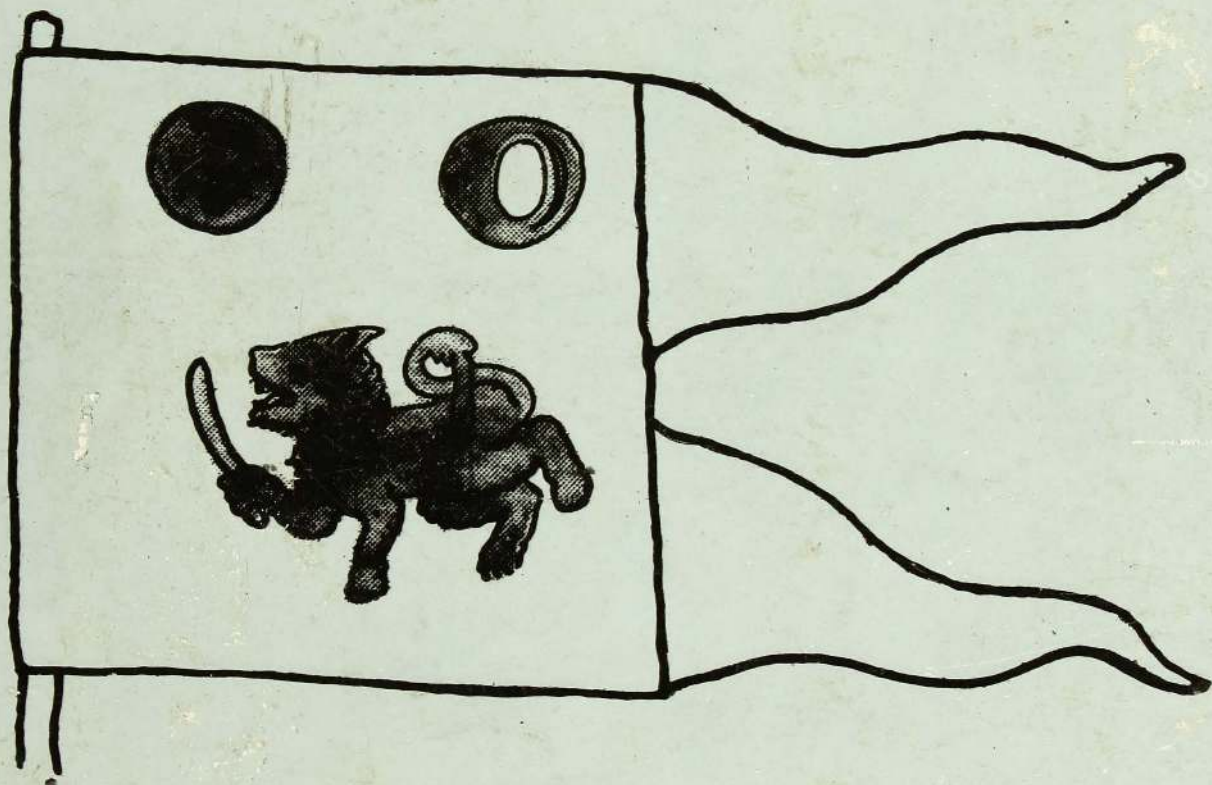


RUHUNA

*A Study of the History, Society
& Ideology of Southern Sri Lanka*



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RUHUNA

A Study of the History, Society
& Ideology of Southern Sri Lanka

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The cover depicts the banner of Outagamunu as represented by the Dambulla temple paintings. Extracted from Sinhalese banners and the banner of the Colombo branch of the oldest existing temple in the early part of the 19th century. It is a product of the early part of the 19th century. It is a product of the early part of the 19th century. It is a product of the early part of the 19th century.

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The cover depicts the banner of Dutugemunu as represented in the Dambulla temple paintings. Extracted from: Sinhalese Banners and Standards, By E. W. Perera, Memoirs of the Colombo Museum, Series A No. 2, 1916. This is considered the oldest extant Lion flag. Most probably a product of the early Kandyan period, it reflects the ideological accretion of ages when the association of Dutugemunu with "Sinhalaness" had become complete.

To the memory of my father
the late
Candauda Arachchige Chandraprema (Sr)

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PREFACE

The subject matter of this book it is needless to say, is very controversial. This is especially so at the present moment with ethnic and other tensions running high on all sides. However, a period of social unrest and ferment can also be a period of the breakdown of conventional wisdom and new thinking. It is with such a process in mind that I have undertaken this study at this particular time.

A basic problem arises in that the author happens to be very much a part of the phenomena examined in this book. A "Ruhunuputra" writing about Ruhuna. The insider-outsider dichotomy is one of the most vexatious problems in the sociology of knowledge. Does one have to be an insider vis a vis the phenomena taken up for analysis, or is an outsider better able to take an "objective" view of the matter under consideration? This will continue to be one of the perennial dilemma's of the social sciences.

Whether done by an insider or outsider, it should be stressed that there is no such thing as "impartiality" in social inquiry. The social scientist always processes the data available from the view he has already formed about the subject under consideration. To this extent I too have been subjective. But it should be taken note of that this book has been written from the materialist perspective of history. This is to say that historical processes are in the main fundamentally influenced by material factors. If the people of Ruhuna are seen to possess certain special characteristics, these are viewed as the cumulative result of material processes over decades, sometimes centuries. Among such material factors that went into the shaping of the Ruhuna identity as explained in this

book are, geographical location, climatic changes, foreign military invasions, famine, pestilence, landlessness, agricultural involution, occupational dislocation, the availability of road networks, railways, irrigation systems, harbours and other such infrastructural facilities, patronage, educational facilities, emulation effects set in motion by example etc, etc.

Into this category of material factors which have had a pivotal importance in the formation of the Ruhuna identity, I include traditional sources of written history. Sri Lanka is one of the few country's in the world that has an unbroken tradition of written history ranging over nearly two millennia. The myths of origin contained in these compilations and the exploits of certain "primal" hero's (like for instance Dutugemunu) are important aspects of what the French sociologist George Rude refers to as the "mothers milk ideology" of the people. The widespread dissemination and acceptance of such a primordial ideology makes it a material force active in society and capable of influencing human behaviour as much as other economic factors such as landlessness and population pressures. Emphasis is also placed on the fact that processes very similar to those taking place in Ruhuna also took place in the Jaffna peninsula, thus leading to the sharing of similar characteristics by the people of peninsular Jaffna and the Sinhalese of the deep South. Hence the Ruhuna phenomenon does not stand alone even within the confines of this small island. Other examples from neighbouring India are also referred to.

Another factor that has to be contended with is that if at all some aspects of the Ruhuna identity have been dealt with by scholars previously, it has always been to find fault with it. In today's emotion charged atmosphere, this is doubly relevant. "Ruhunuism" has for a long time (correctly) been considered the apex of Sinhala - Buddhist national consciousness. With regard to this matter however, there has been an unfortunate tendency to throw out the baby with the bath water. If one is to discern certain positive aspects of the Ruhuna identity, does this in itself

constitute a promotion of Sinhala chauvinism? To some, Ruhuna presents a basic epistemological block. They are afraid even to talk about it. This attitude however well meant it may be, is infantile and at the same time dangerous. Today, we have a situation where proponents as well as the opponents of the Ruhuna phenomenon look at it irrationally. The result of this needs no elaboration. We are still experiencing the chaos and destruction it has entailed.

This book, though not always "critical" is intended as a critique of the Ruhuna identity. The Ruhuna identity is what it is today not because of any innate or inborn qualities of the homo sapiens of the deep South but due to social conditioning owing to material processes taking place over decades and centuries. Thus, examining the Ruhuna phenomenon is not a case of making "statements of faith" for the "serene joy and emotion of the pious." But one of taking due cognisance of some very conspicuous realities. There is the possibility however, that the very act of explanation might lead to the consolidation and organisation of what I have termed "Ruhuna triumphalism" (self glorification based on achievement and performance.) But this is one of the common "hazards" of intellectual inquiry in the social sciences where the subject of study is human society - and in this specific instance, a society which is largely literate, industrious and acutely aware of their self-worth.

However, I wish to draw attention to the fact that chauvinism on the Sinhala side is more the result of unfounded fears, plain envy and feelings of general inadequacy vis a vis the minorities rather than being due to any triumphalist feeling of superiority. I venture to suggest that the day the Sinhalese lose their feeling of inadequacy and inferiority in the face of the more industrious and dynamic minorities, they will prove to be capable of taking a more rational attitude to the question of minority rights in Sri Lanka. If the Sinhalese build up a self image of being a community of achievement oriented go-getters, they will be much less inclined to fear and envy other communities and demand

total and undivided State power to "protect" themselves from "exploitation" and "domination" by the more industrious minorities.

Hence what the minorities have to worry about is not any kind of Sinhala triumphalism, but the Sinhala inferiority complex. In today's Sri Lanka, this inferiority complex is becoming less and less justifiable in empirical terms. And as time goes on this process will further continue. But there does not appear to be any corresponding diminution of the intensity of the inferiority complex. The more unfounded popular feeling is, the more irrational and dangerous it becomes. Thus it is hoped that this study will, in however small a way, contribute to a better understanding of the realities in Sri Lanka.

C. A. Chandraprema

INTRODUCTION

According to G. C. Mendis, (1) the Ruhuna Janapada in Southern Sri Lanka was founded independently of the agriculture-based communities that came into existence around the sixth century BC on the banks of the Malwathu Oya and Mahaveli Ganga in the Rajarata in Central and Northern Sri Lanka. The boundaries of Ruhuna have remained fluid down the ages, generally showing a tendency to shrink. During the Anuradhapura period from the 2nd century BC to around the 9th century AD, the territory stretching from below the Kaluganga in the West, extending in an arc comprising the low-lying regions to the South of the Central highlands and going on to the banks of the Mahaveli river in the east, belonged to Ruhuna.

The Mahaveli was taken as the boundary during the Anuradhapura era when civilisation was concentrated mainly in the Eastern dry zone areas of both Rajarata and Ruhuna. Later, when civilisation shifted to the south-western parts, the boundaries of this region which had always been indeterminate had to be defined clearly. It is not quite certain when the Bentota river came to be recognised as the new boundary demarcating Ruhuna territory in the South-West. But it would be correct to surmise that when the shift of civilisation to the South-West was being consolidated in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the carving out of a separate principality in the west (Dhakkinadesa), which was to be the domain of the heir-apparent to the Rajarata (Polonnaruwa) throne, clearly fixed Bentota as the boundary of Ruhuna, the area which was known as the Pasdun Korale between the Kaluganga and the Bentota river having been absorbed into the newly carved out Dhakkinadesa. In any case, up to the

emergence of Dhakkinadesa as a unit of administration in the eleventh-twelfth centuries, there was no fixity of boundaries in this region. Certainly nothing compared to the Mahaveli Ganga in the North-East of Ruhuna.

Since scholars are unanimous today that the shift to the South-West took place due to the push factor of foreign invasion, climatic change and pestilence and the pull factor of a trade-based economy in the South-West, we could surmise that when the principality of the heir apparent was demarcated, it was sought to include within its frontiers as many revenue-generating trading ports as possible. Thus the Pasdun Korale area with the flourishing trading ports and ship-building sites of Kalutara, Maggona, Aluthgama and Beruwela were absorbed into Dhakkinadesa. This absorption effect has deprived Ruhuna of much of its territory down the ages. Next to the Pasdun Korale, the Eastern parts of Ruhuna were abandoned due to the factors of invasions and climatic change in the thirteenth century. And the people who colonised the area now known as the Eastern Province in later centuries — Tamils who came with the South Indian invaders, Muslims who were given land in the region by the Sitawaka and Kandyan Kings during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and Sinhala settlers in the twentieth century — do not have the "Ruhuna" consciousness. Today, there is only a tiny sliver of land comprising the administrative unit of the Southern Province where the hard core of Ruhuna consciousness has been preserved to date. In a sense, it is natural that the Southern Province should retain a "Ruhuna" consciousness and self-identity since the most important centers of dynastic power and human settlements (along the Walawe, Kumbukkan Oya, Menik and Kirindi Oya river basins) of ancient Ruhuna were located in the territory of the Southern Province. And most of the later history of Ruhuna was also enacted in these regions.

The exact nature of this "Ruhuna" consciousness is hard to define. Speaking of the tendency of the rulers of Ruhuna during the Anuradhapura era to be quite independent of the central political authority, Prof. K. M. de Silva characterises it as a "well defined sense of regional patriotism" and regional parti-

cularism. (2) While acknowledging the fact that there is an element of regionalism and regional identity in the Ruhuna consciousness, one should stress that this regionalism is certainly not of a particularistic or exclusivist kind. The independent spirit of Ruhuna could in a sense be ascribed to its isolation from the main centre of Buddhist - Sinhala dynastic power in Anuradhapura. In later centuries the Vanniar chieftans imbibed a similar spirit of independence on account of their isolation from both the Tamil kingdom in the North as well as the Sinhala kingdoms of the South due to the vast tracts of jungle which separated their regions from the main centres of civilisation in the country. (3) At no point in History has Ruhuna ever claimed separate "national" or "ethnic" status, as for instance the Kandyan elites did in the early decades of this century. Since Buddhism welded together the scattered village communities of Rajarata, Ruhuna and Kalyani in one common religious bond from around the third century BC, Ruhuna has always stayed within the heritage of the religio-cultural-linguistic identity which evolved over the centuries on the basis of this common point of reference.

Indeed, far from distinguishing itself from the Buddhist-Sinhala identity in a particularistic way, it would appear that the geographical location of Ruhuna in the southern extremity of the island, which ensured its protection from South Indian invasions, enabled Ruhuna to emerge as the bulwark of the Sinhala Buddhist resistance in times of South Indian aggression. The emergence of certain parts of Ruhuna as important sea-ports after around the fourth century AD and its continuation into colonial and modern times gave an added dimension to the ideological make up of the Ruhuna people, which becomes steeped not only in Sinhala-Buddhist ideology but also in an increasingly articulate mercantilist - capitalist ethos. This paper seeks to inquire into the large - scale development of this mercantile - capitalist ethos in the Ruhuna region during and after the Dutch era. It also examines the manner in which this tied up with Buddhism, which has a lay ethic very favourable to mercantile capital., and the manner in which this combination has given rise to the "Ruhuna triumphalism" which is so much a part of our social, political and economic life today.

But the roots of Ruhuna triumphalism lie not only in the development of mercantile capital in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but more particularly in the ancient past in resistance to South Indian invasions which has generated a multitude of legends and folk tales which still evoke a highly emotive response among the Sinhala - Buddhist masses. Today, when for the first time in the modern history of the island an Indian Army is once more on our soil. the emotive effect of the ancient legends has in combination with other socio-economic factors made Ruhuna once again the bulwark of Sinhala - Buddhist resistance. Though this paper will not go into the specifics of the militant uprising of sections of Southern youth in the wake of the Indo - Lanka peace accord, it draws attention to the fact that the vehemence of the Southern response, unparalleled in the other Sinhala areas of the island, was not merely accidental. This is ancient history being re-enacted in a modern setting. Rohana Wijeweera, the leader of the Southern militant youth expressly compares himself to the twelfth - century Ruhuna hero Vijayabahu I who vanquished the South Indian invaders to capture the throne at Polonnaruwa and re-unite the country under his rule. The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna which he leads is very clearly making use of this readily available reservoir of blind and unthinking emotion in the Southern Province to their short term benefit.

This paper seeks to make a socio-historical inquiry into the emergence and consolidation of the triumphalistic ideology of Ruhuna over the centuries to modern times. Since the subject matter covers a vast canvas, the information provided in a monograph of this size may be far too skimpy to lead to any definite conclusions. The purpose of this paper is not to convince and consolidate, but to initiate discussion on a subject that has been neglected for far too long.

THE DUTUGEMUNU EPISODE — THE ROLE OF RUHUNA IN THE FORMATION OF THE SINHALA - BUDDHIST IDENTITY

“The Sinhala identity in its earliest historical form bears the imprint of its origin in the period of state formation in association with the ruling dynasty and its immediate social base.” — Prof. R. A. L. H. Gunawardene(4).

The Dutugemunu episode has been assessed and re-assessed many times by various scholars vis-a-vis its pivotal importance with regard to Sinhala - Buddhist ideology. The objective in going into this rather hackneyed topic here would be in view of its specific importance in the formation of a distinctive “Southern” identity within the Sinhala Buddhist polity. The main thrust of this section would be to show how Buddhism as an organised religion acted as a catalyst in the formation of what should be referred to as a **Buddhist - Sinhala** identity on the basis of the unified state, which was created via a political dynamic originating from **Ruhuna**.

A Multitude of Isolated Polities

The Pali chronicles have a tendency to see Dutugemunu’s achievement in the unification of the island as a restoration of the status quo ante. (5) The impression that is conveyed in these writings is that monarchy was brought ready-made from the Indian subcontinent by the North and South Indian settlers(6) who appear to have come in several waves during the sixth century BC, as is expressed in the Vijayan legend. The Mahavamsa would have us believe that local rulers beginning from Vijaya controlled the whole island until the unity of the island

was disrupted by successive South Indian invasions. "Vijaya, the Lord of men ruling over all Lanka in peace and righteousness reigned as is known in the city of Tambapanni thirty eight years." (7) Sena and Gutthika, the adventurous sons of a horse dealer, were the first South Indians to disrupt the unity of the island. (8) The next was the Chola nobleman Elara (9) who has was later defeated by Dutugemunu. "When he had thus overpowered thirty two Damila kings, Dutthagamini ruled over Sri Lanka in single sovereignty" (10).

Scholars today believe that this picture of monarchical rule was not quite what obtained in reality since evidence in the Pali chronicles and the inscriptions indicate that the actual situation was that there were a multitude of petty rulers controlling parts of the various settlements within the island. (11) The decentralisation of political authority during this early stage of our political evolution was at two levels. Firstly, there appears to have been three separate settlements in the island. There was Rajarata, the main location of civilisation in proto-historic times, settled mainly along the banks of the Malvatu Oya and the Mahaveli. The second most important settlement was Ruhuna, the main sites of population concentration being the four river basins in the South Eastern part of Ruhuna — namely, the Walawe Ganga, Kirindi Oya, Kumbukkan Oya and the Menik Ganga. Kalyani at the mouth of Kelani river in the West was the third settlement in the island. What the peopling of the island was like in pre-historic times we do not know. But it would so appear that in proto-historic times, there was shift and change with the waves of immigrants from Northern and Southern India so that as an end result, the three main centres of civilisation were founded in the three areas mentioned above. Though these separate settlements developed parallel to one another, they appear to have been politically autonomous. In addition to this area-wise decentralisation of the polity, each of these three main settlements were in turn divided amongst a multitude of petty rulers. This was the political geography of proto-historic Sri Lanka.

The Advent of Buddhism

The idea that the entire country was united under monarchical rule from the time of the Indian colonisation has engendered various myths. It is asserted for instance, that once Devanampiya Tissa was converted to Buddhism in the third century BC the rest was plain sailing for the propagation of Buddhism in the country. (12) While it would be an oversimplification to say that Buddhism was propagated in the whole island by virtue of the conversion of Devanampiya Tissa, it also appears that there was a radical change in the position of Buddhism as a mass religion during his rule with the advent of the Maha Thera Mahinda. The consolidation of Buddhism as the dominant religion by virtue of its being the only organised religion in the country was achieved during the time of the Maha Thera Mahinda's stay in the island.

Mahinda's advent could not have been the only missionary effort in the island. Most probably there were other missions in earlier periods which would have achieved marginal successes in the various settlements in the island. The Mahavamsa for instance says that there were representatives of the ruling houses of Kataragama and Chandanagama from Ruhuna at the ceremony held to mark the planting of the Bo sapling at Anuradhapura. (13) Though of course, the conversion of these ruling houses could have taken place after the advent of Mahinda, it is equally possible that there were separate missions that went to Ruhuna even before the arrival of Mahinda. There is in fact mention in the Mahavamsa about people who came into the country disguised as monks. Panduvasudeva, the successor to Vijaya, for instance came to the island disguised as a mendicant monk. (14) Apparently, there had been a tradition where religious from India visited Sri Lanka. Buddhism, as one of the major missionary religions in India at that time, would have been well represented in these early visits of Indian religious. Thus Buddhism when it came into Sri Lanka did not take the form of an overnight conversion of the people from above, starting with the monarch. It would have been a gradual process reaching a highpoint in the arrival of Mahinda, after which some major breakthrough appears to have been achieved.

The advent of Buddhism as an organised religion to the country is a watershed in the history of the island. The circumstances of Devanampiya Tissa's conversion to Buddhism would appear to indicate that this ruler who controlled the most significant of the petty kingdoms in Rajarata was converted to the new religion in the process of accepting the suzerainty of the Asokan Empire over his kingdom. The formal consecration of Tissa was done in accordance with the wishes of Emperor Asoka. (15) There is very little room for doubt on this score, since the Mahavamsa itself shows that the formal consecration of the king preceded his conversion to Buddhism. Religion was thus an effect and not the cause of Devanampiya Tissa's consecration. During the reign of this king, there appears to have been an unprecedented influx of cultural influences from India. The cultural forms in which Buddhism was expressed in the island were mainly imported from India. So was the Brahmi script and Prakrit language which was later to develop into the Sinhala language. Architecture was also heavily influenced by India during this period. The first stone inscription in the island was made during the time of Uttiya, the immediate successor to Devanampiya Tissa. Even the construction of religious monuments was done after the fashion of Indian architecture, as the Thuparama dagaba which was constructed during the time of Devanampiya Tissa shows. It was these imported cultural elements which later developed into an indigenous culture particular to Sri Lanka with the passing of centuries.

Origins of the Sinhala Language

The language of the proto-historic period of Sri Lanka was "Prakrit" — a dialect brought to the island by the many waves of Indian settlers who arrived in Sri Lanka around the sixth century BC. Historical evidence points to the fact that these Indian colonizers soon achieved pre-eminence in the political life of the country, in both Rajarata and Ruhuna. Superiority in terms of culture and military prowess obviously contributed to this dominance. If the several episodes in the Mahawamsa are shorn of their mythical garb, the inference will be to that effect. The defeat of the Yakkhas at

the hands of the North Indian warrior— Prince Vijaya symbolises this North Indian ascendancy. It is through such political domination by North Indian colonizers in all parts of the island that the linguistic homogeneity of all three major centers of settlement was achieved. Later when the second great wave of Indian influence comes to bear on the island during Devanampiya Tissa's time in the third century BC, this common dialect finds expression in the Brahmi script which was then used by Asoka in his inscriptions as well. Archaeologists have found that the inscriptions in Ruhuna and Rajarata are similar in terms of language.

Nostalgia for Mother India and the Lion Myth

It is a moot point as to what extent the Indian origins of the ruling elites of Rajarata and Ruhuna made the reception of Buddhism easier. It could be that the ruling groups in the petty Kingdoms that dotted Ruhuna and Rajarata were more receptive to such influences from the Indian sub-continent than the indigenous people. The presence of the most important ruling houses of Ruhuna at the planting of the Bo sapling may have been due to this factor of affinity. Buddhism which became the state religion of the Asokan Empire would have been accepted in Sri Lanka by its ruling elite precisely because the ruling elite of India had accepted it. It is here that the origins of the "Sinhala" identity itself would have taken place. The Mahavamsa, which was written about the sixth century AD, mentions the mythical origination of Prince Vijaya from a Lion. The presence of such myths in this sixth century chronicle points to the fact that this would have been a myth of origin already well established in the mass consciousness by that date.

And the rulers who thus claimed descent from the Lion were far from being racially homogeneous. It could have been that the elite was an admixture of South and North Indian settlers with a liberal sprinkling of indigenous people. (16) The desire to conform to the dominant ideology would have prompted the non-Indian sections of the elite to throw in their lot with the elites of Indian descent. A "follow the leader" frame of mind would have brought about ideological homogeneity amongst

an elite which was heterogeneous in every other respect. The favourable reception of Buddhism would have in large measure been due to such ideological cohesion within the early elites.

Buddhism as the Link between the Masses and the Elite

Prior to the advent of Buddhism, the religion of the indigenous people would have been a hotchpotch of animism, ancestor worship and Naga and Yakkha cults. The disparate little village communities scattered all over the north-central plains of Rajarata and the south-eastern river valleys would have been made even more heterogeneous by the lack of common ritual denominators. The acceptance of Buddhism by the most important ruling elites of Rajarata and Ruhuna appears to have changed this. Buddhism became a common ritual denominator between the ruling elite and their political allies who were converted to the new faith.

Dr. Tilak Hettiarachchi opines that Kings of ancient Sri Lanka took an avid interest in religious activities so as to secure the loyalty of their subjects by keeping the sangha happy. The sangha was comprised of members from all sectors of society which meant that there existed a close nexus between them and the people. The participation in religious ceremonies would also have given the king an opportunity to appear in public and make his presence felt. And the feeling imparted by this that the king and people were working together for the glorification of their common faith would have strengthened royal authority even more. "The close connexion between the Sangha and the people is very obvious from the stories contained in the Sahassavatthupparakana, the Sihalavattupparakana and Pali commentaries. In spite of the fact that these were works of monks who may well have exaggerated the regard in which the sangha was held by the people, one does get the impression of a surge of popular enthusiasm. Thus by spreading the faith, the king became popular among his subjects. In the first place religious ceremonies became a unifying force. This is particularly noticeable in the efforts of Devanampiya

Tissa to bring princes from distant places such as Kajaragama and Chandanagama to attend the Bodhi festival . . . Such ceremonies turned out to be a common ground where the ruler and the ruled met striving for a common cause, that of glorifying the faith they both avowed. Hence the religious ceremonies must have brought the king and the people very close to each other and the sangha became a constant link between them. Therefore, the more the king participated in such ceremonies the more he won the hearts of the people." (17) Thus was created the Sinhala - Buddhist identity. Actually speaking, two halves of the term Sinhala - Buddhist should be inverted to read as Buddhist - Sinhala since Buddhism was the main catalyst in the formation of the Sinhala identity.

The Buddhist - Sinhala Identity

It may be contested here that to look for the origin of the Buddhist - Sinhala identity as far back as the introduction of Buddhism into the country would be misleading. It would be asserted by some that since the Mahawamsa and the Chulawamsa do not mention explicitly any "Sinhala" identity even though they speak of a Buddhist identity, that the Sinhala - Buddhist identity which has gained currency today was a cultural construct dating from **after** the time that the Chulavamsa was written: ie. from about the eighteenth century.

The question can be posed after the fashion of Benedict Anderson in his book "Imagined Communities" about "the objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of the nationalists." (18) The imputation would be that the Buddhist - Sinhala identity was actually a product of nineteenth century Ceylon under the leadership of such ideologues as Anagarika Dharmapala, Piyadasa Sirisena and Walisinha Harischandra. Benedict Anderson in fact traces the origins of modern nationalism to the expansion of print capitalism whereby large masses become aware of one another as members of the same "imagined community" called the nation. "The print languages laid the base for national consciousness in three distinct ways. First and foremost they created unified fields of exchange and communication . . .

in the process, they gradually became aware of the hundreds of thousands, even of millions of people in their particular language field These fellow readers to whom they were connected through print, formed in their secular, particularly visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community." Second, "print capitalism gave a new fixity to language, which in the long run helped to build that image of antiquity so central to the idea of the nation . . ." (19)

As Prof. R. A. L. H. Gunawardene's paper quoted at the beginning of this section indicates, Buddhism tied to dynastic interests served to create the "imagined community" of Buddhist - Sinhala consciousness within the parameters of a unified state structure. An organised body of men in the form of the Buddhist sangha was the catalyst that established communication between, the disparate and scattered village communities that existed prior to the advent of Buddhism, and gave them a point of common identity. The absence of print communications after the fashion of modern print - capitalism was more than offset by the oral traditions initiated by the sangha. Oral transmission by the sangha was easily able to overcome the existing oral traditions and emerge as the dominant ideology. As one Western scholar has pointed out, "any traditional culture, based exclusively on oral transmission, could maintain its pure form only in those situations where the community that carried it was not subject to the influence of more advanced, literate civilisations." (20)

The historical consciousness that give cohesion to the Sinhala - Buddhist identity goes far back beyond the eighteenth century. One cannot create something out of nothing. It is true that ideologues like Anagarika Dharmapala had a lot to do with making the Sinhala - Buddhist identity what it is today. And for this purpose, print capitalism and other modern communication techniques were made use of quite liberally. But their entire propagandistic thrust was based on the "residual consciousness" of the past. Scholars in Sri Lanka generally tend to be very sympathetic to Benedict Anderson's theory that nationalism was a product of the socio - economic changes that took place globally in and around the eighteenth century. Supposing one does concede this idea completely, one is still

left with the question as to how it came to be that in Sri Lanka the large majority of the Buddhist and nationalist reformers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries hailed from Ruhuna (see following sections). The point here is that whether one takes the antiquarian view of nationalism or the more modernist Benedict Anderson theory, Ruhuna still emerges as a major factor. Either way, the importance of Ruhuna in the formation of the Sinhala Buddhist identity remains undiminished. For the purposes of the present study, it would be sufficient if it was taken note of that Sinhala Buddhist nationalism of the nineteenth century was as much a product of Ruhuna as the more antiquarian variety of the same. And this in my opinion, was not just a coincidence.

The Sinhala Identity in the Mahavamsa

Dutugemunu, when campaigning for the Anuradhapura throne, is reported to have said that he did not do it for himself but for the Sasana. (21) No mention is made here about a Sinhala identity. But if we take the comment of the mendicant Giri in seeing the nephew of Dutugemunu, King Vettagamini Abhaya, preparing to flee in order to escape the Tamil invaders who over ran the country for a brief period during his reign, "The great black Lion is fleeing" (22) we see some mention of a Sinhala identity here. The Sinhala identity took shape mainly in conflict with the Tamil identity from South India. In fact it may be said that the term "Maha Kalu Sinhaya" used by Giri to describe King Vettagamini Abhaya has become immortalised in Sinhala consciousness as an expression of national narcissism. There are instances where Army officers who died in the civil war against the Tamils (1983 - 1987) were described as "Maha Kalu Sinhalaya's." It is indeed a strange quirk of fate that an epithet used by an enemy to describe a defeated Sinhala King in full flight should later be adopted as an expression of Sinhala triumphalism and self - glorification. The term would have acquired its narcissistic tones by the fact that Vettagamini Abhaya was later able to effectively defeat the Tamil invaders with an Army recruited from Ruhuna. And "Maha Kalu Sinhalaya" has survived to modern times as a term of high praise among the Sinhalese.

Later in history, around the time of Kasyappa I in the sixth century AD, we see the architecture of the period depicting the Sinhala identity. The Lion's mouth in the Sigiriya rock is symbolic of the identity of the ruler with the Lion. (23) The Sinhala identity percolated to the ordinary people through identification with the ruling elite by virtue of conversion to Buddhism. The process of percolation and crystallisation would no doubt have taken centuries. But the absence of any explicit statement about a Sinhala identity in the Mahavamsa and the Chulavamsa need not necessarily mean that there was no Sinhala identity at the time that these chronicles were written. The writing of history is always a selective process, where information that is gathered is processed by the historian in accordance with his own idiosyncracies. The Mahavamsa and the Chulavamsa were written by Buddhist monks, understandably more conscious of the welfare of the sasana than of anything else. The views and interests articulated in the Mahavamsa and Chulavamsa are mainly Buddhist interests. The Sinhala identity which was merely an adjunct of the Buddhist identity was, as is to be expected in the circumstances, given very little attention.

Up to the sixteenth century, it would not have been possible to conceive of a Sinhalese who was not a Buddhist. It was only during the sixteenth century with the arrival of the Portuguese that a Sinhala identity that was shorn of the Buddhist identity was created. The creation of the distinct category of Sinhala - Buddhists would thus have been necessitated by the new situation where there was a section of the population that was linguistically and culturally Sinhalese but non-Buddhist (Christian) by religion. It would be interesting to inquire as to why these Christian converts were not promptly declared to be outcasts by the Sinhalese - Buddhists, as for instance happened in colonial India vis-a-vis the Christians and other traditional religionists. Two reasons may be adduced for this. Firstly, the Sinhala - Buddhist ethnic identity though well defined had not developed into the exclusivist ethnic nationalism of the modern era. Secondly, significant individuals and certain sections of these Christian converts had a tendency to identify and sympathise with the Sinhalese - Buddhist interests that held out in the Kandyan kingdom of the time, even though the natural thing for them to have done was to take the side of their co-religionists, the Portuguese. (24)

The Importance of Dutugemunu

The importance of Dutugemunu for the present study lies in that he brought about the unification of the entire island under one state structure for the first time in Sri Lanka's history. The chronicles try to portray the achievement of Dutugemunu as a restoration of the status quo ante. Scholars today however seriously contest this matter. It would be a moot point as to why the chronicler should misconstrue the facts in such a way as to belittle Dutugemunu's achievement. What follows would show that the chronicler was attempting to legitimise Dutugemunu's reign over the whole island by the creation of further myths for which the basic myth of monarchical rule from the beginnings of civilised existence in the island was necessary.

The Buddhist Chakravartin

Buddhist doctrine gives pride of place to the concept of the Chakravartin — the pious Buddhist lay ruler. Dutugemunu was for ancient Sri Lanka the realisation of this Buddhistic ideal of kingship. After the time of Asoka, the Buddhist Chakravartin of India and the concrete prototype of that kind for the entire Buddhist world, the Mauryan Empire went into decline. Buddhism, which in its institutionalised manifestation was thoroughly dependent on state patronage and the support of wealthy laymen, went into decline along with the political authority of the Mauryan Empire. The Buddhists in Sri Lanka would no doubt have felt the decline of the sasana in India. The political manifestation of the decline of the Mauryan Empire was the growing aggressiveness of the Dravidian kingdoms of South India that were on the periphery of the Mauryan empire. The invasion of Sri Lanka by two Pandyan adventurers in the third century BC is an indication of this new found independence of action of the South Indian Provinces.

The losing of ground in India to the Hindus would have triggered off a reflex action in the Buddhist community in Sri Lanka. The sangha for instance, as the intelligentsia of the period and as a group very conscious of its privileges and powers, would have wanted a Buddhist ruler in Sri Lanka to stem the tide of decline. Dr. Tilak Hettiarachchy points out that "the

Sunga's definitely persecuted Buddhism after the decline of the Maurya's. And Mahayani tendencies were gaining ground in India. The control of the North by the Tamil Sivaite king Elara would have been another aggravating factor. Thus, from the point of view of the sangha, there was a dire need for unification of the island under a single ruler committed to the cause of preserving and protecting Buddhism." (25)

In Dutugemunu, they found the ideal man to fulfil their ambition. Dutugemunu's alleged statement that he does this not for himself but for the sasana is to be seen in this light. It is also illustrated in the Mahavamsa as to what extent the Buddhist clergy were responsible for setting Dutugemunu to the task of unifying the island under a single state structure with Buddhism as the state religion. The Buddhist clergy actively intervene in the war of succession between Dutugemunu and his brother Saddhatissa. (26) One of the ten Generals of Dutugemunu (Teraputta Abhaya) was a Buddhist monk who had given up robes for the sake of joining in Dutugemunu's cause. (27) Also, according to the Mahavamsa, five hundred monks of the Tissamahavihara in Ruhuna marched with Dutugemunu's army from Ruhuna to Rajarata . (28) Thus the active involvement of the Buddhist clergy as advisers and otherwise in the military and political campaigns of Dutugemunu, is not in doubt.

The Buddhist State

The main cause for supporting a war against Elara, whom the writer of the Mahavamsa himself claims to be a very righteous ruler is his "false beliefs." Why should a king who had many indigenous people as supporters and was just to the sangha be ousted? It is here that the Buddhist pre-occupation with the control of the state and state patronage comes in. What the Buddhist community in Sri Lanka wanted was not righteous rule, but a Buddhist state to act as a bulwark against the encroachments of Hinduism and Mahayanism. The presence of a South Indian Hindu monarch on the throne at Anuradhapura would have been particularly irksome to the Buddhist community. Thus the Buddhist community with the Maha sangha at its head supported the only indigenous Buddhist ruler who

showed the potential of being able to oust the unbeliever from Anuradhapura. In the circumstances of the time, the need was not to judge the ruler by his righteousness but by his profession of religion. It would have been about this time that the whole myth of Sri Lanka as the "Dhammadipa" took shape. The Mahavamsa and the earlier compilation, the Dipavamsa both enunciate this point of view very clearly. Mythical accounts of the Buddha's visits to the island to prepare it for its future role and his instructions to the king of gods, Sakra, regarding the future destiny of Sri Lanka are created to give credence to this idea. (29)

A Refuge for Buddhism and the Dhammadipa Concept

The defensiveness that is reflected in the whole idea of the island as the "sanctuary" of Buddhism is obviously not a creation of the period when Buddhism was flourishing in the Indian sub-continent. There was then no need for Buddhism to find any kind of refuge anywhere since it was already well established in India. But when, with the dissolution of the Asokan Empire, Buddhism began to lose ground on the sub-continent to Brahminism, the defensive attitude of the Buddhists and especially the monks becomes evident. The Dhammadipa concept is thus a creation of adverse circumstances where the consolidation of gains already made was necessary. As Prof. Sirima Kiribamune affirms, "the Dhammadipa concept was born in an atmosphere when it was found necessary to conserve the status quo by seeking authority in the past." (30)

The Sihadipa concept which is given equal prominence in the Pali chronicles is ancillary to this primary concept of Dhammadipa. The depiction of Dutugemunu's path-breaking achievement in unifying the island as only a restoration of the status quo ante has to be examined in this light. The chronicler attempts to establish that Dutugemunu was directly connected to the Buddha Gautama through his paternal uncle Amitodana. The lineage is traced through Dutugemunu's ancestor Mahanaga who (supposedly) was a brother of Devanampiya Tissa, through Mutasiva to Pandukabhaya (the first Anuradhapura king) and via his allegedly Sakyan connection to Amitodana — the brother

of the Buddha's royal father Suddhodana. (31) The reasons for construing history in such a manner can be made out as follows.

Firstly, the aim of the chronicler would have been to depict this Southern upstart as being a legitimate heir to the Anuradhapura throne as a relative of Devanampiya Tissa — one of the most important rulers of Anuradhapura. Secondly, to give more sanction to this legitimisation, the chronicler so construes history as to connect Dutugemunu with the Buddha. Thus, the Ruhuna upstart becomes not only the legitimate heir to the Anuradhapura throne but also the kinsman of the Buddha and the instrument of destiny as the protector of Buddhism. (32) The major falsification in the chronicles to the effect that the whole country was unified prior to the invasions from South India was meant to invest the Anuradhapura kings with a legitimate right to rule the whole island.

The Need for Ritual Legitimacy

After Dutugemunu captures the throne at Anuradhapura, he increases the ritual importance of the city by building religious monuments like the Lohapasada and Ruvanvelisaya. The Mahavamsa describes the building of these monuments at great length. (33) Dutugemunu thus brings to fruition a process which began at the time of Devanampiya Tissa with the planting of the Bo tree and the inauguration of the Mahavihara. Mihintale had become a common point of pilgrimage for all Buddhists in the island long before the unification of the island had taken place. To quote R. A. L. H. Gunawardene; "It is also possible to suggest that the expansion of Buddhism brought about a culturally as well as politically significant psychological orientation among the converts, making them look towards a place beyond the bounds of their polities as the centre of their new faith. Inscriptions set up by Asalisa and several others reflect this new development which attracted pilgrims and patrons from different parts of the island to Mihintale long before they came to accept Anuradhapura as their political centre." (34) Buddhism was thus the cement with which the stones of the unified state were held together. It was the

link which bound the isolated village communities of Rajarata and Ruhuna to the "larger system."

A Piecemeal Process

Of relevance to this present discussion on the formation of a Buddhist - Sinhala identity is the question of what sections of the old pre - Buddhist polity combined to create the new Buddhist - Sinhala identity. It would be far too simplistic to think that once Dutugemunu captured the throne, the whole of the island's polity became homogeneous. The Mahavamsa itself states that many of the people who laboured on the Ruwanvelisaya went to heaven having been "converted to the new faith." This statement is important in that it indicates that Buddhists were not as numerous in those days as the Mahavamsa story about the conversion of Devanampiya Tissa would have us believe. The conversion of the people to Buddhism was obviously a very long - drawnout, piecemeal process which would have stretched over a number of centuries. It is stated in the Mahavamsa itself that during the time of Vettagamini Abhaya, a Brahmin by the name of Tiya raised a rebellion in Ruhuna and that "his following waxed great." The Sri Lankan polity was far from being homogeneously Buddhist at this point of time. Thus the people were also not Sinhala, since Buddhism was the point of identification of Sinhalaness. Being of North Indian extraction, the ruling elites in Sri Lanka were probably converted to Buddhism before the ordinary populace. The ordinary populace to the extent that they identified with the rulers were known as "Sinhala." But the majority of the people not so converted would have sought out at times leadership outside the established circles as is shown in the episode of the Brahmin Tiya.

The Secularisation of Religion

In examining the Dutugemunu episode, one cannot but notice that Buddhism underwent a process of secularisation in the creation of the unified state. Prof. Pieris talks of the secularisation of caste with the allocation of caste functions being vested in the political authority during the time of the Sinhala kings (35). It can be seen that when Buddhism became

the catalyst of a new religio - ethnic identity, it was secularised to the extent where practice differs totally from doctrine. The killing of many thousands of Tamils during the campaigns of Dutugemunu is noted in the Mahavamsa as being of no consequence as only one and a half human beings had died in the war — one having taken refuge in the three gems was a full human being while the other having taken the five precepts was half a human being! The killing of Tamils was justified on the basis that they were not really human beings since they were not Buddhists. And as the Mahavamsa further relates, the people who console the king with this rationalisation are Arahants! Commenting on this passage in the Mahavamsa, the Ven. Walpola Rahula says that the military campaigns of Dutugemunu obviously had the fullest sanction of the most influential sections of the clergy. (36) Here obviously the clergy have put the interests of institutional Buddhism above the pure practice of doctrine. And the tradition thus established has continued to this date with various ramifications. Buddhism here is more the ideological expression of very worldly interests and the prime criteria in the formation of a new ethno-religious identity. More than adherence to doctrine what is important here is ritualistic adherence to Buddhism which assumes the form of a political affiliation. Political adherence rather than doctrinal adherence is the important factor in this case.

A Case in Point

In the mid eighteenth century when a Tamilian dynasty from South India inherited the Kandyan throne the legitimacy of the rulers was ensured by their conversion to Buddhism while in all other respects they were culturally different to their subjects. The queens of the first Nayakkar king Vijayarajasingha were great patrons of Buddhism. The present Siam Nikaya was established during the time of his successor Kirtisirajasingha who brought Upasampada (higher ordination) from Siam in 1751. It was during the reign of Kirtisri that Velivita Saranankara Sangharaja was able to provide leadership to a great religious and literary efflorescence in the Kandyan areas. Rajadhirajasingha was an accomplished poet and a lavish patron of Buddhism. (37) Thus it was not surprising that when certain

sections of the Sinhala nobility sought to oust the Nayakkars from the Kandyan throne they did not find it an easy task. As Prof. K. M. de Silva states with reference to the Kandyan rebellion of 1818, the fact that Vilbave the pretender had to claim to be Doraisamy, a member of the deposed royal family "was a point worth noting both as evidence of the Nayakkar dynasty's continuing popularity among the Kandyans and as acknowledgement of their status as indigenous rulers. Every pretender who appeared thereafter — most notably in 1848 — claimed descent from the deposed and exiled Nayakkar line." (38)

During the formative stages of the Buddhist - Sinhala identity, it was Buddhism with its organised intelligentsia that fomented the evolution of a separate cultural identity in the insularity of the island. Even in later times when this identity had solidified into the familiar Sinhala - Buddhist nationalism, the conversion to Buddhism remained the first step towards acceptance and assimilation. Speaking of the South Indian immigrants of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries who settled along the Western seaboard of Sri Lanka and who were assimilated into Sinhalese society and caste structure, M. D. Raghavan states that "though the merger of the major elements was accelerated by the pervasive force of Sinhalese culture, it was the common bond of Buddhism that integrated them as a Sinhalese community." (39)

Even today, in my opinion, most Sinhalese Buddhists would feel a kindred spirit for a Buddhist Tamil than for a Christian Sinhalese. During the July 1983 anti - Tamil pogrom, owners of urban property in Colombo exhibited the Buddhist flag to escape marauding mobs. The Buddhist flag in this case symbolising the "Sinhalaness" of the owners. Thus even today, the secular ethnic identity of the Sinhalese tends to be in large measure decided by the Buddhist identity.

A conspicuous feature of the contemporary political scene in Sri Lanka is that though there is no dearth of mass organisations and political parties furiously proclaiming the cause of the Sinhala - Buddhists, the Buddhist religious organisations per se tend to be relegated to a rather minor role in the political and social life of the people. Thus while the Sinhalese - Buddhist

political organisations tend to be articulate and powerful the purely religious organisations remain woefully inarticulate and disorganised. Coupled to this is the absence of a Buddhist political party in the country. (40) Buddhism is thus in the Sri Lankan context more an important aspect of an ethnic identity rather than a religion in the traditional sense.

Ruhuna – The Heroic Heritage

Where does Ruhuna as a geographic, demographic and historical entity figure in all this? Firstly, Ruhuna was Dutugemunu's native province from where he launched the military campaigns which led to the creation of the unified state and the consolidation of the Buddhist - Sinhala identity. Secondly, for over two millennia Dutugemunu at the head of his Ruhuna hordes has remained the symbol of Sinhalese military prowess, independence, prosperity and all that is good and glorious. Anagarika Dharmapala, another Southerner, was many centuries later to hark back to the exploits of Dutugemunu as an example to be followed by all Sinhalese. Dutugemunu is the prototypic hero of the Sinhalese - Buddhist moral community. Every nationalism needs its idols either real or imaginary. And Dutugemunu to the Sinhalese is the ideal of all that is good and great and the symbol of their glory. If the Sinhala people (in general) regard Dutugemunu as their ideal the people of Ruhuna regard themselves as the progeny of Dutugemunu.

THE SHIFT TO THE WEST

Historical research indicates that the decline of the Rajarata civilisation in the thirteenth century AD was preceded by the decline of Ruhuna several centuries earlier. Prof. W. I. Siriweera has put forward the idea that the South - Eastern part of the island and in particular the river valleys of Ruhuna that were inhabited from pre - historic times were sparsely populated by the fifth or sixth centuries due to droughts and a lack of rainfall. The dwindling of the number of inscriptions in this region after about the fifth century is seen by Prof. Siriweera as a sign that these areas went into decline after the fifth century. (41)

Climatic Change and Irrigation Technology

It is interesting to note in this context that even the great irrigation works of Rajarata date only from around the time of Mahasen in the fourth century. "It would so appear that some climatic change did occur in Rajarata around this period which necessitated the adoption of advanced irrigation technology not hitherto used." (42) Famines and droughts do not appear to have been rare in Rajarata in the pre-Christian era. The chronicles mention a famine during the time of Dutugemunu (third century BC) when he was hiding in Mayarata following a dispute with his father. According to Prof. Siriweera "occurrences of droughts and destruction caused by them in pre - colonial Sri Lanka appear to have been more serious than at present. The first reference to a famine in the chronicles is found in connection with the legendry story of Dutthagamini

(BC 161 - 137). This famine was called **akkhakhayika** famine which literally means the famine during which nuts called **akkha** (*Terminalia Bellerica*) were eaten. According to the commentary on the Mahavamsa the *Vamsatthappakasini*, it was called **akkhakhayika** because the people used to cook tender **akkha** fruits and eat them during the famine, although they were not normally used as edible fruits. The commentary also refers to this famine through the terms **pasanacataka** and the *Thupavamsa* refers to it as **bulu kana saya**. According to all the texts, the famine was restricted to a particular area called **kotta** in the highlands. During this period, Duttagamini after disputes with his father was living in the region called **Kottamalaya**. The *Thupavamsa* refers to the region as **Kotmale**, which can be identified with the area close to Gampola known by the same name. (43) During the time of his nephew **Vettagamini Abhaya**, there was another famine which caused great hardship. After around the 1st century, famines and droughts became more frequent.

The King as Rain Giver

It would so appear that around this time, the climatic changes taking place were reflected in the thinking of the people. Dr. Tilak Hettiarachchy has written of the changes that took place in the use of royal titles during this period. The importance of water which was becoming more and more scarce is reflected in the new titles that came into use.

After about the time of **Vasabha** (2nd century AD) the title **Gamini** falls into disuse. And even titles like **Raja** and **Maharaja** fade away. The new titles that took its place was **Maparumaka Meghavanna** and other such titles which denoted the king as the giver of rain and prosperity to his subjects. The use of the title **Sri** marks the peak of this new development. The *Chulavamsa* has described the second successor to **Mahasen** (4th century AD) as **Mahadata** i.e. bestowing all kinds of blessings on the world. The kings of this period were quite obviously pre-occupied with the idea of obtaining sufficient water for irrigation. **Mahasen**, the builder of the famous **Minneriya** tank had experienced a severe drought during the reign of his father **Gotabhaya**. The chronicles report that **Sirisangha-**

bodhi had to resort to his superhuman powers to obtain rain. During this bleak period another king, Upatissa had to resort to religious ceremonies to obtain rain. (44)

It was obviously this persistence of famines and droughts that encouraged experimentation with larger irrigation works of the sort that did not exist before. (45) Vasabha in the second century constructs some large irrigation works like the Elahera canal. This was the beginning of large scale irrigation technology in Sri Lanka. (46) But the technology of large scale irrigation works really comes into its own in the fourth century with the building of the Minneriya tank by Mahasena. Mahasen has been deified as "Minneriye deviyo" by the folk of the outlying regions for his contribution to the prosperity of the country. In earlier periods huge construction works like the Ruvanveliseya and Lohapasada not to mention the financing of innumerable wars could be undertaken on the basis of the surplus produced by the village-based small-scale irrigation works of the era. But later large scale irrigation works become necessary for the very survival of the Rajarata civilisation. The fact that some drastic climatic change took place in the island between the 1st and 4th centuries is thus beyond any doubt.

The Backwardness of Ruhuna

One fact that can be noticed in Ruhuna is that it never evolved the elaborate irrigation technology that became such a common feature of Rajarata by the fourth century A.D. If as Prof. Siriweera asserts, Ruhuna had to face the same kind of climatic change that was experienced in Rajarata how did the people manage to survive in the face of adverse circumstances? According to him, adverse weather conditions prevailed in Ruhuna after the fifth and sixth centuries until about the tenth century. He quotes as evidence the fact that the inscriptions which are quite numerous in the early centuries of the Christian era show a marked decrease after the fifth and sixth centuries. He also points to the anxieties expressed in the inscriptions themselves about famines and droughts. And furthermore the fact that the two great monasteries in Ruhuna the Tissamaharama and the Chittalapabbata always had in stock grain sufficient to feed twelve thousand monks could be a pointer to the un-

predictable weather conditions and climatic change during this period. Most probably the whole area was sparsely populated after the fifth and sixth centuries due to the lack of rain fall. (47)

The Development of Trade

It is here that the development of trade in the western half of Ruhuna becomes important. Was there a shift of population from the East to the West of Ruhuna that was precipitated by the push factor of adverse climatic conditions and the pull factor of fast developing trade in the Western ports of Ruhuna? Ruhuna as we know, never really experienced South Indian domination because of its fortunate geographical location in the Southern extremity of the island. Thus there was no need for Ruhuna to be depopulated when Magha invades the island in the mid - thirteenth century. And moreover, since historical research indicates that the Eastern half of Ruhuna was depopulated by around the sixth century, could it be that the people of Ruhana migrated to the Western half of their domain in search of new avenues of survival, as their small scale irrigation works broke down in the face of climatic change? As Prof. Siriweera says, ". . . it is reasonable to assume that the depopulation of the dry zone and the breakdown of the reservoir system, famine and pestilence had taken a fearful toll of life . . ." (48) To what extent did the shift of population from East to West of Ruhuna absorb the population displaced by constant famines and droughts? The Western part of Ruhuna beyond the Walawe river falls into the heavy rainfall area of the "wet zone." The favourable climatic conditions prevailing in this part of Ruhuna combined with the development of trading activity in the fourth century would have encouraged the shift of population to the West in Ruhuna long before a similar process was to affect Rajarata.

The Entrepot of Asia

Prof. R. A. L. H. Gunawardene says that Sri Lanka from the fourth century AD to the eighth century, functioned as the entrepot of Asia. Prior to the fourth century, nautical technology was at too low a level for any sea borne voyages of any distance. The vessels of the period were coast-hugging craft concentrating

mostly on the trade along the coasts. Later however, developments in nautical technology allowed greater mobility and ships began to ply the high seas. The vessels of this time though greatly in advance of what existed before, could not undertake long voyages and frequent stops were necessary.

According to Prof. Gunawardene, "It appears that during the first seven centuries of the Christian era, technological developments affecting navigation in this Indian ocean had a beneficial effect on the commercial importance of the island. The change in techniques of navigation meant that ships from the mediterranean region could directly reach its shores each year. It is also important to note that dependence on the monsoon regime meant that scheduling of voyages was quite difficult. Hence even by the middle of the first millennium, voyages from the Red sea to places like Java in the eastern extremity of the Indian ocean will have been unusual. This probably meant that patterns of shipping and trade in the eastern part of the Indian ocean were distinct and autonomous to a certain degree — a situation which emphasised the commercial importance of Sri Lanka due to its strategic situation in the middle of the Indian ocean. The comments that Procopius made on problems of eastern trade suggest that Persians and Ethiopians went only as far as Sri Lanka where they awaited cargoes of silk and other merchandise from further east. (Procopius 193) . Ships from the western sector of the Indian ocean and those from the eastern sector were now meeting in Sri Lanka . . ." (49)

It was in this context that Sri Lanka became important during this period as it was situated in the middle of Asian sea-ways. Dr. G. V. P. Somaratne, quoting O. W. Walters (Early Indonesian Commerce) says, "Ceylon was known to the Chinese as an important commercial centre as early as the fourth century of our era." (50) Sri Lanka functioned as the entrepot of Asia where goods were brought from the Mediterranean and west Asia to be distributed in south-east Asia and goods from south-east Asia were brought to Sri Lanka to be distributed in the Mediterranean and west Asia. And it was the ports on the coastal belt in the western part of Ruhuna that came into prominence as a result of this trading activity. Lankan

products like precious stones, pearls, chanks, turtle shells and cloth were in demand from a very early time. Later on the island gained a reputation for its cinnamon and steel products . . . "(51)

Even as late as the seventeenth century, when the tug of war between the Dutch and the Portuguese was in full spate for the capture of the coastal areas of the island, the Dutch were very particular that Galle should be taken from the Portuguese and brought under their control even at the cost of antagonising their ally Rajasingha II of Kandy. This was for no other reason than that being located in the southern extremity of the island, which in turn was located on the southern extremity of the Indian sub-continent, and having no other land mass between itself and the south pole, Galle was ideally suited to control the seaways of Asia. (52)

The Decline of Mantai and the Rise of Ruhuna

Mantai or Mahatittha (modern Mannar) had been a trading port from proto - historical times. So had Kalyani at the mouth of the Kelani river. Both these ports were situated further north along the western coast of Sri Lanka. Mantai was connected by a major roadway with Anuradhapura during its heyday. Kalyani was not connected in such a way with the Rajarata civilisation, and it appears to have functioned on a momentum of its own as an independent settlement. During ancient times both these ports functioned as the main points of contact with foreign traders where the produce of the island was exchanged for foreign goods. And given the general level of nautical technology at the time, most of this trade would have been with the Indian sub-continent. The heydays of Mantai and Kalyani were during a period when Sri Lanka was not the entrepot of Asia. Later in the fourth century when ships begin to call at Sri Lankan ports from countries further away towards both the east and the west, other ports come into prominence all along the south western coastal belt.

To quote Prof. Gunawardene, "new developments in trade and in particular, the growing importance of relations with South-East Asia wielded a note worthy influence in bringing about a

change in the relative importance of commercial centres in the island. When the Samanthapasadika was being written in the fifth century, the practice of taking ship from Mahatittha to go to Tamralipiti or Suvannabhumi was quite well-known. (Samanthapasadika 808). However, it is likely that with the passage of time, ports in the southern and eastern parts of the island became progressively more important in the trade with South - East Asia. Though the importance of the port of Gokanna is well-known, historians have not paid adequate attention to the importance of the southern coastal belt during this period. The ports in the South were particularly convenient meeting places for mariners arriving in the island from both the Eastern and Western parts of the Indian Ocean. The combined effect of winds and oceanic currents favoured their use even as early as in the second century the port of Godapawata in the Hambantota District was yielding an income to the kings of Anuradhapura from the customs duties collected there. (Paranavithana 1984; 101). Finds of Roman coins provide an important corrective to the prevailing views on the relative importance of ports in the south-western, southern and eastern parts of the island in the period between the fourth and seventh century. Large hoards of Roman coins have been recovered from sites near Colombo, Balapitiya, Naimana, Kapuhenvala, Debaravewa and Valachenai, some of these hoards being exceptionally large and containing more than a thousand coins at each site. (Codrington 1924; 32 - 33). Devundara was yet another port which gained importance during this period. An elegant edifice built of stone found at this site has been identified by Paranavithana as a shrine which was originally dedicated to Varuna the God who ruled the sea. Paranavithana who dated it in the seventh century believed that it was this shrine which was built according to the chronicles by a princeling who held sway over southern Sri Lanka (Paranavithana 1953; 10). It is noteworthy that these sites are located well outside the northern plains dominated by the city of Anuradhapura and that the greater majority of them are from the southwestern and southern part of the island. The finds are clear testimony to the rise in importance of new centres of trade in the island with the changing patterns of navigation in the Indian ocean, more than five centuries before

the centres of political power were formally shifted to the south-west. A "tilt" towards the south west had already begun." (53)

With this trade Kalyani becomes more and more important. It is said that Greek ships called at Kalyani as far back as the second century AD. Kalyani having been known to be a major port of Sri Lanka would have been a convenient point of contact for vessels arriving from the west. Other ports further down the coast which rose to prominence in this period are Kalutara, Maggona, Alutgama, Beruwela, Bentota, Ambalangoda, Kosgoda, Galle, Weligama, Matara, Tangalle and Devinuwara to mention a few.

Shipbuilding in Ruhuna

In addition to trade there appears to have been a burgeoning shipbuilding industry in Sri Lanka which flourished during the period under review. Ports in the southern parts of Ruhuna like Tangalle, Weligama and Kalutara appear to have had a major role to play in this development of ship building. The ships of the time were wooden constructions which were held together by coir ropes, which had to be seasoned from time to time with coconut oil. Not only was the southern half of Ruhuna abundantly supplied with timber from its thick tropical jungles, its coastal areas were the natural habitat of the coconut palm which was so important in the supply of material for shipbuilding. Coir ropes and coconut oil were produced abundantly in these southern areas for the building of new ships as well as the provisioning of visiting vessels. The wood of the "del" tree which was available in plenty in the hinterland seems to have been highly valued in ship building. So was the wood of the jak tree also which was available in plenty in the hinterland of the wet zone. (54)

Merchant Capital

During the fifth and sixth centuries, when things began to get difficult in the river valley settlements of eastern Ruhuna, the majority of the population would have shifted to new sites of habitation made viable by the development of trade. It is not clear as to what extent the indigenous population was involved

in trading activity. Prof. Gunawardene quotes evidence that seems to point out to indigenous involvement in trade. "The growth of sea - borne trade and shipping was certainly an inducement for Sri Lankans to trade. We have already cited the statement of Kosmas that Sri Lanka sent out trading ships to foreign ports . . . there are several tales in Sri Lankan literary works about local men who took to foreign trade. In one such story, a man from the village of Gola decides to become a trader and takes ship to bring foreign goods. (Sahassavatthupkarana 166). In another tale, a man of peasant origin (Kutum-bika) who was also an artisan specialising in turning out craft products out of ivory, decides to take to trading and takes ship to go to foreign lands. (Sahassavatthupakarana 191) In these stories, the moral seems to be that these sea-going merchants who were good Buddhists and had generously patronised the Sangha would be protected by deities and saints endowed with supernatural powers. As such it was not possible for malevolent beings to harm them, and they were invariably saved in times of shipwreck. Clearly, the message was aimed at a section of the population who had the means to extend patronage and were wont to undertake hazardous voyages for trade. That there was in fact a very wealthy community of merchants living in attractive mansions inside the citadel of Anuradhapura is clear from the account that Fa - Hian wrote about life at the capital. (Fa - Hian 47)" (55).

The development of shipbuilding would have encouraged entrepreneurial activity amongst the local population. "The sixth century probably represents the highest point of the development of Sri Lanka as a centre of navigational and commercial activity. For Kosmas, Silediba was "the great emporium" which was connected by sea ways with trading marts "over the world." More specifically he states that goods from Sindhu, Male, Kalliana and other ports of India as well as from China, Persia and Ethiopia were being brought there and redistributed. ". . . . For the rulers, foreign trade was not only a source of revenue but also an equally important means of acquiring prestige goods. The active encouragement given by them was certainly a major factor behind the rise in the commercial importance of the island. Their endeavour

is evident in a succession of missions sent to the courts of Rome, Byzantium and China during the period from the first to the seventh century of the Christian era. Attempts were being made from about the fifth century to ensure the security of the sea. Moggallana I (495 - 512) instituted "a watch of the sea" (sagara - rakkhana, Chulavamsa; 39. 57). The practice was probably continued by his successors for there is a reference in the chronicle to another king Silakala (522 - 535) appointing one of his sons to protect the sea. (56).

By the eighth century, the biggest ships calling at Chinese ports were from Sri Lanka. There is nothing to show that at least some of these were not operated by local entrepreneurs. Whatever local entrepreneurship that would have existed however does not seem to have lasted very long. By the sixteenth century when the Portuguese arrived in the island, almost all trading activity whether external or internal was in the hands of Muslims.

The Growth of Service Trades

Even if there were local traders in these southern ports, they would have been a miniscule minority amongst the people who would have shifted to the west in search of new economic opportunities. The vast mass of the people would have been engaged in the ancillary occupations of producing the material for the provisioning of ships — coir rope, coconut oil, foodstuffs and providing the manpower resources for activities pertaining to trade. To quote Prof. Gunawardene, "Cordage, made out of fibres extracted from coconuts as well as creepers and barks of trees (Edye 371) would have been another material produced in Sri Lanka which attracted mariners plying the routes in the Indian ocean to its shores. The "sewn" ships which sailed in the Indian Ocean needed enormous quantities of rope. One can form an idea of the quantities required regularly in those days when one considers the amazing fact that Severin who built a medium sized ship for his "Sinbad voyage" used up to about 400 miles of rope. (Severin 40). Coconut oil was perhaps another product which was in demand at the ports. The ropes used to tie up the planking had to be oiled regularly, once in about four to six months. (Severin:

68). . Though products based on the coconut tree were certainly used for internal consumption, the growth of the practice of cultivating coconut in large plantations with a view to exchanging the produce has to be explained largely as a result of the growth of trade and shipping. The Laccadives were perhaps the most well known among Arabs as a source of cordage, but by the end of the ninth century at least, Sri Lanka was known as another important source for this product. "The people of Serendib pay attention to the cultivation of coconut," Al Idrisi noted. He further recorded that Arab ships from Oman and Yemen used to come to this island and to other islands in its vicinity to obtain rope, trunks of coconut trees for masts and timber for planting and also to place orders for ships which were constructed there. (Ahmed 29 - 30)" (57).

In the western parts of Ruhuna one can see the production of coir goods going on in much the same way as it would have several centuries earlier. The production of coconut oil has now been mechanised for the most part. But an interesting feature of the late nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century was that the Galle and Matara districts had a lead in the production of coconut oil (according to Dr. Michael Roberts) even though the main centre of coconut cultivation had moved further north on the western coastal belt into what is now known as the coconut triangle, Kalutara - Kurunegala - Chilaw. Could this lead in coconut oil production in a period when technology had not much changed since the heyday of Sri Lankan entrepot trade, be an indication of traditional competence gained by the people of this area in the production of this commodity? (58).

Changing Trade Patterns

After the eighth century there appears to have been a decline in the importance of Sri Lanka as an entrepot. The further development of nautical technology, and particularly the invention of the compass and better understanding of the vagaries of the monsoons, enabled ships to make longer voyages. Thus Sri Lanka became important as a place of stop-over and its entrepot functions declined. According to Prof. Guna-wardene, "If developments in nautical technology worked in

favour of certain ports and regions at an early period, it also appears that the further development of technology had a paradoxical effect in diminishing their importance and shifting the balance towards new centres. It would seem that during this period the development of nautical technology was a factor which contributed towards limiting the Sri Lankan share of trade in the Indian ocean. The "division of labour" in navigation in the Indian ocean had been convenient for Sri Lanka and contributed to its commercial importance, but it appears likely that this pattern of navigation began to change even from about the seventh century. One of the implications of technological development in shipping up to this time was that large voyages became feasible. It is interesting to note that I - tsing left China in a Persian ship. (I - tsing 115). When Vajirabodhi arrived in Sri Lanka in the earlier part of the eighth century, he saw thirty five Persian vessels docked at port. However, these Persian ships were bound for ports further east than Sri Lanka, and it was in one of these that Vajirabodhi travelled to the kingdom of Fo-chi. (Levi, 1900, 421). While mariners plying the Indian ocean routes called at Sri Lankan ports to buy the island's valued products like gems and pearls, to obtain food, water and other supplies and for repairs, it appears that the position of these ports as centres of entrepot trade had diminished." (59)

Sri Lankan ship building technology also declined, never again to attain the technical advancement of the eighth century. Prof. Gunawardene states that "In an earlier era, the demand created by opportunities in commerce had helped to spur on developments in the art of shipbuilding. Since the type of ship that Buwanekabahu offered to supply the Malmuks should have been trading vessels for use in the Indian ocean, the tradition of building large ships was probably alive at the end of the thirteenth century. The author of the Pujavali who lived in the middle of that century was conversant with the art of navigation. He alludes in his work to mariners sailing in the ocean, with raised sails fastened and adjusted by cords, carrying oars and spars on board and guided by the stars. (Pujavali 6). It seems reasonable to suggest that these tradition of building large ships and of navigation were continued

well into the time of Aryachakravarthi and even up to the time of Buwanekabahu VI. Though the technology of nautical construction was available, avenues in which it could be profitably utilised were becoming increasingly hard to find in a context of diminishing opportunities for commerce., and in such a context, the technology itself was bound to decline. Hornell recorded the dimensions of a padagu built at Velvettithurai during his time, and it was 100 ft. in length, 21 ft. 2 inches in width and 14 ft. in depth. It had two masts and a capacity of 144 tons. In most respects, this type of vessel was similar to the yatra oruva of southern Sri Lanka. There was however one major difference in that the northern craft did not have the outrigger. Hornell was inclined to believe that the Velvettithurai padagu represented a development on the yatra oruva, the vessel of similar proportions from southern Sri Lanka which had gone out of use not long before his time. (Hornell, 1923; 180). Thus the tradition of shipbuilding of an era long past did survive right into modern times, but in a vitiated and diminished form. It is abundantly clear that an evolution had set in pushing back the level of nautical technology in Sri Lanka to what it had been long before the eighth century when the largest ships arriving at Chinese ports were from Sri Lanka."(60)

Under the new dispensation, where Sri Lanka became an important port of stop-over, the western ports of Ruhuna continued to flourish. And this situation prevailed till the advent of the European powers in the sixteenth century and beyond. After the decline of Sri Lankan entrepot activity in the eighth century, ports like Beruwela, Bentota, Galle and Weligama became important ports of call for Arab ships plying the Asian trade routes. More easterly ports like Hambantota and Samanthurai also became important around this time because of the access they provided to the central highlands where lucrative trade in products like ivory and arecanuts were carried on. Beruwela assumes special importance in this connection because it provides the Arab traders with access to the gem mining areas of Sabaragamuwa.

Ruhuna Grows in Importance

The continuing and growing importance of the western part of Ruhuna is reflected in the political changes that took place in the twelfth century during and immediately after the reign of the great Sinhalese hero, Vijayabahu I. Up to this period, Ruhuna was considered to be the most important province after Rajarata, and whenever the whole country was brought under the rule of a single authority, the Yuvaraja or vice - king and heir apparent was appointed as the ruler of Ruhuna. Vijayabahu himself ruled from Kataragama in Ruhuna when he was the rightful contender to the throne at Anuradhapura but was forcibly kept out by the Cholas who held the throne in Rajarata. Later, when attacked by the Cholas he evacuates Kataragama which is in the eastern part of Ruhuna and makes Mahanagakula on the banks of the Walawe river his capital. The choice of Mahanagakula as a seat of dynastic power and political authority in Ruhuna would obviously have been due to its strategic position being as it was, located athwart the dividing line between eastern and western Ruhuna.

The fact that by this time, the western half of Ruhuna had become more important than the eastern half is borne out by the events which follow the accension of Vijayabahu to the throne at Polonnaruwa. Jayabahu and Vikramabahu held the position of heir apparent successively under his reign and ruled Ruhuna from Mahanagakula. After the death of Vijayabahu, Jayabahu becomes king at Polonnaruwa. He is speedily expelled by Vikramabahu who assumes rulership. Thereafter, Jayabahu with his sister Mitta retires to Ruhuna and rules from Mahanagakula. The eldest son of Mitta, Manabharana I, is appointed as the Adipada (heir apparent) who rules from Dhakkinadesa. This is incidentally, the first occasion in the history of the island when Dhakkinadesa on the western coast of the island becomes more important than Ruhuna in the political configuration of the country. The new economic opportunities opened up in these areas by the development of trade, and also probably its increasing population, enhanced its political significance. Up to this date, Kalyani in Dhakkinadesa was the most insignificant of the three major

settlements in the island. But now in the twelfth century we see the crucial change taking place where Dhakkinadesa takes precedence over Ruhuna in terms of political importance. Of still more importance for the present study is to see the corresponding changes taking place within the province of Ruhuna itself.

The West Outstrips the East

When Manabharana becomes the ruler of Dhakkinadesa, the other two sons of Mitta, Kithsiri Megha and Siri Vallabha, rule the western and eastern parts of Ruhuna respectively. The capital of the former is Mahanagakula whereas the latter rules the eastern half of Ruhuna from Uddahanadwara. When Kithsiri Megha becomes the heir apparent and succeeds to the throne at Dhakkinadesa on the death of Manabharana I, his younger brother becomes the overall ruler of the once more united Ruhuna and administers the province from Mahanagakula. The most important thing that should be taken into account here is the precedence in terms of importance, as reflected in the division of authority between the three sons of Mitta in terms of priority, Dhakkinadesa — western half of Ruhuna — eastern half of Ruhuna. (61).

This goes to show that the western half of Ruhuna had become more important than the eastern half, which was originally the main centre of civilisation during the period prior to the development of trade on the western coast in the fourth century. By the thirteenth century, this importance of the western half is well established. Mantai which was the premier trading port of the Anuradhapura period is abandoned and the road linking it with the capital is devoured by the jungle. In the late twelfth century Parakramabahu the Great succeeds in doing what no other monarch had been able to do — bring Ruhuna to heel and get it to accept unconditionally the central authority at Polonnaruwa. Uddahanadwara which was Siri Vallabha's former seat in eastern Ruhuna is razed to the ground. The reason why Parakramabahu was able to achieve this unprecedented triumph was, most probably that by this date, eastern Ruhuna was virtually aban-

done and very sparsely populated. The areas which had a comparatively heavy population concentration were now located in the western half of Ruhuna in and around the trading settlements. They were thus exposed and amenable to control from a strong and assertive central authority. After Parakramabahu and the devastation of the Rajarata civilisation by South Indian invaders in the thirteenth century, the western ports continue to flourish. One of the factors which caused the total abandonment of Rajarata after the thirteenth century was the incentive of this growing trade and new economic base of the western coastal areas. As the foregoing account explains, the people of Ruhuna were quick to see the advantage of trade, and the shift to the west took place in Ruhuna centuries before a similar process was initiated in Rajarata.

The Western Ports of Ruhuna

By the thirteenth century, Mantai had fallen into disuse and the roadway linking it to Anuradhapura had yielded to the encroaching jungle. "Archaeological investigations carried out at Mantai in 1980 have led to the view that the end of Mantai as a major trade centre of the North - West coast of Sri Lanka can be tentatively dated in the second - half of the eleventh century." (62). Though later in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it gains a reputation as a pearl fishing area, never more was Mantai to be a trading port. But by the fifteenth century, ports like Veligama, Galle, Matara, Tangalle and Bentota were large and well developed settlements. The famous Sandesa poems of the fifteenth century all refer to the booming trade of these Southern ports. As Prof. Gunawardene points out. "That there was a certain revival of commercial activity in the island is evident from the literary works of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It is noteworthy that this revival was limited in its impact to the coastal board of the South Western quadrant of the island. Perera has drawn attention to the fact that the ancient town at Mahatittha did not disappear and that it was noted by writers in the fifteenth century. (Perera 1:112). However, it is clear that the prevailing patterns of navigation in the Indian ocean favoured ports in the Southern parts of the island and helped them to emerge as the more important centres of trade. Seeing

large groups of ships sailing in the sea appears to have been a usual experience for travellers arriving at Panadura, Udugalpitiya and Tangalle. (Parevi Sandesa v. 84, Gira Sandesa v. 74, Kahakurulu Sandesa v. 52)."

". . In the fifteenth century, Devinuwara was one of the flourishing cities in the island. (Parevi Sandesa v. 163 - 164, Hansa Sandesa v. 10). Other noteworthy ports were, Beruwela, Bentota, Galle and Veligama. Beruwela noted earlier, was perhaps the most prosperous. It was a busy settlement of Muslim merchants with many beautiful mansions and large permanent shops. (Tisara Sandesa v. 76, Kokila Sandesa v. 92, Gira Sandesa v. 104) Galle was a town with wide streets where shops stocked with valuables were located. (Tisara Sandesa v. 55, Parevi Sandesa v. 88). Similarly, large shops dealing with precious goods were to be found at Veligama where a cultured merchant community lived in beautiful mansions and courtesans frequented the city streets. (Mayura Sandesa v. 89, Tisara Sandesa vv. 44 - 45. Parevi Sandesa vv. 108 - 109., Kokila Sandesa vv. 54 - 59)" (63).

Speaking of Devundara, the fourteenth century Muslim traveller Ibn Batuta says that it was " large and inhabited by merchants" (64). The Chinese Admiral Cheng Ho made several visits to the Island and on every visit he disembarked at Galle. It would so appear that he was able to exert some control over the area judging by the fact that he defeated and abducted Alagakonara of Kotte and even set up a tri - lingual inscription — the latter a clear indication of political authority since the setting up of inscriptions was solely a royal prerogative. In times of yore, Mantai was the favourite place of disembarkation for would-be invaders of Anuradhapura. Now the main point of focus had changed to the ports of the West and the South. Cheng Ho chose Galle. Later the Portuguese concentrated their efforts around the port of Colombo. When the Dutch wrested power from the Portuguese in the Maritime Districts, the emphasis was once more on Galle in the South.

RUHUNA UNDER FOREIGN RULE

The myth prevails that after the capture of the maritime regions by the Europeans, the Kandyan Kingdom became the main preserve of the Sinhala - Buddhist culture and identity. Dr. Gananath Obeyesekera has questioned this assumption and drawn attention to the strong Sinhala - Buddhist identity which was preserved in Ruhuna even under foreign rule. (65). Indeed it may not be incorrect to say that not only was the Sinhala - Buddhist identity preserved in the South, but it was given an altogether new dimension by contact with foreign cultures. Changes that were brought to bear on the Buddhist Sinhala identity through contact with foreigners in the Southern districts have had lasting impact on all aspects of Sri Lanka's social and economic life. What we have to examine here is how the Sinhalese Buddhists of Ruhuna adapted themselves to the changed circumstances under European rule.

The Portuguese

Within a short time of the arrival of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, they extended their influence to the Western half of Ruhuna, which, with the environs of the Kotte Kingdom were not only prime cinnamon producing areas, but were also so placed that they had access to the cinnamon growing areas of the Kandyan kingdom. As Dr. D. A. Kotalawale says, ". . . It would so appear that the southern districts of Galle and Matara were transit points for cinnamon coming in from the Kandyan areas during Dutch times. Since the main port of the Dutch administration in Ceylon was located

in Galle, the transportation of Kandyan produced cinnamon through Galle and Matara appears to have been the established practice" (66).

However, the rule of the Portuguese was constantly disturbed by the incessant warfare which took place between the Portuguese authorities and the Kandyan King. This did not leave much room for trading activities to really develop. It was all that the Portuguese could do to hold the administration together during much of their period of rule. In 1597 the King of Portugal was declared King of Kotte, which encompassed territory extending from Chilaw in the North to the Walawe Ganga in the South and inland to the frontiers of Kandy. (67). They did make some headway in converting large numbers of people to the Roman Catholic faith. Most of these converts were of the Karava caste from the Western coast in the Chilaw-Colombo stretch. The Portuguese made a large number of converts in the coastal belt south of the Bentota river as well, but conversion in this part of the country does not appear to have been as successful and long lasting as that of areas north of Colombo along the western coast. Most Christians south of the Bentota river had a tendency to revert back to Buddhism. This propensity to revert back to the old religion extended even to the Karava converts whose counterparts further up north on the coastline form the backbone of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka today. (68). This tendency to revert back to Buddhism has resulted in the Southern Province being today the most Sinhalese - Buddhist (in the demographic sense). Province in the island, despite it having been under foreign rule for over four centuries.

Moreover, a remarkable feature of the newly converted Catholics in the Western coastal belt, especially in and around Negombo, was that they had a tendency to put their Sinhala identity above their religious identity which bound them to the Portuguese, and to make common cause with the Kandyan King. The need to differentiate between Sinhalese who were non - Buddhist and the Buddhist Sinhalese first emerged during this period when for the first time the Sinhalese political authority had Sinhalese allies who were not Buddhists. If the propensity of the Negombo Sinhalese - Catholics to find

common cause with the Kandyan King was strong, then the trend for Southern Sinhalese to do so would have been even stronger. The people of the Southern areas under Portuguese rule played a major role in every war the Portuguese had with the Kandyan Kingdom — mainly as allies of the Kandyan king. According to Dr. C. R. de Silva, " . . . In 1553 when Vidiye Bandara, the Regent of Kotte launched an anti - Portuguese and anti - Christian crusade, it immediately struck a responsive chord among the people of Kotte and of Ruhuna in particular. He was able to seize the whole coastal belt South of Colombo and destroy all churches in the area. These regions had earlier been subjected to a proselytizing thrust by the Portuguese in a bid to turn Kotte into a Roman Catholic client state. When King Dharmapala of Kotte converted to Christianity in 1557 Mayadunne of Sitawaka emerged as the champion of the Sinhalese Buddhists. In the same year Mayadunne was able to capture the coastal region of the South-West in a battle against the Portuguese forces of Kotte. And throughout the existence of the Sitawaka Kingdom, the South-Western region of Ruhuna continued to be integral parts of the Sinhala Kingdom and were prime targets of attack by the Portuguese " (69).

The Dutch

The South underwent a spurt of development under Dutch rule, starting from 1640. Conditions under the Dutch were far more conducive to economic and social development than in the troubled Portuguese era. Infrastructural facilities for economic development were constructed during the Dutch era. Galle and Matara were extensively canalized to facilitate transport. The Kapu-ela in Galle is over twenty miles long. Matara too had a canal system of about 30 miles, based on the Polwatte Ganga in Weligama and the Nilwala Ganga which flows by the Matara fort (70). There was also the encouragement of agriculture by the Dutch with the construction of costly irrigation works. The Urubokka dam in Girawa Pattu in the neighbourhood of Tangalle was considered by a former British Governor of Ceylon, Sir Henry Ward, to be a masterpiece of Dutch irrigation engineering. This dam had turned the parched

Girawa Pattu region into a verdant field. And Ward mentions the stark contrast in the regions that came under this system and the rest of the parched and infertile land. (71).

As Geoffrey Powell puts it, "... the Dutch were able to cut their military spending in the island to the minimum. An uneasy balance of power resulted. The king, when he so wished, was able to interfere with the Dutch as they gathered their cinnamon or arecanut crops in the forest or he could make it difficult for them to engage in the profitable occupation of elephant trapping. To counter this, the Dutch controlled most of the coast and could when they wanted to impose an economic blockade on the Kandyans. . ." (72) From 1640 to 1656 when the Dutch finally managed to capture the Colombo Fort from the Portuguese, Galle was the main centre of Administration. When the seat of Government was transferred to Colombo in 1956, Galle became the main port of the Dutch possessions in Sri Lanka. The implications of this in view of the tremendous development in trading activity that took place during Dutch rule is very great. Galle was in those days, what Colombo is today. Galle had the biggest and the most affluent trading community in Sri Lanka at that time. Most of these were foreigners — mainly Dutch — but apparently there had been a handful of local entrepreneurs too — mainly ship chandlers and suppliers and the like.

The presence of large numbers of foreign traders in Galle and its environs and Weligama which was used as an outpost of the Galle harbour, would no doubt have stimulated some initial entrepreneurial activity amongst the inhabitants of the surrounding areas. Dr. Michael Roberts states that there had been scope under the Dutch regime for inter - Asian trade in commodities like arecanuts, arrack, tobacco and coconuts. Cloth and rice were imported in exchange. Trade links with India were particularly close. There were also opportunities for merchants and peddlars within the Kandyan kingdom, arising from the demand for salt, dry fish, cloth and arrack. The towns of Galle and Colombo also offered service trades like building, victualling and carpentry. There was further-

more the concentration of land amongst the low country Mudaliyars which would have enabled them to engage in profit-oriented agriculture, making full use of the forced labour available to them in their official capacities as headmen. Within the Southern districts itself, the opening up of plantations as in the Morawak Korale provided a further base for expansion. Most of the entrepreneurial opportunities in the Southern and Sabaragamuwa plantation districts were taken by Karava, Durava and Salagama merchants from the Southern Province. The rapidly increasing population of the Southern Province itself provided another base for entrepreneurial activity. The Southern Province was, moreover, the island's prime centre of citronella cultivation. Amongst those who made a fortune in the citronella trade was one Nanayakkarage W. Samarassekera. There was also the tendency for traders from the south to migrate to other parts of the country. One such trader, A. B. Mathias de Silva of Matara migrated to Trincomalee and produced textiles on the putting-out system. There apparently were many such southern traders in Batticaloa and Trincomalee by the end of the nineteenth century. Many traders went further afield into foreign countries like Southern Africa, Hong Kong and Singapore. Their occupations were diverse — those of curio dealers, lace makers, jewellers, merchants etc. George Alwis Kuruneru and his descendents, the Dimingu Badathuruge family, Punchi Hewage's and the Balage De Silva's were some of the more prominent names amongst these very adventurous southern entrepreneurs. During the time that Galle was the main port of call in Dutch controlled Sri Lanka, there was further scope in service trades like stevedoring and chandling. Two of the prominent names in this field were those of Christopher Perera Abeywardene and S. P. D. B. de Silva. Moreover, some of the biggest arrack renters in colonial Sri Lanka were in the South. Prominent among them were Appuhannedige Don Baban Appu of Mirissa and the famous M. Thomas de Silva Amarasuriya. (73).

A. P. Don Davith was another wealthy Mudalali of the last quarter of the nineteenth century in Galle. He is reputed to have imported 50,000 bags of rice every week. And an average of 100 double bullock carts used to call at his store

every day for provisions. He also had a branch establishment at 4th Cross Street in Pettah. In the late nineteenth century, the biggest establishment in Galle town belonged to K. C. Juwanis. The great literateur of Ruhuna Martin Wickremasinghe of Koggala, had been employed for some time as a clerk under Juwanis Appu. V. D. S. Fernando was another of these pioneering businessmen who was the first to open up a pharmacy in Galle town. Another businessman, Abeydeera Mudalali, was a pioneer in the forage business in Galle. Even the biggest jewellery store in Chatham Street, Don Theodoris and Co., was owned by Don Theodoris Weerasiri of Galle. Queen Victoria is said to have patronised (by letter) Don Theodoris and Co. There were two other Galle jewellers in Chatham Street at that time; De Silva Samararatne and H. H. M. de Silva. H. A. P. de Silva and W. B. Simon were also in the jewellery business. It is said that W. B. Simon was patronised by several British Governors and even enjoyed the privilege of private entry to Queens House. There were also other wealthy individuals like W. A. T. de Silva, government contractors like Singohamy and Babahamy and Subehamy Premaratne of Bope who had made money in Africa. (74).

Local Entrepreneurship and the Rise of the Ruhuna Diaspora

It is most probable that the first local entrepreneurs started off as what Max Weber has termed "bazaar" capitalists. Having small amounts of capital which can be transferred from one line of trade or industry to another at very short notice and yielding small profit margins. Max Weber identified capitalist enterprise as falling into three categories 1. adventurer capitalism, 2. bazaar - type capitalism, and 3. rational bourgeois capitalism. (75). According to Dr. Michael Roberts, "adventurer capitalism, also described sometimes as "booty capitalism," refers to profit seeking enterprise constructed upon the political framework and political devices, and oriented towards speculation. To Weber, speculation in government finance and contracts, tax farming, the farming of government offices and domains and the state monopolies and financial projects

of princes typified this sort of enterprise and was viewed as a form of speculative pariah capitalism."

" . . . Bazaar - type capitalism is not to be confused with the location of business concerns in market places which are widely known in many parts of Asia as bazaars. It refers to a structural type associated with pedlars and is best exemplified in Clifford Greetz's description of the majority of trading concerns in the market towns of Modjokuto in Eastern Central Java. These concerns are small enterprises often lacking even permanent commercial sites, marginal in terms of capital deployed and profit gained. Their trading is hyper-individuated and relies on a sliding scale of prices associated with haggling. Their economic activities are dispersed into small commodity lines to spread risk and are directed towards cutting themselves in on good deals and cornering markets for scarce goods. As such, each of these units attempts to maintain great liquidity rather than to build itself up through investments and incremental profit . . . Contrasting with both these forms of enterprise in its solidity, its on - going strength and its rational mode of organisation is the third ideal type, that is of the rational bourgeois concern. Here the emphasis is on the establishment of a stable clientele and on scrupulous and honest economic dealings within the existing legal framework, and the economic goals are not those of a gambler but those of a calculating machine. Its illustrated in Greetz's summary of the major elements in a store at Modjokuto which was in an intermediate position in the progressive line of growth between a bazaar economy and a firm centred economy; namely, permanent location, a full business day, somewhat more fixed prices, regular sales - clerks, an adjustment of inventories to modern urban tastes, a more conscientious effort to carry out systematic book - keeping based on planning a more aggressive search for customers and so on . . ." (76).

Later during the nineteenth century, we see southern entrepreneurs penetrating into every nook and corner of Sri Lanka and even going to overseas destinations. The seeking of one's fortune in foreign countries seems to have assumed mass proportions in the South. Arthur C. Dep has written

about how Sinhalese labourers from Galle migrated to Australia in the late nineteenth century in search of better opportunities. (77).

Indigenous traders would have played a major role in the cinnamon trade between the Kandyans and the Dutch. As Prof. S. B. D. De Silva opines, "The trade of the Kandyan Kingdom with the maritime provinces was of a relatively long distance nature and it had a wide geographical spread. Salt, salt fish and cloth were brought in and pepper, cardamons, cinnamon, arecanuts, wax and paddy were taken out." (78). The itinerant traders from the south who would have taken the place of the Muslims during Dutch times would have been the intermediaries in this trade. To quote the words of a nineteenth-century Government Agent of Matara, "The external trade of the Kandyan Kingdom was based partly on cash. On my journey I met many parties from the northern parts of the Galle district on their way to Kandy to exchange Sicca rupees, Dutch doits, salt fish and other articles of consumption for Candian grain." (79). The G.A.'s reports of the early nineteenth century report that; ". . . A regular influx occurred from the maritime districts to the Kandyan areas for trade, cinnamon peeling, to collect cardamons for sale to the Dutch company and for timber felling . . . The collecting and processing of cinnamon was a well - organised activity in the hands of the Dutch East India Company, and led to regular commercial and social contact between the Kandyan kingdom and the maritime districts. The cinnamon was cut mostly from the jungle by the Chaliya caste emigres from the Malabar coast who lived in the maritime areas. They came in a brigade of 1000 organised in several groups or "ranchoo" each under a petty headman. They were acquainted with the Kandyan country and knew where good cinnamon most abounds and also roads leading from village to village. The cinnamon was taken to stores or depots constructed on the bunds of navigable rivers and then by boat to Colombo, Kalutara, Galle and Matara where it was inspected and lodged before being transported for shipment abroad. . . To expedite the transport of cinnamon to the ferries the Dutch Company in 1766 pressed into the cinnamon service about 400 persons

from the Galle and Matara districts. They were paid 8 doits or 2 pice per day more than the usual allowance . . ." (80). Government Agents Reports of the era indicate that in the late nineteenth century, the road linkages between Galle, Matara and the Plantation areas which started from the northern hinterland of these districts were vastly improved by the government, thus facilitating the trading activities of pioneering businessmen from the south. (81).

The Persecution of Muslims

The Muslims who had traditionally performed the functions pertaining to trade were persecuted by the Dutch. In February 1662, Dutch Governor Van Goens and his Council reporting on the state of the island to the Seventeen at Batavia had the following to say about the Muslims ". . . The great source of trouble which we have to contend are on the one hand the Moors, who in great numbers have settled in the districts of Galle and may in their mode of life and occupation be compared to the Jews at home. They are abstemious, satisfied with small earnings, and very careful of their money. Through their humble ways, their industry and their servility, they manage to get hold of all the small trades from our countrymen . . ." (82).

And to quote Dr. K. W. Goonewardena, ". . . In matters of trade too there was discrimination on religious grounds. This was linked with Dutch attempts to oust the Muslims from the dominant position which they held in the internal and external trade of the country - commodities that were not VOC monopolies. By the resolution of 5 June 1659 the Muslims of Colombo and even the servants of the company were elbowed out of the retail trade in foodstuffs and coarse textiles. Local Muslims were forbidden to undertake any trade overseas unless they had Dutch colonists participating in their ventures. The trade in salt was given in monopoly to the colonists and other Christian natives, who were to fetch this commodity only from Mannar and Jaffna but not from any other place in or outside the island. The stipulation regarding the places from which salt could be brought was apparently aimed at preventing collusion between the colonists

and Muslim (or other) merchants bringing salt from the east coast of India. . . .Muslim traders had all the advantages of the firstcomers, with established trading contacts, and they were accepted by the villagers in a manner in which the newcomers could not hope to be accepted. There was also the fact that successful traders had to be itinerant vendors and collectors of goods who moved patiently through foot - paths and jungle tracts, from door to door and village to village, partaking of the fare — often vegetarian — available in the countryside, resting at night in any available shelter and prepared for long absences from home . . .” (83).

The policy of the Portuguese towards the Muslims appears to have been equally adverse. The Muslims were the traditional enemies of the Portuguese. An expulsion order was issued in 1525 and the Muslims had to look to Mayadunne of Sitawaka for succour. (84). As Dr. Sinnappah Arasaratnam has pointed out, the Sinhalese agrarian community had by a voluntary division of labour, handed over to Muslims most of the non - agrarian occupations. And their influence in the Matara Dissavany was particularly strong in the early years of Dutch rule. (85). Which in a way indicates that there was a heavy concentration of non - agricultural pursuits in Ruhuna even during the early stages of Dutch rule. The policy of discrimination against Muslims followed by the Dutch would have made certain non - agricultural occupations available to the Sinhalese in the area. However, the Portuguese and Dutch persecution of Muslims in the rise of Southern entrepreneurship should not be given exaggerated importance. The implementation of discriminatory legislation was rather ambivalent at times. As Dr. K. W. Goonewardena points out, there were periods during Dutch rule, anti - Muslim legislation notwithstanding, where Muslims were held in high esteem. The Muslim traders from Mughal India, the Javanese mercenaries in the Dutch army and Javanese royal exiles from the East Indies were held in high regard by the Dutch. (86)

The major objective of the Dutch authorities in applying discriminatory measures against the Muslims was to encourage Dutch settlers in the island to take over the non-agrarian

occupations. . . " Thus Burghers were given the exclusive right of baking bread in the cities of Colombo and Galle. All Muslim tailors were prohibited from setting up business independently but could work only under licenced Burgher tailors. Similarly, butchering and shoe - making were also made exclusively Burgher concerns. No Muslims could have shops in the city of Colombo or sell any goods openly. Their immigration into the country and into the cities in particular was strictly supervised and no new Muslims were allowed to settle in the country." (87). Moreover, ". . . regulations were passed restricting the freedom of movement of the Muslims. They were not allowed to go outside certain limits and come into contact with the villagers."(88)

The Sinhala Influx

The Dutch settlers were however, not successful in the occupations allotted to them by the Government. As the Dutch Governor Van Goens put it, "The bulk of our colonists were formerly soldiers or sailors and therefore, uneducated people knowing no trade, they were only good for opening taverns and selling arrack . . ." (89). The Muslim traders both Indian and Ceylonese, were far superior in business methods. In open and free competition the Burghers had no chance against them. Their methods of trading, fashioned through centuries of mastery of this occupation produced maximum results on a minimum outlay. They could trade at far less expense than the Burghers and were far more enterprising.

It can be surmised here that as the Dutch settlers lost ground, the Sinhalese in the area took over as more and more Sinhalese were compelled to take to non - agricultural pursuits due to the lack of land to meet the needs of an expanding population. It can be seen for instance that the bakery industry, which was during the pre - Dutch era controlled by the Muslims, is now almost exclusively a Sinhala petty industry. And a noteworthy point is the domination of bakers from Ruhuna in the industry all over the country. Even in the Jaffna peninsula, the bakery industry was completely dominated by Southerners. The gemming industry was dominated till recent times.

by Muslims. However, many businessmen from Ruhuna have broken into this monopoly now. It would appear that during the period Muslims dominated the trade, many Southerners migrated to the gem - rich Sabaragamuwa areas to work as labourers in gem pits. Having thus acquired skills in recognising gems, many of these labourers would have entered the trade themselves. One natural and widespread way of acquiring capital in this line of business would have been pilferage. (90).

The forerunners of the modern finance companies were the Nattukottai Chettiars(91). Their importance declined from around 1925 after the Chetty crisis where several leading Chetty firms collapsed and were found to have indulged in irregular financial dealings. The British Banks then refused to further lend to the Chettiars, which effectively vitiated their role as middlemen between the Banks and the people. Their Sri Lanka domicile was affected by the citizenship legislation of 1948 and the coup de grace was administered to their traditional money lending practices by the Finance Act II of 1963 which prohibited moneylending operations by foreigners (except Banks), the repatriation of profits and subjected real estate purchased by foreigners to a 100% tax. Today there are only two or three dozen Chettys living in Sri Lanka. It is believed that the lacuna left by the Chettys was filled in by entrepreneurs from the South. In addition to the fact that the most successful finance companies operating in the island are owned by Southerners, one can also see that the most successful pawnbroking centres are run by Southern businessmen.

The Caste Factor

The presence of the Karava, Durava and Salagama casts in large numbers in the Southern districts could have been an additional factor in the emergence of Southern entrepreneurial skills. As Dr. Michael Roberts has pointed out, these castes were not tied to the agrarian mode of production and could therefore make use of the opportunities for economic advancement offered by the colonial regime(92). It could also be that since these castes were for the most part made up of

recent immigrants from India (in a long drawn out process beginning around the thirteenth century and continuing well into the period of Dutch colonial rule) they did not have the same "qualms" about making use of the opportunities made available to them under the foreign rulers. The Sinhalese (Govigama) for their part, do appear to have had reservations about the foreigners and their goodies. Their antipathy towards the education imparted by the colonial authorities and the missionaries is a well recorded fact. This was why, as late as the early twentieth century, the Sinhala Govigama's did not have a candidate for the educated Ceylonese seat in the legislative council to pit against the Karava contender, Dr. Marcus Fernando, and were constrained to support the Tamil Vellala candidate Ponnambalam Ramanathan.

It could well be that during the early stages of the development of Sinhala entrepreneurial skill in the Southern districts, the lead was taken by the KSD castes since they were better placed in terms of lifestyle and psychological make - up to make use of the new opportunities. But since the land problem became acute in the Southern districts during the Dutch era, there would have been more and more Govigamas taking to trade as a means of livelihood. This in time becomes almost a mass phenomenon with every village having its own tales about how someone or another made good in trade. In addition to the KSD castes, more traditional groups like the Govigama's, Navandanna's and Wahumpura's have made it good in trade. One cannot say that all or even the majority of the Southern entrepreneurs scattered all over the island are of the KSD castes. The threat of destitution combined with a readily available avenue of employment in the form of trade would have been an incentive for the traditional castes to overcome their antipathy towards non - agricultural occupations. Thus Southern entrepreneurial skill is a cross - caste phenomenon which, though probably first acquired by an exclusive caste group, soon came to be shared by other castes as well when they were pushed into the same situation which gave the KSD castes the ability to explore non - agricultural means of livelihood.

Pioneering Businessmen

In addition to petty trade, it would appear that quite a lot of people made headway as military and civil officials of the Dutch government. It can also be surmised that well-paying wage labour would have paved the way for many an enterprising southerner to accumulate sufficient capital to set up business as petty traders. Plumbago mining during the British period was a lucrative source of employment for wage labour and Southerners seem to have taken to it in large numbers. Prof. S. B. D. De Silva, quoting from the diaries of a British Assistant Government Agent of Ratnapura says of the plumbago mines of Dumbara that "the coolies and miners who are working are all Galle men and seem to thrive on the industry." (93). The workers in the mines were very highly paid (in consideration of the hazards involved) when compared with similar employment in other sectors of the economy. (94).

The fact that population pressures and similar factors had by Dutch times begun to have salutary effects on the mind-set of the Southerner can be gauged from the following extract. Innovation and out-migration from the land was becoming necessary for survival itself. According to the Dutch Governor, Cornelius Joan Simons, ". . . these natives are usually lazy and careless and yet very proud by nature, especially the wellalas, and it is very difficult to get them to work. Still we must not lose courage for the people of the same caste in the Galle district have been induced to undertake the duty of burning tiles and bricks, cutting of firewood for the charcoal necessary for the ships etc, and that the same privileges and exemptions as granted them, may be allowed by the Disawe and it should be his endeavour to win the people for this work" (95). It also appears that there were 400 lascarins from Galle serving on the Dutch fortified post of Anguruwatota 10 miles inland on the Kalu Ganga. (96). The same reason that induced the once proud Vellala's of Galle to undertake menial labour for the Dutch would have induced some of them to seek their fortunes as petty traders and contractors etc.

There also were many Southerners who had accepted higher military and civil posts as Arachchi's or Mudaliyars. Capital accumulation through the holding of such government posts seems to have gone on apace during Dutch times. The amassing of wealth by the Mudaliyar class during colonial times has been studied by Dr. D. A. Kotalawela. The highest ranks of the headman hierarchy were monopolised by a closely knit group of blood relations. ". . . Besides the various forms of administrative and judicial authority wielded by the headmen, it was their wealth and the avenues of acquiring wealth that holding such office opened that contributed greatly to their power and influence. The emoluments they enjoyed by virtue of holding office were already referred to. Though these emoluments were limited by regulation from the time of Governor Van Imanhoff, frequent references to headmen holding more than their due are encountered. Often this kind of excess holdings had its source in returned accommodations. These accommodations were treated often as praveni or heritable private property. Attempts were made from the time of Governor Van Imanhoff to strip the Sinhalese headmen of these illicitly held excess lands. In addition to these holdings, the headmen could obtain land grants from cultivation just as other inhabitants. In the post - 1766 period, the new more liberalised policy on cinnamon planting with a view to promoting private plantations enabled the headmen to gain even more of government land . . . Being the socially and economically dominant section of the population, it was the headmen who could find the labour resources for the cultivation and improvement of such large landholdings. They used their own tenants as well as the tenants of the government for this purpose." (97).

In fact, the desire for the accumulation of wealth and prestige was so acute among the Southern Mudaliyar class, that when during the 1818 Kandyan rebellion the dissidents approached the Mahamudaliar De Saram of Matara the latter not only rejected them outright, but even went so far as to leak the news to the British. In exchange for his loyalty, the Mahamudaliyar wanted his two sons sent to England for

higher education. Thus the first Ceylonese youth to gain higher education in England were two De Sarams (98). Thomas Eden, the Collector of Matara once said of De Saram that "he was certainly more attached to the old Dutch government than ours, but at all times more attentive to his own interests and ambitious prospects than either." (99).

The Hambantota District

Unlike the similar upsurge of trading activity which took place from the fourth to eighth centuries, this new spurt of activity has been kept going to the present day by the pressures of demographic concentration in the Southern districts. The narrowing of the land-man ratio in the Southern districts began around the time of the Dutch when people began leaving the Southern Province in search of economic opportunities elsewhere. Improvements in agricultural technology and know-how would have enabled greater absorption of people in more recent times. But in earlier periods, the land problem was quite acute. As D. A. Kotalawela has noted, "the growing landlessness in the South-West of Ceylon in the eighteenth century is indicated by frequent references in Dutch sources to a category known as "Sellakkarea's" or landless drifters who were moving from one district to another refusing to perform any government services . ." (100).

It may be asked at this stage why a section of the population did not shift into the less populated Eastern part of Ruhuna, enacting thus a reversal of the historical process whereby civilisation became concentrated in the Western half of Ruhuna. In fact, quite a number appear to have done so both as cultivators and as petty traders and suppliers of ancillary services. In his study of the political economy of underdevelopment, Prof. S. B. D. De Silva notes the following, "In the paddy tracts of the Eastern Province and in the Hambantota District of the Southern Province, such forms of production which are transitional to capitalism developed from the middle of the nineteenth century." (101). To quote Dr. Michael Roberts on this matter, ". . . in Batticaloa and Hambantota districts, paddy too was a cash crop and generated surpluses for some landowners or land controllers . . . Mudaliyars,

Doole and Bahar (both Malays) S. L. Naina Marikkar and several socially mobile families from the Matara district appear to have been among those who controlled substantial amounts of wet paddy land in the Hambantota district. Their tendency however, seems to have been in the direction of becoming absentee rentiers who relied on middlemen (called gambaraya's) for management operations. . . . (102). But considering the special characteristics of the agriculture of these areas, there was not much room for the absorption of large numbers of people. Since capital inputs were minimal and the returns poor, there was not much incentive for people to settle down in these areas. The two great obstacles to the re-population of the Hambantota District in those times was on the one hand the backwardness of the poorest sections of Ruhuna society and on the other hand the availability of more lucrative avenues of employment for the more enterprising. As Ameer Ali has pointed out, "The entire scheme of restoring the large tanks in these areas was undertaken on the assumption that once irrigation was provided the people would migrate to these places. In fact a few did But many did not. There were hundreds of families living within a distance of just twenty miles from the Tissamaharama tank and along the border of Uva, who had no regular means of earning a livelihood. Yet they preferred to cling to their squalid homes rather than to move Economic opportunities generally attract the enterprising. But in 19th century Sri Lanka such people had better attractions than those provided by the irrigation schemes. Plantations and plumbago mining, urbanisation and allied ventures were opening new avenues of investment for indigenous capital, and the returns on such investments were more handsome than in the paddy sector. On the other hand, to initiate the enterprising to settle in the newly opened areas meant absolute state-aided colonisation. This was never attempted by the British in Sri Lanka" (103). The Hambantota district was in fact proverbial for its abject poverty and misery during British times. Leonard Woolf, a former Assistant Government Agent of Hambantota conveys this well in his great novel "The Village in the Jungle."

Trade and Education in Ruhuna

In ancient times, it would appear that Ruhuna was a major seat of learning in the island. Education in this era was a monopoly of the Buddhist monks, and consequently the Viharas were the seats of learning in ancient Sri Lanka. The location of two major viharas of ancient Sri Lanka — the Tissamahavihara and the Chittalapabbata vihara in Ruhuna is an indication of the existence of a tradition of learning in this region. The Mahavamsa says that each of these viharas had sufficient grain stored to feed twelve thousand monks for three months. This gives us a fair idea of the size and importance of these places of learning. "In ancient Ceylon, there were two great convocations held twice a year before and after the vassa (rainy) season in two central places. One was the Mahavihara at Anuradhapura and the other was the Tissamahavihara in Ruhuna. The monks to the North of the Mahaveli Ganga assembled at the Mahavihara and those to the South of the river at the Tissamahavihara." (104).

"Education," as we know it today, is a product of colonial times. And the purpose of this section is to examine the way in which Ruhuna fared in terms of education during colonial rule. In pre-independence times, Ruhuna could be considered to have been in the category of under-privileged regions, in terms of education. It was not so much in education as in trade that the Southerner found a source of social mobility. Colonial education, being as it was tied up with Christian missionary activity, would have been unpalatable to the stalwart Sinhala-Buddhists of Ruhuna. Thus the occupations they chose were those with less strings attached. Landlessness in the Jaffna peninsula gave rise to an interest in education offered by the Missionaries. Though there was some opposition to the Christian missionaries at various times in Jaffna, the force of circumstances compelled them to rely more and more on education for social mobility and perhaps even for survival. The language and cultural differences that the Jaffna Tamils had with the rest of the Ceylonese population would have precluded their taking to trade after the fashion of the Ruhuna Sinhalese. The Ruhuna Sinhalese, not being dependent on missionary education, could afford the luxury of being nationalistic and opposing educational efforts in their regions.

From the inception of European rule, Ruhuna lagged behind Jaffna with regard to Education(105). During Dutch times however, education in Ruhuna did receive a fillip in terms of an increase in the number of schools, etc. The Dutch used churches as schools. There was one at Ambalangoda which is now used as a garage by motorists patronising the Rest House. There was another at Bentota which is now being used as a government school. There was also a Dutch church in Matara which would, according to the opinion of R. L. Brohier, have been there from about 1686 even though the sign there says 1769 (106). As Dr. Michael Roberts states, ". . . The location of the main entrepots (Galle and Colombo) and the administrative centres within the low-country during Dutch and British times also provided the low-country Sinhalese with certain advantages. The advantages were underlined further by fortuitous circumstances which created a greater number of English medium schools in the low - country relative to those available in the Kandyan territories, though too this feature may have been partly the product of differences of demand." (107)

Concerning progress in education during Dutch times, S. A.W.Mottau opines as follows, " Native education in Ceylon made greatest progress during the last quarter of the 17th century and the early part of the 18th century, the most continuous progress being shown in the Commandment of Jaffna . . . The schools in the Galle and Matara districts were less numerous and less efficient than those in the Jaffna and Colombo districts. Galle and Matara, being strongholds of Buddhism, were troublesome stations and the reports of the "scholarchen" were full of complaints. Their visits sometimes could not take place owing to the hostility of the people. On one occasion in 1731 A.C, the proceedings were interrupted and the "scholarchen" assaulted with sticks. The masters were often hindered in the performance of their duties by the villagers. In many parishes no progress was being made at all and where the annual visits of the inspectors were attended, it was done with great reluctance . . ." (108).

During British times however, it appears that a consciousness of the advantages of education grew within the people of Ruhuna. As Dr. L. A. Wickremaratne points out, ". . .The evidence suggests that among the Sinhalese the Mudaliyar class was quick to see the importance of acquiring a knowledge of English. When the Wesleyans were first setting up schools, there were Mudaliyars who offered free accomodation in their localities for schools in which English would be taught. In both Galle and Matara, the English schools which the Wesleyans had set up were attended mostly by the children of headmen . . .The desire for the acquisition of English grew more intense. Its penetration into the rural areas — a particularly notable feature of the period was fraught with significant implication. In the villages the landed proprietors and the headmen, the influential elements on whose co-operation the very maintainence of schools so largely depended, spear-headed the cry for English. Thus the Wesleyans had found that the headmen of the Southern Province not only wanted their children to learn English but were also anxious that they should be boarded with English families so that their English education comprehended all that relates to social life as well as school instruction. The Rev. S. Coles, a O.M.S. missionary, reported in 1865 that in Baddegama which he describes as a jungle district remote from any town there was not a single boy's school in which English was not taught . . ." (109).

In spite of a late start in the field of education, the Galle and Matara districts are now among the more privileged districts in terms of higher education. The Galle district boasts the largest number of university entrants after Colombo, Jaffna and Kandy. In fact, the first two Sri Lankans to obtain higher education in Britain were scions of the De Saram family of Matara(110). It is however more in trade and industry than in education that the Southerner has made his mark.

Other Entreprenurial Communities: Similarities and Differences

The South was not the only area in which new trading communities came up during the colonial period. The coastal belt South of Colombo up to Kalutara also produced a very

dynamic entrepreneurial tradition. Research done by scholars such as Michael Roberts shows that these entrepreneurs were for the most part Sinhalese Christian (either Catholics or Anglicans but more the latter) belonging to the three main non-Govigama castes— Karava, Salagama and Durava.

There were some differences between these two groups of early Sri Lankan capitalists, in style of operating, lines of business etc. Most of the southern capitalists started off as Bazaar capitalists and remained in similar lines of business until expansion could take place into more stable forms of business. But most of the Western Province capitalists who came up during British rule went in for a period of adventurer capitalism — speculation, arrack renting etc, after an initial period as a bazaar capitalist. The huge fortunes built up by these entrepreneurs during a very short period of time was mainly due to this expansion of capital through "adventuristic" means. Later they too branched off into more stable and respectable forms of capitalist enterprise such as plantations etc. For instance, the de Soysa brothers of Moratuwa-Panadura, Babasingho Jeronis and Susew, made most of their money in arrack renting. In the 1840 - 50's, they had in collaboration with a relative, Jeronis Peiris, virtually monopolised the arrack industry in the Central Province. In a letter written to Charles Henry de Soysa—son of Babasingho Jeronis de Soysa, by Jeronis Peiris, there is mention of the fact that this business house made vast sums of money from controlling the Central Province arrack business. It would also appear that though this family had many interests in other fields of business, particularly in cash crop (coffee) cultivation, arrack renting still remained the major source of profit (111). This is not to say that adventurer capitalists were non-existent in the Southern districts. There certainly were many. But on the whole, capital accumulation was slower but steadier in Ruhuna. The more sober pace of Ruhuna entrepreneurial development has paid off in that it keeps on accumulating more and more gains whereas the great adventurer capitalists of Moratuwa have now virtually fizzled out, after the initial spectacular burst of activity.

Buddhist Capitalism

Most Southern entrepreneurs are Buddhists by religion. What are the foundations of their value system? Is it as Michael Roberts asserts, a **Protestantic ethic** arising out of the puritanical Buddhist revivalist movement initiated towards the second half of the nineteenth century? ". . . It can be argued that the low-country Sinhalese-Buddhists had imbibed Christian values and practices. Indeed the ascetic practices to which we have previously called attention and which were a pronounced aspect of the revitalisation movement during the British period have been partly attributed to the influence of the Protestant sects. The new orientation in Buddhism that was crystallised in the Anagarika Dharmapala is described thus by Obeyesekera; "This orientation was an active involvement in the world. The model for this involvement was a Protestant model. The Anagarika is the modern Sinhalese analogue of an early Calvinist type of reformism with its increasing this-worldly asceticism. In sum, on similar lines one can come up with a percolation theory which argues that capitalist values entered the low-country Sinhalese bourgeoisie via accepting Christianity via Buddhist recoil against Christianity." (112)

Apart from the fact that this "Protestant ethic" of Max Weber is a creation of institutionalised religion with no Biblical foundation, it is incorrect to seek inspiration for the entrepreneurial activity of these southern businessmen outside the Buddhist tradition. The juxtaposition of the Protestant ethic with Southern entrepreneurial activity, is due to the common misconception that "natives" do not possess the dynamism or the inspiration to engage in any kind of entrepreneurial activity. Doctrinal Buddhism however, does lay much store by the development of professional skills, the accumulation of wealth, sobriety, thrift and all other components of the "Protestant ethic". The latter is simply a construction of Max Weber through his impressions of the Protestant Christian institutions. But every aspect of this "Protestant" ethic which so facilitates the rise of capitalism is embodied in the Buddhist Suttas pertaining to laymen. Especially important in this regard is the Vyaghapajja sutta, Sigalovada sutta, Mahamangala sutta and the Parabhava

sutta. These pious Buddhist entrepreneurs of the south were not acting unconsciously according to any "Protestant" ethic but consciously according to the orthodox Theravada Buddhist ethic pertaining to lay people.

Buddhism as an institutional creed requires the support of the state on the one hand and wealthy lay supporters on the other since the sangha is strictly a non-producing community. Buddhist lay ethics are designed to produce these wealthy laymen who would support the clergy with generous endowments. The merchant Anathapindika — a contemporary and one of the most important benefactors of the Buddha has a very prominent place in the Buddhist tradition. There is even a separate sutta — the Anathapindikovada sutta (Majjhima Nikaya) regarding the meritorious actions of this wealthy entrepreneur. Thus the entrepreneurs of the South were modelled on a type given the highest sanction in Buddhism. To quote Roberts, ". . . more revealing is the information on the life style and business practice of a Govigama Buddhist entrepreneur named Candauda Arachchige Odiris de Silva (1860 - 1928) who started out as a small retail merchant at Matara and by 1914 owned a store, a dairy and eighteen coconut oil presses operated by animal power, (i.e. chekkoes) which he replaced in 1928 with a 36 hp. mill (later 66 hp). He believed strongly that a businessman should not cheat and should stand by his word. The motto imprinted on a brass plate in his shop read; "The courageous one would receive any treasure he aspires to. The most rare (achievement of) Buddhahood was obtained through courageousness. He who aspires to wealth will end up being a wealthy man if he (pursues his aspiration) without evil behaviour and laziness and without wasting time or wealth and if he engages himself in one single trade, understanding its real nature." It was his practice to rise around 3 or 4 o'clock each morning and finish his working day at about 3.00 p.m. And he made it a point to keep track of his working capital every day, maintaining a stock account book for the purpose. He read Buddhist "bana pot" (books of sermons) every evening and adhered to a strict vegetarian and teetotal diet. Predictably, he was also a believer in regular philanthropic largesse and was a founding father of Rahula College, a Buddhist

school in Matara. It should be noted that C. A. Odiris de Silva was not an idiosyncratic type. He himself regarded the business organisation of the Karava merchant C. Juanis Appu of Galle as a model for emulation and my collection of biographical information suggests that there were other entrepreneurs of the same school."

The Religio - Ideological base of the Economic Formation

"Not only does C. A. Odiris de Silva's career represent striking contrast to that of Don Davith de Silva, it reads like a page from Weber's "Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism". It confirms the influence of the ascetic tradition within the Buddhist revivalist movement which has been described by such scholars as Michael Amos and Gananath Obeyesekere. Buddhist revivalism was also part of a wider cultural awakening worked by a hostile reaction against the degree to which western ways had been adopted by the Sinhalese. It reflected and encouraged the forces of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism. Ananda Wickramaratne has revealed how the Buddhist traders in the late nineteenth century subtly exploited the revivalist movement to air certain economic grievances, and how the newspapers run by the Buddhist Theosophical Society constantly argued that it was the business of the Ceylonese and Sinhala-Buddhists to consider ways of accumulating capital. This was not only a reflection of the bourgeois class interest of the Buddhist entrepreneurs. But also the product of a perception which saw economic strength as an instrument of Buddhist revitalisation. Therefore, one cannot agree with Obeyesekera when he insists the ascetic, this worldly involvement of Buddhist activists lacked an economic orientation and was solely social in nature. Nor was this economic emphasis solely a consequence of new class formations, colonial pressures and the permeation of Protestant values. It had roots in the Buddhist tradition. C. A. Odiris de Silva consciously modelled himself on the royal financiers and merchants of Asoka's day, the "sitana" of the Asokan Empire. . ." (113) (see also appendix).

Learning from the Foreigner

The advent of foreign powers to the South stimulated and aroused activity for which there were ample ideological foundations already. It may be pointed out for instance that the emphasis on the acquisition of professionalism and efficiency in popular Buddhist suttas like the Mahamangala sutta and the Vyaghapajja sutta would have given rise to the willingness of the Buddhist - Sinhala entrepreneurs of the South to learn trading and industrial skills from the Europeans. The emphasis that was placed by such Southern leaders of the national and Buddhist revival as Anagarika Dharmapala and Piyadasa Sirisena on the acquisition of western scientific and technical know-how as the only way in which the country could be made to stand on its own feet can be interpreted in the same light. These two titans of the Buddhist-Sinhala revival of the early twentieth century, combined in them the apparently paradoxical situation of being rabidly anti-British and at the same time ardent exponents of modernisation.

A Love-Hate Relationship

In this paradox was expressed the deep rooted tradition of the South where antipathy towards foreign political domination was combined with a desire to make the maximum of any avenues open to socio - economic advancement. If the Dutch period marked the introduction of new entrepreneurial skills to the South which were eagerly snatched up, it was also a period of rebellion where resentment towards foreign political domination was expressed in no uncertain terms. The disturbances of 1761 - 62 in Ruhuna where the lascarins of the Matara Fort mutinied and held the Fort for several months and the attack on the Katuwana Fort by a joint force of mutinous lascarins and Kandyan forces well illustrates this tradition of independence that the South has always been famous for.

To quote R. L. Brohier on the Matara rebellion, "It is stated to have been kindled by a band of disgruntled lascareens who went about the district promoting the rural inhabitants to join the Kandyan forces who would see to it that they paid no

tithes in future but would be allowed to sow and plant as much land as they liked. On March 25 1761, the Dutch forces evacuated the Fort, but it was recaptured on the 26th of February 1762. The stockade at Katuwana which guarded the frontier between the Dutch territories and the Kandyan kingdom was also razed to the ground during the Matara rebellion by a combined Kandyan and low-country rebel force . . ." (114)

Many historians would have us believe that with the advent of the Portuguese, the mantle of resistance to foreign rule passed from Ruhuna to the short lived Sitawaka kingdom and there onwards to the Kandyan kingdom. While it is true that the major rebellions of 1818 and 1848 were mainly Kandyan, it must not be forgotten that the South figured prominently in the battles between the Portuguese and the Sitawaka and Kandyan Kingdoms Even during the initial stages of British rule, the Kandyan Sinhala forces found Matara more receptive to their call to battle than the other foreign held territories in Sri Lanka (115). The modernism of the South was thus always in conjunction with patriotism. It is this powerful combination that has made Ruhuna such a potent force to reckon with in Sri Lanka.

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THE INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE AND BUDDHIST REVIVAL

As the foregoing would have shown, Ruhuna no less than the kingdoms of Sitawaka or Kandy was a bulwark of the Sinhala - Buddhist identity. In the pre - independence era when consciousness of national and religious revival was beginning to take root in the minds of the Sinhala people, two individuals stood out from amongst all others. "Anagarika Dharmapala (1864 - 1933) and Piyadasa Sirisena (1875 - 1946) are rightly recognised as ideologues of the Sinhala nationalist revival of the early twentieth century." (116). "Dharmapala was born in 1864, the eldest son of Don Carolis Appuhamy, who was the owner of a well - known firm of furniture dealers in Colombo. Don Carolis migrated to Colombo from Hittatiya, a Buddhist strong-hold in South Sri Lanka. And had started a carpentry business. Due to the expansion of plantation and commercial activity, the growth of the city of Colombo and the construction of a new road to Kandy creating a demand for rapid transport of commercial produce, this enterprise prospered and by the time Don David Hewavitharana, as Dharmapala was named was born, his father had become a leading Sri Lankan businessman (diary p. 39) . His contacts extended to Australia, Japan and the Far East." (117). "Piyadasa Sirisena, named Patrick De Silva in his childhood was born in 1875 to an influential village Govigama family in the environs of Induruwa which lies midway on the important Colombo - Galle road." (118).

Anagarika Dharmapala in his autobiographical writings emphasises the importance of his Buddhistic upbringing in having made him the man he was. This Buddhist tradition in which the Anagarika was steeped in consisted not only of schooling in doctrinal Theravada Buddhism but also of imbibing the particularly Sri Lankan variety of Sinhala - Buddhism. Thus the Mahavamsa and Chulavamsa which are supposed to be accounts of the history of the island are also a history of Buddhism. And more the latter than the former. There is also a strong tendency in these chronicles to lay main emphasis on Ruhuna as the champion and guardian of the Buddhist faith. Other Pali works like the Rasavahini, which is the first Pali reader for Bhikkhus, and the Sahassavatthupakarana, which is an account of the Buddhist religious establishment in Sri Lanka, also contain as much adulation of Ruhuna as the Mahavamsa itself. It should be noted that about one third of the Mahavamsa is taken up in the description of the Ruhuna hero Dutugemunu - his birth, victory and religious deeds.

A Heir to a Great Tradition

What is important to examine here is the extent to which the ideology embodied in these literary compilations would have influenced the thinking of Anagarika Dharmapala. In a pamphlet entitled "A message to the young men of Ceylon" (published in Calcutta in 1922) he says, "Enter into the realms of our king Dutugemunu in spirit and try to identify yourself with the thoughts of that great king who preserved Buddhism and our nationalism from oblivion." (119). To Dharmapala, Dutugemunu was the archetypal Sinhala hero. He was the model for all subsequent patriotism. This Alpha and Omega pattern of thought is reflected in the above-mentioned writing. "The first armed conflict began at the time of Duttagamini in 161 BC and the last conflict ended in November 1818 with the execution of the Kandyan Chiefs . . ." (120) and again, "the Sinhalese Lion Flag, that was unfurled twenty-four centuries ago in Vijithapura near Anuradhapura, was for the first time brought down . . . in the year 1815 . . ." (121). It was typical of the Buddhist revival led by Dharmapala that the British colonial power was seen only as one of the many enemies of the

Sinhalese Buddhists. Indian Tamils, Ceylon Tamils and Muslims were seen to be even more dangerous than the British.

Piyadasa Sirisena, who was one of the closest associates of Anagarika Dharmapala, was as a journalist and novelist, a leader of the Buddhist revival in his own right. To quote Dr. Sarath Amunugama, "Piyadasa Sirisena's career can best be understood in the context of changes that were taking place in the Sinhalese social structure, especially along the Southern coastline. Here the traditional isolation of the village had been breached. Geographically, the new Colombo - Galle road and the coastal railway linked these villages with towns like Galle and Kalutara and the city of Colombo. Through these networks came new urban values and social aspirations. Culturally, the opening of English language schools in the towns and the teaching of elementary English in village schools provided an opportunity to village children especially those of the more affluent families to acquire skills necessary for urban employment. In socio-economic terms the burgeoning capitalist economy siphoned off the more enterprising youth from the village to the city." (122). His best known novel **Jayatissa saha Rosalyn** was written in the characteristic propagandistic style of the period upholding Buddhist values against Christianity. It was the practice of the time for Christian missionaries to make comparative assessments in various literary forms of Buddhist and Christian values, invariably upholding the latter against the former. Piyadasa Sirisena turned this method of propaganda against the Christian missionaries themselves with his novel. Though Sirisena here upholds Buddhism specifically against Christianity, it had always been a main feature of the Matara literary tradition to uphold Buddhist values in general.

The Ruhuna Literary Tradition

Though all previous literary traditions like the Kotte tradition and Kandy tradition were associated with the various kingdoms that flourished at various times, the Matara tradition came into being without the concomitant political authority. Some scholars do not accept the validity of treating the Matara tradition separately, being as they are inclined to treat it as an outgrowth

of the Kandy tradition. While it is true that there was some overlapping of the time frame of these two traditions, the situations in which they flourished were very different. Kandy at that time was an independent Kingdom whereas the major part of Ruhuna was under Dutch control. Thus it would be most fallacious to see the Matara tradition simply as an outgrowth of the Kandy tradition.

The Matara Sahitya Vamsaya is deemed to have had its inception (tentatively) towards the last quarter of the eighteenth century. One of the most salient features of this tradition which claims a whole host of eminent literati is that it consistently upheld the superiority of Buddhism. The other rather incongruous feature of the literary works of this area is the eroticism in the works produced. This could have been due to the formation of a new educated lay elite who had done well under the Dutch. No doubt their secular life style was reflected in the prarts they wrote. One significant thing to be noted about the elites of Ruhuna of this period is that they do not appear to have been alienated from the masses the way the elites were in other parts of the country. Thomas Eden is once said to have commented regarding Mudaliyar De Saram of Matara who lived in the early nineteenth century, that he "had been and is one of the most learned natives of the island and possesses incredible knowledge of every transaction taken place in it from the most ancient periods, he is an astrologer learned in languages, a lawyer and priest, a virtuoso and a physician and is in consequence looked up to as a prodigy by the natives . . ." (123).

The Southern Headmen

Similarly, other Southern headman families such as the Ilangakkons, and the Ekanayake's retained close relations with the Buddhist faith. Contemporary works like the Kavmini Kondola (1773) written by Pattayame Lekam on the invitation of Don Joan Abhayasiriwardene Ilangakkon Mudali and Kavmuthuhara (1778) written by Saliala Manirathana on the invitation of Abhayarathana Ekanayake Muhandiram contain profuse eulogies of the religious activities of these families (124).

There were also some "native" scholars of no mean achievement among the Southern headmen. Gate Mudaliyar B. R. Gooneratne who had once acted in the position of Mahamudaliyar, was a Pali scholar and had edited *Tela Katha Gatha* (1864), *Vimana Vatthu Puja Madhu* (1887) and *Dhatu Katha* (1892) which were published by the Pali Text Society in London. F. E. Gooneratne Mohotti Mudali of Galle and H. E. Amarasekara Mudaliyar of Magam Pattu carried on historical research and contributed to learned journals as well as newspapers.

These were men who, though co-opted to the service of the colonial regime, had maintained close links with the traditions of the people. In fact, so steeped were these headmen in the ancient traditions, that when the Donoughmore Commission in the late 1920's was receiving deputations, Gate Mudaliyar George. A. Goonetilake who led the Chief Headmen's deputation, had drawn upon tradition to buttress their claim to pre-eminence in Sinhala society. He had warned that "for twenty centuries (sic), the government of the country had been carried on by the Chief Headmen and that any change in the system would be fraught with danger." This in spite of the fact that the Ruhuna region had been under foreign domination for over four centuries! And he had further asserted that only men of good birth and property should be appointed to be Chief Headmen. (125). Thus one can see that even the elitism of the Ruhuna headmen class was based on indigenous traditions and was not quite the alienated kind of "pukka sahib" elitism that was to be seen in the headman class in other parts of the country.

Speaking of her family, the Bandaranaike, Obeysekera, Alwis, Dias Abeysinghe *et al.* clan of the Western Province, Yasmin Gooneratne states, "Our families had based their claim to be considered leaders of Sri Lanka's Sinhalese communities in the low country, on their intimate inherited familiarity with local custom and language, on the antiquity of their family traditions, on their unmixed descent, and on the political and administrative experience they had gained during successive foreign occupations of the island. Now intensively educated in English, they had begun to lose that intimacy with the Sinhala speaking community in which had lain the chief of their claims to honour and responsibility. There are numbers among Sinha-

lese who whilst proficient in Greek, Latin and English, are unable to read an ordinary Sinhala manuscript, or read the Bible in their mother tongue or take a deposition on the bench of a Gamsabhava . . . Our clan as a whole, had looked too long toward Europe, and the life of the farmer in a village though it might be seen in the abstract or at a distance, viewed from a carriage or a car, or from the verandah of a holiday home on a rubber or coconut estate, had been left too far behind to permit a return. The source of social influence and political power was thought, after the British accession to lie in an English education. An English education of the very finest quality was unobtainable in Sri Lanka at the turn of the century except by those who had the money and the connections to purchase it abroad — and they were sadly, the people who had the most to lose from its gradually alienating effects." (126). The striking contrast between the elites of Ruhuna and the rest of the country is revealed further in Ms. Gooneratne's personal memoir. The Colombo residence of one of her Uncles, a Dias Bandaranaike, was named GRANTA to evoke memories of the owner's days in Cambridge University, whereas another relative by marriage, an Ilangakkon from Matara, had named his Colombo residence ROHANA to evoke memories of his native province! (127). Furthermore, contrast the opinion the British officials had of Mudaliyar De Saram of Matara and the following comments about non - Ruhuna members of the Ceylon elite . . . R. E. Stubbs once described S. C. Obeysekara, an unofficial member of the legislative council as "a silly old ass," and of A. J. R. De Soysa's appointment to the same position he said, "He can't put two words together and was therefore likely to give no trouble." Furthermore, the unofficial members of the legislative Council were "a decent lot of people, but by no means intelligent and with absolutely no backbone." (128).

Ruhuna Elites and Literary Endeavour

With regard to the influence of such affluent laymen on the literary production of the period, Dr. Sarath Amunugama opines as follows, ". . . with the advent of westerners to the maritime regions of Sri Lanka, and the consequent changes in social organisation, a new secular trend in Sinhala literature can be seen. In the Matara period (1779 - 1852) we see literary

works which illustrate the diminishing social authority of the monks and its concentration in the hands of provincial headmen, who were favoured by the colonial administration. The poetry of Dona Issabella Perumal (Gajaman Nona), mistress of several feudal chiefs of the South, is a good example of the new secular and personal concerns in Sinhala literature. Many of the literary works of this period were written by or attributed to provincial chiefs . . ." (129). It was mentioned earlier that Ruhuna remained a bastion of the Sinhala - Buddhist identity throughout foreign rule. One manifestation of this tendency was the recurring theme of Buddhist values in the literary works of the period. It is the proud boast of some literati belonging to this tradition that more Jataka tales were put down in poetic form during the Matara period than in the Kotte period which produced the **Guttala Kavya**, a poetic masterpiece of Ven. Vetteve based on the **Guttala Jatakaya** (130). Piyadasa Sirisena was thus only continuing a long tradition of Buddhist piety expressed in literature which was characteristic of his birth place — Ruhuna. It can be stated in fact that the Matara literary tradition rests on two great pillars — Buddhist values and eroticism. The two are contradictory to some extent, symbolising asceticism and indulgence. However, in the particular historical conjuncture in which this literary efflorescence took place, this contradiction gave expression to the changes in the social structure. The classes that prospered economically were beginning to adopt new life styles in keeping with their affluence. And at the same time there was an attempt to retain their cultural identity.

An interesting figure in this regard is "Pattayame Ralahami" or Abhayagunawardene Samarajeewa, a store-keeper of the Dutch government who later entered the service of Ilangakkon Mudaliyar of Matara as a clerk in the late eighteenth century. The piety of this devoted Buddhist shines through his best known work, the *Kavmini Kondola* — a poem based on the *Jayaddisa Jatakaya*. Two other equally famous works, *Viyovage Rathnamalaya* and *Rathivathee Kathava*, by the same author are soaked in eroticism. *Pattayame Ralahami* is thus the prototype of the Ruhuna poet encompassing both piety and eroticism, the sublime and the mundane, the first reflecting his origin as a son of the soil and the second (speculatively) reflecting his

social and economic status as a minor government functionary under the Dutch regime. The well known Ruhuna poetess Gajaman Nona (1746 - 1814) or Dona Isabel Perumal Cornelis wrote poems felicitating many such newly emergent individuals of the official class under the English regime, among whom were Tilakaratne Mudaliyar of Matara, Sevi Vikrama Arachchi and Alapatha Mudaliyar. Another Headman who wrote erotic poetry was Dissanayaka Mudaliyar of Matara (-1768) who composed a poem called Makaradvajaya (The taming of the dragon). Another example of Buddhist piety in the literature of the South was the poem Ganga Rohana Varnana (1806) by Tomis Samarasekera Dissanayake. This was a description of a meritorious ritual performed by Mudaliyar de Saram of Matara.

Gamperaliya and Gamanaka Mula

Another eminent Southern literary figure, perhaps its greatest, Martin Wickramasinghe, being as he was, a rational and secular intellectual, could not play the role of an impassioned advocate of primordial loyalties after the fashion of Piyadasa Sirisena. But even Wickramasinghe's rationalism finds a place within the Matara literary tradition because debate and dispute and controversy were as much a part of the Matara literary tradition as the upholding of Buddhist values. Gate Mudaliyar W. F. Gunawardena of Matara was one such figure who became famous in the course of a debate regarding the origins of the Sinhalese language. On the contention that the Sinhalese grammatical structure was Dravidian, he contended that there was a dominant Dravidian element in the formation of the Sinhala identity. Thus dissension and controversy were by no means alien to the Matara literary tradition. However, it is neither dissension nor controversy that makes Martin Wickramasinghe's work fit into the Matara tradition. Rather, it is the new dimension he gives it. The Sinhala novel first comes into its own with his work **Gamperaliya**. The first time that the novel was used as a form of literary expression in Sinhala was in 1888 with the publication of the novel "Meena" by W. A. Simon Silva—another Southerner.

As Wickramasinghe himself has said, **Gamperaliya** was an attempt to understand events and changes that took place

in his own native village of Koggala during his own lifetime. Koggala, being as it were a Southern village, would have reflected the changes taking place in Ruhuna villages during the period. The main character of the novel, Piyal, is shown to be a youth of a lower class who had raised himself up in life through education. Thereafter, using his skills he procures contracts and accumulates wealth. Similarly, Jinadasa, a minor character, goes off into the hill country to seek his fortune as a petty trader when he finds himself unable to make any headway in his place of birth. These movements, which have such a pivotal importance in the plot of the novel, could only have taken place in a Southern village. As we saw earlier, the influence of foreign rule and the opportunities it had provided for social and economic advancement had created an ethos of advancing oneself — the best representative of which is Piyal. It was also an established custom of the Southerners to seek their fortunes in other parts of the country. Migrant petty traders from Ruhuna were a common sight all over Sri Lanka by the time Wickramasinghe wrote his novel. What Jinadasa does is the usual and established practice of Southern petit-bourgeois to seek social and economic advancement through petty trade in other parts of the country. The Kandyan areas were at that time one of the biggest attractions for these petty traders. **Gamperaliya** is therefore, an account of changes taking place in a **Ruhuna** village. The events described therein would not be in any sense representative of a village in another part of the country.

Gunadasa Amarasekara in his magnificent novel "**Gamanaka Mula**" writes of a character called Gunawardene who had worked in Singapore for some time and with his savings had bought a car with which he makes a living by running hires. Because of his constant bragging about his days in Singapore, Gunawardene was known among the villagers as "Singapuru pachaya." Gunadasa Amarasekara's novel which is based in the Galle district, is very interesting in many ways. The author's accuracy in detail can hardly be paralleled in Sinhala literature. The Vedamahattaya who is obsessed with the idea of providing his children with an English education as a means of social mobility is very much a figure of the western part of

Ruhuna where people had become acutely aware of the advantages of education by the latter part of the nineteenth century. The fact that the Vedamahattaya's two sisters obtained their English education even at the cost of conversion to Christianity and the depiction of the grinding poverty and landlessness of the rural areas of Galle which made many people take to estate employment was a very accurate description of the situation in that part of the country in those days. The rise of a new Sinhala labour contractor class is attested by the mention of Porolis Kangany—a minor character in the novel. It also mentions the fact that more and more Sinhalese villagers in the Galle district were taking to estate labour as a means of livelihood. The novel also traces the rise of new rich entrepreneurs in the wake of the second world war. It mentions several traders and contractors from the South who were making it good in Colombo in the wake of increased demand for goods and services during the war. The term used by the author to describe these new entrepreneurs is "aluth mudalali paramparawak." Like **Gamperaliya**, **Gamanaka Mula** is a novel based on the South and reflecting the changes taking place in the particular historical epoch in which it is cast.

Southern Triumphalism: A Combination of Factors

If older works like the Mahavamsa upheld the political importance of the South, the Sandesa poems of the Kotte period upheld its economic importance. Novels like **Gamperaliya** and **Gamanaka Mula** express the new social and economic changes which took place in the South during the colonial era. There is thus an unbroken tradition in Sri Lanka where the South is given a place of prime importance. No doubt it is this factor that has given the Southerner the triumphalism for which he is notorious. It is also this same tradition which has made the rest of the Sinhala people look up to the Southerner. As was seen in the foregoing account, the most important and articulate exponents of the Buddhist revival were from the South. Even lesser figures of the nationalist revival like L. H. Mettananda, P. de S. Kularatne (Ambalangoda) and C. W. W. Kannangara hailed from the South. (131). Many of the monks leading the Buddhist revival also hailed from the

South. Foremost among them were Mohottiwatte Gunananda (Balapitiya) and Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala.

In addition to the names already mentioned, another noteworthy Sinhala nationalist of the South was Munidasa Cumaratunga. "Munidasa Cumaratunga (1887 - 1944), who launched the Hela movement was born as the son of an Ayurvedic physician in Dikhena, a remote village in the Matara district of the Southern Province. Having received his primary education in oriental languages from a nearby Pirivena, and having obtained a good command of the English language from St. Thoma's College at Matara, he arrived in Colombo to enter the Teacher Training College with the career of an Anglo - Vernacular teacher in view." (132). Munidasa Cumaratunga differed from his predecessors Dharmapala and Sirisena in that he rejected the Arya Sinhala identity with its Indic orientation and attempted to posit in its place language as a prime factor in nationality. Buddhism was not thought of as an integral aspect of the Sinhala identity. Thus the slogans of his predecessors — Country Nation and Religion (Rata, Jatiya, Agama)— was altered to, Language, Nation and Country (Basa, Resa, Desa) by Cumaratunga. The exclusion of Buddhism from the Sinhala identity goes contrary to historical facts as well as today's reality. Cumaratunga's rejection of religion as a criterion of nationality was as a political programme, however, quite feasible in a situation where there were many Sinhalese who were not Buddhists. Cumaratunga's policy on religion was basically secularist. According to him, "one can change one's religion many times without changing one's birth. Let all be Hela in nationality, caste, language and religion. Hela religion is that which a person professes according to his conscience." (The Heliyo 1, 7 and 8, 1941 p. 56). One might even venture to say that his secularism had a conventionally Marxist tinge to it since he deeply resented the political quietism and economic apathy encouraged by other-worldly religion. "The sermons which direct our minds to foreign lands, to heaven and to the Brahma world are fires which burn the ladder to prosperity. Let us cultivate our lands as our forefathers did. The sinful monks who eat up our brains along with our rice are the hordes of Mara." (133).

But Cumaratunga's attempts to build a nationalism based on a "pure" language ended in ridiculous attempts to disprove the influence of the Indian mainland in the formation of the Sinhala identity. One of which was to brush aside the Vijaya myth and to posit in its place the myth of Ravana as a Hela King. As he once commented, "It is a slur on the Helese nation to say that the arch-robber Vijaya and his fiendish followers were its progenitors. Many thousands of years before their arrival we had empires greater and mightier than the greatest and mightiest that any other nation could claim to have had. (The Heliyo. 1, 11 and 12 1941 p. 87).

The Lunatic Fringe

Whatever the differences Cumaratunga had with Dharmapala, they were both heirs to the Ruhuna tradition. Munidasa Cumaratunga's rather quixotic attempts to promote a pure Hela nationalism can be seen as the lunatic fringe of the nationalist revival that originated from the South. And the social psychology of this rather idiosyncretic nationalism is to be found in the long historical tradition of Ruhuna as the bastion of Buddhist—Sinhala resistance to extraneous influences—mainly military influences. The great tradition of Ruhuna is capable of accomodating a large margin of eccentricity and idiosyncrasy within its fold. As K.N.O. Dharmadasa states about Cumaratunga, "His views, especially on the history of the Sinhalese race and the Sinhalese language were mostly passionate beliefs based on his own conviction rather than on historical evidence." (134). Munidasa Cumaratunga's differences with other nationalistic leaders, though substantial, is only a further outgrowth of Ruhuna consciousness which evolved through a process of attraction and repulsion vis-a-vis foreign cultures Indian and otherwise. As Dharmadasa has pointed out, the virulent anti-Indianism of Cumaratunga was the result of a self-respect movement which sought maximum detachment from all extraneous traditions. In this context, it is only natural that India, the foreign land that has had the greatest impact on our country, should be rejected with the greatest vehemance. (There was a similar movement in South India under the leadership of Periyar Ramasamynayaker in the 1930's and 40's which rejected all "Aryan" and Brahminical intrusions into Dravidian

culture. This movement was the precursor of the Dravida Munnetra Kazagam and its offshoots.) Resonances of Cumaratunga's secularism and anti - Indianism were seen in the youth insurrection of 1971. Today the trend seems to be even stronger with the modern JVP even borrowing the Ravana myth. The description of the IPKF as the "Vanduru Hamudawa" (monkey army) is a harking back to the Ravana myth where Sri Lanka was invaded by Rama with the aid of Hanuman's monkey army. Thus Cumaratunga's political entrepreneurship is as strong as ever today. His political heir in this respect is Rohana Wijeweera — the leader of the JVP.

Modernity and Tradition

The tendency for the formation of new Buddhist fraternities in the South during the nineteenth century has been taken note of by Dr. Amunugama who speaks of the "Buddhist revival in Galle in South Sri Lanka." According to him, one of the highlights of the developments in Buddhism under colonial rule was the growth of new Buddhist fraternities (nikaya) particularly on the Southern seaboard. (135) The extent to which Ruhuna figured in the Buddhist revival can be seen in what Dr. Malalgoda has to say about the shift of the effective centre of Buddhist activity during the nineteenth century. The South much more than the West was to figure prominently in this. "The stronghold of Buddhism in the low country while Kandy was still the effective as well as formal centre of Buddhism was the area around the provincial town of Matara in the Southern Province. These areas did not really escape European intrusion after the sixteenth century, on the other hand, it was sufficiently removed from the citadels of European power such as Colombo and Galle, to maintain its links with tradition reasonably unimpaired. The political influence of the Kingdom of Kandy was high in this area, and it was here that the impact of the mid - eighteenth century Buddhist revival in the Kandyan Kingdom was most strongly felt (within the low country). Some of the leading monks of this area had their monastic training in Kandy, but once they had returned to the low country, they continued their religious and educational activities quite independently, under the patronage of their local headmen. In

fact, with the literary contribution of these persons in mind students of Sinhalese literature have come to speak of a specifically Matara period of Sinhalese literature, a period extending roughly from about 1790 to 1830."

"... Tennant in 1850 described Matara as a town which had always been pre - eminent as the stronghold of Buddhism, and the residence of its most learned Professors. But by 1850 the pre - eminence of Matara as the stronghold was on the wane. As the movement which began there grew stronger, this provincial town became too small a place for its operations. It was replaced, about this time, by the much larger town of Galle which was also (still) the major port of the island."

Dr. Kitsiri Malalgoda notes that, "The rise of Galle as a centre of Buddhist activity, was closely related to the fact that it was in the immediate neighbourhood of Galle that all the major branches of the Amarapura fraternity (with the exception of its Kandyan branch) had their headquarters (at Valitara, Dadalla, Dodanduwa and Miripanna). All the monasteries of the Amarapura fraternity were new compared with those of the Siam fraternity. But they were very active. It is a clear indication of the enthusiasm of the Amarapura monks that they succeeded, within a very short time, in equipping their monasteries with libraries which rivalled those in the older monasteries of the Siyam fraternity. Indeed in 1875, the library at Dadalla founded at the beginning of the century by Kapugama Dhammakhandha was described in an efficient report on temple libraries as by far the most extensive Buddhist library in the island. The libraries at Ambagahapitiya, Bogahapitiya and Gane Godalla—all Amarapura monasteries—also received special mention in the same report on account of the richness of their collection of manuscripts. The Amarapura monks were keen to maintain contacts with their co - religionists in Burma and Siam, and the proximity of their temples to Galle, for a long time Ceylon's major gateway to the outer world, helped them to maintain these contacts. It was at Galle that Ceylonese delegations to South - East Asian countries were assembled prior to their departure; it was also there that Burmese and Siamese delegations were received and conducted with due ceremony to the monasteries in the vicinity of the port (136).

The Ruhuna Bhikkhus

Another aspect of the Southern led Buddhist revival was the preponderance of the ordained intelligentsia in Ruhuna. As K. D. Paranavitana points out, "The scholars, especially those who were in Matara and its surroundings dominated the scene." Among these outstanding scholar monks were Karatota Dharmarama (1734 - 1826) and Bowala Dhammananda (- 1833). Ambagahapitiye Gnanavimalatissa Thera (founder of the Amarapura Nikaya) and Kataluwe Gunarathana-tissa Thera (founder of the Amarapura Kalyaniwansa Nikaya) were two eminent pupils of Bowala Thera. One of the most famous scholars of the first half of the nineteenth century was Mihiripenne Dhammaratana Thera (1768 - 1855). Galle Medhankara Thera (1780 - 1836) of the Pelmadulla Viharaya who was appointed Nayake Thera of Adam's Peak was another renowned monk of the time. His pupil Induruwe Sumangala Medhankara is reputed to have been a poet and the author of a book on the History of Nadagam (stage plays) in Sri Lanka.

" Ven. Weligama Sumangala Nayaka Thera (1825 - 1905) was another scholar worth mentioning. Born at Weligama in 1825 he received his education from Ven. Bentara Atthadassi. In a very short period he achieved literary prominence and was a recognised sanskrit scholar. Ven. Hikkaduwe Sumangala Thera was probably the most eminent amongst the Southern scholar monks in the nineteenth century. "All Buddhists accepted him as their leader without any sectarian or caste differences. He was also the founder of Vidyodaya Pirivena. "(137).

When in fact the Buddhist revival took place towards the end of the nineteenth century, it assumed the form of an anti-Christian thrust. As Rev. J. W. Balding reports, "A Buddhist revival took place during which public lectures were given for the avowed purpose of overthrowing Christianity and leading the converts back to their original faith. The result was that hundreds of those whose names had stood on the congregational lists of the various missionary societies forsook all connections with the Christian Church." (133). "The first open challenge

to Christian domination however came from Baddegama in the South, a strong fortress of the Anglican Church. On February 8, 1864 the Buddhists led by Ven. Bulathgama Dharmalankara Sri Sumanatissa, Ven. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala and Ven. Migettuwatte Gunananda were meeting the Christians led by Rev. George Parsons face to face in open debate at Baddegama. Parsons commenting on this controversy says, "I was slow to believe it would become such a serious matter until urged by our people to prepare for a fierce contest. The result fully justified their anxieties for never before in Ceylon was there such a marshalling of the enemy against Christianity. The one aim of the fifty priests and their two thousand followers who assembled here on February 8 was not to defend Buddhism but to overthrow Christianity." (139). Following the Baddegama example, four more great debates were held—in Waragoda (1865), Udanwita (1866), Gampola (1871) and Panadura (1873) the last of which is said to have attracted a crowd estimated at over 10,000. The hero of the latter debate, the Ven. Mohottiwatte Gunananda, a bhikkhu hailing from the South, has been described by Col. Henry Olcott as the precursor of the Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka (140).

Champions of the Sinhala – Buddhist Identity

The South always has displayed a tendency to assert its Buddhist identity. So it is not surprising that the Buddhist revival should start in the South. The public display of the Buddhist identity also seems to be very much a part of the Southern psyche. Dr. Gananath Obeysekera has studied the desire of the Sinhalese to establish their religious identity by wanting to display conspicuously, Buddha statues and other religious symbols in public places. In the course of his study Dr. Obeysekera notes that the largest and most conspicuous of such religious symbols is located in Matara in the South. (the Vehera-hena statue) (141). Considering the psychological make-up of the Southerner, the location of the largest Buddha statue of all time in Matara is certainly no accident.

Most of the low-country orders that were formed in the early years of the nineteenth century in protest against the refusal of the Kandyan Siyam Nikaya to give higher ordination

to anyone outside the cultivator caste had their headquarters in and around Galle. The first Southern delegation left in 1799 under the leadership of Ambagahapitiye Gnanavimalatissa and returned to establish their Sima at Balapitiya (142). It was these Ruhuna based orders of Bhikkhus who spearheaded the Buddhist revival in the face of the hostility of the conservative Siyam Nikaya. Interestingly enough, the Buddhist revival itself was the result of the typically Southern combination of Buddhist piety with the desire to learn from new sources. For example, the Southern bhikkhus were the first to emulate the Christian missionaries in using the printed word for propaganda purposes. The Lankaprakara Press was started in Galle in the early 1860's for this purpose (143). The Southerners were also the first to use education as a means of enhancing Buddhist influence and prestige. The first non-monastic Buddhist school was begun by Ven. Dodanduve Piyarathana in 1869 at Dodanduwa (144). It was Mme. Blavatsky and Col. Olcott who taught the Buddhists the advantage of adopting the propaganda and organisational methods used by the Christian missionaries. And the Southern Nikaya's were the first to modernise their methods. As we saw earlier, the greatest lay exponent of the Buddhist revival — Anagarika Dharmapala — was himself a vociferous advocate of modernisation. In fact, the motto of one of the most colourful characters produced by the South, Gate Mudaliyar W. F. Gunawardena of Matara (1861 - 1935) was, "that which is ancient is not necessarily the best." (145).

This dual aspect of the Southern psyche is brought out clearly in two incidents recounted by Dr. Sinnappah Arasaratnam in his book "Dutch Power in Ceylon (1658 - 1687)." In the early period of Dutch rule when a tug of war was in progress between the Dutch authorities and Rajasinha II for control of territories captured from the Portuguese, some local chiefs supported the Dutch and yet some others supported the Kandyan King. To quote Dr. Arasaratnam, "... some other chiefs however, who had remained loyal to Rajasinha, or at least had not taken to the new regime, found on occasion how to give him every assistance. These were mainly chiefs of the Matara district, an area which is reputed for its resistance

to the foreigner. Their disloyalty to the Dutch had gone so far that the only way for the Dutch to cope with this problem was to confine the families of the chiefs in their fortress, in order to ensure their loyalty — a practice borrowed from the Portuguese . . .” (146). And again, when in 1670 a major rebellion against the Dutch launched under the auspices of the Kandyan King Rajasinha II spread to Batticaloa, the lascars, all of who had been recruited from Matara were the first to answer the call to revolt and they all fled to Kandy leaving the Dutch in the lurch (147). Thus, while the people of Matara were “modern” enough in outlook to make use of any available avenues of economic and social advancement under the new regime, they were also patriots who never missed an opportunity to resist foreign political domination. It is out of this ethos that the Buddhist revival and nationalist upsurge emerged.

INDEPENDENCE AND AFTER

Independence in Sri Lanka was a rather anti-climatic affair where though politically there was a handing over of state power to an indigenous elite, there was no accompanying change in socio-economic terms. Things continued to be very much the same until 1956 when the Sinhala-Buddhist nationalistic revival which began in the early part of the century attained fruition in the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna government which was formed in that year.

Southern Entrepreneurship under the New Dispensation

In economic terms, this was a period where industrialisation and import substitution were given prominence. The rice crisis of 1952-53 which led to the hartal of 1953 was symptomatic of the economic problems of the country. By 1956 the situation was such that there had to be curbs on imports and serious thought had to be given to industrialisation. The economic plans of this period emphasised the role of the state in taking the initiative in heavy industry while leaving medium and light industries to private entrepreneurs. Heavy industry started off during this period with help from the Soviet bloc countries. Though not with great success, the entry of private entrepreneurs into medium and light industry also took place during this period. The restriction on imports and import quotas which were such a common feature of the governments of Ceylon during the period 1956-77 turned out to be a great stimulant for local entrepreneurial talent.

Many of the entrepreneurs who made huge fortunes during this period were Southerners. Certainly the most colourful personalities who rose to prominence in this time were Southern entrepreneurs. The industrialist C. A. Harischandra of Matara was one of the first entrepreneurs to rise under the new dispensation. A. G. Hinniappuhamy of Maliban Biscuits, Upali Wijewardene of the Upali Group, H. K. Dharmadasa of the Nawaloka Group, Gunadasa Mudalali of the Dasa Group and N. U. Jayewardena of Mercantile Credit to mention a few, and many others accumulated enormous fortunes under the new nationalistic dispensation. They were all Buddhists without exception. The pious Buddhist entrepreneur whom Michael Roberts characterised by the example of C. A. Odiris De Silva of Matara really comes into his own only after 1956 when the political climate and economic policy are most conducive to the further expansion and development of Southern entrepreneurial talent. This of course is not to say that there were no successful Southern business concerns in the pre - 1956 era. Southern traders and industrialists had penetrated to almost every corner of the island and established themselves in various capacities long before 1956. But the 1956 political, economic and social transformation saw a new dimension given to Southern entrepreneurial activity where some people accumulated in the course of a few years sufficient wealth to challenge the supremacy of the old Colombo-based landed and industrial concerns (which were for the most part foreign owned).

The Larger than Life Image

Thus the 1956 Sinhala - Buddhist revivalist movement gave an added fillip to the "superman" image of the Southerner. As we saw earlier, the superman image of the Southerner as regards politics and ideology was already well established long ago. But now with the patently visible superiority of the Southerners in almost all aspects of economic life, the image received confirmation. In this respect, the period between 1956 - 77 could be taken as a single era. Over three quarters of the period, the country was ruled by the centrist Sri Lanka Freedom Party which had an industrial policy of import substitution. During the five years 1965 - 70 in which the rival

United National Party was in power, the policies did not undergo much change since it was during the last few years of the sixties that the foreign exchange and employment problems really began to get out of control. It was during these two decades that the new Sinhala Buddhist tycoons thrown up by the industrialisation policy of the 1956 Bandaranaike government were able to grow and consolidate their position. A number of late comers who rose to prominence under the 1970 United Front Government are also much in evidence today.

Sinhalese children are from their infancy taught to think of Ruhuna as meriting special attention on account of the role it has played in the history of the island. Now there was the added factor of the ubiquitous Southern traders who were a living testimony to the boldness, enterprise and venturesome spirit of the Southerner. In Colombo, the Sinhala Buddhist business community is almost exclusively from Ruhuna. The motor vehicle trade in Panchikawatte, the vegetable trade in Pettah, are entirely Southern dominated. In other parts of the country, like Kandy and other hill country towns, Sinhala Buddhist trade, industry and transport are monopolised by Southerners. In Eastern Province towns like Trincomalee and Batticaloa, Southerners are yet again at the helm of Sinhala Buddhist business enterprise. In addition to this there is another set of nationally known figures in the form of wealthy entrepreneurs who are conspicuously Ruhuna Sinhala Buddhist in rhetoric — thus helping to spread the notion of Southern supremacy. Within the Ruhuna psyche itself, these factors tended to engender a kind of triumphalism and regional patriotism. Mr. N. U. Jayawardena once told the present author that the South always produces people in extremes. Prodigies are as common in Ruhuna as mediocrities in the rest of the country. People of outstanding ability in all walks of life, whether they be business people, professionals, charlatans, and even criminals are constantly being produced in the South.(148).

Two Ruhuna Folk Heroes

When Sepala Ekanayake (of Hakmana?) hijacked a plane in 1983, he immediately became a folk hero in Sri Lanka. Though enthusiasm was not lacking in Colombo and the outlying areas,

it was nothing compared to the jubilation in the South. He was feted in Ambalangoda and Galle, and it was at one such reception that his arrest by the Sri Lankan government is said to have taken place. Thereafter, numerous petitions with hundreds and even thousands of signatures originated from various places in the South demanding that Sepala Ekanayake be released. A similar outburst of enthusiasm was to be seen when the naval rating Vijitha Rohana (of Rathgama?) was arrested following an assault on Premier Rajiv Gandhi on the 29th of July 1987 after the signing of the Indo-Lanka peace accord. Though the sympathy of the people was more muted this time in the face of a government crackdown, their views were very much in evidence in the posters that came up all over the South, and also in private conversation.

What is it in the Southern psyche that made them accept these two international criminals as folk heroes? Boldness and the adventurous spirit are seen by the Southerners as desirable qualities, and the unprecedented acts of Sepala Ekanayake and Vijitha Rohana fired their imagination. Rather than the act itself, it was the spirit in which the act was done that they responded to. The commonly prevalent self - image of the Southerner as being stout - hearted and venturesome found expression and sympathy in these two acts of international crime. It is this very same self - image and spirit of the Southerner that enabled him to strike out on new and unexplored pathways when it came to economic and social advancement. It should be noted in this context that in neighbouring India, Rajasthan — a region well known for Hindu militancy during the medieval and pre - modern ages, was also the region that later produced India's most successful entrepreneurs. The successors of the Rajput warrior clans were the Marwari merchants who began to migrate to other parts of India from their native Rajasthan towards the middle of the nineteenth century. Similarities between the Marwari's and the Ruhuna diaspora are thus unmistakable. A history of communal or nationalistic militancy could thus give rise to the adventurous spirit needed for pioneering entrepreneurial activity. Though the Southern areas are agricultural in terms of economic base, the people there certainly

do not have the diffidence and fear of the outside world that is commonly associated with a peasant mentality. Two things have contributed to this unique feature of the Ruhuna psyche — the kudos given to the Southern fighting spirit by all our traditional sources of written history and the actual living conditions in the South. The former provides the mentality necessary to strike out on new paths. And the latter constitutes the urgent necessity of doing so.

The Kandyans Fade Away

The Kandyan kingdom remained the symbol of resistance to foreign powers long after the British had conquered it. And nationalistic sentiment harked back to the Kandyan kingdom as the symbol of Sinhala - Buddhist independence and integrity. The brief period of the Sitawaka kingdom (70 years) was followed by the Kandyan era where many heroic exploits against the Portuguese, Dutch and British were recorded. It could in fact be said that the Kandyans were the heirs to the tradition of resistance to foreign domination which was located for such a long time in Ruhuna. With the coming of the Portuguese, the mantle passed from Ruhuna to Sitawaka and then onwards to Kandy(149). Historians give adequate credit to the Kandyans for their valorous resistance to foreign rule. But they have failed to assess the cost of this non - reception of foreign influences and the importance of the compromise position arrived at by the Southerners whereby Buddhist and Sinhala cultural values were upheld while at the same time the best of what the foreigners had to give was imbibed and put to good use.

The Kandyans paid the price for their (perhaps well meant) independence and exclusivism by becoming the most backward section of the Sri Lankan population. As Geoffrey Powell puts it, ". . . In contrast to the Maritime Provinces, the half a million or so Kandyans stagnated in their mountain kingdom. Their old culture was nearly in ruins and they were cut off from contact not only with the rest of the world, but in many respects from their own littoral as well. The effects of this separation of the Kandyan from his low - country compatriots have not been eradicated even today and is one of the two main marks the Dutch set upon Ceylon . . ." (150).

Though Sinhala - Buddhist nationalism had far from become a dead letter, the nationalism of the twentieth century had to take a new dimension in view of the changes in communication and international contact taking place. The new nationalism which emerged from the South was better suited to the task, being as it were, a more forward looking kind of national sentiment in spite of its almost semi - xenophobic virulence. To quote Dr. Amunugama, ". . . Influential writers on the sociology of communication like Daniel Lerner have looked on mass media as agents of modernisation. Modernisation however, has been in these works defined as the rational pursuit of wealth, skills and leisure as developed in western society. Two assumptions underlie this approach. Firstly, that all societies evolve in unilinear fashion towards the western ideal. Modernisation in short is westernisation. Secondly, traditionalism is the polar opposite of modernity. The careers of Dharmapala and Sirisena throw doubt on the validity of this formulation. While as representatives of the rising national bourgeoisie, they were the first to use modern technology, it was used to further traditional interests. This dialectical relationship between tradition and modernity and the consequent creative evolution of new forms of communication (eg. newspapers, journals, public meetings, associations, drama) lies at the heart of the vitality of social movements which have been called modernising movements. The career of Piyadasa Sirisena — journalist, newspaper owner and novelist — is a good illustration of the powers of tradition to endure creatively in a new environment, provided the socio - economic basis for such a development exists " (151).

While asserting Sinhala - Buddhist revivalist sentiment, it was also emphasised by this brand of nationalism that it was necessary to learn from the foreigners for the greater glory of the Sinhala Buddhists. To quote Anagarika Dharmapala on this matter, ". . . Europe is progressive. Her religion is kept in the background for one day in the week and for six days her people follow the dictates of modern science. Sanitation, aesthetic arts, electricity etc, are what made European and American people great. Asia is full of opium eaters, ganja smokers, denigrating sensualists, superstition and religious fanatics. Gods and priests keep the people in ignorance . . . (152)."

It would be good for you and for the country, if a thousand Sinhalese youths leave Ceylon for the United States, Japan, Germany, India, Hong Kong, France and England to learn technical sciences and scientific agriculture, irrigation and return to Ceylon to begin the work of national elevation." (153). And then again, he laments "where are our dockyards, our arsenals, our gas works, our electric workshops, our agricultural colleges, our scientific laboratories?" (154). This divergence of thought is well reflected in the fact that the Southern Sinhala Buddhist nationalists were willing to learn from foreigners like Col. Olcott and Mme. Blavatsky so as to better organise their movement whereas the Kandyan Sinhala - Buddhists, both lay and clergy, remained sunk in ignorance, tradition and superstition. As Dharmapala once put it, "As regards materialistic development however, the Buddhist community in the island has since 1862, been showing its ability to march with the times. Printing presses, newspapers, and journals devoted to the religion have been established, and colleges for teaching Pali, Sanskrit, classical Sinhalese, Ayurvedic medicine, astrological mathematics and kindred subjects have been founded." (155). The "Buddhist community" in this case denotes exclusively the low country Buddhists. The main reason for the fading away of the Kandyan kingdom as a point of reference for Sinhala - Buddhist nationalists before and after independence, was that it was becoming more and more irrelevant to the modern world.

Xenophobia Sans the Desire to Learn

When A. E. Goonasinha inaugurated the Ceylon Labour Union in 1915, he chose the centenary of the fall of the Kandyan kingdom as the inaugural date. (156). Thus the Kandyan kingdom was at that time still an emotional point of reference for nationalists. Within the next two decades however, a diminishing of this importance becomes quite evident. At the election to the Legislative Council in 1924, many Kandyan Sinhalese candidates discovered that low-country Sinhalese had defeated them at the polls. This in spite of the fact that the Kandyan elites had always depicted the low - country Sinhalese as a threat to the Kandyans as much as the British imperialists, Indian and Moor traders and Indian labourers. By 1926 one sees the Kandyan elites taking desperate measures

to stem the erosion of support for Kandyan exclusivism. The Kandyan National Assembly was formed in this year and the British authorities and the Donoughmore Commission were canvassed for the formation of a separate autonomous region in the Kandyan areas. As Dr. Roberts puts it, ". . . The elections in 1924 - 25 (on a limited franchise) served to confirm the worst fears of the oppositional Kandyan leaders regarding their weak political position. Dr. T. B. Kobbekaduwa, P. B. Ratnayake and other Kandyan Congressmen moved away from the Congress. A new confederation of Kandyan leaders crystallised into a new political association in December 1925. Significantly, it was named the Kandyan National Assembly. A few years later in its memorandum to the Donoughmore Commission, this association contended "Ours is not a communal claim or a claim for the aggrandizement of a few. It is the claim of a nation to live its own life and realise its own identity . . . we suggest the creation of a federal state as in the United States of America . . . A federal system will enable the respective nationals of several states to prevent further inroads into their territories and to build up their own nationality." In support of this concept, the memorandum falsified history by claiming that the Kandyans as a group existed for over 2400 years, it claimed that there was no homogeneity in Sri Lanka and that the island was a melange of communities with prejudices and conflicting interests as great as those existing between Europeans and the rest, and it presented a legalistic argument originating in the theory that the Kandyan convention of 1815 was a document between two sovereign states" (157). With the failure of this scheme, one does not hear much from the Kandyan elites thereafter.

Increasing Friction with the Tamils and the Decline of Kandyan Exclusivism

Especially relevant to this lack of support from the Kandyan people for the exclusivist schemes of their leaders, was the increasing friction between the Tamils and the Sinhalese during this period. To quote Roberts, "More latterly however, the emergence of the Sinhala Maha Sabha as the organ of Sinhalese nationalist sectionalism, the heightening of political rivalry between the Tamils and the Sinhalese, the Indian Tamil question,

and finally, the arrival of political independence and the birth of the Federal Party injected increasing hesitation and ambivalence into the programme and claims of the Kandyan nationalist movement." (158). The feelings of the Kandyans of being besieged by the large numbers of Tamil labourers and traders who had made inroads into their preserves would no doubt have encouraged them to find common cause with their low-country brethren, who though separated for several centuries were nevertheless no less Sinhalese or Buddhist than themselves. Besides, there had always been a tradition where many low - country Sinhalese looked up to the King of Kandy as their rightful sovereign. Thus though differences were not non-existent, points of common reference were also not lacking. Thus the Kandyan elites soon found that the Kandyan masses were not all that enamoured by the prospect of Kandyan autonomy.

The breaking away of Ponnambalam Arunachalam from the Ceylon National Congress in 1919 may be interpreted as merely an event at the elite level. But in a country where politics proceeds on the lines of client — patron relationships, any schism at the top would of necessity have repercussions at the mass level. With the sharpening of Sinhala - Tamil friction in the mid - 1940's with G. G. Ponnambalam canvassing the Soulbury Commission for fifty - fifty representation for all the minorities collectively, there was an increasing uneasiness among the Sinhalese which would have made the Kandyan Sinhalese draw even closer to their brethren in the low - country. Moreover, the fact that the Kandyan elites were hidebound and feudalistic in their approach would have made the more dynamic and forward looking low - country leadership seem more attractive to the Kandyan masses than their own ineffectual leaders. One major gift to the Kandyan Sinhalese from the first low - country dominated post - independence government was the disenfranchisement of the Indian Tamils in the up-country under the Citizenship Act of 1948. With the disenfranchisement of large numbers of voters in a situation where the number of people rather than the number of actual voters was taken into account in the demarcation of electoral constituencies, the Kandyan Sinhalese were found to be in a position to field a larger number of Parliamentarians than their proportions in the overall population warranted. The 1960 June election

which brought Mrs. Bandaranaike — a member of the eminent Kandyan Ratwatte clan into power, and the 1962 appointment of William Gopallawa to the post of Governor - General would have placated Kandyan sentiments still further.

The Tamil Issue and the Role of Ruhuna

The upshot of all this was that from the early decades of the twentieth century there was a continuous diminishing of the importance of Kandyan regional patriotism and nationalism until it disappears almost completely after the seventies. In the early seventies, there were only a few voices to express Kandyan national sentiment like that of Prof. Tennakoon Wimalananda. Some Kandyan issues like the presence of large numbers of Indian Tamil plantation labourers were taken up by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna in 1971. But these were the last glowing embers of a dying fire. Since the decline of Kandyan nationalism took place in conjunction with the increasing ethnic rivalry between the Sinhalese and the Tamils, one sees the phenomenon where the South increases in importance as a focus of Sinhala - Buddhist militancy. Thus the decline of the Kandyan legend resuscitates the Ruhuna legend. The traditional role of Ruhuna as the bulwark of Sinhala - Buddhist nationalism against the encroachments of the South Indians and Tamils brings it increasingly to the forefront of the Sinhala - Tamil conflict.

The Indo - Lanka Peace Accord: Ruhuna Boils Over

The signing of the Indo - Lanka Peace Accord on July 28th 1987 to end the ethnic war was a watershed in the history of the island and it saw Ruhuna (rightly or wrongly) once more rising up to its traditional role as the "protector" of the Sinhala - Buddhist identity. It could be seen that in ancient times, all those who had vanquished Indian aggression had to do so with the aid of the people of Ruhuna. Dutugemunu (2nd century BC), Vettagamini Abhaya (2nd century BC), Dhatusena (6th century AD) and Vijayabahu (12th century AD) all had to rely on Ruhuna as a base against Indian aggression. It is not necessary to expand on the popular expression of Ruhuna triumphalism one comes across every day. However, for recording purposes,

it would be enlightening to quote from a recent article in a Sinhala journal on the position of Ruhuna in the post-Indo-Lanka Accord politics of Sri Lanka. Concerning the measures taken by the government to combat the insurgency in the Southern Province following the Indo-Lanka Peace Accord, the writer opines as follows, ". . . The counter-revolution (sic) strengthens and expands military action against the people of Ruhuna — the great bastion of the freedom struggles of the Hela nation throughout history. Not only is this military action against the people of Ruhuna completely unjustified, it will never be successful . . . since there is no room to retreat, the expansion of military action will leave no option but to fight for the illustrious base area of the nation which they have safeguarded for ages . . ." (159). Anti-accord violence and agitation became particularly virulent in the South in the months following the signing of the Accord. Indeed it may be said that there was almost a situation of dual control in the Southern Province. Though the presence of the Indian Peace Keeping Force on Sri Lankan soil bares no relationship to the early Cholan invasions, it should be noted that current Sinhalese antipathy towards the IPKF is based to a large extent on such memories.

The New Messiah from Ruhuna

In Sri Lanka, it is not possible to talk of politics without taking into account the personalities involved. This is especially true of the extremist forces of both the Tamils and the Sinhalese. If the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam cannot be talked of without reference to its leader Velupillai Prabhakaran, even less so can the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (Peoples Liberation Front) be talked about without reference to its leader Rohana Wijeweera. The whole history and ideology of Ruhuna is embodied in his first name. The name Rohana was adopted by him in the pre-1971 days in order to depict his chosen role as the Messiah from Ruhuna who was to deliver the Sinhala people from imperialists, Tamils and the like. The JVP, even in its pre-71 phase, laid a lot of emphasis on "Indian Expansionism" in its propaganda work, condemning the large contingent of Tamil labour of Indian origin in the hill country and the Indian Tamil trading community in Colombo as an Indian "fifth column".

And they warned against the subtle machinations of this fifth column to bring Sri Lanka more and more to a position of subservience to India. Thus the insurrection of 1971 was also meant to be a reaction against the subtle expansionist designs of India. In commenting on the Messianism within the JVP, Gamini Keerawelle suggests that it was no accident that Wijeweera's chief lieutenant during the 1971 insurrection was given the code name Athula. Martin Wickramasinghe's novel "Rohini" has a character named Athula in the role of King Dutugemunu's chief lieutenant. And Keerawelle's contention is that there was a conscious harking back to the old myths of Ruhuna heroism against foreign imperialists and their local lackeys within the JVP during this period(160).

More recently, Mr. Rohana Wijeweera has settled down to a more concrete example, that of Vijayabahu I who in the twelfth century, vanquished the Cholas with a Southern army using Ruhuna as his main base. The Vijayabahu image keeps on recurring in JVP literature, for instance—Wijeweera's book "The Solution to the Tamil Eelam Question" and the Central Committee statement of 26 May 1988. What was to be seen in the Southern Province in the aftermath of the Indo-Lanka Peace Accord was an attempt to make a practical reality of this Vijayabahu model. The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna was identified as a Sinhala nativistic movement quite early in its history. The interesting thing about this nativism is that it had a marked Southern bias. Today, this is quite obvious with the South being used as the main base of operations and recruitment for JVP cadres. Large numbers of Southern youth have been sent to other Provinces, (eg. Uva, Sabaragamuwa) to conduct military operations (in the last few months of 1988). It is relevant in this regard that the large majority of the leaders of the abortive JVP insurrection of 1971 were from the South. (161). Many of the district leaders of the JVP in 1971 were from Ruhuna. Half of the accused under the Criminal Justice Commission Act were from Ruhuna.(162). This, in a situation where the insurrection spread to many areas outside the Southern Province. Another interesting feature which one notices is that the JVP's concentration of military activity is even today in the same old 1971 regions "Starting in the South from Matara, Galle,

Ambalangoda and Elpitiya, passing through the Central Provinces by way of Matale, Kandy and Kegalle and continuing into the North West and North Central Provinces through Kurunegala as far as Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa with a line extending into Uva Province at Wellawaya and Moneragala . . .” (163).

The Southerners amongst the 1971 JVP leadership were as follows: (164)

Rohana Wijeweera	..	Kotuwegoda, Matara
Lionel Bopage	..	Weligama
James Uyangoda	..	Kamburupitiya
Anura Ranjit Kurukulasuriya	..	Porambe, Ambalangoda
Sunanda Deshapriya	..	— do —
Victor Ivan <i>alias</i> PodiAthula	..	Kapuhempola—Akmeemana
Somasiri Kumanayake	..	Ganegoda, Elpitiya
Wasantha Karunaratne	..	Imaduwa, Galle
Cecil Chandra	..	Ambalangoda
Piyasiri	..	Porambe, Ambalangoda
Sunil Ratnasiri	..	Akurala, Kahawe
Wijepala	..	Heenetiya, Balapitiya
Lakshman Mahaduwage	..	Pelawatte, Ambalangoda
Mahinda Wijesekera	..	Devundara
Kelly Senanayake	..	Balapitiya
Batapola Athula	..	Polwatte, Batapola
Aladin Subasinghe	..	Talgahawatte, Elpitiya
Nayanananda Wijekulatilleke	..	Madampe, Ambalangoda

The Best Representatives of the Sinhala - Buddhists

It would be interesting to see whether there is any other instance in the world where one geographically distinctive section of a particular ethnic - religious group are accepted by the rest of the same group as the best representatives of the whole identity. The Ruhuna Sinhalese are accepted by the rest of the Sinhala community as the best representatives of the Sinhalese. It would be strange if this was not so in view of the ideological kudos given to Ruhuna by all our traditional sources of written history and the very visible economic power and influence of the large community of Southern entrepreneurs—the Ruhuna diaspora scattered all over the island. The Southerners

for their part unstintingly think of themselves as in fact the best representatives of the Sinhalese. The triumphalism of the Southerner is a well known fact and a conspicuous feature of our society. In a similar vein, the Tamils of Jaffna do tend to think of themselves as the best representatives of the Tamil people of Sri Lanka. But this triumphalism of the Jaffna Tamil is deeply resented by their counterparts in the plantation areas and the Eastern Province. The Jaffna peninsula, being like the South heavily populated and marginalised, had necessitated greater industry in the people for the sake of survival. The success stemming from this industry, in the field of education in the case of the Jaffna Tamil and entrepreneurship in the case of the Southerner has given these people a reputation for hardwork and success. But the Jaffna Tamils lack the ideological backing given to Ruhuna by written history. Ruhuna triumphalism is in George Rude's words, the "mother's milk" ideology of the Sinhalese. It is deeply ingrained in the oral traditions and folk memories of the Sinhala people. (165). Among the traditional sources of written History which contain profuse eulogies of Ruhuna are the Mahawamsa, Dhatuwamsa, Sihalavatthupakarana, Rajavali, Pujavali, Rasavahini, Saddhammalankara, Thupavamsa and the epigraphic sources of Hennagala, Kusalakanda, Sandagiri Vehera and Situlpauwa.

Sons of the South in National Politics

Out migration from Ruhuna appears to have given rise to the ascendancy of the Ruhuna diaspora in politics as well. In the traditional politics of Sri Lanka where political elites are formed along the lines of economic advancement, this process was in a sense inevitable. One would see the Ruhuna man migrating to another part of the country, slowly becoming economically dominant in the area of his new habitation, and through the traditional patron - client relationships with the "masses" and the Buddhist ecclesia, gradually moving into politics. This is a very widespread phenomenon. For example, at the Presidential Election of 1982, three of the six candidates were from Ruhuna. Dr. Colvin R. de Silva (Lanka Sama Samaja Party) - Balapitiya Vasudeva Nanayakkara (Nava Sama Samaja Party) - Unawatuna and Rohana Wijeweera (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna) - Matara, Kottegoda. At the Presidential Elections in 1988,

two of the three candidates hailed from the South. Ranasinha Premadasa (United National Party) — Balapitiya, and Oswin Abejgoonasekera (Sri Lanka Mahajana Party) — Ahangama. The new President Mr. Ranasinha Premadasa is in fact a very typical member of the Ruhuna diaspora. His father is said to have migrated to Colombo from a village off Balapitiya as a tobacco merchant in the early decades of this century. One has to look at this phenomenon in conjunction with the fact that even the vast majority of the Buddhist and nationalist reformers in the early part of this century hailed from Ruhuna. Political ascendancy by virtue of economic power is much more common at the level of Parliamentary and local government constituencies. Examples in this regard are too common to need citation.

Economic Hardship and Population Pressures

The South in fact shares with Jaffna many common socio-economic factors which induce greater industry among the people. The Colombo district has a population density of over 2600 per square km. (166). Jaffna and Matara follows with a population density of 500 - 800 per sq. km. The Galle district follows next with 300 - 500 population density. The Hambantota district of the Southern Province is relatively less populous with around 100 - 300 to the square km. While the annual rate of population growth for the country as a whole was 1.7 in the inter-censal period 1971 - 1981, the corresponding rates for Galle, Matara and Hambantota were 1.1, 1.0 and 2.4 respectively. Colombo and Jaffna recorded growth rates of 1.3 and 1.9 respectively in the same period.

Out Migration

It can be seen that there was considerable outmigration from the Southern districts particularly from Matara. In the intercensal period 1963-1971, Matara district recorded the highest net migration rate at -8.03 with Jaffna coming second with -5.09. Galle came third in the net outflow figures with -2.50. (The plantation districts of Nuwara Eliya, Badulla, Kegalle and Kandy also recorded high

negative rates of migration due to the repatriation of Indian labour. Hence they have been left out of the above calculation. The Hambantota district which is the least populated district in the Southern Province also recorded a negative rate of migration with -0.47 . As was pointed out earlier, the possibility of the Hambantota district absorbing migration from Galle and Matara was circumscribed due to the limited economic potential of the area. In the intercensal period 1971-1981 the plantation districts of Kandy, Badulla, Kegalle and Matale recorded tremendous increases in negative migration due to increased repatriation of Indian Tamil labour. Of the non-plantation districts, Matara was still in the lead with a -11.2 rate of net migration. Galle came next with -6.0 while Jaffna followed with -3.9 . These statistics indicate that the rate of out-migration from the Southern districts outstripped even that of Jaffna during this period.

Diminishing Land Holdings

As regards land holdings, the Colombo district has 85.2% of its land holdings in plots of less than 2 acres in extent. 70.2% of Colombo land holdings are less than one acre in extent. Jaffna district comes second with 72.6% of its land holdings being less than one acre in extent and 85.4% being less than two acres. In the Kandy district, which is as densely populated as the Galle district, 55.9% of land holdings are less than one acre in extent, and 76% are less than 2 acres in extent. In the Galle district itself, 53.1% of land holdings were less than one acre in extent, with 67.9% being less than 2 acres. In the Matara district, these figures are 42.6% and 67.9% respectively. Even in the Hambantota district, which is far less populous than Galle and Matara, one finds that small land holdings predominate. 20.4% of all land holdings in this district were less than one acre while 44.4% and 63.3% were less than two and three acres respectively.

Meanwhile, statistical data reveal that the average size of land holdings in these areas have been diminishing

over the years. During the period between 1962 and 1973, the average size of land holdings in the Galle district was reduced from 2.07 acres to 1.73 acres. And in the Matara district from 2.44 acres to 2.06 acres. The heavy out migration from these areas, of which mention was made earlier, was due no doubt to this increasing pressure on land. In the Jaffna district too there was a significant reduction in the size of landholdings from 1.78 acres to 1.31 acres during 1962-1973. Though Colombo district recorded a reduction from 1.80 to 1.47, the economy of this district is not dependent on the produce of the land and hence migration into the district grew by 1.70% during this period. Even in the Hambantota district where the land-man ratio is far lower than that of Galle and Matara, the average size of land holdings were reduced from 1.78 acres to 1.31 acres during 1962-1973.

Agricultural Involution

It would appear that this high pressure on land had created in the Galle and Matara districts a large agricultural proletariat. As we noted earlier, this agricultural proletariat or lumpen proletariat had been in existence even during Dutch times. And it was this social flotsam that had laid the foundation for Southern entrepreneurial activity. In more modern times, of those employed in agriculture in the Southern districts, 48.7% in Galle and 44.3% in Matara were classified as agricultural labourers. Thus the landlessness in Galle and Matara districts are higher than that of Colombo and Jaffna where 22% and 15% respectively of the population engaged in agriculture were classified as labourers. The higher levels of out-migration in the Matara and Galle districts can be explained to a large extent by the severe landlessness of the region. Even the process of "agricultural involution" does not appear to have been able to contain the pressure on land in the Galle and Matara districts. In spite of the small size of the average land holding in the Jaffna district, the process of agricultural involution where the land continues to absorb more and more people (albeit at decreased standards of living) seem

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to have kept at manageable levels the problem of landlessness in the Jaffna district. The intensive cultivation practiced in Jaffna cannot be practiced in Galle and Matara due to the absence of ground water. Some idea of the quality of life in the Southern districts when compared with Jaffna can be seen in the number and variety of livestock reared for food and other purposes.

1981 Statistics - per 100 employed in agriculture

District	Neat Cattle	Buffaloes	Goats	Sheep	Pigs	Poultry
Jaffna	256	4	209	33	1	808
Galle	41	20	12	-	-	259
Matara	41	21	6	-	-	137
Hambantota	111	117	9	3	-	137

The disparities are there for all to see. The lack of proper avenues of employment in agriculture in the Southern districts would have resulted in the very high proportion of non-agricultural workers in the working population in these districts. Colombo had the highest proportion with 88.65%. Galle came second with 60.85% with Jaffna following closely with 60.01%. Matara and Hambantota were 49.24% and 38.47% respectively. The fact that non-agricultural workers constituted 60% and 50% of all wage earners in two non-industrial districts like Galle and Matara eloquently testifies to the inability of their agrarian economies to absorb the increasing population which has to eke out a meagre existence in various service related forms of work in the absence of any real industry. In these circumstances, it is only natural that the South should become a hotbed of subversive activity. What was earlier an incentive to greater effort and industry has now turned out to be the motive force for societal violence. Ideology provides the will and poverty provides the cadres for the political ferment in the Southern Province.

A Ruhuna Business Community

Ruhuna nationalism has in recent times veered more and more towards the lunatic fringe. Indiscriminate killings in the South by a generation gone mad has laid the foundation for the vitiating of one of the most positive tendencies to emerge from Ruhuna, a rational and forward looking nationalism. The present struggle has led us back in time to an era of bestiality and complete unconcern for international opinion. The South has always been notorious for violence. But it had always had the twin saving graces of modernity and enterprise.

Considering the fact that the Ruhuna upheaval is directly related to the ethnic question, it should be noted that the enterprising Southerner had a lot to do in reducing the level of inter-ethnic hatred and jealousy. It was the hardy Southerner who in business enterprise and other endeavours fought his way to the top amidst many obstacles and thereby rectified many of the ethnic imbalances in the share of wealth owned by Sinhala Buddhists. Had it not been for the Southerner, Sri Lanka would have experienced the kind of unrest that shook countries like Malaysia and Indonesia. When minorities control completely the wealth of a country, unrest is bound to erupt.

During the colonial era, when all lending operations were in the hands of Chettiar's employed by the British owned banks, it was the hardy Southerners alone from amongst the Sinhalese Buddhists who made headway in accumulating wealth. Due credit should be given to them for that. Taken individually, Ruhuna has produced some truly remarkable entrepreneurs. But the lack of an "entrepreneurial culture" in Sri Lanka has made these gains unstable. Southern entrepreneurship is still characterised by its floating nature . . . some rise to great heights and then fade away. It has been noticed in India that stable business communities like the Marwaris, Sindhis and Parsees were able to contribute

much better to capitalist development because of its stable nature and its permanent "network". Even in countries like Hong Kong and Indonesia, the extensive Chinese business societies have provided stability and advancement. Because of the lack of such a system, the Sinhala businessman is still no match for his Tamil or Muslim counterpart.

Will the Ruhuna merchants and industrialists scattered all over the island solidify in time into a trading community analogous to the Marwari or Chetty phenomenon in India? The origins of the Marwari, Chetty and Ruhuna diaspora are quite similar. Faced with harsh and inhospitable conditions in their native homeland, the Marwaris migrated from Rajasthan to other parts of India in search of opportunities for a new life. Of Chettinad, the place of origin of the Chettiars, W. S. Weerasooria sates that, "The desert like countryside is matched only by that of Rajasthan another region that has given India some of the greatest industrialists and businessmen. The rainfall in Chettinad is scant, agriculture unprofitable, mineral wealth and industry almost non-existent." (167) The same could, as we saw earlier, be repeated word for word about Ruhuna. Like the Ruhuna businessmen of Sri Lanka, the Marwaris spread their influence all over India after around the mid-nineteenth century. Even in Tamil Nadu, the traders who have really established themselves are not the well known Tamil community of Chettiars but the Marwaris. (168) By 1947 the well known Tamil leader Mr. C. N. Annathurai was lamenting the commercial and industrial domination of Tamil Nadu by Marwari, Gujerati and Parsee businessmen. (169)

The Marwari's

The trading castes of Rajasthan spread to other regions in India and became known collectively as the "Marwaris." (170) As in the case of Ruhuna, the migration patterns of the Marwaris was such that the migration of one would have a spread effect and encourage and facilitate the migration of some others. Of course, none

of the Ruhuna caste groups that took to trade belonged to any "trading castes" as such. Sri Lanka never had any. They were basically other occupational castes that took to trade when traditional occupational roles began to break down. Thus the Ruhuna traders did not have the elaborate self-help schemes that the Marwaris had almost from the beginning of their all-India migration. These self-help schemes were of great help in consolidating Marwari control over many lines of business. But today, with the Ruhuna trading community having matured with time, we see the emergence of business organisations like the Sampath Bank which aim at the building up of indigenous entrepreneurial activity. The Marwaris too had the same kind of self help network and even a "resource base" of able administrators and the like. The Marwaris were thus able to aid each other in capturing markets, obtaining loan capital, eliminating competitors and so on. The practice of employing skilled and trained "technocrats" from their own community ensured the loyalty of key employees. The training of the technocrats was the responsibility of the employers, and there were occasions when upon the demise of the founder, the chief employee takes over the business temporarily until the heirs of the founder were in a position to operate the business. Such employees or "chief clerks" of some Marwari firms attained great prestige and became leaders of their community in some parts of India. This system has ensured the smooth transition from one generation to another and has ensured the stability of Marwari firms. (171) The only phenomenon approximating to this in Sri Lanka are the Muslims, who admittedly, are not powerful enough to merit a place analogous to the Marwaris of India. Moreover, in an era of heightened communal consciousness their position as an ethnic minority may preclude their chances of acquiring sufficient power and influence to develop into a trading community after the fashion of the Marwaris. It is a moot point here as to whether the Ruhuna traders scattered all over the island will gather sufficient cohesion so as to be able to present a solid front to all

competitors. As the champions of the majority community they will be in a much better position to wield the power and influence that would be necessary to emerge as a new business community.

The Southern Entrepreneur Phenomenon

The same cannot be said of the Kandyans where the younger generation considers it "old fashioned" to speak of one's regional identity. In Gamini Fonseka's film "Sagarayak Meda" Iranganie Serasinghe acts the role of the rather eccentric old mother of a powerful government Minister who insists on ascertaining whether every guest calling at her house to meet her son is of Kandyan descent. The Kandyans are allowed to come inside and sometimes even allowed to sit down whereas the non-Kandyans are told to stand outside. The whole character is held up for the ridicule of the audience. Kandyan exclusivism is an anachronism to be made fun of.

Not so the Ruhuna identity. The younger generation takes it very seriously. Will this strong sense of identity among the migrant Ruhuna business people in other parts of the island enable them to band together as a cohesive business community? Though the rise of the Marwari merchants in India took place in another totally different economic and social context, they have an organisation well suited to the development of capitalism. One might indeed say that most of the successes scored by Indian capital was due to the existence of cohesive business communities with rules and codes of their own. The business communities developed by migrant Chinese in Indonesia were mainly responsible for the development of capitalism in that country. Similarly, it will be the role of the Southern entrepreneur to be the locomotive of capitalist development (such as is possible) in this country.

Eliminating competitors in the process of growing into a self-conscious business community is a major step in capitalist development. Earlier in this century

Anagarika Dharmapala, the Sinhala nationalist from Ruhuna was at the forefront of protest against alien traders. In 1915 he wrote "the Muhammedans, an alien people by Shylockian methods became prosperous like the Jews. The Sinhalese, sons of the soil, whose ancestors, for 2358 years had shed rivers of blood to keep the country free from alien invaders are in the eyes of the British only vagabonds. The alien South Indian Muhammedan comes to Ceylon, sees the neglected villager without any experience in trade... and the result is that the Muhammedan thrives and the son of the soil goes to the wall."

Communalism and the Minority Business Groups

Similar sentiments, directed at all sections of the alien ie, non-Sinhalese business community, is not very far off in the horizon given the present state of heightened ethnic consciousness in the country. Even if the virulence of the present state of war abates somewhat in the future, it is only inevitable that the ethnic war would leave its permanent scars. The Sinhalese may become more conscious of the fact that the minorities in Sri Lanka have an inordinate proportion of the trade in the island and the Sinhala businessman will eventually stand to benefit from such a consciousness. It can be seen in countries like Malaysia and Indonesia that the Bhumiputras have become conscious of their under-privileged position and support authoritarian regimes that have promised to rectify the situation. If a similar situation does emerge in Sri Lanka, the businessmen of Ruhuna will be the immediate beneficiaries. Actually, the attempts of Anagarika Dharmapala to whip up Sinhala resentment did not reach the levels it did in Malaysia and Indonesia. But then, levels of inter-ethnic hatred had not reached today's levels at that time.

Even in the early part of this century when communal consciousness had not reached today's levels, the sons of three premier Sinhalese businessmen were convicted by the British colonial government for allegedly

having incited the crowds to attack rival business establishments during the anti-Muslim riots of 1915. "E. H. Pedris the son of the wealthy Pettah merchant was court-martialed and shot . . . Edmund Hewavitharana, a son of H. Don Carolis died in jail after his death sentence was commuted. And N. S. Fernando Wijesekera, son of the Pettah stationer, N. S. Fernando also received a death sentence which was commuted." (172). Ethnic violence aimed at eliminating business competition is usually a symptom of inferiority either real or imagined. However, one cannot have objections to the elimination of competition through the usual business methods like combination, boycott, price manipulation etc. These are "evils" endemic to capitalism and are liberally used by the other business communities in Sri Lanka as well.

At the present moment with the South at the forefront of the uncompromising Sinhala struggle for a kind of political authority where the ethnic minorities in the country would be allowed to exist only under the sufferance of the majority community as in the days of the Sinhala Kings like Parakramabahu VI and Rajasinha II, one may reasonably expect such a frame of mind to guide the actions of Sinhala businessmen, particularly the Ruhuna businessmen. In the long run, the ethnic conflict may contribute towards the development of capitalism in this country by giving rise to a new hard-headed and cohesive business community which is not ethnically or religiously differentiated in any way from the majority community and therefore in a position to command loyalty and security—two major factors not available to Tamils and perhaps to Muslims too in the future. The Ruhuna entrepreneur is ideally suited to the function of a Marwari style of business community. What with his already manifest entrepreneurial skill, ubiquitous presence, a religion which favours business enterprise, and above all political and social acceptance among a group of people increasingly adamant in securing the exclusive right to political authority and state power in the island.

Pointers in this direction are already becoming manifest. The setting up of the Sampath Bank in 1987 was

precipitated by a resolution passed at the International Buddhist Conference held in Colombo in 1984. (173) This indicates that even at the international level, Buddhists are becoming conscious of their underprivileged position and are trying to do something about it. The original proposal was in fact to set up an International Bank for Buddhists And Mr. N. U. Jayawardena, one of the most successful members of the Ruhuna diaspora, was invited to initiate action towards its implementation. However, the project was later limited to the formation of a Bank for "the sons of the soil" in Sri Lanka itself, due to the lack of capital to do international financing. Thus the Sampath Bank is a harbinger of things to come in the field of business activity in Sri Lanka.

It was Anagarika Dharmapala again who called in 1911 in a article in the Sinhala Bauddhaya, for patriotic notables to come forward to work for the glory of the Sinhalese. He wanted the wealth squandered by the elites on various fads and fashions spent instead on educating youth to create a new Sinhala technocracy and in investment in profitable ventures to generate an income. He also advocated the setting up of Sinhala shopping centres to drive out the foreign (in this case meaning both British and other South Asians) merchants who had come to siphon off the country's wealth. (174) Dharmapala placed great emphasis on the Sinhala elites as a potential counter to the forces beseiging the Sinhala Buddhists. And one of his main criticisms of these elites was their lack of business acumen. In a poem written in 1911 entitled "Borah-Parsee" he states that though there be plenty of Sinhalese well endowed with money, they do not put it to use in profitable enterprise. And the thriftless and naive Sinhalese continue to decline. (175) Anagarika Dharmapala's image as a religious reformer makes many people forget that he was the son of one of the most successful Ruhuna businessmen of the time. His exhortations to the Sinhala Buddhist elites therefore has a great deal of rationality from a purely capitalist viewpoint. His life long obsession with the creation of a Sinhala Buddhist technocracy has to be seen in

conjunction with his constant exhortations for wise financial investment on the part of the local elites.

According to comments made to the author by Mr. Ranjith Wijewardene, a son of the late newspaper magnate D. R. Wijewardene, and chief dayaka of the Hunupitiya Gangaramaya Temple, the nucleus of a more cohesive Sinhala business establishment may even now be present in embryo. (176) He for instance concedes that the dayaka sabhas of Buddhist Temples sometimes function informally as Sinhala Buddhist chambers of commerce. A dayaka sabha is generally composed of wealthy laymen with various business interests. And whenever they gather for temple matters, some exchange of information and views leading to further contact is inevitable. Being one of the few non-Ruhuna businessmen amongst the Sinhala Buddhist big bourgeoisie in Colombo, Mr. Wijewardene had some interesting comments about Ruhuna entrepreneurship and ideology. As a large scale employer, he had noticed that employees from the South generally showed a marked tendency to advance themselves and better their lot. Amongst his Southern business contacts he had noticed a marked tendency to exhibit fellow feeling towards one another, leading to mutual aid. He speculates on a whole "network" of such contacts, albeit still at a very informal level. Though not a son of the South himself, Mr. Wijewardene is quite familiar with Ruhuna triumphalism having been always closely associated with his cousin, the late Upali Wijewardene. The latter was undoubtedly one of the most successful and flamboyant members of the Ruhuna diaspora. He was also one of the loudest in proclaiming his Southern origins. Mr. Ranjith Wijewardene reminisces that the late Upali was inordinately proud of his Southern origins even as a youth. He retained this attachment even into successful adulthood. Like the traditional elites of Ruhuna, Upali never became Anglicised or internationalised enough to forget Ruhuna. Even when he entered politics, it was with the single minded intention of entering Parliament through his native Kamburupitiya electorate. A few months prior to his tragic disappearance, he had initiated a reawakening scheme - Ruhunu Udanaya - for the purpose of building up

his political image. Upali Wijewardene was in more senses than one, the epitome of the Ruhunuputra.

The fondness shown by the Ruhuna elites towards their traditional culture is quite a remarkable phenomenon. Prof. Ediriweera Sarachchandra – one of the great Southern literary figures – notes with gratitude that it was the patronage of the Mudalali class in areas like Ambalangoda and Matara in the South which kept the indigenous performing arts like propitiation rituals and kolam alive into modern times, despite the indifference of the government and the “comprador” bourgeois class. He also further notes that these arts were preserved from further deterioration because these wealthy patrons were themselves well versed in the art forms and rituals, which meant that the performers could not distort either the form or the content of the performance without immediate detection. (177) what Prof. Sarachchandra takes note of here is as we saw from the preceding sections, the very essence of the Ruhuna phenomenon – Modernity combined with a love for tradition.

EPILOGUE

The contents of the preceding sections of this book would go to show that there is a very definite co-relation between an ideology of self glorification and worldly success. More often than not, this self glorification is based on memories of military prowess and militancy.

It is an interesting fact that some caste groups in Sri Lanka, which have distinguished themselves in the economic and business sphere, have exclusive caste traditions and folklore which uphold their notions of glory and self-worth. The Karava's for instance have myths which trace their origins back to Kshatriya (warrior) roots in India. (178) What is important here is not whether there is any truth in these myths, but the fact that they are an ideological force capable of changing behavioural patterns.

The Salagama's of the South appear to enjoy describing themselves as aggressive and militant, the terms they most commonly use in this regard being "wasa" (wicked) and "napuru" (hot tempered). This tendency to present an aggressive face to the world may partly be explained by the rebellious tradition of Salagama's of this region who opposed the inhuman and exploitative attitude of the Dutch in cinnamon collection.

This same spirit, though perhaps not so candidly expressed or acknowledged, is as we examined earlier, a conspicuous feature of the entire South. Speaking of his native place in The Galle district (the villages in and

around Ratgama, Dadalla and Boossa) Prof. Ediriweera Sarachchandra comments that the people there were a "hot tempered, ferocious and totally incorrigible lot" (179) Even as regards the Ruhuna diaspora, the claim to be of "Southern" origins in a situation of conflict is meant to be taken as a threat or a warning. It can be quite clearly seen that it was this same lack of diffidence and outgoing aggressiveness which very early on marked the Southerners as the most industrious and successful section of the Sinhala people. Having got accustomed from colonial times to the relationship of wage labour to capital, they migrated to various parts of the island in search of opportunities for economic advancement. In this matter they may still be more modern than other sections of the Sinhalese. It is well known that graphite mines in Sri Lanka, which are in non-Southern regions, were heavily manned by Salagama workers from the Southern coastline, (especially Ratgama) from the turn of this century. The people of the outlying villages, though by no means well-off, had rejected work in the mines. The villagers themselves attributed this to the fact that they were not interested in "wage work", but the Salagama workers ascribed this to a superstitious fear on the part of the villagers of going into the depths of the earth which was the abode of the demon Bairava. Moreover they were inclined to laugh at the village folk and refer to them as "country bumpkins".

One cannot in any way say that the people of Ruhuna are a superstitiously backward people. Yet there are a lot of rituals involving curses, blessings, and daemonic propitiation in the deep South. The "Matara Kattadiya's" (a kind of native witch-doctor) are well known all over the island. "Vas kavi" is a kind of versified curse. Some of the still extant work of this nature indicate that the causes that inspired these "poetic curses" were in the main economic - the theft of livestock, agricultural produce and land litigation figure prominently in these early vas kavi. One of the most celebrated vas kavi poets Bharana Ganithacharaya lived in the late eighteenth century and was very popular among the people for writing

vas kavi for them. (180) Some of his vas kavi were addressed to the guardian deity of Ruhuna - Kandasamy (Kataragama deviyo). This predilection towards the occult among a people known for their fearlessness and modernity, can be ascribed (after an examination of the content of the vas kavi) to the deteriorating economic conditions in Ruhuna after the eighteenth century.

Another thing that can be noticed is that the Southern owned business undertakings, on the whole, whether big or small, have a reputation for excellence within their respective localities or fields of business. The quality of the product or service very often appears to be foremost on the minds of these entrepreneurs. The same cannot be said about businesses owned by other communities. Being a witness to this phenomenon from within, I would ascribe this tendency to a craving for stability on the one hand and the Buddhist business ethic on the other. (see appendix) Giving out a good product is one of the basic tenets of modern capitalism. In this regard, I would categorise the Southern entrepreneur as the most progressive amongst all the business communities in Sri Lanka. I would also not hesitate to venture the idea that the Ruhuna entrepreneurs represent a higher species of capitalist. There is a constant attempt on their part to build themselves up through investment and incremental profit. Most other business communities operating in Sri Lanka however, still operate at the mental level of "bazaar capitalists" by attempting to maintain liquidity, by cutting themselves in on good deals and cornering markets for scarce goods etc. In this sense too the Ruhuna businessman is very close to the first generation of Marwari's who were sometimes barely literate and superstitious and socially backward to the extreme, yet displaying the highest modern capitalist entrepreneurial finesse in their business operations.

One discovers that even some of the great Karava "adventurer capitalists" of Moratuwa-Panadura were migrants from Ruhuna, having originated in the Karava community of Devundara. Joseph de Soysa, the father of Jeronis and

Susew and the grand-father of Charles Henry de Soysa, was brought to Moratuwa as a child by his migrant parents. This family was originally a part of the pious Buddhist entrepreneur tradition. But Jeronis (and subsequently Susew as well) came increasingly under the influence of Anglican Missionaries and converted to Christianity. (181) Though themselves a part of the Ruhuna diasporal phenomenon, the difference in their approach to capital accumulation may perhaps be attributed to their adopted Christian value system. It is interesting to note that the biographical work on the De Soysa family, "The De Soysa Charithaya" written by C. Don Bastian and the english version of which was published by De Soysa and Co, does not make any mention at all of the arrack renting activities of the De Soysa's - which in large measure was responsible for their fabulous wealth. The production and sale of alcohol is in today's modern secular society not thought of as being in any way different to the production and sale of any other consumer product. Hence, the complete absence of any mention of the main source of the De Soysa wealth even in the late 1980's edition of the family biography can be interpreted as a quaint hangover from the De Soysa family's Southern Buddhist past. The conversion of Jeronis de Soysa to Christianity despite his very traditional Sinhala Buddhist upbringing (his original occupational training was in ayurvedic medicine) might in fact be ascribed to the "exigencies of business". Conversion to Christianity may have been sought as a means of overcoming problems of values and conscience and also the question of social acceptance.

The ideological base of economic development is an important factor that has to be taken into account in examining the Ruhuna phenomenon. One notes that in neighbouring India, the most resourceful business community - the Marwari's have never shown an inclination to migrate to foreign lands in any appreciable number. Thus other than in India itself, the only other country where they have made their presence felt is Burma. (182) This may be ascribed to the orthodox Hindu dogma that

any crossing of seas involves loss of caste. The Rajasthani Marwari's allowed themselves to be hampered by this ideological block despite all the modernity and sophistication they have shown in their business operations within India. Contrast this with the case of the Nattukotai Chettiars of Tamil Nadu, who saw no such ideological barrier to their expansion overseas, and migrated in significant numbers to places like Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Singapore. The absence of such inhibiting ideological factors is no doubt one of the major reasons for the existence of a successful Ruhuna diaspora.

Thus while an ideology which confirms self-confidence may be of pivotal importance in the economic development of a country, we have seen that certain historical facts or myths which contributed to this ideology may just as easily be made use of to whip up mass emotions for irrational, xenophobic and authoritarian political programmes. The same spirit which enabled the venturesome pioneers of business enterprise to strike out confidently on new and uncharted routes, can be turned overnight into cynical and desperate political action. The reason for this being that the basic motivational factor in both kinds of behaviour being economic hardship and the lack of sufficient opportunities for making a living. It was this same factor which gave rise to the paradoxical situation of Ruhuna being at one and the same time, the cradle of Sinhala-Buddhist business enterprise and one of the main bases of the Left political parties in the country.

The widespread unrest in Ruhuna after the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka peace accord in July 1987 is due to two factors – an easily organised reservoir of chauvinistic emotion based on the Dutugemunu tradition, and economic hardship with extremely high levels of unemployment. It is for this reason that the chauvinist agitation in the South goes hand in hand with demands for the statisation of the economy. Statisation is seen as a quick source of patronage and employment for large numbers of unemployed youth in the area. As has been shown in previous sections of this book, in the past when landlessness was becoming a

major problem in the South, the people thus displaced were able to shift to other occupations since there was no dearth of such opportunities. As the instance of the Tissamaharama tank in the 19th century (quoted earlier) indicates, the displaced even had the luxury of being choosy and going in only for alternative occupations which they felt were better paying. The drying up of such outlets of alternative employment for the large number of unemployed youth in the South can be ascribed as one of the main reasons for the persisting unrest.

In this period of time when the characteristic disposition to violence and brutality of the Ruhuna people has risen to a pitch never before experienced, one feels inclined to point out that tolerance, intellectual honesty and realism have also graced Ruhuna at various times. Back in the 1930's when agitation inspired by the labour leader A. E. Goonesinha against Malayalee workers in Colombo was in full spate, one of the people who stood up on their behalf was Dr. A. P. De Zoysa, a Salagama scholar hailing from Balapitiya. A very typical member of the Ruhuna diaspora, he migrated to Colombo, spent 13 years in England and returned to represent Colombo South in the State Council from 1936 to 1946. In 1936, he openly appealed to the Sinhala people to show maitriya (compassion) to the Malayalees on the grounds that they were the kith and kin of the Sinhalese. (183) For years afterwards, he was greeted with cries of "haro hara" and "Kochchi Zoysa" at political meetings. Goonesinha's anti - Malayalee campaign is an important juncture in our political history since it is the precursor of today's tendency towards "Sinhala Socialism", ie. organised agitation for socio-economic reform under a hegemonic Sinhala Buddhist political authority. This was opposed in the 1930's by two other eminent sons of Ruhuna, Dr. Colvin R. de Silva of Balapitiya and Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe of Akuressa. (184) A significant fact is that Dr. Wickremasinghe could openly criticise Sinhala chauvinism and yet become in time, one of the best loved and universally respected political leaders of the South.

In recent times, another Southern political figure of similar calibre was the murdered student leader Daya Pathirana, who is respected by all Tamil groups ranging from the moderate to the extremist and by all non-chauvinist Sinhala groups for his stand on the Tamil issue – which finally cost him his life. My brief but close relationship with him can in fact be said to be one of the intellectual seeds which has gained fruition in the form of this book. Daya Pathirana was the stereotypic Southerner – always skillful in whatever he did, and always cockily self-confident and proud of his Southern origins. Like many Southerners, he had an eye for opportunity and enterprise. The average student comes to University hoping to obtain white collar employment after graduation. Pathirana in contrast, had by the time he entered University, mastered the trade of tailoring to a very high standard. His constant boast was that “he never wore anything that he did not stitch himself”. It is of course needless to say that such an attitude to life is an extreme rarity among University students today – who are barely competent in their fields of study, let alone other things. This same (typically Southern) resourceful perseverance and ability to grasp essentials was to mark him out very early as the most notable student leader this country has ever produced. He had in him the aggressiveness that goes with the sense of belonging to a community of go-getters. One thing that struck me most was the fact that his stand on the Tamil issue, while being articulated in the words of the Leninist doctrine of the right of nations to self determination, was based at the personal level on the observation that the Jaffna Tamils were like the Southerners and that a community that is industrious, capable, and well aware of their own self worth cannot be hampered in their forward march by a state structure which does not leave sufficient room for the full realisation of their potentialities. This is a matter worth considering in the present context with the South at the helm of an uncompromising struggle to deny the Tamil minority all rights to territorial autonomy. This pre-occupation with territorial “integrity” can be seen entirely as a legacy of the Dutugemunu tradition where the Sinhalese lay claim to

the undivided political authority over the whole island – to the detriment of the minority Tamils.

In spite of their outright denial of territorial autonomy for the Tamil minority, the Southern militants have been at pains to state that they have no intention of discriminating against the minorities and that they will be allowed equal opportunity within a united Sri Lanka. Among the Southern militants there appears to be a tacit harking back to the times of Sinhala Kings like Parakramabahu VI and Rajasinha II. These were periods when Sinhala political hegemony was given a great deal of emphasis. Yet the minorities were allowed to exist in peace and even to flourish. For instance, during the time of Parakramabahu VI, his General Sapumal conquered Jaffna from the Aryachakravartis and Sinhala political hegemony was established over the whole island. Yet the minorities were not discriminated against, and the era generally represents one of the most cosmopolitan periods of Sri Lankan history. The ideal of the educated individual during this period was the shadbhasaparameshwara or adept in six languages – one of which was Tamil. There were in addition many Tamil pupils under the great scholar-monk Totagamuwe Sri Rahula, and many scholarly works on Buddhism were written in Tamil.

During the time of Rajasinha II, Muslims who were persecuted by the Dutch found refuge in his kingdom, and similarly the Catholics, who were persecuted by the Dutch, were also accorded sanctuary despite their cruel and overbearing attitude towards the non-Christian native population when they were in power during Portuguese rule. (185) While the Sinhalese can be justifiably proud of such magnanimity on the part of their early rulers, there should also be a realistic assessment of the aspirations of the minorities in today's context. In the modern world, one cannot expect any national minority to live merely on the "sufferance" of the majority. Daya Pathirana's stand on this issue is in my mind, the most rational and the one best suited to win the confidence

of the minorities. Pathirana could be at one and the same time aware of the triumphalistic, go-getter tradition of Ruhuna and yet willing to acknowledge that the minorities too have such feelings of self worth.

The Sinhala insurrection in the South, while being articulated in chauvinistic terms, has its base in the inability of the economy to absorb the excess population of the South. The greater availability of employment opportunities for enterprising youth from Ruhuna will be an imperative need if the current unrest is to be solved to the satisfaction of the parties concerned. As it is true of the Jaffna Tamils, no community aware of its self worth will long tolerate constantly deteriorating economic conditions. Desperation can easily turn a normally aggressive but practical and enterprising community to lend support to parochial and cynical political action based on racism and violence. It was desperation of a similar nature which turned the industrious and enterprising German people into supporters of Hitler in a political programme which left the entire European continent and a good part of the world in shambles, but ultimately wreaked the most amount of destruction on the German people themselves. Though pre-World War II Germany was totally different to today's Sri Lanka, we see similar processes taking place here with ominous parallels.

It is interesting to note that, like many revivalist leaders the world over, Anagarika Dharmapala was a great admirer of the industrious and efficient Germans and Japanese. Yet these very same people soon succumbed to a kind of political irrationalism and militarism which harmed them much more than their intended victims. The people of Ruhuna are now going through a similar process - which will be their undoing both in the short-term and the long-term. Ruhuna today, is known to the world not as the cradle of Sinhala-Buddhis business enterprise, modernity and Buddhist revival, but as the newest of the killing fields of South Asia - a breeding ground of barbarism and savagery. It may be recalled that even in peace time, the

South always had a higher incidence of homicide and disputes leading to physical violence than any other part of the country. Butchery in the South has in recent times been increasing both qualitatively and quantitatively. The specifics of this phenomenon is certainly well worth separate study. What kind of psychological make-up would induce anybody to exhume the corpse of a person "executed" as a "traitor" and to take the corpse back to the house of the bereaved family and lean it against the door to fall in when the door is opened—on the charge that the funeral was not done according to orders given? (186) Then again, who would break up a "banned" funeral, kill nine mourners on the spot and behead the corpse and carry away the severed head in triumph? (187) And what about the public display of mutilated and dismembered corpses with gloatingly victorious notices placed near them? (188) Where else in the world would ordinary people be gunned down for no other reason than that they cast their vote at a national election? Where else would anybody dare defy public outrage by openly "banning" a national election? (189) These are a few of the reasons which have caused what was the most forward-looking section of the Sinhala population to become one of the most primitively barbaric in the entire world. Lak Mini Pahana, the first Sinhala newspaper in the island was begun by a Southerner, Koggala Dharmatilaka, way back in 1862. In resurrecting this paper after several years of non-publication in 1934 Munidasa Cumaratunga wrote in his first editorial (190) . . . "Let us all join together in the service of our country. Let us learn to countenance and accept the merits of others. Let us be tolerant towards one another. Let us learn to praise the virtues even of our enemies and to criticise the faults of our friends. The Sinhala nation once held the world astounded by its achievements. Let us see today, whether it is at least possible for us to prevent ourselves from becoming the laughing stock of the entire world."

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APPENDIX

XIONG

BUDDHISM AND THE CAPITALIST ETHOS

There have been many debates in the press about the social ethics of Buddhism. But for the most part these have centered around the political dimensions of Buddhist social ethics. This paper does not seek to discuss matters like the absence of a "radical tradition" in Buddhism or the partiality of Buddhist thinking towards democratic forms of political organisation. Rather, it seeks to examine the economic base of Buddhist social thought.

The sangha here comes in for automatic exclusion since the vinaya strictly rules out any kind of economic activity. The vinaya expressly forbade bikkhu's from handling gold, silver and other precious substances, instruments for trapping animals, paddy and other fruits where they are produced (ie, while still on the plants) (1) There were moreover, two improper forms of seeking a livelihood for a bikkhu-1. Loka-vajja (improper in the world) This included robbery, deception and other acts blamable in the eyes of the world. 2. Pannattivajja (faulty to the discipline) This ruled out occupations like usury, trade and even medical practice. (2) The non-participation in the production of goods or services was the very essence of the Buddhistic concept of world renunciation. A bikkhu by definition is one who begs one's needs from others. (3) Even the bikkhu's robes and bowl were not regarded as his property; it belonged collectively to the sangha. (4)

Buddhism takes it for granted that there will be a lay society to support the community of renouncers. The nature of the relationship being that the renouncers would function as a community of professional philosophers in society. (5) Hence the Buddhistic concept of the economic man has to be examined in relation to the sermons given by the Buddha

to laymen. Innovative Buddhists like Dr. Nalin de Silva have opined that we should evolve an economic policy in keeping with the vinaya laid out for the sangha. In his opinion, the egalitarian and democratic concepts of internal organisation as laid down in the vinaya should be applied to the economic sphere as well. (6) The Buddha himself however, never even considered such a course of action. He never condemned the rich and powerful the way the Old Testament prophets and Jesus did. On the contrary, his life and teachings show that he always tried to arrive at a situation of mutual accommodation between the rich and the poor and the powerful and the powerless. His effort was thus aimed not at destroying but streamlining the status quo. (7) In this paper therefore, we are not concerned with innovative ideas of the sort expressed by Dr. Nalin de Silva. Rather, we are concerned with orthodoxy. What is the orthodox Buddhist concept of the economic man?

Richard Gombrich opines that the tone and content of the Buddha's teaching were . . . "of a kind to appeal to businessmen. The ethic is founded on prudential considerations. Immorality entails five disadvantages: poverty, a bad reputation, social diffidence, anxiety on one's death bed and a bad rebirth. As a corollary, moral behaviour brings five benefits, from wealth in this life to a good rebirth in the next. This is just an extension of our adage that honesty is the best policy . . ."

" . . . It is interesting to note that the Buddhist ethic like the soteriology, does seem to be all of a piece. The king of Kosala is said to have asked the Buddha one day whether there was one thing which could accomplish the ends of both this world and the next. Yes, said the Buddha: diligence can win you longevity, health, beauty, heaven, birth in a good family and pleasures of the senses . . . in economic terms, it is realised as thrift, a thoroughly bourgeois value . . ." (8)

Basing himself on B. G. Gokhale, Gombrich also asserts that the Buddha's message in the initial stages appealed especially to town dwellers and the new social classes. Gokhale had analysed the social composition of the early sangha

basing himself on two canonical collections of religious poems, the Thera and Therigatha which are ascribed to monks and nuns respectively. "We thus have plausible information on a sample of over 300 monks and nuns, more than two thirds of them came from large towns, and of these two thirds, 86% from just four cities: Savatthi, Rajagaha, Kapilavattu and Vesali. As for varna, of 328 religiaux, 134 (about 40%) were brahmin, 75 ksatriya, 98 visya, and 11 sudra. 10 were outcastes. From various terms applied to their families we can further deduce that nearly half of them came from wealthy or powerful houses." (9)

It would be interesting to examine some of Max Weber's theories on Asiatic religions in the light of what Gombrich reveals. In the opinion of Max Weber, "... no motivation toward a rational system for the methodical control of life flowed from Buddhist, Taoist or Hindu piety." (10)

"All rational purposive activity is regarded as leading away from salvation, except of course the subjective activity of concentrated contemplation, which empties the soul of the passion for and every connection with worldly interests. The achievement of salvation is possible for only a few, even of those who have decided to live in poverty, chastity and unemployment (For labour is purposive action) and hence in mendicancy. These chosen few are required to wander ceaselessly - except at the time of heavy rains - freed from all personal ties to family and world, pursuing the goal of mystical illumination by fulfilling the injunctions relating to the correct path. (Dharma)" (11)

In attempting to apply this "renunciationist" view to the laity as well, Weber tends to overlook some of the most salient features of the Buddha's life and teaching as revealed in the Pali canonical writings. Note the negative overtones of the following passage: "All popular religions of Asia left room for the acquisitive drive of the tradesman, the interest of the artisan in sustenance and the traditionalism of the peasant." (12) "Capitalism existed among all these religions. Even those religions of the

type known in occidental antiquity and the medieval period. But there was no development towards modern capitalism, not even any stirrings in that direction, in these religions. Above all, there evolved no capitalist spirit in the sense that is distinctive of ascetic Protestantism." (13)

We shall go on to examine these statements by first taking a closer look at what the Buddha expected Buddhist lay society to be like. In the first instance it should be stated that Buddhism was pre-occupied with soteriological salvation and therefore has a minutely regulated code of ethics for the sangha, the like of which does not exist in the case the laity. But it would be wrong to assert as Dr Gananath Obeyesekera once did, that the Buddhist doctrine has no systematic code of lay ethics. (14) There are in the main four sutta's that deal with Buddhist lay ethics. Though of course not as minutely detailed as the vinaya (rules) for the sangha, it is certainly far more detailed and precise than anything the Christian doctrine can boast of. The ascetic Protestantism that Max Weber and R. H Tawney speak of was not the outcome of any Biblical tradition. It was the unintended consequence of some changes in theological thinking within the institutional church. The so called capitalist spirit of ascetic Protestantism in fact flies in the face of early Christian practice. In Buddhism however, the injunction for ascetic lifestyles and capitalist enterprise qua the layman is very much a part of the original teaching of the Buddha. Let us now examine the lay ethics of Buddhism as stated in the four sutta's referred to earlier. In what follows the teachings have been categorised under headings convenient for our present purpose.

The Sigalovada Sutta (15)

1. The Buddhist attitude towards the unequal accumulation of wealth:

The wise and virtuous shine like a blazing fire
He who acquires his wealth in harmless ways
Like to a bee that honey gathers (without harming the flower)
Riches mount up for them

Like an ant hill's rapid growth
With wealth acquired this way
A layman fit for household life
In portions four divides his wealth
Thus will he friendship win
One portion for his wants he uses
Two portions on his business spends
The fourth for time of need he keeps

2. The Buddhist virtue of thrift :

What are the six channels of dissipating wealth he does not pursue ?

Indulgence in intoxicants which causes infatuation and heedlessness

Sauntering in the streets at unseemly hours

Frequenting theatrical shows

Indulgence in gambling which causes heedlessness

Association with evil companions

Habit of idleness

3. The Buddhist virtue of sobriety:

There are young householder, these six evil consequences in indulging in intoxicants which cause infatuation and heedlessness.

Loss of wealth

Increase of quarrels

Susceptibility to disease

Earning an evil reputation

Shameless exposure of body

Weakening of intellect

4. The Buddhist virtue of familial loyalty, continence and asceticism:

There are young householder, these six evil consequences of sauntering in the streets at unseemly hours.

He himself is unprotected and unguarded

His wife and children are unprotected and unguarded

His property is unprotected and unguarded

He is suspected of evil deeds

He is subject to false rumours
 He meets with many troubles
 Frequenting theatrical shows He is ever thinking,
 Where is the dancing ?
 Where is the singing ?
 Where is the music?
 Where is there recitation ?
 Where is there playing with cymbals?
 Where is there pot-blowing?
 There are young householder, these six evil consequences in indulging in gambling
 The winner begets hate
 The loser grieves for lost wealth
 The loss of wealth
 His word is not relied upon in a court of law
 He is despised by his friends and associates
 He is not sought after for matrimony—for people would say that he is a gambler and, is not fit to look after a wife

5. The Buddhist work ethic:

There are young householder, these six evil consequences in being addicted to idleness
 He does no work saying,
 That it is extremely cold
 That it is extremely hot
 That it is too late in the evening
 That it is too early in the morning
 That he is extremely hungry
 That he is too full
 Living in this way, he leaves many duties undone, New wealth he does not get and wealth he has acquired dwindles away.

6. The "Protestantic" nature of Buddhist lay ethics – The Buddhistic injunction for thrift, sobriety, continence and hard work :

Sleeping till sunrise, adultery, irracibility, malevolence, evil companions, avarice—these six causes ruin a man.
 The man who has evil comrades and friends—is given to

evil ways, to ruin doth he fall in both worlds here and the next.

Dice, women, liquor, dancing, singing, sleeping by day, sauntering at unseemly hours, evil companions, avarice these nine causes ruin a man.

Who plays with dice and drinks intoxicants, goes unto women who are dear unto others as their own lives, associates with the mean and not with elders – he declines just as the moon in the waning half.

Who is drunk, poor, destitute, still thirsty while drinking, frequents the bar, sinks in debt as a stone in water, swiftly brings disrepute to his family.

Who by habit sleeps by day, and keeps late hours, is over intoxicated and licentious is not fit to lead a household life.

Who says it is too hot, too cold, too late and leaves things undone, the opportunities for good go past such men.

But he who does not regard cold or heat any more than a blade of grass and who does his duties manfully, does not fall away from happiness.

7. Friends and economic wellbeing:

These, young householder, should be understood as foes in the guise of friends.

In four ways young householder, should one who appropriates be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend.

He appropriates his friend's wealth

He gives little and asks much

He does his duty out of fear

He associates for his own advantage

In four ways young householder, should one who brings ruin be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend.

He is a companion when you indulge in intoxicants that cause infatuation and heedlessness

He is a companion when you saunter the streets at unseemly hours

He is a companion when you frequent theatrical shows

He is a companion when you indulge in gambling which causes heedlessness

Mahamangala Sutta (16)

1. On Professionalism:

To have much learning, to be skillful in handicrafts, well trained in discipline, and to be of good speech. This is the greatest blessing.

2. On Sobriety:

To loath evil and to abstain from it, to refrain from intoxicants, and to be steadfast in virtue, this is the greatest blessing.

3. On Continence:

Self restraint, a holy and chaste life, the perception of the noble truths and the realisation of nibbana, this is the greatest blessing.

Parabhava Sutta (17)

1. Indolence:

Being fond of sleep, fond of company, indolent, lazy and irritable this is the cause of one's downfall.

2. Debauchery:

To be a rake, a drunkard, a gambler and to squander all one earns, this is the cause of one's downfall.

Not to be contented with one's own wife and to be seen with harlots and the wives of others, this is the cause of one's downfall.

Vyagghapajja Sutta (18)

1. Persistent effort and Professionalism:

Herein Vyagghapajja, by whatsoever activity a householder earns his living, whether by farming, by trading, by rearing cattle, by archery, by service under the king, or by any other kind of craft at that he becomes skillful and is not lazy, he is endowed with the power of discernment as to the proper ways and means, he is able to carry out and allocate duties, This is called the accomplishment of persistent effort.

2. The protection of wealth :

Herein Vyagghapajja, whatsoever wealth a householder is in possession of, obtained by dint of effort, collected by strength of arm, by the sweat of his brow, justly acquired by right means, such he guards well by guarding and watching so that kings would not seize it, thieves would not steal, fire would not burn, water would not carry away, nor ill-disposed heirs remove. This is the accomplishment of watchfulness.

3. The economics of the Buddhist way of life:

Herein Vyagghapajja, a householder knowing his income and expenses leads a balanced life neither extravagant nor miserly, knowing that thus his income will stand in excess of his expenses but not his expenses in excess of his income.

4. The dissipation of wealth:

The wealth thus amassed Vyagghapajja, has four sources of destruction: 1. Debauchery 2. Drunkenness 3. Gambling 4. Friendship, Companionship and intimacy with evil-doers.

5. The increase of amassed wealth:

There are four sources for the increase of amassed wealth: 1. Abstinence from debauchery 2. Abstinence from drunkenness 3. Non indulgence in gambling 4. Friendship, companionship and intimacy with the good.

6. The Buddhist ideal of the economic man:

Energetic and heedful in his tasks
Wisely administering his wealth
He lives a balanced life
Protecting what he has amassed

And further, (to quote Dr. Walpola Rahula), "a man named Dighajanu once visited the Buddha and said, Venerable Sir, we are ordinary lay men, leading the family

life with wife and children. Would the blessed one teach us some doctrines which will be conducive to our happiness in this world and hereafter."

"The Buddha tells him that there are four things which are conducive to a man's happiness in this world. First, he should be skilled, efficient, earnest and energetic in whatever profession he is engaged and he should know it well. (utthana sampada) Second, he should protect his income which he has thus earned righteously, with the sweat of his brow (arakkha sampada). This refers to protecting wealth from thieves etc . . . Third, he should have good friends (kalyana mitta) who are faithful, learned, virtuous, liberal and intelligent, who will help him along the right path away from evil. Fourth, he should spend reasonably, in proportion to his income, neither too much nor too little, ie, he should not hoard wealth avariciously, nor should he be extravagant - in other words, he should live within his means (samma jivikata)."

"Once the Buddha told Anathapindika the great banker . . . that a layman who leads an ordinary family life has four kinds of happiness. The first happiness is to enjoy economic security or sufficient wealth acquired by just and righteous means (atthisukkha). The second is spending that wealth liberally on himself, his family, his friends and relatives and on meritorious deeds (bhoga sukkha). The third, to be free from debts (anana sukkha), The fourth happiness is to live a faultless and a pure life without committing evil in thought, word or deed (anavajja sukkha). It must be noted that three of these kinds are economic . . ." (19)

An examination of the four Sutta's above, will show that the Buddhist lay ethic of ascetic this-worldly activity was co-eval in almost all respects to Max Weber's theory of the Protestant ethic. Indeed doctrinal Buddhism has a "Protestant ethic" far better stated than it ever was in Protestant theology itself. Weber himself has shown that economic success was only an unintended consequence

of Protestant theology. (20) There was no express injunction in Protestant theology for the work ethic, thrift, professionalism etc, that constitute the "Protestant ethic" as conceived by Weber. The Calvinist doctrine of predestination taught that salvation was achieved not by the works of man but by the grace of God alone. And thereby, as Weber claims, "... ascetic Protestantism completely eliminated magic and the supernatural quest for salvation... It alone created the religious motivations for seeking salvation primarily through immersion in one's worldly vocation." (21) This "liberation" from having to seek transcendental salvation was arrived at in the following form:

Calvin taught that everyone must face the ultimate uncertainty of his fate.

Nevertheless, ministers encouraged their congregations to engage in a zealous and self-denying round of daily activity.

Mindful that God had put the resources of his created world at the disposal of men who on the day of judgment would be responsible to him for the single-minded, work oriented use of all their powers in his service.

True believers responded with an inner - worldly asceticism as Weber called it, which enabled them to quiet their conscience by rationally transforming the world in which God had placed them. (22)

The "Protestant ethic" in the Weberian sense was therefore, the illegitimate child of the Protestant theology of predestination and Protestant pastoral admonition. Contrast this with the "Buddhist capitalist ethic" which has perfect legitimacy in orthodox doctrinal terms.

There is a further difference in that Christianity condemns absolutely the unequal accumulation of wealth. The New Testament states that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. (23) This was true of

Protestant theology as well. "Protestant reformers had anathematised the pursuit of riches as dangerous to the soul and that the pursuit of riches had so often been accompanied by a life of adventure and display, as well as by religious indifference." (24) Buddhism however, does not have such a condemnation of the unequal accumulation of wealth.

The Buddha in fact saw five disadvantages and five advantages in the accumulation of worldly wealth. His attitude towards the accumulation of worldly goods by laymen was mainly of a prudential and realistic nature. The five disadvantages were that worldly wealth was in constant risk of destruction by: fire, floods, Kings (or the State), robbers, unloved heirs. The advantages were that "with the help of riches one makes oneself happy, glad and keeps that happiness. One makes one's parents, wife, children, slaves, work-folk, men, friends and companions happy, glad and keeps them so. For recluse and brahman one institutes offerings of lofty aim, connected with a happy hereafter, ripening into happiness, leading heavenward." (25)

Not only did the Buddha thus sanction the accumulation of worldly wealth, he even had a broadly stated "Buddhist business ethic". This was in addition to other personal moral injunctions. Trades that were not to be plied by the Buddhist layman were as follows: trade in weapons, trade in humanbeings, trade in flesh (meat), trade in spirits (intoxicants), trade in poison. (26)

The accumulation of wealth is in a way justified even in Buddhist soteriological terms by being linked to the doctrine of kamma and rebirth. The late Mr. Justin Kotalawela (of the Ceylinco Group) had once written to the Life magazine asserting that Buddhism might be of interest to Americans because it taught that worldly riches were due to good kamma in a previous birth! (27) There could in fact have been a similar thought process amongst

Weber's "Protestant capitalists". Anxious Protestants looking for outward signs of their soteriological salvation may have taken worldly success as a sign of belonging to God's chosen few. (28)

The anthropocentrism of Buddhism provides a further base for energetic this - worldly activity. Buddhism, (at least in its Teravada form) believes that every human being can, and should work out his own salvation. Human effort can achieve anything, even Buddhahood. And the Buddha Gautama himself was never anything more than an enlightened humanbeing. (29) Even in soteriological terms, it was considered a blessing to be born a humanbeing. Buddhism, with its emphasis on the "golden mean" considered the human world as being between heaven (higher forms of physical existence) and hell (lower forms of physical existence) and therefore, most conducive to the pursuit of the noble eightfold (middle) path of enlightenment. This anthropocentrism is given a further boost by the Buddhist theory of kamma which explicitly rejects the fatalistic world view that "whatsoever pleasure, pain or mental state a humanbeing experiences, all that is due to a previous act." The Buddhist theory of kamma teaches that past kamma is only one amongst eight factors influencing the life of a person. The eight factors are as follows:

1. bile
2. phlegm
3. wind
5. seasons changes
6. the stress of circumstances
7. akward happenings
8. the ripeness of kamma (30)

The Buddhist doctrine of Kamma thus does not act as a disincentive to this - worldly activity by inculcating fatalistic attitudes towards life. In addition to the philosophical encouragement of this worldly activity, there are certain episodes in the Buddha's life that further confirms the idea that Buddhism encourages a capitalist ethic in lay life. One instance would be the Buddha's special

relationship to the merchant - prince Anathapindika. The Buddha considered Anathapindika one of his foremost lay disciples and accepted many gifts from him. There is even a separate sutta eulogising him in the Majjhima Nikaya of the Sutta Pitaka. (31) As Gombrich has shown, many of the Buddha's principal lay disciples were from the wealthy urban classes. The Buddha was quite comfortable with these people in spite of the tremendous wealth they owned.

It is here that the question of locating the Buddhist lay ethic within the macro-picture of the Buddha dhamma comes in. It can be argued (as it often is), that the central doctrines of Buddhism contain a critique of the unequal accumulation of wealth in the form of the doctrine of tanha (craving) which the Buddha posited as the origin of all suffering. (32) This however would be trying to quantify the concept of tanha. Some people seem to think that the concept of tanha applies only to excess and surplus and unfair and unequal appropriation. By which way, they try to read into tanha meanings similar to Marx's theories of surplus value and exploitation. In Buddhist terms however, tanha means: 1. kama tanha - thirst for sense pleasures, 2. bhava tanha - thirst for existence and becoming, 3. vibhava tanha - thirst for non-existence. What this means in effect is that all sense pleasures whether they be experienced by the rich or the poor is tanha. And further, that all thirst for existence and becoming, regardless of the subject's position in the mode of production is tanha. (33) Buddhism does not teach that the rich have tanha while the poor do not. Quite the contrary might be true in fact. Which is why the Buddha always stressed vis a vis the sangha that acute discomfort was not conducive to salvation. Thus the Buddha's doctrine of tanha is in essence soteriological and not social. The elimination of tanha leads not to socialism but to Nirvana. The essence of the Buddhist doctrine of dukkha is that it is bad to exist in this world. It is not only "suffering" (in the conventional

sense) that is bad, but the sum total of all conditioned origination is undesirable. In other words, all worldly feelings of happiness, sadness, equanimity and even the dhyana states of deep meditation are dukkha. (34) The world has yet to see the kind of socialism that states simply as a first premise that it is bad to exist!

In the context of the Buddhist notion of liberation, it is not surprising that a separate body of "world renouncers" had to be set up. Dukkha arises out of tanha and tanha itself arises out of vedana (sensation) through phassa (contact). So says the Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination (paticca samupada). The sangha was conceived by the Buddha as a special body of men that seeks to break out of the vicious cycle of dependent origination by minimising phassa (contact) with the world. The first step was to sever all contact with family, name spouse, wealth, employment etc. It was for this reason that the Bikkhu was allowed only the use and not the ownership of even the robes he wore on his back. Secondly, since the concept of tanha extended from the material to the "ideal" as well, the creation of any power structures or the concentration of power within the sangha itself was strictly prohibited. Phassa in the form of attachment to power was thus sought to be eliminated. Thus the emphasis on the collective ownership of available resources and internal democracy were seen by the Buddha as being conducive to the elimination of all desire to exist in this world. Which was why he recommended it to the sangha and not the laity. In Buddhism, the laity are thought of primarily as a moral community of economic supporters for the sangha.

Another question that can be posed regarding capitalism and the central doctrines of Buddhism is, how can a teaching that rejects the existence of an individual soul, have sufficient place for individualism so as to encourage a capitalist ethic? (35) According to the Buddhist doctrine of anatta, an individual is only a bundle of five aggregates, and there is no such thing as a permanently

existing soul. This however, is at the level of ultimate truth (paramatta sacca). (36) In terms of conventional truth (sammuthi sacca), the five aggregates of matter (rupakkanda), sensation (vedanakkanda), perception (sannakkanda), volitional activities (samkarakkanda) and consciousness (vinnanakkanda) do in fact constitute an individual for all practical purposes. And the Buddhist layman is not expected to be anything but industriously individualistic.

The concept of dana or giving and sharing could be construed as another "socialistic" tenet in Buddhism. It is in fact a paternalistic kind of welfarism. The Chakkavatti Sihanada Sutta of the Digha Nikaya traces many social and personal evils to the cause of absolute (as distinct from relative) poverty. (37) And dana by the rich to the poor is a safeguard to maintain the social balance. The Anguttara Nikaya categorises meanness (macchariya) in the following terms: meanness in sharing a lodging, meanness in (sharing the benefits from) a family, meanness in sharing fame, and meanness in sharing dhamma. (38)

In addition to fostering social stability, dana has also another function of being the only means of livelihood for the sangha. What is interesting to examine here is the very mercantilist nature of the Buddhist concept of dana. Dana is seen basically as a profitable investment which will bring returns in this world and the next. According to the Cula-punnama Sutta in the Majjhima Nikaya, one of the main characteristics of the dana of the sappurisa (good man) is that he gives it "with regard for the future." (39) This Sutta moreover, promises a good future birth for such sappurisa dana. (40) The Anguttara Nikaya promises returns in the form of wealth, beauty, happiness and protection in this life itself for sappurisa dana. (41)

A dana to the sangha is taken to be an investment with double returns. Buddhism regards patipatti (dhamma) dana as being superior to amisa (material) dana. Thus when the layman offers amisa dana to the sangha, he gets back in

return the dhamma which is worth much more. This immediate return is only a bonus in addition to other short term and long term benefits accruing therefrom to the layman who has cultivated the Buddhist virtue of generosity (caga sam-pada). Thus the concept of dana in both its paternalistic as well as mercantilist aspect, falls well within the capitalist ethic of Buddhism .

Contrary to popular belief, Buddhism in no way discourages socio-economic progress and development. This applies not only to lay society but even to the sangha which ostensibly has renounced the world. One should take care not to confuse Buddhistic world renunciation with extreme self-denial. As Gombrich stresses, the essence of the middle path as far as the "renouncers" are concerned is that neither comfort nor discomfort should become an issue to distract one from the quest of enlightenment. What the Buddha stressed was the monk's subjective state of satisfaction. If comfort does not become an obstacle to the life of renunciation, monastic Buddhism does not consider it unsuitable for renouncers. On the contrary, in several cases the Buddha indicated that discomfort is an obstacle on the path of internal progress... (42). In fact, one of the seven factors of illumination stated by the Buddha is piti (joy). This of course would depend to a large extent on material well being and security. (43) The natural corollary of this is that the monk's "subjective state of satisfaction" can change in an upward direction with socio-economic progress. As the upper limit of possibilities rises higher, the golden mean also moves up along the scale. The venerable Dr. Walpola Rahula also voiced similar ideas during his convocation speech at the first convocation of the Buddhist and Pali University. The gist of his argument being that since all conditioned things are subject to change, the sangha too has to change with social and economic conditions. But the Dhamma (ie. the middle way) has not changed. (44)

One can thus see that Buddhism has always had a capitalist ethic better stated and substantiated than anything "ascetic Protestantism" can boast of. Why is it then that

this has never been in the mainline of the Buddhist tradition down the ages? The main reason could be that with the decline of Buddhism in India, it spread and consolidated in neighbouring lands that were predominantly agrarian. A peasant society was not a fertile ground for a capitalistic ethic to take root. When the Portuguese first came to Sri Lanka at the beginning of the sixteenth century, all non-agricultural occupations were in the hands of Muslims who had been allowed to take over occupations like trading which were considered lowly in Sinhala society. This was a voluntary division of labour. (45) But as the Sinhala-Buddhists began to take to trade and other non-agricultural occupations, the Buddhist capitalist ethos began to come to the fore once more. Dr Michael Roberts takes as the prototype of this new breed of Buddhist entrepreneurs, the industrialist C. A. Odiris de Silva of Matara (1860-1928). He has recounted in detail how Odiris de Silva consciously modeled himself on the merchant-princes of the Mauryan Empire. (46) Dr. Roberts also says that the career of Odiris de Silva reads like a page from Weber's Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. (47)

This latter point certainly deserves further study. As far as the Sinhala-Buddhist entrepreneurs of Sri Lanka (especially those from the South) are concerned, what exactly is the co-relation between religious belief and economic activity? After all, Weber himself had to rely on empirical studies to construct his theory of capitalism and ascetic Protestantism.

The following biographical note by Dr Roberts would leave no doubt as to the influence of Buddhist capitalist thinking on the life of Odiris de Silva.

It was his practice to rise around 3 or 4 o'clock each morning and finish his working day at about 3.00 p.m. And he made it a point to keep track of his working capital every day, maintaining a stock account book for the purpose. He read Buddhist *bana pot* (books of sermons) every evening and adhered to a strict vegetarian and teetotal diet.

Predictably, he was also a believer in regular philanthropic largesse and was a founding father of Rahula College, a Buddhist School in Matara." (48)

Dr Roberts also asserts that Odiris de Silva was not an ideosyncratic type and that his collection of biographical information suggest that there were other entrepreneurs of the same kind. (49) This latter point needs to be followed up with further research.

The Protestant capitalist ethic was essentially a creation of Weber. Since the Protestant theologies did not contain any capitalistic ethic as such, the ethic had to be constructed painstakingly from empirically observed Protestant behavioural patterns which were said to be based on admonitions given by Protestant ministers to their restless flocks under the shadow of the doctrine of predestination. In 1906 Weber wrote an essay entitled "The Protestant Sects" to describe the methods used by Protestant clergy to inculcate the capitalist ethic of ascetic Protestantism on their congregations. (50) Fortunately for us, we do not have to look under blades of grass to find the capitalist ethic in Buddhism. As the foregoing has shown, it is all very clearly stated in the Buddhist canonical writings. This needs to be backed up by empirical research to ascertain the extent to which Buddhist entrepreneurs today consciously adhere to the capitalist ethic in Buddhism. It is interesting to note in this context that "Velenda" (Trader), a Sinhala monthly magazine meant exclusively for those in trade and industry and published by a Ruhuna diasporal industrial concern, did in fact carry an article in its 1989 May issue which explained in detail the Buddhist ethics of trade. Thus one might surmise that despite the suffocating weight of "peasant Buddhism" in our country, awareness of the early Buddhist business ethic may still be more widespread than many people think.

In the light of all this, it would be quite futile to look for a non-existent "Radical element" in Buddhism as some people seem to be hell-bent on doing. It would be much

more fruitful to discuss as to how the capitalist ethic in Buddhism could further the cause of socio-economic progress. Elements in the Buddhist lay ethic like the emphasis on diligence and professionalism are common social virtues in both capitalist as well as post-capitalist forms of development. During the post-revolutionary industrialisation drive in the Soviet Union in the 1930's one of the major problems faced by the Communist Party was the low level of motivation, diligence and skill of the labour force. (51) And draconian measures had to be adopted to enforce labour discipline. To what extent was this due to the cultural ethos of pre-revolutionary Russia? Can the Buddhist lay ethic (properly propagated of course) help avert similar situations from arising in the Teravada Buddhist countries? The capitalist ethic in Buddhism with its emphasis on diligence, professionalism, technical competence etc, should therefore be considered a very valuable cultural / ideological asset.

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The deep South of Sri Lanka, which in antiquarian parlance would be known as Ruhuna, has not received the scholarly attention it deserves in view of its pivotal importance in the history of the island both ancient and contemporary. This book thus seeks to fill in a major lacuna in the compendium of writings on Sri Lanka. Among the many factors examined here are, the very special place accorded to Ruhuna in the collective consciousness of the Sinhala Buddhist people and the rise of an indigenous entrepreneurial tradition from this region during Dutch Colonial rule. Ruhuna remained a bulwark of the Sinhala Buddhist identity even during the period of European Colonial domination and spearheaded the Buddhist revival in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The author thus further contends that the entrepreneurial thrust which emerged from Ruhuna was influenced by the capitalist oriented lay ethics of orthodox Theravada Buddhism; the details of which are examined in the appendix.

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