

STUDIES IN
**CEYLON
CHURCH
HISTORY**

W. L. A. DON PETER

239

James J. Nesbitt



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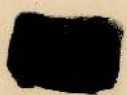
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Preface

The present volume contains a series of studies pertaining to the early history of the Catholic Church in Ceylon. Some of them have already appeared in print in various journals; some are being published for the first time.

As they were written independently of one another, some repetition and overlapping will be noticed which we hope the reader will not mind.

For permission to reproduce some of the illustrations in this book I am greatly indebted to the Trustees of the British Museum, the Council of the Hakluyt Society, London, the *Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga*, Lisbon, and Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., London.

I wish to say a special word of thanks to the Franciscan Fathers at No. 11, Largo da Luz, Lisbon, for their hospitality and kindness to me when I was in Lisbon collecting historical material part of which is included in this book.

W. L. A. DON PETER

St. Joseph's College,
Colombo, Ceylon.
15th August 1963.

A lei tenho de Aquele a cujo império
Obedece o visibil e invisibil,
Aquele que criou todo o Hemisfério,
Tudo o que sente e todo o insensibil;
Que padeceu desonra e vitupério,
Sofrendo morte injusta e insofribil,
E que do Ceu à Terra, enfim, desceu,
Por subir os mortais da Terra ao Ceu.

Os Lusíadas, Canto I, LXV.

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Abbreviations

- Baldaeus:** Phillipus Baldaeus, *A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon*, translated from the Dutch by Pieter Brohier (*The Ceylon Historical Journal*, VIII, nos. 1-4, 1958-1959), Maharagama, Ceylon, 1960.
- CALR:** *Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register*, vols. I-X (1915-1924).
- Campos:** *Campos de Ermo dos Filhos de Santo Agostinho da Congregação da India Oriental, plantado, regado, e brotado*, by Faustino da Graça, MS in the *Biblioteca Publica* of Evora, Cod. CXVI / 1-13.
- JCBRAS:** *Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*.
- Manual:** *Manual Eremítico da Congregação da India Oriental dos Eremitas de N. P. S. Agostinho*, by Manoel da Ave Maria, MS in the Library of the University of Coimbra, Cod. No. 1650, published in the *Documentação para a Historia das Missões do Padroado Portugues do Oriente*, ed. Antonio da Silva Rego, vol. xi (Lisbon, 1955), pp. 95-833.
- OMC:** *The Oratorian Mission in Ceylon*. Historical documents relating to the life and labours of the Venerable Father Joseph Vaz, his companions and successors. Translated from the Portuguese by Fr. S. G. Perera, Colombo, 1936-1938.
- Queyroz:** Fernão de Queyroz, *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon*, translated from the Portuguese by Fr. S. G. Perera, 3 vols., Colombo, 1930.
- Ribeiro:** João Ribeiro, *Fatalidade Historica da Ilha de Ceilão*, translated by P. E. Pieris and published as *Ribeiro's History of Ceilão*, Colombo, 1909.

1. The Early Jesuits and The National Languages

I

Catholic missionaries were the first European students of the native languages of India. Jesuits were the foremost among them. The English Jesuit, Thomas Stephens — incidentally, the first Englishman to live in India¹ — is sometimes mentioned as “the first European to exhibit a scholarly interest in the vernaculars.”² But actually there were other Jesuit scholars before him. The Tamil pundit Henry Henriques is one of them. The contribution to Indian linguistic study by Stephens and Henriques, and Heinrich Roth, Jerome Xavier, Robert de Nobili and Constant Beschi is well known. Orientalists have paid generous tribute to the services rendered by the Jesuits to Oriental research. Jarl Charpentier, for instance, himself a non-Catholic, has this to say of them: “The record of the Jesuit Fathers as explorers of unknown Asia — and of other continents as well — is one which is bound

¹ J. Southwood, “Thomas Stephens, S.J., the First Englishman in India,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* (London), III (1923-1925), 232-240.

² J. E. Abbott, “The ‘Arte de Lingoa Canari,’ the ‘Doutrina Christam,’ and the ‘Adi’ and ‘Deva Puran’ of Thomas Stephens,” *ibid.*, 159.

to elicit our unlimited admiration. The self-sacrificing enthusiasm and the truly scientific spirit in which these early travellers carried out, often under the most severe hardships, their important researches deserve any amount of praise; and to whatever degree opinions may vary concerning other achievements of the Society of Jesus, there should be no disagreement upon its record in the field of geographical, ethnographical, and linguistic research."³

It was the policy of the Society of Jesus that its members should acquire proficiency in the native languages of the countries where they worked. The importance attached by the Society to the study of Oriental languages may be gauged from the fact that at the second general assembly of the Society held in 1565 (nine years after the death of Ignatius of Loyola) it was laid down that one could be admitted to religious profession as a Jesuit if deficiency in theological study was compensated for by proficiency in classical studies or in *Oriental languages*.⁴

Moreover, Francis Xavier, founder of the Jesuit missions in the East, had insisted that the missionaries should take pains to learn the local languages. "Since all religious instruction had to be given in the native tongue, the first duty of the missionary [according to Xavier] was to learn the vernacular."⁵ Having had to grapple with Oriental vernaculars in the course of his missionary peregrinations, Xavier had personally experienced how much a barrier to personal contact with the native inhabitants the missionary's ignorance of their language could be.⁶ His insistence that the missionaries should acquire proficiency in the local languages bore fruit in his successors. The Jesuits not only learnt the Indian languages for the ordinary needs of missionary work, but went further, and mastering them, began to compile grammars, dictionaries, etc., thus preparing the way for later Western scholars of Oriental studies.

³ J. Charpentier, reviewing C. Wessels' *Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia, 1603-1721* (The Hague, 1924), *ibid.*, 821. Cf. also J. Charpentier, ed. *The Livro da Seita dos Indios Orientais* of Jacobo Fenicio (Uppsala, 1933), pp. xxxvii-xxxviii.

⁴ T. Hughes, *Loyola and the Educational System of the Jesuits* (London, 1892), p. 162.

⁵ D. Ferroli, *The Jesuits in Malabar* (Bangalore, 1939), vol. i, p. 138.

⁶ Cf. J. Brodrick, *Saint Francis Xavier* (London, 1952), pp. 138-143.

II

In Ceylon, as elsewhere, the Jesuits took an active interest in the study of the national languages. They arrived in Colombo in 1602 to undertake missionary work in the Island. One of the first things to which they directed their attention was the study of Sinhalese. A letter written a few months after their arrival reports: "All ours are engaged in learning the Sinhalese language."⁷ A few years later a college was opened in Colombo which became a study centre where Jesuits newly appointed to the Ceylon mission could, before commencing work, "prepare themselves by learning the languages and customs of the place."⁸

We know of several Jesuits who became very proficient in Sinhalese. It is said that one of the reasons why the two Fathers Matthew Pelingotti and John Metella, who were killed in 1616 in the rebellion of the pretender Nikapitiyē, were liked by the people was "their great familiarity with the Sinhalese language."⁹ We are told that when Pelingotti was stationed at Malvāna, where the captain-general had his headquarters, he was "almost entirely occupied in perfecting his knowledge of Sinhalese,"¹⁰ which he later put to good account in writing books. Moreover, he is known to have been tutor in Sinhalese to new missionaries.¹¹ Others who

⁷ Letter of Jeronimo Gomez, Jan. 14, 1603, *CALR*, II, 15.

Jesuits were required to keep their superiors informed of what was going on at their mission posts. The letters written by them for this purpose are our chief source of information about their activities. A full discussion of the importance and historical value of the letters will be found in J. Correia-Afonso's *Jesuit Letters and Indian History*, Bombay, 1955. Of these letters Sir Edward Maclagan wrote: "Tested by such information as we possess from independent sources, Indian and European, they emerge from the examination with the greatest credit and may for historical purposes be looked on as authorities of a very high order." (*The Jesuits and the Great Mogul*, London, 1932, p. 17). The author in this instance was referring to the letters of the Mogul Mission. What he says may well apply to any mission of the Jesuits.

The letters pertaining to the Jesuit mission in Ceylon in the Portuguese period have been translated and published by Fr. S. G. Perera in the *Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register*, vols. II-VI.

⁸ *Foundation and Origin of the College of Colombo*, *CALR*, II, 28.

⁹ Letter of Emmanuel Barradas, Dec. 15, 1617, *ibid.*, II, 77.

¹⁰ Letter of Franc Cagnola, Dec. 9, 1610, *ibid.*, II, 81.

¹¹ *Menologia Italiana*, s.j., cf. *ibid.*, II, 79.

likewise learnt Sinhalese well and wrote books were Emmanuel Costa and Pierre Berguin.

Another Jesuit, Lambert Ruiz, missionary of Chilaw, "made a very close study of Tamil, which he afterwards taught with great care and accuracy."¹² It is said that he died praying in Tamil.¹³ Bernardino Pecci is also mentioned as having "learnt Tamil thoroughly . . . though the study of that language cost him great labour."¹⁴ How keen the Jesuits were to acquire proficiency in the native languages may be gleaned from the fact that the Fathers of the Fishery Coast, under the direction of the superior Henry Henriques, himself a Tamil scholar of distinction, and later a missionary in Mannar, decided that among themselves they should speak only Tamil and the one who spoke Portuguese should be given a penance.¹⁵ When Jaffna was invaded by Kandyan forces in 1628, and the Jesuits had to abandon their mission stations and flee to the fort of Jaffna for safety, the superior ordered lectures in Tamil grammar to be given to the assembled Fathers.¹⁶ Some of them were veteran missionaries who had laboured for many years in India and Ceylon and doubtless knew Tamil well. If therefore special lectures were arranged for them by the superior, it was obviously because he wished that they should acquire a still deeper knowledge of the language. Fr. Ignatius Bruno, who gave the lectures, was an ardent student of Tamil, and was so convinced of the missionary's need to know the vernaculars well that he wrote to the Jesuit General insisting that only those who were keen on studying the native languages should be sent out to the missions.¹⁷

It was clearly no easy task for the pioneer European missionaries to learn these languages so different from their own. They had to learn by the toilsome direct method, as there were no books

¹² Letter of Emmanuel Barradas, Dec. 1613, *ibid.*, II, 85.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Letter of Ignatius Lobo, Jan. 31, 1629, *ibid.*, IV, 99. Fr. Bernardino Pecci (also called de Sena) was murdered, with Fr. Matthew Fernandez, by Kandyan troops in 1628. *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Letter of Henry Henriques, Jan. 12, 1551, *Documenta Indica*, ed. J. Wicki (7 vols., Rome, 1948-1962, contd.), vol. ii, pp. 158-159.

¹⁶ Letter of Ignatius Bruno, Oct. 31, 1628, *CALR*, IV, 97.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

as yet in European languages for the study of the Indian vernaculars. In fact, it was by them that such books were produced for the first time, which greatly benefited later missionaries and other European scholars. But they had to go through the laborious process of learning the languages directly from the native inhabitants.

III

While generally all the Jesuit missionaries learnt the native languages at least to the extent of being able to instruct and catechize the people, there were some who made a deeper study of them in order to be able to set their hand to writing.

The books they produced were of two types. Some were linguistic compositions designed to help later missionaries to acquire a knowledge of the vernaculars with greater ease and rapidity. Such works were compiled in European languages and after Western patterns. To the other category belonged religious works in the local languages for the use of the inhabitants themselves. The missionaries were evidently trying to provide the native Christian converts with a Christian literature in their own languages.

Of the works of the linguistic group there is mention in Jesuit records of two Sinhalese grammars. One was in Latin, the work of a Colombo-born Portuguese Jesuit, Emmanuel Costa.¹⁸ It was entitled *Ars Chingalensis Linguae*. No copy of this grammar is known to exist. The other was in Portuguese, composed in 1645 by the French Jesuit Pierre Berguin. It bore the title *Arte e grammatica da Lingoa Chingala*.¹⁹ Concerning this work D. W. Ferguson wrote in 1890: "The original manuscript is probably in the library of Propaganda at Rome; but copies exist in the libraries of the University of Jena and the Berlin Academy."²⁰ In 1936 Fr. S. G. Perera wrote: "Of this work . . . no trace was found so far, either in the Library of the Propaganda at Rome or in that of the Society of Jesus."²¹ My efforts to trace the copies mentioned by

¹⁸ Letter of J. Carvallius, Jan. 1, 1627, *ibid.*, III, 33.

¹⁹ *Ceylon Literary Register*, 1st series, IV (no. 8, 1890), 62.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ceylon Literary Register*, 3rd series, IV (no. 7, 1936), 328.

Ferguson brought me the information that the Jena manuscript had the misfortune of being destroyed with other documents in an air-raid in February 1945, and that there is no copy to be found in the library of the Berlin Academy.

Henry Henriques, the Tamil scholar, probably the first European to master the language, was a missionary in Mannar from 1561 to 1564. He is known to have composed several Tamil works. One of them was a Tamil grammar, another a Tamil lexicon.²² A copy of the grammar, *Arte da lingua malabar*, has been found in the *Biblioteca Nacional* in Lisbon.²³

Ignatius Bruno, who was a missionary both in Colombo and Jaffna and who, as we have seen, was a keen student of Tamil, and sought to promote the study of the vernaculars among his fellow Jesuits, is also known to have compiled a Tamil lexicon.²⁴

To the group of religious writings belong a number of works in both Sinhalese and Tamil. To begin with, there is mention, in the records, of a book of Christian doctrine in Sinhalese compiled in 1545 at the Jesuit College of St. Paul in Goa at the time when two Sinhalese princes, a son and nephew of Bhuvanekabāhu of Kōṭṭē, and some Sinhalese noblemen were there receiving instruction in Christianity.²⁵ It is perhaps the earliest Christian writing in Sinhalese.

Matthew Pelingotti, who was first stationed at Malvāna, where as already noted, he was occupied in perfecting his knowledge of Sinhalese, had, in 1610, "already translated into that language some prayers, a catechism, the principal events of Our Lord's life, and some anecdotes of the Saints."²⁶ From a letter of his written from Māṭiyagana (addressed to his superior in Colombo and quoted by the Provincial of Malabar) we learn that when he was transferred to Māṭiyagana he had taken there from Malvāna a seventy-

²² *Documenta Indica*, vol. ii, pp. 145, 152, 155, 305, 390, 396.

²³ X. S. Thani Nayagam, "Tamil Manuscripts in European Libraries," *Tamil Culture*, III (1954), 219-220.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 225.

²⁵ Letter of Juan de Beira, Nov. 20, 1545, *CALR*, I, 220.

²⁶ Letter of Franc Cagnola, Dec. 9, 1610, *ibid.*, II, 81.

year-old Sinhalese teacher with those help he "translated twenty-six lives of the Saints, a catechism, the Passion of Our Lord, an explanation of the Seven Sacraments, and many other things," which he does not name but hopes "will be of great use."²⁷

We are told that Emmanuel Costa, of whom we have already spoken as the author of a Sinhalese grammar in Latin, "translated many works well calculated to fortify the Catholics in their faith."²⁸ Similarly Henry Henriques, author of a Tamil grammar and lexicon, composed also several religious works in Tamil.²⁹

The Jaffna mission was fortunate to have for two years the presence of the celebrated missionary of Madura, Robert de Nobili (nephew of the famous Cardinal Robert Bellarmine), whose missionary methods had caused a sensation in India and Europe and led to long-drawn-out disputes and controversies. He had an exceptionally good command of Sanskrit, Tamil and Telugu. Despite the fact that he had come to Jaffna to rest "owing to his advanced age and infirmities," he "did much good with the books he composed for the children."³⁰

Unfortunately very few of these writings have survived. We have a couple of works in Tamil. In Sinhalese, however, not one is now known to exist.

IV

The Jesuits, moreover, gave a position of importance to the national languages in their educational programme. It was for the most part in the national languages that children were taught letters and instructed in Christianity.

The Jesuits had a college in Colombo with three departments of study: a school of theological studies for those intending to take Holy Orders; a school of Latin studies; and an elementary school.³¹

27 Letter of Pero Francisco, Dec. 2, 1612, *ibid.*, II, 84.

28 Letter of J. Carvallius, Jan. 1, 1627, *ibid.*, III, 33.

29 *Documenta Indica*, vol. i, pp. 492-493; vol. ii, pp. 145, 157, 305, 390.

30 Letter of Balthazar de Costa, Nov. 28, 1648, *CALR*, IV, 156.

31 Letters of Antonio Rubino, Nov. 8, 1620, *ibid.*, III, 23, 24.

Education in the elementary school was presumably in Portuguese, as most of the pupils were children of Portuguese residents. The Latin school catered mainly for ecclesiastical students, as the College of Colombo was meant to be "a seminary from which should come forth the workers required in the missions"³² Instruction in the theological school was, of course, in Latin. It was probably the same in the Latin school. But the national languages were by no means neglected. As already noted, it was in the college that the Jesuit missionaries learnt the languages of the country before proceeding to the mission field. It was, in fact, a student of the college, Emmanuel Costa, who composed the first Sinhalese grammar in a European language.

The college which the Jesuits opened in Jaffna was a smaller institution. It had only two departments of study: an elementary school and a class of Latin.³³ There is no mention of a department of theology. Students who wished to become priests were very likely sent to their college in Colombo for the study of theology. The language policy of the Jaffna college would not have been different from that of the College of Colombo.

In addition to these two colleges, the Jesuits had a number of schools attached to their Residences scattered over the mission field. They were elementary schools for the education of the native children. The medium of instruction was the mother tongue of the pupils — Sinhalese or Tamil. It is mentioned, for instance, that the priest stationed at Kammala opened a school in which the children were taught Tamil which was the language spoken in those parts.³⁴ Sometimes the missionaries themselves taught the native languages. Lambert Ruiz, we have seen, was one who taught Tamil.

There is mention also of prayers, hymns, catechisms, etc. being translated into the national languages for the use of the school children,³⁵ as religious instruction was given in the mother tongue.

³² *Foundation and Origin of the College of Colombo, ibid.*, II, 28.

³³ Letter of Cyprianus a Costa, 1633, *ibid.*, IV, 101; letter of Baithazar de Costa, Nov. 28, 1648, *ibid.*, IV, 155.

³⁴ Letter of Pero Francisco, Dec. 2, 1612, *ibid.*, II, 83.

³⁵ Letter of Simão Figueredo, Dec. 1, 1643, *ibid.*, IV, 154; letter of Andrew Lopez, 1644, *ibid.*, IV, 155; another letter of 1644, *ibid.*, IV, 154.

The Jesuits, therefore, did not come to Ceylon "with the Latin service-book in one hand and the Latin grammar in the other,"³⁶ as Augustine and his companions, coming to England, did. They no doubt had "the Latin service-book" in one hand, but came prepared to pick up the Sinhalese, or Tamil, grammar with the other.

V

The importance attached by the Jesuits to the study of the national languages was, apart from being a boon linguistically, an asset to their own missionary work.

Their familiarity with the languages of the country led to familiarity with the people who spoke them. Unlike some earlier missionaries, they had no need of interpreters. Being themselves fluent in the local languages, they were able to communicate with the people directly and intimately, and thereby understand better their ways and manners, customs and traditions, virtues and defects. As a result of this deeper understanding of the people, the Jesuits saw, perhaps better than the other missionaries, the need for accommodating themselves to the particular conditions of the milieu in which they worked. De Nobili, in Madura, becoming a Brahmin *sanyasi*, in almost everything except the Christian faith, is a striking example of such missionary accommodation.

Reciprocally the people themselves were happy that they were able to contact the missionary directly, and freely communicate with him. They naturally appreciated the missionary who understood them. We have seen that Pelingotti and Metella were liked by the people because of their familiarity with the Sinhalese language. The people came to the missionary in their troubles and difficulties; they even brought to him their complaints against the Portuguese administrators. The Jesuits in many instances took the side of the people against their oppressors, with the result that they were disliked by the officials, while the people's confidence in them greatly increased.³⁷

³⁶ A. F. Leach, *The Schools of Mediaeval England* (London, 1915), p. 3.

³⁷ Cf. e.g., letter of Simão de Figureido, Dec. 1, 1643, *CALR*, IV, 154; V, 84.

Moreover, being proficient in the languages of the country they were able to instruct the people in Christianity much better than those who worked through interpreters, or did not know the languages so well. We find them discussing religion with the native literati,³⁸ including Buddhist monks,³⁹ which was possible only because they knew the languages well. Consequently they achieved greater success in evangelization than most other missionaries. The Bishop of Cochin, Sebastião de S. Pedro, pays them tribute on this score in the letters patent by which he appointed them to the Jaffna mission in 1622.⁴⁰ The bishop, himself a Franciscan, tells us that he chose the Jesuits because he knew well "the earnestness with which they apply themselves to the study of the language of the country in which they are, the ardour with which they catechize the Christians entrusted to their care — a matter in which they far excel all other Religious in these parts."⁴¹ Indeed, for thoroughness of instruction, so essential to the stability and perseverance of the convert, the Jesuits were unsurpassed, a fact acknowledged by the Dutch Calvinist minister Philip Baldacus, who was in Jaffna immediately after the expulsion of the Portuguese, and had the opportunity of personally testing the quality of Jesuit religious instruction in the Christians they had left behind.⁴²

In religious services, too, the national languages seem to have been put to greater use by the Jesuits than had been the usual practice. One Jesuit, writing about the church at Vaddukodai, in Jaffna, says: "On Saturdays, as the church is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, the Vespers, Litany, *Salve* and *Ave Maris Stella* are sung in Tamil."⁴³ Another, speaking of a burial service, reports: "The father of the child wanted to cremate the body, as is their custom, but I, with the school children, who sang the prayers in Sinhalese, took the body to church where it was buried."⁴⁴

To conclude, it is clear from the evidence we have that in Ceylon, as elsewhere, the Jesuits paid great attention to the study, teaching, and use of the national languages.

³⁸ Letter of Pero Francisco, Dec. 2, 1612, *ibid.*, II, 84.

³⁹ Letter of Franc Cagnoia, Dec. 9, 1610, *ibid.*, II, 81.

⁴⁰ Ceylon was part of the Diocese of Cochin.

⁴¹ Letters patent of Nov. 11, 1612, *CALR*, III, 119.

⁴² Baldacus, p. 290.

⁴³ Letter of Didacus Affonsua, 1642, *CALR*, IV, 153.

⁴⁴ Letter of Pero Francisco, 1612, *ibid.*, II, 84.

2. The Church of Telheiras

The first ruler of Kandy with whom the Portuguese came into contact was Vikramabāhu (Jayavīra Baṇḍāra). Although he became a Christian, it is not likely that he had a genuine interest in Christianity. If he submitted to Baptism, it was with the hope of obtaining Portuguese military assistance and protection against his enemy Māyādunnē of Sītāvaka.¹

His successor was Karalliyaddē Baṇḍāra. He seems to have been more sincere in his acceptance of Christianity. His was a short reign, however, for he was ousted by Rājasimha of Sītāvaka, son of Māyādunnē. Karalliyaddē fled to the Portuguese at Trincomalee, where soon afterwards he died of smallpox, leaving his nephew Yamasimha and infant daughter Dona Catharina to the care of the Portuguese.²

After nearly ten years of subjection to Sītāvaka, Kandy made a bid for independence and succeeded. Yamasimha, who had become a Christian as Don Philip and had been educated at Goa, was placed on the throne of Kandy by the Portuguese (1592). He, however, died the same year, and his 12-year-old son Don João

¹ Cf. P. E. Pieris and M. A. H. Fitzler, *Ceylon and Portugal: 1539-1552* (Leipzig, 1927), pp. 82, 148, 200.

² Queyroz, p. 705.

was acclaimed king. But Konappu Baṇḍāra — son of the chief Vīrasundara of Pērādeṇiya — who had once been befriended by the Portuguese and had even become a Christian as Don João of Austria, usurped the throne and proclaimed himself king as Vimaladharmasūrya. He became not only violently anti-Portuguese, but anti-Christian as well. A later attempt by the Portuguese to oust him and enthrone the Christian princess Dona Catharina ended in their defeat by Vimaladharmasūrya and his capture of the princess, whom he married.³

Don João, Yamasīṃha's son, was taken to Mannar where he was looked after by the Franciscans. "There were ever by his side in all these perils the Fathers of St. Francis," Queyroz tells us, "especially Father Friar Francisco do Oriente who like a Father brought him up and had care of him."⁴ From Mannar he was later brought to Colombo and educated in the Franciscan College of St. Anthony. From there he was sent to Goa with prince Nikapiṭṭiyē Baṇḍāra of Sītāvaka,⁵ for further education in the College of the Magi in that city.

Fifteen years later they were called to Portugal. The viceroy himself, Andre Furtado de Mendonça, and the Archbishop of Goa, Aleixo de Menezes,⁶ accompanied them to the ship. On arrival in Lisbon they were very cordially received. Nikapiṭṭiyē left for Coimbra to continue his studies in the university, as an alumnus of the Royal College of St. Paul, but before commencing his studies fell seriously ill and died in the Franciscan monastery of S. Francisco da Ponte. Don João did not wish to go to Co-

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 706-708, 480-489; Ribeiro, pp. 81-88.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 708.

⁵ When Rājasīṃha of Sītāvaka died (1592), he had no son to succeed him. His closest kinsman, the boy Nikapiṭṭiyē Baṇḍāra, was proclaimed king. But the Portuguese captain of Colombo routed the forces of Sītāvaka and brought Nikapiṭṭiyē to Colombo, where he was entrusted to the care of the Franciscans. Cf. Queyroz, pp. 469-477.

⁶ Menezes, the most eminent and most celebrated Archbishop of Goa was an Augustinian. He founded the Augustinian Convent of St. Monica in Goa where the two Jaffna princesses, Dona Maria and Dona Izabel, became nuns. Cf. article on "The First Ceylonese Nuns," pp. 40-43.

imbra. Ordained priest, he decided to live in Lisbon. He was paid an allowance on the orders of the king.⁷

The allowance was, however, ill paid. Don João thereupon went to Madrid to meet the king⁸ and plead his right to the Kingdom of Kandy. He was received at the court with great honour. The king made him a grandee of Spain, ordered that a seat be given him on the Bench of Bishops, and increased his monthly allowance. Don João renounced his right to the Kingdom of Kandy and returned to Lisbon.⁹ For the rest of his life he lived in a suburb of Lisbon called Telheiras. There he died in 1642 at the age of 64. This, in short, is the story of Don João of Kandy.

The Franciscan chronicle *Historia Serafica* gives us some details about Don João's life at Telheiras.¹⁰ It tells us that in appreciation of what the Franciscans had done for him since his boyhood he built for them a church and monastery at Telheiras. The church was dedicated to *Nossa Senhora da Porta do Ceo* (Our Lady of the Gate of Heaven). It was the first church in Portugal to be dedicated to Our Lady under this title. We are told, moreover, that Don João got a special image made for the church and that it was very pretty.¹¹ He is said to have had a great devotion to Our Lady. The *Historia Serafica* speaks very frankly of his failings, especially on the point of priestly celibacy. In spite of such lapses, for which he made amends later, he remained devoted to his religion and to the priesthood to the end of his days. It seems to me that to sum up his life as "a life of luxury and ostentation, unworthy of his profession"¹² is too harsh a judgment. He no doubt had his failings, but he had his virtues too.

⁷ Queyroz, pp. 708-709.

⁸ Portugal was subject to Spain from 1580 to 1640. The Spanish king held court in Madrid.

⁹ Queyroz, p. 709.

¹⁰ Manoel da Esperança and Fernando da Soledade, *Historia Serafica Chronologica da Ordem dos Frades Menores de S. Francisco na Provincia de Portugal* (Lisbon, 1656-1721), tom.V, liv. IV, pp. 609-612.

¹¹ The *Santuário Mariano* of Agostinho de Santa Maria (Lisbon, 1720) also speaks of the church and its image. Cf. tom. I, pp. 425-426.

¹² S. G. Perera, *A History of Ceylon for Schools: The Portuguese and the Dutch Periods* (Colombo, 1949), p. 57.

When I was in Lisbon in 1955 I very much wanted to see what remained of the church and monastery of Don João. I remembered having read in a book by Fr. S. G. Perera that the buildings were "in ruins."¹³ I felt, however, that it was worth seeing even the ruins, even a heap of stones, because of their historical association with Ceylon.

I inquired about the buildings from several persons in Lisbon but could not obtain any definite information as to their location and identity. Telheiras was for them an insignificant suburb. One could not expect them to know the history of a small church there. I consulted some books which gave information about ancient monuments and historical personages. They did contain references to Don João and to the buildings,¹⁴ but spoke of no "ruins" nor gave any clue by which I could locate their whereabouts.

Finally I decided to go to Telheiras and make inquiries on the spot. I was hoping that at least the parish priest of the place would know something about the "ruins" I was searching for. To my disappointment, I learnt that there was no parish at Telheiras. But I was told by a librarian at the *Biblioteca Nacional* of a church at Telheiras which had no resident priest but where Mass was said on Sundays. Could it by any chance be Don João's church? But his church was "in ruins." However, I decided to go and see it. The *Arquivo Historico Portuguez* gives, with an article on Don João, two pictures of the church he built at Telheiras.¹⁵ I thought that with their help I should be able to find out if the church at Telheiras was actually Don João's church. But before I could go to Telheiras I had the good fortune of meeting a Franciscan who told me that the monastery to which he belonged had charge of the church at Telheiras, and added, to my great surprise and joy, that it was the very church built by Don João.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹⁴ Jose Barbosa Canaes de Figueiredo Castello-Branco, *Estudos Biographicos ou Noticia das Pessoas Retratadas nos Quadros Historicos Pertencentes a Bibliotheca Nacional de Lisboa* (Lisbon, 1854), p. 305; Esteves Pereira and Guilherme Rodrigues, *Portugal* (Lisbon, 1915), vol. vii, *sub voce* 'Telheiras.'

¹⁵ Sousa Viterbo, "D. João, principe de Candia," *Arquivo Historico Portuguez*, III (1905), pp. 354-364, 441-459.

I had been looking for ruins, but here was his church, now restored and used again.

On 15th August (1955), feast of the Assumption of Our Lady — patronal feast of the Archdiocese of Colombo — I had the great joy of celebrating Mass in the church of Telheiras, at the altar where some three hundred years before Don João himself had said Mass. I offered my Mass for Ceylon, his country and mine. During Mass the people of the locality, poor humble folk, prayed and sang hymns, as probably their ancestors had done when the ex-king of Kandy, whom they called *O Principe Negro* (the Black Prince), said Mass at the same altar. I believe it was the first time, since the days of Don João, that Telheiras had seen a priest of his own race and country saying Mass in that church.

There is an inscription on the façade which says that this church, “built by the Prince of Candea,” was damaged in the great Lisbon earthquake¹⁶ and restored, in the reign of Joseph I (1750-1777). The monastery building, which stands just by the church, is now in private hands and has been converted to flats.

Don João was buried in his church, but during the Portuguese revolution his tomb was rifled by treasure-hunters. Marks of the tomb can still be seen. There had been in the sacristy of the church a portrait of Don João¹⁷ which later found its way into the *Biblioteca Nacional*. Castello-Branco's *Estudos Biographicos*, to which I have already referred, speaks of this portrait.¹⁸ But it is no longer there at the *Biblioteca Nacional*. My inquiries at this library and elsewhere yielded no clue whatever as to its whereabouts. It is a great pity that this invaluable portrait, which is said to be a true likeness of Don João, has been lost. Fortunately we have a reproduction of it in the *Arquivo Historico Portuguez*.¹⁹

Don João's buildings at Telheiras are historically unique: they are, presumably, the only buildings erected in Europe by an

¹⁶ The earthquake, one of the worst in history, occurred on 1st August 1755 and caused extensive damage in the city.

¹⁷ Cf. *Historia Serafica*, tom. V, liv. IV, p. 612.

¹⁸ Cf. *supra*, note 14.

¹⁹ Sousa Viterbo, *op. cit.*, picture following p. 360.

Asian prince raised to Holy Orders. They deserve to be better appreciated by the country in favour of which he renounced his throne, and where he lived and died. Don João's own countrymen, too, have shown little interest in them. It is fortunate that the church has at last been restored and is being looked after.

3. The First Christian Poem in Sinhalese

Alagiyavanna's *Kustantīnu Haṭana* is entitled to recognition as a landmark in the history of Sinhalese literature: it marks the introduction of a new element, the Christian element, into the literature of the Sinhalese. Incidentally, it is also the first Sinhalese war-ballad (*Haṭan-Kāvya*)¹ and the last work of an author who is generally regarded as the last of the ancient line of Sinhalese classical writers.²

The poem was composed to celebrate the victory of the Portuguese captain-general Constantino de Sa de Noronha (1618-1620) over the Sinhalese rebel Antonio Barreto. It gives an account of the expedition against Barreto and the defeat of his forces at the battle of Lellōpiṭiya.

In Dr. C. E. Godakumbura's *Sinhalese Literature* the question of the authorship of the poem has been summarily dismissed with the remark that "the poem is attributed to Alagiyavanna, only on the slender evidence of the similarity of some of the lines with those

¹ Other well-known Sinhalese war-ballads are the *Paraṅgi Haṭana*, *Vaḍiḡa Haṭana* and *Imḡirisi Haṭana*.

² Cf. M. Wickramasinghe, *Sinhalese Literature* (Colombo, 1949), pp. v, 198; C. E. Godakumbura, *Sinhalese Literature* (Colombo, 1955), p. 200.

of this well-known poet," and that "many a later poet has imitated Alagiyavanna and one would not ascribe all their works to him."³

Fr. S. G. Perera and M. E. Fernando have, however, discussed the authorship at great length in the introduction to their critical edition of the poem,⁴ and come to the conclusion that "an examination of the text of the *Hatana* removes any possible doubt about its authorship from the mind of any person acquainted with the poems of Alagiyawanna Moñottala."⁵ They had reached this conclusion after a detailed comparative study of the *Kustantīnu Haṭana* and the other known works of the poet, *Kusadākava*, *Dahamsoñḍakava*, *Subhāṣitaya* and *Sāvul Sandēśaya*. Reasons, under several heads, are given by them in support of Alagiyavanna's authorship of the poem. In the light of the research they have done, one finds it difficult to accept the view of Dr. Godakumbura that the poem is attributed to Alagiyavanna only on "slender evidence."

As opposed to this view is that of Martin Wickramasinghe, also an author of a *Sinhalese Literature*, who holds that "the *Kustantīnu Haṭana* . . . has unmistakable signs of Alagiyavanna's authorship."⁶

Dr. Godakumbura contends, in support of his view, that "many a later poet has imitated Alagiyavanna and one would not ascribe all their works to him." Indeed, one would not; but there is a big difference between those works and the *Kustantīnu Haṭana*. The points of similarity one notices between the latter and the acknowledged works of the poet are more profound than what one might expect in an author attempting to imitate another. There are resemblances touching peculiarities of style, including even defects.

Martin Wickramasinghe pinpoints this when he rejects Alagiyavanna's authorship of another work attributed to him, the *Paraṅgi Haṭana*. He points out that despite resemblances between

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 228.

⁴ *Alagiyawanna's Kustantīnu Haṭana* (Colombo, 1932), pp. xiv-xxvi.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. vi.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 197.

this poem and the poet's known works, "there is hardly anything in it which could be definitely regarded as reminiscent of Alagiavanna's style."⁷ The *Kustantīnu Haṭana*, on the other hand, has "unmistakable signs" of Alagiavanna's authorship. These have been pointed out by the authors of the critical edition referred to.

All the works generally accepted as Alagiavanna's are Buddhist in spirit and inspiration, if not in theme, whereas the *Kustantīnu Haṭana* appears to be the work of a Christian poet. But we have evidence that Alagiavanna did become a Christian.

The French Protestant traveller Jean-Baptiste Tavernier recounts in his *Travels in India* how Alagiavanna became a convert to Christianity. According to him, "a very accomplished man and good native philosopher, named Alegamma Motiar, . . . after having conversed some time with the Jesuit Fathers and other priests at Columbo, was inspired to become a Christian. With this object he went to see the Jesuit Fathers, and told them that he desired to be instructed in the Christian faith, but he inquired what Jesus Christ had done and left in writing. He set himself then to read the New Testament with so much attention and ardour that in less than six months there was not a passage which he could not recite, for he had acquired Latin very thoroughly. After having been well instructed, he told the Fathers that he wished to receive holy baptism."⁸ We are told that after his baptism he laboured to convert others to Christianity.⁹

According to Tavernier, then, it was from the Jesuits in Colombo that Alagiavanna had received instruction and baptism. Tavernier did not come to Colombo but called at Galle in 1648. He could scarcely have obtained at Galle the information he gives us about Jesuit activities in Ceylon, as by then Galle had been occupied by the Dutch and the three Jesuits there taken prisoner and carried off to Batavia.¹⁰ It was very likely from the Jesuits at Goa¹¹ that he had learnt about their Ceylon mission.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Op. cit.*, translated from the French by V. Ball, 2nd ed. W. Crooke (2 vols., London, 1925), vol.ii, p. 148.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Letter of Manoel Sylveiro, Jan. 17, 1641, *CALR*, V, 197-198.

¹¹ Cf. J. B. Tavernier, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 159.

Alagiyavanna had become a Christian as Don Jeronimo, apparently the name of the captain-general, Don Jeronimo de Azevedo (1594-1613). We learn that Alagiyavanna was employed by the Portuguese as registrar (*Mohottāla* or *Mohottīār*) to compile the *Tombo* or Register of Lands.¹² Hence Tavernier refers to him as 'Alegamma Motiar', that is, Alagiyavanna Mohottīār.

The *Kustantīnu Haṭana* is therefore a work Alagiyavanna had composed after his conversion to Christianity.

But Dr. Godakumbura objects that "the poet does not appear to be the adherent of any one religion," and that "he ascribes the victory of the hero to the gods and powers on whom the hero relied and not to the poet's own favourite deities." He continues: "Thus we notice that the poet in his descriptions is not writing from the standpoint of one faith or religion."¹³ What he means to say is, in short, that the poet is not a genuine Christian; that though perhaps a convert to Christianity, he continues to adhere to his "own favourite deities" of popular Buddhism. We feel, however, that such a view is untenable.

The *Kustantīnu Haṭana* is, of course, a secular poem, the story of a military expedition and its ultimate triumph. But it is unmistakably Christian in sentiment and outlook. From its references to Christian belief it is clear that the author possessed an accurate knowledge of Christianity. We find, in fact, that Christian concepts are expressed with theological precision, which one would not expect of a nominal, ill-informed Christian.

Right at the beginning of the poem, in place of the traditional worship of the *Tiritatna*, or Triple Gem, of Buddhism (Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha), Alagiyavanna invokes the Trinity, Christ and the Blessed Virgin—the Christian *Tiritatna*—in the first three verses:

*Lovingly I worship the one Triune God—Father,
Son and Holy Ghost—whose unity is like that of [a word's]
symbol, sound and sense.*

¹² Cf. D. W. Ferguson, "Alagiyavanna Mohottala, the Author of Kusa-jataka Kavyaya," *JCBRAS*, XVI (no. 50, 1899), 115-120; S.G.P. [S. G. Perera], "Alagiyavanna Mohottala," *CALR*, IX, 45-48.

¹³ C. E. Godakumbura, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

I worship Jesus Christ, God, abounding in gracious compassion and goodness, to venerate whose lotus-feet the heads of all beings on earth are bent low.

Devoutly I worship the God who was born of the womb of the Virgin Mary like a flame issuing from the sun-stone.

Similarly in keeping with the native poetic tradition of concluding a work with one or more benedictory verses invoking the blessings of the gods on the king and his people, Alagiavanna, in the final verses, prays Christ and the Virgin to bless his hero, Constantino de Sa, and the whole world:

May Jesus Christ, God of wonder and power and abounding in goodness, who watches over the world, protect the world.

May the Mother of Jesus, mother of the three worlds, who is gentle and graceful like the golden-swan, protect the whole world.

May Jesus, God, eye of the three worlds, specially protect and prosper in every way the lord Constantino de Sa.

The ideas and sentiments expressed in these verses are, to our mind, genuinely Christian. But according to Dr. Godakumbura, "one does not feel much true devotion in these verses."¹⁴ How he came to that conclusion it is difficult to see. The very opposite is the view of Martin Wickramasinghe. He says: "He [Alagiavanna] begins his poem with an invocation to the Christian Trinity, and the Christian sentiments expressed in it bear the stamp of genuineness."¹⁵

There are in the poem other references to Christian belief and practice. The rebel Barreto "had once belonged to the divine religion of Jesus Christ" (verse 11); Constantino de Sa had a safe journey from Goa to Colombo "by the power of Jesus who is God" (60); he set out on his military expedition "after having devoutly worshipped, with hands joined above the head, the sacred and comely feet of Jesus Christ who having created the heavens

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ M. Wickramasinghe, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

and the earth and all beings in the world, unfailingly protects them with love" (83); having reached the royal palace at Sītāvaka, he worshipped his God with devotion (124); he woke up the following morning and devoutly worshipped "the feet of the Triune God who with compassion and love created the beings of the entire three worlds" (126); Barreto was "a traitor to the God who created the heavens and the earth" (178).

We see nothing contrary to genuine Christian teaching in any of these references. We cannot but conclude, therefore, that they "bear the stamp of genuineness."

Dr. Godakumbura's view that the poet's Christianity was not genuine is perhaps based on the fact that the poem contains references to Indian mythology and Buddhist beliefs.

The poet compares the King of Portugal to Śakra, the chief of the gods (38); the general (Constantino de Sa) in the midst of his army and followers was like Śakra among his host of gods (72); the staff he carried in his hand was like Śakra's weapon, the thunderbolt, with which he split mountains (87); his march against Barreto resembled that of Vishnu, incarnated as Rāma, going to war with Rāvaṇa (101); the damsels bathing in the river were so fair, like the wives of the gods, that only Ananta, king of the world of Nāgas, who is supposed to have a thousand tongues, or Vinayaka, the god of wisdom, could fitly describe their beauty (121); when the rebel Barreto fell upon Kandy, it was by the power of the Triple Gem (of Buddhism) and the help of the gods that the king (Senarat) came off unscathed (22).

It cannot be concluded from allusions such as these that the poet was not a genuine Christian. References to mythology and Buddhist beliefs are not incompatible with the Christian faith of the author. Similar allusions are to be found in the writings of persons the genuineness of whose Christianity cannot be called in question. We find, for instance, Robert de Nobili and Constant Beschi, two reputed Jesuit missionaries in India, and the Indian Oratorian in Ceylon, Jacome Gonçalves, making allusions to non-Christian beliefs in the religious works they composed. *The Lusians*, the national epic of Portugal, by Luis Vaz de Camoens, is itself a striking example of the possibility of harmonizing Christian belief with mythology.

In *The Lusiads* great prominence is given to gods and goddesses of Greek and Latin mythology. The historical facts of Portuguese exploits in the East are woven into a plot in which mythical gods and goddesses have a part to play under the supreme dominion of God Almighty of Christian faith.

At the very beginning of the poem we are told that Jupiter summoned the gods to Mount Olympus to discuss what help should be given to Vasco da Gama and his fleet sailing to India.

Up on Olympus, the gods were assembling in council to consider future happenings in the East. Jupiter had sent his summons out by Mercury, and now, from north, south, east and west, down the Milky Way they came, treading the crystal skies, leaving to their own devices all the seven spheres entrusted to them by the Supreme Power who governs heaven, earth, and angry sea by thought alone.¹⁶

Mars and Venus were for helping Gama, but Bacchus adopted a hostile attitude. Thereafter he sought to put every possible obstacle in Gama's way, while Venus extended to him her protection. When, for instance, the fleet was in the Indian Ocean, Bacchus raised a storm, and when Gama prayed to Heaven for help, Venus and her nymphs quelled the storm.¹⁷

Camoens, who seemingly identifies himself with the mythical beliefs of the Greeks and Romans, also makes Gama say: "Our religion is that of the true God, Creator and Lord of the universe, who suffered scorn and dishonour for our sakes and, having undergone a cruel and unjust death, came back to earth that he might raise mankind to be with him in heaven."¹⁸ Camoens' religion was doubtless the same. His orthodoxy as a Christian believer cannot be doubted.

The *Kustantīnu Haṭana* is a poem not unlike *The Lusiads* in its attitude to mythology. Like Camoens, Alagiyavanna weaves together Christian concepts and mythological beliefs.¹⁹ It was

¹⁶ *The Lusiads*, tr. W. C. Atkinson (Penguin Edition, 1952), p. 42.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, canto vi.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁹ See, for instance, the verses 57, 58; 60, 61; 83, 85; 126, 127.

a poetical way of harmonizing the literary heritage with the Christian faith. It in no way implies that the poet subscribed to the non-Christian beliefs he incorporated in his poem, or that his Christianity was adulterated. Even when he refers to the Triple Gem (v. 22) what he evidently means is that it was king Senarat's belief, as it would be any devout Buddhist's in such circumstances, that he was saved by its power. It does not follow that the poet too was of the same belief.

The resemblance between *The Lusiads* and the *Kustantīnu Haṭana* in their treatment of mythology is such that one begins to wonder if Alagiyavanna was in any way influenced by the Portuguese epic. *The Lusiads* was published in 1572, about fifty years before the *Kustantīnu Haṭana* was composed. The Jesuits in Colombo probably knew about the book. No one reading it could have but been struck by the manner in which it coupled mythology with Christian belief. Did the Jesuits pass on to their pupil, Alagiyavanna, the spirit of *The Lusiads*? Did they place in his hands a copy of the epic? We do not know. We know, however, that the Jesuits themselves were accommodating in their attitude towards non-Christian cultures. It may be that Alagiyavanna was inspired by them.

The Jesuit attitude to 'pagan' cultures was generally far more sympathetic and understanding than that of other missionaries of the time. The missionary principles and activities of such men as Robert de Nobili in India and Mateo Ricci in China are well known. From about a decade before the *Kustantīnu Haṭana* was composed, De Nobili was living in Madura the life of a Brahmin ascetic. To convert the Brahmin he had made himself a Brahmin in all but the Christian faith. He believed that the Christian need not discard anything of non-Christian cultures except what was strictly incompatible with Christianity. There were many Jesuits who shared his views. The Jesuits in Ceylon certainly knew of them and were perhaps also influenced by them. It is possible, therefore, that through the Jesuits in Colombo the spirit of De Nobili found an echo in the poetry of Alagiyavanna.

I happened to see at the 1955 Winter Exhibition of the Royal Academy in London (which was an exhibition of the art of Portugal from 800 to 1800 A.D.) a credence table of the early seventeenth

century from the Lahore church of the Jesuit Mogul Mission. It had been lent to the exhibition by the Victoria and Albert Museum. On it, around a central medallion which had a monstrance surrounded by angels and the inscription *Lovvado seia o santissimo Sacramento*,²⁰ were inlaid, in bone, figures from Indian mythology which one would normally not expect in an article of this nature used in church. It is another example of the attitude of the early Jesuit missionaries to the non-Christian cultures of the lands where they worked. It reminded me of the *Kustantīnu Haṭana* where we find the same attitude exemplified in a different art form.

The attempt at synthetizing East-West concepts is, in fact, a happy feature of the first Christian poem in Sinhalese. We have already seen how Alagiyavanna, though writing as a Christian and introducing Christian ideas into the poem, retained the traditional allusions to Indian mythology. Another interesting feature of the work is the manner in which the author has employed Oriental figures of speech to illustrate Christian ideas.

Oriental literature is noted for the prolific use of the simile. The *Kustantīnu Haṭana* is no exception. But what strikes one as exceptional is the adaptation of conventional similes from Oriental literature to illustrate Christian doctrines with telling appositeness.

Take, for instance, the simile Alagiyavanna gives for the Trinity (verse 1). St. Patrick, Apostle of Ireland, is said to have compared the Trinity to the three-lobed leaf of the shamrock. In the West the equilateral triangle is sometimes given as an illustration of the Trinity. Alagiyavanna's simile is the *word*, with its three elements of symbol, sound and sense. Kālidāsa, in the first verse of his *Raghuvamśa*, compares the union of the god Śiva and his consort Pārvatī to that of a word's sound and meaning. Alagiyavanna himself had used in an earlier poem, the *Sāvul Sandēśaya*, the simile "Inseparable as sound and sense" (93). In the *Kustantīnu Haṭana* he improves on it, and adding a third element, orthography, produces a very apt illustration of the Trinity.

His simile for the Virgin Birth, too, is strikingly appropriate: "Born of the womb of the Virgin Mary like a flame issuing from

²⁰ 'Praised be the most holy Sacrament.'

the sun-stone" (3). A mediaeval English author, Robert Grosseteste,²¹ compares the conception and birth of Christ to the sun's rays passing through glass without damaging it:

*Like as the sun full clear doth pass
Without a break through shining glass,
Thy Maidenhood unblemished was
For bearing of thy Lord.*²²

Alagiyavanna draws an illustration from the mythical sun-stone mentioned in Indian literature. It was believed that flames of fire rose from the sun-stone, as in the case of a prism, when the sun shone upon it. In the simile, as given by Alagiyavanna, the flame is Christ; the sun-stone is Mary; the sun, God. Just as flames rise from the sun-stone, without it being harmed by the action of the sun, so Christ was born of Mary by the action of God without violation of her virginity.²³

To speak of Mary's virtues the poet again takes a simile from Oriental literature. He compares her to the golden-swan, king of the birds. She is "gentle and graceful like the golden-swan" (187). In Indian and Sinhalese literature women are often compared to this bird.²⁴

Of Indian flowers the lotus is the most frequently met with in Oriental art and literature. References to it abound in Sinhalese poetry. The face is often compared to the lotus; so are the feet. Alagiyavanna speaks of the "lotus-feet" of Jesus Christ, to venerate which "the heads of all beings on earth are bent low" (2). Worshipping the feet is an Oriental manner of expressing great submission and reverence. In the poem homage is paid to God and Christ by worshipping the feet: the heads of all beings

²¹ Robert Grosseteste (1175-1253), philosopher and scholar, was head of Oxford University, and later Bishop of Lincoln.

²² From *I Sing of a Maiden: The Mary Book of Verse*, edited by Sister M. Therese (New York, 1947), p. 55.

²³ Alagiyavanna's simile is far more appropriate than that given by Fr. Jacome Gonçalvez in his *Veda Kāvya*: "Like a jewel taken out of a golden casket." (v. 147).

²⁴ *Haṃsa* (Sinh. *hasa*), though commonly rendered as 'swan', which I have retained here, is more correctly 'goose'. The word is discussed at length in *The Goose in Indian Literature and Art*, by Ph. Vogel (Leiden, 1962), pp. 1-16.

on earth are bent low to worship the lotus-feet of Jesus Christ (2); before marching against Barreto, Constantino de Sa worshipped "the sacred and comely feet of Jesus Christ" (83); the morning after his arrival at Sitāvaka, he worshipped "the feet of the Triune God" (126).

It is interesting to note also that the poet makes de Sa worship Christ, not with hands joined at the breast in the Western manner, but "with hands joined above the head" according to local custom (83).

It will be seen from what we have pointed out that allusions to non-Christian beliefs do not preclude genuine Christian faith. In the *Kustantinu Haṭana* such allusions seem to have been introduced on set purpose. Alagiyavanna has made an attempt, in the spirit of Camoens, De Nobili and Beschi, to harmonize Christian belief with the poetic tradition and literary heritage of the country. It was an attempt to bring the East and the West to meet on the literary platform. But unfortunately Alagiyavanna was neither rightly understood nor followed by those who came after him.

4. Pioneers of the Drama in Ceylon

We know of no drama, in the accepted sense, in the traditional Sinhalese culture. There is no drama in Sinhalese in spite of the fact that from about the twelfth century A.D. the Sinhalese language and its literature were strongly influenced by Sanskrit which had a highly developed drama.

The Indian drama evolved from the union of dance and song in religious worship, with the addition afterwards of a narrative recitation, and later still of sung, or spoken, dialogue. Acted drama came into vogue by about the fifth century A.D., and in the succeeding centuries developed an elaborate technique and dramatic theory. In the works of Kālidāsa (6th century), Bābhavuti (8th century) and Rājasekhara (9th century) are to be seen some of the finest productions of the Indian drama, worthy of being numbered among the best dramas of the world. Composed, however, in a classical language (Sanskrit), unintelligible to the ordinary man, the Indian drama could not become a popular form of entertainment, but remained the drama of a literary class.

The influence of Sanskrit on Sinhalese was such that numerous Sanskrit words flowed into the language; Sinhalese writers modelled their works after Sanskrit patterns; they followed the rules of poetics and prosody as enunciated by Sanskrit poets; Sinhalese literature produced its counterpart of almost every branch

of Sanskrit literary work. Sinhalese writers, therefore, could not have been unfamiliar with the Sanskrit dramatic literature of India.

They had, moreover, in their history, traditions and religion abundant material for the production of drama. The Jātaka stories in particular which understandably form the theme of the bulk of Sinhalese literature are rich in dramatic content. Among the hundreds of stories of the Bodhisattva are characters and incidents of all types, and every facet of human behaviour is represented. If Sinhalese writers did not compose drama, it was certainly not for lack of material

The absence of the drama in Sinhalese seems to have resulted mainly from the influence of Theravāda monasticism on Sinhalese culture — on the culture of the literati.

The main factor which through the centuries shaped and moulded the culture of the Sinhalese was Buddhism. And in Buddhism the monks held a position of pre-eminence. They were the chief savants, writers, scholars and educators. They were the accredited leaders among the literati. But they were recluses who, abandoning household life and its pleasures and distractions, lived apart in monasteries. They were men dedicated to an ascetical life. For them such arts as music and drama were mundane. It is not surprising, therefore, that they did not favour the writing and staging of drama. The laity apparently followed their example, with the result that no drama was produced in Sinhalese.

Moreover, because of the predominantly monastic character of Buddhism, it was chiefly to serve the monastery that architecture, sculpture and painting were introduced into Ceylon from India; and it was for the most part in the service of the monastery that they developed in this country, assuming, however, their own peculiar features. Sinhalese literature likewise is largely a product of the monastery. But monasticism which promoted the development and shaped the character of architecture, sculpture, painting and literature, did not do the same in regard to music and drama, and that precisely because they had no place in monastic life. But what the monastery did not patronize became an art of the common folk, and consequently failed to become anything more than a folk art. It should be noted, however, that the folk

arts also were influenced by religion; but it was from popular Buddhism that they drew inspiration.

One form of folk drama is known as *Kōlam*.¹ It is a kind of masked dance-cum-drama found mostly in the coastal villages of South Ceylon. The *Sokari*² is a form of mime in the Kandyan provinces and in the Vanni. These folk plays had no acts, scenes, or a stage. They were crudely performed in the open air, on the bare ground, with a great deal of singing and dancing for the entertainment of the villagers.

It was by the Christian missionaries of the Portuguese period that regular play-acting on the stage was introduced into Ceylon. From contemporary records we learn that the Jesuits in particular attached considerable importance to the drama. They organized and staged plays from time to time, both in their college in Colombo and in the mission outstations under their charge. Their purpose in staging plays was essentially educational.

The Jesuits were, in fact, among the earliest educators to note the educational possibilities of the drama. They had evidently realized the value of play-acting both as an activity method and an audio-visual medium of imparting knowledge. Rusk points out that "in retaining the drama as an educational instrument, the Jesuits anticipated the modern movement represented by what is termed the dramatic method of teaching history."³ It is interesting to note that the celebrations following the election, in 1558, of the first successor to Ignatius of Loyola (Diego Laynez) included "the rare spectacle of a sacred play" staged by the Jesuit students in Rome, and witnessed by eight cardinals and a host of other dignitaries.⁴ It is known that the Jesuits frequently had dramatic

¹ Cf. E. R. Sarathchandra, *The Sinhalese Folk Play and the Modern Stage* (Colombo, 1953), pp. 51-72.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 73-82.

³ R. R. Rusk, *The Doctrines of the Great Educators* (London, 1918), p. 85.

For a brief survey of Jesuit activity in regard to drama in Europe, cf. R. Schwickerath, *Jesuit Education* (St. Louis, 1904), pp. 164-171.

⁴ J. Brodrick, *The Progress of the Jesuits* (London, 1946), p. 26.

performances in their College of St. Paul in Goa, which was the chief educational institution of the Portuguese empire in the East.⁵ They had similar performances in their schools and mission stations in Ceylon.

It should be noted also that the *autos* (dramatic pieces) of the Portuguese Gil Vicente (c. 1465-1536), the Spanish Lope de Vega (1562-1635), and other lesser writers of drama in the two countries must have had considerable influence on the drama of the Jesuits and other missionaries. In fact, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were a period of great activity in Europe in the production of religious drama. The Mystery and Miracle plays, which originated in the liturgy of the Church and were first performed in the church itself, later drifted into the city squares and became so popular that special associations, the *confréries*, were formed to organize them. Some plays assumed enormous proportions both in regard to length and the size of the cast.

The Ceylon records of the Jesuits speak of a dramatic performance in 1602 — only seven months after their arrival in the Island — to celebrate the opening of their chapel in Colombo.⁶ Again a drama was staged, on 2nd February 1604, to mark the solemn inauguration of the new church they had built in Colombo.⁷

When the Jesuit Provincial came to Ceylon in 1605, bringing with him some relics from Rome, these were taken in procession to the Jesuit church, and the event was celebrated with a dramatic performance.⁸ On 2nd February 1609, the celebration of the titular feast of the Jesuit church in Colombo included a drama.⁹ The following year again a dramatic performance was given on the same date.¹⁰ Performances of this nature seem to have been an annual event on the 2nd of February when the feast of the church

⁵ Cf. *The Voyage of François Pyrard of Laval*, translated from the third French edition of 1619 and edited by A. Gray and H. C. P. Bell (2 vols., London, 1887-1890), vol. ii, p. 96.

⁶ Letter of Diogo da Cunha, Dec. 10, 1603, *CALR*, II, 16.

⁷ Letter of Petrus Eulitius, Oct. 15, 1605, *ibid.*, II, 20.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Letter of Christopher Joam, Dec. 1, 1609, *ibid.*, II, 22.

¹⁰ Letter of Franc Cagnola, Dec. 9, 1610, *ibid.*, II, 80.

was celebrated. A letter of 1612 speaks of a performance on the occasion of a church feast at Kammala.¹¹ A letter of the following year mentions a similar performance at the same place.¹² In 1617 a drama was staged at Chilaw to celebrate the blessing of a new church.¹³ In Jaffna several performances were given at the dedication of the new church of Tellippalai, in 1633.¹⁴

There is mention also of a Franciscan friar, Antonio Peyxoto, a veteran missionary well versed in Sinhalese, who composed several religious plays.¹⁵ Queyroz speaks of a "mystery-play" in Jaffna to celebrate the baptism, by the Franciscans, of some princes, chiefs and other persons.¹⁶

The theme of the performances was always a religious one — a representation of "Faith and Religion giving battle to Idolatry"¹⁷; the New Testament story of "the holy old man Simeon"¹⁸; a "comparison between the Synagogue with the Ark of the Covenant, and the Church with the Mother of God"¹⁹; a "representation of the creation of the world and the Incarnation of Christ"²⁰; the "Baptism of Constantine the Great."²¹ These are some of the performances referred to in Jesuit records. The plays composed by Friar Peyxoto were also based on stories from the Bible and the lives of the saints.²²

The actors were generally the students of the mission schools. A drama staged in Colombo under the direction of the Jesuits was

¹¹ Letter of Pero Francisco, Dec. 2, 1612, *ibid.*, II, 82.

¹² Letter of Emmanuel Barradas, Dec. 1613, *ibid.*, II, 85.

¹³ Letter of Emmanuel Barradas, Dec. 15, 1617, *ibid.*, II, 90.

¹⁴ Letter of Cyprianus a Costa, 1633, *ibid.*, IV, 101.

¹⁵ Queyroz, pp. 712-713; Paulo da Trindade, *Conquista Espiritual do Oriente* (MS in the Vatican Library, Lat. 7746), ff. 824-825.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 688.

¹⁷ Letter of Diogo da Cunha, Dec. 10, 1603, *CALR*, II, 16.

¹⁸ Letter of Petrus Eulitius, Oct. 15, 1605, *ibid.*, II, 20.

¹⁹ Letter of Christopher Joam, Dec. 1, 1609, *ibid.*, II, 22.

²⁰ Letter of Emmanuel Barradas, Dec. 1613, *ibid.*, II, 85.

²¹ Letter of Emmanuel Barradas, Dec. 15, 1617, *ibid.*, II, 90. It is interesting to note that the Jesuits dramatized the story of Constantine in Munich on a grand scale in 1574. "More than one thousand persons took part in the play. Constantine, after his victory over Maxentius, entered the city on a triumphal chariot, surrounded by 400 horsemen in glittering armour." (R. Schwickerath, *op. cit.*, p. 168).

²² Paulo da Trindade, *op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*

“by our young men,”²³ presumably the older students of the Jesuit college in Colombo. But a performance given at Kammala was by “children of not more than six or seven years of age.”²⁴ They were pupils of the Kammala school.

The performances seem to have been given in both Portuguese and the local languages. A play staged by the Jesuits in Colombo in 1604 had as audience a “large crowd of Portuguese and natives” who “much appreciated the performance.”²⁵ The language of instruction in the Jesuit college was Portuguese. Moreover, many of the native inhabitants in and around Colombo, especially those of the upper classes, would have by now known Portuguese. Hence Portuguese was very likely the language in which performances were given in Colombo. But those in the outstations were definitely in Sinhalese or Tamil. The plays were meant for the public, and the people in rural districts did not know Portuguese. Moreover, children in the outstation schools were educated in the language of the local inhabitants. The pupils of the Kammala school, for instance, who, as we have seen, gave a performance in 1612, were taught in Tamil, as it was the language spoken in those parts.²⁶ It was, therefore, in Sinhalese or Tamil that plays in the mission outstations were performed.

We know from a statement in the Jesuit records that the performances were given on a stage, and that care was taken to have it appropriately furnished, for it is mentioned that, on the occasion referred to, the “stage equipment was far from ordinary.”²⁷ In some places there were, in fact, permanent stages built opposite, or alongside, the churches. Baldaeus, who took over the churches of Jaffna after the Catholic missionaries had been expelled by the Dutch, refers to these stages in his book on Ceylon: “There are stages attached to almost all their churches, there being a spacious theatre for the Church of *Telipole* [Tellippalai] built by the *Portugese padres Jesuiten* where some scriptural dramas are wont to

²³ Letter of Petrus Eulitius, Oct. 15, 1605, *CALR*, II, 20.

²⁴ Letter of Pero Francisco, Dec. 2, 1612, *ibid.*, II, 83.

²⁵ Letter of Petrus Eulitius, Oct. 15, 1605, *ibid.*, II, 20.

²⁶ Letter of Pero Francisco, Dec. 2, 1612, *ibid.*, II, 83.

²⁷ Letter of Christopher Joam, Dec. 1, 1609, *ibid.*, II, 22.

be represented to the people on their holy days."²⁸ The practice of constructing permanent stages attached to churches continued down to British times. Some churches still have them, as for instance the parish churches of Piṭipana and Pamunūgama.

The purpose of the performances was instruction, for the missionaries were aware of the usefulness of the drama as a means of imparting knowledge — religious knowledge in this instance. It was an effective aid in the education of both children and adults. Most of the people at the time were illiterate. For the instruction of such persons dramatic representation was specially helpful. One missionary remarks, in fact, that the new Christians "being ignorant, are more impressed by what they see than by what they hear."²⁹ What he means is that visual representations, like the drama, impressed them more than mere oral instruction. It must be remembered also that books were difficult to obtain, as they had to be transcribed by hand. Moreover, drama was always entertaining and attracted young and old alike. Here, then, is an instance of the drama being employed for an educational purpose — which is of great interest educationally, in view of the fact that modern educators attach much importance to the educational value of dramatization.

The tradition established by the European Catholic missionaries of the Portuguese period of utilizing the drama for religious instruction was continued by later missionaries. The Indian Oratorians of the Dutch period, though greatly handicapped as a result of the persecution launched against the Catholics, continued the tradition of religious drama. Apart from religious plays,³⁰ performances were given also of the *pasco*, a dramatic representation, more of the nature of folk drama, of the passion and death of Christ.³¹ Early in the nineteenth century, a kind of drama of Tamil origin called *Nāḍagama*³² became associated with the Catho-

²⁸ Baldaeus, p. 320.

²⁹ Letter of Manoel Sylveiro, Jan. 17, 1641, *CALR*, IV, 151.

³⁰ *OMC*, p. 263.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 73, 106, 168, 185.

³² W. A. de Silva, "Dramatic Poetry and the Literature of the Sinhalese," *JCBRAS*, XVIII (no. 54, 1903), 92-97; E. R. Sarathchandra, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-107.

lic tradition of religious drama. The *Nāḍagama* was first adopted by the Tamil-speaking Catholics of Chilaw and the surrounding districts, and passed on to the Sinhalese-speaking Catholics of the neighbouring coastal villages, which in Portuguese times had witnessed the dramatic performances organized by the Jesuits. The first Sinhalese plays in the *Nāḍagama* style are said to have been composed by a Catholic named Philippu Siñño.³³ He was followed by several others. Many of the early *Nāḍagama* writers were Catholics. Their compositions generally have a Catholic social setting, and many of them are based on Christian stories. In course of time the *Nāḍagama* became very popular and adopted more and more of secular themes. It was this type of drama, still crude and hardly anything more than a folk art, which prepared the way for the Sinhalese drama of recent times.

It is to the European Catholic missionaries of the Portuguese period that we owe the beginnings of the tradition of religious drama which later extended into the secular field.

³³ W. A. de Silva, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

5. Our Lady of the Sinhalese

We are greatly indebted to Fr. S. G. Perera, S.J., for bringing to light much material for the study of the history of the Church in Ceylon in the Portuguese period. Thanks to him we know quite a lot about the activities of the Jesuits. He has translated and published the *Annual Letters* and other Jesuit records.¹ Through him we came to know about the *Conquista Espiritual do Oriente* of Fr. Paulo da Trindade,² which is a source of much valuable information about the Franciscans. But so far we have known very little about the work of the Augustinians and the Dominicans. I had this in mind when I went round visiting archives and libraries in Portugal, in 1955, and made it a point to see if anything could be found to throw more light on the work of these Orders. I am happy to be able to report that my search has not been in vain.

I came across a history of the Augustinians in India by Fr. Faustino da Graça among the manuscripts in the public library at Evora³ — a quaint old city about a hundred miles to the east

¹ "Historical Records of the Society of Jesus" in the *Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register*, vols. I-VI (Colombo, 1915-1920).

² Cf. S. G. Perera, "The Franciscans in Ceylon: Contemporary Documents in the Vatican Archives," *Ceylon Literary Register*, 3rd Series, IV (no. 7, 1936), 331 sq.

³ Cod. CXVI / 1-13. The work bears the title *Campos de Ermo dos Filhos de Santo Augustinho de Congregação da India Oriental plantado, regado e brotado* (The desert lands planted, watered and harvested by the Congregation of the Sons of St. Augustine in the East Indies).

of Lisbon. We learn from the *Biblioteca Lusitana*⁴ that the author was born in Goa, joined the Augustinians there, held various posts in the Order, and was finally confessor to the convent of St. Monica in Goa, incidentally the convent where the first Ceylonese to become nuns, the princesses Dona Maria and Dona Izabel of Jaffna, had been professed and where the former had been prioress a few decades before.⁵ The approbation given to the work by the Augustinian Provincial, bears the date 12th December 1713. Faustino da Graça is the author of several other works some of which have appeared in print. He died in 1744.

In a chapter entitled *Das Igrejas da Ilha do Ceilão*⁶ (Of the Churches in the Island of Ceylon) the author gives a list of the thirteen churches the Augustinians had in the Island with a brief account of each. A fact well worth noting is that of the thirteen churches no less than eight were dedicated to Our Lady, three of them to Our Lady of Grace (*Nossa Senhora da Graça*), patroness of the Order. In Lisbon is a venerable church of *Nossa Senhora da Graça*, the church of the ancient Augustinian monastery in the city. It stands on a hill commanding one of the loveliest views of Lisbon. The Augustinian monastery in Goa, the headquarters of the Indian Province of the Order, was also dedicated to *Nossa Senhora da Graça*. In fact, the Augustinians came to be known as *Gracianos*.⁷

Besides these thirteen churches, the Augustinians had in Colombo a monastery with a church which, according to Fr. Manoel da Ave Maria to whom I shall refer later, was dedicated to St. Augustine.

But what I discovered to be the most startling information contained in the manuscript of Faustino da Graça was that among the Marian churches the Augustinians had in Ceylon was one dedi-

⁴ By Diogo Barbosa Machado, first published in Lisbon in 1741. 2nd edition, Lisbon, 1930-1935, 4 vols. Cf. vol. ii, p. 2. Also cf. *Manual*, pp. 572-573.

⁵ Dona Maria, in religion Sister Mary of the Visitation, became prioress of the convent in 1682, but died two months after. Cf. article on "The First Ceylonese Nuns," *infra*, pp. 40-43.

⁶ *Op cit.*, pp. 180-185.

⁷ Cf. Paulo da Trindade, *Conquista Espiritual do Oriente*, ed. F. Lopes (Lisbon, 1962), vol. i, p. 126.

cated to **Our Lady of the Sinhalese** (*Nossa Senhora dos Chingalas*). It was the church at Attanagalla. Attached to it were 3,400 adult Christians living in seventy villages. Fr. Roque da Ressurreição, a Portuguese from Lisbon, is mentioned as the founder and first vicar of the parish. We learn from the manuscript that he — the founder of the church of *Our Lady of the Sinhalese* — was, significantly, well versed in Sinhalese (*perito na lingua dos natarães*).

Thus had our forefathers, yet new in the Faith, manifested, already in the early days of Christianity in the Island, their desire to identify Mary with their country and its people, a desire which saw its complete fulfilment in the solemn official proclamation of 1947 that the Blessed Virgin is *Our Lady of Lañkā*. As *Our Lady of Lañkā* she remains *Our Lady of the Sinhalese*, and is 'Our Lady' of the other inhabitants as well.

There are other manuscripts dealing with the history of the Augustinians in India, such as the *Chronica da Ordem de Santo Agostinho na India* (Chronicle of the Order of St. Augustine in India) by Fr. Simão da Graça,⁸ and the *Memorial das Missões*, etc. (Memoir of the Missions, etc.) by Fr. Antonio de Moraes.⁹ But the information they give us about Ceylon is very fragmentary. There is, however, another document containing more information but of a much later date (1817), which Dr. Antonio da Silva Rego had found in the library of the University of Coimbra¹⁰ and has published in the eleventh volume of his *Documentação para a Historia das Missões do Padroado Portugues do Oriente* (Documentation for the History of the Missions of the Portuguese 'Padroado' in the East).¹¹ It is a voluminous compilation by Fr. Manoel da Ave Maria and is entitled *Manual Eremitico da Congregação da India Oriental dos Eremitas de N.P.S. Agostinho* (Manual of the East-Indies Congregation of the Hermits of Our Father St. Augustine). The information it gives us about the Augustinian parishes in Ceylon¹² is very much the same as that given by Faustino da Graça,

⁸ Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, 731, ff. 94-202.

⁹ Biblioteca Nacional, 59.

¹⁰ Cod. No. 1650.

¹¹ Lisbon, 1955.

¹² *Op. cit.*, pp. 211-216.

but it contains more information about the missionary personnel. The names of all the Augustinians who worked in the Portuguese possessions in Asia are given with biographical notes.

All the works I have so far mentioned are histories of the Order in the whole of the East, and speak of Ceylon only as a small part of the vast mission field entrusted to the Augustinians. As such, only a few pages are given to Ceylon, and the information contained in them is very sketchy. But we know of at least one document which treats of Ceylon exclusively. It is entitled *Noticia das 13 igrejas que a Congregação da India dos Eremitas de S. Agostinho que teve em Ceilão, e das conversoens que nellas fizerão*. (Information about the 13 churches which the Indian Congregation of the Hermits of St. Augustine had in Ceylon and about the conversions they made therein). It is a work of Fr. Diogo da Trindade, who hailed from Macao. The latest possible date of its compilation is 1675, as the author died that year.¹³ It is thus an earlier source of information about the Augustinian mission in Ceylon than the work of Faustino da Graça. But unfortunately the document has not been found. It is likely, however, that the information given us by Faustino da Graça is based on that document.

It will be seen, from the information contained in Augustinian records, that devotion to Our Lady was a very marked feature of the Catholic life instilled into our people by the Augustinian missionaries. In promoting Marian devotion they were thus not second to the other Religious whose activities in this regard we already knew. Queyroz tells us from the information available to him that the Augustinians "erected in Ceylon four churches and a hermitage."¹⁴ We now know that they had fourteen churches¹⁵ of which as many as eight were dedicated to Our Lady and, what is of special significance to us, that one of them was a church of *Our Lady of the Sinhalese*, the only one we know to have been dedicated to her under this title.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 458-459; *Biblioteca Lusitana*, vol. iv, p. 106.

¹⁴ Queyroz, p. 720.

¹⁵ Only twelve of these were actually parish churches. Of the other two, one was the monastery church in the fort of Colombo, and the other the chapel of the shrine of Our Lady of Deliverance at Nārāhēnpiṭa. Cf. articles on "The Augustinians in Ceylon" and "The Shrine of Livramento."

6. The First Ceylonese Nuns

Hendarmāna Siṃha (Pararāja Śēkaran), king of Jaffna, died in 1615. Rescued from death, as a young prince, by the Portuguese captain Simão Pinhão, when Nallūr was attacked by the Portuguese in 1591, he had been placed on the throne of Jaffna by Andre Furtado de Mendonça, commander of the Portuguese forces. Throughout his reign of nearly a quarter of a century he had remained loyal to the Portuguese. Himself a Hindu, he had allowed missionaries full freedom for their activities.¹

His son, the heir to the throne, being still an infant, Arsa Kēsari, the late king's brother, was appointed regent, but was slain by another prince, Śaṅgili, who usurped the regency and turned against the Portuguese. The captain-general in Colombo, Constantino de Sa de Noronha, thereupon despatched a force to Jaffna under Philip de Oliveyra. Śaṅgili was captured and brought a prisoner to Colombo, and later sent to Goa where he was tried and executed. The young king and his two sisters were also brought to Colombo with several others of the royal household, and Jaffna became a Portuguese possession with Oliveyra as governor and captain-

¹ Queyroz, pp. 452-462. A sculptured slab in the Maha Saman Dēvālaya of Sabaragamuva depicts the scene of the prince's rescue. Cf. D. W. Ferguson, "The Inscribed Mural Stone at the Maha Saman Dēvālē, Ratnapura," *JCBRAS*, XVI (no. 50, 1899), 84-114; S. G. Perera, "The Saman Dēvālē Inscription," *CALR*, VIII, 1-5.

major. In Colombo the prince and his sisters and other persons of the royal family were instructed in Christianity.²

On 18th June 1623 an impressive ceremony took place in Colombo — the solemn baptism of Jaffnese royalty. To the accompaniment of the pealing of all the bells in the city, the catechumens were taken in procession “with many dances and plays.” 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 S. Antonio, where everything was ready, rich and neat.”³ The captain-general, Constantino de Sa, other high-ranking officials, Franciscans from the parishes and the monastery, soldiers, and a great crowd of people witnessed the ceremony. The Minister Provincial of the Franciscans, who had come on a visit to Ceylon, baptized the prince. He was named Don Constantino after his godfather, the captain-general. His sisters were baptized as Dona Izabel and Dona Maria. There were baptized also the queen mother, Dona Clara; a sister of the late king, Dona Maria; her husband, whose eyes Saṅgili had put out, Don Diego; and their three sons and daughter, Don Phelipe, Don Francisco, Don Bernardino, and Dona Ines respectively.⁴

The princes remained in Colombo and were educated in the College of St. Anthony. Afterwards they were sent to Goa where they continued their studies in the Franciscan College of the Magi.⁵ Don Constantino became a Franciscan as Constantino de Cristo. Don Phelipe, his cousin, also became a priest.⁶

Here we are concerned with the two princesses, Dona Izabel and Dona Maria. Like their brother, Don Constantino, they also decided in favour of the religious life. They became nuns in the Convent of St. Monica in Goa.

It was a convent of Augustinian nuns founded in 1606 by Archbishop Aleixo de Menezes, himself an Augustinian, a man

² Queyroz, pp. 463-468, 629-632, 690-692.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 693.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Iacinto de Deos, *Vergel de Plantas e Flores da Provincia da Madre de Deos dos Capuchos Reformados* (Lisbon, 1690), p. 17.

of deep piety and learning, and one of the greatest archbishops of Goa.⁷ Linschoten who was in Goa sixteen years before says: "The towne hath in it all sortes of Cloysters and Churches as Lisbon [hath], only it wanteth Nunnes, for the men cannot get the women to travell so farre, where they should be shut up, and forsake Venus."⁸ However, the convent founded by Archbishop Menezes flourished and became in course of time one of the most prominent religious houses in Portuguese India. Women there were who did "forsake Venus" and join it. They came from all parts of the Portuguese empire in the East. Sister Filipa de Trindade, who helped Archbishop Menezes to found the convent, and became its first prioress, hailed from Ormuz. There were nuns from Chaul, Diu, Bassein, Cochin, Negapatam, Malacca, Macao, etc., in addition to those who joined from Goa itself.⁹

The two Jaffna princesses, daughters of Hendarmāna Siṃha, were admitted to this convent.¹⁰ Dona Izabel, however, died in her youth. In the words of Fr. Iacinto de Deos, she "who was in flower withered to yield fruit in the garden of glory."¹¹

⁷ He was Archbishop of Goa and Primate of the East Indies from 1595 to 1610. In 1606 he became also Governor of India, and held the post till 1609 when he was succeeded by Andre Furtado de Mendonça who, as we have seen, made Hendarmāna Siṃha king of Jaffna in 1591. It was Archbishop Menezes who presided over the famous Synod of Diamper in 1599. François Pyrard de Laval who visited Goa in 1608, when Menezes was Archbishop and Governor, speaks of him in his book. Cf. *The Voyage of François Pyrard of Laval*, translated from the third French edition of 1619 and edited by A. Gray and H. C. P. Bell (2 vols., London, 1887-1890), vol. ii, pp. 88-92. "He who held office [of Archbishop] while I was at Goa," he writes, "was of the order of S. Augustin, whose habit he wore; he was aged about fifty years, and had been fifteen or sixteen years in this charge. For charity and almsgiving he had a great reputation. He had built and endowed a large number of monasteries and convents." *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89. Menezes returned to Portugal in 1611 and became archbishop of Braga. He died in Madrid in 1617. The Franciscan, Paulo da Trindade, writing two decades later, speaks of him as a man of great virtue. Cf. *Conquista Espiritual do Oriente*, ed. F. Lopes (Lisbon, 1962), vol. i, pp. 99-100.

⁸ *The Voyage of John Huyghen van Linschoten to the East Indies* (From the old English translation of 1598; ed. vol. i, A.C. Burnell; vol. ii, P. A. Tiele; London, 1885), vol. i, pp. 178-179.

⁹ Cf. Agostinho de Santa Maria, *Historia da Fundação do Real Convento de Santa Monica da Cidade de Goa*, Lisbon, 1699.

¹⁰ Iacinto de Deos, *op. cit.*, p. 17; Manoel da Esperança and Fernando da Soledade, *Historia Serafica Cronologica da Ordem dos Frades Menores de S. Francisco na Provincia de Portugal* (Lisbon, 1656-1721), tom. III, liv. V, p. 553.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

But her sister, Dona Maria, lived to an advanced age. She was professed as a religious on 17th December 1637, fourteen years after her baptism. Her name in religion was Maria de Vizitação — Mary of the Visitation. On 1st January 1682 she was elected prioress, which means that she became the head of her convent. However, she was not destined to hold the post very long. She died on 9th April the same year.¹² She had been a religious for forty-five years.

She was still living when Fr. Iacinto de Deos completed his *Vergel*, which he must have done before 10th November 1679, as that is the date of approbation of the work by his superior, the Guardian of the monastery of Madre de Deos in Goa. It is very likely that Fr. Iacinto had known personally the venerable nun from Ceylon, the Jaffna princess. He tells us that she was held in great esteem — “*que hoje vive com muyta reputação*” (who is living today greatly esteemed).¹³

So far as we know, these two princesses from Jaffna were the first Ceylonese to become nuns.¹⁴

¹² *Manual*, p. 133.

¹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

¹⁴ In Queyroz there is a reference to a certain “devout Sister of the order” in Jaffna (p. 686). For lack of information we are not in a position to know who is here referred to as ‘Sister’.

7. Early Christian Architecture in Ceylon

Apart from royal palaces, the main forms of architecture in Ceylon up to the beginning of the sixteenth century were the Buddhist *stūpa* and *vihāra*, the Hindu temple, and the mosque. In the sixteenth century, however, a new form makes its appearance — the Christian church.

It is possible, though, that the Nestorian Persians mentioned by Cosmas Indicopleustes (6th century) had a church in Ceylon, for we are told that they had with them a priest and a deacon and held religious services.¹ The stone column bearing the image of a cross dug out at Anurādhapura in 1912² perhaps belonged to that church. In any case, we have no certain knowledge of the existence of any churches in Ceylon prior to the sixteenth century.

The Franciscans who came to Ceylon in 1543 built in course of time, in addition to their two monastic churches in the city of Colombo, over fifty churches in the Kingdom of Kōṭṭē, most of them in the maritime districts of the south-west, from Dondra in the extreme south to the river Maha-Oya, which was the northern

¹ *The Christian Topography*, ed. E. O. Winstedt (London, 1929), p. 322.

² *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, Annual Report, 1912-1913*, p. 5.

limit of the territory assigned to them for missionary work.³ We have hardly any information about their architectural character. However, from casual references to some of them it would appear that they were generally of considerable size and solidly built. Several of them, we are told, were "beautiful," such as the churches at Vāligama, Pānadurē, Kosgoḍa and Mādampē; the churches of Negombo and Navagamuva were "large and beautiful"; Dondra had "a church of three naves of columns of stone"; the church of St. John the Baptist at Mutwal was "beautiful and well-built"; that of Mātara was "one of the most beautiful in Ceylon."⁴

The Jesuits arrived in 1602. We learn from their records that they also built quite a number of churches. They had a church in Colombo and several others in the mission territory entrusted to their charge. A letter of 1622 has this to say of the church in Colombo: "It is built in Corinthian style, and is well proportioned and handsome. The façade is magnificent, and if it is not the best, it will certainly be the second best in the whole of India."⁵ We know that some very fine churches were built in Portuguese India, particularly in Goa.⁶ To be called "the second best in the whole of India" the Jesuit church in Colombo must have been an exceptionally handsome edifice. The other churches of the Jesuits were attached to their outstation Residences in such places as Mannar, Puttalam, Ettāle, Kalpiṭiya, Munnēssaram, Chilaw, Mādampē, Kammala, Māṭiyagana, Mākaṇḍura, Uḍugampola, Vāligampīṭiya, Moraṭuva and Galle. Most of these churches, it appears, were "splendid as regards size and decoration."⁷

³ Queyroz, pp. 714-719. Paulo da Trindade, *Conquista Espiritual do Oriente* (MS. in the Vatican Library, Lat. 7746), ff. 810-822.

There were no Capuchins in Colombo or elsewhere in Ceylon in the Portuguese period. The term *capucho* has been incorrectly translated by Fr. S. G. Perera (cf. Queyroz, pp. 691, 969) and P. E. Pieris (cf. Ribeiro, pp. 128, 129, 315). Franciscans of the Portuguese Province of 'Piedade' were called 'capuchos,' but they were not Capuchins.

⁴ Queyroz, pp. 714-719.

⁵ Letter of Antonio Rubino, Nov. 10, 1622, *CALR*, III, 31.

⁶ Pyrad de Laval, who was in Goa about fifteen years before, speaks of the churches he saw there. Cf. *The Voyage of François Pyrad de Laval*, translated from the third French edition of 1619 and edited by A. Gray and H. C. P. Bell (2 vols., London, 1887-1890), vol. ii, pp. 51-63.

⁷ Letter of Emmanuel Barradas, Dec. 15, 1617, *CALR*, II, 12.

The Dominicans, who came still later (1605), had a church in Colombo, two in Galle, and twelve in the parishes they had in the district of Sabaragamuva and the Two-Kōralēs.⁸ In the Colombo Museum is an inscribed slab from their church in Colombo.⁹ The Augustinians, too, had a church in the city of Colombo and another at Nārāhēnpiṭa — the shrine of Our Lady of Deliverance. In their parishes outside Colombo they had twelve churches.¹⁰ Speaking of the churches built in Ceylon by the various religious orders, Queyroz remarks that “the majority of these parish churches were as magnificent as the best in Goa.”¹¹

In the Kingdom of Jaffna, too, the missionaries built several large and beautiful churches. The Franciscans were again the first in the field. After Nallūr was captured by the Portuguese in 1591 and Hendarmāna Siṃha (Pararāja Śēkaran) set on the throne of Jaffna,¹² the way was open for the Franciscans to undertake missionary work, and the construction of several churches was begun. Greater missionary progress was made after Jaffna became a Portuguese possession in 1618. Churches sprang up wherever the Franciscans established themselves.¹³ Nearly all the churches were “of stone and mortar.”¹⁴ One of the largest and most handsome was the Church of Our Lady of Miracles. King Hendarmāna Siṃha had given the Franciscans some houses near his palace. There they erected a church in honour of Our Lady of Victory.¹⁵ In 1614 it was moved to a new site, in the Jaffna fort, where it became famous as the shrine of Our Lady of Miracles.¹⁶ A large church with vaulted roof and clerestory was built there by Fr.

⁸ Queyroz, p. 720. Cf. also *Documentação para a Historia das Missões de Padroado Portugues do Oriente*, ed. Antonio da Silva Rego, vol. vii (Lisbon, 1952), pp. 528-536.

Kōralē: a territorial division of a *disāva*, or province.

⁹ J. P. Lewis, “Portuguese Inscriptions in Ceylon,” *JCBRAS*, XVIII (no. 56, 1905), 361, 378.

¹⁰ Cf. *Campos*, ff. 180-185.

¹¹ Queyroz, p. 720.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 448-454.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 695; Paulo da Trindade, *op. cit.*, ff. 904-907.

¹⁴ Queyroz, p. 695.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 661.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 666-685.

Pedro de Betancor,¹⁷ a great missionary and church-builder in the North, who had already built several churches in Jaffna, Mannar and the Vanni.¹⁸ Two bells which belonged to this church still exist, one in the Dutch church in Jaffna fort, and the other in the Anglican Church of St. Michael and All Angels at Polvatta, in Colombo.¹⁹

The Dominicans also built a church in the town of Jaffna, and another some distance away.²⁰ The Jesuits who came in 1623 established twelve parishes,²¹ in addition to the college and church they had in the town.²² We are told that the churches they built were "vast in size, handsome in structure, and well fitted up."²³

The Dutch Calvinist minister Philip Baldaeus, who had the use of the churches of Jaffna, Mannar and the Vanni after the Catholic missionaries had been banished from the country, has left us some details about them.²⁴ According to him, most of the churches and the presbyteries were large and solid buildings. The church of Tellippalai, for instance, was "a large roomy building with 2 rows of well-built pillars, a stately house"; that of Mallakam was "built of good lime and stone, with a fine house attached to it, with many arches and a long staircase leading to the top of it"; the church of Mayliddi was "wide and roomy," and the clergy house "very lofty with a flat roof extending over the choir of the church, affording a fine prospect of sea and land"; the church at Pandattarippu was "a neat and ingenious building of coral stones, with an elegant and well built house constructed upon arches, with a very commodious gallery with two spacious rooms."²⁵

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 676-677.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 664-665.

¹⁹ *JCBRAS*, XVII (no. 52, 1901), 43-44; XVIII (no. 56, 1905), 362.

²⁰ Queyroz, p. 694. Cf. also *Documentação*, etc., *supra*, note 8.

²¹ Letter of Manoel Sylveiro, Jan. 17, 1641, *CALR*, IV, 150-153; letter of Andrew Lopez, 1644, *ibid.*, IV, 155.

²² Letter of Ignatius Bruno, Oct. 31, 1628, *ibid.*, IV, 96-98; letter of Balthazar de Costa, Nov. 28, 1648, *ibid.*, IV, 155.

²³ Letter of J. Carvalho, Jan. 1, 1627, *ibid.*, IV, 95.

²⁴ Baldaeus, pp. 318-340.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 318-322. For a brief survey of the ultimate fate of these churches, cf. J. P. Lewis, "The Portuguese-Dutch Churches of Jaffna," *CALR*, II, 47-50.

We notice that a surprisingly large number of churches, many of them quite big and handsome, had been built in the Portuguese period. But it was a period frequently disturbed by wars and revolts. In the turmoil which accompanied them, churches were sometimes seriously damaged, sometimes completely destroyed. In the Kingdom of Kōṭṭē many churches along the Western coast from Colombo to Galle were burnt down by Vīdiyē Baṇḍāra after his escape from imprisonment.²⁶ In the rising of 1603, which followed Jeronimo de Azevedo's unsuccessful attempt to oust Vimaladharmasūrya of Kandy, several churches were destroyed.²⁷ The rebellion which broke out in 1616 under the leadership of the pretender Nikapiṭiyē also led to the destruction of many churches.²⁸ To the missionaries "the thought that of so many churches hardly any survived was so painful that they shed tears from grief of heart."²⁹

Jaffna fared no better. In 1627 several churches were destroyed, not, however, by man, but by nature. A violent cyclone and tidal wave hit the peninsula causing great destruction to life and property. Many churches, along with other buildings, were laid low.³⁰ Close on the heels of this disaster came another, the invasion of Jaffna by Kandyan troops, who set fire to the churches they came across and killed two Jesuits and two Franciscans.³¹

But, undaunted by these reverses, the missionaries carried on their work. They returned to their posts as soon as it became possible to do so, and set about rebuilding their churches.

How did the missionaries manage to build so many churches, not only in coastal towns, but also in inland villages, when the country was being disturbed by wars and insurrections? Churches

²⁶ Queyroz, p. 316; letter of Antonio Dias, Dec. 15, 1552, *Documenta Indica*, ed. J. Wicki (7 vols., Rome, 1948-1962, contd.), vol. ii, p. 535.

²⁷ Letter of Albert Laertius, Jan. 13 and 15, 1604, *CALR*, I, 18; letter of Manoel Roiz, Jan. 15, 1604, *ibid.*, II, 18.

²⁸ Letter of Emmanuel Barradas, Dec. 15, 1617, *ibid.*, II, 12.

²⁹ Letter of Emmanuel a Costa, Dec. 15, 1618, *ibid.*, III, 20.

³⁰ Queyroz, pp. 647-651; letter of Ignatius Bruno, Oct. 31, 1628, *CALR*, IV, 96-98.

³¹ Queyroz, pp. 654-656; letter of Ignatius Lobo, Jan. 31., 1629, *CALR*, IV, 98-99.

such as we find described in the records could not have been built without great labour and expense.

We find it mentioned that the native Christians themselves took an active part in building the churches; that they gave their personal service to put up the buildings.

Speaking of a church in Mannar, one missionary reports: "The church of this Residence was up to this time of mud, but the Christians determined to build it of stone. The Father is still engaged in collecting the materials necessary for the work."³² Generally it was the missionary himself who organized the building project and collected the material required. The same document says of another church in Mannar: "The church of this Residence was for a long time without tiles for want of wood which could only be found in forests full of elephants, tigers, bears and thieves. The Christians nevertheless resolved to go a six days' journey into this forest."³³ In the parish of Chankanai, in Jaffna, there were three villages, and each wanted to have the stone church the missionary was planning to build. It was finally settled by lot that Chankanai itself should have the church. In building it, however, all the villages co-operated. "The fervour with which they all applied themselves to the construction of the new church is both remarkable and edifying," observes one missionary, "for they themselves brought all the materials for it, the elders giving the example."³⁴ The children, too, had their share of work: "The alacrity and delight with which the children set about their work is something to behold. They take great pleasure in the work, and invite the Father to come and see them at work."³⁵

It will be seen, then, that the building of so many churches was possible largely because of the fact that the Christians themselves were prepared to give their personal service — which we know today as *śramadāna*.

32 Letter of Andrew Lopez, Dec. 13, 1644, *CALR*, V, 85.

33 *Ibid.*

34 Letter of Manoel Silveiro, Jan. 17, 1641, *ibid.*, IV, 150. The ruins of this church, now an archaeological reserve, can still be seen.

35 *Ibid.*

It was in the building of churches that, in the Portuguese period, Ceylon architecture was most influenced by the West. It is true that the Portuguese built several forts in Ceylon. Moreover, Portuguese settlers built for themselves houses and villas. Many of the local inhabitants were employed in the construction of these buildings, with the result that they gained some knowledge of Western methods and styles of architecture. But forts were erected mainly along the coast, and Portuguese settlers generally lived in and around coastal towns. Churches, on the other hand, were built even in distant inland villages, and were far more numerous than forts. The earliest Western influences in architecture, therefore, came chiefly from church building. In this connection it should be noted also that quite a number of Sinhalese and Tamil terms still in use in the building craft are from Portuguese.³⁶

According to the information we have, the churches were apparently built after Western styles of architecture.³⁷ In fact, this is a practice that has been followed by missionaries down to recent times. It is only now, in our own day, that some interest is being shown in the adoption of Oriental styles of architecture for church building. If the missionaries set aside the local styles and designs, it was certainly not because they did not appreciate the architecture of the country. One missionary who had seen some Buddhist temples and monasteries in Ceylon wrote, in 1552, to his brethren in Europe: "They [the Buddhist monks] live near the pagodas, separated from other people, and their houses are enclosed like monasteries and ornamented with paintings even as the pagodas. Some of the pagodas are more splendid than the most splendid churches in Lisbon . . . I entered one which impressed me more than any buildings I have seen, for it seemed to me that it was more splendid and magnificent than the chapel of the Archdeacon of Salamanca."³⁸ Other missionaries very likely felt the same.

³⁶ Cf. S. G. Perera, "Portuguese Influence on Sinhalese Speech," *CALR*, VIII, 45-60, 126-144; S. Gnana Prakasar, "Portuguese in Tamil," *ibid.*, V, 70-77.

³⁷ Letter of Antonio Rubino, Nov. 10, 1622, *ibid.*, III, 31; letter of Jeronimo Gomez, Dec. 29, 1606, *ibid.*, II, 21.

³⁸ Letter of Manuel de Moraes, Nov. 28, 1552, *Documenta Indica*, vol. ii, (Rome, 1950), p. 435. The chapel referred to is probably that of St. Peter, in the new cathedral of Salamanca, built by the Archdeacon of Alba, D. Francis Sanchez y Palenzuela. (*ibid.*, n. 25).



It must be noted, moreover, that it was not the policy of the Church to discard or underrate the indigenous culture of non-Christian countries, or to impose on them the culture of Christian Europe. The Church, on the contrary, wishes to be assimilated into the native culture of each country, eliminating only what is incompatible with the Christian faith.

Why, then, were the missionaries reluctant to adopt for Church use the traditional architecture of the country? It is true that, whatever the policy of the Church, there were European Christians and even missionaries who felt that their culture was superior to that of Asian or African peoples, and that they should, therefore, propagate among them not only the Christian faith, but also European culture. Nevertheless the main reason for following Western patterns and setting aside the native styles of architecture seems to have been the fact that the native architecture was predominantly a religious one. Both among the ruins of ancient cities and the buildings of later times, the vast majority are religious buildings. The missionaries felt that to safeguard the faith of their converts they should be weaned away from all 'pagan' associations. The native architecture, so closely identified with the local religions, was 'pagan' in their eyes. That being their attitude, it is not surprising that they refrained from adopting for church building the architecture of the country.

In adhering to European styles of architecture, there was both an advantage and a disadvantage. The advantage was that the people were given the opportunity of gaining some idea of the religious architecture of Europe, which represents European architecture at its best. The people had before them replicas of European churches — specimens of Christian Europe's architectural heritage. The churches, therefore, had an educational value in the sense that they brought to both Christians and non-Christians some knowledge of the religious architecture Europe had produced.

From another point of view, however, there was a disadvantage. The new architecture was so much a contrast to the traditional architecture of the country, and so clearly marked out as something introduced from Europe, that it gave one the impression that the religion it represented was also 'European'.

Truth, whether religious or scientific, cannot be European or Asian: it is universal. However, in Asian and African countries it is not unusual to find Christianity being regarded as *European*, and therefore alien and unwelcome. The fact that Christianity, as introduced into these countries, has a European look about it has definitely been a disadvantage to it.

The introduction of Christian architecture into Ceylon, in the Portuguese period, by the construction of so many churches, many of them large and beautiful ones, not only in towns and coastal districts, but also in remote villages, in spite of the disturbances caused by wars and revolts, constitutes a distinct contribution to the architecture of the country, although unfortunately little now remains of that architecture.

8. Sinhalese Pundit from India

When Fr. Joseph Vaz came, in 1687, to minister to the persecuted Catholics of Ceylon, there was little or nothing left of the religious works that had been produced in Sinhalese by the missionaries of the Portuguese period.¹ He decided, therefore, to call upon his colleague, Fr. Jacome Gonçalvez, a Konkani Brahmin like himself, a “gifted man of many parts”² with a flair for languages, to make a thorough study of Sinhalese and compile religious books, with a view to providing Sinhalese Catholics with at least the necessary minimum of Catholic literature in their own tongue. Gonçalvez more than fulfilled the wishes of his superior, for during the thirty-seven years of his life in Ceylon he produced no fewer than twenty-two books in Sinhalese, some of which merit to be ranked among the best classical works in the language. His works far excel in literary quality the writings of the Calvinist clergy, his contemporaries. In addition to these works in Sinhalese, he composed fifteen others in Tamil, four in Portuguese, and one in Dutch.³

The most striking feature of the Sinhalese writings of Gonçalvez, which have been referred to by Sir D. B. Jayatilaka as “very

¹ Letter of Jacome Gonçalvez, Sept. 8, 1712, *OMC*, p. 126.

² Letter of Joseph de Menezes, June 14, 1714, *ibid.*, p. 148.

³ Mission Report for 1733-1740, *ibid.*, pp. 250-252.

interesting and extensive works,"⁴ is variety — variety of theme, form and style. Gonçalvez has written in both prose and verse. His most celebrated work, his *magnum opus*, is the *Dēva Vēda Purāṇaya*, a treatise on scripture and doctrine. It is written in a virile literary prose, with numerous Sanskrit *tatsamas*, or loanwords, in a style similar to that of the *Sārārtha Saṃgrahaya*⁵ of his contemporary Vāliṣṭha Saraṇaṅkara Thera.⁶ The *Purāṇaya* is Gonçalvez's longest prose work. The printed text runs to nearly 400 pages quarto. It is clear from the language and style that the book is meant for the learned reader. It was a belief, noticeable in Sinhalese literature from the twelfth century, that Sanskrit *tatsamas* made the language learned and elegant. Such words — "the glittering ornaments of the Sanskrit"⁷ as James de Alwis speaks of them — were introduced even into poetry from about the fourteenth century. This is very noticeable especially in *praśasti-kāvya* or panegyrics, like the *Pārakumbā Sirita* (15th century) and the *Vaḍiḡa Haṭana* (19th century). In keeping with this practice Gonçalvez used Sanskrit words not only in his prose works, such as the *Purāṇaya* and the *Dēva Nīti Visarjanaya*, but also in his poetical compositions like the *Vēda Kāvya*, *Maṅgala Gītiya* and *Pasaṅ Pota*.

Another prose work on almost the same theme as the *Purāṇaya*, but very much shorter, in simpler language, and in the form of question and answer, for the use of the less learned reader, is the *Dēva Vēda Saṅkṣēpaya*. In fact, Gonçalvez, while writing books in a learned literary language for the educated reader, composed others in a simpler and almost colloquial language for the ordinary man. In the latter type of works he did not allow himself to be tied down to grammatical rules. In Sinhalese there is a marked difference between the spoken idiom and the literary language, especially in regard to grammar. The spoken language has a very

⁴ D. B. Jayatilaka, ed., *A Dictionary of the Sinhalese Language*, vol. i, pt. i, (Colombo, 1935), p. xi.

⁵ Cf. C. E. Godakumbura, *Sinhalese Literature* (Colombo, 1955), pp. 66-68.

⁶ The Buddhist monk who was chiefly responsible for the revival of Buddhism and learning in the eighteenth century. He composed the *Sārārtha Saṃgrahaya* in 1726; Gonçalvez completed the *Purāṇaya* in 1735.

⁷ James de Alwis, *Sidai Saṅgarāva* (Colombo, 1852), p. cxvii.

simplified grammar of its own, which sophisticated grammarians regard as 'ungrammatical'. Gonçalvez seems to have followed the practice of not strictly adhering to the rules of grammar of the literary language when writing for the ordinary reader. In this simplified style he composed, on the ethical and moral aspect of Christianity, the *Ñānāñjanaya* and the *Sukruta Darpaṇaya*. He compiled also a collection of edifying stories from the lives of the saints under the title of *Dharmōdyānaya*, and a set of stories of the miraculous, called *Prātihāryāvaliya*.

Gonçalvez was a musician, and had a good command of Western religious music. However, he believed, with Fr. Vaz, that the Christian Church in Ceylon should adopt for its use the traditional music and methods of singing in the country.

In Buddhist worship, however, there was no religious music as such. There was no organized singing such as the singing by a choir or congregation at a Christian service. But there was chanting, the chanting of *pirit* and *gāthās*. Moreover, for the purpose of imparting religious instruction to the common man, especially to the unlettered, it was a practice, in the Buddhist tradition, to chant religious books in the home or at assemblies of the people, especially when they gathered together on religious occasions. It was a practice necessitated, moreover, by the fact that books were costly and scarce, as they had to be laboriously copied out by hand on *ola*.⁸ Books intended for this purpose were composed in simple, unornate language, which the ordinary man could understand. And as they were meant to be chanted, they were generally written in a flowing rhythmic prose.

Gonçalvez composed several books of this type for chanting. One of them, the *Suviśēṣa Visarjanaya*, contains the Gospels for Sundays and feast days, with a commentary on each, to be chanted by the *annavi* — the lay leader of the congregation — during Mass, or when, in the absence of the priest, the people assembled for prayer in the local church. The *Dukprāpti Prasamgaya* is a moving

⁸ The leaf of the talipot palm prepared for writing. Robert Knox describes how books were made with palm leaf. Cf. *An Historical Relation of Ceylon* (*The Ceylon Historical Journal*, vol. VI, nos. 1 to 4, 1956-1957), p. 175.

narrative of the passion and death of Christ in nine sermons, or discourses. Still a very popular work, it is chanted in Lent in Catholic homes. A metrical version of the passion is the *Pasaṃ Pota*, the 'Book of the Passion.' The sad, plaintive melodies of the *pasaṃ* can be heard during Lent in homes, and sometimes in churches, especially where the passion-play is staged. The *Dēva Nīti Visarjanaya*, of which we shall speak again, also belongs to the category of chant-books. The *Maṅgala Gītiya* is actually a hymnal, a collection of hymns to be sung to Oriental melodies.

Gonçalvez composed also a large number of prayers, litanies, etc., which were meant to be chanted. Some of them are contained in the *Kristiyāni Palliya*. He wrote them to be chanted to melodies drawn from the country itself. His aim was to make at least the non-liturgical prayers and hymns truly indigenous; to make not only the words but also the music Oriental. This was part of a policy of the early Oratorians to make the Church look less alien.

It is not known whether Gonçalvez composed any dramatical works, although there are some attributed to him,⁹ but a work full of the dramatic is the *Dēva Nīti Visarjanaya*. Man's judgment by God at death has been dramatized by Newman in the *Dream of Gerontius*. The *Visarjanaya* of Gonçalvez is a dramatization, though not in actual drama form, of the end of the world and the last judgment. Its plot has been cleverly conceived, and the work ingeniously executed. From the literary aspect, too, it is a work of great merit. The language is not so Sanskritized as in the *Purāṇaya*, nor colloquial as in some other works of the author. The easy flow of the language, the rich and varied vocabulary, the very apt and expressive illustrations, bring out more strikingly than in his other works his remarkable mastery of the language. There are in this work specimens of the finest Sinhalese prose. From the literary point of view the *Visarjanaya* appears to be the best work of the author, better in fact than the *Purāṇaya* itself.

Gonçalvez composed a long poem of 528 stanzas on the life and teachings of Christ. It is known as the *Vēda Kāvya*. In

⁹ James de Alwis, *op. cit.*, p. LXXvi.

composing it the author has used a variety of metres as found in Sinhalese prosody. The poem bears resemblance to the *Budugūñālaikāraya* of Vidāgama Maitreya Thera (15th century), which is a work on the life and virtues of the Buddha. Gonçalvez seems to have been quite familiar with Vidāgama's poem. In fact, he speaks of it in another of his works, the *Buddhabaṇa Pratyakṣaya*.¹⁰

There were occasions when Gonçalvez took part in religious controversies with Protestants and Buddhists. Oratorian records speak of the discussions he had with the Frenchman Nanclairs de la Nerolle who, sent as messenger to the Kandyan court in 1672 by Admiral de la Haye, had settled down in Kandy, and championed Protestantism.¹¹ Sometimes discussions were held in the royal palace, in the presence of the king himself, Śrī Vira Narendrasimha.¹² The king held Gonçalvez in great esteem,¹³ one reason for it being no doubt his mastery of the Sinhalese language. It is mentioned that on one occasion, after a discussion before the king, Gonçalvez presented him with a copy of a controversy he had composed. This work, purporting to be a refutation of Protestantism is known as the *Bhēdakārayingē Tarkaya*. It appears that the king "read it and liked it very much."¹⁴

Some of the leading citizens of Mātara who had come to Colombo in 1732 to welcome the new Dutch commissary Jacob Christiaan Pielat had seen in the hands of the Catholics of Colombo some of the works of Gonçalvez "written in the manner of dialogues or controversies."¹⁵ The chief work on controversy he had so far composed was the *Ajñāna Auṣadhaya*, a discussion on religion between a Catholic priest and a Buddhist pundit. This was very likely one of the books the people of Mātara had seen. We are told that they were so impressed by what they had read that they

¹⁰ Cf. *Buddhabaṇa Pratyakṣaya*, ed. C. E. Fonseka (Maggonā, Ceylon, 1932), p. 31.

¹¹ Letter of Jacome Gonçalvez, Sept. 8, 1712, *OMC*, pp. 124-125. Also cf. *ibid.*, pp. 127-129.

¹² Letter of Jacome Gonçalvez, Oct. 18, 1714, *OMC*, pp. 157-158.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 158. Cf. also pp. 148, 186, 227, 252-255.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

¹⁵ Mission Report for 1730-1732, *OMC*, p. 245.

begged of him to visit them at Mātara to discuss religion. Gonçalvez went with them.¹⁶ It was probably after his visit to Mātara that he had composed the *Mātara Pratyakṣaya*,¹⁷ which treats of Buddhism from a polemical angle. He composed another book on Buddhism, called *Budu Mula*, and presented it to the heir to the throne, the queen's brother, who later became king as Śrī Vijaya Rājasimha, and who, like his predecessor, treated Gonçalvez with the utmost courtesy and cordiality.¹⁸

Gonçalvez is also the author of several dictionaries, or word-books. There is mention, in Oratorian records, of four such works: (a) a Sinhalese-Portuguese dictionary; (b) a Portuguese-Sinhalese dictionary; (c) a dictionary of Tamil phrases; and (d) a Portuguese-Tamil-Sinhalese dictionary.¹⁹

Nearly all the extant works of Gonçalvez have appeared in print. In the *Biblioteca Ajuda* in Lisbon I came across a manuscript copy,²⁰ in four volumes, of almost all his Sinhalese works except the dictionaries. So far as we know, this is the most complete manuscript collection of his works. A note attached to the collection says that it had belonged to the library of the Congregation of the Oratory in Lisbon, and that it contains "various works on religion and controversy in Sinhalese and Tamil by Fr. Jacome Gonçalvez." These four volumes actually contained only his Sinhalese works, but I found also in the same library (*Ajuda*) two volumes, in a very neat hand, of his Tamil works.²¹ Of the dictionaries, only one is extant, the Portuguese-Tamil-Sinhalese dictionary. There is a copy of it in the archives of the Archdiocese of Colombo.

Gonçalvez was almost thirty years old when he arrived in Ceylon. Sinhalese was a language entirely new and alien to him.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 245-246.

¹⁷ It is this book, presumably, which forms the first part of the work known today as the *Buddhabāṇa Pratyakṣaya*; the second part, *Buddhakṣētraya*, seems to be the work which is cited in Oratorian documents as *Budu Mula*.

¹⁸ Mission Report for 1733-1740, *OMC*, pp. 261-262; for 1740-1743, *ibid.*, p. 268.

¹⁹ Mission Report for 1733-1740, *ibid.*, pp. 250-252.

²⁰ Ref. no. 49-II-11 to 14.

²¹ A note on the fly-leaf of the two volumes states that they are "*em lingua Chingala*" which is obviously an error.

That being so, it must be admitted that it is a remarkable feat for him to have mastered the language so well, not only the spoken but also the literary language, and to have produced so many works, while being engaged in other arduous duties as a missionary, in a country which had but a handful of priests and where so much of one's time had to be spent in travelling long distances on foot from one mission station to another, at a time when the Catholics were being persecuted and Catholic priests hunted down — a feat not equalled to this day even by those whose mother tongue is Sinhalese. Gonçalvez has deservedly earned the title of "Father of Sinhalese Catholic Literature."

A noteworthy feature of his style is his skill in using the simile to illustrate his ideas. The simile is a literary device profusely employed in Oriental literature. What Gonçalvez used was not the kind of stereotyped and conventional simile, repeated *ad nauseam* in Sinhalese classical works, but similes drawn from real life, and associated with objects, incidents and customs with which the people were familiar. One is struck by the originality, freshness and appropriateness of his similes. He seems to have possessed to a remarkable degree the art of making his ideas clear to his readers with homely illustrations drawn from their own environment. Examples will be found on almost every page of his works. In the use of the simile he comes very close to another master of the simile in Sinhalese literature, the monk Dharmasena, author of the *Saddharmaratnāvalīya* (13th century).

The writings of Gonçalvez, apart from being a very substantial contribution to Sinhalese Christian literature, are of great value from a linguistic point of view. He was not only well versed in the literary language, but also, by coming into close contact with the common folk in the course of his missionary tours in the hill country as well as in the maritime districts, had come to know the spoken language in all its variety and variations, with the result that a large number of words from the vocabulary of the common man, many of them now obsolete, have been preserved for us in his writings. His trilingual dictionary in particular is a mine of linguistic information. Against each Portuguese word are given, in addition to a set of Tamil words, Sinhalese equivalents varying from one to as many as fifteen.

It is interesting to note that just as it was Indians — Mahinda and his companions — who in the third century B.C. brought to Ceylon, with Buddhism, the Pali canonical literature, and again it was an Indian, Buddhaghosa, who visited Ceylon in the fifth century A.D. and produced a Pali commentarial literature, so it was once more an Indian, Jacome Gonçalvez, who came to Ceylon in the eighteenth century and provided Sinhalese Catholics with a religious literature in their own language.

9. The Jesuit College of Colombo

I

Colombo at the beginning of the seventeenth century was a city of considerable size. The small Portuguese settlement of the first decades of the sixteenth century had grown into a *cidade*¹ with its fort, with over five hundred houses of the Portuguese, in addition to those of the local inhabitants, and with gardens, villas, mansions, churches, monasteries and schools.² It had become the chief settlement of the Portuguese in the Island, and the centre of administration. It was also the main port of call for Portuguese vessels, and the principal trading centre in the country. And from the time king Dharmapāla moved there from Kōṭṭē (1565). it had assumed the status of a metropolis,³ which it still retains.

¹ "From a letter of King D. Sebastião [1568-1578] the superscription of which said: 'To my City of Colombo,' they [the townsmen of Colombo] at once assumed this title, and as it was due to it, both on account of the size to which it reached, according to the style of India, and also because it was a new Rome in Ceylon after the migration from Gota [Kōṭṭē], this title and right of City was always used without contradiction." (Queyroz, p. 421).

² Queyroz, p. 308. Colombo, in 1630, is briefly described by Paulo da Trindade in the *Conquista Espiritual do Oriente* (MS in the Vatican Library, Lat. 7746), ff. 715-718. Cf. *Ceylon Literary Register*, 3rd series, IV (1935-1936), 528-532. For an account of Colombo about the middle of the seventeenth century, cf. Ribeiro, pp. 127-129.

³ Queyroz, pp. 420-421.

Up to now, with the exception of a few secular priests, Franciscans had been the only missionaries in the Island, and the only educators.⁴ In Colombo they had a college⁵ where children were taught "the law of God, good customs, reading, writing, arithmetic, singing and Latin."⁶ But it was felt that there was still no adequate provision for the higher education of children. There was need for more educators. In 1602, therefore, Jesuits were called in. Their arrival was viewed with great satisfaction by the townsmen of Colombo.

We are told, in fact, that they had for a long time wished to have Jesuits in Ceylon.⁷ Their interest in them was no doubt due to the following causes.

First, the Society of Jesus had gained great prestige in Europe especially by its educational work.

The Jesuits, according to the original intention of their founder, "were meant to be primarily roving mission-priests, with no greater educational ambitions than to preach a good sermon and to teach the catechism."⁸ But the turn of events was such that the attention of the Society was drawn more and more to education till finally it accepted educational work as its main concern.

The Society had, in fact, originated in a university, the University of Paris, one of the oldest institutions of higher learning in Europe. It had come into being with a small band of university men as its nucleus, men who knew the worth of education, although they had adopted a humbler programme of work. Confronted as the Church was with the need of organizing Catholic higher education, principally with a view to counteracting the Reformation, the Jesuits had proved themselves equal to the task,

⁴ In Mannar, however, there had been Jesuits since 1560. Cf. Queyroz, p. 396.

⁵ Queyroz, p. 708. They had also "a College for orphan boys" at Mutwal (*ibid.*, p. 714), a college at Navagamuva (*ibid.*, p. 539) and another at Jaffna (*ibid.*, pp. 632, 657, 664).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1053.

⁷ Letter of Jeronimo Gomez, Jan. 14, 1603, *CALR*, II, 14. For the historical value of Jesuit letters, cf. *supra*, p. 3, note 7.

⁸ J. Brodrick, *The Progress of the Jesuits* (London, 1946), p. 38.

and devoted their energies to education with remarkable success. From their efforts there was evolved "an educational system which was at once in complete accord with the genius of Catholicism and fundamentally sound in its practical methods."⁹

A plan of studies known as the *Ratio Studiorum* was drawn up by them after many years of careful study and experimentation by the best minds of the Society. It elaborated methods for the education of pupils as well as for the training of teachers. By reason of the long and careful training given to the Jesuits, they were the best-qualified educators Europe could provide at the time.

When Ignatius of Loyola died in 1556, fifteen years after the foundation of the Society, there were already about a hundred colleges and houses of study distributed into twelve provinces. There were colleges in many European countries, in the New World, and in the East Indies. Half a century later Jesuit colleges in Europe numbered more than three hundred. The Society counted among its members men of high rank and noble birth as well as learned and scholarly men. Though the Society admittedly had its enemies, many were its patrons among princes and nobles, and there was an increasing demand for the establishment of more colleges. The Jesuits thus succeeded in building up "the greatest international system of secondary and higher educational institutions known in history."¹⁰

The Portuguese who had come over to Ceylon as officials or settlers knew of the success and fame of the Jesuits in Europe, chiefly as educators. In their own country and in Spain the Society had risen to a position of pre-eminence in education. It is not surprising, therefore, that they were anxious to have them in Ceylon too, especially for educational work.

⁹ W. Boyd, *The History of Western Education* (London, 1952), p. 204.

¹⁰ N. Hans, *Comparative Education* (London, 1958), p. 107. For the spread of Jesuit colleges in Europe, cf. T. Hughes, *Loyola and the Educational System of the Jesuits* (London, 1892), pp. 68-77. The German Protestant historian, Leopold von Ranke, also speaks of the phenomenal growth of Jesuit education in Europe in his monumental work *The History of the Popes* (translated from the German by F. Foster, and revised by G. R. Dennis, 3 vols., London, 1908), vol. i, pp. 182, 432-543.

Moreover, the Jesuits had been in India from the first years of the foundation of the Society. They had an extensive mission field in South India, with schools, colleges, hospitals, printing presses, etc. As there was close contact between India and Ceylon, the townsmen of Colombo would have heard of their success on the mainland, especially in the field of education. In Goa the Jesuits had their famous college of St. Paul, already more than half a century old. This institution, the first Jesuit college in the East, had been established shortly after Xavier's arrival in India. Its original founder, a Portuguese secular priest named Diogo de Borba, being unable to provide a staff, had appealed to him for help, who in turn had written to Ignatius of Loyola and persuaded him to send some members of the Society for the staff of the school.¹¹ Xavier, a product of the Sorbonne like Ignatius himself, had no doubt realized that, although the missions were hopelessly understaffed, the education of children was so important that the Society should not grudge to set apart some members exclusively for educational work. Under Jesuit administration this school became not only the chief Jesuit college in India, but the greatest educational institution in the East during this period. Speaking of the college, Pyrard de Laval, who was in Goa not long after the Jesuits had come over to Ceylon, says: "The college is the principal one in all the East Indies, wherein I have seen as many as 2,000 children and more at their studies, as well Portuguese as Indians."¹² It is understandable that the people of Colombo hearing of the successful educational activities of the Jesuits at Goa and elsewhere in India should have wished to have them in Ceylon too.

¹¹ J. Brodrick, *Saint Francis Xavier* (London, 1952), p. 125. Cf. Xavier's letter to Ignatius of Loyola, Sept. 20, 1542, *Epistolae S. Francisci Xaverii*, ed. G. Schurhammer and J. Wicki (2 vols., Rome, 1944-1945), vol. i, pp. 132-134.

¹² *The Voyage of François Pyrard of Laval*, translated from the third French edition of 1619 and edited by A. Gray and H. C. P. Bell (2 vols., London, 1887-1890), vol. ii, p. 59.

In this college were educated a son and a nephew of Bhuvanekabāhu of Kōtṭe, who had fled to Goa to escape the king (cf. Letter of Juan de Beira, Nov. 20, 1545, *Documenta Indica*, ed. J. Wicki, vol. 1, p. 60) and another son of the same king carried away to Goa by the viceroy Afonso de Noronha. (Cf. Queyroz, p. 304).

It was in the same college that, at a later date, Joseph Vaz, who was subsequently to become the 'Apostle of Ceylon,' and Jacome Gonçalvez, who became the 'Father of Sinhalese Catholic Literature', received their education.

Furthermore, the fame of St. Francis Xavier himself had added lustre to the Society, especially in India, the country where he had laboured most. His meteoric passage through the East, in just ten years (1542-1552), had left a deep impression on both the Portuguese and the local inhabitants. His name, held in veneration by thousands in India and elsewhere, had greatly enhanced the prestige of the Society.

These causes explain why the townspeople of Colombo were so interested in getting Jesuits to work in Ceylon.

It was fortunate, moreover, that the captain-general, Jeronimo de Azevedo, the highest Portuguese official in Ceylon, was personally interested in the Jesuits. He had come to Ceylon in 1594, and on the death of Don João Dharmapāla (1597) assumed the government of the Kingdom of Kōṭṭē in the name of Philip I of Portugal. He had himself been educated by the Jesuits, and evidently knew the value of Jesuit education. Furthermore, his half-brother, Ignatius de Azevedo, had been a distinguished member of the Society and with thirty-nine other Jesuits put to death by French Huguenots while they were on their way to their Brazilian mission.¹³ Jeronimo de Azevedo became the staunchest friend, defender and benefactor of the Jesuits in Ceylon.¹⁴

However, the person mainly responsible for the foundation of the Jesuit mission in Ceylon was the Bishop of Cochin, Andreas de Santa Maria. He was a Franciscan, but realizing that the members of his own order could not by themselves meet the demands of the fast-growing mission in Ceylon, which formed part of his diocese, he decided, with the concurrence of the viceroy¹⁵

¹³ J. Brodrick, *The Progress of the Jesuits*, p. 220 sq.; Queyroz, p. 576.

¹⁴ After some eighteen years in Ceylon as captain-general (1594-1612) Azevedo was appointed viceroy, but fell into disgrace and was sent a prisoner to Lisbon where he remained imprisoned till his death (Queyroz, pp. 616-618). The Jesuits in appreciation of his services to the Society buried him in the sacristy of their Church of St. Roque. Anxious to see the place of burial, when I was in Lisbon in 1955, I made inquiries at the church, and after some search, came across a faded inscription on the sacristy floor which read: "Aqui jaz D. Jeronymo dazevedo XXII visorrey da India morreo em Lisboa a IX de Marco de MDCXXV." (Here lies D. Jeronymo d'Azevedo, the 22nd viceroy of India. Died in Lisbon on the 9th of March, 1625). Cf. also *Historia dos Mosteiros Conventos e Casas Religiosas de Lisboa* (a publication of the *Camara Municipal* of Lisbon, 1950), vol. i, p. 277.

¹⁵ Ayres de Saldanha. He was viceroy from 1600 to 1605.

and the archbishop of Goa,¹⁶ and the approval of the king,¹⁷ to call in the Jesuits.¹⁸

Accordingly, in April 1602, a band of four Jesuits arrived in Ceylon.¹⁹ The Indian mission of the Jesuits had by then grown into two Provinces: the Province of Goa, with headquarters at Goa itself, and the Malabar Province, with Cochin as its centre. The Ceylon mission became part of the Province of Malabar.

II

The Jesuits were welcomed with great joy by the captain-general and the people of Colombo. Diogo da Cunha, who came as superior, reports in a letter of 1603: "We were well received by the townspeople and the General of the *conquista*, and the captain of the city, and by all others, ecclesiastics as well as seculars, European and native, with many demonstrations of joy."²⁰ The Franciscans, however, urged that they had the exclusive right to be in charge of the Ceylon mission, but the bishop, Andreas de Santa Maria, intervened and divided the Island between the two orders, giving also to the Jesuits permission to have a college in the city of Colombo.²¹

The captain-general was particularly pleased to see members of the Society arrive in Colombo. He "undertook to support us," writes one Jesuit, "giving freely all that was necessary."²² He bought for them a house and property for 2,000 *pardaos* ²³

¹⁶ Aleixo de Menezes, Archbishop and Primate from 1595 to 1610.

¹⁷ Philip II of Portugal (1598-1621).

¹⁸ Letter of Andreas de Santa Maria, Nov. 16, 1602, *CALR*, II, 4; letter of Jeronimo Gomez, Jan. 14, 1603, *ibid.*, II, 14; *Foundation and Origin of the College of Colombo*, *ibid.*, II, 25

¹⁹ Letter of Jeronimo Gomez, Jan. 14, 1603, *ibid.*, II, 14; letter of Albertus Laertius, Jan. 15, 1604, *ibid.*, II, 18.

²⁰ Letter of Diogo da Cunha, Dec. 10, 1603, *ibid.*, II, 15.

²¹ *Foundation and Origin of the College of Colombo*, *ibid.*, II, 26-27; letters of Albertus Laertius, Jan. 13 and 15, 1604, *ibid.*, II, 18; letter of Manoel Roiz, Jan. 15, 1604, *ibid.*, II, 18-19.

²² Letter of Jeronimo Gomez, Jan. 14, 1603, *ibid.*, II, 14.

²³ *Pardao*, or *pardau*: an Indian coin, either of gold, which had the value of 6 *tangas*, or 360 *reis*; or of silver, which was equivalent to 5 *tangas*, or 300 *reis*. Cf. Sebastião Rodolfo Dalgado, *Glossario Luso-Asiatico* (2 vols., Coimbra, 1919-1921), vol. ii, p. 175. "The data, such as they are, allow us to calculate the *pardao* or *xerafin* at this time as worth 4s. 2d. to 4s. 6d." (H. Yule and A. C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson*, ed. W. Crooke, London, 1903, p. 675).

and undertook to build a larger house with a view to founding a Jesuit college in Colombo.²⁴

The term 'college' originally meant "the body of educators who were sent to a place."²⁵ Later the whole institution, staffed by them, came to be called 'college.' The Jesuit system required that, to found a college, "there should be a location provided with buildings and revenues, not merely sufficient for the present, but having reference to needful development."²⁶ Being thus endowed, the college was to give education free of charge.

For the purpose of establishing a college in Colombo there was therefore the question of endowment. The Jesuits received from two sources the funds they needed to found and maintain the college: State grants and private donations.

By letters patent, dated 22 October 1605, Azevedo gave the Jesuits, in the name of the king and by order of the viceroy, several villages with the revenue of which they were to maintain their college.²⁷ More villages and lands were given later.²⁸ In a private capacity, too, the general continued to support the Jesuits with "many proofs of kindness, confidence and friendship,"²⁹ and before leaving Ceylon, in 1612, to take up new duties at Goa as viceroy, he donated to them a part of his furniture, and thereafter continued to send provisions and gifts regularly every year.³⁰

The college had other benefactors. Queyroz tells us that it was "with the aid of the alms of the inhabitants,"³¹ in addition to those of the general and State grants, that the Jesuits were able to open a college in Colombo. One of their chief benefactors was a Portuguese widow of Colombo, named Mercia Roiz, who

²⁴ Letter of Jeronimo Gomez, Jan. 14, 1603, *CALR*, II, 14; letter of Diogo da Cunha, Dec. 10, 1603, *ibid.*, II, 15.

²⁵ T. Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

²⁷ *Foundation and Origin of the College of Colombo*, *CALR*, II, 27.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Letter of Diogo da Cunha, Dec. 10, 1603, *ibid.*, II, 17.

³⁰ Letter of Emmanuel Barradas, Dec. 1613, *ibid.*, II, 85.

³¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 576.

gave them "abundant alms" and helped them in all their needs,³²

These grants and donations made it possible for the Jesuits in Ceylon to keep to their principle of providing free education as they were doing in Europe. It has been observed that "the Jesuit system [of free education] realised a principle which many modern democracies have not yet fully attained, the Jesuit practice in this regard recalling the disinterested Greek attitude to knowledge."³³ Free education was, however, not new to Ceylon. The traditional education in the Buddhist monastic schools (*pirivenas*) and the village temples (*pansalas*) had always been free. Endowed by kings and other patrons of religion and learning, the Buddhist schools had provided education free of charge. The Jesuit practice, therefore, harmonized with the long-established tradition of free education in the country.

III

Information about the organization and curriculum of the college is very scanty. A letter written eight months after the arrival of the Jesuits in Colombo says: "One [Jesuit] undertook the work of teaching the children in the school, another teaches Latin, and the superior gives religious instruction."³⁴ It would seem from this report that already there were two schools or departments of study: "teaching the children in the school" apparently means only an elementary school; and "teaches Latin" implies that a course of Latin studies, according to the *Ratio Studiorum*, had been introduced. That the 'school' spoken of was actually an elementary school, and that lectures were given also in Latin, obviously to older students, is mentioned in a letter of 1609.³⁵ Ten years later, the addition of a new course of studies, namely Theology, is recorded: "In this college we have three

³² *Foundation and Origin of the College of Colombo, CALR*, II, 26-27; letter of Emmanuel Barradas, Dec. 1613, *ibid.*, II, 85; of Antonio Rubino, Nov. 8, 1620, *ibid.*, III, 23, 24; of Valentine Pinheyro, Dec. 1620, *ibid.*, III, 27.

³³ R. R. Rusk, *The Doctrines of the Great Educators* (London, 1918), p. 64.

³⁴ Letter of Jeronimo Gomez, Jan. 14, 1603, *CALR*, II, 15.

³⁵ Letter of Christopher Joam, Dec. 1, 1609, *ibid.*, II, 22.

courses — one of Cases of Conscience [Moral Theology] which was recently introduced, at the request of the Bishop for the secular clergy, of whom there are many — another of Latin and the third of Reading and Writing.”³⁶ According to this information, therefore, the college had grown into a three-branched institution consisting of a school of theological studies for ecclesiastical students, a Grammar school of Latin studies, and an elementary school.

One report has it that the Jesuits in Colombo provided the children “with a sound education in letters and morals and other accomplishments.”³⁷ Education in the elementary school consisted mainly in teaching the pupils “to read, write and sing.”³⁸ Portuguese was the language they were taught to read and write, as the majority of the pupils were children of Portuguese settlers, and the rest were sons of Sinhalese princes and chieftains, who also would have known Portuguese. The Latin school was intended primarily for those who wished to take Holy Orders, as the college was meant also to be “a seminary from which should come forth the workers required in the missions.”³⁹ It was for this reason that a department of theological studies was added in 1620. The medium of instruction in the school of theology was admittedly Latin, as was the practice in Europe. It was probably the same in the Grammar school.

It may be asked whether Sinhalese had a place in the college curriculum. We know that the Jesuits attached great importance to the study of the native languages and cultures of the countries where they were engaged in missionary work. We are told, in fact, that one Jesuit in Ceylon was instructed by his superior to “investigate into the antiquities of Ceylon and write about them.”⁴⁰ Some of the Jesuits acquired a good knowledge of Sinhalese and Tamil and wrote books, both linguistic and religious. The compiler of the first Sinhalese grammar in a European language, the

³⁶ Letter of Antonio Rubino, Nov. 8, 1620, *ibid.*, III, 23.

³⁷ Letter of Christopher Joam, Dec. 1, 1609, *ibid.*, II, 22.

³⁸ Letter of Franc Cagnola, Dec. 9, 1610, *ibid.*, II, 80.

³⁹ *Foundation and Origin of the College of Colombo*, *ibid.*, II, 28.

⁴⁰ Letter of Jeronimo Gomez, Dec. 29, 1606, *ibid.*, II, 21.

Ceylon-born Portuguese Jesuit Emmanuel Costa, was a pupil of the college. It was in the college that newly-arrived missionaries, before commencing work, prepared themselves by learning the languages and customs of the country. The study of Sinhalese, therefore, appears to have received considerable attention in the college.⁴¹

As was to be expected, religious instruction was given pride of place. We have seen that, as soon as a school was opened in Colombo, the Jesuit superior himself attended to the teaching of religion. Singing, which is mentioned as a school subject, was largely religious chant. The college had "a choir of school-boys,"⁴² but there were occasions when all the pupils joined in the singing.⁴³ By education in 'morals' is meant the training of character. The Jesuit system attached great importance to it. It is mentioned in the records that the Sodality was established in the college.⁴⁴ The Jesuits regarded the Sodality as an ideal means of inciting their charges to greater assiduity in acquiring knowledge and virtue.⁴⁵

The college, we have seen, provided training in "other accomplishments" besides "letters and morals." Singing was evidently one of these. Jesuit documents speak of another school activity — drama — which, too, was one of those "other accomplishments" referred to.

Only seven months after the arrival of the Jesuits in Colombo a dramatic performance was given to mark the opening of their

⁴¹ Cf. article on "The Early Jesuits and the National Languages," *supra*, pp. 1-10.

⁴² Letter of Petrus Eulitius, Oct. 15, 1605, *CALR*, II, 20.

⁴³ Letter of Antonio Rubino, 1620, *ibid.*, III, 23.

⁴⁴ Letter of Cyprianus a Costa, 1633, *ibid.*, III, 35.

⁴⁵ "Besides the bond of affection which attached scholars to the Professors, there was another bond, that of their character as Sodalists. This character denoted membership in the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a religious association which is most highly commended in the *Ratio Studiorum*, and which gathered into itself all that was excellent in the body of students. The literary and scientific 'academies' were recruited only from the Sodality. Thus, by a double process, an aristocracy of virtue and talent was created among the students themselves, tending not only to the maintenance of order, but to the active development of all those qualities which an educational system most desires." (T. Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 258).

new chapel. It was witnessed by the bishop himself, Andreas de Santa Maria, and the captain-general, Jeronimo de Azevedo. On 2nd February 1604 a drama was staged at the solemn opening of their new church. Performances of this nature seem to have been given on important occasions, and annually when the feast of the church was celebrated on 2nd February.

It is interesting to note, in the light of modern educational science which lays much stress on the value of dramatization in teaching, that the drama had a place in education in seventeenth-century Ceylon. This is all the more significant in view of the fact that till then there had been no drama in Ceylon whether as a form of literature, or as a medium of instruction or entertainment, barring some crude forms of folk drama. The dramatic performances of the Jesuits and other missionaries in the Portuguese period mark the beginnings of the drama in Ceylon.⁴⁶

IV

Jesuits had charge not only of the administration of the college, but also, for the most part, of the teaching itself. They were no doubt capable and enlightened teachers. As is well known, the Society provides a long, elaborate and comprehensive course of training for its members, so that, "without theorizing on pedagogy, the Jesuit system itself, merely as observed and realized, results in the formation of Professors."⁴⁷

As we have seen, there was at the start only one Jesuit to teach in the elementary school, and one to teach Latin. The superior himself gave religious instruction. But in course of time the revenues accruing to the college from grants and donations made it possible to add more personnel to the staff. In 1606 there were eight Jesuits in Ceylon of whom three were working in the college.⁴⁸ By 1610 the number had increased to twelve: five were

⁴⁶ Cf. article on "Pioneers of the Drama in Ceylon," *supra*, pp. 28-35.

⁴⁷ T. Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

⁴⁸ Letter of Jeronimo Gomez, Dec. 29, 1606, *CALR*, II, 20.

attached to the college.⁴⁹ In 1622 there were twenty-two Jesuits, eleven of them in the college.⁵⁰

They seem to have been assisted by lay masters. Although there is no direct mention of the recruitment of lay teachers, we learn from a reference to the dismissal of a teacher that lay masters had been employed. It appears that when the Jesuit Provincial paid a visit to the college in 1622 he "removed from the college a teacher who seemed too fond of some students, and put a Father in his place."⁵¹

With the increase of personnel came also new and larger buildings.⁵² A new church, "an elegant and commodious edifice," was constructed and solemnly opened on February 2nd, 1604.⁵³ In 1613 the residential building was enlarged: "Our house was rendered more commodious, and a new wing added, connecting it with the college for our convenience."⁵⁴ The building of a larger and more beautiful church was later undertaken, thanks especially to the generosity of the widow Mercia Roiz. The Rector of the college writes about it in a letter of 1622: "It is built in Corinthian style and is well proportioned and handsome. The façade is magnificent, and if it is not the best, it will certainly be the second best in the whole of India."⁵⁵ Ten years later a school chapel was built for the benefit of the Sodality: "Near the classrooms of the college we have built a chapel dedicated to the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, to promote piety and devotion among the sodalists of the Blessed Virgin."⁵⁶

The majority of the pupils of the college were children of Portuguese residents. Only once is the number of students mentioned. According to this information, there were about 150

⁴⁹ Letter of Franc Cagnola, Dec. 9, 1610, *ibid.*, II, 80.

⁵⁰ Letter of Antonio Rubino, Nov. 10, 1622, *ibid.*, III, 30.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, III, 31.

⁵² The site of the college was somewhere near the spot where the Khan Clock Tower stands today. Cf. Ribeiro, p. 128.

⁵³ Letter of Petrus Eulitius, Oct. 15, 1605, *CALR*, II, 20.

⁵⁴ Letter of Emmanuel Barradas, Dec. 1613, *ibid.*, II, 85.

⁵⁵ Letter of Antonio Rubino, Nov. 10, 1622, *ibid.*, III, 31.

⁵⁶ Letter of Cyprianus a Costa, 1633, *ibid.*, III, 35.

children.⁵⁷ The only students of whom any mention is made are the sons of certain Sinhalese princes and chieftains. According to a report of 1606, "Many persons were baptized, among them four young princes, sons of petty kings. One was the son of the King of the Seven Corlas. The three others were brothers, sons of the King of Uva. They are all attending the school of the Fathers."⁵⁸ Another report, of 1610, says: "The son of a chieftain was baptized, the general himself⁵⁹ being sponsor. He is now attending our college in Colombo."⁶⁰

It is mentioned also that an adult Sinhalese, no other than the celebrated Sinhalese poet Alagiyavanna, learnt Latin and the Christian faith from the college Fathers. We are told that he studied the New Testament "with so much attention and ardour that in less than six months there was not a passage which he could not recite, for he had acquired Latin very thoroughly."⁶¹ He became a Christian and took service under the Portuguese. As a Christian he composed the *Kustantīnu Haṭana*.⁶²

V

The townsmen of Colombo were greatly pleased with the educational work of the college. According to one report, the people were "extremely grateful" to the Jesuits for "providing their children with a sound education . . . a benefit which they hitherto lacked."⁶³ Another report says: "They [the Jesuits] labour successfully in educating and training the young, and the people of Colombo fully acknowledge this and often thank us, for they see the great progress made by their children in virtue and knowledge within the last six or seven years, viz., since our arrival here."⁶⁴

⁵⁷ Letter of Antonio Rubino, Nov. 8, 1620, *ibid.*, III, 23.

⁵⁸ Letter of Jeronimo Gomez, Dec. 29, 1606, *ibid.*, II, 20.

⁵⁹ Jeronimo de Azevedo.

⁶⁰ Letter of Franc Cagnola, Dec. 9, 1610, *CALR*, II, 80.

⁶¹ Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels in India*, tr. from the French by V. Ball, 2nd ed. W. Crooke (2 vols., London, 1925), vol. ii, pp. 148-149.

⁶² Cf. article on "The First Christian Poem in Sinhalese," pp. 17-27.

⁶³ Letter of Christopher Joam, Dec. 1, 1609, *CALR*, II, 22

⁶⁴ Letter of Franc Cagnola, Dec. 9, 1610, *ibid.*, II, 80.

The people showed their appreciation by readily contributing towards the maintenance of the college. Especially in times of need, as when in 1619 the State grants were withdrawn for a time,⁶⁵ the residents of Colombo came to the rescue of the Jesuits and supported them generously. "Knowing that we were unable to remain in Ceylon for want of funds," wrote one Jesuit, "they offered to give maintenance sufficient for the Fathers needed in the island. Nor did this end in words, for, when our Fathers were obliged by poverty to go a-begging from door to door, they collected more than 500 *pardaos*."⁶⁶ He adds that the withdrawal of grants only served to make the Jesuits "see more clearly the great esteem which the people of this city entertain towards the Society."⁶⁷

Apart from what the Jesuit records have to say about the success of their work, we have the testimony of Philip Baldaeus, the Dutch Calvinist minister who was a missionary in Jaffna after the Catholic missionaries had been banished from the country. He says that the Jesuits were "excelling in zeal and good disposition and in their morals, fitted to instruct the youth, as well as to attract the older ones and surpassing the Franciscan and other orders." He adds: "I must confess that I approved of all their maxims and followed their footsteps in my reorganisation of all the schools and churches of *Manaar* and *Jafnapatan*."⁶⁸

There were no doubt other educational institutions in Ceylon, established by the Franciscans, who were already in the country when the Jesuits arrived, and by the Dominicans and Augustinians, who came after them. But from the fact that the Jesuits regarded education as a special aim of the Society and prepared themselves for it by long training, and from the tone of contemporary references to their educational work in Ceylon, it might be concluded that their college in Colombo was the foremost educa-

⁶⁵ Letter of Antonio Rubino, Nov. 8, 1620, *ibid.*, III, 23, 24; letter of Andre Palmeyro, Dec. 20, 1620, *ibid.*, III, 26; letter of Valentine Pinheyro, Dec. 20, 1620, *ibid.*, III, 27.

⁶⁶ Letter of Valentine Pinheyro, Dec. 20, 1620, *ibid.*, III, 27.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Baldaeus, p. 290.

tional institution of the Portuguese period, an institution which, with the schools of the other orders, provided Ceylon students, for the first time in the Island's history, access to Western learning, and to the benefits of Western methods of education. Its short life of just half a century, however, came to an end with the capture of Colombo by the Dutch in 1656 and the consequent expulsion of all Catholic missionaries from the Island.

10. The Shrine of Livramento

Nearly a century and a half before Lourdes, and two centuries before Fatima, a voluminous work in Portuguese on the history of Marian shrines throughout the world was published in Lisbon. It is known as the *Santuário Mariano*, and was compiled by the Augustinian, Agostinho de Santa Maria.¹

In its eighth volume² the author speaks of Marian shrines in Asia and Africa. One of the Ceylon shrines of which he gives an account is the *ermida* of Our Lady of Deliverance (*Nossa Senhora do Livramento*³), at Nārāhēṇṇiṭa, near Colombo, which was

¹ He wrote also a history of the Augustinian Convent of St. Monica in Goa where two princesses from Jaffna became nuns. Cf. *supra*, p. 42, note 9.

² Lisbon, 1720. The full title of the volume is: *Santuário Mariano, e Historia das Imagens milagrosas de Nossa Senhora, e das milagrosamente aparecidas, em a India Oriental, e mais Conquistas de Portugal, Asia Insular, Africa, e Ilhas Felippinas. Em graça dos Pregadores, e mais devotos da mesma soberana Senhora.*

³ *Ermida*, in Portuguese, is a church or chapel in a secluded spot. In the translations from the Portuguese, which follow, I have retained the word *ermida*, as there is no word in English corresponding to it. An *ermida* is not really a 'hermitage', the Portuguese word for the latter being *eremiterio*.

The term 'Livramento' has been variously translated, as 'delivery', 'release' and 'deliverance.' The Portuguese term for 'delivery', in the sense of childbirth, is *parto*. There was in Ceylon in the time of the Portuguese a church of *Nossa Senhora do Parto* (Our Lady of Delivery) at Manipay, in Jaffna (Cf. Queyroz, p. 695). *Livramento*, which has a wider connotation than *parto*, should be rendered as 'release' or 'deliverance'. That the term is to be taken in this sense is corroborated by the tradition relating to the origin of the shrine. Also cf. *infra*, note 19.

a popular place of pilgrimage in Portuguese Ceylon. The following is what the book says of the shrine:

Our Religious, the Hermits [of St. Augustine], had a monastery in Ceylon, and thirteen churches in which they administered the Sacraments like the parish clergy; and they had also under their charge an *ermida* in which was a miraculous image of the Mother of God, which was much sought after and greatly venerated under the title of Our Lady of Deliverance [*Nossa Senhora do Livramento*]. The *ermida* stood in a farm land, belonging to the same Order, in a locality known as Marapety,⁴ about half a league from Colombo. This *ermida* and sanctuary of Our Lady was a place of great devotion, and drew a large crowd of pilgrims, and never was that Residence without pilgrims. Many came there from distant places, as all in their afflictions and infirmities had recourse to its health-giving well, and all, Christians as well as non-Christians, went away healed and restored to health Afterwards the Hollanders entered Ceylon, in the year 1655,⁵ and laid siege to the fort and city of Colombo, and as all [the Portuguese] were evil-doers, Divine Justice, offended by them, did not wish that the city should come out victorious, and so the enemies entered and took the fort and city of Colombo on 12th May, after a siege of eight months, during which they [the Portuguese] performed great feats of valour, but Divine Justice had been so outraged that all that was of no avail; and as the reinforcements they had awaited did not arrive, they were overpowered. In the city the Hollanders committed such crimes and cruelties as cannot be described, and the unfortunate residents suffered a great deal. They destroyed the monasteries and robbed them of all their possessions. The Religious in order to save their lives and not become slaves of the heretics, withdrew [from the Island] and saved the

⁴ In other documents, which speak of the shrine, the place is referred to as 'Narapeti' (Nārāhēnpiṭa). The 'M' in the present text is evidently an error.

⁵ Actually the Dutch had been in Ceylon since 1638, when Batticaloa was captured by them. In October 1655 they laid siege to Colombo. The city surrendered only in May the following year.

relics and images⁶ which they were able to hide in that great catastrophe and affliction. The Religious who had charge of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Deliverance brought its image with them and managed to save it from that grave peril, for it was for them a very great treasure; and they brought it secretly to Goa, where it is now much venerated. They placed it in a chapel in the cloister of the monastery of Our Lady of Grace. This most holy image is a carved one, and a little over three spans in height, and has the Divine Child in its arms. Its feast is celebrated on the Sunday within the Octave of the Assumption of Our Lady. The feast is very solemn, as it is a feast celebrated by the Provincials,⁷ and they attend to its cult and veneration with great care and zeal, and in the same chapel recite the Litany every night and sing it on Saturdays.⁸

The Augustinian monastery in Goa, where the image was received, was first built in 1572. In 1597, when an Augustinian, the celebrated Aleixo de Menezes, was Archbishop of Goa, the building of a new monastery on a grand scale was undertaken. Pyrard de Laval who was in Goa in 1608 says: "Building goes on continually at this convent, the archbishop being of this Order."⁹ The monastery was dedicated to Our Lady of Grace (*Nossa Senhora da Graça*), patroness of the Order. It became the headquarters of the Indian Province of the Augustinians, and its head, the Provincial, resided there. Attached to it was a novitiate and a school. Its group of buildings "all standing on a splendid site on the hill of the Rozary, formed perhaps the finest group of buildings in Goa . . . It had fine galleries, halls, and cloisters, a vast number of dormitories, and a good library; all travellers have testified to its splendour."¹⁰

⁶ By the terms of capitulation the missionaries were permitted to take with them the images they wished to remove. Cf. Queyroz, p. 983; Ribeiro, p. 378; Baldaeus, pp. 238, 242.

⁷ 'Provincial' is the head of a 'Province', which is a territorial division of a religious Order or Society.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, liv. I, pp. 161-163.

⁹ *The Voyage of François Pyrard of Laval*, translated from the third French edition of 1619 and edited by A. Gray and H. C. P. Bell (2 vols., London, 1887-1890), vol. ii, p. 58.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 57, note 2.

The *Santuário Mariano*, at the end of the chapter from which we have quoted,¹¹ refers to a chronicle by Fr. Faustino da Graça which contained an account of the shrine of Our Lady of Deliverance in Ceylon. The author of the *Santuário Mariano* had obviously consulted this work in writing about the shrine and its image. The work was not known in Ceylon till the present writer came across the manuscript, in 1955, in the public library at Evora.¹² It is entitled: *Campos de Ermo dos Filhos de Santo Augustinho de Congregação da Índia Oriental, plantado, regado, e brotado* (The desert lands planted, watered and harvested by the Congregation of the Sons of St. Augustine in the East Indies).

Agostinho de Santa Maria compiled his *Santuário Mariano* in Portugal, with information drawn from books, manuscripts and other sources available to him there. Faustino da Graça, on the other hand, wrote his *Campos de Ermo* in Goa, with more direct and largely personal information. We learn from a later work¹³ that he was born and bred in Goa, and, as an Augustinian, held various posts in the Order in Goa itself. He was finally confessor to the Convent of St. Monica in Goa, and died in 1744 in the very monastery, *Nossa Senhora da Graça*, where the image brought from Ceylon was being venerated. Faustino da Graça was therefore writing about the image from firsthand information.

His book, *Campos de Ermo*, must have been compiled in or before 1713, as the approbation of his superior bears the date 12th December 1713. In this work he tells us briefly about the twelve parishes the Augustinians had in Ceylon. He gives us the names of the priests who established them, and the number of adult Christians in each. He tells us also that in the vicinity of Colombo, at Narapeti, was a shrine of Our Lady of Deliverance. The following is the information he gives us about the shrine:

The *ermida* of Narapeti was dedicated to Our Lady of Deliverance [*Nossa Senhora do Livramento*]. It was a place of great devotion and pilgrimage for both natives and foreigners. The image of Our Lady was miraculous, and never

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, liv. I, p. 163.

¹² Cod. CXVI/1-13.

¹³ *Manual*, pp. 572-573. Cf. also Diogo Barbosa Machado, *Biblioteca Lusitana* (2nd ed., 4 vols., Lisbon, 1930-1935), vol. ii, p. 2.

was the *ermida* without pilgrims. After the loss of the Island of Ceylon, the said Image was taken to Goa, and is now kept in a chapel in the monastery of Our Lady of Grace at Goa, and every year the Provincials celebrate its feast.¹⁴

In another part of the work the author again refers to the shrine and gives us this detail about its image: "This Image is three spans in height and holds the Child Jesus in its arms."¹⁵

In Queyroz, too, there are references to the shrine. He gives a list of churches in the Kingdom of Kōṭṭē¹⁶ and adds: "All the Christians of these 55 churches were converted and baptized by the Friars of St. Francis."¹⁷ The Franciscans came to Ceylon in 1543, the Jesuits in 1602, the Dominicans in 1605, and the Augustinians in 1606.¹⁸ The Franciscans were thus ahead of the other orders by over half a century. There is no doubt that they were the founders of most of the churches in Queyroz's list. But there is evidence that other orders had charge of some of the churches mentioned by him. One such was the shrine of Livramento. According to Queyroz: "Half a league to the South of Colombo [stood the Church] of Our Lady of Delivery¹⁹ and within gun shot to the East of it was in former times the City of Cota."²⁰ There is no doubt that Queyroz was here referring to the Augustinian church of *Nossa Senhora do Livramento*.

In another place he speaks of a hermitage on the plain of Mapane.²¹ "The Religious of St. Augustine," he says, "erected in Ceylon four parishes²² and a hermitage on the plain of

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, f. 185.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 270.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, pp. 714-719.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 719.

¹⁸ There were no Capuchins in Ceylon although some authors speak of them. Cf. *supra*, p. 45, note 3.

¹⁹ Queyroz here uses the word *parto* instead of *livramento*. The latter term is the one used in all the Augustinian records. Also cf. note 1 in Queyroz (translation), p. 715, which connects with this church the name of the locality — Livramento.

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 715.

²¹ The plain of Mapane, as mentioned in Portuguese records, extended southwards from the outskirts of the city of Colombo.

²² We know, however, from the records of the Augustinians that they had more than four parishes: they actually had twelve.

Mapane.”²³ What was Queyroz referring to as the *ermida* on the plain of Mapane? Fr. S. G. Perera explains in a footnote that “the Anglican Church of Milagiriya, Wellawatta, now stands on the site and commemorates the name, Milagiriya being a corruption of Milagres (Our Lady of) Miracles.”²⁴ But there is no mention anywhere in Augustinian records of a church of Our Lady of Miracles. In the vicinity of Colombo the Augustinians had only one church — that of Our Lady of Deliverance. But it is referred to in the records as an *ermida*. It can hardly be doubted, therefore, that the “hermitage on the plain of Mapane” was none other than the *ermida* of *Nossa Senhora do Livramento*, which of course was popularly regarded as a *miraculous* shrine.

This leads us to the question as to where exactly the *ermida* was located. Both Agostinho de Santa Maria and Queyroz tell us that it was at a distance of half a league from the city of Colombo. According to Queyroz, it was to the south of the city, and “within gun shot to the East of it” was the former city of Kōṭṭē. We learn from Faustino da Graça and Manoel da Ave Maria that the locality where the shrine stood was called Narapeti — evidently a Portuguese rendering of Nārāhēnpiṭa. Even now there is at Nārāhēnpiṭa a locality known as Livramento. The shrine must have been there and given its name to the place. Agostinho de Santa Maria, we have seen, speaks of a well at the shrine where people flocked to obtain cures. The practice continued into the Dutch period, and pious folk visited the site regardless of the proscriptions of the Dutch. An Oratorian, Manoel de Miranda, writing from Ceylon in 1707, says that Livramento was “a place outside the city where formerly was a Church of Our Lady of Release (Nossa Senhora do Livramento), but now only a ruined wall, but many people white and black and even non-Christian Sinhalese visit it with great devotion and each one according to his belief receives favours from God, and the sick drink of the water of the well, which is by the side of the church; and all the orders and penalties which the Company had published against those who go

²³ *Op. cit.*, p. 720. The term used by Queyroz, in the Portuguese text, is actually *ermida*, which Fr. S. G. Perera has rendered as ‘hermitage’. For the correct meaning of *ermida*, cf. *supra*, note 3.

²⁴ Queyroz, pp. 720.

thither did not succeed in doing away with the devotion of the people."²⁵ Moreover, Livramento seems to have been a place where, during this period, the Catholics of Colombo secretly met the priests for their spiritual ministrations.²⁶

The pious belief in the possibility of cures by the use of the water at the old shrine persisted down to the British period. There is a reference to it in Cordiner's book on Ceylon, published in 1807. He first gives a description of the well as he found it: "There is a very curious well, said to have been dug whilst the Portuguese possessed the coasts of the island. The perpendicular descent into the well is of a square form, cut out of solid rock, to the depth of thirty feet; after which the well is contracted into a circular form, and is at the top of the water surrounded by sand. A subterraneous slanting passage, with steps hollowed out of the rock, leads down to this place, where a person can taste the water by taking it up with his hand. The top of the well is inaccessible, and not discoverable on account of thickets of shrubs which hang over it."²⁷ He then speaks of its water: "The water is of a superior quality; and is celebrated, together with the soil, which surrounds it, for the possession of many virtues. Both are often carried to Colombo to gratify the wild fancies," so it seemed to Cordiner, "of credulous superstition."²⁸

Interest in this water seems to have survived for another century or so. Fr. Charles Collin, writing in 1892, has this to say of the shrine and its well: "There [at Nārāhēnpīṭa], lost among infidels, is a group of Catholic families, what remains of a large Christian community of former days, which as a result of persecution by the Dutch and the absence of missionaries had been gradually absorbed by the Buddhist population. There still remain, very near to that place, some vestiges of a church and a well held in great veneration by the Catholics of Colombo. The place is called *Livermente*, a corruption of the Portuguese word

²⁵ *OMC*, p. 61.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ J. Cordiner, *A Description of Ceylon* (2 vols., London, 1807), vol. i, p. 56.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

'Livramento', which indicates that the ancient Church was dedicated to Our Lady of Deliverance."²⁹

According to Augustinian records, the shrine of Our Lady of Deliverance was at Nārāhēṇpiṭa. Now, at Nārāhēṇpiṭa is a locality known as Livramento. The name obviously comes from the shrine.³⁰ In the present Livramento cemetery is an old well, now partly filled up, which seems to be the one described by Cordiner and referred to by Fr. Collin. The indications are that this was the well of the shrine. If so, it was here that the church of Our Lady of Deliverance stood in the time of the Portuguese. To this spot people from far and near came on pilgrimage. Here they came to obtain relief in their bodily and spiritual ills by using with faith in *Nossa Senhora do Livramento* the water of the sanctuary well.

We have seen that the image of the shrine was taken to Goa when Colombo capitulated to the Dutch. But we are told of an image, discovered in Colombo sometime after the advent of the Dutch, which was thought to be the image of the shrine. The story of its discovery and what happened afterwards is given in the *Santuario Mariano* itself.³¹ It is briefly as follows:

Some years after the arrival of the Dutch, the Virgin appeared to a Sinhalese Christian in a dream, and instructed him to dig at a spot not far from where the shrine of Livramento had stood. The man found there a box containing some images, among which was one of Our Lady of Deliverance. It was carved in wood. On its head was a gold crown, and it had earrings studded with pearls. The man

²⁹ C. Collin, "Missions de Ceylan, Vicariat de Colombo: la lutte contre le Bouddhisme," *Missions de la Congregation des Oblats de Marie Immaculee*, no. 118 (June, 1892), pp. 148-149.

³⁰ A document drawn up fifty years after the expulsion of the Portuguese from the Island refers to the locality as 'Livramento', although the shrine itself had been abandoned and only a ruined wall was left. It was a deed dated January 4, 1707, by which the Dutch Governor Cornelis Johannes Simons had granted to Gabriel Schade a piece of land and a sowing field "situated at Livramento, north of Narahenpitti." Cf. R. G. Anthonisz, *Report on the Dutch Records in the Government Archives at Colombo* (Colombo, 1907) p. 20.

³¹ *Op. cit.*, tom. VIII, liv. I, pp. 335-343.

kept the image in his house and venerated it in secret.³² Some years after, he moved to Galle, where he continued to show reverence to the image, and even held an annual novena in its honour. Though denounced to the Dutch Commander of Galle, he escaped arrest. As he had no children, he entrusted the image, before his death, to his sister, who, however, being an impious woman, treated it irreverently, going to the extent of selling the crown and earrings for her own gain. Struck down by disease, she was brought to Colombo where she died a miserable death. The image was with her nephew who was advised in a dream to hand it over to a pious lady of Colombo, Constancia de Silva. The latter welcomed it into her house and venerated it with great devotion. Its presence in her house brought about the conversion of a youth, one of her trusted servants. He was instructed in the faith by Fr. Jacome Gonçalvez, to whom he was of great assistance afterwards.

Agostinho de Santa Maria tells us, in the *Santuario Mariano*, that he got this information about the image from annual reports sent by the Indian Oratorians to the Prefect of the Congregation of the Oratory in Lisbon, and that the story is attested to by Fr. Jacome Gonçalvez.³³ In fact, Fr. Gonçalvez had been a missionary in Ceylon for fifteen years, and was still there, when the *Santuario Mariano* was published in Lisbon. He came to Ceylon in 1705. The book was published in 1720.

This image round which the story had grown was certainly not the original image of the shrine, for we know from very reliable sources, noted above, that the image of the shrine was taken to Goa. How much of the story is fact we cannot say. It is not at all unlikely that images hidden or buried in the early days of Dutch rule came to light later on. It is a fact that when the Dutch came over and began to persecute the Catholics, "some pious folk," as Agostinho de Santa Maria has noted, "fearing that the sacred images might be profaned and desecrated by the heretics, hid some, and buried others."³⁴ The image that was unearthed,

³² Catholicism had by then been proscribed and churches confiscated.

³³ *Op. cit.*, tom. VIII, liv. I, p. 343.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 336-337.

if one of Our Lady of Deliverance, was presumably a replica of the image taken to Goa. It may be supposed that the image of the shrine, which was so popular and believed to be 'miraculous', had reproductions just as we have today replicas of the image of Our Lady of Madu.

In a reference to the church of Livramento Fr. S. G. Perera has noted: "There is a most romantic story attached to the image of that church, which was put into a well at the outbreak of the persecution, afterwards taken up and removed to Galle, whence it was brought back to Colombo, and is, I believe, now in St. Mary's, Bambalapitiya."³⁵ Fr. Perera seems to be referring to the story we have given above.³⁶ But it is certain that the image of Our Lady at St. Mary's Church, Bambalapiṭiya, is not the image of the shrine of Livramento. From the evidence we have cited it is clear that the image of the shrine was taken to Goa. There is no indication anywhere that it was ever brought back to Ceylon. It continued to be venerated in Goa, in the monastery of *Nossa Senhora da Graça*, till the early part of the nineteenth century. Fr. Manoel da Ave Maria, who has recorded in his *Manual Eremitico* the history of the Augustinians in the East up to 1817, says where he speaks of the monastery of *Nossa Senhora da Graça* of Goa:

In the monastery two miraculous images are venerated, each in its own chapel. One is that of Our Lady of Deliverance [*Nossa Senhora do Livramento*] which is in the chapel of the Very Reverend Provincials, who celebrate its feast every year with great pomp, and daily recite in the chapel the Litany of Our Lady and sing it every Saturday. This has been done since 1688. The said image belonged to the *ermida* of Narapeti, which we had in the Island of Ceylon, and was a place of great devotion and pilgrimage for both natives and foreigners; and after the loss of the said Island the image was brought to Goa and placed in the aforementioned chapel of the Provincials which is in the centre

³⁵ S. G. Perera, *Historical Sketches* (Jaffna, 1938), p. 97.

³⁶ He has given the story himself from "a Portuguese document of the 18th century now in the *Torre do Tombo* of Lisbon, Liv. 696." Cf. *Parish Bulletin* (St. Mary's Church, Bambalapiṭiya), X (no. 2, July 1938), pp. 31-32.

of the monastery of [Our Lady of] Grace, almost adjoining the quarters of the Provincials.³⁷

We are certain, then, that the image of the shrine of Livramento was in the monastery of *Nossa Senhora da Graça* till 1817. Some fifteen years later all religious orders in Portugal and in the colonies were suppressed. Moreover, Old Goa having been abandoned, its buildings began to decay and crumble. Today, the great monastery of *Nossa Senhora da Graça*, like so many other churches, convents and monasteries, lies in ruins. What happened to the image of Our Lady of Livramento we do not know. We know, in any case, that it has been an object of great veneration in the Augustinian Order in India. It was welcomed into the chief house of the Order and treasured by the Provincials themselves, who kept it in their own chapel, prayed before it every night, and celebrated its feast every year.

Tradition has preserved a story to explain the origin of the church of Livramento. It may be given here to complete our account of the shrine. It has been recorded for us by Fr. Charles Collin. He does not, however, give its source. It was traditionally believed, he says, that this was how the shrine began. The story, as given by him, is as follows:

A Portuguese family lived close to this spot [where the shrine came up later on]. The master of the house went every morning to the fort of Colombo, where he held a government post, and returned home in the evening after work. Every day towards noon a little servant girl brought him his lunch from home. It happened one day that the girl stumbled and rolled on the ground with the plates and dishes, and the master's lunch scattered on the sand. The poor little girl lifting herself up and seeing the wreckage burst into tears, not daring to go to the fort, nor return to her mistress. Seated on the trunk of a tree and burying her

³⁷ *Manual*, pp. 104-105. The other image was one of Our Lady of Snows. It was venerated in the chapel of the novitiate. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

The author, Fr. Manoel da Ave Maria, had personal knowledge of the image in which we are interested, as he was himself Provincial of the Order in India, from 3rd September 1816 to 21st October 1819. *Ibid.*, p. 803.

head in her hands she sobbed and implored the holy Virgin to deliver her from her misery. Having wept and prayed she lifted her eyes, and what did she see? The dishes were in perfect order and filled with dainty food. Falling on her knees she thanked the good Mother for having delivered her from her distress, and with the lunch basket on her head went her way towards the fort. Arrived there, she placed the dishes on her master's table. Having tasted them, he exclaimed: "Who prepared my lunch today?" The servant girl, a little frightened, replied: "My mistress, sir." Said the man: "It's impossible! My wife has never prepared meals like this." Returning home that evening, the husband questioned the wife: "Who prepared my lunch today?" "I did, as usual," the wife replied, surprised at the question. "No, my dear," said the husband, "howsoever clever you are, you cannot cook such dishes. All my life I have not tasted anything so delicious." Finally the little servant girl was called and questioned and pressed to answer, and it was a joy to learn that the holy Virgin herself had been responsible for the exquisite viands. It was in memory of this miracle, it is said, that the church was built and dedicated to *Our Lady of Deliverance*³⁸.

From the information we have, it is evident that the church of Livramento has been a popular shrine in Portuguese Ceylon, a centre of piety and pilgrimage frequented by the Catholics. Even after the shrine was abandoned, in the days of persecution, and the church reduced to ruins, attachment to the spot persisted. We learn from Fr. Collin that, as the spot was dear to the hearts of Catholics, Dr. Christopher Bonjean, the first Archbishop of Colombo, had the intention of acquiring some land at the old site and building a church there.³⁹ He says: "Mgr. Bonjean hopes to obtain from the government, by way of compensation for the ancient Church properties [confiscated by the Dutch],

³⁸ C. Collin, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-149.

³⁹ Under the Oratorians, in the British period, there was in Colombo, but not at the site of the ancient shrine, a church which is referred to in their documents as 'the church of Livramento.' The documents are in the Colombo Archdiocesan Archives. Cf. also the *Ceylon Catholic Messenger*, Dec. 10, 1872; Dec. 12, 1878.

two acres of the land here of which we have been deprived, where we hope to see the church of Our Lady of Deliverance rebuilt."⁴⁰ Unfortunately Dr. Bonjean's plans did not materialize. All that is left for us today is the name of *Livramento* and the ruined old well to indicate the site of the historic shrine.

⁴⁰ C. Collin, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

11. Affonso and Catherine: Confessors of the Faith

In the Portuguese period, conversions to Catholicism took place in considerable numbers particularly among the inhabitants of the western seaboard, in Mannar, and in the Jaffna peninsula. Catholics have since remained by far the largest body of Christians in the Island.

The allegation that the Portuguese made converts at the point of the sword is without historical foundation.¹ Yet, the tale is still being repeated. Not so long ago, a British author, Harry Williams, wrote in his book on Ceylon that the conversions made by the Portuguese were "the product of the bludgeon."² Evidently Williams was repeating what some British authors before him had written on the subject without careful investigation.³

Emerson Tennent, also a British author, has, however, a different story to tell. He was a Protestant and had no special sympa-

¹ Cf. S. G. Perera, "Portuguese Missionary Methods," in *Historical Sketches* (Jaffna, 1938), pp. 168-200. As a separate booklet, *Portuguese Missionary Methods: The Myth of Forced Conversions*, Colombo, 1936.

² H. Williams, *Ceylon, Pearl of the East* (London, 1951), p. 83.

³ Cf. for instance, R. Percival, *An Account of the Island of Ceylon* (London, 1803), p. 8; J. Cordiner, *A Description of Ceylon* (2 vols., London, 1807), vol. 1, p. 154.

thy for Catholics. But after studying the question of the alleged forced conversions by the Portuguese, he concludes: "There is no proof that compulsion was resorted to by them for the extension of their own faith."⁴

A modern authority on Portuguese history, C. R. Boxer, Camoens Professor of Portuguese in the University of London, has come to this conclusion on the question of forced conversions: "It can be said that the Portuguese did not seek to impose Christianity at the point of the sword, or to maintain it through the action of the Inquisition, for the Holy Office was never established in Ceylon. But they did seek to foster their religion through coercive and discriminatory legislation, although the enforcement thereof varied widely in time and place. The official policy was to favour and encourage converts; but the missionaries complained that sometimes even the "Moors" were better treated than their neophytes."⁵

It is no doubt true that some of those who became Christians under the Portuguese were not sincere converts. Some were attracted to Christianity by the favours and privileges granted to Christians. Some turned Christian with an eye to employment or preferment under the Portuguese. There were kings and princes who became Christians to obtain more easily the help of Portuguese arms against their enemies. Such conversions from worldly motives were admittedly not genuine. But it is quite a different thing to say that the conversions were "the product of the bludgeon," that people were forced to become Christians against their will.

After the expulsion of the Portuguese and the Catholic clergy by the Dutch, many of those who had become Christians as a matter of convenience or expediency, or for material gain, did, indeed, give up the Christian faith; but there were others, large numbers of them, who unswervingly adhered to their new religion, and that in the face of the persecution launched against them

⁴ J. E. Tennent, *Christianity in Ceylon* (London, 1850), p. 7. Cf. also p. 65.

⁵ C. R. Boxer, "Christians and Spices: Portuguese Missionary Methods in Ceylon, 1518-1658," *History Today*, VIII (1958), 353.

by the Dutch. Even when all their priests had been banished from the country, their religion proscribed, their churches and schools confiscated, and they were fined, imprisoned and exiled for being Catholics, they remained unshaken in their loyalty and attachment to their religion. "Notwithstanding every persecution," Tennent observes, the "Roman Catholic religion . . . was adhered to by large bodies of the natives, both Singhalese and Tamil, whom neither corruption nor coercion could induce to abjure it."⁶ This is proof enough that the conversions under the Portuguese were not "the product of the bludgeon."

After the European missionaries had been expelled by the Dutch, the Catholics were left without priests for nearly thirty years. They were, moreover forbidden under pain of death to harbour Catholic priests, or to have anything to do with them; and Dutch guards kept a close watch for any priests who tried to enter the country secretly. However, in 1687, an Indian priest of Goa, Joseph Vaz, hearing of the sad plight of Ceylon Catholics, came to the Island secretly and in disguise, and for nearly a decade laboured single-handed, walking the length and breadth of the country amidst countless perils and hardships, comforting the persecuted Catholics by his spiritual ministrations, and edifying by his holy life Catholics and non-Catholics alike.⁷ Later a small band of Indian priests from Goa — from the Congregation of the Oratory he had himself founded — came to his assistance. It was this heroic band of Indian missionaries that, braving all hardships and the ever-present danger of falling into the hands of the Dutch, attended to the spiritual needs of the Catholics of Ceylon.⁸

While Catholics in Dutch territory were being thus persecuted, there was religious freedom in the Kingdom of Kandy, under Sinhalese rulers. Indeed, Ceylon Catholics owe an immense debt of gratitude to the Kings of Kandy — Vimaladharmā Sūrya II

⁶ J. E. Tennent, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

⁷ Cf. S. G. Perera, *Life of the Venerable Father Joseph Vaz, Apostle of Ceylon*, 2nd edition, Colombo, 1953.

⁸ Cf. *The Oratorian Mission in Ceylon*, being historical documents relating to the life and labours of the Venerable Father Joseph Vaz, his companions and successors, translated from the original Portuguese and edited by Fr. S. G. Perera (Colombo, 1936-1938), herein referred to as *OMC*.

(1687-1706) and Śrī Vira Narendrasimha (1706-1739)—who, though themselves Buddhists, befriended the Catholics at a time when they were being persecuted by a Christian nation, and not only permitted them to practise their religion in peace, but treated their priests, the Oratorian Fathers, with the utmost courtesy, friendliness and respect, and sometimes even employed them in their service.

From the domains of the King of Kandy the Oratorian missionaries kept constantly venturing forth into Dutch territory, and secretly gathering the Catholics together under cover of darkness, with guards posted on the look-out for Dutch soldiers and spies, exercised their priestly ministry.

At this time there was a large Catholic community in Negombo.⁹ The leading Catholic of the place was the Mudaliyar, Affonso Pereira.¹⁰ His brother Lourenço,¹¹ and sister Maria¹² were also devout Catholics. As Mudaliyar, Affonso was the chief civil officer of the district, appointed to the post by the Dutch.¹³ Not only was he known to be a good Catholic, but a loyal servant of the Government as well. We see him faithfully discharge the duties assigned to him by the Government.¹⁴ However, it was no easy matter for him to be loyal to the Government and at the same time loyal to his religion, when that very religion had been proscribed by the Government, and its adherents were subjected to severe penalties. How these two loyalties could be reconciled was without doubt a very perplexing problem to him. Moreover, the fact that he was the accredited leader of the Catholic community in Negombo, to whom the people looked up for guidance and leadership at a time when they were being sorely tried by persecution, made things more difficult for him. In any case, he was a man who valued his faith more than anything else. He was of

⁹ Cf. *OMC*, pp. 68-69.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 72, 86, 87, 159.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 85.

¹³ Cf. François Valentyn, *Byzondere Zaken van Ceylon*, vol. V of *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien* (Amsterdam, 1726), p. 336.

¹⁴ Cf. *Diary of Gerrit de Heere*, translated from the Dutch by Sophia Anthonisz (Colombo, 1914), pp. 7, 16, 17; *OMC*, p. 70.

course prepared to render to Caesar the things that were Caesar's, but he could not yield to Caesar when his behests came into conflict with God's law. He was, in fact, prepared, for the sake of his faith, "to run the risk of losing his office and fortune and wife and children,"¹⁵ if that was necessary.

In all the troubles he had to face on account of his religion, his great support and mainstay was his wife, Catherine Bausem, a woman who practised the faith with even greater courage and daring than her husband — with the courage and daring, indeed, of a heroine. She was the daughter of "a leading European who had great influence in Nigumbo and was a native of the colony."¹⁶

From time to time the Oratorian Fathers came secretly to Negombo to minister to the Catholics there. They lodged in the houses of trustworthy Catholics.¹⁷ The penalty for harbouring a priest, or for failing to denounce one, was death, according to a *plakkaat*, or proclamation, of 1658.¹⁸ However, undismayed by the threat of punishment, of even the supreme penalty, the Mudaliyar and his wife received the Fathers in their own house and gave them every assistance to contact the other Catholics.¹⁹ Fr. Joseph Vaz himself doubtless knew the Mudaliyar and his family, and lodged with them when he visited Negombo — although there is no explicit mention of it in the records of the period.²⁰ An Oratorian who knew them well, Fr. Manoel de Miranda, has left us some valuable information about them.

Fr. Miranda came to Ceylon in 1705, in the company of Fr. Jacome Gonçalves and two other Oratorians.²¹ At the distribution of the mission field which took place on 8th September 1705, Fr. Vaz, the Superior of the Mission, assigned to Fr. Manoel de

¹⁵ *OMC*, p. 71.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 53, 63, 82, 85, 92, 96.

¹⁸ Cf. Dutch Records of the Ceylon Government Archives, 2438, ff. 46-48.

¹⁹ *OMC*, pp. 53, 63, 87.

²⁰ Cf. S. G. Perera, *Life of the Venerable Father Joseph Vaz, Apostle of Ceylon* (2nd edition, Colombo, 1953), pp. 110-111.

²¹ *OMC*, p. 44. After seven years in Ceylon, Fr. Miranda was called back to Goa to be Prefect of the Congregation of the Oratory. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

Miranda the western maritime districts down to Matara.²² — by far the most difficult part of the mission field by reason of the fact that the greater part of it lay in Dutch-occupied territory. Negombo came within this mission division. In two long and interesting letters²³ Fr. Miranda has recorded his missionary experiences in these parts of the country — his secret meetings with Catholics, his disguises, his hiding places, his hairbreadth escapes, etc.

Afonso Pereira being the chief Catholic of Negombo, Fr. Miranda came to know him and his wife very intimately. He refers to the Mudaliyar as “our benefactor,”²⁴ and speaks “of the kindness with which the Modeliar and his wife, Catherine Bauzem, treat the Fathers, and of their zeal and fervour of faith.”²⁵

He writes eulogistically of Catherine’s courage and of her knowledge of the faith: “She is so zealous for the Catholic religion that whenever a heretic spoke against the faith in her presence she convicted him and put him to shame without mincing words, but with good proof and vivacity and it can well be that her questions and arguments made even me to study the Scriptures deeper; and at her request I translated the greater part of the controversies of Beccano and Hosdachim and Belarmin into Portuguese as they were not found in Dutch, a language which she knew well. She was my catechist, and by her persuasions she brought whites and natives to the Catholic faith. It was for this reason that the Governor²⁶ and the predicantes²⁷ complained not so much of her husband as of her, saying that she not only brought those of their sect to the Catholic religion, but even publicly affronted the reformed religion and its communion.”²⁸

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-75, 80-104.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

²⁶ The Governor was the highest official of the Dutch in Ceylon. There was a Governor-General at Batavia where the Dutch East India Company had its headquarters.

²⁷ *Predicantes*, or *predikants*, were clergymen of the Dutch Reformed Church.

²⁸ *OMC*, p. 87.

We are told that she brought about the conversion of her own father who had been an apostate for thirty-three years: "He had been a Catholic, but some 33 years ago he became a pervert through the instigation of the heretics²⁹ and followed their errors and spoke against the use of images, etc. But a daughter of his, who was a good Catholic and married to the Modeliar of Nigumbo . . . succeeded in making him abandon his errors. When the Father [Manoel de Miranda] came to Nigumbo in disguise and was staying in the house of the daughter of this man, she narrated to him with many tears about her heretical father."³⁰ With the priest's help she succeeded in bringing him back to the Church. The same document adds that he "abjured his errors, made a protestation of Faith, received absolution" and "destroyed all heretical books."³¹

Her zeal for the faith sometimes overstepped the bounds of prudence, so that her husband had to warn her to be careful; but she would not listen to him. "One night," recounts Fr. Miranda, "her husband in my presence begged her to abstain from her sermons and not to touch matters of religion seeing the troubles and the persecution in which they were at the time, so as not to irritate the lords of the country. She replied: 'As your wife I endure all the troubles through which you have to pass, and I will do so till death, without the least deviation and whatever orders you give I will always carry out, but in this matter of the Faith give me no orders, nor have I to obey, for whether the Governor himself or the Predicantes speak to me about the Catholic faith I will not hesitate to reply with reasons.'"³² In fact, she was once accused before the Governor's council by a *predikant* "that she despised the communion they got in their Kirk, and that she said she could give in her house the kind of communion they got in the Kirk."³³ Fr. Miranda notes appreciatively: "I shall never be able to express fully how valiant these soldiers of Christ are, or the

²⁹ Adherents of the Dutch Reformed Church.

³⁰ *OMC*, p. 53.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, p. 87.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

zeal and fervour with which they act and have acted in the matter of the Faith and in arguing for the Catholic religion.”³⁴

The Dutch authorities were no doubt aware of the religious zeal of the Mudaliyar and of his wife. They knew of the encouragement and support they gave to their fellow Catholics in Negombo. But the Government left them alone. One reason for this was that the Mudaliyar was the leader of his people and greatly respected by them. In fact, they refused to have anyone else as their chief.³⁵ To punish the Mudaliyar solely because of his loyalty to his religion, when on the one hand he was loyal to the Government and on the other acceptable to the people, was doubtless thought to be an unwise step. Another reason was the high regard the king of Kandy, Vimaladharmā Sūrya II, had for him. The Mudaliyar's father, we are told, was once at the head of an army division when the Dutch clashed with Rājasimha of Kandy, and although in one of the encounters he had the chance of capturing the king, he let him escape, for which Rājasimha was ever grateful, and even asked his son, Vimaladharmā Sūrya, to remember with gratitude his gracious gesture.³⁶ The Dutch who found it expedient to be on good terms with the king did not wish to offend him by being harsh to one esteemed by him.

But the king died in 1706. His successor, Śrī Vira Narendrasimha, had no special regard for Affonso Pereira. The Dutch knew, therefore, that the king was not going to be offended by anything they did to him. Moreover, the following year a harsh and intolerant Governor, Hendrick Becker,³⁷ was appointed to Colombo. These changes foreboded ill to the Mudaliyar and the other leading Catholics of Negombo.

Not long afterwards a *predikant* named Petrus Sijnjeu came to Negombo to take stock of the progress of Catholicism in the town and in its environs, to inquire especially about the Catholic

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

³⁵ François Valentyn, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

³⁶ *OMC*, p. 72.

³⁷ Becker was appointed Governor in succession to Cornelis Johannes Simons, and remained in office till 1716 when he was succeeded by Isaac Augustyn Rumpf.

chapels (there were fourteen) and their catechists and whatever else besides for which the Mudaliyar could be held responsible. The Catholics, greatly perturbed, began to convert the chapels into godowns. Fr. Miranda was then at Dūnagaha. The Mudaliyar sent a message to him asking him to come at once to Negombo, as his presence would be an encouragement and solace to the frightened Catholics. In spite of the fact that the ensign of the Negombo fort, who was very hostile to the Mudaliyar, had posted his men in every direction and even searched houses, Fr. Miranda succeeded in getting into Negombo at night, and met the Mudaliyar at three o'clock in the morning. On a subsequent night, in Grand Street, he narrowly escaped arrest. The people were greatly encouraged by his presence among them. He did not stay long in Negombo, however, but having counseled and comforted the Catholics, quietly withdrew to Kammala.³⁸

Then came three captains to Negombo to inquire into matters of religion, especially with reference to the Mudaliyar. A similar inquiry had been held in Colombo shortly before. The first to be questioned was a 67-year-old prominent Catholic of Negombo, Simão da Cruz. He boldly admitted that he was a Catholic. So did the others who were called before the captains. But no information could be obtained from them regarding the activities of the Mudaliyar.³⁹

Although no action was taken against the Mudaliyar just then, it did not take long for the storm, which had been threatening for some time, to break.

Fr. Miranda was at Puttalam when the news reached him. A letter had come from Tuticorin, from Fr. Virgilius Mansi, of the Society of Jesus. Fr. Vaz had seen to it that it was speedily despatched to him. It contained "the very sad news that Dom Affonso Pereyra, Mudaliar of Nigumbo, and his brother, Dom Lourenco Pereira, with his wife and family had been banished from Colombo to Tuticorin."⁴⁰ It was not merely for being Catholics that they had been dealt with in this manner, but "as promo-

³⁸ *OMC*, pp. 63-65.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-70.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

ters of the Catholic faith and for receiving and lodging the Missionary Fathers."⁴¹

The banishment from home and country, and kith and kin, and the loss of office and means of livelihood were without doubt a very heavy blow to Affonso Pereira and his wife and children. However, in their exile they had a great consolation and reward, which was that in Tuticorin there was no religious persecution as in Ceylon and they could practise their religion in peace.⁴² "They were in Tuticorin and thankful to God, not only because it was the will of God, but also because they were very happy to find churches and priests which they had not in Ceylon. They took a house near the church, and by their Christianity and good proceeding they won great esteem not only from the aforesaid Father Manze but of all the religious of the Society of Jesus, and more especially of Dom Francisco Leines, Bishop of S. Thome, when he passed through that place on his way to his See, and administered to them the Sacrament of Confirmation, which the Christians of Ceylon never received, and which they now received with such joy of soul that they said they considered their troubles and loss of their office and goods and even their banishment well repaid by the joy they felt in receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation and the other services of our holy religion, which they saw in Tuticorin, and that it was only the desolation and the persecution suffered by the Christians of Ceylon that caused pain to their hearts."⁴³

The bishop and the priests were particularly impressed by Catherine Bausem. "She is so discreet and intelligent a lady," writes Fr. Miranda, "that the Bishop of S. Thome was highly pleased with her conversation, and so also are the Fathers of the Society of Jesus; and Father Simao Carvalho, a great missionary

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Although at this time Tuticorin too was under the Dutch, Catholics there were allowed a good measure of freedom in the practice of their religion. The *Statuten van Batavia* (the Batavian Code of the Dutch East India Company), of 1642, regarded the Dutch Reformed Church as the official religion of all the territories under the Company's administration, and did not permit the exercise of other religions. Cf. Dutch Records of the Ceylon Government Archives, 2387, ff. 4-5. In practice, however, the application of this 'statute' varied according to place, persons and circumstances.

⁴³ *OMC*, pp. 86-87.

of Madure, called her "Doctor", for she is fairly well read and very skilled in controversy."⁴⁴

Affonso Pereira now being reduced to penury from the position of a well-to-do Mudaliyar, his family began to feel keenly the pinch of poverty, so much so that his wife and daughter had to "make sweets and pickles for sale and sell their jewels to maintain themselves."⁴⁵

The exiles thus passed their days in Tuticorin; and, after a time, Affonso Pereira and his brother, finding themselves in great need, decided to send a petition to the Council of the Dutch Governor-General at Batavia, complaining of the injustice done to them and asking for redress. The petition was sent, but the outcome of it was that instead of being repatriated and reinstated in office, for which they had hoped, they were made prisoners once more and taken to the Dutch fort in Galle, their last state thus becoming worse than the first, for in Tuticorin they had at least the consolation of freely practising their religion. Fr. Miranda writes about it to his superior: "Though it was reported that there had come from Batavia orders in their favour, to reinstate them in their offices and property, yet the Governor who has absolute power which he has received from Holland at the instigation of the Predicantes—for one of them is his brother-in-law—being angry that these Catholics did not come to him with submission and humility, but wrote to Batavia, changed the orders that had come from there and sent word to the Captain of Tuticorin, who thereupon went with some soldiers and two officials suddenly and unexpectedly to the house of Dom Affonso and seized all his papers and every written thing, among which were the draft of the petition to Batavia and a letter of mine sent from Puttalam in reply to one of his."⁴⁶

The Captain of Tuticorin, who took the two brothers prisoner, decided to leave Affonso Pereira's wife and daughter in Tuticorin, as the Governor's order did not refer to them. But Catherine was determined to accompany her husband. She could very well have remained in Tuticorin, enjoying the religious free-

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

dom she found there; but she felt that it was her duty to be with her husband and even share his imprisonment. With her wonted courage she faced the Captain and told him that her husband had committed no offence to be treated in that manner, and that, if it were a crime to be a Catholic, she and her daughter were equally guilty. The Captain yielded to her request, and she, with her daughter, accompanied her husband, leaving the few things they had with Fr. Mansi.⁴⁷

Several other Negombians had been banished to Tuticorin. Of these, the catechist Antonio da Costa and Diogo d'Abreu died there; Simão da Cruz managed to escape, and returning to Ceylon, settled down in Kandyan territory; the sacristan Thome de Miranda and two others continued in exile.⁴⁸

In Galle, Afonso Pereira and his brother were put in prison in the Fort, while Catherine and her daughter took a house nearby. We are told that the Christians were much grieved at the news that they were going to be sent to the Cape of Good Hope. But actually they were not sent there. In fact, after a time the two brothers were released from gaol, but they were not allowed to leave the Fort. The Mudaliyar's daughter married a French physician of the place who also was a Catholic.⁴⁹

Fr. Miranda was anxious to see them return to Negombo. "Now they are free from imprisonment," he wrote to his superior, "and they live in that city all together, but are not permitted to return to their home in Nigumbo nor to Columbo nor to any other place, and their matter is at a standstill, and I expect it will be so as long as the present Governor [Hendrick Boecker] remains; after that let us hope that God will not fail to come to their assistance, for though in his hidden councils He has permitted the troubles which they had to endure, we trust that they will be restored to their former state. May God deign to do so for the welfare of this Christian community . . . I should like your Reverence also

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

to pray to God for these men and their family, that they be restored to their former places."⁵⁰

Galle, like Negombo, being part of Dutch territory, Catholics living there had no religious freedom. But the Mudaliyar and the other exiles did not fail to attend to their religious duties whenever they got the chance of secretly meeting a priest.

They got such a chance when a Portuguese visitor to Ceylon, Diogo de Pinho Teixeira, came to Galle with his chaplain. Teixeira, who had relinquished the post of captain-general of Macao, had arrived in Colombo with his wife, Senhora Isabel Henrique, and children, and decided to stay a few months in the Island before proceeding to Goa.⁵¹ He had obtained from the Dutch Governor in Colombo [Hendrick Becker] permission to have with him his chaplain, an Augustinian priest. After a few weeks in Colombo, and a week in Negombo, Teixeira and his family proceeded to Galle with their chaplain, and remained there some 13 or 14 days. The exiles from Negombo and the local Catholics were overjoyed to hear of the presence of a priest in their midst, and secretly approached him for Mass and the Sacraments. "They had Mass," Fr. Miranda tells us, "under the direction and instruction of our catechist, Dame Catherine Bausem, wife of Dom Affonso Pereira, who is still there with his brother, prisoners in the Fort for their faith and the Catholic religion. The wife and daughter increased the religion with the help of the said Father, and with great charity she helped and nursed the wife of Diogo de Pinho, who fell ill in that city, as she herself told me, stating that she was under great obligation to her."⁵²

The fact that Teixeira's wife was under obligation to Catherine for nursing her back to health gave Fr. Miranda some hope of being able to get the exiles set free. As the Dutch Governor and his wife had by now become very friendly with the Teixeira family, Fr. Miranda had thought that Teixeira and his wife were in a position to ask the Governor, as a favour, to let the exiles

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-94.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 94.

return to Negombo. But when he communicated with Affonso Pereira and his wife and told them of his plans to get them released, he found, to his surprise, that they thought differently about it: they preferred to suffer for their faith rather than obtain release as a favour. Fr. Miranda wrote of it to his superior: "They both replied by letter written by themselves, that they knew how much I wished their welfare, and how much I suffered with them, seeing that I was excogitating such attempts for their deliverance, for which they kissed my hands and feet, and begged me, however, not to trouble myself in the matter, that they preferred that none should speak to the Governor about them, and that as they were imprisoned and degraded for being Catholics, they had great confidence that God would come to their assistance and would see to their release when He pleased to do so."⁵³ Full of admiration for them Fr. Miranda adds: "Let your Reverence consider the firmness of our soldiers of Christ. I think one might say of them what Our Lord Himself said of another: *Non inveni tantam fidem in Israel*. I have not found so great faith in Israel."⁵⁴

Thereafter we find no mention of Catherine Bausem in Oratorian records, but we learn from a letter of Fr. Joseph de Menezes,⁵⁵ written in February 1713, that "the Mudeliar Dom Affonso Pereira and his brother were sent to Batavia on orders sent thence."⁵⁶ This meant that the Mudaliyar had to leave behind not only his beloved Negombo and Ceylon, but even his wife and children. There is no doubt that they faced the new situation with courage and fortitude. Fr. Menezes writes again the following year to say that the Catholics of Colombo who had been dismissed from office for aiding the Catholic priests had been reinstated in property and office, but not the Mudaliyar and his brother.⁵⁷ The last we hear of them is what Fr. Jacome Gon-

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Fr. Menezes succeeded Fr. Vaz, in 1711, as Superior of the Ceylon Oratorians and Vicar General, in Ceylon, of the Bishop of Cochin to whose diocese the Island was attached.

⁵⁶ *OMC*, p. 145.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 149

çalvez reports in a letter of October 1714, namely, that at the time of writing the two brothers were still in Batavia.⁵⁸

What ultimately became of them we do not know. Nor do we have any information as to the subsequent fate of Catherine Bausem. In any case it is clear that Catholics of the calibre of Affonso Pereira and the other Negombians who heroically suffered persecution could not have been "the product of the bludgeon."

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

12. Catholic Royalty in Ceylon

The earliest reliable source of information about Christianity in Ceylon is the *Christian Topography* composed in Greek in the sixth century by Cosmas of Alexandria, surnamed Indicopleustes. In this book Cosmas speaks of a community of Persian Christians in Ceylon who had a priest and a deacon and held religious services.¹ They were most probably Nestorians from Persia who had come to Ceylon presumably for trade. It is known that Nestorian Persians were engaged in trade in the East about this time, and carried their religion as far as China. The Persian Cross discovered in 1912 among the ruins at Anurādhapura is probably a vestige of their presence in Ceylon in the sixth century. These Christians do not seem to have attempted to convert the people of the country to their faith. Cosmas tells us that the inhabitants and their kings were non-Christians. In any case, when the Portuguese arrived in the sixteenth century, they did not find any Christians in the Island. We see, then, that Sinhalese royalty, converted to Buddhism in the third century B.C., had remained Buddhist down to the sixteenth.

I

At the time of Portugal's contact with Ceylon the Island was divided into three main kingdoms: the Tamil kingdom of Jaffna in the north, the kingdom of Kandy in the central highlands,

¹ Cf. edition by E. O. Winstedt (London, 1929), p. 322.

and the kingdom of Kōṭṭē in south-west Ceylon, which was the largest, the richest and the most powerful of all, and whose ruler was, at least nominally, emperor of Ceylon.

When Lourenço de Almeida landed in Colombo, the king of Kōṭṭē (and emperor of Ceylon) was Vira Parākramabāhu VIII. When he died, two of his sons, Dharma Parākramabāhu and Vijayabāhu, disputed the succession to Kōṭṭē. Dharma Parākramabāhu became king, and aware of the superior military strength of the European power with which the people of Ceylon had come into contact, appealed to the viceroy at Goa for military assistance against his brother, promising to give in return a site for a fort in Colombo. The viceroy, Lopo Soarez de Albergaria, came in 1518, concluded a treaty with Dharma Parākramabāhu, and erected a fort in Colombo. Thus it happened that, as a result of a domestic dispute in the Sinhalese royal family, the Portuguese, who at first wanted only a trading base in Ceylon, were drawn into Kōṭṭē's political arena and given the opportunity of strengthening their position in the Island.

We see again and again, in the succeeding reigns, one prince seeking the aid of the Portuguese to subdue or overthrow another, with the result that the Portuguese became more and more involved in local politics. It has become the fashion in this country to heap abuse on the Portuguese, blaming them for all the evils of the period. I should like to emphasize here that we have to blame Sinhalese royalty, too, for making the Portuguese a party to their domestic disputes and rivalries.

When Dharma Parākramabāhu died in 1519, his brother Vijayabāhu ascended the throne of Kōṭṭē. In 1521 Vijayabāhu was assassinated by his sons, when his attempt to assassinate them (to make way for a favourite to succeed him) had failed. But, having disposed of the father, the princes could not agree as to which of them should succeed him. This led to a division of the kingdom among the brothers. Bhuvanekabāhu became ruler of Kōṭṭē with the title of Emperor, and Māyādunnē became king of Sītāvaka.

This partitioning of the kingdom of Kōṭṭē must be looked upon as the root cause of most of the political troubles of the period. It complicated the dealings of the Portuguese with the

Sinhalese. It led to wars and revolts, to the shedding of much blood both Ceylonese and Portuguese, and the wanton destruction of towns and villages.

The one great ambition of Māyādunnē, throughout his long reign of sixty years, was to be king of Kōṭṭē and emperor of Ceylon. When Bhuvanekabāhu of Kōṭṭē saw what his brother's aims were, he found it necessary to make his position on the throne secure, and for that end turned to the Portuguese for help. When he allied himself with the Portuguese, the Muslims of Colombo, who detested the Portuguese, their rivals in trade, went over to Māyādunnē's side. When Portuguese troops were sent from Goa to defend Bhuvanekabāhu, Māyādunnē obtained Malabar forces from the Samorin of Calicut. Again and again troops were sent from Goa to help Bhuvanekabāhu to repel the attacks of Māyādunnē. The latter relentlessly pursued his struggle for supremacy till the end of his days. The political upheavals of the time, in which the Portuguese were involved, were in the main the outcome of the conflict which arose from the division of the kingdom.²

It was Bhuvanekabāhu's wish that his daughter's son Dharmapāla should succeed him. Dharmapāla was still a boy. Bhuvanekabāhu was almost certain that if the boy succeeded him, Māyādunnē, or his son Rājasimha, would oust him and capture the throne. He found it necessary, therefore, to make provision for his successor's safety and protection. He knew from which quarter he could obtain the best support. He had already obtained so many times the help of the Portuguese to keep his brother in check. He sought, therefore, to strengthen his ties with the Portuguese. He sent an embassy to Lisbon with a gold image of Dharmapāla and a crown, requesting the king of Portugal (John III) to crown the prince in effigy, and later protect him when he became king. The crowning was solemnly done in Lisbon on 12th March 1543. Bhuvanekabāhu had, moreover, learnt

² The *Rājāvaliya* lays the blame squarely on Bhuvanekabāhu for the unhappy consequences of his alliance with the Portuguese. (Cf. English translation by B. Guṇasēkara, Colombo, 1900, pp. 67-69). But Māyādunnē is perhaps more to blame, as it was mainly through fear of him that Bhuvanekabāhu was constrained to seek the assistance of the Portuguese.

from the Portuguese in Colombo that the kings of Portugal greatly desired the spread of the Catholic faith. To please the king, therefore, and win his support for himself and Dharmapāla, Bhuvanekabāhu asked for missionaries. John III, pleased with the Sinhalese king's request, directed that a band of Franciscans be sent to Ceylon, and issued instructions to the Portuguese authorities in India to recognize Dharmapāla as lawful heir to the throne of Kōṭṭē, and defend him against his enemies.

Four Franciscans, with Friar João de Villa de Conde as superior, arrived in Ceylon towards the end of 1543. Great was their disappointment to find that Bhuvanekabāhu was neither personally interested in Christianity, nor desirous that his subjects should become Christians. Bhuvanekabāhu feared that if he became a Christian or let the missionaries propagate Christianity in his kingdom, Māyādunnē would call him a traitor to the ancestral religion, and incite the Buddhists to rebel against him, as he actually did when Dharmapāla became a Christian. It was obviously to obtain Portuguese support more readily that Bhuvanekabāhu had feigned interest in Christianity.

However, he entrusted to Friar João the education of prince Dharmapāla, his would-be successor. Dharmapāla was thus the first Ceylonese prince to have a European tutor and receive an education in the Western manner and in Western sciences.

Bhuvanekabāhu had two sons by a junior queen who also had hopes of succeeding him. To placate them the king sought Portuguese aid to place them on the thrones of Kandy and Jaffna. The seventeen-year-old elder son, Jugo Baṇḍāra, was in the meantime planning to go to Goa and become a Christian hoping thereby to win for himself the sympathy of the Portuguese. Bhuvanekabāhu, hearing of it, got Jugo Baṇḍāra secretly murdered. Thereupon his younger son and a nephew escaped to Goa where they became Christians and were educated in the Jesuit College of St. Paul.³

On the death of Bhuvanekabāhu, young Dharmapāla was acclaimed king. The missionaries expected him to become a

³ Cf. *supra*, p. 64, note 12.

Christian forthwith, but he was reluctant and hesitant fearing, no doubt, that if he became a Christian at this juncture, it would strengthen Māyādunnē's claims to Kōṭṭē, and even deprive him of his throne, to the detriment of Christianity itself.

Soon after Dharmapāla became king, the viceroy Afonso de Noronha came to Kōṭṭē to seize the royal treasures. This treasure-hunt is one of the most sordid episodes in the history of the Portuguese in Ceylon.⁴ When Noronha left, he took away with him to Goa as hostage a four-year-old son of Bhuvanekabāhu. The prince, baptized as Don João, was brought up in the household of the viceroy and educated by the Jesuit Fathers. Later we find him in Portugal continuing his education under Franciscan tutelage in the monastery of St. Francis in Lisbon. Then for some years he was at the royal court, enjoying the honours and privileges of a Count. Afterwards he returned to Goa, with a pension from the king, married a Portuguese lady, and lived and died there.

About five years after Dharmapāla's accession to the throne, some 70,000 of the Carcas⁵ of his kingdom embraced Christianity. With so many of his subjects converted, on whose allegiance he could presumably count, the king himself decided to become a Christian. He was solemnly baptized by his teacher, Friar João. To celebrate the event there were public festivities, not only in Kōṭṭē, but in Goa and Lisbon as well. John III being dead by then and his successor Don Sebastião being still an infant, the regents, Queen Dona Catharina and Cardinal Henry, wrote to Dharmapāla in the king's name warmly congratulating him.

Thus occurred a change in the religion of the ancient royal line of Sinhalese kings which had remained Buddhist for nearly two thousand years. Dharmapāla was, to all appearances, a sincere convert. He was well versed in Christianity, having learnt it from his youth from the Franciscan superior himself.

⁴ Queyroz gives a lengthy account of the event and castigates Noronha for his rapacity and high-handedness. Cf. pp. 300-305.

⁵ Members of the Karāva community. The sincerity of their conversion was proved by later events. In spite of persecution under Dutch rule, they remained unshaken in their adherence to the Catholic faith.

A study of this community will be found in *The Karāva of Ceylon*, by M. D. Raghavan, Colombo, 1961.

Desirous of seeing his subjects converted to Christianity, Dharmapāla, urged no doubt by the missionaries themselves, took a step which, though legally justifiable, was impolitic in the extreme. He transferred to the Franciscans the lands which had been granted by him and his predecessors to Buddhist temples and monasteries. The missionaries took the revenues accruing from these lands for the building and maintenance of churches, schools and charitable institutions. This naturally infuriated the Buddhists, and they rebelled against the king. The revolt was harshly repressed by the Portuguese soldiery, with the result that many of the king's subjects went over to Māyādunnē.

This was Māyādunnē's opportunity. He came forward as the champion of the ancient religion of the land. He had the support of many of the Sinhalese, even in Kōṭṭē, who were disgusted with the Portuguese. They rallied round him. With his son Rājasimha, a prince as warlike and ambitious as his father, he led his forces against Kōṭṭē. The city itself was so badly battered by the repeated attacks of Māyādunnē, and once so near to surrender, that it was finally decided to abandon it altogether. Dharmapāla with his court moved to Colombo, which has since remained the metropolis of Ceylon.

Having lost the greater part of his kingdom to Māyādunnē, Dharmapāla was now king and emperor only in name. He lived on a pension granted by Portugal, but was mercilessly fleeced by the Portuguese officials themselves and reduced to a humiliating position. Feeling quite despondent, he wrote to the Pope, in 1574, begging him to intervene. Pope Gregory XIII replied promising to take the matter up with the king of Portugal. The Pope did write to the king, but nothing really came of it.⁶

It was doubtless his fidelity to the Christian faith that deprived Dharmapāla of his kingdom and reduced him to such straits. Despite his poverty and helplessness, and the indignities he had to suffer at the hands of the Portuguese, he remained steadfast in his adherence to Christianity. He had no children, and fearing that

⁶ For the text of the letters see the *Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register*, VI (1920), 27-32.

if after his death Māyādunnē or his son Rājasimpha should inherit his kingdom the Christians would be persecuted, he made a declaration on 12th August 1580 (which was later renewed) that on his death his kingdom should pass to the king of Portugal. On 27th May 1597 Dharmapāla died, and the king of Portugal⁷ became suzerain of Kōṭṭē.

II

When the Portuguese arrived in Ceylon, Vikramabāhu, a cousin of Bhuvanekabāhu of Kōṭṭē and Māyādunnē of Sitāvaka, was ruler of Kandy. When Māyādunnē grew powerful and became a threat to Kandy, as he was to Kōṭṭē, Vikramabāhu began to make overtures to the Portuguese to obtain their help for his protection and defence. To please the Portuguese, he let the Franciscans into his kingdom, and even received Baptism secretly one night and sent the news to Goa. It is doubtful if he ever had any faith in Christianity. One missionary, in fact, tartly remarked after his baptism that as he became a Christian by night, so he remained in spiritual darkness, adhering to his former beliefs.⁸

Vikramabāhu wanted to give the throne to his younger son by his second queen Gampola Devī. But his elder son, Karalliyaddē Baṇḍāra, born of the first queen, Hantane Devī, overthrew the father and became king. To defend himself against Māyādunnē, he obtained from the king of Kōṭṭē (Dharmapāla) a force of three hundred Portuguese. A Franciscan went with them to Kandy and won the king over to Christianity. Some of the nobles followed the king's example. The king's mother and sister were also baptized, as Dona Maria and Dona Margarida respectively. Dona Margarida subsequently married Don João (Dharmapāla) of Kōṭṭē.

Karalliyaddē appears to have been sincere in his profession of Christianity. With a Catholic king on the throne of Kandy, and

⁷ Portugal at this time being subject to Spain, the king of Portugal was Philip II of Spain, to whom was married Mary, Queen of England. It was he who sent the Armada against England in 1588. He died in 1598, the year after the Kingdom of Kōṭṭē passed to him.

⁸ Letter of Friar Antonio Padrão, June 7, 1546. Cf. *Ceylon and Portugal: 1539-1552*, by P. E. Pieris and M. A. H. Fitzler (Leipzig, 1927), p. 148.

full freedom for missionaries to preach Christianity in the kingdom, the future of the Church there seemed full of promise, but the king's reign came to an abrupt end when in 1582 Rājasimha of Sītāvaka took Kandy. Karalliyaddē fled, and not long after died of smallpox with his wife and sons, leaving a year-old daughter, Dona Catharina, and nineteen-year-old nephew, Yamasimha, to the care of the Portuguese. The little princess was taken to Mannar and brought up by a Portuguese lady, Catharina d'Abreu. Prince Yamasimha, baptized as Don Philip, was taken to Goa and educated there.

In 1592 Kandy revolted against Rājasimha and regained independence under the leadership of a Christian, Mudaliyar Don Francisco, a grandson of Gampola Devī. Yamasimha, nephew of the last Kandyan ruler Karalliyaddē, was acclaimed king. A Catholic once again sat on the throne of Kandy. But not for long. Yamasimha had as general Konappu Baṇḍāra — son of the chief Virasundara of Pērādeṇiya — who to save himself when his father was put to death by Rājasimha of Sītāvaka had fled to the Portuguese and even become a Christian taking the name of Don João of Austria, after the victor of the historic battle of Lepanto of about a decade before. Konappu Baṇḍāra was himself aiming at the throne of Kandy. King Yamasimha suddenly died under suspicious circumstances. His twelve-year-old son Don João was then acclaimed king. Again a Catholic succeeded to the throne of Kandy. But Konappu Baṇḍāra, having attacked and dispersed the Portuguese who were in Kandy, proclaimed himself king as Vimaladharmā Sūrya. He not only treated the Portuguese with contempt, but gave up the Christian faith as well.

The ex-king Don João escaped to the Portuguese. They took him to Mannar where he was looked after by the Franciscans. From Mannar he was brought to Colombo and educated in the Franciscan College of St. Anthony. From there he proceeded to Goa and continued his studies for fifteen years in the College of the Magi, and then went to Portugal where he completed his studies and was ordained a priest.

For the rest of his life he lived in a suburb of Lisbon called Telheiras, where he built for the Franciscans an oratory and a

monastery. He died in 1642 and was buried in the oratory. After the Revolution in Portugal the oratory fell into ruins and was abandoned. The tomb, too, was rifled by treasure-hunters. The church has now been restored and Mass is said in it on Sundays and feast days. It is being looked after by the Franciscans of a nearby monastery. A marble slab above the main entrance bears an inscription to the effect that it was built by "the Prince of Candea." By the side of the church stands the monastery building, now converted to flats. A portrait of Don João, preserved in the sacristy of the oratory and later removed to the *Biblioteca Nacional*, is no longer there.

Now, to go back to Kandy, Konappu Baṇḍāra who usurped the throne was ruling as Vimaladharmā Sūrya. The Portuguese were determined to dethrone him. Don João, the ex-king, was, as we have just seen, a priest in Portugal. So they brought from Mannar the thirteen-year-old princess Dona Catharina (daughter of Karalliyaddē Baṇḍāra), took her to Kandy, overthrew Vimaladharmā, and set her on the throne. But Vimaladharmā rallied his men and routed the Portuguese so successfully that of the Portuguese force of six hundred all but ninety-three were cut down. Forty of the survivors having been mutilated were sent back to Colombo, with only one eye for every four, to show Vimaladharmā's contempt for the Portuguese. Dona Catharina tried to flee, but was captured and brought back to Kandy, where she became wife to Vimaladharmā.

Dona Catharina, the last Catholic to sit on the throne of Kandy, is one of the most tragic figures in the history of Sinhalese royalty. As we have seen, she became an orphan when she was only a year old. She was brought up by foreigners. At thirteen she, a Catholic, had to become the wife of an apostate, who championed Buddhism. After his death, his brother Senarat, also a Buddhist, took her to wife. The climax of her miseries came when her son by Vimaladharmā, who was heir to the throne, was put to death by Senarat to make way for his own son by her. This was too much of a blow for the unfortunate queen. She took ill and died not long after. Her death brought to an end the Catholic succession to the throne of Kandy.

But, significantly enough, her successors, down to Śrī Vīra Narendrasimha (1706-1739), the last of the royal line of Sinhalese rulers,⁹ showed a remarkable partiality for Catholics. It was in the reign of Rājasimha, a son of Dona Catharina by Senarat, that the Portuguese were ousted by the Dutch; and when the Dutch began to persecute the Catholics of the low-country, Rājasimha welcomed them into his kingdom. His successors, Wimaladharmasūrya II (1687-1706) and Śrī Vīra Narendrasimha (1706-1739), are known to have treated with the utmost cordiality, respect and friendship the Indian Oratorians, headed by Father Vaz, who came from Goa to minister to the persecuted Catholics of Ceylon.

A brother of Rājasimha of Kandy, Vijayapāla, Prince of Mātālē, fled to Goa to escape Rājasimha. He became a Christian as Don Theodosio and lived and died there.

Now to turn to Sītāvaka, we have seen how its ruler Rājasimha took Kandy and lost it after ten years. When Konappu Baṇḍāra captured the throne, Rājasimha attempted to oust him, but failed miserably. Bitterly disappointed, he died in 1592. He had no son to succeed him. There were several aspiring to be king. Finally a boy, Nikapiṭiyē Baṇḍāra, the nearest kinsman to Rājasimha, was proclaimed king of Sītāvaka. But the young king's generals were quarrelling among themselves. The Portuguese taking advantage of this routed the forces of Sītāvaka and brought Nikapiṭiyē Baṇḍāra to Colombo. There he was educated in the College of St. Anthony. He became a Christian as Don Philip. He continued his studies in the College of the Magi in Goa, and later proceeded to Portugal, with the ex-king Don João of Kandy. He was sent to Coimbra for further study in the university. There he died in 1611, being the first Ceylonese to join a European university. He died in the Franciscan monastery of St. Francisco da Ponte, and was buried there. The monastery building still stands, but is no longer used for religious purposes.

⁹ Narendrasimha dying without issue was succeeded by his wife's brother, a Nāyakkār from South India. Thus arose the Nāyakkār dynasty to which belonged all the kings after Narendrasimha — Śrī Vijaya Rājasimha (1739-1747), Kīrtiśrī Rājasimha (1747-1780), Rājādhi Rājasimha (1780-1798) and Śrī Vikrama Rājasimha (1798-1815).

III

In Jaffna, Christian missionary work of any consequence became possible only after Hendarmāna Siṃha (Pararāja Śēkaran) became ruler of that kingdom. He favoured Christian missionary work. He gave the Franciscans some houses near his palace, where a church was built in honour of Our Lady of Victory.¹⁰ Queyroz tells us that he was inclined towards Christianity, and at his death-bed sent for a priest, but his nephew Śaṅgili prevented the priest from seeing him, with the result that he died without Baptism.¹¹

Hendarmāna Siṃha died in 1615, leaving his infant son as successor, and his brother Arsa Kēsari as regent. Arsa Kēsari, like the late king, remained on good terms with the Portuguese. But his nephew Śaṅgili slew him, made himself regent, and planned to drive the Portuguese out. The captain-general of Ceylon, Constantino de Sa de Noronha, learnt that Śaṅgili was negotiating with the Dutch. The general thereupon despatched an expedition to Jaffna, under Philip de Oliveyra, who marched to Nallūr, and captured Śaṅgili. Oliveyra was appointed governor and captain-major of Jaffna. Thus Jaffna also came under Portuguese rule.

Śaṅgili was sent to Goa, where he was tried by a court and sentenced to death. Visited in prison by the Franciscans, he and his wife became Christians, the Archbishop of Goa himself being godfather to both.

Jaffna having become a Portuguese possession, the ex-king, seven-year-old son of Hendarmāna Siṃha, was entrusted to the care of the Franciscans. He was brought to Colombo where he received instruction in Christianity in the College of St. Anthony and was baptized under the name of Don Constantino, the name of his godfather, the captain-general, about whom Alagiyavanna

¹⁰ In 1614 this church was moved to a site where the Jaffna fort now stands. There it became famous as the shrine of Our Lady of Miracles (Queyroz, pp. 666-685). The much venerated image of this church, the image of Our Lady of Miracles, is still preserved in the church of S. Pedro, Piedade, Old Goa.

¹¹ Queyroz, p. 462.

wrote his poem *Kustantīnu Haṭana*. Several other princes and princesses were baptized on the same occasion. Queyroz gives an account of their solemn baptism in Colombo on 18th June 1623.¹² The others of the royal house of Jaffna baptized with the prince were the queen mother, Dona Clara; two sisters of the prince, Dona Izabel and Dona Maria; the sister of the late king, Dona Maria; her husband, Don Diogo; and their three sons and daughter, named respectively Don Phelipe, Don Francisco, Don Bernardino and Dona Ines.

After his education in the College of St. Anthony in Colombo, Don Constantino proceeded to Goa where he continued his studies in the College of the Magi, entered the novitiate of the Franciscans, and became a member of the order as Friar Constantino de Cristo. He was thus the first Ceylonese to become a Franciscan. He lived an exemplary life, and was held in great esteem.¹³ He was appointed to several responsible posts in the order, and even became head of the College of the Magi in Goa.

His cousins, the princes Don Phelipe, Don Francisco and Don Bernardino, also received their education in the College of St. Anthony in Colombo and then went to Goa for further study at the College of the Magi. Prince Phelipe, we are told, became a priest.

Don Constantino's sisters, the princesses Dona Izabel and Dona Maria, also joined the religious life in the famous Augustinian convent of St. Monica in the city of Goa, being thus the first Ceylonese to become nuns. Dona Izabel died young.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 693.

¹³ Queyroz has this to say of him: "In that Holy Order he was much esteemed for his virtues and docility, and he held therein honourable posts till in our days he died leaving behind a holy remembrance." (p. 693). Another work, the *Vergel de Plantas e Flores da Provincia da Madre de Deus dos Capuchos Reformados*, by Friar Iacinto de Deus (Lisbon, 1690), also tells us (p. 17) that Friar Constantino lived a very exemplary life.

It seems to me that there is a confusion of names in Queyroz. What he says of Don Bernardino (the words we have quoted above) should really apply to Don Constantino. The *Vergel* tells us that it was Constantino who became a Franciscan and, being heir to the throne of Jaffna, bequeathed his kingdom to the king of Portugal. It does not say that either Bernardino or Francisco became a priest or a religious. Only their brother Phelipe is mentioned as having become a priest. *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

But her sister lived to an old age, and even became prioress of her convent.¹⁴

Such, in brief, is the story of Ceylon's Catholic royalty. It is clear that some of the Ceylonese kings and princes were drawn to Christianity from purely worldly motives. Some, after becoming Christians, apostatized, again for material advantages. Such persons were certainly not true Christians. Their conversion could not have been genuine. But we have also had converts who were, to all appearances, sincere in their acceptance of Christianity — converts such as Dharmapāla, Karalliyaddē, Yamasimha, Nikapiṭiyē, Constantino de Cristo, and Mary of the Visitation.

¹⁴ Cf. article on "The First Ceylonese Nuns," *supra*, pp. 40-43.

13. The Augustinians in Ceylon

I

It was in 1572 that the Hermits of St. Augustine (Augustinians)¹ came from Portugal to India to undertake missionary work. The approval of the king, Don Sebastian (1568-1578), having been obtained, the Augustinian Provincial of Portugal, Fr. Agostinho de Jesus² (de Castro³) despatched a band of twelve Augustinians (recalling the twelve Apostles of Christ) to found the new mission. They embarked from Lisbon on 18th March 1572 and reached Goa on 3rd September the same year. The viceroy in India at the time was Antonio de Noronha.⁴

After a few months' stay with the Franciscans by whom they were very cordially treated, the newly-arrived missionaries established themselves in a small monastery, which eventually became the headquarters of the Order in the East and remained so till the

¹ The Order of Augustinian Hermits was established about the middle of the thirteenth century by amalgamating a number of small congregations of hermits. It followed the 'Rule of St. Augustine,' which had been drawn up towards the end of the eleventh century, and was based on some letters and sermons on community life written by St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, in the fifth century.

² He later became archbishop of Braga. One of the twelve he sent to India, Fr. Jorge Queimado, subsequently returned to Portugal and became his confessor and eventually his coadjutor. He compiled a life of the archbishop (*Manual*, pp. 232-233).

³ His family name was de Castro. Throughout this article, the name of a religious before profession, if available, will be given in brackets immediately after the name in religion.

⁴ *Manual*, pp. 96-97.

suppression of religious orders in Portugal and in the colonies in the nineteenth century. The construction of a larger monastery, on the same site, was undertaken in 1597. The foundation stone was laid on 9th September, in honour of St. Nicholas of Tolentino,⁵ and the monastery dedicated to *Nossa Senhora da Graça* (Our Lady of Grace), patroness of the Order.⁶ The Archbishop-Primate, Aleixo de Menezes, presided at the ceremony. There was present also the viceroy, Francisco da Gama.⁷

In this monastery resided the Provincial of the Augustinians, and attached to it was the Indian novitiate of the Order. By reason of its being the headquarters of the Order in the East, the monastery of *da Graça* had close connections with the Augustinian mission in Ceylon. It was from this monastery that missionaries were appointed to Ceylon and their work was directed and supervised.

Aleixo de Menezes himself was an Augustinian. He became Archbishop of Goa and Primate of the East Indies in 1595. He held also the post of Governor of India from 1606 to 1609. A

⁵ An Augustinian saint (1245-1306). He was already a priest when moved by a sermon preached by an Augustinian friar, he himself joined the Order in which he lived a saintly life. As we shall see, two of the fourteen churches the Augustinians had in Ceylon — those of Horaça and Valivēriya — were dedicated to this saint. His feast is celebrated on 10th September.

⁶ Because of the special devotion the Augustinians had to Our Lady of Grace, *Nossa Senhora da Graça*, they came to be known as *Gracianos* (Cf. *supra*, p. 37, note 7).

The monastery of *da Graça* became one of the largest religious establishments in Portuguese India. The monastic building "was thought by some to be the finest and most stately edifice in the whole of Portuguese India, and from a distance a visitor might take it for one of the noblest palaces in the world. It had a magnificent staircase, and its cloisters and galleries were alike very lovely; its vast dormitory overlooked a spacious garden, always green, and beautified with the best trees that India produced . . . A British visitor, Dr. Claudius Buchanan, was a guest there at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the fabric was still intact, and he was so entranced by the library that he felt as if he were suddenly transported to one of the college libraries of Cambridge. The ruined façade of the conventual church and one tower survived until 1951, to testify to the magnificence of the buildings." (B. Penrose, *Goa, Rainha do Oriente: Goa, Queen of the East*, Lisbon, 1960, p. 81). Also cf. *supra*, p. 78.

⁷ *Manual*, pp. 103-104.

virtuous and zealous prelate, he built and endowed a large number of monasteries and other religious institutions. With his help the Augustinians opened new houses of the Order not only in Goa and its neighbourhood but also in other parts of India. He himself founded in Goa the Augustinian convent of St. Monica. It was when he was Archbishop of Goa that first the Jesuits, and later the Dominicans and Augustinians, arrived in Ceylon, the Jesuits in 1602, the Dominicans in 1605, and the Augustinians in 1606.

We know, however, that there have been some Augustinians in Ceylon before a regular mission of the Order was opened in 1606. Queyroz tells us that in 1544 "Father Friar Marcos de St. Guilhelme, a Hermit of St. Augustine, a Neapolitan by birth," arrived in Colombo, and that he was followed by other religious.⁸ He mentions also that in 1558 there were some Dominicans and Augustinians "already living in Colombo."⁹ He adds, however, that "as the Religious of St. Francis, were the first to open the gates of Ceylon to the Gospel, Our Lords, the Kings of Portugal, considering the great zeal wherewith they laboured there, ordained that they alone should build and administer Churches in Ceylon."¹⁰ But about half a century later, as it was found that the Franciscans could not by themselves cope with the work, other religious orders (Jesuits, Dominicans and Augustinians) were authorized to open missions in the Island.¹¹

The Augustinian Provincial in India who undertook the foundation of a monastery in Colombo, in 1606, was Fr. Domingos da Trindade. He was one of the most experienced members of the Order in the East. In 1596 he had founded the monastery at Bassein and become its first prior. Having held several other posts in the Order, he became Provincial on 30th April 1606. The monastery in Colombo is the only one he is known to have founded as Provincial. He did not remain in office for more than a year

⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 257.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 343.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 577.

and a half, for on 10th November 1607 he was appointed coadjutor bishop of Goa. When the archbishop, Aleixo de Menezes, returned to Portugal in 1610, he became administrator of the archbishopric, and held the post until his death, two years later, on 30th December 1612. He was buried in the monastery of *da Graça* in Goa.¹²

The priest he sent to Ceylon to establish a monastery there was Fr. Leonardo da Graça, a religious of great zeal and virtue. He had twice been master of novices at Goa. In 1599 he had founded the monastery of Hoogly in Bengal and become its prior. In 1602 the viceroy (Ayres de Saldanha) and the archbishop (Aleixo de Menezes) had sent him as ambassador to Socotra. On his return to Goa in 1605 he had again become master of novices. The following year the Provincial sent him to Ceylon to found the new monastery and mission. He became the first prior of the Colombo monastery. In November 1612 he returned to Goa to become master of novices for the fourth time, but was sent the same month to Ormuz as prior. In 1618 he became prior of Cochin. In 1623 he came to Ceylon again, this time as official visitor. He died in 1646 in the monastery of *da Graça* in Goa.¹³

II

In 1606, then, Fr. Leonardo da Graça was sent by the Provincial, Fr. Domingos da Trindade, to found a monastery in Colombo. He was accompanied by another Augustinian, Fr. Bartolomeo de Sampaio, who had been appointed his assistant. The captain-general in Ceylon at the time was Don Jeronimo de Azevedo. The Augustinians built in the fort of Colombo a small monastery, which became the headquarters of the Order in Ceylon. Its church was dedicated to St. Augustine.¹⁴ The monastery stood on an elevation near the spot where the present Fort Clock Tower stands.¹⁵ The southern bastion of the city closest to it came to be

¹² Simão da Graça, *Chronica da Ordem de Santo Agostinho na India*, MS, Torre de Tombo (Lisbon), 731, f. 145; *Manual*, pp. 245-246.

¹³ Simão da Graça, *op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*; *Manual*, pp. 242-243.

¹⁴ *Manual*, p. 211.

¹⁵ Cf. Ribeiro, p. 128.

known as the bastion of St. Augustine.¹⁶ Ribeiro records the curious belief that within the monastery walls "we had an extensive vaulted building where we kept one hundred and twenty large jars of gunpowder, which were miraculously preserved there without the necessity of being refilled."¹⁷

Fr. Leonardo da Graça, the first prior of Colombo, returned to Goa, as we have seen, in 1612. His assistant, Fr. Bartolomeo de Sampaio, also rose to the rank of prior of Colombo. In 1618 Fr. Agostinho da Graça became prior. During the latter's tenure of office the Augustinians extended their activities into the mission field. They opened three mission stations — those of Dūnagaha, Rañbukkana and Bentaça.¹⁸

Fr. Agostinho da Graça (Luis Velho) hailed from Lisbon. He had joined the Augustinians in 1604, at the age of 17. His ministry in Ceylon appears to have been his major work as a missionary. It is mentioned that, in addition to being prior of Colombo, he founded also the church at Horaça. On his return to Goa from Ceylon he was appointed master of novices (September 1627), a post he held till December 1628.¹⁹

The mission of *Dunaga* (Dūnagaha) was founded by Fr. Ignacio de Jesus, a Ceylon-born Augustinian, who became also its first vicar. To it belonged 3,000 Christians. In this mission, and in the others given below, the number of Christians mentioned does not include the children. The church of Dūnagaha was dedicated to *Nossa Senhora da Graça*. At the solemn baptism of the converts of the mission, the captain-general, Don Constantino de Sa de Noronha, was himself present.²⁰ Noronha was captain-general, the first time, from 1618 to 1620. The mission of Dūnagaha must have been established, therefore, during this period.²¹

¹⁶ Queyroz, p. 943.

¹⁷ Ribeiro, p. 128.

¹⁸ *Campos*, f. 180; *Manual*, pp. 212-213.

¹⁹ *Manual*, p. 380.

²⁰ *Campos*, f. 180; *Manual*, pp. 212, 344.

²¹ There is mention of a community of Christians at Dūnagaha in Dutch times. Cf. *OMC*, p. 63.

The mission of *Ramucana* (Raṁbukkana) also had about 3,000 Christians.²² Its founder and first vicar was Fr. Manoel da Assumpção (Borges da Costa), who later (1628) became prior of Colombo. The church of Raṁbukkana also was dedicated to *Nossa Senhora da Graça*.²³ Queyroz, too, speaks of this church as one belonging to the Augustinians.²⁴

In the mission of *Bentota* (Bentoṭa) were 3,000 Christians. It was founded by Fr. Jorge de S. Agostinho. Born in India, he had joined the Augustinians in 1589. He died in Goa in 1651. The church at Bentoṭa was dedicated to *Nossa Senhora da Assumpção* (Our Lady of the Assumption).²⁵

These three missions of Dūnagaha, Raṁbukkana and Bentoṭa were first dependent on the monastery in Colombo for financial support. Six years later, however, on the orders of the king,²⁶ the Augustinians were provided with subsidies for the maintenance of the three missions already established and the others they were going to open in the Four-Kōralēs,²⁷ which was the territory assigned to them when the Ceylon mission was redistributed among the four religious orders (Franciscans, Jesuits, Dominicans and Augustinians).²⁸

On 1st December 1628 Fr. Manoel da Assumpção, who was already a missionary in Ceylon and had founded, as we have seen, the mission of Raṁbukkana, became prior of Colombo. He had joined the Order in 1613. His first appointment seems to have been to the Ceylon mission. He left Ceylon in 1630 to be superior of the monastery of *da Graça* in Goa. He became prior of Muscat in 1632 and of *da Graça* in Goa in 1648. We find it record-

²² The number of Christians according to the *Campos* was 3,000 (f. 180), but the *Manual* gives the figure as 2,700 (p. 212).

²³ *Campos*, f. 180; *Manual*, pp. 212-213.

²⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 718.

²⁵ *Campos*, ff. 180-181; *Manual*, pp. 213, 362.

²⁶ Philip IV of Spain (1621-1640).

²⁷ A *disāva* or *disāvani* (province) was divided into *kōralēs*, which were subdivided into *pattus*. The *disāva* of Four-Kōralēs consisted of the Beligal, Kinigoḍa, Galboḍa and Parapaḱūru *kōralēs*.

²⁸ *Campos*, f. 181; *Manual*, p. 213.

ed that he compiled in 1630 an account of the rebellion, in Ceylon, in which Constantino de Sa lost his life (25th August 1630). The manuscript has not been found. It was entitled: *Recopilação Breve das guerras de Ceilão, e da rebelião dos levantados; morte do general Constantino de Sa e Noronha, e perda de todo o arraial com outras couzas, que succederão, escrita em 25 de Novembro de 1630.* (A brief account of the wars of Ceylon and of the rising of the rebels; of the death of the general, Constantino de Sa de Noronha, and of the loss of the whole force, with other events that followed).²⁹

With provision made for the support of their work, the Augustinians now intensified their missionary activity. New mission stations were opened especially in the Four-Kōralēs. Churches were built at Attanagalla, Vālivēriya, Kal-eliya, Mandamaravita(?), Piṭagaldeniya, Atulugama, Māpitigama, Ampē, Horaṇa and Nārā-hēpita.

The church at *Atanagale* (Attanagalla) was dedicated to *Nossa Senhora dos Chingalas* (Our Lady of the Sinhalese).³⁰ This is the only instance we know of when the Blessed Virgin has been publicly acknowledged as the patroness of the Sinhalese. It is recorded that the church was built when Fr. João da Rocha was the Provincial.³¹ He held the post from 2nd December 1623 to 27th November 1628,³² a period which coincides with the captain-generalship, for the second time, of Constantino de Sa (1623-1630), one of the best Portuguese administrators in Ceylon and a staunch supporter of missionary activity.³³ In fact, seven other churches were built in Ceylon by the Augustinians during this period, namely, the churches of Vālivēriya, Kal-eliya, Mandamaravita, Piṭagal-

²⁹ *Manual*, p. 405.

There are other accounts of the rebellion which are extant. Cf. "The Rebellion of Ceylon, and the Progress of its Conquest under the Government of Constantino de Sa y Noroña," tr. from the Spanish of João Rodriguez de Sa e Menezes (the general's son) by H.H. St. George, *JCBRAS*, XI (no. 41, 1890), 427-608; *The Expedition to Uva made in 1630, as narrated by a Soldier who took part in the Expedition*, tr. from the Portuguese by S. G. Perera, Colombo, 1930; Queyroz, pp. 752-756, 761-766.

³⁰ Cf. article on "Our Lady of the Sinhalese," *supra*, pp. 36-39.

³¹ *Manual*, p. 213.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 98, 260-261.

³³ Queyroz, pp. 738, 780.

deniya, Atulugama, Māpiṭigama and Ampē.³⁴ The church at Attanagalla was built by Fr. Roque da Ressurreição (Manoel de Castro), its first vicar. He was from Lisbon, and had become an Augustinian in 1616. Attanagalla had a congregation of 3,400 Christians scattered over seventy villages.³⁵ It is mentioned that Fr. Roque was a very zealous missionary and had acquired a good knowledge of Sinhalese — *muito perito na lingoa nacional da ilha* (very proficient in the national language of the island).³⁶

Fr. Balthazar de S. Ursula (Antonio Bravo) founded the church of *Villaveria* (Vālivēriya). It had 500 Christians in eighteen villages. The church was dedicated to *S. Nicolao de Tolentino* (St. Nicholas of Tolentino). Fr. Balthazar, who hailed from Evora, had joined the Augustinians in 1614 at the age of 21. He founded also the mission of Māpiṭigama. In 1636 he left Ceylon to become sub-prior of the monastery of *da Graça* in Goa. He subsequently held also the posts of prior of *da Graça*, rector of the Augustinian college of *Nossa Senhora do Populo*, rector of the seminary of *S. Guilherme*, and was finally elected Provincial, but died in 1657 before assuming duties.³⁷

The church of *Mapetiḡão* (Māpiṭigama), founded by the same missionary, was dedicated to *Nossa Senhora da Graça*. It had 500³⁸ Christians in sixteen villages.³⁹ The Franciscans, too, had a “church of the Mother of God” at Māpiṭigama, “built by D. Jeronimo de Azevedo, when he was General” (1594-1612), says Queyroz, adding, “but as the floods of the river did it great damage, they are thinking of changing it.”⁴⁰ The Augustinian church was built, as we have seen, during the second term of Constantino de Sa’s captain-generalship (1623-1630).

³⁴ *Manual*, pp. 213-215, 261.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 213, 410; *Campos*, f. 182.

³⁶ *Manual*, p. 213.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 214, 408; *Campos*, f. 182.

³⁸ The *Manual* gives the figure as 700 (p. 214).

³⁹ *Manual*, p. 214; *Campos*, f. 183.

⁴⁰ Queyroz, p. 714.

At *Alugão* (Atulugama), in the Atulugam Kōralē, was built a church in honour of *S. Cruz* (the Holy Cross). It had 3,000 Christians. Its first vicar was the Ceylon-born Augustinian Fr. Ignacio de Jesus, who founded also, as already noted, the mission of Dūnagaha. The church of Atulugama being the first to be built through the efforts of Constantino de Sa, the general himself was present at the baptism of its first converts, which was celebrated with great pomp. The mission extended over thirty-two villages. Fr. Ignacio was also one who had acquired proficiency in Sinhalese. He died in Ceylon in 1651.⁴¹

The Augustinians built at *Mandamaravita* (?), a church in honour of *Jesus Maria Jose* (the Holy Family). The number of Christians belonging to it was 3,000. At their baptism, too, Constantino de Sa was present with the Captain-Major of the Field and his companies of soldiers, and there was much festivity, including military displays, to celebrate the event. The mission was a large one with seventy-seven villages. It was founded by Fr. Jose de Mendonça. He became prior of Macao in 1636 and of *da Graça* in Goa in 1640.⁴²

There was at *Calilia* (Kal-eliya), near Pasyāla, a church dedicated to *Onze Mil Virgens* (the Eleven Thousand Virgins).⁴³ It had a Christian community of 6,000 living in sixty villages. The mission was founded by Fr. Paulino da Madre de Deos (Antonio de Couto). He was from Lisbon, and had joined the Augustinians in 1607, at the age of 18. Before coming to Ceylon he had been a missionary in Bengal. He died in Goa in 1648.⁴⁴

At *Petigaldeni* (Piṭagaldeniya), in the Beligal Kōralē, was a church in honour of *Nossa Senhora dos Prazeres* (Our Lady of Joys). There was here a Portuguese garrison under the command of the Captain-Major of the Four-Kōralēs.⁴⁵ The mission had 900

41 *Manual*, pp. 213, 344; *Campos*, ff. 181-182.

42 *Manual*, pp. 214, 344; *Campos*, ff. 183-184.

43 The legendary virgins, headed by St. Ursula, who were supposed to have been martyred near Cologne when they were returning from a pilgrimage to Rome.

44 *Manual*, pp. 214, 391; *Campos*, f. 183.

45 Cf. Queyroz, pp. 816, 911, 914.

Christians. It extended as far as the hills of Balana. Its founder and first vicar was Fr. Andre do Paraizo, from Lisbon, who had joined the Augustinians in 1607 when 19 years of age. From Ceylon he went to Goa where he held the posts of sub-prior of *da Graça* and procurator of the Convent of St. Monica. He died in Goa in 1657.⁴⁶

At *Ampe* (Ampē), also in the Beligal Kōralē, the Augustinians built a church in honour of *Nossa Senhora do Socorro* (Our Lady of Help). Both Ampē and Pitagaldeniya lay on the old road to Kandy.⁴⁷ The mission of Ampē was founded by Fr. Agostinho da Conceição (Agostinho de Amaral) of Coimbra, who had become an Augustinian in 1617 when he was 17 years of age. The mission had 2,000 Christians in twenty villages.⁴⁸

At *Orna* (Horana) the Augustinians had a church dedicated to *S. Nicolao de Tolentino*. Its founder and first vicar was Fr. Agostinho da Graça, who, it will be remembered, became prior of Colombo in 1618. The mission had 1,500 Christians.⁴⁹

About half a league to the south-east of the city of Colombo there was at *Narapeti* (Nārāhēnpīṭa) an *ermida*⁵⁰ of the Augustinians which became a popular shrine and centre of pilgrimage—the shrine of *Nossa Senhora do Livramento* (Our Lady of Deliverance). Information about this shrine will be found in the article on “The Shrine of Livramento.”⁵¹

It will be seen that the Augustinians had thirteen churches outside the city of Colombo. Fr. Faustino da Graça observes that in the territory assigned to them there was room for more than fifty churches, but more could not be built for want of funds to support the missionaries.⁵²

⁴⁶ *Manual*, pp. 215, 391-392; *Campos*, f. 184.

⁴⁷ Cf. R. Raven-Hart, “The Great Road,” *JCBRAS*, IV (1955-1956) 154-155.

⁴⁸ *Manual*, pp. 214-215, 415; *Campos*, f. 184.

⁴⁹ *Manual*, p. 215; *Campos*, f. 185.

⁵⁰ *Ermida* is a church or chapel in a secluded spot.

⁵¹ Cf. *supra*, pp. 76-88.

⁵² *Campos*, f. 185.

Augustinians were engaged also in other roles than that of the parochial ministry. In 1638 the Portuguese captain-general in Ceylon, Diogo de Mello de Castro, was planning an invasion of Kandy. When the king of Kandy, Rājasimha II, came to know of it, he despatched a Franciscan to remonstrate with the general and dissuade him from attempting the expedition. When the friar's efforts failed, the king sent other ambassadors, but without success. Finally he sent an Augustinian to appeal to the general. Says Queyroz: "He also directed a Religious of St. Augustine, who was living in Candea as Vicar of the Christians who were in that Court, to accompany the envoys with a Crucifix and to ask the General in His name not to make war."⁵³ But he would not listen. He led his troops against Kandy, but they were completely routed and cut down by the Kandyans at Gannoruva. The general himself was among the slain.⁵⁴ We learn that an Augustinian who had accompanied the expedition and was taken prisoner with other Portuguese "remained captive in Candea."⁵⁵ We do not know the names of these two Augustinians, the one sent by Rājasimha to meet Diogo de Mello, and the other taken captive at Gannoruva; nor do we have any other information about them.

We find it mentioned that Augustinians as well as members of other religious orders assisted in the defence of the city of Colombo whenever the need arose.⁵⁶ In the siege of the city by the Dutch in 1655 an Augustinian by the name of Pedro de Castelbranco is said to have been of great help, according to one report, in paying "particular attention to the alarms of the enemy during the whole duration of the siege [seven months], at the same time per-

⁵³ *Op. cit.*, p. 803. Cf. also Ribeiro, pp. 235-236.

Rājasimha was not opposed to Christianity. He permitted missionaries to live in his kingdom and minister to the Christians. Later he invited the Catholics of the low-country into his kingdom, when the Dutch began to persecute them. Robert Knox who was a detenu in Kandy in his reign says of him in his book on Ceylon: "The Christian Religion, he doth not in the least persecute, or dislike, but rather as it seems to me, esteems and honours it." (*An Historical Relation of Ceylon in The Ceylon Historical Journal*, VI, p. 67).

⁵⁴ For the ill-fated expedition, cf. Queyroz, pp. 802-805; Ribeiro, pp. 234-237.

⁵⁵ Queyroz, p. 1059.

⁵⁶ Cf. Queyroz, pp. 782, 971.

sonally inspiring our men with all necessary courage."⁵⁷ Two others, referred to as *Brother Gosal* and *Frei Philippe* are also mentioned as having rendered valuable assistance.⁵⁸ Of the former the report says: "In all these calamities, the sympathy and pity of Brother *Gosal*, an Augustine monk, in particular outstripped the rest, by his attentions towards the wretched sufferers, by the assiduous ministration of his office to their relief which he continued to display in the Hospital, where a greater number of the soldiers were perishing from the want of requisite remedies than were destroyed in conflict and battle."⁵⁹ In the *Manual*, which is a chronicle of Augustinian personnel of the Indian Province, there is a reference to Castelbranco,⁶⁰ but the other two cannot be identified.

III

We learn from the records of the Order that it had some recruits from Ceylon. They are referred to as *natural de Ceilão*, Ceylon-born. The term *natural* does not indicate whether one was born of Portuguese parents resident in Ceylon, or of native Ceylonese. The family names, which are available except in the case of one, are Portuguese, but that does not necessarily mean that those who bore such names were all Portuguese, as there were also native Ceylonese who had adopted Portuguese names. There are ten Augustinians mentioned as *natural de Ceilão*. However, we have no means of knowing if there were any Sinhalese or Tamils among them.

It was in the novitiate at Goa that the Ceylon recruits would have had their religious training. The novitiate was attached to the Provincial headquarters of the Order, the monastery of *Nossa Senhora da Graça*.

We have mentioned already that Fr. Ignacio de Jesus, who founded the churches of Dūnagaha and Atulugama, was born in

⁵⁷ "The Siege of Colombo by the Dutch," *JCBRAS*, VIII (1962), 61.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 33, 61.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁶⁰ *Op. cit.*, pp. 288-289. Cf. also Queyroz, p. 971.

Ceylon. We do not know if he held any posts abroad. We know, in any case, that he died in this country.

The following are the biographical notes available in regard to the other Ceylon-born Augustinians.

Luis de Jesus (Luis da Costa Pinto): born in Colombo and belonged to the principal parish church of the city⁶¹; joined the Order on 24th February 1630, at the age of 19, and made his religious profession on 25th February the following year; became a priest, preacher and confessor; died in the monastery of *da Graça*, Goa, in 1664.⁶²

João de S. Jose (Mathcos Maceira): born in Colombo; joined the Order on 12th June 1635, at the age of 16, and professed on 13th June 1636; priest, preacher and confessor; appointed procurator of the monastery of *da Graça* of Goa: 8th July 1647; secretary of the Order, in India: 27th September 1655; prior of the monastery of *da Graça* of Daman: 28th November 1664; master of novices: 5th December 1666; visitor twice, April 1668 and September 1669; prior of *da Graça* of Goa: 10th December 1669; died, while prior, in March 1670.⁶³

Antonio de S. Agostinho (Antonio Maccira): born in Colombo and belonged to the principal parish church; joined the Order on 14th August 1640, when 16 years of age, and professed on 15th August the following year; priest, preacher and confessor; died in Bengal in 1666.⁶⁴

Luis da Paixão (Luis Teixeira): born in Colombo; joined the Order on 23rd April 1641, at the age of 21, and professed on 27th April 1642; priest, preacher and confessor; appointed prior of the monastery of Hoogly in Bengal: 7th December 1669; died in Bengal in 1677.⁶⁵

⁶¹ This is referred to as *freguesia da Se*, meaning 'parish of the see,' that is, the 'cathedral parish.' There was no cathedral in Ceylon, as there was no bishop. Ceylon formed part of the diocese of Cochin. The Bishop of Cochin was represented in Ceylon by a Vicar-General. It was the parish where he resided that is here referred to as *freguesia da Se*, or the 'Mother Parish'.

⁶² *Manual*, pp. 454-455.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 470.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 484.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 486.

João da Assumpção (João Teixeira): born in Colombo and belonged to the principal parish; joined the Order on 14th August 1648, at the age of 18, and professed on 18th August 1649; priest, preacher and confessor; prior of the monastery of Bengal; died in Bengal in 1681.⁶⁶

Nicolao do Bom Successo, son of Antonio de Miranda de Saldanha and Catharina Brandão; born in Colombo, and belonged to the principal parish; joined the Order on 17th October 1648, at the age of 24, and professed on 19th October 1649; priest, preacher and confessor; died in Cochin in 1662.⁶⁷

Manoel de S. João (Manoel de Mesquita): born in Colombo, and belonged to the principal parish; joined the Order on 7th March 1660 and made his profession on 25th March 1661. He was taken captive by the Malabars, as a Brother, and died in 1667.⁶⁸

Lourenço do Espirito Santo (Lourenço da Fonseca Muniz da Silva): born in Colombo, and belonged to the principal parish; joined the Order on 16th November 1660, at the age of 15; died, as a novice, on 28th November 1660.⁶⁹

Antonio dos Reis (Antonio Teixeira): born in Colombo; joined the Order on 5th January 1663, at the age of 22, and made his profession on 6th January 1664; priest, preacher, confessor and *mestre*⁷⁰; rector of the college of *Nossa Senhora do Populo* of Goa: 1st March 1678; prior of Daman: 11th November 1690; prior of Bassein: January 1703; died in this monastery on 27th November 1711. We find this mentioned about him: "This religious had a great reputation as a preacher; he was one of the most talented in our Congregation in India; he was very learned and versed in polemical theology; he left as witness to his knowledge the *Refutação das herezias Modernas fundada sobre a Baze Solida da S. Escritura*,⁷¹ MS, 2 vols. in folio."⁷²

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 499

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 500

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 520

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 521.

⁷⁰ *Mestre*, from the Latin *magister*, means teacher (master), one qualified to teach. It corresponds to the Indian term *guru*. The word appears in Sinhalese as *mēstri* or *mēstiri*, for master, and master craftsman.

⁷¹ 'Refutation of Modern Heresies based on the solid foundation of Holy Scripture.'

⁷² *Manual*, pp. 526-527.

It will be noticed that the last three mentioned, though born in Ceylon in the Portuguese period, joined the Augustinians only after the Dutch had come over. We do not know whether they were still resident in Ceylon when they joined the Order, or whether they had migrated to India or elsewhere on the arrival of the Dutch.

IV

The Dutch, having ousted the Portuguese, launched a persecution against the Catholics. Catholic priests were banished from the country, Catholic churches and schools were confiscated, and the Catholic religion was proscribed. We have so far known of only two priests who were left behind in Ceylon after the arrival of the Dutch. Both of them were Jesuits. One was Fr. John Caldeiro, in Jaffna, who being unable to travel owing to old age and ill-health, had stayed back. He was put to death by the Dutch for refusing to give information about a plot against them by some Portuguese.⁷³ The other was Fr. Bartolomeo Bergonço who, like several other Europeans of whom Robert Knox was one, was held captive in Kandy by Rājasiṅha II.⁷⁴

We learn from Augustinian records that there was another priest, an Augustinian, who remained in Ceylon after the Portuguese were overthrown. He was Fr. Estevão da Conceição (Estevão Thomas Ferreira). He had joined the Order in 1636, at the age of 23. He was a member of the community of the Colombo monastery at the time the city fell to the Dutch. We are told that he did not embark for Goa with the other missionaries, but stayed on in the Island to minister to the local Catholics, and accompanied them when they fled into the Kingdom of Kandy to escape

⁷³ The Dutch Calvinist minister, Baldaeus, who was present at his death, speaks of him in his book on Ceylon: "This man was prevented by illness from accompanying the other ecclesiastics on their departure from the Island as if destined for this fate. He was in some respects to be pitied indeed, for he had no direct hand in this shameful transaction, yet there was a letter which the conspirators had addressed him, styling him *Padre de Suas Almas*, or Father of their Souls, in which they made known to him their abovesaid intention, but he did not deliberately share in the godless plot, yet his better feelings did not at the same time permit him to betray his own countrymen, a fatal silence, which he broke with his life." (pp. 315-316).

⁷⁴ Robert Knox, *op. cit.*, pp. 214, 303.

persecution by the Dutch.⁷⁵ "He did not wish to go back to Goa," say the records, "but, inflamed with love for his neighbour, he, of his own accord, made himself a prisoner among barbarous people, and accompanied the Christian exiles into the Kingdom of Kandy in the same Island of Ceylon, in order not to leave those unhappy Christians without a priest for their spiritual ministrations."⁷⁶ So far as we know, Fr. Estevão is the only priest who, of his own choice, stayed back in Ceylon after the Dutch came. He ended his days in the Kingdom of Kandy. How long he lived in the Island we do not know. When Fr. Joseph Vaz came in 1687 he did not find any priests in the country.

It is not known if Fr. Estevão da Conceição ever came to the parts of the country held by the Dutch where Catholics were subject to persecution. But we know of another Augustinian, João de Jesus Maria (João Pinto Soares), who, while on his way to Goa from Macao, stopped for some time in Ceylon and ministered to the Catholics in Dutch-occupied territory. Born at Rachol in Salsette, near Goa, he had joined the Augustinians in 1663 at the age of 21. His visit to Ceylon took place in 1678, nine years before the arrival of Fr. Vaz. "Disembarking in Ceylon, which was still under the dominion of the heretical Hollanders," it is recorded "he, in his religious habit, confessed and administered the sacrament of the Eucharist to a large number of Christians who were living in that country; he brought to our holy Faith five heretics, and baptized 800 persons."⁷⁷ It would appear from this account that the proscriptions against the Catholics had been somewhat relaxed at the time. These were later enforced with great rigour when it came to be known that priests from Goa, the Oratorians, had secretly entered the Island and were visiting Catholics in Dutch territory.

In Goa, Fr. João de Jesus Maria became rector of the college of *Nossa Senhora do Populo* in 1684. He died, as prior of Bassein, in 1694.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ *Manual*, pp. 216, 475.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 475.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 528.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Another Augustinian, whose name is not known to us, was in Ceylon sometime between 1710 and 1712. He came as chaplain to Diogo de Pinho Teixeira, who, on his way back to Goa having relinquished the post of captain-general of Macao, stayed a few months in Ceylon with his wife and children. The presence of this Augustinian in the Island gave some of the local Catholics the opportunity of secretly availing themselves of his spiritual ministrations.⁷⁹

The Augustinians had also some connection with the Goan Oratorians who under the leadership of Fr. Vaz came to the succour of the Catholics of Ceylon in the days of the Dutch persecution. The beginnings of the Oratory date back to 1682. Its members first took up residence in an old chapel at Batim, but when it collapsed they moved into an abandoned church in Goa, the Church of the Holy Cross of Miracles. It was from this church that the new congregation came to be known as the *Oratory of the Holy Cross of Miracles*. The church had belonged to the Augustinians. It had been built at the site where an apparition of the crucified Christ had taken place in 1619. Later on the church was abandoned by the Augustinians because of the unhealthiness of the locality. The first Oratorians, however, established themselves there, as we have seen, and took from the church the name of *Holy Cross of Miracles*. It was from an Augustinian church, therefore, that the Oratory of Goa sprang up and got its name — a society to which the Church in Ceylon owes so much.⁸⁰

Such was the contribution to Christian missionary enterprise in Ceylon by the Augustinians, who were the last of the religious orders to come to the Island in the Portuguese period, and were in the country for just fifty years, from 1606 to 1656.

⁷⁹ Cf. *supra*, p. 101.

⁸⁰ *Manual*, pp. 142, 483.

14. The Mission of Joseph Vaz

I

For over a century the Catholic faith was preached in Ceylon by the European missionaries of the Portuguese period. Many churches were built by them, schools opened, and charitable institutions founded. As in other Portuguese colonies, missionary work in Ceylon was encouraged, patronized and subsidized by the kings of Portugal. But, paradoxical as it may seem, it was in the period that followed, when Catholics were subjects of either the Buddhist king of Kandy or the hostile Dutch of the low-country, that the Catholic faith was more solidly and securely established in Ceylon than in the Portuguese period when there was full freedom and support for missionary activity.

From the material point of view, of course, the Portuguese period presents a picture of considerable success for the Church. So many large and beautiful churches were built; so many parishes or mission stations were established; the missionaries could take pride in the large number of conversions they had made. But it is not material buildings, nor their costly embellishments, however useful they may be, that really matter, but the purity and intensity of the Christian life of the people. It is not the number of converts that counts, but their quality. There certainly were genuine converts in the Portuguese period, but there was also a great deal of dross. For this the missionaries themselves are

partly to blame. Some of their missionary policies and methods of evangelization gave occasion to nominal conversions. The insincerity of such converts became evident when, on the arrival of the Dutch, they relapsed into their old ways or became Calvinists with the same ease and nonchalance with which they had allowed themselves to be baptized as Catholics.

But the period that followed was different. The fate of the Catholic faith in the Kingdom of Kandy depended on the goodwill of its Buddhist ruler. In the parts of the country held by the Dutch, Catholicism was proscribed, so that it had to be practised in secret. The missionaries went about in disguise. As their number was small, and as moreover they had to be on their guard against capture, it was at long intervals that the people had the consolation of meeting a priest. There were no longer well-built and beautifully furnished churches where the people could congregate for worship. In the Kingdom of Kandy most of the churches were mere sheds thatched with palm leaf. In Dutch territory it was not in churches but in ordinary homes that the Catholics secretly met for Mass and the Sacraments. The priests and the people lived in constant fear of being hounded out and brutally dealt with. Some idea of the condition of the mission during this period may be gained from the first mission report (for 1687-1701) where it speaks of the hardships of the missionaries in Ceylon: "They are always exposed to the persecution of the heretics, to the insults and injuries of the pagans and apostates, to great discomfort, to hunger and thirst, to danger of being taken prisoner and ill-treated, always going about unshod, walking over thorns and mounting hills, in thick forests often exposed to the clutches of wild beasts in the forests, bare of body above the cincture, and exposed to the inclemencies of the weather and the burning sun for greater disguise, without any opportunity of communicating with each other, except once in six months and often only at longer intervals, and finally without any other succour except what the Congregation [of the Oratory of Goa] sends once a year."¹

¹ *OMC*, p. 13

But now, as never before, the true spiritual character of the Church and the essentially spiritual nature of her mission came into evidence. The Church, shorn of its material trappings and purified by persecution, revealed itself in its starkly spiritual aspects, drawing to it only those who sincerely valued its teaching, and deepening the faith of those who continued to adhere to it.

The success of the Church in this period was largely due to the man sent by providence to guide the destinies of the mission in its hour of trial and tribulation. Joseph Vaz was unmistakably the providential man of the hour. His ascetical way of life, his poverty and humility, his genuine love of his fellow-men, his selfless dedication to them, revealed in a palpable manner to those who came into contact with him the spiritual ideals of Christianity. Persecution and the trials and hardships of the Ceylon mission brought into relief the great qualities and heroic virtues of the man of God and his capacity for organizing the mission not only in accord with the true spirit of the Church but also with an awareness of the claims of the indigenous culture.

II

Unlike his predecessors, it was not with conquistadors that Fr. Vaz came to Ceylon. It was indeed a blessing for the Church that he came not merely in the guise of a beggar, but a beggar in actual fact, and throughout his life relentlessly adhered to poverty — “with it he entered the Island, with it he lived, and with it he died.”² His life portrayed the poverty and simplicity of a Francis of Assisi. When he was put ashore at Mannar, he was penniless and had to beg his bread from door to door.³ His arrival, in poverty and destitution, in fear and trepidation, disguised and defenceless, was very different from that of the Portuguese missionaries, for whose defence there were well-armed troops, whose cannon, as the *Rājāvaliya* puts it, was “louder than thunder when

² Francisco Vaz, *A Brief Sketch of the Life and Virtues of the Apostolic Man, Father Joseph Vaz, of the Congregation of the Oratory of Goa, First Missionary in the Island of Ceylon*, OMC, p.119.

³ S. G. Perera, *Life of the Venerable Father Joseph Vaz, Apostle of Ceylon*, 2nd ed. (Colombo, 1953), p.43.

it bursts upon the rock of Yugandhara,"⁴ and whose flag, in the poetical language of *The Lusiads*, fluttered "triumphant from the fortress of Colombo enough in itself to inspire a profound respect in the natives."⁵

It is no doubt true that Portugal's patronage was an asset to missionary work. In the first place, it was the naval expeditions launched by Portugal, under the impetus given by Prince Henry the Navigator, that by the 'discovery' of new lands or by gaining access to hitherto little-known countries opened out new fields for missionary activity. Secondly, missionary enterprise itself was backed up by Portugal in various ways. The protection, by the civil authorities, of the person and property of the missionaries whenever they were exposed to danger in foreign lands; the financial assistance given to missionaries by the State; the very means of reaching distant lands which Portuguese seafaring made possible — all these helped to spread the Christian faith.

But, in other respects, the alliance of the Church with the secular power was unfavourable to Christianity. That the Christian faith was preached by men who belonged to, or represented, a nation that had reduced the native inhabitants to subservience and robbed them of their independence was a factor inimical to the progress of Christianity. From this aspect it was unfortunate that the attempt to propagate Christianity was made in conjunction with Portugal's colonial expansion.

Prince Henry and those who followed in his footsteps may have thought it desirable to "set the relationship between Europeans and non-Europeans, White and Coloured, on a particularly Luso-Christian course,"⁶ and the Portuguese colonisers may have regarded it expedient "to expand the temporal and spiritual confines of the kingdom of Portugal and to unite the East and West with ties of affection."⁷ But the fact is that the people of Ceylon (as of other Asian countries) would not, understandably,

4 *Rājāvaliya*, tr. B. Gunasekara (Colombo, 1900), p.63.

5 *The Lusiads*, tr. W. C. Atkinson (Penguin ed., 1952), p.228.

6 G. Freyre, *The Portuguese and the Tropics* (Lisbon, 1961), p.3.

7 E. M. Pope, *India in Portuguese Literature* (Bastora, 1937), p.31.

brook any interference with their long-established and greatly cherished political independence.

It was not savages, or primitive tribes, that the Portuguese had to deal with in Ceylon. Queyroz, in fact, wrote in his history of the Portuguese period in Ceylon: "Let Europeans realize that these Oriental peoples are not barbarians."⁸ In Ceylon the Portuguese had to deal with a people who were inheritors of a highly advanced civilisation, who existed as a nation long before any of the colonial powers had attained national identity. They were a people who had resolutely repulsed for centuries wave after wave of invasions from India, who valued their own institutions and their independence. Queyroz admits that the Sinhalese were "most stubborn to admit any foreign dominion, and when the Portuguese entered Ceylon, at first foreseeing the future vassalage and afterwards experiencing the foreign dominion, they did not hesitate to submit to any bold rebel, in order to recover their liberty."⁹ One should not be surprised, therefore, if they were not well disposed towards a religion preached by those who assailed their rights and possessions and, above all, their independence. The dislike of Christianity as the religion of the Western imperialist still lingers even in countries which have regained their independence. "For a long time we have looked down upon Asians," admits missiologist Ohm, adding, "now they have turned the tables on the West."¹⁰

But the position of Fr. Vaz was different. He had no political interests or intentions. He did not represent any country or nation, but only the Church. He was no ally of imperialism — a contrast to what was even then taking place in the low-country held by the Dutch. He kept completely clear of politics. He was a missionary, not from Europe, but from Asia itself, brown-skinned like the people of the country, and not very different from them in manners and customs and way of life. His sole purpose in coming to Ceylon was to preach Christianity. He sought only a spiritual conquest, a *dhammavijaya*, to use an Asokan term, and not a conquest both temporal and spiritual, a *conquista*

⁸ *Op. cit.*, p.440.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p 23.

¹⁰ T. Ohm, *Asia Looks at Western Christianity* (Freiburg, 1959), p.216.

temporal e spiritual, as the very title of Queyroz's history of the Portuguese period implies. In Kandyan territory he was at first taken for a spy and imprisoned on the orders of Vimaladharmā Sūrya,¹¹ but when the king saw what manner of man he was and learnt of his intentions—that he was only a harmless ascetic preaching the Christian faith—he not only released him and gave him freedom to exercise his ministry, but as time went on and his saintliness became more evident treated him with the greatest respect, friendship and favour. His successor, Narendrasimha, extended to Fr. Vaz the same courtesy and cordiality.

III

There is no doubt that what most appealed to the king and the people in the life and manner of Fr. Vaz was his asceticism. In the Indian religious tradition the ascetic has always been held in great esteem. It has been said that “only in India has the interior discipline of spiritual perfection and the ideal of world renunciation acquired an unchallenged domination for thousands of years.”¹² From the ancient *munis*¹³ of the *Rig-veda* down to Mahatma Gandhi, or Vinoba Bhave, of our own day, the predilection for asceticism has been a notable feature of India's religious experience. In addition to the Hindu ascetics, there were others. About the middle of the first millenium B.C. many ascetical sects flourished in North India of which two survived and evolved into religions, one founded by Gotama the Buddha which we call Buddhism, and the other by Vardhamāna, or Mahāvīra, which is known as Jainism. Some of the Indian ascetics indulged in extreme forms of *tapas*,¹⁴ inflicting torture upon themselves, and

¹¹ Vimaladharmā Sūrya II (1687-1706) was the son and successor of Rājasimha II (1635-1687), during whose reign the Portuguese were ousted by the Dutch. Vimaladharmā was succeeded by his son, Śrī Vīra Narendrasimha (1706-1739). Fr. Vaz arrived in Kandy when Vimaladharmā was on the throne (1691), and died in the reign of Narendrasimha (1711).

¹² J. Correia-Afonso, *The Soul of Modern India* (Bombay, 1960), p.24.

¹³ Cf. *Rig-veda*, X, 136.

The term *muni* (literally 'the silent one') was later applied to the Buddha and other great ascetics. It is interesting to note that the same word has been adopted into the Sinhalese Christian vocabulary for 'saint'.

¹⁴ *Tapas*: ascetic practice.

giving up worldly goods to the extent of going naked, adhering to the belief that "nobody who owns anything — even a piece of loin cloth — is altogether fitted to attain salvation."¹⁵

Although Buddhism wisely kept clear of extremes in the practice of *tapas*, it did uphold, in the Indian tradition, the need of asceticism, for the rules governing the *Saṅgha* enjoin an ascetical way of life. The *bhikkhu* shaves his head and dons a yellow robe to signify his renunciation of the household life and its pleasures. He undertakes to keep the Ten Precepts (*dasa-sīla*)¹⁶ and the 227 rules of monastic discipline (*vinaya*)¹⁷ which impose on him a life of austerity. He binds himself to celibacy and poverty. He is to live on alms, as the very term *bhikkhu* signifies.

The ideal set before the Buddhist monk is, therefore, that of a world-forsaking, spiritual man, an ascetic. This fact must be looked upon as one of the chief reasons for the respect and reverence the *Saṅgha* has always received from the Buddhist public. Indian religious systems are based on the belief in *karma* and transmigration. It is also the belief that asceticism is a means to self-purification, to mental concentration, to release from rebirth, to the attainment of *Nirvāṇa*. The man who aspires to higher levels of spirituality must, therefore, tread the ascetical path. Those who did so, whether called *bhikkhu*, *svāmi*, *sādhu*, or *sanyāsi*, were regarded as worthy of veneration by reason of the fact that they were men striving after higher things. They were not only esteemed, but listened to with respect.

Such has been the Oriental tradition. A Sinhalese Buddhist king, Senarat of Kandy (1605-1635), gave expression to the Oriental's regard for asceticism when he wrote to Philip III of Portugal

¹⁵ M. Hiriyanna, *The Essentials of Indian Philosophy* (London, 1949), p.60.

¹⁶ In addition to the Five Precepts (*pañca-sīla*), which every Buddhist had to keep, namely, refraining from killing living beings, from taking things not given, from sexual misconduct, from lying, and from intoxicants, the *bhikkhu* was required to keep five others, viz. refraining from eating at forbidden times (i.e. after midday), from dancing, singing, music and dramatic performances, from the use of garlands, perfumes, unguents and jewellery, from sleeping on a high or broad bed, and from receiving gold and silver.

¹⁷ The rules, which lay down in detail what is permissible to a *bhikkhu* and what is not, are listed and commented upon in the *Vinaya-Piṭaka*, which is the first of the three main divisions of the *Tripitaka*, the Pali Canon.

(1621-1640): "Though we are Heathens, we well understand that virtue consists in the disregard of the things of this earth and of the riches of this world."¹⁸

From the type of life that Fr. Vaz lived he appears to have been convinced that the missionary preaching the Christian faith to Oriental peoples must exemplify in his life the ascetical aspects of Christianity. He seems to have realized that in the matter of evangelization the best approach to the Oriental was the ascetical approach. Contemporary records give us the portrait of a man who was in very truth an ascetic, one who might be called a Christian *sanyāsi*. He ate the food of the poorest of the country, rice gruel or *cunjee* — "rice boiled in water, with salt without any other seasoning."¹⁹ He abstained from meat, except "when he was advised that it was necessary for the preservation of his health."²⁰ It was his practice to eat "only twice a day, and very little each time, once at noon and again at night; and this latter never exceeded what is allowed as collation on a fast day, so that in reality he fasted every day."²¹ He refrained from taking even tea.²²

Like the poor of the land, he slept on "a poor mat spread on the floor."²³ Like them, he walked barefoot, even when he had long journeys to make over thorny jungle paths and stony mountain roads. "Yearning for greater rigour of life he . . . began to go about without shoes," says one report, "a practice he kept up throughout his life."²⁴ We are told, in fact, that he and his brother missionaries, who followed his example,²⁵ had always to take penknives with them to pull out the thorns from their feet.²⁶

The dress he wore spoke of his poverty and renunciation: "He had a poor black mended cassock and thought it quite proper

18 Queyroz, p.711.

19 Mission Report for 1706, *OMC*, p.49.

20 Francisco Vaz, *op. cit.*, *OMC*, p.120.

21 *Ibid.*

22 Letter of Manoel de Miranda, 1712, *OMC*, p.85.

23 Francisco Vaz, *op. cit.*, *OMC*, p.120.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 109. Cf. also *OMC*, pp.33, 50.

25 Letter of Manoel de Miranda, 1712, *OMC*, pp.81, 82.

26 *Ibid.*, p.99.

that when going to preach the gospel to others he should observe to the full the instruction which the Master had given to his ministers in that very gospel."²⁷ A fellow-missionary tells us that "he wears his cassock as long as it can be serviceable, and his cassock has so many patches that the Christians finding it so full of patches, beg it from him and substitute another made by them, keeping the former as a relic."²⁸

Fr. Vaz, therefore, lived a life of austerity. It was not just a show of asceticism, mere make-believe, but the outward expression of a genuinely austere and saintly life. Had it been mere pretence, it would have before long appeared hollow to those who came into contact with him. Instead they revered him as a true man of God. They felt drawn to him. They sought his advice. They found comfort and solace in his words. They were glad to receive instruction from him and accept the faith he preached. "Many and wonderful were the conversions throughout the Island wrought by him," is the testimony of his confreres.²⁹

It is true that the missionaries of the Portuguese period, being members of religious orders, were bound to poverty, chastity and obedience. But their social attitudes and habits, their customs and practices, were those of Europe, so that their asceticism did not appeal to the people so much as that of Fr. Vaz whose way of life was more in keeping with the Oriental mentality and tradition.

For instance, following the custom in Europe, the Portuguese missionaries received some remuneration for their services.³⁰ But in a country which had a non-Christian monastic institution the members of which were mendicants living on alms, whose ideal of poverty and renunciation was such that it was thought improper for a *bhikkhu* even to handle money, the idea of remuneration would seem irreconcilable with that of renunciation. In fact, the poet Alagiyavanna who came to the Jesuit Fathers in

²⁷ Francisco Vaz, *op. cit.*, *OMC*, p.111.

²⁸ Letter of Pedro da Saldanha, 1705, *OMC*, p.33. Cf. also p.188.

²⁹ Francisco Vaz, *op. cit.*, *OMC*, p.115.

³⁰ Cf. e.g., Queyroz, pp.1052, 1083.

Colombo to be instructed in Christianity was surprised to note that the missionaries received payment for certain services. We learn from Tavernier that "after having been well instructed, he told the Fathers that he wished to receive holy baptism, that he saw that their religion was the only good and true one, and such as Jesus Christ had taught, but what astonished him was, that they did not follow Christ's example, because, according to the Gospel, he never took money from anyone, while they on the contrary took it from everyone, and neither baptized nor buried anyone without it."³¹ However, as Tavernier himself attests, "this did not prevent him from being baptized."³²

Fr. Vaz thought, on the contrary, that the Christian missionaries in Ceylon should not accept remuneration, however much they were entitled to it. One of his missionary companions writes: "Here we have neither subsidies nor stipends of any kind from the Christians, for we give our service *gratis* . . . and that the Christians may not have to stand the expense, we do everything at our own cost, without asking them for any payment."³³ It has been said in fact that Fr. Vaz "never took money into his hands."³⁴

Declining to accept a gift of money from the king of Kandy, Śrī Vijaya Rājasimha, in 1739, Fr. Jacome Gonçalvez was able to tell the king that for the past fifty years when the Oratorians were in Ceylon "serving God and the king of Kandy for the benefit of his subjects, they never showed the least desire for gain."³⁵ The king thereupon asked the Father to accept the money as alms and distribute it among the poor.

The Christians of Ceylon, however, did not fail in their duty towards their pastors. Although they were not required to make any payments, they very readily and religiously gave them alms, and gave alms through them. "So great is the faith of the people

³¹ Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels in India*, tr. from the original French edition of 1676 by V. Ball, 2nd ed. William Croke (2 vols., London, 1925), vol. ii, p.149.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Letter of Manoel de Miranda, 1712, *OMC*, p.103. Cf. also p.68.

³⁴ Mission Report for 1687-1701, *OMC*, p.9.

³⁵ Mission Report for 1733-1740, *OMC*, p.262.

in the Father [Fr. Vaz]" writes one missionary, "that whatever they wish to give as alms, much or little, they bring to the church."³⁶

The asceticism of Fr. Vaz, his poverty and detachment, his otherworldly outlook, had a strong appeal to the people. This, more than any other factor, explains his great reputation as a saintly man, and the influence he had over them.

IV

Although there is no evidence of forcible conversions in the Portuguese period, it is a fact that special favours and privileges were granted to converts with a view to attracting them to Christianity. Instructions were issued by the kings of Portugal to their officials overseas urging them to promote conversion by granting certain temporal favours. "The official policy," as Professor Boxer has pointed out, "was to favour and encourage converts."³⁷

For instance in Ceylon when some *paṭṭankāṭṭis*,³⁸ or chief men, of Chilaw became Catholics in 1606, the captain-general, Jeronimo de Azevedo, granted them "many favours and privileges in order to cause the envy of the other gentiles, who might thus be led to follow their example."³⁹

Sometimes the missionaries themselves obtained favours for their converts, which roused the interest of the non-Christians in the Christian religion. We glean the following from a Jesuit letter of 1618 giving an account of their mission in Ceylon: "They [the Jesuit Fathers] had an order passed that no Christian prisoner be put to death . . . This came to the ears of the pagans, and, when the prisoners were led forth to be discharged, they made the sign of the cross on the forehead and proclaimed themselves

³⁶ Letter of Pedro de Saldanha, 1705, *OMC*, p.34

³⁷ C. R. Boxer, "Christians and Spices: Portuguese Missionary Methods in Ceylon, 1518-1658," *History Today*, VIII (1958), 353.

³⁸ *Paṭṭankāṭṭi*: a Tamil word meaning chief, that is, one on whom a title (*paṭṭam*) has been conferred (literally, bound: *kāṭṭi*). It appears in Sinhalese as *paṭabāṇḍi*.

³⁹ Letter of Jeronimo Gomez, Dec. 29, 1606, *CALR*, II, 21.

Christians. We hope," the missionary adds, "it will be useful to make them embrace the Christian faith more readily in the future."⁴⁰

The missionaries were no doubt hoping that those who were drawn towards Christianity by the prospect of material advantages would eventually be inspired by purer motives when they came to know the truths of Christianity. But what often happened was that the offer of temporal favours led to conversions that were insincere.

Fr. Vaz's attitude was different. He gave himself to the service of his fellow-men and exercised charity to a remarkable degree. But his charity had no strings attached to it. He rendered whatever service he could to Christian and non-Christian alike without expecting anything whatsoever in return. He never sought to entice non-Christians into the Church with the bait of material favours. But he did draw them to the faith by the appeal of his extraordinary charity.

Fr. Vaz was doubtless of the belief that, although the missionary was directly concerned with the soul and things spiritual, he could not altogether overlook the bodily needs of his people; that, man being body and soul, the missionary should be prepared, as far as it lies in his power and in the manner possible to him, to help his fellow-men in their temporal needs as well; that the missionary has a contribution to make not only to the spiritual but also to the social upliftment of the people, as the latter is a prerequisite for the former.

One of the secrets of the success of Fr. Vaz is that he translated into action, in a very striking manner, Christ's teaching on charity, so that his edifying example awakened in the hearts of non-Christians an interest in the faith that inspired such charity. He showed genuine interest in both the spiritual and the temporal welfare of his people, and gave them what help he could in their material needs. He not only preached Christ, but also demonstrated in a tangible and convincing manner the charity of Christ.

⁴⁰ Letter of Emmanuel a Costa, 1618, *ibid.*, III, 20.

Although he himself fasted nearly every day, he saw to it that the needy were provided with the rice he had: "Every day he distributes rice to the poor who come to Mass. To the pagans who come to the gate of the church for alms he gives rice as often as they come. To the pagans who are not beggars but manifest their hunger, he gives rations . . . Rice is always bought in this church and no one, rich or poor, is ever denied it. The rice bag is open night and day . . ."41 No distinction was made, therefore, between Christian and non-Christian. It was not required that anyone should become a Christian to receive favours from him.

Fr. Vaz, above all, showed great concern and compassion for the sick. One report tells us that "when he goes out to the missions he always takes with him a box of medicines that have been tried, and gives medicines according to their [the people's] needs."42 The report continues: "The sick he succours with religious charity, and having no disgust for the miseries of the body he is ready to serve them without loathing."43

His charity rose to the heights of heroism when the smallpox epidemic of 1697 was raging in Kandy. According to one account, "there broke out a fearful pestilence all over the Kingdom of Kandy and many people died of it daily being abandoned, parents fleeing from it leaving children behind, so that there was no one to give food to the sick or burial to the dead. In consequence of this the dead putrified and infected the living and even the King left his palace and city. Thus Father Joseph Vaz who was going about seeking occasion to serve God found opportunity in the city to exercise his fervour and charity, and becoming an infirmarian, he began to assist those who were taken with the pestilence, pagans as well as Christians, washing their sores, dressing the pocks, and with his own hands removing the unclean vessels, and supplying food to some, carrying on his own shoulders the pots of viands dressed in the house, morning and evening,

41 Letter of Pedro da Saldanha, 1705, *OMC*, p.34.

42 *Ibid.*, p.33.

43 *Ibid.*

giving instruction to others and burial to the dead, with the aid of his companion, Father Joseph Carvalho. And seeing them won over by his charity he erected near the church a hospital so as to attend to them with greater ease. In this hospital he had a number of patients whom he maintained by begging alms for them."⁴⁴

Another account gives us details of his daily round of work in aid of the stricken: "During the whole period of the duration of the pestilence the Fathers had no other occupation save this, for scarcely had they recited the divine office and performed their obligatory devotions when they said Mass very early in the morning; and taking time only for these exercises, they immediately sallied out of the house with their servants carrying two pots of rice and *cunjee* to the woods and the lonely places, where the poor sufferers were, and distributed food to them; and in order that they might not remain exposed they built some huts of branches of trees to shelter them from the wild beasts. They then applied the medicaments of the country, having first consulted the physicians, and with their own hands they washed them, pressed out the blisters, and rendered other services handling the sick without any disgust or loathing, as if they were not of flesh and blood; and having spent the first half of the day they returned home. Scarcely had they taken a little refreshment, which consisted only of rice, when lo and behold they again set out taking the two pots of rice and *cunjee*, and spent the whole afternoon in the same occupation and returned home only at night."⁴⁵

The same account continues: "It was indeed a touching sight to see the old man [Fr. Vaz] going about the city with his companion [Fr. Carvalho], from street to street and house to house, in search of sufferers, giving nourishment to one, medicine to another; at one place washing the sick with his own hands, at another cleansing the impure vessels, becoming their nurse and often their cook for want of people to help him."⁴⁶

44 Mission Report for 1687-1701, *OMC*, p.9.

45 Francisco Vaz, *op. cit.*, *OMC*, p.117.

46 *Ibid.*

It often happened that they had themselves to dispose of the dead, "digging graves and burying with their own hands, sometimes ten and even as many as twelve dead bodies a day, which was the most that even the ablest-bodied person could do: and this for a whole year without interruption."⁴⁷

In a Sinhalese chronicle, compiled by a Buddhist, which belongs to the Hugh Nevill Collection in the British Museum, and was brought to light by Dr. Edmund Peiris⁴⁸ — the *Vijitavāllē Rājāvaliya* which continues the *Rājāvaliya* narrative down to early British times — there is a reference to the epidemic and to the part played by Fr. Vaz in it, which corroborates the accounts of his missionary companions. It says that when the disease spread over the Island and many succumbed to it, "parents and brothers, wives and children and husbands, unmindful of one another, abandoned one another. Wild beasts devoured the corpses of the dying. The numbers of the dying mounted high. Corpses were left unburied. Then the disease prevailed in Jayawardene-pura city; many died. As the stricken were thrown on the streets the stench from their dead bodies became unbearable. The King himself left the city. Hearing of these events, the Padre called Vaz, came over from Colombo, bringing with him food, clothing and commodities. He searched about for the sick, looking for them even in the forests; he built tents for their shelter and attended to all their wants. Thus he performed heroic deeds."⁴⁹

It is expressly stated that Fr. Vaz made no distinction whatsoever between Christian and non-Christian in assisting the victims of the disease.⁵⁰ No one was required to accept the Christian faith to receive his ministrations, or in return for them. But his charity touched many hearts: "Many were the souls he gained to God . . . for at sight of the charity with which the servant of

⁴⁷ Life of Father Joseph Carvalho, *OMC*, p.22.

⁴⁸ Cf. "The Fame of Fr. Vaz in the Rajavaliya," *Ceylon Catholic Messenger*, Jan. 25, 1942; "The 'Hugh Nevill' Collection in the British Museum," *Ceylon Literary Register*, 3rd series, IV (1935-1936), p.130.

⁴⁹ *Ceylon Catholic Messenger*, *loc. cit.*

⁵⁰ Cf. *OMC*, pp.9, 22, 116.

God helped them, and the light with which the Lord enlightened them at the time, many opened the eyes of the soul to the truth and wished to be Catholics."⁵¹ Or as the *Vijitavällē Rājāvaliya* has put it: "On account of his triumphant actions of that time [in succouring the sick], many people were taken up with him and embraced Christianity."⁵²

His charity, moreover, won for him and his colleagues the esteem and admiration, not only of the people, but especially of the king, on whose goodwill depended their very presence in the kingdom, not to speak of the freedom to exercise their ministry. It appears that the king, in appreciation of Fr. Vaz's charity towards his subjects during the epidemic, "would have liked to send the Father a present in thanksgiving, but being informed by his courtiers how much the Father despised riches, he desisted lest it might have the appearance of an insult."⁵³

It was not, therefore, by such dubious methods as the offer of favours that Fr. Vaz won converts to Christianity, but by the appeal of Christian charity honestly, and even heroically, lived.

V

The position of Fr. Vaz as head of the Ceylon mission was unique in several respects. It was the first, and at that time the only, instance of a non-European missionary in charge of a Church manned entirely by non-European clergy. Because of the persecution by the Dutch, and the constant watch kept by them against the entry of any Catholic priests into the Island, a European missionary would have found it difficult, chiefly because of his colour, to enter the country and remain there long without being detected. Fr. Vaz and his companions had the advantage of being of the same complexion as the local inhabitants.

Ceylon, therefore, became isolated from the rest of the Indian mission field and cut off from the direct influence and interven-

⁵¹ Francisco Vaz, *op. cit.*, OMC, p.117.

⁵² *Ceylon Catholic Messenger*, *loc. cit.*

⁵³ Francisco Vaz, *op. cit.*, OMC, p.118.

tion of the European missionaries. It became difficult, in fact, for the Ceylon mission to maintain contact with its diocesan headquarters, Cochin. Although Fr. Vaz was officially the Vicar General of the Bishop of Cochin, he happily found himself free to organize the mission in the manner he thought was best for the country. For all practical purposes Ceylon was an independent mission under his leadership.

Fr. Vaz had to organize the mission almost from scratch. He had to lay down the policies and point out the methods best suited to the peculiar circumstances in which the Ceylon mission found itself, partly under the Dutch persecutors, and partly under a Buddhist ruler. He had to supply the missionaries and train them to meet the special demands and difficulties of the mission.

There were other problems, besides. The country had for a century and a half witnessed the harsh and sometimes brutal treatment it received at the hands of a foreign power that was Catholic; it was even now being exploited by another Christian nation from the West; the scandalous lives of many of the Portuguese in the Island had been an open contradiction of the faith they seemed proud to profess; there was the scandal of a divided Christianity and the unedifying spectacle of one Christian Church openly persecuting another. The damage done to the cause of Catholicism in the Island by such evil influences had to be counteracted. Few other missionaries have been called upon to shoulder a task of such magnitude as that entrusted by providence to Fr. Vaz.

And yet he was an Indian. The ability of the indigenous clergy to hold responsible posts in the missions had been doubted by the European missionaries. Native priests had not been promoted to positions of responsibility. But here in Ceylon a son of Asia not only ably and wisely controlled the affairs of a persecuted, downtrodden and abandoned Church, but adopting and pursuing methods of evangelization and Church organization eminently in keeping with the spirit of the Church on the one hand and the national aspirations on the other, resuscitated Catholic life and laid anew firm and secure foundations over which has grown a Church of no mean proportions.

Although Fr. Vaz had imbibed Western culture through Portugal, he retained his Indian character. He was distinctively Indian, born into a Brahmin family, and brought up in an Indian society, though Christianized and partly Westernized. Being an Indian, he was in a better position to understand and appreciate the mind and mentality of the Indians, or the Ceylonese, than were the European missionaries. This, in addition to his being a man of deep insight and vision and selfless dedication to the pastoral ministry, guided him in the organization of the mission and the choice of missionary method.

Thus it was that he lived a perceptibly ascetical life, realizing no doubt that in a land which esteemed asceticism and had a non-Christian monastic order, ancient and much respected, the Christian missionary should not be found wanting in the practice of asceticism. For the same reason he lived a poor and simple life and sought no remuneration for his services.

The foreign, European look of the Church planted in Asian and African countries by the colonial powers has generally been a disadvantage to it, an obstacle to its progress. The Christian Church built up in mission countries by the European missionaries of those days was very much a reproduction of the Church in their own countries. This was partly because they believed in the superiority of their own culture. Thomas Ohm admits that "nearly all missionaries at one time were convinced of the superiority of Western culture over the civilizations of Asia," although "today many have become uncertain."⁵⁴ They did not as a rule identify themselves closely enough with the native population on the cultural plane. Men like Robert de Nobili were exceptions. Consequently there was always a certain gulf between the missionary and the people, which was accentuated by the difference of colour and the relation of colonial subject and ruler. The problem was further aggravated if the missionary was not conversant with the languages of the country.

Fr. Vaz, already favoured by the absence of the colour barrier and the problems arising from alliance with colonialism,

⁵⁴ T. Ohm, *op. cit.*, p.226.

sought to get close to the people by adopting their customs and usages, their domestic habits and mode of living. It was for this purpose, apart from his wish to live an ascetical life, that he ate the food of the common folk, slept like them on a mat spread on the floor, and went about barefoot. He did not ask that the native Christians change any of the traditional customs they had in common with the non-Christians, so long as they did not go counter to the Christian faith or the law of charity. He did not require that they change their surnames for those of European Christians, as had been done in the previous regime.

He showed them, by his own example, that as Christians they could remain as loyal to their king and country as were the other citizens. In the Portuguese period the people had to accept as their sovereign a foreign ruler, who was the suzerain of the missionaries. Now it was the reverse. Fr. Vaz, the foreign missionary, accepted as his sovereign the native king of the country. When he came to Ceylon, he had no intention of ever going back. The country became a new native land to him. Though a subject of the king of Portugal, he regarded the Sinhalese Buddhist king as his suzerain. From the records of the period we learn of his unreserved loyalty to both Vimaladharmasūriya and Narendrasingha. They on their part greatly esteemed him. Following his example, his fellow-missionaries showed the kings of Kandy the same loyalty. The kings treated the Fathers with great kindness, received them with honour in the palace, admitted them to close intimacy, exchanged gifts with them, showed great concern when they were ill, sent even the royal physicians to treat them, sought their advice, and employed them in their service.⁵⁵ The relations between these Catholic priests and Buddhist kings could hardly have been more cordial. It was no doubt largely due to the remarkable personality of Fr. Vaz as a man of God and his wise missionary policies that such friendly relations were possible.

Fr. Vaz saw the importance of the native languages for close contact with the people. The language of a country is not only the common medium of communication among its inhabitants,

⁵⁵ Cf., e.g., *OMC*, pp.9, 16, 22, 102, 116, 141, 158, 161, 173, 180, 204, 227, 255, 260, 268.

but also the chief means by which a nation's cultural heritage is preserved and handed down. The native language is closely woven into the fabric of the native culture. To reach the heart and soul of a people and make it absorb, assimilate and preserve new concepts the most appropriate language medium is, therefore, the native idiom. The more the missionary is master of that language the better qualified he is to fulfil his task.

In the Portuguese period there were no doubt some missionaries who became proficient in the national languages. The Jesuits in particular took pains to study them. But it was by no means a common practice. Too many missionaries were satisfied with what they could manage through interpreters. Queyroz deploras this lack of interest in the native languages when he says: "Above all it is of great importance and a matter of conscience that the Parish Priests should know the language of the country, and one must be judged useless for this Ministry, if within a year he cannot shrive and catechize his flock, without trusting his conscience to interpreters who through ignorance and sometimes through malice say bread for stone."⁵⁶

Fr. Vaz made it a point to learn both Sinhalese and Tamil well. Even as a busy missionary, who already knew the languages well enough, he kept on reading to improve his knowledge of them. Says one report: "In spite of his thousand occupations he manages to find time to read some Tamil or Sinhalese."⁵⁷ We find him engaged in "the work of translating a book of medicine from Portuguese into Tamil at the request of the King [Wimaladharmasūrya] who for that purpose summoned him daily to the Palace for some months."⁵⁸

Fr. Vaz insisted also that all the missionaries coming to Ceylon should make themselves proficient in the languages of the country.⁵⁹ Whenever he could find the time, he himself taught the languages to new missionaries while they were with him.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ *Op. cit.*, p.1083.

⁵⁷ Letter of Pedro de Saldanha, 1705, *OMC*, p.33.

⁵⁸ Mission Report for 1704, *OMC*, p.17.

⁵⁹ Letter of Fr. Joseph Vaz, Aug. 14, 1694, cf. appendix to *The Catholic Church in Ceylon Under Dutch Rule*, by R. Boudens (Rome, 1957), p.237.

⁶⁰ Mission Report for 1706, *OMC*, p.50; Life of Fr. Miguel de Mello, *OMC*, p.188.

But to learn the languages was not enough. The people had to be provided with a religious literature in their own language. In a vast mission field where regular contact with the people was difficult, partly because of the paucity of missionaries and the great distances they had to travel, and partly because of persecution, it was necessary, if the people had to be well instructed, to provide, especially the educated, with books with the help of which they could not only preserve but also improve their knowledge of the faith. Moreover, a Christian literature in the language of the people was important in a country which had a fairly extensive ancient literature extending back to pre-Christian times. The fact that the native classical literature was predominantly a religious one made it all the more important that the Christians should have a religious literature of their own. In the classical literature the Sinhalese had, for the most part, to read about Buddhism. It was necessary, therefore, to provide the educated Christians with a Christian literature of such literary excellence that in reading it they would not only learn their religion, but at the same time obtain the satisfaction they got in reading the traditional literature. In other words, from a literary point of view the Christian literature had to be one that compared well with the national literature.

The creation of a Christian literature of that nature is by no means an easy task. But providentially Fr. Vaz found the man he needed for it — Fr. Jacome Gonçalves, a gifted linguist and writer, who very creditably carried out the work entrusted to him by his superior.⁶¹ He produced a literature, extensive and varied, in prose as well as in verse, of high literary quality, and sufficient to provide the Sinhalese Catholic of his day, nay even of today, with a wide knowledge of his religion — a remarkable achievement for a single man in the circumstances in which he lived and worked. He wrote, besides, a number of books in Tamil, copies of which were taken even to India. "When the news of these works reached the Choromandel Coast," it is reported, "many Christians came from there to take copies of his works."⁶²

⁶¹ Cf. article on "Sinhalese Pundit from India," *supra*, pp.53-60.

⁶² Mission Report for 1730-1732, *OMC*, p.243.

Fr. Vaz not only saw to it that books were written but also that they were copied and distributed. We learn from a report of 1707 that twelve clerks were engaged in the work of making copies of the writings of Fr. Gonçalvez and the few composed by Fr. Vaz himself.⁶³ In 1712 we find Fr. Gonçalvez complaining to his superior at Goa that "without skilled writers who are costly" he had not been able to make copies of some of his works, and begging him to ask the Bishop of Cochin for some financial assistance for the work.⁶⁴ Although the laborious process of supplying books in this manner involved great expense, which the poor mission could scarcely afford, the work was carried on as the missionaries were convinced of its importance for successful evangelization. The report for 1730-1732 says: "Owing to the want of a printing press they are written in innumerable volumes for distribution throughout the Mission. Two hundred were sent to the mission of Jaffna alone at considerable expense in paying copyists."⁶⁵ It is mentioned in the report for 1733-1740 that Fr. Gonçalvez "engaged a number of writers at some cost and copied the volumes and had them spread in Matara."⁶⁶ There is no doubt that the steps taken by Fr. Vaz to provide a Christian literature in the national languages helped greatly to strengthen the foundations of the Church he built up.

Realizing no doubt the importance of giving a national look to the Church, Fr. Vaz sought to adopt for Church use what lent itself to adaptation and Christianization in accord with Church law in vogue at the time. He allowed, for instance, the use of various forms of native music at Church functions. At the celebration of a feast of St. Anthony in Kandy "there were dancers with sticks with each of the feretories [one of Our Lady, one of St. Anthony, and another of Saints Peter and Paul], and music according to the manner of the country"⁶⁷; at a feast of the Immaculate Conception at Puttalam there was music supplied by

63 Letter of Manoel de Miranda, 1707, *OMC*, p.74.

64 Letter of Jacome Gonçalvez, Sept. 8, 1712, *OMC*, p.126.

65 *OMC*, p.242.

66 *Ibid.*, p. 249.

67 Letter of Pedro da Saldanha, 1705, *OMC*, p.39.

non-Catholic native musicians⁶⁸; during a church devotion "the instrument called *uddappa* was played for a canticle of Our Lady."⁶⁹ In fact, Fr. Gonçalvez composed prayers and hymns to be sung to native airs, to the accompaniment of native musical instruments. He wrote also for chanting in the traditional manner of the country prayers, sermons and religious verse, of which the 'passion-chants' (*pasaṇi*) remain very popular to this day.

In Ceylon, as generally in other Oriental countries, superstition in various forms is deeply ingrained in the life of the people. There is a good deal of it in popular Buddhism.⁷⁰ It was no easy task for the early missionaries to wean their converts from superstitious beliefs and practices. It was particularly in times of illness and affliction that such practices were resorted to to obtain relief. A common practice was the recitation or incantation of a formula, verse or text believed to possess some magical power. There is, for instance, the popular belief in the power of *mantrams* (charms). There is the practice, among the Sinhalese, of reciting verses composed with a particular grouping of syllables according to which their recitation may bring good or evil on those over whom they are recited — *set-kavi* (benedictory verses), if the purpose is to cause some good or obtain some relief, or *vas-kavi* (malevolent verses), if some evil is intended. A considerable volume of literature has grown in Sinhalese on the exercise of magical, astrological and demonological practices of various types.⁷¹

Fr. Vaz, no doubt, saw that it was almost impossible to root out altogether these practices to which the people had got so much accustomed. He, therefore, made an attempt at adaptation. He placed in the hands of the Christians a set of special prayers for various occasions and needs, some translated from the Ritual, some newly composed for the purpose, which the

⁶⁸ Mission Report for 1728, *OMC*, p.208.

⁶⁹ Mission Report for 1718-1719, *OMC*, p.168.

⁷⁰ Cf. B. Ryan, *Sinhalese Village* (Coral Gables, Florida, 1958), pp 106-118; W. A. de Silva, "Sinhalese Magic and Spells," *JCBRAS*, XXX (no. 79, 1926), 193-211.

⁷¹ Cf. C. E. Godakumbura, *Sinhalese Literature* (Colombo, 1955), pp.290-303.

people could recite themselves, or get a lay leader of the local Christian community to recite. A collection of such prayers, under the title *Dēva Parihāra* ('Divine Protection') is listed as one of the works of Gonçalvez and described in the mission report for 1733-1740 as: "Medicine for all ailments of men and animals and remedy against all damage done by beasts and insects to crops, by the use of the prayers of the Church and prayers of Saints. This was composed as an antidote against superstitious ceremonies of paganism. The use of this book has been very efficacious not only for the effects which those who read the prayers experienced, but also because of the conversions produced."⁷² In the printed editions we find the *Dēva Parihāra* (under the name *Dēva Vaidhyāvaya*) attached to the *Kristiyāni Palliya* which is partly a catechism of Christian doctrine, and partly a manual of prayers.

At a later date, however, the use of the Ritual prayers by the lay folk, especially in case of illness, gave room to abuses, and had to be censured by ecclesiastical authority. This degeneration of the practice was partly due to lack of understanding and tactful guidance on the part of later missionaries. In any case, the policy of adaptation followed by the early Oratorians meets with the approval of modern Missiology. From the sociological and psychological aspects, adaptation is more effective than the attempt at complete eradication.

Among the Catholics of Ceylon there are other practices, with their parallel in Buddhism, which originated in the time of the early Oratorians. One such is the manner of saluting a priest. In a country where the people were accustomed to go down on their knees to worship the *bhikkhus*, Fr. Vaz evidently thought it desirable that the Christians should be allowed to venerate their pastors in a similar manner. A band of Oratorians, including Fr. Gonçalvez, who came to Ceylon in 1705, were surprised on arrival to see the native Christians fall at their feet to venerate them: "The Fathers were struck with admiration at the sight of the love and veneration with which the Christians treated them,

⁷² OMC, p. 251.

for no one came but knelt down to ask a blessing or even prostrated himself on the ground such as is never seen in this city [of Goa]."⁷³ Later Fr. Gonçalvez himself added the salutation *Jēsu kristu ārādhitavēvā* (Praised be Jesus Christ)⁷⁴ — a practice which has come down to our times.

From the days of the early Oratorians comes also the practice of giving food as alms. In Buddhist life, almsgiving, especially in the form of food, holds an important place. It is thought that giving alms to a *bhikkhu* is a highly meritorious deed. The Buddhist not only places food in the monk's alms-bowl as he goes round from door to door, but on special occasions invites him to his home and offers him food there. Although among Catholics there is no ceremonial almsgiving to priests, as to *bhikkhus*, it is a popular practice among them also to give food as alms. We have seen that the Christians brought rice to the church to be distributed by Fr. Vaz. One of his companions, Fr. Pedro da Saldanha, commends the generosity of the Kandyan Christians in giving alms: "The more poor they are, the more generous they are in giving alms; and this is a virtue characteristic of the Christians of Kandy."⁷⁵ We are told also that at this time "it was the custom throughout the mission for people to dine together on the feast of Christmas and Easter and to give dinner to all the people who come to the chapel."⁷⁶ It is probably this practice that has come down to us as the annual almsgiving of each church which is an important occasion for the local Christian community when everyone who comes to the church is fed. There is also the practice of giving food as alms in memory of the dead, as is done by the Buddhists themselves, and of giving food to the poor at a church or shrine after the rice harvest, in the same way as Buddhists make offerings of food to *dēvālēs* in fulfilment of vows made for the success of the harvest.

⁷³ Mission Report for 1706, *OMC*, p.47.

⁷⁴ Mission Report for 1730-1731, *OMC*, p.226; Report for 1730-1732, *ibid.*, p.242.

⁷⁵ Letter of Pedro da Saldanha, 1705, *OMC*, p.34.

⁷⁶ Letter of Manoel de Miranda, 1712, *OMC*, p.101.

The adaptation of similar practices by the Oratorians, under the inspiration and guidance of Fr. Vaz, would make an interesting study, which, however, we cannot attempt here. Suffice it to say that his policy of adaptation, which has given a local colour and national aspect to the Church he founded, is in keeping with sound missiological principles.

VI

Some idea of the greatness of Fr. Vaz as a missionary and the success of his missionary methods, in so far as success in the spiritual order can be measured by human standards, may be gleaned from the impact his personality had on those who came into contact with him.

His fellow-missionaries saw in him a deeply spiritual and saintly man and a great missionary, and considered it a privilege to be called upon to work with him and be trained and guided by him. Fr. Pedro da Saldanha speaks of him as "a torch, blazing and ardent,"⁷⁷ showing the way to others. The ascetical standards Fr. Vaz had set himself seemed almost beyond the reach of his confreres. Says Fr. Francisco Vaz: "His penances and rigour of life in the midst of the toils of mission life were rather a matter for astonishment than for imitation."⁷⁸ He was scrupulously faithful to the rules of the Congregation of the Oratory. "The zeal with which he observed our rules in the least particular is wonderful,"⁷⁹ is the testimony of one who had the opportunity of observing him very closely, Fr. Gonçalves. His zeal was such that "to assist one single soul, of whose need of succour he had the least information, he would go a three or four days' journey in one,"⁸⁰ according to the mission report for 1705. Such was the regard the missionaries had for him that his death is spoken of by Fr. Manoel de Miranda as a loss "on account of

⁷⁷ Letter of 1705, *OMC*, p.34.

⁷⁸ *Op. cit.*, *OMC*, p.120.

⁷⁹ Mission Report for 1706, *OMC*, p.49.

⁸⁰ *OMC*, p.28.

our sins."⁸¹ Remarks such as these occur again and again in the letters and reports of the period. They are so numerous and so unanimous in their esteem of Fr. Vaz that it would be rash to regard them as mere exaggerations.

The missionaries not only admired him but also valued his counsel and guidance and sought to follow in his footsteps in respect of their personal spiritual life and their work as missionaries. They did so evidently because they saw for themselves that his way of life and missionary method bore fruit. We find it mentioned, for instance, that Fr. Saldanha became "a faithful imitator"⁸² of Fr. Vaz and "learnt fresh lessons of spiritual perfection by watching the most exemplary life and deeds of that great servant of God."⁸³ It is said of Fr. Miguel de Mello that "on arriving in Ceylon his fervour became the more ardent when he saw the example of the Venerable Father Joseph Vaz."⁸⁴ Fr. Gonçalvez is mentioned as "walking in the footsteps"⁸⁵ of Fr. Vaz and working "with a zeal and ardour worthy of a companion of that great servant of God."⁸⁶

Indeed, Fr. Vaz seems to have animated with his spirit the early Oratorians who were his collaborators. One is struck by their courage, zeal and daring; their readiness to suffer hardships and risk their very lives; their poverty and asceticism; their regard for the native languages, manners and customs; their devotion to the people, and loyalty to the king. If they thus strove to walk in the footsteps of Fr. Vaz, it was certainly not for the mere fact of his being the founder of the mission and of the Congregation, but because they regarded him as a holy man who should be emulated, and saw with their own eyes that his methods produced good results.

The results he obtained, though not spectacular as in the time of the Portuguese, were, where quality is concerned, solid and lasting. By the powerful persuasion of his saintly persona-

⁸¹ Letter of 1712, *OMC*, p.100.

⁸² Mission Report for 1730-1731, *OMC*, p.224.

⁸³ Life of Fr. Pedro da Saldanha, *OMC*, p.237.

⁸⁴ Life of Fr. Miguel de Mello, *OMC*, p.188.

⁸⁵ Mission Report for 1730-1732, *OMC*, p.242.

⁸⁶ Mission Report for 1733-1740, *OMC*, p.248.

lity, by total dedication to the service of the people, and by a practical programme of pastoral care, he formed a generation of Catholics who were well instructed, who loved and valued their religion, who were deeply attached to their pastors, and who were prepared to suffer inconvenience, hardship and persecution for the faith, as amply borne out by the records of the period.⁸⁷

The people's attitude towards Fr. Vaz was such that unmistakably he emerges as the central figure round which the Church grew at this time. He was the main force behind the wave of conversions to the Church. The people were so impressed by his saintly, ascetical personality that they held him in profound veneration. He was "regarded by all as a saint,"⁸⁸ said the first mission report. "Every action of his seems extraordinary to them,"⁸⁹ wrote Fr. Saldanha to his superior. So great was their regard for him that they treasured his old cassocks as relics.⁹⁰ Some asked to be baptized by him, even when other missionaries were at hand, "because of the great devotion they have towards him."⁹¹ When he died and the news of his death spread, "there was a concourse of people to the Church of Kandy from all parts, even from most distant parts, because of the great veneration they had for him."⁹² Echoing the sentiments of the people the Sacred Congregation of Rites spoke of him, three decades later, as a priest "with a great reputation for holiness of life and virtue and miracles."⁹³

Fr. Vaz was therefore the main influence in the process of evangelization in Ceylon in the early part of the Oratorian period. Even thereafter his influence continued. It continued, first of all, through his fellow-missionaries and their successors, who

⁸⁷ Cf. e.g., *OMC*, pp. 14, 17, 18, 19, 28, 34, 36, 47, 52, 55, 56, 165.

⁸⁸ Mission Report for 1687-1701, *OMC*, p.6.

⁸⁹ Letter of 1705, *OMC*, p.34.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.33.

⁹¹ Mission Report for 1705, *OMC*, p.28.

⁹² Francisco Vaz, *op. cit.*, *OMC*, p.122.

⁹³ Letter of Sept. 12, 1742, authorizing the Bishop of Cochin to institute the Informative Process for the Beatification and Canonization of Fr. Vaz, cf. *OMC*, p.3.

found in his life and work inspiration and guidance. It continued also through the Christians who had known him. The memory of his saintly life and the tradition of Christian piety initiated by him were handed down by them to later generations. Having come to know him, they entertained a high regard for the other missionaries as well.

So did the kings of Kandy. The efforts of persons hostile to Christianity in Kandy did not succeed in breaking the kings' confidence in the Fathers.⁹⁴ In spite of repeated attempts by the Dutch to convince Narendrasimha that "the Catholic missionaries residing in his court were traitors and spies of the Portuguese, and that they revealed the state of his kingdom and cleared the way to their coming to take possession of the Island of Ceylon,"⁹⁵ he refused to believe that they were anything more than what they claimed to be, preachers of the Gospel of Christ.⁹⁶ It was because Fr. Vaz succeeded in winning the goodwill and confidence of the kings of Kandy by his saintly life that, under them, his companions and successors were able to exercise their ministry and the Catholics enjoyed religious freedom.

It will be seen, then, that the personality of Fr. Vaz dominated the period of Catholic revival under the Oratorians. He was not only the founder but also the chief architect of the new Church that rose from the ruins of the old. It is clear that the success of his mission was due mainly to the holiness of his life and his methods of evangelization. Not only has he saved the Church in Ceylon from destruction, but we have in him a missionary who undoubtedly ranks as one of the greatest in Asia, and whose missionary principles and methods are missiologically of a high order. His mission, therefore, is not for his time and our country only. He has a mission beyond his day and our shores. His life, work and method should serve as an object-lesson to all missionaries. To show them the way is also part of the mission of Joseph Vaz.

⁹⁴ Cf. *OMC*, pp.11-12, 51-52, 218.

⁹⁵ Mission Report for 1728, *OMC*, p.206.

⁹⁶ Cf. *OMC*, pp.101, 206, 217-218, 260, 265-267.

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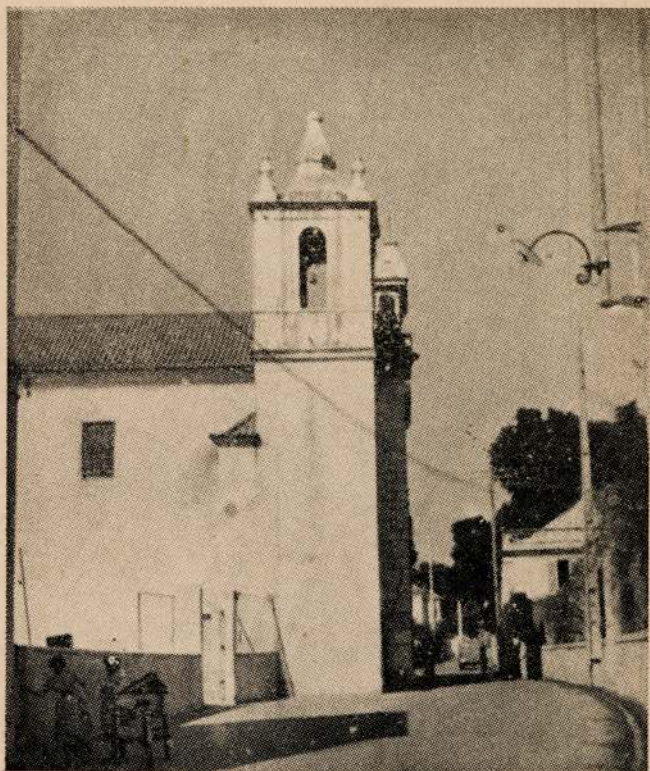
DON JOAO OF KANDY

(Reproduced from the *Archivo Historico Portuguez*, vol. III, 1905).

Do Principe conservamos na Sacristia deste Oratorio huma vera effigie, que na estatura alta, proporção do corpo, gravidade do semblante manifesta a sua fidalguia. Era pardo, como são todos os de Ceylão, mas nas feyções, e cabello não se differencava dos Europeos.

In the sacristy of this oratory [of Telheiras] we have a true portrait of the Prince, which by the height of the figure, proportion of the body and grave countenance manifests his nobility. He was dark-complexioned like everybody in Ceylon, but in features and hair was not different from Europeans.

— *Historia Seráfica*, tom. V, liv. IV, p. 612.



THE] CHURCH OF TELHEIRAS

(From a photograph by the author)



ALEIXO DE MENEZES

Archbishop of Goa and Primate of the East Indies,
1595-1610.

By Courtesy of the British Museum, London.

(From the MS *Livro do Estado da India* of Barretto de Resende,
Sloane Collection, No. 197).



PHILIP I OF PORTUGAL

(Philip II of Spain)

He became suzerain of the Kingdom of Kōṭṭē on the death
of Don João Dharmapāla in 1597.

By Courtesy of Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., London.

(From a picture by Alonso Sanchez Coello)



ROBERT DE NOBILI

Famed Seventeenth-Century Jesuit Missionary and Orientalist.

He was in Jaffna for two years.



ANDRE FURTADO DE MENDONCA

20th Governor of Portuguese India.

He set Hendarmāna Siṃha on the throne of Jaffna in 1591.

By Courtesy of the British Museum, London.

(From the MS *Livro do Estado da India* of Barretto de Resende, Sloane Collection, No. 197).



LUIS VAZ DE CAMOENS

Author of *The Lusiads*

From a Bust in the *Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga*, Lisbon.

By Courtesy of the Director of the Museum.

(Camoens lost his right eye in a skirmish in Ceuta before he came out to the East).



VASCO DA GAMA

Hero of *The Lusiads*

By Courtesy of the Hakluyt Society, London.



THE VENERABLE FR. JOSEPH VAZ

(Detail from an old painting. Reproduced from a copy at the National Seminary, Kandy).



