ch. 94; Pieris Vol. 2 pp. 92, 112; Codrington, p. 105.  
2. Ribeiro, pp. 86, 88.



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Prince Don Philip who fled from the Sinhala Rata through fear for Raja Sinha, embraced the religion of the Portuguese, lived with Konap Bandara, and sending the army to Senkadagala.

After making Prince Philip the King there, the post of Commander was given to Konap Bandara, and that wise prince, was not satisfied with that thus conferred with the Sinhala Army.

Konappu Bandara next eliminated Dona Catherina his only possible rival to the throne, by taking her to wife, a princess then and later very much in Ceylon's picture; she was a versatile woman, possessed of all the charms of her sex; she adapted herself to several husbands with feminine facility.

Konappu Bandara's next move, the restoration of Buddhism was a master-stroke; the Saivites installed by Raja Sinha I were removed from Buddhist temples and Buddhist areas; the revered *Sripadasthana* was restored to the Buddhist priesthood; the sacred *Dalada* was brought back to Sirivaddhana (Kandy) and a magnificent Maligava built as its receptacle.

A Buddhist mission was despatched to Lower Burma with instructions to return with a mission of Burmese High Priests; under their presidency the ceremony of Higher Ordination was held in Ceylon at Sirivaddhana<sup>4</sup> (Kandy) after the lapse of many years (A.D. 1597). The fanaticism of the Portuguese and the vengeance of Raja Sinha I came into liquidation. These meaningful steps won him the encomiums of the Buddhist Chronicle.

“He (the prince) full of faith, mighty by reason of his merit, became King under the name of Vimaladharmasuriya highly famed in the town of Sirivaddhana. He had the Tooth Relic which had been brought to Labujagama in the possession of Sabaragamuwa (Delgamuwa, near Ratnapura),<sup>5</sup> fetched thence, and in order to venerate it day by day in his own fair town and to dedicate a ritual

3. *Mandaram Pura Puvatha*, Verses 76-77.

4. *Culavamsa* Ch. 99.

5. *ibid.* Ch. 99. 6.



to it the wise (prince) had a two-storeyed, superb temple erected on an exquisitely beautiful piece of ground in the neighbourhood of the Royal palace. Here he placed the Tooth and in lasting devotion brought offerings to it.

“As there were no bhikkus in the island of Lanka on whom the ceremony of admission to the order had been performed, the King sent officials to the country of Rakhanga (Arahan in Lower Burma) invited Nanchcakka and other bhikkus, had them brought to the island of Lanka made them take up their abode in the noble city Sirivaddhana and cared for them in a reverent manner.”<sup>6</sup>

Hence arose, as though from the ashes of her former capitals, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruva, Sitavaka and others of less repute, the fine glory of Senkadagala which like her illustrious forbears was for another 200 years to be sanctified by fire and sorrow before the light of Sri Lanka was to suffer a temporary extinction.

The origin of Kande Udarata and its establishment as a separate kingdom (A.D. 1474) under Vikramabahu has been elsewhere related,<sup>7</sup> and so it remained up to the arrival of the Portuguese (A.D. 1505). On this kingdom and its King the Portuguese machine had set to work; in terms of its stereotyped technique, it struck at the head.

A priest of the Franciscan order who had arrived in Ceylon with the ambassadors despatched to Portugal sought audience with Jayavira with two companions; he inveigled himself into the King's good graces with such success that a large tract of land in the kingdom was presented by him for the construction of a church and houses.<sup>8</sup>

“They soon obtained so much influence over the King himself that he was anxious to be baptised and was prevented from doing so only through fear of the displeasure of his subjects (A.D. 1545). The Father accordingly advised him to apply to the Portuguese Governor of India to send some troops for his protection and one of the priests was despatched with this message.”<sup>9</sup>

This ingenious suggestion was an admirable piece of brain-washing to which its guileless victim succumbed. The Portuguese were on the eve of constructing a fortress in Kandy and effecting a bloodless temporal and spiritual conquest, as they had done at Kotte.

6. *ibid.* Ch. 99, 12, 16.

7. See *supra*, Vol. 1, p. 18.

8. Ribeiro pp. 28, 29.

9. *ibid.*



But the watch-dog Mayadunne, ever alert, like unto the fierce three-headed Cerberus that guarded the entrance to the underworld, growled and barked his veto; he warned the king of the trap laid for him; for he realized that his nephew at Kandy was about to fall into the same pit into which his nephew at Kotte had fallen.

Mayadunne sent messages to him and urged him to abandon his design. He pointed out that the inevitable consequence would be that either the Portuguese would seize his kingdom or his subjects would turn on him and put him to death. Jayavira acted on his advice and the Portuguese Captain on his arrival in Ceylon met with a bow and arrow reception on the Kandyan hills in the best native style and took to his heels.

The anecdote of Captain Antonio Baretto's discomfiture has been elsewhere told.<sup>10</sup> A reconciliation between the Portuguese and Jayavira was, however, effected; the entire blame was put on cousin Mayadunne's treachery but the nefarious scheme of the Franciscan friars was foiled. The installation of a Portuguese garrison at Kandy in the style of Kotte and Colombo was averted.

The Franciscan friars, however, continued their set policy, which was then a world policy, unabated. Karaliadde Bandara, the King's son, was baptized in the manner of Dharmapala, the grandson of the King of Kotte and in the same way as the king and the royal family of Jaffnapatam some years later. Jayavira fearing for his throne threatened his son with death; Karaliadde fled to Uva and declared war on his own father.<sup>11</sup>

The machinations of the Portuguese had disrupted the Kandyan kingdom; but a reconciliation was again effected and the Portuguese given permission to return within certain prescribed limits but the equilibrium of the kingdom was never restored. A climax was reached when the king gave his daughter as a Queen to Dharmapala in preference to Raja Sinha who had also sought her hand. The draw, therefore, resulted in the union of Kotte and Kandy against Sitavaka.

Raja Sinha had only one choice left to him; it was essential that he should break up the new confederacy, for on its dissolution depended the continuance of Ceylon's existence as an independent nation; he displayed in the political field the same clarity of mind which won him victories and distinction in the field of battle; he

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10. See *supra*, Vol. 1 p. 235

11. Ribeiro, p. 30.



invaded the Kandyan kingdom (A.D. 1582) and encamped with 30,000 men on the Hill of Balana. Karaliadde gave him battle with 6000 men, mostly bowmen; they were routed and were put to flight.

The districts of Yatinuwara, Tumpane and Matale became, thereupon, subject to Raja Sinha's rule; the subjugation by him of the entirety of the Kandyan kingdom soon followed. By his timely decision to break up an imminent confederacy against him and its execution, Raja Sinha had once again averted the domination of the Portuguese over the whole Island.

Overcome with grief by this disaster, Karaliadde fled to Trincomalee where he died. His young son was entrusted by him to Joma Singhe Bandara who later took refuge in Goa, was converted to Roman Catholicism and assumed the name of Don Philip; the Kandyans in his suite were also baptized; the entire Royal family of Kandy underwent the same fate as the Royal family of Jaffna.

Subsequent events in the Kandyan Kingdom, which occurred after Raja Sinha's death, took a different turn; the people themselves remained Buddhists and Candia better known to them as Senkadagala was destined to carry on the torch of independence after it was put out at Sitavaka; these events are narrated elsewhere.

It is reasonable to suppose that during Raja Sinha's invasion of Kandy, the bhikkus of the kingdom gave their support to their own king with whom they had close connections and thereby incurred Raja Sinha's displeasure. He grasped the danger of the situation as he took a broader view of its implications than the Buddhist bhikkus; as between the safety of the state and his religious inclinations, he realized that the safety of the state was of primary importance and the punitive measures that he took were a necessary consequence.

A parallel can be found in the events that transpired about a century later (A.D. 1669) during the reign of one of his successors, Raja Sinha II. "On that occasion a rebellion occurred in Ceylon. About which time appeared a fearful blazing-star. Just at the instant of the rebellion, the star was right over our heads. And one thing I very much wondered, at which was that whereas, before the Rebellion, the Tail stood away towards the Westward from which side the Rebellion sprung, the very night after (for I very well observed it) the Tail stood away towards the Eastward. And by degrees it diminished quite away."<sup>12</sup>

12. Knox, Part ii Ch. Vii, p. 58.



“Some of the priests supported the Rebellion. In consequence some of the priests, against whom the King took displeasure, were beheaded, afterwards cast into the river. Which thing caused amazement in all the people, how the King dared to do it towards such holy and reverend persons....But the reason the King slew them was because they conspired in the Rebellion. They threw aside their habits and got their swords by their sides.”<sup>13</sup>

During the desperate struggle for survival and independence at Senkadagala, Dom Joao Periyar Bandara alias Dharmapala who had followed the Portuguese band-waggon from Kotte and concealed himself in their hide-out of the Colombo fortress, sought to take advantage of the Lion's death and foolishly made his way to the Lion's den at Sitavaka.<sup>14</sup> The apostate soon found himself in serious difficulties surrounded by hostile Sinhalese forces that despised him as a renegade; his frantic calls for help were answered by the new Captain-General Dom Jeronimo de Azavedo (A.D. 1594-1612), the man of evil, Joao was pulled out with great danger to de Azavedo himself.

Both fled back to the fortress at Colombo but it was only a miraculous deliverance that saved the King and the Captain from extermination; the arrival of a powerful Sinhalese nobleman, Samarakoon, who came to their assistance at Gurubebila near Hanwella (A.D. 1594) turned the tide; Samarakoon later earned his reward when the Portuguese, on suspicion of his renewal of associations with the Sinhalese, confiscated his assets and sent him in chains to Goa where he died.<sup>15</sup>

Shortly after his escape Joao's miserable existence came to an end; he died as he had lived in the Church; he was interred in the convent of St. Francisco at Colombo; the only king of Ceylon whose career had not terminated with Buddhist rites, he disgraced both the faith and the kingdom of his ancestors.

Dom Joao had been completely brain-washed; he lost not only his name but also his personality in this process. It may well be said of him that he was a man more sinned against than sinning; he can be well-erased from the slate of Ceylon's kings so that not even his name remains; for he was only a Portuguese puppet. The *Culavamsa* has displayed a keen journalistic sense; it has given him a complete black-out; no reference to him appears in its pages.

13. *ibid*, Part iii, Ch. iii, p. 75.

14. Pieris, *Ceylon and the Portuguese*, pp. 126, 129.

15. *ibid*. pp. 130, 133, 137, 163; Ribeiro, 81.



De Azavedo, the man of evil, next enacted a ceremonial farce which came to be known as the Malvana Convention (A.D. 1597); he preselected the voters of an assembly for the election of the King of Portugal as the King of Ceylon on the basis of the legal fiction that Joao's gift and bequest of Ceylon to him was valid and effectual.

Eight Sinhalese noblemen, five of whom were Doms—a high sounding Portuguese title which in Ceylon signified subservience, constituted the pre-arranged electors at this ludicrous farce; “they knelt round a table placing their hands on a Missal and swore by the Holy Evangelists to recognise the King of Portugal as their lawful King and render him fealty, homage and obedience as if he was their native sovereign”. The Portuguese officials for their part gave a guarantee on behalf of their King that the laws and customs of the Sinhalese would be maintained inviolable for ever.<sup>16</sup>

Flags were then exchanged and de Azavedo went in procession through the principal streets where at pre-arranged spots pre-arranged criers proclaimed the King of Portugal as King of Ceylon. The people of Ceylon had witnessed for centuries their kings lead the battle or processions in person and this impersonal fiction could have made no appeal to their emotions, far less to their reason.

The King of Portugal went into cold storage in his palace at distant Lisbon; they dubbed De Azavedo, the man of evil, as “The King of Malvana”, a village now known to Ceylon school boys as the village where grows a delicious tropical fruit (*Rambuttan*); the glory of the Convention and the grandeur of the King of Malvaña, are all forgotten and unknown; the people of Ceylon recall them not while they relish the luscious and savoury flesh of the fruit grown in the venue where the Convention was held.

But Hieronimo de Azavedo soon became notorious as the most wicked of the many men of evil who scourged the land of Lanka; he found it no easy task to execute either the policy of conquest or the policy of administration which he set on foot as the King of Malvana. The King's view was that:

“Ceylon is the most important conquest to be achieved in India; when with the help of God you arrive at Goa you are strictly enjoined to reduce the whole of it into submission to me; many years have now elapsed since the task was first taken in hand and it is well known to you how vast an expenditure my treasury has incurred on this account.”<sup>17</sup>

16. Pieris, p. 139; Ribeiro p. 85; Queyroz p. 529.

17. Ribeiro, p. 194.



In his attempt to carry out his sovereign's mandate De Azavedo, the man of evil, met again with a great reverse "Dom Hieronimo had again to flee (1603) before the victorious arms of the Sinhalese king, his army a disorganized rabble, his reputation destroyed."<sup>18</sup> This campaign, the most important during his eighteen years' administration in Ceylon and named by the Portuguese historians as the Great Retreat was immediately followed by the revolt of the native troops.<sup>19</sup>

His administrative set up was to divide Ceylon into four great Provinces or Dissavannies with a Dissava at the head of each. Whatever his intention may have been, it was found that the condition of affairs at the end of 1610 was in the highest degree unsatisfactory. This fact was revealed by a Portuguese, who had fifteen years of experience of the country, in a memorandum referred for a confidential report to the Viceroy. The last twenty years of warfare (up to 1610), sixteen of them under Don Hieronimo and the rest under Pedro Homem Pereira and after him Pedro Lopes de Sousa had cost the Portuguese twelve thousand lives and half a million cruzados of treasure, but the end appeared as far off as ever.

"One of the chief reasons for this was the excessive harshness displayed towards the natives, as the officials who governed them had almost absolute power; they were in addition ground down to oppressive taxation and laws of terrible severity. The policy of destroying their temples before the people was pacified and rendered familiar with foreign rule was greatly to be deprecated.

"The Portuguese soldiers were few in number and the scanty forts insufficiently garrisoned, while the continuance of hostilities served the private interests of the Commanders of the native troops, whose authority and opportunities for peculation would be terminated with the war. Natives who had no right to do so were permitted to assume the titles of King, Prince and Mudaliyar and thus obtained an undesirable influence over their countrymen who were only too ready to rise in revolt at the bidding of every renegade."

Various other reasons are also given and the writer concludes with the words: "And the ultimate reason I assert is that we Portuguese are evil Christians with little fear of God."<sup>20</sup>

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18. *ibid.* p. 179.

19. *ibid.* p. 140.

20. From the *Documents, Remittidos da India* Vols. 1—IV cited by Ribeiro, p. 183, 179.



While the affairs of the Portuguese deteriorated, the Kandyan Kingdom although hemmed in by the hills, increased in power and influence under Vimaladharmasuriya; he was succeeded by Senarath (A.D. 1604-1638) but although the fortunes of war varied, the Kandyan Kingdom under him was a factor that could not be ignored; it now attracted to itself all the former loyalties. Both combatants were, however, exhausted by continuous warfare and a truce was called (17th August, 1617) which was of short duration. De Azavedo assumed duties as Viceroy in India (1612); there were several successors; the most notable was Dom Constantine de Saa (1619).

De Saa found that the Portuguese army during the period of peace, 'had degenerated into a lawless rabble of six hundred men, a terror to the peaceful citizens who were compelled to have recourse to arms in self-defence'.<sup>21</sup> In De Saa's plan of reorganization was included the erection of forts at Trincomalee and Batticaloa (A.D. 1623) which made the renewal of hostilities inevitable; the King was enraged and made preparations to attack the Portuguese.

De Saa in anticipation of the King's movements set out on an expedition to Uva where his troops indulged in the customary ravages of Uva and the Kandyan Hills and the burning of cities in these districts. Negotiations were set on foot by the King for a peace which was welcomed by the Portuguese, as both sides were exhausted by years of warfare. But De Saa received an order from the Viceroy Conde de Linharss with definite instructions to reduce the Kandyan Kingdom once for all and accusing him with a certain degree of negligence.

Against the advice of the religious bodies and captains of experience, De Saa set out again on an expedition of conquest; he appears to have been completely outmanoeuvred by the son of Senarath, Prince Raja Sinha, who tempted him to invade Uva; the Prince had retired before his arrival but he had the satisfaction of burning the city; he then realized that both he and his army had been trapped.<sup>22</sup>

The hopeless situation in which he found himself has been attributed to: "four modeliards, natives and all Christians, born in Colombo, members of the noblest families in the Island and related to the Chief Portuguese settlers, all men of wealth who had received high distinctions, to whom the General rendered high respect and

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21. Ribeiro p. 306.

22. *ibid.* pp. 223, 224.



kept them by his side and in many matters followed their advice. They were in command of the men at arms of our territory and they were named Dom Alexo, Dom Cosme, Dom Belthezar and Dom Theodozio...they were the cause of our total ruin....for in the end the blacks are all our enemies.’<sup>23</sup>

“The enemy on their side were advancing to meet us (at Randeni vala, in Wellavaya 1631) and the first to declare his treason was Dom Cosme who slew a Portuguese soldier and placed his head on the front of a lance, this being the signal he had arranged with the enemy. The rest of the conspirators turned their arms against us.” De Saa and his men were surrounded on all sides and unable to obtain relief or rest even in the night as they were worried on all sides with arrows and javelins and much shouting.<sup>24</sup>

The night brought the Portuguese no relief; it brought them disaster; a thunderstorm followed by a flood of rain rendered their powder and cord useless. The Sinhalese kept out of the reach of the Portuguese swords and shot their muskets and showered their arrows “in such numbers that they appeared like clouds”. De Saa himself fought gallantly to the end but of him and his troops there was left only “a mountain of Corpses”.

The king followed up his success with an attack on the fortresses and laid siege to Colombo; several assaults were made and on one occasion he succeeded in making an entrance within the city but was driven back. “The Portuguese suffered heavily through want of provisions and although the siege was raised, yet he (the king) remained within our territories which were all in revolt.” A few years later, however, the Portuguese received large reinforcements mainly from Goa which enabled them to re-occupy some of their lost territories and the King had no alternative but to enter into a Treaty (18th April 1633).<sup>25</sup>

The defection of the four Mudaliyars is the outstanding feature of the battle of Randeni vala. Under the command of De Saa they were in charge of about 20,000 lascarins drawn from the inhabitants of Colombo; it was a comparatively considerable force which had every chance of success, so that the fear of defeat was not a reason for their defection.

The Portuguese historian does not allege any particular motive for their conduct, neither any inducement by Senarath nor any disfavour

23. Ribeiro, pp. 225, 229.

24. *ibid.* p. 298;

25. *ibid.* 229, 230; Pieris, 219, 230.



by De Saa; on the other hand all four of them were "Doms", a high and coveted titular rank, held high office, were ostensibly converts to Christianity, in the confidence of De Saa and favoured by him; they counted long associations, if not relationship, with the Portuguese. The reason for their defection has, therefore, to be sought elsewhere.

The conclusion is irresistible that they had elected of their own choice to fight for and not against their country; their long associations with the Portuguese, their titular ranks, their ostensible conversion to Christianity, the favours of the General, taken singly or even in combination, had failed to dissolve their natural ties.

Their defection reveals how tenuous, hollow and superficial had been the impression made on them by both the Crown and the Cross in comparison with the irresistible draw of their motherland; it also affords evidence that it was the force of circumstances and not choice that had compelled the inhabitants of even the coastal region to accept the Portuguese regime.

The reaction of the four Mudaliyars can be classified as illustrative, and not exhaustive, of the view of the rest of the population. The Mudaliyars have been stigmatized as traitors by the Portuguese historians; they can well claim the insertion of their names in Ceylon's panel of national heroes with Dom Cosme at the head of the list.

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"But what boots it thus to walk round and round with the Parangis?" And they pondered how to leave them. With this thought: "The powerful Maha Mantri of Siyane Korale, and the handsome Kattota Mantri with Amaracon Mantri.

And the chief from Peliyagoda, renowned for his wealth and mighty in war. Wickremasinha Mudali

Presented themselves before the King and with due obeisance.

Submitted that if the enemy escaped into the low country, there would be no hope of capturing him".

"Then it is mine to see that none escape".<sup>26</sup>

Exclaimed the King: and gifting to them titles and lands, he started on the road.

A few years later Senarath's son and successor Raja Sinha II (1634-1686) achieved even a greater success at the battle of Gannoruwa, near Kandy (1638). Again the Portuguese troops under

26. Parangi Hatana, Verses 124-130 Dr Pieris, translation of Ribeiro pp. 252, 253.



Diogo de Mello merrily marched up the hills; they devastated and burnt Kandy; again they found themselves trapped; an attempt to retreat through Balana failed as the Pass was blocked by huge trees. Surrounded by a force of nearly 70,000 Sinhalese troops the Portuguese were annihilated and only a tower of skulls remained to tell the tale of the disaster; this victory was celebrated by Raja Sinha II by a Jaya Perahera.

Raja Sinha's preparations for this war and a description of the battle itself is given in verse in the *Mandaram Pura Puvatha* and generally tallies with the version of the Portuguese historian. It is significant that the King made every effort to avoid hostilities and even sent a Portuguese priest who was in Kandy, with a crucifix, as an envoy requesting the General not to invade his territory but De Mello's insolence and arrogance knew no bounds.

"The reply which the General gave the envoy was that he should tell the King that he was come only to see him whipped for his insolence and immediately ordered his army to advance."<sup>27</sup>

The battle followed, the Portuguese were being killed by the surrounding Sinhalese forces but they could not see who did the killing as the Sinhalese were hidden by the trees; they were suffering from thirst and great distress. At dawn De Mello realized that his position was hopeless and sent a message to the King begging for a truce so that he might retire to Colombo and offering to make peace restoring the status quo. The King detained the messenger and ordered the attack.

"The enemy immediately charged down the slope covering themselves behind the trees, and kept such a discharge of guns that few escaped being killed; seeing the destruction that they had caused they boldly closed on the few who were still defending themselves, and as their number was so great our force was totally defeated and put to the sword. Thereupon the King and the Prince of Uva ordered their men to take alive the Portuguese who still survived; the King's men, captured fifteen and the Princes eighteen; for he had no small share of the victory (at Gannoruwa, 23 and 24 March, 1638).

"Such was the result of this shameful expedition where not only did our General come to his death but in spite of every effort even his dead body could not be found"<sup>28</sup>

27. Ribeiro p. 236.

28. Ribeiro p. 237.



A description of Kande Udarata in the seventeenth century says: "The land is full of Hills, but exceedingly well watered, there being many pure and clear rivers running through them, which falling down about their lands is a very great benefit for the country in respect of their rice, their chief sustenance. These rivers are generally very rocky and so un-navigable. In them are great quantities of Fish, and the greater for want of skill in the people to catch them. The main river of all is called Mahaveli-ganga which proceeds out of the mountain called Adam's Peak. It runs through the whole land Northward, and falls into the Sea at Trenkimalay. It may be an Arrow's flight over in breadth but not fruitful."<sup>29</sup>

It was my good fortune three centuries later to make an official contact with Kande Udarata and its sister district Uva, closer than it has fallen to the lot of most others; the occasion was my appointment as Chairman of the Kandyan Peasantry Commission (1951); I had, therefore, the two-fold advantage of both an official and a personal connection with Kande Udarata.

Almost in the centre of Ceylon stand out the Highlands with the mountain ranges which add to their picturesque beauty. Before they were denuded of their magnificent forests during the British regime (1796-1948), the Highlands would have been beautiful beyond description in all their silent majesty.

The highest mountain zone with extensive ranges is in the South Central region; Pidurutalagala (8282 ft.) near Nuwara-Eliya (6240 ft.), 103 miles from Colombo is the top-most peak, but Samanāñkanda or Adam's Peak (7341 ft.) is, however, the best known mountain; reference to its religious significance has been made elsewhere. From the mountain zone rivers flow in all directions.

The Kelani-ganga (90 miles) enters the sea near Colombo, the Kalu-ganga (70 miles, near Kalutara, 26 miles from Colombo), the Deduru-Oya (88 miles, near Chilaw, 49 miles from Colombo), the Gin-ganga (76 miles, near Galle, 72 miles from Colombo) and Nilwala-ganga at Matara (100 miles from Colombo). The longest river is the Mahaveli-Ganga (208 miles) which flows past Kandy (72 miles from Colombo) and has its estuary at Trincomalee, one of the finest natural harbours in the Eastern seas on the east coast of Ceylon. A major diversion scheme of the Mahaveli from near Kandy to feed Raja Rata (North-Central Province) has just been inaugurated (1970).

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29. Knox, Part 1, Ch. 1, p. 3.



The strategic importance of Ceylon was the decisive factor which determined the British to take over Maritime Ceylon from the Dutch, the most valuable Colonial possession on the globe, as giving to their East Indian Empire a security which it had not enjoyed from its first establishment.’<sup>30</sup> Trincomalee remained a British Naval and Air Base for over one hundred and fifty years (1796-1957).

The mountain zone also receives the rains and in consequence the area is known as the Wet Zone and is cultivable without tank irrigation. The average rainfall is 80 to 125 inches rising to 140 to 200 inches in the upper valley of the Mahaveli Ganga around Ramboda (4409 f.) and The Knuckles (6112 ft.) and falling away to 65 to 105 inches near the mountains of Uva and the Eastern hills which form the drier sub-zone.

The Eastern and part of the North-Central lowlands, however, are cultivable only by the conservation of rain water which was stored in vast reservoirs built in ancient times and which was led through a network of irrigation channels to the fields. These areas constituted the Dry-Zone which was the seat of the ancient civilization.

The coming of the monsoons is as a rule heralded by thunderstorms accompanied by intensive lightning common to tropical climates. The earlier settlements would appear to have been in the valleys and in the lower mountain zones up to about 2000 feet but the frequent Malabar invasions, the abandonment of Anuradhapura, and the shifting of the capital to Polonnaruva led to a large-scale movement into the highlands.

Uva was not included by that name within the earlier divisions of the Island. Tisihala or Tun-rajaya consisted of Rajarata, Mayadesa and Rohana-desa; of them Rajarata took in the Anuradhapura district, Maya was the mountainous region, Rohana extended southwards to the sea-coast. The Portuguese historians describe Ceylon as divided into four Kingdoms (Kotte, Sitavaka, Candia and Jaffnapatao) and three Principalities (the Seven Korales, the Four Korales and Uva); for political and military purposes, Uva was as an adjunct of Candia and a Prince of the Kandyan royal family acted as its ruler and as Commander of its army.

“Its lands are the highest in Ceylon, rugged, unhealthy and badly

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30. William Pitt in Parliament (1862); vide Annual Register (1862) p. 31. *Ceylon under British Rule* (Colvin R. de Silva) Vol. 1.



shaded, and all those mountains are almost bare; the houses are covered with a kind of grass, which has some resemblance to flax, wherewith the natives, instead of thatching, cover them. In the depressions of the mountains there is much rice, lemons and oranges of good sort. The people are good-natured, and simple though they are more barbarous than the rest of the Chingala nation, but better lascarins than all the rest.

“The Prince lives in Badale, which has today nothing of a city except that there can be erected on that spot a most capacious one, because around it 2000 amanoes of paddy (bate) are sown which makes 1100 moyos and this twice a year besides other lands in the neighbourhood equally fruitful. Its name should not be Uva but Huverata, which means high land. It gives a land rent of 4000 paradaos only.”<sup>31</sup>

The territory of Uva, during the days of the Portuguese and earlier provided many of Ceylon's fighting units; it enlisted 12,000 men called *gente da terra*, all of bow and arrow; to Uva was given an important privilege; her inhabitants were not obliged to fight save within the districts of the Kingdom of Kandy and of the principalities of Uva and Matale. Even when the king himself was engaged in warfare on other parts of the Island, the men of Uva had the option either to join his forces or to remain in their own district; so much so that they did not participate in a siege of Colombo despite the offer of rich rewards and booty by the king of Kandy himself.

One of the earliest and greatest of the campaigns in which the men of Uva played a conspicuous part was Ceylon's First Great War of Liberation when Dutthagamini (161-137 B.C.) marched from Mahagama (Hambantota) for the overthrow of Elara; his route was through Rohana northwards to Mahiyangana; at Vijitapura he struck his first heavy blow by the capture of Vijithapura; pursuing his north-westward course he gave battle at Anuradhapura to Elara whom he defeated; this battle was one of the earliest decisive battles in Ceylon history;<sup>32</sup> a part of the route would have fallen within Uva. It was in these districts that his legendary ten mighty warriors were enlisted; the Sankapala temple, near Ratnapura (30 miles) carries yet the emblem of Pussadeva, the conch shell, the blast of which was like the roar at the bursting asunder of a thunderbolt.

31. Queyroz, Bk. 1 p. 63.

32. See *History of Ceylon* (University) Vol. 1. Part 1 p. 9.



It was after the British occupation that Ceylon was divided into five Provinces, Western, Central, Northern, Southern and Eastern (1813); a change in this division was later effected by the delimitation of the North-Western Province (1845), the North-Central Province (1873), the Uva Province (1886) and the Sabaragamuwa Province (1889). This demarcation was made to facilitate the civil and military administration of the new Colony. The boundaries of Uva remained on the basis of this division up to the middle of the twentieth century.

Uva, as described by Portuguese writers is, therefore, not identical with Uva of Colonial Ceylon. Uva known to the Portuguese constituted one of Ceylon's finest fighting units. A Sinhalese poem recites how the men of Uva marched with their compatriots from the Uva villages and formed together at Maturata under their generals on their route to Kandy for the king's review before the battle of Gannoruwa (1638).

The men of Uva also fought in Ceylon's last Great War of Liberation (1818) under Keppetipola Dissava with their bow and arrow against the British gun and bullet; they were shot down and decimated in this unequal combat; their houses were burnt down, their fields ravaged and their tanks breached<sup>33</sup> in execution of the policy of conquest by terrorisation promulgated by the British authorities. Uva disappeared thereafter from human existence for over 150 years; the residue of the peasants eked out a sub-human existence in poverty, hunger and disease during that period.

From time to time different kings of Ceylon restored the unity of the Island and at no time was the determination to bring the entire population under one canopy abandoned until the arrival of the Portuguese (1505). The domination of the Maritime Provinces by the Portuguese marked the final cleavage between the people of the Plains and the people of the Hills.

Vivid recollections and impressions of my contact, four hundred and fifty years later (1949-1951), with the people of the Central Province and Uva in connection with the Kandyan Peasantry Commission<sup>34</sup> still remain. My brother Commissioners and I visited almost every village in Kande Udarata and Uva, which consisted of 3887 villages.<sup>35</sup> The constitution of a village cannot be understood except by personal contact; one who has lived only

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33. Ceylon under British Rule.

34. S.P. XVIII (1951) p. 67.

35. S.P. XVIII (1951).



in towns and cities with their fissiparous tendencies could hardly picture to himself how closely knit a village is by common traditions, associations, activities and aims.

A village appears to the uninitiated to consist of isolated homesteads with no connection one with the other, each family an independent unit. The converse is the case. Each time that the Commission visited a village, in an incredibly short space of time, its members became the nucleus of an eager and expectant crowd; the village was one unit, of which each family formed, as it were, a constituent atom; their hopes and fears were identical except where political intrigue had dissolved their cohesion.

In the course of the three years during which my brother Commissioners and I examined and assessed the problems of the peasantry, we formed a vivid picture of the village economy and of the village society and the indelible scars that many wars and the plantation economy introduced under the British regime had left on the rural population. Our Report (1951) was accepted by Parliament and has since then been implemented in successive stages.

In the Central Province the peasant had been driven down to the edge of his little field of paddy. His homestead, often several homesteads, were on a small patch of high land with a few fruit trees. Access was difficult and through long detours as the estate roads served only the estates.

The paddy fields were being silted by the down wash of earth from the estates on the hill-tops; so also were the tanklets (*pathahas*) above the village constructed for the conservation of water for emergency use. One request was for the grant of an acre of land from the neighbouring estate for use as a burial ground as none was available.

In a village near Kandy there were about 150 persons living in thirty or forty houses; their occupation was mat weaving from *hana* leaves. Their economic conditions were of the lowest possible order; they were ill-nourished and poverty-stricken. The elders proudly invited us to a small hall, built of wattle and daub with a cadjan roof.<sup>36</sup> On inquiry as to the use to which the hall was put, "many things" replied the chief elder, "in particular we discuss how best we can promote the success of our younger generation". What chances of success had their younger generation in such surroundings!

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36. *ibid.* p. 75.



In the Province of Uva, the plantations had absorbed part of the hill sides; in the level areas the picture, in the few bazaars, was different; it was miles and miles of desolation. Communication, in view of the absence of roads, was difficult. There was little or no medical aid or police stations or Government institutions; the villagers were at the mercy of the elements and of the traders who bought their garden produce while yet in bud; the fields were uncultivated, since in the Dry Zone tank irrigation is essential and the ancient tanks had been breached by enemy action, abandoned and not restored.

In some areas even the walls of houses were of cadjans and the village gardens were frequently destroyed by wild animals; communal assistance was unavailable owing to the paucity of the population. From this tragic picture of distress it could hardly be imagined that Uva had in historical times been a source of the Island's grain and the nursery of the warriors who went forward with their kings to battle. It was now a picture of desolation, like unto the picture of the North-Central plains after the South Indian invasions;

Here death may deal not again for ever;  
 Here change may not come till all change end  
 From the graves they have made they shall rise up never,  
 Who have left nought living to ravage and rend.'<sup>37</sup>

On our way to Alutnuvara (about 50 miles from Badulla the capital of the Province) we met a family consisting of three generations, a grandfather, his son and daughter-in-law and a grandchild; they had walked many miles; the child was ill and the travellers had yet many miles to go before they could reach the nearest hospital; the grandfather had joined the party as he could not be left behind alone; their greatest dread, however, was that the elephant would destroy both their home and their plantation, before their return.

Innumerable were similar instances of poverty, disease and distress. It was the same picture once again.

The sun burns sere and the rain dishevels  
 One gaunt bleak blossom of scentless breath.  
 Only the wind here hovers and revels  
 In a round where life seems barren as death.

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37. Swinburne, *A Forsaken Garden*.



Here there was laughing of old, there was weeping  
 Haply, of lovers none ever will know,  
 Whose eyes went forward a hundred sleeping years ago.

The three years during which I served on the Kandyan Peasantry Commission were three eventful years of work and labour but yet throbbing with the living joy of life. One hundred and fifty years after the establishment of British Rule, an official inquiry to examine the social and economic conditions of the peasantry was sponsored by Government. We sat down to our task in earnest; but our proceedings were not marred either by the pomp of officialdom or by the pageantry of the political parades of later years.

There were no garlands, no processions, no speeches and no promises. We went into the midst of the villagers as fellow-villagers and as friends, without interpreters and without red tape. Our report contains a valuable record of the social and economic conditions in the two provinces at that period. How I survived the stress and strain of those arduous days now passeth my understanding.

My engagements both within and without the Commission were manifold, professional, educational, commercial but they were kept without a breach of faith. In the physiological sphere, my wife's succinct remark to me, as I was stepping into my car before the rosy fingers of early dawn were visible in the sky, was not wholly inappropriate. "You are a living dynamo", she said and smiled; it is to her memory that *Ceylon and Her People* is dedicated.

I would, however, prefer to believe that it was in the spiritual sphere that the explanation has to be sought. The inscrutable hand of destiny had, as it were, chosen the grandson of a Kandyan peasant to make a contribution towards the rehabilitation of his brothers and sisters. A karmic force, so to say, appears to have given me strength and protection as I went among them with sorrowful and faltering steps.

Whate'er I feel I cannot feel alone,  
 When I am happiest or most forlorn,  
 Uncounted friends whom I have never known  
 Rejoicing stand or grieving at my side,  
 These nameless, faceless friends of mine who died  
 A thousand years or more ere I was born.<sup>38</sup>

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38. Rosalind Murray.



On one occasion a brother Commissioner and I after a long and arduous conference at a town about 40 miles from Kandy strolled along the hills and sat on the summit of a hillock watching the evening sunset. An elderly village lady who was on her way home joined our company and we fell into a conversation; we did not know nor ask her name or village nor was she aware who we were. We were, however, struck by her demeanour and the ease with which she kept up a brisk conversation with us; nor were witticisms and repartees out of bounds for her.

She was dressed in a jacket and a saree draped in the Kandyan style and wore few inexpensive ornaments of delicate design. It was soon evident that she was a lady in her own right; her clear complexion bore a natural tint and was a token of the enjoyment of good health. She was in short an embodiment of her type. A Kandyan lady whether of the rural class or of higher status is an efficient housewife and meets her husband's friends, if of equal status; she can converse with them without dropping her "Hs"; she can walk in and out of a drawing-room without a rehearsal at a finishing school; it is part of her tradition.

An Englishman who was a long resident of Ceylon was struck by the beauty of the Island and evinced a deep sympathy for her people. He has written a number of poems on Ceylon, describing them and the scenery. Of a Kandyan maid he wrote:

Fair is the maiden, passing fair  
 Of foot, and form, and face,  
 With her dresses rare, and her jewelled hair;  
 God crown her with His grace.<sup>39</sup>

His ashes at his own request were brought from England and interred at the little Churchyard of Haputale Church (April 16, 1938) in the presence of his friends and many old students of Trinity College, Kandy, where he had served on the staff. "Stanley had on a former visit to Haputale fallen in love with it and its glorious views. So here, for three years we lived."<sup>40</sup>

Bee that hummest by at Haputale  
 High among the hills of old Ceylon,  
 Was it thou to whom my boyhood listened  
 Half a world away in life ago.

39. *Resurgam*, W. S. Senior.

40. *The Call of Lanka*, Introduction (Mrs. W. S. Senior) p. 9.



Yes, these eyes are gazing over Uva  
 Over sunny crags and emerald tea,  
 Over blue and cloud-beshadowed patnas  
 On to Pidru's mountain mystery.<sup>41</sup>

Although a greater part of my life has been spent in Colombo and its environs, I lived in Kandy for many years, when I was young and my memories of Kandy still linger; its lake, its hills and streams still haunt me; with them I still hold communion; nor has a busy life in the Maritime areas erased them from my mind.

It would not be untrue if I say with the Lake poet that "the sounding cataract haunts me like a passion, the tall rock, the mountain and the deep and gloomy wood, their colours and their forms are still to me a feeling and a love. And oft, in lonely rooms and mid the din of towns and cities, I have owed to them in hours of weariness, sensation sweet, felt in the blood and felt along the heart."<sup>42</sup>

After their long struggle with the Portuguese and the Dutch, the peasantry of Kande Udarata came under British rule; they witnessed then an awesome and death-dealing spectacle; their magnificent forests were felled, all their chenas were cleared and went up in flames; their fields were silted and their little patches of gardens hemmed in by extensive plantations of coffee and later tea and rubber.

The passage of a century and half (1796-1931) thereafter was like the flight of a great bird over vast pools of stagnant water harbouring humanity, flora and fauna, helplessly struggling for survival and dying for want of the wherewithal to live. This was in substance the result of the adoption of the capitalist policy recommended by Colebrooke (1832) in imitation of his mentor, the imperialist Raffles in Java.

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41. *ibid.* Reminiscences.

42. Wordsworth, lines composed a few miles from Tintern Abbey.







## BATTLES AND BANNERS

We shall fight them in the mountains,  
We shall fight them in the forests,  
We shall fight them in the passes,  
We shall never surrender.

—RAJA SINHA II

தேசிய நூலைப் பரிசீலி  
மாநகர நூலக சேவை  
மயிப்பணம்.







## CHAPTER II

### BATTLES AND BANNERS

During the period under review (1505-1818) the sunny but unhappy land of Ceylon was a battlefield and its people endured untold misery; the wars that her Kings and people so valiantly waged were not wars of choice but of necessity against powerful foreign enemies in succession. Ceylon suffered from the handicap that she was never a sea-faring nation and never built naval forces to protect her commerce or her shores. Hers was a life based on agriculture, on the tillage of fields and the cultivation of lands and the *Goiya*, probably a philological descendent of the Greek *Gaia*, Mother-Earth, held the highest place in her society.

Knox, an European long interned in the Island makes in regard to two counties of "the Inland-country that is now under the King of Cande" the observation; "These two Counties (Udu-Nuwara and Yati-Nuwara) have the pre-eminence of all the rest in the land. They are most populous and fruitful. The inhabitants thereof are the chief and principal men; insomuch that it is a usual saying among them, that if they want a King, they take any man, of either of these two counties, from the Plow and wash the dirt off him and he by reason of his quality and descent is fit to be a King."<sup>1</sup>

Agriculture thus held a pre-eminent position in the Islands' life; expansion into foreign lands formed no part of its philosophy; its economic policy was based on self sufficiency; its religion did not favour the acquisition of wealth. Ceylon was, however, the emporium for the trade of the East and West; and in its harbours merchants and ships assembled. Its Kings, therefore, never realized the necessity for a navy.

It was only when the Portuguese and the Dutch came upon them with the force of tornados that the people of Ceylon first sensed the impact of sea-power on history. After the conversion of the North-Central plains by a super-human effort to smiling fields, the Sinhalese never, like other nations which had the sea as their neighbour, felt the need to plough the waves. Had their lives taken that course, their history would in all probability have been different; for Athens,

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1. Knox, *Historical Relation* Bk 1. Ch. 1. p. 2.



Carthage, Spain, Portugal, England and the Netherlands, all wrested wealth and power as sea-faring nations. No Sinhalese monarch on his death, was wafted to Valhalla, like a Viking after a career of plunder, on the flames of his ocean craft.

No naval battles of any moment were, therefore, fought during the period; the warfare was on land, confined mainly to sieges of the sea-ports, converted by the invaders into forts, or to attacks on outposts fortified by them as bases to guard or to attack districts within the Island. There were, however, two decisive battles, one at Mulleriyawa (1561/62) near Colombo, one at Gannoruwa (1638) near Kandy; the effect of both was to stem the tide of Portuguese invasions into the heart of the Island.

During the course of both engagements the Sinhalese kings were present in person; in the former Raja Sinha I led his troops in the face of Portuguese cannon; in the latter Raja Sinha II directed operations, although he did not himself engage the enemy. The dazzling victory at Mulleriyawa reversed the falling fortunes of the Sinhalese and had a deadly effect on the minds of the enemy, for never again did the Portuguese march their forces into open battle during the lifetime of Raja Sinha I; on the contrary he hemmed them within their forts by the sea.

He besieged Kotte for many years so mercilessly that the Portuguese evacuated and demolished the capital and removed it to Colombo (1565); thereupon and even earlier he besieged Colombo with such force and persistence that the city was reduced to the point of capitulation; sea-power alone saved the Portuguese from that imminent disaster. A graphic account is available of the battle of Mulleriyawa:

“The King (Mayadunne) sent Wickramasinghe Mudaliyar to hold the enemy in check at Mulleriyawa. Despite a desperate resistance, the General was driven back upon the main army. The severe fighting had, however, left the Portuguese unable to follow up their slight advantage immediately. Accordingly Raja Sinha putting his whole force in motion, himself advanced to Mulleriyawa. Detaching a body of a thousand trained soldiers to take the Portuguese in the rear, he led the attack in front, with his elephants, another thousand Illangan spearmen and the Radage companies of Alutkuru and Hapitigam Korales.”

Then ensued one of the hardest fought battles Ceylon has ever known. By personal efforts Raja Sinha helped in no small degree



to turn imminent defeat into a complete victory. Riding through the ranks and animating them by his presence and encouragement, he at once closed with the Portuguese, in order to minimise the effect of their fire. But Sinhalese impetuosity could not force back the disciplined troops of Europe, and Raja Sinha saw his soldiers slowly yielding ground.

“The King” says the *Rajavaliya* would not permit his army to retreat, “but, again urging them on, at length drove a way into the midst of the Portuguese. The Portuguese, unable any longer to load their guns, clubbed them and met the foe hand to hand. So desperate grew the struggle that Portuguese and Sinhalese alike clung to the tails of the elephants and fought.

The king on horseback flew from side to side, encouraging here, threatening there. Sparks flew from smitten corselet and cuirass ‘like a play of fireworks,’ whilst smoke enveloped all ‘as the mist in January.’ ‘That day blood flowed like water on the field of Mulleriyawa’. The Portuguese further pressed in flank and rear ‘could not retreat one foot,’ and left, 1,600 killed on the battlefield.’<sup>2</sup>

After the death of Raja Sinha I (1592) the Portuguese summoned courage to invade the interior of Ceylon. Sitawaka was burnt to the ground and the Sinhalese capital was removed to Senkadagala (Kandy); thereafter commenced invasions of the Kandyan Kingdom. The King Vimala Dhamma Suriya I won, however, a signal success at Danture, (1594), near the Balana Pass.

This invasion assumed a pattern which was characteristic of later invasions of the Kandyan Kingdom; the King’s troops would retire into the jungles and the mountain fortresses; the enemy in hot pursuit would plunder and devastate the districts on their route, burn the King’s palace on every occasion that they occupied Kandy.

They would soon find themselves surrounded by the Sinhalese forces with their retreat blocked by huge trees felled across the roads; the exits guarded by thorn-gates lowered and closed; the Sinhalese war-drums would then beat and shouts of the Sinhalese forces make a fearful din; the Portuguese would then be attacked by an unseen enemy in vast numbers and be taken prisoners or killed.

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2. *Rajavaliya*, p. 2; Bell’s Report on the Kegalle District, p. 7; Pieris pp. 64, 65.



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Surrounding the whole Portuguese army on all four sides the Sinhalese army showered an attack of arrows without a break as if from the Maha Meru mountain, and at the same time started shooting with the guns. On the four sides, on the top of the mountain, and in the valleys, standing in close file without being seen, sending attacks of arrows and gun shots, they destroyed the enemy in the forenoon itself.

The battle of Danture, the first battle following the invasion of the Kandyan Kingdom, followed this pattern. It was thus described by the Portuguese soldier historian. "With all those forces and the twenty-thousand men he (Vimala Dhammasuriya) already had hastened to meet us as we were already on the march, despatching a small body to block the road by cutting down the trees in the rear and spreading the archers and the musketeers through the wood, where they were hidden from our men who were exposed to their incessant fire without perceiving their assailants. Our men attempted to retire on Balana but found the road blocked and guarded by a large force; and thus they all lost their lives ingloriously, with the Captain-General (Pedro Lopes de Sousa) and his two nephews who were also slain."<sup>4</sup>

According to Queyroz:<sup>5</sup> "the Sinhalese covered the hills, mountains and dales and the most experienced men could not believe that there were in these lands so many people, save by enchantment; the battle lasted a long time and, as the Portuguese (in retreat) had to march and fight at the same time and sometimes in narrow passes, their advance guard became separated, and as there were no men of the country to guide them, they came upon a marshy field, where at last their heads were cut off and the van guard was also routed after three hours of fighting; on the following day the General surrendered.

3. *Manderam Pura Puvatha*, Verses 227-228.  
 4. Ribeiro pp. 87 *Rajavaliya* p. 89.  
 5. Queyroz Bk. 3 pp. 488, 489.



“Being full of grief over the failure of his expedition, over the Captains, gentlemen, friends and good soldiers that were lost, after being the author of the greatest ruin that up to that time had ever befallen the Portuguese armies in Ceylon and realising how much his courage had misguided him, seeing death approaching, he entrusted his son to the tyrant King and gave his soul to his Creator.”

De Couto's version<sup>5</sup> of this battle gives less details. The Portuguese army climbed the pass and assailed Balana which they captured and encamped at Danture some miles distant therefrom; on the murder of Jayawira his soldiers deserted to the King, when Pedro Lopez attempted to retreat, he found the road blocked in the usual Kandyan fashion by felled trees. He and the rest of the Portuguese sold their lives dearly and not one seems to have escaped; the few that survived becoming prisoners and slaves at Kandy.

But the battle of Danture was not decisive of the issue. Portuguese invasions and Sinhalese counter-attacks continued in different parts of Ceylon: “six years of pitiless guerilla warfare succeeded the crushing defeat of Danture and the subsequent repulse of Don Hieronymo de Azavedo”. He sent an expedition to Jaffnapatam but the tide of success did not last and in 1603 Hieronymo had again to flee before the victorious arms of the Sinhalese King, his army a disorganized rabble and his reputation destroyed. This campaign, the most important during his eighteen years of administration was named by the Portuguese historians the Great Retreat.

The history of events that transpired after the battle of Danture upto the truce with Senarath (1594-1617) is somewhat confusing. It would, however, appear that Dom Jeromino de Azavedo, that man of evil, was recalled to Ceylon; he had served two earlier periods in the Island (1582 and 1588) on this last occasion he served for eighteen years (1612). On this occasion the devil did his worst; his regime was characterized by acts of extreme cruelty towards the inhabitants; records of his atrocities have been left by Portuguese historians themselves.

One of the steps he took for the “pacification” of Ceylon was the erection of forts in many parts of the Island; among the sites selected were Galle, Matara, Negombo, Chilaw, Malvana, Guru-babila, Sitavaka, Denavaka and Batugedera. From these pockets the garrisons would emerge for the terrorization of the peasants. This man of evil thus acquired for himself a name that is still detested.

5a. De Couto's R.A.S. (C.B.) Journal, Vol. XX pp. 402-403.



He experienced several reverses in the military field; he also achieved several successes; later he expiated his sins in a Lisbon dungeon.

Various and confusing versions are given of the actual incidents themselves; there were no decisive battles. The six years that succeeded Danture are described as six years of guerilla warfare; a truce was struck between King Vimaladharmasuriya I and the Portuguese (1600) with the suspension of hostilities and the restoration of prisoners. But early in the seventeenth century de Azavedo led a successful campaign against Jaffnapatam; in other areas, however, his efforts at subjugation failed; there was a major revolt in which a Sinhalese chieftain, long loyal to the Portuguese participated. The Sinhalese king averted his efforts at subjugation and De Azavedo fled before his victorious troops.<sup>6</sup>

The next battle was fought during the reign of Senerat at Randeni-vela near Wellawaya in Uva (1630); the Sinhalese forces were led by the King's son Prince Raja Sinha, who inflicted an overwhelming defeat on the Portuguese Captain General Constantine de Saa de Noronho. The General led an expedition to Uva "to punish the Prince" and found himself and his troops surrounded on all sides by the Sinhalese forces; shortly prior to the engagement four Sinhalese Modeliars in charge of Portuguese divisions joined the king and a thunderstorm the previous night rendered the Portuguese arquebuzes useless.

"That afternoon the enemy did nothing but shout at our men as was their custom, saying: 'This is the last hour you have to live' and adding insulting words; and so the night came on.... In the morning they (the Portuguese) started on their march in the same fashion; they did not advance many paces when all at once from every side they were attacked by this multitude and when they tried to make use of their firearms, they could not do so owing to the condition of the cord and the powder (a thunderstorm had occurred in the night).

"At this time the enemy pressed on them more freely but they would not come within the reach of our swords, the only weapons our men could use, but shot their muskets at them and showered their arrows in such numbers that they appeared like clouds. In a short time our men were dead and the few that remained were thrown into confusion by the conflict."<sup>7</sup>

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6. Ribeiro pp. 103, 179.

7. Ribeiro 277, 228.



A version of the battle of Randenivela has also been left by Menezes (1608-1682); his book was published (1681) one year before his death and four years before Ribeiro's *Ceilao* (1685). It is likely that the latter was indebted to Menezes' work for some of his material. Over the title *Rebellion De Ceylan*<sup>8</sup> the writer has sought to make out a defence of his father's administration in Ceylon; he has also written in praise of Constantino de Sa de Noronho and his government.

Menezes has recorded an address to his troops attributed to the General on the eve of the battle in which he made express reference to the anticipated defection of the four modeliards; it is improbable that the General spoke in the manner described as the Modeliards were yet among them: it is evident that this address is the historian's own attempt to reconstruct his own view of the situation.

“My friends and comrades, you are now aware of a conspiracy of traitors. It came late to our knowledge, because there is nothing so easy as to deceive a loyal heart. The only remedy we have is in God's hands, to whom we ought to pray first of all, and then our constancy and steady resolution will not fail us in the last extremity. I confess that great is the peril of the present moment: but the greater the danger the greater will be your courage. The memory of the many victories we have gained over these barbarians should verily, O comrades, give us hope.

“These are the same enemies whose backs we have so often seen: they fight with numbers on their side: but we have valour. Heaven, whose cause we fight for, will not forsake us, inasmuch as we have always found it favourable. Unless we had experience of the cowardice of these barbarians, it was sufficient demonstration of it to see how their princes make use of traitors to carry out their plans. It shames me to think that, for the space of even a night they should be allowed to remain in our midst: for there is nothing more hateful to the good than evil companionship.

“It is better that we should give up all but our arms, for we shall be the lighter to use them and less impeded for whatever might happen. We shall only reserve a little rice sufficient to last us two days, and just enough to be carried in the girdle: the rest will be given to the flames; for should we come out conquerors, what greater riches do you require than victory? If, with all, God will be

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8. *Rebellion De Ceylan* Juan Rodriguez de Sa Y Menezes Journal X RAS (CB) Vol. XI pp. 427-429.



served by the triumph of our enemies, we shall find the greatest happiness in so honourable a death; since we shall die so gloriously doing our duty for the service of our religion and our king.”<sup>9</sup>

The sentiments expressed by this historian at the conclusion of his book in his attempt to condone the General for his ill-fated expedition against the better advice of his associates are, however, contradictory of his earlier contemptuous reference to the Sinhalese forces. He writes, “Our General surpassed all in the manner of his death since he revenged it beforehand by the numbers of enemies he killed by his own hand, the odds against which he fought, the immense numbers of the enemy not an enemy without a name, nor without valour, like the Western Jews, nor effeminate cowards like most Oriental nations, but barbarians looked upon as the bravest and most warlike in the world.”<sup>10</sup>

The third and final battle of this series was the battle of Gannoruva (1638); its immediate cause was two comparatively trivial incidents; the retention by the Portuguese Captain-General of a handsome tusked elephant intended as a gift to Raja Sinha II and the detention by Raja Sinha of two horses of the Portuguese intended to be sold for elephants. The Captain-General collected a force of twenty-eight thousand lascarins and seven hundred Portuguese “the choicest men we ever had in the island”.

On receiving news of this imminent invasion the king collected his own forces from every part of the Island; the method of gathering the troops is told in inspiring verses both in the *Maha Hatana* and the *Mandaram Pura Puvatha*. Ready though he was, the king made a final effort to avoid an engagement and is said to have despatched a Portuguese priest as an emissary; the reply was that the General had come “only to see him horse-whipped for his insolence and immediately ordered his army to advance.

“The Portuguese who had been allowed to cross the Balana Pass had reached the Mahaveli river near Kandy. They descended the mountain and drew up alongside the river leaving a small body on the slopes to prevent the enemy cutting down the trees and blocking the road; this body at once deserted to the King and a large number of those who were with us did the same, as they were all people of one tongue.”

“While they (the Portuguese) were drawn up close to the river,

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9. *ibid.* 597.

10. *ibid.* 608.



some of our people were wounded and a large number killed without our seeing who did it. The enemy had cut down on the other bank of the river numerous trees which served them as an outpost not only to defend the approach to the city but also to prevent our men obtaining a drop of water; and thus they were not only harassed by the continuous firing of guns and foot-muskets which the enemy kept up all night long killing and wounding a large number, but they also suffered from thirst and passed that night in great distress without any relief.”

At dawn the General found that Balana was blocked and that it was impossible to retire. He sent a message begging for a truce to which there was no reply since earlier he had announced to the King that he had come to see him whipped. “The enemy immediately charged down the slope covering themselves behind the trees, and kept up such a discharge of guns that few escaped being killed, seeing the destruction they had caused they boldly closed on the few who were defending themselves and as their number was great our force was totally defeated and put to the sword.”

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History affords many parallels of the strategy of Kandyan monarchs; among them were the measures adopted by the Russians on the historic occasions when Russia was invaded with mighty armies by Napoleon (1812) and by Hitler (1941-1942), obsessed with dreams of world dominion. A memorable answer was given by the Tsar to Napoleon’s emissary who conveyed the message for his submission. “I have no illusions. I am aware that your Emperor is a great general but I have two allies—space and time.

“In all this huge country there is no corner so obscure that I shall not withdraw into it, no position so remote that I shall defend it before I am prepared to sign a dishonourable peace. It is not I who will attack, but I shall not lay down my arms so long as a single foreign soldier remains on Russian soil.”<sup>12</sup> A similar reply was given by Prince Kutusov at a Russian Council of War (1812).

“The loss of Moscow does not mean that Russia is lost. I regard it as my duty to save my army from destruction, to safeguard its means

11. *Mandaram Pura Puvatha*, Verse 332.

12. *Fatal Decisions*, Moscow, Patel, p. 73.



of life, and to ensure the inevitable destruction of the enemy even if this entails the evacuation of Moscow." These fatal decisions were taken with a full consciousness of their consequences.

But Russia was a vast country; its invasion involved a long line of communications and a traversal of hundreds of miles; incoming armies were greeted with the Russian winter's biting cold and the operation was beset with delay and difficulties. The Tsar had, indeed, space, time and the seasons as his allies.

The capital city of Ceylon, Senkadagala, on the other hand was only seventy-two miles distant from the seaport of Colombo, then converted into an enemy fortress; of which fifty miles were broad even plains through which a military force could move rapidly, the balance twenty-two miles of precipitous, pathless mountains and dense forests served as the city's protection.

The invasions of Russia, although of great intensity, were of short duration; while the Kandyan territory was the subject of several invasions and under the threat of invasion continuously for over two hundred years (1592-1815). And yet their kings and people refused to submit to foreign enemies, each of which in turn was the foremost power in Europe. A Thucydides or a Livy would have reconstructed the address of Raja Sinha II to his troops before the battle of Gannoruva (1638), perhaps in this wise.

"You are on the eve of a great battle with a ruthless enemy, you have assembled here from every village in the Kingdom in answer to my call to defend our country. You will soon be called upon to make great sacrifices even the last, and you should, therefore, know beforehand the nature of your opponents, their objects as well as your own resources and the cause for which you fight.

"Before you is an enemy well-disciplined, trained for war; they are better equipped than you are. Have no illusions; they are brave in battle. The subjugation of non-European nations is their object; in a short space of time they have acquired by force of arms vast wealth and vast territories.

"Their occupation is war; they take delight in destruction. They have come here in the intoxication of victory, determined to subdue our people. If they should succeed they will impose on you their rule and inflict on you their religion at the point of the sword.

"Your occupation, on the other hand, is not war but peace; the weapon that you wield is the plough and not the sword. You spend your days in the cultivation of your own fields, in the pursuit of



agriculture and not in the pursuit of wealth; wealth has no meaning for you, nor has the exploitation of the lands of other men.

“The enemy is cruel and intolerant both in material affairs and in matters of religion. While your religion has taught you tolerance, love and compassion not only towards all human beings but also towards all creatures living on earth.

“Wicked as the enemy are in themselves, they have enlisted into their ranks the scum of the earth, mercenaries or lascarins drawn from thugs, criminals and convicts of all nations drunk with the promise of rewards and thirsting for loot, murder and rape.

“Look back upon your ancestors; they have been brave men, fearless in battle; they have fought successful wars against powerful enemies; twenty centuries are looking towards you along the corridors of time; your fore-fathers are watching you to see whether the progeny of the men who fought and died for their country are cowards or as brave as they were themselves and whether they would defeat the enemy or be defeated by them.

“If you fail, not only your country, but even your religion which you so fondly cherish and in which you so devoutly believe, the Sacred Dalada which you have ever fearlessly guarded will be destroyed and trodden under foot by a cruel, intolerant, foreign enemy. They will raze your temples to the ground, they will devastate your fields, they will burn your homes, murder your men and lads and rape your wives and daughters. Better it is that all of us should die than suffer that calamity!

“The way of life of the enemy is not our way of life; their religion has no appeal to us. Until their arrival in our country our cities were free to all men from all lands, whether in which to live or with which to trade; our ports were the emporiums of the East and West and in them vessels exchanged the commerce of the world.

“Every man could worship and observe the religion of his belief. Any woman could travel alone, carrying even a precious jewel on her person, in any part of our land, however remote, unrobbed and unmolested. Any one of you was considered fit to hold the highest office of honour in the country, so well versed and nurtured were you in the culture of our ancient civilization.

“The Sacred Dalada and your beloved city of Senkadagala are the symbols of the great traditions and the causes for the preservation of which you are assembled here and which you are pledged to defend even with your lives.



“Do not forget that the enemy whom you will fight tomorrow are men whom you have met in battle before a few years ago. You fought him at Randenivala and his army was routed and was left a mere pile of skulls; the General’s own head was carried through the country on a pike and nailed to a tree trunk as an example to others. The enemy, therefore, is not invincible and your own deeds have proved that you yourselves are not second to them in bravery.

“We have also many advantages; in numbers we are by far their superiors; we are fighting in our own territory; every inch of soil is familiar ground to you but unknown to the enemy. Our inaccessible mountains and dense forests afford us protection. If we cannot give them open battle since they are better armed, we shall retreat and entice them up into the hills; we shall then reassemble, encircle and destroy them; hidden hands will strike the blows.

“We shall fight them in the mountains; we shall fight them in the forests, we shall fight them in the passes. We shall never surrender. And with the aid of the Triple Gem we shall defeat them and drive them back to the sea whence they came.” As the King concluded his address, the cry of ‘Sadhu, Sadhu, Sadhu’ that rose to the sky from the seventy thousand peasant warriors assembled before him was like unto the roar of the ocean in tumult.

The invasions of Kandy by the Portuguese ended with the battle of Gannoruva. Apart from the King’s overwhelming victory, another circumstance intervened; the arrival of the Dutch and the treaty between them and the King (1638) rendered the dissipation of the Portuguese troops unsafe. In this dilemma the Portuguese themselves negotiated a truce with the Dutch (1644) as a solution to their own problems; but this truce was honoured more in its breach than its observance as each party endeavoured to take over the other’s areas of occupation.

Hostilities between them and the Dutch recommenced (1652); their forts at Trincomalee and Negombo were captured and Galle too was attacked and ultimately taken by the Dutch; in these operations the Dutch received the assistance of the King’s troops. The end came with the fall of Colombo (1656) after a siege of seven months, followed by the fall of Jaffna (1658). The Portuguese were unable to resist this new enemy themselves equipped with naval forces which both cut off re-inforcements to the Portuguese garrisons and brought men and supplies to the Dutch.

There was, however, during these twenty years (1638-1658) no



decisive engagement in the open field of the importance of the three earlier battles. Even during the period thereafter, although the hostilities between the King and the Dutch were confined to border raids and two heavy sieges of two strongholds which the Dutch had established within the Island; one was the capture by the King of Arandore (1670) a fort near Kandy which served as a bastion against an attack from Kandy; the other was the capture of Bibilegama (1675) a fort which guarded the Dutch areas of occupation in South Ceylon. These successes re-established the prestige of Raja Sinha II which had experienced a temporary eclipse.

For the next one hundred years there was comparative peace, punctuated by border warfare until Van Eck led his ill-fated expedition to Kandy (1765); an initial success was followed by a subsequent rout and only a few stragglers lived to return to Colombo in a miserable condition with the help of a Modeliar who sold the Balana Pass and led them through a by-path; he was rewarded for his treachery to his people with the gift of a gold chain and a gold medal by the Dutch.<sup>13</sup>

This Modeliar thereby earned an invidious distinction; he was the only Sinhalese who sold this great watch-tower of the Kandyan Kingdom during three hundred years of unremitting warfare; his treachery brings into focus the patriotism displayed by a nation which no diversity or temptation could corrupt to hand this precious key to the enemy. The treaty which was signed by the King and the Dutch in the following year (1766) put an end to hostilities for a further thirty years until the arrival of the British (1796).

The glory of the Kandyan Kingdom was now drawing to a close; but it made two last bids to retain and regain its freedom. The British despatched a force under Major Davie to instal an imposter on the Kandyan throne. In an engagement that followed, popularly known as the *Engreesi Hatana* (1803), Davie and his men were defeated and wiped out. This expedition and its result were characteristic of the earlier pattern; devastation followed by disaster and extermination.

But another canker had now eaten into the Kandyan Kingdom; the nepotism of the Nayakar dynasty had led to corruption and disruption; the great chieftains, ignored and under suspicion, withdrew their allegiance and no longer gave the king their support in

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13. Van Eck's Despatch XV of 8.11.1765, Historical Manuscript Commission Bulletin No. 6 p. 136.



Ceylon's final struggle; on the contrary some of the most powerful Kandyan nobles joined the British; with their assistance the King was captured and deported. But they soon realized that the intention of the British was to retain Ceylon as part of the British Empire.

The appointment of a Muslim Hadjiar for the Muslim population of Wellessa, a district of Uva, while Millewa held the high office of Dissawa gave rise to the Eighteen-Eighteen War of Liberation. Under the leadership of Ceylon's last great patriot Keppitipola Dissave; his initial success was a cause of alarm to the British authorities, the Secretary of State issued an order to the Governor for the evacuation of the district but before it reached him, the Sinhalese had been overpowered with great brutality; intoxicated with joy at their success, a British sentry burst into song:

But British courage still prevailing  
 Soon we made our foes to fly,  
 And their villages assailing,  
 Caused some hundreds for to die,  
 —See their villages a burning,  
 And their temples soon laid low  
 This the wretches get for joining  
 With the jungle rebel foe.<sup>14</sup>

The great Dissava himself was captured and, after a mock trial, condemned to death. He met his end, unperturbed and with unflinching courage. As the executioner was getting his sword ready for the fell stroke, Keppitipola was reciting Buddhist *Gathas* (religious stanzas); and as his head rolled on the ground (1818) by the former Bogambara tank of Kandy, then was the light of Ceylon's freedom put out for one hundred and fifty years (1948).

A memorial was erected in recent years (1964) to enshrine his skull; it stands on the esplanade at Kandy, a mile or two away from the soil which his decapitated head consecrated. Branded by the British as a traitor for over a century, Keppitipola is remembered by the people as a national hero.

It will thus be seen from the foregoing pages that for over three hundred years there was continuous warfare in Ceylon consequent on European aggression but of battles there were few. While the maritime provinces were of easy access and the sea coast of the Island went under foreign control and occupation, the Hill Country

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14. *Sinhale and the Patriots*, Pieris.



was protected by the mountain terrain; its forests and passes were inaccessible and a part of the Kandyan strategy was to conserve this condition. The Sinhalese troops accustomed to and trained in guerilla warfare remained a force which the European soldier although better equipped, could never wholly overcome and, Sinhalese courage still prevailing, did him to death in sudden encounters.

It should be remembered in this connection that, as described elsewhere in these pages, during the long sieges of Kotte and Colombo, there were frequent fierce encounters between the Sinhalese and the Portuguese troops. The incidents of each day, remarks a Portuguese historian, were so numerous that, if recounted, they would fill a history.

Many of these encounters, in view of their intensity, the numbers that participated and their duration, partook of the nature of a battle; the venue, however, remained more or less the same as the Portuguese were hemmed in within the walls of the cities, while the armies of Raja Sinha remained in their environs.

Descriptions are extant of the manner in which the King's forces were assembled together to meet an imminent danger; the King's command was announced from village to village and district to district by beat of drum. On this signal the peasant left his plough and joining his fellows marched in answer to his King's call. A description of the gathering together of the Spanish peasantry under the banner of Bernards del Carpio to resist the French invasion bears comparison.<sup>15</sup>

With three thousand men of Leon, from the city Bernard goes  
 To protect the soil Hispanian from the spear of Frankish foes,  
 From the city which is planted in the midst between the seas  
 To preserve the name and glory of old Pelayo's victories.  
 The peasant hears upon his field the trumpet of the knight  
 He quits his team for spear and shield and garniture of might  
 The shepherd hears it mid the mist he flingeth down his crook,  
 And rushes down the mountain like a tempest troubled brook.  
 The youth who shows a maiden's chin, whose brows have  
 never been bound,  
 The helmet's heavy ring within, attains manhood from the  
 sound;  
 The hoary sire beside the fire forgets his feebleness;

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15. *The March of Bernardo Del Carpio*, Spanish Ballads (Lockhart).



Once more to feel the cap of steel a warrior's ringlets press.  
 As though the glen his spears did gleam, these soldiers from  
 the hills,  
 They swelled his host as mountain stream receives the roaring  
 rills;  
 They found his banner flocked in scorn of haughty  
 Charlemagne,  
 And thus upon their swords they swore the faithful sons of  
 Spain.

A vivid description of the massing of the peasantry for the battle of Gannoruwa is similarly given in the *Mandaram Pura Puvatha*.<sup>16</sup> The King's command is echoed from village to village by the beat of war-drums; chosen warriors from each village then join in and march forward, and when all the villages of a district have assembled, the flag of the district is flown in front, and in this manner the forces of all the districts within the King's dominion move in an inspiring procession to the appointed venue for the royal review.

එකලා	ලක නෙක තැන්වල බල ලැබ සිටි මැතිවරු	සෙද
විපුලා	තම තම පෙදෙසෙහි පරසිදු සුරුවිරු සෙබ	එද
නුමුලා	සි වැ රණබෙර ගොස කරමින් බැණ වහසි නො	මද
තුමුලා	සිරි වඩනා පුර පැමිණ දුටහ රජ හිමි	සද
රුහුණු	ඌව වෙල්ලස්ස ද බදුලු කතර පුර බුක්	තල
වියලු	වැල්ලවාය ද බිම්තැනි උඩු-යටිකිද සපු	තල
දික්වැලි	නාගොලු වැලිමඩ කොස්ලලු පස්සර කොත්	මල
වලපන	පුස්සැල්ල අගරපතනද සමගින හක්	ගල
දිඹුල	ලිඳුල තලාගල ද උලපන සමගින ගම්	පල
නිලඹ	පුර ද අටබාගය බුලත්ගම ද යළි මා	තල
දඹුලු	ද සිගිරි වැට්ටි නාලන්දය සහ ගල්	වෙල
යළිදු	වන්නි දෙවිමැදි සහ හිරියාල ද කුරුණෑ	ගල
කැ කි රා	මරදන්කඩවර තිරජපනේ සහ හබ	රන
අ නු රා	පුර ගලගෙදරද උඩු යටි දෙනුවර තුම්	පන
ප ව රා	සිවු සිය පත්තුව දුම්බර හේවාහැට	යන
නොහැරා	සැම රටවල සෙන් සැත්තෑ දහසක් විග	සින
රැස්විය	කඩු දුනු තුවක්කු පලිහ සමග නෙක අවි	ගෙන
දක්වන	තම රට සලකුණු කොඩි ද පෙරටු කොට නහ	මින
ඉක්බිති	මතුරට ගොණගම හේවාහැට තුන් පෙදෙ	සින
දක්වමි	සෙන් ආ පිළිවෙළ විස්තර කොට අසනු සු	දන

16. *The Mandaram Pura Puvatha*, Verses 320-325.



එ ක ල	මෙ ලක පසිඳු වීර-සූරිය සහ පුස්සල	මැති
වී ම ල	යසැති දිවාරත්න - හඵවඩනා මැතිඳු බ	ලැති
ප බ ල	මැතිඳු රත්නායක අඹගහතැන්නේ විකු	මැති
ර වු එ	දදය නහා ගියහ පන්සැත්තෑ බලසෙන්	යුති

The Ministers who held position and power in various places in Ceylon, with their famous and clever army officers, playing the war drum, talking in loud tone, came to Siriwardanepura and for the King's review.

Ruhunu, Uva, Vellassa, Badulla, Kataragama, Buttala, Viyaluwa, Wellawaya, Bintenna, Udukinda, Yati Kinda, Haputale, Dickwella, Nagolle, Welimada, Koslanda, Passara, Kotmale, Walapane, Pussella, Agrapatna, Hakgala.

Dimbulla, Lindulla, Talagala, Ulapane, Gampola, Nilambe, Atabage, Bulatgama and Matale Dambulla Sigiri Weuda, Nalanda and Galewela. Then Vanni, Devamedi, Hiriya and Kurunegala.

Kekirawa, Maradankadawara, Tirapane and Habarana Anuradhapura, Galagedera, Uda Nuwara, Yatinuwara Tumpane Sarasiya Pattuwa, Dumbera, Hewaheta.

Soldiers from all three provinces assembled with weapons, sword, bow gun and shield, with their respective flags and emblems in the forefront. And then I relate to you how the army came from the three provinces Maturata, Gonagama and Hewaheta. Now listen.

The ministers the famous Virasuriya and Pussala, Divaratna of pristine fame, the minister Haluwadena, the powerful Ratnayake, Meegahatenne, and Ambahaghatenne, they all marched with the Ravana flag—along with an army of seventy-five thousand soldiers.

It will be seen from the description that each district had its own emblem which was carried in the forefront of its contingent, and that when the Generals joined in the procession a different flag was flown; the Generals who marched to Gannoruwa have flown the Ravana flag. But one of the best known flags of ancient Ceylon, perhaps the most famous, was the Ira—Handa—Kodiya (Sun and Moon Flag); this flag became the banner of the Four Korales, the famous fighting unit of Ceylon that guarded the Balana Pass. A picturesque legend is woven round its origin.

It was brought by the God-King Rama on a visit to Ceylon and presented to the Devundara (Dondra) Devale, sacred to Vishnu;

ලෝකීය නායකයා විසින්



thence Rama moved in a gorgeous procession to the Alutnuwara Devale, in the Four Korales, which became its custodian; since then the flag was the emblem of the Four Korales; it was later graced with the adornments which it now bears by Sri Lanka's warrior King, Raja Sinha I, in recognition of the prowess and feats of men of this district.<sup>17</sup>

රාම දෙවරද දෙවුන්දර සිට අලුත් නුවරට වඩන ගම	නේ
සෑම සිවුරහ සෙනහ සැදෙමින් මහල් දිව පෙරහැරින් සොඳි	නේ
සෝම රිවිරුව පිහිටි කොඩිය ද පෙරටු කර ආ සෙයින් එදි	නේ
ඒ මහත් මානයක් සිවු කෝරළේ හට වනි එතැන් පට	නේ
හරිඬේ කොටු කොළඹ රජසිහ නිරිඳු රයිගන් වත්ත වැඩ සි	ට
දවුඬේ සහ පව්වලන්සේ එල්ලමින් පොල් තුරෙක එම වි	ට
ගෙනෙන්ඬේ වද හළෙන් කප්පිත්තාගෙ තරම ද දැක්වූ අත්පි	ට
දවුන්ඬේ සහ පව්වලන්සය ලැබුණි සිවු කෝරලට මාන	ට
ලක මෙතුන්හිමී රාසිනරපති වඩිනු මඩකලපුවට සමයෙ	ක
නෙක ගණන් දන නසා ගල්මය රදන කිඹුලකු දිව නෙතින් ද	ක
සැකනොවී කගපතින් කොටමින් කොතවියෙන් ඇනලුවෙන් විගසක	
රැකනොහී දිවි කොතවියත් සහ කිඹුලු ජලබාවිය ඇසිල්ලෙ	ක
යෙන් පිරිස් මැද රාසි නරපති එද එක් පනතක් වද	ළේ
ඇත්ත විට කිඹුලාට ජලයට ඇත්තගිය ඒ ඉළක්කෝ	ලේ
දුන්නහෝත් දුන් ගෙනත් සමතෙක් ඇතොත් සබයේ නොවීකෝලේ	
දුන් දෙවමී මානයට අත්පිට වදළේ එම ඉළක්කෝ	ලේ
එවිට කප්පාගොඩින් සමතෙක් රැගෙන අවසර දියට පැන	ලා
එගෙට වැදලන් කිඹුළු දකිමින් ගිරිය අතලා අනුව	බිඳලා
දියට මතු කොට ගෙනත් දැක්වූ කලට මා හැහි කට්ටු බැඳ	ලා
එවිට මානෙට ඉළක් කෝලය ලැබුණි ඔහු යස උසස් කර	ලා

When the god-king Rama proceeded from Devundara (Dondra) to Alutnuwara in great state with a four-fold army like unto a festival of the gods the flag emblazoned with emblems of the Sun and Moon (*Soma rivi ruvapihiti kodiya*) was borne in front. Since then the four korales have held chief rank.

King Raja Sinha, when at Rayigam watta about to raise the siege of the Colombo fortress, suspended the *Davunde* and *pachcha lans*a (spear) on a coconut tree, then bade "the captain" take them as he could. *Davunde* and *pachcha lans*a were then conferred on the Four Korales as marks of honour.

17. *The dekam Metiya*, vide Bell, Kegalle Report pp. 125-126.



It chanced as on a day Raja Sinha, Lord of Tri Sinhala, journeying to Batticaloa (*sic*) beheld with godly eyes in the Gal-Oya (rocky stream) a crocodile that had killed many a man. He fearlessly struck the reptile with his sword, and thrust sore at it with javelin (*Kotaviya*); the crocodile unable to escape with life, disappeared beneath the water, the javelin in its side.

On that day Raja Sinha made promise to the escort that accompanied him: "the crocodile has carried away the *ilukkola* that stabbed it. To any brave man in this company not over-powered by the sense of our Royal presence, who will deliver to us the *ilukkola*, we will forthwith present the self-same *ilukkola* as a mark of honour."

Then stood forth a valiant man of Kappagoda (Galboda Korale), and having obtained permission of the King, plunged in to the stream. Diving to where the crocodile lurked, he thrust his hands between its jaws and wrenched them asunder. Then he bore the monster to the surface and showed it to the king, who admiring his courage highly conferred on him the *ilukkola* as a mark of honour.

The Dissava of the Four Korales, who bears, as is the established custom, the five marks of honour, the flags with figures of sun and moon, *davunde pachcha lanse*, *Kotaviya* and red flag goes foremost to the ever victorious war.

An invaluable classification of Sinhalese banners and standards with illustrations was made (1912—1914) in so far as then available. In the course of the investigation "what is perhaps the most important flag of the collection, the Royal Standard of Sri Wickrema Raja Sinha, King of Kandy (1798—1815), was discovered quite unexpectedly at the Chelsea Hospital". It had been granted by royal Letters Patent to Governor Brownrigg for his services in the occupation of Ceylon (1815).

It was later deposited at White Chapel, removed from there to the United Service Museum (London) and later to the Chelsea Hospital. At the time of its discovery it lay with Napoleon's eagles;<sup>18</sup> *Sic transit gloria mundi!* (so passeth away the glory of this world.) After the capture of the King and the entry of the British to the royal Palace, a distribution was made among British officers of articles of great value and variety, some of which were later restored.

The account of Sinhalese banners and standards compiled under the auspices of the Government was published (1916) as one of

18. *Sinhalese Banners and Standards*, edited by E. W. Perera, Introduction p. 3.



the memoirs of the Colombo Museum; from its contents it would appear that the main custodians of Ceylon's precious heritage were the priests of Buddhist temples; these relics saved from vandalism by their care and devotion seem to have appealed only to them, except what was preserved by individual families to prove their own genealogy. The reason is obvious.

The object of most institutions and persons who believed in the Western Christian civilization was to destroy and obliterate what remained of Sri Lanka's past and supplant it with a new theology and a new way of life; the sincerity of their own convictions is unquestionable, so also the callous zeal with which they set about the obliteration of the ancient civilization but it was otherwise with the Buddhist bhikkus.

“The Incumbents of the Kandyan temples, though invariably courteous and obliging, in some cases showed a natural reluctance to part with their flags even temporarily. The flags had been lying in large wooden chests for years, zealously guarded.”<sup>19</sup> “This flag (the Royal Standard) has since been renovated, and the emblem is clearly discernible a lion passant holding a sword in its right paw, as described in the Malwatte manuscript.”<sup>20</sup>

“The flag of the Sitawaka Kingdom was doubtless the standard borne by Raja Sinha I (1581—1594) an elephant on a green field.”<sup>21</sup> The carrying of banners by the Sinhalese armies is recorded by Portuguese historians. The mere sight of the banner of Sri Lanka's Warrior-King appears to have struck terror into the hearts of the enemy. In a description of the fierce attack on Colombo (1587) it is said:

“On the bastion of Sao Sebastio the attack was greater because it was taken in hand by the Captain of the *atapata* or King's guard with all the troops under his command, who were picked men and with Raju's banners. Here the trouble was great, because our lascarins on seeing near the bastion these banners and devices immediately lost heart and began to retire.”<sup>22</sup>

The Sinhalese banners and standards vividly call to mind the emblems round which a people fought and died for the preservation of their religion and the freedom of their motherland.

“It was found that only in the provinces which once formed the

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19. *ibid.* p. 2.

20. *ibid.* p. 8.

21. *ibid.* p. 13.

22. *ibid.* p. 13.



Kandyan Kingdom and in the city of Kandy was there any considerable collection of ancient banners. Those in the lowland provinces had long since perished. Many of these flags are housed in the ancient temples in the city of Kandy itself, the rest in Buddhist shrines in the outlying suburbs and villages.’<sup>23</sup>

There was a number of ancient banners of different castes in the possession of different families. It is to be regretted that no banners were found in the *walauwas* of the Kandyan Chiefs. The lion was the national symbol from the fabled origin of the Sinhalese monarch Vijaya from the King of beasts.

Different banners were assigned to different provinces, to boards or departments (*panti*) which formed separate branches of administration, to temples and districts, to tribes or castes; banners were carried in religious and royal processions; especially in the case of *peraheras* escorting the Tooth and Bowl Relics (of the Buddha) and those connected with the worship of the Devalas.

‘The banner of the provinces, as we have them, probably date from the fifteenth century, when Parakrama Bahu VI (A.D. 1412—1467) reorganised the Island.’<sup>24</sup> Of the flags of the Dissawas, Uva had a swan flag (*hansa kodiya*), Matale a White (*sudu*) flag, the Three Korales displayed the double headed eagle (*bherunda pakshiya*); Walapane bore a peacock on its banner, Udapalata lotus flowers (*nelun mal*), Binnewa a parrot (*girawa*) and Tamankaduwa a bear (*walaskodiya*).

The *ratas* (districts) had distinctive flags of their own; Udunuwara had a *Kindura kodiya*, a *kinduru* (creature half human, half bird) blowing a conch shell; the flag of the *Hath Korale* was a lion (*Sinhaya*); the banner of the Matara Dissawa bore one of the small elephants for which the province was famous; Sabaragamuwa (Denewaka Adhikara) received its yellow silk flag from the colour sacred to god-king Saman, the tutelary deity of Adam’s Peak which stands within the borders of the province.

The flag of the Kingdom of Jaffna was Gemini holding a lyre (*yal*) from the tradition that the peninsula was granted by a King of Ceylon to a blind harper from Chola as a guerdon for his minstrelsy, now not extant.<sup>25</sup> Kandy adopted the Sinhalese Royal Standard with the beginning of the realm when the lowland provinces surrendered to Portugal and the Sitawaka Kingdom fell, but

23. *ibid.* p. 1.

24. *ibid.* pp. 10—14.

25. *ibid.* pp. 24, 25.



the flag of the under kingdom was uncertain.

At the annual Perahera at Kandy on the occasion of the revival of Buddhism the disposition of the people under their banners by Kirti Sinha (1747-1778) is thus described. "He assembled all the inhabitants of Lanka in that city, dividing the people according to their districts and office, and stationing them in different parts of the city, the people of each district having a flag to distinguish them (raised in their special encampment)."

A contemporary poem (*Dalada Perahera Alankaraya*, circa 1787) describes the order of the procession and how the banners were marshalled. The Maha Dissawa of the Hatara Korales had also the privilege of taking the lead at the Dalada Perahera and other similar occasions.

This chapter cannot be closed without an allusion to the Buddhist flag. The symbol is very ancient but its revival is due to the renaissance of Buddhism about 1882. The five-coloured flag is often referred to in the *Mahavamsa*. It represented the five colours which formed the halo round the Buddha's head, *nila* (blue) *peta* (yellow), *lohita* (blood-red), *awadata* (white), magenta (red of the colour of *maditiya* seed), *prabhaswara* (glory, a combination of all other colours). The latter is usually shown by small square of the five colours stitched together as a sixth stripe, while the other colours are shown by long stripes of cloth sewn together. A banner with a barry of these five colours is now used in all Buddhist processions and celebrations.

The account of Sinhalese banners and standards also traces chronologically the changes made in the royal banners and standards; they reflect that Ceylon was conscious of the European science of heraldry after the arrival of the Portuguese in Ceylon. The three-winged lion on the Sanchi gateway probably stood for the three divisions into which the Island was divided.

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Beyond the Himalayan height bearing the lion banner on the northern side,

The heavenly maids sing to the lute in this wise,

26. Sri Rahula, *Perakumba Sirita*, Verse 91.



The only peer of King Perakum among the monarchs of  
the three worlds,  
Is the reflection of his own image shown in the mirror.

The reference is to Kotte during the days of Sri Parakrama Bahu VI (1412—1467); its ramparts are compared to the Himalayan heights; on the northern wall of the city floated the national lion flag. At the beginning of the sixteenth century the flag was adapted to keep in line with the science of heraldry. "The Royal flag was a red lion passant holding a sword in its right paw, it is generally on a white field and as such continued to be up to the last. It was flown on a staff surrounded by a golden tassel wrought in gold thread. At the four corners of the banner four *bo-leaves* were worked in gold thread, while the centre displayed a royal lion (*Sinha raja*) holding a sword. The four *bo-pat* (leaves of the sacred Pipal tree) denoted that Ceylon was a Buddhist kingdom."<sup>27</sup>

Banners and flags have from time immemorial played an active part in human affairs; they have served as visual objects which have lent inspiration to armies, institutions and ideals, round them men have fought and died; the lowering or loss of their banner was synonymous with disgrace and defeat. In moments of stress or danger the sight of their banner has given men fresh courage and renewed their resistance.

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The *Dhajagga Discourse* (Flag Discourse) in the Buddhist scriptures affords an interesting parallel; Buddha is said to have recalled an incident to his disciples who had gathered together. It once happened that the Gods and the Asuras were at war when the God Sakra summoned the gods and said unto them:

"When you are at war and fear and trembling comes upon you, look at my flag and thereupon you will cease from fear and trembling. If you do not see my flag, observe the flag of Prajapati, failing him the flag of Varuna, failing him the flag of Isan (Ishwara), then your fear and trembling will cease and no longer will your hair stand on end.

"But what I say unto you, Brethren, is that you are at war with Raga (desires) Moha (ignorance) Dvesha (Hate). These cannot be driven away by gazing at flags. What I say unto you is this. When you are in fear or trembling or when your hair stands on end, think of the Buddha and you will then attain enlightenment, think

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27. *Sinhalese Banners and Standards* pp. 6-7.



of the Dhamma and of the Sangha, then will your fear and your trembling cease and no longer will your hair stand on end.

This discourse in its forceful simplicity lays down a cardinal principle of Buddhism that it is not by resort to divine aid that humanity can seek relief from life's troubles but by their own efforts and mental discipline, by seeking the three Refuges and following the footsteps of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

*Evaṃ Buddhāṃ Sarāntānaṃ  
Dhammaṃ Saṅghaṇca Bhikkavo  
Bhayaṃ va chaṃbhitattāṃ va  
Loma haṃso na hessaṭṭhi*

Then, O monks, unto those who think  
Of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha  
There will come no fear nor trembling  
Nor will their hair stand on end.

The last scene in this eventful struggle of Ceylon against European nations yet lives in an ancient painting; it depicts a Buddhist Bhikku pulling down the British flag. The documentation and recital of the Kandyan Convention had been completed; the representatives of both nations had assembled and British soldiers were hoisting up their flag when the Anunayake of Wariyapola pulled it down with the words that the document must first be signed before the British flag can fly; <sup>28</sup> it was the last flicker of Independence and the light was lit by the hands that had for generations protected the dignity and religion of the nation.

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28. See, *In the Last Days of Sri Wickremarajasingha*, Dolapihilla p. 274.



## LITERATURE

*Many books, known and famous, they tore from the cord and strewed  
them hither and thither.*

— *Culavamsa*







## CHAPTER III

### LITERATURE

An account of the art of Ceylon is incomplete without an analysis of its literature, since a nation's literature forms part and parcel of its culture and civilization. But only a portion of her literary heritage is now extant. The greater part underwent destruction during many South Indian invasions; ample evidence of that fact appears in the Buddhist Chronicles and in other writings. It is also said that during the reign of Rajasinha I, Buddhist scriptures and Buddhist books were piled up mountain high and consigned to the flames.

On the available evidence it can be asserted that the ancient literary wealth was large; that it has been periodically destroyed; that what remains is only a moiety of the whole; that several causes contributed to this loss. Of the South Indian invasions, the Buddhist Chronicle says:

Many books, known and famous, they tore from the cord and strewed them hither and thither.<sup>1</sup>

There were also violent schisms ....between Theravada and Mahayana adherents; each side destroyed the books of the other; angry kings showed their hostility in the same manner. The marvel, therefore, is not the paucity but the survival of Ceylon's literature, for which posterity should remain ever grateful. It is a precious national heritage of which Ceylon can be justly proud.

“Unlike the Sanskrit, which can be procured from India, the Sinhalese works are few in number; owing to the grievous loss sustained from the invasions of the Island by the Malabars, and from the general destructions of literary records during several reigns. At least it is difficult to account for the share of civilizations possessed by the Sinhalese prior to the age of Veedagama (15th century) and Totagamuwe (15th century) much less for the great talent and learned research displayed by these *literati*, without supposing that many manuscripts, which once existed are now lost.”<sup>2</sup>

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1. *Culavamsa*, pp. 80, 87.

2. *A Survey of Sinhalese Literature* (James de Alwis) LXXVIII.



In world history the destruction of a country's literature is not a singular circumstance. The fate of Ceylon has befallen other lands sometimes with greater intensity; the ancient literature of Africa and America is irretrievably lost to posterity; treasure hunters destroyed books with the same abandon as they murdered natives and destroyed their temples; a classic instance is the pillage of the famous library at Alexandria (A.D. 638).

“The victorious army awaited the directions of the Conqueror;” said Mohamed: “If these writings of the Greeks agree with the books of God, they are useless and need not be preserved; if they disagree they are pernicious and should be destroyed; and such was their incredible multitude that six months were barely sufficient for the consumption in the public baths of this precious fuel.”

The historian expresses his regret that valuable libraries were involved in the ruin of the Roman Empire, but adds: “When I seriously compute the lapse of ages, the waste of ignorance and the calamities of war, our treasures, rather than our losses, are the object of my surprise.”<sup>3</sup>

The same observation may be made of Ceylon and for the preservation of her literature, posterity owes an irredeemable debt to the Buddhist bhikkus. As in the case of *Sinhalese Banners and Standards*, so in the case of books, they were the main custodians. The Commissioners in quest of the former (1912) found them mainly in Buddhist temples. “The incumbents of the Kandyan temples, in some cases, showed a natural reluctance to part with their flags even temporarily.”<sup>4</sup> Their disinclination is understandable for they realized, as in the case of books, the priceless value of their possessions, the index to Ceylon's culture and civilization.

The eminent author Gurulugomi who lived in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries makes the observation that: “as (again) the city in which Sakka (Indra) dwells is called the city of Sakra, so also the island in which the Sinhala (Sinhalese) dwell is called the island of Sinhala. As (also) people who are natives (of a place) speak in their native language, so likewise the people of the Sinhala country make use of the Sinhala speech—their language is called the Sinhala Language.”<sup>5</sup>

3. *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Gibbon, Vol V, pp. 345-347.

4. *Sinhalese Banners and Standards* (E. W. Perera) Introduction.

5. *A Survey of Sinhalese Literature* (James de Alwis), citing the *Pradeepekawa* (Gurulugomi) XXIV-XXVI.



යම්සේ ශක්‍රයානට නිවාස භූත පුරය ශක්‍ර පුරය නම් වීද එසෙයින්ම සිංහලයනට නිවාස භූතද්වීපය සිංහල ද්වීප නම් වී. යම්සේ මවස්ථු ජනයෝ මද්වශබ්දයෙන් කියනු ලැබෙත්ද එසෙයින් මේ සිංහල දේශස්ථවූ ජනයෝ සිංහල ශබ්දයෙන් කියනු ලැබෙත්, ඔවුන්ගේ භාෂා සිංහල භාෂා නම් වේ.

The Sinhala language as spoken by the people and the language as used by writers in literary works was not identical; the language of literature was meant for the scholar and was, therefore, less simple and not easily understood by illiterates. The scholars, moreover, introduced into their writings Sanskrit and Pali words and phrases which enriched their works but also detracted from the direct force and appeal of Sinhala to the common folk; this adaption and assimilation of Sanskrit and Pali extended to the acceptance of the ideas and descriptions of the Indian classics and scientific works of Pali, to the intake of the Buddhist Scriptures and discourses of Sanskrit, even to explorations into erotic and libidinous Sanskrit literature.

Expression has been given to the resulting situation by an European scholar many years ago. "One of the difficulties which present themselves to the student of Ceylonese literature is the variety of languages in which various works have been composed. A knowledge of the Sinhalese alone does not unlock the treasures of their literature, thus, if I mistake not their scientific works are generally to be found in Sanskrit, their religious writings in Pali, whilst their poetry is in the dialect of its own Elu."<sup>6</sup> As a general observation this comment yet holds but much of the literature, which the writer had in mind, has since been translated into Sinhala.

In the view of some scholars the language was standardized about the middle of the thirteenth century; this period is selected in relation to the composition of the *Sidat Sangarawa* (1270-1295), a well-known Sinhalese grammar; an ancient copy of this book was found (1587) in the Raja-Maha Vihara at Kundasale (near Kandy).

An Introduction to an English translation of the grammar was published about three centuries later (1852) for the assistance of British administrators and the English-educated intelligentsia at a time when British policy had sent Sinhala underground. The writer fearlessly and firmly asserted that it was essential to give Sinhala a high place as a medium of administration.

6. *A Survey of Sinhalese Literature* (1852 A.D.) pp. XXVI and XXVII citing Knighton's essay R.A.S. (C.B.) Journal No. 1, p. 30.



This publication had a result beyond the author's anticipations; his views on one line of the poem—*Gangarohana Varnanava* wherein occurred the words—සසර සරණ සච්ච සන්ද්ඵඵ evolved into a literary bomb; it led to a literary controversy which came to be known as the Savsatdam Vadaya (1853); to a renaissance of Sinhala literature and Oriental learning in the late nineteenth century, besides making a valuable contribution to the development of the flexible prose style in modern Sinhala.<sup>7</sup>

Some writers classify Sinhalese literature—according to their respective periods of composition, punctuating the periods in terms of the rise and fall of the several Kingdoms which flourished and died during the course of the Island's history, such as the Anuradhapura Period (A.D. 437-1038), the Polonnaruwa Period (A.D. 1058-1234), the Dambadeni Period (1220-1293 A.D.), the Kotte Period (A.D. 1412-1580), the Senkadagala Period (A.D. 1480-1706) and others. This classification hardly holds except for the inclusion of a literary work within each time interval.

The author of the Introduction to the *Sidat-Sangarava* attempts a division into five periods:

First Period	up to	A.D. ....	339
Second Period	...	A.D.	339—1410
Third Period	...	A.D.	1153—1410
Fourth Period	...	A.D.	1410—1815
Fifth Period	...	A.D.	1815—1852

It is obvious that this selection is defective; there is no outstanding reason for this division; it is perhaps more helpful to fall back on the duration of the kingdoms, if the analysis is on a chronological basis. A classification can hardly be contained within artificial limitations of time; an analysis that takes into consideration the content of the literature without a disregard of the time factor is, perhaps, the best solution of the problem.

The outstanding characteristic of Ceylon literature up to the seventeenth century is its connection with Buddhism; thereafter can be seen the impact of foreign invasions on the growth of Ceylon's culture. Prior to these events, its histories were the histories of Buddhist kings and Buddhist institutions; its prose works and poems recalled Buddha and his many lives in his previous births, adoration

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7. *Preface to a Survey of Sinhala Literature* (James de Alwis) by Dr. A. W. P. Guruge.



is paid to Him at the commencement of the compositions and references to Him abound within the text itself.

This feature was but a natural sequence of the character of the authors; for they were generally either Buddhist bhikkus or their associates. It has been said that while it is the function of kings, nobles and soldiers to act; it is the function of priests to write and to record; so also it is the function of rural folk to give expression to their emotions in song and dance, handed down by tradition from generation to generation.

Of the histories, the highest place is accorded to the *Mahavamsa*—the record of the Great Dynasty of Kings; it is generally accepted that this Chronicle was begun by a learned Thero of the name of Mahanama who took the story of Ceylon down to the reign of King Mahasena (A.D. 276-303); the Chronicle was thereafter continued over the title of *Culavamsa* (*Suluvamsa*) or the Lesser Dynasty; as in the case of some other works of this class, it is likely that the actual composition was assigned to junior bhikkus who wrote under the supervision of their illustrious elders.

These histories are in Pali verse and are in fact epic poems on the dynasties of Ceylon's kings. It is difficult for the best of translations to reproduce a replica of the literature of one country written in its own language and idioms into the language of another. In the prose translations now available, only a glimpse of the originals can, therefore, be seen. Reference is made later to many other poems and prose works, yet extant, panegyrics on kings, works of moral wisdom, of religious interest and others. At certain periods Sandesas and Hatan Kavyas were also written; these are described in some detail in subsequent pages. But an investigation into metre, prosody or grammar or other features of mere linguistic interest is beyond the scope of this work and of the present writer's attainments in these fields of scholarship.

The tradition is that there was no Pali Commentary to the *Paritta* (Pitakas) extant in India but that there was one in Ceylon, written in Sinhala; that the Thera Revata selected a scholar to visit Ceylon and render the Sinhala commentary into Pali. His choice fell on Buddhagosha—so called as his speech was as profound as Buddha's. On his arrival at the Maha Vihara, he was tested by the community of monks who gave him two verses with the words. "Show here thy qualification, once we have seen it we shall give all the books".<sup>8</sup>

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8. *Culavamsa* Ch. 37, 235-236.



The Buddhist Chronicle then records that, summing up the three Pitakas together with the commentary, Buddhagosa wrote the work called the *Visuddhimagga*. He began to read it near the great Bodhi tree; but the devas to convince the people of his greatness caused the book to disappear; but twice and thrice he reproduced it. When the book was brought back a third time to read, the gods then produced the two other books. Then the bhikkus read out all the three books together.

“Neither in composition and content, nor also as regards the sequence (of the subjects), in the teaching of the Theras, in the quotations, in words and sentences was there any kind of deviation in all three books. Then the community satisfied and exceedingly well pleased, cried again and again, ‘Without doubt, this is Metteya.’”<sup>9</sup>

The object of this legend is to focus on the reader’s mind the profundity of the scholarship and the prodigious memory of Buddhagosa. Apart from the Commentary, he also composed the *Visuddhimagga* which contains the whole of Buddha’s teaching. “If he had written nothing else, it alone would have secured for him undying fame.”<sup>10</sup> He was also the author of the *Nanodayas* and the *Samantha-Pasadika*; the latter deals with the Vinaya texts, “by taking the substance of the old commentaries,” it also reveals many facets of the life of ancient India. His contribution to Pali scholarship and its development was unique.

*Buddhagose patithante paññavantā pi ye janā  
Tesaṅ paññapabhā natthi Rāhu—mukke va candimā.*<sup>11</sup>

When Buddhagosa is by, even wise men lose the lustre of their wisdom, like the moon in the Dragon’s mouth.

The momentum given to the Pali Language by Buddhagosa (5th century) was unexpended for a considerable time; it was maintained by another scholar Buddhadatta (5th century) who was almost his contemporary; their successors were Dhammapala and, possibly, Buddharakkita and Upasena; little is known of the last two authors; disagreement among scholars leaves the nature of their contributions uncertain. Buddhadatta and Dhammapala, however, were real personages and authors of repute and not legendary figures.

9. *ibid.* Ch. 37, 240-243.

10. Gray, *Introduction to Buddhaghosupatti*.

11. *Buddhaghosupatti*.



Buddhadatta is said to have left Ceylon at the time of Buddha-gosha's arrival; he appears to have entered the Order at the Maha-Vihara at Anuradhapura and, therefore, belonged to that community of bhikkus. He resided in Ceylon for a period of years, but his two books *Abhidhamma-vatara* and *Vinaya-Vinicchaya* were probably written in India after his return; the former is a study of Buddhist philosophy and similar in content to the *Visuddhimagga*. "It is probably right to conclude that both were but handing on an analytical formula which had been evolved between their own time and the final closing of the Abhidhamma-Pitaka." Two other books attributed to Buddhadatta are the *Madurattha-vilesini*, and the *Jinalankara*, but his authorship of the latter remains in doubt.

Dharmapala also appears to have been born in India and to have studied at the Maha Vihara in Ceylon and followed the Theravada tradition. It is said that when he came of age a daughter of the king was assigned to him as his wife. But on the night before the marriage ceremony was performed, being greatly distressed in mind he prayed before an image of the Buddha. In answer to his prayer, a god bore him away to a mountain, some hundreds of *li* from the capital. When the brethren there heard his story they complied with his request and gave him ordination.

Of Dharmapala, it has been written; "It would seem that Dharmapala was educated in the same university as Buddhagosha; the two writers hold very similar views. They refer to the same authorities; they have the same method of exegesis; they have reached the same style in philological and ethnological science, and that both have the same lack of any knowledge of the simple rules of higher criticism."<sup>12</sup>

Fourteen commentaries are ascribed to Dharmapala, of which seven are on the principal books processed in the canon. He is also regarded as the author of a commentary on the *Netti*, the *Paramettha-manjusa* and the *Linpatha-Vannena* and other books. His work was, according to him, compilations from already existing commentaries and shows the importance attached at this period, in the history of orthodox Buddhism, to the work of re-writing in Pali the traditional interpretation handed down in local dialects.<sup>13</sup>

From this short summary of the Pali literature of Ceylon cannot be excluded the Jataka and the Pali Chronicles. The historical

12. Rhys Davids, *Hastings Encyclopaedia*, Bel: and Ethics, Vol. IV pp.701 et seq.

13. *The Pali Literature of Ceylon*, (G. P. Malalasekera) p. 116.



development of the Jataka is a subject beyond the scope of this review; they have grown in the course of centuries into their present form, style and content; they existed in the old Sinhalese language and were translated into Pali; at different periods of time changes were made in them, including additions, they ultimately took the form of a collection of 550 Jataka (Birth Stories); their translation into Sinhala was done in the reign of Pandita Prakramabahu (circa 1305). The main themes of some and the part they played in the Island's life has been elsewhere related.

The Buddhist Chronicles were written in Pali verse; they consisted of stanzas intended for recitation. The *Mahavamsa* says in its first lines: "Having made obeisance to the Sambudda, the pure, sprung of a pure race, I will recite the *Mahavamsa* of varied content and lacking nothing."<sup>14</sup> The *Dipavamsa* says in its Introduction that it has been "twisted into a garland of history, from generation to generation, like flowers of various kinds"; the *Mahavamsa* also claims that its stanzas are like unto "a splendid and dazzling garland, strung with every variety of flowers, rich in colour, taste and scent".

The *Dipavamsa* records that King Dhatusena (A.D. 450-477) ordered that it should be recited in public at the annual Mahinda festival; evidently it had been then completed but it was later superseded by the *Mahavamsa* which was later in point of time and more artistic in point of style. The continuity of Ceylon's civilization is the outstanding fact that emerges from these chronicles; in them Ceylon possesses historical records which take back the story of her people to distant centuries, further than the annals of many other nations.

Of these two Chronicles, as disclosed by its own intrinsic evidence, the *Dipavamsa* was a compilation from earlier records and made by a group of persons and not by a single author; their names remain anonymous. Scholars assign the date of its completion in its present form to some time between the beginning of the fourth and the first third of the fifth century; its narrative extends till about A.D. 302; the style of its stanzas has been criticized as inartistic and inelegant but that does not signify that it has no literary value; it makes the claim that it is like flowers of various kinds.<sup>15</sup>

The earlier chapters of the *Mahavamsa* up to the death of Mahasena (A.D. 276-303) are generally accepted as the work of the Thera

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14. *Mahavamsa* Ch. 1 1-2.

15. Introduction.



Mahanama; the Chronicle was later continued by several authors; the chapters up to the time of Pandita Prakramabahu II (A.D. 1225-1269) are probably the composition of Dhammakitti II. The author of the intervening chapters from that date up to the reign of Pandita Prakramabahu III (A.D. 1283-1293) remains yet unascertained; the portion thereafter up to the death of Kirti Sri Rajasinha (A.D. 1758) was completed by Tibbotuvave Sumangala; it was continued thereafter up to the Kandyan Convention (A.D. 1815) by Hikkaduve Sri Sumangala and Batuvantudave Pundit.

The *Mahavamsa* was itself a reconstruction of the *Dipavamsa* and the earlier records in a more elegant and refined style; it made the claim that it was written in the "Supreme Magadhi (Pali) language, which is the mother of all tongues, sweet to the ear and delightful to the heart, and cooling to the senses." There is a consensus of opinion among scholars that it would come within the classification of an epic.

One of the objects of the composition of the *Mahavamsa* would appear to have been the suppression of the Sinhalese language by Pali. The bhikkus of the Mahavihara had accepted Theravada Buddhism, the language of which was Pali; they, thereafter decided to convert the nation's history also into the language of their religious scriptures. "Whatever the matters may be that are contained in the *attakatha*, without suppressing any part thereof, rejecting the dialect only, the work is composed in the supreme Magadhi (Pali) language which is thoroughly purified from all imperfections"<sup>16</sup>

The accuracy and the veracity of the Chronicles have been challenged by some critics; one has described them as "the absurdities of monks"; of the *Dipavamsa* it has been said that, "in the absence of any sources the work must be considered as standing on its own tottering feet". It must be confessed that the chronology of the chronicles contains many inaccuracies, references to happenings which come within the terms fables and legends; descriptions of cities having the splendours of the heavens and the occurrence of incidents which are no other than miracles.

But it should be remembered that the Chronicles are not merely histories; they are also epics; in his great epic (circa 1669) a great poet made the following reference to the moon and its likely inhabitants:

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16. *Mahavamsa*.



“Not in the neighbouring moon, as some have dreamed;  
 These argent fields more likely habitants,  
 Translated saints, or middle spirits, hold  
 Betwixt the angelical and human kind.”<sup>17</sup>

Three centuries later (July, 1969) the American astronauts who alighted on the moon's surface saw no signs of life, human, or semi-divine, no atmosphere, no flora or fauna, only desolation.

Later criticisms of the Chronicles have, however, been cautious and more objective. “These Singhalese stories the value of which have been sometimes over-estimated demand cautious criticism as much as the records of popular ecclesiastical tradition.”<sup>18</sup> Eminent scholars have expressed views even more favourable. Rhys Davids, cited by Geiger, writes:

“The Ceylon Chronicles would not suffer in comparison with the best of the Chronicles even though so considerably later in date, written in England or France.” He lays stress on the fact that, as is self-evident, these Chronicles contain no pure history. But they represent the traditions of their time and permit us to draw retrospective deductions as to earlier periods.<sup>19</sup>

“True there are no lack of fables and marvellous tales. But they appear as outward decoration which can be easily omitted. ...In the Buddhist tradition, around a relative small nucleus all kinds of additions have collected in time. But we must not therefore throw away the child with the bath. Here, too, the task of science is to lay bare the grains of truth; not only this, but she must seek the meaning and significances of the mythical crown of rays that has gathered round the nucleus. For the mythical is often the covering of deep thoughts.”<sup>20</sup>

Recent research and archaeological excavations and finds have confirmed part of the data in the Chronicles; their material has afforded evidence useful in unravelling the history of India and Southern Asia; they are of importance in arriving at a correct understanding of the mysterious names in Indian chronology. A critic who disposed of them with the contemptuous phrase, “silly fictions of mendacious monks” has been later constrained to revise his view, “the new reading of the Kharavela inscription....

17. *Paradise Lost* (Milton) Bk. iii. 61-63.

18. *Mahavamsa*, Geiger's Introduction p. xiii.

19. *ibid.*

20. *ibid.* (citing Winditch, Mara and Buddha) pp. xiv, xv.



if correct obliges us to move back all the Saisunaga dates more than fifty years, and therefore supports the Ceylon date for the death of the Buddha, viz 544 or 543 B.C.’’ This date is of great importance in the fixation of Indian chronology.<sup>21</sup>

Since the establishment of Buddhism in Ceylon, Pali pushed out the Sinhala language; its disuse was a logical sequence. Buddhism was enunciated by the Teacher in Pali; the written word was in the hands of the bhikkus; for the preservation of the doctrine in its original purity the Theravada fraternity took the decision to translate the Sinhala commentaries and other books into Pali; this substitution was gradually effected to the detriment of the Sinhala language, its use and development.

‘‘In commencing this commentary—having embodied thereon the Maha Attha Ratka, without excluding any proper meaning from the decisions embodied in the Maha-paccari, as also the famous Kurundi and other commentaries, and including the opinions of the Elders—I shall perform my task well.

‘‘Let the young and the middle-aged and the elderly monks who entertain a proper regard for the doctrine of the Tathagata, the Luminary of Truth, listen to my words with pleasure. The *Dhamma* as well as the *Vinaya* was declared by the Buddha and the sons understood it in the same sense as it was delivered; and inasmuch as in the former times they (the Sinhalese commentators) composed of the commentaries without disregarding their (the sons’) opinions, therefore, excepting any error of transcription, everything contained therein is an authority to the learned in this Order, who respect ecclesiastical discipline.

‘‘From these commentaries after casting off the language, condensing detailed accounts, including authoritative decisions without over-stepping any Pali idioms (I shall proceed to compose my work). And as the commentary will be explanatory of the meanings of words belonging to the Suttas, in conformity with the sense attached to them therein, therefore ought it the more diligently to be studied.’’<sup>22</sup>

The introduction of Pali was due to the influence exercised by the bhikkus of the Maha-Vihara; as adherents of Theravada Buddhism, their anxiety was to preserve the doctrine in its original form; Pali was in their view the best medium to achieve this object. On the other hand, the Abhayagiri fraternity took a hand in the introduction

21. *Early History of India* (1924 ed.) p. 50 cited in *Pali Literature of Ceylon*. p. 145.

22. *Samanta-pāsādika* (Pali Text Society) p. 2 VV10-16.



of Sanskrit; they were adherents of Mahayana Buddhism which had affinities with Hinduism, the language of which was Sanskrit. However that may be, the native language was caught up and squeezed by a pincer movement of Pali and Sanskrit in a joint assault.

Sanskrit crossed over as a natural consequence of the Malabar invasions from South India which intermittently vexed the Island for centuries from the third century; the invaders had acquired a large measure of control and occupation; with them came Brahmins and Brahmin priests well versed in the Sanskrit language; its study attracted as well the scholars of the Island; it held, moreover, the key to the great Indian classics; Sanskrit, therefore, obtained a foothold not less firm than the mellifluous Pali. The result of this two-fold drive into the native language has been thus described.

“The early diffusion of Pali among the priesthood and the learned laity, and the subsequent introduction of Sanskrit literature and Sanskrit verbiage into the once pure Elu, must have so choked that language that it died out early and its memory was cherished only by the lovers of Parnassus. In all religious and philosophic purposes Pali and Sanskritized philosophic Sinhalese began to be used from a very early period and continue to be used to-day.”<sup>23</sup> The outstanding Ceylon work written in Sanskrit was the *Janakiharana*; its author is uncertain but it is often regarded as a composition of the *Yuva-rajā*, named Mana, of Aggabodhi III (A.D. 633-643).

It is, therefore, not only the people but also their language that received massive blows from external sources; the nature and ferocity of the latter attack has, probably, been clouded by the attraction of the learned to scholarship. Whatever records are extant have been made and preserved by scholars; it is their view that the language has been enriched by the absorption of Pali and Sanskrit; their words, phrases, metaphors and analogies have been adopted; Ceylon writers have drawn inspiration and scripts from these sources. Emasculated of Pali and Sanskrit, some scholars at least would have nothing left over in their constitution; since they have always maintained for them a close affection and with them a close association.

It is, however, yet an interesting speculation to attempt an assessment of the turn that the native language would have taken but for the advent of its later association. This task is made more difficult by the disappearance, with hardly a trace, of most of the ancient

23. R.A.S. (C.B.) N.S. Vol 5. p. 201.



writings and records. What was not incised in stone is hardly extant. But from the residue, the conclusion has been drawn that the native language—whatever its name, Elu or Sinhala or any other—was simple, clear and crisp, it had force and a direct appeal even if it was not always elegant. It was, perhaps, better suited to a simple agricultural society; these Indian languages current among scholars served a society which was not identical but they had an irresistible attraction for learned men.

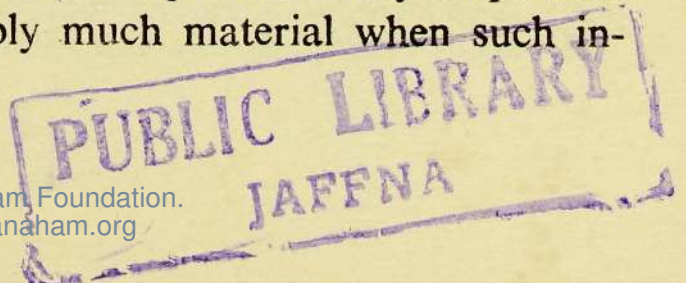
In this context the observations of an eminent Sinhalese scholar and archaeologist who was instrumental, more than most others, in recovering for posterity many invaluable ancient treasures of Ceylon sculpture, painting and inscriptions merit reproduction. Writing of the stanzas that he has deciphered on the Mirror Wall of the Sigiriya Rock fortress, he says:

“The prosaic translations given by me, in which what is aimed is a faithful rendering of the substance of the stanzas without striving after literary style do scant justice to the charm of the originals.

“Whatever rendering will not be able to reproduce the rhythm and the music of the old stanzas .....these spontaneous expressions of their feelings by the representatives of a refined and cultured people, at a place remarkable for its power to touch the aesthetic sensibilities of men, have an appeal not found in much of the formal Sinhalese poetry of later periods which often degenerate into labour-ed exercises in grammar, prosody and rhetoric.

“The reader of these verses who has mastered the difficulties due to the archaicness of this language, will not fail to be struck by the direct, simple but none the less expressive style in which they are written. They contain hardly any word which can be omitted without affecting the sense. There is scarcely any word which has been introduced for the purpose of satisfying the requirements of the metre. The sentences are short and crisp and offer a striking contrast to the involved and often ambiguous style of a later period. In a few words they say much and suggest more.

“These characteristics of studied brevity, preciseness and purposefulness are noticed not only in the languages of these verses but also in other known specimens of the speech of the Sinhalese during those ages in which they remained a virile people and in such Sinhalese literary works like the *Amavatura*..... A scientific study of Sinhalese prosody is likely to produce very important results, and our graffiti will supply much material when such in-





vestigations are undertaken.’<sup>24</sup> How much then have our learned men given to and how much have they taken away from our native language by excursions into other fields!

The Sigiri graffiti afford valuable evidence of the ancient Sinhalese language and culture: “the majority belong to the eighth and ninth centuries; they consist of stanzas some of them rhymed; they are incised on the Mirror Wall (*Kadapat pavura*) of the rock fortress. These graffiti are older than the oldest Sinhalese work now extant; two of the Sinhalese works now extant are the *Dampiya-Atuva Sannaya* and the *Kavisilumina*; those who wrote these verses intended them to be poetry but the lines of a stanza were not separated; very often a whole stanza, together with an introductory prose passage is written in one line.”<sup>25</sup> But for the aforesaid scholar’s industry these stanzas would probably have been lost to posterity. His treatise on these stanzas was published in two volumes a decade ago (1956).<sup>26</sup>

This scholar has expressed the view that the writers of these verses usually describe things from their own observations and according to their own feelings; they do not seem to pause in order to consider whether any simile or metaphor they wanted to employ had been sanctioned by theorists; they compare things with the natural features of the countryside with which they were familiar. For scholars, the main interest of these records will doubtless be philological. They contain a large number of words and grammatical forms of an intermediate stage between the Prakritic and the classical stages of the Sinhalese language not found in other documents.<sup>27</sup> The majority of the verses are on the elusive damsels painted on the Mirror Wall.

A singular feature of the Sigiri graffiti is that the verses are compositions of visitors to the gallery; the writing before being incised with a sharp pointed stilus has been drawn on the wall in red paint and in a few places it has been left without being incised over; some of the graffiti are shallowly incised. Some verses are comments on the verses earlier written; it is, therefore, unlikely that the authors were persons who fell within a classification of poets but nevertheless their compositions lead to a very favourable opinion of the literature on which these writers were nurtured.

24. *Sigiri Graffiti*. S. Paranavitana R.A.S.(C.B.) Vol XXXIV pp. 339, 345.

25. *ibid* p. 309 et seq.

26. *Sigiri Graffiti*, S. Paranavitana (1956).

27. *Sigiri Graffiti*, R.A.S. (C.B.) Vol XXXIV p. 309 et seq.



These records have an added value in that they are the earliest records available of ancient Sinhalese literature; there is evidence in the *Culavamsa* in the *Siya-bas-lakara* (A.D. 807-823) and in Sinhalese historical writings that twelve great poets flourished in the reign of Aggabodhi I (circa A.D. 564-597) but their poems which are said to have been of great beauty are all lost. Certain characteristic expressions and phrases found in the stanzas are found in some of the classical Sinhalese poems dating from the twelfth century; these verses have, therefore, been a store-house from which later writers have drawn.

Their metrical form and their poetic flavour may be gathered from the stanzas here reproduced out of many of equal elegance. The entrance to the rock fortress is the figure of a Lion carved on the rock; the following two verses contain an observation of a visitor who saw the Lion at the entrance but not the ladies in the cave and a witty retort by another on the former's infirmity.

නැගී ඇති බලනට බැලීම් සිහිමියන් සිහිගිරි  
 මනදෙළ පුරයි ඇති බලන රිසි නොවෙ බෙයන්ද් රන්වනු  
 එවැනි(ය)කට බියෙයි බසන්න බණව (න්නෙක්)  
 හෙ නොයැ බැවින්බෙයන්ද්හි රන්වනුත් දක්නෙයි උකැවැලී

I ascend Sihigiri and saw what is there to see, namely, Lord Leo, and fulfilled the desire in my mind. I have no wish to see the golden-coloured ones in the cave.

One who speaks of ascending is afraid of such an (easy) thing. He, as he is unable to go up to the cave, is indifferent to seeing the golden-coloured ones.<sup>28</sup>

Coquetry and amorous glances at the bewitching forms of the damsels looking with eyes askance on admirers who can only gaze at but can never hold them in their arms give the stanzas on the wall a luscious flavour; they are likened unto Ceylon flowers of various hues that enchant the eyes of the beholder and make music in his mind.

මත් බමර වැළ අවළ කමල් ලෙලයු	හුමු
ගුමමිනි මල් කෙසුර් නෙවිසු කිසුක් ළග්	හැමු
කුමුන්ද්වන විද් හෙමින් සරා සිසිරස්	හැමු
නුයුළහී අනු නැතියි එය් නොජනනින්	යමු

28. *ibid.* p. 329.



The string of intoxicated bees which made the closed lotuses to flutter, wandered humming near the kimsuka flowers on which the pollen had settled down. The beams of the autumnal moon went forth expanding clusters of white water lilies. But the slender-waisted one is not aggreable; therefore we go away insensible to all that.<sup>29</sup>

නෙහෙර් සිතා කොමුල් බැලුම් රුපිතා රුපි	රග්
මහනෙල් වනම් ලක්දිව සක් ලකා රජු ලද්දිය	අග්

The coquetish smile of the lily-coloured one is like the mist; her beautiful limbs are pleasing to look at. For her the king staked the sovereignty of the Island of Lanka and in winning her received (good) value.<sup>30</sup>

Verses such as these are comparable with their like of any clime; they reveal the culture and the genius of a people who had attained a higher civilization. It is their misfortune that the literature of this period hardly survives today; but for the industry and perseverance of a few scholars and archaeologists even these verses would not have escaped the hands of vandals.

ආය විසි මල් බලය නොමෙ බැණැහි රසැත්තක්  
(නින)බු සුනිල් කියම්බු හෙළිල්ලම්බු ලම්බු සිත්මය<sup>31</sup>

Though she is not able to speak to me anything sweet having seen the flowers scattered by her, my mind hangs on the fair damsel whose beautifully dark locks are comparable to a (water-laden?) cloud.

Are we not with the English poet Byron who fell in love with the *Maid of Athens* by the shores of the Aegean sea.

By those tresses unconfined  
 Woed by each Aegean wind;  
 By that lip I long to taste;  
 By that zone-encircled waist;  
 By all the token flowers that tell  
 What words can never speak so well.

Another classification of Sinhalese Literature has been made more on the basis of its content than on its chronology; for instance in

29. *ibid.* p. 324  
 30. *ibid.* p. 328.  
 31. *ibid.* p. 323.



what has been called a classical period fall three poems; they are the *Muva-Dev-Da-Vata* (A.D. 1100-1200), the *Sasa-Da-Vata* (A.D. 1197-1200) and the *Kaw-Silumina* (A.D. 1266-1269). Of these three poems the third (the title of which means the "Gem Crest" of Sinhalese poetry) is accorded a very high place in Sinhalese literature, second, perhaps, only to the later poem the *Kavyasekara* of Totagomuva Sri Rahula. The *Kaw-Silumina* has been generally accepted as the composition of the Sinhalese King Parakramabahu II (A.D. 1236-1270); this King earned the title of Pandit as a mark of his learning; it is accepted that he was one of the most cultured of Sinhalese kings.

These Poems have all a Buddhist background, they adapt Buddhist stories and put them into verse; the method of description, however, owes much to Indian counterparts; this device and the imitation of Indian poets have contributed to a reaction on the part of critics that the poems are artificial in character. The direct force of the scripts that are selected, some of which stir the human emotions, is taken away by verses which inhibit the progress of the story. The interpolation of the glory of cities like unto the cities of heaven, of the beauty and the water sports of women counteract rather than adds to the poetic value of these compositions.

This period is however redeemed by a prose work of great beauty an adaptation of a life story of the Buddha; the writer abstains from the embroidery which takes away more than it adds to the vivid force of Buddha's personality. This work is the *Amavatura* of Gurulugomi (A.D. 1187-1225); the *Amavatura* contains several stories which by reason of the author's style and presentation carry away the reader with them. About the same time was written the *Butsarana* (A.D. 1200-1293) by Vidyachakra Varti. The former work can be better understood by educated readers while the latter has a more popular appeal. The author of the *Butsarana* also wrote *Daham Sarana* and the *Sanga Sarana* (A.D. 1220-1293).

Among other works of literary interest are the *Thupavamsa* (A.D. 1293-1303) the *Pujavaliya* (A.D. 1266) and the *Nikaya Sangraha* (A.D. 1390). The *Thupavamsa* contains a number of stories, inclusive of accounts of the ten warriors of Dutthagamini and portions of the life of the king himself; it is the view of scholars that this book is not an original work but that its content is mainly borrowed from the *Butsarana* and the *Saddharmalankaraya*. The *Nikaya Sangraha* is a succinct analytical survey of the various Nikayas (Sects) of the



Buddhist clergy.

The real purpose of the *Pujavaliya* would appear to be to make its hearers bestow alms to bhikkus; its author is Mayurapada; its language is comparatively simple, without much use of Sanskrit words and is easily understood. It has a certain social value and some bearing on the life of the peasants of that age; it was indeed a hard life it said when the peasant spent day and night in toil and labour and the paddy went mainly to the owner of the land.

Another book which reflected the society of the time is the *Saddharma Ratnavaliya* (A.D. 1220-1293); this book was written by Dharmasena and contains Buddhist stories of the life of village folk; his style is suited to the subject, so are his figures of speech; it has been said that the *Saddharma Ratnavaliya* is a sort of mirror reflecting the society of its time and the manners and even the very speech and customs of the village folk. Dharmasena adopts a humorous style which has a popular appeal.

Sinhalese writers also produced certain other work which are well known and read today; among them are the *Saddharmalankaraya* (A.D. 1398-1410). The *Dalada Sirita* (A.D. 1325), the *Dambadeni Asna* (A.D. 1303-1325) and the *Kuveni Asna* (A.D. 1412-1420). The first of these compositions has been characterized as propaganda for alms; it contains many stories, the object of which is to encourage piety and stress the difficulties of the poor. The *Jataka*—(A.D. 1303-1333) are extended prose renderings of the original Pali versions. Similar tales abound in other lands but the *Jataka*, by reason of their variety, their subtle humour and moral purpose can bear favourable comparison.

The fifteenth century was the age of poetry; between the age of prose that preceded it and the fifteenth century stands the *Attanagaluvansaya*—(A.D. 1325), a translation into Sinhalese of a Pali composition; the Pali verses are given as insets to the Sinhalese prose; it is more or less the story of Sirisangabo; this king sought to escape from the trammels of life; he left his family and his kingdom and took his abode in the forest. Whatever may have been the appeal of this story to a people nurtured in the Buddhist way of life, its appeal to citizens of the technological age is doubtful.

The literary sovereign of the Kotte period—(A.D. 1412-1580) is Sri Rahula; among his works are the *Parevi Sandesaya* (A.D. 1430-1440), the *Kavyasekera* (A.D. 1449) and the *Salalihini Sandesaya* (A.D. 1450); the last two poems are regarded as his best works and



occupy a high place in Sinhalese literature; of them, the former bears evidence of his wide learning, the latter of his poetic genius. Two other great names belong to this period, Vattava the author of the *Guttala Kavya* (A.D. 1450-1460), and Vidagama whose *Buduguna Alankaraya* (A.D. 1475) is a well-known poem; a greater portion of this work is a criticism of the society of the period.

Sinhalese literature was now on its decline; the Kotte period witnessed its twilight but it was a twilight not without beauty. Its earlier years saw the *Perakumba Sirita* (A.D. 1430-1460) of Sri Rahula, an eulogy on Prakrama Bahu; this poem partakes of the nature of a Viridu Kavya and in that respect it is novel. Within the period also came several works of Vidagama Thera, such as the *Loweda-Sangarava* (A.D. 1446), *Dahamgata Malava* and *Kavalakumini Malava*; he was also the author of the *Buduguna Alankaraya* (A.F. 1475); stanzas from the first and last named of these poems are yet frequently cited as they have a magnetic appeal to the people.

The Sitawaka period (A.D. 1530-1592) that followed can claim the *Daham Sonda Kavya* (A.D. 1581-1592) and the *Savul Asna* (1581-1585 A.D.), the latter poem is an eulogy on Raja Sinha I; its author was Alagiyavanna Mukavetti; it does not reach the high standard of the *Salalihini Sandesaya*; but it affords material which helps to formulate a correct assessment of a great king and of events of moment; several verses from this poem have been reproduced in the foregoing pages.

Several well-known works were composed after the Sitawaka period; from a strict chronological view-point they fall into the Senkadagala period which attained age on the great victory at Danture (A.D. 1594) for, since this event the sovereignty of the kingdoms of Ceylon passed to Senkadagala; these poems though later in date, may be said to contain in a measure the flavour of the Kotte period. Three poems fall into this category; they are the *Kusa Jataka Kavya* (A.D. 1610), the *Parangi Hatana* and the *Constantinu (Kustantinu) Hatana* (A.D. 1618-1620); the first known also as the *Kusa Da Kavya*, is a rendering into verse of the popular Jataka which recounts a former life of the Bodhisat as Prince Kusa; in content it is almost identical with the *Kaw-Silumina* although in quality and style it is not classed as high; yet its popular appeal is greater in view of the simplicity of its diction and the fascinating presentation of its theme.

The author of the *Kusa Da Kavya* is regarded as Alagiyavanna



Mukavetti but of the authorship of the *Parangi Hatana* and the *Constantinu Hatana* there is no consensus of opinion; both poems are attributed by some scholars to Alagiyavanna, the former poem is written in praise of the Portuguese, while the latter is in praise of the Sinhalese. Linguistic similarities and dissimilarities apart, this change of front would accord with the versatility of Alagiyavanna; for at one time he held office under the Sinhalese Kings, and at another time under the Portuguese; at one time he was a Buddhist, at another time, probably, a Roman Catholic, for which conversion the attraction of wealth and status was, probably, the bait. To the post-Sitawaka period also belongs the *Subasita* (A.D. 1611) of Alagiyavanna, a well-known book of maxims.

As in many other countries, the authorship of many of Ceylon's literary works remains uncertain. Two of the celebrated world classics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, are subject to the same infirmity; Homer to whom they are attributed is but a name; the probability is that several bards took a hand in their composition for recitation. An acute controversy has raged as to whether the plays attributed to William Shakespeare, the Bard of Avon, were not in fact written by Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam, a Lord Chancellor of England. In many Sinhalese poems a clue to the author's name is given in one or more of the ultimate stanzas; this disclosure is often accompanied by self-praise in which modesty has no share.

Sri Rahula compares himself to Braspati (Jupiter) and to the great jewel upon the Crown while his contemporary scholars are like its other jewels.<sup>32</sup> Alagiyavanna asserts that he has dived into the deep ocean of Sanskrit, Pali drama and poetry and has overpowered contemporary poets as a lion overpowers elephants.<sup>33</sup> The student of the ancient Western classics, as he reads these lines, cannot resist the feeling that he is sipping wine with Horace and hearing him sing:

I've reared a fame outlasting brass  
which in its more than kingly height  
shall Egypt's pyramids surpass,  
unharm'd by countless ages flight.<sup>34</sup>

Of the life story of the men of Ceylon's early literary world there is scant authentic information; many of them were bhikkus con-

32. *Kavyasekara*.

33. *Savul Sandesaya* Verse 203.

34. Horace *Odes* Bk. iii. 30 (Modern Library transl.).



nected with temples; a few were kings; of others, only their names transpire. Of the greatest of them, Sri Rahula, it is known from a verse in one of his own poems that he was the head of the Vijaya-bahu Pirivena at Totagamuwa near Galle. He was probably associated in his early days with the household of King Prakrama Bahu VI (A.D. 1412-1467); this fact is a fair inference from the solicitude that he has evinced for the welfare of his daughter, the Princess Ulakuda-devi, in the *Parevi Sandesaya* (A.D. 1430-1440) and the *Salalihini Sandesaya* (A.D. 1450). Beyond these meagre facts little else is known; this absence of information about ancient writers is not peculiar to Ceylon.

Alagiyavanna, on the other hand, was a colourful character; his literary genius was matched by his worldly acumen. The son of Dharmadvaja, a native of the village of Hisvella, near Sitawaka, he was a Mukavetti (Mohottala) under Raja Sinha I; that he was once a Buddhist is demonstrated in many of his poems:

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හිස්වැලි ගම පව	ර
දහම් දජ පඩි නදන ගරුන	ර
අලභිය වන්න න	ම
මුකවැටිතුමා ගුණ'තු	ම
දකිනුව සසර හි	ම
මෙකුසද කවි කෙළේ මනර	ම <sup>35</sup>

The noble son of the learned Dharmadvaja of the far-famed village of Hisvella, who had in the ship of wisdom crossed the ocean of the Tripitaka.

The good and noble Alagiyavanna Mukavetti composed this beautiful Kusa Jataka poem so that he may see the further shore of Sansara.

It is Alagiyavanna's subsequent career that affords evidence of his versatility and his disregard of moral or religious scruples in his quest for personal advancement. The king of Portugal despatched Antao Vaz Fereira as Vedor de Facenda (A.D. 1607) with authority to reorganize the fiscal affairs of the Island. One of his major achievements was the preparation of *tombos* or registers of lands;

35. *Kusa Jataka*, Verses 684, 685.



a *tombo* contains the name of the land, a description of its cultivation, an enumeration of the claimants and a record of the owners as accepted by the *tombo* Commissioners; a most important function of Commissioners was the determination of the title for the levy of taxes on the owners.<sup>36</sup>

The weight of evidence is that Alagiyavanna became a convert to Roman Catholicism and was baptized under the name of Dom Jeramino de Aligua; the assumption of the prefix "Dom Jeramino" was a compliment to the former Captain-General then Viceroy in India, that man of evil, Dom Jeramino de Azavedo. The poet and Mohottala was appointed a *Tombo* Commissioner; the actual dates of his baptism and his appointment do not transpire, but the probability is that they synchronized; it cannot be precisely said that the conversion was the bait for the acquisition of office but the coincidence in time is remarkable. A travelling French Count, Jean Baptiste Tavernier, Baron of Aubonne, re-hearses a quaint anecdote which he says was current in India on the incidents of Alagiyavanna's conversion;

"They found the ingenuities of the Youth of Ceylon so quick and apprehensive that they learned more Latin, philosophy and other sciences in six months, than the Europeans learnt in one year and that they put such subtle questions to their masters as were beyond imagination.

"After the king had professed Christianity, a witty man of the Island of Ceylon and a good natural philosopher whose name was Alagiamma Moriar or the Master of the Philosophers after he had conversed with the Jesuits and other Religious persons was inspired to learn Christianity. Thereupon, he went to the Jesuits, and told them that he would like to be a Christian but withal he was anxious to know what Jesus Christ had done and left in writing.

"They gave him the New Testament which he set himself to read with that heed and study, that in six months, there was hardly a passage that he could not repeat. After that he again testified to Jesuits and other Religious Persons that he had a great desire to become a Christian, in regard he found their Religion to be such as Jesus Christ had taught but only he found that they themselves did not follow his example. For that he could never find by his reading that Jesus Christ took any money from anybody; but that they took all that they could get and never baptized or passed unless

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36. *Ribeiro* p. 187.



they were well paid but though he started the Question, he was baptized and became a zealous converter of others.'<sup>37</sup>

The Baron, like all other story-tellers of the medieval age about the heathens of non-European lands, does not claim to be the primary source of his anecdote but protects his own virtue by its reproduction as a story current in India. It is difficult to believe that a man of the mental stature of Alagiyavanna and a scholar versed in many languages had not acquainted himself earlier with the contents of the New Testament; for from the commencement of the previous century (1505 A.D.) the occupation of the Portuguese clergy was the cultivation of "angelets" in Ceylon. Either the travelling Baron was spinning a yarn or what is more probable is that the astute diplomat was in need of six months time to process his claim to the lucrative post of Tombo Commissioner and within this period he exchanged his old faith for his new appointment.

This event appears to have been the climax of the poet's secular career; for we next hear of him as a petitioner to the King of Portugal. Nuno Alvares Pereira was appointed General (A.D. 1613) in place of De Azavedo the man of evil who was later cast into a Lisbon prison on a charge of embezzlement; the new General was vested with special powers and arrived in Ceylon (A.D. 1616);<sup>38</sup> the contents of the petition (1619) reveal that the new General had deprived Alagiyavanna of his office of Moetjaer (Secretary or writer to the household of a native Chieftain), his allowances, his sustenances and the villages granted to him;<sup>39</sup> in other words the godson had undergone the same punishment as the godfather. There is no record of the result of this appeal or of any subsequent event in Alagiyavanna's life.

There is, however, a significant fact in the career of this remarkable man. A letter written by the king of Portugal to his Viceroy in India (24th March 1620) makes reference to Alagiyavanna's petition and requests the Viceroy "to advise me thereupon as to what you think right by the list of re-scripts";<sup>40</sup> the probability is that the Viceroy would have sought the advice of Constantinu de Sa who was then the Captain-General of Ceylon (1619).<sup>41</sup> It was at this critical moment that the *Constantinu Hatana* (1619) ascribed to Alagiyavanna, is said to have been written.

37. *The Six Voyages of Jean Baptists Tavernier* Bk. iii Ch. iv. p. 163.

38. *Ribeiro*, p. 186.

39. R.A.S. (CB) Journal Vol. xvi p. 115; 118-119.

40. R.A.S. (CB) Journal Vol xvi, p. 115; 118-119.

41. *Ribeiro* p. 206.



This poem was in praise of the Portuguese and a poem on the exploits of Constantine de Sa. If the writer was the ex-Moetjaer, his resources were by no means exhausted and his presence of mind not lost in his distress; he appears to have timed his manoeuvres with precision. His career bears some resemblance to that of an illustrious contemporary in another land, Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam, who also met with great success and great disaster; he was also a man of letters, a scientist, a philosopher and Lord Chancellor of England.

This review of Ceylon literature does but scant justice to its content or its quality; the subject is too wide and too scholarly to be brought adequately within this compass. But too long a detour into these fields would, perhaps, have defeated the main purpose of this book which is to draw the attention of its readers to the fascinating story of Ceylon and her people, of which its literature is only a part. It is sufficient, perhaps, to say that the residue of her literary wealth, in spite of the ravages of war, vandalism and time, is an index that she had attained a high culture and civilization.











## CHAPTER IV

### SANDESAS AND HATAN KAVYAS

The Sandesas and the Hatan Kavyas form an important section of Ceylon literature; the Sandesas preceded and the Hatan Kavyas followed the European invasions; the latter were related to the battles (Satan); the former were descriptive of the Island and of its institutions. One of the earliest extant Sandesas is the *Megha Duta* a well-known classic of the Indian poet Kalidasa; this poem was familiar to Sinhalese scholars; it was a source of ideas and inspiration to Sinhalese poets as Sanskrit had found its way into Ceylon centuries earlier.

Kalidasa conceived the picturesque idea of using a cloud to send an exiled husband's message to his wife; the cloud caps the gorgeous mountains of India and flies over its many rivers; its magnificent shrines are visited; its cities, like unto the mansions of the gods, are depicted; through this panorama, the cloud-messenger moves until it reaches a garden where grows a coral tree; a flight of emerald steps leads to a well in which bloom golden lotuses and swans delight. There the cloud awakens the sorrowing wife and comforts her with the assurance that her man is well and that their reunion is close at hand.

The Sandesas are descriptive poems. Many of the Sandesas of the Kotte period (1412-1580) are extant; a bird is chosen as a messenger to fly to the temple of a God and invoke a benediction on a person of the poet's choice. This device gave the poet an opportunity to describe the sights below, and in some instances the bird is made to enter a place of worship or a palace to enable the poet to dwell in detail on its magnificence; the flight is related in rhymed verse.

The author skilfully mixes fact and fiction to catch the ear of the king to whom adulation is paid or the imagination of the people that constitute his audience; the similes and metaphors are echoes of Sanskrit and Pali literature familiar to the author and to oriental scholars of his age; the picture is painted in glowing colours chosen by the poet's eye rolling in a fine frenzy; flora, and fauna institutions and people, all come within the ambit of the flight.



The city of Jayawardenapura (Kotte) for instance is likened unto a city of heaven; its king sprung from a royal line of kings is like unto a god; its storeyed palaces are resplendent; its river is like a lady's girdle; on its banks are beautiful trees and its orchards are heavy with fruit; its women are as lovely as water nymphs or heavenly goddesses; only the flashing of their eyelids reveal that they are mortals.

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Know (thou) noble friend, the great city of Jayawaddana, the abode of great men, adoring and attached to the Triple Gem, a city that by its teeming opulence drives the Devas city into insignificance, a city that has fittingly established its name by victories repeatedly won.

Here in the rows of storeyed palaces so compact and lofty, the balconies (or moon-light halls) resplendent with figures of deities, and sprites and other powers of air, like the mansions of gods come down to behold the glories where reigns never-ceasing jubilation.

On the two river-banks rendered lovely by the (falling) meadows of deeply green branches of Sal, Champac, Kina, Domba, Reranga, Ironwood, Midella, Erahendi in full bloom,

1. *Salalihini Sandesaya*, Verses, 7, 12, 13. 43,



Asoka, Palu, Mi, Mango, Palol, Coconut, Arecanut, Sugar-Cane and Plantain trees, and Silk cotton trees entwined with flowery betel.

The women of this city looking like golden vines, and each possessing such features of beauty as a moon-like face, a slender waist that a hand could span, a broad symmetrical hip circular like a chariot wheel and swan-like breasts are not goddesses for the reason that they twinkle their eyes.<sup>2</sup>

But such descriptions are not peculiar to Sinhalese or oriental literature; the master-artists even of the Homeric age painted cities and men of bygone days and the loveliness of women is similar hues. When the much travelled Ulysses was led by the ivory-armed Nausicaa to the capital city of her father, Alcinous, king of Phaecia, even Ulysses beheld in wonderment the opulence of the port, the splendour of the palace and the fruitfulness of his orchard

He wondered, as he past, to see the Ports,  
 The shipping in them and for all resorts,  
 The goodly market steds and Iles beside  
 For the Heroes, walls so large and wide  
 Ramparts so high and of such strength with all  
 It would with wonder any age appall.  
 Ulysses to the loftie-builed Court  
 Of King Alcinous made bold resort;  
 Yet in his heart-cast many a thought before  
 The brazen pavement of the rich court before  
 His entered person. Like heaven's two main Lights,  
 The rooms illustrated both daies and nights  
 On every side stood firme a wall of brasse,  
 Even from the threshold to the inmost passe  
 Which bore a rooffe up that all Sapphire was;  
 The brazen thresholds both sides did enfold  
 Silver Pilastars hung with gates of gold,  
 Whose Portall was of silver; over which  
 A golden Cornish did the front enrich,  
 On each side, Dogs of gold and silver fram'd  
 The house's Guard stood.  
 A goodly Orchard ground was situate,  
 .....In it flourished

2. *ibid*, Wijesinghe's translation, pp. 21, 24. 31,





High and broad fruit trees that Pomegranates bore  
 Sweet Figs, Peares, Olives, and a number more  
 Most useful plants and their produce their store;  
 Ripe fruits, these blossomes, Peare grew after Peare  
 Apple succeeded apple, Grape the Grape  
 Fig after Fig came June made never rape  
 Of any daintie there. A spritely vine  
 Spred here his roots, whose fruit a hote sun-shine  
 Made ripe betimes.<sup>3</sup>

It is more probable than not that the Ceylon poets who composed Sandesas had the *Megha Duta* in mind; a comparison affords many similarities in form and content. Many early Ceylon Sandesas are lost; the earliest yet extant is the *Mayura Sandesaya* (1385-1391); scholars are not agreed on its author; its composition is ascribed to the Gampola period of Ceylon history (1347-1412) in the reign of Bhuvaneka Bahu V; it was, therefore, the fore-runner of the Sandesas of the Kotte period (A.D. 1412-1580).

There are several Sandesas accepted by critics as works of literary merit; among them are the *Tisara* (1412-1415), *Parevi* (1430-1440), *Kokila* (1440-1446), *Salalihini* (1450), *Gira* (1457-1465), *Hansa* (1457-1465), *Savul* (1581-1585), *Kaha Kurulu* (1710-1739), *Nila Kobo* (1780-1798), *Kaha Kurulu* (1778), *Kirala* (1815). The dates are of necessity approximate but this chronological tabulation covers the Kotte period (1412-1580) and extends through the days of the Portuguese and Dutch occupations up to the date of the Kandyan Convention (1815) which marked the commencement of British rule.

It is thus evident that the Kotte period saw the bloom of the Sandesas and that thereafter they gradually perished. This fact is a graphic comment on the events of four centuries; the Portuguese invasion brought an enemy within the Island's gates; the pen was exchanged for the sword; poetry was silent amidst arms; the advent of the Dutch followed; the people were engaged in a deadly duel. In this view the Sandesas may be classified as Poems of Peace and their successors the Hatan or Satan Kavyas, as their name implies, as War-Poems.

The itineraries of the bird-messengers are deftly chosen; the poets selected in the first place areas known to them; the poems make little reference to the Hill Country; the flights are generally along

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3. Homer, *Odyssey*, Chapman's translation.



the Lowlands, mostly the coastal plains; the distances vary, some are short, others long. The *Salalihini*, for instance, covers only seven miles, while the *Parevi* (Pigeon) flies over one hundred miles; the former area was, however, of greater importance than the latter, as it included Ceylon's heart at that period where Portuguese intrigue and native vassalage predominated.

These aerial surveys of the Sandesa poets are like unto cinematographic plates of the Island in these years of moment in its history; they provide data of divers kinds, geographical, social, political and religious; they were filmed by writers who were conversant with their subject and of the culture and civilization of the people, and not by enemy historians or casual travellers who had an arrogant contempt for our people, their religion and way of life; what these writers could not understand, they ridiculed.

The Sandesa poems have been contemplated by our scholars more as literature and not as history; they have been critically analysed through the binoculars of the Sanskrit and Pali languages; the reader is puzzled by the annotations of commentators who at times make simple words obscure; a little less of grammar and of *alankara*, and a little more of sociology and the elucidation of the nation's life would have been of greater service; this important aspect of the value of the material furnished by the Sandesas has recently been brought to the surface.<sup>4</sup>

A close analysis reveals that they include descriptions of the districts, roads, bridges, rest-halls, wells and ponds, *kadawat*, woods and forests, agriculture, agricultural practices, rivers, streams and tanks, animal husbandry and farmers, merchants and merchandise, imports and exports, provincial and city administration, forts and moats, house decorations, streets and thoroughfares, business centres, parks and gardens.

And within their ambit come the dress and ornaments of women both "ladies" and "courtezans", dancing girls, and dance forms music and song, games and sports, amorous interludes among men and women, kings, queens and princesses, courtiers and court decorum, ministers of State, members of the central and provincial administration, generals, subordinate army officials, wars and warfare, armaments and arsenals, the practice of swordsmanship and archery and the build-up of the King's army.

Buddhism and the Sangha occupy a high place in the Sandesas;

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4. *Sinhala Sandesa Sahitya* (Sannasgala) 1962 ed. pp. 116—167.



reference is also made to the many Pirivena Schools which were the centres of education and in which the authors themselves would have learnt their letters; descriptions of the vihares and forms of worship are common. Some idea can also be gathered of Hinduism and the Gods of the Hindu pantheon, Upulvan, Vibhisana, Ganadeviyo, Ishwara and others; reference is made to the reverence paid to the God of Katharagam; South Ceylon was regarded as under the protection of Upulvan and West Ceylon of Vibhisana;

වී පු ලේ වන් යසැති ලොවැ පතළ පිරිසු	ඳ
කොපුලේ වන් රුවන් පස් කැන් කනින් සැ	ඳ
උ පු ලේ වන් සමඟ රු රස අඳුන් බ	ඳ
උ පු ලේ වන් සුරිඳු සිරිපා පියුම් ව	ඳ <sup>5</sup>

Worship the feet of God Upulvan whose unblemished mighty fame is spread world over and who by reason of a lotus complexioned body, rosy cheeks and adorned ears is possessed of beauty one could relish.

වෙසෙසින් පහන් පැහැසර ගැඹුරු පිවිතු	රු
බැලූ වන් ඇලුම් කරවන යලිඳු බියක	රු
සිරි පින් රුවන් පිරි එ සුරිඳු සයුර යු	රු
මුවෙ කින් කියා නිමවිය හැකිද රු සි	රු <sup>6</sup>

Can one utter a complete description of the personal beauty of that God chief who, like the sun, is particularly pleasant, rich in colour, deep and pure, and allures and appals alike all gazers, and is replete with jewels and auspicious marks and the Goddess of Grace herself.

The introduction of the Hindu Gods into the vicinity of Buddhist temples is an index of the conflict between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism for ascendancy in Ceylon. Although the ultimate victory was won by Theravada, there are many signs of the adoption of Mahayana in several spheres. The common folk yearned for a visible god to whom they could appeal in moments of stress; the Hindu gods were at hand; and, therefore, in the Sandesa poems favours are often sought from them; so it happens that the termination of a bird-messenger's flight is a devale dedicated to the worship of a Hindu God.

This device also enabled the poets to describe in detail the devales

5. *Parevi Sandesaya* Verse 178 (Upulvan).

6. *Salalihini Sandesaya* Verse 89 (Vibhisana).



themselves and their ceremonies. The *Parevi Sandesaya* was one of Sri Rahula's earliest poems and written by him when he was a young man—(1430-1440). From his description of the dancing girls in the famous shrine of Upulvan at Devinuwara, it is evident that the austerity of the religion that he professed had not then sterilized his sensuous perceptions. The poet conjures up through the eyes of the pigeon an erotic vision of the dancing girls in the devale and their captivating dances.

පියයුරු කිණිහිරි කැකුළෙක අ	න්දම
දසනග රැස්වැනි ගෙලෙ දැසම	න්දම
ලෙලවන කොමලත් පැහැසර රන්	දම
අභනන් දුටු නොතිබේ තවසු	න්දම
සිත් කලු විලසින් මදලස ගමනි	නි
යුත් සෙවනලු තැන වැඩි මියුරන් වැ	නි
ගත් පැහැ නෙලෙනද ලා අඹ දළ වෙ	නි
සිත් තුටුවෙයි අභනන් රහ දැකුමෙ	නි
ලෙලදුන් නව තඹපලුවන් පා	දේ
තබ මින් නිවරද මද්දලනා	දේ
ගය මින් පානා ගීතෙන් කී	දේ
අභනන් රහ දුටුවන් සිතු පැ	දේ
ල සි ත ලලිත විදුලි	සේය
දී සි ත ලියන් නොකම	සේය
වි සි ත කියන ගී ර	සේය
ත සි ත නොපටු වේ නො	සේය <sup>7</sup>

165. On seeing women with painted flower-like “kinihiri bud like breasts; teeth with rays emanating as from jasmins adorning their necks, and tender hands like dazzling gold strands; even hermits would lose their tranquillity.

166. You will be delighted on seeing fluttering tender mango leaves complexioned women dancing, and their attractive provocative walk like peacocks in a shady grove.

167. It would evoke pleasure when one sees women rendering into music what is sung and moving their feet like fluttering mango leaves to the accompaniment of the beat of the drums.

7. *Parevi Sandesaya*, Verses 165—168.



168. You would enjoy in no small measure the effortless singing of women who can be seen like bright quivering lightning.

It has been said that on the publication of his dictionary by the English author Dr. Johnson, a lady complimented him on his effort but asked him "why there were so many bad words in his Dictionary"; the learned Doctor who never minced his words replied, "Madam, it is because you look for them." The reader whose inclination is towards erotic literature, attuned by modern authors who interpolate obscene scenes, to enliven tired minds, can find in abundance in the Sandesas erotic passages not second to any written in other languages.

අ යු රු කිසර තන බැඳ රන් පටින්	පටින්
මී යු රු තෙපුල් තෙපලන ලිය කටින්	කටින්
සොළුරු සලෙඵ මුඵ දෑකු එන වටින්	පිටින්
මී තු රු වඩින් මනහර වැලි තොටින්	තුටින් <sup>8</sup>

Having seen the women whispering sweetly with their swan resembling breasts tethered with golden bands and the hordes of playboys coming from all directions, friend; proceed from lovely Welitota with pleasure.

සිසි වැඩි දවස් නැත මල පිපෙන්	නට
ඔබා තන කිසර පට නැත බඳින්	නට
පිපුණ මලක් නම් නැත ඔබට දෙන්	නට
කැකුඵ මල තලා පලයන් පිපෙන්	නට <sup>9</sup>

Few are the days ere the flower (a girl's breasts) will bloom  
With no Swan-like strips may I press in these breasts of mine.  
I have no flower in bloom to give you. Why not crush  
these buds that they may bloom.

It is evident from the content of the Sandesa poems, their respective dates and the names, whenever ascertained, of their authors, that they were compositions contemporaneous with the events and the institutions which they survey; the poets, moreover, generally wrote from their own knowledge of matters of which they had first-hand information. Their value, therefore, as source material

8. *Parevi Sandesaya*, Verse 73 (first verse); the Second is anonymous, a Rodiya girl forbidden by custom to cover her breasts is waiting a Radela lord to squeeze them.

9. Introduction of *Ehelapola Varnanava*, M. E. Fernando pp. vi, vii.



for a correct assessment and reconstruction of Ceylon history is considerable; they await a full analysis and co-ordination not merely as literature but also as historical data.

The Portuguese invasion gave rise to the Hatan Kavyas; Hatan or Satan means warfare and the content of the Hatan Kavyas was war; these poems taken with the Sandesas of the Kotte period (1412-1580) afford an insight into the cities, the men and women of Ceylon of that age and their manners, minds and fashions; the Hatan Kavyas exhibit a marked contrast to the Sandesas, both in content, in metrical composition and in quality.

Viewed from an historical angle, the Hatan Kavyas and their sister poems the Varnanavas were more or less contemporaneous with the events which they relate. In Homeric times minstrels sought the mansions of their patrons and earned their living by the recitation of melodious hexameters, but they probably sang of bygone days and the heroic deeds not of the living but of reputed ancestors. The Hatan Kavyas, on the other hand, sung of events, cities and warriors familiar to the audience.

The Hatan Kavyas are often compared with ballads; but they are not ballads, although they possess some of the features of ballad poetry; for instance the manner in which the peasantry of the Kandyan Provinces answered the call of Raja Sinha II bears as we have seen a similarity to the Spanish ballad which records the gathering of the clans to meet a French invasion.

The Hatan Kavyas drew their inspiration from the stimulus of war and carnage and not like the Sandesas from the beatitude of peace and prosperity. Their title labels them as poems of wars and battles (hatan, satan); but within them are panegyrics on Kings and persons as well; some of them are correctly called Varnanavas (paean of praise), for instance Raja Sinha II Varnanava. The *Gannoruwe Hatana* is a misnomer, since it is merely a panegyric on Raja Sinha II and contains only one verse which refers to the battle.

“All those praise-poems have much in common and bear a close resemblance to one another in the style and the ideas embodied in the subject matter. They are all concerned in extolling the merits and the virtues of their heroes. Each poem dwells at length on the attainments of its hero. His prowess, his indomitable courage, his never failing generosity, his consummate skill in horsemanship, in archery, in discussion, and in the use of the sword, his personal



charms, his wide-spread fame, his personality and royal splendour; all these are dealt with in many a stanza of exquisite beauty. In each poem blessings, long life, victory and prosperity are invoked on the hero.”<sup>10</sup>

The stanzas of the Hatan Kavyas generally consist of four rhymed lines of equal length; this metrical form known as Sivupada is popular in Ceylon; they do not consist of the common short metre found in the *Guttilla, Kavyasekera, Kusa Jataka* and other poems. The object of the Varnanavas or praise poems lends itself “to a profuse use of oriental rhetoric embodying many figures of speech, such as the simile, the metaphor, the hyperbole and other embellishments (*Arthalankara*). The use of sound embellishments (*Sabdalan-kara*) as alliteration and the employment of a variety of metres form a conspicuous feature of these poems.” Some Kavyas, for instance, thus describe the weapons, the dress, the drums and the attack.

වානෙන් කළ ලේන්තු වෙඩි බෙන් තබා දික් තුව	ක්ක
මා නන් දූන තිබන බොන්දි කුළා මහත් කොඩි තුව	ක්ක
ඌ නන් දූන පෙදර නේර තුවක්ක දෙක එක තුව	ක්ක
බෝගුම් සහ දී තුවක්ක ගෙන යුදයට නොව පර	ක්ක
රි දී තැටින් අගද කඩු රිදී මුඩි ගුරු ලේ	ත්තු
බැඳි ඉහ කස්තාන මුට්ටු සිංහ මුණු කලා ව	ත්තු
රි දී සවඩි රන්මුතු රන් මාල බරණ එලි පි	ත්තු
වැදී ගත්තු මහත් කොල්ල සැටට නොපිපි ජගලා	ත්තු
අයෙක් පරන්ගින් අල්වා බදිති බදිති වෙමින්	ගැට්ටු
අයෙක් එරුපු අඩිති වදිති මරංව කියා නොකර	ගැට්ටු
අයෙක් රෙනෝඵවෝ සිටිති වෙමින් බයින් බීරි	තට්ටු
අයෙක් කැපු තරම් බාගු උදුරති කරමින්	සරට්ටු
බී ලා සිටයුද කරන්ඩ ගෙන බාපිය රා අර	ට්ටු
දී ලා සිත සනසන්නට පත්තායම් පට සුරු	ට්ටු
මී ලා කියමින් තැන තැන කරපි සටන් පුරප් ප	ට්ටු
දී ලා ඇරියෝය දෙරට සෙනහ උගේ ඉසට සො	ට්ටු <sup>11</sup>

Carrying with them the long guns made of steel, fired with gun powder, bondi guns and the great kodi guns capable of taking aim and the pedara nera guns, and with the bogun and the diguns, without getting delayed for ever.

10. *ibid.*

11. *Maha Hatana*, Verses 381, 388, 389, 399.



With silver trays, swords and silver jugs with covers, the swords and the lion masks, silver bands, gold and pearl necklaces, and the hats and blouses, the loot was increasing.

Some take hold of the Portuguese and wrestle with them and tie them up using force, some of them the enemy, weep and worship asking that they may be killed without torture, some of them stand still stunned, and some of them snatch what was cut into half.

As dara, sak, sinnam, and kombu, vira, kulat, kahal and horana, with the resounding turampettu blared forth at once.<sup>12</sup>

The Hatan Kavyas concentrate more on the general description of battles than on the performance of individuals; the audience, therefore, becomes a camp-follower of an army and not an admirer of the feats of a hero; they fail in consequence to create in their hearers the sustained interest and the emotional thrills that have made in particular the Homeric epics so intensely popular and immortal.

Even the *Kustantinu Hatana* designed to glorify the Portuguese—General Constantine de Saa and to belittle Antonio Baretto (Kuru-vita Rala) who made a gallant stand against the Portuguese has a crude and inglorious end.

“Yea, those teeth of the wicked Anthony Baretto, rebel against God and the King of Portugal, were there dashed out, thirty-two in all; and well were his two cheeks slapped; for none of his thirty-two chiefs found chance of escape.”<sup>13</sup>

Some of the verses are contradictory and can even be ludicrous; the poet in one verse compares his hero to God Sakra; in the verse that follows; he sings that his face is as beautiful as the moon, while the opening lotus buds (his teeth) garlanded his mouth; a moon-like face is generally associated with women and not with warriors.

වර සුර සෙනග	මැද
උන් පසක් සක්දෙව්	ලෙද
දෙසෙන් පිරිවර	මැද
සේසතින් සැදි අසුන වැඩ	හිඳ

12. *Kustantinu Hatana*, Verse 91.

13. *Kustantinu Hatana* for translation Verse 180 see *Ribeiro's Ceilao Pieris* p. 219.



චුළනන් පුන් සි	සි
කිරණින් පුබුදු එක	සි
කොඳ කුසුම් සඳි	සි
දසන් පැහැ පෑ මද සිනා	සි

Seated in the midst of his brave army, like Sakraya in his glory, On the throne shaded with *sesath*.

Smiled upon his men with face beautiful as the moon, while the opening lotus-buds garlanded his mouth.<sup>14</sup>

The closing scenes of the *Iliad*, on the other hand, cannot be read without shedding a tear for the gallant defender of Troy, Hector of the glancing helm; he is forsaken by the Gods whom he worshipped and pursued with relentless hate by his deadly enemies the goddess Athene and Achilles, Peleus' son. At that tragic moment of this cruel inhuman chase when his opponent is almost poised for the blow, the poet with inimitable skill deftly whirls his audience away in an aerial flight to a chase between pursuing hound and fleeing fawn,

Meanwhile on Hector, with untiring hate,  
The swift Achilles press'd; as when a hound,  
Through glen and tangled brake, pursues a fawn,  
Rous'd from its lair upon the mountain side;  
And if awhile it should evade pursuit,  
Low crouching in the copse, yet quests he back,  
Searching unwearied, till he find the trace;  
So Hector sought to baffle, but in vain,  
The keen pursuit of Peleus' active son.<sup>15</sup>

The final scene is sad beyond measure. Both warriors hurl their spears and miss each other. Athene who had enticed Hector to the fatal combat, disguised as his friend Deiphobos, invisibly passes a lance to Achilles. Says Hector:

Deiphobos, another lance. Lance nor Deiphobos stood  
Near at call. And then his mind saw all things ominous.  
.....Woe is me. 'The Gods have cal'd and I must meet  
Death here.....<sup>16</sup>  
.....My fate has found me now

14. Paul Pieris translation, Ribeiro verses 73, 74, p. 213.

15. Homer, *Iliad* Bk. xxii. 219-227, Derby's translation (Everyman).

16. *ibid.* 257-260 (Chapman's translation).



Yet not without a struggle let me die  
Nor all inglorious; but let some great act which future days  
may hear of, mark my fall.<sup>17</sup>

Many Ceylon manuscripts have been lost or destroyed or taken away to foreign lands during three centuries of perpetual war; others have been hidden in Buddhist temples for "salvation" from vandal hands. It is only during the comparatively recent years of the twentieth century (written 1967) that scholars and enthusiasts have made a real effort to rescue and reconstruct the residue; some of the poems contain verses which give the identity of the author; others are silent. The authenticity of many, therefore, awaits discovery when it would be possible to collect further material and review existing interpretations.

The earliest Hatan Kavya, now extant, is the *Sitawaka Hatana*; it relates to the reigns of Mayadunne and his son, Raja Sinha I, or the Sitawaka period of Ceylon history (1530-1592); its text indicates that its author had a close association with both Kings and with the installation of the latter as sovereign.<sup>18</sup>

පෙර පිය රජුන් විසින්	හය
නිබ්බවෙ නමක් රාජසිං	හය
ලංකා වාසි විසින්	හය
එදත් නිබ්බවෙ නමක් රාජසිං	හය

In days gone-by Royal fathers  
gave the name Raja Sinha;  
On that day too Lanka's sons  
gave the name Raja Sinha.<sup>19</sup>

Its discovery, in comparatively recent years, has displaced from its pedestal the distinction once held by the *Kustantinu Hatana* as the earliest Hatan Kavya (1620). The *Sitawaka Hatana* was written, probably, about thirty-five years earlier (1585/86) and affords a glimpse, historically valuable, of Ceylon at a critical moment of her life.

It was discovered in a mutilated form and has been reconstructed by the industry of scholars. Its style and diction are inferior to the better known Hatanas and Varnanavas nor does its

17. *ibid.* 357-360 (Derby's translation).

18. *Sahitya* (1966), *Sitawaka Hatana* by Dr. A. W. P. Guruge, pp. 159-163.

19. *ibid.* p. 162.



author, Denawaka Wijewardena Alagapperuma Modeliar, lay any claim to scholarship (Verse 1120) but his simple words recall incidents familiar to the common folk.

කුරු ජප්පු	මැති සඳු යුදට	සරණ්ඩු
අර ක්කු	වඩවා ලක්සෙන්	මණ්ඩු
උරුක්කු	කර කර හරඹෙන්	බණ්ඩු
මුරුක්කු	කර ඇත රුපු හට	කේඩු <sup>20</sup>

The Minister Kuruppu who was thorough in war-fare entertained the army with toddy and wielding the sword, belittling the enemy, did abuse the jealous enemy.

An important place among Hatan Kavyas is held by the *Maha Hatana*; two poems bear the same title and are, therefore, for purpose of reference classified as *Maha Hatana I* (1638-1650) *Maha Hatana II* (1659-1684); connected with them are Raja Sinha Varnanavas and Kavyas; all relate to the life and times of Raja Sinha II. The authorship of *Maha Hatana I* is ascribed to Kirimetiya Mathivara in a verse in the poem:<sup>21</sup>

සව් කර	ලක රුපුන් සිඳි දෙස අනු	දෙසයා
රිව් කුල	කොන් රාජසිහ රජු කළ	යසයා
නොවිතර	සැප ලබන ලෙස නැණකුරු	යසයා
කව් කර	පෑවෙ කිරිමැටියාවෙ	මැතිවරයා

Kirimetiya Mati did compose into poetry, so that he may achieve boundless happiness, wisdom and fame, the deeds of fame of King Raja Sinha, the pinnacle of the solar dynasty, who destroyed the enemy both in the country and provinces and unified Lanka.

The name of the author of *Maha Hatana II* is uncertain. From the text of these poems it would appear that both authors had close associations with Mayadunne (1530-1581) and Raja Sinha I (1581-1582) and their Court. The first is a long poem with many verses, while the second is much shorter (157 verses); the former makes reference only to events prior to the expulsion of the Portuguese (1658), while the latter includes that momentous incident and the arrival of the Dutch. It is, therefore, probable that the latter is a later composition.

20. Verse 1083.

21. See *Sinhala Sahitya Vansa* pp. 340-341, 354 *Sahitya* (1966) p. 40; *Sinhala Hatan Sahitya*, Hector Perera, p. 84.



According to the first poem Devamedda in Mahiyangana is given as the city where Raja Sinha II was born; his father, King Senarat, had his horoscope cast by his chief minister, Diyakelinawala. His birth appears to have synchronized with the evacuation of the Balana Pass by the Portuguese who had occupied it for a time; the poet ascribes the event to the power of the planetary position in the Prince's horoscope.

එකල ලොව සුඡ	නිත
වුණු මහ නිරිඳු පිනි	නිත
නොහැර සිටි රුඳු	සත
ගියා බලනේ කොටුව හැර	සිත <sup>22</sup>

By the merits of the Great King who was born in the world at that time, the enemy who stayed on without leaving, then left the fortress of Balana giving up hope.

The education of Raja Sinha II included many languages, Sinhalese, Tamil Sanskrit, Magadha, and Portuguese; he was also proficient in the sciences and trained in horsemanship and the art of war. Sinhalese monarchs would, therefore, appear to have been nurtured for kingship from their earliest years, a fact which accounts for the equanimity with which they held their high office during days of despair and strain.

The preparation of a Sinhalese prince for kingship was no less severe than that of his compeers in other lands; then the fortunes of the state and of armies hung on the king's individual performance. Knox refers to the fluency of the king and his court in the Portuguese language. Of the court of Raja Sinha I, a poem says:

නු බ මිණි තෙදැනි එ සුමන සුරිඳුට සොබ	න
සු බ මෙ හසුන් දන්වා අප අයැදු මෙ	න
බ ඔ මුදුනන යස හිරවරණ සදම්	න
න ඔ සිළ මිතුර පවතින් සහ නැසිය	න <sup>23</sup>

Poets well versed in Sanskrit and Magadhi  
Sinhala and Tamil, rhetoric prosody  
And grammar are for ever singing verses  
With beautiful meaning in the Royal Court.

The title of the *Gannoruwa Hatana* does not reflect its content; this

22. Verse 45.

23. *Savul Sandesaya*, Verse 81.



poem refers to the battle only in one verse; the rest of the *Hatana* is a panegyric on Raja Sinha II. Two other *Hatanas* of this period are well known; one is the *Kustantinu Hatana* (1619/1620) the other is the *Parangi Hatana* (after 1630).

The former is a praise-poem of Constantine de Sa, the Portuguese Captain-General of this period, of Christianity and the Portuguese Captains. It glorifies the Portuguese victory over Kuruvita Rala who, under the assumed name of Antonio Baretto, made a gallant stand against them in Uva, (A.D. 1618), but was overpowered.

The authorship of this poem is uncertain; it appears to be a piece of casuistry designed by the author with the object of material gain; the blessings that it invoked on its hero (Verses 187-189/188-190) failed to fructify, for he was later killed and his forces annihilated at the Randenivela battle (1630); the hero's head was taken through the kingdom and nailed to a high tree in the Seven Korales.<sup>24</sup>

The *Parangi Hatana* is the counter-part of the *Kustantinu Hatana* it is in praise of Buddhism, Raja Sinha II and the Sinhalese warriors; from the text it is evident that it was written after the expulsion of the Portuguese and the arrival of the Dutch; the author is again uncertain; the partisanship obviously shown by the authors for the persons and causes that they espoused detracts from the historical value of these two *Hatanas*.

A review of all the *Hatan Kavyas* and connected poems of this period (1505-1818) is beyond the scope of this book; they are numerous and the authenticity of some remain in doubt; their historical and literary value needs examination and assessment. Some have been written more from a personal angle and cannot be considered as of national importance; the titles of others are misleading; they deal not with battles but with persons and incidents.

The *Dunuville Hatana* (1811-1816), for instance, has no connection with warfare but relates to the author's personal problems; the *Waduga Hatana* or *Ehelapola Varnanava* (1816), of doubtful veracity, purports to describe the popularized tale of the last King's alleged cruelty to the family of the Chieftain Ehelapola; it terminates in a series of lascivious verses dwelling on the Chieftain's sexual virility, repulsive even to a prurient mind.

An analysis of the *Hatan Kavyas* and their sister poems would disclose a wealth of historical and literary material; with the sole exception of the *Kustantinu Hatana*, they depict the period of

24. *Ribeiro*, Pieris, translation, p. 229.



Portuguese occupation from a national and not an enemy angle; they, therefore, add data drawn from native sources which reveal the resistance and the emotions of a people at a time of stress and tribulation; and fill gaps in an arena full of enemy historians and their camp followers.

The *Engreesi Hatana* or the Encounter with the English (1803) depicts the invasion of Kandy by Major Davie in the customary manner. The immediate object of the British was to set up the imposter Muttusamy on the throne; detachments of the British troops took possession of Kandy where a British garrison was then placed. The Kandyans fought back; the garrison surrendered; during its return, to Colombo all except Major Davie and three officers, were wiped out by the King's troops in retaliation for the acts of the invading forces. The two stanzas below refer to the invasion and the British defeat.

ර ට ත්	පසුකර ගෙන ඔවුනට මෙ රට කඩයිම බිඳ දමා	පුව
ම හ ත්	සත් කෝරළය මැද මද පවර දඹදෙණි පුර නසා	පුව
එ හි ත්	නොම සිට විත් ගිණි තියමින් උඩරට වැදිලා	පුව
ම හ ත්	සිංහල සෙනග හට මෙම ලෙසින් රුපුකැල බලේ පා	පුව
උ ලා	දණින් හම යනතුරු ඇද ඇද පසුරක් පා	සා
වි ලා	ප කියමින් හඩවා උන්නේ ඉංග්‍රීසි බා	සා
රි ලා	මොටුන් ලෙස පෙරළා ගෙන කපමින් කන් නා	සා
හ ලා	මුගුරු ගෙන ඇට බිඳ හරිමින් යුදයෙහි ආ	සා <sup>25</sup>

Crossing the boarders of the region belonging to them, and encroaching on this land, entering the great Sat Korale and destroying Dambadenipura and without staying there also coming from Ginitiagana and encamping in the Hill-Country and thus did the enemy show their powers to the large Sinhalese army.

They dragged them along the ground from bush to bush, until their knees bled, made them wail in their English tongue, cutting off ears; in verses, like that of monkeys and beating hard with clubs, until the bones crushed, so that the desire for war left them.

The author of the *Engreesi Hatana* is regarded as Veligala Kavisundara of the *Kavikara Maduwa*; a verse in the poem runs as follows:

25 . Verses, 57, 164.



සොබ මන්	කවි ලකර දන් අනුඥා වල	සේ
නිති යෙන්	සරසවිය මුව සැතපු කර නො	සේ
කවි සුන්	දර මුදලි වැලිගල නම් පිය	සේ
වෙසෙසින්	මෙ පොත කවිකර නිමි දනු නොල	සේ <sup>26</sup>

Know ye that this book and poetry has been composed by Kavisundara mudali of Veligala, who had mastered rhetoric and prosody and in whose mouth the goddess of speech rests.

The King of Ceylon like the monarchs of other countries had the institution of Court poets called the *Kavikara Maduwa*; its chief, like Veligala Kavisundera, occupied the position of a Poet Laureate. A drawing is extant<sup>27</sup> of Raja Sinha II seated on his Throne, fanned by damsels, with the *Kavikara Maduwa* (the Poets' Circle) in front and their leader alone standing, singing a song composed by the *Kavikara Maduwa* in celebration of the Gannoruwa Victory (1638).

This institution died in the most humiliating circumstances; its last performance was to native eyes a tragic and servile exhibition of a national disaster. After the decapitation of the patriot Keppetipola Dissave (1818) a perahera was organized to celebrate the British occupation; Governor and Lady Barnes were carried in the procession in a palanquin in the traditional style; the members of the *Kavikara Maduwa* walked on either side of the palanquin singing songs in their praise and honour. Nothing became then less than the manner of their leaving the stage (1821).

26. *Sinhala Sahitya Vansa* (Sannasgala).

27. By Charlis Karunatilaka, (Buddhist Press), reproduced in *Sinhala Sahitya Vansa* (Sannasgala) as a frontispiece.



## **FOLKLORE AND FOLK-PLAY**

**Nāga Patiya**  
**Ran Hawadiya**  
**Tōra, Sakiya**

**The Naga Belt**  
**Is the golden waist-chain**  
**Explain it, friend.**

**Folklore (North-Western Province)**







## CHAPTER V

### FOLKLORE AND FOLK-PLAY

Ceylon is rich in folklore; these traditional tales picture the village life of ancient times; collected in the words of the village folk themselves and reproduced in their original form, without embellishment, they bring the reader into direct contact with the village; the main collection now available makes no reference to the Portuguese, the Dutch or the British; it can, therefore, be safely assumed that they date to periods prior to the European invasions of Ceylon.

“It is perhaps the chief merit of these stories and certainly a feature that gives them a permanent value, that we have in them the only existing picture of the village life of ancient times, painted by the villagers themselves. From the historians we can learn practically nothing regarding the life of those of the ancient inhabitants of Ceylon who were not monks or connected with royalty or the conditions under which they existed. It is here alone that the reader finds the daily experiences and the ideas and beliefs of the villagers gradually unfolded before him.”<sup>1</sup>

The classification of this writer divides Ceylon folklore into stories as prevalent among or told by the different castes of ancient times; the distinctions current among them were then pronounced and their separation was on an occupational basis; this division permeated into social circles and was scrupulously observed; a correct understanding and recognition of this distinction contributes to a better assessment of the Ceylon folk tales.

The class system prevalent in Ceylon was similar to but not identical with the four-fold caste division of the Hindus. In consequence of the close relationship that existed from an early date between the Sinhalese and South India, the Dravidian and not the Aryan caste system was adopted in Ceylon. But as Ceylon was a Buddhist country the Brahmans as a caste exercised less influence; the merchants (*velenda*) were few or none; the ruling caste (*raja*) was exclusive and formed a caste by itself.

These modifications introduced to suit local conditions resulted in giving the *goiyas* (cultivators) the chief importance from the caste

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1. *Village Folk Tales of Ceylon* (Parker) Vol. 1 p. 35.



point of view. "That is, the *goiya* or *vellala* as he is often called, is the man of high caste. The *goiya* included three ranks, the chiefs (*radala* or *mudali peruva*), the nobles or titled men (*Sitanu*) and the rest of the *goiya*; and these together formed over ninety per cent of the community."<sup>2</sup>

The *Janavamsa*, a Sinhalese poem founded probably from a Pali original and attributed to the middle of the nineteenth century (1848), contains a classification of the various castes; the division runs into 26 castes with different names and is of considerable interest. In a country, yet class conscious, this classification may not be wholly acceptable but it is generally informative. Claims to a higher status by persons who have risen in social circles by reason of wealth and education are the natural sequence of the levelling process; some later compilations have been obviously made with that objective.

The Veddahs or wild men of the woods constitute a class by themselves; they live by hunting and chena cultivation and lead a nomadic life; they are still found in Bintenne (Uva Province) but are fast disappearing, both by death and absorption; they are, perhaps, more a race than a caste; research work on them has revealed certain ethnological characteristics. The present writer and his colleagues in the Kandyan Peasantry Commission came in contact with many of them and their thatched roofed homes, often made of jungle sticks and bark.

"There are a few Veddah families in Beligal wasama of Bintenne Korale. These families live by means of chena cultivation and by hunting. A few of them appeared before us and stated that if a settlement is provided with irrigation facilities, they would be prepared to settle down in one place. They also stated the present headman was unsatisfactory. They requested that a headman be appointed from among themselves."<sup>3</sup>

"The wilder sort of them when they want arrows, will carry their load of Flesh in the night, and hang it up in a Smith's shop, and also a Leaf in the form they will have their Arrows made and hang by it. Which if the Smith do make according to their Pattern they will requite, and bring him more Flesh; but if he make them not, they will do him a mischief one time or another by shooting in the night.

2. Coomaraswamy, *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, p. 21.

3. Kandyan Peasantry Commission Report, Sessional Paper-xviii—1951 p. 343.



“They are so curious of their Arrows that no Smith can please them. The King once to gratify them for a great Present they brought him, gave all of them his best made Arrow-blades, which nevertheless would not please their humour. For they went all of them to a Rock by a River and ground them into another form.”<sup>4</sup>

The origin of the Veddahs, probably, dates back to Vijaya, the legendary hero whose name is associated with Ceylon of prehistoric times; according to the legend the first Aryan immigrants came to Ceylon from North-Western India in the fifth century B.C. They met in Ceylon with a population of an unknown race that was certainly not Aryan nor Dravidian, but rather related to the uncivilized tribes of South India.

Vijaya married Kuveni, a princess of the aboriginal tribe, referred to as Yakkas, to denote barbarous tribes living in the mountains and forests; when he later put her away, she was slain by her own brother; her children, a son and a daughter fled to Maya, the wild mountainous regions of Central Ceylon; the brother took the sister to wife “and they became the ancestors of the Pulindas. The word Pulinda too is a designation for uncivilised tribes in India, but here in Ceylon perhaps for a mixed race believed to have sprung from the intermarriage of the first Aryan colonists with aboriginal women.”<sup>5</sup>

“The last remnants of the original population are the Veddahs. Originally they were hunters who armed with bows and arrows wandered about in small groups in the wilderness, living in caves or rather overhanging rocks, without any civilization. However these wild Veddahs grew fewer from year to year, and it is difficult to estimate their exact numbers. The majority of the Veddahs live in small hamlets, but still in the most primitive manner.”<sup>6</sup>

Among castes other than the Goiyas or cultivating caste whose folk-tales have been collected are the Tom-tom beaters (beravayas), the Baggage-carriers (durayas), the Washermen, the Rodiyas (out-castes) and Kinnarayas (mat-weavers); the Rodiyas, also a fast disappearing caste, are also nomadic; they wander from village to village pitching their tents from time to time, wherever it suits their fancy; they make ropes, horn combs and tanners for their living. The Kinnarayas are a mat-weaving caste in which art they are experts; the fibre of which these mats are made is *niyanda*,

4. Knox, pp. 62, 63.

5. See Geiger, *Culture of Ceylon in Mediaeval Times* p. 18.

6. *ibid.* pp. 18, 19 (written 1935-1938 A.D. circa).



the bow-string hemp (*Sansevieria Zeylanica*); they were regarded as the lowest of the Kandyan castes, except the Rodiyas.

The upper part of the bodies of these castes, according to a rigorous custom, could not be covered; the social structure was closely knit and the lower castes as then accepted suffered severe disabilities in regard to dress and marriage; elevation to a higher status, social or occupational was not recognized. It was a system, rigorously observed and rigorously enforced, although less in degree than in India.

The religion of the people, however, laid down that a man's status should be judged by his acts and not by his birth.

Na jacca vasalo hoti  
 Na jacca hoti brahmano  
 Kammana vasalo hoti  
 Kammana hoti brahmano<sup>7</sup>

It is not by birth that a man becomes an outcaste;  
 It is not by birth that a man becomes a Brahman,  
 It is man's conduct that makes him an outcaste,  
 It is a man's conduct that makes him a Brahman.

With these words Buddha remonstrated against the practice of the caste-cult that prevailed in India, with the Brahmans at the summit of the caste ladder but in spite of His teaching, its observance in Ceylon remained even after it became a Buddhist country. One of the punishments which a high-born woman dreaded more than death was to be given over on the King's order to the Rodiya community for an heinous offence.

At the time of Bell's survey (1892) of the Kegalle villages, a few members of the Rodi-caste still survived at Gevilipitiya. They belonged to the Nahalle-peruwa and admitted their inferiority to the Ratnavalli peruwa (peruwa, clan). Bell gives an account of this clan and of the legend as to its origin. The legend of "the golden image that bled" is as follows:

"A man named Kalinguwa of Gevilipitiya, a member of a Gamage family, stole the golden image of Buddha which had come roaring through the air by iridiya from Rakkandu-desa in India to Uduwa Vihare in Pata Bulatgama. The man cut off one of its little fingers to get some jewellery made. Immediately blood began to spirit from the finger. Unable to stop the bleeding, Kalinguwa took the

7. *Vasala Sutta*, Verse 21.



image and put it into a well; whereupon the well became a pool of blood.

“Alarmed at this he returned to his house, climbed into the loft, and hid himself under the paddy. When the priest and villagers found that the temple had been robbed of its golden image, information was at once carried to the King, and search ordered to be made for it. By accident some persons engaged in the search happened to pass the house of Kalinguwa, at Gevilipitiya, and on questioning his son, a child, who stood at the door, learnt that the image had been put into the well.

“Thereupon the men went and examined the well, and were horror-struck to see the water turned to blood. After taking out the image they arrested Kalinguwa and held him before the King, who ordered him put to death, his property to be confiscated, and his wife given over to the Rodi. Ever since that time her descendants have been called the Nahella-peruwa Rodi.”

උඩුවේ ගමමැද ඒ ස්ථාන ඇති රන්කඩු දේසෙන් වැඩිය බුදු න්  
 මේ ගම සිටිනා සෙනරත් රාලට වැදුනිය ගිනිකඳ බොහොම තදි න්  
 පිරිවරු සිටිනා නයිගත් සෙනගට වදිති පුදති මුනිදුන්ට දුකි න්  
 බුදුන්ට අනදර කලා කියන්නන් ගැවිලිපිටියෙ කලිඟු විසි න්

The loss of the image of Buddha in the Uduwa village which had come from Rakkadu-Desa, made the chief and the people in this village thunder-struck with remorse, and lamenting on the loss of the image hysterically saluted and worshipped those around. It is Gevilipitiya Kalinguwa who had harmed the Buddha.

An account of the Rodi community in the Kandyan Provinces is also given by Sir John D' Oyly. Of the clan at Kegalle, Bell says, “the Hulavaliya (Headman) and his brother are both (especially the former) fine specimens of Kandyans physically speaking—tall, upright, with sharply cut handsome features and venerable beards. In general appearance and looks the women without exception, fall far short of ordinary Kandyan women, and are of darker complexion.”

According to another version of an earlier date and probably with reference to members of the Rodi community in other districts, an observer has recorded that they are spread over the whole Island

8. Bell, Report of the Kegalle District, p. 52/53.



living in separate hamlets and have to do the same unclean work as formerly the Chandalas to cleanse streets and sewers, to carry the dead, and to watch cemeteries. The Chandalas were in ancient Ceylon in the same position as in India. The Buddhist Chronicle refers to a punishment inflicted on the Lambakannas by a King; he ordered them to make a road at Anuradhapura and set Chandalas as their overseers; it is possible that the Chandalas which later disappeared in Ceylon as a caste was absorbed by the Rodi community, of whom it was said:

“The intercourse with them is strictly avoided by the Sinhalese of the better classes. They are beggars as well as thieves by hereditary custom and speak a conventional secret language comparable to the language of thieves in Germany. It is a corrupt form of Sinhalese mixed with foreign words, the origin of which is sometimes obscure.

“They have their peculiar manners and customs often different from those of the Sinhalese but they are by no means a degenerate race. They enjoy bodily strength, the women are often very handsome. As regards their origin and first appearance in Ceylon we are confined to their own fantastic traditions; their origin is connected with the persons of Prakramabahu and one of his daughters.”<sup>9</sup>

One of the disabilities was that a Rodi could not cover the head and a Rodi woman could not cover her breasts. In former years it was not uncommon to see a group of them singing songs as they passed and begging for some favour. Here is a quaint one, the original of which is in pure Rodi. In Roman Script it reads:

<i>Tabala kettinnen tabalat yapparav</i>	<i>da</i>
<i>Polgalamut kettinnen polgalamut yappanav</i>	<i>da</i>
<i>Aharambulut kettinnen aharambulut yappanav</i>	<i>da</i>
<i>Dunumurabot kettinnen dunumuarbot yappanav</i>	<i>da</i> <sup>10</sup>

Will you give me, will you give me, betel from the tray?  
 Arecanut and betel leaves, the little boon I pray;  
 Prithee give me, prithee give me—will you say me nay?  
 Lime and eke tobacco leaf from off the betel tray.

Ceylon has seen rhymesters full of wit and ready repartee whose verses are recited by tradition and many of them have been collected

9. Geiger, *Culture of Ceylon in Mediaeval Ceylon*, citing *The Taprobanian* (N. Nevill) June 1886, p. 88 and August 1887, p. 108.

10. *ibid.*



and published and made available to the public in little books. Some have a lascivious flavour. The following luscious verses depict an exchange of eyes and an exchange of words between a Radala man and Rodiya girl by the bank of the Attapitiya stream. Beauty, as ever, breaks the barriers of caste and the woman's wit is more than a match for the man's passion;

අට්ටාපිටියෙ ඔය අසබඩ අඳුන් ව	නේ
හුලවලියන් දකලා සිත සලිත උ	නේ
පිපුනු මලක් නම් මිස තලලා නොය	නේ
කැකුළු මල නිසා යඤ්ඤමු ලද ලිය	නේ

At the sight of a Rodiya girl in a Kumbuk grove by the Attapitiya stream a Radala, all in a tremble (says)  
 "Only a flower in bloom would I crush.  
 As thou art still in bud, damsel, I depart."

The Rodiya damsel is more than a match for the Radala wit. She replies,

සි සි වැඩි දවස් නැත මල පිපෙන්	නට
ඔබා තන නිසරපට නැත බදින්	නට
පිපුනු මලක් නම් නැත ඔබට දෙන්	නට
කැකුළු මල තලා පලයන් පිපෙන්	නට <sup>11</sup>

Few are the days ere the flower will bloom.  
 With no swan-like strips may I press in these breasts of mine.  
 I have no flower in bloom to give you.  
 Why not crush these buds that they may bloom.

A prerequisite to the understanding of a Ceylon folk tale and an assessment of its value is the understanding of life in a village; the nucleus of a village is a tank, near which are paddy fields and gardens; round the tank the village grows; for it provides the water necessary for the cultivation of paddy, the staple food of the peasant; round it birds and animals congregate, not excluding reptiles, such as crocodiles indistinguishable from their surroundings.

The scene is set in the soil, in the seasons and with nature with which the life of the peasantry was bound, all of which made up one unit. The beasts, and birds, the trees, the flowers grew up, flourished and died together with the men, women and children; hundreds

11. *Kavyasangrahava*, Verses, 1335, 1336.



of years would pass by without a change. A thatched hut is the villager's home; it is sited in a patch of ground higher than his field; and in it he grows fruits and garden produce. A maduwa or shed serves as a resting place or a space for entertainment for visitors from a distance or from a neighbouring village.

With industrialization, scenes such as these are dead or dying; scholarship and research can only dig up and reproduce the folklore of a past age; it cannot recreate its words or the magic of its spell. I am reminded of a passage in a Buddhist tale when Buddha bade an evil-doer break a leaf from the twig of a tree which he did; he was next requested to replace it. "I cannot", said the killer. So it is with the peasantry and the folk-tale. "There are few fairer spots on the earth than some of the village tanks when they are nearly full of water. Here we may sit in the cool of an umbrageous tree and contemplate nature on its most idyllic respect."

"The busy world with its turmoil and stress, the noisy factories and clanging machinery, its hurrying railway trains and motor cars, the crowded cities full of artificial and unhealthy existence, has disappeared, as though it had merely been a fantastic vision of the night. Here all is peace; an uneventful calm that has survived the changes of perhaps two thousand years."<sup>12</sup> The likelihood is that it now cannot survive the impact of the technological age.

"Civilization" thinks only in terms of money; its towns and its cities of city-architects aim at chess board forms which is the symbol of soullessness; they extend in rectangular blocks, moving more and more upward; in them live humans whose life is one tension, a frantic rush to beat the wristlet-watch and a frantic rush to make the best of extended leisure hours in hectic living; in that soulless soil no folk-tales can be born, and in it they must surely die. Academic efforts to set them up and restore them to life are in the nature of temporary and ineffective restoratives.

City-lore now alone remains to regale the leisure hour; the operations of big financiers who by variations of rates, ostensibly negligible, can build or destroy; the mergers of big companies into bigger companies which swallow up the little ones in giant mouths; the manoeuvres of the city man who has no personal loyalties and worships, only success and gain, who trips his rival and seduces both his wife and his chief executive, callous both of domestic and civic morality. City-lore emits a nauseating stench and lacks the eternal

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12. Parker, Vol. 1, pp. 4, 5.



fragrance of folklore.

A comprehensive collection of Ceylon folklore has yet to be made; a compilation by an English Civil Servant<sup>13</sup> at the beginning of the present century (1910) still remains the major effort but it is confined to tales from five Provinces (North-Western, Western Central, Southern and Uva). Other tales have appeared periodically in journals and in articles contributed by scholars and free-lance journalists; their authenticity is uncertain and their rendering into the authors' own words and literary style detracts rather than enhances their value; in some cases, a doubt exists whether they have been subjected to a critical scrutiny before publication. "A Bibliography of Sinhalese Folklore"<sup>13</sup> constitutes a valuable compendium and provides, perhaps, a first step in an enterprise which presents many difficulties.

The original tales have, as far as possible, been preserved in their original form in the Parker collection as they were dictated to him by the tellers themselves and taken down in Sinhalese; thereafter they were translated into their literal renderings. "The stories as they now appear are practically literal translations of the Sinhalese originals, perhaps it may be thought in some respects too literal. My aim has been to present them as nearly as possible in the words in which they are related in the villages. The only liberty of any importance that I have taken has been the insertion of an occasional word or phrase where it was evidently omitted by the narrator or was necessary to elucidate the meaning or complete the sense."<sup>14</sup>

The basis of the classification of the Parker collection is the caste of the tellers and not the content of the tale; there are tales told by the cultivating caste, the Veddahs, the tom-tom beaters, the durayas, the rodiyas, the kinnaras and others; the stories of the cultivating caste are generally more complex than those of the other castes. "The few tales that have been told by the Rodiyas and the Kinnaras are very simple; the chief fact is that they have any to tell."

A close analysis, however, enables a reader to classify the tales according to content; and they would appear to lend themselves to a classification similar to the folklore of other lands; some bear a close resemblance, while others have a distinct local flavour. It is difficult to say precisely whether their origin lay in foreign sources

13. *Village Folk Tales of Ceylon* (Parker) in 3 Vols. (1910-1914).

13a. See *The Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies* Vol. 3 No. 3 p. 208, an article by H. A. I. Goonetilleke (1960).

14. Parker, Vol. 1, p. 31.



or whether they were indigenous.

There are a few creation myths,<sup>15</sup> drawn from Hindu mythology, the making of the great earth, of the sun, the moon and the great paddy. The great god Vishnu, the god Saman and the Asura Chief Rahu participate in the creation of the world. From the earliest time the whole of this world, being filled up and overflowed by a great rain, and being completely destroyed, was in darkness, There were neither men nor living beings, nor anything whatever.

Rahu's test was to put a blue lotus into the water; it sprouted; then he descended along the lotus stalk down to the earth in seven days and taking a handful of sand he returned in seven days. Vishnu squeezed the sand, placed it in the water and resolved that the earth be made. Thereafter, Vishnu and Saman decided to make men; their first choice were the Brahmans. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the Brahmans had a hand in the origin of this myth.

Some of the characters in Ceylon folk-lore are supernatural beings with supernatural powers; there are rakshasas and yakkas taken over from folk religion, though not in their entirety; these creatures have generally a tendency to do evil, occasionally they do a good turn, according to their pleasure or displeasure; they eat humans but even cohabit with them and beget children; these associations are, however, of short duration.

They have great bodily strength; in one tale a raksha is described as being, "in width five gawwas (twenty miles), in length ten gawwas (forty miles);"<sup>16</sup> the yakkas are probably of smaller size. References to giants are also extant but the demons of folklore are inferior both in size and power to the demons connected with exorcism reviewed in an earlier volume of this work.

The eccentricities of yakkas are illustrated in a tale<sup>16</sup> from the North-Western Province. A tom-tom beater going to a devil dance came across the Maha-Sona yakka seated on a burning funeral pyre; the yakka asked him to beat the airs of a devil dance, including the new ones that he knew which the tom-tom beater did; pleased with the tunes, the yakka said:

"Look thou every day in the house in which are the loom (the tom-tom beaters were formerly weavers). Don't tell anyone about the things I give."

Beginning from that day, whenever he went into the house in

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15. Parker, Vol. 1, p. 47.

16. Parker, Vol 1, p. 241.



which the looms were and looked at them, raw rice and pulse (mun), and ash plantains, and betel, and arecanuts and various things were there; every day these said things were there.

At the time when he was bringing them, his wife said, "Whence are these?" Every day she plagued him, and being unable to escape from it he told the woman.

"On the following day after the day on which he told her, at the time when he looked he the yakka had filled the looms with excrement."<sup>17</sup>

The devatavas and devatavis are generally benign supernaturals; their abodes are holes in the trunks of big trees; hidden in them, they hear the conversation of humans who sit under and often intervene to help mortals in distress or warn them of an impending calamity.

The classic instance is an anecdote in Sri Rahula's *Kavyasekera*; an old Brahmin on his way home with his earnings to meet his young wife whom he had left behind, kept his bag of sweet-cakes by a tree trunk and went for his ablutions to a pool nearby; on his return to collect his bag, he heard a voice recite:

අස බමුණ ගම් වැ	සි
මහ රැඳුන අද තෝ න	සි
ගෙට ගිය අඹුව න	සි
අතුරු දන්වී කියා මේලෙ	සි <sup>18</sup>

Listen village Brahmin,  
stopping on the way-side, you will die,  
going home, your wife will die,  
making myself invisible, I tell you this.

It was a warning given by a deva who from the tree trunk had seen a cobra enter the bag when the Brahman was away; the cobra would have stung him to death if he put his hand into the bag, or his wife if she did the same on his arrival at home. All in a tremble the Brahman carrying his bag, went to a preaching hall where Buddha was preaching bana; at his command, the Brahman untied the bag and to his horror saw the serpent creeping out of its resting place. This anecdote in the poem is in the nature of a Jataka.

The tale of "The Faithless Princess"<sup>19</sup> is folklore of the North-

17. Parker, Vol. 1, p. 294.

18. *Kavyasekara*, Canto 10, verse 105.

19. Parker, Vol. 1, p. 157.



Western Province; it is an exquisite piece of workmanship and can form the script of a film or of a novel. A complex tale, with many denouements is told in simple words; unless the reader is on his guard he cannot detect the artistry of the teller. It combines in one well-knit and compact whole the mystery of an oracle, the amours of court-life, supernatural intervention and vengeance on the faithless; it is both folklore and a detective tale; it reflects the high standard of culture in its district of origin. A Devatava intervenes to save a prince's life.

A princess who had been formed by the God Sakra from a prince's body associates and falls in love with a Nagaya, a supernatural being who could take at will either a human form or the shape of a cobra; they conspire to kill the prince and the Nagaya requests her to ask the prince, where the prince's death is. "After you have got to know where his death is, I will bite him there." Every day the princess asked the question until one day the prince said: "Today my death is in my thumb."

Then the princess told the Nagaya: "He said that his death is in his thumb." So the Nagaya went in his snake form and stopped on the path on which the prince was going for his bath, in order to bite him. Afterwards, the prince's people went first, the prince went in the middle. Then the people who went first saw the Nagaya and killed it. When the princess came to know that it was her Nagaya, the princess clasped her hands with grief.

The princess then gave gold to the goldsmith, got him to make a waist-chain and a case for it. Then the princess went to the place where the cobra was, cut off its hood; and placing the cobra in the case of the golden waist-chain, the princess put it round her waist. Having it there when they had eaten and drunk in the evening and lighted the lamp in the house, both of them went into the house.

Then the princess said to the prince, "I will ask you a riddle. Should you be unable to explain it, I will kill you. Should you explain it, you will kill me."

*Nāga Patiya*  
*Ran Hawadiya*  
*Tora, Sakiya.*

The Naga Belt  
Is the golden waist-chain  
Explain it, friend.



For fifteen *paeyas* (six hours), without extinguishing the lamp, the prince tried and tried to explain it. He could not. So the princess was to kill the prince next day. A Devatava who drank the smoke of the lamp of that house was there looking out (invisibly) until the lamp was extinguished. After the lamp was put out, having drunk a little smoke he took a little that was slightly burnt with him for his wife. The Devatava and the Devatavi lived in an Ironwood tree on the road side.

The Devatavi quarrelled with the Devatava for his long delay; at that time the prince's elder sister and the man to whom she was given in marriage, having set off to come to the prince's city, stayed that night at the resting place under the Ironwood tree.

The Devatava said, "Do not quarrel" and retold to the Devatavi the whole tale and how and why the princess told the riddle to the Prince, because of her anger at the killing of the Nagaya and with intent to kill the prince. The prince's sister was listening to this narrative at the foot of the Ironwood tree.

After having heard it, as it became light, when they were coming along to the prince's house, they saw from afar that they were going to behead the prince. The elder sister said from afar. "A' Don't behead him. I will solve the riddle."

Having come near, the prince's elder sister explained the riddle in the manner stated by the Devatava. So the prince was saved and they beheaded the princess.

This tale, as reproduced, is almost in the words of the original collection with few abridgements; my purpose was to acquaint the reader with the text; an attempt to omit a sentence or a paragraph was unsuccessful, since with the omission the tale did not hang together, so closely had the incidents been knit; for instance the reference to the lamp in the house could not be omitted because the Devatava drank its smoke, nor could the fifteen *paeyas*, since it was the time factor that led to the quarrel between the Devatava and the Devatavi and the disclosure of the plot. The teller of an old folklore can educate his after-comers in the art of precise expression.

Some tales centre round animals, birds and reptiles with or without supernatural qualities; there are jackals, leopards, bears and elephants which play a leading role, also turtles, crabs and frogs, ducks and quails. In some stories flowers and fruits appear and disappear, such as the lotus to which frequent reference is made;



it has various hues. Among birds are the owl, the heron and the devil bird; the piercing shriek of the last is regarded as an evil omen and causes alarm and fear; the legend is that it is shrieking for its murdered mate. Humans are often transformed into animals, birds or flowers by their own or the supernatural powers of gods, deities or demons.

References to the lion are rare, for there were no lions in Ceylon and the fox, a common character in European folk-lore, hardly figures here; the jackal, a beast without the wit or the dexterity of the fox is a poor substitute; his greed and manners are repulsive. The crocodile is seen in pools, on rock ledges or among logs with its evil eyes alert and its murderous tail ready for the kill; the kabaragoya also clumsily wriggles its heavy length along; the diyabariya (water-snake) is not absent.

ටිකිරි ටිකිරි ටිකිරි ලී	යා
කළෙත් අරත් ලීදට ගී	යා
ලීද වටකර කබර ගො	යා
කකුල කාපි දිය බරි	යා

The tiny, tiny, tiny little girl  
 carrying a pot went to the well  
 twined round the well-bund was a kabaragoya  
 A diyabariya stung her foot.

A tale from the Uva Province is the tale of "The Kabaragoya and the Widow<sup>20</sup>"; the kabaragoya, in need of a woman as his wife, wins the hand of a princess; she is reluctant to appear in Court with her husband; the kabaragoya then goes to a rock-cave, puts there the kabaragoya jacket and transforms himself into a prince with royal ornaments. At that the royal daughter much pleased went to the royal palace and thereafter the kabaragoya retained his form as a Prince.

These simple tales re-echo village life; their characters are familiar to the teller and the listeners; kings (in reality sub-kings) princes, princesses, noblemen come also within their purview; but of greater appeal are the *nekatiralas* (astrologers) and the *vedaralas* who are consulted by the *gamaralas* (cultivators) and the other castes; the former for their knowledge of the stars; the latter for their knowledge of medical-lore coupled with an acquaintance of the astrologer's

20. Parker, Vol. 2, p. 407.



art; they are major characters in village life. The tales are simple, told in simple words, but they have an irresistible charm, a magic and a mystery which elude the pen of the literati.

Folklore is distinct from Jataka; the former has folk-religion, the latter Buddhism at its base; the object of the former is entertainment; of the latter admonition through entertainment. At the end of a tedious day, compact with work and labour, to listen to a sermon is tedious and unattractive, the village folk, therefore, devised another occupation for their leisure hours which both gave expression to their feelings and provided them with entertainment; they erected an inexpensive popular stage without patrons in which audition was a substitute for visual aids and folklore for exorcism and folk plays; the folk-artist was now a teller of entrancing tales; the village eliminated, for the time-being, the bhikku, the singer and the dancer.

But without an intermixture of fantasy and mysterious happenings the tale would fall flat; within it were, therefore, introduced supernatural beings and supernatural incidents; they added both a charm and a mystery to the anecdote. A murdered sister becomes a blue lotus which eludes all comers except her own daughter; she assumes many floral shapes obedient only to the girl's will until a king attracted by her mysterious power puts her on the back of his elephant and takes her to his palace; the dead mother secured thereby a royal male for her orphan child.

From a woman's womb a frog is born; it attains age and wants a woman for his wife; seven Princesses refuse him; the youngest in a spirit of adventure makes a bold bid and accepts him; they live together happily until they receive an invitation to Court; the daughter is ashamed to accompany her frog-husband and a feeling of sorrow overcomes her. But her husband enters a rock-cave, drops his frog jacket and emerges a handsome prince wearing princely ornaments.

“The Decoction of eight Nelli Fruits”.<sup>21</sup> Is of the earth, earthy; it has the smell of the country-side and not of the Court. A Vedarala is on his death-bed; his son upbraids him for not teaching him his medicinal art according to custom; he dies with the words, “Son, you will have the decoction of eight Nelli fruits.” Now a vedarala occupies a high place in village society; the bhikku, the astrologer and the vedarala are its main constituent elements; he is something

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21. Parker, Vol. ii, p. 121, 122.



of an astrologer as well and acts in general as a friend and guide.

A man loses his yoke of buffaloes and goes to the Vedarala's son for advice; the young man gives him the only prescription of which he is aware—"The Decoction of eight Nelli Fruits"; its ingredients are the nelli fruits, water, powdered rock-salt, and castor-oil; it acts as a violent purge; the villager acts on this advice and the decoction begins to act on him; he goes to a pool to wash his arse; the buffaloes go to the same pool to quench their thirst; and the owner finds his yoke of buffaloes. This rough joke would have occasioned roars of laughter; it rehearses familiar village scenes.

"The Frog in the Queen's Nose"<sup>22</sup> is a deft mixture of both the Court and the country-side; a Queen smells a flower and a little frog gets into her nose; she is rent by pain. The King issues a Proclamation that he would give a district from his kingdom and goods amounting to a tusk elephant's load to the man who takes out the frog; several try, fail and are beheaded. A woman in love with a paramour, sees in this impasse a simple way of getting rid of her husband; she sends him to the King as the man that can take out the frog. In fear of imminent death the man recites non-stop things that happened to him;

Handa giya kala wiya-gaha kaedune,  
 When to plough I went away,  
 snapped the wodden yoke in twain,  
 Wiya-gaha kaedu kala gedarata emine,  
 When the yoke in pieces broke,  
 slowly home I come again;  
 Gederata a kala aenda uda sitine,  
 When I to the house returned,  
 I upon the bed remain;  
 Aenda uda siti kala konda-pita daewe,  
 When upon the bed I lay,  
 felt my rear a burning pain;  
 Konda-pita dae kala aenda yata balane,  
 When my hinder part I burned,  
 'neath the bed I search amain;  
 Aenda yata baelu kala kiri-bata tibune,  
 When beneath the bed I look,  
 hidden milk rice there had lain,

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22. Parker, Vol. ii, p, 382, 384.



Kiri-bata kalayi me duka waedune,  
 As I ate that rice, I ween  
 these afflictions on me rain,  
 Me duka balala paenapan Gembiritto  
 Having this affliction seen,  
 jump out, O Froggy-pawn.”

The Queen absorbed in this cumulation of incidents listened to the story, holding her breath and when the story ended, it went out with a snort; the young frog quite of itself fell to the ground. The King gave the man a district from his kingdom and goods amounting to a tusk-elephant's load and made him stay at the palace itself. That woman became bound to that paramour.

Myths, legends, fables, folklore are familiar terms; myths and legends are sometimes regarded as tales of an earlier world or of prehistoric times, while fables and folklore relate to denizens of this world, with or without a supernatural element; but no precise division can be made which places them in set separate compartments. They are all forms of art to which the genius of the artist, in this instance a story-teller, has given a local habitation and a name; they both entertain and stir the imagination and, therefore, are more attractive than the sermons of the clergy or the precepts of sages; their appeal is universal and includes both the literates and the populace.

In myths and legends gods fight with gods and heavenly beings or demons play a part in human affairs; in fables; beasts talk words of wisdom or indulge in the same foibles as men; fables hold a mirror up to nature; the reader is both educated and amused. Aesop and La Fontaine have attained immortality in the West: in the same way, the fables of *Panchatantra* and the *Hitopadesa* have won distinction in the East; their freedom from intellectual and scientific jargon is their priceless heritage; their meaning is crystal clear and like brilliant gems they sparkle for ever on the forefinger of time.

All things that are seen or heard  
 In Science or the Sacred World  
 All things in interstellar space  
 Are known among the populace.  
 Some scamp and sneek and snake  
 So often undertake  
 A plan that does not thrive



The world wags on, alive.  
 However skilful in disguise  
 However frightful to the eyes,  
 Although in tiger-skin arrayed  
 The ass was killed-because he brayed.<sup>23</sup>

It is not possible within these pages to review all Ceylon folklore; far less, to draw a clear picture of world folklore; for folklore is not the perquisite of one country but is a national heritage of all lands. It is a singular phenomenon that the incipience of the death of the folk that created and were characters in folklore under the armageddon of industrialization has led to an international revival in the study of folklore; scholars, travellers, business and professional men have in recent years made a feverish attempt to dig out these immemorial tales from their dungeons with some success; but their task is yet incomplete.<sup>24</sup>

It is a race between the hunter and his elusive prey; the likelihood is that in view of the dynamic pace of modernization the physic of research will not arrest the malignant course of the disease that is carrying folklore to its grave; they will soon take their place beside the dinosaurs whom the slayers have killed and are now occasionally brought back to life in the fantasy of the wonder-book or of the film. A comparison of the folklore of different countries or an analysis of the tales of one country or the variants of a single tale as it travels West or East or North or South is an absorbing occupation.

The Parker collection (3 Vols) contains 226 tales drawn from the North-Western, Central, Uva, Western and Southern Provinces and some from Southern India; the tales from the North-Western predominate; on the basis of caste origin, they are classified as told by the Cultivating Caste and Veddas, Potters, Washermen, Tom-Tom Beaters, Durayas, Rodiyas and Kinnaras; here the tales of the Cultivating Caste predominate; the inference is that certain cultural and social standards were a prerequisite even for the creation of folklore; according to the conditions then prevalent the cultivating caste had enjoyed a higher status than the other castes in the Island.

The texts of a few of the stories in the second and third Volumes of the collection are appended in Sinhalese,<sup>25</sup> translated into Roman

23. *The Wisdom of India* (Lin Yutang), pp. 247, 248, 272.

24. See *The Folktale* by Sith Thompson.

25. Parker, Vol. III; p. 413.



script as of interest to philological students as examples of the Sinhalese tongue as found in the villages; the language is given exactly as it was spoken; stories by different narrators have been selected with the object of giving the selection a representative character; this collection made with due regard to intrinsic values is a national asset; it is another example of the interest shown by some European Civil Servants in the life of the people with whom they come in contact; *Jungle Tide* and the *Village in the Jungle*<sup>26</sup> are invaluable as fascinating portraits of a civilization struggling for survival in a sea of misfortune.

The tale of "The Gamarala who went to the God-World"<sup>27</sup> is familiar even with children; it is often told and even shown in picture books. It relates to a newly-married Gamarala and Gama-Mahage (wife); the Gamarala begged for and was granted a chena land from the King which he planted with millet; thereafter he remained at home doing house-work; when he went back to the chena after two or three months, he found that the millet had been trampled, eaten and thrown down.

At his wife's suggestion he kept watch in the night in the chena; then he saw that a tusk elephant, having come from the Divine World and trampled on the millet, and eaten it, had thrown it down and gone away. Astonished by this sight, he thought that he must go to the Divine World, hanging on its tail; he informed the Gama-Mahage to be ready, putting on clothes tomorrow for the purpose of going to the Divine World.

"The Gamarala's wife thereupon wanted to know the means to get clothes washed when she went to the Divine World. At that time the Gamarala said that they must perhaps take the washerman-uncle (so he went to him and told him). When the washerman-uncle set off to go he wanted his wife also to go (and he brought her with him).

"At last, these very four said persons having become ready and been in the chena until the tusk elephant comes, and after the tusk elephant came, at the very first the Gamarala hung by the tail. The Gamarala's wife hung at his back corner (*piti mulla*). After that, while the washerman-uncle and his wife were hung in turn behind the others, the tusk elephant, having eaten the millet, began to go to the Divine World.

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26. John Still; Leonard Woolf.

27. Parker, Vol. III, pp. 207—209.



“After these four persons with extreme joy went a little distance, the washerman-uncle’s wife spoke to the Gamarala, and asked him thus, ‘For a certainty, Gamarala, in that Divine World how great is the size of the quart measure which measures rice?’ she asked.

“Thereupon the Gamarala, who was holding the tusk elephant’s tail the very first, said, ‘The quart measure will be this size.’ Having put out his two hands he showed her the size.

“At that time, these very four persons being extremely high in the sky, and from that far-off place having fallen to the earth, each one went into dust.”

Reference is made in some tales to Hettiralas; they were members of a South Indian Community, mainly from Madras, who migrated to Ceylon for the purpose of trade and money-lending; they were even bankers to the British East India Company in Madras and later in Ceylon, they facilitated the transfer of the funds required for purposes of administration, their rates of commission and interest were high but they did a flourishing business until their replacement by the Exchange Banks. Their characteristics are caricatured in “the Prince with his Life in His Sword”<sup>28</sup> in which a Princess disguises herself as a Hettirala and makes her escape.

“The Princess having thrown away the Princess’s dress, dressing like a Hettiya went away. In this manner she went to another kingdom. In that country, establishing shops, there was a rich Hettiya. She approached near him. At that time the shopkeeper Hettiya having become much pleased with the (apparent) Hettiya, told him to remain there. Well then, the shopkeeper Hettiya asked, ‘Who art thou?’

“Thereupon the Princess said, ‘I am a Hettirala of a country; I came to establish a shop.’

“The shopkeeper having heard that word, said, ‘If so, let us two trade in partnership.’ Having said (this) he handed over a shop to the Princess resembling a Hettiya. He gave for it suitable servants.

“At that time this Princess says, ‘I having come to a new country, when establishing a shop have the thought to give a dana (free donation of food), and secondly to establish the shop.’

“Thereupon the shopkeeper Hettirala having become pleased, and having said, ‘Let us two pay the amount that the cost comes to,’ they gave the dana.”

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28. Parker, Vol. III p. 265 at 270, 271.



Ceylon folklore is rich in dry humour; some of the tales raise an irresistible smile by reason of either the phrase used or the situation created by the teller; an instance of the latter is the tale of the *Decoction of eight Nelli Fruits*, the draught of which led the owner of the buffaloes to a pool of water for his ablutions simultaneously as his lost buffaloes came to the same pool for a drink of water. In the tale of the *Women and the Priest* both the situation and the phrase combine to provide the amusement.

It was a woman's custom to take Pansil every morning; this Buddhist religious practice consists in a bhikku reciting the five precepts; the devotee repeats verbatim the words of the bhikku. One day her husband expressed his own desire to take Pansil and went early in the morning to the temple with a pingo of boiled rice and curries; the priest was yet in bed; the man knocked violently at the door in order to wake him; the priest jumped out of bed with a word "*Kavuda*" (Who is there?).

The man, following his wife's instructions to repeat the words of the priest said "*Kavuda*"; the priest not understanding what was taking place, came near the door and said from inside, "*Mokada?*" (What is the matter?); the man repeated "*Mokada*"; the priest was bewildered and called out in a loud and stern tone "*Allapiya*" (Lay hold of him). "*Allapiya*" was echoed forth by the man who thinking that the ceremony was over left the pingo by the door and went home satisfied.

The tale proceeds to describe how by the repetition of these words the man frightened a group of thieves who had robbed some jewels and were counting them near his house in the night; how the man delighted by his find decided to give one third of the jewels to the priest whom he regarded as his benefactor and how ultimately his wife got the better of him and kept back the jewels by creating a situation in which the man was made to carry a rice-pounder and the priest ran away in fear of an imminent assault on his person.<sup>29</sup>

*Matalange Loku Appu* is another tale, where the situation and the phrase combine to give delight; for two mischievous falsehoods Loku Appu was tied and put into a sack and left on the road by a group of tom-tom beaters; hearing the sound of footsteps, he shouted "How can I govern a Kingdom when I cannot read or write?" It was a Muhammedan trader who came along; he questioned Loku Appu who replied, "By force they are going to make me

29. *The Orientalist* Vol. 1. pp. 36, 37.



King.” “It will be a great favour”, said the trader if you let them do it to me,” and eventually they changed places.

Loku Appu left the trader in the sack and hid himself; the tom-tom beaters returned after the ceremony which they had gone to attend was over and cast the trader into the river; as they were returning past the river, they saw Loku Appu washing clothes in it. They went up to him and said, “What is this Loku Appu? Where have you come from? Where did you get all this cloth? They were assured that the cloth came from the bed of the river.

“The tom-tom beaters said to him that they would be greatly obliged if he could put them in the way of getting such treasures, to which he requested to each of them to bring a sack like that in which he had been tied. They soon came back with the sacks, got inside them, were tied up and were duly thrown into the river by Loku Appu. Then Loku Appu went to the tom-tom beaters’ village, and took possession of their lands and houses.”<sup>30</sup>

In the category of folklore falls a tale often told of Raja Sinha II and his Queen; the origin of its popularity lies both in the verses that it contains and its colourful content; it is woven round an alleged amour between the Queen and his Prime Minister Gascon of foreign descent, this minister held the high office of Adigar and had access to the Court. The draw of this anecdote has made it the script of a theatrical performance. As a member of the tutorial staff of a Kandy secondary School (Dharmaraja College), I was associated with its production and it was staged by the students throughout the Island with great success (1917).

“At the time he (Gascon) was in high favour with the King, the Queen was taken ill; and on reference to her horoscope, it was ascertained that a Bali ceremony to the unpropitious planets could alone restore her to health. Directions were accordingly given for the ceremony of the Bali offering, and for a preparation of a figure, as is usual, of the sick person.

Gascon superintended the ceremony; and, in an unlucky hour, unable to restrain his love for the queen, and to secure a correct reproduction of her person at the hands of the painter, directed him to mark on a part of the figure (her waist) a mole, adding that without it the figure was not a faithful likeness. This circumstance created suspicion in the King’s mind; and led to an inquiry which

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30. *The Orientalist*, Vol. II pp. 53, 56; Parker Vol. 1. p. 108.



resulted in the incarceration of the Prime Minister''<sup>31</sup>

It is said that in their anguish at their separation and the imminent doom overhanging him, the Queen and Gascon exchanged a secret correspondence in verses; the three concluding verses two attributed to the Queen and one to Gascon are often quoted:

<p>                 බිසව                  තුන් කල තුමුල වනයේ මල් රස නොවි                  මත් කල ගජන් කොපුතල බිඟු රොනට වැ                  කන් තල පහර වැනි නිරිඳුට අසුව ඉ                  පින් කල හිතවතුනි දැන් තැවෙනු කුමට                    සක්මන් කරන මලුවේ දී බැඳි                  සිත සන්තොසින් දුන් මුව මී බී                  ඉක්මන් ගමන් හිමි ඔබ අද යන                  දස්කොන් මගෙ නමට ජීවිත දෙන             </p>	<p>                 ද                  ද                  ද                  ද                    හාද                  වාද                  වාද                  වාද             </p>
<p>                 දස්කොන්: වි ස ස් කමලාව රස පහස නො විද                  ද සි ස් දුනි පොරණ ඇස දුටු පමණ න                  වෙසෙස් නුඹේ අමයුරු පහස ලද මෙ                  ම හි ස් එකක් ගියෙ නම් නුඹේ නමට කි             </p>	<p>                 මා                  මා                  මා                  මා             </p>

Like unto the bee that enjoying not the sweetness of the forest flower, lustrous, lovely, large, alights on the must on the cheek of the elephant in rut, and is struck by its ear flap, so you dear friend, of many good deeds, caught in the grip of the king, what avails repentance now?

On the promenade where we walk, we fell in love, and with joy of mind, you sucked the honey from my lips, Are you not, Dascon, on a swift journey, giving away your life, for my sake?

Enjoying not the sweet touch of the lovely Lotus One (Ravana of the Ten Heads) Sacrificed his Head, for the mere sight of her, what matters then were my own head to go, having enjoyed your ambrosial sweetness.

The learned editor of the journal, while he reproduces the tale discounts its veracity; he regards the marking of the mole by Gascon,

31. *The Orientalist* (1885-1886), Vol. II, pp. 41, 42; edited by William Goonetilleke.



a man of learning and wisdom as improbable; it was imprudent and perilous and exposed him to danger; he adds that no punishment was inflicted on the Queen; she would have been the first to be sentenced to death or to some other severe punishment; according to the tale Gascon was executed.

“These considerations justify our discrediting the narrative and our transferring it from the region of history or biography to that of folklore—the origin of this fiction is to be found in a Sanskrit work called *Kathasantsagara* or ‘The Ocean of the rivers of Stories’ where an incident bearing a striking resemblance in all its details to the foregoing is given in Vararucci, also called Katyayana the author of the *Varitkas* to the *Sutras* of Panini.”<sup>32</sup>

According to Vararucci, when he was Prime Minister of King Yogananda, a Brahman was seen peeping into one of the rooms of the harem and conversing with the Queen; the King sentenced the Brahman to death; when he was being led to execution a dead fish that was exposed for sale in the bazaar is said to have laughed. The King commanded Vararucci to solve the mystery; Vararucci invoked the favour of his patron, Goddess Sarasvati, who directed him to lie concealed that night behind a certain palm tree. Whilst he was thus, he saw a terrible Rakshasi approaching the tree, surrounded by her young ones, clamouring for food. Her reply was that they would have to wait until dawn as the Brahman was not killed because a dead fish laughed. “Who made the fish laugh?” asked the little ones.

“He laughed,” rejoined the Rakshasi, “because the poor innocent Brahman was condemned to death, when in every apartment of the harem are men disguised as maid-servants.”

Vararucci who had listened to this conversation returned to the palace and gave the King the reason why the dead fish laughed; the Brahman was liberated. Later a painter drew the figures of the King and Queen with such remarkable accuracy that only life was wanting but Vararucci observed that a mole about the Queen’s waist had not been marked and took upon himself (as Gascon did) to supply the omission. The King vexed with suspicion directed his Second Minister to bring about Vararucci’s death but he caused another man to be killed and announced that Vararucci had been executed on his Sovereign’s order.<sup>33</sup>

32. *ibid.* p. 42.

33. *ibid.* pp. 42, 43.



The remarkable similarity of tale of Vararucci and of Gascon leads to the probable inference that both are folk tales with customary variants. This view finds support in the significant fact that Robert Knox in his *Historical Relations*, a biography of the life and times of Raja Sinha II makes no mention of this anecdote, although he was a resident for nineteen years in the King's Court. The names of the chief characters should, therefore, remain fictitious in future reproductions of this colourful folk-tale of anonymous origin.

Extensive research has been done in recent years in the study of particular tales and of international folklore which discloses its general features and the variants of individual tales in their transit from land to land; folklore embedded in the ancient literature of Greece and Rome of ancient Egypt, Babylonia and Assyria have been sorted out with great scholarship and industry; the continents of Europe, Africa and Asia have been ransacked in this intellectual quest; North-American Indian tales have made a large contribution to the funds of these treasure hunters.

It is no easy task to decide whether a folk-tale is of indigenous origin or is an adaptation; it has the singular gift of emigration and the assumption of a form or content in conformity with the dress or mental climate of its new domicile; this change-over is the result of various factors; it may be the religion, the habits and customs or the traditions of its new residence; this device is not unlike the doffing or donning of a jacket, the frog jacket or the kabaragoya jacket in foregoing tales; the transformation of a hideous beast into a handsome prince and his happy wedlock with a lovely princess is not without resemblance to the European story of the *Beauty and the Beast*. Similar conditions in different countries can evolve similar presentations according to its standards of culture and civilization; footnotes to the Parker collection of Ceylon folklore make reference to possible sources of similar tales.

The tale of *The Invisible Silk Robe*<sup>34</sup> recorded as current in the North-Western Province is a well-known anecdote illustrative of great men being made the victims of scheming flatterers: the invisible silk robe was no vesture at all; it was a mere figment of the imagination; but a king was duped into the belief that it was of exquisite design and made to sit on his festival tusk elephant and perambulate

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34. Parker, Vol. II, pp. 66-69.



through all places in the city without any clothes and completely nude.

Comment was made about a century ago (1884) by an eminent scholar on the absence of a systematic collection of Ceylon folklore. "It is a matter both of regret and surprise that no writer in Ceylon has been to work in a systematic manner in collecting the folklore of the island."<sup>35</sup> In several issues of a journal published by him, several folk-tales were later included; but these tales, periodically reproduced cannot be said to constitute a collection; they further suffer from the infirmity that they are told in the language of the writer and not of the teller; they lack, therefore, their essential characteristics—their connection with the hard crust of the earth, the short sentence, the simple word, the contact with nature herself the main attributes of the tale of the folk as distinct from the story of the literate.

It took twenty-six years for a collection to appear in print (1910) and strange to say the labour was undertaken and the work accomplished by an European civil servant (Parker); he has preserved for the posterity of the natives and the delectation of the world some at least of Ceylon's heritage of folklore; this enthusiast went, as he says, straight into the jungle country amidst the tanks, the birds and the beasts, and the rice-fields; he put into writing the lore of the peasants from their own lips; now that technology and industrialization are taking their toll of the ancient way of life; it is vain to hope for another genuine collection; the songsters are dead and will sing nevermore.

Emphasis is given to comparative folklore in the Goonetilleke collection; a comparison is made of Ceylon tales and tales current in other countries; the coincidences are remarkable and the difference sometimes slight. But this similarity should not, by itself, lead to the assumption that the one was borrowed or adapted from the other, for it is not impossible for similarity of conditions and cultures to generate similar tales.

As an illustration, stories told by the Sinhalese, Siamese, the Punjabees and Tamils about goldsmiths are related;<sup>36</sup> the then current belief was that "whosoever else is to be trusted, a goldsmith is not" and that "a goldsmith would cheat his own mother". According to one Sinhalese story a son deceived his mother that

35. *The Orientalist* Vol. 1, p. 35. (Sinhalese Folklore).

36. *Comparative Folklore, The Orientalist* Vol. 1, pp. 180-184.



a large piece of gold made up in the form of a frog was in fact a live frog; according to another a goldsmith contrived to steal the king's gold by a device which evaded the surveillance of the king's guards.

“A certain woman possessed a large piece of gold made up in the form of a frog, which had been an heir-loom in her family for many years.

“She though wishing to keep the metal, was anxious to have it made up in the form of ornaments, which she would wear and display before her friends. She was afraid to take to a goldsmith, for she knew that they all had the reputation of being rogues, and that she would most likely be cheated. It therefore occurred to her that the safest way would be to have her son apprenticed to the trade; this she accordingly did. When he had learned it sufficiently well, she took the golden frog to him and requested him to make it into the ornaments she required.

“The cunning fellow first obtained a live frog and placed it among the ashes of his fire-place, and then, whilst his mother stood by, took the golden one, put it among the ashes also, and commenced to blow the fire to melt it down. The live frog feeling uncomfortable in the heat immediately jumped out and hopped away.

‘See, dear mother’ said he ‘your frog is gone. How can you expect me to make ornaments from a living thing.’ ‘Oh, my dear son,’ said the mother, ‘what is worse than bad fortune? My lump of gold has turned into a lump of flesh’.

“A certain king employed a goldsmith to make him a crown of pure gold, and, knowing the proverbial dishonesty of their trade, stipulated that the work should be done on the deck of a ship under the close observation of some of his ministers whom he would appoint for the purpose. The goldsmith was to be closely examined both on entering the ship in the morning and on leaving it in the evening; and everything required for the work was to be supplied to him by the ministers and not brought to the ship by him.

“These precautions being considered by the king ample for preventing the possibility of any theft of the gold, the work was begun by the goldsmith on the deck of an isolated ship lying at anchor at a little distance from the shore.

“Among the other things, the goldsmith required daily a few stalks of the habarala leaf for stirring the melted gold with. When the gold was stirred with the stalk the cold cavities of the latter imbibed,



hardened and held together a small quantity of the precious metal. These stalks were, one after another, thrown into the sea under the very noses of the watchers, who never suspected that there was any meaning in this proceeding. The waves of course washed the stalks to the shore and the goldsmith picked them up when returning home every evening after the day's work, and thus collected a large quantity of gold, setting at naught the watchers and all their endeavours to thwart him in the long-established practices of his trade...."

These tales are, no doubt, inventions of the folklore artists to give expression to views then current in the Island. According to the Siamese version a Brahman rescued from a river an ape, a goldsmith, a tiger and a snake in danger of being drowned; the other three warned the Brahman against the goldsmith and promised him their assistance, if ever required; the tiger thereafter devoured the king's son, and happening to meet the Brahman later, gave the son's jewels which he had buried underground to the Brahman; the Brahman thought that it was improper for him to wear such jewels; he gave them to the goldsmith to make a betel-box. The goldsmith thereupon went to the king, showed him the jewels and accused his benefactor of the murder. The Brahman was, however, saved by the strategy of the snake.

According to the Punjabee story "a goldsmith made a bangle of pure silver for his mother saying, "You are my mother and I, as your son, who owe you so much, cannot do less." But he was troubled in mind that he had not added an alloy; he could not rest or sleep in bed, until he had melted the bangle and recasted it with a considerable admixture of alloy. The Tamil story is short and spicy.

"Once upon a time there was a king, who, wishing, on ascending the throne, to have a crown of pure gold made according to a design of his own, employed a goldsmith to do the work at the palace under the supervision of some of his officers. While the goldsmith was making the crown of pure gold at the palace by day, he was making one of the same pattern and size, but of gold mixed with a large quantity of alloy, at his own house by night, and both crowns were completed on the same day. The goldsmith then informed the king that the presentation of the crown should be attended with certain ceremonies at the royal tank. In the night preceding the appointed day, the goldsmith quietly stole into the tank and deposited in it the counterfeit crown. The following morning the



King proceeded to the tank in state with his ministers and retinue, the wily goldsmith bringing up the rear with the crown of pure gold resting on his hands raised above his head. When the tank was reached the goldsmith entered it with measured steps, having the crown in his uplifted hands, and plunged into the water. After remaining there a few moments he rose to the surface with the crown still in his hands, raised above his head. This was repeated three times, at the last of which, he brought out the counterfeit crown instead of the one of pure gold. Falling on his knees at the feet of the king he gracefully handed the crown to His Majesty, who then returned to the palace wearing it on his brow; and, being much pleased with the beauty and elegance of its workmanship, ordered the goldsmith to be handsomely rewarded. At nightfall of the same day, when all was quiet the goldsmith removed the crown of pure gold from the tank to his own house, and thus became the possessor of a large quantity of pure gold.”

Folk religion found expression in various forms; it supplied the supernatural element to folklore, exorcism by the *kattadiya* or *yakadura* of the demons that possessed humans, the invocation of the gods by the *kapuva* or *kapurala*, the cult of the planets and the allied deities presided over by the *bali adura*; ceremonies attended these performances. It also lent colour and the mystical element to folk drama by the intermixture of characters and happenings—connected with folk religion.

Research into the origin and character of Ceylon folk-play or folk-drama has been done both by Western<sup>37</sup> and local scholars<sup>38</sup> the former worked under two handicaps, ignorance of the language and non-conversance with the customs of the people; the latter did not suffer from these disadvantages but their contributions are not comprehensive, comparatively recent years have seen a critical analysis of the folk play or folk drama together with its historical background by a scholar who was himself a producer.<sup>39</sup> Some ancient texts are available in manuscripts.<sup>40</sup>

Folk-drama has been broadly defined into Kolam, Sokari and Nadagam; it has also taken other forms such as puppet shows, organized in various districts for various purposes and on various

37. Gallaway (1829 A.D.); Pertold (1930).

38. Juwanis Appuhamy (1938) Silva and Malalasekera (1938).

39. *The Folk-Drama of Ceylon*, 1st ed. 1952; 2nd ed. (1960) E. R. Saratchandra.

40. *The Sinhalese Folk-Play* (1953), E. R. Saratchandra, Ceylon Museum and British Museum.



occasions. The modern trend is to act a good play islandwide without localisation; this change is the natural result of the unification of the Island. Here again, the problem of patronage presents an obstacle; amateur actors are a volatile body and an expensive cast to harness; without a good draw, the undertaking is a financial loss.

Kolam or masked plays are staged mainly along the South-West Coast of Ceylon; the actors wear masks of light wood, such as *kaduru* or *ruk attana*, painted in bright colours. Sokari is current in the Uda Rata and not in the maritime areas; it takes the form of a mime in which some or all the characters wear masks; it is popular in the areas around Kandy. Nadagama or Folk-Opera is shown along the western coast of Ceylon. It is enacted almost entirely through the medium of song accompanied by dance.

“The stock characters dance in a particular manner, and all the other characters have a set movement to perform upon entry. Stylised movement is also used to depict certain actions, and there is a narrator who describes incidents that cannot be brought upon the stage.”<sup>41</sup>

In Kolam various characters appear on the stage, the introduction is chanted in verse by the Pote Gurunnanse; he is followed by the Anabera Karaya and his wife Nonci Akka; their facial expressions in the masks they wear, their quarrels and their antics raise roars of laughter and create a favourable reception atmosphere for the rest of the performance; their exit is followed by the appearance in turn of the main actors; these characters are familiar to local audiences in life or through folk religion.

The characteristics of the main actors are described in verses sung on their entry on the stage; among them are the messenger, the Liyana Rala (scribe), the Badajari (one who speaks through his nose), the Hewarala (soldier), the Anabera Gura, the Bahulajjariya (much ridiculed man), the Ralahamy (of Mudaliyar's rank) and the King with the Crown on his head; some of the verses are reproduced here: as illustrative of the rest.<sup>42</sup>

පනිවිඩ කරව	නා
ලෙසට සබයට එමි	නා
බස්නමක් රැගෙ	නා
එන්ඩ සැරසි සබයෙ සිටි	නා

41. *The Folk-Drama of Ceylon* (1966 Ed.), Saratchandra, p. 95.

42. See *Sinhala Natum*, M. D. Raghavan, pp. 193 onwards.



Walking-stick in hand  
 He is ready to come to the assembly  
 That he may discharge  
 The duties of a messenger.

සොබන ගුණ වඩව	ස
දමන අත්පොඩි සුරල	ස
ගමනොහුගෙ කොමල	ස
සබයටෙන්තේ ලියන රාළ	ස

His hands are tender and small,  
 Manners pleasant,  
 And his walk, serene  
 He is the Liyana Rala and he comes to the assembly.

බීමන ලෙසින්	තේ
දවුල උරලා ගන්	තේ
නොහැර වෙවුලන්	තේ
මෙවර අණබෙර ගුරා එන්	තේ

With davul, slung on the shoulder  
 Now comes the Anabera Gura;  
 And he trembles continuously,  
 Like a man intoxicated.

කග පලභ අතක	ට
ගන් සැරමිටිය සුරත	ට
වෙන කෝලම් කුම	ට
වරෙන් හේවාරාල හනික	ට

With the sword in one hand  
 And a walking-stick in the right,  
 Comes the Hewarala  
 Of what avail is the other Kolam?

මුදලි නම් ලැබගෙ	නා
කස්නාන ගෙන පලදි	නා
රාජකාරිය ගැ	නා
රාළහාමින් සබේ වඩි	නා

The good gentleman who abides in that city  
 Having received the rank of "Mudaliyar"  
 Enquires into what is right and wrong  
 And comes into the assembly.



පෙර සිට පැවත එ	න
දරමින් ඉස ඔටුනු මෙ	න
බඳිමින් කඩුව ඉ	න
මෙලෙස සැරසී රජුන් දැන් එ	න

Wearing a crown  
That comes from ancient times,  
And armed with a sword,  
Now comes the King.

ඉ නා මත් තද මහලු වයසකි මෙබහුලජ්ජාරිය ද	නා
ප නා ගත් පෙර ජාති කරුමෙට මහලු වයසට පැමුණු	නා
පු නා වත් නැතුවා ද අඬබෙර කරන්නට ආවේ හි	නා
පු නා පයකින් නටයි සබ මැද මෙබහුලජ්ජාරිය ද	නා

A palm-leaf in the arm-pit and walking-stick in hand  
He has a paccavadam round his waist and davul tied to his  
shoulder  
Coming from different places, he shows his beard to the  
assembly;  
In this advanced age, he dances in the assembly.<sup>43</sup>

The *Maname Katawa* and the *Sanda Kindura*<sup>44</sup> Jataka rank easily first in popularity; they are exquisite works of art, full of emotional thrills; feminine infidelity and feminine fidelity are the themes; life and death hang in the balance; disgrace overwhelms the faithless spouse; the virtuous wife receives her reward by the restoration to life of her slain lord by Sakka's opportune intervention; song and dance intervene as the tension rises to its height. It has been my privilege to witness both these plays staged by consummate actors.

ගිරි අරණ වස	නා
දඩයම් සොයා රැක	නා
සෙනහක් සමගි	නා
වසයි වැදී රජ එවන සොඳි	නා <sup>45</sup>

In the jungle the Vedda King lives  
Hunting for food;  
His place of abode, over mountains and forests,  
He lives accompanied by his hosts.

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43. The reference is to the Bahulajjariya.  
44. For the Jataka, see Vol. 1, Part 1.  
45. This verse and the following five verses are from *Maname*. See *Sinhala Natum* pp. 206-209.



වැදී රජ වසන ව	ර
නිරිඳෙක් පැමිණි වන තු	ර
එ බියොවට ලොබ ක	ර
බලනු වියතුනි කරන කරද	ර

The King who thus comes accompanied by his handsome Queen  
Reaches the forest where the Veddas dwell  
Enamoured of her beauty  
They cast wistful glances at her.

හෙ ළා වැදී රජුන් මනමේ නිරිඳු ස	ඳ
බ ලා බියව දෙස කගපත ඉල්ලු ස	ඳ
හෙ ළා නිබුණු ලෙස කඩුවේ කොපුව ඇ	ඳ
මෙ ලා ගයෙන් රජු හට කොපුව දුන් ස	ඳ

King Maname knocks down the Vedda King  
And beckons the queen to hand him the sword  
The scabbard she takes out instead  
And that the queen gives to the king.

ඇ ද ලා කඩුව වැදී රජ සුරතට රැග	නේ
සි ද ලා දැමිය නිරිඳුගෙ හිස විගසකි	නේ
එ කලා නැගිට බියවුන් සමගිව ගොසි	නේ
බැස ලා ගහ තෙරට වැදී රජ විගස කි	නේ

Taking the sword the Vedda King  
Beheads the king instantly  
Thereupon the Vedda King takes hold of the queen  
And with her goes to the bank of the river.

බ ල වි කු මෙන් ගුණවත් නරනිඳුන් අ	ඳ
සෙනෙහසයෙන් පුරුදුව විසු කලක් සො	ඳ
මට ලොබයෙන් එරජුට පැමුණුණ ලෙස	ඳ
නු ඹ ස ම ගි න් සිටියොත් වෙයි එලෙස න	ඳ

The mighty king whom you loved for long is killed  
Because of the desire you cherish for me  
If I were to live with you  
The same fate would overtake me.

Although there is evidence of other forms of literary activity in ancient Ceylon, there is an absence of dramatic literature; the reason for this gap is uncertain; it may be that extant works suffered



destruction during the Malabar invasions or at the hands of Raja Sinha I; or it is possible that the Buddhist bhikkus who were the main authors refrained from such activities in view of the rigour of their vows. Fa-Hian, the Chinese traveller, however, records that he witnessed in the city of Anuradhapura (414) the display of the five hundred different bodily forms which the Bodhisatva assumed in the course of his history; this exhibition was, however, not a dramatic performance. The *Mahavamsa*<sup>46</sup> makes reference to the existence of strolling players, theatres and performances; that drama in some form existed cannot, therefore, be discounted in its entirety.

Later years saw the birth of nadagama and *natya* also known as *nyrtiya*; the former was of local origin, the latter drew its inspiration from Gujarati plays; both types of performances were popular, the *natyas* at a later stage; their popularity gave rise to a number of other dramatic works. There existed at one time (1903) over twenty well-known nadagam works printed and published in Sinhala; there also existed quite a number of well-known *natyas*; of the nadagam, two were historical, Sinhawalli and Ehelapola; attributed to one author,<sup>47</sup> the *natyas* were of more recent origin; their plots were mostly derived from popular stories.

“There is an arrangement of acts and scenes in the *natya* plays which is entirely absent in the nadagam. These plays on account of the scenery and the new music introduced through them, became popular among the Sinhalese and displaced the older nadagam to a great extent;” two Colombo playwrights<sup>48</sup> gave this species of performance an added popularity.

A nadagam play<sup>49</sup> is not divided into acts and scenes and commences with a prologue, which is usually written in the form of verses with high sounding words, and invoking the blessings of gods and the support of the audience. Next come the clowns; before they appear on the stage, the manager describes them in a verse, *viriduwa* and introduces them; they dance and sing. Next is introduced a young and accomplished student who is expected to be refined in his tastes in contrast to the clowns, and who sings and dances to sustain that character. Then come the prophets or the learned men, who are

46. *Mahavamsa*, Ch. lxvi; Ch. 2xxiii.

47. Philippu Sinno

48. C. Don Bastian; Proctor John de Silva.

See Dramatic Poetry by W. Arthur Silva, R.A.S.(C.B.) Journal.

49. Vol. XVIII pp. 90—97.

ibid p. 95.



introduced with due gravity, and who repeat in short verses the plot of the story and the moral to be derived from it.

The story is next started; the kings and queens are always preceded by the criers and pages. Each time a new character appears, a new incident takes place, the Manager explains it in a verse. The words in a nadagama consist of four-lined verses and songs of different metres and a few conversational sentences. The following verse is from the Sinhawalli Nadagama:

කුන්ග වන්සාදිපති රාජශමය දිරපුර අබ්‍යන්තර බ්‍රහ්මකර වැජබෙමි න්  
 වන්ග දෙස රජකරණ වගුනිරිඳු ලත් මායාවතී කුමරි සිහරජුට අග්‍රබිසෝමෙන්  
 අන්ගවීර සුර සිංහබා කුමරු සිංහවල්ලි ජාතවි කෙසර පියවිද මරා රජවෙමින්  
 ගන්ගදරවෙති දසදෙසට කීර්ති සිංහල උපත වර්දනය මින් පට න්

Princess Mayawati, daughter of King Wagu of the royal house of the great and noble descent, who lived in great splendour, shedding a lustre beyond his city, and reigning in the Wanga country, became the chief queen of the Sinha King; and her children, the great divine-formed Sinhaba and Sinhawalli, killed the Sinha King, and obtaining the kingdom became the origin of the great Sinhalese race, whose fame has spread in the ten directions like that of the god Gangadhare.<sup>50</sup>

50. Dramatic Poetry by W. Arthur Silva, R.A.S. (C.B.) Journal, Vol. XVIII fi. 95.







## THE KISS OF DEATH

“The Admiral wishes the great and mighty Emperor of Ceylon, King of Candy, etc. etc. success and prosperity and begs to tender his services to rid Your Majesty from the unbearable pretence and unreliability of the treacherous Portuguese.” (1638 A.D.)

—ADMIRAL WESTERWOLD (BALDAEUS)







## CHAPTER VI

### THE KISS OF DEATH

Ceylon had become in ancient times the commercial centre and warehouse of Asia; foreign merchantmen bought and exchanged the produce and manufacture of Asian lands at Trincomalie; "Ceylon, Serendib or Taprobane was divided between two hostile princes (582 A.D.) one of whom possessed the mountains, the elephants and the luminous carbuncle, and the other enjoyed the more solid riches of domestic industry, foreign trade and the capacious harbour of Trincomalie, which received and dismissed the fleets of the East and West.

"In this hospitable isle, of an equal distance (as it was computed) from their respective countries, the silk merchants of China who had collected in their voyages aloes, nutmeg and sandalwood, maintained a free and beneficial commerce with the inhabitants of the Persian Gulf. The subjects of the Great King exalted, without rival, his power and magnificence; and the Roman who confounded their vanity by comparing his paltry coin with a gold medal of the emperor Anastasius, had sailed to Ceylon, in an Aethiopian ship, as a simple passenger."<sup>1</sup>

The little Island (25,481 sq. miles), girt by the silver sea, was well known to the ancient world as the clearing-house of the trade of the East and West. Standing in the Indian Ocean, astride the trade routes, it was regularly visited by merchants and mariners of many lands such as Greeks, Arabs, Persians, Chinese and others; it was known to them by many names: Taprobane, Serendib, Zeilon, Ceilao Ceylon, Lanka-dipa (Sea-girt isle).

Apart from traditional and legendary references to Ceylon, "the earliest geographical accounts by Western writers based upon second-hand information was probably fabulous. An island by the name of Lanka is referred to in the *Ramayana*, the well-known Indian epic as the place to which Ravana, the Raksha King, took away Sita the wife of Rama, and whom Hanuman a Chieftain of the Vanars (Monkeys) spied after an adventurous search.

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1. Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of The Roman Empire*, Ch. XI, Vol. iv. p. 173 (Everyman).



Crossed the ocean's boundless waters, Hanuman in duty  
 brave,  
 Lighted on the emerald island girded by the sapphire wave,  
 Rich in fruit and laden creeper and in beauteous bush and  
 tree  
 Flower-bespangled golden Lanka was like gem-bespangled  
 sea.  
 By the rich and royal mansion Hanuman his eyes did rest,  
 On a woman sad and sorrowing in her sylvan garments drest.  
 "This is she the peerless princess, Rama's consort loved  
 and lost,  
 This is she the saintly Sita, by a cruel fortune crost."

There is a doubt among scholars whether the Lanka of the *Ramayana* is in fact Ceylon; as it often happens among learned men they are often found to take opposite views; some assert that the island of the poem is, in fact, Ceylon, others assert the contrary; but wherever the truth may lie the description leaves the reader's mind rent between the beauty of the Island and the loveliness and anguish of the virtuous wife.

Limpid lakes of scented lotus with their fragrance filled  
 the air,  
 Homes and huts of rustic beauty peeped through bushes  
 green and fair,  
 This is she 'the soft-eyed Sita, wept with unvailing tear,  
 This is she' the faithful consort, unto Rama ever dear.

Reference has been made by Pliny (first century A.D.) and Ptolemy (second century A.D.) of intercourse between the Roman and the Greeks with Ceylon; the former relates the reception of four Sinhalese ambassadors and the establishment of a direct commercial contact. Since the introduction of Buddhism into Ceylon (circa 346. B.C.) in the reign of King Asoka of India, religious and cultural intercourse between Buddhist establishments of Ceylon and Southern India had been maintained uninterruptedly.

Commerce with China appears to have existed from earliest times and Fa-Shien records in his travels (A.D. 399-414) that he resided in Ceylon for two years (A.D. 411). This description of Ceylon relates to the Anuradhapura period (A.D. 437-1038), the golden age of Ceylon history. "The country is on a great island, and from the merchants going backwards and forwards and some stopping



there, the attractions of the place became well known, so that it became a great nation.” Historical data reveal that by the sixth century Ceylon had become the entrepot of sea trade between the West and the Far East.

About the middle of the seventh century the Arabians had secured domination over the ocean routes to the West and all that trade was in their hands. The Chinese retained control of the sea-borne traffic to the Far East, Marco Polo (1293) and Ibn Battuta (1344 A.D.) claim to have visited Ceylon; by then even the Polonnaru Kingdom (1058-1234) had fallen. Arab shipping and merchants were established in the Port of Colombo (A.D. 949) long before the arrival of the Portuguese (1505).

Reference has been made to the importance of Ceylon as a centre of sea-borne traffic. “The direct interval between Sumatra and Ceylon is about three hundred leagues; the Chinese and the Indian navigators were conducted by the flight of birds and periodical winds, and the ocean might be securely traversed in square-built ships, which instead of iron, were sewed together with strong thread of the coconut.”

It is evident from Fa-Shien’s account that Ceylon was by then not only a great nation but also a Buddhist country. “There is a Hall of Buddha (at Anuradhapura) of gold and silver carved with all kinds of precious substances, in which stands his image in green jade, over twenty-feet in height, the whole of which glitters with the seven preciousities, the countenance being grave and dignified beyond expression in words. On the palm of the right hand has a priceless pearl.<sup>1</sup>

6271 “The king scrupulously observes the rites of Brahma and the religious sentiments of the people inside the city are also firmly established. Ever since this country has been under civilised government, it has known neither famine nor revolution. In the treasury of the priests there are many precious stones and priceless pearls. In this city there are many elders of the Buddhist laity; the dwellings of the head-merchants are very grand; and the side street and main thoroughfares are level and well kept.”

At all points where four roads meet there are chapels for preaching the Faith.<sup>2</sup> Then follows a description of the manner in which the Faith is periodically expounded to assemblies of ecclesiastics

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1. *Fa-Shien Travels.*
  2. *ibid.*



and laymen and of the exposition of the Tooth Relic. "Buddha's Tooth is regularly brought out in the middle of the third moon." A man dressed in royal robes mounts a richly caparisoned elephant and gives a discourse in the manner in which Prince Siddhartha attained Buddhahood (Enlightenment) and the various ways in which he suffered for the benefit of living creatures and of the forty-nine years that he preached the Faith.

"Let those ecclesiastics and laymen of the country who wish to lay up happiness for themselves help to level the roads, decorate the streets, and prepare flowers, incense and implements of worship. Thereafter, representations of the five hundred different forms in which the Bodhisatva successively appeared are made on both sides of the road on the King's orders, all beautifully painted and life-like in appearance."

"The Tooth is then brought out and passed along the central street, receiving homage and offerings as it goes by." Fa-Shien also writes that on one occasion he heard an Indian Buddhist say: "Let us raise within us the spirit of compassion and mercy and let us cultivate charity of heart and duty towards our neighbour."

The beauty and simplicity of this ceremony witnessed nearly sixteen centuries ago, is most impressive; decorations, flowers and incense are the only offerings made to the object of veneration; there are no sacrifices of any kind and king and people participate in unison in paying reverence to a great Teacher who demonstrated a way of life by his own personal sacrifices and efforts.

Throughout the canon of Buddhism permeates the doctrine of compassion not of violence; an object lesson to power-hungry blocs and the millions that live in perpetual dread today of a nuclear war. Buddhism which of all religions has the greatest number of adherents became known to the Chinese in the first half of the 3rd century B.C. The canon of Buddhism contains no stirring narratives of bloody wars nor of deeds of merciless violence."<sup>3</sup>

Fa-Shien was a Chinese Buddhist monk who carried out "for the Faith's sake", a supremely dangerous expedition in the glow of which the journeys of St. Paul melt into insignificance...for he practically walked from Central China across the desert of Gobi, over the Hindu-kush, and through India down to the mouth of the Hooghly where he took ship and returned by sea, after manifold hairbreadth escapes, bringing with him what he went forth to secure

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3. *Fa-Shien Travels*, Introduction.



books of the Buddhist canon and images of Buddhist deities.”<sup>4</sup>

It is refreshing for a citizen of Ceylon to read the Travels of Fa-Shien (A.D.399-414) as he is one of the earliest and one of the few foreign writers who has referred to the people with understanding and sympathy because he possessed the background essential to the appreciation of their civilization and way of life.

Later writers, many of them Portuguese and other foreigners, arrogantly refer to the inhabitants of the Island as “pagans” and “heathens”, to the images of their deities as “idols,” to their religion as “idolatry”; these terms of contempt could well be reciprocally applied to them by a people who refuses to believe in their religion or in their saints or in their images.

It took many centuries to break this long chain of libel; to dig out the residue of a great civilization and understand the character and virility of a people who set up a heroic struggle against the cruel union of enemy action and of nature’s relentless forces; to re-colour the landscape by digging out despatches and material hitherto unassessed; subsequent research by industrious scholars has found sermons in stones and in archives which has enabled them to paint a true picture of the past periods of Ceylon history.

Marco Polo (1254-1324) himself, often denounced as a teller of falsehood and sometimes restored as a teller of truth, is said to have visited Ceylon (circa 1293); he records in his Travels (published 1875 A.D.) this astounding yarn that, “when the Prince (Buddha) died he was brought to the King, his father (Suddhodana) who had an image made in his likeness, all of gold and precious stones and caused it to be honoured by all the people of the country and worshipped as a God.”

The tradition, however, is that King Suddhodana had predeceased Buddha. “In the fifth year after his enlightenment Buddha stayed at Vesali in the Pinnacled Hall (Kutagarasala) and at this time Suddhodana died and realized arahatship the while Buddha preached to his father on his death-bed”<sup>5</sup>. It was subsequent to the King’s death that Buddha after much persuasion admitted his second Queen Mahaprajapathi as the first Buddhist nun.<sup>6</sup>

This visitor (circa A.D. 1293) has cracked “another Marco Polo” when he says that “the inhabitants of Ceylon are not fighting men

4. *ibid.*

5. *The Life of Buddha*, E. J. Thomas, p. 107.

6. *ibid.*



but paltry and mean-spirited creatures. If they have need of the services of soldiers, they bring them from abroad.”<sup>7</sup>

This malicious and disparaging remark is more or less repeated by Castanheda (1500-1554) a native of Sentaram (in Portugal) and once a member of the Dominican order of friars when he says, “the Sinhalese are unskilled in war and somewhat effeminate.”

It is fortunate that these libels are negatived by Queyroz, himself a Portuguese, who has described the Sinhalese as a race “by no means inferior in courage to the best in India”; and by Menezes who refers to them as “barbarians looked whom as the bravest and most warlike in the world.”<sup>8</sup>

It is Ceylon’s misfortune that the main records now extant of the most fateful periods of her history have been written by her enemies; among them were De Barros (1496-1570) who compiled his *Three Decades of the History of Ceylon* (1552-1563) on information received from persons who had been in India and translated chronicles in various Oriental languages. De Barros had never been to Ceylon; De Couto (1543-1616), was another Portuguese historian who had settled down at Goa, the centre of Roman Catholic activities at that time, where he lived until his death; his *Decades* (1593-1616) were despatched by him to the King of Portugal whose favours he sought.

Father Queyroz (1617-1688) relies on De Barros, Couto, Menezes and Faria Y Sousa as well as other documents for the raw material of his history of the *Spiritual and Temporal Conquest of Ceylon*, fuller in detail than the writings of his predecessors; it was compiled by him in the course of sixteen years (1671-1687). Captain Ribeiro, a Portuguese soldier arrived in Ceylon in 1640; he served as a soldier in the army; his book *Ceilao* was dedicated to the King of Portugal in 1688.

These histories of Ceylon were, therefore, composed by writers either during or shortly after the fierce struggle between their countrymen and the Sinhalese; it is difficult to expect them to be free of bias.

The strategic position which Ceylon enjoyed in the heart of the trade-routes to the East and to the West was one of the reasons why a resolute fight was put up by the kings of Ceylon against the closure of their sea-ports by foreign powers as well as the attraction of these

7. *Travels of Marco Polo*

8. Queyroz ; *Minens Rebellian de Ceylan*, R.A.S. (C.B.) Journal, Vol. XI p. 429.



self-same ports to European merchants. Trincomalee and Batticaloa on the East, Hambantota, Matara, Galle on the South, Kalutara, Colombo, Negombo on the West and Jaffna on the North were among others the nerve centres of the Island's life.

From them the kings exported its animal, mineral and agricultural wealth and through them received in turn its necessities and luxuries. The Portuguese and the Dutch when they plied their sea-borne trade realized the necessity for safe harbours for their imports and exports, for the clearance of their merchandise and anchorages for their fleets; the situation of Ceylon was ideal but it was a prerequisite that their goods should be free from arbitrary seizure and their subjects from continuous harassment by local sovereigns.

This necessity was the origin of the areas of occupation; the fort and the factory became the nucleus of foreign domination. The first to build them in Ceylon were the Portuguese; they were followed by the Dutch and the British; they became the centres of food supply and of arms to foreign garrisons in Ceylon; from them emerged invading troops and in them the marauders sought refuge from attacks by local rulers.

Remnants of the forts of Colombo, Galle, Matara, Trincomalee, Jaffna and of others still survive; certain areas of these towns still bear the name of "fort"; for instance, "Colombo Fort", bringing vividly to mind the trials and tribulations of earlier years.

Upheavals in Europe from the sixteenth century, and its expansion led to the outflow of Western Europe into Eastern lands; the correlation of these momentous changes is essential to a correct understanding of events in Ceylon during the corresponding periods.

Colonial wars of that age as between imperialistic powers were not settled in the colonies themselves; they were settled thousands of miles away by the navies of contending countries. In the modern age that system has been outmoded by aerial and nuclear warfare on which the issue depends.

The first visits of the Dutch to Ceylon were like those of the Portuguese not accidental but on set purpose; and Matecalo (Batticaloa) was the place to which Spilbergen, the head of the Mercantile house of the Mouchérons at Vere, and of French origin, directed his course.

In the description of Spilbergen's visit to Ceylon (May 1602) reference is made to a pagoda and a monastery of Buddhist bhikkus at Vitane (Bintenne) and to a procession which the visitors observed



on their journey.<sup>9</sup> It is invaluable as a record from a foreign viewpoint of the state of Buddhism in Ceylon at that period after hundred years of violent and organized effort of the Portuguese for its suppression.

“In the town of Vitane or Alutnuwara is a great *pagode*; the base is a hundred and thirty paces (it is) very handsome and high, all white and gilt above, in the manner of a pyramid, but from below ascending oval-wise up to a four-cornered point.” The reference is to the ancient thupa or Dagoba at Mahiyangane in Alutnuwara, built to enshrine the hair relics and the collar bone of Buddha.

“And there are yet other pagodas besides, and a monastery wherein are monks clad in yellow clothes, and they go along the streets with large *sombareros* (umbrellas), some have slaves (acolytes) with them who carry the *sombareros* and serve them. They are clean-shaven in the manner of the monks in this country, only that one sees no corona.

“They also go with *paternosters* (strings of beads) in their hands, continually babbling or reading. They are held in great honour and are free from working and all other burdens. Their monastery is after the manner of our monasteries in this country, with their galleries, corridors and many private chapels which are gilt, wherein stand many figures of men and women, who they say lived holily. These carved figures stand with silvern gilt clothes; they are honoured day and night with lamps, wax candles; they stand on altars where are large chandeliers, which are held by carved naked children.

“Into the aforesaid chapels come the monks at all times to read their prayers and breviaries. While there they saw them holding their festival and saw their procession going about the town. The chief abbot or priest sits upon an elephant clad in silver and gold and the abbot holds a golden staff above his head with both his hands. Before him go in order other monks with much playing of horns, trumpets, cymbals, clanging of bells and basins which altogether gives a very good harmony.”

“Many lamps and torches are also carried, and there follow many men, women and maidens. The most beautiful maidens, ere the procession goes out and comes in again, perform many wondrous feats with dancing; they are all with naked bodies bare above the arms, hands and ears all adorned with gold and precious stones;

9. *The Earliest Dutch Visits to Ceylon* (Donald Ferguson) R. A. S. (C.B.) Vol. XXX p. 361, 379-380, 382.



below they have handsome embroidered clothes. These people one sees daily before the pagodas and in the chapels doing Sombayo, which is to fall flat down on the earth, (then) standing up holding the hands together over the head, and so saying their prayers.

“Anyone observing these things of these monks, monasteries and processions would certainly judge that our monks had learnt most of their ceremonies from these heathens. They also have the custom of presenting flowers to their idols which stand everywhere on the roads, some near trees, and others in built niches, as the Jesuits now put the image of Mary everywhere.”

This colourful spectacle of Buddhist activities within and around the thupa at Mahiyangana recalls the account of Fa-Shien when Buddhism was at its height in Ceylon; it indicates the survival of Buddhism, notwithstanding a century of Portuguese persecution; the Sangha appears to have received the same honours as before and the people's way of life unaffected.

The stupa at Mahiyangana had been from ancient times a scene of devout worship; it was built in four stages;<sup>10</sup> the first was on the occasion of the Buddha's visit to Ceylon and the last three after his death. “The Prince of devas, Mahasumana, of the Sumanakuta mountain (Adam's Peak) who had attained to the fruit of entering into the path of salvation, craved of him who should be worshipped, something to worship.

“The Conqueror the (giver of) good to living beings, who had pure and black locks, passing his hand over his (own) head, bestowed on him a handful of hairs. And he receiving this in a splendid golden urn, when he had laid the hairs upon a heap of many coloured gems, seven cubits round, piled up at the place, where the Master had sat, covered over with a thupa of sapphire and worshipped them.

“When the Sambuddha had died, the thera named Sorabhu, disciple of the thera Sariputta, by his miraculous power received even from the funeral pyre, the collar-bone of the Conqueror and brought it hither (to Lanka), and, with the bhikkhus all around, he there laid it in that same Cetiya, covered it over with golden-coloured stones, and (then he), worker of miracles, having made the thupa twelve cubits high, departed again thence.”

“The son of King Devanampiyatissa's brother, named Uddaculabhaya, saw the wondrous Cetiya, and (again) covered it over and made it thirty cubits high. The King Dutthagamini, dwelling

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10. *Mahavamsa*, Gieger, Ch. 1. 33-43.



there while he made war on the Damilas, built a mantle Cetiya over it and made it thirty cubits high. This was Mahiyangana-thupa completed.”

Spilbergen and the Dutch visitors continued their journey from Mahiyangana until they reached Kandy and were received in audience by the King; they were hailed all along with demonstrations of welcome. The King took the General in his arms and lifted him up saying. “All the pepper and cinnamon I have ready is given to you” and regretted the short notice that he had received of their arrival.

The General in turn presented the King with a portrait of Prince Maurice; he was then brought into the chamber of the Queen and presented to her and her children, the prince and princess, which is a great honour and favour.

The King offered his personal help if the Dutch chose to build a castle and gave the General divers letters to the States General. “His Royal Majesty of Candy also honoured our General with presents and titles.” Two persons who could play very well on all musical instruments were left behind at Court at the King’s request as a mark of friendship.<sup>11</sup>

The little Asian King had unawares clasped an asp to his breast; the exchange of presents was characteristic of the Dutch business sense; Spilbergen took all the pepper and cinnamon in the King’s store and left in exchange a portrait; the two musicians whom he assigned to the King were evidently two spies who could keep him informed of events in the island. This exchange of courtesies was the starting point of an association which was to last for two hundred years of relentless exploitation. It was *The Kiss of Death*.

The visit of Spilbergen and his assurance of goodwill were not followed either by immediate military aid or commercial relations, for the reason that the Dutch nation was too pre-occupied by other affairs both in Europe and elsewhere. In the meantime events of considerable importance occurred in Ceylon; King Senarat in an endeavour to mitigate the privations suffered by his subjects through protracted warfare called a Truce with the Portuguese (1617)

But the fortification by them of two of the King’s ports, Trincomalee and Batticaloa, led to a fresh outbreak of hostilities. Apart from risings by Sinhalese Chiefs to liberate the country, the invasion of the Highlands and the ravaging and burning of cities

11. R.A.S.(C.B.) Journal Vol. XXX p. 361, 379—382, see also Baldaeus, p. 33.



by the Portuguese led to two major battles, in both of which the Portuguese were routed and their Captain-General slain (Randeni-vela 1630) and Gannoruwa (March 28, 1638); the latter was fought during the reign of Raja Sinha II (1636—1687).<sup>12</sup>

At the moment a resourceful Governor-General, Antonio Van Diemen, was in office at the head of the Company's Board at Batavia (1636) and he was not slow to take advantage of this incident; Vice-Commander Willem Jacobsz Koster was despatched from Batavia and arrived at Trincomalee (April 2, 1638) with a letter from Admiral Westerwold written in the customary pattern and couched in the highflown language adopted by the Portuguese in their communications with oriental potentates.

“The Admiral wishes the great and mighty Emperor of Ceylon, King of Candy, etc. etc. success and prosperity and begs to tender his services to rid Your Majesty from the unbearable pretence and unreliability of the treacherous Portuguese.<sup>13</sup>

“Great and mighty Emperor whilst our illustrious General and the Council of India resolved to despatch with all possible speed sixteen well-equipped ships from Batavia to India to act against our common enemy the Portuguese... from your Majesty's letter dated 9th September 1636 our General and Council have learnt of the unreliability and the treachery of the Portuguese and of the unwarrantable acts done by them in Your Majesty's lands against all which aggressions Your Majesty earnestly solicits our aid.

“So as to ensure the protection of Your Majesty's dominions and see the enemy extirpated, with a proposal that a fortress might also be erected at Your Majesty's cost either at Batticaloa or at Cotiar as might be deemed advisable by us and that Your Majesty will also defray all the expenses attending the fitting up of the ships for Your Majesty's service.

“The Council having weighed and considered the representation made by Your Majesty and they from a source of friendly feelings towards Your Majesty could not have done otherwise than fully accede to Your Majesty's request... I shall if it pleases God to spare my life, then sail to Ceylon with three of my largest ships armed with men and ammunitions of war conformable to the directions received from the General and the Council to arrange for further matters with Your Majesty. In the meantime Your Majesty will be

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12. *Ribeiro*, pp. 227, 229; *Rajavaliya*, p. 101.

13. *Baldaeus*, p. 112.



pleased according to promise to hold in readiness one or two loads of cinnamon. I now wish Your Honourable Majesty long life, prosperity and success against Your Majesty's enemies.''<sup>14</sup>

The artistry of this epistle is exquisite; its object was to beguile the King into a contract by which his exchequer was to bear the cost of the construction of a Dutch fortress and the fitting up of Dutch ships. The Portuguese against whom these operations were directed were already the rivals of the Dutch in the acquisition of an Asian empire and the Dutch had already committed their own nation to the extinction of this formidable foe; this manoeuvre was staged, not for the protection, but for the exploitation of Ceylon.

The climate of this period of the expansion of Europe was made familiar to the youth of my generation more by the historical novel of the storywriter than by the scholarly treatise of the historian; the latter was prosaic and uninteresting; the former gripped the imagination and was the delight of the Ceylon schoolboy then educated through the English medium. A fair proportion of these tales of adventure was found in school libraries; science fiction had yet to be born.

*Treasure Island* and *Westward Ho*, for instance, went far to make up our mental climate. Ship-Captains, sailors and buccaneers would float before our eyes; we could hear the gun-fire of Spanish galleons and watch the dexterity of British rovers; this way of life and adventure, although by way of encounters with the natives of victim lands where the natives were always killed, gave us a momentary thrill. It was the creation of the image of European superiority, difficult to erase from our minds, even in later years.

The fierce old buccaneers of that age were made to live again in the Captain-pirate of *Treasure Island* painted indelibly as "that filthy, heavy, bleared scare-crow of a pirate of ours sitting far gone with his arms on the table. Suddenly he the captain, that is, began to pipe at his eternal song:"

Fifteen men on the Dead man's chest  
Yo ho-ho and a bottle of rum  
Drink and the devil had done for the rest  
Yo—ho-ho and a bottle of rum.

Empire building was no easy task; many suffered, drank and died; it was their blood that filled the royal treasury and the coffers

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14 *ibid.*



of the merchant classes that displaced the bearded barons of the feudal age; of them monarchs were afraid; their wealth controlled the destinies of the home-countries as well as of the new empires.

The wage-owners of this new-born system of capitalism were the sailors, the pirates and the buccaneers; they were the raw material of empire building; they worked twenty hours a day; they were not paid by their employers but paid themselves with the treasures and the flesh of their victims; to them the heathen maidens were as luscious as their own psalm-singing damsels.

But Ayacanora in *Westward Ho*, in all her tropical loveliness, her body voluptuous yet lithe, ready to spring like a tigress to protect her mate and follow him through unknown and perilous seas, was at all times, if only you could get her, a more attractive woman than the genteel ladies of baronial castles who shyly dropped their favours and bade their gallants and squires come back to them as chaste as when they left their castlewalls.

At the close of a long and detailed account of the incidents in Ceylon during the sojourn of the Portuguese in the Island (1505-1658), a Portuguese historian holds a post-mortem on their conduct; the title of his book, *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon* is misleading; for the entirety of Ceylon never came under Portuguese control; he ascribes the loss of the Island to divine chastisement for their cruelty to the natives; and refers to many visions which were seen and which forboded impending disaster.<sup>15</sup>

Portuguese writers in their histories often make reference to supernatural interventions or forebodings in times of stress; these anecdotes fail to satisfy scientific inquiry; the reasons for the expulsion of the Portuguese are capable of scientific analysis; they were political, economic and psychological rather than divine chastisement. In the political field, Portugal lost her equilibrium in the European balance of power and with that calamity her far-flung empire went to pieces.

In the economic sphere, wealth bred indolence and luxury. Consignments of African slaves were brought to Lisbon; Negro slaves were installed in the South of Portugal to work the plantations. "A Papal Bull (1537) sanctioned the opening of slave markets in Lisbon; in these markets between 10,000 to 15,000 slaves were sold each year for transportation to American colonies. But the hotbed for the employment of slaves was Brazil; there existed

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15. Queyroz Bk. vi Ch. 1 pp. 1005, 1006.



the largest slave class in America, over one-half of the 7,000,000 inhabitants being slaves; a good part of them owned by the Church''.<sup>16</sup>

The institution of slavery was practically confined to the Colonial fringes of Western Christendom; it had no serious lodgements in the European homelands; the exception which proves the rule is Portugal; for the spread of the institution of Negro plantation—slavery from Brazil into the European dominions of the Portuguese Crown was contemporaneous with the eclipse of Portugal as a great power<sup>17</sup>.

It was not long before the conquistador abandoned the service of the sword in which he once took pride and gave himself up to the attractions and luxury of wealth; in her colonies, from the Viceroy downwards, corruption was rife and the emissaries and servants of the King filled their own coffers more than the coffers of the state; in this scuffle for the gold of heathen lands, the clergy took over and above their own share; their conduct came under the strictures of St. Francis Xavier; Portugal had created a Frankenstein for her own destruction.

Another cause of the dismemberment of the Portuguese empire was psychological; their religious fanaticism and inhuman cruelty engendered rather than stifled resistance; for the natives realized that it was better to die than be their subjects. A Portuguese historian himself gives an instance of the appalling atrocities committed by a Portuguese General who forced mothers to throw their children into mortars and to pound them like spicery with pestles<sup>18</sup>.

The disasters of Spain both in Europe and on the seas at the hands of the English and the Dutch, the severance of the Dutch Netherlands from Spain and its rise, made the once great Spanish Empire a fossil of the past; both the Spanish and the Portuguese vessels were attacked on the seas, plundered and destroyed; the ocean trade passed from them to the English and the Dutch. The Eastern countries, which had once bowed their heads, rose again and joined in the attack as active enemies and their own ships assumed the offensive.

The Dutch formed a network of trading Companies in the East of which one was the Dutch East India Company (1602); all were amalgamated into one unit and incorporated by Charter (1610), the

16. *Catholic Imperialism and World Freedom* (Manhattan), p. 191.

17. *A Study of History*, Toynbee, Vol. iv. 138; also footnote 2, *American Negro Slavery*; U.B. Phillips, Appendix p. 13.

18. Queyroz Bk. VI Ch. 1 p. 1006.



Dutch East India Company; its object was to take over the Eastern sea-borne trade and to lend the State a helping hand in her war of Independence against Spain; all the Companies in operation in the East were brought within this unit; its control was assigned to several Boards of Directors under a Committee at the Hague, given a monopoly of the Eastern trade with wide executive and legislative powers; the Company established its Headquarters at Batavia in Java (A.D. 1611).

About the same time, at the end of the sixteenth century, the English East India Company was formed with its Headquarters at Madras and incorporated by Charter (Dec. 31, 1600). Portugal had, therefore, soon to contend with two powerful enemies in Eastern waters, the English and the Dutch; "town after town, settlement after settlement went to the Dutch or to the English. Even Malacca fell (1641); all that remained were a few outskirts in India and elsewhere"<sup>19</sup>

"The Eastern Empire of Portugal, which had been raised as though by the magic ring of a genie was soon crumbling into dust. Her naval power at home was broken and her foreign commerce was being rapidly destroyed. The China trade was well nigh closed to her; that of the Spice Islands was controlled by the Hollanders, who had established themselves at Batavia; Shah Jehan captured the headquarters of the Portuguese in Bengal; Ormuz of which they were as proud as of Goa, was taken by the Persians.

"The English blocked their intercourse with the West India; the Danes had acquired a centre at Tranquebar; and even the French were beginning to appear in the Indian Waters. At the same time the wealth of the great Portuguese Settlements in America were being conveyed by the shiploads to enrich the share-holders of the trading companies in Holland; Goa itself was blockaded from time to time, and all Portuguese vessels which were met with on the high seas were plundered"<sup>20</sup>

The solid and business-like Dutchmen, who, as we shall soon see, won their freedom with their sword and their livelihood by their industry, turned their eyes towards Asia; and with the same pertinacity with which they had wrested their homeland from the Ocean, they laid the foundation of their Eastern Empire Overseas. Some of their own countrymen discreetly obtained overseas employment

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19. Nehru, *Glimpse of World History*, p. 250.

20. *ibid.*



from the Spaniards and the Portuguese; among them Linschoten, as a Roman Catholic, found favour in the Spanish Court and served in the East with the Portuguese.

From a merchant he evolved into an attractive story-teller; these adventurers on their return to their homeland relaid the secrets of the Portuguese spice-trade flavoured with wonder-tales of Spice-land and its strange inhabitants who were all "pagans" or "heathens" or "infidels" or "idolaters."

And of the Cannibals that each other eat  
And anthrophagi and men whose heads  
Do grow beneath their shoulders.<sup>21</sup>

One can picture the Dutch merchants, as they drank their gin and smoked their tobacco, with their buxom wives beside them sitting on their hams and opening their mouths wide, while they listened to these story-tellers as they spun their entrancing yarns about the people of Ceylon, rehearsing in prose what was later composed in verse by an English bishop and devoutly sung in Churches for the collection of funds for the redemption of the heathens of Ceylon and for the salvation of the souls which these heathens did not claim to have,

What though the spicy breezes  
Blow soft o'er Ceylon's is'le  
Where every prospect pleases,  
And only man is vile ;

In vain with lavish kindness  
The gifts of God are strewn,  
The heathen in his blindness  
Bows down to wood and stone."

One can picture the reiteration of these yarns until the solid Dutch merchants reluctantly opened their purses to receive the elephants of Ceylon, her cinnamon, her pepper, her ginger, her cloves and her cardamoms. And as Cato brought about the destruction of Carthage by pointing out her wealth and dangling before the eyes of the Roman Senate fresh figs and grapes imported from Carthage and ending every speech with the words that Carthage must be destroyed.

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21. Shakespeare, Othello 1. iii. 143.



*Delenda est Carthago.*

So these story-tellers would have appealed to the most vulnerable spot in the Dutchman's armour, "to their purse" and ended with the refrain,

That luxuriant corner of Mother Earth  
Called Ceilao is in fact another Eden,  
Demi-Paradise, created for other's uses,  
And now for the use of the Dutch Merchants  
After the destruction of the treacherous Portuguese

To the Dutch this appeal to their purse was irresistible. It was not Calvinism which was the driving force of Dutch expansion overseas but a combination of "love of gain among the merchants and the threat of unemployment and starvation for many of the seafaring community." "Gold is your God," said the West African Negro to the Dutch in Guinea, early in the 17th century, thus anticipating King Charles X of Sweden who pulled out a rix-dollar out of his pocket and said, '*Voila votre religion*' to a Dutch envoy who was making a remark to him about the liberty of religion".<sup>22</sup>

And so it came to pass that Admiral Joris Van Spilbergen, a Dutch merchant, came to Ceylon and paid his "Courtesy Call" (which means to a Native *The Kiss of Death*) to Vimala Dharma Suriya II, King of Ceylon (1602). His gift to the King was a portrait of Prince Maurice on horseback and a band of musicians and the King gave him in return all the pepper in his Royal Store. An exchange prophetic of future Dutch deals.

It is said that when Albert Einstein realized that his little formula  $E=MC^2$  was likely to destroy mankind in a potent nuclear blast he had remarked, "Had I but known! Ah! Had I but known! I would have been a Watch-maker!" "In the same way, had his great compatriot, Gerald Geradoon, better known as Desiderius Erasmus, ever known that the message of humanism which he sent throughout Europe from his little study at Bale would, in its transit through commercial and religious crucibles, crystallize into a potent poison for the destruction of non-white humanity, he would have exclaimed, "Had I but known! Ah! Had I but known I would have been a Proof-reader."

22. Boxer, *The Dutch Sea-Borne Empire*, p. 115.







## **THE RISE OF THE NETHERLANDS**

There emerged in the Netherlands, the great figure of William the Silent, Prince of Orange, to save the nation from the Spanish Fury.







## CHAPTER VII

### THE RISE OF THE NETHERLANDS

The rise of the Netherlands and its people into an European power of the first rank in the fifteenth century is an epic and in some ways bears a resemblance to the emergency of Ceylon and its people into one nation some centuries earlier. It has been said that soft soils breed soft men and that the same land should never be famous for the excellence of its fruit and for the vigour of its inhabitants.<sup>1</sup>

Ceylon has been cited as an example of the reaction of a people to the stimulus of pressures,<sup>2</sup> of the hard soil breeding a hardy race; a section of her people by arduous toil and superhuman effort conquered the parched plains of the Island's North Central dry zone; by the construction of a marvellous system of tanks and irrigation channels with surpassing engineering skill, they converted them into green and smiling fields; in these areas they grew the paddy which gave them the grain which was their staple article of diet.

Another section, poised above in the highlands, where eagles would normally rest and man not inhabit, achieved the same result converting with the skill and labour of human hands, the mountains into terraces of paddy, spreading like ribbons across their breasts; with dexterous ease they led the mountain streams down their beds, utilizing every drop of water before it reached the expanding streams below; in result both the lowland plains and the central hills teemed with a large and prosperous population.

In the same way the industrious sons of the Dutch Netherlands converted the swamp and the sea into a homeland by the construction of dykes, canals and embankments. But for the dykes, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, the Hague, Delft, Haarlem, Dordrecht, Utrecht and territory occupied by a large population would disappear in the waves. A Dutch proverb says "God made the sea; we made the land."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Herodotus.

2. *A Study of History*, Arnold J. Toynbee Vol. 2—p. 5.

3. See, *The Rise and Decline of the Netherlands*, Ellis Barker, p. 19.



From the Ocean the Dutch extracted the fish which was their main article of commerce and in the ocean they plied their main industry and trade, the fisheries; this trade brought them wealth in abundance. Hardened by the rigours of life into a bold, industrious, thrifty and resourceful nation, they made their arduous passage into the forefront of the European powers that once ruled the world; their emergence testified to their sobriety and industry and their keen sense of the weight and value of the rix-dollar which became their God; their entry into the Western and Eastern seas as a colonial Power was evidence of the skill, valour and courage of their sailors and men of action.

In the same way, the busy inhabitants of the inland Belgian Netherlands converted their towns into hives of industries which fed Europe. Ypres, Flanders, Brabant and Bruges became the centres of many manufacturers; Ypres was at one time famous for its woollen and linen manufactures but after its defeat in a rebellion against the Count of Flanders (circa A.D. 1400), Flanders led the woollen industry. Bruges had become the great storehouse of the world and the magazine and mart for the exports of all nations. The Netherlands, Dutch and Belgium was composed of seventeen provinces loosely knit.

At the time when the Netherlands was on the eve of making its impact on Ceylon, she formed a part of the vast empire of Emperor Charles V who in conjunction with the Pope and the Vatican had built up a dream of world dominion. But it was not long when wearied with the incessant and exacting demands of state and overcome by disease, Charles decided on abdication in favour of his son Philip. The scene which accompanied that rare act of laying down in one's own life-time the attire of royal majesty (Oct. 25, 1555) is said to have been one of unequalled magnificence and emotion.

The Emperor appeared before a gorgeous gathering of Princes, Knights, Councillors and Ministers, assembled from all parts of Europe, and leaning on the shoulders of Prince William of Orange, declared his inability to defend the State and the Faith any longer with the necessary vigour and his resolution, therefore, to resign his power to his beloved son Philip. At this utterance both the Emperor and his audience were overwhelmed by a gust of profound emotion. "Nothing was heard in the great Hall but stifled sobbing."<sup>4</sup>

Philip threw himself on his feet and took the oath which the aged

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4. *Emperor Charles V*, Karl Brandt pp. 633, 634.



Emperor had asked. But Philip had neither the magnanimity nor the genius of Charles V; brought up and educated in Spain, speaking only the Spanish language, narrow-minded and bigoted, he displayed in the worst form the worst qualities of the Spaniards at their worst. It is difficult to assess whether the sufferings and the suppression of the natives of the Netherlands under Philip's dominion were greater or less than the woes of the natives of Ceylon under the incubus of Portugal.

The Crown and the Cross operated with equal cruelty and fanaticism upon the "heathen whites" as upon the "heathen browns" and the "heathen blacks" because to the Catholic Cross then the followers of the Reformation were indistinguishable from the adherents of other religions and were as wicked and in dire need of absolution from their sins.

The executioner employed by Philip on the people of the Netherlands was the Duke of Alva, a man of blood and iron, who in cruelty and evil surpassed his compatriots Afonso de Albuquerque at Goa and Continho de Saa Noronha and Dom Jeromimo de Azavedo in Ceylon. The year of the great Emperor's abdication (A.D. 1555) at Brussels was by a strange coincidence identical with the defeat and assassination of Prince Vidiya Bandara in Ceylon and its consolidation by the transfer of Ceylon's Sword of State to Mayadunne and Raja Sinha I.

The hour proclaimed the man; just as in little Ceylon, Mayadunne and Raja Sinha I emerged to withstand "the Portuguese fury", there emerged in the Netherlands the great figure of William the Silent, Prince of Orange, to save the nation from "the Spanish Fury". At great personal sacrifice and with indomitable courage William stood against the military might of the Spanish army and the fanaticism of the Spanish clergy and endeavoured with patience and wisdom to unite the seventeen Provinces of the Netherlands into one nation. The task before the Prince of Orange at this moment of destiny cannot be understood without the revelation of the work of the Spanish executioner, the Duke of Alva.

"Gallows, wheels, stakes and trees in the highways were laden with carcasses of such as had been hanged, beheaded or roasted so that the air which God had made for the respiration of the living had now become the common grave and habitation of the dead." "For his eminent services in propagating the Roman Catholic Church, Alva was sent a sword of honour and encouraged to



persevere in the prosecution of his Christian Campaign.”

“The people fled from the country in thousands, more than 100,000 houses were deserted. Alva boasted of having in six years, by the hand of justice, taken the lives of some 18,000 people, who should no longer complain of the Spanish Government.”<sup>5</sup> The enormity of these excesses gives an indication of the corresponding blast of fury with which the resistance in Ceylon had to contend and what would have been the inevitable consequence had its resistance failed.

The courage of William the Silent, however, never sagged, not even when his three brothers fell in battle. Round his great personality, the resistance of the Netherlands revived and the ferocity of the persecution itself provided the stimulus for the re-action. Homeless Dutch privateers scoured the seas and their Commander Count der Marck, without provisions, sought refuge on the Dutch coast for food and shelter. He occupied the town of Briel which had for the moment been evacuated by the Spanish garrison. This occupation gave fresh courage to the Dutch in the extremity of despair and was followed by the capture of several other towns.

In a short time all the towns and provinces of Holland and Zeeland with the exception of Amsterdam and Middleburg revolted. But those were dangerous days and the Dutch, for the preservation of their own lives, professed that the revolt was only against the Duke of Alva and not against their King Philip; they wisely nominated William Prince of Orange as the Stadtholder of the King of Spain and declared him Governor of Holland, Zeeland, Friesland, etc.

With the secret assistance of the French and the English the Dutch resistance gathered force, a general revolt and insurrection against Spain took shape and led to the conversion of the Netherlands into an independent nation although ostensibly yet under Spanish rule.

But the Netherlands, consolidated from separate and heterogeneous units, contained within herself the seeds of her own destruction; each family, each city, each province that acquired wealth by its own individual efforts strove to retain and promote its own particular individuality and elected to advance its own parochial interests in preference to national welfare and unity; their temporary success and ultimate failure supply another instance of the rise and decline of city states.

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5. Brandt, *History of the Reformation*. 1720, 1. 261, 276, 277.  
See *The Rise and Decline of the Netherlands*, Barker, pp. 86, 87.



The Netherlands, like Athens, went to her doom, broken into pieces by petty rivalries individual ambitions, commercial jealousies and political intrigues which left her gates open to external attack and corrupted her body within; many a city state of the past has died a similar death; the Netherlands, like Athens, made a great contribution to political history by the assertion of the rights of the people against the arbitrary will of the sovereign and set in blood the seal of this ideology.

Her Act of Abjuration of King Philip (1581) was another milestone in the history of political development and in this wise she bears comparison with England. She also demonstrated in ample measure that men possessed of genius, courage and self-sacrifice could weld even for a time a cluster of divergent elements into one whole by the force of their personality.

Her ultimate decadence, corrupted by the lust of conquest and wealth took another familiar form; the inevitable mortality of great Imperial powers in the murderous grip of the Frankensteins of their own creation; at the very moment when proud conquerors in the intoxication of victory are lulled by the sedative of their own invincibility, the Moving Finger is writing "Death" upon their walls. And so it happened in Ceylon, unknown to her sorrow-stricken people.

It is again a strange coincidence that on the very year that the Act of Abjuration was proclaimed in the Netherlands (1581) it happened that in Ceylon Mayadunne died (1581) and his son Raja Sinha I became King of Ceylon in his own right apart from Mayadunne's renunciation of the throne four years earlier (1578); and in the same year (1581) Portugal was annexed to Spain by threat of armed forces under the Duke of Parma.

The Dutch Netherlands, unlike the Belgian Netherlands, had absorbed some of the wisdom, although not the humanity, of their great compatriot, Gerard Gerardoon, better known as Desiderius Erasmus; its people carried with them the flame which the North German peasant, Martin Luther, had lit at Wittenburg when he burned the Papal Bull of his excommunication (1520). On William the Silent fell the arduous task of effecting a reconciliation between and harmonizing the discordant notes of the divergent interests of the various towns of the seventeen Provinces of which the Netherlands was constituted.

It happened then that a body of Spanish soldiers in mutiny attack-



ed Antwerp (1576), then the store-house of Europe and a magnificent city; the citizens and their mercenaries were slaughtered, drowned and burnt; during three days and three nights the town was sacked and plundered. The Dutch and the Belgian Netherlands thereupon entered into a Treaty (The Pacification of Ghent, 1576) for mutual defence against the "Spanish Fury".

This attempt at unification was, however, sabotaged by Philip II who persuaded the Belgian Netherlanders to form "the Union of Arras (1579)" for the maintenance of the Roman Catholic religion, the King of Spain's authority and oppose the religious peace. William immediately counter-attacked with the famous Union of Utrecht (1579) by which the Protestant Provinces of the Netherlands formed an alliance for mutual defence; by this union, the foundation of the Dutch Netherlands and the Kingdom of Holland was laid.

Move and counter-move punctuated the situation; Philip issued the Proclamation (1580) which plucked of its surplusage was an offer of 25000 gold crowns for William's head. The Representatives of the Seven Provinces, the Estates General in their turn met at the Hague and at a solemn sitting abjured their "wicked King Philip"; this Edict known as the Act of Abjuration (July 26, 1581) was for that age a novel document, the assertion of the rights of the people *vis a vis* the claims of the sovereign and revolutionary in character.

"The people were not created by God for the sake of the Prince and only to submit to his commands, whether pious or impious, right or wrong, and to serve him as slaves; but on the contrary, the Prince was made for the good of the people (without whom he could not be a Prince) in order to feed, preserve and govern them according to justice and equity, as a father his children and a shepherd his flock; that whoever in opposition to their principles pretends to rule his subjects as if they were his bondmen, ought to be deemed a tyrant and for that reason may be rejected or deposed, especially by revolution of the states of the nation, if the subjects after having made use of the most humble supplication and prayers, can find no other means to divest him from his tyrannical purpose, nor to secure their own native rights."<sup>6</sup>

The suppliant note struck by the last clause even in an assertion of abjuration is noticeable; it is indicative of the "tyrannical power" of kings of that age and the devious methods devised to avert their

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6. Cited in *The Rise and Decline of the Netherlands*.



tyrannous blows; the world has since moved many milestones forward towards liberation but the Edict then served as a model for subsequent revolutionary activities; at that moment it was the symbol of a brave and fearless bid for a declaration of human rights. Its immediate effect, however, was the murder of Prince William by a hidden assassin "who shot him point blank with a pistol, loaded with three bullets" (1584).

This crime was perpetrated in terms of Phillip's Proclamation, Edict and Proscription (1580) which declared the Prince a "public plague of Christendom, a traitor and a wicked man, the enemy of us and of our countries proscribed him perpetually and for ever" and stated that "we, willing to reward virtue, and to punish vice, promise on the word of a King, and as the minister of God, will cause to be given in good land or ready money, the sum of 25,000 crowns of gold to any man who will deliver him to us quick or dead or at least taking his life from him."

This Edict was in terms of the Spanish and the Roman Catholic tradition of that age for the same deadly dose had awaited the great English Queen Elizabeth I when Pope Pius V issued his *Damatio et Ex communicatio Elizabethae* (1570 A.D.) and commanded her subjects not to obey her.

"Murderers were sent against the Queen and as they had been sent against the Prince of Orange but the plots miscarried through the watchfulness of Walsingham and his army of spies."<sup>7</sup>

The foul murder of the Prince of Orange who died with the words; "May God have mercy on my soul and save my poor people" on his lips reveals the dangers that surrounded the Sinhalese monarchs who dared to withstand the Kings of Spain and Portugal. At this crucial moment Raja Sinha had driven the Portuguese out from Kotte and was besieging Colombo; it was three years prior to his great assault (1587) on Colombo. Who can doubt that similar murderous emissaries had been sent against him to bring his head on the point of a Portuguese bayonet under promise of a similar reward.

No public Edict or Proclamation was made in his case since a heathen King was unworthy of that great honour but secret instructions would have been given to the same effect. His survival without falling a prey to a Portuguese assassin bespeaks the strength of his own security measures and the loyalty of his subjects to their King

7. *ibid*, p. 120.



and evokes the highest admiration for him and his people.

The Sinhalese monarchs of that age lived surrounded by intrigue and treachery, and it is unfair criticism to charge them with cruelty and tyranny, when they gave short shrift to suspected traitors without compunction. On the murder of her heroic defender the Spanish armies under the Duke of Parma moved into the Belgian Netherlands (1584) and laid siege to the great city of Antwerp.

“It was no uncommon thing for 500 ships of all sizes to go and come to Antwerp in a single day (1567) and 10,000 carts were employed in conveying merchandise to and from the neighbouring countries. Besides hundreds of wagons daily came and went with passengers and 500 coaches were used by people of distinction. Antwerp was the world’s storehouse, bank, stock exchange and clearing house.”<sup>8</sup> The wealthy merchants of the Belgian Netherlands mostly Roman Catholics by religion, attached more to the Pope, the Vatican and the Roman Catholic King Philip than to their homeland toyed with the hope of plying their trades and amassing wealth in peace and hardly offered any resistance; that hope was vain.

The great industrial towns of Flanders and Brabant were invaded by his Spanish troops and plundered. The fortifications of Antwerp were considered impregnable but the city was divided and would not endure the incommmodity of the siege. “Riots occurred, the populace loudly clamoured for wages, food and peace at any price, and the popular, democratic and representative government of the town obedient to the will of the short-sighted majority yielded up the city without any need, although assistance was coming from England and Holland.” Antwerp surrendered. The Belgian Netherlands for the time being passed out of history and even its name was changed into the Spanish Netherlands. Opulence, greed and democracy run amok converted its citizens into the servants of Spain.

The merchants and politicians who opened the gates of Antwerp to the Spanish army soon found to their cost that for them the day of doom had come. “Wherever the Spaniards planted their flag they utterly extinguished the Reformed religion, closed the Protestant churches and independent schools, placed the education in the hands of religious orders, preferably of Jesuits, drove all the Protestants across the frontier. In 1586, 200,000 people left Flanders. The

8. *ibid*, p. 117, Citing Cerisier, *Histoire des Provinces Unies* Vol. iv, 142, and MacGullock *Treatises and Essays* (1859), p. 347.



industrial and commercial supremacy of Flanders and Brabant became a thing of the past'';<sup>9</sup> a simple verse describes the resultant desolation with greater eloquence than the rhetoric of historians,

In Bruges town there's many a street  
From whence busy life has fled.

The citizens of the Dutch Netherlands, however, put up a desperate resistance; they were not beset by divided loyalties, for the majority belonged to the Reformed faith, owing no allegiance either to the Pope or to Philip; wealthy and prosperous themselves, they had not yet abandoned the hard way of life by which they had achieved success; they had the good fortune to be led by a commander, both patriotic and able, Prince Maurice the son of William of Orange, soon to be recognized as one of the ablest generals of his age.

The Belgian Netherlands became then, as in later years, the battlefield of contending armies and was soaked in blood; the Spanish attacks were repulsed; the Dutch soon took the offensive and defeated the Spaniards both on land and sea. The might of the greatest Empire of the world was broken by the heroism and the military and naval skill of the Dutch forces. The ferocious determination that little Ceylon had displayed in its resistance to the Portuguese, the Dutch exhibited in their defensive and offensive operations against their big brothers, the Spaniards.

The elimination of Antwerp (1584 A.D.) and the waning of the Spanish Empire left a deep gap in the commercial and the colonial world; the former was filled by the emergence of Amsterdam and the latter by the Dutch Netherlands. Amsterdam soon replaced Antwerp and on her head was placed the Ocean Crown; with the establishment of the Bank of Amsterdam (1609 A.D.) she became the centre of world trade and finance, "the great warehouse of Europe for bullion"<sup>10</sup> and the world's financier.

The main industry of Holland was her fisheries and the industry grew from strength to strength. "The Hollanders have about 3000 ships to fish and 50,000 people are employed yearly by them upon Your Majesty's coasts of England, Scotland and Ireland. These 3000 fishing ships and vessels of the Hollanders do employ nearly 9000 other ships and vessels and 150,000 persons more by sea and land to make provision to dress and transport the fish they take, and

9. *ibid*, p. 115.

10. Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations* Bk. iv. Ch. iii.



return commodities whereby they are enabled to build 1000 ships and vessels, having not one timber tree growing in their own country; nor home-bred commodities to lade 100 ships, and yet they have 20,000 ships and vessels and all employed.”<sup>11</sup>

Simultaneously with the increase of their sea-borne trade, the Dutch launched the ship-building industry; the carriers and bankers of the world in the nature of things became its insurers and a Chamber for insuring ships against loss and damage was created in Amsterdam (1598). It was this avalanche of commercial might that was soon to descend on the little island of Ceylon.

The final blows on Spain and Portugal were dealt by the guns of the English and Dutch navies on the seas; the destruction of the invincible Spanish Armada (1588), equipped for many months at Lisbon and launched for the conquest of England was an overwhelming blow to Spanish prestige. The Duke of Parma and the Spanish army, poised for action, waited in vain for “D” day in the Spanish Netherlands; the combined English and Dutch fleets completely outmanoeuvred the cumbersome unwieldy Spanish men of war and triumphantly set fire to them in the English Channel and in the North Sea. To this victory which for the time gave the waiting world a reassurance of freedom, the Dutch made a great contribution.

Four centuries later the youth of Britain fearlessly sacrificed their lives when they shot out the German bombers in the Battle of Britain (1940) and Hitler waited in vain in the North of France with his army of invasion; that was a similar, perhaps a greater contribution, against a titanic force.

The Spanish fleet and merchantmen were thereafter mercilessly attacked. “Dutch privateers hunted Spanish Ships in every part of the world”; the Dutch Admiral Pieter Van de Does destroyed a Spanish fleet at Gibraltar (1607 A.D.). With the waning of Spanish sea-power, the Dutch were soon free to plunder the Spanish galleons and attack the Spanish and Portuguese Colonies.

On land, Spain suffered a military disaster at the hands of Prince Maurice at the battle of Nieuport (1600). Portugal, then an adjunct of Spain, participated in and shared the Spanish disasters and determined attacks were also made on her vessels and her Colonial Empire. The beginning of the seventeenth century saw the foundation of the English and Dutch East India Companies and the substitution of their Empires for the Empires of Spain and Portugal.

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11. Sir Walter Raleigh, Observations on the Trade with the Hollanders.



These events synchronized with the arrival of Joris Van Spilbergen at the Court of Vimala Dharma Suriya II (1602).

But to the chagrin of the Sinhalese monarch and his successor, Senerath (1604-1636), the visit was not followed up with any proposal of assistance; tired of the long wait, Senerath was compelled to enter into a Truce with the Portuguese (1617); the Dutch were busy with European affairs; they struck up a truce with Spain (1609-1624) and all Europe was involved in an European conflagration, the Thirty Years War (1618-1624) the flames of which were skilfully fanned by Europe's mastermind the great Cardinal Richelieu.

In its origin a religious war, it degenerated into a war of political intrigue, until no one really knew exactly for what they were killing each other. It was, perhaps, the natural evolution of the fatal omen, the flocks of vultures seen by Romulus and Remus at the foundation of Rome, their great progenitor. The nations and the provinces of Europe were clawed to one another's breasts and were all the while running blood; the question put to old Kaspar by Peterkin and Wilhelmine about the later battle of Blenheim and his answer are not inappropriate.

Now tell us all about the war  
And what they fought each other for

But what they fought each other for  
I could not well make out.

But everybody said; quoth he,  
That 'twas a famous victory.<sup>12</sup>

Before its close, the Dutch with keen foresight realized that even wars must end of sheer exhaustion of the combatants; they reappeared in Ceylon in the person of Admiral Westerwold and his ill-fated emissary Jacobsz Koster (1638) and undertook with a realistic appreciation of the value of sterling or to them the rix-dollar to extirpate the treacherous Portuguese at the cost of the Sinhalese king and for the gain of their own kinsmen; Raja Sinha II heavy with his own troubles, realized the value of naval aid for want of which his great predecessor Raja Sinha I had failed to capture the fortress of Colombo.

Forced by circumstances to make an instant choice between the Devil and the Deep Sea, to his everlasting regret he chose the Devil,

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12. After *Blenheim* (Southey).



Raja Sinha II signed a Treaty with the Dutch (1638 A.D.) and became the unconscious and unwilling procreator of the Dutch occupation of Ceylon. Had he but known what was destined to be the fruit of the seed that he was sowing, he would rather have said, "Away from my Imperial Presence, *Casta Hollandesa*, or else I will have you impaled."

It is remarkable that Ceylon never possessed a Navy, not even a merchant marine. Many Asian countries had navies, not as well equipped or as powerful as those of European powers, but yet capable of offering a measure of resistance. Ceylon's timber resources were plentiful, her engineers, as evidenced by her irrigation tanks and edifices, her craftsmen and artisans as proved by her ammunition and firearms were not unequal in skill and efficiency; but, except for a few solitary instances, there are no records extant of the existence of a Sinhalese navy.

Parakrama Bahu the Great (A.D. 1164-1197) built ships in order to despatch military expeditions to Burma and South India; he also fought a naval battle with Gaja Bahu; Vijebahu I (A.D. 1197-1198) and Nissanka Malla (A.D. 1198-1207) equipped naval forces for a threatened invasion of Cola. Mention is also made in a contract between Dutch and Raja Sinha II (1612) that the King should cause the delivery of good and serviceable wood at the beach of the Dutch for the construction of ships and other vehicles and timber for the building of galleys, sloops and other vessels (Clauses 17 and 32).<sup>13</sup>

The later Treaty (1638) covenanted that the King should provide some frigates and crews for the protection of the harbours and outlets (Clause 7) but otherwise no mention is made of any Sinhalese fleet. Several factors, perhaps, contributed to this result. The Sinhalese were always an agricultural and never a seafaring nation; their enterprise never took them beyond coastal fisheries; the conquest and plunder of their neighbours' lands never made an appeal to them; their religion had a hand in their aversion to the slaughter of mankind and to their non-acceptance of a cash economy in ancient times; the abundance of the wealth of the Island itself withheld the Sinhalese from hard conditions.

Once the great tanks and channels created by human hands fertilized the North-Central plains of the Dry Zone, succeeding generations were amply provided with rice, their staple article of diet; the luxuriance of the soil of the Wet Zone gave fruits and spices in

13. Baldaeus pp. 50, 52, 119.



abundance almost without human effort; the forests bred the elephants, the river beds yielded up gems and precious stones of priceless value, the pearl banks hid the oysters carrying pearls of great price and nature's plenitude was such that the hard life of the sea with its boisterous waves was unnecessary for their existence.

Another factor which, perhaps, added to the people's complaisance and effortless satisfaction was that Ceylon had become the commercial centre and warehouse of Asia where foreign merchantmen bought and exchanged the produce and manufacture of Asian lands.

"Ceylon, Serendib or Taprobane was divided between two hostile princes (A.D. 582) one of whom possessed the mountains, the elephants and the luminous carbuncle, and the other enjoyed the more solid riches of domestic industry, foreign trade and the capacious harbour of Trincomalee, which received and dismissed the fleets of the East and West"<sup>14</sup>

A comparison and a contrast are, perhaps, afforded by Attica and its great city, ancient Athens. Her hillsides had been denuded by deluges of water flowing down, had become barren and from agricultural pursuits hard conditions converted the Athenians into a seafaring nation.

Necessities called into existence the Attic potteries and the Attic merchant marine and also the Attic silver mines, since international trade demands a money economy. Finally all these things together exports, industries, merchant ships and money required the protection and defrayed the expenses of a navy.

Thus the denudation of their soil in Attica stimulated the Athenians to acquire the command of the sea from one end of the Aegean to the other. Every delicacy of Sicily, Italy, Cyprus, Egypt, Lydia, the Black Sea, the Peloponnese, or any other country has been accumulated in a spot in virtue of the command of the sea.<sup>15</sup>

But the Athenians built their own merchant marine and their men of war while the Sinhalese Kings relied, to their cost, on foreign merchants to ply their trade and on foreign warships to give them protection.

It is also possible that the Malabar invasions which commenced early in its recorded history, bringing a neighbouring enemy within her gates, kept Ceylon so pre-occupied within her borders that

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14. Gibbon, Ch. XL. Vol. iv, p. 173.

15. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Vol. 2, pp. 39—41.



expansion beyond was not contemplated; and when the need for a navy became a dire necessity a powerful European naval power had obtained an entry into the Island.

Thereafter the construction of a fleet became impracticable and impossible. Raja Sinha I collected a number of ships to assist his land forces in his operations against the fortress of Colombo but this effort was ineffectual. Raja Sinha II adopted the only available alternative, an alliance with a foreign naval power which had its inevitable tragic sequence.

During the period when the Portuguese were in occupation of the coastal regions of Ceylon, their language came to be spoken in the Island; Knox who was interned within the Kandyan Kingdom for nearly twenty years has asserted that Portuguese was used in Court circles even after the Dutch occupation; a number of Portuguese words have been absorbed into the national languages, although Portuguese is no longer a language in current use in Ceylon.

Similarly the origin of many words in common parlance can be traced to the Dutch language but Dutch has also ceased to be a language of Ceylon. The British administration took effective steps to suppress both the Portuguese and the Dutch as well as the national languages of Ceylon by the introduction of English as the sole medium of official communications and of the administration of justice, to the exclusion of even the "vernaculars" which they despised.

Dutch literature of the medieval period cannot claim to possess a national epic of the quality of *the Lusiads* of Camoens; neither Portugal nor the Netherlands produced during their period of expansion any literary works which rose to the height of the literature of the Elizabethan period; it is not uncommon for the literary genius of a people to respond to moments of national activity by the creation of literature of great excellence.

But the Dutch literature does not include any national epics or dramas of the period that can lay claim to world status. In the fields of secular romantic literature and lyrics, however, high standards were reached; they represented a breakaway from the cloisters and the closures then clapped on intellectual freedom by the religious intolerance of the governing classes of the middle ages and of the Roman Catholic Church; the Reformation and the birth of the Renaissance brought with them a whiff of fresh air into thought and literature.



It appears to have been a period of great literary activity; themes of chivalric romance and courtly love were introduced which were characteristic of the baronial age; and within them was literature which attracts by its pungent criticism and sly humour; the royalty, the nobles and the clergy are castigated deftly by the use of whips that lash without laceration; among such works are *Charles the Elegant*, *Walewein* and *Reynard the Fox*; the representation of mankind by animals is an age-old device of literature; the wisdom in fables excels the wisdom of sages.

Reynard the Fox triumphs with effect over all his accusers and gets away unpunished for his wicked deeds by his many wiles. In biting satire, which attracts by its simplicity and seeming innocence; the author condemns the abuses of the times and makes fun of the participators in the human drama. Reynard has beguiled both King Noble (The Lion) and his Queen and outwitted his traducers; he has obtained a pardon; the King summons a full assembly of the beasts of his kingdom and reiterates the announcement in their presence; the abuses which are made the subject of laughter peep through the lines:

2780 Hear all of you not the great alone  
 And the rich but also the poor and the small,  
 My barons and my fellows all.  
 Reynard has come here into court  
 Intending—for which I praise the Lord—

2785 To turn over a new leaf  
 The Queen holds for him a brief  
 And has pleaded so well that I  
 Have become his ally.  
 My rancour towards him is all gone.

2790 I've given him absolution  
 Of life and death penalties.  
 I command that Reynard be left in peace.  
 Reynard be left in peace. I ordain.  
 He be left in peace, I say again.

2795 And I command all of you,  
 On pain of death, that you do  
 Honour to Reynard and to his wife  
 And children, wherever you meet in life,  
 Be it by night, be it by day.



- 2800 Henceforth I will not pay  
 Attention to charges any more.  
 Although he was ruthless heretofore.  
 He'll mend his ways, I'll tell you how,  
 Early tomorrow, that is his vow,  
 2805 He'll leave with bag and staff his home  
 And go on a pilgrimage to Rome  
 And the Holy Land, and he'll remain  
 In Palestine, nor come back again,  
 Until he has received as meed  
 2810 Remission of every sinful deed.<sup>16</sup>

It is not to be expected that Reynard would keep his promise; indeed he did not; he was by constitution incapable of good conduct; but the poem reveals that the Dutch could laugh at themselves; and the nation that retains this precious gift of laughter at its own foibles is well on the road to greatness; for such criticism holds the mirror up to nature and engenders reformation.

In the same way the religious literature of the period betrays impatience with the religiosity of religions; although couched in this form, the authors and the readers of the time had a firm belief in God and His Justice; they were merely chastising current abuses. In the better-known literature of that age may be classified, *There are seven manners of living*, the *Book of sparkling Wine*, *Beatrice* and *Mary of Nijmeghees*; the following extract from *Beatrice* is<sup>17</sup> illustrative:

“He made known to the convert before he returned home what had happened to one of their nuns, but none of them knew who she was, for that remained a secret. The abbot did as God commanded him, and took both the children of the nun into.....

his protection. He clothed them both in the grey habit, and they became two good men. Their mother was called Beatrice. Praise and honour be to God, and to Mary, who suckled God and achieved this lovely miracle. She helped Beatrice in all her need, and now let us all, small and great, who listen to this miracle, pray that Mary be our intercessor in that fertile valley where God shall judge the world. Amen.”

16. *Reynard the Fox and other Medieval Literature of the Netherlands*, p. 157

17. *Medieval Netherlands, Religious Literature*, pp. 184—186.



*Hi deet vertaen den covende,  
 Eer hi thuus weder wende,  
 Hoe ere nonnen was ghesciet;  
 Maer sine wisten niet,  
 Wie sie was, het bleef verholen.  
 Die abt voer Gode volen.  
 Der nonnen kinder nam hi beide  
 Ende vorese in sijn gheleide,  
 Grau abijt dedi hen an  
 Ende si worden twee goede man.  
 Haer moeder hiet Beatrijs.  
 Loof God ende prijs  
 Ende Maria, die Gode soghede,  
 Ende dese scone miracle toghede'  
 Si halp haer uut alre noot,  
 Nu bidden wi alle, aleine ende groot.  
 Die dese miracle horen lesen,  
 Dat Maria moet wesen  
 Ons vorsprake int soete dal,  
 Daer God die werelt doemen sal.  
 Amen.*

If the Dutch failed to reach world standards in other forms of art it is an accepted fact that in painting they achieved that distinction. The energy that was released when the Netherlands shook off the fetters of Spain was stupendous. It gave expression to itself in many forms; in economic, industrial trade and financial expansion, in the build-up of sea and land power. But in the midst of these occupations which gave her sons wealth and an overseas empire, some of them became painters; and into this field they brought a new force, colour and vitality.

Holland it has been said "became a beehive with thousands of little bees merrily buzzing around and carrying all sorts of fresh spoils to the domestic apiary but none so busy as the painters."<sup>18</sup> There are many great names; among them Frank Hals (1580-1666) and Rembrandt (1606-1669) stand high in the world of art; the latter has taken his place among the masters. As in the case of many other men of genius, the prison and precepts of University life had no appeal to him; Rembrandt soon left Leyden University to learn painting in the studio of a local painter.

18. Vanloon, *The Art of Mankind*, p. 321.



Rembrandt's career was full of vicissitudes; he himself belonged to the middle-class; he fell in love with and married a girl of a pseudo-aristocratic family; her health was always delicate. It was thought that her father was rich but on his death it was found that he had only left land of little value and not cash. Shortly after she gave birth to a son, she died. Rembrandt's next adventure was with a young peasant woman who also presented him with a child, while she was no more than his house-keeper. This event created a sensation in Amsterdam where Rembrandt had become famous.

Soon his customers abandoned him and his creditors swarmed upon him and the great painter was sold up; he, however, put himself together and started life again. This last adventure of Rembrandt has been described as the third and final chapter of his great career. In his first chapter he found himself; his second chapter brought him to the height of his fame; his third chapter brought him to a glorious and logical conclusion; his pictures and etchings had a spiritual quality which none of his former work had.

The poor, the disinherited, the lame, the halt, and the blind, of which the country was still so full after eighty years of warfare—they became the faithful companions of his pencil and his brush. He clothed them in Biblical garb, bestowing upon them the dignity of those figures from the Old and the New Testament with which he had been familiar since the earliest days of his Leyden childhood.<sup>19</sup>

But it would appear that Rembrandt's later work was neither understood by his compatriots nor did it bring him custom; no models came to him; he contended himself with painting the members of his own family. Soon after his death (1669) the age of Dutch painting came to an end. The life force of the Dutch generated by their heroic resistance to Spain had reached its end; it was surfeited with the commercial wealth that issued from it, like a fabulous spring, and, in its own juice the Netherlands was submerged and came by an inglorious death.

The rise and fall of the Dutch Republic is a fascinating story; it has been told in great detail by several writers. It has many parallels; it illustrates, on the one hand, how a great power can get bogged in the morass of conquest; on the other hand, how a small nation led by patriotic and courageous leaders can with success resist armed might. It should, however, be remembered that in that age the lethal weapons were only guns and gunpowder; there were no nuclear

19. *ibid.* p. 332.



bombs, no devastating blasts, no biological warfare. Whether similar resistance is possible in this age is a matter of grave doubt.

Even the twentieth century, however, has afforded a parallel in Vietnam. The greatest or at least, one of the greatest powers is waging a war by land, sea and air against a small state, whose peasant warriors are putting forward a desperate resistance. World opinion, transmitted now in little aerial waves throughout the earth is a new weapon; it is fighting side by side with the little state; so persuasive is this new weapon that the question before the big state becomes not "how to win the war!" but "how to avoid it without loss of self-respect!"

The incidents associated with the heroic struggle of the Dutch Netherlands constitute a ghastly tale; mass murders and mass executions are said to have been a common sight; that the monks of the inquisition converted themselves into "Blood Councils" that sent innocent victims to the gallows, the rack and the stake after mock trials; that the victims were men, women and children of European races that has refused to accept Roman Catholicism or subjugation to Imperial Spain; a multitude were done to death on false accusations.

Charles V introduced and organized a papal inquisition side by side with those terrible "placards" of his invention, which constituted a masked inquisition even more cruel than that of Spain. The execution of the system was never permitted to languish. The number of Netherlanders who were burned, strangled, beheaded or buried alive, in obedience to his edicts, and for the offences of reading the Scriptures, or looking askance at a graven image, or ridiculing the actual presence of the body and blood of Christ in a wafer, have been placed as high as one hundred thousand by distinguished authorities and have rarely been put at a lower mark than fifty thousand.

The edicts (1559 A.D.) and the inquisition were the gifts of Charles to the Netherlands in return for their wasted treasures and constant obedience. For this his name deserves to be handed down to eternal infamy, not only throughout the Netherlands, but in every land where a single heart beats for political or religious freedom. To eradicate these institutions after they had been watered and watched by the care of his successor (Philip II) was the work of an eighty years war, in the course of which millions of lives were sacrificed.<sup>20</sup>

It has been written that the wickedness of Philip II was too great

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20. *The Rise of the Dutch Republic*, Motley, Vol. I pp. 103-104.



for words; that the cruelty of his commander, the Duke of Alva, was inhuman, those statements are accepted by all sources as factually correct. But it should not be forgotten in an assessment of their character that it was an age when conquest and intolerance were accepted maxims of their country and of Portugal. Since the world was divided between them by a Papal line.

To the atrocities committed by these two men can be added the massacre of Saint Bartholomew Eve (1572 A.D.) indulged in by the French Monarch Charles IX; that was a Blood Bath of the Protestants not unequal in violence to the performance of his Spanish compeers. So long as force is accepted as the final arbiter of ideologies and of normal or international disputes, it is futile to condemn the excesses of individuals in an age when excesses were considered to be a necessary adjunct of faith.

Between Sunday and Tuesday, according to one of the most moderate calculations five thousand Parisians of all ranks were murdered. Within the whole kingdom, the number of victims were variously estimated as from twenty-five thousand to one hundred thousand. The heart of Protestant Europe stood still with horror. The Queen of England put on mourning weeds and spurned the apologies of the French envoy with contempt. The Pope accompanied by his Cardinals went solemnly to the Church of St. Mark to render thanks to God for the grace thus vouchsafed to the Holy Sea and to all Christendom.<sup>21</sup>

The French envoy at Spain reported to the French Monarch that he had conveyed the intelligence of the massacre to Philip II. "I went to see him next morning and as soon as I came into his presence *he began to laugh*, and with demonstrations of extreme contentment, to praise your Majesty as deserving your title of Most Christian, telling me there was no king worthy to be your Majesty's companion, either for valour or prudence. He praised the steadfast resolution and the long dissimulation of so great an enterprise;"<sup>22</sup> for the Protestants had been set upon without any warning.

The story of William the Silent and his son, Prince Maurice, and their struggle to establish the freedom and to preserve the faith of the people of the Netherlands is another episode in the history of small nations. For many years with invulnerable patience in the midst of many trials and persecutions, he asserted his allegiance to the

21. Motley, Vol. II, p. 332.

22. *ibid.* p. 333.



king and his faith in God. It was only when the infamous Edict (A.D. 1580) drawn by Cardinal Granville imposing a ban on his life, was proclaimed that he issued his "Apology of the Prince of Orange". It was an open defiance of Philip II; the ties of loyalty and allegiance were finally severed; he asserted:

"I am not a rebel, I am in the hand of God; my worldly goods and my life have long been dedicated to His service. He will dispose of them as seems best for his glory and salvation." To his people he said, "there is my head, over which no prince, no monarch has power but yourselves. Would to God that my perpetual banishment, or even my death, could bring you a true deliverance from so many calamities."<sup>23</sup>

William the Silent lost his life, but he and his son Prince Maurice saved the nation; his life remains a great example to posterity of courage and self-sacrifice but the proximity by land of his country to the Spanish Fury was too close to avert devastation, massacre, and suffering. On a scale, of less magnitude, but not less heroic, stands the resistance of Mayadunne and his son Raja Sinha I in Ceylon to the Portuguese Fury. The thought of the fate that would have befallen Ceylon but for Mayadunne's philosophy of retreat and the military genius and strategy of Raja Sinha can yet curdle our blood; the massacres by the Portuguese of the inhabitants of Mexico and Peru yet recall to the world the savagery of those campaigns.

But nations, though quick to criticize the misdeeds of other men, are slow to practise the precepts that they lay down; the lessons of Peru, Mexico and the Netherlands are yet unlearnt and go by default. As I am writing these pages, I am listening in to a broadcast of World News (January 20, 1970); there are three relevant announcements; one is that American Commanders are being tried by a Court Martial for the massacre of Vietnamese peasants; the second is that the Vietnamese have in retaliation shot down American Officers in cold blood; the third draws attention to the suffering of the Biafran men, women and children of Biafra at the conclusion of the Nigerian-Biafran war.

It is apparent that human misery resulting from the use of lethal weapons is not limited to the colour of a race or to its religion; it is the companion of the use of force. Buddha preached that the use of force in any form for any purpose is unjustifiable. It is only by

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23. Motley, Vol. III, pp. 369-370.



a mutual agreement among the world powers for the mutual renunciation of the use of force that a solution to this problem can be found; such an agreement is now under discussion and merits universal co-operation.



## **DAYS OF DESPAIR**

Every man, woman and child would have watched him (Rajasinha I), in fear and agony;

Will he break?

for in that fatal event all was lost; extermination at the hands of the Portuguese Fury, dangled overhead.







## CHAPTER VIII

### DAYS OF DESPAIR

Evidence of the media and the progress of the Portuguese efforts at conversion for the period up to 1644 are available from documents supplied by high authorities of the church and can therefore be accepted as reliable. The work of the members of the Society of Jesus in Ceylon in 1644 is thus recounted.

Ceylon was originally attached to the Society's Province of Goa but in 1601 the new Southern Province of Malabar was created with its headquarters at Cochin. Out of the four Portuguese Dissavannies which were administered from Colombo, Matara was in charge of the Francisans who had been the first to arrive in the Island; the Jesuits, who had come next, were entrusted with the seven Korales; the Augustinians with the four Korales, and the latest arrivals, the Dominicans, with Sabaragamuwa.

There were two colleges in Ceylon, one at Colombo and one at Jaffnapatam; the former had eight residences with churches attached in various parts of Ceylon, each with patron saints. In the island of Kalpitiya there were two residences also with churches attached, each with a patron saint; to this information is an addendum which refers to the existence of dangers from elephants, tigers and bears and the hostile Cingalese who roam through the woods of this island, (the classification is significant). In all there were under the supervision of the Colombo College 11,149 Christians as well as 14200 children who were being catechized.

Under the College of Jaffnapatam there were eleven residences, each with a patron saint; in all there were 32,287 Christians under this College; there were besides 1,000 Christians in the Vanni where there was no church and where for four years it had no longer been possible for fathers to go and preach. In the island of Mannar, there were five residences with a superior depending immediately on the Father Provincial, whose duty it was to take charge of the catechumens, and look after the interests of the Christians before the ecclesiastical and civil tribunals; each residence had its patron saint. The total number of Christians in this island was 5,450. According

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1. Ribeiro 317—320



to this information there were under the supervision of the authorities 50,306 Christians of whom 37,736 were in North Ceylon.

The Fiscal affairs of the Island, inclusive of the emoluments received by the religious bodies were the subject of investigation by Antonio Vaz Ferraira (1607-1616/1617) who was despatched by the King of Portugal as Vedor de Fazenda with special powers. It transpired at the inquiry that these bodies had obtained, apart from their normal allowances, special privileges both from Dharmapala and the generals both from the revenues of the State and from villages which the Sinhalese kings had earlier endowed to Buddhist temples.

The revenue from the temple villages were estimated at the annual sum of seventy thousand cruzados—a sum amply sufficient for the maintenance of the entire Christian establishment in the Island. Meaning thereby that this income had been diverted from the Buddhist temples of which they were the endowments to the friars and the Jesuit fathers. Several of these villages had been allotted by the General without authority and accordingly the cancellation of these grants were ordered, the income of all such villages being in future credited to the general revenue.

A claim was advanced by the members of the Order of St. Francisco to numerous villages which had been granted by Dom Joao Perea-pandar for the maintenance of their Colleges and seminaries and the support of their catechumens; in spite of the unfavourable attitude of the Vedor the King of Portugal considered himself bound as Dom Joao's heir, to abide by the grant made by the latter. As regards the various religious orders in the country, a general rule was laid down that no allowance was to be made to them without special sanction from the king, and the allowances that were authorized were to be paid from the revenues of the temple villages as soon as they were available.

In 1613 the Dominicans were granted for two years the same allowance as had already been given to the Augustinians; an appreciation was placed on record of the services rendered by the Franciscans, whose work had suffered from the disasters of 1603 and they were to be remembered in the distribution of temple villages.

Sixteen villages in the three Korales belonging to the Gabadawa (perquisites of Buddhist temples) had been granted to the Society of Jesus without permission and in 1615 this grant was ordered to be cancelled, and the Society was assigned the same allowances as the



other orders. It was, however, found that it was already amply provided in other ways; it held sixty-two villages of the Hindu Temple of Munneswaram yielding over five hundred pardoes of three larins each.

Within the limits of Colombo and other Korales, it held Crown villages yielding over four hundred pardoes, all of which were devoted to the Society's College in Colombo; these were held on a grant from De Azavedo which the Society refused to produce to the Vedor. It was also allowed three hundred seraphins for the Churches at Kaymel, Chilaw and Kalpitiya; two priests stationed at Matiagama held two Royal villages yielding two hundred seraphins. Many other privileges had also been granted by De Azavedo and Dharmapala.

The data afforded by these statistics of Catholic religious bodies operating in Ceylon and of their emoluments are of importance in arriving at a correct assessment of the condition of the country at the relevant period. Over emphasis on wars, movements of troops, and military affairs, however vital for the maintenance of independence, tends to leave a gap and to omit a factor of no less vital importance.

The grip which these religious bodies held of Ceylon is evident from these facts. The endowments given throughout the centuries by pious Buddhist kings to Buddhist temples had been expropriated; the temporalities intended for the use of the Buddhist clergy; the latter were receiving in addition emoluments from the general revenue.

It would thus appear that it was a pincer movement; on the one hand the Portuguese soldiers destroyed and burnt the Buddhist temples, while on the other hand, the Portuguese clergy appropriated their lands and buildings. The effect of this duel operation on the people would have been disastrous, for the elimination of the temple and its priests meant the deprivation to the people of the nucleus of the village.

These ancient institutions had preserved their religion, their traditions and their culture; that had been the source of their early education; the Buddhist priest was from time immemorial the guide, philosopher and friend of the rural peasantry; he was ousted from the seat that he had occupied for centuries by a calculated drive to destroy him. But these manoeuvres directed to the spiritual eclipse of the national religion only stiffened the people's resistance and



engendered hatred against the invaders.

The seizure of the kingdom of Kotte and the machinations against the kingdom of Kandy has been recounted in the foregoing pages; it was only the strategy of Mayadunne and the sword of Raja Sinha that had averted total disaster. But the assault on the kingdom of Jaffnapatam had a tragic sequence; it resulted in a temporary eclipse of Hinduism in distressing and humiliating circumstances for the overthrow of the royal forces in the field was followed by the baptism of the entire royal family and the elimination of Hindu shrines.<sup>2</sup>

The temporal conquest of Jaffnapatam preceded the propaganda for its spiritual conquest. About the time when St. Francis Xavier was at Goa (1542) a powerful Portuguese fleet under its Governor Afonso de Sousa set out from Goa for the capture of Jaffnapatam; its King, Yaga Raja, thereupon came to terms with the Governor. Eighteen years later (1560) Dom Constantino de Braganza collected a large naval and military force and landed in the vicinity of Jaffna; reference to this expedition has been briefly made earlier. Its avowed object was to punish the king for alleged crimes committed on the Catholics of Mannar.

“All our people having landed, they formed their companies, and in front of all rose in the air the banner of Christ crucified, which a father of St. Dominic bore on a large staff, so that it might be seen by all those that were to fight under its protection and there it was adored by all and acclaimed with a general voice.”

That was an age when under the banner of Christ a multitude of sins were committed on “heathens” by West European powers and their religious fanatics with the object of world dominion. The Prince of Jaffnapatam gave battle to the Portuguese forces; the Prince was overpowered in this unequal struggle and the King himself retired with all his army to the palace which was a fair-sized fortress. The Portuguese thereupon made preparations for an assault when the King set fire to his palace which he had abandoned. Everything that was left was taken as spoils by the soldiers, including a greater part of the King’s artillery.

This success of the Portuguese was, however, soon followed by an insurrection. It is evident from De Couto’s version that its cause was the attack on the religious susceptibilities of the inhabitants by the attempts of the friars at their conversion; the friars who engaged in making “Christians” were captured and put to the sword; the

2. Queyroz.



bishop barely saved his life by making his escape into a vessel; the rebels appear to have made him their main target.

So zealous was the bishop on this work of conversion, that he would not allow his catechumens to be meddled with; and if anyone caused them any annoyance or injury, he flew into a great rage and fulminated saying that they were not to meddle with his angelets; one which they took in such ill part, that they strove hard to get him into their power. The Portuguese thereupon built a fortress in Mannar and for the time being abandoned the conquest of Jaffnapatam.

The fortunes of war are forever fickle and for ever change; the Portuguese who had fled ingloriously to Mannar (1560) returned thirty-one years later (1591) with a large force under Andre Furtado de Mendoza; the King's guard, shield bearers and tribesmen were overcome after a fierce struggle; they fought madly and with such resolution that they seemed to court death. The King himself was captured and Furtado ordered a Captain to cut off his head which was forthwith placed on a pike and planted there, where it remained for some days.

The palace which was very rich was sacked. The entire family of the King were taken captive, the Queen his wife already advanced in years, another Queen with five sons and two daughters together with other Princes and Princesses; the King's second son was invested by the Portuguese with the Crown. Such was the temporal conquest of Jaffnapatam, the campaign against which met with little resistance unlike the campaigns against the Sinhalese kingdom.

The climax, however, had yet to be reached. An elaborate and ostentatious ceremony was held at Jaffna for the public baptism of the Queen and her household, then in captivity (June 18, 1623). It is alleged by Queyroz that their adoption of Roman Catholicism was of the captives' own choice; but very little is left to the choice of Queens and Princesses in captivity; they have no option but to obey the orders of their captors even up to the pollution of their own bodies. According to Queyroz, everything being already prepared and 75 persons instructed on 18th June, 1623, with the pealing of all the bells of the city, all the Parish priests of St. Francis set out in procession with many dances and plays to the camara of the city where were the Prince, his mother the Queen and other catechumens. There were present also the General, the Captain of Colombo, the Vedor de Fazenda, the Ouvidor, many soldiers and a great crowd.

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And as soon as the General approached the Prince, he put round his neck a beautiful chain of gold with a Reliquary and the Boy, his mother and other children, his cousins, were all richly dressed and the others according to their quality. The procession passed through the principal streets which were well decorated with rich carpets and hung with China brocades, till they entered the Church of St. Antonio where everything was made rich and neat.

The Prince was baptized under the name of his godfather, D. Constantine de Sa, the Queen under the name of Dona Clara; two other sisters of the Prince were baptized Dona Isobel and D. Maria, D. Diogo brother-in-law of the dead King, Dona Maria his wife and sister of the King Pera Rajera Pendera, with three sons and a daughter under respective baptized names, and along with them the rest (in their train).

The boys remained with the religious in that convent till they went to Goa on the orders of the Viceroy, and then lived in the College of the Magi studying Latin and good customs till they went to Portugal. The Prince afterwards took the habit of St. Francis and bequeathed the right he had to the kingdom of Jaffnapatam to the King of Portugal. In that Holy Order he was much esteemed for his virtue and docility and he held therein honourable posts till the day he died leaving behind a holy remembrance.''

This scene still emits an abominable stench, no less mal-odourous than the emanation from the corpse of King Atahualpa when he was diddled into choosing baptism and strangulation in exchange for his own faith and death on a slow fire; the inhabitants of Jaffnapatam had been for centuries devotees of Hinduism; its kings and queens had in its honour built and endowed shrines and religious edifices; it nowwitnessed in sorrow and humiliation this heart-rending spectacle of foreign domination and religious intolerance.

But this episode was common to that age; the publicity of the royal conversion was part of the standard technique; its object was to act as a bait for the common folk; the conversion of the body must follow the conversion of the head; there was then no radio service to broadcast the news to the world; no international conscience to shock. Like the Chorus in a Greek tragedy, the victims knew ahead that woe is the lot of captivity. But neither the General nor the Captains on the one hand nor the Franciscan friars on the other should be misjudged; they were mere executioners; the former of the policy of their King, the latter of the policy of the Vatican;



this incident was a natural phenomenon and not singular to Ceylon.

But the curtain had not yet fallen on the Jaffnapatam tragedy. As the cultivation of that kingdom required more missionaries than the order of St. Francis engaged in other missions was able to supply, they were reinforced by members of the Society of Jesus (1602). These intense activities were made possible by the zeal of the Portuguese Captain Philipe de Oliveyra who was not averse to the use of the sword as an aid to mental suasion.

A conflict between the units of the two religious orders then operating on the "Heathen" pastures was avoided by a direction that the Fathers of the Society should remain inland one league from the sea and those of St. Francis along the coast. Queyroz enumerates the names of the many Churches with which Jaffnapatam was soon studded.

And as it was the object of both the one and of the other Missionaries only to till and plant that vineyard, with holy emulation the faith went on increasing in such sort that the whole kingdom came to be converted by their labour and industry. Sad disillusionment would have dawned on Father Queyroz had he lived to see the day when an inspection on the order of the Dutch authorities revealed that the Churches were full of "pagan" worship.

This experience as earlier observed was not singular to Ceylon; Ceylon was merely an illustration of a global operation; it merely afforded a parallel to similar occurrences in most parts of the then known world; since it was the policy of the Papacy to hold both secular and spiritual dominion. Some states like England broke away from Rome in consequence of its assertion of secular and spiritual supremacy but the countries that accepted Roman Catholicism accepted the policy of the Vatican; although there were considerable conflicts between the Papacy and sovereign states on these issues during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with divergent results.

There arose, moreover, in Europe of the sixteenth century a body of men deeply devoted to the Faith who made every effort to carry their mission to heathen lands; among them was St. Francis Xavier (1506-1552). In this wise the Jesuit Fathers and the Franciscan, Dominican and Augustinian friars arrived in Ceylon and in other parts of Asia. It was their devout belief that theirs was a dedicated mission to convert the whole world to what in their view was the one and only True Faith.



In the execution of this mission various devices were adopted individually or in combination; military force, installation of garrisons for the retention of heathen lands, trade agreements for the promotion of their wealth, the construction of hospitals for the improvement of their health, the exchange of courtesies and friendly advice. But all roads led to Rome.

Since the centrifugal force was an institution, there was never a cessation of the drive; success never said, "Enough; Hold on;" the shocks of chance, the force of circumstance, expected or unexpected reverses never disheartened but only led to other methods of action, where necessary.

A common technique was the conversion of the King of the State, its Princes and its Nobles; since thereafter with their patronage, other advantages were more easily obtained. These operations were made easier by the fact that in most Asian countries, and in particular in Buddhist States, religious toleration was an accepted fact.

Few Asian monarchs or dictators had the faintest idea at the initial stages of the meaning of this manoeuvre for world domination; that the installation of a garrison for their protection or the entry of ships for purposes of trade or the residence of the clergy for the improvement of morals was no other than a blind which would in the end lead to the subversion of the State and the persecution of their own religious bodies and adherents; there was a total camouflage of the real object of this apparently innocent approach.

An investigation made by the Viceroy in 1623 revealed that a similar situation as in Ceylon had arisen in Goa; while no money was available to pay for the soldiers, the monks and friars who were supported by the State were in a condition of affluence. The number of the latter had assumed astonishing proportions in Goa; there were twice as many friars as all the other Portuguese put together.

The bulk of the men sent to serve in the Indian army hastened to enter a religious Order, and the amazing dishonesty practised over the Portuguese forces, whereby shiploads of infants were despatched under the name of soldiers, contributed in no less degree to fill the converts. The arrogance of some of the Orders was beyond belief.

The Jesuits had made themselves masters of Travancore and of the Pearl Fisheries of that coast; they maintained armed men at their



own expense; and even fought on the high seas with the King's officers. They had also succeeded in securing a general supervision over the works of the fortresses in the North, of which they refused to render any accounts. The private possessions of the Orders were so large as to be a scandal, and legislation had to be passed to prevent further acquisition.

While these scenes were enacted in Ceylon, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed momentous changes in Europe. Her temporal power had been consolidated by the coagulation of the blood of internecine warfare, by the barter of kingdoms as dowry of princesses and by their devolution by inheritance; for in that age countries and peoples were the pawns of kings. Her spiritual power was vested in the Vatican; able and masterful Popes had centralized in this institution the administration of all episcopal sees; its emissaries spread throughout the world both as an intelligence corps as well as pockets for the disruption of heathen lands.

"The gossamer filaments of the Papal Spider's web, as it was originally woven, drew medieval Western Christendom together into an unconstrained unity which was equally beneficial to the parts and to the whole. It was only later, when the fabric worsened and hardened in the stress of conflict, that the silken threads changed into iron bands, and that these came to weigh so heavily upon the local princes and peoples, and so grievously to restrict their movements and cramp their growth that at last they burst their bonds in a temper in which they hardly cared if, in severally liberating themselves, they were destroying that oecumenical unity which the Papacy had established and preserved."<sup>3</sup>

This magnificent balloon burst; the unity of Roman Catholic Christianity was split asunder when Martin Luther, himself a Catholic priest, nailed on the doors of a Catholic Church (1517) at Wittenburg 95 Theses on the Sale of Indulgences by the Pope. It was a fission with a chain reaction not in this architect's contemplation; the unity of the temporal power of continental Europe was rent asunder by the abdication of Charles V (1555); his vast empire which sprawled across Europe was divided between his two sons. Internecine warfare, religious and temporal convulsed the continent for many decades.

What respite, if any, these upheavels in Europe gave to Asian kings, fighting for survival against European powers in Asian

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3. Toynbee.



lands, still awaits a comprehensive analysis. But it is not unreasonable to assume that when the Sinhala monarchs bought time by their dogged and heroic resistance they saved the nation from extermination; for the winds of evil were later arrested by their own internal conflicts which had turned their blasts against one another and away from the heathens.

The emissaries of Papal imperialism made an unconscious contribution to knowledge; they were the computers of the medieval age; their religious zeal propelled them from Rome through Central Europe and Central Asia into the Far East and back again to Rome; missionaries and Papal legates followed and with them went enterprising bands of pioneers; the results of their explorations of the land surface of the earth provided valuable data; their observation have become primary sources of recorded history. Posterity should realize that whatever be the accuracy of the physical features of Asian lands as seen by them, their caricatures of heathen peoples are of doubtful veracity, coloured by natural prejudice, personal limitations and their own religious views; instances of these exploratory missions are many.

Friar John left his cloister (April 16, 1245) and set out to find the Mongol Empire, by way of Bohemia, where he was joined by a companion, Brother Stephen. He travelled into Russia, and having annexed Brother Benedict in Poland, made his way eastward. By Easter, 1246, they had crossed the Volga and "most tearfully, we set out, not knowing whether for life or for death". In July of the same year they entered Mongolia and arrived in time to witness the enthronement of the new Khan.

The two Polo brothers were Venetian merchants; they together with their third brother the famous Marco Polo set out in 1271 as Papal messengers; they were joined by two preaching friars and arrived at the Court of Kublai Khan (1275) after a journey of a thousand days and delivered the Papal message to the ruler of the Mongal Empire. John of Monteco left Europe (1289) and reached South China (1295); he arrived at Peking and from there he sent two favourable reports (1305/1306). John Marignoli was the Papal legate in Peking (1342-1346); his observations on Kotte are elsewhere recorded.

While literature abounds with anecdotes of sea explorers and explorations, less has been said of these intrepid travellers and emissaries who went by land on journeys no less hazardous; they



sowed the fertile seed of European expansion in many fields, trade, conquest, proselytism. Even the heathen who dislikes their objectives, cannot but admire their intrepidity and self-sacrifice in a cause in which they devoutly believed. Many never returned nor were they heard of afterwards; they were swallowed up by the vast Asian continent and its own upheavals.

The paucity of native material restricts the reconstruction of the decimation of the Buddhist temporalities to accounts of and inferences from the writings of Portuguese historians; what was not destroyed or taken by force of arms was exacted by expropriation; a common device was the remission of taxation on Catholics and Catholic institutions; an ingenious fire-escape was thus left to the pliable to accept baptism and remain affluent renegades. The Buddhist Chronicles are reticent on these distressing incidents.

The *Rajavaliya* contains a paragraph which recounts the conversion of Dharmapala, his assumption of the name of Don Juan Prapandara and the baptism of many leading men of Kotte on this occasion; another paragraph refers to the leading men coveting wealth and advancement making intermarriages with the Portuguese, oblivious of their inferior status; then in a terse sentence it records a religious revolution. The Buddhist bhikkus who were at Kotte departed to Sitawaka and Kande Udarata.

එද පටන් කෝට්ටේ නුවර ප්‍රධානිවරු ප්‍රතිකානුන්ගේ සැප සම්පත් බලා තවද වෙනත් නොයෙක් හීන ජාතීහු අඩු කුල නොබලා උන් හා හිර ගනුදෙනු කර කුල වැදීමෙ උන්නාහ. විසුරේ කීප දවසක් කෝට්ටේ නුවර සිටලා රාජ වස්තුවකුත් අත් කරගෙන ගෝවේට යන විට තමාගේ බැනාට නිලයන් දී උදව්වට දියහු ද මෙල් කප්පිත්තන් හිටුවා ගෝවේට ගියේය. කෝට්ටේ නුවර උන් සංඝයා සිතාවකට හා කන්ද උඩ රටට ගියාහ. (p 57)

The *Culavamsa* is even more cryptic; it makes no reference to the Portuguese war and the mischief done by the invaders. But in a later chapter on the reign of Vimaladharmasuriya I (1592-1604 A.D.) the sequel of one hundred years of religious persecution is concisely recorded; the reticence of the ecclesiastical scribe and his elimination of heart-rending events is symbolic of his control over his own emotions. Speech is silver, silence is golden.

“As there were no bhikkus in the Island of Lanka on whom the ceremony of admission to the Order had been performed the King sent officials to the country of Rakkinga (Lower Burma), invited



Nandicakka and other bhikkus, had them brought to the island of Lanka and made them take up their abode in the city of Sirivaddana (Kandy).....he led the bhikkus, had the ceremony of admission to the Order performed on this great bhikku community.”

The full meaning of this passage cannot be understood without an awareness on the reader's part that without an Upasampada ceremony, a novice does not become a Buddhist bhikku; this ceremony constitutes the Ordination; it cannot be performed without the participation of the requisite number of bhikkus; this number was not available in Ceylon at the commencement of the sixteenth century, a century after the arrival of the Portuguese (1505).

An eminent scholar has expressed the view that “the decay of the Buddhist Church was in all probability due to the hostile attitude of Raja Sinha I (1581-1594) towards it”. Certain measures taken by this king confirm that he was hostile to the Buddhist clergy towards the close of his reign for reasons detailed earlier in these pages. But it is not unreasonable to assume that persecution by the Portuguese was a contributory cause of the absence of Upasampada bhikkus in the Island.

It is not generally known in Ceylon that at the period when the Catholic clergy was undermining Buddhism in the Island, other Buddhist countries were similarly assailed. The Achilles heel of the Japanese military dictator Oda Nobunga (1534-1582) was pierced by the enticing offer of firearms by the European traders who came in the company of the missionaries; the foreigners were welcomed by the dictator as an aid to the solution of his own problems; it did not take long for the missionaries to entrench themselves throughout the country, to make converts and establish centres.<sup>4</sup>

The Jesuit Fathers were led by St. Francis Xavier and the Japanese were made to believe that their religion was another form of comprehensive Buddhism; Catholic foreign merchants had to be favoured; Buddhist temples were destroyed or closed and converted into churches; the Buddhists were compelled to become Christians and on refusal persecuted. The successor of Nobunga, Hidezoshi Jazohomi (1538-1598) latterly became convinced that the missionaries were adverse agents of European powers bent on conquest; he thereupon adopted the policy of banishing all missionaries and suppressing converts.

The tables were turned; “many under cruel pressure recanted their faith but thousands chose martyrdom. By A.D. 1638 the last

4. Bordon p. 103, Catholic Imperialism, Manhattan, 354—360.



stronghold of the Christians who had risen in revolt was destroyed and what remained of Christians went underground". The situation was complicated by the arrival of the Franciscans (1593). Violent quarrels arose between them and the Portuguese Jesuits.

There resulted a full exhibition of religious intolerance with dissensions which were dangerous to the safety of the State. The Franciscans and Dominicans were placed under Imperial ban (1597). A resumption of activities on the death of Hideyoshi (1598) was followed by stern measures taken by Jemitsui (1623-1651); the priests were ordered to leave Japan, all Spanish merchants and missionaries were ordered to be deported (1624) and in certain cases even the death penalty was inflicted on Japanese Christians who did not renounce Christianity; the Japanese Exclusion Edict (1639) said:

For the future, let none, so long as the Sun illumines the world, presume to sail to Japan, not even in the quality of ambassadors, and this declaration is never to be revoked on pain of death.

Similar attempts were made for the conversion of Siam,<sup>5</sup> another Buddhist country, as well as the neighbouring lands; this object was disguised with and intended to be achieved through the commercial activities of the French East India Company working in conjunction with the missionaries and the French Government. Jesuit missionaries arrived in Siam and Indo-China (1606-1610); one of the methods which was to be adopted was the conversion of the king himself in pursuance of the scheme that through him and the nobles the conversion of the rest of the population would be an easy task.

Glowing accounts of the kingdom and its possibilities were sent to the Vatican and the French monarch (Louis XIV) by the missionaries; Siamese embassies also arrived in the French Court, while this compliment was returned by the despatch of craftsmen and architects who were to assist in the construction of forts for the King of Siam under the supervision of Father Thomas an architect, who became the king's adviser in these temporal activities.

The missionaries were given lands; houses and churches were built; a Bishop was installed (1763) at Ayutia which was selected as the headquarters of the Church and where a Catholic seminary was established (1676), a female community known as Votaries of the Cross was formed. A ceremonial audience with the King of Siam

5. Siam (wood) 195—197



was arranged at which an incident occurred which was highly resented by the Siamese nobles; the bishops and the priests remained seated in the Royal presence, a sight which scandalised the observers.

A reaction soon set in; suspicions were aroused that the real motive behind the commercial activities and the friendship was the king's conversion and the spiritual and temporal conquest of Siam. The French officials and the Catholic priests were expelled (1688) and the bid of the Vatican and the French government for political and religious control came to an end.

The process of proselytism was also set on foot both in Hindu and Muslim India. Of all the Catholic missionary sects that took part in conversion operations on an international scale in the 16th and 17th centuries, the Jesuit Fathers were by far the most zealous and active; they evinced an unparalleled devotion to the dedicated cause which had inspired their founder, Ignatius de Loyola (A.D. 1495-1556) who introduced a revolutionary and almost mystic technique.

No foreign emotion, however noble should interrupt the prescribed course, so that when lamentations over sin or the pains of death, should be tested, the consolation of redemption and resurrection should not intrude out of its place. In his spiritual discourses he thus laid down the irreversible steps of progression along which his followers had to tread in the manner of machines with the cause as their objective unswayed by emotion.<sup>6</sup>

In Ceylon and in Goa, the Franciscan friars anticipated the Jesuit Fathers but in many other Eastern countries and cities the Jesuits took the lead. Father de Nobili, a Jesuit arrived at Madura (1606) a great Hindu city in South India; he assumed all the characteristics of a Brahmin priest and acquired a perfect knowledge of the local language, and of Hinduism, of Sanskrit literature and of Indian music; with this equipment he carried on his mission so unobtrusively that some time elapsed before the Brahmin priests discovered his real objective and secured his expulsion.<sup>7</sup>

He was the symbol of a new awareness of the Order that Christian missions should strike at the head rather than at the main bodies of alien societies, the Brahmins were the real target, and that once the Brahmin citadel would be taken, all others would fall into their hands.

Tanned by the sun and wearing the saffron robe and sacred thread of the "twice born" a turban on his head and wooden sandals on his feet he looked the perfect image of a distinguished Brahmin—

6. Fulok-Miller, *The Jesuits*, p. 13.

7. *The Soul of India*, Rienwort, 190—193.



and far more surprising, he acted and spoke like one. If asked suspiciously whether he was a Portuguese, he would deny it with a look of wounded pride and declare himself to be a "Roman Brahmin who had come to study with his fellow-Brahmins in India".

In the same way and at about the same time there appeared at Madura the Jesuit De Costa, disguised as a Sannyasin, to tackle the problem of the lower castes; he claimed to be a holy man who was beyond all caste and could, therefore, associate with any man, Brahmin or outcaste. Nobili saw one day the Jesuit Sannyasin arrive in Madura and start his work without giving any signs of recognition.

Forty thousand converts were made in Madura alone; but a simultaneous attack on Northern India met with little success; a band of skilled theologians came as the honoured guests of the great Moghul Emperor Akbar, and so impressed him that he let them build a church and open a college but he later plied them with questions and directed their departure refusing to become a new Constantine.

The absorption of Hindu religious customs was a part of the technique of conversion adopted by the Jesuits. A description by the famed Abbe' Dubois of a Christian religious procession in the eighteenth century gives a picture of Indian Christianity.

"Accompanied with hundreds of tom-toms, trumpets and all the discordant music of the country; with numberless torches and fireworks, the statue of the Saint is placed in a car which is charged with garlands of flowers and other gaudy ornaments according to the taste of the country; the car slowly dragged along by a multitude shouting all along the march—the congregation surrounding the car all in confusion, several among them dancing or playing with small sticks or native swords, some wrestling, some playing the fool, all shouting or conversing with each other without any one exhibiting the least sign of respect or devotion."

These methods of conversion adopted by the Jesuits soon brought them into serious conflict with other Catholic religious bodies, who evidently feared that their rival was stealing the thunder. Representations were made by the Franciscans and Capuchins to the Vatican that the result of the Jesuit activities would be to launch a new heathen sect than to convert their disciples to Christianity. The Capuchins even criticized them in an address to the Governor and Council of Pondichery (1707).



“You should not wonder, gentlemen, if the Malabari Christians who had nothing about them of the heathen, when under the guidance of their legitimate shepherd, have become more heathen than Christian..... We who are on the spot see every day the poor Christians smearing themselves over like masqueraders. Some cover their foreheads with cow ashes. The men wear jewels in their ears representing the attributes of false gods, the women hang talis on their necks with a cross on one side and the head of an idol on the other.

“One caste is separated from another in church; one caste receives the Holy Sacrament at the door, while the other castes are admitted at the Holy Table.” It is not illogical to assume that the wise Brahmins watched with amusement these petty bickerings from their intellectual heights, sensed that the raiders had begun to shoot one another and gave the “All Clear” signal to their compatriots.

The Catholic missionary attempts of that age to displace the great Hindu and Muslim religions in India registered a dismal failure. The deep philosophy of the one and the practical wisdom of the other remained unassailable nor could the gods and goddesses of the Hindu Pantheon or the one God of Islam be driven out by the contrivances used against the gods and goddesses of the fallen Roman Empire.

The process of the translation of the alien religion into terms of the prospective converts' native culture is a task of vital importance in any missionary enterprise. The methods employed to achieve the Christian victory in the Roman Empire, not dissimilar to the methods employed then and now in Ceylon, have been the subject of careful analysis; it was the result of the strenuous exertion of the fathers of the Christian Church to translate the Christian doctrine into terms of Hellenic ritual and piety.

The Christian hierarchy was built up on the pattern of the Roman civil service; Christ was portrayed in the lineaments of Orpheus, the Christian ritual was moulded on the mysteries; pagan festivals were even converted into Christian and pagan cults of heroes into Christian cults of saints. These devices were intensively used, were attractive and insidiously deadly in their effect on the natives; in the modern world when the sword is sheathed and the rod of iron cannot be used in deference to world opinion, they are the only media left and adopted for the achievement of the missionary purpose.



A parallel to the attack on other countries can be found in the efforts then made for the spiritual conquest of China (1582-1610). The exponent on this occasion was Father Mattes Ricci; the missionary endeavour at first made considerable concessions to Confucianism (the dominant cult in China) and by this technique achieved considerable success; but their ultimate victory was averted, as in the case of India, by the jealousy of their Franciscan and Dominican rivals in the mission field and by the directions of the Vatican which opposed the introduction of Confucianism into Christianity.

Matters were brought to a head when, after nearly a century of success, the local representative of the head of the Western Catholic church was publicly convicted (12th December, 1706) by the head of the Far Eastern Universal State, of an utter ignorance of Confucian philosophy. This was an exposure which the Jesuit propaganda in China could not retrieve and did not survive.

The technique adopted in Ceylon was somewhat similar to that adopted at Madura; the external observances of Buddhism and Hinduism were introduced and suitably adapted so that the inhabitants could see no marked divergence between their own faith and the new religion which was being introduced. This technique was according to the well-tryed and well-established pattern.

The different saints (of Christianity) merely replaced the deities of the Hindu pantheon. Rosaries bore a great resemblance to amulets worn to charm away evil spirits. Stone images of Christ, the Virgin Mary and several saints could be worshipped in place of similar images of Hindu gods or of the Buddha. Social customs were in some cases, completely adopted by Christianity. The Dutch *predikant* (minister), Baldaeus who arrived in Ceylon (1658) observes that "though these people (of Jaffnapatam) bear the Christian name and know surprisingly well how to discourse effectively on God's Ten Commandments and the Christian doctrine, they are not wholly free from pagan superstitions. Amongst the native Christians there still prevails the ugly custom (in order to render the marriage tie more binding) for the bridegroom to fasten a talis or necklace round the bride's neck in spite of all reasonings to the contrary.....and unless it takes place the marriage is considered not properly confirmed."

According to the Hindu religion this ceremony was considered essential and, therefore, it remained unchanged. "No wonder then that early Dutch clergymen observed that there was hardly any



difference between Catholics and heathens.”

There occurred in Ceylon 350 years after the De Nobili episode (1606) a singular phenomenon which by reason of its resemblance may be here appropriately recorded, although out of its chronological context. Its co-relation appears also relevant, as it was to all appearances, a move by an unknown hand to sabotage Buddhism in Ceylon on the eve of an historic event—the 2500th Anniversary year (1956) of the Enlightenment—the attainment of Buddhahood by the Buddha.

The stage was being set for Island-wide celebrations and rejoicings when there suddenly appeared, as though from the bowels of the earth, a set of men, clad in saffron robes, walking in processions in single file along the streets of towns and cities and along the roads and the by-ways of rural areas with bowed heads, looking neither to one side nor to the other in the manner set down in the Buddhist scriptures, and in the manner of Buddhist bhikkus (priests).

Their air of austerity and other worldliness attracted attention and they were acclaimed as deeply religious Buddhist priests and given the customary alms. This phenomenon in fact reached the stage when at least in some rural areas illiterate lay devotees began to turn away from their temples and minister to these alleged bhikkus who by that time had assumed the proportion of a new Buddhist sect and came to be known as the Tapasa Nikaya (Hermit Sect).

The Buddhist clergy and the Buddhist public, in accordance with their customary tolerance, at first ignored the apparition. But as the movement began to grow in strength and dimension, an agitation was set on foot against this new sect and inquiries made of their propaganda. It then transpired that they were not believers in the doctrine of the Buddha or in the Upasampada ceremony (Higher Ordination of Buddhist priests), in Buddhist shrines or temples, in pansalas (residences for priests) in the Buddhist precepts or even in the simple offerings of flowers at times of Buddhist worship.

They had no known place of abode and were found to rest even in cemeteries. On being questioned on the doctrines of Buddhism, they were unable to give correct answers; they were in fact, no other than a set of imposters. An announcement was published (January 30, 1954) in the leading Buddhist Journal by two of the highest Buddhist dignitaries of Ceylon disowning the sect and denying that they were Buddhist priests.<sup>8</sup>

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8. *Sinhala Baudhaya* (25-2-1954), p. 1.



As the temperature of the resistance rose the imposters disappeared as mysteriously as they had appeared; no official or authoritative pronouncement was made of their origin or their exit.

Into this Universe and *why* not knowing,  
Nor *whence*, like water willy-nilly—flowing  
And out of it, as wind along the waste,  
I know not whither, willy-nilly blowing.<sup>9</sup>

The hidden hand that set the imposters on the move was never discovered; but if the object of the contrivance was to create confusion on the eve of the unparalleled celebrations that followed, the design of the mechanism adopted to destroy twenty centuries of Buddhism was crude and unrealistic; it had only a nuisance value. No act of dishonesty or violence was committed by any member of the gang.

No inference can, therefore, be drawn that a gangster was behind the scene; nor was there a schism at that period among the Buddhist sects nor an acknowledged leader of this set of men. The phenomenon awaits the passage of time for its solution but discloses that eternal vigilance is the price that Buddhism has to pay for its survival in Ceylon.

It was against a holocaust of international intrigue and extinction that Raja Sinha I stood alone, undaunted, unbeaten and unbroken; his only ally was his own trusty sword. Every man, woman and child in the country would have watched him in fear and agony; in their thoughts and on their lips, unuttered would have been the words, "will he break?"; for in that fatal event all was lost; nothing would have remained but extermination, at the hands of cruel, relentless and fanatical forces, military and religious.

Instances are not wanting when at the same period of history, larger populations suffered extinction under the weight of the same demoniacal blows. As the curtain opens on this awesome scene, it recalls a brilliant passage in a famous book where a great writer has played deftly on human emotions with the skill of a master craftsman.

"In a farm in the country of Oklahoma the rain had failed one season; the surface of the earth crusted; the dust began to settle on the cornfields; the clouds moved in the sky but no raindrops fell; an even blanket of dust hid the corn; then came the wind sweeping through in its relentless course, rushing past, carrying with it the

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9. Omar Khayyam, verse 29.



weakened corn leaves; drying fast was the ruined corn.

“The men stood by their fences and looked at the ruined corn, dying fast now, only a little green showing through the film of dust. The men were silent and they did not move often. And the women came out of their houses to stand beside their men to feel whether this time the men would break. The women studied the men’s faces secretly, for the corn could go, as long as something else remained. The children stood near by drawing figures in the dust with bare toes, and the children sent exploring senses out to see whether men and women would break.....

“After a while the faces of the watching men lost their bemused perplexity and became hard and angry and resistant. Then the women knew that they were safe and that there was no break. Then they asked ‘What’ll we do?’ And the men replied, ‘I don’t know.’ But the women knew it was all right, and the watching children knew it was all right. Women and children knew that no misfortune was too great to bear if their men were all right. The women went into their houses to their work and the children began to play.”<sup>10</sup>

In a telling anecdote, not without amusement, another writer of eminence, recalls another awesome scene where the men were shatteringly overpowered and “broke” under the forces of destruction. An Italian Senator was one of the lecturers at a session of a summer school in New England; his exposition, punctuated by rattlings of his sabre and the tramlings of his jack boots neither impressed nor amused his English-speaking Protestant audience. At the close of the session the President of the University invited the Senator who was a bibliophil to inspect the University library.

The chief treasure of the library was a Bible printed in the seventeenth century in the language of the Red Indians who had inhabited this part of New England at that time; and as the Senator handled the precious volume, his features relaxed and lighted up. “This book is very rare then?” he asked. “There are not half a dozen copies known,” replied the President proudly. “Then the Indians do not read it, nowadays?” the Senator went on. “Why no, you see,” explained the President, “the Indians are no longer there.” “What happened to the Indians?” asked the Senator lightly, with an innocent air and at that question the President’s speech became confused.

He hummed and hawed, he stuttered and stammered, till at last the words came out, “what happened to the Indians? well the Indians,

10. Steinbeck, *Grapes of Wrath*, p. 7.



you know...the fact is, the Indians disappeared.” The Senator said not a word but smiled so broadly that I began to wonder whether, like the smile of the Cheshire Cat it would appear round the back of his head. That Red Indian Bible was the symbol of the extinction of an ancient civilization by brute force under the pseudonym of Western Christian civilization.<sup>11</sup>

“I weep for you” the Walrus said:  
 I deeply sympathise  
 With sobs and tears he sorted out  
 Those of the largest size,  
 Holding his pocket-handkerchief  
 Before his streaming eyes.

“O Oysters,” said the Carpenter  
 You’ve had a pleasant run  
 Shall we be trotting home again?  
 But answer came there none  
 Any this was scarcely odd, because  
 They’d eaten every one.

The catalogue of iniquities herein enumerated should not be regarded as exhaustive nor rehearsed as an indictment against their perpetrators, since according to the standards of that age, they were in a colloquial phrase “the done thing” and any man or woman who thought or acted otherwise was sub-standard. The arrogance of racial superiority was such that, although the black or brown or the yellow was biologically, except in colour, substantially the same as the white, in the opinion of the whites, the non-white was a chattel to be used or abused according to the arbitrary whims or decisions of the whites.

To the Papacy, however, the Catholic hierarchy and their adherents, even the whites, who were not Catholics but Protestants who accepted the tenets of the Reformation, were “heathens” with hardly any differentiation from the black or brown or yellow heathens and invited elimination in the same manner and by the same methods. The balloon of the superiority of the white man and of western Christianity, imposed on the rest of mankind, by the sword, has now been pricked and has burst, yet to the ideological and institutional warfare there can never be a truce or a termination, unless the ideology or the institution itself cracks at its core.

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11. Toynbee Vol. 1, p. 213.



The battle is now being fought less ostensibly by almost invisible methods and in attractive forms, in the dress, the language, the architecture of the heathen; the intonation and content of religious songs and sermons are a close imitation; the same iron hand now encased in the velvet glove seeks its way into the life of Asian nations who yet live in suspicion and fear. It was thus that the Church took over the Great Roman Empire.

The Christian Church is, of course, as striking a phenomenon as the Roman Empire in the first place by reason of the universality that it acquired from the Empire by growing up within its framework and deliberately taking over the Empire's organisation as the bases of its own. This technique has not since lost its savour; on the contrary its technology is more scientific and its propaganda methods more insidious.

Since the days when the heathens of Asia heard with incredulity and refused to accept the overtures of Catholic and Christian clergymen and underwent suffering and death for their "blindness", much water has flowed under the bridge; in the second half of the twentieth century it has become apparent that it is Western Christianity that needs re-orientation and that the "heathens" were, probably, right in their refusal to accept the Western Tenets.

Most Christian theologians readily agree that eschatology—the doctrine of death and after life—owes more to superstition than to supernatural wisdom. The traditional views of heaven and hell are about 95 per cent. mythology. The new Christian thinking begins by rejecting the Greek dualism of body and soul. The old idea of a soul that departs from the body at death makes no sense at all. In the new eschatology hell is something more believable than a pit of unending fire. Hell is estrangement, isolation, despair.<sup>12</sup>

Conversely heaven is now defined as the triumph of self-giving—not some celestial leisure village. Man's salvation is work in this world—work for others. It would, therefore, appear that the many who suffered and died in heathen lands for their disbelief in the older conceptions of Western Christianity died in the cause of righteousness; for they believed in the two cardinal principles, now accepted, of loving kindness to all living creatures and the attainment of the highest sphere by one's own exertions and not by the grace of an external power.

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12. *Time* (19-5-67), p. 48.



*Tumhehi kiccam atappen*    “You yourselves shall exert  
*Akkataro Tathagata*        The Buddhas only show the way.”

The world has also moved far away from the days when by Papal Edict (1493) it was divided among the followers of the “true faith” in accord with the words of the Psalms:

“Ask me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost part of the earth for thy possessions.

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

It has now been realized (1967) after centuries of Western Christian domination, that “the world is sick”. The poor nations remain poor while the rich ones become still richer. The very life of poor nations, civil peace in developing countries and world peace itself are at stake. A world fund made up of a portion of the money now spent on armaments could be used to relieve the most destitute of the world. Whatever the channels the superfluous wealth of rich countries could be placed at the service of poor nations, otherwise continued greed of the rich nations will call down upon them the judgment of God and the wrath of the poor with consequences that no one can foretell (1967).<sup>13</sup>

Another cardinal feature of Buddhism is loving kindness to all living creatures. It would now appear that the new “Christian Vision of Development,” at least in precept, has changed from the exploitation of the heathen and the infliction upon him of suffering to the grant of relief and advancement. This view would appear to come somewhat near the ancient Buddhist vision of loving kindness.

*Mata yatha niyam puttam*  
*Ayusa eka putta manurakke*  
*Evampi sabba bhutesu*  
*Manasambhavaye aparimanam*

“As a mother would even with her own life protect her only son, so should you observe loving kindness to all living creatures.”<sup>14</sup>

13. Fifth Encyclical, Pope Paul VI.

14. *Karaniya Metha Sutta*, verse 7.



The two world wars of the twentieth century shook the world to its foundations; their impact on men's minds and beliefs was more explosive than their cannon fire on lands or seas or their aerial blasts of cities; they blasted mental concepts more than material things more so than the Renaissance and the Reformation that drew away the curtain of darkness that hung over the Middle Ages. Their wellnigh intolerable pangs have brought forth a re-orientation of world thought and accelerated the advancement of science. Above all these wars generated a closer contact between men and women of all nations both heathens and followers of the true faith; angry young men of today cannot understand for what the old men are fighting.

But the policy of the true faith has not changed; only its approach to heathens has changed; it has confessed that the great Afro-Asian religions are "worthy of admiration" but re-asserted that the true faith cannot share of these various forms of religion; its objective of conversion to its own views still persists; its ostensible comity is motivated by the old objective. The snail that crawls upon the earth and stretches out its antennae to test its surroundings draws them back when it senses obstruction; but after a while its antennae again spread out and it moves again to its destination with or without the slightest deviation in its direction. It should not be assumed that there never can be a resurrection of the "Days of Despair"; such an assumption would be unwise.

The conflagration in South Vietnam (1963) is a comparatively recent instance of religious intolerance; its President and two brothers in whose hands there was a concentration of government power ran amok; even international intervention fell unheeded; of a total population of 15 millions, the Catholic community constituted only 1½ millions but dictatorial measures were taken against the Buddhists in total disregard of their own and world pleas for the exercise of restraint; acts of wanton damage and cruelty followed.

"One day in early June, 1963, a 73-year-old Buddhist monk Thich Quang Duc stopped in a busy street in Saigon, the capital city of South Vietnam, and after having been soaked with gasoline by a fellow monk, sat down cross-legged; thereupon having calmly struck a match, he burned himself to death. Prior to this, he had written a message to President Diem: "Enforce a policy of religious equality", the message said. But his request had no response.

Buddhist monks, Buddhist nuns and Buddhist leaders were



arrested by the thousands. Pagodas were closed or besieged. Buddhist leaders were tortured by the Police. One day another Buddhist monk burned himself alive in public, to draw the attention of the world to the Catholic persecution. President Diem undeterred continued in his policy. The secret police packed the jails with monks. A third monk committed suicide by fire, and then another. Within a brief period, seven of them had burned themselves alive in public. Vietnam was put under martial law. Troops now occupied many pagodas and drove out all monks offering resistance. More Buddhist monks and Buddhist nuns were arrested and taken away in lorries, including a large number of wounded. Many were killed.''<sup>15</sup>

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15. Vatican Imperialism (Manhattan), pp. 397, 398.







## **AN ASIAN KING FALLEN AMONG THIEVES**

A certain man fell among thieves which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

—ST. LUKE







## CHAPTER IX

### AN ASIAN KING FALLEN AMONG THIEVES

The visit of Spilbergen to the Sinhalese King (1603) bore no immediate fruit; the reason was the preoccupation of the Dutch in European wars, among the fiercest of which was the Thirty Years War (1618-1648); Europe was convulsed by a religious and political conflagration which involved Belgium and the Netherlands. But after the inhabitants of Europe had killed one another for twenty years (1638), the horizon began to clear; the Dutch carried their vendetta against the Portuguese into Asian seas; they re-appeared on the East coast of Ceylon.

Military operations for the extirpation of the hated Portuguese as envisaged in the Dutch envoy's letter (20th October, 1637) to Raja Sinha II were renewed. On Admiral Westerwold's arrival with a fleet at Batticaloa (May 10, 1638),<sup>1</sup> he was joined by the King; their joint forces stormed Trincomalee which was reduced to ruin; the King was overjoyed beyond measure at this success; Westerwold seized the opportunity to present him with a Treaty which he signed (May, 23, 1638); this Treaty was the beginning and not the culmination of Raja Sinha's troubles; its terms were the subject of an acrimonious disagreement.

There followed an interval of seven years (1645) characterized by hostilities between the Portuguese and the Dutch in which the King's troops participated; Trincomalee fell (1639); so did Negombo after a bitter struggle (1640); the next capture was Galle (1640); in all these forts the Dutch installed their own garrisons and the King was not slow to realize that the result of these operations was that he had exchanged Portuguese for Dutch strongholds, or in his own words, pepper for ginger. As a general rule, the King's forces arrived after the event, according to the Dutch to share the plunder without the conflict; according to the King, for want of due notice, to enable the Dutch to instal themselves within the fortifications.

Conditions in Europe had in the meantime fluctuated; Portugal released herself from her uneasy and vexatious connection with

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1. Baldaeus, *Ceylon*, Ch. 18, pp. 99-101; Ch. 21, p. 115.



Spain (1641) and became once more an independent nation. Her next step was to untie the knot that bound her to fight Spanish wars, particularly in Europe and with the Dutch. A Declaration of Truce between the two countries followed (1641). Van Diemen, the Dutch man of genius in the Dutch Council at Batavia, foresaw the cessation of hostilities with the Portuguese; by Hague command he directed his emissaries in Ceylon to act in accordance with the impending Peace Treaty. Aware of the difficulties which beset the Portuguese he instructed Boreel, the Dutch representative in Ceylon, to drive a hard bargain.

“As the situation of the Portuguese in Europe, as also here (in Asia) is not suited for the continuation of hostilities with us, we believe that they will concede rather more than they themselves imagine. You must take note of that.”<sup>2</sup>

The Dutch cast their treaty with Raja Sinha to the winds and signed a Treaty with the Portuguese—(January 10, 1645); it led to the cessation of official hostilities between them for a period of seven years (1652); but it did not mean that either party ceased to take what it could from each other's territory on the sly. This pact was in effect a division of the coastal areas of Ceylon and their environs between the two aggressors. Raja Sinha was no party to the agreement and it was later that he became aware of its execution. It was obvious that the Dutch had committed a breach of faith with the King; but from the Dutch angle if it brought them greater profit their grandiloquent promises to a heathen were mere pieces of paper.

Raja Sinha had brought in the Dutch as an ally; the Dutch had come in mainly for purposes of trade but had elected to remain with the object of conquest. It was not long before acute differences arose between the two parties occasioned by many causes; they were at variance both in regard to the terms of the Treaty between them and its interpretation, the conduct of the war against the Portuguese, the retention or non-retention by the Dutch of the captured forts, the repayment of expenses claimed by the Dutch as incurred on the King's behalf, the keeping and rendering of these accounts and the repayment of any excess expenditure.

Apart from the grandeur of the ownership of an Eastern Empire, it was the exploitation of Ceylon's cinnamon and its animal and mineral wealth that was the main inducement to the Dutch to

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2. Goonewardene, *Foundation of Dutch Power*, pp. 69, 76.



acquire a control over the Island; unlike the Portuguese, the propagation of their faith was of little concern to them, so long as the diversion of the Island's wealth into their own purses was achieved. There was ever a demand of the King for more ship-loads of cinnamon and more elephants; the king on the other hand protested the scarcity of both and as far as conditions permitted not only collected both these commodities for himself but carried off the peasantry and the plantation labour from the areas under Dutch occupation.

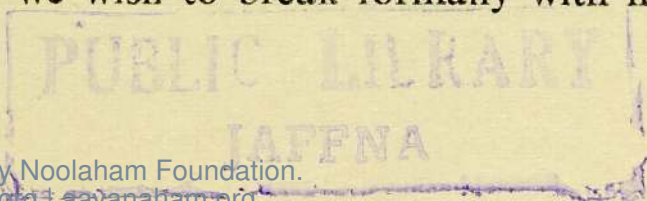
Both parties, however, professed the utmost loyalty to each other; both parties suspected each other of duplicity; some writers have taken pains to exonerate Raja Sinha and others to condemn him; other writers have taken pains to exonerate or condemn the actions and conduct of the Dutch. The correct view, probably, is that both ostensible allies were *de facto* antagonists, guilty of duplicity in that both adopted the standard technique, then and now in international dealings—the science of lying.

An analysis of the correspondence between the parties betrays the prevarications on both sides peeping through the expressions of courtesy and assurances of good faith on either side. The Dutch attitude towards the King can hardly be better expressed than it was by their man of genius Van Diemen, in Batavia to their man of works Thijssen, then the Dutch representative in Ceylon; he wrote (20th July, 1644).

“You know well that we help Raja for no other purpose than to help ourselves....consequently you must not allow the coolies and cinnamon peelers and others to be removed from the jurisdiction of Galle....If you read carefully the letters sent through the Commissioner, Breel, you will find yourself fully authorised to do what the service of the Company requires.

“We do not ask you to break formally with Raja, and to declare war against him—that is not our meaning—but you shall carry on war in his name against those who try to hinder the Majesty's forts (*sic*) and people in Ceylon from obtaining proper sustenance from his lands....

“But we should be glad to see that they (*i.e.* the few Dutchmen who were in Batticaloa) continue there, even if it were only one or two persons, in order not to create greater suspicions in the mind of the faithless Raja, that we wish to break formally with him al-





though it apparently must come to that.''<sup>3</sup>

The central body of what had become a far-flung Dutch Empire was the Hague; this Council of Directors which sat in the homeland claimed to exercise authority over and supervise and direct their headquarters in their Asian establishments; Ceylon was under the direct charge of the Council of Batavia. The views of the central body and its Asian Council were not always identical. Beset by its European problems, the Hague often favoured peace and not conquest; the men on the spot, however, motivated by feelings of gain and of grandeur preferred territorial expansion; there was, therefore, a frequent conflict between these two authorities; so much so that Batavia put its decisions into execution before the directions of the Hague reached the Council. The Hague was thus forestalled, sometimes as the logical sequence of its own procrastination, at other times deliberately and on purpose.

Van Diemen in anticipation of the contemplated peace with Portugal expressed his solicitude for the adverse repercussions that such an event would have on Raja Sinha's problems. The sentiments in his letter to his colleague in Ceylon create a doubt whether he was giving expression to his own feelings or practising the art of deception on himself and his colleague. Whatever may have been his own reason, it provides food for amusement as a piece of casuistry; it recalls the penitent Reynard in the churchyard garbed in a cassock and counting his beads until the next fat hen comes within his ken; he wrote (12th Dec., 1641):

“If it comes to a peace, we shall maintain the same religiously. But we are bound by contract to the King of Ceylon to assist him to drive the Portuguese from his land; that must be accomplished or else he will remain liable to pay the expenses incurred by the Company in his service.”<sup>4</sup>

With the Declaration of Truce (1641) between the Netherlands and Portugal, and the latter's separation from Spain (1641), Van Diemen's keen mind anticipated his future opportunities; he saw the path clear for a division of Ceylon between its two enemies; in another letter to Thijssen (18th Oct., 1641) the real Van Diemen reveals himself; he had made an astute assessment of the resulting situation; the two enemies, turned friends, could now cut up Raja Sinha's corpse; he wrote (18th Oct., 1642):

3. Goonewardene, pp. 89, 102.

4. Goonewardene, pp. 67/103.



“On account of the great likelihood of a peace with Portugal, it would not be a strange thing if, after this, everything remained in *status quo*, and if we break with Raja Sinha, each of us would remain in possession of the territory under his jurisdiction as his own. Then, the cinnamon in the territory of Galle, being lawfully appertaining to us.”<sup>5</sup>

The relationship between the King and the Dutch, courteous letters notwithstanding, were seldom cordial; the King was conscious of an uneasy feeling that he had been duped by the retention of the forts by the Dutch and Dutch accounts of the expenses incurred by them and of the payments made by him were false and faked; under the agreement and by mutual arrangement the Dutch had constituted themselves the book-keepers of the various transactions between them. The King's debt was according to the Dutch ever on the increase. An attempt was made by the Dutch to ease the situation by personal negotiations; they, however, chose the wrong emissary; Jacobsz Koster sought audience with the King.

The interview bore no fruit; on the contrary it was followed by an unfortunate incident, the assassination of Koster himself by the Sinhalese (1640).

Koster's behaviour in the audience hall was most indiscreet; he was guilty of an atrocious diplomatic *faux pas* in that he turned his back to the King and left the hall without the King's permission breaking all the Biblical rules of protocol; he next took off from his neck, the King's present to him, a golden chain and threw it at a Mudaliyar's feet; nevertheless he had the good fortune to leave the King's presence with his head yet on his shoulders but on the return journey he was assassinated.<sup>6</sup>

It has been said that the cause was yet another incident when he slapped the Mudaliyar in charge of his escort but according to a different version, the assassination was on the King's orders. Raja Sinha II, like King Henry II who posed his problem about Thomas à Beckett with the words “Who will rid me of this turbulent Priest?” had, perhaps, exclaimed, “Who will rid me of this turbulent Hollander; he knows not how to behave in my imperial presence?” Even the Dutch historian's version does not entirely exonerate the Vice-Commander in the role of diplomat.

“Koster though he personally attended the Court of Candy yet

5. Goonewardene, pp. 60/76.

6. Pieris, *Ceylon and the Portuguese*, pp. 236-237.



could obtain nothing of his reasonable requests but was fruitlessly detained there for a long while. He became thus disheartened and impatient and began not only to threaten the courtiers but also to use some expressions of abuse;" (verily a sad indiscretion and sign of shallow policy).<sup>7</sup>

It is evident that the impetuous and erring Dutchman had none of those remarkable diplomatic traits of the much enduring Britisher, John Pybus; who over a century later waded through slush and mud to Empire unperturbed by trial and tribulation.

Shortly after Koster's assassination, the Portuguese resumed military operations with some success; they re-captured Negombo (1640) and a Kandyan force which had gone to the aid of the Dutch under the command of one of Raja Sinha's chief Mudaliyars was taken unaware and defeated; the Mudaliyar himself was slain. The Portuguese thereafter overran a great part of the King's territories and a large quantity of cinnamon fell into their hands. Their success was accentuated by differences between the allies which left a joint attack in doubt.

It was at this stage that the Dutch sought a way out to resolve the differences in connection with the treaty by the creation of a new excuse for the retention of the forts; they exaggerated the expenses and refused their restoration until payment; but Raja Sinha was adamant; he was prepared to release only one fort and claimed the right to recover the others. "Now the lands are mine, and I am, the lawful King of these lands" (1641). The statement of expenses sent by Van Diemen (Sept. 6, 1640) was repudiated by the King who called the Dutch "faithless" and "covenant-breakers".

"I have room to presume such, for it is not written in the articles of the treaty, that when any fortress was captured it should be kept as security until I should have paid the expenses; nor that I should immediately pay the same, nor do you desire the payment in cash, but only in merchandise. And if desired the repayment in cash whenever any fortress was conquered, or if we had agreed in the articles in the treaty to make repayment in cash then I would admit the reasonableness of your demand. But since neither the one nor the other has been agreed on, I may well term, those who do the contrary, "faithless" and "covenant-breakers", since they have done that which has not been agreed on in the treaty."<sup>8</sup>

7. Baldaeus, p. 272.

8. Goonewardene, p. 59; 26th August, 1641.



This letter of Raja Sinha is a clear and unequivocal repudiation of the contention of the Dutch; the King, though unequal to the Dutch in commercial diplomacy, was quite their equal in closely reasoned argument and mental calibre. However irritating these accusations were to Van Diemen and his Council, the appropriation by the Portuguese of the produce of the cinnamon lands compelled them to send more Dutch forces to Ceylon (Oct. 19, 1641). Matters were in this state when the political climate in Europe underwent a change and a Truce was declared between Portugal and the Netherlands (1641).

Van Diemen saw the path clear for the division of Ceylon between the two countries; to both Portugal and the Netherlands it was merely a temporary expedient to enable them to make the best bargain for each other; the correspondence reproduced in the foregoing pages and their observations on their own unreliability afford ample proof of their own intentions towards each other and towards Raja Sinha. The treaty between the two countries, to which reference was earlier made, was a natural sequence (January 10, 1645).

The main terms of the agreement between the Dutch and the Portuguese provided for a division of the territories between Galle and Colombo determined by the Bentota-Ganga; the territory to the south of the river fell to the Dutch and that to the North, to the Portuguese. Regarding the lands between Colombo and Negombo, it was decided that although an equal division of the total territory was to be made, entire Korales or districts were, as far as possible, to be assigned without mutations, since confusion and conflicts regarding this division could thus be avoided.

The lands to the North of Negombo, Puttalam and Kalpitiya were to remain in the possession of the Portuguese. Provision was also made that the Dutch could claim redress within a year if it was found that they had been deceived and advantage taken of the absence of a very precise knowledge on their part; if, however, the parties could not agree on the claims of the Dutch no recourse was to be had to arms, but the truce was to be maintained inviolable.

Even in later years in common parlance a distinction came thereafter to be drawn between the inhabitants of Southern Ceylon in relation to the Bentota River; the residents of the further side were for some reason credited with greater shrewdness than their brethren on the side nearer Colombo; this view was not factually correct nor was it the political reason for the division.



The truce amounted, however, to nothing more than a temporary compromise between the two brigands to rob another man of his property with the mental reservation to rob each other at the first opportunity; the clause that the truce was to be maintained inviolate was a fiction as subsequent events demonstrated.

The real feelings between the two combatants have been succinctly expressed by their own compatriots. Within a few months of the treaty Thijssen wrote to Batavia, "it looks as if we shall not be able to keep any good relations with this evil brood. But time will teach us what we must do." (April 17, 1645)<sup>9</sup>.

The Portuguese view of the Treaty was similar; "they (the Dutch) came to these terms, which their policy approved, and which was not less convenient to us, because at this very time, we had to deal with other enemies, who profiting by the distraction caused by the Hollander arms in diverse parts, occupied our lands, because among those nations there never existed any friendship other than present convenience."<sup>10</sup> The substance of the agreement (March 9, 1645) stipulated that:

"The Portuguese and the Netherlanders were bound themselves to protect, according to ability and the necessities of the case, each others lands and peoples against the invasions and devastations of the aforesaid peoples, whoever they may be, or by whomsoever they may be sent.

"But in case either party wished to completely destroy the above people and thought it necessary to declare war and pursue them beyond the territorial boundaries of that party, then the other party was not bound to assist in this work unless it was undertaken with common agreement.

"The two parties also promised to assist each other in quelling any rebellion, which might arise in their respective territories. Finally each party bound itself to refrain from negotiating with the King of Kandy—here he was explicitly referred to—anything which might be prejudicial to the other party.

"For the better observance of this agreement, which incidentally was to last till a final decision regarding these lands was notified from Europe, the governors of both parties were to swear on oath that they would fully maintain the above terms."<sup>11</sup>

This agreement was in effect a distribution of the lands and peoples

9. *ibid*—pp. 108/133.

10. Queyroz—p. 894.

11. Goonewardene, pp. 99, 106.



of a little Asian State among two foreign nations, for the express purpose of plunder. The hypocritical words "each others lands and peoples" could scarcely disguise the fact that the reference was to the territories and peoples of Ceylon; the prevarication is obvious. An apt illustration of this act of these two Christian nations is found in a passage in the Bible.

A certain man fell among thieves which stripped him of his raiment and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half-dead.''<sup>12</sup>

The Dutch predikaant (preacher) Baldaeus who resided in Ceylon for nine years (1656-1665) with a break of two years (1656-1658) has written an account of Ceylon; it is entitled *A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon*; his section on Ceylon is regarded as a source book; it contains fifty-one chapters, of which the first twenty-one deal with events up to the Dutch Treaty with Raja Sinha II (1638). His next chapter, twenty-two, refers to the siege operations against Colombo (1656), except for desultory reference to some prior incidents, such as the assassination of Koster and changes of Governors and Commanders.

It is remarkable that not a single reference is made to the most outstanding incident of the intervening eighteen years—the Treaty between the Dutch and the Portuguese (1645); not even in his two subsequent chapters, forty-one and forty-two, which contain some throw-backs. It cannot for a moment be thought that Baldaeus was unaware of the treaty; he has reproduced the text of two earlier treaties between the Dutch and Raja Sinha,<sup>13</sup> and of one later treaty between the Portuguese and the Dutch. It has not been suggested that any chapters of his book has been lost or abstracted.

The answer, therefore, suggests itself that the virtuous Predikaant hid from posterity this ugly chapter in the history of the transactions of the Dutch in Ceylon; evidently he felt ashamed of the treachery of his compatriots towards a heathen king, of an ally towards an ally tied by covenant to protect him. But this treaty was of fundamental importance; for it paved the way for the foundation of Dutch power in Ceylon; the omission of so vital a fact detracts from the reliability of Baldaeus as an historian.

If the two Governors, as stipulated in the Dutch-Portuguese Treaty,

12. St. Luke.

13. Baldaeus, pp. 48, 118, 338.



took their respective oaths in accordance with its terms, they forswore them before their lips were closed; for hostilities soon recommenced. The behaviour of colonisers of that age is, indeed, neither "elevating" nor pleasant reading. If Asian peoples have ever since evinced a bitter hatred towards them and towards the races that they represented, it is hardly fair or reasonable to ascribe their resentment to prejudice or to lay the blame on the victims.

In the midst of this deadly peril and shifting sands, Raja Sinha stood his ground; he made full use of every opportunity at his disposal. He realized that the new allies would soon be as faithless to each other as they had been to him; while bargaining with the Dutch as before, he decided to play one against the other which he did with consummate success until he fulfilled his main ambition, the expulsion of the Portuguese (1658).

The diplomacy of Raja Sinha II at this critical moment was not second to the ablest of his compeers in other lands; he hated the Portuguese for their occupation of Ceylon, their cruelty and their bigotry; he despised the Dutch for their cupidity and unreliability. But outwardly he made it appear that his assistance was available to one enemy against the other; that either of them could rely on his loyalty and aid in an expedition against the other. His situation was desperate; his country was in dire peril. It would appear that he put into execution an immemorial technique of international diplomacy.

During twenty years (1638-1658) of his long reign of fifty-two years (1634-1686), he balanced the Dutch against the Portuguese until the expulsion of the Portuguese (1658); this accomplishment of his dedicated task was, indeed, a magnificent achievement. He put into practice in a little Asian State a fundamental principle of international politics—the Balance of Power; this experiment was the pet amusement of European nations of that age; whenever one nation would appear to have amassed too much Power, the others united to achieve its overthrow; it was a game of permutations and combinations in which the great master craftsmen of Europe took a weird delight.

The partition of a "heathen" state among European nations was not a strange event in that age. It was Europe that then decided non-European affairs, not the states concerned; Africa, for instance was divided among the European nations. When as a schoolboy in a British Colony of the early twentieth century, the present writer



observed in a map of Africa the prefixes, British, French, Dutch, Portuguese to the names of African States, no teacher taught him the process of this evolution. The carving out of coastal Ceylon and its environs between the Dutch and the Portuguese was, therefore, no strange phenomenon; its people and its territory were as chattels for distribution amongst the favoured nations.

The King's view of this secret partition of his country was expressed by him in his letter to the Dutch Governor (Feb. 16, 1645);<sup>14</sup> he complained of the inclusion of some of his territories within the partition; certain areas, named by him in the letter, had been under his own vidanes; they had never formed part of the territory near Mannar controlled by the Portuguese; the "fraud" had been committed because his own emissary was not present to assist in the negotiations; he also complained of the omission of his own name in the Treaty document as he was the owner of the lands and also of the retention of the forts of Negombo and Galle by the Dutch. The Dutch Governor's reply was naïve (March 1645 A.D.).

"We should indeed have wished not to have to undertake any division of lands with the Portuguese until someone had been commissioned on behalf of Your Majesty who might have assisted therein; but I was not able to obtain sufficient time for that from the Viceroy Dom Philippo, who is about to leave for Goa, but instead we have agreed that, in case it is found that we have been deceived, we may within the period of a year challenge it, as Your Majesty will have learnt from our previous letter, whereby everything remains safeguarded, while we shall be glad if Your Majesty will be pleased to point out wherein you have been prejudiced, in order that we may seek reparation on his behalf.

"In like manner it is for the sake of the Portuguese that our name stands in the contract of the division and not Your Majesty's to whom the lands properly belong; on account of other princes and kings, we shall do as Your Majesty requests, and it is also right to take out our name and put Your Majesty's in place thereof. What Your Majesty says touching our camps near Negombo and their retiring inside that fortress shall, as, owing to the truce with the Portuguese, we have now no more enemies, be carried out in the near future.

"But as the lands are still, owing to the late war full of highwaymen and rabble who in the name of Your Majesty cause annoyance

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14. R. A. S. (CB), Vol. XVIII p. 185.



to the good inhabitants and drive them off their lands, it will be necessary for the aforesaid camps to remain in the field for some time yet, until the lands have completely quietened down, as we confidently believe Your Majesty will understand in regard to us, for without this it will be impossible to obtain any fruits from the lands, wherewith to pay the expenses that we have in mind in Your Majesty's service. Meanwhile we shall not fail to hold Your Majesty's fortresses occupied by suitable garrisons so that, with God's help, they will be free from danger, of which Your Majesty be pleased to rest fully assured, by whom also we expect the aforesaid garrison will be provided with all necessaries as promised in the aforesaid letter.''<sup>15</sup>

The mental climate of the Dutch occupation of Ceylon was now in the process of change; they had come in by invitation; and primarily for the purpose of trade. But their retention of the captured forts and their secret partition afford ample evidence of their change of attitude; their occupation of Ceylon thereafter can be equated to and was no different from the Portuguese—it was an occupation by force. They were in effect putting into execution of what a well-known exponent of political theory in Europe had recommended as the standard technique; in defining for his adherents “in what way faith should be kept by Princes,” he wrote:

“Everybody knows how laudable it is in a prince to keep his faith and to be an honest man and not a trickster. Nevertheless, the experience of our times shows that the princes who have done great things are the ones who have taken little account of their promises and who have known how to addle the brains of men with craft. In the end they have conquered those who have put their reliance on good faith.

“You must realise then, that there are two ways to fight. In one kind the laws are used, in the others, force. The first is suitable to man, the other to animals. But because the first often falls short, one has to turn to the second. Hence a prince must know perfectly how to act like a beast and like a man....A prince must know how to use the qualities of both creatures (beast and man). The one without the other will not last long.’’<sup>16</sup>

An acute controversy arose on the retention of the forts; ultimately both parties relied on the Treaty between them (Clause 3);

15. Joan Maetsuicker to Raja Sinha II, R. A. S. (CB), Vol. XVIII, pp. 187—189.  
16. The Prince by Niccolo Machavelli (1469-1527 A.D.).



the treaty had been written in Portuguese and the originals had been executed in duplicate; both parties had translations of the originals. On the capture of Trincomalee (1640) the Dutch commander had brushed aside the request of Raja Sinha's Modeliars to hand over the fort to them by the production of the translation in the possession of the Dutch. But on the capture of Galle, Raja Sinha who was himself present with his army produced his translation; the 3rd clause supported his contention.

“Provision had been made in the 3rd clause that the defences conquered as aforesaid, shall be garrisoned by the Netherlands”; in the king's copy after the word “Netherlands” came the words “if His Majesty thought fit” but this crucial qualification was omitted from the translation then with the Dutch. In view of the King's denouncement that a deception was sought to be practised on him, the Dutch held a further inquiry into the matter; it was said that there had been an omission in their translation through the error of an assistant or clerk. The relevant material has been recently found as the result of further research. It is sufficient without further comment to reproduce the observations of an eminent Dutch historian on the alleged error.

“It cannot be decided with certainty whether the alteration made in the copy presented to the Maharaja has been caused by an error, or deliberately, in order to deceive him.

“It is, however, hardly credible that an unconscious, yet so glaring, error of a subordinate should not have been immediately perceived. The nature of the alteration and the obvious objective that was aimed at by the alteration, make us rather believe that there is no question here of an error, but that really, this has been done according to a fixed plan and that the translator has only been the tool of people in higher positions.”<sup>17</sup>

According to the Treaty the Dutch undertook to “protect His Majesty's Empire from all violence by the Portuguese (clause 1); on the king's part he was to defray all expenses incurred by the Dutch in his defence including the fitting up of ships, equipment and the expenses of the war; in lieu of money payment, His Majesty shall give us cinnamon, pepper, cardamoms, indigo, wax, rice and other articles except—jungle cinnamon;” in regard to elephants, the Dutch were entitled to be provided with the same number of elephants that were sold to strangers at the same price (clauses 8 and 9);

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17. Goonewardene, pp. 34, 36, 51 citing William Van Greer.



the arrangement was that the Dutch were to keep the accounts.

It was the king's continual complaint that no accounts were rendered in spite of repeated requests and that whatever accounts happened to be rendered were false and fabricated; the alleged expenditure was grossly exaggerated and the pricing of the merchandise—excessively low; the Dutch contended that unless the debt was paid, the forts could on no account be restored. It was obvious that their intention was to keep the king permanently in their debt for the exploitation of Ceylon. "Fortunately there is enough evidence to show that the statement of the king's debt is very much of a concoction, turned out by the commission, which was specially appointed for the purpose."<sup>18</sup>

This treaty of Raja Sinha II was, perhaps, the first adventure of a Sinhalese king in the field of commerce; the head of a little agricultural state whose language of commerce was barter and not cash was no match for the master craftsmen of Europe. Raja Sinha was, so to say, stripped naked; his forts, his lands, his commodities, his animal wealth were all taken from him; he was charged with being in debt; he sought a way of escape and offered to pay his full debt in cash. Van Diemen sent the significant reply (18th October, 1641 A.D.):

"The contract speaks of merchandise not cash; further more (the contract says) that all the wares of Ceylon, may be sold to no other nation than the Netherlands; excepting the elephants, of which not more than half is due to us. Therefore, we request you to maintain inviolate the concluded contract."<sup>19</sup>

This reply is reminiscent of the trial scene in the *Merchant of Venice* when the avaricious Jew insisted on exacting his pound of flesh from the breast of the desperate Venetian merchant, the shipwreck of whose commodities had rendered him bankrupt and unable to pay his debt.

Portia. Therefore lay bare your bosom

Shylock. Ay, his breast;

So says the bond—doth it not, noble judge?

Nearest his heart; those are the very words.

Portia. It is so. Are there balance here to weigh the flesh?

Shylock. I have them ready.

18. Goonewardene, pp. 43, 55.

19. Goonewardene, pp. 45, 56.



- Portia. Have by some surgeon, Shylock, on your charge,  
To stop his wounds, lest he do bleed to death
- Shylock. Is it so nominated in the bond?
- Portia. It is not so expressed but what of that?  
'Twere good you do so much for charity.
- Shylock. I cannot find it; 'tis not in the bond.'<sup>20</sup>

The contention raised by Raja Sinha for the restoration of the forts is revealed in his letters; in the same way the reason for the anxiety of the Dutch to retain them appears in the observations of Dutch writers and in the confidential communications between the Dutch Governors in Batavia and their representatives in Ceylon; an observation of an historian is that Galle was regarded as holding the key to the surrounding districts; similarly Van Diemen sent express instructions to Commander Cash to capture Galle without the aid of the king's troops; the object of this direction was to facilitate the retention of the fort by the Dutch:-

"You shall thoroughly sound the King's humour and inclination towards (the idea of) our undertaking alone by ourselves something against the Portuguese forts; since it is not advisable to have his men and his assistance."<sup>21</sup>

Even after the capture of Galle and its retention by the Dutch, Raja Sinha in his correspondence refers to Galle as "my fortress at Galle" and the Dutch Commander as "my vassal"; in some letters his protests are unequivocal and amount to accusations against the Dutch of breach of faith. But neither his requests nor his threats were of any avail to deter the Dutch from their set purpose.

"In the past I have given warnings to the governors of that fortress of mine (Galle) regarding the war in this my empire of Ceilaō, and I now do so to Your Honour in order that you may know it, that all times when the Dutch nation shall have war with the Portuguese, or with whatever nation it may be; or shall wish to make any fortification, or place any arrayal (camp) in any garrison, or take any alien territories or towns from the Cape of Comorin (or) from the coast of Choromandel on this side (on the coast facing Ceylon).


"They first consult my royal person, before they make the said war; and by sea it will be according to the occasions that they shall have, and as it shall appear to them in their Council, provided that

20. *The Merchant of Venice* (Shakespeare), IV. 1. 260—268.

21. Goonewardene, pp. 24, 25.



there be no loss on our side; because if they do this there will be no distrust or any mistake, but rather it shall be to the profit of both parties, and our fame; and for these aforesaid reasons I shall esteem it if the Dutch nation give fulfilment to that which I have already enjoined upon it.”<sup>22</sup>

This letter was written in Portuguese on both sides of a large sheet of thick paper measuring no less than 38 inches in length by 15 inches in breadth and bore as its signature the royal sign manuel  which was the mark adopted by Sinhalese monarchs. His letters bring us almost into personal contact with Raja Sinha and his vigorous personality; they evoke a chord of sympathy towards a man, fighting single-handed to save a little island from exploitation by two assailants between whom he was sandwiched.

Ceylon became a scene of blood and carnage mainly for the collection of the bark of the cinnamon tree which grew luxuriantly in certain districts. Spices and spice-lands were an irresistible attraction for the preservation of animal food in the days when recourse was not had to refrigeration. It was Ceylon's misfortune to produce that commodity in abundance. A Dutch historian has left a full description of the cinnamon tree, the extraction of its product and its uses.

“The cinnamon which is so much esteemed in Holland and a pound of which is sold at such remarkable prices, is in the island absolutely pure. It is called by the Cingaleze *curaneopotto* and the *curunda-gas* some of which are found to be very large; the leaves are not unlike those of the citron tree, but somewhat narrower; the blossoms are white, lovely and of a sweet scent, it produces a fruit resembling an olive, of a slight yellow tint, from which the inhabitants extract an oil which has the colour and virtue of *noten muscalen* (nutmeg) and is medicinally applied in various disorders, it retains the smell and flavour of cinnamon.

“The cinnamon tree has two barks of which the external one is scraped off with a bent knife, and then they proceed to peel off the cinnamon with the curved point by an incision made first circular-wise and then in a parallel line, and then expose the bark in the sun to dry, when they warp and get rolled together. The trees thus barked and peeled grow no longer, but there spring up new trees from the seeds, which are dropped down from the parent tree.”<sup>23</sup>

22. R. A. S. (CB), Vol. XXI—p. 259.

23. Baldaeus, *Ceylon*, Ch. 49, pp. 386, 387.



While carrying on a vigorous correspondence on the issues on which they were in conflict, both parties scrupulously maintained the rules of protocol. The Dutch addressed Raja Sinha as His Imperial Majesty and gave him all the high-sounding titles calculated to please him and sent presents to suit the royal taste; they always gave him their reassurance of protection against the wicked Portuguese; the King on the other hand, reiterated his belief in the loyalty of the Dutch and reciprocated the presents.

“The science of reigning” has been described as “the science of lying”; this device adopted by both parties has been misdescribed as “duplicity” and writers who favoured the King have endeavoured to clear him of this charge; while the writers who favoured the Dutch have sought to exonerate them, but this term can hardly be assigned to a device of which both parties were well aware; each party neutralised the other’s manoeuvre.

“As I hold in my royal heart that the Dutch nation is loyal and true to me, and serves me with goodwill, so I have confidence that it will serve me always with the same aforesaid love and loyalty; and in the same manner I hope in God, that as long as the sun and moon endure, so it will continue always.

“As the Dutch nation serves me with great loyalty and good zeal, and because of the affection that my imperial person has for it, for that reason anything that the said nation presents me with I esteem highly.

“The four plumes (evidently for Raja Sinha’s headgear) are very good and as such I welcomed them. The surgical instruments are of very good workmanship. The medicines as, I have towards the Dutch nation great love and affection, and it is faithful to me, I well understand that they are sure to present me with only very precious things, as Your Honour tells me in your letter that they are and that these aforesaid medicines be explained to me.”<sup>24</sup>

In spite of his profuse thanks, it is most unlikely that the King swallowed the medicines unless, at least, the food-taster of his palace had first partaken of them and had survived the experiment. The plumes, however, would have delighted his mind; for Raja Sinha was himself the designer of his own outfit and the drawings yet extant of his person assign to him a distinctive headgear of which plumes form a part.

While these diplomatic notes were being exchanged between the

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24. R. A. S. (CB), Vol. XXI, p.



Sinhalese King and the Dutch Governors, the peace in Europe between Portugal and the Netherlands was drawing to a close; the agreement had been for a Truce for ten years (A.D. 1642-1652). Batavia had already received orders from the Hague for the resumption of the war (14th Oct., 1651); but as the reinforcements sent were insufficient, hostilities were delayed until more assistance was received. The Portuguese were now a beaten race; their power both in Europe and in Asia had been gradually extinguished; the bell had begun to toll for Portugal; a curse was lifted from Ceylon.



**A CURSE IS LIFTED**

Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that  
take the sword shall perish with the sword.

—ST. MATTHEW

6271 ce







## CHAPTER X

### A CURSE IS LIFTED

According to the agreement in Europe, the Truce between Portugal and the Netherlands was for a period of ten years (A.D. 1642-1652); in Ceylon the two nations had entered into two pacts, one was for the definition of the limits of each other's territories (January 10, 1645); the other was an alliance which stipulated their future course of action (March 9, 1645), but neither party intended to keep faith with the other.

As observed by the Portuguese historian, "among these nations there never existed any friendship other than present convenience";<sup>1</sup> this view found confirmation by Thijssen, the Dutch representative in Ceylon, "It looks as if we shall not be able to keep any good-neighbourly relations with this evil brood"<sup>2</sup> (April 17, 1645).

The exchange of compliments was, therefore, reciprocal; both pacts turned out to be mere wastepaper. Henceforth, it was a triangular contest, punctuated by periods of peace; the King remained the main target of attack, but whenever an opportunity was afforded he made use of and received the assistance of one enemy against the other; both invaders in turn overran his territory while he attacked and de-populated their areas of occupation.

But his greatest handicap was the fact that the forts which also served him as ports and his means of communication overseas were retained by the invaders and his trade was throttled; he was hemmed in within the Island while his enemies had access to the seas. This slow process of strangulation led to the inevitable diminution and decay of his resources and of his kingdom.

The people of Ceylon were perishing in their own luxuriant Island submerged in a sea of foreign inoculated turmoil; no opportunity or interval of time whatsoever was left to them for the development of the agricultural or other natural resources of their homeland or for the flowering of their culture or for national growth.

The King's inveterate hatred, however, against the Portuguese always superseded his fear of the annexation of his territory by and

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1. Queyroz, Bk. 5, p. 894.

2. Goonewardene, *Foundation of Dutch Power*, p. 108.



his bitterness towards the Dutch in regard to their conduct in relation to his own Treaty with them; his decision to drive the Portuguese out of Colombo, "the Mother of Evil", never wavered.

On the other hand, he railed against the Dutch for the deceit practised on him. "And if I thought that the *casta Hollamdesa* would not fulfil that which they had said and sworn at the peace, I would not have allowed them to swear in my royal presence;"<sup>3</sup> but yet, he collected forces to aid the Dutch against his hated foe; to his relief, the Dutch and the Portuguese could never agree on the division of the cinnamon and the exploitation of the spoils of conquest; they killed each other for the booty in the manner of common thieves.

"The twenty-year period preceding the final expulsion of the Portuguese (1638-1658), witnessed a triangular conflict between three powers, each seeking its own advantage over the other two rivals. The basic factor behind these conflicts was the attempt of King Raja Sinha II to rid the Island of Portuguese power, in pursuance of which he took the fateful step of inviting the assistance of the Dutch East India Company (1638).

Consequent on this decision there ensued a period of tortuous diplomacy and confused warfare in which agreements and covenants went by the board.<sup>4</sup>

Of these terrible years the Portuguese historian said, "there was seen nothing but bloodshed among the three nations that embattled therein.... the Portuguese, Hollander and the Chingalaz nation.... we were compelled to divide these (the Portuguese forces) against the Chingalaz and the Hollander."<sup>5</sup>

It was Ceylon's misfortune that the arena of this dreadful conflict was her own soil; to the foreign troops and foreign garrisons, the battlefield was a venue of choice; to the people of Ceylon, it was a venue of necessity. Their survival through this reign of terror is another illustration of the response of the inhabitance to a terrific challenge. But the situation reached a climax and its end as the strength of the Portuguese ebbed away with the eclipse of Spain and it became no longer possible for them to retain their Eastern Empire.

"The Hollander, who has gained such ascendancy and power in these seas that he was able at one and the same time to make war on us in Goa, Ceylon, Malacca and in all other parts wherein he

3. *ibid* pp. 125/138.

4. Arasaratnam, *Dutch Power in Ceylon*, p. 1.

5. Queyroz.



could do us injury, with a hatred as deadly as if the Portuguese nation had ever invaded his home, for this is the nation from which we received most injury outside Portugal, in the other parts of the world for no other reason than that of might and self-interest.”<sup>6</sup>

A very apt description, indeed, of the motives that brought both the Portuguese and the Dutch to Ceylon; the final observation would be reciprocated by the natives of Ceylon towards both these foreign nations.

During the seven years (1645-1652) which elapsed between the Portuguese and the Dutch Alliance and the resumption of hostilities between them, no military activities of any decisive nature occurred; the Portuguese attempted to hold fast to their territories, the Dutch to extend their own, whenever an opportunity occurred; the King, at times recovered part of what he had lost, at other times found his own lands overrun by his enemies.

It was apparent that the Portuguese were mainly on the defensive, conscious that little aid could be expected from their motherland, while the anxiety of the Batavian Council to strengthen the position of the Dutch was in a measure curbed by the Hague on the ground that the truce for ten years was still in operation.

In the meantime the local authorities extended their rule in Ceylon; the Company's lands were administered by a President or a Governor assisted by a Council under the authority of the Governor-General and Council in Batavia; other officers, many of them military men, were put in charge of the civil administration with appropriate designations. The Governor's attempts to act on his own without prior consultation with the Council were peremptorily checked.

“We require that in future you will not undertake or decide any matters of importance, except with the previous consent and common decision of the Council as happens here (Batavia) and everywhere, where good order is maintained. And so, that the Councillors may have fuller knowledge of all matters concerning the affairs of the Government, they will in future sign the letters (to Batavia, apparently) along with you (April 4, 1651).”<sup>7</sup>

The administration of the Dutch territories in different parts of the Island were assigned to various Chiefs, Captains and Dissavas. The main source of revenue was from the cinnamon; the sale of

6. *ibid.*

7. Goonewardene, pp. 142/150.



elephants came second in value and in importance. The Batavian authorities were of the view that the cost of administration and the maintenance of the forces should be met by local sources of revenue other than cinnamon and set on foot a policy of colonization with the object of the reduction of expenditure.

But this colonization project was a failure; the Dutch colonists were lazy and disinclined to hard work; they were moreover unable to contract any marriages other than with native women of lower status. The wish of the Directors to see the colonists married to native women of the best castes was unrealized.

“Few except those who had nothing to lose and everything to gain, had the courage to marry the Dutch soldiers (for almost all the colonists were soldiers). And these women, either through their unfaithfulness or their extravagant habits or both, dragged many of the colonists to ruin.”<sup>8</sup>

One unrealistic Dutch Governor, Maetzuyker, is said to have even made the suggestion that in order to prevent the unfaithfulness of these women, they should be kept indoors in “honourable confinement” (January 26, 1647). This well-intentioned Dutchman’s education had evidently been incomplete and had not included Boccaccio’s *Decameron* where it is said that a jealous husband could not even by the use of a padlock protect his wife’s chastity from her ingenious paramour who unknown to him would use a duplicate key during his absence.

The conquest and occupation of foreign lands is one thing; their administration and the reaping of the fruits of victory is another; the wheels of Government move on its subjects goodwill and cooperation. The people of Ceylon, both the chiefs and the masses, compelled by force of arms to acknowledge and submit to the foreign occupation of the coastal plains, remained steadfastly loyal to their own sovereign.

To foreign rulers, governors and commanders their professed allegiance was a mere make-believe. Foreign rule was to them akin to slavery; such was the admission made by a Dutch governor in Ceylon to the Council in Batavia in the course of a reference to the powerful Sinhalese chiefs of Matara in South Ceylon.

“From our daily experience we judge that they imagine that so long as they have to submit to our rule (although in peace and quiet) they consider themselves to be in slavery.”<sup>9</sup> (Sept. 23, 1651).

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8. *ibid*, pp. 145/152.

9. *ibid*, pp. 149/153.



This sense of frustration evinced by the Chieftains of Southern Ceylon displayed a keen sense of perception of the evil effects through foreign domination which cannot be camouflaged by the invaders' patronage and the crumbs which fall from his table. From the angle of the invaders, the main object of the alliance between them was to obtain Ceylon's cinnamon supply.

But it was one thing to cut off chunks of Raja Sinha's territory; it was another thing to chew them. The supply of cinnamon depended on the availability of cinnamon-peelers to harvest and cure the cinnamon bark which was a specialized function and the existence of a Sinhalese population in the cinnamon areas.

“This matter is clear and certain; namely, that we cannot obtain the fruits of the lands without the help of these people (the Sinhalese); it is on account of this that they must be attached to us by means of all polite, friendly and mild treatment and not because they merit such treatment or are worthy of it.”<sup>10</sup>

This observation was made by a Dutch Governor to Batavia (Sept. 18, 1650); in execution of this policy of winning the attachment of the people the Dutch, like the Portuguese, adopted two expedients, one was directed towards the King, the other mainly towards the people. Raja Sinha had always evinced an interest in the collection of animals and articles of rarity; the Dutch Governor Maetzuyker sent him rare presents to humour this pursuit, among which were a cassawary, a Dutch bear, a Persian greyhound and a fine Persian horse.

In this game of barter, the Dutch seldom suffered a commercial loss, since the King would return the compliment with presents of his own which were generally of greater value than the Dutch gifts; here both parties observed the tradition prophetic of the future, laid down at the first audience when Spilbergen left with King Vimala Dharmasuriya a portrait of Prince Maurice together with a band of musicians and took away with him “all the pepper in the royal store”.

Another device was that the Dutch correspondence, in the manner of the Portuguese, was replete with the conferment of high sounding titles on the King and expressions of humble regard; the letters of Governors would conclude by “kissing the King's feet”.

It was also sought to win the goodwill of the people by the observance whenever possible of their ancient laws and customs and the

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10. *ibid*, pp. 148/153.



association of Sinhalese chiefs in the administration. In this respect the attitude of the Dutch and of the Portuguese coincided; for the latter had at the convention of Malwana (A.D. 1597) made a proclamation to the same effect; but in the case of the Dutch, just as in the case of the Portuguese, the officials merely kept to the forms and disregarded the spirit of the ancient institutions.

Their vitality and force always depended on the presence and the power of the Sinhalese Kings and the observance of the ancient traditions; the subterfuges adopted by the invaders to establish their governments were in full accord with the precepts of one of the greatest European masters of the technique of government and the practice of deception.

“It is customary for those who wish to gain the favour of a prince to do so by offering him gifts of those things which they hold most precious or in which they knew him to take especial delight.”<sup>11</sup>

“When those which have been acquired are accustomed to live at liberty under their own laws, there are three ways of holding them. The first is to despoil them; the second is to go and live there in person; the third is to allow them to live under their own laws, taking tribute of them, and creating within the country, a government composed of a few who will keep it friendly to you.”<sup>12</sup>

It was a part of Dutch policy to uphold the Chiefs in their ancient privileges and positions. As they were almost all Buddhists or only nominal Christians, they looked up to Raja Sinha as the patron and defender of their faith. The Dutch, therefore, gave them all the material advantages possible.

“The richer they are, the trustier they must become, as their wealth is like a security of their loyalty.”<sup>13</sup> (1651). The Chiefs were also given liberal grants of land, particularly out of the confiscated Portuguese properties; the powers thus conferred on the Chiefs without a Sinhalese King to exercise his traditional control over them ultimately led to gross abuses and the oppression of the people.

But the strategy adopted by both the Portuguese and the Dutch to keep the King in good humour and to destroy the allegiance of the Chiefs and the people towards him was in the main a failure. The personal gifts were of no avail to divert the King from his objectives while the Chiefs and the people held firmly to the view

11. The Prince, Niccolo Machiavelli, Ch. 1.

12. *ibid*, Ch. V.

13. Goonewardene, pp. 149/153.



that foreign rule was synonymous with slavery.

The King fully conscious of this chink in the enemy armour, the occupation of the cinnamon areas without the harvesting and the curing of the cinnamon was merely a source of expenditure and not of revenue to his enemies, adopted the simple device of removing the cinnamon peelers from the areas of occupation and of installing them in the Kandyan hills; he systematically de-populated the cinnamon districts.

In view of this strategy, neither the Dutch nor the Portuguese could exploit their territorial conquest and both found themselves unable even to get the provisions for their food supply; they were in consequence compelled to provide living quarters within the forts for the cinnamon-peelers, a source of additional expense and embarrassment.

Raja Sinha, therefore, although hemmed on all sides, achieved a considerable measure of success, both in the military and economic fields, even during the period of this triangular contest.

The orders for the resumption of hostilities reached the Dutch Governor at the termination of the ten-year truce in Europe (1652); this news was welcome to the Dutch but a cause for terror to the Portuguese in Ceylon. One of their chief commanders, the Moor Mudaliyar, moved over to the Dutch; the war was resumed; the Dutch were afraid that the King would join forces with the Portuguese but in this view they were mistaken, for it was ever the King's ambition to expel the Portuguese and re-capture Colombo.

“When my imperial person summoned the Dutch nation to this my Empire, the principal reason was that they might help me, and likewise capture the city of Colombo; since the most serene and famous Raja who was king of Ceitavaca laid several sieges to it, and could not take it, for this reason I took into my imperial heart to capture it.”<sup>14</sup> (Oct. 23, 1656).

The king, therefore, gave his full support to the Dutch; he himself marched into the lowlands with his forces; but the object of the Dutch was to keep Colombo for themselves; they regarded the King as an unwelcome visitor; the King's insistence on the restoration of Colombo and Negombo to him on capture was pacified by false assurance as the Dutch was in sore need of his assistance.

“It is certain that (next to God) His Majesty is the only cause that enabled us to keep things going in this form, for so long; there-

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14. Goonewardene, pp. 157/158.



fore we ought to be rather obliged to him.’<sup>15</sup> (April 30, 1953).

The Batavian Council had their doubts about the king's loyalty to the Dutch; letters that passed between the Council and Van Kittensteijn, their representative in Ceylon, contain their assessment to the contrary; they also reveal their own disloyalty to the King in confirmation of their own assertion that they ‘‘help Raja only to help themselves. The Governor-General wrote:

‘‘He (the King) hated the Portuguese, because they are occupying his lands; and that is what we are also doing, He will hate us all the more, because he will observe that we are more powerful than the Portuguese. Therefore, we must never let ourselves be so far misled, as to imagine, that he will mean rightly by us.’<sup>16</sup>

‘‘But regarding Colombo you must regulate yourself according to circumstances and the strength of our available forces. If we could capture that city without the King being present we should gladly see that it was held until our further deliberation and order in case this could happen without danger.... But if this cannot happen without danger and great calamity, then you will let this city to be demolished for the contemplation and desire of the King.’<sup>17</sup> (Aug. 13, 1653 A.D.).

The contemplated attack on the Portuguese position and in particular the blockade of Colombo failed to materialize as the Portuguese received considerable reinforcements; the delay and privation forced the King to return to Kandy; the Portuguese themselves took the offensive. The conduct of the Dutch Governor who replaced Sinhalese high officials with the Dutch caused much dissatisfaction among the Sinhalese. Hostilities continued without any noticeable success on either side until the arrival of the Dutch Director-General, General Hulft, with a force of 1200 soldiers and 14 ships with instructions to capture Colombo in the first instance (August 14, 1655).

It is unfortunate that General Hulft's career in Ceylon was curtailed by his untimely death, for he was the only Dutch Commander who appears to have won the King's regard and with whom there arose a mutual relationship of trust and confidence. Hulft soon made preparations to lay siege to Colombo; nothing could have occasioned greater pleasure in Raja Sinha's mind than the message to the King through one of the King's Dissaves that the purpose of his

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15. *ibid*, p. 161/184.

16. *ibid*, p. 161/184.

17. *ibid*, p. 162/184.



mission was to capture the towns of Colombo, Mannar and Jaffna and hand them over to Raja Sinha.

Hulft's success as an emissary of friendship was beyond expectation; for in a short space of time he appears for the moment to have erased his rankling bitterness against the Dutch from the King's mind, for the King addressed Hulft "as Director-General of the Naval Squadron of the upright, faithful Netherlands' nation."

Hulft set to work without delay, opened a heavy fire on Colombo and called upon the Portuguese to surrender the fortress; the reply was that the City would be defended to the last; the final siege of Colombo began (Oct. 14, 1655) with an attack by the Dutch on the four bastions of the city; severe fighting followed but the Dutch found to their surprise that the gallant defence of the Portuguese exceeded their expectation.

In the meantime the Portuguese as a last resort made a desperate effort to obtain the King's assistance warning him that on the capture of Colombo the Dutch would not hand it over to him but retain the city for themselves; these overtures were, however, rejected.

A message was sent by the King through two of his Dissaves expressing his disappointment that the Director-General had not yet presented himself before the King; Hulft conveyed his eagerness for permission to appear before his royal presence "to explain the true friendship and affection which the Honourable Company strives to persevere to the end" in the imperial service; after some delay and setbacks an audience was arranged.

The General proceeded with a large retinue (April 5, 1656) and was received at the first halt (Navalagamuwa) by His Majesty's dignitaries with high marks of honour. The interview itself was delayed for four days owing to the King's indisposition after which some of the Chief's came to Hulft with the King's invitation to the Court; the Director-General proceeded under this escort to a spacious esplanade where there was a prepared hall, also called *mandonoe* (maduwa) on the western side of which His Majesty was seen sitting on a state chair on an elevation from the ground in great splendour.

"Before our people could have entered this hall, down went all the great men of state prostrate with their faces on the ground, three different times paying him obeisance, while our people sank on their knees, when His Majesty waved his hand as a signal for them to rise. We approached near the throne which was adorned in an imperial style with costly gold brocades and rich carpets, when out of civility



and goodwill our men went on their knees a second time, after the Eastern fashion.

“His Imperial Majesty then raised himself from his seat, and stood upright and bade the General approach him, when His Excellency addressed him; the Director-General referred ‘to their indefatigable exertions to root out and eradicate from His Majesty’s lands our common enemy’ and requested His Majesty to set aside and wipe off every unfavourable impression which might there be still lingering in His Majesty’s mind. ‘It will be my future study by our actions to convince Your Majesty of our sincerity and uprightness.’ ”

After the customary exchange of presents, Hulft went back to Colombo to resume his operations for the capture of the fortress. The interview had ended with the utmost cordiality and good relationship had in a great measure been restored.<sup>18</sup> “I received all as perfect truth into my imperial heart” was the King’s reaction. But to his great regret, three days later came the news of the death of “the most faithful servant that he had ever known”. It is said that Hulft was killed by the unfortunate discharge of a musket, the ball entered below the right shoulder and escaped from under his right arm, when he was endeavouring to put out a fire which had started on the battlements.

The King despatched the Dissava of Matale and his courtiers to express his condolence at the death of the “well-beloved Director-General” and to ascertain from the new Governor “whether his death was to be ascribed to some treachery or other of our own people, to some accident or whether it was caused by the enemy”. The actual cause of the death seems to be uncertain.

The mystery that surrounds the incident appears to have influenced Raja Sinha to take the view that Hulft’s assurance to restore Colombo to him was genuine and that Hulft had been done away with by the Dutch themselves (July 6, 1658). Wherever the truth may lie, with the passing away of General Hulft, there passed away the last flicker of hope that the Sinhalese monarch could get a fair deal from his shifty ally who had by now decided on the annexation of Ceylon.

The defence of Colombo by the Portuguese under their new Captain-General Antonis de Sousa Continho was as gallant as it was desperate; the siege lasted seven months (Oct. 14, 1655, to May 12, 1656); there was a simultaneous assault both by sea and land;

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18. Baldaeus, pp. 198-206.



the small garrison within the city at times sallied out with some success but as the days passed a drought and a plague, both of fearful intensity intervened against the defenders; reinforcements of which they were in sore need failed to arrive despite frantic calls for aid.

The failure was inevitable since their mother-country was herself on the point of death. As the Dutch and Sinhalese forces tightened their hold and pressed on with the attack the suffering within the city became intense. The Portuguese on their own admission turned Ceylon into "a pool of blood and carnage"; but even a native cannot but feel a twitch of human sympathy at the appalling agony which was the lot of the troops and of the civilian population within the fortress. The situation was aggravated by an excess of the civilian population; "the people who lived in the seven parishes which formed our suburbs had been allowed to enter the city during two days. The provisions began to run short; the civilians were then turned out and when driven back by the assailants were refused re-entrance.

"They took the only remedy available and threw themselves into the moat where their continuous cries and lamentations were of no avail; they were all destroyed; and when we surrendered nothing was left of all this crowd except their bones lying close to the lake, the most horrible sight the world could see, for they were almost all Christians, brought up amongst us and living under our protection.<sup>19</sup>

"A fearful plague followed the famine, attacking not only the poor but making no distinction of rich and high born. Some of those who were attacked by it swelled out as if with dropsy, while others fell down dead without any pain or illness. From the 15th March, 1656, when it first broke out, till the 20th April up to which the dead were buried, there were counted twenty-two thousand and thirty persons. Nor need this surprise us, for there were families consisting of sixty, and the small ones had twelve or fifteen.

"After that date men were wanting for burying the dead, and so great was the horror and misery that all longed to be buried; for not even the few soldiers had anything to satisfy their hunger with. Crowds walked about the streets begging for a little hot water for the love of God, for they well knew that they could not help them with anything else. The misery became beyond endurance and one hundred and twenty of our soldiers deserted to the enemy, including

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19. Ribeiro, pp. 372, 373.





some of our guards.

“These soldiers gave a true account of the position we were in, but they were not believed as the story appeared impossible to the listeners, and it was also related by men who were looking for an excuse for their behaviour; but in honest truth the state of things was far worse than they could describe.

“And God in His wisdom so ordained that though it rains here three or four times a day as it is so close to the equator, yet during the whole period of the siege it never rained, and this caused such intense heat that it was not possible to walk through the streets even with shoes on; for these were covered with dead bodies full of noxious flies and emitting a horrible stench.

“There was a public butcher of dogs, and anyone who obtained an arratel considered himself very fortunate. The elephants which died were eaten up to their skins, and they stealthily killed some of them to get the chance; and out of the fifteen we had in our service none escaped save Ortela for the affection all had for him; there was no unclean kind of animal which escaped being eaten; entire families of Portuguese of position were found dead in their own houses.’<sup>20</sup>

The worst military disaster that befell the Portuguese in Ceylon was the loss of Colombo (May 12, 1656). Jaffna fell two years later (1658 A.D.) when the Portuguese were finally expelled. Raja Sinha always referred to Colombo as “the mother of Evil”, for it was the nucleus of Portuguese activities. On the occasion of the final siege, the attack was both by land and sea, and not by land alone, as on the occasion of the famous siege by Raja Sinha I; Colombo was bravely defended by its gallant garrison without supplies of reinforcements during a siege of seven terrible months.

At last at three o'clock in the afternoon of the 12th May, 1656, there came out of the city seventy-three very emaciated soldiers with broken arms minus a leg and all looking like dead people. “A condition of the terms of capitulation (May 12, 1656) was that the garrison should be permitted to march out with their badges of honour, drums beating, banners flying, lighted matchcords, loaded muskets (Article 5)’’.<sup>21</sup>

“The Capiteyn Moor (Antonio de Melo de Castro) with the King’s soldiers and 36 of their captains denominated *reformados*

20. *ibid.*

21. Baldaeus, p. 239.



of the Portuguese preceded by 14 flying banners, came first fully equipped with drums beating, lighted matchcords and muskets loaded. Passing through the ranks of most of our Companies they proceeded to the Governor's quarters and laid down their arms.'<sup>22</sup>

The fall of the fortress of Colombo was not, however, the termination of hostilities; for two Portuguese pockets yet remained. The Hollanders had a fear that the residue of the Portuguese soldiers could join the King and assist him to recover the forts; there seems to be some evidence of overtures by the King in this direction but without success. The Dutch, thereupon, commenced operations to expel the Portuguese from their remaining strongholds, in particular the Island of Mannar and Jaffnapatam.

A Dutch fleet moved against Mannar which fell; the fort surrendered without much resistance as it had no means of defence; the garrison marched to Jaffna-patao which they successfully reached but they were again attacked by the Dutch and retired to the village but the pressure of the Dutch attack forced them to retire by night into the fort which was a regular square with four bastions; the siege persisted and the ultimate surrender was not without a determined struggle which lasted two months (20th March—22nd June, 1658).

"We saw that we had no powder, rice, or any other kind of provisions, the majority of our men killed, our bastions, in ruins, and that there was no possibility of help reaching us; and as for some time the firing from the other fort had ceased—a sure sign that it had fallen, we held a meeting and agreed to surrender the place. They would not rob us of the honour of our arms, but in every other particular we had to submit to their mercy.

"The Portuguese marched out (24th June, 1658) in terms of the capitulation to the number of one hundred and forty. When the march was over, they sent us almost nude to the College of the Society of Jesus. The same process was gone through with the rest of the people without making an exception even of the women; for this scoundrel (an adjutant) without any respect or shame searched the parts which nature had meant to be hidden, without their tears or faintings helping the poor wretches at all; not even the most noble escaped this scrutiny; for the thirst of avarice causes people to do such shameful acts.'<sup>23</sup>

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22. *ibid.* p. 245.

23. Ribeiro, pp. 387, 388.



The details of the military operations, whether as related by the Portuguese historian, or as related by the Dutch historian, are not at variance. But to the heathens of Ceylon whose "pagodas" were demolished or desecrated by the Portuguese, the occupation of the churches of the vanquished and the nature of the prayers of the Dutch predikaant are not without interest. "On the 9th of March (1658) we took possession of the principal church of the Jesuiters lying west to the town and on the 18th the church and convent of the Dominican on the east side of the town. Prayers of thanksgiving were offered; there was abundant cause to say,

"I have given you a land for which you did not labour and cities which ye built not, and yet dwell in them; of the vineyards (which then were and still are in abundance) which ye planted not do you eat." 24

Raja Sinha II had succeeded where Raja Sinha I had failed; but the success of the former does not mean that the struggle of the latter was less heroic; circumstances had changed. Raja Sinha II was able to harness to his aid a naval power which gradually exceeded the Portuguese in strength; Raja Sinha I had fought Portugal when its might was in the ascendant; Raja Sinha II when its strength was ebbing and Holland had entered the European arena as a first-class power.

But from these important considerations it cannot be deduced that the victory can be ascribed to the Dutch alone. The Portuguese historian records that Raja Sinha had brought 40,000 men to participate in the final siege of Colombo; in fact on all important engagements, the Dutch had Raja Sinha's assistance, for his hatred for the Portuguese ever outweighed his distrust of the Dutch.

And subsequent events confirmed that the Asian Monarch's assessment of the unreliability of his European ally was correct; for with the expulsion of the Portuguese, by the use of prevarication, of force and of any subterfuge they could enlist, the Dutch paved the way for the disruption of Ceylon's territory and for the emaciation of her people.

This last scene in the story of the Portuguese occupation of coastal Ceylon presents two memorable features; one was the gallant defence of Colombo by the Portuguese; the other was a glimpse of a Dutchman whose promise of a cordial relationship between the Dutch and the King was cut short by his sudden death. It is unlikely

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24. Baldaeus.



that the Hague or Batavia would have sanctioned the restoration of the forts by Director-General Hulft; but in that event, it is possible that the later history of Ceylon would have taken a different course; the story of the Dutch occupation would have been less sordid; the sufferings of the people less severe.

The body of Director-General Hulft was first laid to rest at the church at St. Sebastian; thence by resolution of the Council it was removed in procession to Galle; prior to its removal there arrived Sinhalese dignitaries of high rank sent by the King to express his condolence; the Director-General's remains were ultimately buried with great ceremony in the Church of Galle on the right hand side of the pulpit. The Dutch historian who states that he was present on this occasion, writes:

“He was a gentleman of good descent, and of outstanding intellect who not only possessed a thorough knowledge of jurisprudence and of military matters, but was also well versed in theology, of which I have had proof on various occasions when I had the honour of conversing with him.

“In deportment and walks of life, affable and amiable, eloquent and skilled in languages, polite, friendly and kindly; in outward appearance he was tall well-made and nimble, alert, industrious and energetic; in a word, both in body and soul there was in him such harmony and consistency, as can be met with in a comparatively few in this our imperfect world.”<sup>25</sup>

An account of the Portuguese period would be incomplete without an assessment of their administration of the areas that came under their occupation; their invasion was characterized by cruelty and proselytism; their regime was conspicuous for misgovernment. They claimed the Island on the donation made by the apostate King of Ceylon, Dom Joao Periya Pandar (Dharmapala), to a dead king of Portugal; this grant was later confirmed by his devise by will as the dead king's successor.

On Dharmapala's own death (1597) the Portuguese-General, Dom Hieronymo de Azavedo, enacted a ceremonial farce at Malvana (18 miles from Colombo); by pre-arrangement a hand-picked coterie of apostate Sinhalese Doms and Des chose him as king as representative of the King of Portugal (1597); thereafter he came to be known as King of Malvana; on the same occasion he enacted another farce.

“He summoned the Modeliars and Nobles of the island to an

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25. Baldaeus, pp. 212, 213.



Assembly, and left them to chose the laws by which they wished to be governed, whether by those of Portugal or by those of Cota, and they all unanimously said by theirs, or by those of Raju, according to their way of speaking, because they had been brought up on them, and because of the natural affection whereby we all prefer the customs of our Fathers and Forefathers.

“On behalf of the king of Portugal, the General granted it to them, and thenceforth he and the others were addressed by the Chingalas as Highness and treated as Kings. Never, however, did they take pains to find out what these laws and customs were; nor were they reduced to writing like our ordinances; nor were they published so that all might come to know them.

“Nor was any order given to the Dissavas and other Captains nor to the *foreyros* of the villages, so that everything was left to the evil conscience of each, and there was none to gainsay them in anything however evil it be, and however contrary to the laws and customs of the country save the Ministers of the Royal Exchequer, who received orders according to the laws of Portugal; and some under pretext of war, others on pretext of being *foreyros* and others on pretext of revenue or service of the King, who were at all times the biggest thieves of our conquest, moved by ambition and self-interest for the most part had no other law than sin, nor any order save ambition.”<sup>26</sup>

This condemnation of the Portuguese regime is an extract from a Portuguese historian's review of their administration after their expulsion. A record also exists of the measures adopted for the diversion of the ownership of the areas under their occupation. It is evident that this division was primarily intended for the benefit of the Portuguese themselves and not of the inhabitants. The villages which had been donated to Buddhist temples by pious Sinhalese kings for their sustenance were re-assigned to the Roman Catholic churches and clergy but this re-distribution was not confined to the Buddhist temples. Villages were taken away from their hereditary tenants and their produce from the uses to which they had been put by immemorial custom.

“A scheme for the villages when available was approved by the king; some were to be allowed to the Captains in charge of stations occupied by Portuguese troops for the maintenance of the garrisons, due consideration being had of the allowances and provisions grant-

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26. Queyroz, Bk. vi pp. 1008, 1009.



ed to the latter; the Chiefs of the native soldiers who did not have the allowances were to be treated with greater liberality; other villages were assigned to the Captain-Major, while a few of the best scattered throughout the country were to be set apart for the special use of the King, so that the Captain-General might have when required the means of provisioning the troops on any district

“The villages of Bolategao (Bulatgama) were reserved for the royal use in view of the importance of the supplies of rice and areca available from them; the right of appointing the Vidane over them were vested in the Viceroy himself and failing him in the Vedor. These villages had been assigned by Jeromimo de Azavedo to Manuel de Azavedo (son) but the cancellation of the grant was ordered in 1612.

“Villages were also granted to Portuguese engaged in the work of conquest and to native Christians who had displayed exceptional loyalty; the cultivation of the lands were left in the hands of the resident villagers; where they were not available resident Christians were to be given the preference, and failing them Christian settlers were to be invited over from St. Thome.”<sup>27</sup>

This scheme of distribution was the result of a reorganization effected by Antonio Vaz Fereira who had been despatched by the King of Portugal as Vedor de Fazenda with special powers (1607). Corruption was so rampant that the King was constrained to issue the following directions to his Viceroy (1605):

“Ceilao is the most important conquest to be achieved in India; when with the help of God you arrive at Goa you are strictly enjoined to exert yourself to reduce the whole of it into submission to me; many years have now elapsed since the task was first taken in hand; and it is well known to you how vast an expenditure my treasury has incurred on this account.”<sup>28</sup>

In the course of his investigations Fereira found that the monopoly of the cinnamon trade for three years had been sold to Dom Hieronymo when Director-General for twelve thousand pardaoes; the King disapproved of this proceeding and forbade its repetition. It was during the period of office of this Vedor that the Portuguese thombos were prepared for fiscal purposes to facilitate the collection of revenue.

This resumé of the fiscal policy of the Portuguese leaves no room

27. Ribeiro, pp. 187/188.

28. *ibid*, p. 194.



for doubt that its natural consequence was the disruption of the economy of the Island; its resources were henceforth to be exploited for its conquest, for its Portuguese garrisons and its Portuguese administrators and clergy, and not for the benefit of the people; the necessity for the invitation of Christian soldiers from St. Thomé into the villages is evidence that many villages had abandoned under these intolerable conditions; the inhabitants invariably took refuge in the Kandyan Kingdom.

A review by Queyroz at the conclusion of his account of the temporal and spiritual Conquest of Ceylon confesses its failure and discusses many causes; from a military angle, operations were long delayed. "The principal mistake of the conquest was its delay; because if we had set about it with the needed forces, which were not lacking at the time, it would have been achieved even in the time of the Kings of Cotta or immediately after the death of King Joao. One of the reasons he gives is that at that time the people of Candea were not accustomed to the firelock and musket; comment is also made of the non-provision of roads.

"Inroads and sallies into Candea and the other highlands were attempted without any precautions in the lowlands and without the intention of remaining in the hills. As the revenue from Ceylon declined after the Hollander began the blockade of the bar of Colombo everything diminished to such an extent that soldiers were always ill-paid and many of them were going about ragged, naked, clad in mats, sleeping on the floor, and even the plate of rice failed them. And this one of the greatest negligences of Ceylon that they did not erect respectable *pracas*, nor garrison, provide and munition them in the manner required by European warfare."<sup>29</sup>

From the economic and financial angle as well, the review of Queyroz contains many adverse criticisms; private persons depended in drawing the expenditure necessary for fortifications and conquest from the State revenues of Lisbon and not from the revenue of Ceylon; the directions of the King were not carried out and fantastic certificates were made out of the preparations for the conquest while each one was looking to his private interest and not to serve the King. It was but natural that the arrival of the Dutch at a time when corruption was prevalent among the Portuguese should lead to their expulsion.

The occupation of the coastal regions of Ceylon and their environs

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29. Queyroz, Bk. vi. pp. 1049—1066.



by the Portuguese led thus to the expropriation of property and a government of the people in a manner contradictory to their ancient laws and customs; they also introduced an alien religion. The duration of their stay in these regions lasted 150 years. Its consequence was to effect a cleavage between Lowlands and the Highlands; Ceylon ceased to be one unit. The people of the maritime Provinces began in course of time to adopt foreign ways of life while the people of the Highlands generally maintained their ancient customs. This division was unhappy and the reunification of the island has been a long and slow process.

The Portuguese language has not survived their departure; apart from certain household words which owe their origin to Portuguese terms, Portuguese is hardly spoken in Ceylon nor are there any books written in Portuguese now extant; the Roman Catholic religion which they introduced is the religion of between six to seven per cent of the population; otherwise no trace is left of the conquistadors who in the days of their glory made a bold bid to overrun the Island with a fair measure of success.

The courage of the Portuguese soldiers was always great; their discipline was exemplary; their defence of Kotte and of Colombo was heroic; the capture of these towns was resisted beyond human endurance, against heavy odds; the terms of surrender which they obtained even on the brink of defeat were characteristic of a brave race which preferred death to dishonour. They left the fort "with banners flying, all equipped, fully equipped and with drums beating, lighted match-cords and muskets loaded."

Nothing became them more than the manner of their leaving. The fateful portent had spent its evil force. A curse was lifted from sunny Ceylon;

"Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."<sup>30</sup>

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30. St. Matthew 26, 52.







## **RAJA SINHA II**

**Great rolling eyes, turning them and looking every way  
a brisk bold look; in conclusion, a very comely man**

**KNOX.**







## CHAPTER XI

### RAJA SINHA II

The Portuguese had been expelled but the Dutch still remained. Raja Sinha aged 60 but not inactive, was not yet a factor that could be ignored; he claimed that he had himself made a substantial contribution to the expulsion of the mutual enemy; and such was the fact. During the years that followed (1658-1669), the absence of the Portuguese and the new conditions necessitated a readjustment of the policies of both the King and the Dutch; but after the Kandyan rebellion (1664) which caused a temporary eclipse of Raja Sinha's power and prestige, the Dutch attitude towards him changed.

The Dutch conceived the idea of territorial expansion on the mistaken assumption that the King had lost his grip on his subjects; they occupied the forts of Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Kottiar (1665-1668); they took under their control portions of the interior of Ceylon, both on the East and on the South-East, inclusive of the salt pans (1669); the entire coast line of the Island came within their area of occupation; so that within twelve years (1670 A.D.) what the King had wrested from the Portuguese were taken over by the Dutch.

But the eclipse of Raja Sinha was only temporary, he soon regained his former command over his subjects; the recapture of Arandara (1670), the nearest Dutch military station to Kandy was his first major act of retaliation, soon followed by the recovery of most of the areas in the interior which had fallen into the hands of the Dutch. A short interlude was occasioned by the arrival of a French Fleet (1672) but the negotiations for an alliance between the French and Raja Sinha failed to materialize.

The French surrendered to a Dutch fleet on the Coromandal Coast (1674) and abandoned the idea of a settlement in Ceylon. But Raja Sinha scored a signal success when his forces recaptured the Dutch fortress at Bibilegama (1675) and took the Dutch garrison as prisoners. The expansionist policy of the Dutch came thereupon under reconsideration more especially as the King's attack had caused an increase in military expenditure and damage to the economy of the territory under Dutch control.

Raja Sinha had been present in person when Bibilegama was



stormed and two Dutch Lieutenants taken captive; these prisoners were despatched to and imprisoned in Kandy, despite the Governor's efforts to obtain their release. In an account of this campaign, the King's success is ascribed to the insubordination and the treachery of the natives:

"This attack clearly proves the insubordination and treachery of the natives, the Company's subjects, who deserted the Netherlands in a shameful manner and otherwise injured them. The inhabitants acted similarly in the district of Negombo, which they deserted altogether; everywhere they showed the greatest cowardice and faithlessness, proving that little reliance could be placed upon them in case the Company was in a difficulty."<sup>1</sup>

This comment is made in an account of the Dutch in Ceylon (1602-1757); it is similar to the charges made against the four Modeliars who joined the king's forces at the battle of Randenivala (1630). Observations of this nature are common in writings and records of enemy historians who evince a strong bias in favour of invaders against the nationals of a country; for, they cannot understand or recognize the natural impulse of a people to release themselves from foreign domination when an opportunity presents itself.

Raja Sinha pursued this success; his mountaineers would invade the lowlands and terrorize the inhabitants; they either removed or drove away the cinnamon peelers and the peasants in the rural areas; the Dutch cinnamon trade was stifled. The King thereupon was the recipient of a friendly missive forwarded to him by the Dutch Governor on the directions of the Chief Batavian Government; it contained an offer to deliver back to the King all the lands acquired by the Company since 1668 and to assure him of "our interest in his" welfare. The authorities in Ceylon submitted the following proposals:

1. "That their Excellencies were pleased to recommend the Council of Ceylon to beseech His Majesty to lay aside his displeasure and resume the peace and friendship which has been maintained with the Company for so many years.
2. That in proof of the sincere affection of the Hon-Company for His Majesty, their Excellencies offer to cede absolutely the Province of Pannovewe and the Five and Three Korales

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1. The Dutch in Ceylon, translation by F. H. de Vos, of Dutch Records, R. A. S. (C.B.) Vol. XI, p. 70.



occupied by the Company since 1665, after the receipt of His Majesty's Olan, and to comply with all reasonable demands.

3. That in return it was hoped that His Majesty would refrain from further enmity, release the Hollanders held captive, and conclude a settled peace.'<sup>2</sup>

The policy of the Dutch in Ceylon was dominated for eleven years (1664-1675) by Van Goens as their representative until 1671 and thereafter as the de facto Governor during his son's term of office; he appears to have in his despatches coloured the picture of Ceylon to suit his own policy and to have represented the King as unpopular and his military strength as negligible.

Admiral Rijjloff Van Goens had a successful career in the Company's service and had held responsible positions; he was the architect of the Company's victories over the Portuguese in North Ceylon and the South Indian Coast, and later, on the Malabar Coast; he had in consequence secured an extraordinary position of influence in the Company's Council in Batavia; the Governor in Ceylon, Vander Meyden, was a secondary figure. "Van Goens gradually established himself in a position of predominance over the making of policy in Ceylon, a position which he held, with interludes, for a period of about 15 years."<sup>3</sup>

The Ceylon Government was of the view that the situation necessitated a new contract with Raja Sinha; the Batavian authorities were, however, of the opinion that the old contract would suffice; they resorted to the device of preparing and submitting to the King an account according to which the King would be heavily in debt to the Company; the claim was made that the lowlands could not be restored until the deficiency was paid. The statement was to the following effect:

	£	S.	P.
General Expenses up to February, 1657	9,308,651	15	4
Amount paid in cinnamon, elephants, arecanuts, land revenue, etc.	2,135,101	4	3
Amount outstanding from Raja Sinha	7,265,460	11	1

This claim was fantastic and was nothing but a calculated device to retain possession of the forts and the lowlands; even if the King

2. *ibid*, p. 72.

3. Arasaratnam, *Dutch Power in Ceylon*, p. 4.





wished, he was unable to find this exorbitant amount; he ignored the claim and the situation remained as tense as before. The Dutch thereon blockaded the Kandyan Kingdom and stopped its trade with the object of forcing the King's hands; the King refused to come to terms, except on the basis of the return of Colombo to him.<sup>4</sup>

The Dutch authorities both in the Hague and in Batavia, however, entertained grave doubts of the correctness of Van Goen's recommendations; these misgivings were confirmed by Raja Sinha's success at Bibilegama (August 1675) two months after the departure of Van Goens. Vexed with the problem whether to effect a reconciliation with the King or to embark on a career of total conquest and make Ceylon the base of their Eastern Empire, the Councils in Holland and in Batavia remained of divided views.

It was only after the relinquishment of his office by the younger Van Goens (1658-1679) that the local despatches began to reveal a true picture of Ceylon. On a re-assessment of Raja Sinha's military strength, it was ascertained that he had 27,720 men in continual service, and that, besides this number he could summon at a moment's notice yet another 44,180 thus making in all 80,000 men in the field; this number could be doubled or even trebled in case of need.

As opposed to this force, the Dutch lascarins were only 4486 in number, of whom very few could be trusted. The Batavian Council outvoted (1681) Van Goens who had both taken over control (1678) and reversed the policy of his predecessor Maetzuyker, towards Ceylon. The Council decided to stand by its earlier decision and to adopt a policy of reconciliation with the King.<sup>5</sup>

From the Dutch angle, the crucial question was whether the revenues from the expanded conquests and the monopoly of trade was worth all the price that was being paid for it; they felt that cinnamon was the chief attraction for the Dutch in Ceylon and that the other sources of profit were merely incidental. In any case, they were not so important as to justify all the heavy expenditure.

The view prevailed that neither the security of the Island nor the profit motive seemed to justify this intensive military expenditure; its curtailment was desirable so long as cinnamon and elephants were monopolized, the trade in other articles could be left open...

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4. See *ibid*, pp. 5-6.

5. *Ibid*.



while it was true that the Dutch political supremacy and commercial interests were inextricably intertwined, in this particular case, it was unanimously agreed that the commercial gains had long ceased to justify the political responsibilities involved.

Knox has left a graphic account of the person, dress and characteristics of Raja Sinha which helps to recreate a vivid picture of the man and his way of life.

“As to the person of the King he is not tall, but very well set, nor of the clearest colour of their complexion, but somewhat of the blackest, great rolling eyes, turning them and looking every way, always moving them, a brisk, bold look, a great swelling of belly and very lively in his actions and behaviour, somewhat bald, not having much hair upon his head, and that gray, a large comely beard with great whiskers; in conclusion, a very comely man. He bears his years well, being between Seventy and Eighty years of age; and though an old man, yet appears not to be like one, neither in countenance, nor action.”<sup>6</sup>

“His Apparel is very strange and wonderful, not after his country-fashion, or any other, being made after his own invention. On his head he wears a Cap with four corners like a Jesuit three teer high and a Feather standing upright before, like that in the head of a fore-horse in a Team, a long band hanging down his back after the Portuguese fashion, his Doublet after so strange a shape, that I cannot well describe it, the body of one and the sleeves of another colour.”

“He wears long Breeches to the Ankles, Shoes and Stockings. He doth not always keep to one fashion but changes as his fancy leads him; but always when he comes abroad, his Sword hangs by his side in a belt over his shoulder; which no Chingalays dare wear only white men may; a Gold Hilt and Scabbard most of beaten Gold, Commonly he holdeth in his hand a small Cane, painted of divers colours and towards the lower end set around about with such stones, as he hath and pleaseth with a head of Gold.”

“He is temperate both in his Diet and his lust, of the former, I am informed by those who have attended on his Person in his Palace, that though he hath all sorts of varieties that the land affords brought to his Table, yet his chief fare is Herbs, and ripe pleasant Fruits,..... And as he is abstemious in his eating, so in the use of women. If he useth them 'tis unknown and with great secrecy.... He allows

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6. Knox, *Historical Relations*.



not in his Court Whoredom or Adultery; and many times when he hears of the misdemeanors of some of his Nobles in regard to women, he not only executes them, but severely punisheth the women, if known."

"Sometimes for his pleasure, he will ride or be carried to his Banqueting-House (near which he has made) a fine Pond... exceeding full of Fish. At this place the King has several Houses built according to his own appointment very handsome, borne up with carved Pillars and Painted, and round about Rails and Bannisters turned, one Painted and of Ebony, like Balconie. Some standing high upon a wall, being for him to sit in, and see Sport with his Elephants and other Beasts, as also for Prospect abroad.

"Others standing over the Pond, where he himself sits and feedeth his Fish with boiled rice Fruits, and Sweetmeats. They are so tame that they will come and eat in his hand; but never doth he suffer any to be caught. This Pond is useful for his Elephants to wash in. The Plan was made for his Horses to run upon. For after-times, he commands his Grooms to get up and ride in his presence. He hath in all some twelve or fourteen; some of which are Persian Horses.

"Others Pastimes or Recreations he hath (for this is all he minds or regards). As to make them bring wild Elephants out of the woods and catch them in his presence.... And when he comes out of his Court, he delights to look upon his Hawks, altho' he never uses them for his game; sometimes on his Dogs and tame Deer, and Tygers, and strange kind of birds and Beasts of both which he hath a great many. Also he will try his gun and shoot at Marks, which are excellently true, and rarely inlay'd with Silver, Gold and Ivory.

"In his Palace, he passeth his time, looking upon certain Toyes and Fancies that he hath, and upon his Arms and Guns, calling in some or other of his great Men to see the same, asking them if they have a Gun will shoot further than that; and how much Steel such a knife, as he will show them needs to have in it. He takes a great delight in Swimming in which he is very expert. And the Custom is, when he goes into the Water, that all his attendants that can swim must go likewise."

At a time when religious persecution, introduced into Ceylon by the Portuguese, was the fashion, Raja Sinha's rule was distinguished by his religious toleration; the Portuguese in their fanaticism perse-



cuted the Sinhalese and the Dutch; the Dutch likewise persecuted the Portuguese; the clergy of either denomination received short shrift from the other; some of the Jesuit priests fled for refuge to Goa which remained the central base for their religious operations; other Catholics under pressure from the Calvinism of the Dutch fled to the King's territory as their refuge.

“The Christian religion he does not in the least persecute but rather as it seems to me esteems and honours it. He established a fine city at Ruanwella in a strong position and settled down in comfort seven hundred of our families allotting them villages which belonged to the Crown, and they live there with their own clergy, to administer to them their sacraments. The Jesuit priests in India secretly used the Kandyan Kingdom as their base to make contact with their flock in Dutch lands.”

Raja Sinha was also singularly free of racial bias. He detained many Europeans in his Kingdom; “it is not out of Profit nor Envy or ill-will, but out of love and Favour, that he keeps them, delighting in their Company, and to have them ready at his Command. He had a Company of white soldiers under two Captains, one a Dutchman and the other a Portuguese. The Dutch Captain lyes at one side of the gate (of the King's Magazines) and the Portuguese at the other.”

It is evident, therefore, that the “heathen” Raja Sinha was a man free of racial and religious prejudice, of refined tastes, of liberal instincts, and in many ways a citizen of the world; his Court, free of whoredom could compare favourably with the Courts of many other countries which although of dazzling brilliance were full of lurid impurities.

According to the Sinhalese Chronicle Raja Sinha was “a man whose commands were not lightly to be slighted, difficult to attack, hard to vanquish and of lion-like courage”;<sup>7</sup> into a chapter of less than fifty verses, the scribe has condensed the main events of a reign packed with incident and the main characteristics of a colourful character. A general idea of the trend of events is given, without too much detail or embellishment; on a first reading of this summary in about fifty lines of verse, running only into five pages of translation, inclusive of notes and comments, the reader gets a sense of dissatisfaction; it is only after he has perused other long reviews that it dawns on him that the Chronicler's drawing is a work of art,

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7. *Culavamsa*, Ch. XCVI.



strong in line and rich in colour.

“He prepared every kind of implement of war and the rest, took in order to open the fight, the battle-equipped Sihalas and set forth under a favourable constellation, at a happy moment from the town of Sirivaddhana with elephants, steeds and princely retinue with great warriors and so on, with great dignitaries and so on, with foot-soldiers who bore bows, swords, spears and other weapons, in front the music with drums, kettledrums and other instruments.”

This description is of interest in that no mention is made of pieces of artillery, not even of muskets, so that the superiority of the enemy even in the seventeenth century in weapons of offence and defence is self-evident. The Chronicler then makes reference to the warfare in the five highland provinces, the clash of battle which made the sound of the war drums resound like the terrible clash of thunder. It would appear that even Buddhist bhikkus accompanied the enemy.

Mention is also made of the storming and the capture of enemy strongholds and the restoration of the people to freedom, of the continuance of warfare due to the re-appearance of the enemy that had been driven away; losing his self-restraint the scribe writes, “the heretical villains began again and again to plunder the different provinces”; heretical villains they were in the assessment of the natives of Asian lands that they pillaged, plundered and oppressed for centuries. This section of the review evidently refers to the Portuguese, although not by name; for the following paragraphs mentions the King’s invitation to the Hollanders.

“While he, experienced in all the state-craft taught by Manu, sojourned there (at Digavapi near Bibile), he received news of the Olandas”; the Chronicle proceeds with a brief allusion to the King’s negotiations with the Dutch and the subsequent wars and the capture of a fort. “The Ruler of Men gave over the place (probably Galle) to the inhabitants of Olanda and showed them many other favours and made them contented.”

It must be confessed that the Chronicle glosses over the acute differences that arose between Raja Sinha and the Dutch in regard to the terms of his treaty and the manner of its observance and its breach on occasions by both parties; and the retention of the forts by the Dutch as well as the contention of each party as to the accuracy of the accounts. No express mention is even made of the final siege and capture of Colombo which was the greatest military event of the period. But with all these defects and omissions, for



which the scribe probably had a reason now not in evidence, his review is not without substance and helps to understand a scene which was shifting every moment as the actors changed sides.

The long reign of Raja Sinha II (1636-1687) cannot be passed over without an assessment of his character and of his personality; neither the Dutch version nor the views of Knox do him justice; the former is tainted by bias, the latter by want of understanding. Knox took to sea as a sailor lad (aged 14) suffered shipwreck (aged 19) was interred in Ceylon (19 years and 6 months).

According to Knox<sup>8</sup> he had with him only "the wholly Bible"; he had, therefore, not read Histories (that) make men wise. "This booke was wrote by me when I was about 39 years of age. In my passage to England from Bantam in Anno 1679 I wrote this booke... to exercise my hand to wright for in all the time of my captivity, I had neither pen, inke nor paper,"<sup>9</sup>. Knox observes.

"As to the manner of his Government, it is Tyrannical and Arbitrary in the highest degree; for he ruleth Absolutely and after his own will and pleasure; his own head being his only Counsellor. The land all at his disposal and all the people from the highest to the lowest slaves, or very like slaves, both in body and goods wholly at his command. Neither wants He those Virtues of a Tyrant, Jealousy, dissimulation and cruelty."

These observations, generally accepted in after years, are based on certain misconceptions; the vices ascribed to Raja Sinha were not peculiar to him but characteristic of kings and institutions of that age; if he was possessed of them, it was not a mark of particular distinction but a common fault. The Inquisition, the Star Chamber, the Pillory, the Rack, the Gallows, the Axe, the Scaffold, the Stake, were alternately in common use according to the national climate. The figure of "One Impaled on a Stake", drawn by Knox in his *Historical Relation* is, therefore, only a Sinhalese variation of a customary royal pastime in Europe and elsewhere.

As to the manner of Raja Sinha's Government, even Constitutional England was ruled by Henry VIII for fourteen years (1515-1529) without a Parliament; and when he summoned one, he gave the members a choice of two alternatives, the passing of the laws he proposed to make or the confiscation of their property; their choice of the former was obvious.

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8. *An Historical Relation of Ceylon* (1681), Knox.

9. *Autobiography*, Knox.



“To the English people of that age, the exercise of Constitutional rights did not present itself as an ideal. Their dominant anxiety was that the Tudor dynasty should rule and endure;” in the same way, to the Sinhalese people of the age of Raja Sinha their dominant anxiety was the expulsion of the hated Portuguese and thereafter of the avaricious Dutch, not the method of Raja Sinha’s rule.

Like little Alice in Wonderland, the honest sailor who had spent his life in the sea and in internment was no doubt puzzled by what he saw around him; little Alice could not understand why the Queen of Hearts was always in a furious rage and went stamping about and shouting, “Off with his head” or “Off with her head” about once in a minute and the King (of Hearts) always said, “I’ll fetch the executioner myself”. Alice, like Knox evidently had not read of the great Queen Elizabeth I of England, who launched the British Empire and at the same time enjoyed cutting off the heads of her gallant courtiers as a favourite pastime.

But when he talks on “Bed Chambers and Whoredom” the Sailor treads on familiar ground and his views are indeed, unassailable; but he slips in his interpretation of the ancient Sinhalese system of land-tenure which was foreign to him. His error is neither strange nor singular; for even two centuries later, it was contended that the Service-tenure system of Ceylon was the counterpart of serfdom in medieval England and in the Continent of Europe, whereas the *paraveni niliakaraya* of this system was an irremovable hereditary tenant and had in this singular system the ownership of the soil of the land on which he lived; he was by no means a slave, nor very like a slave as Knox erroneously believed; nor was he by any means even a serf, nor very like a serf of the European feudal system.

“He (Knox) describes a long established form of despotic monarchy, with its hierarchical social organization, without giving weight to an appreciation of its traditional roots and customary sanctions, thus he emphasises the letter of the law and not the spirit in which it operated which makes an absolute monarchy a tyrannical one. He gives us a lop-sided picture of Raja Sinha’s absolutism, over-emphasising the absolute rights of monarchs and ignoring the restraints of unwritten law and custom.”<sup>10</sup>

During the medieval period of European history the peoples of

10. Arasaratnam, *Dutch Power in Ceylon*, p. 114.

10. Gibbon, Vol. VI, p. 208, Ch. LXI.



Europe were bound by the chains of the feudal system; the relationship that existed for centuries between these and their feudal lords was in comparison far less favourable than the overlordship of the kings of Ceylon over peasant proprietors. It was only the fortuitous intervention of the Crusades that broke the chains of serfdom in Europe; the estates of the barons were dissipated and the baronial race was often extinguished in their costly and perilous expeditions.

“The larger portion of the inhabitants of Europe was chained to the soil without freedom, of property, or knowledge; and the two orders of ecclesiastics and nobles, whose numbers were comparatively small, alone deserved the name of citizens and men. This oppressive system was supported by the arts of the clergy and the swords of the barons. The authority of the priests operated in the darker ages as a salutary antidote; they prevented the total extinction of letters, mitigated the fierceness of the times, sheltered the poor and defenceless, and preserved or revived the peace and order of civil society. But the independence, rapine and disorder of the feudal lords were unmixed with the semblance of good; and every hope of industry and improvement was crushed by the iron weight of the martial aristocracy. Among the causes that undermined that Gothic edifice, a conspicuous place must be allowed to the Crusades.”

Raja Sinha has also been charged with craft and double-dealing; this Dutch presentation of his portrait has been lifted without examination by other writers; the King's character has been misrepresented and a false picture drawn of the monarch. “He was a master of craft and double-dealing but met his equal in diplomacy in the Dutch who found it impossible to act otherwise with so shifty an ally.”<sup>11</sup>

Recent research in the Dutch Colonial Archives, by courtesy of the authorities at the Hague,<sup>12</sup> reveals Raja Sinha in the opposite light, “as a man more sinned against than sinning”. The material now available affords an explanation of Raja Sinha's conduct, his recriminations against and his bitterness towards the Dutch up to his death.

“The (Dutch) despatches from Ceylon echoed the old tunes; everything was done to make Raja Sinha look a despicable villain. He was alleged to be goating over the wanton murder of his

11. Codrington, *History of Ceylon*.

12. Goonewardene, pp. IX and XIX.



subjects. His Court was a den of self-seeking scoundrels, who were involved with the king in a self seeking struggle for power, and were being executed in large numbers every day. All the higher castes had been put to death and his present advisers were said to be of the meanest orders of society.

“All this was done to impress on the Directors and Councillors at Batavia that it was humanly impossible to have dealings with Raja Sinha. It was even asserted by Van Goens the younger with an air of certainty, but with no foundation whatever, that until Colombo was returned to him, Raja Sinha would never listen to any talk of peace”<sup>13</sup>.

Raja Sinha was in fact the victim of misrepresentation by the Dutch representatives in Ceylon whose endeavour was to outwit both him and their superiors in Batavia.

As a result of recent research, many communications of the Dutch, which were secret till now, have come to light. “The material that was brought out from the volumes in parchment bindings of Colonial Archives was not always elevating, Be it so, We Dutch are not accustomed to fight shy of the truth, and we were often the first to criticize the behaviour of our colonisers severely, sometimes too severely.”<sup>14</sup>

The cumulation of the Dutch intrigue that surrounded Raja Sinha, their conduct in connection with the Treaty (A.D. 1638) the capture and detention of the forts, the delay and inaccuracies in their accounts, their alliance with the Portuguese, while professedly an ally of Raja Sinha, all make sad reading.

The data now available refute the charge made against Raja Sinha of craft and double-dealing and prove that it is false and without foundation, The great “Van Diemen, the Dutch master-mind at Batavia, has in a letter to Thijssen, their representation in Ceylon (July 26, 1644 A.D.) left for the benefit of posterity a record of the current Dutch policy in Ceylon in the succinct phrase “You know well that we help Raja for no other purpose than to help ourselves”<sup>15</sup>.

Raja Sinha II was a great king; his life and energy were dedicated to his country's freedom and its deliverance from foreign enemies and with that object he fought with a dogged determination for nearly 50 years. In an assessment of his success or failure, the

13. Arasaratnam, p. 89.

14. Goonewardene, pp. VI, VII, citing Observations of Dr. H. T. de Greer.

15. Goonewardene, pp. 462—474.



odds against him need review; his country was a little Asian State; his opponent, the greatest European power at a time when Europe was dominating the world.

The Dutch were at that period in the intoxication of victory; they had vanquished the one-time mightiest power in Europe, the great Spanish Empire, Raja Sinha's own resources and military equipment were unequal and inadequate; the hated Portuguese were within his doors eating his country's substance; but in spite of all these disadvantages, until old age and disease overpowered him, his courage and endeavour never flagged.

It would be wrong to suppose that he had not weighed the implications of the Dutch alliance; on the contrary the object lesson of the failure of Raja Sinha I to capture Colombo was before his eyes. It was more probably his realization that the absence of a navy was the missing link in Ceylon's military set up that influenced his decision. The expulsion of a foreign enemy fed by his mother-country through sea-communications was impracticable without a naval force of which he had none.

His only alternative was naval aid and the interruption of communications. His decision to call in the Dutch to his aid and to sign a treaty with them was not a step taken on impulse; it was rather a premeditated and calculated move to fill a gap in his war equipment. One of Raja Sinha's letters to the Dutch Commander (21st May 1656) succinctly sets out the course of events:

“My imperial person took much trouble to get the Dutch nation to come to this my Empire, and likewise when Admiral Adao Vestrevolt arrived with the vessels of the fleet at this my Empire, in the meantime my imperial person had gone to capture the fortress of Batticaloa. And when I gave them leave to go to my fortress at Galle they took with them one of my dissavas that they might give him charge of the territory of Mature (Matara); and there on account of the many disturbances that took place they did not allow the said dissava to remain there, in order to do services to his Court, which was the cause of much loss and hurt to it; and which although with much pain of my imperial heart I bore with patience.

“And during this time my imperial person being exceedingly grieved and distressed, there arrived at this my Court, my much loved and cherished Director-General (Hulft) bringing all the forces of Holland to perform all the things touching my imperial service and to give fulfilment to those terms of peace, that so my imperial person may



rest content and satisfied; and when he appeared in person in my imperial Court, he declared by word of mouth that, as regarded all the matters of dispute and doubt which my imperial person had in my heart, with respect to the Dutch nation, I might abandon and be quit of them.

“For he gave the word, and in the name of the Company, and the Prince of Orange, to do everything to my imperial pleasure and contentment, giving up to me the fortress of Negombo and the city of Colombo, when with the favour of God, he could have taken it; and that meanwhile my Hollanders who might be necessary in my imperial service should remain in the Empire, and the rest he would take away. For the aforesaid reasons I gave my Hollanders every assistance in the way of succour and leave to take the city of Colombo; and since it was taken, of all the things promised from day to day they have been ignored.”<sup>16</sup>

A classical myth affords an interesting parallel to the elimination of the Portuguese by the Dutch. In the course of one, of the ten labourers assigned to him, Hercules encountered Antaeus, the giant son of Gaia (Earth) who protected a race of men called Pygmies; they were so small that they lived in constant dread of their neighbours who often passed over their country and devoured their harvests; as a protection they accepted the services of Antaeus who there upon became their defender.

In the course of his Titanic struggle with Antaeus, Hercules felt that his great strength was ebbing away while the monster's vigor and vitality revived every time that he touched the ground. Realizing that it was the giant's mother that was reviving his strength Hercules held him aloft in a crushing embrace; his opponent then grew weaker and weaker until he became limp and lifeless,

Lifts proud Antaeus from his mother-plains,  
And with strong grasp the struggling giant strains  
Back falls his fainting head and clammy hair  
Writhe his weak limbs and flits his life in air.<sup>17</sup>

The Dutch naval forces had by the second half of the seventeenth century gained control over the seas and the sea-routes essential for the maintenance of the Portuguese Asian Empire; the Portuguese in consequence were unable to send reinforcements or supplies

16. R. A. S. (C.B.) Vol. 1. XVIII, pp. 238, 239.

17. *Myths of Greece and Rome* (Guerber), p. 498.



to feed their forts in the territories under their occupation. Ceylon was one of the countries in which this problem presented itself to the Portuguese; their external supplies were cut off by the Dutch fleets; while their internal supplies could not be procured by reason of the measures taken by Raja Sinha whose troops were ever on guard in the vicinity of the forts.

The untiring military efforts of Raja Sinha II ultimately led to the reversal for the time being of the Dutch policy of territorial expansion by military conquest. He was like his predecessor, Raja Sinha I, the pivot of the Sinhalese resistance to foreign domination, but he had greater good fortune in that he lived to see the expulsion of the hated Portuguese. The close of Raja Sinha's life was one of disappointment; age and illness prevented him from enjoying and following up his later victories; the question of a suitable successor pre-occupied his mind. At the end of his war-wearied career it would have given him some consolation had he known that the struggle and labour had not been all in vain, that the Dutch Empire was itself ebbing away at the very moment that the light was going out from his tired eyes.

On the death of Raja Sinha II the Dutch Governor held a memorial celebration (Dec. 22, 1687) in honour of the man who had become their bitter enemy and continually accused them of craft and deceit, called them "faithless covenant-breakers" and other names. The celebration was attended with great pomp and ceremony. First came a colourful procession. "Long lines of lascarin companies of soldiers, and sailors with arms reversed and trailing pikes, each company preceded by a field-piece dragged by slaves, and the Governor's guard in armour went in front of the trumpets and kettle-drums, which were on horseback.

"The great Standard of the King, smaller standards, his personal banner, led horses covered with black velvet, gilt spurs, gauntlets, dagger, helmet, coat of mail, etc. came next. These were succeeded by a coach drawn by six horses, all hung with the King's device of the Red Lion on a gold ground, the horse of State, herald in armour, the Sword of Sovereignty the Crown and the Sceptre. These Rest were carried on cushions by noblemen and guarded by halberdiers, and accompanied by lighted flambeaux.

"Next came the Governor, whose train six ells in lengths was borne by a page, with the Sinhalese ambassador by his side. The Political Council, the Ministers, the Council of Justice, and other



officials followed while the burghers and domestics brought up the rear. The long procession wended its way to the Church where the insignia remained on a table till evening; then these were removed under three volleys of musketry, and a royal salute from all the guns in the city and the fort, and escorted back to the Governor's house with the same marks of distinction."

A noticeable absentee from this calculated farce was the dead body of Raja Sinha himself whose "imperial presence" had evidently been earlier consigned to the flames in the garden of his palace at Kundasale and among the hills of Kandy which he loved so well. One can picture the Governor drinking his gin and smoking his tobacco after this exhausting ordeal and giving vent to an expression of his real feelings on this occasion. "At last, we are rid of that craftly old rascal, whose next move we could never anticipate." And one can almost hear the invisible figure of the dead King reply: "*Casta Hollandesa* out of my royal presence, or I will have you impaled."



## THE DYING DUTCHMAN

The principal towns are sadly decayed, You meet with multitudes of poor creatures who are starving in idleness. Utrecht is remarkably ruined. There are lanes of wretches who have no subsistence than potatoes, gin and stuff which they call tea and coffee. They are so habituated to this life that they would not take work if offered to them (A.D. 1764).

—DE WITT







## CHAPTER XII

### THE DYING DUTCHMAN

The close of the seventeenth century saw the Netherlands involved in several wars, both with the English and the French, but it was evident that the Dutch had lost their supremacy on the sea and their power of resistance on land; the theatre of the naval war was now not England but the Netherlands; the skill and courage of the great Dutch Admiral Van Tromp was of no avail against more and better ships First Anglo-Dutch War (1652-1654); and he was himself killed in the naval disaster off the Texel (A.D. 1653).

In the Second Anglo-Dutch War (A.D. 1665-1667) the Dutch fleet was totally overpowered and defeated; in the first battle (1665) four Dutch Admirals were killed and many ships destroyed; this second disaster afforded confirmation of the deterioration of the Dutch navy. About the same time the Bishop of Munster with hastily collected troops overran a good part of the Netherlands; the war with the English led to the reciprocal burning and ravaging of the Dutch and English coasts and ended with the Treaty of Breda (1667).

The Third Anglo-Dutch War, however, soon followed (1672-1674); it was an attempt by both nations to resolve the question of commercial and maritime supremacy. In the meantime there commenced a disastrous war with France (1672-1678); the French overran the Netherlands "with lightning-like rapidity"; the Dutch government itself allowed the delivery of stores of ammunition and provisions to the French army during this campaign; national greed had been substituted for patriotism; so low had national unity and national consciousness fallen.<sup>1</sup>

The Treaty of Nimeguen (1678) terminated these hostilities to the detriment of the Dutch and their allies. In the course of this war the Dutch fleet under Admiral de Ruyter was defeated in three battles and almost annihilated; the warnings of this great admiral that the Dutch fleet was unequal went unheeded and the Admiral himself, like his great predecessor Van Tromp, was killed in action.

The French campaign in the Netherlands met with no resistance;

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1. See *The Rise and Decline of the Netherlands*.



fortress after fortress fell but the situation was providentially saved by an improvised defence at Mayden, near Amsterdam, which was also on the verge of capture. "Everyone appeared as if condemned to death. Trade and industry were at a standstill. All shops were closed. The law Courts, universities and schools were empty, the churches were crowded. Many people sent their wives, their children and their wealth away from Holland. Many buried their money; Dutch securities fell."<sup>2</sup>

While the Dutch Governors and the Dutch troops were dealing out death in Ceylon against the resistance of Raja Sinha II, the Dutch homeland was itself dying at its very core without even a show of resistance. The Treaty of Nimeguen gave the French certain lands on the North-East frontier; these defeats for the moment tipped the political balance in favour of the House of Orange and led to its restoration to power.

But the tide of decline was irreversible; several causes were at work; disaster both on sea and land was coupled with rivalry and competition in trade and commerce by England and France which had by then become great powers; the energy and the fighting qualities of the Dutch had been sapped by the opulence of their great Empire; the wealth of their Colonies attracted rivals anxious and able to displace them from their far flung possessions; the end of the eighteenth century saw the culmination of the Dutch sea borne Empire; the day of glory had departed.

While the growth and competition of new nations, in particular, the English and the French, led to the decline and decay of the Dutch Empire, another contributory factor was the social, economic and political structure of the United Provinces; individual, family and sectional interests superseded national interests. It is alleged that:

"Self-satisfied and short-sighted rentiers and capitalists preferred to invest their money abroad rather than in fostering industry and shipping at home and thus relieving unemployment." Each one says, "It will be my best time and after me the deluge. The going will be good as long as I live, and what happens after my death won't worry me then."

The sections in the political arena were tenacious of their own individual or party views and indifferent to the effect of the promotion of their policies on the country as a whole; there were broadly

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2. See *ibid*, pp. 383, 384 and citations.



three political parties, the De Witt Party, the House of Orange Party and a third party without a definite designation and a definite family leader.

These differences were acute and prevailed both in economic and even in military affairs; state funds which were available for the construction of war ships or manufacture of military equipment, for munitions, garrisons and the fortification of forts were diverted to other purposes and the country fell later into a chronic state of unpreparedness to meet a military or naval emergency.

Parochial interests gained the ascendancy; without the concurrence of the other Provinces, Holland negotiated the Treaty of Munster with Spain (1648) which was in effect a vital breach of the Union of Utrecht; the office of Stadtholder was abolished.

“In the conflict between the House of Orange and the oligarchical politicians of Holland, both in 1618 and 1650, the trouble came from the same cause. In both cases, the conflict was created by the fact that the central power of the state, that is to say, the combined authority of the States-General and the Stadtholder the national and unifying element came into collision with the anti-national and the anti-unionist elements.”<sup>3</sup>

While the internal structure of the Union was loose and breaking into pieces, the British Parliament passed the Navigation Act (1651) which gave a death blow to Dutch shipping and her import trade.... All British goods were henceforth to be borne in British ships. The Anglo-Dutch wars had demonstrated the weakness of the Dutch navy but the advice of great Admirals fell on the deaf ears of the politicians and the merchants.

The personnel of the land and sea forces had gone into business; the generals and admirals manned their contingents and navies with foreigners, lascarins and sailors whose only spur was their pay and not fame. The Dutch lost their knowledge of the art of war and their thirst for glory; in times of stress and invasion, they elected to purchase peace at any price.

Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey  
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.<sup>4</sup>

An early diagnosis of the predicament into which the Dutch had fallen and an accurate prophecy of their near future was made by a far-sighted Italian statesman, Cardinal Bentivoglio (1530).

3. See *ibid*, p. 31 and citation.

4. Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village*, line 51.



“The Government is too much in the power of some of the provinces which lord it over the rest. Hence there is no real and effective unity among the United Provinces, outward appearance notwithstanding. However, not only diversities of interest, but religious differences as well, militate against the union of their minds.

“Many are the sects and the religions, and in many things disagreeing, into which the people of the United Provinces are divided, and how can their forces be efficient in their defence when they do not all pull together? From all these circumstances we may conclude that this new commonwealth is not likely to maintain its present position.”<sup>5</sup>

These wise words of the Papal nuncio, an apt analysis of the conditions prevalent in the Netherlands, afforded a striking example of the abuse of the party system and of individual ambition; the concentration was on the success of individuals and of parties and not on the promotion of the welfare of the state; its structure was undermined by over attachment to ideologies and the neglect of matters of grave practical moment.

In the throes of these conflicts the efficiency of the departments of state declined, in particular, the army and the navy which failed to repeat their great achievements in the Spanish wars. The dangers that are inherent to the abuse of party politics, have been aptly described by Germany's iron Chancellor.

“The Party politics are a deadly disease in the state. They are antagonistic to the national interests. Party politicians do not ask themselves. What is good for the nation?. National interests may suffer, people may be sold up or die of hunger; what does it matter to them if only their party flourishes?”<sup>6</sup>

The abuse of the party system reached giddy heights in the Eastern Empire of Rome; the factions which had agitated the circus and the hippodrome of the Western Empire were introduced into affairs of state; the contending parties assumed different colours, such as red, white, blue and green; and even forms of dress and hair style; this last method of distinction has found favour in modern society in many countries, where youth has cut itself off from age and formed itself into a distinctive class. An eminent historian has related with effect the terrors of the party system in Constantinople run amok.

5. See, *The Rise and Decline of the Netherlands*, p. 165 citing Bentivoglio, *Historical Relations*.

6. *ibid.* p. 287, citing speech of Prince Bismark (1884 A.D.).



“Every law, either human or divine, was trampled under foot; and as long as the party was successful, its deluded followers appeared careless of private distress or public calamity. The license without the freedom, of democracy, was revived at Antioch and Constantinople, and the support of a section became necessary for every candidate for civil or ecclesiastical honours.

“Insolent with royal favour, the blues affected to strike terror by a peculiar and barbaric dress, the long hair of the Huns, their close sleeves and ample garments, a lofty step and a sonorous voice. In the day they concealed their two-edged poniards, but in the night they boldly assembled in arms and in numerous bands, prepared for every act of violence and rapine.

“No place was safe or sacred from their depredations; to gratify their avarice or revenge they profusely spilt the blood of the innocent; churches and altars were polluted with atrocious murders. The dissolute youth of Constantinople adopted the blue livery of disorder; the laws were silent, and the bonds of society were relaxed; creditors were compelled to relax their obligations; judges to reverse their sentence; those ministers of justice who had courage to punish the crimes and to brave the resentment of the blues became the victims of their indiscreet zeal.”<sup>7</sup>

A young democracy like Ceylon would do well to pay heed to the words of the Italian Cardinal and the German Dictator; for the very seeds of possible disruption which they so precisely and cogently describe are prevalent in Ceylon. The origin of these divisive forces is now immaterial but it is undeniable that they are the bed-fellows of Ceylon and her people. Diversities of interests, sects and religious differences are many, with communal, political and racial conflicts super-added.

Ceylon exhibits further a singular circumstance which enhances rather than diminishes the problem; her constitution and the delimitation of her electorates (written 1969) entrusts the balance of power to minority communities which tends to an unique result; the majority can be defeated both at the polls and in Parliament by a minority community which can hold a pistol at its head.

While it is agreed on all hands that a majority should not override and should pay regard to the wishes and welfare of a minority in the interests of the state, it would appear to be a travesty of parliamentary democracy that a minority should be elevated to a seat

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7. Gibbon, Ch. XL, Vol. IV pp. 162, 163.



from which it can control the majority. An opposition vote or its very threat can submerge administrative or legislative measures which a Government in office considers a wise proposal.

A minority opposition vote toppled over a party in office (April, 22, 1960) and the same minority vote later brought the same party government into power (March, 27, 1965).<sup>8</sup> It is only wise leadership and not sectional views or personal ambitions that can steer Ceylon through the many divisive forces and conserve national unity in the interests of national progress and welfare.

In recent decades a considerable expansion has taken place in Ceylon's economy; a great part fed by foreign aid; industries have sprung up, agricultural yields have increased; and endeavours have been made even to export locally manufactured goods. Major irrigation and hydro-electric schemes have been set on foot, the growth of the economy is essential to keep pace with the growth of population; a people that hitherto thought in thousands is now beginning to think in millions of rupees. It is too early to make an accurate assessment as to what impact these ostensible material gains may have on the nation's mental climate.

Intercourse with the West, both by Ceylonese seeking residence and employment in foreign lands and foreigners, aided by the encouragement shown to tourism, visiting Ceylon registers a clear upward trend. Investment in foreign countries of the capital of Ceylonese by birth, or distinction, or on temporary residence permits, 'is a noticeable' feature. These movements must of necessity affect the social life and the attitude of the people.

It is difficult to resist the uneasy feeling that this outward vesture of prosperity may in fact be an inward decadence; that the price of virtue may fall to a low ebb and the prey of corruption, power and lust reach a new height; the survival of a nation depends on the virility of its people and not on their opulence; to this fact the annals of history bear ample testimony. The disintegration of a nation is seldom evident on its surface, even when it has begun to run its course.

The great Dutch Empire was dying: the English Navigation Act (1651) had crippled her trade; the first three Anglo-Dutch Wars (1652-1674) had destroyed her commercial and maritime supremacy; the forty years struggle with France (1672-1713) had

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8. Debates, Ceylon Hansard.



exhausted her; embargoes were laid on her herring trade by France (1751) and Austria, Denmark and Prussia (1766-1775); the end came with the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780-1784) and the wars which followed the French Revolution.

The Netherlands was invaded (1794); Amsterdam was captured; the Dutch fleet was destroyed and, after the exaction of a heavy war indemnity the Netherlands was converted into a petty Kingdom of France. By a singular coincidence, the great Dutch Empire and the little Kandyan State that it was devouring were dying simultaneously.

But even from the second half of the seventeenth century, the throttling effects of foreign competition were apparent; the decline of the deep-sea and coastal fisheries (herring, cod and whale) led to the decline of the ship-building and its subsidiary industries; the demand for herring was reduced in the 18th century by a change in the dietary habits of Europe; avenues of employment from all these sources were lost.<sup>10</sup>

The portrait painted by contemporary writers of the Dying Dutchman is not a pleasant sight even to the "native heathen" over whom he once lorded. The decline of the Dutch fisheries inevitably affected to a greater or lesser extent, the numerous ancillary trades and occupations with which they were closely connected; they included the timber trade, the salt trade;

"The carpenters, caulkers, smiths, rope-makers and nail-makers, the coopers, who make the prodigious number of casks used for package of the herrings; the net-makers and all other little traders who furnish the several instruments necessary in the manufactory. (Onslow Burrish 1728). The Fisheries were doubly valued as a nursery of seamen and a source of employment for labour ashore."

"Trade is declining in South Holland and at Amsterdam, as may be seen by the fact that the canal boats bring in less than they used to do, and loud complaints may be heard by Holland because the majority of nations have bye-and-bye become wiser and manufacture themselves all that can be manufactured by them, and have learned to go themselves to the Indies for their tropical produce. The beautiful Leyden cloths have lost much of their sale because they have been prohibited by France, Sweden and Prussia" (1723-1727).

"Nobody is loading ships to go out; the herring fishing stands

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still, rye and grain are rapidly rising in price, and thousands of men, having neither work nor food turn to wrong-doing, plundering and robbing'' (1873).

''The principal towns are sadly decayed, and instead of finding every mortal employed, you meet with multitudes of poor creatures who are starving in idleness. Utrecht is remarkably ruined. There are lanes of wretches who have no subsistence than potatoes, gin and stuff which they call tea and coffee; and what is worst of all, I believe they are so habituated to this life that they would not take work if offered to them (1764).''<sup>11</sup>

''The economic decline of the nation has reached such a pitch that it seemed as if the body of the Commonwealth would shortly consist of little more than rentiers and beggars—the two kinds of people that are the least useful to the country (1778). Industry also declined.''

''Nowhere was the overall decline of Dutch industry in the years (1750-1795) more clearly reflected than in ship-building. In the 17th century the Dutch shipwrights were kept fully occupied in building repairing and replacing ships for the fisheries, the navy, the European sea-borne carrying trade and the two Indian Companies apart from the vessels they built for sale or charter abroad.''

Its decline, more noticeable after about 1750, rapidly increased in the last quarter of the century ''whereas on the war of 1672-4 the Dutch warships had fired their broadsides at the rate of three to one compared with their French and English opponents, the exact opposite was the case in 1746, according to the evidence of Dutch Naval Officers.''

The East India Company was equally affected by the decline. ''I am afraid to say how things are with us, for it is shameful—everything is lacking, good ships, men, officers; and thus one of the principal props of the Netherland's power is trembling in the balance'' (1744).

Recent research attributes the causes of the economic decay primarily to the development of industry and shipping in neighbouring countries and assigns the social structure of the Republic as a subsidiary one.<sup>12</sup>

The disintegration of the Dutch hegemony over the coastal areas of Ceylon in the eighteenth century ran parallel to the decline and

11. See *The Rise and Decline of the Netherlands*, pp. 415, 286. *The Dutch Sea-Borne Empire*, and citations.

12. See *The Dutch Sea-Borne Empire*, pp. 271, 287, 108, 292 and citations.



decay of the Kandyan Kingdom; neither the intermittent expansion of the areas under occupation nor the attempts made to reverse the trend met with any real success; the Dutch Governors were often unequal to the task of Government.

Dutch policy oscillated between the views of their representatives in Ceylon, the opinions of their Head Office in Batavia and the decisions of their nerve centre at the Hague; the problem often fell between these three stools; it was seldom that there was complete agreement. While these disputations were in session, the exigencies of the moment would demand immediate action which was taken by the man on the spot before the final verdict was in his hands; where contrary action had been earlier taken the despatch on the situation was coloured to provide a justification.

The problem that vexed the Dutch was the eternal problem of Imperialism. "Was it to be territorial expansion or commercial exploitation? Was the former a necessary adjunct or not of the latter? Was the revenue from extended conquests and the monopoly of the trade worth the price that was paid i.e. in men and in military and other expenditure? The driving force with the Dutch was always gold not glory.

While the home government preferred to err on the side of caution, its pro-consuls, intoxicated by power and feelings of grandeur, favoured conquest. An instance was Van Eck's expedition to Kandy (1756) and his two proposals to Batavia, conquest or the elevation of a Dutch puppet to the throne. But the difficulties which the Dutch encountered were many and some of them proved insuperable.

Ceylon gradually became a machine of private trade, manipulated by profiteers in both the King's country and the Dutch territories. The canker which had destroyed the rule of the Portuguese had set in among the Company's officers who had shown themselves too weak to resist the numerous temptations for the illicit acquisition of wealth. Once again arecanut proved the sorest trial, and the officials were found busily employed in trading in this article in competition with the Company.

"The best arecanut in the market was bought in for them; fore-stallers waylaid the men from the Sinhalese Kingdom who brought the stuff for sale, forced them to sell it at low figures, or harnessed them from place to place; vessels calling for arecanut were supplied with what belonged to them, while the property of the Company



rotted in the go-downs and had to be burnt.’’<sup>13</sup>

A general picture of the corruption prevalent in the Dutch Eastern Empire is also drawn elsewhere by foreign writers. “The senior merchants, junior merchants, skippers, officers, assistants and all other persons in the service of the Company were buying up or sending home the best and finest procelain, lacquer-work and other Indian varieties, contrary to their oath and allegiance. This complaint runs through the Company’s official correspondence to the end of its days.... The superiors in the East normally had no inclination to give their subordinates away, as they themselves were almost invariably more deeply implicated.’’

The facilities for fraud and embezzlement were endless.... the Company’s accounts in the remoter factories could be “cooked with relative ease”. The employees of both Companies (the English and the Dutch) continued to use the services of the other for the remittance of their ill gotten gains. This practice became a major scandal in the latter half of the 18th century. John Ross, the Dutch Company’s agent in Bengal, made at least half a million rupees from commissions he took on funds which the servants of our John Company sent secretly to England by way of Jan Compagnie and the Amsterdam Banking houses.’’<sup>14</sup>

“In Ceylon a good many of the officials were incompetent, several were dishonest, the majority hated each other and were glad of an opportunity to ruin their rivals. Several were after inquiry removed from office. A scrutiny of the Court of Justice and of the Orphan Board led to the Secretaries being put on their trial for embezzlement, the Secretary of the former avoiding punishment by killing himself in jail.’’<sup>15</sup> An effective step was taken towards the improvement of the efficiency of the administration of justice by the appointment as Governor (1705) of Joan Simons, at one time Vice President of the High Court of Batavia, with a legal training in the Universities of the Netherlands.

During his tenure of office a register was prepared of the Regulations issued from the Netherlands as well as from Batavia and a summary made of the Placaats which were read in public every year under the supervision of the Fiscal. He was also responsible for the collection by Class Isaaksz, Dissawa of Jaffna, of the customs observed in Jaffna and their publication and adoption by an Order

13. Pieris, *Ceylon and the Hollander*, p. 56.

14. *The Dutch Sea-Borne Empire*, pp. 201, 202.

15. Pieris, p. 57.



(June 4, 1707) as the Thesawalamai or the Customary law of the inhabitants of the area.

The attempts made by the Dutch for the colonization of Ceylon by immigrants of Dutch extraction and to provide them with avenues of occupation and employment turned out to be a failure; among the avenues of employment tried were the opening of taverns, plantations and trade; the first was popular with the burghers.

“There was easy money in this trade and it was easy work and suited their temperament more than any other occupation. It led to an alarming increase in the number of taverns in the cities, creating a major social problem.”<sup>16</sup>

The attempt to develop planting, however, failed; cultivation of land was not attractive to the burghers as it involved labour and few applicants for land came forward; the third experiment, the giving over of the private trade, met for a time with considerable success.

“The intention of the Dutch was that the trade of Indian private traders should pass over into burgher hands. So when the Indian traders were stopped from coming to Ceylon, the burghers were encouraged to buy up all the arecanuts and take them to India.”<sup>17</sup>

“They secured the entire arecanut trade for a period—(1670-1672); but this policy was later abandoned by the Dutch Government.

“It came into conflict with the Company’s own trade and led to a considerable diminution of the Company’s profits. At one stage of the Dutch regime, many burgher families were in dire straits and submitted a petition to the Government (1682) setting out their difficulties and making a few demands to alleviate their condition but the appeal was not entertained as the Government was more concerned with its own measures of economy.”<sup>18</sup>

In an endeavour to ply their trade without interruption or disturbance by the King’s forces, it became the fashion of Dutch Governors and officials to adopt a servile attitude towards the King and his Court. “We cannot stir, much less make proper profit of our conquest,” observed the Dutch Governor (Schreuder), “if we do not continually, indeed, nauseatingly flatter and caress the Court; and though this is commonly called by us, keeping the Court in good humour, it tends towards the great degradation of the Honourable Company, which formerly made itself so feared in the country,

16. Arasaratnam, *Dutch Power in Ceylon*, p. 206.

17. *ibid.* p. 207.

18. *ibid.* pp. 211, 212, and citations.





but now almost continually has to play the little poodle.’’<sup>19</sup>

The Directors at the Hague, while in agreement with the policy that the King should be treated with every mark of respect disapproved of the extremely servile attitude adopted towards him by the Governors; their terms of address was unbecoming of Christians as they ascribed divinity to the King. An attempt was earlier made to counteract the private trading activities of the Company’s and the King’s officials with South India and Asian ports.

Encouragement was given to the burghers in the areas of occupation to engage in trade. This policy met with success (1670-1672) for a short period when the entire arecanut trade was in their hands but was later abandoned by the Government itself as a conflict arose between the Company’s trade and the business done by the burghers which resulted in a considerable diminution of the Company’s own profits.

Becker who succeeded Simons made several attempts to improve the efficiency of the civil administration with partial success; the ports were closed against Indian trade, as smuggling had reached alarming proportions; the small Company formed by the Dutch officials operated side by side with the Dutch East India Company and made a considerable harvest. The thirst for wealth which the King of Sweden had remarked was their religion had sunk deep into the soul of the Dutch.

“Private trade alongside the Company’s lawful business was ubiquitous. The directors either could not or would not pay adequate salaries to the great majority of their employees. Moreover a substantial portion of their meagre pay was retained in the home offices until the expiry of their time in the tropics, partly as a precaution against their desertion; from 1658 onwards the Heeren VII manipulated the rate of exchange against their employees.

“Virtually nobody was able to live on their official pay, let alone save anything for eventual retirement, and pensions were only awarded under very exceptional circumstances before about 1733. The result was that everyone from the Governor-General to cabin-boy traded on the side and everyone else knew about it.’’<sup>20</sup>

This trait of the employees of the Company could hardly be conducive to improve the morals of the “heathen” whom their predikaants were called upon to convert; the Dutch were introduc-

19. Pieris, p. 100.

20. *Dutch Sea-Borne Empire*, pp. 201, 202.



ing into Ceylon the corruptive influences of money considerations which had hitherto no attraction to its inhabitants.

Becker's vigorous administration, however, brought an improvement in the revenue of the Company, "never before never after, were the profits derived by the Company from the island so uniformly abundant. The only source of annoyance was the steady influx of the Moors who in spite of all restrictions continued to make their way and to obtain lands for themselves."

Rumpf who succeeded him (1721-1723) was, therefore, able to report the highest revenue (1721); a successful Pearl fishery was held the following year (1722) for the first time in the century. On Rumpf's death (1722) Vuyst succeeded him (1726) but Vuyst turned out to be a homicidal maniac; he was arrested for murder, tried by a Special Tribunal, sentenced to death and beheaded.

Versleys who had been sent on a Special Commission to restore order next assumed the administration and attempted to restore order and redress for the actions of Veyst but was himself soon recalled. Van Domburgh, the Commandent at Galle was directed to take over but he found the Castle at Colombo closed against him; his successor Pielat (1732-1734) endeavoured to reform the abuses and corruption current among the officials and in the administration of justice; some of the officials involved were prosecuted.

Van Domburg (1734-1736) again replaced him; attempts had been made during Piolet's regime to keep the King in good humour, among them were a carriage and four, camels and other curious animals and above all a wig for the personal use of the King; but serious dissatisfaction arose on the closure of the ports; the Kadawatas were closed in retaliation. After Van Domburg took charge there occurred a strike among the cinnamon peelers; this discontent was aggravated by regulations for the protection of cinnamon which prevented the customary chena cultivation; as the riot spread nearly all the demands were conceded but the situation had got out of control and turned into a rebellion.

Van Imhoff, however, took control of the Company's affairs (1736) and being an able administrator, took firm action to restore normal conditions but he failed to receive much assistance from Batavia and was, therefore, compelled to arrest the growing discontent by attempts to pacify the King.

His successors were Stein, Loten and Schreuder (1757-1761) during whose tenure of office the growing discontent between the



Dutch administration and the King came to a head; the request of the King for a share in the elephant trade and the opening of the post of Puttalam were both refused. Schreuder refused to placate the King with the customary subservience and "Continuously play the little poodle".

He further stressed that the methods usually adopted to dissensions in the Court were not being followed. Regulations were enacted to take back from the villagers the Company's lands of which they had been long in possession, though without a documentary title; the ports remained closed.

The cumulative effect of these measures was that there was a general rebellion (1760) which spread throughout the country which received the King's assistance and his troops crossed the frontier (1761). The Dutch were caught unprepared; their military precautions were lax and inadequate.

While the terms of employment in Eastern countries under Dutch occupation remained unattractive to the men, emigration was equally unattractive to respectable Dutch women; the voyage was difficult, the climate unsuitable and living conditions undesirable, the hazards of the tropics appealed only to the more adventurous who had little to lose and it was only "light women" who answered the call; as these females were reputed to lead scandalous lives both Batavia and Hereen XVII ultimately discountenanced emigration and favoured associations with the better class of natives.

But the social customs and religious scruples of the better class of natives acted as an effective barrier to intermarriage; nor were these obstacles counterbalanced by the status of the prospective husbands; on the contrary they had little to offer as compensation for the risks attendant on a mixed marriage; the pay of the employees was meagre and they were subject to the terms of employment; while the men whose period of service had expired and came to be described as "free burghers" were regarded as of inferior status to the officials and were not permitted to return to Europe with Asian women.

Conversion to Christianity before marriage was laid down as a condition precedent to the alliance and it happened, therefore, that only the lower classes and women of the same character as the women who emigrated accepted these restrictions; the free burghers were drawn from time-expired clerks, soldiers and sailors and constituted a class of irregular habits so much so that it was said by



one Governor-General with reference to the East Indies that the alliance was between "the scum of our land" and "the scum of the East Indies".

Dutch colonization in the East was, therefore, on the whole a failure. At the time of the British occupation of Ceylon, there remained in Ceylon a few Dutch families' some of whom claimed the appellation of "Dutch Burghers" in contra-distinction to "Burghers" who could not lay claims to the higher status, the dividing line between the two classes became in course of time thinner and thinner with the progress of inter-marriage with the "natives".

On their entry into occupation the Dutch made every effort to introduce colonialism into Ceylon; but two obstacles, almost insuperable, stood in their way; one was their inability to displace the religion of the people; the other was to dislodge Roman Catholicism in areas where it prevailed.

Four main Church bodies were established; these were constituted into Councils at Jaffna, Mannar, Colombo and Galle, Each Church Council consisted of the Predikaant, the minor church officials from among the important members of the laity and a Political Commissary or representative from the Government. The Church Council dealt with purely doctrinal matters and the Political Commissary had considerable power; the predikaants (ministers) were mainly entrusted with the duty of converting the heathen to accept the reformed faith; with them were associated readers or school masters who were called "sick-visitors" or "sick-comforters".

Both predikaants and lay-readers were appointed by and subject to the disciplinary regulations of the Company and not of a Church organization; the insistence by the Company that this right was in them led to differences with the Church authorities who claimed that the control, appointments and dismissals should be vested in them but this claim was not conceded.<sup>21</sup>

The division into a higher class and lower class of instructors was mainly a measure to save the rix-dollar, for the lay-readers were paid less and "had only a rudimentary theological training, were recruited mainly from the worker class, and included ex-soldiers, jailors, cobblers, weavers, cloth-workers and bakers."

"Missionaries selected from what constituted the scum of Holland, more or less, had little chance of displacing established religions.

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21. See Arasaratnam, p. 218; *Dutch Sea-Borne Empire*, pp. 134-136.



and conveying the message of the holy writ; the predikaants, on the other hand, claimed to hold a higher status which they jealously guarded. But very few predikaants or lay-readers interested themselves in learning Sinhalese or Tamil. The curriculum of the lay-reader required him "to read the morning and evening prayers from a little book, and to sing a verse or two from a psalm. On Sundays, they must read a chapter; if anyone is sick and likely to die, the sick comforter must encourage him and read some Christian prayers to him and help him to draw up his will." The duty of the predikaant was to supervise the lay-readers and go on tours of inspection,<sup>22</sup> his annual visit was as much of a nuisance and source of expense to a villager as that of a revenue officer.

"Villages with a reputation for fat chickens and good mutton, which the inhabitants had to supply never lacked the ministrations of the predikaants who frequently took their wives with them" for whom palanquins with their bearers had to be supplied.<sup>23</sup>

But it was not long before substantial differences arose between the Dutch State officials and the predikaants; the latter emphasised the necessity of unity among themselves, both in regard to doctrinal matters and with the object of the centralisation of Church administration: they advocated an annual gathering (1659) and an annual selection of one Church as the presiding Church for a year in rotation which was to be charged with attending to all the correspondence from outside. But the Batavian Government disapproved of many of the recommendations and "described the deliberations as a great deal of jabbering".<sup>24</sup>

Another move of the predikaants was to claim the right to forward a general letter every year to the Church Council of Amsterdam in the nature of a report, reviewing the activities of the Ceylon Church. This recommendation was also rejected; a third manoeuvre, their claim to pay themselves from the funds of the Church organization in substitution for payment by the Government from State funds also failed. The Government was keenly alive to the dangers inherent to the acquisition of independent powers by the clergy and elected wisely to retain the control in its own hands.<sup>25</sup>

But quite apart from internal conflicts between the predikaants and the lay-readers and between them and the Government the

22. *The Dutch Sea-Borne Empire*, p. 138.

23. Pieris, p. 89.

24. Arasaratnam, p. 223.

25. *ibid.* pp. 225-226.



Dutch policy of conversion to the Reformed Church met with other insuperable difficulties. One of the first hurdles in their way was the problem of language; the Dutch Missionaries were not conversant with either the Sinhalese or Tamil language and with the notable exception of the predikaant Baldaeus (1658-1665) were unable to preach to the prospective converts in their own language.

Unlike the Catholic Missionaries of the Portuguese era, they were less inclined to equip themselves with this essential aid to the due performance of their functions; two other hurdles were even more inaccessible, the intransigence of the people and the Catholic clergy entrenched in the pockets of Roman Catholicism which they had made for themselves. The Dutch took the first obvious step, the persecution of the Catholic Clergy and an embargo on the practice of Roman Catholicism.

The Catholic Clergy fled to their stronghold at Goa and also sought refuge in the Kandyan Kingdom where they were all received since the Kandyan Kings who were Buddhists accepted religious toleration as a principle of good Government; from these coigns of vantage the Catholic Clergy continued to feed their flocks and were too elusive to be caught. Their pertinacity and grit can be gathered from an instance when they gave confession on board a ship to Catholics who had no priest in Ceylon.

In Kandy, the King (Raja Sinha II) allowed the Catholic priests to build a Church and the Portuguese assembled there; but they made no better than a bawdy-house of it, for which the King commanded to pull it down. "The Kandyan Kingdom was the secret headquarters for underground Catholic activity in the Dutch dominions, in the same manner that the Kingdom of Madura in South India was used by the Jesuit priests to minister to the Parava community in the Dutch held harbour of Tuticoryn. This Parava Catholic community, unlike their co-religionists of Ceylon, put up an open defiance against all attempts at Reformation and maintained their religious beliefs.

"Sometimes priests were smuggled into Ceylon from India. Navarotte, a Spanish priest who touched the coast of Ceylon reports that some Catholics came aboard his ship for confession, as they had no priest among them for a long time. The women, he says, "showed much devotion, sent beads and candles to bless, asked for holy



water, written gospels.’’<sup>26</sup> Catholic sources of the time give some evidence of the secret activity during the period (1658-1687) which was referred to by them as the dark period of Catholic activity in Ceylon.

They also record that there was some attempt by the Goan Church to persuade the Papacy to use their influence to secure permission from authorities in Holland for their priests to visit and attend to the Catholics of Ceylon. Though this permission was not given openly, the regulations relaxed after 1687.<sup>27</sup>

The Dutch persecution of the Roman Catholics and their internal conflicts would have been watched with satisfaction and amusement by the heathens of Ceylon who saw for the first time that the disciples of the “true faith” had divisions of their own and were not averse to cut each others’ throats as eagerly as they cut the throats of the heathen.

But the toleration shown by the King of Candia to the Roman Catholic community was ill-repaid when their community in Colombo offered their services to Van Eck for his invasion of Kandy. He received a memorial from Colombo Romish Christian priests offering as many men as desired from that community armed or as coolies, and themselves to go with the expedition to encourage their co-religionaries and act as interpreters and guides—Resolved to accept 200 armed men and 800 coolies.<sup>28</sup>

“Had it not been for the Roman Catholic coolies Van Eck would have been in worse difficulties, even though they were used for relatively light work only the construction of huts and stockades, the collection of paddy. But nothing toilsome or degrading.”

Both the authorities at Batavia and Van Eck were, however, quite aware of the fact that they were treading on treacherous ground and these overtures by the Romish community were evidently made in order to secure additional concessions at the cost of the King of Kandy who had given them refuge; for in a later Despatch (November 8, 1765) Van Eck acknowledges the instructions that he had received from the Governor and the Members of Council at Colombo and Batavia in these words.

“Yyee’s recommendations to mistrust the Roman Congregation will be duly observed, but since for some time unusual tolerance has been shown them it appears undsirable now to strictly execute

26. Arasaratnam, pp. 227-228 and citations.

27. R. A. S. (C.B.) Journal Vol. IV. Part 1, pp. 39-66.

28. Ceylon Manuscript Commission, Bulletin No. 6, pp. 10, 53, 105.



the ordinances against them; but no further concessions will be granted.’<sup>29</sup>

During their exploration of possible fields of conversion in Ceylon, the Dutch found to their amazement how shallow the Portuguese efforts had been in some areas of Ceylon. Roman Catholic churches and secret conventicles were closed (1699) but it was a shock years later that the bulk of the thirty-five churches in Jaffna were well stocked with heathen literature.<sup>30</sup>

“It was impossible to blink the fact that the natives were at heart heathens. The Wannias, the inhabitants of a district of Ceylon, refused to admit Europeans into Ceylon, and were suspected of being devil-worshippers, probably Hindus. The Dutch retaliated with a Proclamation, (June 6, 1711) which declared that whereas:

“The clear instructions which we have constantly issued to dispel the darkness that surrounds the people of the country are to our immeasurable sorrow and great displeasure daily disobeyed and insulted, we find it expedient to waken that attention which our blessed religion requires’<sup>31</sup>

This measure declared that anyone found at a place of heathen worship or taking part in Hindu ceremonies was liable to be summarily arrested and punished corporally as well as by rigorous imprisonment; the priests officiating at Devalas (a Hindu place of—worship) were ordered to leave the Company’s territory. This Proclamation was ignored; a subsequent order forbade Christians to marry Buddhists; this prohibition was found ineffective.

Thereupon a Statute was passed (1760) that if a Christian woman lived with a pagan man, the two of them were to be flogged till blood appeared, to be branded, confined in chains at hard labour for life, to have all their property confiscated and their children taken for slaves.<sup>32</sup> It was an appalling exhibition of the salvation of the heathen soul through the mutilation of his body.

But Christianity found little headway among the people nor could it capture the bastions of Roman Catholicism although the the Company forbade baptism by Catholic priests and declared the reception of Catholic priests a penal offence and marriages solemnized by them illegal. The failure of Christianity to reach the heathen soul is evidenced by the observation of a German Jacob

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29. *ibid*, p. 134.

30. Pieris, p. 88.

31. *ibid*.

32. *ibid*.



Haafner who had wide experience in the Company's Eastern Settlements and was in Ceylon (1782) who said that:

“the inhabitants knew little of Christianity save to make the sign of the cross and to mutter a prayer.” The same opinion had been expressed by Pararacini de Capelle of Breda a hundred years before, having spent thirty years in various parts of Ceylon, regarding the Mukkuvas of Puttalam that “little had been done beyond introducing new incantations and new ceremonies in place of old”.<sup>33</sup>

The predikaants also found that the pattern of conversion adopted by the Romish Church in Ceylon was identical with the methods adopted in other countries and confirmed to the technique by which they won their first great triumph when they toppled over the statues of the Olympian gods of the Roman Empire from their high pedestals:

Will you walk into my parlour? said a spider to a fly,  
'Tis the prettiest little parlour that ever you could spy.<sup>34</sup>

“The different saints merely replaced the presiding deities of the Hindu pantheon. Rosaries bore a great resemblance to the amulets worn to charm away the evil spirits. Stone images of Christ, the Virgin Mary and several saints could now be worshipped in place of similar images of Hindu Gods or the Buddha. Social customs were in some cases completely adopted by Christianity.”

The most significant examples were, perhaps, the marriage ceremonies. In the Hindu religious ceremony, the bridegroom tied a chain of gold (called *thali* in Tamil) round the bride's neck and this was the symbol of the marital union. When the Christian couples were married in Church, there too the *thali* was used, as observed by the Christian Tamils to the present day.<sup>35</sup>

No wonder, then, that early Dutch clergymen observed that there was hardly any difference between Catholics and “heathens”. The Dutch Protestantism with its lack of symbols in worship and its insistence on the Bible as the sole guide in religion offered no attraction to the Catholics and much less to the Buddhists and Hindus of Ceylon.

The Dutch, however, used like the Portuguese, a more formidable and effective aid to conversion, the temporal weapon; employment in the Government service and Government patronage were reserved

33. Pieris, p. 91.

34. *The Spider and the Fly*, Mary Howitt.

35. Baldaeus, pp. 182-183.



for the adherents of the "true faith"; this convention compelled the "heathens" to accept formal conversion, although their religious convictions remained unchanged.

Marriage ceremonies and the giving of evidence in Courts of law also required the acceptance of Christianity; marriages in Church were alone recognized as legal; the kissing of the Bible preceded testimony in Court. It was, therefore, a common event for an inhabitant who was in fact a Buddhist to comply with these observances outside his home.

He secreted, however, a Buddha Statue under the mattress of his bed, on his return home after his secular duties, he would replace the statue on its pedestal and kneel before it in prayer. This class of Christian came to be dubbed. *Sine Christo Christiani*,—(Christians without Christ) or "Rice Christians" by their fellow citizens.

Ceylon owes to the predikaant Baldaeus (1658-1668) a description of Ceylon and of events from the arrival of the Portuguese (1505) to their final expulsion from Jaffna (1658). Baldaeus functioned mainly in North of Ceylon and was one of the few predikaants who equipped himself with a knowledge of the native languages, more particularly Tamil.

His book entitled a *True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon by Philip Baldaeus* was published first as a Dutch edition (1672) about the time of his death. His own impressions are subject to the infirmity that his view point is that of a Dutchman and a predikaant actively engaged in the task of conversion.

A conflict arose between the predikaants and the Government in his time in regard to the imposition of fines by the predikaants who were accused of imposing the fines for their own benefit, of exploiting the people on their tours of the villages, lording over the villagers, expecting princely treatment and causing them severe hardship.<sup>36</sup>

Baldaeus protested against the instructions given by the Government regarding the inspection of schools. He refused to conform to them and elected to relinquish his appointment; he left the Island shortly thereafter. His account of the success of his own efforts is probably exaggerated for his own benefit and should not be accepted without the allowance of an appreciable discount.

It was one thing to occupy Ceylon; it was another to hold it; and although for a time Jan Company reaped a rich harvest, they

36. See Arasaratnam, p. 224.





soon found that they were sinking in a sea of troubles. Was the ultimate profit in riz dollars worth the cost and the labour and the tears!

The Kandyan Kingdom, even without a real King, still remained unconquered, its mountains undefiled and the redoubtable Balana Pass, like unto Moloch, opened its entrance only to burn the Dutch as it did the Portuguese, in sacrificial fires. The Sinhalese Dissavas and noblemen under them could neither be controlled nor was their loyalty certain; the Company's trading profit was cut out by its own officials and by the King's smugglers; reinforcements from Batavia or from Holland became less available as the Empire's continental troubles grew more and more.

The ever pressing danger was the English daily increasing in strength and eyeing the Dutch-sea-borne trade with envy. Strict instructions were issued to close the ports against them and to prevent them slipping out of the Dutch nets and holding communion with the King.

"Your news of the landing of English has caused us great concern, since any negotiations of that nation with the Court must be to our disadvantage; and doubly so at this moment since they would divert the Court from the consideration of an advantageous peace, not to mention the possibility of the English being granted some trading posts on the island"<sup>37</sup> (6 August, 1764).

This Despatch to Rein and Council at Trincomalee also directed that every possible means should be employed to get further details of the Englishmen and of the one Englishman in Kandia; to intercept them on their return and bring them to Colombo, to ascertain where they landed and whether there were other creeks or ports where such "illegal visitors" could make entry; a reward was offered for their capture or reports which would lead to their capture and the interception of letters addressed to them.

Other Despatches indicate that while the English were pre-occupied with Manila, the opportunity should be taken to deal with the King of Kandia and also that the Dutch were aware of the visit of Pybus to Kandy, as an Ambassador from the English Ministry at Madras (1762).<sup>38</sup>

At a conference between Dutch Commissioners and Commissioners of the English Company an assurance had been given that the

37. Ceylon Historical Manuscript Commission, Bulletin No. 6, p. 83.

38. See *ibid*, p. 54.



Company would trouble themselves no further with Kandia; that Colombo was convinced of the good intentions of the English and accepted the assurance given (1762-1763) of the maintenance of the closest possible friendship with the Dutch.<sup>39</sup>

It is evident from these Despatches that a creeping terror was running through the body of the Dutch of the incoming of the English who were now knocking at their door in Ceylon.

Dutch society in Batavia during the days of the Dutch Eastern Empire in the 17th and 18th centuries has been described by travellers to the East. The Dutch women have been classified into four classes: Holland women, come out from Holland, East-India Holland women, born in the Indies of pure Dutch parents, usually called *Liblabs* on account of their accent, Kastisen (Portuguese *castico*) children of a Dutch father and a Eurasian mother, and Mestisen (Portuguese, *Mestico*) born of a Dutch father and a native mother.

Dutch ladies were reluctant to come out to the East and Dutchmen were compelled to contract marriages with the natives or Eurasians. It would seem that the Dutchmen, except when they were in bed together, ignored the society of their wives who had no option but to make the native women, mostly slaves their companions and fell into indolent habits.

“They are waited on like princesses, have a great many slaves of both sexes at their beck and call waiting on them like watch-dogs, night and day, and watching their eyes closely in order to catch their slightest whim; and they are so lazy that one will not stretch out her hand for a thing, not even to pick up a straw from a floor, even if it be just at her feet or beside her, but will call a slave to do it.”<sup>40</sup>

In moments of irritation they would appear to have lapsed into most vulgar language and maltreated their slaves; their children were left more in the charge of the slaves and grew up with them and acquired their habits and formed in the course of time a generation more native than their mothers.

The habits and manners of the Kastisen and Mestisen are according to the descriptions worse than those of the Dutch-born women. “They knew nothing and are fit for nothing except to scratch their

39. *ibid.* p. 87.

40. De Graaf, *Cost Indische, Spiegel*, Raffles of Singapore (Emily de Hahn), p. 125.



arse, chew betel, smoke cigarettes, drink tea or lie on a mat or a carpet.’<sup>41</sup>

The high proportion of slaves in a Dutch household created domestic problems; the slave-girls selected were most comely in appearance and miscegenation between them and the Dutch men was common; the wives on these occasions subjected the mistresses of their husbands to cruelty of a repelling type, although they themselves were not averse to sexual indulgence with the slave boys.

“In the selection of female slaves for the respective duties of the house, great attention is paid to their personal appearance and musical accomplishments, as well as to those qualifications, which seem to be their principal recommendation. Here the slaves are valued for their beauty, their skill in playing the harp, and their melodious voices.

“This peculiarity of Asiatic luxuries is carried to such a height, that in some of the houses of the more opulent Europeans, as well as of the wealthy natives, some dozens of these enchanting female slaves may be found, as if the owners thought of realising the promise of the Mohammedan paradise in this world.”<sup>42</sup> Some writers refer to the brutal treatment of slaves but domestic slaves would appear to have been treated on the whole with toleration.

It has been said that “those whom the Gods wish to destroy, they first make mad”. Europeans who left the exacting shores and climate of their motherland lost themselves in the wealth and splendour of the gorgeous East and paid, more often than not, a terrible price for power and material gains in suffering moral degradation and loss of all cultural values.

“The people here learned to care only for riches. Whatever ideas of virtue or honesty they may have held were lost in record time. Very few men could resist the temptation in Batavia to indulge in petty graft and dishonest practice. Yet few of them got enough wealth to satisfy themselves; and they became disappointed, discontented, melancholy dejected souls.

“Added to the effect on their spirits of this noxious climate and the want of their customary food, all of this rendered them an easy prey to death. Most of the people looked dejected. Even the rich burghers. Their only resources were tobacco, dull conversation, drinking and cards. They were bored to death.”

41. *ibid.*

42. Thorn, *Conquest of Java*; Raffles of Singapore, p. 130.



The Dutch kept their women slangily called "liblabs" in a world of their own and that world was "damnably dull".<sup>43</sup> In the language of their own religion:

For what shall it profit a man  
if he shall gain the whole world,  
and lose his own soul.<sup>44</sup>

Jealous of the amours of their husbands with their female slaves, tired themselves of their company and of their own amours with the slave boys, the ladies of Dutch land in Batavia appear to have sought refuge in going to and coming from church on Sundays, highdays and holidays.

"For everyone is then tricked out in her best finery, in silk and brocade, cloth, damask and gold thread work, or heavily embroidered and decorated cloth of gold striped and flowered stuffs with gold embroidered borders, etc. Their head-dress is decorated with costly pearls.... necklaces and ear-rings of fine pearls and diamonds, others on their breasts and so forth.

"Thus they sit by hundreds in the church, decked out in their finery like dolls in a row—the meanest of them looking like a Princess or a Burgomaster's wife or daughter.... when they go to Church or come home, the least of them is accompanied by a slave who holds a sunshade over her head.... So that when the service is beginning and ending the Church doors and courtyard, are so crowded with a throng of sunshades, slaves and slave-girls, bodyguards and lackeys, that one can scarcely push through them.....

"This ridiculous pomp and ceremony is the rule not only in Batavia but throughout all Asia wherever Hollanders live or are settled; because nobody will give way to anybody else, or take a small step aside, each one wishes to play the fine lady."<sup>45</sup>

An account of the "Ceylonese Dutch"<sup>46</sup> has been left by a British chaplain who arrived with the forces at the commencement of the British occupation of Ceylon (1796). The chief trait of the original Dutch which those in Ceylon retain is their fondness for gin and tobacco; in other respects they adopt the customs and listless habits of the country.

"A Ceylonese Dutchman usually spends time as follows: He

43. *Raffles of Singapore*, citing Stavorinus, p. 112.

44. *St. Mark*, 8: 36.

45. *Raffles of Singapore*, pp. 126-127, citing De Graaff, *Cost Indische, Spiegel*.

46. Robert Percival, *Island of Ceylon*, pp. 158—163.



rises early, about six, and either goes to walk, or sits down by his door in a loose robe, and nightcap to smoke a pipe—then with a glass of gin which is called a *soupkie*, he fills up the interval to seven. A dish of coffee is then handed by his slaves, and his lounging posture and tobacco pipe are again resumed.

“He afterwards dresses, and goes to business, or more frequently to pay visits; a mode of spending time of which his countrymen are particularly fond. In these visits the Dutchmen usually take a pipe and a glass at every house to which they go....

“Their dinner hour is about twelve. On their tables they have very gross and heavy food, and are particularly fond of having great quantities of butter and oil mixed with their fish and other victuals.... This mode of living cannot fail to make them lazy and indolent, which indeed they generally are to a proverb.”

“Their children are treated with the same neglect as other objects and are usually committed to the care of slaves ...The conversation of women....forms very little of a Ceylonese Dutchman’s entertainment.... After the first salutations are over, the men seem to forget that the ladies are present and will sit a whole evening talking politics over their pipes, without once addressing the women or taking the least notice of them.... In the forenoons their dress is particularly slovenly.

“I have seen many in a morning with only a petticoat and a loose gown, their hair coiled up in a knot on the crown of their heads, and without shoes or stockings, and yet these very women appeared at evening parties dressed out in abundance of finery.

“From their infancy they are given up to the management of the female slaves, from whom they imbibe manners, habits and superstitious notions of which they never afterwards divest themselves... Their morals being drawn from the same sources (their slaves) are equally destitute of dignity, or virtue, as their manners are of politeness.”

“Dancing is the principal amusement of the younger women, while the chief pleasure of the married and elderly ladies consists in paying formal and ceremonious visits to each other. To these visits they go accompanied by a number of slave girls, dressed out for the occasion. These girls walk after them carrying their betel-boxes or are employed in bearing umbrellas over the heads of their mistresses, who seldom wear any head-dress, but have their hair combed closely back and shining with oil.



“Their chief finery consists in these female attendants, and their splendour is estimated by the number of them which they can afford to keep. These slaves are the comeliest girls that can be procured, and their mistresses in general behave very kindly to them.... The Dutch ladies behave in a very cruel and unjust manner to their female attendants, upon very trifling occasions, and in particular on the slightest suspicion of jealousy.”

On the assumption that this description of the “Ceylonese Dutch” is correct, it would appear that they bore a close resemblance to the “Batavian Dutch” as described earlier by Stavorinus and De Graaf; the former was a Rear-Admiral of the States-General whose memoirs were published in London (1793), the latter a Dutch traveller who visited Batavia.

The descriptions carry a vicious sting and are, perhaps, exaggerated, but afford a basic picture of the degeneration of a once industrious nation and of the “Dying Dutchman”.

Events in Ceylon during the corresponding period reveal the laxity of the connection between the central Governments of Colonial powers and their possessions overseas. Means of communication were slow and inadequate; the pioneers, therefore, simultaneously with their departure from their homelands underwent a process of emancipation; the home authorities, hardly conversant with local problems, vacillated and were hesitant to take decisions even when their views were canvassed.

The men on the spot, therefore, often acted before the arrival of directions. The achievements of Viceroys, Governors and Pro-consuls were often in disregard of the wishes of their central Governments and it was not long before they began to carve out careers of gain and glory for themselves.

Many of the acquisitions of Afonso de Albuquerque on behalf of Portugal in the East (1505-1515) were not on the orders of Lisbon; the classic instance is the annexation of Singapore three centuries later by Raffles for England (1810) disobeying the instructions of London.

While the principal towns of Holland were falling into decay and their inhabitants starving in idleness, the Dutch pro-consuls were reducing the people of Ceylon into a state of misery and destitution.

Military operations against the Kandyan Kingdom were resumed (1764) and the Dutch Commander Van Eck invaded Kandy (1765); the King's overtures for peace were rejected; in the King's words



“truly peace will never have been attained with that Govr. even if the whole island was made a blood bath” (1765 A.D.).<sup>47</sup> According to custom the Kandyan districts fell and according to customary Kandyan strategy Van Rein found himself trapped; his forces were routed and would have been annihilated but for the intervention of a Mudaliyar who led them through a secret route. A few stragglers returned to tell the tale of this disaster which so overwhelmed Van Eck that he committed suicide (April 1, 1765); two days later Van Rein himself died (April 3, 1765) at Kandy.<sup>48</sup>

The Buddhist Chronicle capitalizes on the affliction and death of Van Eck by attributing them to a visitation on him for his evil deeds. The Van Eck episode is narrated in the Chronicle in detail and has been described as “perhaps, the most valuable part of the latest *Culavamsa*”.<sup>49</sup> “Thereupon the hostile hosts like cruel armies of Yakkas, forced their way into the town and destroyed the sacred books and everything”....

“The large, beautiful Vihara, well worth seeing which is known as the Gangarama because it was built on a fair spot near the Mahavaluka ganga (Mahaveli river) was founded by the King under the name of Raja Mahavihara. This Vihara thus superbly furnished with glory and splendour was also destroyed by the enemy who penetrated into the town.”<sup>50</sup>

“Hence after a short time the greatly deluded leader of the enemy was smitten with fear, horror and delusion which came over him owing to the might of the gods and owing to the power of the merit (of the King). He left the fair town, fled without prestige and landed in the fire of death. Victims of the power of infatuation, all the hostile armies who had advanced, were helpless and shelterless and came to a bad end.”<sup>51</sup>

The campaign was, however, continued with untold misery to the local inhabitants. “It seems obvious that they are in great straits from the ravages of the army; and the lack of salt and dried fish, so that it might be expected that they were ready for peace; but this is not the case.”<sup>52</sup> (Nov. 8, 1765). Even in the midst of severe distress the will of the people to resist foreign domination

47. *The Dutch Wars in Kandy*. Historical Manuscript Commission Bulletin, No. 6, pp. 4, 13.

48. *ibid.* pp. 13, 135; pp. 14, 15; also Pieris, p. 116.

49. *Culavamsa*, Geiger, p. 268.

50. *ibid.* Ch. 99, 125; Ch. 100, 291.

51. *ibid.* Ch. 99, 134.

52. Historical Manuscript Commission, p. 136.



had not been extinguished.” A peace was at last concluded in the same year (Feb. 14, 1766) on terms advantageous to the Dutch.<sup>53</sup>

At this identical point of time, when her pro-consuls were prancing in Eastern lands, Holland herself was dying; she had been reduced to a nation of “rentiers and beggars” and her own inhabitants were “starving in idleness”. The day of doom had come to her, as it had come a century earlier to Portugal.

The much enduring Britisher John Pybus, like his much enduring compatriot, John Bunyan, had made his *Pilgrim's Progress* through slush and mud to the city of Senkadagala (Kandy); after many prostrations, he had presented himself before His Majesty the King of Kandy (1762) to lay the foundation stone of a little bit of England in a little corner of the far-flung British Empire then in the making.

Of the Dying Dutchman, it can be said, by Ceylon and her people:

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves,  
but rather give place unto Wrath,  
for it is written Vengeance is mine,  
I will repay, saith the Lord.<sup>54</sup>

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53. *ibid.* p. 162, p. 17.

54. *Romans*, 12: 19.



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## **THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE KANDYAN KINGDOM**

The present condition of the Kandyen Kingdom is as confused and unstable as could be imagined. The King, lazy by nature and as a foreigner having little knowledge of the affairs of his Kingdom is ruled by the Court Dignitaries. Above all, the King lets himself to be led blindly by his Malabar kinsfolk at Court.

—DUTCH DESPATCH  
(1765)



சென்னை நகராட்சி நிர்வாகப் பேரவை

சென்னை நகராட்சி நிர்வாகப் பேரவை  
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சென்னை நகராட்சி நிர்வாகப் பேரவை



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE KANDYAN KINGDOM

With the death of Raja Sinha II (1636-1687) there passed out the most picturesque figure of Ceylon in the seventeenth century; her annals thereafter (1687-1796) read as though her very life had been sapped and was ebbing away. Nearly two centuries of continuous warfare (1505-1687) had taken its awesome toll and both kings and people were dying for peace. His son and successor Vimala Dharma Suriya II (A.D. 1687-1707) "hated war with an intense hatred" and turned his attention to the revival of Buddhism and the pursuit of religious activities; from the Buddhist angle, two momentous events adorn his reign.

One was the erection of the Temple of the Tooth at Kandy to hold the sacred Relic; "In honour of the Tooth of the Prince of the wise he erected a fair three-storeyed pasada, resplendent with all kind of (artistic) work, and for the sum of five and twenty thousand silver pieces he had a reliquary made which he covered with gold and ornamented with nine precious stones. In this great reliquary that resembled a cetiya (dagaba) of precious stones, he laid the Tooth of the Victor."<sup>1</sup>

The other was the despatch of an embassy to Rakkhanga (Arakan) 1697 which "brought thirty-three Bhikkus to the beautiful town of Siriwardhana (Kandy) who performed the Ordination (Upasampada) ceremony on thirty-three sons of good family. He also visited the shrine of Sumanakhuta (Adams Peak) sheltered with a great umbrella of silver the footprint of the Sage. These events were celebrated with great fervour and rejoicing throughout the country."<sup>2</sup>

In comparison to Raja Sinha II, a dogged and determined man of war, Vimala Dharmasuriya sought the ways of peace; at first he again and again remonstrated with the Dutch about the non-fulfilment of obligations to which they had pledged themselves in the treaty (1677); but the Dutch evasively put the King off and there was no war during the whole period.

Soft kings were delicious meat for the Dutchman's avaricious

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1. *Culavamsa* 97-5. 7.
  2. *ibid.* 10-16.



palate; they readily supplied ships for Buddhist missions and honoured them with grandiloquent titles as long as they were free to follow their own pursuit of exploitation. The depths to which Ceylon had fallen from her high estate during the reigns of Raja Sinha I and Raja Sinha II is evident from a description of Ceylon when Vimala Dharmasuriya II was King.

“The King’s guards were armed mainly with pikes; there were barely a thousand men who knew how to use a musket, and there was no one who could manage the cannon which still existed. The three-hundred tusked elephants of the King were maintained chiefly for ceremonial purposes and was kept distributed among the peoples.<sup>3</sup> These noble beasts were of the breed that had charged the gate of Vijithapura (circa 150 B.C.), while balls of red-hot iron and molten pitch were pouring on their back; that had charged the battlements of Colombo (1587) against the fire of the Portuguese cannon.

“The King was quite content; he addressed the (Dutch) Governor as one of his Dugganaralas and a Dutch Governor subscribed himself as from ‘His Majesty’s Castle of Colombo.’ When a Governor died, the King sent directions that ‘good care should be taken to protect the interests of the Company; the King’s solicitude for the welfare of the Dutch and his gratitude for the care with which they guarded the shores of Ceylon’ were reciprocated in many ways by the Dutch, anxious to maintain relations conducive to their exploitation of the Ceylon trade.”

For instance, “they maintained for the King’s ambassadors four-in-hands for their conveyance when they visited Colombo and sent him presents to keep him amused, curios from Nuremberg, tea from China, horses from Persia; a ram which was presented to the King was escorted for four miles from Jaffna by the Dissava and other officials, with companies of soldiers and lascarins, after being saluted with three volleys of musketry and thirteen guns from the Castle”<sup>4</sup> (of Colombo).

These measures on the one hand and the King’s policy of peace on the other enabled the Dutch to administer for a period of five years the occupied territories with much less friction than before; the peeling of cinnamon was freely permitted and in one year the collection was so large that the surplus left over, after providing the yearly fleet with full cargoes, was burnt in order to prevent a

3. Pieris, *Ceylon and the Hollander*, p. 45.

4. *ibid.* pp. 46, 48.



glut in the market.

The Dutch administration of Justice had fallen into disrepute and with the object of correcting the deficiencies the appointment was made of Cornelius Joan Simmons, a man with a legal training, who caused the preparation and adoption of a register of the Regulations issued from the Netherlands as well as from Batavia for the administration of Justice and a summary was drawn up of the Placaats and read out in public every year.

It was during his tenure of office that Claas Isaaksz made a valuable contribution to the legal system by the collection of the customs of the Tamil country which was adopted as a statement of the Tesavalamai or the customary law of Jaffna by an order (June 4, 1707). As a gesture of goodwill the ports of Kalpitiya and Kottiyar were thrown upon to the Indian traders (1696) while the ports at Batticaloa and Trincomalee were converted into petty outposts.

Vimala Dharmasuriya II was succeeded by his son Narendrasinha (1706-1738) who was the last Sinhalese King. His successors were the relations of the Queens who were Malabar princesses. According to a custom that had prevailed in Ceylon, a king of Ceylon was obliged to marry within a royal caste and it was common for a Sinhalese king to marry a princess from a South Indian royal family.

As Narendrasinha left no son to inherit the throne, he was succeeded by his wife's brothers, Vijaya Raja Sinha (1738-1746) and Kirthi Sri Raja Sinha (1746-1779); the latter had three Queens, all Malabar princesses; the Court of the Kandyan Kingdom was soon flooded by the kinsfolk of the queens who arrived from South India.

This fortuitous and unfortunate circumstance led to disastrous consequences; disunity became prevalent within the kingdom; the King lost the allegiance of the powerful Kandyan noblemen and no longer retained the loyalty and the goodwill of the people. Thus began the disintegration of the Kandyan Kingdom; the Dutch who observed the changing scene with watchful eyes were not slow to capitalize on Ceylon's misfortune.

"The Court", remarked a Dutch Governor (Schreuder), had assumed a novel, a Malabar countenance. "It is true that Sinhalese noblemen still continued to be the King's Ministers. But the real force behind the Throne consisted of his Malabar Kinsmen. The chief among them was his (Kirti Sri Raja Sinha's) own father, Narennappa Nayakar, a determined and resourceful man, a strict



disciplinarian. The Sinhalese officials were watched with the utmost jealousy by the King, who feared any combination among them; they were supervised by the Malabars who filled the most lucrative appointments, and for whose maintenance a large revenue was required.”

Corruption and nepotism were rife in the King's court; his wives' relations who held him in their control were more keen on the success of their private enterprises than on the people's welfare. Their activities were centred on smuggling operations. The North coast of Ceylon had become a smugglers' paradise—a characteristic which it has inherited up to date—not only the produce of the Dutch but even the produce of the King was smuggled to South India.

“An extensive system of smuggling was organised in co-operation with the Coast Moormen who boldly conveyed the produce of the King's country in their boats to the creeks and backwaters between Negombo and Puttalam. An urgent remonstrance (by the Dutch) addressed to Court met with the contemptuous reply that smuggling was very profitable to the King, and that unless the port of Puttalam was opened, the Company might find the loss even greater.”

“Armed vessels kept patrolling up and down but the Moormen were more experienced on these dangerous waters and little could be achieved in checking the enterprise.”<sup>5</sup> In one instance the resourceful Narennappa Nayakar attempted to take his own vessel by force past Kalpitiya and its obstruction resulted in the adoption of retaliatory measures by him. It would, therefore, appear that the relations of the Queen not only ran the King's government but also carried on a lucrative private smuggling trade.

In the meantime the kings and queens of the Nayakar dynasty, in accordance with the tradition that no king who was not a Buddhist could rule the country, adopted Buddhism. Internal corruption and maladministration were clouded by the ostentatious display of religious activity, the restoration of the Buddhist temples and the splendour of religious festivals.

The Upasampada (Ordination) ceremony was revived in Ceylon by a Chapter of Siamese priests headed by the Grand Thera Upali who arrived in Ceylon in response to a Buddhist mission despatched by the King. The revival of this ceremony (1752) was indeed a great achievement and the King won thereby the goodwill of the Buddhist priesthood; there was great rejoicing among the people;

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5. Pieris, pp. 50, 68.



the celebrations were on a magnificent scale and in them the King himself participated.

“In the year two thousand two hundred and ninety-six (Buddhist Era, 1752) after the final Nirvana of the Enlightened in the month of Asala—(Esala) (Esala, June-July)—when it was full moon, the all-powerful Great King.... betook himself to the monastery. He had seats carefully spread in the fine Uposatha house contained therein. Then he invited the Grand Thera Upali.... and second to him the Thera Ariyamuni together with the rest of the community and hath them be seated.

“Then with the celebration of a great Festival the Ruler of Lanka made them perform on the most distinguished of the Samaneras (unordained) of Lanka the ceremony of admission to the Order;” this reference is to the great Weliwita Saranankara, one of the most distinguished dignitaries of the Buddhist Priesthood of Ceylon. On the same occasion the King invested him with the dignity of Sangaraja.’<sup>6</sup>

The revival of the ordination ceremony and the investiture of the learned Saranankara “who as regards virtue, discipline and devotion to duty was as a mirror” were two landmarks in the history of Buddhism in Ceylon. The praise accorded to the King in the Buddhist Chronicle (*Culavamsa*) is evidence that he had completely won over the Buddhist Priesthood; for the Chronicle which had disposed of the great Raja Sinha I in two pages and allotted barely five pages to the great Raja Sinha II lavishes no less than forty-four pages on Kirti-Sri-Raja Sinha.

“Gifted with physical beauty, he was a delight to the eyes of the people, filling the whole superb island of Lanka with splendour, a prince of glorious grace....The Lord of men dowered with abundant merit, resided in Siriwaddana. The virtuous one had already aforetime made the firm resolve to shelter the order of the Sage and now under the name Kirthisrirajasinha he ruled gloriously over Lanka. By the four heart winning qualities he made all the people well disposed to him and he was worthy of the praise of the learned’<sup>7</sup>

The Chronicle enumerates in great detail the various meritorious acts of the King, including the copying out of the sacred books, the restoration of the temples and the celebration of the religious festivals of which the most important was the Esala (June-July)

6. *Culavamsa*, Ch. 100.

7. *ibid.*—Ch. 99.



Perahera at Kandy. Kirthi Sri also caused the deficiencies in the *Mahavamsa* to be filled up and the unknown part of the history of the later Kings written down and brought up to date.

The medical care of the Bhikkus received his special attention; he appointed for them two physicians and nurses. To these he granted villages, fields and facilities in the way of garments, ornaments and the like; as prices for medicines he gave them yearly a hundred (money pieces) from the royal treasury. In the various monasteries the ruler would ask after the health or ill-health of the Samaneras and the bhikkus and gave them the requisite cure.<sup>8</sup>

The activities to which reference is made in the Chronicle, although meritorious from the Buddhist angle, cannot in a correct assessment compensate for the general weakness of his rule and the errors of his administration; he displayed none of the great qualities of Raja Sinha II but suffered his kingdom to fall into decay by his policy of peace and his unpreparedness for war and in particular by his handing over the Government to the kinsfolk of his Queens.

The Dutch humoured the Sinhalese Sovereign with gifts and pretended to be his servants; 'Every year they were wont to bring with great reverence and great ceremony as gifts and lay before the King various stuffs made in different countries, along with many other articles, fitted for the use of the King which they had carefully chosen out.'<sup>9</sup> The many Olanda people who had been our foes thought of the custom of the country. They all came together, took counsel with one another and said; to capture the whole of Lanka is impossible... it is fitting, therefore, that we dwell here in the town with humility, love and reverence to the Sovereign of Lanka.<sup>10</sup>

In spite of these outward protestations of amity, the real relations between the parties were generally strained and soon became open war (1761 to 1766); these hostilities at the commencement resulted in the King's favour; several forts in the South and even Hanwella near Colombo (17 miles) fell, Matara and the Coast up to Galle were taken by the King. These defeats resulted in the replacement of Schreuder (1757-1762) by Van Eck (1762-1765) and the formation of a Security Council out of the members of the Political Council which was the governing body for Ceylon; the exercise of its powers by this body varied with the strength or weakness of the Governor.

8. *ibid.*

9. *ibid.* 99. 110—112.

10. *ibid.* 99. 155—159.



Van Eck turned out to be a man with more drive than tact; the Sinhalese still remained loyal to the King and could not be trusted; Van Eck, therefore, obtained troops from Batavia and Holland, formed a Marine and a Malay Company from deportees from Indonesia and slaves freed *ad hoc*; some of the forts were re-taken (1763). Finding the transport system inadequate, he next reorganized the system with new coolies and pack animals.

The recruitment of coolies were from the scum of the earth; Easterners including criminals, Caleros and Kamatjees (coast coolies) and bandits were included; the Roman Catholic community of Colombo offered 800 coolies which offer was gratefully accepted. The Dutch soldiers had normally to pay for their one suit of uniform including one pair of shoes; the introduction by Van Eck of a field service dress two suits of uniform free of charge was found satisfactory.

He then resumed the campaign; but the campaign (1764) met with little success. The following year (1765), however, he divided his forces into several detachments; he marched up the hills; the Kandyan resistance collapsed; the King's troubles were increased by the steps taken to put forward a Siamese puppet as a claimant to the throne.

Ambassadors were sent by the King to whom Van Eck put the following demands (1) recognition of the Company's sovereignty in all occupied territories (2) handing back of prisoners, deserters and rebels (3 and 4) the cession of all shore lands and the 7 and 8 Korales, Sabaragamuwa and the district of Anuradhapura (5) freedom of trade (6) repayment of the costs of the war (7) military aid against foreign aggression (8) the prohibition of negotiations with other Powers. The Ambassadors had no credentials and the negotiations failed.

“The troops crossed the Mahaveli ganga and the Palace at Kundsale was plundered; the booty was mostly linen, fine furniture and curiosities with some coined and uncoined silver; Van Eck took possession of a large silver gilt machine like a bell but closed below and in two pieces of which the upper can be removed, weighing 210 lbs. which served to contain their Holiest Relic, the famous Tooth of Boedoe in a gold and jewelled chest. And Van Eck presented this to the troops, to be distributed among them in addition to the 100,000 florins promised.” A request was made that the best way of fulfilling the promise was by melting and sale and distributing the value.

Then the tide turned; the Kandyans fought back; Van Eck, like



his predecessors soon realized that it was easier to get into Kandy than to get back; he offered terms, reducing the Dutch demands and left Kandy, taking with him the Relic casket and handing over to Van Rein but no reply was received from the King; the retreat became a rout, arrows came from unseen enemies hid in the Kandyan fastnesses; shortly after his return Van Eck died (April 1). Van Rein to whom he handed over when he left Kandy also died (April 3). It is said that Van Eck committed suicide, depressed by the enormity of the disaster.

The garrison that had been left at Kandy realized that there was no hope of reinforcements and began its own retreat; the return was on an empty stomach and lost all the jubilation of the attack; they intended to take the usual route through the Balana Pass. At this crucial moment there came into the fold of the retreating garrison, the Mudaliyar of Hapitigam Korale and knowing that the Balana Pass was strongly held, advised the use of a little-known route through which the garrison escaped, and entered Colombo with as much ostentation as possible which they were instructed to do in order to give the people the impression of a victorious campaign; the massacre of the retreating garrison was averted by the advice given by the Modeliar.

“The said Modeliar,” says a Dutch Despatch, “so truly served us both in Kandia and during the retreat, above all by showing the path, that we bestowed on him a good chain to the weight of 32 pagodaas to which the undersigned (the writer of the Despatch) added a gold medal, wherewith, he is mightily content.”

In view of this disaster the Dutch evacuated a number of posts and the Kandyan activity revived; as an immediate act of retaliation the Dutch cut off salt and opened a new campaign under Dufflo (January 1766); he moved *via* Kurunegala and arrived at Yatawatte Gravet. Meanwhile envoys arrived from Kandy and the points at issue were the shore lands and the question of salt and cinnamon; the Court wanted leave to fetch salt to be granted once and for all.

The Dutch insisting that if they had to get leave each year to put cinnamon in the King's lands, he must also ask yearly for salt. Finally, only the shore-lands remained for discussion and a 12-day armistice was granted while messengers were sent to Kandy to get authority to cede them, care being taken that the news of this armistice should take 8 or 9 days to reach Dufflo so that effectively it would be 4 days only.



“The Envoys have now asked for an armistice of 12 days. I have taken care that this will not reach you for 8 or 9 days, this was granted; the Candians are to provide food without payment.”

The stage had been reached when “the misery in the Candian Kingdom was unbearable”. It seems obvious that they are in great straits from the ravages of our troops, the failure of the crops since the farmers are in the army, and the lack of salt and dried fish; the envoys were instructed by the King to conclude peace as best they could. This letter appears to have fallen into the Governor’s hand. The cause of this mishap described in a Dutch despatch as “a fortunate error” was more probably a sale of the document to them at a price.

“The Envoys messengers were sent to the Court, returning 5 days before they were expected with a letter which by a “fortunate error” of the N. C. O. escorting them was delivered to the Governor. From this it was seen that they were instructed to insist, if there were any chance of holding some of the salterns, but if not to conclude peace as best they could; which letter was sent to them with our apologies that same evening, the rapidity of this, removing the suspicion that we had read it.”

The reverses suffered by the Kandyan Kingdom during the later Dutch wars (1764-1766) reveal the disintegration of the kingdom and its impending breakdown, but the Sinhalese Chronicle does not confess the true facts; it shuts its eyes to the King’s ineptitude and rather suggests a royal success.

“They (the Dutch) thought we shall seek pardon for the wrong committed by our countrymen and shall from now onwards live (in peace), betook themselves to the ruler, praised him, showed him reverence and spoke many friendly words. The King, the sovereign of Lanka, pardoned them their great wrong and showed them distinction in every way.”<sup>11</sup>

“Their great wrong,” in this context is the invasion of Kandy (1765), the plunder of the King’s palace and the removal of the gilt casket that enshrined the Tooth Relic. “In this wise by friendly negotiations our King achieved with them firm and lasting friendly relations. The Olanda people also became thoroughly reconciled with the King of Lanka and went every year to present him with valuable gifts, the products of various countries, with a royal letter which had been handed to them.”

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11. *ibid.* 161—165.



The Dutch exploited the King's unwisdom to the full; they were shrewd observers and acutely conscious of the real situation in the Kandyan kingdom; their Despatches contain a correct appraisal of the trend of events; the truth about the affairs in the king's territories at this period is more probably the version given in a Despatch to Batavia.

“Situation in the Kandyan Court:

“The present condition of the Kandyan Kingdom is as confused and unstable as could be imagined. The King, lazy by nature and as a foreigner having little knowledge of the affairs of his Kingdom, is ruled by the C Ds (Court Dignitaries), each of whom seeks his own advantage, flattering him with all sorts of shows of respect and meanwhile doing as he pleases.

“Above all, the King lets himself to be led blindly by his Malabar Kinsfolk at Court, who know the value of the trade in the products of this island too well not to hanker for it, and therefore set the King persistently against us.

“The C Ds who at present rule the Korles as they wish, have no desire that they should be ceded to the Coy, and the 7 Korles would not have been offered to us were it not that the RA (Rijks-Adigar), one of the two most Senior C Ds who is the Dissave of them fell into disrepute; after the action at Galegiddere he has not only lost his post but is also made a prisoner, and perhaps by now has been executed.

“It is, therefore, easy to see that that little chance of a durable peace with such a mediocre and unstable ruler as this Malabar Prince. Though (as the natives unanimously testify) he longs for peace, he has not the authority to obtain it against wishes of his kinsfolk and the C Ds; and even were a peace concluded, it would depend more on their whims than on the King himself.

“Two proposals therefore exist; either to wipe out Royal rule, once and for all, or to give the throne to the Siamese Prince, who is not hampered by a train of covetous relatives, who would be able to bridle the C Ds, so that a secure peace could be concluded with him”<sup>12</sup> (March 13, 1765). It is stated in the Despatch that it was dictated by Van Eck from his death bed (*ob.* April 1, 1765), but not signed by him.

It is not improbable that Van Eck was making out a defence for his wanton invasion of Kandy, in spite of the King's repeated over-

12. Historical Manuscript Commission, Bulletin No. 6, pp. 88, 102, 103, 137.



tures for peace, and for the savagery and rapine of his soldiers over whom he had no control; for the plunder of the King's palace, for which retaliation was inevitable.

Retaliation in fact occurred shortly after his death when most of the troops were destroyed by enemy attacks and famine; a few escaped with the help of the treachery of the Sinhalese Mudaliyar. But the Despatch is valuable as a picture of the King's Court at the time; the King's version of the incident of the invasion is otherwise; according to him.

“He (the King) repeatedly sent letters seeking for peace to the late Govr. but as Van Eck was disinclined to peace, there were no satisfactory results; and truly peace could never have been attained with that Govr. even if the whole island were made a blood-bath, since he was inclined to strife and did much evil”.<sup>13</sup> The proposals contained in Van Eck's despatch were rejected by Batavia and counter-instructions given.

“Suggested abandonment of the idea of the Siamese Prince; that Falck (the then Governor) win over and crown an outstanding C D to rule the highlands on terms (similar to those finally accepted); or if none found, write to the King offering peace, and asking for Envoys; and if none sent, divide up the conquered lands among the C Ds, on Oaths of loyalty.

“Authority given to modify the terms since Holland writes, however, much we ask for a speedy success for our arms, the Ministers of Ceylon must always bear in mind, how greatly our interests demand peace. Moreover, our experience has taught us how dangerous it is to press too far into the interior, and the possession of the shores and the lands previously held by the V O C should be the only goal of war”<sup>14</sup> (Nov. 8, 1765).

These instructions, specific and precise, are indicative of the divergence of policy in the three nerve centres of the Dutch Overseas Empire; the Hague obsessed by the impending gloom and the proximity of death was anxious for peace at any price; Batavia was tenacious of its conquests, the pro-Consuls on the spot thirsted for gain and glory; the Pretender was dropped but the other instructions were ignored and disobeyed; a new campaign opened two months later (January 1766), followed again by an invasion of Kandy.

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13. *ibid.* p. 57.

14. *ibid.* p. 134.



The disintegration of the Kandyan Kingdom is apparent from these instructions of Batavia; they contemplated the division of the Kingdom into districts ruled by Court Dignitaries appointed by and loyal to them. The disaffection of the Kandyan noblemen was intense; it was the inevitable consequence of the King's nepotism and the discrimination shown by him in favour of his Malabar kinsmen.

This feeling of resentment was the virus which infected the dying Kandyan Kingdom and led to its ultimate fall. While the impassable barriers presented by the terrain remained undefiled, the will of the Chieftains and the people to resist the foreigner had been sapped; for even at this decadent stage, Van Eck reports in his Despatch (1765).

“But the various hills with which Nature has enclosed the Kingdom (the region around Kandy) made the approach almost impossible for an army with baggage, since, beside the notorious hill, Balane, two chains of steep and heavily wooded hills, serve as an outer wall.”

Nepotism and smuggling appear to have been characteristics of the reign of Kirthi Sri Raja Sinha, while the outward display of religious zeal was used by the King and his foreign courtiers to cloak their frauds on the nation.

This system of deception is not a new feature in the annals of the history of nations; it was conspicuous in the days of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire; emperors beguiled a credulous public by the organization of shows of various kinds for their amusement; such as circuses, hippodromes and gladiatorial contests; bread and the dole were lavishly distributed to keep the people content and in good humour; in the meantime warlike pursuits were abandoned, discipline came to an end; the great empire began to crack from its foundations. In Ceylon the institution of religious festivals and of similar observances and processions was the device adopted to suit the mental climate of the people in consonance with immemorial custom.

The Buddhist Chronicles's main object was to record transactions connected with the Buddhist institutions and the Buddhist bhikkus; during the reign of Kirthi Sri Raja Sinha such transactions were many; they have been fully recorded. It is evident that the King had won the hearts of the ecclesiastical scribe as they themselves without guile confess:



“The Lord of Men called scribes together, made them copy out in one day the Digha-Nikaya, showed them much favour and then he had the sacred text preached the whole night over..... People who had renounced the world and inhabitants of houses had other sacred books carefully copied and when these were shown to them, he was highly pleased, showered them with money and other gifts, much favour and thus in his pious zeal took a share in the merit of other dwellers in Lanka.”<sup>15</sup>

So artfully had the King won the ecclesiastical press that it even showers praise on him for his selection of two brothers as two uparajas (sub-kings). This action of the King was an unwarranted act of nepotism and discrimination, probably engineered by that shrewd businessman, Narenappa Nayakar, the King’s father, who brought his whole family down from South India to share the spoils of their fortuitous new acquisition:

“To show the world that he respected his royal brothers as himself assigned the two uparajas vehicles and retinue and every kind of distinction, made them completely contented and thus showed forth in the best way the four-fold heart winning qualities. These two who in this wise attained distinction, celebrated each for himself a great festival for the Tooth Relic. They had books copied and gave the scribes money. They invited the bhikku community and each for himself continually gave them alms, such as constant maintenance and the like.”<sup>16</sup>

Not content with this adulation, the Chronicle by way of an aside condemns the former kings who “for the sake of gaining the royal dignity or for other reasons did not look on each other as brothers or otherwise (as friends) but fought one another and as a result of their discord, their subjects were even so minded. But these three brothers who had yet attained such royal power, shunned all discord and showed no weaknesses. They dwelt together in one town and were ever friendly with one another as their own shadows”<sup>17</sup>.

A note at the conclusion of his translation of this chapter by an eminent scholar, gives, apart from the bestowal of gifts another reason, for the enthusiasm of the ecclesiastical scribes. “The panegyric character of many strophes occurring in this chapter of the Chronicle seems again to prove that it was composed when King

15. *Culavamsa*, Ch. 99, 31—35.

16. *ibid.* Ch. 99, 84—87.

17. *ibid.* Ch. 99, 94—97.



Kittisirirajasinha was alive. The poet flatters him with conventional phrases.’<sup>18</sup>

The king had put into operation another immemorial custom of kings, emperors and dictators—the control of the press; it is, therefore, an interesting intellectual exercise to sift the grain from the chaff in this form of propaganda and to dig up carefully concealed misdeeds. An insight into the distressing conditions that prevailed in the Kandyan kingdom is found, however, in Dutch despatches.

“We cannot give much information about the enemy who have cut off all communications with the lowlands for some months. It seems obvious that they are in great straits from the ravages of our troops, the failure of the crops since the farmers are in the army, and the lack of salt and dried fish, so that it might be expected that they were ready for peace on any terms; but such is not the case to judge by the reply of the C D (Court Dignitary) to a letter sent by Monyart with the knowledge of the S. C. (Secret Committee).” Another Despatch says; “the misery among the Kandyans is too great to suspect them of treachery.” (Feb. 25, 1766 A.D.)<sup>19</sup>

The closure of the majority of the ports aggravated this depressing situation; the state trade was stifled; goods were smuggled out of the Island for the benefit of the smugglers alone and not for the coffers of the state; the Dutch, moreover, dominated the passes which Raja Sinha II had controlled and they channelled to themselves the Highland trade; conditions within the Kandyan Kingdom were so difficult that the peasantry preferred to migrate to towns and become landless serfs in their land; this process both destroyed their independence and the pools of recruitment of soldiers for the continuance of the struggle.

“At the same time the Dutch power was expanding all round the sea coast. In 1666 Trincomalee was taken and fortified and in 1668 Kotiyar and Batticaloa were occupied. By 1760 Dutch power had extended in some form or other, to most of the lands along the Ceylon coast line. This put them in a much more favourable position in regard to Ceylon’s trade, because now they could do what they wanted with it. It also gave them some idea, for the first time, regarding the real volume of trade, particularly on the east coast, where they were greatly impressed by the way it was carried out.’<sup>20</sup>

18. *ibid.* Ch. 99—p. 273, Note 1 Geiger.

19. Historical Manuscript Commission Bulletin No. 6, p. 136.

20. Arasaratnam, *Dutch Power in Ceylon*.



The preceding paragraphs contain a summary of the current events and local conditions relevant to the Dutch occupation. But the causes of the breakdown of the Kandyan Kingdom cannot be limited to the misrule of the Nayakar dynasty alone; that was, perhaps, the immediate cause; the spark that set aflame a fire that had kept smouldering for centuries. The area of the sovereignty of the Sinhalese kings had been gradually contracted by a process of continuous disintegration; the relapses were both serious and recurrent; the recoveries were not permanent enough to effect a restoration to the affluence of the Anuradhapura period.

The intermittent Malabar invasions struck mortal blows from which there never was a complete recovery; through the process of years Northern and North-Central Ceylon was cut off from occupation and even of effective control. The magnificent irrigation system that had contributed to make Ceylon a granary of rice was abandoned and those districts again fell into jungle and became hot-beds of disease; the population shifted south.

“The bunds were breached and these channels (of the irrigation system) were choked in the course of an incessant and devastating warfare. The works were deliberately sabotaged by invaders as a short cut to the military objective of bringing their victims to their knees; and a war-worn people had not the heart to go on repairing a damage that had been inflicted so many times over and that was virtually certain to be inflicted many times again.”<sup>21</sup>

These calamities had restricted the territories and the resources of the Sinhalese kings to the Highlands and the coastal areas on the West, South and East; the coastal areas contained ports suitable for trade, such as Negombo, Colombo, Kalutara, Galle, Matara and Trincomalee; the last had a natural harbour acclaimed as the finest in the East. With these facilities the restoration of the Island to even a moiety of its former social and economic conditions was well within the region of possibility. But Ceylon was yet to receive two successive and heavy blows.

The coastal areas were taken over successively by the Portuguese and the Dutch; after the fall of the Kingdom of Sitawaka (1594), only the Kandyan Kingdom remained protected by its forests and mountains which hemmed in enemies ever ready to despatch expeditions for its plunder and devastation. A LITTLE ASIAN STATE

21. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Vol. iv. pp. 46, 47, citing John Still, *The Jungle Tide*, pp. 86—90.



25,000 sq. miles in area was now contracted within the limits of its precipitous mountain districts.

The spirit of the people alone survived these terrific assaults; their ancient customs still remained; and in their observance the ancient Sinhalese chieftains played a decisive and conspicuous part; they were the generals who collected and led the mountaineers to battle in times of stress.

The nepotism of the Nayakkar dynasty broke that last link essential for the nation's survival; it substituted their own relations to the offices and powers which had been traditionally held by Kandyan noblemen; the king's relations who were mere sojourners in a foreign land and unacquainted with its ancient customs could neither win nor maintain the allegiance of the people.

The Sinhalese chieftains who had been deprived of their just rights and had fallen under unjust suspicion were no longer interested in the good Government of their former districts nor in giving aid to the king in times of war. The Kandyan Kingdom under the stress of social and political decay came to its inevitable end.

Kirti Sri Raja Sinha was succeeded by his brother Sri Rajadhi Rajasinghe (1780-1798). It was during his reign that the Dutch led another expedition against the Kandyan Kingdom, now exhausted by corruption, internal dissensions and war. The misery of the Kandyans was so great and that resistance was impossible; the Dutch were fully aware of their hopeless situation and extracted from the King every advantage short of virtual surrender. The Kandyan Kingdom was felled not by the sword but by its own internal decay. The King's envoys after negotiations with the Dutch authorities asked for and obtained an armistice for 12 days to enable them to confer with the king.

The Dutch Despatches in relation to this incident afford considerable material for an assessment of the conditions in the Kandyan Kingdom and the problems that confronted the Dutch at this juncture; there were three Despatches one to Holland, one to Batavia and one to Dufflo, the officer in command of the operations against the Kandyan kingdom. The Colombo Headquarters continued to delay the commencement of the 12-day truce to enable Dufflo to proceed on with his military operations.

One Despatch gives the reason for the Dutch compliance to enter into a treaty; the increasing cost of the war, the exhaustion of their Korales, especially in cattle the shortage of coolies, their



heavy losses, the fidelity of the C. D. s. to the King and the increasing bitterness among the Kandyans who longed for peace as never before; this Despatch also reveals the strength of the Dutch forces. As in Central and South America, during their conquest by the Portuguese, and in Ceylon during their occupation, in numbers the European aggressors were small in comparison with their objective; the gun and bullet prevailed over the bow and arrow.

“From May to Oct. last year 321 Europeans, 343 Easteners, 800 Sipahis, Kaleros and other natives were killed, died missing or discharged incurable, in all 1723. In Jan. the Colombo garrison alone lost 144 Europeans, 26 Malays and 55 Sipahis. We now have 3850 Europeans, 2804 Sipahis, 2388 Easteners (probably Indonesians or Javanese) or in all 9042 of whom 800 Europeans, 414 Easterners and 550 Sipahis are unfit for a campaign, so that our effective strength is 7278 only, plus 307 artillery of whom 37 are unfit.”<sup>22</sup>

The terms of the Treaty were agreed upon and a Treaty signed (Feb. 14, 1766); the final terms were to the following effect: The King recognized the Company's Sovereignty over all the lands held before the war and all the shore-lands “for one Sinhalese mile more or less” inland, receiving in return a yearly sum equal to his previous revenues from them.

Salt was to be imported by Kandy and cinnamon peeled by the Dutch as far as the hills without need for yearly leave, but embassies with gifts were to be sent and was to have no relations with other Powers; the ceremonies for Ambassadors were to be identical for both parties; prisoners, slaves, deserters, rebels and the cannon captured from the Company were to be handed back. Both parties were to prevent smuggling.<sup>23</sup>

This treaty sounded the death-knell of the Kandyan Kingdom; the Dutch took their pound of flesh; the King sacrificed everything for which Raja Sinha II had fought during fifty long years; but the course of history is mysterious and unpredictable. During the reign of Rajadhi Raja Sinha himself and within ten years of their reputed success, the Dutch occupied territories in Ceylon passed over by an arrangement in Europe into the hands of the British (1796).

Two years thereafter Sri Vikrama Raja Sinha, the previous King's

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22. Historical Manuscript Commission, pp. 151, 152, 161, 162.

23. *ibid.* pp. 17, 153.



brother, while yet in his teens, was invested with the Sword of State (1798-1815); the weight of a derelict kingdom approaching its agonized end was too heavy for the youth to bear; intrigue surrounded him on all sides; it is no marvel that, if he committed the crimes alleged against him, the stress of circumstances had made him a paranoic.

“He had the chief councillors, the great dignitaries, and many other officials gathered together and destroyed his subjects like a devil. He had the people, many hundreds in number, brought to different spots, and had them impaled, merciless as death.

“Much wealth that had come to the people by inheritance, the King had confiscated like a thief robs villages. And because the Ruler committed in this way many evil deeds the Sinhalas and the inhabitants of the town of Colombo (the British) rebelled.

“They all came hither, captured the criminal King alive when the eighteenth year after his consecration had passed, and brought him to the opposite coast (Indian mainland). After they had brought the King, the torturer of the people, to the opposite coast, the Ingirisi by name seized the whole kingdom” (1815).<sup>24</sup>

This epic of a little Asian State is now drawing to a close. It is a remarkable fact that the end came because a foreign dynasty failed the nation; the people did not fail the state. This outstanding fact emerges from their heroic resistance thirty years later against the best organized European power of that age—the British. The peasantry had found a redoubtable leader in Keppetipola Dissava, a Kandyan Chieftain; he led the last great War of Liberation, mis-termed “The Rebellion of 1818”.

So great was his success that the British Home Government despatched a direction to the British Governor to withdraw the British troops to Colombo; but before the order reached Ceylon, treacherous colleagues had given information that led to the capture of the Dissava and the war came to a close and with it Ceylon’s Independence. A people, exhausted by warfare and malnutrition, had fallen at their post; they had never surrendered. It is a remarkable tale of blood, suffering and endurance.

The capture of Sri Vikrama Raja Sinha was followed by the execution of the Kandyan Convention<sup>25</sup> (2nd March, 1815); the contracting parties were the British Governor (Brownrigg) on behalf

24. *Culavamsa*, Ch. 101, 23—29.

25. Legislative Enactments (Ceylon), Cap. 390, Vol. XI, p. 380—392.



of King George III and the Adigars, Dissavas and other principal chiefs of the Kandyan provinces; the latter acted on behalf of the inhabitants and in the presence of the Mohattalas, Corales, Vidaans and other subordinate headmen from the several provinces. This enumeration of the Chiefs and headmen in the document gives an indication of the offices then held by them and their order of precedence.

The several clauses of the Kandyan Convention reveal the objects for which the Chieftains had risen in revolt, the deposition of the Sri Vikrama Raja Sinha and the exclusion of his relations and the Malabar race for ever from the throne and from the island. The dominion of the Kandyan provinces was vested in the British Sovereign, saving to the principal chiefs and subordinate headmen the rights, privileges and powers of their respective offices.

The civil rights and immunities were also to be preserved according to the laws, institutions and customs established and in force among them. The religion of Boodho, professed by the chiefs and inhabitants of these provinces was declared inviolable and its rites, ministers and places of worship were to be maintained and protected. Provision was also made for facilities for trade and export, and the improvement of the returns, in money or in salt, cloths or other commodities.

The details of this document bring back vividly to mind the evils that preceded the final breakdown of the Kandyan Kingdom and the struggle between the Kandyan Chieftains and the Malabar dynasty; the reference to trade and returns is consequential on the smuggling then prevalent and the embargo placed by the Dutch on the necessities of life. Temporary relief was obtained but the cost had yet to be counted by Ceylon and her people.

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