

Modern Sri Lanka: A Society in Transition

Edited by
Tissa Fernando
and **Robert N. Kearney**



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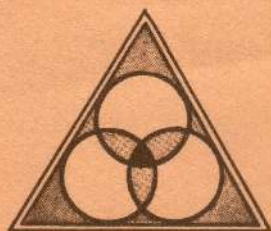
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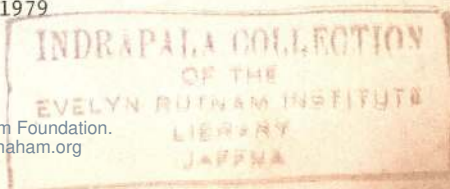
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PREFACE

Over a number of years, a small but hearty band of scholars concerned with Sri Lanka would regularly assemble at the Association for Asian Studies annual meetings and --among other things--grumble about the paucity of up-to-date and conveniently accessible literature on the people, society, and culture of contemporary Sri Lanka. From these ruminations blossomed the idea of assembling a volume of selections on the island's culture and institutions, each prepared by an expert in the particular field and based on the author's original research. The result, after several years of planning and writing, is this volume. The work is intended to be meaningful and interesting to students and others obtaining their first introduction to Sri Lanka and at the same time to make fresh contributions to scholarship on that nation.

Initially conceived as being essentially limited to the social sciences, the scope of the volume was subsequently broadened to include sections on the arts and literature, thereby, we feel, considerably enriching the total work. Still, the volume remains oriented primarily toward the social sciences. Also, for the most part, the emphasis is on developments and circumstances of the nation today and in the immediate past, although certain contributions of necessity lead the reader back to the more distant past and even to antiquity.

Within the confines of a single, relatively slim volume it is, of course, not possible to treat all facets of a complex, dynamic, pluralistic nation. We are uncomfortably aware that many fascinating topics and significant questions are not examined or receive only passing attention. The diversities of language, religion, and social organization, in particular, merit much more extensive treatment than is practicable in an introductory volume such as this. It is our hope that this work

will stimulate among its readers sufficient interest in the "Resplendent Isle" to lead them to further explorations penetrating more broadly and deeply into the rich cultural and social texture of Sri Lanka.

We wish to express our sincere thanks to the contributors to this work for taking time from their busy schedules to participate in this endeavor, allowing the volume to benefit from their unique knowledge of and experience with Sri Lanka. We are indebted to Barbara D. Miller, H. Daniel Smith, David E. Sopher, and Susan S. Wadley of the South Asian Publications Editorial Committee, Maxwell School, Syracuse University, for reading the manuscript and making many useful suggestions. An additional note of appreciation is due Professor Sopher, and D. Michael Kirchoff of the Syracuse University Cartographic Laboratory, for preparing the maps contained in the volume. We are particularly grateful to Ms. Miller for her proofreading of the entire final version, thereby absolving the editors of any responsibility for such flaws as may remain in the finished work.

Finally, we should note the tremendous debts of gratitude to innumerable persons in Sri Lanka--academic colleagues, personal friends, politicians, administrators, teachers, writers, and people from virtually all walks of life--that each of us who has been involved in preparing this work has accumulated over the years, which are far too immense to specify here but which are nonetheless most gratefully acknowledged.

Tissa Fernando
Robert N. Kearney

Vancouver and Syracuse
December 1978

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Tissa Fernando and Robert N. Kearney

• Sri Lanka is a small island nation, 25,332 square miles in extent, populated by about 14 million persons, lying off the southern tip of India. Although its proximity to India has meant that it shares some of the cultural and institutional features of the Indian sub-continent, its civilization, spanning a period in excess of 2,500 years, displays distinct and autochthonous features. Known to most of the outside world for many centuries as Ceylon, the nation in 1972 assumed the indigenous name Sri Lanka.¹

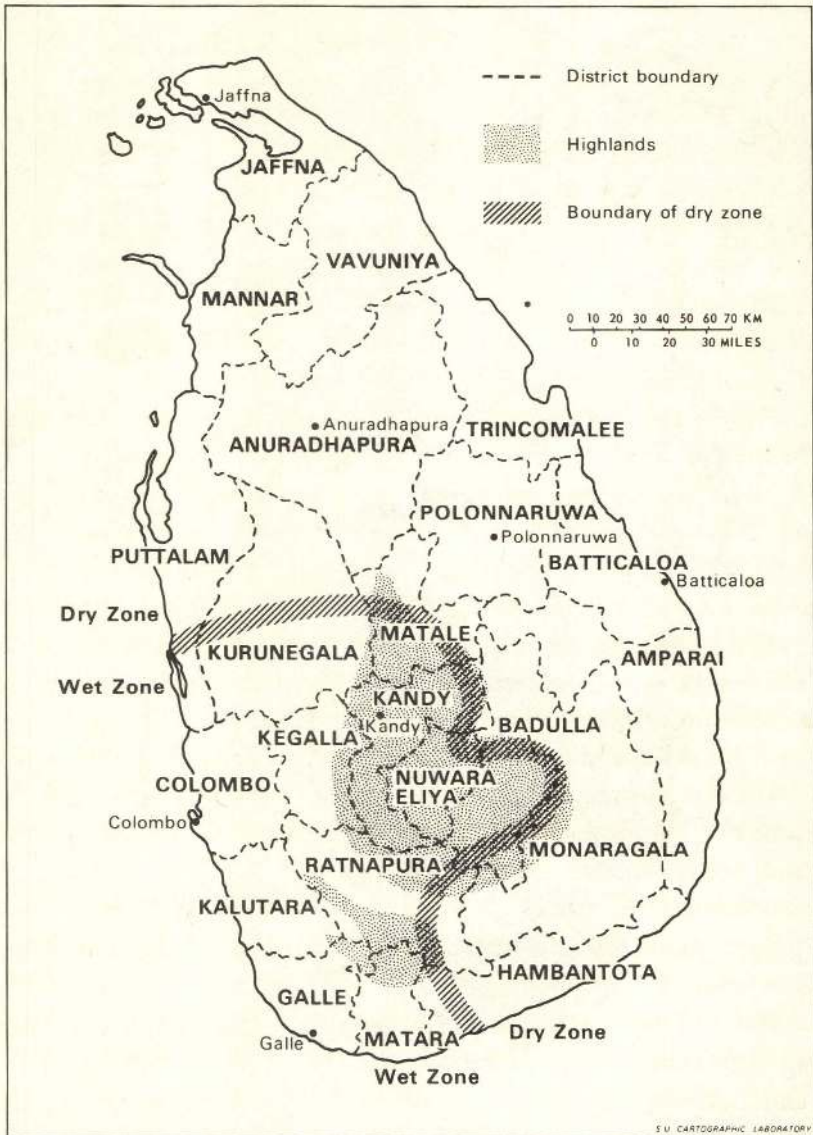
The island of Sri Lanka is an extension of the Indian peninsula, separated from the mainland by a narrow and shallow strip of sea, the Palk Strait, which is only about twenty-five miles in width at its narrowest point. The island's maximum length from north to south is about 270 miles and its maximum breadth from east to west is about 140 miles. A mountainous core in the south-central portion of the island contains elevations of between 3,000 and 7,000 feet, with the highest peak reaching more than 8,000 feet. About one-fifth of the total land area of Sri Lanka is occupied by the hills, mountains, and plateaus of the central highlands. From this core of highlands, the elevation falls to a coastal plain, rather abruptly except in the Southwest, where the hills and gorges of the highlands merge more gradually with ridges and gullies of the coastal plain. The remaining four-fifths of the island's area consists of the flat or rolling land of the narrow southwestern and eastern coastal plains and the broad plains to the north of the highlands. As the island is situated only about 500 miles north of the equator, the temperature is warm and the variation

in temperature is slight.

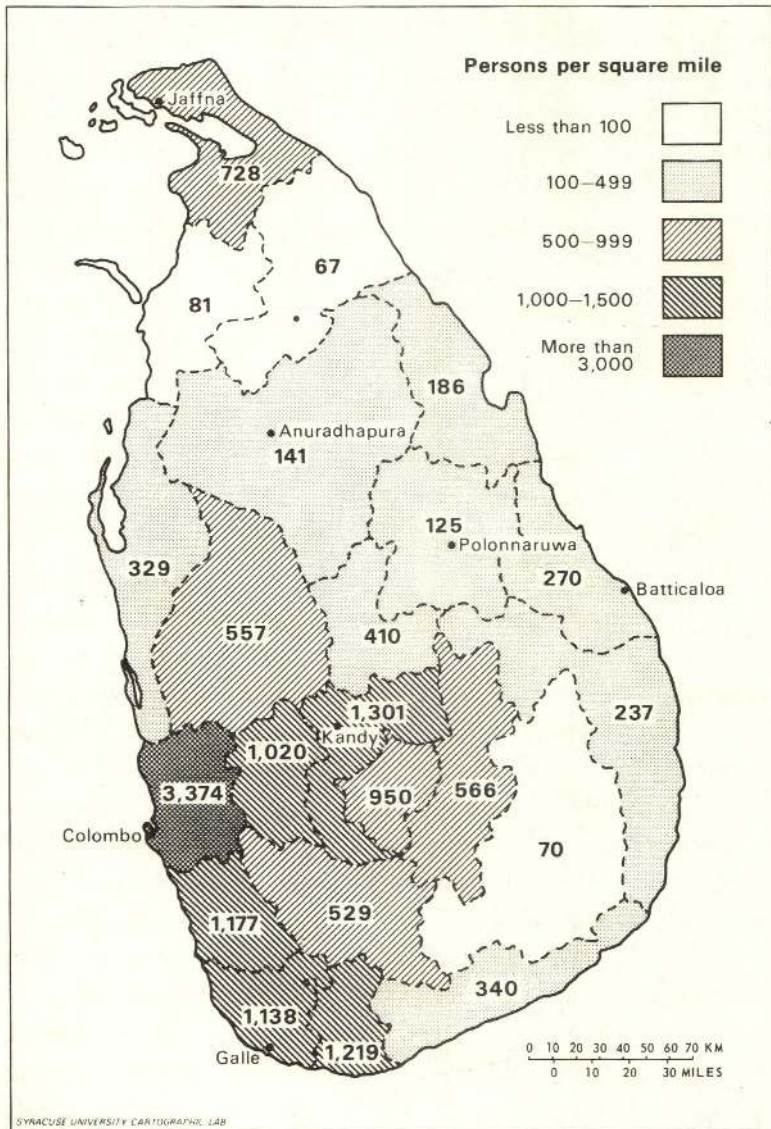
The island can be divided into a "wet zone" and a "dry zone," reflecting differences in the seasonal distribution as well as the amount of rainfall. The wet zone includes the southwestern coastal plain and the western portion of the central highlands, roughly corresponding to the southwestern quarter of the island (see Map 1.1). Lush and humid, this region normally receives 100 to 200 inches of rain annually. The dry zone--the northern, north-central, and eastern portions of the island--ordinarily receives between fifty and seventy-five inches of rain a year. Although rain falls throughout the year, much of the island's precipitation is provided by two monsoons, the southwest monsoon commencing in May and bringing heavy rains to the wet zone, and the northeast monsoon commencing in November or December and bringing precipitation to the northern and eastern regions of the island. Half of the island's land area is covered by woodlands and grasslands. Tea, rubber, and coconut cultivation occupies about 11 percent of the land, while paddy (rice) cultivation accounts for about 8 percent; other crops, 15 percent; and gardens and orchards, 9 percent. The remainder is unused land and land utilized for other purposes.²

About two-thirds of the island's population live in the wet zone, where the density of population averages more than 1,000 persons per square mile and reaches 3,374 in the Colombo district. Elsewhere, the population density ranges from 728 persons per square mile in the Jaffna district at the northern tip of the island to seventy in the southeastern district of Monaragala and sixty-seven in the northeastern district of Vavuniya (see Map 1.2). In the quarter of a century between 1946 and 1971, population density on the island almost doubled, climbing from 293 to 508 persons per square mile.³

The people of Sri Lanka are largely rural villagers



MAP 1.1.--Sri Lanka, Showing Administrative Districts,
Major Cities, the Central Highlands,
and the Wet and Dry Zones



MAP 1.2.--Population Density by District

engaged in agriculture and supporting activities. In 1971, more than three-quarters of the population lived in rural areas,⁴ and half of all employed persons were engaged in agriculture, hunting, forestry, and fishing.⁵ A well-developed network of roads and highways exists, making accessible all but a few remote areas. Of an urban population totaling 2.8 million in 1971, nearly 1.5 million lived in the Colombo district and 962,000--one-third of the entire urban population--lived in the Greater Colombo area.⁶ The position of Colombo as the nation's primary urban center is underscored by the fact that the largest city outside the Greater Colombo area is Jaffna, with a 1971 population of 107,000--about one-ninth that of Greater Colombo, followed by Kandy--with a population of 93,000.⁷

Ethnic and Religious Composition

Ethnic and religious divisions continue to be of considerable social, political, and cultural importance in Sri Lanka. Of the ethnic-linguistic groups into which the population is divided, the Sinhala (also known as Sinhalese) comprise the large majority (see Table 1.1). The present-day Sinhala population is descended from an Aryan-speaking people who came to the island from North India in about the fifth century, B. C. The Sinhala people, most of whom are Buddhists, speak a language also called Sinhala, derived from Sanskrit and related to the Aryan or Indo-European languages of North India, which was brought to Sri Lanka by the ancient Aryan settlers. There has long been a strong association between Sinhala nationalism and the Sinhala language, for to this day Sinhala is spoken only in Sri Lanka and the language sharply differentiates the Sinhala people from the nearby Dravidian-speaking peoples of South India. The Sinhala community is divisible into Low-Country and Kandyan branches, a traditional distinction of regional origin. The Kandyan Sinhala are descended from inhabitants of the

TABLE 1.1--Population by Ethnic Group
at the 1971 Census

Ethnic group	Number (in thousands)	Percentage of population
Sinhala		
Low-Country	5,426	42.8
Kandyan	<u>3,705</u>	<u>29.2</u>
Total	9,131	72.0
Ceylon Tamils	1,424	11.2
Indian Tamils	1,175	9.3
Muslims ^a	899	7.1
Burghers	45	0.4
Others	<u>15</u>	<u>0.1</u>
TOTAL ^b	12,690	100.0

a. Listed in the census report as Ceylon and Indian Moors and Malays.

b. Discrepancies in totals are due to rounding.

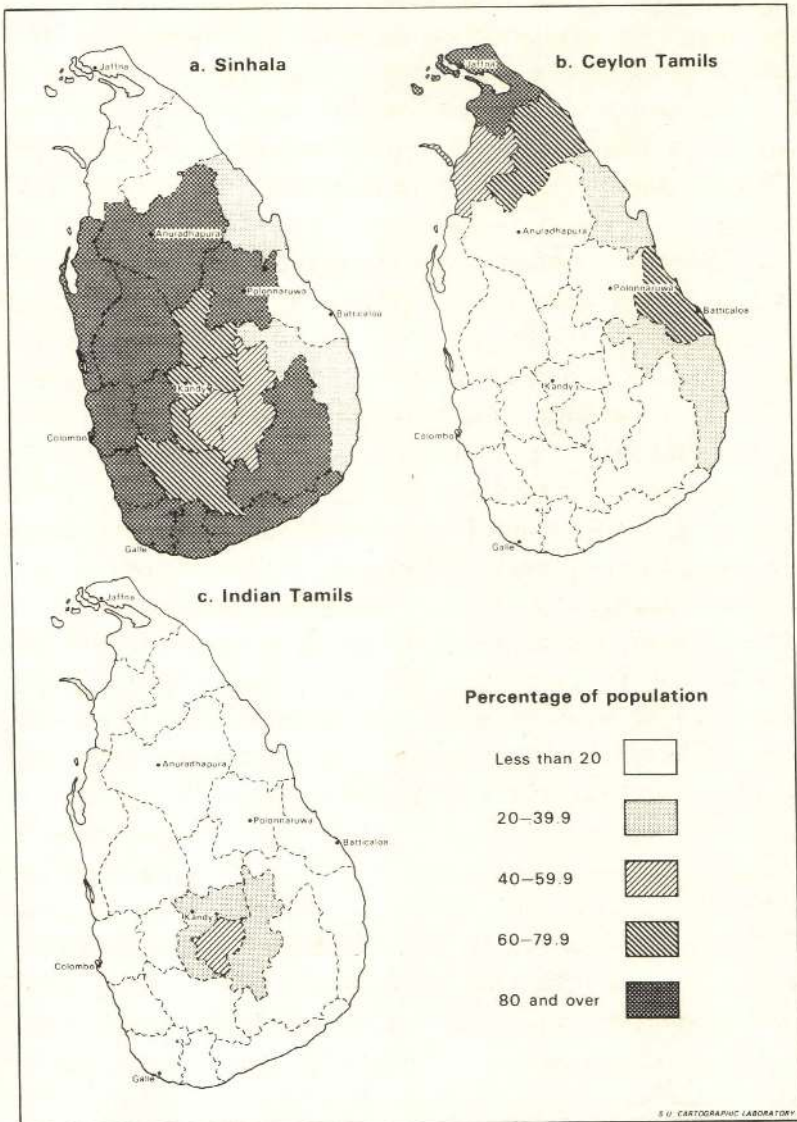
SOURCE: Department of Census and Statistics, Census of Population, 1971, Vol. II, Part I (Colombo: Department of Government Printing, 1975), p. 25.

interior highlands and north-central dry zone that once formed the Kandyan Kingdom, while the ancestors of the Low-Country Sinhala populated the coastal plains of the West and South (irrespective of the place of residence today).

Next to the Sinhala in numerical strength are the Ceylon Tamils, who are descendants of early Dravidian immigrants from South India. Although Sinhala settlements appear to have preceded the arrival of the Tamils by several centuries, it is clear that the latter have been inhabitants of the island from very early times. An independent Tamil kingdom emerged on the island in the thirteenth century, to be extinguished by Portuguese conquerors about four centuries later. The Tamils are predominantly Hindu and speak Tamil, one of the major Dravidian languages of South India. They are, thus,

culturally distinct from the Sinhala majority. The sense of separateness between ethnic groups was reinforced by the fact that the Tamil community was concentrated in the northern and eastern portions of the island, while the Sinhala people populated the remainder of the island. Consequently, the two indigenous communities generally had only minimal contact with each other through the centuries.

The coming of roads and railroads during the modern period facilitated territorial mobility and led to some intermingling of communities, principally in the cities. Nonetheless, a marked territorial concentration continues to exist (see Maps 1.3a and 1.3b). Members of the Sinhala community form a majority of the population, frequently an overwhelming majority, in every district outside of the North and East except in the Nuwara Eliya district in the south-central highlands. Tamils constitute a majority of the population in the far northern districts of Jaffna (where they make up more than 90 percent of the population), Vavuniya, and Mannar. They are also a major element of the population along the east coast, where they live interspersed with Muslims. Slightly more than half of all Ceylon Tamils are found in the three districts of the far North, with the densely populated Jaffna district alone containing 46 percent of the community. About one-fifth of the Ceylon Tamils live along the east coast in the districts of Trincomalee, Batticaloa, and Amparai. Elsewhere, the only significant concentration of Ceylon Tamils is in the Colombo district, where almost 12 percent of the community reside (although they constitute only about 6 percent of the persons living in that populous district).⁸ Tamils from the North have been attracted to Colombo for many decades by the employment opportunities in the government service and commercial firms of the nation's capital and principal commercial center.



MAP 1.3.--Ethnic Composition of Population
by District

The ancient Tamil community in Sri Lanka must be distinguished from the substantial population of Indian Tamils, most of whose ancestors were brought to the island by the British in the nineteenth century to work on the tea estates. At the 1971 census, there were almost as many Indian Tamils as there were Ceylon Tamils living on the island. The Indian Tamils remain concentrated in the tea-growing areas of the central highlands, with nearly two-thirds living in the hill-country districts of Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, and Badulla (see Map 1.3c). Indian Tamils constitute half of the population of Nuwara Eliya district. Smaller numbers are scattered through the lower tea-growing and rubber-producing areas on the southwestern rim of the central highlands.⁹ Most of the Indian Tamils do not hold citizenship in Sri Lanka. Under an agreement between the governments of India and Sri Lanka, about three-fifths of the Indian Tamil community are scheduled to depart for India in the near future, while the remainder are to receive Sri Lankan citizenship.

Although Arabs are known to have had contact with South Asia since pre-Christian times, substantial Muslim settlements in Sri Lanka are relatively recent, not earlier than about the tenth century, A. D. The early Muslim settlers were Arab traders but their numbers were augmented by a steady immigration of Indian Muslims. Arasaratnam has observed that after the sixteenth century "the Muslim community of Ceylon became completely 'Ceylonized.' One of the first spheres of the 'Ceylonization' was in language. The greatest influence on the Muslims was the Tamil language, for it was the Tamil community they confronted most in the Indo-Ceylon trading operations."¹⁰ Tamil became the mother tongue of Sri Lanka's Muslims, but those who settled in Sinhala areas developed a proficiency in both languages. Today, a major concentration of Muslims exists on the east coast

and near the city of Kandy. Nearly one-third of the island's Muslims live along the east coast, slightly smaller numbers live in the Southwest in and near the city of Colombo, and about one-tenth live in the vicinity of the city of Kandy. Others are scattered through the island, often working as merchants and traders.

The Burghers constitute another of the island's ethnic groups. They are, strictly speaking, the descendants of those European officials who worked in Sri Lanka for the Dutch East India Company (from 1656 to 1796) and of the vryburghers engaged in trade and other occupations in Dutch Ceylon. In the parlance of Sri Lanka, however, persons of Portuguese descent as well as Eurasians are included in this category.¹¹ The Burghers are heavily urbanized, almost all are Christians, and most use English as their home language. In recent years, many Burghers have migrated to Britain, Canada, and Australia.

The religious groups of Sri Lanka, with the exception of the Christian minority, are nearly congruent with the ethnic communities. Buddhists, virtually all Sinhala, constitute about two-thirds of the population (see Table 1.2), while Hindus, who are ethnically Tamils, make up

TABLE 1.2.--Population by Religion
at the 1971 Census

Religion	Number (in thousands)	Percentage of population
Buddhists	8,537	67.3
Hindus	2,239	17.6
Christians	1,004	7.9
Muslims	902	7.1
Others	8	0.1
TOTAL	12,690	100.0

SOURCE: Department of Census and Statistics, Census of Population, 1971, Vol. II, Part I (Colombo: Department of Government Printing, 1975), p. 27.

slightly more than one-sixth of the population. Christians and Muslims in approximately equal numbers constitute the remainder of the island's peoples. Christians, of whom nearly 90 percent are Roman Catholics, include members of the Sinhala, Tamil, and Burgher ethnic communities. Most Muslims are classified ethnically in the census reports as Moors, a name given to the Muslim population of Sri Lanka by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, but a very small community of Malay descent also adheres to Islam.

Historical Background

From about the third century, B. C., until A. D. 1017, Anuradhapura was the capital of Sri Lanka (see the list of historical events contained in the appendix to this chapter). The most important event of this period was the introduction of Buddhism during the reign of Devanampiya Tissa (307-267, B. C.). Buddhism, which in the course of time practically disappeared from India, the land of its origin, took deep roots in Sri Lanka and became an integral part of the island's culture and identity. The Anuradhapura period saw the growth of Sri Lanka's great Buddhist civilization, but it was also a period of considerable political instability. With the rise of Hindu states of the Pandyas, the Pallavas, and the Cholas in the fifth and sixth centuries, A. D., South Indian involvement in Sri Lanka's political affairs became endemic. Under Rajaraja the Great (985-1018) the Cholas sacked Anuradhapura and the capital was shifted to Polonnaruwa. Chola rule was short-lived, for in 1070 the Sinhala king, Vijaya Bahu I, was able to liberate the island. Polonnaruwa, however, was retained as the capital.

The best known figure of this period is Parakramabahu I, who ruled from 1153 to 1186. Apart from initiating many important social and religious reforms, he was associated with the construction of several magni-

ficent irrigation works, including the massive Parakrama Samudra. Around the middle of the thirteenth century the Sinhala kings abandoned Polonnaruwa, due to a combination of factors including further South Indian invasions and the spread of malaria, and moved to the Southwest, while Tamil settlers from India began to occupy the Jaffna peninsula in large numbers. The Sinhala kings then ruled from Dambadeniya, Yapahuva, Kurunagala, Gampola, and eventually from Kotte near Colombo.

When the Portuguese came to the island in 1505 there were three independent kingdoms in Sri Lanka: two Sinhala kingdoms, with their centers in Kotte and Kandy, and the Tamil kingdom of Jaffna in the North. The Portuguese were initially less interested in territorial conquest than in controlling the island's lucrative cinnamon trade and in making conversions to Catholicism. However, they were brought into local politics as a result of developments in Kotte which led to the partition of that kingdom among three brothers in 1521. One of the brothers, Mayadunne, the ruler of Sitavaka, emerged as the strongest and the other rulers looked to the Portuguese for help to contain him and his successor, Rajasinha. After Rajasinha died in 1593 the Sitavaka kingdom disintegrated for want of a strong successor. Kotte now regained (with Portuguese help) all the territory it held before partition. The king of Kotte, Dharmapala, had in the process become a puppet of the Portuguese. In 1580, he made a deed gifting his kingdom after his death to the Portuguese monarch. Dharmapala died in 1597, and the Portuguese became the rulers of the entire island except for the Kingdom of Jaffna and the Kandyan Kingdom based in the interior highlands. Jaffna fell to the Portuguese in 1619, but the Kandyan kings successfully repelled all attempts to capture their kingdom. The Portuguese were involved in the maritime provinces of Sri Lanka from 1505 to 1658. Their most lasting influences on the island were

the introduction of Christianity (Catholicism), the incorporation of new words into the Sinhala and Tamil languages, and the introduction of a European ethnic group (descendants of Portuguese settlers) into the social fabric.

The Portuguese were succeeded in 1658 by the Dutch, who emerged in the early seventeenth century as a major naval power in the Indian Ocean. They soon sought to oust the Portuguese and obtain a monopoly of Sri Lanka's maritime trade. Although the Dutch captured the Portuguese territory in Sri Lanka, the Kingdom of Kandy eluded the Dutch as it had their predecessors. Two Dutch attempts to capture Kandy were unsuccessful. Just as the Portuguese were summoned by local rulers to help in attempts to overthrow the then-powerful king of Sitavaka, the Dutch came at the request of the king of Kandy to aid in expelling the Portuguese. Hence, both these European powers arrived in Sri Lanka as benefactors and remained as conquerors. The Dutch administration was by far the better organized of the two, in part because it was supervised by Batavia, the headquarters of the Dutch East India Company's Asian operations. However, for this reason the Dutch were often more exacting on the native population and, consequently, were more unpopular. The lasting influences of the Dutch include the establishment of Roman-Dutch law and Protestant Christianity, and their own contribution to the European element in the population of Sri Lanka. The descendants of Portuguese and Dutch settlers of this early period are the island's Burghers, a small but important minority.

The period of British involvement in Sri Lanka's history began with the capitulation of the Dutch settlements on the island to the British East India Company in 1796. Initially, Sri Lanka was administered by the East India Company as an appendage of the Madras Presidency, but, consequent to a rebellion in 1797, the

maritime provinces were declared a Crown Colony in 1802. In 1815, the rest of Sri Lanka--the Kandyan provinces--were also brought under British suzerainty.¹² The Kandyan Kingdom, which had remained independent throughout the periods of Portuguese and Dutch rule, was subjected to Western colonial rule for the first time. In 1833, separate administration of the Kandyan territories was ended and the entire island was brought under a uniform and centralized administrative system. Despite rebellions in the Kandyan areas in 1818 and 1848, the nineteenth century was a period of consolidation of British rule and steadily advancing British economic and cultural penetration of the island.

The island's long exposure to foreign rule had serious implications for Buddhism, the traditional religion of the island's Sinhala population. "An important consequence of the transfer of political power into alien hands, as far as Buddhism in Ceylon was concerned, was the loss of the state patronage which it had enjoyed for centuries....Under the Portuguese and the Dutch, the strength of the state machinery was not merely withdrawn from Buddhism; it was actively used against Buddhism on the side of Christianity."¹³ The coming of the British did not improve matters for, although in theory British officials separated religion from affairs of the state, in practice they were not unsympathetic to the proselytizing zeal of Christian missionaries, which frequently took the form of abusive attacks on Buddhism.

From about 1850 onwards there developed a conscious Buddhist response to the Christian missionary effort. This was organized and led by Buddhist monks, the most prominent of whom were Hikkaduve Sumangala and Mohottivatte Gunananda. This "Buddhist revival," however, was not entirely autochthonous. Some remarkable achievements in Buddhist and Pali studies by European scholars, such as T. W. Rhys Davids and George Turnour, gave educated

Sri Lankans a new appreciation of the religion of their forefathers. In addition, it was the foreign Theosophists, notably the American Henry Steele Olcott, who provided Sri Lankan Buddhists with the organizational know-how to combat Christian proselytizing. Buddhist books and periodicals were printed in large numbers to counter Christian polemics and Buddhist schools were established to provide children with education in a Buddhist environment. The identity of the nation with Buddhism was once more proclaimed and was made the basis for popular mobilization. The Buddhist counterattack against the Christian missionary activities produced a series of public debates in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the most famous of which took place in 1873 in the southwestern coastal town of Panadura and was hailed as a stunning triumph of the Buddhist spokesman over his Christian adversary. This was the beginning of that militant Buddhism--aptly called "Protestant Buddhism" by Obeyesekere¹⁴ for its explicit protest against Christian proselytizing and its implicit adoption of the missionary zeal, strict morality, and organizational forms of Protestant Christianity--that has continued to be evident in one form or another to the present day.

The Crown Colony government the British established in 1802 was authoritarian, with executive, legislative, and judicial powers vested in the governor. The governor was assisted by an advisory council of British officials but he was not required to seek their advice. This rule of the governor was modified in 1833 as a result of recommendations made by the Colebrooke Commission.¹⁵ The governor was thereafter provided with an Executive Council of senior officials, which he was obliged to consult, and a Legislative Council, composed of nine official and six non-official members, the latter being nominated by the governor. Three of the six non-official members were to be Sri Lankans, and it became customary for the gov-

ernor to nominate for these positions one Low-Country Sinhala, one Tamil, and one Burgher. This was the beginning of ethnic representation, a source of much dissension among the communities in the early decades of the present century.

After the 1833 reforms there were no major constitutional changes until the twentieth century. The only change in the composition of the Legislative Council was the addition in 1889 of two more non-official members. The Executive Council remained exclusively a body of British officials. By the turn of the century, Western-educated Sri Lankans began to ask for a more liberal constitution. Their strategy was to send memorials to the Colonial Office advocating constitutional reform, while emphasizing their commitment to political change without violence. These early demands were relatively modest. All urged the introduction of the elective principle to the Legislative Council and of non-official representation in the Executive Council. They repudiated ethnic representation and wanted only territorial electorates. Asking for elected members in the Legislative Council was not a radical measure, for none of the memorials sought a non-official majority. What they were seeking was greater participation of Sri Lankans in government, not persons chosen by the governor but those who could claim to have the confidence of the people. The assumption was that the Western-educated Sri Lankans were better able to represent the masses than British officials; the memorials never suggested a broad franchise to include the masses in political activity.

The Colonial Office responded to these demands with what have come to be known as the Crewe-McCallum Reforms in 1910. They did not amount to much. There were to be no changes in the Executive Council. The Legislative Council was expanded and four of the ten non-official members were to be elected, one of whom was to represent

the "educated Ceylonese." The election for this position, held in 1911, was an event of some importance for this was, for Sri Lankans, the first exercise of the elective principle at the national level.

Sri Lankan leaders of the period around 1910 were practically all politically conservative, and this was reflected in their ready acceptance of the meager reforms granted by the Colonial Office. However, there was soon to be a change in attitude brought about mainly by the 1915 riots.¹⁶ Excesses committed in the suppression of the riots, which erupted between Buddhists and Muslims, and the persistent refusal by the government to grant a commission of inquiry greatly affected the confidence of Sri Lankan leaders in British justice. The events following the riots provided an unprecedented stimulus to political agitation, and nationalist politics, which had hitherto been in some respects dilettante, became focused and purposeful.

Another factor in the new enthusiasm for political reform was the political progress being made in India. The liberalization of the constitution on the neighboring sub-continent could scarcely be expected to go unnoticed in Sri Lanka. The Montagu-Chelmsford proposals for India in 1918 only underlined the backwardness of Sri Lanka's own constitution. The need for organized agitation became clearer. The earliest political organization of Sri Lankans was the Ceylon Agricultural Association founded in the mid-nineteenth century and in 1888 renamed the Ceylon National Association. However, this was not a rigorous organization and did not lead a movement for political reform. In 1917, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, a distinguished Sri Lankan who had served in the three bastions of power--the Executive and Legislative Councils and the Civil Service, founded the Ceylon Reform League. In 1919 this organization was superseded by the Ceylon National Congress, based on the

Indian model, with Arunachalam, a Tamil, as its first president. The constitutional progress of India emphasized the efficacy of organized action and made Sri Lankans realize the inadequacy of their own haphazard representations. The achievements of the Indian National Congress made that organization the obvious example to follow, although many among the Sri Lankan elite disliked the more somber aspects of Indian nationalism.

Representations by the Ceylon Reform League and later the Ceylon National Congress led to the Manning Reforms of 1920. The constitution of Sri Lanka was altered in three directions: (1) a considerable extension of the principle of popular election was made, (2) a substantial non-official majority was created in the Legislative Council, and (3) non-official representation was introduced in the Executive Council. The notion of territorial electorates was, at last, accepted, but only eleven of twenty-three non-officials were to be so elected. Ethnic representation was continued and even extended despite strong opposition to it by the Ceylon National Congress. A dispute over ethnic representation led in 1921 to a rupture of the Sinhala-Tamil amity in the Congress, when Arunachalam and most other Tamil leaders withdrew from the organization.

In 1923, further reforms were granted. There was an increase in the number of non-official members as well as in the proportion of territorially elected members. However, the principle of ethnic representation was also extended to the Tamils, the largest minority. This was consequent to Tamil anxieties that they would not be adequately represented in a purely territorial system. Sri Lankan leaders were on the whole disappointed with this reform package, but they were willing to cooperate with the five-year testing period stipulated by the Colonial Office. This spirit of moderation reflected the limited political aspirations for the nation held by

the Sri Lankan leaders. Unlike Indian nationalists of this period, the leaders in Sri Lanka indicated no urgency about the timetable for self-government. Also, in the 1920's political leadership was dominated by the conservative Ceylon National Congress, which "unlike the Indian National Congress under Mahatma Gandhi's inspiration, never succeeded in arousing the enthusiasm of the common people."¹⁷

In accordance with its pledge to reconsider the constitution after five years, the Colonial Office in November 1927 sent to Sri Lanka a commission headed by the Earl of Donoughmore. The consequent Donoughmore Reforms of 1931 were a landmark in the island's constitutional development. A novel feature of the new constitution was the introduction of a committee system, based on the model of the London County Council, in the national legislature. The new State Council (which replaced the Executive and Legislative Councils) performed both executive and legislative functions. It was to consist predominantly of territorially elected members and the members were to divide themselves into seven executive committees, each of which was to elect its own chairman. These executive committee chairmen were to be designated ministers, and the seven ministers together with three officers of state (chief secretary, financial secretary, and the attorney general) were to constitute a Board of Ministers. By this device it was intended to give Sri Lankan leaders--for the first time--executive responsibility.

A major recommendation of the Donoughmore Commission was the abolition of ethnic representation, thereby doing away with the strategy of "divide and rule" so effectively used by the British for nearly a century. The Donoughmore Report called ethnic representation "a canker on the body politic, eating deeper and deeper into the vital energies of the people, breeding self-interest,

suspicion and animosity, poisoning the new growth of political consciousness, and effectively preventing the development of a national or corporate spirit."¹⁸ It should be noted that the same arguments had been put forward by Sri Lankan leaders as early as 1908, only to be disregarded by the Colonial Office for almost a quarter of a century.

An equally important recommendation of the Donoughmore Commission was the introduction of universal adult suffrage, only three years after its adoption in Britain. To appreciate how radical this recommendation was, one must note that under the previous (1923) constitution the number of eligible voters did not exceed 4 percent of the population. Following the suffrage reform, the number of eligible voters rose from about 205,000 in 1924 to more than 1.5 million in 1931.¹⁹

Despite its attractive features, the Donoughmore reforms failed to stifle political agitation. The political leaders of Sri Lanka, having had a taste of real power, wanted full-fledged parliamentary institutions including a cabinet form of government. It was to take more than a decade for that to be realized. In July 1944 the secretary of state for the colonies sent a constitutional commission to Sri Lanka headed by Lord Soulbury. The Soulbury Report led to a new transitional constitution based on the parliamentary mode. But events overtook these reforms. On February 4, 1948, closely following Indian independence, Sri Lanka became once more an independent nation, after nearly 450 years of foreign tutelage.

The later period of British rule also produced the beginnings of a tremendous expansion of education and literacy. Prior to the first Western incursions in the sixteenth century, village temple schools had imparted basic skills in reading and arithmetic to a significant portion of the island's male youths. The Portuguese,

soon after their arrival, established the first Christian missionary schools. Through the Dutch and early British periods, missionary schools continued to play a dominant role in education, catering largely to children of the local elite, while the traditional temple school system atrophied. During the nineteenth century, government schools were introduced and a dual system of education emerged, with public and private schools existing side by side. In the early twentieth century, a practice was adopted of providing public funds for private denominational schools, creating three types of educational institutions: government schools, government-assisted private schools, and unassisted private schools. The schools in the latter two categories were nearly all run by religious bodies. The practice of aiding private schools was continued until more than a decade after independence.

Education in the English medium was introduced early in the nineteenth century, largely to supply recruits for the clerical grades of the public service. Following the Colebrooke recommendations of 1832, which urged expansion of English-language education, the small number of government schools teaching in Sinhala and Tamil were discontinued and an expansion of education in the English medium commenced, advancing before mid-century to the provision of secondary education. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, however, the objective of providing mass popular education was adopted by the government, and the decision was made that education for the general population would be in Sinhala or Tamil. Subsequently, more than 80 percent of all students were enrolled in schools teaching in the indigenous languages. School enrollments in the two decades after 1880 more than tripled, rising from about 50,000 to 170,000, and doubled over the next two decades. By 1945, enrollments had climbed to almost 800,000.²⁰ The literacy rate among persons five years of age and over rose from 17.4 percent

in 1881 to 31.0 percent in 1911, and 57.8 percent in 1946.²¹ In 1944, a policy of providing free education through the university level was adopted. Sri Lanka reached independence with one of the highest levels of education and literacy in Asia.

Whereas Portuguese and Dutch influences on Sri Lanka were marginal and mostly ephemeral, the social and economic consequences of British rule were profound and pervasive. Apart from the establishment of the foundations of constitutional government and the development of an educational system geared to mass popular education, the more significant changes introduced by the British were the introduction of a unified administrative bureaucracy and judicial system; the establishment of a plantation economy producing commercial crops such as coffee, tea, and rubber; and the development of urban centers oriented to import-export commerce, giving rise to new types of employment and significantly altering the patterns of life of many of the island's people.

Contemporary Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka today is a society in transition. Extensive social, economic, and political transformations have been occurring over recent decades, and in some cases extending far back into the last century. These changes are evident in rising rates of literacy and levels of educational attainment, in a shift from subsistence agriculture to wage labor, in soaring levels of popular participation in vigorously competitive election contests, and in many subtle alterations of aspirations and values. These manifold transformations--stark and volatile as the emerging politics of youth, or barely perceptible as evolving attitudes toward religion, kinship, or the position of women--are frequent themes of the chapters that follow.

Sri Lanka in the last quarter of the twentieth century is a nation with an ancient cultural heritage and

rich history which is struggling to attain modern goals of economic well-being, equity and social justice, and enhanced life opportunities for its peoples. At the same time, modern public health measures and improved nutrition have contributed to a spiraling rise in population, which has brought in its train a host of problems. It is a significant commentary on the present circumstances of the nation that youth unemployment is a focus of concern in four of the chapters in this volume. Stresses arising with modernization--competitive striving for modern educational and employment opportunities, for example--not infrequently exacerbate long-standing communal suspicions and rivalries.

But societies are seldom transformed over night, nor, indeed, over the span of a few decades. The past is still much in evidence in many areas of contemporary life. Religion, art, and literature may be viewed as important custodians of the past--although they are not themselves immune to reinterpretation and fresh evaluation. Popular religions have responded to the felt needs of the contemporary era, and even within the venerable Buddhist tradition modified viewpoints and shifting emphases may be discerned. Literature and art display new themes and techniques, as well as preserving, or discovering, elements from the past. The remaining chapters in this volume seek to explore these and other major issues and themes of the social and cultural life of modern Sri Lanka.

Notes

1. The island was always called Lanka or Sri Lanka (Srī is an honorific with a meaning approximating "resplendent") in Sinhala. The origins of the name Ceylon are unclear, possibly derived from Sri Lanka or from Sinhala Dvīpa (island of the Sinhala), but in modern times the name came to be associated with colonial rule. Hence, recent nationalist aspirations called for its replacement in English, or any other language, by Sri Lanka. For the most part, the name Sri Lanka will be used in this volume, although in quotations and under special circumstances Ceylon appears.
2. Department of Census and Statistics, Statistical Pocket Book of the Republic of Sri Lanka (Ceylon), 1974 (Colombo: Department of Government Printing, 1974), p. 47.
3. Department of Census and Statistics, Census of Population, 1971, Vol. II, Part I (Colombo: Department of Government Printing, 1975), p. 2.
4. Ibid., p. 5.
5. Statistical Pocket Book . . ., 1974, p. 25.
6. Greater Colombo includes the Colombo and Dehiwala-Mount Lavinia municipal council areas and the Kotte, Moratuwa, Kolonnawa, and Wattala-Mabole urban council areas. The population of the Colombo municipal council area was 562,420 in 1971.
7. Census of Population, 1971, p. 6.
8. Based on 1971 census data, reported in Department of Census and Statistics, Statistical Abstract of Ceylon, 1970-1971 (Colombo: Department of Government Printing, 1974), pp. 35-36.
9. Ibid.
10. S. Arasaratham, Ceylon (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 120-121.
11. See Tissa Fernando, "Burghers of Ceylon," in Noel P. Gist and Anthony G. Dworkin (eds.), The Blending of Races (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1972), pp. 61-78.
12. For details on the early years of British rule, see Colvin R. de Silva, Ceylon Under the British Occupation, 1795-1833 (Colombo: Colombo Apothecaries, 1953), 2 vols.
13. K. Malalgoda, Buddhism in Sinhalese Society, 1750-1900 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 28.
14. Gananath Obeyesekere, "Religious Symbolism and Political Change in Ceylon," Modern Ceylon Studies, I (January 1970), pp. 43-63.

15. See G. C. Mendis (ed.), The Colebrooke-Cameron Papers (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), 2 vols.
16. See Robert N. Kearney (ed.), "The 1915 Riots in Ceylon: A Symposium," Journal of Asian Studies, XXIX (February 1970), pp. 219-266; and Tissa Fernando, "The British Raj and the 1915 Communal Riots in Ceylon," Modern Asian Studies, III (July 1969), pp. 245-255.
17. Sir W. Ivor Jennings, Nationalism and Political Development in Ceylon (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1950), p. 11.
18. Great Britain, Colonial Office, Ceylon: Report of the Special Commission on the Constitution, Cmd. 3131 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1928), p. 39.
19. Great Britain, Colonial Office, Ceylon: Report of the Commission on Constitutional Reform, Cmd. 6677 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1945), p. 54.
20. Report of the Director of Public Instruction for 1880-1900 (Colombo: Government Printer, 1881-1901); Report of the Acting Director of Education for 1920 (Colombo: Government Printer, 1921); Administration Report of the Director of Education for 1945 (Colombo: Government Press, 1946).
21. Derived from Statistical Abstract of Ceylon, 1970-1971, p. 39.

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Appendix: Some Historical Events

- Sixth century, B. C. Beginning of the history of Sri Lanka with the arrival in the island from North India, of the Sinhala people.
- Third century, B. C. The introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka during the reign of King Devanampiya Tissa.
- Sixth century, B. C., to eleventh century, A. D. The Anuradhapura period of Sri Lanka's history. Anuradhapura was throughout the capital city although kings occasionally lived elsewhere. This period saw the construction of Sri Lanka's best known Buddhist stupas (relic chambers): Thuparama, Ruvanvalisaya, Mirisavatiya, Abhayagiri, and Jetavanaramaya.
- First century, B. C. The Tripitaka, the teachings of the Buddha, was for the first time committed to writing. This important event in the history of Buddhism took place at Aluvihara, near Matale.
- 477-495, A. D. Reign of King Kassapa I, builder of the rock fortress of Sigiriya. The frescoes of Sigiriya are the oldest surviving figure paintings in Sri Lanka.
- Sixth century, A. D. The likely period when Sri Lanka's oldest extant chronicle, the Mahāvamsa, was compiled.
- 1017, A. D. Mahinda V, the last King to rule from Anuradhapura, was taken prisoner by the Cholas of South India. The Cholas moved the capital to Polonnaruwa and ruled Sri Lanka for more than seventy years.
- Eleventh to thirteenth centuries, A. D. The Polonnaruwa period of Sri Lanka's history. Vijaya Bahu I, who liberated the island from the Cholas, retained Polonnaruwa as the capital. To this period belongs some magnificent architectural works such as the temples Kirivehera, Lankatilaka, and Gal-Vihāra.
- 1153-1186 Reign of Parakramabahu I, perhaps the most venerated of Sri Lanka's kings. He unified the island, revived Buddhism to its position of supremacy in the island and built numerous irrigation works including the massive Parakrama Samudra.

- Thirteenth and
fourteenth centuries Rise of the Tamil kingdom in the north of Sri Lanka. It remained an independent kingdom until its subjugation by the Portuguese in 1619. Since then the Tamil North has been considered an integral part of the Sri Lankan national polity.
- 1505 The Portuguese arrival in Sri Lanka ushering in four and a half centuries of Western domination.
- 1658 The end of Portuguese rule of Sri Lanka with the capture of their strongholds by the Dutch. Dutch rule lasted until 1796, when it was replaced by British rule.
- 1802 The maritime provinces of Sri Lanka were declared a British Crown Colony.
- 1815 The Kandyan Kingdom was also brought under British rule. This was the first time that Kandy experienced Western rule, as the kingdom had successfully repelled every attempt at conquest by the Portuguese and the Dutch.
- 1833 The Colebrooke-Cameron reforms introduced some radical changes such as the abolition of rājakāriya (caste-related service obligations), the establishment of a Legislative Council, and the introduction of a unified judicial system.
- 1860's Tea was introduced as a plantation crop and after the 1880's it became the island's main export commodity. To this day tea remains Sri Lanka's main foreign exchange earner.
- 1915 Sinhala-Muslim riots. The ruthless manner in which this episode was handled by the colonial government provided a stimulus for the nationalist movement.
- 1919 The Ceylon National Congress, the principal organization of the national independence movement, was formed.
- 1921 Ceylon University College was established, developing into a degree-conferring university in 1944.
- 1931 The Donoughmore reforms were introduced, bringing universal adult suffrage and giving Sri Lankans executive responsibility for the first time.

- 1944 A free education scheme was adopted, providing non-fee-paying education from kindergarten through the university level.
- 1948 Sri Lanka became an independent nation, with D. S. Senanayake as the first prime minister.
- 1956 First election defeat and replacement in power of a governing political party. Sinhala declared to be the only official language for the nation.
- 1958 Sinhala-Tamil communal riots, following growing linguistic and religious tensions.
- 1959 Prime Minister S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike assassinated.
- 1971 Unsuccessful armed uprising staged by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna.
- 1972 First major constitutional revision since independence.
- 1978 Second major constitutional revision.

Chapter 2

ASPECTS OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

Tissa Fernando

The Traditional System

Sri Lanka has been, from the earliest times, a society with a highly elaborate system of institutionalized inequality. Pre-colonial Sri Lanka was stratified on the basis of kinship and caste. The traditional elite were from the Goyigama caste, which "to all intents and purposes constituted the chief caste, 'the good people,' as opposed to the 'low castes.'"¹ However, the caste system of traditional Sri Lanka differed from the Indian model in many important respects. First, the prevalence of Buddhism as the dominant religion tempered Sinhala caste by depriving it of the religious rationale and sacred sanctions of Hinduism. Second, the absence of a Brahmin caste meant that Sinhala caste "never knew the structuring power of the Brahmin,"² hence its relative mildness. Third, hierarchical ordering of caste in Sri Lanka differs radically from that which prevails in India. Contrary to the pyramid-structure of the Indian system which has the numerically insignificant Brahmins at the apex, the Goyigama caste in Sri Lanka constitutes over half the population, and the "lowest" castes are numerically small.

Historically, the distinguishing feature of caste in Sri Lanka was its link with Sinhala feudalism. Singer observed that "the occupational role of the higher-ranking Goyigama can be compared with occupational role of the medieval European aristocrat who 'governed' his manors and estates in return for service to the king and service to his own vassals."³ The majority of modern castes are historically derived from groups that filled particular economic roles in the Kandyan feudal system. A caste

then was an occupation with feudal obligations to the king and to patrimonial lords. This conception of stratification was strengthened by the Portuguese and the Dutch who found in the system a "ready-made machinery for exploitation."⁴ For example, certain caste occupations that were useful to them, such as cinnamon peelers (Salāgama), were given special recognition, including manorial grants, by the Portuguese. Several low country castes were not, strictly speaking, part of the traditional feudal system but rather were creatures of the colonial period. For, not only the Portuguese and the Dutch, but initially the British also wished to retain the caste system and even maintained district caste headmen.

What are the castes of the Sinhalese system and what are their relative status? In the Kandyan areas, three layers of caste are discernible: (1) the "high" caste--the Goyigama and its subdivisions; (2) the service castes, such as the Hēna (washermen), the Beravā (drummers), and the Navandanna (metal workers); (3) the "lowest" castes, such as the Kinnara (mat weavers) and the Rodī (beggars). In the low country regions the structure is less clear. The Goyigamas are recognized as the "superior" caste. But the Karāva (fishermen) and the Salāgama (cinnamon peelers) are extremely important and influential. The "service castes" and the "lowest castes" are less conspicuous in the low country, but where they exist they are generally considered "inferior" to the Goyigama, Karāva, and Salāgama. The pattern, then, is that some castes are found throughout the island; others are concentrated either in the Kandyan areas or in the low country. There is consensus on the relative status of individual castes at the two extremes, but considerable disagreement exists regarding castes in the middle range. Although the names of Sinhala castes denote traditional service duties, it is important to note that they were never occupational categories in any total sense. "The Washermen are only ritual washermen, the Drummers are

only religious drummers; in their ordinary life Goyigama, Washermen, Drummers and the rest are all alike cultivators of the soil. This was so in the past just as it is now."⁵

Caste in Jaffna, the Tamil province of the North, is closer to the Indian system.⁶ Brahmins exist but are few in number and their professional occupation is almost always that of temple priest. The de facto "high" caste in Jaffna is the Vellāla (landlord), the equivalent of the Sinhala Goyigama. Like the latter, the Vellālas constitute the majority of the Tamil population. Other castes in Jaffna include the Kōviyars (recognized as the ritual equals of the Vellālas), Barbers, Washerman, and Pallas (landless laborers).

The Impact of British Rule

Until the British period the social status of a person in Sri Lanka was determined almost exclusively by caste and kinship. Although the British were initially reluctant to interfere with this traditional system of stratification, the Colebrooke-Cameron Report of 1832 recommended the abolition of rājakāriya, the ancient system of compulsory labor based on caste distinctions. Cameron's judicial reforms also worked against the caste system, for it envisaged a uniform legal system for Ceylon which did not recognize race, religion, or caste. The significance of these reforms was that the caste system was no longer legally recognized. By the mid nineteenth century the government had made its position on caste explicit. For reasons of diplomacy and administrative convenience it favored "leaving the abatement of the evil to the operation of time and the gradual growth of intelligence."⁷

Although British officials did not make a deliberate attempt to disrupt the caste power structure, the economic and social changes introduced by British rule had the effect of weakening traditional bases of power and prestige. Some of these changes were: the development of a

plantation economy, with the introduction of commercial crops such as coffee, tea and rubber; the establishment of English schools imparting Western education; the introduction of a unified administrative bureaucracy, leading to unprecedented opportunities for employment in government service; the growth of urban centers, giving rise to new types of employment; and the laying of the foundations for constitutional government on the Westminster model.

There can be no doubt that the radically new economic opportunities offered by British rule had the function of eroding the economic base of traditional inequality. It brought into being the reality of secular economic mobility independent of ritual status. The introduction of the cash nexus began the emancipation of traditionally "low" castes by offering them avenues for upward mobility. Among the prominent Ceylonese of the late nineteenth century who owed their fortunes to the judicious exploitation of the new economy were many non-Goyigama persons, especially members of the Karāva caste. Because of their affluence, these entrepreneurs were given privileges hitherto reserved for the Goyigama aristocracy. For instance, a wealthy Karāva, C. H. de Soysa, was permitted to entertain the Duke of Edinburgh to dinner in his own home, which he did in grand style

off a plate with a knife and fork, all of pure gold, the champagne and wine goblets being of the same precious metal. Upon the spoon were delicately carved wine leaves, and around the stem was worked a row of pearls. Rows of rubies similarly encrusted the knife and fork.⁸

But wealth alone did not ensure elite status. These pioneer native entrepreneurs were not all Western educated but they recognized that an English education was indispensable if their families were to consolidate their newly won positions. They, therefore, invested their money not only in plantation land and house property but also in the education of their sons. Amassing wealth was

one way of transcending the constraints of the traditional stratification system; a good English education was the other and surer way.

English Education and Its Consequences

The introduction of English education had a profound long-term impact on the island. The Colebrooke-Cameron Report of 1832 made explicit the position of English in Sri Lanka. Since English was the language of administration, of the courts, and of export-oriented commerce it was necessary to establish English-medium schools to qualify Sri Lankans for employment in this modern sector. Accordingly, in 1832 the government established five English schools, located in Colombo, Galle, Kandy, Chilaw, and Jaffna. The number of English schools increased gradually, and by 1848 there were sixty of them with an attendance of 2,714 students. Here, then, is the origin of the dichotomy of society into those with an English education and those without, the single most important factor in stratification in twentieth century Sri Lanka.

Initially, it was the Goyigama aristocratic families that had access to Western education and, thus, provided the earliest recruits to the new Westernized elite. As early as 1811, two sons of Sinhalese chiefs were sent to Oxford and Cambridge and were the first beneficiaries of the British administration's early efforts to provide higher education for Ceylonese. Similarly, the early recruits to English schools were from "high" caste families. But this preferential access to education did not last long, for it was incompatible with the notion of individual achievement, an integral aspect of the new ethic introduced by British commerce. Thus, in the course of the nineteenth century an increasing proportion of non-Goyigama children attended English schools, and by the early decades of this century the "lower" castes came to constitute a substantial proportion of the Western-educated elite.

The British authorities were well aware of the consequences of introducing English education. This is seen in the attitude of the Central School Commission which took over the supervision of government schools in 1841. The English school system was deliberately reorganized by the commission on the basis of the existing class structure of society. The Commissioners "always kept in mind what they considered to be the requirements of the different classes in society" so that "schools came to be divided into a number of categories each serving a particular social class."⁹ At the top of the hierarchy of schools was the Colombo Academy (renamed Royal College in 1881) which was to provide "a sound English, Classical and mathematical education" for the upper class children."¹⁰ Next to the Colombo Academy in status were the central schools of Kandy and Galle, intended for "the poor orders" interested in securing modern employment. Inferior to the central schools were the elementary English schools, meant for those who could not afford to send their children to the former.

This early policy of confining the government's educational efforts exclusively to English schools was abandoned in 1847 when it was decided to establish vernacular schools for the masses. English education became thereafter, both in theory and practice, the monopoly of a small minority. This restriction was effected by introducing prohibitive school fees in government-aided English schools.

In 1869, the administration of education in the island was centralized in the Department of Public Instruction and a comprehensive scheme of grants-in-aid to private schools was introduced. This scheme was responsible for the success of some of the best English schools: St. Thomas' College, Colombo, founded in 1851; Trinity College, Kandy, founded in 1857 (Anglican); Jaffna Central; Wesley College, Colombo (Wesleyan); Jaffna

College (American Mission); St. Joseph's College, Colombo (Roman Catholic); Ananda College, Colombo (Buddhist); and Jaffna Hindu College (Hindu). In the 1880's the government handed over their English schools, with the exception of Royal College, to private enterprise. This move further restricted English education to the privileged urbanites who could afford the high fees. Table 2.1. suggests the restricted character of English education.

TABLE 2.1.--Spread of Education in English,
1904 and 1924

	<u>1904</u>	<u>1924</u>
Number of English-medium schools	180	246
Number of students	22,611	48,587

SOURCE: Administration Reports of the Director of Education.

And, of course, only a small proportion of those educated in English had obtained a good secondary education. The total number of students presented for the Cambridge Senior Examination (the high school graduating examination) in the period 1905-1925 amounted to 14,299. For the entire period 1910-1931, only 274 Sri Lankans obtained London University degrees by sitting for the external examination held in Sri Lanka.

The fact was then that English education was highly restricted, and even what was available was confined mostly to the western seaboard and to the Tamil province of the north. Even in these schools the quality of education was uneven. At one extreme were the principal secondary schools such as Royal College, where the standard of education was high, and at the other, the large majority of schools where the students did not gain even a working knowledge of English. The problem was serious enough for Governor McCallum to appoint two committees in 1911 to investigate existing provisions. Interestingly enough, both investigations concluded that access

to English education must be even further restricted. J. J. R. Bridge, the commissioner investigating secondary education, was explicit in advocating (as the Central School Commission had done half a century earlier) that English education be geared to meeting the needs of the class structure that had emerged with British rule. Bridge analyzed three social levels of students going to English schools in Sri Lanka: (1) the "higher social class" consisting of Europeans and Europeanized Ceylonese. They required superior education for professional careers or for higher-level employment in government service; (2) the "middle class" which required an education necessary for lower grades of service under government or with business enterprises; (3) the poorer sections of the community that wanted clerical and other minor white-collar jobs.¹¹ It was Bridge's strong recommendation that the three social strata discerned by him should be treated differently and that the "higher social class" alone needed quality education. It is clear that Bridge was interested in confining English education to a small elite rather than making it available to the masses. Bridge's recommendations were accepted by the government and embodied in the Education Code of 1914. The result was a further restriction on the availability of a good English education. Students from the poorer sections of the community, especially from the rural areas, had to be satisfied with vernacular education. Thus, English education remained throughout the British period the monopoly of a very small segment of the Sri Lanka population, those that had attended privileged fee-paying schools. An analysis of a Who's Who published in Sri Lanka around 1924 shows that out of 502 Sri Lankans listed as prominent personalities, 159 (32 percent) were educated in one school, Royal College.¹² Of the Ceylonese members in the Legislative Council in 1924, 63 percent were educated either at Royal College or at the

leading Anglican school, St. Thomas' College.

If English is the language of administration, justice, and commerce and if the availability of an English education is deliberately restricted, it is natural that those who have that scarce resource will become a privileged elite. They were a new elite in that their power and prestige were based on personal achievement rather than on caste or kinship. Initially, an English education gave Ceylonese employment only as clerks, technicians, and other subordinates but in the course of time they began to have access to more prestigious jobs. Employment opportunities improved considerably in the early decades of this century. Thus, the proportion of Ceylonese in the Civil Service (the higher administration) increased from 11 percent in 1910 to 31 percent in 1930. The number of Sri Lankan lawyers increased from 355 in 1901 to 800 in 1921, and they were given high appointments such as to the Supreme Court and to the office of Solicitor-General. The number of local doctors in the Medical Department increased from sixty-seven in 1910 to 349 in 1930. In the political sphere, the Donoughmore reforms of 1931 gave Sri Lankans considerable executive authority. There was then a process of taking over posts from the British in the various sectors of government, and those who were being given these coveted positions were, of course, persons with a good Western education.

The consequences of English education were, thus, far-reaching. Together with the economic changes, the new system of education created a new elite whose composition differed significantly from the island's traditional elite of aristocratic Goyigama kinsmen. The new elite spoke English at home and adopted Western dress. The significance of these changes in dress habits was that Western attire came to be considered an index of upward mobility. "The Sinhalese call any person who wears a pair of trousers, whoever he may be, a Mahatmaya

meaning a gentlemen who was also presumed to be able to speak English."¹³ Differences in life style came to be manifested in two vastly different styles of dress: the one Western and the other traditional. Similarly, the residences of this new elite were highly imitative of the West, in contrast to the simple dwellings of the masses.

The effects of this dichotomy of society have persisted to this day. The situation was well expressed by the current president, J. R. Jayewardene, in a speech to the State Council in 1945:

Our educational structure is divided into two types of educational institutions; some institutions giving instruction through the mother tongue, and the other institutions giving instruction through English. This particular defect has created, to my mind, two different nations; one nation learning Sinhalese and Tamil and speaking in Sinhalese and Tamil, and the other speaking and learning English. I think this has been one of the worst features of British rule introduced into this country.¹⁴

In 1952, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike pointed to the fact that in Sri Lanka "to get the smallest job, knowledge of English is necessary."¹⁵ Despite recent attempts to rectify this situation, one of Sri Lanka's leading educationists, Professor J. E. Jayasuriya, observed in 1969:

If English were unimportant, it would not matter if a good knowledge of English was the preserve of a small and select minority. But the truth is that English has occupied and still does occupy a position of pre-eminence in Ceylon in so far as educational and employment opportunities are concerned.¹⁶

Some Further Considerations

Changes have taken place in the socio-political scene of Sri Lanka in the last two decades that are clearly ominous for the contemporary style of elite politics.¹⁷ The introduction of free education in 1944 meant that in the course of time there would come into being a relatively well-educated younger generation that would resent the privileges enjoyed by the English-educated. This

element was brought into the political arena after the 1956 general election. Political participation had the latent function of showing the Sinhala- and Tamil- educated that they were, for the most part, excluded from prestigious and rewarding employment. The 1971 insurrection can be seen, at least in part, as a revolt of the Sinhala-educated against the continuing dominance of the island's political and administrative structures by the English-educated.

It must not be thought that the transition from a caste-based stratification system to an achievement-oriented elite system was either total or clear-cut. Two qualifications must be made to all that has been said so far in this chapter. First, a distinction needs to be made between the national elite and local elites.¹⁸ A good knowledge of English has been a clear asset, if not an indispensable prerequisite to become a member of the national urban elite of Sri Lanka. Persons of traditionally "low" castes have had no great difficulty in reaching positions of prominence in the national bureaucracy and in the professions when they excelled educationally. In rural areas, however, the traditional system of stratification has persisted, although in a much modified way. Caste and kinship are important constituents in the social status of village and small-town notables.

Second, even at the national level, although the most effective means to upward mobility has been a good English education, it would be wrong to conclude that caste and kinship (not to mention religion and ethnicity) do not influence people's thinking and action. In the political sphere "caste" is recognized by all political parties in the selection of candidates for national elections. Similarly, many of the principal castes have been given representation in the cabinet ministries in all governments since independence. Caste is, of course, a very important factor in marriage, rural and urban

alike. Thus, the "alien" system of education has not succeeded in eradicating the caste system from the island. What it has achieved is the erosion of the ideological and institutional bases of caste stratification so that caste thinking has become covert rather than overt and situational rather than pervasive. In the process it has become possible for "low" caste individuals to transcend the system by utilizing new and effective avenues to upward mobility. Class has been superimposed on caste, resulting in the highly complex stratification system of contemporary Sri Lanka.

Notes

1. Ralph Pieris, Sinhalese Social Organization: The Kandyan Period (Colombo: Ceylon University Press Board, 1956), p. 171.
2. Bryce Ryan, Caste in Modern Ceylon (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953), p. 8.
3. Marshall R. Singer, The Emerging Elite (Cambridge, Mass.: M. I. T. Press, 1964), pp. 11-12.
4. Ryan, op. cit., p. 50.
5. E. R. Leach, Pul Eliya (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 26.
6. Michael Banks, "Caste in Jaffna," in E. R. Leach (ed.), Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon and North-West Pakistan (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 61-77.
7. J. E. Tennent, Ceylon: An Account of the Island (3rd ed.; London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1859), Vol. II, p. 158.
8. Examiner, April 23, 1870, quoted in E. F. C. Ludowyk, Modern History of Ceylon (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), p. 127.
9. D. D. de Saram, "Social Class Differences in Education Under the Central School Commission," University of Ceylon Review, XVII, nos. 3-4 (1959).
10. Education Committee, 1911-1912, Sessional Paper XIX--1912 (Colombo: Government Printer, 1912), memorandum by J. Harward.
11. Report on the Secondary English Schools of Ceylon in 1911, Sessional Paper XXI--1912 (Colombo: Government Printer, 1912), p. 17.
12. Ceylon, Its History, People, Commerce, Industries and Resources (Colombo: Plâté, 1924), Part III. Royal College was not fee-levying. However, admission was highly restricted.
13. N. D. Wijesekera, The People of Ceylon (Colombo: M. D. Gunasena, 1949), p. 217.
14. J. E. Jayasuriya, Education in Ceylon Before and After Independence, 1939-1968 (Colombo: Associated Educational Publishers, 1969), p. 67.
15. Ibid., p. 71.
16. Ibid., p. 70.
17. See Tissa Fernando, "Elite Politics in the New States: The Case of Post-Independence Sri Lanka," Pacific Affairs, XLVI (Fall 1973), pp. 361-383.
18. For a detailed discussion of this distinction and its implications see Michael Roberts, "Problems of Social Stratification and the Demarcation of National and Local Elites in British Ceylon," Journal of Asian Studies, III (August 1974), pp. 549-577.

Additional Readings

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Chapter 3

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

C. H. S. Jayewardene

In recent times, when countries are being assessed in terms of their economic development, the natural resources of a country have assumed a disproportionate importance. When to this is added the economic consequences of welfare measures, a country's population tends to be viewed as its greatest liability. In this ironic twist of fate, it is often forgotten that in any scheme of human endeavor, the people of a country occupy the place of paramount importance. What is planned to be done is planned by people, what plans are executed are executed by people, and what benefits are enjoyed as a result of their execution are enjoyed by the people. The people of a country constitute its greatest asset. However, the exact position the people of a country occupy on an asset-liability continuum depends on the relationship between population status and growth on the one hand and economic status and growth on the other. The study of the population status and growth of a country constitutes part of the discipline of demography, involving the analysis of the quantitative and distributive changes.

Only in recent times has the importance of the study of population been recognized and, in consequence, only in recent times have the data necessary for such study been collected. As far as Sri Lanka is concerned, the general consensus was that the requisite data did not exist. However, when Irene Tauber attempted to study the demography of Ceylon, she found buried among the tomes that collect dust in the libraries and government offices of the world prolific historical and current records containing demographic data with such incomparable analytic

potential that would "make Ceylon a true laboratory for demographic research."¹ Since then much of this material has been collected and collated and made more readily available.²

Regular and comprehensive censuses have been taken in Sri Lanka since 1871. Originally these censuses were decennial. As an economic measure during the depression only a partial census was taken in 1931. The Second World War prevented a census from being taken in 1941, but a census was taken in 1946 and again in 1953, 1963 and 1971. At the census of 1871, the population of the country was a bare 2.4 million. It increased to 2.8 million in 1881 and 3.0 million in 1891. The average annual intercensal increases were 1.4, and 0.8 percent. During the period 1891-1901, the population increased by an average rate of 2.0 percent per annum to reach a total of 3.66 million in 1901. Since then the population has increased by average annual rates of 1.2 percent during the intercensal period 1901-1911, 0.9 percent during the period 1911-1921, 1.7 percent during the period 1921-1931, and 1.5 percent during the period 1931-1946. At the 1946 census the population was found to be 6.66 million. During the intercensal period 1946-1953 the population increased by an annual average rate of 2.8 percent--the highest ever--to give a total population of 8.10 million in 1953. The population increased to 10.58 million in 1963, and to 12.71 million in 1971. These increases, representing annual average rates of 2.7 and 2.3 percent during the 1953-1963 and the 1963-1971 intercensal periods, respectively, indicate a decrease in the rate of growth, but the rate has still not fallen to the pre-1946 levels.

Important in this connection is the fact that the base on which the increase occurs is much greater now than it was in earlier times. During the intercensal period 1963-1971, when there was a 2.3 percent per annum growth, the population increased by 2.1 million persons. A similar increase during the 1871-1881 intercensal period would

have added only 0.6 million people to the population. An addition of 0.6 million people to the population now would constitute an average annual increase of only 0.6 percent. When these population increases are considered, one question that readily comes to mind is the ability of the country to sustain the increasing population.

Attempts to answer this question usually revolve around the concept of the density of population--the number of people per square mile of territory--implicitly indicating how crowded the country is. As the population increases, the density of the population must necessarily increase as the territorial limits of the country do not expand. The rate of increase in the density is the same as the rate of increase of the population. In 1901, the density of the population was 141, in 1921 it was 178, in 1946 it was 263, and in 1971 it was 501 persons per square mile. The concept of density assumes equal distribution, but the population of a country is never uniformly distributed over its territorial limits. People are concentrated in certain parts of the land while other parts remain more or less uninhabited. One measure of this uneven distribution is the Index of Concentration which tells us what proportion of the population would have to be redistributed in order to obtain equal distribution over the entire country. In 1901 the index of concentration was 37.1 percent. It was 37.3 percent in 1921. In 1946 the index was 40.8 percent, indicating an increasing concentration of the population in the more densely populated areas. In 1971 the index had fallen to 34.5 percent. This decline began shortly after the peak concentration was reached in 1946. The decrease in the index of concentration indicates a more equitable use of land and a more equitable distribution of population.

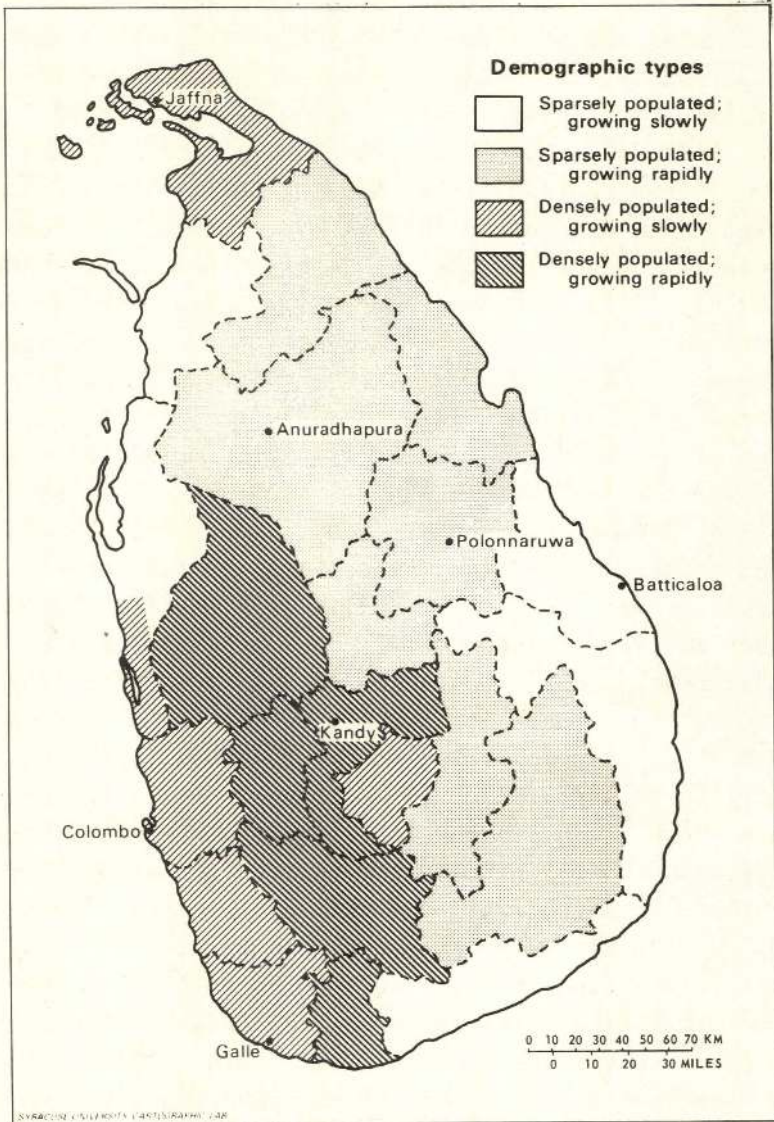
Sri Lanka is divided into twenty-two districts (see Map 1.1), which constitute the smallest territorial units

for which demographic data are available. On the basis of population density and population growth the districts could be grouped into: (1) those densely populated and slowly growing--the districts of the southwest coast, Jaffna, and Nuwara Eliya; (2) those densely populated and rapidly growing--the districts of the west interior; (3) those sparsely populated and rapidly growing--the districts of the east interior; and (4) those sparsely populated and slowly growing--the districts of the northwest coast and southeast coast (see Map 3.1).

Changes in the population occur as a result of the processes of birth and death, and of migration. The rapid rate of population growth during the 1946-1953 intercensal period has been associated with a marked decline in the death rate during that period. The crude death rate--the number of people dying per 1,000 population--fell from 20.3 in 1946 in 1947, to 14.3 and subsequently continued to fall. In 1973 the rate was 7.7, having reached that level around 1967. Prior to 1947 the death rate had slowly declined over a twenty-five-year period from a rate of about 30, at which level it had been constant since the turn of the century.

The marked fall in the death rate has been attributed to the control of malaria. Cullumbine, however, has pointed out that malaria had contributed at the maximum only 39 percent of the death rate, and that the fall in the death rate must, hence, be also due to a decline in the mortality rate due to other diseases especially in areas where malaria was endemic.³ Since then, Fredrikson, Newman, Meegama, Barlow, and Gray have all attempted to assess the actual contribution of malaria control, with some attributing the dominant role to malaria control and others claiming that the fall was really due to better nutrition and improved standards of living.⁴

The effect of the fall in the death rate can be expressed in terms of the expectation of life at birth.



MAP 3.1.--Demographic Regions

In 1921 the expectation of life at birth was 32.7 years for males and 30.7 for females. By 1946 the expectation had risen to 43.9 years for males and 41.6 for females. In 1953, the respective figures were 58.8 and 57.5, and in 1967, 64.8 and 66.9 years.

Consequences of the changing death rate are also reflected in changes in the age structure of the population. Ranasinha, comparing the age distribution of the population in 1911, 1921, and 1946, noted a "progressive decline in the 'child' group and an increase in the 'grandparent' quota."⁵ He compared the age structures in terms of the three broad age groups, 0-14 years old, 15-59 years old, and sixty years of age and over. The data from the 1953 census and the 1963 census indicate a reversal of this trend. The proportion of the 0-14-year-old segment of the population and the sixty years and over increased from 37.2 percent and 5.4 percent in 1946 to 41.4 and 5.8 percent in 1963, respectively. The data collected at the 1971 census, however, indicate a still further increase in the sixty years old and over group to 6.5 percent, but a fall in the proportion of the 0-14-year age group in 1971 to 39.2 percent. The earlier increase in the younger age group is due to the fall in the death rate initially affecting differentially the younger age groups. The infant mortality rate--the number of infant deaths per 1,000 live births--showed a marked decline in the years after 1946, and it has continued to fall. In addition, the stillbirth rate--the number of infants born dead per 1,000 live births--also declined.⁶ These decreases added a disproportionate number of younger people to the population.

The fall in the death rate usually has an effect on the birth rate, in part because of changes in the age structure. Analysis of the age structure of the population of Sri Lanka at the census of 1963 suggests that the change in the age structure is conducive to an increase

in the birth rate.⁷ The birth rate has, however, not increased. The crude birth rate--the number of live births per 1,000 population--remained more or less constant around 35-40 until 1960. Since 1960 the crude birth rate has declined steadily though slowly, by 1973 reaching 27.8.

Analysis of fertility in Sri Lanka at a time when the birth rate was more or less constant led Abhayaratne and Jayewardene to predict a fall in the birth rate on the basis of changes occurring in factors affecting fertility. They found an increase in the age at marriage, leading to a reduction in the reproductive span at the initial end, and an increase in the survival rate of women, leading to an increase in the reproductive span at its terminal end. They also noted a reduction in the size of the family, and a decline in the size of the childbearing population relative to the total population.⁸ In this study, a decrease was noted in the age-specific fertility--number of live births per 1,000 women in a particular age group--of the younger age groups and an increase in the age-specific fertility of the older. These changes have been attributed to the increase in the age at marriage and the increased survival of fecund women.

The average age at marriage for females has increased from twenty-two years in 1946 to twenty-three in 1953 and twenty-four in 1971. The increase in the age at marriage has been attributed by Jayewardene and Fernando to a conscious decision to delay marriage because of the increasing use of educational facilities by females. Wright, however, explains it in terms of what has been called the marriage squeeze--the depletion of eligible males without the concomitant depletion of eligible females, forcing the postponement of marriage by some females.⁹

Though it is physically possible for any fecund woman to conceive at any time between puberty and menopause, it is socially unacceptable for her to give birth

if she is unmarried. The extent to which the physical possibility abnegates the social impropriety depends obviously on social customs. In Sri Lanka today, birth outside wedlock is still a rarity. A clearer picture of the process of population growth can thus be obtained by considering age-specific marital fertility--the number of live births per 1,000 married women in a specific age group. In 1953, the age-specific marital fertility was highest in the 20-24-year age group--378.7. It decreased with each succeeding age group to 44.1 in the 40-44-year age group. In the 15-19-year age group marital fertility was 252.4. In 1963 the rates had increased in all groups except the 20-24-year-old and the 25-29-year-old age groups. Marital fertility was then greatest in the 15-19-year age group (393.5) and lowest in the 40-44-year group (53.8). The rates in 1969 show a decrease in all the age groups except the 15-19-and the 20-24-year age groups, establishing a pattern of decreasing marital fertility with age and suggesting a tendency toward family limitation.

Jayewardene, using pregnancy rates associated with different levels of birth control practice, computed expected family sizes in 1946, 1953, and 1963, taking into account the changed fecund marital period. Comparing these figures with actual family size, he concluded that the 1963 family size indicated birth control practice with a very low degree of efficiency.¹⁰ Other studies of family planning around the same period led to the same conclusion. In addition, they have found that family planning was practiced to a very small extent, and birth control methods, when they were used, were used to limit families rather than to space them.¹¹ An analysis of acceptors in the national family planning program suggests a gradual shift from the IUD to the pill as the oral contraceptive became readily available. Such a shift, Fernando contended, would have an adverse effect on the



family planning program because of the relatively low continuance rates for the pill.¹² Family planning programs in Sri Lanka have not been very successful. Abhayaratne and Jayewardene contend that the failure is due mainly to the approach adopted. The propaganda is designed to change existing values and attitudes to make family planning acceptable. If the propaganda were changed to show that family planning behavior was consonant with existing values and attitudes, they believe more success could be achieved.¹³

Population changes also occur as a result of migration. Usually when economic conditions are favorable people tend to come into the country and when economic conditions become adverse people tend to leave. These movements tend to stabilize the economic conditions for the migrant-receiving country. Such was the situation in Sri Lanka during the period between 1920 and 1938. Although in most countries, the natural processes of birth and death wield the greatest influence on population growth, migration has played a significant part in the population growth of Sri Lanka. During the latter half of the last century, when tea and rubber plantations were being opened up, large-scale migration occurred and in the decades 1871-1881 and 1891-1901 migration made twice the contribution to population growth that natural increase did. In the first three decades of this century, immigration accounted for 20 percent of the population increase. Since then the number of immigrants has decreased but, nevertheless, up to 1953 they made a 5 percent contribution to the growth. With the governmental efforts to repatriate Indian labor, Sri Lanka has ceased to become a migrant-recipient country. Emigrations now outnumber immigrations but emigrations have not as yet had a significant effect on the population growth. This exchange of people was mainly with India.¹⁴

Apart from movement into and out of the country,

people move from one part of the country to another. This movement, referred to as internal migration, does not affect population growth, but affects the distribution of the population. The Index of Attraction tells us the total number of individuals who have chosen a particular area of residence out of every hundred who have chosen to leave their area of birth. Using this index, Abhayaratna and Jayewardene have shown that during the intercensal period 1953-1963 the pattern of internal migration differed from that existing prior to 1946. There has been an increase in mobility--more people are moving out of their area of birth and into areas that are some distance away, rather than to adjoining areas. There has also been a change in the direction of migratory movements. Prior to 1946 the main movements were from the southern and northern districts--the densely populated, slowly growing area--to the urban center of Colombo and to the western interior--the densely populated, rapidly growing areas (See Map 3.1). During the period 1946-1953, the movement toward these traditional targets was reduced, while movements toward the eastern interior, the northwestern coast, and the southeastern coast were increased.¹⁵

As economic factors are thought to be a chief motivation for internal migration, the larger proportion of the movement is generally assumed to be from a rural area to an urban one. The data collected at the census of 1946 show 7.28 percent of internal migrants making an urban to urban move, 11.84 percent an urban to rural move, 35.60 percent a rural to urban move, and 45.28 percent a rural to rural move. The data collected at the census of 1953 showed a similar pattern. These data indicate that internal migration in Sri Lanka is more an inter-regional and an inter-district phenomenon than a rural-urban one.¹⁶

Census data indicate that the urban population of the

country increased slowly but steadily from 11.4 percent of the total population in 1901 to 22.4 percent in 1971. Urban status is conferred on population centers by the minister of local government. There are no criteria to guide the ministry in its decisions although it is claimed that they are based on the nature of the development of the area and the amenities available.¹⁷ Urban growth occurs as a result of in-migration into urban areas, differential natural increase, extension of town limits, and the creation of new urban areas. While all these factors have contributed to urban growth in Sri Lanka, the major factor appears to be the creation of new urban areas. Thus, the increase of the urban population from 15.3 percent in 1953 to 19.1 percent in 1963 may be due almost solely to the inclusion of 429,000 persons residing in areas considered urban in 1963 but not so considered in 1953.

Utilizing census data, Panditharatna has analyzed the trend of urbanization during the period 1901-1953. He indicated a slow urban growth with migration playing an important role in the growth of the principal city of Colombo but the urban growth in the country as a whole being mainly due to the creation of new urban areas. He felt that the census figures tend to underestimate urban growth, basing his argument on the daily commuting movement into the major urban centers.¹⁸ A study of the urban fringe of Colombo suggests that Panditharatna may be correct.¹⁹ Jones and Selvaratnam, on the other hand, contend that there is some exaggeration of the level of urbanization as a result of the inclusion of some of the new urban areas in the urban count. Although they concede that some centers of population concentration still considered rural areas have characteristics that justify their inclusion as urban areas, they do not feel the picture of urbanization would be greatly altered. Analysis of the census figures of 1946, 1953, and 1963 lead

them to conclude that urban growth in Sri Lanka has been slow.²⁰

Briefly summarized, the major demographic changes in the country have been a dramatic fall in the death rate, which produced an alteration of the age structure of the population. Changes in the marital patterns of the population have gradually reduced the birth rate, slowing the rate of population growth. Migration patterns have also altered so as to minimize the contribution of external migration to population growth and to produce a more even distribution of the population through internal migration. Urbanization has been slow. Presently, the population of the country is thought to occupy a position toward the liability end of an asset-liability continuum. Social, economic, and political planners tend to feel that the population will move still more toward that pole with a projected population of 19.2 to 24.6 million in 2001 and a stagnant economy. These predictions and projections are based on assumptions that fail to consider alterations in the genus and genius of the people. The influence of such factors on Sri Lanka's population is the crucial question.

Notes

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15. O. E. R. Abhayaratne and C. H. S. Jayewardene, "Internal Migration in Ceylon," Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies, VII (1965), pp. 68-90.

16. Ibid.

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Chapter 4

POLITICS AND MODERNIZATION

Robert N. Kearney

The society and politics of Sri Lanka have been undergoing pervasive and fundamental changes over a number of decades. These changes can be viewed as a cluster of interrelated societal transformations, shared with many nations of Asia and elsewhere, often termed "modernization." Modernization denotes a complex web of changes in the way people live and work, in the values and beliefs they hold, and in the wants and needs they feel. The introduction of new technologies, the influences of a world market, and the importation from abroad of ideas and organizational forms induce changes in the socio-economic activities and relationships within a society. Wage labor, employment outside subsistence agriculture, and production for a cash market make deepening inroads into traditional patterns of production and exchange. Education and exposure to mass communications media spread to encompass wider segments and strata of the population. Under the impact of these transformations, old customs, values, and relationships are uprooted or eroded, to be replaced or joined by new habits, attitudes, expectations, and associations.

The term "social mobilization" has been applied to one facet of modernization. Social mobilization refers to a process by which members of a society, as they are brought into new patterns of social and economic interaction and increasingly exposed to education and mass communications, develop new aspirations and adopt altered outlooks, identifications, and commitments. Modernization and social mobilization tend to initiate profound changes in the character of politics. Altered

productive activities and conditions of life create new needs and aspirations, often generating demands for governmental action. Increasing education and exposure to mass communications promote wider awareness and inspire new wants and hopes, thus encouraging expanded participation in politics. The stresses and disruptions associated with modernization may stimulate new group identifications or intensify and politicize old ones.

Like other societal processes occurring over time, modernization can be seen as an unending chain, without a discernible beginning or a final termination point. Our concern, here, however, is with certain political developments and circumstances of contemporary Sri Lanka that seem to reflect the accomplishments and stresses of the broad modernization process. Specifically, this chapter will examine aspects of the growth of political participation and the pattern of partisan competition that have appeared over the last few decades, and then will look at one of the presumed consequences of modernization, the appearance of symptoms of restiveness and alienation in the politics of youth.

Social Mobilization and Political Participation

An accelerating pace of social change has been evident in Sri Lanka since the latter part of the nineteenth century.¹ Earlier, administrative and legal reforms in 1833 had disrupted a feudal system of service obligations and land tenure, ended caste and communal inequalities in law, and produced the administrative consolidation of the island. The mid-nineteenth century spread of estate agriculture producing for a world market created a large wage labor force and led to the growth of new occupations and commercial opportunities in supporting service, transport, and processing industries. Increasingly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the reverberations of the world-wide industrial, technological, and communications revolutions were felt. The introduction of the railroad, the printing press, motor

transport, and the telephone and telegraph intensified communication, reduced the isolation of the village, and tended to bring the entire island into a single market and communications network.

A suggestion of the pace of social mobilization may be obtained by reference to changes in occupations, literacy, and education over the past half-century. Although Sri Lanka has remained basically an agricultural nation, some shift in the composition of the labor force can be detected. Between 1921 and 1971, the proportion of the gainfully employed population engaged in agriculture, forestry, fishing, and similar pursuits declined from 62.4 percent to 49.4 percent. In the same period, the proportion of production processing, transport, and related workers climbed from 15.1 to 24.6 percent, while that of persons in professional, technical, managerial, and similar occupations rose from 2.1 to 5.2 percent.² Education and literacy have been expanding steadily since the late nineteenth century. Particularly marked has been the growth in female literacy in this century. In 1901, 8.5 percent of females aged five years and over were literate, compared to 42.0 percent of males.³ By 1971, literacy had climbed to 70.7 percent for females ten years of age and over, and to 85.2 percent for males.⁴ Enrollment in government and state-assisted schools rose from about 50,000 in 1880 to 360,000 in 1920 and 800,000 in 1945. In 1970, school enrollment reached 2,700,000.⁵ (The recent growth in education is discussed further at a later point in this chapter.)⁶

With advancing social mobilization in recent decades has come increasing mass political participation. Sri Lanka in 1931 became the first nation in Asia to adopt universal adult suffrage, abruptly expanding the electorate more than seven-fold. Elections to the pre-independence State Council were held in 1931 and 1936. In the former election, almost 710,000 votes were cast, and in the latter more than one million voters went to

the polls.⁷ However, few mass political organizations existed at that time and election contests largely revolved around personalities, with deference for locally eminent individuals or families of high traditional status playing a large role in mobilizing electoral support. It was not until after independence that political awareness spread widely and rapidly through the village population, facilitated by the increasing education and exposure to mass communications. Although the changes occurring in the politics of the island were qualitative as well as quantitative, one indication of the growing mass mobilization and rising participation can be found in the figures on voting in parliamentary elections after 1947. The proportion of eligible voters who cast ballots climbed past the three-quarter mark in 1960, and in 1970 and 1977 exceeded 85 percent (see Table 4.1).

Experience with the franchise and recurring election campaigns over nearly five decades have undoubtedly contributed to the high levels of participation. The growth of political party competition after independence encouraged widening political involvement and provided proliferating channels for political activity. The emotional issues of language and religion in the first decade of independence stimulated mass awareness of politics and elections. Subsequently, patronage in the form of public employment and services has played an important role in generating popular concern with politics. At least since the 1956 election, when the first defeat of a governing party occurred, all major parties and candidates have adopted campaign techniques and policies designed to reach and attract a broad popular following. Participation in politics is evident not only in the rates of voter turnout at elections, but also in the mass attendance at political rallies and demonstrations and activities within political parties, their youth leagues, and other ancillary organizations.

TABLE 4.1.--Voter Participation in Parliamentary Elections, 1947-1977

Election	Number of Voters	Percentage of electorate voting
1947	1,701,150	55.9
1952	2,114,615	70.7
1956	2,391,538	69.0
March 1960	2,889,282	77.6
July 1960	2,827,075	75.9
1965	3,821,918	82.1
1970	4,672,656	85.2
1977	5,769,706	87.2

SOURCE: Department of Elections, Results of Parliamentary General Elections in Ceylon, 1947-1970 (Colombo: Department of Government Printing, 1971), p. 6; Sun (Colombo), July 26, 1977, p. 1.

Institutionalization of Partisan Competition

The past three decades have been a consolidation and institutionalization of mass politics based on competition in popular elections between coherent and durable political parties. Transfers of control of the government between partisan opponents have occurred in each of the last six parliamentary elections. Growing institutionalization of the party system is evident in the steadily declining fortunes of independent candidates and ephemeral parties, and in the penetration of national parties into local government elections and agencies. All parties of any electoral significance in the 1970's had been formed by 1951. Party voting and partisan loyalties seem to have become firmly established. In the 1977 election, more than 98 percent of the popular votes and all but two seats in Parliament were captured by parties that had been functioning continuously for more than a quarter of a century (the results of national elections since 1947 are presented in Table 4.2).

TABLE 4.2.--Parliamentary Election Results,
1947-1977

Party	1947		1952	
	Percent votes won	Number seats won	Percent votes won	Number seats won
United National Party	39.9	42	44.1	54
Sri Lanka Freedom Party	--	--	15.5	0
Lanka Sama Samaja Party	16.9 ^a	15 ^a	13.1	9
Communist Party	3.7	3	5.8 ^b	4 ^b
Federal Party	--	--	1.9	2
Tamil Congress	4.3	7	2.8	4
Other parties	6.2	7	2.8	2
Independents	<u>28.9</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>14.0</u>	<u>11</u>
TOTAL	100.0	95	100.0	95

Party	1956		March 1960	
	Percent votes won	Number seats won	Percent votes won	Number seats won
United National Party	27.3	8	29.6	50
Sri Lanka Freedom Party	40.7 ^c	51 ^c	21.1	46
Lanka Sama Samaja Party	10.2	14	10.5	10
Communist Party	4.5	3	4.6	3
Federal Party	5.4	10	5.8	15
Tamil Congress	0.3	1	1.2	1
Other parties	0.6	0	18.3	19
Independents	<u>11.0</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>8.8</u>	<u>7</u>
TOTAL	100.0	95	100.0	151

a. Includes two factions contesting the election separately.

b. Results for a united front of the CP and the Viplavakari Lanka Sama Samaja Party.

c. Results for the SLFP-led Mahajana Eksath Peramuna coalition.

(continued on next page)

(Table 4.2. continued)

Party	July 1960		1965	
	Percent votes won	Number seats won	Percent votes won	Number seats won
United National Party	37.6	30	39.3	66 ^d
Sri Lanka Freedom Party	33.6	75	30.2	41
Lanka Sama Samaja Party	7.4	12	7.5	10 ^d
Communist Party	3.0	4	2.7	4
Federal Party	7.2	16	5.4	14
Tamil Congress	1.5	1	2.4	3
Other parties	5.3	7	6.7	7
Independents	4.4	6	5.8	6
TOTAL	100.0	151	100.0	151

Party	1970		1977	
	Percent votes won	Number seats won	Percent votes won	Number seats won
United National Party	37.9	17	51.5	139
Sri Lanka Freedom Party	36.9	91 ^d	30.3	8
Lanka Sama Samaja Party	8.7	19	3.8	0
Communist Party	3.4	6	1.8	0
Federal Party	4.9	13	--	--
Tamil Congress	2.3	3	--	--
Tamil United Liberation Front	--	--	6.5	17
Other parties	1.3	0	0.7	1
Independents	4.6	2	5.3	1
TOTAL	100.0	151	100.0	166 ^e

d. One candidate was returned unopposed.

e. The election for two seats was postponed. Subsequently, the UNP won one and the TULF the other of these seats.

SOURCE: Ceylon Daily News, Parliament of Ceylon, 1947 (Colombo: Associated Newspapers of Ceylon, Ltd., n.d.), and the comparable Ceylon Daily News volumes for 1956, 1960, 1965, and 1970; Report on the Seventh Parliamentary General Election in Ceylon, 27th May, 1970, Sessional Paper VII--1971 (Colombo: Department of Government Printing, 1971); Department of Elections, Results of Parliamentary General Elections in Ceylon, 1947-1970 (Colombo: Department of Government Printing, 1971); Sunday Observer (Colombo), July 24, 1977.

The major contenders for power are the United National Party and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, one of which has been the cornerstone of each government since independence. Four smaller but durable parties, all of which were founded before 1950, are the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, the Communist Party, the Federal Party, and the Tamil Congress. In the early 1970's, the latter two parties merged in an organization called the Tamil United Liberation Front. A number of minor parties have appeared, but often after one or two disastrous electoral efforts they have quietly vanished. A few other parties have had a longer life and perhaps a moment of significance, but eventually declined. Among the latter are the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (originally called the Viplavakari Lanka Sama Samaja Party), which attained prominence in the 1950's but in 1970 and 1977 failed to return a single member to Parliament, and the Labour Party of A.E. Goonesinha, which survived for about three decades before it disappeared in the early years of independence.

The Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), the oldest still active party in Sri Lanka, was founded by a group of young Marxists in 1935. A schism in the LSSP led to the formation of the Communist Party (CP) in 1943. The following year the Tamil Congress (TC) was established, and in 1949 a TC split produced the Federal Party (FP). The United National Party (UNP) was founded in 1946 in anticipation of the 1947 election and impending independence. The party initially included most of the leading politicians of the day, except for the Marxists grouped in the LSSP and the CP, and the Tamils supporting the TC and later the FP. The UNP held power with a few small allies from 1947 until 1956. The Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) founded in 1951, led a coalition that administered a shattering defeat to the UNP and replaced it in power in 1956. The first of two elections in 1960, following the assassination of the prime minister and a period of political

confusion, proved indecisive. The UNP held power briefly, until the second election of the year returned control of the government to the SLFP. Five years later, the SLFP and its allies, the LSSP and the CP, were defeated and the UNP again formed the government with several smaller coalition partners, including the FP and the TC. In 1970, a United Front composed of the SLFP, the LSSP, and the CP defeated the UNP and assumed power. The LSSP was abruptly driven out of the United Front in 1975, and in early 1977 the CP withdrew. In July 1977, the UNP rolled to the most massive electoral victory in the history of the island, collecting 139 (and adding another in a postponed election) of 168 parliamentary seats. The SLFP, which had won ninety-one of 151 seats in the preceding election, was reduced to a humiliating eight, insufficient for the former prime minister and SLFP leader, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, to assume the post of leader of the opposition. A United Left Front formed by the LSSP, the CP, and a breakaway group from the SLFP failed to secure a single seat, producing the first instance in four decades that no Marxist party was represented in the national legislature.

The alternations in power, which have become a regular feature of elections in Sri Lanka, suggest a degree of political sophistication and maturity found in few developing nations. Indeed, relatively few nations anywhere in the world are able to achieve orderly and peaceful transfers of power between rival sets of political leaders. The capacity of parties to survive election defeats, to remain as viable alternatives, and later to resume control of the government indicates a high level of institutionalization. However, the regularity with which the incumbent government has been defeated over the past quarter of a century might also be interpreted as reflecting a pathology of the political process, resulting from the incapacity of successive governments to satisfy

the demands of a socially mobilized and politically conscious public. According to this view, popular hopes and expectations are stimulated by the exuberant campaign promises of each contender for power. Upon coming to power, however, the political leaders find themselves confronted by obstinate economic problems and severely limited financial and other resources. As a result, performance fails to match the promises of the campaign and the expectations of the public. Dissatisfaction with the government's performance leads some sections of the electorate to shift their support to the opposition in the next election, producing the defeat of the governing party or parties. In the aftermath of this election, however, popular hopes are again frustrated as those newly returned to power find themselves facing similar constraints of inadequate material resources, administrative capability, or political skill. The regular alternations in power, hence, can be viewed as reflecting recurring disenchantment within the electorate.

The consistent loss of support by the government of the day can be seen in the results of by-elections between 1956 and 1976, presented in Table 4.3. Of thirty-three unambiguous clashes between government and opposition candidates over two decades, twenty-six represented gains for the opposition and only seven gains for the government, six of which were registered in 1965-1970. In only one by-election did a government candidate capture a seat that had been won by opposition in the preceding general election. Opposition candidates, however, took nine seats from the government. Furthermore, except in 1965-1970, opposition domination of the by-elections was almost total (the single government gain after 1970 was on a shift of 1 percent of the vote from the opposition to the government candidate).

The presumed flaws in performance and waning popularity of governments may be related to certain frailties

TABLE 4.3.--Government and Opposition Performance
in By-Elections, 1956-1976

	Government gain				Opposition gain				Ambiguous
	Won by government from opposition	Retained by government, increased margin	Retained by opposition, reduced margin	Total	Won by opposition from government	Retained by opposition, increased margin	Retained by government, reduced margin	Total	Contest between opposition or independent candidates
1956-1960	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
1960-1965	0	0	0	0	2	2	4	8	3
1965-1970	1	0	5	6	2	3	2	7	2
1970-1976	0	0	1	1	4	5	1	10	0
TOTAL	1	0	6	7	9	10	7	26	5

SOURCE: Tabulated from Department of Elections, Results of Parliamentary General Elections in Ceylon, 1947-1970 (Colombo: Department of Government Printing 1971); and data supplied by the commissioner of elections.

in the composition and support of governments. Most governments have been coalitions. The coalition partners have cooperated to win the election and have been associated in the operation of government, but with little ideological agreement or consensus on fundamental policies and purposes, possibly undermining the capacity for determined and aggressive implementation. Furthermore, governments have received tenuous popular mandates, despite occasional lopsided majorities in Parliament. Table 4.4 indicates the proportion of popular votes won by the party or parties coming to power in each election. Prior to 1977, only in 1965 did the winning parties' proportion

TABLE 4.4.--Electoral Support of Winning Party or Parties

Election	Winning party/parties	Percent of popular vote won
1947	United National Party, Labour Party	42.0
1952	United National Party, Tamil Congress, Labour Party	48.1
1956	Mahajana Eksath Peramuna coalition ^a	40.7
March 1960	United National Party	29.6
July 1960	Sri Lanka Freedom Party	33.6
1965	United National Party, Federal Party, Tamil Congress, Mahajana Eksath Peramuna, Sri Lanka Freedom Socialist Party, and Jathika Vimukthi Peramuna	53.2
1970	United Front (Sri Lanka Freedom Party, Lanka Sama Samaja Party, Communist Party)	49.0
1977	United National Party	51.5

^a Composed of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, the Viplavakari Lanka Sama Samaja Party (after 1959 called the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna), the Bhasha Peramuna, and a group of independents.

of the vote exceed 50 percent, and then only by inclusion of the FP and the TC, which were not pledged to enter a coalition government although they subsequently supported the government (the FP only until 1968). Without the FP and TC, the UNP and its allies won only 44 percent of the votes. In 1956 and July 1960, the SLFP was linked with the LSSP and the CP by a "no-contest" agreement preventing candidates of the three parties from fighting for the same constituencies. If the votes of the LSSP and the CP are included, the victorious parties obtained 55 percent of the votes in 1956, but only 44 percent in July 1960.

The election of 1977, although continuing the pattern of defeats of incumbent governments, constituted a sharp departure from the tendency toward narrow margins of victory and fragile coalition governments. The wholesale swing from the SLFP--and from that party's former Marxist allies--brought the UNP to power not only backed by an absolute majority of all votes cast throughout the island, but also supported by more than four-fifths of the members of Parliament.

Shortly after the 1977 election, the British-style parliamentary system of government, under which executive powers resided in a prime minister and a cabinet perpetually dependent on majority support in Parliament, was replaced by a semi-presidential form of government with paramount executive authority vested in a president selected for a fixed term of office. The new form of government followed the model of the French, rather than the American, presidency in that a prime minister and cabinet continued to be chosen by and responsible to the Parliament. In 1978, J. R. Jayewardene, the UNP leader, became the first president of the nation to exercise effective executive powers. (Earlier presidents had performed essentially ceremonial and symbolic functions.) The change in the form of government and the massive legislative backing enjoyed by the governing party could significantly alter the political constraints on the government's performance. A constitutional revision in 1978 further altered the political system by adopting proportional representation for the election of legislators in place of a predominately single-member district electoral system, which had been employed since the introduction of universal suffrage in 1931. The new electoral system, together with some other changes, seemed likely to enhance the importance of the political party and the strength of the party leadership at the expense of the individual M.P. and party member.

Modernization and the Politics of Youth

Any society viewed over time reveals a constant process of the replacement of generations as new cohorts are born and mature and the older cohorts age and die. Often, this natural process proceeds with relatively little evidence of stress or conflict at the political level. In other times or places, the salience of age as a factor in political behavior appears to increase sharply. Questions of youth and generational cleavage in politics may be of particularly profound importance in modernizing nations such as Sri Lanka, as generational consciousness and cleavage seem to be especially intense in periods of rapid social change. The social transformations associated with the modernization process produce marked differences in the circumstances and experiences of successive generations, tending to heighten generational differences in outlook, aspirations, and behavior.

An important measure of generational cleavage in politics is the degree to which the existing political institutions such as political parties are able to absorb and integrate successive cohorts of youths as they reach the age of political activity. In Sri Lanka, political parties and other political organizations appeared to be accomplishing this successfully through the 1960's. The voting age was reduced from twenty-one to eighteen years in 1959. All major parties have organized youth leagues, some of which are large and vigorous, and have made explicit efforts to attract youths to the party. By the 1970's, however, stresses and failures had become increasingly evident. The insurrection of 1971 provided the most dramatic manifestation. Another is provided by the recent growth of militant separatist sentiment among youths belonging to the Ceylon Tamil minority.

Three factors relating to changes in the socio-economic environment appear to have had a bearing on the circumstances of youths in contemporary Sri Lanka.

The first is demographic--the sharp rise in the rate of population growth following the Second World War. The second is a very rapid expansion of education, commencing at about the same time as the jump in the population growth rate and accelerating in the 1950's and 1960's. The third, compounded by the first two, is rapidly rising unemployment, concentrated among youths first entering the labor force and felt most severely by educated youths.

An abrupt drop in mortality rates after 1945 led to a steep rise in the rate of population growth.⁸ Within the two years between 1945 and 1947, deaths per 1,000 population plummeted from 21.9 to 14.3. Subsequently, the death rate continued a steady decline, dropping to 7.5 per 1,000 population in 1970. Births per 1,000 population rose from 35.8 in 1945 to a peak of 39.8 in 1951, then dipped to 29.4 in 1970.⁹ Between 1946 and 1971, the population almost doubled, climbing from 6,657,000 to 12,690,000. The population expansion was marked in the younger age groups. In 1971, about 60 percent of the total population was under 25. Between the censuses of 1946 and 1953 and between the latter and that of 1963, by far the largest increase in population occurred among children under age 15. Between the census of 1963 and 1971, however, the 15-29-year age group recorded the greatest increase, as the enlarged cohorts born in the late 1940's and early 1950's began to enter adulthood.¹⁰ It was the members of this age group who were seeking employment and commencing political activity by the late 1960's.

Few social developments in contemporary Sri Lanka have been as striking as the broadening of education opportunities over the past three decades. The number of students enrolled in primary and secondary schools climbed from 867,309 in 1945 to 2,716,187 in 1970.¹¹ The growth of education was evident not only in the

spread of basic education but also in the sharp rise in the number of years of schooling completed. Candidates sitting for the General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level), or GCE (O), examination, taken after the tenth year of schooling, soared from 53,000 in 1952 to nearly 355,000 in 1971.¹² University enrollments shot from 3,177 in 1959 to 15,046 in 1966, then slipped to about 12,000 in 1971.¹³ The generation reaching adulthood by about 1970 possessed markedly higher levels of educational attainment than did the older generations. The differentials in educational levels between age groups in 1969/1970 are indicated in Table 4.5. One-third of the population forty-five years of age and older had no schooling and only about one-fourth had completed a middle school (tenth grade) or higher education, while less than one-twelfth of those aged 15-19 years and 20-24 years had no schooling and in the 20-24-year age group more than 60 percent had attained a middle school or higher education.

TABLE 4.5.--Educational Levels by Age Group, 1969/1970 (Percent)

Educational level	15-19 years	20-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45 years and older
No schooling	6.8	8.2	12.8	21.5	33.3
Primary school ^a	28.4	30.6	36.1	43.0	40.7
Middle school ^b	56.5	40.8	34.9	26.9	21.2
Passed GCE (O) ^c	7.7	17.6	14.1	7.6	4.2
Passed GCE (A) ^d and higher	0.6	2.8	2.1	1.0	0.6

a. Grades one through five.

b. Grades six through ten.

c. General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level).

d. General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level).

SOURCE: Department of Census and Statistics, Preliminary Report on the Socio-Economic Survey of Ceylon, 1969-70 (Colombo: Department of Census and Statistics, 1971), p. 10.

At roughly the same time the growth in education was occurring, the rapid rise in population converged with sluggish economic performance to produce mounting unemployment, felt most acutely by youths seeking their first jobs. A 1973 Central Bank survey reported an unemployment rate of 24.0 percent, compared to a rate of 13.8 percent in 1963. According to the 1973 survey, in the 14-18-year age group 65.8 percent and in the 19-25-year age group 47.5 percent of the labor force was unemployed.¹⁴ Furthermore, unemployment rates among youths rose with the level of educational attainment (see Table 4.6). In the 15-24-year age group, the rate of unemployment was twice as high for males who had completed a GCE(O) level education as for those with no schooling or only primary schooling. Among females in the same age group, the rate of unemployment climbed steadily with the level of education. At each educational level, the unemployment rate was many times higher in the 15-24-year age group than in older age groups.

In April 1971, an armed uprising was staged by an organization called the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), or People's Liberation Front. Insurgents armed with shotguns and home-made hand bombs launched simultaneous assaults on police stations and other government installations at widely scattered locations across the island. In the first week of the insurrection, ninety-two police stations were attacked, of which five were overrun and forty-three abandoned.¹⁵ During that week, the Inspector-General of Police reported, police in the outlying stations were

continuously without sleep and under heavy strain. Stocks of ammunition were running low and reinforcements could not reach them. . . . As police stations were withdrawn and civil administration collapsed in these areas, the insurgents took over. They distributed food from Co-operative Stores, sold stamps at the Post Office and even held their own Courts of Justice.¹⁶

Hard fighting continued for several weeks in certain

TABLE 4.6.--Unemployment Rate by Age, Sex, and Educational Level, 1969/1970

Educational level	Ages 15-24 years		Ages 25-34 years		Ages 35-59 years				
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
No schooling	25.2	10.6	17.0	--	2.3	1.4	0.2	3.8	2.1
Primary	23.5	17.2	21.7	2.8	8.2	3.9	1.1	3.1	1.4
Middle school	39.0	53.2	42.6	7.5	23.3	9.5	0.7	2.0	0.8
GCE(O)	50.8	79.2	63.6	6.7	30.8	13.0	1.5	7.6	2.9
GCE(A) and above	40.0	90.0	60.0	11.1	38.2	23.3	--	--	--
All levels	33.4	40.3	35.6	5.2	14.4	7.4	0.9	3.6	1.5

SOURCE: Department of Census and Statistics, Preliminary Report on the Socio-Economic Survey of Ceylon, 1969-70 (Colombo: Department of Census and Statistics, 1971), pp. 28 and 47.

areas and several months elapsed before the last insurgent activity subsided. The insurrection left an officially estimated 1,200 persons dead and 14,000 in custody.¹⁷

The movement that became the JVP was formed by a small group of young men associated with the tiny pro-Peking Communist Party, who by about 1965 had become disillusioned with that party and sought to build a revolutionary movement oriented toward radical youth. The movement had remained small until about 1969-1970, when it underwent a very rapid expansion, principally attracting rural Sinhala youths of low socio-economic status. The movement had little organizational coherence and no name until late 1969 and early 1970, when an organizational structure was created and the name Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna adopted.

It appears that preparations for an armed struggle commenced prior to the 1970 election in the professed belief that the then-governing UNP would not hold the election or if defeated would not relinquish power. The JVP's leaders campaigned for the United Front in the election contest, but soon after the United Front came to power, the JVP began to denounce the government in a series of public meetings. At least some sections of the JVP had apparently continued stockpiling arms and explosives. At the same time, the movement was beset by factional conflict and leadership rivalries. In the latter part of 1970, as reports circulated of secret meetings of youths at which a violent seizure of power was discussed, the police began to take action against the JVP. Confronted by police efforts to suppress the movement and internal pressures for audacious action, the JVP leader, Rohana Wijeweera, in late 1970 or early 1971 decided to commence (or intensify) arming the movement. Weapons were collected and hand bombs manufactured. Accidental explosions and police discovery of caches of arms

and explosives, as well as a raid on the American Embassy (purportedly the work of a dissident faction that had broken away from the JVP), led the government to declare an emergency and alert the armed forces and police in March. Wijeweera was found and taken into custody. A short time later, the remaining leaders of the JVP met and resolved to put into operation previously existing plans for an armed uprising.¹⁸

The insurrection dramatically underscored growing generational cleavage and the grievances of youth. Nearly 90 percent of the suspected insurgents held in custody following the revolt were under thirty years of age, and almost three-quarters were under twenty-five. About 70 percent were born in the years 1946-1953, the first generation to grow up after the jump in population and the expansion of education.¹⁹

Some inferences regarding generations and politics may be obtained by reference to the age distribution of the members of Parliament, the suspected insurgents, and the general population in 1971 (Table 4.7). Since 39 percent of the total population was under fifteen years of age and political activity does not ordinarily commence before age fifteen, the age distribution of only the population aged fifteen years and over is shown in Table 4.7. This may be called the potentially politically active population. The M.P.'s cluster in the middle ages of the forties and fifties. The population under thirty-five was markedly under-represented in Parliament, whereas the population from forty to sixty-four years of age was significantly over-represented. The suspected insurgents present a starkly different age distribution. They were heavily concentrated in the late teens and early twenties, with the ages above thirty drastically under-represented, relative to the total population. Interestingly, almost 95 percent of those detained in connection with the insurrection were under thirty-five years of age, whereas about 95 percent of all M.P.'s were thirty-five years of age

TABLE 4.7.--Age Distribution of Members of Parliament, Suspected Insurgents, and Total Population Fifteen Years of Age and Older, 1971 (Percent)

Age group (years)	Members of Parliament ^a	Suspected insurgents ^b	Total population ^c
15-19	--	24.4	17.6
20-24	--	47.7	16.4
25-29	1.4	16.8	12.3
30-34	3.4	5.4	9.4
35-39	8.9	2.4	9.4
40-44	15.1	1.3	7.6
45-49	23.2	0.9	7.0
50-54	18.5	0.5	5.4
55-59	13.7	0.3	4.5
60-64	8.9	0.1	3.5
65 and older	6.8	0.2	7.0

a. Excluded eleven whose ages could not be determined.

b. Of the 10,192 persons in detention, thirty-six who were under fifteen years of age have been excluded.

c. Total population fifteen years of age and older, which numbered 7,745,212, out of a population of all ages of 12,689,897 at the 1971 census.

SOURCE: For members of Parliament: Ceylon Daily News, Parliament of Ceylon, 1970 (Colombo: Associated Newspapers of Ceylon, n.d.), and author's interviews. For suspected insurgents: Gananath Obeyesekere, "Some Comments on the Social Backgrounds of the April 1971 Insurgency in Sri Lanka (Ceylon)," Journal of Asian Studies, XXXIII (May 1974), p. 369. For total population: Department of Census and Statistics, Census of Population, 1971, Vol. II, Part I (Colombo: Department of Government Printing, 1975), p. 13.

or older. In generational terms, the Parliament may be said to have been composed of the generations over thirty-five years of age, while the insurrection was staged by the generation under thirty-five.

The insurgents of 1971 were almost entirely members of the Sinhala ethnic majority. Within a few years, signs of rising discontent and militancy had also appeared among Ceylon Tamil youths. By 1972, the Federal Party, the Tamil Congress, and some other groups and individuals had banded together in a Tamil United Front (TUF, in 1976 renamed the Tamil United Liberation Front), which began to demand a separate state as the only solution to the linguistic and other problems confronting the Tamil population of Sri Lanka. The TUF Youth Organization is said to have played a major role in pressing the TUF to move for the drastic goal of a separate state and to adopt a more bellicose stance in confrontation with the government. Despite their embrace of separatism, the veteran TUF leaders reportedly exercise only a tenuous and uncertain leadership over some sections of the youths associated with the organization. In June 1975, a Tamil Elam Liberation Organization was formed by a breakaway group from the TUF Youth Organization, led by youths who had recently been released from detention (and were soon to be again taken into custody). The founders of the new organization denounced the TUF leadership's lack of accomplishment over a quarter of a century, urged greater speed in moving toward the establishment of a separate state, and sought to disassociate the movement for a Tamil state from parliamentary and electoral politics.

Disillusionment with the existing parties, leaders, and tactics, and extreme impatience appear to lie behind a recent growth in terrorist activities, attributed to an underground movement of Tamil youths. Bombings and robberies, apparently to gain funds for the movement, began to occur, leading in 1975 to the assassination of

the SLFP mayor of Jaffna, Alfred Durayappah, whom the militant youths labeled a "quisling" for associating with the Sinhala-dominated SLFP and the United Front government in Colombo. A year later, an SLFP organizer was killed by a bomb near Jaffna.

For the disaffected and militant Tamil youths, frustrations of thwarted expectations, which they share with Sinhala youths, are compounded by what they perceive to be discrimination against them in education and employment and intense grievances linked to the festering conflict over the status of the Tamil language and Sinhala migration into territories of traditional Tamil settlement. Whereas the restive Sinhala youths typically seem attracted to Marxist, often "ultra-leftist," ideologies and utilize the vocabulary of class protest to voice their discontents, the Tamil youths display a strong ethnic-linguistic nationalism, stressing the bonds of ancestral language, culture, and homeland.

As in the case of the JVP, youthful militancy within the Tamil community involves an emphasis on the unique grievances and mission of youth, a rejection of the established parties and the veteran leaders of the older generations, and an attempt to obtain a drastic alteration in the political order. Clearly, the activities of the JVP and the militant separatists cannot be construed as general tendencies among the nation's youth. The overt rebels constitute a minute fraction of the youth population. It seems significant, however, that although virtually no links are known to have existed between the disaffected Sinhala and Tamil youths, separate "anti-system" movements employing violent tactics should appear in the early 1970's within each community.

Notes

1. The following two paragraphs are based on (and elaborated in) the author's "Political Mobilization in Contemporary Sri Lanka," in Robert I. Crane (ed.), Aspects of Political Mobilization in South Asia, Foreign and Comparative Studies, South Asian Series, no. 1 (Syracuse, N.Y.: Maxwell School, Syracuse University, 1976), esp. pp. 36-42.
2. Department of Census and Statistics, Ceylon Year Book, 1950 (Colombo: Government Press, 1951), p. 221; Department of Census and Statistics, Statistical Pocket Book of the Republic of Sri Lanka (Ceylon), 1973 (Colombo: Department of Government Printing, 1973), p. 26. While the trends seem clear, differences in classification of occupations over the years make exact comparisons of occupational categories hazardous.
3. Department of Census and Statistics, Statistical Abstract of Ceylon, 1967-1968 (Colombo: Department of Government Printing, 1970), p. 35.
4. Statistical Pocket Book . . . , 1973, p. 15.
5. Report of the Director of Public Instruction for 1880 (Colombo: Government Printer, 1881); Report of the Acting Director of Education for 1920 (Colombo: Government Printer, 1921); Administration Report of the Director of Education for 1945 (Colombo: Government Press, 1946); Department of Census and Statistics, Statistical Pocket Book of Ceylon, 1971 (Colombo: Department of Government Printing, 1971).
6. Also, see Chapter 7 in this volume.
7. S. Namasivayam, The Legislatures of Ceylon, 1928-1948 (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1951), pp. 54-56.
8. Demographic trends are discussed further in Chapter 3 in this volume.
9. Department of Census and Statistics, Statistical Abstract of Ceylon for the years 1960-1969 (Colombo: Government Press/Department of Government Printing, 1960-1970); Department of Census and Statistics, Statistical Pocket Book of Sri Lanka (Ceylon), 1972 (Colombo: Department of Government Printing, 1972).
10. Derived from the following Department of Census and Statistics publications: Census of Ceylon, 1946, Vol. I, Part II (Colombo: Government Press, 1951), p. 47; Census of Ceylon, 1953, Vol. I (Colombo: Government Press, 1957), pp. 155-159; Statistical Pocket Book of Ceylon, 1970 (Colombo: Department of Government Printing, 1970), p. 24; and Census of Population, 1971, Vol. II, Part I (Colombo: Department of Government Printing, 1975), p. 13.
11. Ministry of Finance, Economic and Social Development of

Ceylon (A Survey), 1926-1954 (Colombo: Government Press, 1955), pp. 93-98; Department of Census and Statistics, Statistical Pocket Book of Ceylon, 1971, p. 48.

12. The 1952 figure is from R. D. Sirisena, "Examinations," in Education in Ceylon: A Centenary Volume (Colombo: Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, 1969), Part III, p. 1028. The 1971 figure is from data supplied by the Department of Examinations.

13. Statistical Abstract of Ceylon for 1964 and 1967-1968; Statistical Pocket Book . . . , 1973.

14. Central Bank of Ceylon, Department of Economic Research, Survey of Sri Lanka's Consumer Finances, 1973 (Colombo: Central Bank of Ceylon, 1974), Part I, pp. 48-49.

15. Judgement of the Criminal Justice Commission (Insurgency), Inquiry No. 1 (Politbureau) (Colombo: Department of Government Printing, 1976), pp. 407, 433-434.

16. Ibid., pp. 407-408.

17. "The Statement on Insurgency Made in Parliament on 20.7.71 by the Honourable Prime Minister," Department of Information press release, n.d., pp. 3-5.

18. For sources of information on the JVP and the insurrection, see Robert N. Kearney and Janice Jiggins, "The Ceylon Insurrection of 1971," Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, XIII (March 1975), pp. 40-64.

19. See Gananath Obeyesekere, "Some Comments on the Social Backgrounds of the April 1971 Insurgency in Sri Lanka (Ceylon)," Journal of Asian Studies, XXXIII (May 1974), pp. 367-384.

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Chapter 5

RELIGION, POLITICS, AND THE MYTH OF RECONQUEST

Donald E. Smith

"The past is not dead; it is not even past." William Faulkner's words come often to mind in considering the politics of Sri Lanka since independence in 1948. And the past which has demonstrated such remarkable vitality is largely epitomized by Buddhism.¹

The Sinhala National Myth

The past of Sri Lanka is far more accessible than that of other South Asian societies because it is recorded in the unique chronicles, the Mahāvamsa and Cūlavamsa. These two volumes together trace events on the island from the sixth century, B. C., to the Portuguese conquest in the sixteenth century. The conversion of King Devanampiya Tissa to Buddhism in 250, B. C., marks the real beginning of Sinhala Buddhist civilization, and from this point forward the chronicles provide essentially trustworthy dynastic history.

But the past which continues to influence us is not only what happened, but the complex of beliefs and sentiments which gradually developed around events and gave them meaning. According to the Mahāvamsa, the Lord Buddha visited Lanka three times, flying through the air from India, and implanted his footprint at the top of the highest mountain, Sri Pada. Prince Vijaya, grandson of a lion and a princess, the legendary founder of the Sinhala race, landed in Lanka on the precise day the Buddha passed away, but not before the Buddha had designated Lanka the chosen place where his religion would be established, entrusting it to the protection of the king of the gods.

The belief that Sri Lanka is a sacred isle, with a unique mission and destiny, to preserve Buddhism and make

its light shine out in the world, developed in the context of military challenges from South India. The first Buddhist missionary monks were sent to Lanka by the Indian emperor Ashoka, and had Buddhism continued to flourish in the land of its birth there would have been no such exalted role for Sri Lanka. But it was the resurgence of a militant Hinduism and precipitous decline of Buddhism on the mainland that set the stage for the conflicts of the next 2,000 years. A Sinhala Buddhist Sri Lanka faced Tamil Hindu kingdoms in South India, and the latter had overwhelming potential superiority.

In the second century, B. C., the Tamil king Elara captured the capital of Anuradhapura and pushed the Sinhala forces into the southern part of the island. Although a just and benevolent king, Elara was a Hindu, and the young Sinhala prince Dutthagamani resolved to reconquer the lost territory, not for the joy of sovereignty, he asserted, but for Buddhism. In the handle of his spear, which served as the royal scepter, he placed a Buddha relic. Then he secured 500 monks to march with his army, for the sight of the yellow robes, he explained, would bring blessing and protection to his warriors. He marched northward, and after many victories defeated Elara in single combat, thus reuniting Sri Lanka under one royal umbrella.

Dutthagamani to this day is regarded as the greatest national hero of the Sinhala people, and his story embodies their national myth. The national myth of a people is their idealized history. It defines the major challenge that has faced them as a collectivity, and exalts the heroes who have led them in meeting that challenge.

Some societies have only fragments of a national myth, without a powerful unifying theme. Others, however, are very clear. For the United States, the national myth has been the New Beginning, and this motif has run through the American experience from the founding of the

first colonies, through the westward movement of the frontier, to the waves of immigrants in the early decades of this century. Soviet society is informed by a myth of the Revolution. The revolutionary myth also posits a radical new beginning, but it is first necessary to tear down, to destroy utterly the structure of the old society.

The Sinhala national myth is different--neither the New Beginning nor the Revolution, but the Reconquest. In the reconquest myth, the ideal society is not new but ancient. Sacred values cling to a particular territory, but these face extinction when the land is overrun by enemies. The great challenge is to reconquer the land and restore the preeminence of the sacred values. It will be recognized that this theme is common to many twentieth-century nationalist movements in Asia and Africa. In Sri Lanka, however, it has a history of well over 2,000 years.

Dutthagamini's Buddhist Reconquest, completed in 161, B. C., did not solve the problem for long, for thirty-five years after his death the Tamil domination was re-established and another Sinhala hero rose up to lead the reconquest. There were always new Tamil invasions to be beaten back, and this was the pattern of Sri Lanka's history. For seventy-seven years (A. D. 993-1070) the island was administered as part of the Chola Empire. But in the long run, Sinhala reconquests, and skillful diplomacy among rival South Indian kingdoms on some occasions, resulted in the preservation of Sinhala sovereignty over most of the island. A Sinhala prose work of the thirteenth century expressed this fact in terms of divine inevitability:

This Island of Lanka belongs to the Buddha himself; it is like a treasury filled with the Three Gems. Therefore the residence of wrong-believers in this Island will never be permanent, just as the residence of the Yaksas (demons) of old was not permanent. Even if a non-Buddhist ruled Ceylon by force for a while, it is a particular power of the Buddha that his line will not be established. Therefore,

as Lanka is suitable only for Buddhist kings, it is certain that their lines, too, will be established.²

The Impact of Imperialism

Western colonial rule, beginning in 1505 in the maritime provinces, seemed to make a mockery of this Buddhist confidence. Imperialism, changing only in the nationality of the European masters (Portuguese, Dutch, and British, consecutively), lasted almost four and a half centuries. The most profound impact was made by the British, who expelled the Dutch in 1796 and annexed the remaining vestige of Sinhala rule, the Kandyan Kingdom, in 1815. The British government pledged to continue royal protection of Buddhism, even while continuing its official connection with the Church of England. But the overwhelming fact was that the traditional system, in which religion had played a major legitimizing and integrating role in the state, had come to an end. The bureaucratic colonial structure which the British erected was secular in its organization, purposes, and spirit, and had no essential connection to either Buddhism or Christianity.

Of critical importance was the great expansion of governmental responsibility in the area of education, as government schools and state-aided missionary schools with their essentially Western curriculum displaced the monastery schools in which Buddhist monks had instructed the young in the Dhamma and the skills of literacy throughout Sinhala history. As it developed, the most prestigious sector of this system of Western education utilized English as the exclusive medium of instruction and prepared students for admission to university either in Sri Lanka or England, after which they made their way into government service or the professions. Some came from families of landed wealth but most from humbler social circumstances, from Sinhala Buddhist and Hindu Tamil and other communities, but the English-educated elite which evolved was remarkably homogeneous in terms of its values, for

the common cultural imprint of England was deep.

The Christians, a minority of about 8 percent of the population, contributed a substantial number of leading families to the elite, and Christian dominance in education as well as the religious association of the rulers and of Western culture, combined to create the high prestige of Christianity in Sri Lanka. Over two millennia of invasions from South India had left a permanent Ceylon Tamil community, 11 percent of the total population, the majority living in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. In the new competitive situation created by Western rule, the Tamils were very effective, proportionally far more so than members of the Sinhala majority.

The English-educated elite of Sinhala background, in particular, became increasingly cut off from the culture of the masses. English was the mother tongue of several generations of certain Sinhala families, and while they might have remained nominal Buddhists this was a vestige which bore little relationship to their highly Anglicized lifestyle.³ The secular values of British liberalism and parliamentary democracy were absorbed by the elite. The process was very incomplete, however, for it never went beyond the urban Westernized elite to produce a transformation of values among the rural masses. By and large, traditional religious and caste values remained supreme in the village.

Western rule thus posed a challenge to Sinhala Buddhist society qualitatively different from any it had faced previously. Not content to subjugate, British imperialism had radically changed the consciousness of the most influential segment of the ruled. The past indeed seemed dead, irrelevant.

No significant nationalist movement developed to present a serious challenge to British rule. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, a revival of Buddhism sought to refute the aggressive claims of

Christianity, create a modern Buddhist system of schools, and encourage abstinence from liquor, all of which had nationalist undertones. But politics was a monopoly of the English educated class, and their posture vis-à-vis the British government was a moderate one.⁴ Law degrees from England, participation in an expanding economy in Sri Lanka, and faith in the progress of parliamentary institutions were among the factors which inclined the elite toward a conservative brand of politics. Sri Lankan nationalism, if it could be called that, was a very mild affair, without the mass mobilization, non-violent and violent conflict, and massive arrests which shook India intermittently over a period of three decades.

Remarkably, even the institution of universal suffrage in 1931 did not make politics less a monopoly of the elite. For the most part the politicians dealt not with the masses, but with the local notables (landlords, caste and village leaders, and others) who could deliver blocs of votes in exchange for patronage. Independence dawned in 1948, the Union Jack was hauled down and the Lion Flag was raised to the stirring roll of drums. But the era of secular elite politics went on without marked change, and would continue as long as all players observed the cardinal rule of the game, namely, that nothing be done to make participants out of spectators.

The more sensitive intellectuals of the Western-educated elite were troubled by their image as brown Englishmen. In an age of nationalism, of renascent Asia, it was uncomfortable to claim one's place in the sun as the class most like the displaced foreign rulers in all the former British Empire. But undoubtedly, had the new governmental elite succeeded in maintaining a high degree of cohesion (a most difficult assignment in any political system), the dramatic changes would have been postponed for some years. As it turned out, the frustrated aspirations of one man set the stage for a dramatic twentieth-

century reenactment of the Buddhist Reconquest.

The National Myth Resurgent

S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike was the son of a prominent Anglican layman who had been knighted by the British sovereign. He was educated at St. Thomas' College (near Colombo) and at Oxford. Along with other politically ambitious young men, he became a convert to Buddhism after the 1931 Donoughmore constitutional reforms granted universal franchise.⁵ Bandaranaike started a political organization, the Sinhala Maha Sabha, which became the largest single element in the United National Party formed in 1946. He became a member of the UNP cabinet under Prime Minister D. S. Senanayake and was for some time regarded as his heir-apparent. However, it soon became evident that Senanayake favored his nephew, Major John Kotelawala, as successor to the top post.⁶ Bandaranaike sought to strengthen his personal political following by reviving the Sinhala Maha Sabha and by giving leadership to the Buddhist revival movement. In 1950 he made a number of speeches urging that Buddhism be given special constitutional recognition. On one occasion he declared: "The adoption of Buddhism as the state religion will usher in an era of religio-democratic socialism. More than two-thirds of the population of Ceylon are Buddhists, and it is therefore inevitable that Buddhism should be the state religion."⁷ Prime Minister D. S. Senanayake, whose wife was a Christian, disagreed sharply with this emphasis. In 1951 Bandaranaike resigned from the cabinet and joined the opposition.

The prime minister, whose outlook had been molded by nineteenth-century British liberalism, was resolutely opposed to governmental intervention in matters of religion. When a delegation of high-ranking Buddhist monks from Kandy met him to request state protection and support for Buddhism, he replied that spiritual development was entirely up to the individual, and that government

was inherently incapable of promoting spirituality. "The Buddha has pointed out the path of development, and no state aid can take man there."⁸ In 1951 D. S. Senanayake met an All-Ceylon Buddhist Congress deputation of venerable elders of the sangha (Buddhist clergy) and prominent laymen led by Dr. G. P. Malalasekera. The deputation specifically requested the appointment of an official commission to inquire into the grievances of the Buddhists. The prime minister pointedly asked the group whether--in addition to the Three Refuges of The Buddha, The Dhamma and The Sangha--they wanted to add a Fourth Refuge--The Government. A commission of inquiry was not appointed.⁹

During this crucial period the whole Buddhist world became caught up in a powerful wave of enthusiasm over the Buddha Jayanti--the celebrations which were to mark the 2,500th anniversary of the passing away of the Buddha. The full-moon day of May 1956 was set as the exact date, but Buddha Jayanti activities were begun more than two years before this date. In Rangoon the Sixth Great Buddhist Council brought together learned monks from all five Theravada Buddhist countries to embark on the monumental task of editing the Pali canon and producing an authoritative version of the Tripitaka. According to Buddhist tradition, the teaching of the Buddha would last 5,000 years, and the 2,500th year would mark a great turning point in the history of Buddhism. At this time the Dhamma would be spread throughout the world and would produce an unprecedented spiritual awakening.¹⁰

The political genius of Bandaranaike lay in his systematic rejection of the Westernized cultural image over a period of years, in religion, language, and dress, and in the creation of a political program based on the supremacy of a Sinhala Buddhist national identity. In short, he embraced the cultural symbols of the majority of the population; he appealed directly to the rural masses. He promised to make Sinhala the sole official

language, and to restore Buddhism to its "rightful place" in state and society. It was a populist appeal sacralized by reference to a glorious Buddhist past. His movement was a modern version of the Buddhist Reconquest, directed now not against non-Buddhist invaders, but against the cultural transformation of society which they had produced.

The glory of Anuradhapura had to be re-linked to present societal realities. Bandaranaike blended traditional and modern themes with compelling effectiveness. In proclaiming the new era of the common man, with its modern democratic and socialist connotations, he also emphasized that the common man, particularly the villager, had never been seduced by Western culture, and had preserved traditional Sinhala Buddhist culture for the nation.

King Dutthagamini launched his Buddhist Reconquest with the "splendid spear with the relic," to use the language of the Mahāvamsa. Temporal power, the spear, was ironically legitimized by a relic of a prince who renounced political power in order to seek enlightenment. And Dutthagamini, or at least the writer of the chronicle, emphatically asserted that the reconquest had nothing whatever to do with any personal quest for power. "Not for the joy of sovereignty is this toil of mine, my striving has been ever to establish the doctrine of the Sambuddha."¹¹ Yet it is clear that Dutthagamini, and Bandaranaike after him, were fully conscious of the driving power of religious belief when harnessed to political movements, and both were very much committed to the quest of power.

Dutthagamini's Buddhist Reconquest was directed against a Hindu Tamil army of occupation. Twenty-two centuries later the Tamils were still there, both the permanent Ceylon Tamils with their greater concentration in the north and east, and the Indian Tamils, several

generations of whom had worked on the tea estates of the mountainous south-central part of the island. The Sinhala-Tamil relationship, perhaps the most ancient ethnic cleavage which still endures in the contemporary world, has taken many curious turns over time. Conflict has been prominent, but there has been extensive mutual influence in language, religion, and the arts. There have been periods in which Tamil soldiers fought for Sinhala kings and vice-versa, and even the recruitment of Tamil royal blood (of the Kshatriya caste, lacking in the Sinhala social system) to rule over the Sinhala Kandyan kingdom.

Despite periods of communal peaceful coexistence, and the culturally homogenizing effect of British rule on the elite, Bandaranaike's movement to establish "Sinhala Only" as the official language inevitably revived Tamil fears of domination. The new enthusiasm for Buddhism was seen not as a religious phenomenon but as a symbol of Sinhala supremacy. The Buddhist Reconquest of the 1950's, in the eyes of the Tamil minority, was but another version of Dutthagamini's anti-Tamil crusade.

King Dutthagamini secured 500 monks to march with his army. The sight of the yellow-robed ascetics encouraged his warriors, and the chanting of scriptures assured the Buddhist army of divine protection. Bandaranaike's clerical support was no less important as the 1956 election approached.

The organized role of the bhikkhus (Buddhist monks) was a dramatic innovation in modern Ceylon politics. Though still endowed with high social prestige and accorded the greatest deference by individual laymen, the sangha had witnessed the steady erosion under foreign rule of its once impressive prerogatives of societal regulation and political influence. This traditional religious elite had every reason to overthrow a system which

had made it increasingly irrelevant, although the monks' political activism was clearly contrary to Vinaya requirements of monastic discipline. Bandaranaike's clerical allies, the Eksath Bhikkhu Peramuna (United Monks' Front) led by the Venerable M. Buddharakkhita, waged a vigorous and effective campaign on his behalf. Buddharakkhita by virtue of his position as chief priest of the Kelaniya Temple, had access to considerable wealth, some of which he diverted to the political campaign. As vice president of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, he was a member of Bandaranaike's inner circle, and he saw himself as the power behind the throne. He and his colleagues in the Eksath Bhikkhu Peramuna leadership did in fact wield great power after the 1956 victory, constituting a kind of supra-cabinet. The political monks proved to be the most aggressive advocates of Sinhala Only, opposed the search for compromises with the Tamils, and were a factor of some importance in the bloody Sinhalese-Tamil clashes of 1958.

Symbols of the Buddhist Reconquest

Prime Minister S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, in partial fulfillment of his election promises to restore Buddhism to its "rightful place," took two steps which met with relatively little opposition. He created a Ministry of Cultural Affairs and established two Buddhist universities.

From its inception, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs was deeply involved in religion. N. Q. Dias, a senior civil servant and prominent Buddhist militant, became the first director. The philosophy which its program reflected was later succinctly stated by a minister of cultural affairs who wrote an article titled "Our Religion is the Basis of Our Culture."¹² Religion, of course, meant only Buddhism, and there was no recognition given to the very considerable cultural contributions made by Hinduism, to say nothing of Christianity and Western

civilization. "Since the day Arahata Mahinda introduced Buddhism into Ceylon the life and thought of the people in this country have been molded by this message. Throughout our history we find that all aspects of our culture have had Buddhism as their background."

Continuing a number of activities begun as part of the Buddha Jayanti program, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs undertook the construction of memorial buildings, the restoration of the Temple of the Tooth, and the compilation and publication of the encyclopedia of Buddhism, the Sinhala encyclopedia, and the Sinhala-Pali Tripitaka. Despite the strong Buddhist orientation and philosophy, support was also given to Hindu and Muslim religious programs. Buddhist, Hindu, and Islamic religious affairs advisory committees were set up to help select suitable programs which would then be aided by the department. An important difference was that Buddhist programs were frequently administered directly by the department, while Hinduism and Islam were usually aided by grants made to the institutions of these religions.

A second important step was the establishment of two Buddhist universities, or rather, the elevation to university status of two famous monastic institutions of higher learning (pirivenas). The tradition of the pirivena in Ceylon is almost as old as Buddhism itself, but was all but lost in modern times until revived in 1873 by an eminent monk-scholar, the Venerable Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Nayaka Thero. In that year he and a group of thirteen Buddhist laymen founded the Vidyodaya Pirivena of Colombo. Later another important seat of monastic learning, the Vidyalandara Pirivena, developed along similar lines. Both institutions belonged to the Malwate chapter of the Siam sect of the sangha. From 1875 onward the British government made annual grants to recognized pirivenas for the advancement of oriental scholarship. Pali and Buddhist studies made up almost

the entire curriculum.

In 1956, Wijayananda Dahanayake, the minister of education, proposed that the Vidyodaya and Vidyalandkara Pirivenas be granted university status, a proposal which met with the prime minister's approval. In the bill which was then drafted, the objects and reasons stated that the two institutions enjoyed an international reputation as seats of advanced oriental learning and lacked only the legal status of universities. The bill sought to remedy this defect, and the two universities thus created would also produce Sinhala-qualified graduates in accordance with the government's language policy. The bill was enacted by Parliament in 1958.

The universities were empowered to make provision "for the advancement and dissemination of knowledge and for the promotion of Sinhala and Buddhist culture." The universities were to be open to all persons of the male sex regardless of race, creed, or class, and no test of religious belief or profession would be imposed. Religious instruction, however, would be prescribed for monk-students. Because of the universities' monastic background, women would be permitted to study as external students only, and the vice-chancellors of the two institutions would be monks.

Bandaranaike's symbolic celebration of the Buddhist Reconquest, however, was marred by numerous problems: conflicts within Bandaranaike's Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (People's United Front) coalition, which included Marxists; the Sinhalese-Tamil riots which erupted over the government's language policy; and, finally, a serious personal feud with his chief clerical ally, the Venerable M. Buddharakkhita.

Buddharakkhita took a leading role in setting up a shipping company which he fully expected would profit from extensive government contracts. When these were denied, Buddharakkhita's alienation from the Bandaranaike

regime was complete. Early in June 1959 the executive committee of the Eksath Bhikkhu Peramuna decided to appoint a three-man committee to investigate whether, in the light of recent political developments, it might be necessary to start a new political party in Sri Lanka. The EBP's break with Bandaranaike's party, The Sri Lanka Freedom Party, was now openly acknowledged. Buddharakkhita had contributed greatly to Bandaranaike's political success, and now felt himself betrayed.

On September 25, 1959, Talduwe Somarama Thero, a monk and also an Ayurvedic physician, appeared on the veranda of the prime minister's house with a group of petitioners. Bandaranaike bowed respectfully before the monk, who then took out a revolver and shot him four times. The prime minister died the next day. In the course of the police investigation eight persons were arrested, including Buddharakkhita and H. P. Jayawardene, one of the directors of the shipping company. Buddharakkhita and Jayawardene were charged with conspiracy to murder Bandaranaike. According to the prosecution case, they were the two "arch-conspirators" behind Somarama, who fired the fatal shots. On May 12, 1961, Buddharakkhita, Jayawardene, and Somarama were convicted and sentenced to hang. Eight months later, however, the Court of Criminal Appeal reduced Buddharakkhita's and Jayawardene's sentence to life imprisonment on the legal ground that only murder, and not conspiracy to murder, had been made a capital offense.

Thus ended the life of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, who fell victim to the extremist forces of resurgent Buddhism which he himself had helped to set in motion. And thus ended the career of the most remarkable political monk of modern times.

Bandaranaike's untimely death left important objectives of the Buddhist Reconquest unrealized. These concerns, however, were taken up by his widow, Mrs. Sirimavo

Bandaranaike, who became prime minister in 1960. Legislation in 1960 and 1961 destroyed Christian dominance in education by nationalizing the state-aided schools, despite strenuous Catholic resistance. In 1962, after an abortive coup attempt by high-ranking army and police officers, mostly Roman Catholics, the government moved quickly to replace Governor-General Sir Oliver Goonetilleke, an Anglican, with a Sinhala Buddhist. Sir Oliver resigned and left the country, and a staunch Buddhist, William Gopallawa, was appointed. In a ceremony of great symbolic significance the governor-general placed a tray of jasmine flowers before an image of the Buddha, installed for the first time at Queen's House (the official resident of the governor-general), while monks chanted the Buddhist scriptures.

Notes

1. The subject of this chapter has attracted a substantial amount of research over the past decade. See particularly: Heinz Bechert, Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft, Vol. I (Frankfurt: Alfred Metzner Verlag, 1966); the chapters on Ceylon by D. E. Smith, A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, and C. D. S. Siriwardane in Donald E. Smith (ed.), South Asian Politics and Religion (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966); Gananath Obeyesekere, "Religious Symbolism and Political Change in Ceylon," and S. U. Kodikara, "Communalism and Political Modernization in Ceylon," both in Modern Ceylon Studies, I (January 1970). In the present essay I have drawn on my two chapters in South Asian Politics and Religion.
2. Quoted in Walpola Rahula, History of Buddhism in Ceylon (Colombo: M. D. Gunasena and Co., 1956), p. 63.
3. On the impact of Western education, see Michael M. Ames, "Westernization or Modernization: The Case of Sinhalese Buddhism," Social Compass, XX, no. 2 (1973), pp. 139-170.
4. See Marshall R. Singer, The Emerging Elite (Cambridge, Mass.: M. I. T. Press, 1964); and Tissa Fernando, "Elite Politics in the New States: The Case of Post-Independence Sri Lanka," Pacific Affairs, XLVI (Fall 1973), pp. 361-383.
5. The term "Donoughmore Buddhist" is well known in Ceylon politics.
6. W. Howard Wriggins, Ceylon: Dilemmas of a New Nation (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 110-111. See also Robert N. Kearney, "Sinhalese Nationalism and Social Conflict in Ceylon," Pacific Affairs, XXXVII (Summer 1964), pp. 125-136.
7. Winburn T. Thomas, "Ceylon Christians Faced by Crisis," Christian Century LXVII (1951), pp. 58-60.
8. Ceylon Daily News, December 6, 1950.
9. Catholic Action: A Menace to Peace and Goodwill (Colombo: Bauddha Jatika Balavegaya, 1963), p. 126.
10. Sir John Kotelawala, "The Significance of the Buddha Jayanti," in Ananda W. P. Guruge and K. G. Amaradasa, (eds.), 2500 Buddha Jayanti Souvenir (Colombo: Lanka Bauddha Mandalaya, Ministry of Local Government and Cultural Affairs, 1956), p. 1.
11. Wilhelm Geiger (trans.), The Mahavamsa, or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon (Colombo: Ceylon Government Information Department, 1950), p. 171.
12. Maitripala Senanayake (minister of industries, home and cultural affairs), "Our Religion is the Basis of Our Culture," The Buddhist, XXXI (January-April 1961), pp. 5-6.

Additional Readings

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Chapter 6

A REVIEW OF THE ECONOMY

N. Balakrishnan

In structure, the economy of Sri Lanka at the time of independence (1948) provided an outstanding example of a dualistic export economy.¹ Plantation agriculture--principally tea, rubber, and coconut--provided nearly all the country's export income, which was a major determinant of the level of activity in the economy. The country depended heavily on the import of basic food items, manufactured consumer goods, raw materials, and capital goods. Foreign trade thus had an overwhelming importance in the island's economy, with the value of merchandise exports and imports totalling about 70 per cent of national income.

The well-organized and more productive plantation sector together with the numerous dependent activities formed the modern sector in the economy. The development of the plantations and related economic activities during the many decades preceding independence had brought about a fundamental structural transformation in the island's economy. However, such changes had very little impact on the semi-subsistence rural economy based on traditional peasant agriculture, largely centered around paddy (rice) and a few other food crops for domestic consumption. Not only did the two sectors differ considerably in many respects, but they were virtually isolated from one another.

In the post-independence period, development policies and perspectives were very much dominated by the problems associated with the undiversified export economy. Along with the expansion of the basic infrastructure facilities in the economy through government investments, policies

and programs were designed to develop and strengthen the domestic sectors so as to provide a greater degree of diversification. In the early 1950's the emphasis on the development of domestic peasant agriculture became clearly marked. While this policy continued, attention also shifted to industrial development in the later years, particularly in the 1960's. Import substitution policies in both industry and agriculture assumed greater significance in response to the balance of payments difficulties experienced by Sri Lanka. Although the need to diversify the country's export-structure and to promote export-based industries was recognized, no systematic attempts were made in this direction until the end of the 1960's.

Growth Trends

Policies and efforts directed toward the development and diversification of the economy have had to depend heavily on foreign exchange resources derived from the country's exports. However, since the early 1960's, the economy was increasingly subject to the repercussions of adverse trends in external trade which seriously undermined the country's development efforts. The overall growth of the Sri Lanka economy has been poor, and the growth of aggregate output, in the context of a rapid growth of population, could not provide any significant improvement in per capita income. During 1960-1970, Sri Lanka's Gross National Product (GNP) at constant (1959) prices increased at an annual average rate of 4.4 percent. With an annual rate of growth of population of 2.4 percent, per capita real product increased annually by 2 percent in that period. The economic growth rate slowed down even further in the post-1970 period. The annual growth rate of GNP in 1971-1975 averaged only 3 percent, very much below the 6 percent target growth envisaged by the government in its Five Year Plan,² and per capita product increased by less than 2 percent per annum.³ The country's unsatisfactory rate of economic

growth has to be seen in the light of a progressive deterioration in its commodity terms of trade which severely limited the import capacity of the economy.

Aggregate consumption expenditure in the economy had remained consistently at high levels averaging 87 percent of GNP (at current market prices) during the 1960's. Investment in the economy did not experience any strong upward trend. In this respect, foreign exchange difficulties have had an important effect; also the uncertainties generated by some of the government economic policies might have had an unfavorable effect on private sector investment, which accounted for 60 percent of the total investment in the economy. Gross investment in the economy averaged 15 percent of GNP at current market prices in 1960-1964; the average ratio went up to 17 percent in 1966-1970 and then dropped to 16 percent in 1971-1975. Gross domestic savings as proportion of GNP remained around 12.6 percent in the 1960's, with hardly any change in the subsequent period. Since the mid-1960's, "foreign savings"--net capital inflow--increasingly supplemented domestic savings in financing gross investment in the economy.

The data presented in Table 6.1 on the sectoral composition of GNP show the relative contribution of different sectors and the degree of change that has taken place in this respect during the post-1960 period. The relative share of GNP contributed by agriculture (including forestry and fishing) has declined over the years. Nevertheless, it is still the largest sector in the economy accounting, on average, for one-third of the country's GNP; and the growth of this sector considerably influences the overall growth in the economy. Agriculture, comprising both the export and domestic sectors, provides direct employment to 50 percent of the total employed workforce in the country and there has been little change in this proportion compared to the

TABLE 6.1--Sectoral Composition of Gross National Product at Constant (1959) Factor Cost Prices
(Annual Averages, Value in Millions of Rupees)

	1960		1965		1971		Percentage increase, 1960-1964 to 1971-1975
	to 1964	Percent	to 1969	Percent	to 1975	Percent	
Agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing	2707	40.2	3035	36.3	3465	33.3	28.0
Mining and quarrying	32	0.5	40	0.5	168	1.6	425.0
Manufacturing	805	11.9	1082	12.9	1404	13.5	74.4
Construction	277	4.1	375	4.5	527	5.1	90.3
Electricity, gas and water	11	0.2	15	0.2	31	0.3	181.8
Transport, storage and communication	598	8.8	811	9.7	1016	9.7	69.9
Wholesale and retail trade	908	13.5	1209	14.5	1395	13.4	53.6
Banking, insurance and real estate	63	0.9	99	1.2	151	1.4	139.6
Ownership and dwellings	231	3.4	278	3.3	327	3.1	41.5
Public administration and defense	342	5.1	407	4.9	566	5.4	65.5
Other Services	807	11.9	1044	12.5	1393	13.4	72.6
Gross domestic product	6781	--	8396	--	10443	--	53.8
Net factor income from abroad	-44	--	-40	--	-47	--	--
Gross national product	6737	100.0	8356	100.0	10396	100.0	54.3
Per capita gross national product (in rupees)	647		712		788		21.8

SOURCE: Annual Reports, Central Bank of Ceylon, Colombo.

1950's. Export agriculture is still the principal source of the country's foreign exchange earnings.

Other than in agriculture, the average value of output in all sectors increased faster than GNP between the periods 1960/1964 and 1971/1975. While the average value of GNP increased by 54 percent, the value of agricultural output increased by only 28 percent, reflecting the relative stagnation of output in plantation agriculture. In contrast, the output in domestic agriculture, especially paddy and subsidiary food crops, increased notably in the 1960's. Consequently, there has been a change in the composition of total agricultural output in that the relative share of plantation agriculture declined, while that of domestic agriculture increased. In 1960, the value added contribution (in real terms) of export crops to total agriculture represented 58 percent. By 1971 the relative share had declined to 43 percent and the value added share of domestic agriculture increased to 54 percent of the total. In 1971, the value added share of export agriculture and domestic agriculture in GNP amounted to 15 and 20 percent, respectively.

The available statistics on the sectoral distribution of employment (see Table 6.2) also indicated a relative shift in the employment pattern in the agricultural sector. Between 1953 and 1971, total employment in plantation agriculture--tea, rubber, and coconut--declined by 15 percent, largely due to a marked drop in employment in rubber. Employment in domestic agriculture (including fishing and forestry) increased by 50 percent during the same period and its relative share in the total for all sectors increased from 24 percent in 1953 to 30 percent in 1971, while that of plantation agriculture fell from 29 to 20 percent. It may be that part of the reported increase in employment in domestic agriculture reflected increased work-sharing rather than increase in productive employment.

TABLE 6.2--Distribution of Employment by Sectors

	1953	Percent	1971	Percent	Percentage change 1953 to 1971
All Sectors	2,993,349	100.0	3,621,987	100.0	21.0
Agriculture	1,584,141	52.9	1,823,957	50.4	15.1
Tea, rubber and coconut	856,110	28.6	727,263	20.1	-15.0
Other agriculture, hunting forestry and fishing	728,031	24.3	1,096,694	30.3	50.6
Industry	362,985	12.1	484,597	13.4	33.5
Manufacturing	289,245	9.6	347,424	9.6	20.1
Services	848,408	28.3	1,015,183	28.0	19.6
Activities not adequately classified	197,815	6.6	298,267	8.2	50.7

SOURCE: Population of Sri Lanka (Colombo: Department of Census and Statistics, 1974).

The share of GNP contributed by the country's industrial sector as a whole (manufacturing, mining and quarrying, construction and electricity, gas and water) increased from an average 16.6 percent in 1960-1964 to 20.4 percent in 1971-1975. The value of output in mining and quarrying, which for a long time remained at insignificant levels, increased considerably after 1970. This was very largely due to an increase in gem production following the provision of generous incentives by the government. This, together with the establishment of the State Gem Corporation, brought the country's gem business under greater official purview and control than before. As a result, foreign exchange earnings from gem exports also increased significantly in recent years.

The average value of manufacturing output, which forms the bulk of the output in the industrial sector as a whole, increased by 74 percent between 1960-1964 and 1971-1975 and its relative share in GNP increased marginally from 11.9 percent to 13.5 percent; the percentage share has declined slightly after 1971 with a reduced growth rate in this sector. However, the contribution of manufacturing to GNP still remains relatively low. While employment in the manufacturing sector increased by 20 percent between 1953 and 1971, its relative proportion in the total employed work force remained at almost 10 percent during this period.

In the economy of Sri Lanka, the services sector has traditionally contributed a large share to GNP, partly on account of the importance of governmental services. This sector includes a wide range of activities from the more organized and productive ones to those with very low earnings with probably a significant amount of underemployment. The average relative share of the services sector as a whole increased from 43.7 percent of GNP in 1960-1964 to 46 percent in 1965-1969 and remained at that level in 1971-1975 as well. This

sector accounted for 28 percent of the total employed work force in 1971, nearly the same as the proportion in 1953.

Agriculture

Plantation Agriculture--Plantation or export agriculture in Sri Lanka is based predominantly on three crops--tea, rubber and coconut. The plantation sector, particularly tea and rubber and to a lesser extent coconut, had traditionally been a major stronghold of "organized" private enterprise, both foreign and local, in the island's economy. The total acreage in the principal crops experienced no significant changes in recent times. The area under tea, rubber, and coconut, which together earned for the country 85 to 90 percent of its total commodity export earnings until recently, accounted for roughly 55 percent of the total cultivated land area in the country. The combined acreage in tea and rubber almost equals the estimated 1.15 million acres under coconut cultivation. Tea and rubber are mainly estate crops, while small holdings dominate coconut cultivation. Small holdings in coconut--below 20 acres--accounted for nearly 70 percent of the total acreage under this crop; it is almost entirely under local ownership. There has been a decline in the relative importance of large estate units in plantation agriculture over the past two or three decades. Estates over 100 acres in extent, which in 1948 formed 80 percent of the total acreage in tea, had declined to 71 percent by 1972. The corresponding percentage in rubber fell from 54 to 46 percent.⁴

Tea is Sri Lanka's most important export crop, which provided until 1972, 55 to 60 percent of the total foreign exchange earnings from commodity exports; the relative share dropped below 50 percent in 1973 and 1974, but increased to 50 percent in 1975 with a significant recovery in its export earnings. Employment in tea, mostly comprising the estate workers of Indian origin, accounted

for 30 percent of the total in the agricultural sector. Although rubber is ranked second as an export crop, its contribution to total export earnings is far below that of tea, amounting to 17 to 20 percent of the total. Coconut exports--mainly copra, coconut oil and desiccated coconut--contributed 10 to 12 percent to the total export revenue derived from commodity exports. The relative share of coconut exports in the export total has also declined in recent years.

Both depressed prices and lower volume of exports, particularly in the late 1960's, have contributed to a decline in foreign exchange earnings from tea exports. In the period 1956-1958 and 1968-1970, the average annual volume of tea exports increased by 23 percent, from 370 million pounds to 454 million pounds. However, the dollar value of export earnings declined by 16 percent during this period, from an average value of \$224 million to \$187 million. Compared to tea, the value of production and exports of rubber recorded a steady increase, despite the fluctuation in export prices, due principally to increased production from replanted acreage, which in 1974 represented nearly 55 percent of the total acreage. The average annual volume of rubber exports increased by 63 percent from 203 million pounds in 1956-1958 to 332 million pounds in 1968-1970. However, due to the fall in export prices, foreign exchange earnings increased only by 12 percent, from an average \$60 million to \$67 million, during this period.

The problems in the coconut sector are largely related to the supply side as production and exports failed to increase, while prices of main export products remained favorable during a number of years. The average annual volume of coconut production amounted to 2,761 million nuts in 1962-1965; but dropped to 2,344 million nuts in 1972-1975. For the corresponding period, the average export volume of coconut products, estimated in terms of

nut equivalent, declined by 47 percent. The low levels of output in coconut can be attributed mainly to the problems of the large small holdings sector, part of which consists of village gardens and home gardens, where there is no systematic cultivation, considerable neglect, and very low fertilizer use due to the lack of capital and poor extension services. Coconut production is also significantly affected by weather, which partly explains the fluctuations in output levels. In 1973, following a substantial drop in production, the government imposed a temporary ban on the export of copra and coconut oil. In 1973-1974 the average volume of exports of coconut products, in terms of nut equivalent, amounted to a mere 450 million nuts, the lowest for the past two decades.

Domestic Agriculture--Over the past two decades there has been considerable progress in Sri Lanka's domestic agriculture, especially in paddy and subsidiary food crops. This period saw "the activation of Sri Lanka's domestic agricultural sector,"⁵ which made it a main growth point in the economy during the 1960's. The progress achieved in paddy and subsidiary food crops no doubt made a significant impact on rural incomes, despite the problems of poverty, uneconomic size of farm holdings, landlessness, and unemployment and under-employment that still dominate the rural economy.

In Sri Lanka, paddy remains the principal peasant crop and rice is the staple food of the people. Therefore, this sector has a place of special importance in the country's domestic agriculture. In 1971, paddy cultivation alone accounted for 43 percent of direct employment in the agricultural sector. Paddy is very much a small holder's crop. According to the data from the 1962 Census of Agriculture, of the total number of paddy holdings of 567,650 involving a total extent of 1,135,200 acres, nearly 95 percent of the holdings and 92 percent of the acreage consisted of units of less than ten acres. Units of five acres and below accounted for 94

percent of the total holdings and 75 percent of the total acreage. Holdings below two and one-half acres comprised 74 percent of the holdings and 43 percent of the total acreage. The average size of paddy holding for the country as a whole was a little under two acres. The existence of "mini-holdings" of less than two acres gives rise to the problems of under-sized or non-viable holdings which are too small to provide an adequate level of income to families from fulltime farming.

Since the early 1950's, as a result of socio-political and economic factors, the domestic agricultural sector has been assigned a major role in the country's development policies and programs. The national objectives of raising domestic food production and improving income levels in the rural economy gave this sector such an overwhelming importance. Government policies in particular were designed initially to assist paddy cultivation and, in more recent times, subsidiary food crops. Under a more intensified food production campaign in the 1960's and 1970's, assisted by government measures and encouraged by high market prices, production of subsidiary food crops--notably onions, chillies, potatoes, pulses and cereals--responded very well; this has also introduced a significant element of diversification in peasant farming, which in the past was almost entirely dominated by paddy cultivation.

The acreage under paddy, which today forms nearly 35 percent of the total under agriculture as a whole, expanded considerably in the post-independent era, largely on account of the opening of new lands under the various government-sponsored land development and land settlement schemes. Between 1952 and 1972, the total extent of asweddumised (land prepared for cultivation) paddy acreage increased by 50 percent from 964,484 acres to 1,448,403 acres. In addition to the new lands made available for cultivation supported by irrigation faci-

lities and other basic services to farmers, the government has also provided assistance in many other ways, the most important being: subsidies for fertilizer, seed paddy and other inputs; credit to the farmers through official agencies; price support for farm produce; marketing arrangements and institutional reforms. Government policies also partly contributed to the adoption of improved cultivation practices and high-yielding seed varieties in paddy farming on a significant scale in the 1960's. All these, in varying degrees, contributed to a substantial increase in paddy production since the early 1950's.

The total estimated production of paddy in the country, which averaged 29 million bushels in 1952-1955, increased to an average 47 million bushels in 1960-1964 and to 62 million bushels in 1966-1970, an increase between 1952-1953 and 1966-1970 of 114 percent. Productivity in terms of per acre yield increased from thirty-six bushels in 1960 to fifty-one bushels in 1970, and declined slightly in the subsequent period. The current per acre average yields are said to be still far below the maximum potential yield that could be realized with the high-yielding seed varieties under appropriate conditions. It has been estimated that yield increase, mainly due to the spread of new varieties and improved cultural practices, accounted for two-thirds of the annual 6 percent growth in rice output in the 1960's.⁶ With the increase in domestic paddy production, the quantity of rice imports as a proportion of total consumption in the country has declined from 60 percent in 1960 to 35 percent in 1970, although the quantity of flour imports also has increased substantially in recent years. Domestic rice production currently is still about 40 percent below what is required to achieve the goal of national self-sufficiency. Substantial improvement is expected in the years ahead from the diversion of waters to the dry zone, the

country's major rice producing area where water availability has always been a critical factor, under the massive Mahaweli Development Scheme, the first stage of which had already commenced.

Land Reform--The United Front government then in power introduced a radical land reform program in 1972, which can be expected to have a significant impact on the country's future agricultural development. The program was carried out, speedily and with little disruption, in two stages. In the first phase the Land Reform Law of 1972 imposed a ceiling on private ownership of land. In the second phase the Land Reform (Amendment) Law of 1975 was enacted to nationalize all estate lands owned by public companies, which were exempted from the earlier land ceiling legislation. Both legislative enactments made provision for the payment of compensation for the lands taken over by the government.

Under the land reform program as a whole, the Land Reform Commission (LRC), an agency set up by the government, acquired approximately one million acres. In the first phase, where the 1972 law stipulated a ceiling of 25 acres for paddy lands and 50 acres for other lands, a total of 563,400 acres was vested in the LRC. Of this total, about a third consisted of uncultivated lands; lands under plantation crops--tea, rubber, and coconut--accounted for 62 percent of the lands acquired by the LRC. Paddy lands were least affected by the ceiling legislation as nearly 95 percent of the existing paddy lands were below the ceiling limit.

The Land Reform (Amendment) Law of 1975 resulted in the nationalization of estate lands, thereby ending more than a century of foreign ownership in Sri Lanka's plantation sector. Under this law, the LRC took over altogether 417,957 acres comprising 395 estates that belonged to 145 Rupee Companies (229 estates and 22,813 acres) and 87 Sterling Companies (166 estates and 195,144 acres).⁷

In the second phase, the estate lands taken over consisted mostly of tea and rubber lands. Of lands vested in the LRC during this phase, tea lands comprised 237,592 acres or 57 percent, which formed approximately 40 percent of the total acreage under tea. Rubber lands amounting to 94,835 acres, consisted of 23 percent of the lands vested in the LRC and 17 percent of the total acreage under this crop.

Both the ceiling legislation and the nationalization of estates resulted in the transfer of a considerable extent of lands, previously under private ownership, both foreign and local, to public ownership and control. Under the land reform program in phase one and two, about 63 percent of the total tea lands came to be vested in the LRC; of rubber and coconut lands, the proportions vested amounted to 32 percent and 10 percent, respectively, of the total acreage under each crop. It is significant to note that in tea, still the country's principal export crop, public ownership and management now covers two-thirds of the total acreage in the country.

In the implementation of the current land reform program the government has emphasized the objectives of increased production, generation of greater employment, intensification of land use, introduction of new land use patterns through crop diversification, and greater integration of the estates and the village economy. In the alienation of the lands acquired by the IRC, considerable emphasis has been given to the ownership and management of state agencies and cooperative institutions in conformity with the government policy of promoting "social" ownership and control. This also reflected the policy of ensuring the continuation of the large units because of their viability in plantation agriculture. Other than the lands that would be set aside for crop diversification programs and redistribution among landless peasant families, most of the estate lands were to

continue with existing crops.

Before the land reform program itself got under way, production levels in the plantation sector, particularly in tea and coconut, had tended to decline. It is likely that the publicity and the campaign that preceded the reform created "a climate of considerable uncertainty" in the plantation sector which, in the context of poor commodity prices, led to some "neglect of plantation properties."⁸ This could have increased after the enactment of the legislation itself and many estates could have been allowed to deteriorate in anticipation of the take over of lands. Thus, while the acquisition of lands proceeded, some loss of production could be anticipated with the large scale transfer of ownership.

Industrial Development

In the 1950's, official efforts aimed at promoting private sector industrial development did not make much headway. With a liberal import policy pursued during this period, fiscal incentives and other promotional efforts proved less effective. It was in the early 1960's that an important phase in industrial development began. This came largely as a result of the stringent import restrictions introduced by the government in response to the country's deteriorating balance of payments. The introduction of quantitative controls on a wide range of manufactured imports and high tariffs created a protected and profitable ready-made home market. This, combined with a variety of fiscal incentives and other concessions, induced the private sectors' participation in manufacturing activities on a significant scale, concentrated almost entirely on import substitution. A large number of consumer goods industries were started, largely with imported inputs, which catered to the local market. Government approvals were granted liberally for new industries by the private sector; and the import restrictions were of such a nature that they mostly favored

the production of luxury and non-essential goods. In this period, official policy with regard to the private sector reflected "the lack of careful planning and clearly defined priorities."⁹ Gradually, the government was forced to introduce a greater degree of rationalization, especially through a more systematic and strict allocation of foreign exchange for the import of raw materials and other inputs. Nevertheless, the "organized" manufacturing sector that evolved in the 1960's under a protected market became heavily dependent on imported inputs, with production almost entirely oriented toward the home market.

Although state participation in Sri Lanka's industrial development dates back to the Second World War period, it was from the late 1950's that systematic efforts were made to develop public sector industries. Following the enactment of the State Industrial Corporations Act of 1957, several state industrial corporations were started by the government to promote the development of "basic industries" in the public sector. In 1963, there were fourteen state industrial corporations and by 1974 the number went up to twenty-six, all but one of which were engaged in the production of items such as cement, textiles, sugar, paper, chemicals, petroleum products, tires, ceramics, and milk products. Total investment (at current prices) in state industrial corporations as a whole increased from Rs. 950 million in 1968/1969 to Rs. 2,964 million in 1975. This constituted roughly 42 percent of total investment in all the state corporations. At present, state industries account for 30 to 35 percent of the total gross value of industrial production in the economy.

For many years, a number of the state industrial corporations showed very poor financial results due to management inefficiency, technical deficiencies in planning, overstaffing, and defective pricing policies. In view

of the burden these corporations imposed on the government budget, concerted efforts were made after the mid-1960's to improve the performance of state industrial undertakings through greater efficiency in management, higher rates of capacity utilization, and the adoption of more appropriate pricing policies. Subsequently, the situation appears to have improved, relative to performance in the earlier years. The total net profits of state industrial corporations increased from an average of Rs. 52 million in 1966-1970 to an average Rs. 115 million in 1971-1975.¹⁰ In the latter period, the average rate of return on capital investment in state industrial corporations as a whole ranged from 4 to 7 percent, which is still rather low, although a number of individual corporations recorded rates of return much higher than the average.

During the 1960's and 1970's, the country's manufacturing sector was adversely affected by acute foreign exchange difficulties. Stringent foreign exchange rationing then in effect, except during the brief period from August 1968 to May 1970, when a limited liberalization of imports of raw materials and other inputs occurred, was a serious limitation on manufacturing activity, particularly in the private sector. In 1974, it was reported that "about 60 percent of the total capacity in the industrial sector remained unutilised."¹¹ The low capacity utilization was mainly the result of shortages of imported inputs and also may have been due to the rising production costs and, in some instances, market limitations. Import-substituting industrialization reached its most difficult phase by the early 1970's. Since the value of imported raw materials still formed approximately 75 percent of the total value of raw materials used in the organized manufacturing sector, foreign exchange scarcity remained a critical factor in

determining the pace of growth in this sector. The value of output in the manufacturing sector, at constant prices and in terms of value added, increased at an average annual rate of 5.5 percent during 1960-67; in the next three years this sector recorded the highest annual rate of growth of 8 percent, largely on account of the increased supply of imported inputs made possible under a partial import liberalization program. After 1970, the growth of output in this sector slowed down very much. During 1971-1973 the manufacturing sector recorded an average growth of only 2 percent per annum and in 1974 there was a decline in output by 4 percent over the previous year.

The industrial structure that evolved in the 1960's, encouraged largely by import restrictions and a protected and highly attractive local market, did not offer much scope for export-oriented industries. This has been a major weakness in the country's industrial policy and structure. As a corrective step, the government, since about 1968, introduced several measures providing strong support to export-based manufacturing activities, which included liberal incentives offered to the private sector through the exchange rate system, tax system, and other measures. These steps seem to have had a favorable effect as evident from the increase in the value of earnings from industrial exports in recent years. Public sector industries, too, have contributed to this development. In the case of the state industrial corporations, the value of exports as percentage of total production increased from 10 percent in 1970 to 20 percent in 1975.

The present industrial structure is still largely dominated by consumer goods industries, which today account for nearly 55 percent of the gross value of total production although there has been some decline in its relative share during the past decade. In this group, food, beverages, and tobacco form the principal sub-group

accounting for 40 percent of the value of production of consumer goods industries and 20 percent of the total value of production in the manufacturing sector as a whole. The value of intermediate and investment goods together accounted for 45 percent of the value of total industrial production. Increased state participation in manufacturing activities, strongly oriented towards intermediate and investment goods, has somewhat increased the relative importance of intermediate products and has produced some degree of change in the structure of industrial production.

Foreign Trade and Balance of Payments

Foreign trade plays a significant role in the island's economy, although the foreign trade ratio (measured by the value of commodity exports and imports as a percentage of GNP) has declined over the past two decades. In 1960-1964, the average f.o.b. value of exports represented 26 percent of GNP and the average c.i.f. value of imports 28 percent. However, during 1971-1975 the average ratios delined to 18 and 22 percent, respectively. In the total value of commodity export earnings, the traditional exports--tea, rubber and coconut products--now average 75 percent, while the so-called non-traditional exports--mainly consisting of minor agricultural, industrial, and gem exports--account for the balance. Since 1968, there was a significant increase in the value of non-traditional exports, largely because of the generous incentives given to this category of exports. This development has introduced an important degree of diversification of the country's export structure in recent years, a trend which has been strengthened by an increase in earnings from tourism. The country's food imports--the bulk of which consists of rice, flour, and sugar--still account for 45 percent of the total value of commodity imports, while the imports of intermediate and investment goods together form 37 percent of the total.

Since the end of the 1950's, Sri Lanka's foreign trade and balance of payments were increasingly subject to adverse trends, and foreign exchange scarcity acted as a major constraint on the economy. Sri Lanka's worsening balance of payments resulted largely from the poor performance of her major exports, mainly due to low prices in the world markets, and a sharp rise in import prices, which was intensified in the early 1970's because of the impact of world inflationary conditions. These adverse trends contributed to a progressive decline in the country's commodity terms of trade. Between 1960 and 1970, the country's exports price index declined by 4 percent, while the imports price index increased by 68 percent, and the commodity terms of trade index declined by 45 percent. Although the exports price index increased markedly after 1970, the escalation in the prices of imports continued and this more than offset the gains in export earnings after 1970. From 1970 to 1975, the exports price index increased by 69 percent, but the imports price index went up by as much as 210 percent and the commodity terms of trade index fell by 43 percent. For the whole period 1960-1975, the terms of trade declined by 69 percent, which indicates the magnitude of the fall in the purchasing power of the country's exports. The escalation in the prices of imports, particularly between 1972 and 1975, has also contributed to the price inflation in the economy.

Since 1957, Sri Lanka experienced continuous balance of payments deficits, except in 1965. The current account deficit on goods and services annually averaged Rs. 175 million in 1962-1964, and increased to Rs. 500 million in 1967-1969. Thereafter, the size of the deficits declined to some extent, as a result of significant cuts in imports, until 1973. However, in 1973-1974, the average deficit reached an all-time record of Rs. 1,260 million, when the full impact of the world commodity

inflation began to be felt.

Prior to 1962, the balance of payments deficits in the current account were met largely from the country's external reserves. However, by the early 1960's, the level of external reserves had fallen to precariously low levels, and the government resorted to measures aimed at physical restriction of imports on a significant scale. Since then, quantitative import restrictions had remained a principal instrument of balance of payments policy. Despite the imposition of such controls, the country's external reserves continued to be low and could not, therefore, provide an effective cover for imports. Against this background, in the post-1965 period, external assistance became increasingly important in supporting the country's import program. The value of official aid-financed imports alone, which averaged 6 percent of the total in 1961-1964, increased to an average of 15 percent in 1966-1969 and to 22 percent in 1971-1974. The increased inflow of external assistance enabled the country to maintain a higher level of imports than would otherwise have been possible, although a good part of the additional assistance in more recent years was swallowed up by the higher import prices.

In the last three years, compared to the recent past, there has been a remarkable improvement in Sri Lanka's export earnings, following the world commodity boom, although the gain was offset by the high import prices and import expenditure.¹² The total value of commodity export earnings increased appreciably since 1973 in terms of both rupee value and foreign exchange earnings (as measured by the relatively stable SDR value). Between 1973 and 1975, the rupee value of exports increased by 50 percent and that of SDR value increased by 30 percent. In particular, earnings from tea exports recorded a considerable increase in contrast to the poor performance in the previous years, and the share in total commodity ex-

port earnings recovered from its lowest proportion reached in 1974, 39 percent, to 50 percent in 1975. The value of exports increased from Rs. 1,261 million (SDR 165 million) in 1973 to Rs. 1,932 million (SDR 229 million) in 1975; this increase resulted largely from higher export prices.

Population Growth and Unemployment

The rapid increase of population since the mid-1940's¹³ has been a major contributory factor to many of the socio-economic problems faced by Sri Lanka. The "demographic revolution" caused a significant change in the age composition of the population, producing a high proportion of young persons, which led to a rise in the dependency ratio--the proportion of persons in the dependent age groups below fifteen years within the population. Apart from the increase in the overall population density, which is one of the highest in the Asian region, the pressure of population on cultivated land became increasingly heavy. It was estimated that the area of cultivated land increased by 0.7 percent per annum, while rural population increased by 2.5 percent, between 1946 and 1969. Consequently, the density of rural population per cultivated acre increased steadily from 1.34 in 1946 to 1.81 in 1962 and to 2.02 in 1969.¹⁴ With the limitations on the extent of additional land that could be brought under cultivation, the rapid increase in the rural population aggravated the problems of land fragmentation and small size of cultivated holdings, particularly in the densely populated parts of the country. Throughout the post-independence period, the socio-economic pressures that stemmed from population growth were also strongly felt on the government budget, with its heavy emphasis on population-linked social welfare expenditures. Substantial increases in these expenditures in the 1950's and 1960's diverted resources away from more directly productive investments.

The high rate of population growth after the mid-1940's, resulted in an expansion of the country's labor force and, hence, aggravated the unemployment problem. In the absence of reliable data no accurate comparison can be made between the increase in the labor force and the increase in employment. The available statistics from the censuses of population indicated that, while the country's labor force increased by 25 percent between 1963 and 1971, total employment increased by 13 percent. The different sample surveys in the 1960's gave estimates of unemployment ranging from 400,000 to 450,000 or 10 to 12 percent of the labor force. The Socio-Economic Survey of 1969/1970 revealed an estimated total unemployment of 546,000, 14 percent of the labor force. A more recent survey placed total unemployment at 792,000, 17 percent of the labor force.¹⁵ The preliminary findings of a subsequent survey gave an even higher and more alarming unemployment figure of 982,284, 20 percent of the labor force and 7 percent of the population.¹⁶ Although not strictly comparable, the statistics from the recent survey and the 1969/1970 survey showed that between 1969/1970 and 1974/1975 the country's labor force increased annually by 3.5 percent, while total employment increased annually by 2 percent. According to the same set of statistics, unemployment has risen from half a million to approximately one million, which reflects an extremely serious situation. These figures refer to open unemployment and exclude categories of persons said to be under-employed or partially employed (the distinction between them is not always well defined), which must be widely prevalent in the traditional farming sector and in some of the urban-based service activities. Thus, the extent labor under-utilization in the economy may be much greater than what is indicated by the large numbers who are openly unemployed.¹⁷

In addition to the very large numbers involved, the

unemployment situation in the country reveals two outstanding characteristics--it is largely a problem affecting young persons, and it involves a substantial number of educated youth. The majority of the unemployed persons, who are concentrated in the rural sector, fall within the age group of 15-24 years, constituting 85 percent of the total unemployed as shown in the 1969/1970 survey. Further, a substantial proportion--about 75 percent--of the unemployed in this age group consists of persons with levels of educational attainment of at least eight to twelve years of formal education. Reporting on the unemployment problem in Sri Lanka, an ILO Mission observed that apart from the overall imbalance in the supply of and demand for labor there is also a "structural imbalance" arising from the "mismatching" of the expectations and aspirations of educated youth and the pattern of employment opportunities.¹⁸ Sri Lanka today provides a leading example of the phenomenon of educated unemployment in the less developed countries.

Government Finance, Social Welfare, and Income Distribution

After the 1950's, the government increasingly became the principal agent of socio-economic change in Sri Lanka. Apart from the progressively greater overall regulatory role assumed by the government, the size of the government sector expanded steadily. State participation in many spheres of economic activity resulted in considerable control over the ownership and allocation of resources in the economy. Direct government participation through several state agencies and cooperative institutions is very well established today in such fields as industry, transport, banking and insurance, and more recently, in agriculture. These developments have not only gradually narrowed down the areas of private sector activities, but brought the private sector under increasing direction and control by the state.

The government budget, with its strong redistributive emphasis, has been and remains the principal instrument through which the state provides extensive social welfare services, mostly free or subsidized. Over at least the past two decades, successive governments were committed to policies designed to promote the welfare of large sections of the population through the expansion of educational facilities, health and medical services, other welfare measures and, "income transfers" by way of subsidized food and certain other public utility services. An estimate of "budget incidence"²⁰ (the proportion of taxes paid and benefits received to average income among different income groups) indicated that social benefits received from education, health, and the rice subsidy as a percentage of taxes paid by the two lowest income groups--Rs. 0-200 and Rs. 200-400 per month--constituted 194 and 116 percent, respectively; the percentage is progressively reduced to below 10 percent in the higher income brackets.¹⁹

The fiscal operations of the central government expanded enormously in the 1960's and 1970's. Between 1960 and 1975 the central government expenditure, a third of which represented various transfer payments, increased by 278 percent.²⁰ On a per capita basis, government expenditure increased from Rs. 185 to Rs. 515 between the same years.

The size of the gross budget deficit (excess of government expenditure over revenue) progressively increased after the early 1960's. In 1962/1963 and 1964/1965 the overall budget deficit averaged Rs. 500 million annually. The average deficit climbed to Rs. 980 million in 1967/1968-1969/1970. In 1972-1975, the average deficit further increased to Rs. 1,695 million, nearly 25 percent of total expenditure. The government has managed to bridge the overall deficits through increased domestic borrowing, external borrowing, "money creation"

(borrowing from the banking system), and utilization of cash balances. As the government resorted to a sizable amount of "inflationary financing," government spending became an important source of inflationary pressures in the economy.

While Sri Lanka's performance in terms of per capita income, investment, savings, and employment creation have been unsatisfactory, the nation has succeeded in achieving greater equality in income distribution. In fact, judged by social criteria such as educational progress, improvement in health and medical facilities, and reduction in disparities in income and wealth, Sri Lanka has made significant progress, perhaps unmatched by any other less developed country at a similar stage of development.

Comparable statistical data on changes in income distribution, summarized in Table 6.3, show that income distribution in the country has moved toward greater equality, in the context of a relatively slow growth and rising unemployment levels in the economy. The Gini concentration ratio, which is a commonly used index of inequality, has declined in respect of both income receivers and spending units; the decline has been particularly marked between 1963 and 1973. While there has been a noticeable trend in the reduction of overall income inequality, the data further reveal that the share of income of the highest group has declined and that of the middle deciles and the lowest four deciles has improved. The percentage of income received by the top 20 percent of the income receivers declined (reflecting a marked fall in the share of the highest tenth) from 56.6 percent in 1953 to 45.8 percent in 1973. The share of income received by income receivers in the middle group--third, fourth, fifth, and sixth deciles--has also increased during this period. It is significant that the percentage share of the bottom 40 percent of income receivers--representing groups at poverty levels--

TABLE 6.3--Percentage of Total Income Received by Each Tenth of Income Receivers and Spending Units

Deciles	Income Receivers		Spending Units	
	1953	1963	1973	1963
Highest tenth	42.49	39.24	29.98	36.77
Second tenth	14.16	16.01	15.91	15.54
Third tenth	10.39	11.46	12.65	11.22
Fourth tenth	7.94	8.98	10.56	9.00
Fifth tenth	6.31	6.82	8.75	7.54
Sixth tenth	5.71	5.55	7.10	6.27
Seventh tenth	4.37	4.57	5.70	5.21
Eighth tenth	3.56	3.56	4.38	4.00
Ninth tenth	3.56	2.70	3.17	3.95
Lowest tenth	1.51	1.17	1.80	1.50
Gini Coefficient	0.50	0.49	0.41	0.45
			0.46	0.35

SOURCE: Central Bank of Ceylon, Survey of Sri Lanka's Consumer Finances, 1973 (Colombo: Central Bank of Ceylon, 1974).

increased from 13 to 15 percent between 1953 and 1973. The same trends in a more pronounced manner are observable with respect to spending units as well. However, the improvement that occurred between 1953 and 1963 appears to be slight; in fact, the percentage shares in the lowest four deciles had declined between 1953 and 1963. Significant changes in the relative position have taken place only since 1963; this is true in terms of both income receivers and spending units.

The position of the lowest four deciles showed even greater improvement after the size distribution of income has been adjusted by allocating the various "social benefits" received--primarily from free education, health services, and subsidized food and transportation provided by the government--among the various deciles.²¹ It appears that the economic policies in the 1960's which encouraged greater income generation among small scale agriculturists and other producers have had a favorable distributional effect. These trends have been "further reinforced by welfare state policies."²²

For a less developed country, Sri Lanka has made considerable progress in social welfare and equity. However, many elements in the social welfare and redistributional policies have conflicted with the objectives of faster economic growth. This has resulted, to some extent, in a trade-off between growth and welfare.

Notes

1. See Donald R. Snodgrass, Ceylon: An Export Economy in Transition (Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irvin, Inc., 1966).

2. The Five Year Plan was introduced in 1972. Within two years, it was virtually abandoned, largely on account of the set of adverse circumstances that resulted from the sharp escalation of import prices, which aggravated the foreign exchange difficulties and completely upset the plan's major forecasts and targets.

3. Sri Lanka's present per capita income is approximately 115 U. S. dollars.

4. G. H. Peiris, "Land Reform and Agrarian Change in Sri Lanka," (unpublished manuscript, Peradeniya, 1977).

5. Gamani Corea, "Economic Planning, the Green Revolution and the Food Drive in Ceylon" in Wilfred L. David (ed.), Public Finance, Planning and Economic Development (London: Macmillan, 1973), p. 274.

6. International Labour Office, Matching Employment Opportunities and Expectations: a Programme of Action for Ceylon (Geneva: International Labour Organisation, 1971), p. 89.

7. Central Bank of Ceylon, Annual Report, 1975 (Colombo: Central Bank of Ceylon, 1976), p. 24.

8. Central Bank of Ceylon, Annual Report, 1974 (Colombo: Central Bank of Ceylon, 1975), p. 17.

9. United Nations, Economic Bulletin for Asia and the Far East (June 1972), p. 30.

10. H. N. S. Karunatileke, "Public Sector and the National Economy," Staff Studies, Central Bank of Ceylon (September 1976), p. 193.

11. Central Bank of Ceylon, Annual Report, 1974, p. 56.

12. In 1976, the trade balance (on the basis of customs data) recorded a modest surplus for the first time since 1965. This improvement reflected both the increase in export earnings and reduction in import expenditures. Also for the first time since 1962, the commodity terms of trade improved in 1976 due to the increase in export prices and reduction in import prices. Central Bank of Ceylon, Annual Report, 1976 (Colombo: Central Bank of Ceylon, 1977), p. 76.

13. See Chapter 3 in this volume.

14. Gavin W. Jones and S. Selvaratnam, Population Growth and Economic Development in Ceylon (Colombo: Hansa Publishers, 1972), p. 193.

15. Central Bank of Ceylon, The Determinants of Labour Force Participation Rates in Sri Lanka (Colombo: Central Bank of Ceylon, 1974), p. 143.
16. Central Bank of Ceylon, Bulletin (April 1976), p. 270.
17. See P. J. Richards, Employment and Unemployment in Ceylon (Paris: OECD, 1971).
18. International Labour Office, op. cit., p. 21.
19. Report of the Taxation Inquiry Commission, Sessional Paper X--1968 (Colombo: Government Press, 1968), pp. 57-64.
20. In the data on government expenditure, available only at current prices, the increase partly reflects changes in the price level, which showed a marked upward trend since the mid-1960's. The current prices data on government expenditure adjusted by the GNP implicit deflator--in the absence of a more suitable index--showed that government expenditure in "real terms" increased by 115 percent between 1960 and 1975.
21. See Lal Jayawardena, "Sri Lanka" in Hollis Chenery (ed.), Redistribution with Growth (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 227-279.
22. Ibid., p. 274.

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Chapter 7

EDUCATION

Swarna Jayaweera

Education in Sri Lanka has been for many decades a crucial issue in public debate. Education achievement has been valued as an agent of economic and social mobility, and recent educational changes have created a ferment in a society which is in many ways in transition. Facile assumptions are often made regarding the relationship of education to current problems such as unemployment and youth unrest. There is so much of the old and the new intermingled in the contemporary educational scene that an analysis of the origins of the modern system of education and the impact of recent changes is a prerequisite to the understanding of the present situation in Sri Lanka.

Educational Institutions and Colonial Policies

In the ancient past of Sri Lanka a traditional system of education flourished and declined through centuries of peace and turmoil. Its Buddhist and Brahmin educational institutions and its sophisticated cultural and technological achievements developed to meet some of the basic needs of an agrarian economy and feudal social order with a strong religious orientation. With the disruption of this civilization as a result of foreign invasion and internal disunity, the jungle grew over the ancient cities and traditional educational institutions such as the pirivenas¹ survived largely in pockets of cultural resistance. These pirivenas were reorganized in the nineteenth century in the process of cultural revival but were never integrated into the modern system

of education which had its origins during that century. They survive today and are a part of the education system, but their status and role have not been clearly defined.

During Sri Lanka's colonial experience, the transfer of education accompanying colonial rule resulted in the importation of educational models from the metropolitan countries. Colonial educational policies were geared to meet the political, economic, and social needs of colonial rule and to create, in particular, new values, norms, and loyalties, and new institutional structures as instruments of adaptation and change. Portuguese and Dutch colonial rule were brief episodes in history.² What is usually described as the modern system of education was developed as an agent of acculturation in the nineteenth century. Some of its main features and institutions survived political independence in 1948, and some of its legacies continue to bedevil education and society today.

The British system of education in Sri Lanka had four main features. The first was partnership between Christian missionary agencies and the state with the latter playing a secondary role in education. British colonial rulers were preoccupied firstly with the maintenance of law and order, and secondly with the provision of infrastructural facilities necessary for the promotion of private British economic enterprise. They played a passive role in education for much of the nineteenth century, and the Colonial Office had no explicit colonial educational policy until the third decade of the twentieth century. The Evangelical movement, which was the mainspring of Christian missionary enterprise in the early years of the nineteenth century, the strength of the missionaries as a pressure group, and the British tradition of reliance on missionary education resulted in a denominational system of education. Transplanted into a predominantly non-Christian country, this system discriminated against the religious interests of the majority,³

while a minority, educated in prestigious Christian schools, became a privileged elite. The Buddhist and Hindu renaissance in the latter half of the nineteenth century could not prevail against a situation in which the colonial administration valued the missionaries as political allies and regarded their services as an economic asset in circumstances in which the colonies had to be self-supporting and, hence, had to limit educational expenditure. Despite increasing resentment, the denominational system became sufficiently entrenched to survive into the period of political independence.

The second main feature of the educational system under British rule was a highly centralized educational administration and bureaucracy manned at the decision-making level by British personnel. In this respect Sri Lanka's education system reflected the political needs of colonial rule and the structure of a Crown Colony rather than the model of decentralized educational administration found in Britain.

The third main characteristic of British colonial education policy was that it was geared toward the creation of an elite assimilated to the metropolitan culture⁴ and the provision of cheap and subordinate local administrative personnel trained to work in the official colonial language. The resultant development of fee-levying English-medium schools providing a Western-oriented education for a minority and free and inferior elementary schools in the indigenous languages for the majority was based on two social ideologies: (1) Cultural imperialism and the British pride in their "superior" civilization, which reached a climax at the end of the nineteenth century with Kipling's concept of the "White Man's Burden," made it imperative that British norms and institutions should be exported to the empire to mold the local elite who could function as intermediaries. (2) British nineteenth-century social class bias was inevitably trans-

ferred to Sri Lanka through the colonial administration. As Heussler's study has shown, British Empire builders and administrators came from a ruling class imbued with the conservatism and social exclusiveness characteristic of the English public school ethos.⁵

English-medium schools were therefore restricted in number and were intended to meet the needs of children from well-to-do families. Their curriculum was modeled on that of prototypes in England. Their goal was to ensure success at the examinations of Cambridge and London Universities. British concepts of quality and selectivity and fear of political unrest led to a very slow growth of higher education institutions, which at the end of colonial rule were confined to a Medical College, a Law College, and a University College which prepared students for examinations of the University of London.

These policies had two consequences for the contemporary situation. First, English secondary and higher education functioned as an agent of social and economic mobility as a result of the link between educational achievement and employment. Secondly, while colonial education helped to cut across caste and communal divisions in society, it failed to promote social integration because it created and reinforced a dualistic social structure consisting of a disadvantaged majority and a privileged minority divided by language and economic and social status, who lived in virtually separate cultural worlds. The frustration and conflict engendered by this situation had far reaching implications for subsequent educational policies,

The fourth feature of the education system developed by the British was also fashioned by the structure of the colonial economy. The search for raw materials, markets for British manufactures, and investment fields for British entrepreneurs led to the development of a profitable but alien plantation sector, the absence of industrializa-

tion, and the neglect and stagnation of local peasant agriculture in which the majority of the population were employed. Education met the needs of the expanding service sector. Vocational education in a few institutions patterned on the British model struggled to survive in an inhospitable environment. The delayed development of institutions of higher education reflected the limited range of high-level employment opportunities and particularly the slow rate of Ceylonization of the public service.

The consequent academic bias of educational institutions, their alienation from the economic environment of the masses, and the values they created and buttressed continued after independence and were instrumental in delaying educational and social change.

Reaction and Change

The "winds of change" affected this colonial education system beginning with the introduction of universal suffrage and a semi-representative form of government in 1931, leading to local involvement in policy-making and to increasing governmental responsiveness to mass needs. Policies initiated during this period had far-reaching consequences through subsequent political changes to independence in 1948.

While educational developments in Britain and other Western countries had an influence on changes in Sri Lanka, the main forces that determined education policies in the past four decades emerged as reactions to social and cultural consequences of colonial policies. Policymakers were motivated by the need and demand to re-orient the education system in conformity with national aspirations, and therefore to revive and develop traditional languages, religion, and culture. They were also intent on extending educational opportunities to the majority and on reducing privilege by dethroning the English-language educational institutions and the denominational

system from their advantageous positions in the socio-economic structure.

The first onslaught was directed toward privilege and elitism. Greater access to secondary education was ensured by the establishment after 1940 of forty-four central (secondary) schools in rural areas which were also linked with village primary schools by a system of fifth grade scholarships. After 1944, a policy of free primary, secondary, and tertiary including university education was introduced and fees were abolished in the privileged sector of the education system--the English-medium schools, the university, and other post-secondary institutions. In the same year, the mother tongue was made the medium of instruction in all primary schools, with English as a compulsory second language. For most students, the mother tongue was Sinhala or Tamil. Only those of Eurasian descent, offspring of mixed marriages, and Muslims were permitted to be educated in English.⁶

A dent was made in the denominational system after almost half a century of agitation with the enforcement of a positive conscience clause. In 1947 provision was made to teach religion in all state schools and to limit grants to children of like religion in denominational schools, although the latter policy was never implemented. The accident of war also hastened the localization of public examinations, leading to the establishment in 1942 of an autonomous University of Ceylon by amalgamating the Medical College and the University College. The need for reorganizing the school system was not overlooked, but the proposed tripartite system of secondary education was so obviously based on the British model and inappropriate to local circumstances that it was rejected by the legislature. Bifurcation of the secondary school after a selective examination at fourteen years of age was accepted as an alternative but was largely a theoretical exercise.

The years immediately after political independence in 1948 were characterized by gradualism and continuity rather than by radical change, as befitted the predilections of the Sri Lankan elite who took over the reins of government from the colonial ruler. However, the welfare-oriented policies of the 1940's continued to focus on free education, free health services, food subsidies, and agricultural settlements in the dry zone. Approximately 40 percent of the budget was allocated for social services, and over the years expenditure on education reached a proportion of 5.2 percent of GNP and averaged between 16 and 20 percent of annual public expenditure.

Meanwhile, the underprivileged majority had become very articulate by the mid 1950's and Sinhala Buddhist radical nationalism emerged as a powerful force in policy formulation. Relegated to a "culture of silence" through years of neglect and deprivation, this pressure group now launched an attack on social, cultural and religious privilege. In 1956, Sinhala, the language of the majority, replaced English as the official language, with subsequent provision for "reasonable use of Tamil." The use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in the secondary school was accelerated so that by 1959 the entire school system functioned in the three media. Two centers of Buddhist studies were transformed into the Vidyodaya and Vidyalandara Universities in 1959 to offset the Western and elitist orientation of the University of Ceylon. In 1960-1961, the denominational system was abolished and, with the exception of some urban institutions which opted for private school status, the majority of denominational schools were converted into state educational institutions. These changes were aimed at reducing religio-cultural inequalities, but as emotive issues they created considerable tension, some of which are manifest even today.

The Expansion of Education

The cumulative result of the introduction of free education, the change in the medium of instruction, and the extension of educational facilities was a rapid increase in enrollment. Social demand and the internal dynamics of the education system were further accelerated by the population explosion from the mid-1940's to the mid-1960's. Despite the absence of a national compulsory education law, enrollment increased sharply at the first or elementary level (ages five to fourteen years) in the late 1940's and early 1950's, at the second level (ages fifteen to nineteen years) in the late 1950's, and in the university in the early 1960's (see Tables 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3). Subsequently, the growth rate has slackened but in the interval a more open system of education had replaced the elitist colonial structure.

The trend toward the equalization of educational opportunity also resulted in a reduction of sex and urban-rural differentials in educational participation. A 1971 literacy rate of 78.1 percent for the total population included rates of 85.2 percent for men and 70.7 percent for women, while the literacy rates in the urban and rural sectors were 85.6 and 75.9 percent, respectively (see Tables 7.4, 7.5, and 7.6). Caste is no longer a significant factor in educational provision or attainment, and only 2 percent of the total student population are enrolled in private schools, although some of these schools are among the most prestigious educational institutions in the country.

Even in the narrowest sector of the educational pyramid where only 1.6 percent of the relevant age group (ages nineteen to twenty-five) receive formal instruction, the social composition of the university has been transformed from its Western-oriented, elitist, urban, male image; the ethnic and religious imbalances of the past have been corrected; and women students have increased

TABLE 7.1.--Schools, Teachers, and Students
at First and Second Levels

Year	Number of schools	Number of teachers	Number of students	Percent of age group 5-14 in schools	Percent of age group 15-19 in schools
1931	5304	18,242	553,701		
1947	5915	28,210	1,025,836	57.6	
1953	6480	43,335	1,564,848	71.6	11.2
1963	9100	81,211	2,460,694	75.1	36.1
1970	9646	94,583	2,550,150	85.4 (ages 5-9) 60.0 (ages 5-19)	
1975	9675	99,067	2,543,600	77.3 (ages 6-9) 65.1 (ages 10-14)	

SOURCE: Ministry of Education Reports.

TABLE 7.2.--Student Enrollment at the First
and Second Levels (General Education),
1953-1975

Year	First Level:	Second Level:	
	Grades 1-8	Grades 9-10	Grades 11-12
1953	1,477,138	81,840	5,870
1957	1,614,470	151,268	6,946
1960	2,008,885	207,716	17,415
1963	2,180,552	300,044	34,685
1967	2,201,040	310,091	47,394
1970	2,267,906	313,500	46,901
1975	2,042,700	423,200	77,304

SOURCE: Administrative Reports of the Director of Education for 1953, 1957, and 1960; and School Census, 1970 and 1975.

TABLE 7.3.--Student Enrollment at the Universities

Year	Peradeniya	Colombo	Vidyodaya	Vidyalankara
1942	904	-	-	-
1950	2036	-	-	-
1960	3181	-	501	445
1965	10723	-	1649	1996
1968	5368	4731	2131	2113
1974 ^a	4593	3531	1900	2023

Year	Katubedde	Jaffna	Total
1942	-	-	904
1950	-	-	2036
1960	-	-	4127
1965	-	-	14368
1968	-	-	14343
1974 ^a	686	129	12862

a. The 1974 figures refer to the six campuses of the single University of Sri Lanka.

SOURCE: Reports, University of Ceylon, Vidyodaya University, Vidyalankara University, and the University of Sri Lanka.

TABLE 7.4.--Educational Level of Population

	1953 (%)	1963 (%)	1971 (%)
No schooling	41.6	36.6	17.5
Primary	46.8	39.3	44.6
Middle	9.8	19.6	30.6
GCE/SSC ^a	0.9	3.4	6.6
Higher/Advanced level and above	0.9	1.1	0.9

a. General Certificate of Education/Senior School Certificate.

SOURCE: Census Reports for 1953, 1963, and 1971.

TABLE 7.5.--Literacy Rates, 1946-1971^a

Year	Total	Males	Females
1946	57.8%	70.1%	43.8%
1953	65.4	75.9	53.6
1963	71.6	79.3	63.2
1971	78.1	85.2	70.7

a. For 1946, 1953, and 1963, the literacy rates are for persons five years of age and over. For 1971, the rates are for persons ten years of age and over.

SOURCE: Census Reports for 1946, 1953, 1963, and 1971.

TABLE 7.6.--Literacy by Age Groups, 1971

Age groups	Percentage literate
10-14	82.8
15-19	86.5
20-24	86.8
25-29	84.3
30-34	82.4
35-39	74.2
40-44	74.7
45-49	69.5
50-54	68.2
55-59	63.1
60-64	59.8
65-69	57.0
70-74	52.2
75 and older	42.1
All ages	78.1

SOURCE: Census Report, 1971.

their proportion from 10.1 percent in 1942 to 42 percent in 1972, with a slight decline to 38.9 percent in 1976.⁷ A shift in the language of instruction in the university from English to increasing use of Sinhala and Tamil and the administration of university entrance examinations in the indigenous languages, commencing in 1959, opened the possibility of university education to the large numbers of youths, predominantly rural, who had received their earlier education in those languages. Thus, the near monopoly of university education held by the English-speaking elite was ended. A recent survey of the origins of 1976 university entrants has shown that 40 percent of these students had parents in working class occupations, 40.1 percent of them came from families with an income of less than Rs. 200 per month, and 45.2 percent were from predominantly rural districts.⁸

The Education Structure

A striking feature of the educational situation was the absence of significant structural change over nearly four decades. The preoccupation with increasing input and output and with equalizing educational opportunity led only to linear expansion and to the consequent replication of outworn institutions geared to the needs of an administrative and professional elite. The need for structural and curriculum reform was, however, recognized and several unsuccessful efforts made to reorganize the school system. In 1950, a nebulous scheme for comprehensive junior secondary and selective senior secondary education was formulated and subsequently abandoned.⁹ In the aftermath of controversy over the language and religious issues, attention was once more directed toward the structure and content of education in the 1960's. In 1962 the National Education Commission proposed a common eight-year elementary school and four types of non-selective four-year secondary schools.¹⁰ A White Paper issued in 1964 favored a four-year comprehensive secondary school

with four curriculum streams.¹¹ In 1966, another White Paper by a different administration suggested a selective system of diversified secondary schools,¹² which was amended in an abortive Education Bill in 1967 to propose a diversified system of senior secondary education.¹³ All these plans generated academic discussion but bore no fruit due partly to the laissez-faire attitude of successive administrations.

In the 1970's, therefore, the school system differed very little from its colonial ancestor except for its national orientation. Its academic and literary bias had hardly been modified by occasional and sometimes tentative additions to the curriculum. In 1970, of 9,541 schools, only 147 had science laboratories for advanced studies, 524 had laboratories for grade ten course, 355 had commercial classes, 375 had craft classes and 127 had agricultural laboratories. In the University of Ceylon, lack of sensitivity to changing social needs resulted in an increase in enrollment in arts courses from 45.5 percent in 1960 to 68.2 percent in 1966 due to imbalance in curriculum provisions to meet the influx of students during this period (Table 7.7).

As in the past, the education system was geared to use competitive public examinations to fulfil as expeditiously as possible its meritocratic and selective functions. Like its British model, specialization in the Sri Lanka secondary school began at fourteen years of age after a five-year primary and three-year junior secondary education with the choice of arts, science and, in a few instances, commerce and handicraft courses leading to the local General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) examination. Between 10 and 12 percent of sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds who qualified at this examination then proceeded to select arts, science and (a lesser number) commerce courses leading to the local General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level) examination. Entry to the

TABLE 7.7.--Enrollment by Faculties, University of Ceylon

Year	Arts and Oriental Studies		Science		Medical and Dental		Agriculture and Vet. Science	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1942-43	396	43.6	165	18.3	343	37.9	-	-
1960-61	1,678	45.5	562	15.3	1,115	30.2	47	1.3
1966-67	7,108	68.2	802	7.7	1,646	15.8	153	1.5
Year	Engineering		Others		Total enrollment			
	No.	%	No.	%				
1942-43	-	-	-	-	904			
1960-61	248	6.8	33	0.9	3,684			
1966-67	571	5.5	143	1.4	10,423			

SOURCE: University of Ceylon, Annual Reports of the Council.

university depended on performance at this examination and availability of university places. In 1976, 18,000 of approximately 60,000 candidates qualified for admission but only 3,880 found places in the university. To the majority of students, therefore, the schools are almost a blind alley.

In 1972, a series of phased educational reforms were introduced with the expressed aim of reorientating the system to meet new social needs.¹⁴ The age of admission was raised from five to six years and the five-year primary school is now followed by a four-year junior secondary education to grade nine, with a common curriculum in ten areas--the mother tongue, English, mathematics, general science, social studies, religion, health and physical education, aesthetic education, and two pre-vocational subjects (a new feature). This common curriculum leads to the National Certificate of General Education which is replacing the GCE (Ordinary Level) examination. At the senior secondary level, the Higher National Certificate of Education (HNCE) examination is intended to replace the GCE (Advanced Level) examination. Students select one of five groups of subjects--science, technical, social science, management and commerce, and humanities, but have in addition to offer a common or foundation core of subjects--the mother tongue, English, cultural heritage and socio-economic environment, elementary statistics, elements of management, principles of socialism, and an environmental project. HNCE courses are intended to be terminal as well as to provide the basis for entry to tertiary education institutions.

These reforms have been associated with the 1972 Five-Year-Plan, which gave an important place to policies such as land reform, rural regeneration, labor intensive technology, and self-employment. It is too early yet to assess their impact as the first cohort of stu-

dents have yet to complete the new secondary course. No comprehensive evaluation has yet been made but limitations of resources and trained personnel have presented implementation problems.

The vocational education scene is much more bleak and far less innovative. A single second-level Agricultural School, eight elementary practical farm schools, two senior and eight junior technical schools, an Institute of Aesthetic Studies, and twenty-nine teachers' colleges, all with a total enrollment of approximately 15,000, and a limited quantum of non-formal trade, craft, and technical courses are available to meet the needs of about 150,000 annual school leavers. As in the past, these institutions tend to be a refuge for dropouts from academic courses.

At the tertiary level, the university continued its role of elite formation and its isolation from the environment even after its social exclusiveness ended in the 1960's with the influx of students from a wide spectrum of society. University enrollment has been restricted since 1967, the centralization that has been characteristic of the school system has encroached on the autonomy of the university as a result of two University Acts in 1966 and 1972,¹⁵ and the four universities which had developed independently were amalgamated as campuses of a single university structure in 1972, to which were added two more campuses. The university reforms of 1972 had as their objective "rationalization" under one authority and the introduction of "job-oriented" courses. The inevitable consequence of so unwieldy and nebulous an exercise has been to create more confusion.

In addition, the only alternative avenues in tertiary education are the Law College, five polytechnical institutes, and a few private institutions or programs. (A short-lived experiment with junior universities ended in 1970.) A pluralistic tertiary education structure and

a wide range of non-formal education programs have yet to be developed to relieve the bottleneck and frustration at the point of entry to the university.

Some Current Problems

As in colonial times, the roots of inertia regarding radical educational change, as distinct from expansion, lie in the economy. The lack of dynamic economic policies and co-ordinated planning and development have led to a situation where there has been a very sluggish economic growth rate, little diversification in the economic structure, and hardly any change in the sectoral distribution of the economy. Consequently the impetus and demand from the economic environment for educational change has been minimal in contrast to the social demand for equalization of educational opportunity, while the current economic crisis precludes any large-scale expenditure in restructuring the education system. A brief analysis of current problems will illustrate further the multi-faceted relationship between education and the social-economic environment in Sri Lanka.

While rigidities of structure and irrelevance of content in different sectors of the education system present problems, this discussion will be confined to three broader social issues that are particularly characteristic of economically developing societies in which educational expansion has tended to outrun economic development--educational "wastage" and imbalances, "educated" unemployment and youth unrest.

Egalitarian policies in Sri Lanka have extended educational opportunities to many who were previously disadvantaged in this respect, but the benefits of these policies have been somewhat negated by a high drop-out rate. Despite the provision of free education facilities, the retention rate was only 36 percent in grade nine in 1971 (Table 7.8). The pyramid continues to narrow with 18 percent of grade nine students currently qualifying

TABLE 7.8--Retention Rates at Grades 1-11,
Class of 1962

Grade	Retention rate (base grade 1 is 100)
1 A	100.00
1 B	90.82
2	88.16
3	73.27
4	64.26
5	52.88
6	46.84
7	41.24
9	36.00
10	58.10
11	4.69

SOURCE: Compiled by Marga Institute from Ministry of Education School Census, and reported in Needs of Children and Adolescents (Colombo: Marga Institute, 1975).

for senior secondary education, approximately 6 percent of grade eleven students obtaining admission to the university and an equally small proportion enrolling in vocational education institutions. Resource constraints have limited the provision of higher and further education facilities in a country in which a high population growth rate has created a youth population of 39.3 percent under fifteen years of age and 20.5 percent between fifteen and twenty-five years at the time of the 1971 Census. The early leaving problem in secondary schools, however, highlights the inability of free education

facilities to compensate for poor socio-economic conditions.

Another facet of the problem of the supply of education is the existence of regional imbalances in education. Education provision has in fact tended to reflect the pattern of socio-economic development in the country and to illustrate the general trend for educational expansion to benefit economically favored regions in the initial stages. Pressure from the more articulate in developed areas has contributed to education reinforcing existing disparities. In Sri Lanka, for instance, the best developed education regions are Colombo and its southwest coastal neighborhood and the Jaffna peninsula in the North, while the interior of the island has yet to overcome the handicap of centuries of neglect.

Elementary education is relatively widespread in all parts of the island, but imbalances are evident in crucial areas such as access to prestigious courses in science in senior secondary schools and in the university, due to the unequal distribution of qualified teaching personnel and equipment. A survey of regional imbalances in 1970 indicated that 52.5 percent of university entrants to science-based courses came from the Colombo district and 24.7 percent from the Jaffna district.¹⁶ A survey of university entrants in 1976 revealed that the figures were 43.2 percent and 20.5 percent, respectively, for these two districts.¹⁷

Unemployment is not a new phenomenon in Sri Lanka, but the rate of unemployment has increased sharply over the last two decades.¹⁸ Widespread criticism of education as a crucial factor in exacerbating the unemployment situation necessitates an examination of the relationship between education and unemployment. The economy has not been able to absorb into employment the burgeoning population that had been contained in educational institutions through extension of facilities from

the mid-forties to the mid-sixties, but which has subsequently caused an "explosion" in the labor force. Those affected are chiefly youths seeking to enter the labor market. Despite contrary assumptions, the majority of the unemployed have had a primary education (22.5 per cent) or an incomplete secondary education (44.6 per cent) and are obviously the numerous dropouts of the school system (see Table 7.9). The greatest frustration, however, is experienced by those with GCE(O) (ten years of schooling) and GCE(A) (twelve years of schooling) in the age group between fifteen and twenty-five years. The 1960's also saw the emergence of two new categories of unemployed--university graduates and educated women.

TABLE 7.9--Unemployed Population (Ages 15-59 Years) by Educational Level

	Total (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
No schooling	5.5	4.1	7.5
Primary	22.5	27.6	14.6
Middle	44.6	49.6	37.2
GCE(O)	24.1	16.1	35.3
GCE(A)	3.3	1.9	5.4

SOURCE: Socio-Economic Survey of Ceylon, 1969-1970.

In terms of needs there is no surplus of educated manpower in Sri Lanka, but the limited absorptive capacity of the economy in relation to the output of the educational institutions has converted unemployment into "educated" unemployment. In recent years, university graduates have found employment through state sponsored schemes but at levels of income regarded by them as not being commensurate with their educational qualifications.

The education system has also been blamed for molding the aspirations of educated youths, leading them to

seek employment in overcrowded high-level occupations in the service sector of the economy. It is true that the strong link established between educational achievement and employment has been a barrier to flexibility in occupational choice. Nevertheless, vocational aspirations in Sri Lanka, as in any other country, are determined less by the content of education than by the wage and incentive structure. Moreover, in Sri Lanka the availability of welfare services such as food subsidies and family support, the low private costs of education, the traditional role of the state as the major employer, and the absence of adequate infrastructural facilities for self-employment are all factors which contribute to selectivity in vocational choice.

The unemployed school dropouts and school leavers have helped to swell the ranks of a restive youth population. Until the mid-1960's the university had been able to channel its graduates, including the rural intelligentsia, into middle-class elitist occupations, many in the service sector. The role of education as an agent of social and economic mobility has, however, been restricted by the economic situation. Economic constraints, the saturation of the service sector, and the increase in the student population have introduced new tensions into the social fabric.

"Non-elite" youth are frustrated by the lack of jobs at expected levels of income. They are keenly aware of the stagnation of their rural environment with its low income and prestige, indebtedness, and unemployment, and of their disadvantaged position in a social milieu still dominated by the Western-oriented English-speaking minority. Their political consciousness has been heightened by the reduction of the voting age to eighteen years in 1959, their exposure in an open society to a whole spectrum of political ideologies, and the existence of a well organized urban Left movement and a politically arti-

culate rural peasantry in Sri Lanka, as well as worldwide student unrest since the 1960's. Although student unrest in Sri Lanka has been a common feature since the mid-1960's, the strongest manifestation of the frustration of youth was the insurgent activity which surfaced in 1971, with tragic consequences for many youths.

Conclusion

In Sri Lanka a change has been manifest from the colonial role of elite-formation ascribed to education toward the goal of equal opportunity. This has led to the establishment of a relatively open school system without a selective apparatus until the stage of senior secondary education.

Education soon outpaced economic development but, as in most other societies, it failed in Sri Lanka to compensate for environmental deprivation. It also became dysfunctional in a lagging economy with a high rate of population growth and a critical youth unemployment problem. In recent years, the goal of welfare has been augmented by an effort to bridge the gap between education and the economy. Vocationalization of education without relevant socio-economic change has, however, led to oversupply and unemployment in several countries, and the use of new skills depends once again on the absorptive capacity of the economy. It seems, therefore, evident that education by itself cannot ensure balanced social and economic development in Sri Lanka, and that the outcomes of educational policies will always be affected by the social, economic, and political environment in which they have inevitably to function.

Notes

1. The pirivenas were founded in the third century, B. C., to train young Buddhist novices in the religious order but they soon expanded their function to meet the educational needs of the lay elite.
2. The Portuguese and the Dutch each set up one or two seminaries (post-elementary institutions) and a number of parish schools chiefly to propagate their religion.
3. Unlike in England, the missionaries in Sri Lanka succeeded in persuading the colonial administration not to enforce a conscience clause.
4. The first British Governor, Lord Frederick North, stated that the objective was to create a people "connected with England by education and by office and connected by the ties of blood with the principal native families." Despatch, Governor to Secretary of State, 26/21/1799, Colonial Office, London.
5. Robert Keussler, Yesterday's Rulers: The Making of the British Colonial Service (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1963).
6. Report of the Special Committee on Education, Sessional Paper XXIV--1943 (Colombo, Government Press, 1943).
7. See Chapter 9, Tables 9.5 and 9.6, for data on university enrollments by sex.
8. D. Gunaratne, et al., "University Admissions 1976, Background Characteristics of the Entrant Population," Ministry of Education, Colombo, March 1977 (unpublished report).
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13. General and Technical Education: A Bill Presented by the Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs, November 1967 (Colombo: Government Press, 1967).
14. "Medium Term Plan for the Development of Education 1973-77," Planning and Programming Division, Ministry of Education, March 1973 (unpublished document).

15. Higher Education Act No. 20 of 1966; and University of Ceylon Act No. I of 1972.

16. S. Jayaweera, "Regional Imbalances in Education," Journal of the National Education Society of Ceylon, XX (1971).

17. Gunaratne, et al., "University Admissions 1976."

18. For discussions of the growth in unemployment, see Chapters 3, 4, and 6.

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Chapter 8

RITES OF PASSAGE AND KINSHIP TIES

Geraldine Gamburd

Dawn is breaking as the preparations for Isatemenawa continue.¹ The eldest daughter of the family, Indrani, has come of age and the family will celebrate with 150 guests. As soon as Indrani's mother learned of the momentous event, twelve days ago, she had Indrani confined to her room. Then, her mother fixed kiribat, a milk rice that is a sign of rejoicing. First she served the kiribat to Indrani's father; later, she took some to Indrani's maternal uncle who lives in the same compound. He ate it and placed a sum of money on the empty platter to wish his niece good luck.

Coming of age in Sinhala society not only provides an occasion for celebration, but is also a critical event to the young woman. A new horoscope is cast based on the time of the exact occurrence of the first menstrual blood; this horoscope will determine the young woman's future, her marriage possibilities, and other events. Indrani's new horoscope was cast by her great aunt, Aggie-ac̣ci. Her mother and her mother's sister went to consult Aggie-ac̣ci the morning that Indrani came of age. Indrani's mother respectfully offered Aggie-ac̣ci a handful of betel and tobacco with a rupee note inside. "Why do you bring this?" Aggie-ac̣ci inquired. "Because my daughter has come of age," the mother replied. Upon learning the exact time of the coming of age, Aggie-ac̣ci consulted Indrani's horoscope to make up a chart of times that would be auspicious for the events of the next twelve days. Luckily, her coming of age had been at a good time and Indrani's future would be good.

Then, the family washerwoman, Asela, was summoned. She brought a clean gown every few days until this, the twelfth and final day of the coming of age ritual. In addition, a new water pot was placed in Indrani's room. On the final day, the pot would be used to give Indrani a full bath, her first full bath since she was confined. This was the day of complete bathing (nana davasa) and coming out (eliyata ganna davasa). Following is Indrani's description of the events of the twelfth day:

Some of my relatives came last night to be here early this morning. Two of my nandas, father's sisters, came. Ann, my father's youngest sister, will help with my bathing because she is my luckiest nanda. Most of my relatives will just come because they are expected to for this occasion but nanda Ann was especially invited to help with my bathing. She was born here and the house is named after her. Mother's eldest sister, my loku amma (elder mother) has come too, but mother is wondering why her youngest sister, my podu amma (small or young mother) hasn't come. She must have been having difficulties at home or has there been some misunderstanding so she is angry with us? Father's cousin (his mother's brother's son) and his wife came too, and a friend of father's who is a health inspector.

The washerman's family, Edwin and Asela from Nagoda, are here already this morning. For her help Asela will be given a mat, pillow, and sheet. She already has the dress I was wearing when I first came of age. She will be given rice and paddy, a tray with milk rice and oil cakes, and thirty rupees.

Everything is ready. There is a basket with bananas, milk rice, and kāvun (an oil cake used at festive times); a new pot with the medicinal herbs prescribed by Aggie-acci. There is a plate of kiribat. My new dress* for the bath is red as Aggie-acci said it should be. The towel, bathing clothes*, underclothes, and pillow are already at the well. It is almost 6:05 A.M., the auspicious time for my bathing ceremony to begin. Father's sisters are discussing which way I should face when I leave the house.

Indrani walks toward the well. Her mother, mother's eldest sister (loku-amma), and father's youngest sister (nānda), Ann, follow. The well is surrounded with curtains to assure privacy. Indrani stands near a small sapling milk tree (kirigaha), in this case a jak tree called a milk tree because it exudes milk when a branch is broken. Indrani chops a small branch off the sapling while her nānda Ann pours the first pot of water and recites proper verses. Indrani's mother soaps her while nānda Ann pours more water from the new pot containing the medicinal herbs, used only for this occasion. When empty, this pot is circled round Indrani's head three times and broken. Then she is covered with a white sheet so she can change out of her wet clothes. On the way back to the house she cuts a coconut in half with a special knife called a kāṭṭa. Her mother greets her at the door with a plate of kiribat, an oil lamp, and gifts, symbols of good luck. The gifts are exceptional as Indrani's family is of high standing. The plate holds 100 rupees, a watch, two bracelets, a necklace with a sovereign, and earrings. Indrani then sits on a mat to pound paddy. Afterwards, she places an oil lamp with seven lights on the table to burn throughout the occasion. She must also eat a bit of the milk rice. Finally, she goes further into the house to complete her change of dress. Asela the washerwoman is now given her gift of goods because her services are completed.² The women go behind closed doors to help Indrani complete her change into a lace covered beige dress. She dons the jewelry given to her on the plate of milk rice. Her cousin sister (father's brother's daughter) helps her comb her hair. She puts on white pantaloons and shoes to complete her costume. It is now 6:28 A.M.

Indrani is given advice by her mother's mother, mother's sister, and Ann nānda. When she comes to pay respect to her maternal grandfather, he sheds what are

called happy tears (satutu kandulu). Perhaps he is remembering the many joyous events there have been here for Indrani and for others.

Two months before she was born, Indrani's mother came back from her husband's family home to this her maternal house where family members could help her, and where Hindu and Buddhist specialists known to her family could conduct the ceremonies surrounding birth. In that seventh month of pregnancy, Indrani's grandfather and grandmother had asked the astrologer for an auspicious day to bring Indrani's mother home for ceremonies and care. Then, in the ninth month a devil dancer performed a malbaliya as a blessing for the mother. Buddhist bhikkhus chanted pirit all night for the same reason. Luckily, the delivery was not delayed so a charmer had not had to be called to perform a lime cutting ceremony to counteract evil influences which might be blocking the delivery. The grandfather's son Sidney, mother's brother to Indrani, had pounded seven coconut shells with eyes in a mortar to avert any stomach ache his sister, the new mother, might get. The grandfather further remembered that after the midwife had bathed Indrani she had stopped crying when a small amount of gold dust rubbed in her mother's milk was placed in her mouth. Then he had held her for the first time, and had given her to other members of the family to hold. On this occasion, too, the relatives had been notified with a milk rice plate and they had come to join in the celebrations and to include Indrani in the network of kin relations.

Perhaps the grandfather is reminded of all the small childhood occasions. The next ceremony of her birth was when a kāpurala came for the pahan eliya (lights of the oil lamp), the ceremony performed the first time Indrani was taken out of the house to the temple. Or perhaps he is remembering when he cut her first lock of hair near

the end of her first year. He cut it then, even though she was still so very small, because if he had cut her hair in the second year when she would begin to learn to speak it might have endangered her ability to talk. It was heart warming to remember just how much Indrani, the eldest child, had indeed talked in her second year. The piercing of her ears had been a very simple ceremony. However, for the ceremony at which she was first fed rice, many guests had been invited, just like today. And he must not forget her first letter ceremony in her third year. It was surely performed at an auspicious time because Indrani became a very good student. Or perhaps he is thinking that today's coming of age ceremony will be followed by the most important occasion of all for Indrani and the family, her wedding. Her wedding will establish her own and her husband's rank in the adult world. With her wedding she may enhance or lower the status of the whole family, so a good marriage must be arranged for her. At that time, again, all the relatives will come and a whole new set of relations of the groom as well, unless she marries a cross cousin to renew and strengthen ties already in existence. Would she marry someone from this hamlet as some young women do, or would she marry a young man from two or three miles away or perhaps as far as twenty-five or more miles away? Would her husband join her here in a binna marriage or would she move away to join him in dīga, at his family home? Many decisions would need to be made. In any case as a wife she would have a whole new set of responsibilities. She would take on the duties of cooking, gathering firewood, and perhaps weaving palm fronds for the roof of the firewood hut. She might become a teacher in a nearby school.

At 6:30 A.M., two friends had begun to prepare the tables with white table cloths for the morning meal of milk rice, sweets, and bananas. At about 7:00 several

of the closest and most respected relatives were invited to sit at the first table. Indrani sat with her sister, brother, mother, father's sister, and her daughter, Ann nānda (who is considered lucky because her husband has a good job and all her children are doing well), grandfather, mother's sister and her daughter, mother's brother and his wife.

Plates of milk and rice had been sent to all of these relatives on the first day Indrani came of age. Her brother went to his father's brother, but the latter had not come. Indrani's mother and father and her other brother took the milk rice plate invitation to the others who sat at the first table. More than a dozen families of neighbors and tenants were informed but not invited. At least twenty additional families of relatives were invited to come for lunch. They began to arrive around 9:30. The musicians arrived in a car at 10:15.

By noon all had arrived for an elaborate dinner of rice and hot curries, large glasses of water, and a cooling dessert of curd. Indrani's extended family includes the siblings of her grandparents and several of each of their offspring, as well as descendants of the direct line of grandparents. Since families often consist of five or six children, this makes possible a coming of age festival with as many as 150 guests. To the Sinhala people, a supportive network of kin relationships is important and life cycle ceremonies are used to unite relatives. Hence, the 150 relatives gathered to celebrate Indrani's coming out.

Indrani's family belongs to the caste of cinnamon growers. They live in a number of enclaves four to six square miles in area, each of which once formed a self-sufficient complex. The enclaves encompass hamlets of farmers of rice as well as farmers of cinnamon and coconut, fishermen, potters, goldsmiths, drummers, mat weavers, leather workers, and washermen. According to

Indrani's people, caste began long ago when the king claimed to own the land and the labor of the people. He assigned each kinship group a craft or other duty to perform (rājakāriya, work for the king). He allocated areas of land and a full complement of crafts and service families to his favorites. Those favorites became patrons of self-sufficient enclaves in exchange for providing goods and services to the king as an annual tax. The king or patron lived in the best house. Goods and services were centralized and redistributed from there. Once these unequal patron-client relationships were created they spread from those external relationships between members of different castes to the relationships internal to and between members of the same caste or kinship group. Indrani's people recognize these differences and express them in many ways. One way is by choosing the most important persons and having them eat at a first table. These unequal relationships create ill will and it may be this kind of thing that Indrani's mother feared when she saw that her youngest sister had not come for the occasion. The wider setting of caste causes competition and strain among the families within the kinship group.

Let us examine Indrani's relatives in more detail. There is a word, nadaya, which has the general meaning of relative. But relatives are connected to each other in different ways and by different rights. Hence, there are different kinds of relatives (just as a distinction may be made between relatives and relatives by marriage, or in-laws). The members of Indrani's family recognize four different categories of kin: variaga, hatmutu par-amparawa, nāna/massina, and pavula.

The first category, variga, refers to those kin with whom an individual shares rights to a name. Names in Sinhala society come from the father only. That is, they are transmitted patrilineally. Hence, brother and sister are variga to each other, but are not variga to their

mother (whose name derives from her father).

Hatmutu paramparawa kin are those with whom an individual shares the rights of residence. Hatmutu paramparawa refers to the hamlet of a lineal kin group. It is a residential unit of local kinsmen who are descended from a common founding ancestress. A given individual's hatmutu paramparawa kin are determined by two factors: where his/her parents chose to live and where he/she chooses to live after marriage. Sinhala couples can live with either the husband's parents (dīga marriage) or with the wife's parents (binna marriage). Their offspring inherit the right to residence in the place that their parents chose to live, that is, they inherit the right to residence with either their father's family or their mother's family, but not both. A newly married couple, in turn, must choose to live with either the husband's family or the wife's family. If they live with the husband's family, his kin in that place are their hatmutu paramparawa kin. If they live with the wife's family, her kin in that place are their hatmutu paramparawa kin. Hence, individuals have some choice in determining their hatmutu paramparawa kin.

Nāna/massinā kin are those to whom one has a right as a marriage partner. The Sinhala practice prescriptive cross cousin marriage. That is, one is supposed to marry his or her cross cousin (mother's brother's or father's sister's offspring). Parallel cousins (offspring of mother's sister or father's brother) are considered siblings and are not potential marriage partners. Therefore, a Sinhala male should marry his nāna (that is, mother's brother's daughter or father's sister's daughter,) ³ and a female, her massinā (mother's brother's son or father's sister's son). It is said that massinā and nāna "have blood claims (le urumaya) upon each other. This means that they 'belong' to each other from their birth."⁴ If a girl does not marry her massinā, she must ask his

permission to marry a man outside of that category as the massinā has first claim to her. Thus, if Indrani does not marry a cross cousin, she must seek permission from a cross cousin before marrying someone else.

The fourth kin category is the pavula, those with whom one shares rights to land. Rights to land derive from both parents and hence both your maternal and paternal kin are your pavula. This term, like nadayo, is a term that includes all the other kin categories. It is very broad and sometimes is even used to refer to the caste group as a whole.

At Indrani's coming out ceremony, many of her nadayo kinsmen were expected to attend. It is through ceremonies such as this that kin ties are reaffirmed and rights acknowledged. Moreover, the celebratory mood serves to mute the tensions that are bound to arise between kin of unequal wealth and status and with different rights upon each other. Indrani's coming out ceremony thus serves two very different functions. First, it is a rite of passage for Indrani herself and the ceremony is used to mark her new status as a woman (and her potential marriageability). Second, it re-establishes important links between kin who are geographically dispersed and variously related. The feasting of several hundred guests should not, then, be lightly dismissed. Rather, it underscores the social ramifications of family ties in Sri Lanka.

Notes

1. For the sake of anonymity names have been changed. Relationships of two separate hamlets have been presented in an effort to disguise both. I want to express my gratitude formally for the many happy hours shared with those who held these ceremonies and taught us their customs. I am also grateful to the American Institute of Ceylon Studies for the grant which made this research possible.

2. At one time, before there was contact with the West and before industrialization, ceremonies provided the primary mode by which goods and services were exchanged. Even though part of a redistributive exchange, in this case, the thirty rupees money gift expresses the current change toward a market economy.

3. Sinhala kin categories of cross-cousin include a wide range of relatives, not just the true cross-cousin.

4. Nur Yalman, Under the Bo Tree (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 170.

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Chapter 9

ASPECTS OF THE ROLE AND POSITION OF WOMEN

Swarna Jayaweera

In the traditional society of Sri Lanka through its long recorded history of over 2,000 years women have functioned in their ascribed role of wife and mother in a close-knit family structure; in the less favored socio-economic groups, they have shared in the economic activities of the basic social unit, the village. From time to time a few women also emerged into leadership roles and made a significant contribution to national life.

External pressures from different cultures in the last 500 years have modified social values and structures without radically changing the basis of life. In the nineteenth century, for instance, the "Victorian" conception of women as being inferior and dependent helped to relegate them to a subordinate role while at the same time access to education introduced many women to new vistas of life. This process of "modernization" continued in the twentieth century, and the momentum of change increased as elsewhere in the last forty years. In Sri Lanka the introduction of universal suffrage in 1931 and free education in 1945 accelerated social change by motivating women to participate more effectively in national life and by ensuring greater access to education and employment.

Political and Legal Status

Sri Lanka women, unlike their other Asian counterparts, did not play an active part in the pre-independence nationalist movement, but the introduction of universal franchise for those over twenty-one years of age in 1931 and the reduction of the voting age to eighteen in 1959 created a high degree of political consciousness

among women, which is reflected in their active participation in the voting process at every general election. In 1960 a Sri Lanka woman achieved the distinction of becoming the first woman prime minister in the world and continued to dominate the political scene for twelve of the next seventeen years.

Nevertheless, the participation of Sri Lanka women at decision-making levels in public life and in the national and local legislative bodies has been minimal. Since 1947 only fifteen women have been elected to Parliament and thirty-four to local government bodies, and women have never exceeded 4 percent of the membership of the national legislature. In the general elections of 1977 women contested only eleven of the 168 seats in the national legislature. Women constitute from one-fourth to one-third of the membership of political parties but only 15 percent of office-bearers are women and only 30 percent of the members of the people's committees are women. Similarly, trade union and student union leaders are generally men even where women comprise the majority of the membership as in the nurses', teachers' and typists' unions.

Where legal rights are concerned, the principle of equality of the sexes is enunciated in the constitution. Legal disabilities in property and personal law are restricted to some inequalities in the law of inheritance applying to Hindus and Muslims and unequal grounds for the dissolution of marriage and the custody of children. A proviso in the constitution to permit the reservation of specific fields of employment to one sex has led to the imposition of quotas of 25 percent each in recruitment to the administrative and clerical services, while the Minimum Wages (Indian Labour) Ordinance and Wages Board Ordinance have enforced wage disparities among agricultural and industrial workers. Labor legislation such as the Factories Ordinance, Maternity Benefit

Ordinance, Shop and Office Employees Act, Employment of Women and Young Persons and Children Act, and the Mines and Minerals Act generally conforms to international norms and helps to safeguard the interests of women employed in the public sector and in the larger establishments in the private sector. The prohibition of night work, however, is claimed to be counter-productive since it tends to limit the employment opportunities available to women.

The Social Context

The cultural milieu in which Sri Lankan women live and work is a complex web of societal values based on traditional concepts, liberal ideas, and economic realities. Men and women in the older age groups tend to be more conservative, to accept cultural constraints unquestioningly, and to have negative attitudes toward expanding women's role in economic, social, and political life. Despite the increasing tempo of change, the social climate is still influenced by traditional myths and prejudices that present women in an inferior and subservient role (and are reinforced by stereotypes in widely read books); behavioral norms which require women to be docile, "innocent" and protected; and social evils such as the dowry system which reduce marriage to a commercial transaction.

The dominant image of women is that of home-makers and mothers in an integrated family structure. Although overt resistance to women seeking higher education and employment outside the home is much less than it was two decades ago,¹ there is a lurking fear that employment may threaten the stability of family life. Society has by and large a narrow concept of women's role in economic life and is apt to view women as secondary earners. As elsewhere in the world, the mass media continue to portray women as a dependent, subordinate group or as mere ornaments, destined to serve or entertain. The responses of Sri Lankan women to their situation have varied, rang-

ing from the rebels and the enterprising who have participated and are participating actively in the economic, social, and political life of the nation, to those so culturally conditioned as to conform to the subordinate role thrust on them, and to the ambivalent who have yet to resolve satisfactorily the conflicts engendered by dual responsibilities within and outside the home.

One other factor of importance in the social context is the demographic situation in Sri Lanka. At the 1971 census, women constituted 48.7 percent of the population. As a high proportion of the population of Sri Lanka consists of persons in the young (and dependent) age groups, a relatively small proportion is married (see Table 9.1).

Education and Training

One area in which sex-based discrimination is practically non-existent in Sri Lanka is that of education. Educational facilities for girls have been organized in some degree since the mid-nineteenth century. The national policy of providing free primary, secondary, and tertiary education since 1945 has obviated the need for parents to limit their investment in education to that of sons, thereby promoting equal access to education for boys and girls. In consequence, sex differentials and even urban-rural differences are relatively narrow, particularly in the younger age groups. It is noteworthy that in Sri Lanka the proportion of men and women with ten or twelve years of education is almost the same (see Table 9.2).

Enrollment data also indicate that boys and girls participate equally in the educational process. In 1970, 72.7 percent of the age group 5-14 years received an elementary education (that is, primary and junior secondary education), and the ratio for boys and girls was 74.6 and 70.8 percent, respectively. The slightly higher drop-out rate for girls is the result of socio-economic

TABLE 9.1.--Population by Marital Status, 1969/1970

Marital status	Percent of total population	Percent of female population
Single	61.6	58.9
Married	32.7	34.9
Widowed	4.1	5.2
Divorced	0.2	0.2
Separated	0.5	0.8

SOURCE: Socio-Economic Survey of Ceylon, 1969/1970.

TABLE 9.2.--Educational Level of Population by Sex and Sector, 1969/1970

Educational level	Male (%)	Female (%)	Urban (%)	Rural (%)
No schooling	11.6	23.4	11.4	15.8
Primary	47.9	41.3	37.8	45.4
Middle	32.4	28.4	37.9	31.7
GCE(O) ^a	7.1	6.1	11.0	6.3
GCE(A) ^b and higher	1.0	0.8	1.9	0.8

a. General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level).

b. General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level).

SOURCE: Socio-Economic Survey of Ceylon, 1969/1970.

pressures, particularly in underprivileged areas. Tables 9.3 and 9.4 offer further evidence of positive developments relating to the education of women. The most significant advance has been in higher education, where the proportion of women in the university student population increased from 10.1 percent in 1942 to 42.2 percent in 1972, followed by a slight decline to 38.9 percent in 1976 (Table 9.5).

Tertiary education is the narrowest section of the educational pyramid with an enrollment of only 1.6 percent

TABLE 9.3.--Female Participation in Education, 1975

Grades	Percent girls
1- 9	48.5
10-12	52.1
1-12	48.6
10-12 (Arts)	57.1
10-12 (Science)	44.7
10-12 (Commerce)	49.7

SOURCE: School census, March 1975.

TABLE 9.4.--Secondary School Examinations: Candidates by Sex

Examination	Girls as a percentage of all candidates
NCGE ^a (9 years of schooling), 1975	51.2
GCE(O) ^b (10 years of schooling), 1973	49.8
GCE(A) ^c (12 years of schooling), 1973	45.9

a. National Certificate of General Education.

b. General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level).

c. General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level).

SOURCE: Department of Examinations, Ministry of Education.

TABLE 9.5.--Total and Female Enrollment in Universities, 1942-1976

Year	Total	Females	Percent females
1942	904	91	10.1
1961	6,279	1,547	24.6
1966	14,171	5,286	37.3
1972	12,835	5,428	42.2
1976	13,153	5,113	38.9

SOURCE: University of Sri Lanka, Senate House, Colombo.

of the relevant age group and a highly competitive entrance examination. While the enrollment in universities has declined since 1967, the proportion of women continued to increase until the early 1970's. Table 9.6 indicates that technology is at present the only male dominated area of university study, and that the prestigious course of medical studies has a female enrollment of 48 percent, which compares very favorably with that of many affluent countries. Women are, however, disadvantaged in one sector of the education system--vocational education and training. While women constitute a majority in the 29 teachers' colleges in the island (69.5 percent in 1975), their enrollment in technical education institutions was 22.9 percent (full-time courses) and 8.7 percent (part-time courses) in 1973 and 24.5 percent of the total enrollment in 1976. Further analysis of the 1973 enrollment data shows that 80 to 90 percent of women students in these institutions are enrolled in commercial courses, while less than 10 percent are enrolled in technician and craft courses. Since no restrictions (other than a competitive entrance examination) have been placed on admission to these institutions, the low participation of women is obviously the result of sex-based

TABLE 9.6.--Enrollment in Universities by Areas of Study, 1966-1976

Areas of study	1966			1972			1976		
	Total	Number females	Percent females	Total	Number females	Percent females	Total	Number females	Percent females
Arts, law, education, commerce, development studies, etc.	10,974	4,775	43.5	8,555	4,189	48.9	8,106	3,489	45
Science and architecture	827	197	23.8	1,416	515	36.3	1,871	635	33.7
Medicine and dentistry	1,636	482	29.3	1,344	552	41.2	1,467	711	48.5
Veterinary science and agriculture	153	21	13.7	307	89	28.9	499	153	30.9
Engineering	571	11	1.9	1,164	83	7.1	1,210	125	10.3
Total	14,171	5,286	37.3	12,835	5,428	42.2	13,153	5,113	38.9

SOURCE: University of Sri Lanka, Senate House, Colombo.

curriculum diversifications in schools in the past and of cultural attitudes which influence women to opt for commercial courses and to shun traditional "masculine" areas such as technical studies.

In agriculture there is a long tradition of female participation, and women do seek admission to agricultural education institutions. Unfortunately lack of facilities and administrative regulations limit the proportion of women admitted to secondary agricultural schools to 20 percent. Women also constitute one-third of the students in the elementary practical farm schools and in non-formal agricultural training courses organized through Young Farmers' Clubs and agricultural settlements.

On the whole, vocational training facilities for women tend to be limited to traditional so-called "feminine" areas of activity. Women participate in a very large way in training courses in nursing, weaving, needlework, and home science courses organized by The Departments of Rural Development and Small Industries, and as telephone operators. They are enrolled in courses for shorthand typists, air stewardesses, sports officers, and, to a lesser extent, in schools of cooperation and social work. But there are no women in the management, technical, and trade apprenticeship courses organized by government departments and corporations, chiefly because there are hardly any women employed in these fields. The Department of Labour organizes vocational training courses for the unemployed but only the tailoring centers have any women undergoing training.

The contribution of the private sector to vocational training is very limited in Sri Lanka, and private vocational institutions such as polytechnic schools cater largely to those seeking white-collar occupations. Women's organizations offering vocational training facilities are also very few in number. The Lanka Mahila Samithiya with its rural base trains a small number for

self-employment in agriculture and handicrafts. The Young Women's Christian Association and the Sri Lanka-dara Society have urban centers with courses in retail-selling, dress-making, home science and handicrafts. The Buddhist Congress has, however, recently launched into a new area--radio and clock repairs.

Recent socio-economic changes and the establishment of new institutional structures have had some impact on the vocational education of girls. The National Apprenticeship Board which started in 1972-1973 with 5.4 percent women apprentices, all engaged in training as weavers and fitters in the weaving industry, now has a small number of women apprentices in the printing trade and in radio repairs. The Ministry of Education is organizing short-term "job-entry" courses for school leavers, and although sex-based diversification persists in the policy of reserving electrical wiring, car repairs, and printing for boys and sewing and lace-making for girls, women have ventured into new areas such as radio repairs and the leather industry.

A fair proportion of women between eighteen and thirty-five years of age are also involved in projects of the recently instituted Divisional Development Councils. In the youth settlements and Janavasas (co-operatives) established as a result of land reform, women account for 35 percent of the total membership. Vocational aspirations are, however, determined largely by the prestige and economic status of occupations. A recent survey of vocational preferences of secondary school girls shows that they still aspire to be doctors, teachers, lawyers, accountants, nurses, clerks, air hostesses, and engineers.²

Employment

Women's role in the economic life of Sri Lanka has changed perceptibly over the years, while the recent expansion of educational opportunities has had its

repercussions on the employment pattern of women. From the beginning of history women shared in economic activities but they did not generally work away from home for remuneration; they were in modern terminology "unpaid family workers." With the advent of immigrant Indian plantation labor in the nineteenth century a large class of women wage earners emerged. Unfortunately these workers functioned in the colonial economy as family units in which women were paid less wages as subsidiary workers-- a practice which still exists. Similarly, in the European-owned coffee mills, tea packing factories, and copra and coconut mills in Colombo, local women were exploited as cheap labor.³

In the twentieth century the growth of the "modern" sector resulted in rural low income women seeking employment in domestic service in urban areas while the Western-oriented middle class was attracted to the traditional "feminine" occupations of teaching and the health services. The educational developments of the last four decades have, however, led to an influx of women into the professions. The less qualified have increasingly sought employment as clerical workers, telephone operators, sales girls, and even factory workers. A few have even penetrated the male fortresses of management and technical employment.

Nevertheless, in Sri Lanka today the female labor force participation rate is relatively low--16.9 percent in 1970, and the highest participation rate is on the estates (Table 9.7). Although women have equal access to education, they form only one-fourth of the labor force. Their economic activities follow the national pattern with slightly more than half the population engaged in agriculture, less than one-third in the service sector, and a smaller proportion employed in the manufacturing sector. In the urban sector, two-thirds work in the service sector. Half the rural female labor force is engaged

TABLE 9.7.--Population Classified by Activity
1969/1970^a

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)	Urban Female (%)	Rural Female (%)	Estate Female (%)
Employed	51.0	15.4	33.3	10.4	11.1	53.8
Unemployed	6.1	4.0	5.1	4.7	4.1	2.0
Students	31.1	28.4	29.8	30.7	29.5	17.1
Housework	0.9	42.6	21.6	54.2	55.3	27.1
Other	10.9	9.6	10.2			

a. Persons five years of age and over.

SOURCE: Socio-Economic Survey, 1969/1970.

in agricultural activities in the peasant sector. One-fourth of both urban and rural women are employed in industrial occupations while in the estate sector almost all are employed in plantation labor (Table 9.8).

In 1973, the largest concentrations of women were found to be in the following occupations: nursing and midwifery, 94 percent; plantation labor, over 90 percent; weaving, spinning, and garment industries, 75 percent; packing, labelling, and assembly work in industries, 60 percent; teaching, 54 percent; rubber cultivation, agricultural farm work, and telephone operators, 45 percent; and stenographers, typists, doctors, and medical technicians, 35 percent.⁴ The impact of educational expansion is reflected in the increasing entry of women into the professions, especially into science-based areas of employment, in the last two decades. In the medical profession, for instance, women increased their representation from 5 to 35 percent between 1961 and 1972. However, few women are employed in management, technical work, or skilled labor, and there are as yet no women engine drivers, railway guards, bus drivers, conductors, or members of the armed services.

TABLE 9.8.--Employed Population by Major Industrial Groups, by Sex and Sector, 1969/1970

	Total (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Urban Female (%)	Rural Female (%)	Estate Female (%)
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing	51.6	49.1	59.6	5.3	44.9	98.4
Mining and quarrying	0.9	1.0	0.6	0.4	1.1	-
Manufacturing	10.6	9.1	15.5	23.4	24.5	0.2
Construction	3.2	4.1	0.1	0.8	-	-
Electricity, gas, and water	0.5	0.7	-	-	-	-
Commerce, banking, and finance	9.1	10.6	3.8	13.0	4.3	-
Transport and communications	5.0	6.4	0.2	1.5	-	-
Community, social, and personal services	16.1	15.5	18.4	51.6	22.7	1.2
Unspecified	3.0	3.5	1.8	4.0	2.5	0.2

SOURCE: Socio-Economic Survey, 1969/1970.

This employment pattern tends to reflect the demarcation of the labor market into masculine and feminine jobs--a phenomenon common to many countries. This sex differentiation is apparent even within industries. Women are employed in weaving and spinning in textile firms, assembly work in technical firms, plucking and leaf stripping in agricultural farms, picking and sorting in mines, packing and labelling, and as private secretaries, stenographers, telephone operators, and sales assistants.

Another noteworthy feature of the employment structure is the concentration of women in low income jobs due to a variety of factors such as lack of training facilities and incentives. In agriculture and industry women

are found in large numbers in semi-skilled and unskilled labor, in the clerical service they are in routine clerical jobs, and in the professions their late entry has been a handicap to reaching the top rungs of the occupational ladder.

Currently all other aspects of economic participation in Sri Lanka are overshadowed by the high incidence of unemployment. Rapid population increase, educational expansion, social change, and economic pressures have greatly increased the number of women entering the labor market over the last two decades. The economy has been unable to absorb these school leavers and university graduates due to the slow rate of economic growth. The result was an unemployment rate of 13.9 percent in 1970 and 18.3 percent in 1973. The groups most affected are the "educated youth," particularly women. The unemployment rate of women is double that of men and has risen steeply. While the rate was 9.5 percent for men and 12.1 percent for women in 1959/1960, it had increased to 11.4 percent for men and 21.2 percent for women in 1969/1970. The employment opportunities available to the majority of women are limited by their narrow range of vocational skills, and many women consider themselves "over-qualified" for their jobs. In the 1971 census returns, 22.9 percent of the employed population and 43.9 percent of the unemployed population were women.

In Sri Lanka, women have helped to retain a cohesive and relatively stable family life. They have also ventured into new fields of activity and attained positions of leadership in several areas of national life. Their participation in education and employment has perhaps helped to reduce the population growth rate from 2.7 percent between 1953 and 1963 to the current rate of around 1.6 percent. As elsewhere in the world, women in Sri Lanka also face innumerable problems. Cultural attitudes and sex-role stereotypes, inadequate formal and

non-formal vocational training facilities, sex-based division of labor, and quotas and other restrictive recruitment practices are all barriers to the full participation of women in the economic, social and political life of the nation. In personal life they are hemmed in by petty prejudices. At work women in the low-income groups are disadvantaged in remuneration, and the exploitation of cheap labor is manifest in some sectors of employment. While labor laws ensure maternity protection and benefits, the lack of provision for long leave for young mothers and the absence of adequate infrastructural facilities, such as child care services and labor saving devices, aggravate the difficulties of working women who are endeavoring to reconcile their home and job responsibilities without detriment to either.

In recent years some egalitarian social policies in Sri Lanka have helped women to seek fulfillment in a richer life in which the home is the center but no longer the circumference of their lives. The 1975 International Women's Year and its aftermath have served to focus attention on women's rights, responsibilities, and problems and to provide a fillip to more rapid change. Many visible and invisible barriers have yet to be overcome if women in Sri Lanka are to function effectively in their multiple roles and to play their parts as agents of change in a society in transition.

Notes

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2. Swarna Jayaweera (ed.), "A Study of Educational Opportunities and Employment Opportunities Open to Women in Sri Lanka," (mimeographed; Colombo and Paris: UNESCO, 1973).
3. Kumari Jayawardene, "Women and Employment," Economic Review, Vol. II, No. 6 (September 1976).
4. For more information see Jayaweera, op. cit.

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Chapter 10

THE BUDDHIST TRADITION

John Ross Carter

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader who is interested in Sri Lanka to the Buddhist tradition in that lovely island, ancient culture, new nation. In its basic sense, "to introduce," as used here, means "to lead one into, to bring one within" a perspective held by many Buddhists in Sri Lanka. This, of course, is an immensely difficult task to discharge adequately in a few pages. A person interested in reading sources to gain a comprehensive grasp of the Buddhist tradition, or an in-depth competence of a facet of that tradition as it has contributed significantly to Sri Lanka, is fortunate to have available a bibliographical essay with which to launch such study.¹

To introduce, to attempt to bring one within, a perspective held by many Buddhists in Sri Lanka is another matter, one requiring interpretation, as well as sensitive, empathetic probes into that held to be most personal by religious persons and critical, reflective observations of one's presuppositions, working assumptions, and the information available. Gaining a perspective requires not only watching and recording and extrapolating in terms of one or another method mutually endorsed, for one reason or another, by one's colleagues, but also listening and reflecting upon what one has heard, or has been told, reflecting on what was not said, and why, for what purpose, in what context. To be brought within a perspective implies an activity of another person, whether a fifth-century Buddhist writer or one's

patient Buddhist friends living today.

An historian would be less than persuasive, certainly less than perceptive, were he to consider history as something inherently other than a study of persons. For that matter, too, a student of mankind's religiousness would tend to ricochet among distorting mirrors of competing theories of method were the focus of his study something other than persons. Historians have long known the helpfulness of historical sensitivity in attempts to find a reasonableness that provides a pattern in an otherwise erratic occurrence of events. Similarly, on beginning to read about Buddhists in Sri Lanka, one could do worse than to acquire a sensitive attitudinal orientation to the subject, to discern dimensions of a dynamic process that preserves and engenders anew, creatively, a religious heritage in a person's life, and to note a continuation of a cumulative religious tradition in history within a religious community, a process of change and continuity, of challenge and creative response.

There are Buddhists living in Sri Lanka today. On first blush this might be considered a trite statement, one hardly worth further reflection, certainly obvious and consequently of little import. However, this statement, comprised of only eight words, is one of those monumental statements that are the consequence not only of someone's report but of a cumulative process in history reflecting a deliberate activity of persons, choosing to remember their tradition of a way of life, to endorse that way of life, and to transmit it to their children. This process is not an easy matter, is not inevitable, and could have been otherwise had persons chosen differently, had they found this way of life no longer relevant to their concerns in the course of the past two millennia, had they ceased to find meaning through it, or to form community by it. No, the statement with which we begin is stunning because of the weight of history that stands behind it,

bewildering because of the complexity of events, communal and personal, that underpin it, and sobering, too, because of the dedication of unknown millions of men and women who for twenty centuries have remembered, have participated in, and have perpetuated what they found to be supportive.

We pause for a moment at the steps of the Temple of the Tooth Relic (Dalada Maligawa, in Kandy) to remove our sandals before walking, flower in hand, into the special precincts. Reaching the second floor, we see others placing their flowers on a memorial table before the closed relic chamber. We slow our stride; the space here is not ordinary space and the activity we see--persons on their knees, bowing full forward with heads held in clasped hands--reminds us that one moves gently in delicate moments. Some of us have purchased a closed lotus just outside the temple. Others of us have brought our flowers from our village. We carefully peel back the leaves to open a lotus, sprinkle water on our flower to heighten its freshness and beauty, and take our place, on our knees, to gather our thoughts. Then one by one, when each is ready, we move to place our flower among others forming a variety of individual hues and shapes and simultaneously a unified arrangement of dazzling diversity. When thoughts become distracted, faint whispers can be heard; a prayer that assistance might be forthcoming, an old verse reminding us that, like these flowers, we, too, will lose our luster and decay, and silence.

When each is ready, each walks away and we form our group again as we walk down the stairs and out into the bright sunlight. We do not talk about what we have done, we do not analyze our actions, our thoughts in order to explain by making piecemeal that action that generates its force precisely because it is integrative.

We have gone to the temple at different times when conch, drums, cymbals, and horana create a din of noise

for some, perhaps, and instrumental praise (sābda pūja) for others; when we are pressed by the excited devotion of the crowd through the tight passageway to place our flowers before the symbol of the tooth relic, pausing for an extended moment, much too brief, then to make our way out through another passage, an exit into our ordinary world.

Persons make their way to this temple for about as many reasons as there are people who come; on a birthday, perhaps, or on the first outing for a new born babe, or to bring the first portion of a harvest, or when dear friends meet again after being separated for several years, or before making our first trip out of the country, or because it enables one, having come into Kandy for a day's shopping, to sense that one has done something noble that day by calmly being humble, before catching a bus for the village.

The Buddha is being remembered in Sri Lanka.

On another occasion, we are dressed in clean clothing, white if we have it, and step into the cool of an evening--enjoying its refreshing reminder that the pressures of a full day at the office, shop, or factory, the pains of a body bent many hours to the heat of the sun, do pass, if we allow them--prepared to forego physical rest for something more edifying. Into settings where torches or bottle lamps flicker, or petromax lamps hissingly cast their sharp shadows into the night, or generators grind out light through naked bulbs thoughtfully arranged, or houses with every light fixture aglow, we make our way in from the dark.

We remove our sandals in village hut, in temple, in urban bungalows because we know that weighty words will be uttered and with us will be monks, men we have decided to support in their pursuits because that support is necessary for them and wholesome for us. We have come for a pirit ceremony, an occasion in which monks

chant the teachings (dhamma) of the Buddha, teachings, which, in spite of our foibles, are recognized as being capable of leading one on to full penetration of salvific Truth (dhamma).

We quietly take our seats, cross-legged, and receive from someone a thread, passing it on to someone else, running it through the fingers of our pressed palms, letting it unravel as it binds us together, an empirical reminder that each individual is really a person grounded in a sacred source and held in balance and buttressed through relationship--between someone and someone else. Some of us know the passages being chanted, a few lips move in cadence with the sound of the monks. Some of us know the general import of the major passages, and others are not quite sure of the meaning of the words and the supportive reminder their meaning communicates, that centuries have not warped the singular message that wholesome living is not measured by rapid gain and clever, quick acquisition, but by patient giving. Pali, the language of dhamma being chanted about dhamma that transcends language, is not known by many in Sri Lanka. But the ceremony has been structured by the cumulative wisdom of tradition to achieve an objective frequently, but not easily, attained by rituals of man's religious traditions--the objective of communicating with each hearer, within his life situation, a common theme that what is going on here is momentous, that one is in the presence of that which enables a world-view to have coherence, that, for some, empirical reality might be altered by this activity because, it seems likely, the lives of persons have been changed, impressively, by becoming engaged with the meaning of these words.

Throughout the night the chanting continues by monks in pairs, joined after sunrise by their brothers in robes in chanting the final stanzas. The hours of the night have passed, and one has talked softly with one's friends,

or walked about to stretch one's legs, or taken a brief nap here or there, and heard the chanting of the words continuously, minute by minute, and one meets a new sunrise having been a part of a stitching of the centuries.

Dhamma is being remembered in Sri Lanka.

Not long after dawn, in Colombo, one joins a small group of relatives and friends who have gathered at a small temple for an induction ceremony (mahāna kirīma) of a young man in his early teens who is seeking to become a samanera, a novice in the monastic order, the sangha. Dressed in white, the young man has his hair and eyebrows shaved, and is rinsed with buckets of cold water drawn from a nearby faucet. He shudders, neither complaining nor joking--the ceremony is much too serious for that. Proud mother and father watch attentively with eyes not without traces of tears.

One listens carefully as this young man, now dressed in the monastic robes and kneeling before the senior monk, in his youthful voice repeats the triple refuge and the precepts appropriate for the occasion, each phrase uttered in echo of the full voice of the elderly monk. All are silent except for these two men and the chirping birds, a rejuvenating sound of fresh continuity set against the sounds of the shifting gears of a city yawning itself awake. Receiving a set of robes and a mendicant's bowl, the young man sits aside about to witness something he has never seen before.

Mother and father approach this seated young man, kneel and bow low to him. He sees the top of the heads of the greatest people on earth, his parents, now bent toward him and toward that for which this young life is committed, in humble reverence. An enormously forceful complex of emotions is let loose and this young man is provided with a supportive memory to underpin his motivation as he sets about to live his life in the devout discipline of a monk.

In Kandy, one evening, two men in royal attire ride the backs of richly adorned elephants to the chapter house where they change their attire to that of a monk and sit facing the incumbent monk seated at the other end of two rows of solemn elders. One recognizes that one has witnessed a repetition in ritual of the Buddha's great setting out from home on his quest for salvific Truth. One takes one's place among the laymen from the home villages of these two men, candidates for the upasampadā, the ceremony of higher ordination as a full bhikkhu (monk) in the sangha. The ceremony is brief, words over two millennia old are repeated anew. Two more men have taken their place in the line of monastic succession.

At the close of the ordination ceremony, wide-eyed children snap up to see the people in the ornately decorated chapter house, older people rise more slowly, more deliberately. A number of gifts (along with the atapirikara or "eight requisites") are given to these two bhikkhus, newly ordained with the upasampadā: umbrellas, notebooks, pillows, suitcases, little of monetary worth. One notes tears in the eyes of villagers, tears suggestive of a proud loss now sealed in this ancient ceremony. Memories of black haired playful sons now subside before the dignity of two men, heads shaven, seated quietly. Inexpensive gifts, though costly for the givers, become vehicles of inestimable value in this moment of potentiality. Two men, just fully ordained, have placed on them at this moment the ideal aspirations of those who know them best.

The sangha is being remembered in Sri Lanka.

In these ceremonies, and others, one hears the triple refuge uttered, and observing these rituals one sees demonstrated the permeating influence of the Buddha, dhamma, and the sangha.

When Rome was struggling as a young republic, men

and women in India were saying the triple refuge:

Buddham saraṇam gacchāmi.

Dhammam saraṇam gacchāmi.

Sangham saraṇam gacchāmi.

I go to the Buddha as refuge.

I go to dhamma as refuge.

I go to the sangha as refuge.

And, as one reads the Pali canon, the impressive Pali commentarial literature, and the great Sinhalese classics, one begins to sense the profundity of the notion of refuge (saraṇa) in the Theravada tradition in Sri Lanka.² These sources make it quite clear that refuge is not a retreat from the world, a form of escapism. It is not closing one's eyes to the world either to whimper in despair or to delude oneself into illusory compensatory idealism yielding a deceptive sense of security. Refuge, these sources labor to make plain, is deeply personal and replete with cosmic consequences. By discerning this refuge, persons become engaged in a process of deepening understanding of themselves, others, and life in this world and beyond. One is dealing with weighty matters, a lively religious practice and concept, in this notion of refuge.

But a shift has occurred, a movement somewhat extraneous from these sources and the testimony of the centuries.

In a rather recent Sinhalese textbook, formally approved for children on a first grade level, designed, ideally, to acquaint these children with their religious heritage, one reads, in the first three sentences of the little book,

Buddhism is our religion. It is according to Buddhism that we should act. For us, ³ there is nothing more important than Buddhism.

Perhaps this might strike one as an unusual way to introduce children to a religious heritage that has held paramount the importance of responsible, generous living⁴ for learning to live well by eradicating personal and

communal detrimental behavior. One might have expected a word about kindness and truth speaking. What has happened that has contributed to this change in perspective?

A great deal has happened over several centuries.

"Change and continuity" is a familiar theme among many who study persons in societies. Change and continuity is a way of describing the historical process. But it is also a way of describing one's personal life. In considering the Theravada tradition in Sri Lanka, the notion of change and continuity is hardly new, either from the point of view of the institutional organizations or from the perspective of persons. Something different was happening in each century; something old was being remembered. In "change and continuity," the conjunction "and" carries the force of a dynamic cross reference that reflects a creative response to the new and a creative appropriation of the old.

Creative responses and creative appropriations are, certainly, not inevitable. In the course of the past two centuries, the Buddhist tradition in Sri Lanka has met a series of new ideas stemming from foreign cultural matrixes, and in responding to these ideas, reacting to them, rejecting, fully adopting, modifying, misunderstanding, refining them, Buddhists have acted creatively.

By the early nineteenth century, one complex of ideas came to have significant ramifications for Sinhalese Buddhists. About this time, Sinhalese Buddhists were becoming acquainted with an idea, "Buddhism," for which they chose to coin a term, buddhāgama. By this time, also, they were aware of an idea "religion," for which they chose to utilize, by extending its meaning, an old term, āgama. By this time, Sinhalese Buddhists were aware of an institution called "Christianity." This complex of ideas, weighty in themselves, seems to have permeated the scene in Sri Lanka rather quickly and quite

thoroughly because this complex was introduced by Westerners who came to hold political, economic, military, and educational dominance in the country.

What Buddhists had been attempting to do with their lives now came to be called "Buddhism," and this "Buddhism" was one of a number of things called "religions," one of which was "Christianity." This triad of ideas, "Buddhism," "religion," and "Christianity," though widespread in Sri Lanka today and, for the most part, reasonably understood, does not entirely represent the thinking of many Sinhalese Buddhists. Once in a while, one can meet an interesting lexical anomaly pivoting on the term āgama, an old Sanskrit and Pali word basically meaning "coming," "approach," "arrival," and also "that which has come down to the present" in the sense of tradition preserved in writing. By further extension the term means "scripture," "authoritative text" and further "established procedure," "discipline."⁴ One listening to a conversation in Sinhalese might hear buddhāgama (buddha + āgama) used like "Buddhism," and āgama, standing alone, used like "religion," but occasionally, one can hear āgama, standing alone, used to designate "Christianity," and āgam kārāyā used to designate a Christian, and eya āgame to mean "He is a Christian." These usages suggest the major source of these ideas, namely Christians.

Buddhists had come to see their religious heritage labeled "Buddhism," designated as one "religion" among several, and affirmed by some to fall somewhere on a spectrum from idolatry to inadequacy. Those who made these affirmations were representatives of a world-view not a part of Sinhalese culture and were closely associated with a dominating political system.

It might be difficult for a person living today in the United States, for example, to gain a perspective adopted by many Sinhalese Buddhists in the early part of this century, and even, among some, today. Roughly

comparable to that situation would be one in which first Chinese, then Koreans, and finally Japanese had maintained a powerful presence in the United States for approximately three hundred years leading to the complete political control of the Japanese. A knowledge of Japanese language, Japanese classics, attitudes, customs, and preferences would be essential for well-placed employment. One would note the strength of the yen, the presence of numerous shrines and temples. One would even date one's birth as in, for example, the Showa era and every letter would be expected to be dated according to imperial reign. And further, the most widely used editions of the Bible would be in Japanese syllabaries. Such setting would represent a lively situation; the times would require change, and reflective persons would tend to maintain continuity.

When Buddhists in Sri Lanka came into their new situation, they responded creatively and they responded differently. One discernible response, when self-consciousness is initially thrust upon one, is a momentary recoil to gain balance before developing a pattern of relationship with the source engendering that self-consciousness. Often, the pattern developed in the early phase of this relationship tends to take a form similar to that of the initiating source, i.e., "Buddhism" vis-à-vis "Christianity." And once this move is made, as it was made, one notes a series of debates in the nineteenth century, i.e., "Buddhism" vs. "Christianity." These debates took several decades to come about, and the pattern of relationships they and associated procedures of developing and maintaining self-consciousness have tended to educe take decades, perhaps centuries, to transcend.

So, "Buddhism" and "religion" are on the scene in Sri Lanka, as well as "Hinduism," "Islam," and "Christianity," and so, too, one comes to read,

Buddhism is our religion.
 For us, there is nothing more important
 than Buddhism.⁵

One wonders how a first grade level reader might introduce dhamma a century from now

In rather recent times, since the beginning of this century and continuing today, Sinhalese Buddhists in academic circles have tended to adopt a mode of research well entrenched in Western academia, a procedure that searches, through analytical methods, the original teachings of "Early Buddhism," or "Primitive Buddhism," or "Nikāya Buddhism" (notions strikingly similar to "Early Christianity," "Primitive Christianity," "New Testament Christianity," subject descriptions long in use in the West), and to find the results of their capable scholarship enthusiastically received by readers in Sri Lanka and elsewhere because their studies had made clearer the original, or at least very early teachings of "Buddhism," that is, it had been assumed, the true or real teachings of "Buddhism." An international group of scholars has been greatly interested in learning about "Buddhism," and their interest has usually followed an "origin and development" view; one has to understand the origin, the early phases, and the subsequent developments before one can understand "Buddhism." And Sinhalese Buddhists have made a significant contribution in this study.

Twin movements have occurred in Western scholarship of the Theravada Buddhist tradition, that strand of the Buddhist heritage that has contributed greatly to the shaping of Sinhalese culture. Scholars of the Buddhist tradition tend to concentrate their studies in areas containing the greatest number of sources, areas considered of great importance by the largest number of colleagues, and all of this under a conceptual rubric of "origin and development." A student might begin his study of the Buddhist tradition by studying Sanskrit and Pali. But which way might one move after competence has

been achieved in these languages? What other language or languages would tend to enable one to move to the cutting edge of scholarship in tracing the history of the Buddhist tradition? Most frequently, it seems, scholars have tended to move from Sanskrit and Pali into Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit in order to gain access to Indian Mahayana Buddhist sources and then to move into Chinese language studies and/or Tibetan, finding, thereby, an enormous number of sources at their disposal and an enhanced capability of contributing to our understanding of a number of issues of considerable historical significance for a great number of people over centuries.

Japanese Buddhologists have tended to reverse the process to some extent. Having a knowledge of Japanese and Chinese, a concern for "origin and development" has led many of them into Sanskrit and Pali sources, picking up Tibetan, perhaps, along the way.

Western scholars of the Theravada tradition have tended to keep their focus on the Pali canonical texts and, to a lesser degree, on the Pali commentarial literature. The relatively few scholars who have made a move into other languages expressing that tradition have, in general, settled on either Burmese or Thai or Sinhalese. There are language barriers in scholarship as there are in societies.

There is another movement in academic circles that has yielded remarkable results. Many scholars in the social sciences have turned their attention to a study of Buddhists in Sri Lanka, and they have pursued their studies, in the majority of cases, with theoretical models developed within their disciplines. Some have studied Buddhists in order to corroborate or modify general theories on the role or function of religion in culture and society.

Somewhere between these two movements--Buddhologists specializing in the "origin" of "Buddhism" in India and

its development in Tibet, China, and Japan or concentrating on the Pali canon and "Early Buddhism," and social scientists studying Buddhists on the contemporary scene in Sri Lanka--few scholars of religious studies and many Sinhalese young people fall. After the cut of demythologization on the part of some Buddhologists, and the thrust of functionalism on the part of some social scientists, one is left looking for a sculptured form among the fragments.

There is some tension and anxiety among many young people in Sri Lanka today.

And so one notes the stories of the Buddha's former lives (Jātakas) and stories of saints of long ago, preserved in the commentaries, long held in the tradition as truth occurring in space and time, likely to have had significant religious meaning for children of our time, discerning within them the truth of living well, are seen by many today as folk-tales, fables, an example of short stories in comparative literature. And so one meets medical students in Colombo, who, having sung recently developed devotional songs about the Buddha at Vesak (a festival of lights commemorating the birth, enlightenment, and complete nibbāna attained by the Buddha), affirm that there really is no footprint of Lord Buddha atop Sri Pada, an impressive mountain peak in central Sri Lanka. And so one hears young Sinhalese refer to rituals of their villages, known to these capable young people since childhood, rituals still being held by their seniors in Sri Lanka, as "superstitious"--of course one would hear this in English, their mother tongue has not yet gained a flexibility in using this conceptual misapprehension, "superstitious."

Political ideologies swirl in Sri Lanka. Some people might have used "Buddhism," in a mundane sense, for personal or ideological aggrandizement, and in doing so would have overlooked an ancient injunction to over-

come inhibiting attachment to material gain or to advancement of opinions. More recently "development" seems to be the most persuasive ideology, and "development" seems to mean a particular kind of development: technological development designed to increase industrial, agricultural, and economic productivity. Buddhists in Sri Lanka appear to have been temporarily jostled by this drive for "development," seen dramatically reflected in the narrowing of streams in cultural studies on the university level. Many are alert, however, that for political ideology to become widely endorsed, that ideology must become capable of being communicated with personal relevance to the majority of the population. It is not enough to speak of development of "things": economic, agricultural, national development, viable economic strength and security. One would want to consider who is being developed, by whom, for whom, for what purpose, and how? Buddhists in Sri Lanka are developing these considerations and one is not surprised to learn of a group of Buddhist intellectuals grappling with the possibility of proposing a theory of Buddhist economics.

Some tend to interpret this possibility as one more example of a vestige of traditionalism, one last attempt to hold on tenaciously to an outmoded pattern of collective identity in an international economic system that surpasses such modes of economic theory. Reports suggest that something far more noble is being attempted. Undaunted by an apparent failure in the Western systems to develop a Christian economic theory, some Buddhists appear to be attempting to contain economics within a broader perspective of religious living; to check greed in a profit motive by disciplined rationality; to avoid measuring success by cunning acquisition of rupees, but, rather, to gauge accomplishment by a capacity for maintaining a continuing contribution to human requirements. This is a creative response.

Religious traditions have long been a part of the development of societies and, as these societies become the hosts to a lively interaction with ideologies transmitted by other societies, a dynamic relationship occurs between the religious institutions of the host societies and the newly incorporated ideologies. This process is not new in the recent years in Sri Lanka. Were one able to search carefully through a massive amount of historical materials, one would spot previous examples. This process is more apparent on the contemporary scene, more penetrating and pervasive today.

One of the surest ways of contributing to the demise of a religious heritage is to choose to see no relationship between that heritage and the setting in which one is presently living. That there are Buddhists in Sri Lanka today suggests that millions of men and women previously have deliberately chosen otherwise. And because of their decisions, Buddhists today have alternatives for appropriating their religious heritage in their lives as they are living today. The alternatives are, of course, numerous, and personal inclinations, dispositions are manifold and vary in different phases, even in one person.

The so-called "phenomenon of the political bhikkhu" represents a creative response in the dynamic relationship between some in the religious institution, the order of monks, and the current drifts in the larger social ensemble. Other Buddhists have differing opinions. For some, these politically inclined bhikkhus are betraying the ancient norm of monastic, ascetic life. For others, these bhikkhus are keeping faith with the ancient norm of sharing dhamma with others in a manner most conducive to their discerning its effectiveness in life. Just as one creatively appropriates one's religious heritage differently at differing phases or moments of one's life, with varying degrees of commitment and intensity, so, too, a collectivity of religious persons will tend to respond

differently, but respond they will, as they have.

When three citizens of the United States made their voyage to the surface of the moon as the first delegation to that body in space from this planet, a group of Sinhalese Buddhists, bhikkhus, were chanting pirit. How quaint, one might say, that this was being done by bhikkhus wishing for the well-being of astronauts from a country halfway round the world--and this a few years before Sri Lanka was to experience a wrenching moment of introspective self-consciousness with the violent insurgency of 1971. But men have walked on the moon. Sri Lanka has weathered, though culturally wounded, it seems, the insurgency. And bhikkhus are still chanting pirit.

When creative responses are occurring rapidly and are moving in multifaceted dimensions, one wonders where one might look for signs of continuity. One important area is ritual like the ones we have noted, long a channel through which a religious heritage is transmitted, a means by which a person can find his status, his fundamental condition and his situation in life defined, given meaning, a procedure for collective remembering yielding personal and communal cohesion. In the Theravada case, one is reminded not to dote on rituals, to think by the mere mechanical act of going through the gestures one automatically achieves a level of profound religious insight. Rituals, of course, as Buddhists have stressed, are not an end. There is more to the process of liberation than rituals, more than meditation, too.

It is in moments of particularly meaningful behavior that a reflective person is no longer a Buddhist; he leaves aside a primary sense of loyalty to belief systems, to political power plays by this or that religious organization, to language issues of the relative importance of Sinhala, Tamil, and English, and he hits upon a reminder of what it means to be Buddhist. Buddhist rituals, unlike many treatises written by Sinhalese Buddhists

today, are not designed for a Western audience.

Today, more than ever, we are met with the term "Buddhist," capable of being used as an adjective and a noun.⁶ This term, too, is an outsider's term, used by outsiders quite early in India. I have not yet found the Pali equivalent of this term in either canonical or commentarial literature. It appears that persons who have followed the teachings (dhamma) of the Buddha have recognized themselves to be characterized neither by "enlightenment" (bodhi) nor by the qualities of the Enlightened One (Buddha). The tradition continued to speak of male and female monastics (bhikkhu, bhikkhunī) and male and female lay devotees (upāsaka, upāsikā), not "Buddhists"--and this in spite of the occurrence of bauddha, "Buddhist," in relatively early Indian sources --because for one to claim that one had fully realized that which enabled a young Indian prince to become the Buddha (dhamma) would be, for most, pretentious, and for some a clear indication that they had not.

•For over 2,000 years the ideal fundamental objectives endorsed by Theravada Buddhists have been to be characterized as one who has taken refuge in the Buddha, in dhamma, and in the sangha, not only to emulate the virtuous qualities of the Buddha, to manifest the virtuous qualities of dhamma, and to reproduce the virtuous qualities of the sangha--magnificent aspirations in themselves--but also to quest, by following the teachings (dhamma) of the Buddha, preserved and shared by the sangha, for that realization of salvific Truth (dhamma), which the Buddha and his illustrious disciples attained, for the penetration of which and communication of which the sangha finds its twofold purpose. A friend might describe one as being characterized by dhamma. A sensitive person parries that thought should it arise in one's mind as a description of oneself. Being a Buddhist is mundane; being Buddhist in the sense of being one

characterized by dhamma is not.

"Buddhism" is on the scene in Sri Lanka. Children learn the ancient ritual of the triple refuge, the three gems, "that which is most precious" the old commentaries tell us, and are told, "These are the three gems of Buddhism."⁷ And one reads, "It is by means of the moral precept of refuge that one becomes a Buddhist." "Without that," we are told, "one is not a Buddhist."⁸ "Buddhism" is seen by some in Sri Lanka today; "Buddhism" responding to this or that, undergoing change, becoming "modernized," bifurcated into "Lay Buddhism" and "Monastic Buddhism," or "popular Buddhism" and "political Buddhism," even "village and urban Buddhism." And a Buddhist is frequently understood by reference only to that in which he or she is seen to play a part. But aspiring to be Buddhist is an entirely different matter, much more personal, much more difficult for one to discern, of enormous significance.

To be a Buddhist means to be a part of a historical community, a community that has a cumulative religious heritage; a community that has been, is, and will be a part of the historical process; has changed, is changing, and will change. To be Buddhist is to strive calmly for a disciplined mind and compassionate heart, to remember dhamma, to exhibit dhamma in one's life in the hope someday fully to penetrate, to realize dhamma, salvific Truth.

In both senses, as noun and adjective, there are Buddhists living in Sri Lanka today.

Notes

1. See the fine work by Frank Reynolds, "From Philology to Anthropology: A Bibliographical Essay on Works Related to Early, Theravada and Sinhalese Buddhism," in Bardwell L. Smith (ed.), The Two Wheels of Dhamma: Essays on the Theravada Tradition in India and Ceylon, AAR Studies in Religion, No. 3 (Chambersburg, Penn.: American Academy of Religion, 1972), pp. 107-121. The other essays in this volume, by Bardwell L. Smith and Gananath Obeyesekere, are also important.
2. For an elaboration of this, see my brief study, "The Notion of Refuge (Sarana) in the Theravada Buddhist Tradition," in A. K. Narian (ed.), Studies in Pali and Buddhism: Memorial Volume in Honor of Bhikkhu Jagdish Kashyap (Delhi: D. K. Publishers, 1978), pp. 41-52.
3. Jayasekara Aberuvan, Buddhagama (Colombo: M. D. Gunasena, 1963), p. 1.
4. For a historical survey of the use of this term and related concepts, see my "A History of Early Buddhism," Religious Studies, XIII (1977), pp. 263-287.
5. Aberuvan, op. cit.
6. See Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Questions of Religious Truth (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), esp. Chapter 4, "Christian--Noun, or Adjective," pp. 99-123.
7. S. F. de Silva, E. R. Eratna, and S. Vanigatunga, Buddha-dharmaya (Colombo: Sri Lanka Prakasaka Samagama, 1964), p. 1. This book was an approved text for upper kindergarten children.
8. Rerukane Chandavimala, Pohoya Dinaya (Colombo: A. D. P. Sugatadasa, Anula Mudranalaya, 1966), p. 34.

Additional Readings

- Carter, John Ross (ed.). Religiousness in Sri Lanka, a forthcoming publication of Marga Institute: Sri Lanka Centre for Development Studies, Colombo.
- Gombrich, Richard F. Precept and Practice: Traditional Buddhism in the Rural Highlands of Ceylon. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.
- Obeyesekere, Gananath. "The Great Tradition and the Little in the Perspective of Sinhalese Buddhism," Journal of Asian Studies, XXII (February 1963), pp. 139-153.
- Smith, Bardwell (ed.). The Two Wheels of Dhamma: Essays on the Theravada Tradition in India and Ceylon, AAR Studies in Religion, No. 3. Chambersburg, Penn.: American Academy of Religion, 1972.

Chapter 11

POPULAR RELIGIONS

Gananath Obeyesekere

The term "popular religion" is perhaps as much of a misnomer as the other terms employed by scholars to designate those strata of religious beliefs that are found in Theravada Buddhist societies, outside of the beliefs and rituals associated with Buddhism. There are several such strata derived historically from pre-Buddhist beliefs, from animistic worship of spirits, from astrology, and from Hinduism or Brahmanism. Some of these beliefs come from ancient Buddhism itself, such as the belief in prētas or departed ancestors who continue to haunt the living as a result of excessive attachment. Moreover, Buddhist canonical texts are full of references to pious laymen who on death have become reborn as gods, which means that, as Marasinghe puts it, the karma theory is a kind of machine, which can create its own gods.¹ At the very least karma theory can easily justify the creation or continuing existence of the many kinds of supernatural beings that inhabit the behavioral universe of Buddhist nations in South and Southeast Asia. The crux of the issue is not whether these beliefs are Buddhist or non-Buddhist; it is that one can remain a Buddhist, and a citizen of Sri Lanka or Burma or Thailand without subscribing to a belief in the spirit cults or popular religions. The latter is not a necessary condition to being a Buddhist. Moreover, being a Buddhist is necessary for one's ethnic and national identity in the Theravada societies of South and Southeast Asia, whereas the spirit cults have little or no bearing on one's larger identity. One is not a "heretic" if one rejects the popular religions; indeed,

in some instances it may indicate affirmation of Buddhist orthodoxy and the ideal cultural values of the group.

To place the Sinhala spirit cults in a larger perspective let me start off with a consideration of Vādda religion as described by the Seligmanns.² The Vāddas, aboriginal inhabitants of Sri Lanka, speak a dialect of Sinhala. They were at least peripherally part of the traditional political system, owing allegiance to the king of Kandy. While Sinhala speaking, most Vāddas were never Buddhist; yet their spirit cults showed considerable overlap with that of Sinhala Buddhists. Vādda religion will help us understand better the nature of the Sinhala spirit cults and their relationship with Buddhism.

Unlike the Sinhala Buddhists, the Vāddas had a system of ancestor worship as the basis of their religion. Vāddas who die become deities known as nā yakku, which literally means "kinsmen-deities." The term yaka (plural yakku) in Sinhala means "demon," but in Vādda religion it generally connotes a benevolent being and could best be translated as "deity." The Vādda usage is akin to the old Pali work yakkha, and the use of words like yakṣas and yakṣis in Jainism, which did not necessarily have any "evil" connotation. The Mahāvamsa makes it clear that Sinhala also used the term yaka, yakṣa in this sense in ancient times; it is likely that the Vāddas retained the older meaning while it became thoroughly pejorated among the Sinhala.

The Seligmanns state that "the yaku of the recent dead, called collectively Nae Yaku, are supposed to stand towards the surviving members of the group in the light of friends and relatives, who if well treated will continue to show loving kindness to their survivors, and only if neglected will show disgust and anger by withdrawing their assistance, or becoming even actively hostile."³ In general, however, the relationship is one of good fellowship, the Vāddas having very little fear of dead spirits that characterize Sinhala popular religion.⁴

The nā yakku are, however, not the major deities propitiated during the collective rituals of Vāddas. On a man's death his spirit does not become a yaka until a few days have elapsed.

During this short period the word prāna kārāya (living one) should be used for the spirit of the deceased, for it has not yet attained the condition implied by the term yaka. Among the Henebedde Veddas it was thought that the prāna kārāya resorted to Kande Yaka a few days, perhaps three to five, after death, and then obtained permission from him to accept offerings from the living, and thus become numbered among his attendants, the nae yakku.⁵

Thus, we have the idea of nā yakku as (a) obtaining permission from Kande Yaka, the head of the Vādda pantheon and as (b) attendants of Kande Yaka. The notion of permission or warrant (varan) and that of lower deities as attendants (or a retinue) of the higher gods is identical with Sinhala beliefs, which in turn are derived from the idiom of Sinhala feudalism.⁶

Kande Yaka, then, is a benevolent deity who heads the Vādda pantheon, a providential god who brings prosperity and wealth to Vādda society. He is sometimes propitiated as Kande Vanniya. "Vanniya" is a Sinhala and Tamil term used for chiefs of the North-central and Eastern Provinces and could be glossed as "Lord," like the Kandyan term bandāra. Several other major deities are propitiated in Vādda collective rituals. There is Bambura Yaka, a grim spirit, presiding over yams, and for whom a mimetic ritual of the boar hunt is performed; Indigolle Yaka or Gale Yaka, the lord of the Rock, who is often propitiated with his spouse, Indigolle Kiri Amma; Belindi Yaka, an infant deity also widely propitiated in Vādda country. In addition there is a whole class of female deities called Kiri Amma ("milk mother," "grandmother"). These Kiri Amma are the spirits of eminent Vādda women, "generally the wives of Vādda headmen or chiefs, many of whom are thought of as haunting the sides and tops of hills where there are rocks and springs."⁷ A few of

these Kiri Amma have become very prominent such as Maha Kiri Amma, the chief of the Kiri Amma; Amarapati (Immortal Lady) Kiri Amma; and others named after the village from which they originated, such as Kukulāpola Kiri Amma, Indigolle Kiri Amma, and Unapane Kiri Amma. These named Kiri Amma are often invoked for curing children's diseases and sickness in general. In addition to these major deities there are named minor deities, all spirits of prominent deceased Vāddas.⁸

According to Vādda beliefs, these named deities are the spirits of pre-eminent ancestors. The Seligmans have, in fact, plausibly argued that the deity Panikki Yaka was a deified Vādda chieftain of the sixteenth century who was given the high title of Bandāra Mudiyanse by the king of Kandy for having captured elephants for the king.⁹ Thus, Vāddas believe in a form of ancestor worship, the cult of nā yakku; however, the pantheon is dominated by a special class of deities, deified heroes, or pre-eminent members of the group. Yet, while these deified ancestors are an important element in Vādda worship there are also Vādda deities who are viewed as having come across from the oceans. In fact, Indigolle Yaka is viewed in Vādda mythology as a foreign deity; so is Rahu (Mars) Yaku.¹⁰ Both these latter beliefs--that of deified ancestors and foreign deities--directly link Vādda religion with that of their Sinhala neighbors, at least in the North-central, Uva, and the Central Provinces (the Kandyan region).

The Sinhala Buddhists have no system of ancestor worship like that of the nā yakka. But they do believe in a cult of deified ancestors, and foreign deities, which Parker has labelled the Bandāra cult. Bandāra means "chief," and this cult is that of a group of deities who are viewed as "lords" or "chiefs." Parker has erroneously called this a form of ancestor-worship, which clearly it is not, though deified heroes or leaders of a local area

or region are part of the cult.¹¹ However, the striking feature of the Bandāra cult is that all deities, both local and foreign, were originally human beings who have been deified. Many of them have the title Bandāra; all of them are viewed as lords or chiefs, subordinate to the great dēvas of the Sinhala Buddhist pantheon who are viewed as kings or world rulers (cakravartin).

The Bandāra Cult Among the Sinhala

The Bandāra cult has been formalized in many parts of the Kandyan region into a cult of the Dolaha Deviyo or Twelve Gods. These Twelve Gods are individually and collectively propitiated in group rituals. Take the case of the Hanguranketa region. Here the Twelve Gods are propitiated in the gammaduva (village hall--not to be confused with the gammaduva of the Western, Southern, and Saharagamuva Provinces, where the Goddess Pattini and the major gods or dēvas are propitiated).

In Hanguranketa, informants gave several lists of the Twelve Gods. Gombrich presents three lists from Vevegama.¹² These lists are as follows:

<u>List I</u>	<u>List II</u>	<u>List III</u>
Piṭiya Deyyō	Piṭiya D.	
Gangē Bandāra Deyyō	Gangē B. D.	Gangē B. D.
Dēvatā Bandāra Deyyō = Dādimunda	Alutnuvara D.	Dēvatā B. D.
Kīrti Bandāra Deyyō	Kīrti B. D.	Kīrti B. D.
Kaḷu Bandāra Deyyō		Kaḷu B. D.
Vanniya Bandāra Deyyō	Vanniya B. D.	Vanniya B. D.
Kaḷukumārayā	Kaḷukumāra D.	Kaḷukumārayā
Kohombā Deyyō	Kohombā D.	Kohombā D.
Kaḍavara	Kaḍavara Deyyō	Kaḍavara Deyyō
Kandakumāra	Kandē Deyyō	Kandē D.
Amusiri Yakā	Amusiri Deyyō	Amusiri Deyyō
Mangara Deyyō		
Hūniyam	Hūniyam Dēvatā Bandāra	

List I

Valkōn Bandāra Deyyō
Abayakōn Bandāra Deyyō

List II

Siddamūla Hūniyam
Dēvatā Bandāra
Pallebādda Deyyō

List III

Pallebādda
Deyyō
Kiriamma
Deyyō

Translations:

Piṭiya:	a tract of flat ground.
Gangē:	in/on/at/of the river.
Kīrti:	fame, glory.
Kaḷu:	black.
Vanniya:	of the Vanni, a desolate area in northern Sri Lanka.
Kaḷukumāra:	black prince.
Kohombā:	Margosa (a kind of tree).
Kandakumāra:	mountain prince.
Kandē:	on/of the mountain.
Amusīri:	raw blood.
Hūniyam:	void.
Kiriamma:	milk-mother (term for wet-nurse; also for grandmother).
Pallebādda:	a place name.

Note that only one of Gombrich's lists actually has twelve deities; list II has fourteen, and there are fifteen in list I. In Hangu-ranketa there were in fact fifteen deities in their operative pantheon; actual lists from informants showed the kind of variation that Gombrich has noted. Thus, it is clear that numerology has the same function here as elsewhere in Sri Lanka: the number itself is crucial, but the content shows some variations. Numerology provides an overall sense of cultural unity within a large geographical area.

The following list of eleven deities was obtained from a tape-recorded version of a ritual from Hangu-ranketa:

1. Irugal Bandāra
2. Piṭiye Devindu
3. Pallebādde Devindu
4. Dēvatā Bandāra

5. Alut Devindu
6. Kalu Kumara Devi
7. Kīrti Banḍāra
8. Vasala Devindu
9. Kalu Dēvatā Devindu
10. Kaḍavara Devindu
11. Vanniye Banḍāra Devindu

Number twelve is probably Gange Banḍāra, an important deity in the area. Other deities of the same class referred to in the texts are Mānik Banḍāra, and most importantly, Mangara Deviyo, and the female deity Kiri Amma, worshipped individually or as a collectivity of seven manifestations. They are very important deities in other areas like Laggala, a remote region to the northeast of Kandy, as well as in the southern dry zone, near Panamure and Hambegamuva. Mangara is associated with cattle; Kiri Amma is often associated with children's diseases. Mangara appears as one of the Twelve Gods in Gombrich's List I and Kiri Amma appears in List III. Most of these deities are also propitiated in the collective rituals known as kohombā kankariya (the equivalent of the gammaḍuva) performed in parts of hatarā korale, uḍunuvara, yaṭinuvara, and hārispattuva, even though the collective designation, "the Twelve Gods," is not employed.

To sum up: the operative pantheon in most parts of the Kandyan region consisted of the Banḍāra cult, formalized in many parts of this area into a numerological category of the Twelve Gods. Many of these gods have in fact demonic attributes and are often referred to in rituals as dēvatā, "godling," a composite of the demonic and divine. Some like Irugal Banḍāra and Dēvatā Banḍāra are close to divine status; others like Kalu Kumāra are split into both good (divine) and evil (demonic) manifestations, while others like Gange Banḍāra are true dēvatās, a composite of divine and demonic attributes. These Twelve Gods are associated with most of the social,

economic, and personal needs of the worshipper--hunting, animal husbandry, rice cultivation, as well as individual afflictions such as illnesses from demonic incursions.

It will now be apparent to the reader that the Vādda gods and the Sinhala pantheon of the Baṇḍāra gods are similar. In both, the deities are chiefs or lords (but not kings); they are euhemerized beings, often ancestral heroes. In collective rituals they are propitiated with meat offerings among the Vāddas; among Sinhala only some of these deities (those possessing demonic qualities like Gange Baṇḍāra) are offered meat (impure) offerings. Furthermore, and this is of crucial significance, both Vādda and Sinhala pantheons show considerable overlap. Thus, Kiri Amma is the operative female deity in both Vādda and Kandyan Sinhala. The Vādda god Kande Yaka, the benevolent deity of the hunt, is perhaps none other than Kande Deviyo of the Kandyans. In kohombā kankariya rituals Kande Deviyo also appears as the god of the hunt.¹³ In Sinhala usage, the Vādda term yaka must be transformed into deviyo (god), since yaka is unequivocally "demon" in the former. Several other deities are shared by both Vādda and Sinhala, especially Gange Baṇḍāra, Vanniye Baṇḍāra, and Mangara. In addition many ritual terms are common to both cultures: hangala (for priest's robe), āyuda (arms, ornaments of the deity), kapurāla (priest), aḍukku (meal served to the deity), dola and puda (offering).

The preceding discussions of Vādda religion and the Baṇḍāra cult of the Kandyan Sinhala show striking resemblances to the nat cults of the Burmese and the Thai phii. Both nat and phii are an indigenous cult of ancestors, having a role similar to that of the Kandyan Baṇḍāra gods. Note that Baṇḍāra means "lord," which is exactly what nat (Sanskrit, nātha) also means. Furthermore, the nats are associated with natural phenomena like the Kandyan and

Vādda deities. Thus, the foremost nat, Min-Maha-Giri, "Lord of the Great Mountain," is like the Vādda Kande Yaka or Sinhala Kande Deviyo, the Lord of the Mountain, or Gale Bandāra, the Lord of the Rock, worshipped in many parts of the North-central Province. It is indeed likely that a form of euhemerism was the old indigenous, pre-Buddhist religion, not only of Sri Lanka, but of other Theravada nations of this region. The full significance of nat or bandāra comes out clearly in relation to the great, often Brahmanic derived dēvas, who constitute the upper level of the pantheon. These dēvas are kings, or cakravartins; the Bandāras are lesser beings "chieftains," "lords" owing formal suzerainty to the "king-gods."

The Elementary Forms of South Asian Religion

The type of religion described in the previous section is, I think, characteristic not only of the pre-Buddhist religion in Sri Lanka but that of most parts of South and Southeast Asia. Euhemerism is found in the village, local, and tribal religions of most of this region, with or without ancestor worship. Its wide distribution attests to its antiquity; it is at least part of pre-civilized religions of the region.

As institutionalized in the village and tribal level this form of religion is intrinsically associated with that of the inspired priest who is a medium or mouthpiece of the apotheosized ancestor or hero. In religious ritual the priest gets possessed by the spirit of the deity. The Seligmanns, as well as other anthropologists writing on tribal India, refer to him as "shaman." This designation is somewhat misleading since "shamanism" in South and Southeast Asia is different from the classic Siberian type. In the latter, the soul of the shaman leaves the body.¹⁴ In the South Asian type this does not happen; the deity possesses the priest and the god is thus physically "present" in the human community. Furthermore, the

extreme individualism of classic shamanism is not found here. The possessed priest activates a formal, publicly accepted pantheon of deities; he does not have personal guardian gods or individual spirits as in classic shamanism. The priest in South Asian euhemerism is no innovator; the invocations and songs that he recites and the ritual that he performs are part of a public system of beliefs and practices. He carries on the tradition of his forebears; his successors continue it.

This simple form of religion probably coexisted, as it does today, with other forms of religious belief and practice, such as witchcraft, sorcery, and divination. When the great historical religions like Buddhism were introduced into this region the older religion had to adapt itself to the new situation. The basic mechanism whereby non-Buddhist beliefs are incorporated into Buddhism is through the theory of karma.

The pantheons of deified ancestors could easily be incorporated into the theory of karma so that the death of the ancestor and his subsequent rebirth as a deity could be explained in terms of his good and bad actions in previous births. But over and beyond this, the older system of spirit cults has to be integrated with those of the great tradition, such as the great Brahmanic dēvas and the Buddha himself. This relationship between the older spirits and the dēvas and Buddhas was expressed in a political idiom, which we shall now discuss.

The Bandāra Cult and the Worship of Dēvas

The Bandāra cult or the cult of the Twelve Gods was the operative folk religion of many villages in the Kandyan Kingdom. But the cult of the Bandāra or lords was in turn enveloped in the cult of the dēvas, the superordinate king-gods of the pantheon. What, then, is the relationship between the Bandāra cult and the great dēvas, most of them derived historically from Brahmanism? To appreciate the full significance of this relationship

we must shift our ground from the narrow perspective of Vādda or Kandyan religion to the larger perspective of a Sinhala Buddhist nation. The Banḍāra were local or regional deities; even if some of them like Mangara and Dēvatā Banḍāra were widely dispersed, they were viewed as chieftains or lords, not kings. The dēvas by contrast were national deities, viewed as kings, holding jurisdictional sway over Sri Lanka; they were protectors of that Sinhala Buddhist nation. The Banḍāra gods are subservient to the dēvas, and the latter are in turn subordinate to the Buddha, according to popular religion. The dēvas have a warrant (varan) or authority from the Buddha himself, whereas the lesser Banḍāras in general exercise their authority with permission from the dēvas.

The concept of divine protectors of the secular and sacred realm is an ancient one in Sri Lanka. Firstly, there was the ancient Buddhist doctrinal notion of the guardians of the Four Quarters. In addition to this there developed in Sri Lanka the idea of four guardians of the state. If the Buddhist guardians protected the "cosmos," the dēvas were protectors of the nation and therefore were of great significance in the practical religion. The concept of the four gods--hatara deviyo, and hatara dēvāle--the four shrines, were clearly established in the Kingdoms of Kotte (fifteenth century) and in Kandy. In popular usage the term hatara varan deviyo--the gods of Four Warrants--which should in theory have referred to the four Buddhist guardians of the universe, came to be synonymous with the concept of the Four Gods, guardians of the kingdom.

In relation to the concept of the Four Gods, numerology is once again very important. There are always four guardian gods, but the deities occupying these positions can show considerable variation. Thus the Four Gods in the Kandyan Kingdom were Viṣṇu, Nātha, Skanda (Kataragama), and Pattini. In the Sinhala low country

the current four gods are Viṣṇu, Saman, Vibhīṣaṇa, and Skanda. Nevertheless, there is strong evidence in the literature of the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, particularly in the genre of poetry known as Sandēsa, that Nātha was equally important. In general, one would say that the positions of the four gods from the fifteenth century onward were filled by one of the following dēvas: Viṣṇu, Nātha, Vibhīṣaṇa, Saman, Skanda, and Pattini. If the Banḍāra gods were part of the operative village religion, the dēvas, in particular the Four Gods, were part of the state cultus. In the Kandyan Kingdom, for example, the Four Gods were paraded in the annual state procession along with the tooth relic. The king, the chiefs, and their retinue also participated in this event. The procession reflected in microcosm the larger macrocosmic structure of the Kandyan state.¹⁵

Underlying the organization of the pantheon is a political idiom, very much like that described for the nat cultus in Burma by Spiro.¹⁶ The Four Gods are kings, guardians of Buddhism and the secular state, while the Twelve Gods are chiefs, attendants or ministers of the king-gods. The order in the pantheon is based on the idea of order in the political state. Crucial to the feudal idiom underlying the pantheon is the notion of sīma, or "limit," "boundary," which has several meanings in the political sphere: (a) in relation to territory, as a "boundary" or "border" of a kingdom, province, or village; (b) in relation to authority and control, as the "limit" of a political domain, e.g., the king has sīma over the kingdom, the disāva over a province, the headman over a village; (c) in relation to time, as a "time limit" (kāla sīmāva) on the exercise of political authority, e.g., the kāla sīmāva for the king is the king's lifetime, for a disāva only a year (barring his reappointment by the king).

All these meanings of sīma, so important in the

political idiom, are transferred intact to the religious context, so the deities in the pantheon all have their sīma in terms of territory, authority, and time. The Baṇḍāra gods have the village, region, or province as their sīma. Thus, Dēvatā Baṇḍāra whose main shrine is in Alutnuvara had, at least traditionally, as his sīma the region of the hatarā korale. However, these boundaries are not permanently fixed: a regional deity may eventually come to have a national reputation and worship, as in the case of Kiri Amma and Mangara, and more recently of Dēvatā Baṇḍāra. Nevertheless, the ideology that the Baṇḍāra Gods are regional chiefs is an important one defining their status in the overall religious system of the Sinhala. The Four Gods by contrast have as their sīma the whole of Sri Lanka, but they also have their special sīma over which they have more direct control. These generally are the regions surrounding the pilgrimage center(s) of each deity.¹⁷ Thus, Skanda (Kataragama) is a guardian god of Sri Lanka; he also has special jurisdiction over a large region in the Southern Province where his central shrine is located. Many people in the area can, for example, state where the sīma of Skanda ends and that of Viṣṇu (whose central shrine is in Devundara) begins.

The Dēvas, Vādda, and Baṇḍāra Deities

The relationships expressed in the political idiom are translated into action in group worship at collective ceremonies. Feudal chiefs and headmen have authority in the day to day affairs of the villages and provinces; so with Baṇḍāra gods and the deities of the Vādda pantheon. The authority of the headman and the chiefs comes from the king; this idea is also translated into the pantheon in the notion that the lesser gods have warrant (varan) from the greater gods, or from the Buddha himself. In terms of worship the dēvas (and of course the Buddha) must be invoked and praised before the

rituals for the Banḍāra gods commence. In the political realm the king's locus of power is in the capital; so is it in the supernatural realm. The lesser gods lose their power at the main shrines of the dēvas, or in the capital where the Four Gods are installed. This is translated into worship in the institution of the obligatory pilgrimage: periodically the members of the village community visit the shrines of the dēvas, which are major centers of pilgrimage. At these centers they renounce the worship of their local Banḍāra gods for the worship of the dēvas. The worship of dēvas, which had been formal on the village level, now becomes a part of the active and operative religion of the peasant. The obligatory pilgrimage, retranslated into political terms, means that the single discrete village communities have merged together in the larger moral community of Sinhala Buddhists. The worship of the dēvas, on this level, reflects this larger solidary consciousness.

The relationship between Vādda deities and dēva is similar except for one very significant difference. The Vāddas are part of Sri Lanka as a political entity, for they owed services to the king, always in theory and often in practice. Yet they were not Buddhists; they did not acknowledge the Buddha, the Dhamma, and sangha, which connotes the formal acceptance of Buddhism. The Vāddas were a tribal group within the Sri Lankan (Buddhist) nation. The political relationship of the Vāddas to the Sinhala Buddhist nation is once again reflected in the religious integration of the Vādda pantheon with that of the Sinhala-Buddhist one.

In general the Vāddas believe that their pantheon of deities is subordinate to Skanda (Kataragama), one of the dēvas of the Sinhala Buddhist pantheon. This idea is clearest among those Vāddas who have established contact--political or economic--with the Sinhala. Thus the Hēnebādde Vāddas, according to the Seligmanns, believe

that "the dead have no power to interfere in human affairs and take offerings until permission has been obtained from one or more high gods, of whom the chief is the Kataragama God."¹⁸ Also: "The Bandaraduva Veddas--asserted that the spirit of the deceased spent some days in the neighborhood of the death scene--to seek the Kataragama God and obtain his permission to become a yaka and pass into the train of attendants on Kande Yaka, and so become a Nae Yaku capable of accepting offerings from the living and in return helping or injuring them."¹⁹ The Seligmans also state that the truly wild Vāddas do not accept any such beliefs regarding the dēvas. This is theoretically expectable in political terms also: if there are groups of Vāddas who refuse to recognize the political supremacy of the king and the Sinhala Buddhist state, it will be reflected in their denial of the supremacy of the dēvas. However, it is likely that most Vādda communities right through history had some political and economic relationship with Sinhala, and that this was reflected in the manner in which their pantheon was integrated with the neighboring Sinhala.

There is considerable internal historical evidence from extant Sinhala rituals that the Vāddas in fact participated, even peripherally, in the rituals practiced by their Sinhala neighbors. Let me give some examples of these.

(1) In the collective rituals (gammaḍuva) performed by the Sinhala Buddhists of the Western, Southern, and Sabaragamuva Provinces in honor of the Goddess Pattini and the major dēvas, there is a ritual text known as the vādi puḷava (Vādda offering), which is now moribund. It is very likely that this ritual indicated the participation of the Vāddas, at least formally, in the collective rituals of their Sinhala neighbors.

(2) A similar ritual known as vādi dāne (Vādda almsgiving) is referred to in the kohambā kankāriya.²⁰

(3) The myths of Kataragama integrate Vādda with the god Skanda, since Valli Amma, Skanda's mistress, was raised by the Vāddas. The present priests (kapurālas) and the female servitors of Valli Amma at Kataragama trace their ancestry to Vāddas.

We can demonstrate clearly the relationship between Vādda and Sinhala religion by an actual contemporary example from the pilgrimage center at Mahiyangana where the collar bone relic of the Buddha is enshrined. The sacred precincts at Mahiyangana have shrines for the dēvas Saman and Skanda, who act as guardians of the Buddha relic, and ipso facto, of the Buddhist sāsana (church) in Sri Lanka. The region around Mahiyangana is also where many present day Vādda communities are located. The annual pilgrimage at Mahiyangana draws large crowds of Sinhala-Buddhists from the neighboring regions. The Vāddas also assemble here and perform an impressive ritual called the vādi perahāra, "the procession of the Vāddas". I shall describe the vādi perahāra I witnessed about sixteen years ago.²¹

Vāddas (seventy-one in the ritual I witnessed) carrying poles representing spears line up near the shrine (dēvāle) of Saman, led by a "chief" carrying a bow and arrow. After circumambulating the dēvāle three times in a graceful dance, the Vāddas suddenly increase the tempo of their dance at a signal from the chief, and start hooting, yelling, and brandishing their "spears", frightening the assembled Sinhala spectators. They stage several battles in front of the dēvāle, during which they "assault" the dēvāle by striking their spears on the dēvāle steps. They then run toward the vihāra and try to enter the premises of the dāgoba, where the Buddha relics are enshrined. Here the path is blocked by two "watchers" (murakārayo) who shout, "You can't approach this place. Go back to the royal altar (rājavīdiya, the altar of the guardian deity)." These mock battles are

repeated several times and end with the Vāddas placing their "spears" gently against the dāgoba and worshipping it. They then run toward the monks' residence (pansala), stage a battle, but, as at the dāgoba, end by worshipping the monks gathered there. Then, from the monks' residence back to the dēvāle where they again "battle," beating their spears against the stone steps of the dēvāle until the spears break into small pieces and finally falling prostrate on the ground to worship the gods housed in the dēvāle. After this they run toward the nearby river ("the ferry crossing of the gods") and bathe and purify themselves. Returning to the dēvāle calm and self-possessed, they are now permitted to enter the inner sanctum while the kapurāla chants an incantation for Saman, Skanda, and the other major deities and blesses the Vāddas by lustrating each person with "sandal water." The ritual ends with the Vāddas all shouting "haro-hara," which in Sri Lanka is the paean of praise for the god Skanda, the great guardian deity of the island and formal overlord of the Vādda pantheon.

The difference in the social functions of the rituals performed by Sinhala and Vādda are impressive. In the case of the Sinhala there are no rituals that separate one group from another: all the assembled groups form one moral community participating in common worship. In the case of the Vāddas, the rituals define their status in relation to the dominant religion in that they are "prevented" from entering the vihāra and dāgoba. Though they formally acknowledge the supremacy of the Buddha, they are clearly outside the Sinhala Buddhist moral community. Yet they are not total strangers, for both Sinhala and Vādda are united in worship of the guardian deities, Saman and Skanda, protectors of the secular and supernatural order of both Vādda and Sinhala.

The Decline of the Baṇḍāra Cult

Most scholars following Parker²² have identified the Baṇḍāra cult as a Kandyian phenomenon. This seemed obvious since the Western, Southern, and Sabaragamuwa Provinces--the most populous and literate areas in the country in Parker's time--had no visible belief in the Baṇḍāra cult, or the Twelve Gods, or any form of conspicuous euhemerism. In these areas--hereafter referred to as the "low country"--the operative religion seemed to be dominated by the worship of the dēvas. The central shrines of the major dēvas were also located in this region: Viṣṇu at Devundara, Saman at Ratnapura, Skanda at Kataragama, Pattini at Navagamuva, Vibhīṣaṇa at Kelaniya, and Nātha at Totagamuva. In other words the operative cult was that of the Four Gods (dēvas) rather than the Twelve Gods (Baṇḍāra). This would seem unusual if our view is correct that a form of euhemerism was the indigenous pre-Buddhist folk religion of South and Southeast Asia. However, I shall show that even in this region the Baṇḍāra cult of the Twelve Gods was probably the operative folk religion until it was displaced by the powerful guardian gods--the dēvas--after the fifteenth century. The analysis of the decline of the Baṇḍāra cult in the low country will help us to identify the causes that led to its decline, and also predict the future of the Baṇḍāra cult in the Kandyian region.

The evidence for an earlier operative Baṇḍāra cult comes from several sources, most importantly the gamma-duva ceremonies performed in the low country. The gamma-duva is a collective ceremony, under the aegis of the Goddess Pattini. In addition to Pattini all the major dēvas of the pantheon are offered pūjas by the grateful community of worshippers. The myths and rituals of the gamma-duva constantly refer to two numerological classes of deities--the Four Gods and the Twelve Gods. In fact, several rituals performed in the gamma-duva are explicitly

directed to the Twelve Gods. Yet, while the Twelve Gods are constantly mentioned, most traditional priests (kapurāla) had very little idea as to the identity of the Twelve Gods. Most priests state that the Twelve Gods were "kings" who came from India when the original prototypic gammaḍuva was performed in mythic times by King Seraman, the founder of the gammaḍuva. Extant texts give a list of nine, viz. Kalikot, Kulakonta, Sāta, Mada raja, Yuva raja, Kandāraja, Yā raja, Sulambā raja, Golusan. Nowhere in the texts of the gammaḍuva have I seen a fuller list. A few of these names make some sense such as Yuva raja (heir apparent), but for the most part these names make no sense in Sinhala language or mythology. Yā raja (Yavana raja? king of the Greeks?) is obviously an important figure since he is often mentioned in these texts, but his mythological roots are probably in ancient South Indian tradition. One priest, however, added three other names to make it twelve, Sēraman himself, Dala Kumāra, and Vīramuṇḍa. It is strange that Sēraman should be one of the Twelve Gods that came for his (Sēraman's) own ritual.²³ Dala Kumāra (or Gara) and Vīramuṇḍa are never associated with any of the "twelve kings" in any text I have seen. Yet these two additions are significant since Vīramuṇḍa is one of the Twelve Gods in some parts of Kandy and is also one of the Banḍāra gods of the kohombā kankāriya. Dala Kumāra is also an euhemeristic deity of the same class, a being with both demonic and divine attributes like some of the Burmese nats. In the gammaḍuva there are two ritual dramas known as āt bandana (capture of the elephant) and mī bandana (capture of the buffalo). Both these are in honor of the Twelve Gods, according to the priests, yet significantly none of the "twelve kings" is mentioned in the texts or the rituals. However, the texts clearly state that these two rituals are for Mangara and Kiri Amma, both deities of the Banḍāra class and part of the pantheon of the Twelve Gods

in many parts of Sri Lanka. Thus it seems reasonably clear that the Twelve Gods were at one time propitiated even in the low country in the gammaḍuva rituals, but for reasons which we shall presently explain, a new set of relatively unknown deities were poured into this numerological category.

Further evidence that the Twelve Gods were propitiated even in the low country comes from Sarathchandra in his study of the folk drama of this region. He writes:

Along with Pattini are invoked a number of gods like Kataragama Deviyo--and the Twelve Gods called collectively Dolaha Deviyo. The names of these gods are given in some places as Mānik Devi, Māvatte Devi, Kosgama Devi, Parakāsa Devi, Kumāra Devi, Miriyabādde Devi, Vanni Baṇḍāra, Kalu Baṇḍāra, Bōvala Devi, Migahapitiyi Devi, Miriswatte Alut Devi and Kivulegedera Alut Devi. These gods are regarded by some as attendants of Pattini.²⁴

Here we have a list which duplicates some from the earlier lists (Vanni Baṇḍāra, Kalu Kumāra), yet many are indigenous to a local area. Thus, Migahapitiya Devi, Miriswatte Alut Devi, Māvatte Devi, and Kivulegedera Devi are minor gods who have names of villages, very likely from this region. Parakāsa Deviyo is also worshipped in parts of the southern dry zone. These gods named after localities indicate that they are deified local heroes. The evidence then is clear that the cult of the Twelve Gods existed not only in the Kandyan areas, but in the low country as well. Furthermore there is an overlap from one region to another; but each region has its own local deities unrepresented in other areas. Thus the cult of the Twelve Gods constituted at one time a series of overlapping circles covering most parts of the Western, Southern, and Sabargamuva Provinces and the Kandyan area. Even when the numerological category of Twelve was not used there was everywhere in Sri Lanka a system of local village worship of baṇḍāras or lords constituting a pan-Sri Lankan pantheon of euhemerized

ancestors or heroes.

I can only spell out very briefly what I think was responsible for the decline of the Baṇḍāra cult in the low country. Its present existence in remote parts of the low country (as Sarathchandra's evidence suggests) and its survival in obsolete form in the gamaḍuva make it reasonable to infer its presence at one time in the low country. Its decline, I think, can be traced to the massive historical and sociological changes that occurred in this region in the post-fifteenth century period. Let me briefly outline these changes.

Right up to the thirteenth century the capital of the Sinhala kings and the main locus of Sinhala Buddhist civilization was in the northern dry zone, first Anuradhapura and later Polonnaruwa. In 1214, Magha of Kalinga (in Orissa) landed in Sri Lanka and destroyed the magnificent civilization of Polonnaruwa. There then occurred a movement to the Southwest first to Dambadeniya, then Gampola, and finally Kotte in the early fifteenth century. This meant that the low country became the locus of Sinhala Buddhist civilization. Concomitantly, there was established in the capital of Kotte the cult of the Four Gods (dēvas), the guardians of the secular and religious realms. Furthermore, the central shrines of all the major dēvas--Viṣṇu, Nātha, Vibhīṣaṇa, Saman, Skanda (Kataragama), and Pattini--were spread throughout the length and breadth of this region. As centers of pilgrimage, these shrines were not only popular with the elite but also with the masses. This meant that the cult of the major gods or dēvas invaded the rural areas and displaced the older cult of regional and local deities, the Twelve Gods. The dēvas became part of the operative pantheon in the low country. The jurisdictional sway of the central gods effectively incorporated the region. However such an erosion of the sīma or territory of local (Baṇḍāra) deities by the dēvas must imply a prior socio-

logical and political change. As the capital of the kings moved to Kotte, villages and isolated areas in this region came under the direct political control of the state. Political control was facilitated by the nature of the terrain, which was much more accessible than that of the Kandyan region. The evidence of the sandēsa literature also suggests that this region was connected by well known land routes. Nevertheless, it is very likely that the older Bandāra cult was operative in the remoter and less accessible parts of this region, then more than now, particularly in Sabaragamuva.

If the older cult of Bandāras declined in the low country, how is it that the concept of the Twelve Gods was retained but new content poured into it? To answer this, we must consider the functions of numerology in South Asian culture generally. For example, consider the numerological category of the Four Gods. Sri Lanka probably always had the concept of the Four Gods; it was essential to the whole notion of kingship. Yet the divine occupants of these positions varied from one period or place to another. So with the Twelve Gods: the number was found in local religion in many places but the occupants of the positions differed regionally. Synchronically viewed numerology facilitates unity in a cultural tradition by incorporating substantive variation and diversity into categorical uniformity. Historically it permits change within the framework of tradition. Thus, after the fifteenth century the Bandāra cult had eroded in many parts of the low country; nevertheless, the concept of the Twelve Gods was retained although mythological figures from South Indian tradition (the Twelve Kings) were substituted. In some parts of the low country the concept of the Twelve Gods was used to designate the major gods (dēvas) of the pantheon, that is, the Four Gods plus other major gods.²⁵

The political process that occurred in the low

country from the fifteenth century onward is not unique to that region but must have occurred at other times and periods in Sri Lankan history. The process whereby the dēvas encroached on the domain of the bandāras always occurs when a city or area is incorporated into the mainstream of national political life. For example, the city of Hanguranketa (not the region surrounding it) was the alternate capital of the later Kandyan kings when Kandy itself was under attack or seige. Thus, the city of Hanguranketa had shrines that housed the major dēvas, rather than the Twelve Gods, and staged processional events modelled on those of Kandy, such as the annual parade of the dēvas. Yet the villages around the city were under the jurisdiction of the Twelve Gods of the Bandāra cult. The difference between this situation and the post-fifteenth century low country is that in the latter many of the villages were directly incorporated into the political system at the center, and the cult of the Twelve Gods moved into remote areas in the periphery.

A process similar to that of the post-fifteenth century is occurring now in respect of the Kandyan region. After the conquest of Kandy by the British in 1815, the feudal order was abolished and the direct political control of the provinces was gradually accomplished. Subsequently, as a result of the development of central government and administrative machinery and the political democratization of the state, the local region lost its distinctive character as a political entity. Concomitantly, the gods of the Bandāra cult tended to lose their sīma or areas of jurisdiction and command. The dēvas are rapidly becoming part of the operative pantheon in village areas and will in time displace the regional gods altogether.²⁶

Notes

1. M. M. J. Marasinghe, Gods in Early Buddhism (Colombo: Vidyalankara Campus Publications Board, 1974), p. 69.
2. C. G. Seligmann and Brenda Z. Seligmann, The Veddas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911).
3. Ibid., p. 127.
4. Ibid., p. 131.
5. Ibid., p. 133.
6. Gananath Obeyesekere, "The Buddhist Pantheon in Ceylon and its Extensions," in Manning Nash (ed.), Anthropological Studies in Theravada Buddhism, Cultural Report, Series No. 13 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 16-21.
7. Seligmann and Seligmann, op. cit., p. 140.
8. Ibid., pp. 162-166.
9. Ibid., p. 141.
10. Ibid., p. 153.
11. Richard F. Gombrich, Precept and Practice (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971). pp. 183-190.
12. Ibid., p. 185.
13. See C. E. Godakumbura, Kohombā Kankāriya (Sinhala) (Colombo: Cultural Affairs Department, 1963), p. 19, for a text of a Sinhala invocation to Kande yaka.
14. See Mircea Eliade, Shamanism (Princeton, N. J.: Bollinger Paperback, 1972), for a superb comparative study of this phenomenon.
15. Obeyesekere, op. cit., pp. 24-25; and H. L. Seneviratne, "A Natural History of a Buddhist Liturgy" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, 1972), have discussions of this problem.
16. Melford E. Spiro, Burmese Supernaturalism (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1967). See also Obeyesekere, op. cit., pp. 16-21.
17. Obeyesekere, op. cit., p. 17.
18. Seligmann and Seligmann, op. cit., p. 18.
19. Ibid., p. 133.
20. See Lorna Amarasingham, "Laughter as Cure: Joking and Exorcism in a Sinhalese Curing Ritual" (Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1973), for an excellent discussion of a ritual for the vādi yakku or Vādda demons performed by Sinhala people.
21. This is an excerpt from Obeyesekere, "Buddhist Pantheon" 1966, pp. 19-20.
22. Henry Parker, Ancient Ceylon (London: Lusac and Co., 1909) See also his paper on "A note on Bandar Cult of the Kandyan Sinhalese," Man (1909), p. 77.

23. Seraman literally meant King of Cera or Kerala. In the texts of the low country gammaduva he is the culture hero who introduced the Pattini cult to Sri Lanka.

24. E. R. Sarathchandra, The Folk Drama of Ceylon (2nd ed.; Colombo: Cultural Affairs Department, 1966), pp. 30-31.

25. This is according to Paul Wirz, Exorcism and the Art of Healing in Ceylon (Leiden: Brill and Co., 1954), p. 136.

26. Not all dēvas come into prominence in the context of social change. I have detailed discussion of this problem in "Social Change and the Deity: The Rise of the Kataragama Cult in Modern Sri Lanka" Man, III (December 1977), pp. 377-396. For a detailed discussion of the traditional Sinhala pantheon the reader is requested to read my forthcoming work on The Goddess Pattini: Virgin, Wife and Mother, Chapters 2 and 6.

Additional Readings

- Ames, M. M. "Magical Animism and Buddhism: A Structural Analysis of the Sinhalese Religious System," in Edward B. Harper (ed.), Religion in South Asia. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964, pp. 21-52.
- Obeyesekere, Gananath. "The Great Tradition and the Little in the Perspective of Sinhalese Buddhism," Journal of Asian Studies, XXII (February 1963), pp. 139-153.
- . "The Ritual Drama of the Sanni Demons: Collective Representations of Disease in Ceylon," Comparative Studies in Society and History, XI (April 1969), pp. 174-216.
- Seneviratne, H. L. Rituals of the Kandyan State. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978.
- Yalman, Nur. "The Structure of Sinhalese Healing Rituals," in Edward B. Harper (ed.), Religion in South Asia. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964, pp. 115-150.

Chapter 12

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Siri Gunasinghe

The single most important event in the cultural history of Sri Lanka¹ was undoubtedly the introduction of Buddhism in the third century, B. C., during the reign of Devanampiya Tissa (250-210, B. C.). Buddhism has always proved itself a tremendous civilizing force wherever it took root in Asia, and Sri Lanka is no exception. It can be stated without exaggeration that the most important creations in architecture, sculpture, and painting in Sri Lanka were inspired by Buddhism and were expressly intended to serve that religion. The only exceptions to the rule are the famous paintings of Sigiriya, a few Hindu temples, and some excellent Hindu bronzes that may have belonged to these temples built during the short Chola rule at Polonnaruwa (eleventh century, A. D.). It would not be wrong to consider Sinhala art as being synonymous with Buddhist art and it would be difficult, if not impossible, to understand this art except in the context of Buddhism.

Architecture

The first artistic expressions in the form of the stūpa² with its ancillary ornamental reliefs and carvings had already been formulated long before the new religion was introduced to Sri Lanka. It is only to be expected that the stūpa idea should have been introduced by Mahinda at the time he converted the island to Buddhism, and Buddhist art in Sri Lanka can be said to have commenced with the erection by Devanampiya Tissa of the first stūpas, such as the Thuparama stūpa, in the capital city of Anuradhapura. As it stands today, the Thuparama

is the result of many repairs and modifications it has undergone during its long existence. Constant repairs to important religious edifices, as well as additions to them, were not unusual.

Besides being religious monuments, the stūpas were also symbols of national pride. This particular aspect of the stūpa appears to have dominated the thinking of some of the builders of these monuments who have spared no effort in making their creations impressive by sheer size and visual grandeur. Ruvanvali (Figure 12.1), the work of Dutthagamini (161-137, B. C.), was as much a monument to his stature as the hero who liberated the country from foreign domination as it was an expression of devotion to Buddhism. With a diameter at the base of 294 feet and a height of more than 300 feet, the Mahāthūpa (the Great Stūpa), as Ruvanvali was called, must have been looked upon as a most eloquent statement of national achievement. In fact, gigantic stūpas seem to have been the order of the day. Mirisavati, Abhayagiri, and Jetavana are among the most notable for their size (the last having a diameter at base of nearly 370 feet and a height of more than 400 feet), although many others built during a period of nearly 2,000 years are only a little smaller.

Shape and size apart, all stūpas had to have a number of essential features which underwent very little change during all these centuries. The most prominent feature of the stūpa was (and is) the dome (anda) containing the chamber, in which were enshrined the corporeal relics of the Buddha that elevated the mass of masonry to the status of an object of worship. It was set on a base consisting of circular terraces receding in circumference as they rose; the top of the dome was slightly flattened to receive a solid brick structure, a square platform of varying height known as the harmikā (little mansion); over it was raised a series of flat circular



FIGURE 12.1.--Ruvanvali, Anuradhapura
(photo: Siri Gunasinghe).

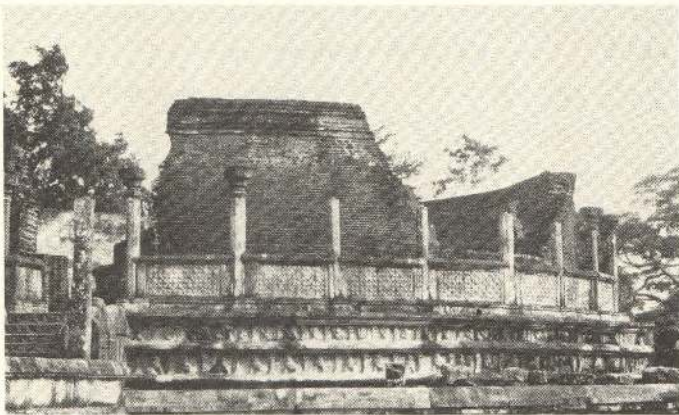


FIGURE 12.2.--Vatadāge, Polonnaruwa
(photo: Siri Gunasinghe).

stone discs fixed on a staff embedded deep in the heart of the hemispherical dome. These discs were, of course, purely symbolic, representing the traditional white umbrella, token of royal power and authority; when used as a component of the stūpa they came to denote the sacred character of the Buddha--his spiritual power. The series of discs was later fashioned in masonry, not as separate discs but as moldings or rings on a solid conical unit, and has remained so ever since. Equally symbolic of the sacred was the "Buddhist" railing--molded uprights and cross-bars--used as decorative facing for the harmikā. The finished look of the monument as a religious edifice was achieved by the use as its top-most member of a shiny finial made of metal and precious stones.

The stūpa was usually built on a large raised terrace held in place by a retaining wall with steps leading to its paved surface where devotees performed their ceremonial worship and the usual circumambulation. Many of these retaining walls were decorated with various ornamental motifs, such as elephant heads, which enhanced the monumental dignity of the edifice. The whole structure, often quite majestic in its imposing appearance, must certainly have greatly stimulated the religious feelings of devotees as they looked upon it.

Although the basic form of the monument was thoroughly in keeping with the rather austere spirit of early Buddhism, it did not remain so for long. With the passage of time and with the evolution of Buddhism itself into a popular religion, new elements were added to its architecture so as to accommodate the changing forms of worship. These modifications were also calculated to enhance the sacred character of the monument in response to the changing personality of the Buddha from the historical teacher into a superhuman (lokottara) person. Among the developments that changed the character of Buddhist worship and the architecture of the stūpa was

undoubtedly the appearance of the Buddha image in response to the popular demand for a tangible manifestation of the personality of the Buddha; once created it was to do service as an icon. In that capacity it was incorporated into the architecture of the stūpa, changing not only the visual aspect of the latter, but to some extent at least, its very character as well.

In Sri Lanka, the architectural response was to add to the base of the edifice, at each of the four cardinal points, a sort of chapel, known as vāhalkada, which held one or more Buddha images. In the form we have them at Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, these chapels are typical Sinhala creations which do credit to their architectural ingenuity. From the remains of foundations and bits and pieces of their superstructures, it has been possible to reconstruct these chapels, showing how much they add to the visual impact of an otherwise bare stūpa. In the absence of elaborate gateways and railings as were found in India, these members were bound to have acquired both a decorative and a didactic function. Even more important, these chapels may have made the worship of the stūpa meaningful as well as colorful from the viewpoint of the ordinary devotee. Buddhist worship in the Theravada³ tradition has always been simple and has involved no complicated ceremonial. In its commonest ritualistic form, it involves no more than the offering of flowers at the feet of the Buddha, in itself a rather simple act without any mystic meaning attached to it.

The stūpas, particularly when small enough, were housed within large circular buildings consisting mainly of a wooden roof supported on concentric circles of beautiful monolithic pillars, walls, and screens (Figure 12.2). These imposing buildings, called vatadāges (circular relic-houses), were not meant merely to protect the stūpas (which they did, of course) but were also intended to serve as a sort of peristylar temple devised

in response to changing ceremonial worship. The idea of the peristylar shrine may point to an ancestry, in spirit at least, that derives from the earlier caitya caves in India in which the rock-cut stūpa rested under the stone roof, supported, visually at least, by pillars hewn out of the same rock. However, the Sri Lankan shrines indicate a more significant development in that they functioned as public places of worship for much larger lay communities, unlike the isolated caitya caves of the strictly ascetic phase of Buddhism; for by now Buddhism was not merely an individual means of salvation but a religion in which public participation on a large scale (not congregational though) formed an essential element.

The vatadāge, when painted and gilded (as is to be expected) was undoubtedly a very conspicuous architectural monument in the community; it was also probably the most consciously planned house of worship, providing for the intimacy and seclusion so essential to the meditative nature of Buddhist worship. Over and above such clearly functional aspects one must also recognize the significance of such an edifice in separating the sacred from the profane. Notwithstanding the fact that the area surrounding it has already attained a status of sanctity, the vatadāge, by virtue of its visual form, would impart a special character to the entire shrine. There have been many devices by which the sacred character of a Buddhist shrine was maintained. Almost invariably the shrine would be built upon a raised platform reached by elaborate flights of steps at the four cardinal points; pillars flanking the stairways marked the sanctity of the particular site. The most eloquent means of such spatial separation was, of course, the "Buddhist railing" with its gateways that played a dominant role in the architecture of the early Buddhist shrines in India, such as Bharhut and Sanchi. The Sri Lankan shrines seem to have dispensed with elaborate railings and gateways. Instead,

elevation by means of platforms or other basal members was the method resorted to by the Sinhalese architects for this purpose. Best of all was the peristylar shrine which, with its first circle of columns, fenced off most effectively the secular environment from the sacred area.

The vaṭadāge was in many ways the perfect Buddhist shrine, combining in one architectural unit the major objects worshipped--stūpa and Buddha image--and most likely also providing, in the murals, sermons in visual form. The Buddha images and the murals dealing with the important episodes from the life of the Buddha must surely have created a great impression in the minds of the devotees on the subject of the supreme personality of the Buddha.

The veneration of the Buddha symbolically represented by the image and the practice of making offerings of flowers and perhaps even food (as at present) placed on an altar before it, was undoubtedly a great source of inspiration for both sculpture and architecture. Probably the most important consequence deriving from such image worship was the development of a special type of shrine to house these images, known as patimāghara. Remains of what must have been image houses were found in Anuradhapura in various stages of preservation, but none was in any condition to encourage a meaningful reconstruction, particularly of the superstructure. However, the foundations that remained buried for centuries can give us some idea of what these shrines might have looked like. Most image houses were of the simplest construction, consisting of a square sanctum--where the principal image was kept--and a smaller entrance vestibule. The whole edifice was built on one or more raised platforms calculated to maintain the spatial separation between the shrine and the secular environs.

The unambitious character of the shrine is altogether consonant with the simplicity of the ceremonial.

Occasionally the desire to enhance the sacred aspect of the principal icon might have been reflected in the construction of a smaller sanctum inside the first one, the smaller inner chamber becoming the sanctum proper and the bigger one serving more or less as an outer hall from which would project the main entrance vestibule. The natural result of the addition of the smaller chamber was the creation of an ambulatory around the sanctum indicating that, in some cases at least, devotees resorted to circumambulation in addition to making offerings before the image itself. Later remains show that the walls of the image houses were covered with murals depicting jātakas⁴ and scenes from the life of the Buddha, making the circumambulation ceremonially meaningful.

Very little of the external ornamentation of these shrines has been preserved. All we have left are a few relief carvings on some staircases, their balustrades, and on some plinths. Here again one is struck by the characteristic absence of exuberant ornamentation. At their ornamental best, some of the plinths sport simple pilasters meant to break up the surfaces into small niches in which lions or dwarfs with happy faces would be located. Most important in the decorative scheme are the guardstones and the makara⁵ balustrades on either side of the entrance stairs and the "moonstones" leading to these. The compositions of interwoven scrolls, floral patterns, and animal figures found on these members are perhaps the best examples of architectural ornamentation from Anuradhapura.

The image houses of Polonnaruwa have preserved more of their architecture than the Anuradhapura examples and provide us with a better idea not only of the nature of these buildings, but also of the changes in the religion itself. The best preserved examples are the Lankatilaka, the Thuparama, and the Tivanka shrine. They are very similar in many ways, indicating a homogeneity in function

and inspiration. It would have been most interesting if a close comparison were possible between the image houses of Anuradhapura and those of Polonnaruwa permitting us to form an adequate picture of the evolution of Buddhist ideology over nearly a thousand years. But such a comparison is not possible because, as stated earlier, no Anuradhapura building has survived with enough of its architecture intact. To judge by the other artistic remains, the stūpas and the Buddha images particularly, one must admit that the art of Polonnaruwa differs greatly in spirit from that of Anuradhapura. The differences must reflect significant changes in the practice of Buddhism itself, rather than external influences such as that of Chola art.⁶ Much has been said about foreign influences without serious consideration being given to the principle that changes in artistic idiom are, basically, responses to ideological changes rather than simple superimpositions. One could not deny that ideas introduced by the Cholas had some effect on the art and architecture of Polonnaruwa: they touched the details of external form rather than the actual content of the arts.

Although the interiors of these buildings show little that is architecturally significant, except for the vaulting of the roof (no longer extant), the plastic ornamentation of the exterior walls can be of interest. It is apparent that the intention of the builders was to create a strong visual impression on devotees as they approached the shrine. The articulation of the vertical aspect, which is an essential element in religious architecture everywhere, is particularly noticeable in the Lankatilaka and the Tivanka shrines where two pylon-like structures dominate the entrance. Chambered and divided into sections by horizontal courses, they were made to look like tall columns to anyone approaching the shrines; nevertheless, they are not columns proper but a new feature structurally incorporated with the wall ends and

presenting an aspect that is visually most effective. Whether calculated or not, they impart a great sense of majesty to the building. At the same time they evoke a sense of humility in the pious devotee, thereby preparing him for the final act of paying homage to the Buddha whose colossal standing image could be seen against the back wall--the tall entrance defined by the two solid structures permitting an unobstructed view.

The pilasters that counterbalance the horizontal articulation also break up the large wall areas into niches which, in addition to holding statues of different divinities, serve also as a very effective decorative motif. Particularly interesting as ornamentation are the roof complexes of these niches, consisting of superimposed cornices, arches, tympanums, and the like, supported by ornate pilaster capitals. There is here an abundance of ornamental splendor that, in many ways, appears to be uncharacteristic in a sacred edifice belonging to an austere religion such as Theravada Buddhism would claim itself to be. These tendencies in architecture and architectural decoration must be viewed as the result of the infusion of Mahayanist and Tantric ideas: although Sinhala Buddhism did not become Mahayanist as in India, it would be futile to deny that the many divine figures that adorn the walls of these shrines show an inspiration other than purely Theravada.

The architectural remains of Polonnaruwa bear witness also to a strong showing of national pride and an unmitigated display of imperial grandeur. In a society where religion is of fundamental significance, religious architecture is undoubtedly the most effective symbol. The important rulers of Polonnaruwa--Vijayabahu, Parakramabahu, and Nissankamalla--were all convinced of the value of architecture as an art of persuasion. Naturally, Nissankamalla's "pavilion of ornamental creepers" (latā mandapa), an obvious tour de force where the rather

baroque-looking pillars are conceived as twisted lotus stalks, was meant to be a display of luxury. The colossal palaces, council chambers, and bathing ponds are all among the most elaborate monuments of ancient Sri Lanka which will always stand as symbols of a glorious moment in its history.

In terms of material wealth the Kandyan Kingdom was easily the poorest in the history of Sri Lanka. By the time the kingdom was established, centuries of internecine warfare had already enfeebled the social structure and the political system of the country. The kingdom had been reduced drastically in size and was limited to the unproductive hilly terrain. It was hemmed in by the vast coastal areas under the foreign rule of the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the British. And to cap it all, Buddhism, which had always been a social and political force that sustained the Sinhala ethos and inspired all their arts, had been practically defunct in this capacity for centuries. During the latter half of the eighteenth century, however, a Buddhist revival occurred; but it was a Buddhism different in many ways from that of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa that emerged. On the one hand, the new Buddhism lacked the classical grandeur; impoverished in content in comparison to the intellectual make-up of early Buddhism, it had become burdened with ceremonial and ritual, particularly as a result of the Hinduism that was being practiced in the court circles. Much of the ceremonial that now passed for Buddhist practice, especially in the Kandyan part of the island, was a debilitated adaptation of the Hindu ritual one can observe even now in the South Indian temples. It is not surprising, therefore, that the monumental architecture or the grand style of sculpture and painting could not have achieved much even if an attempt had been made to revive them.

Compared to the buildings of Anuradhapura and

Polonnaruwa, the Kandyan temples exemplify what might be called a folk architecture, especially because of the simplicity of materials and structural methods that made great use of wood. The pillars and capitals of the shrine at Ambakke and those of the king's audience hall at the capital are examples of the exquisite woodwork created during this time. Lankatilaka and Gadaladeniya, two of the more important shrines of this period, as well as what remains of the old Temple of the Tooth, stand out as examples of Kandyan architecture at its best. Although the Lankatilaka may be said to preserve some aspects of the older architectural idiom, especially in the basic plan, it does not display any of the ornamental grandeur of the Polonnaruwa buildings. The makara arch in stucco over the door of the main entrance is clearly a poor descendent of similar motifs from Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa and indicates an obvious deterioration of standards.

If Kandyan architecture was unpretentious and lacked magnificence, it still remains a largely Sinhala tradition though not closely connected with the classical past. The fall of the Kandyan Kingdom to the British meant, of course, the discontinuance of the national architectural tradition. British colonial architecture as displayed in many public buildings is certainly interesting, as is the mixed, nondescript style in domestic architecture; they document a different time and a different milieu.

Sculpture

As in architecture, in sculpture too, the remains of Anuradhapura display a pervasive sense of restraint and balance that is a natural consequence of the austere discipline that has always been the keynote of Theravada Buddhist practice. Sculpture as architectural ornamentation was limited largely to the use of motifs selected not for their narrative significance, but mainly for

their visual effect in the architectural setting.

One of the most interesting sculptural motifs, which in its fully developed form is also one of the most conspicuous members of the architectural complex, is the landing slab usually referred to as the "moonstone" because it is shaped like the crescent moon. Although generally considered unique to Sinhala architecture, it may be possible to relate it to semi-circular landing slabs occasionally found in India, as at Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda. But what underscores the particularly Sinhala characteristic of the moonstone is its ornamentation which, in the eyes of many authorities, makes it a symbol of metaphysical significance. There is no consensus, however. The decorative scheme consists of a stylized half lotus at the center surrounded by concentric semi-circular zones of animals, floral scrolls, and a border of lotus petals that sometimes look like flames. The animal motifs--bull, lion, horse, and elephant--have been invested with a directional symbolism which cannot be overlooked; the lotus is often symbolic of a variety of concepts such as sanctity, purity, and fertility. It is not surprising that the moonstone, as a whole, does not readily permit unambiguous interpretation, metaphysical or otherwise. On the other hand, there is no question as to the artistic value of the moonstone. Its semicircular shape itself imparts a perfect finish to the stairway as an architectural unit. The elaborately executed floral designs and animal figures displaying great dynamism are pointers to the versatility of the Sinhala sculptor in handling the intractable stone. Not only is the moonstone a visually effective motif, it also tends to enhance the sacredness of the edifice to which it gives access.

Equally significant in the stairway complex are the two guardstones, one on each side of the moonstone, forming front ends of the two balustrades. Carved in sunken

relief on these steles are nāgas (snake deities in zoomorphic and anthropomorphic form) who are symbolic guards (dvārapāla) that justify the function of these sculptures as guardstones (Figure 12.3). Figures protecting the entrances to holy places have been a standard component of architectural decoration from the earliest stages of Buddhist art. The same tradition has been preserved in the Sinhala guardstones except that the figures have an added symbolic meaning that might be related to the concepts of fertility associated with the nāgas and to popular mythological beliefs that they are protectors of treasures.

In these guardstones, the sculptor shows his competence to great advantage by emphasizing the tenderness of the human body as it echoes the supple length of the mythical nāga; the triple-bend (tribhanga) of the nāga king's body and the soft curves of the lotus stalk he carries in his hand are all aspects of this same tenderness. The nāgas of Polonnaruwa are often shown in very dynamic poses, their articulated bodies about to step off the stone. The excessive ornamentation--jewelry, drapery fluttering in the air, and so on--while emphasizing this dynamism, tends somehow to rob these figures of the classical balance and the calm dignity of the earlier guardstones. As in most works of the Polonnaruwa period, the hand of the technician rather than that of the artist dominates these guardstones.

There are two motifs that must appear symbolically very significant in these steles--the tiny figures of dwarfs (gana) standing on either side of the nāga king, and the vase of flowers he carries. The dwarfs, though generally considered protectors of treasures, may not necessarily carry the same symbolic meaning everywhere they appear--on risers of stairs, on friezes, on plinths, and on walls. Their ancestry, however, need not be in doubt, nor their decorative function. Symbolic meanings



FIGURE 12.3.--Guardstone, Polonnaruwa (photo: Siri Gunasinghe).

apart, wherever they occur, they exude infectious gaiety. They are presented, invariably, in frolicsome, playful postures--often dancing poses--in which their chubby bodies appear as if made of the softest flesh; their cherubic smile never failing to enliven the whole scene.

Apart from the purely architectural ornamentation, the late Anuradhapura artists must be credited also with the creation of the beautiful sculptures at the shrine known as Isurumuniya. The most important here are the "Lovers" (Figure 12.4), "Man and Horse" cut out of the living rock, and a relief of elephants on the same rock. "Lovers" is undoubtedly one of the finest creations of the Sinhala artist. The contrast between masculine power and feminine grace has been brought out with admirable clarity by means of the physical proportions and the very demeanor of each personage. The man, with his head tilted up, arm bent at the elbow and resting close to the waist (a very old idiom in Indian art) and the right leg thrust forward in a strident movement, is an image of power and dignity. His round face, large open eyes, and fleshy mouth all express a sensuous desire directed at the woman who reacts with a pronounced tenderness and a coyness that are very becoming in terms of conventional feminine modesty. Her body responds with a subtle movement implying both acceptance and withdrawal; the expression on her demure face, supported by the mudrā (gesture) of her right hand, spells clearly her dilemma. Nevertheless, she remains graceful, pliant, and responsive to the embrace. The woman's body, defined in an outline of curves contrasted with the angular movements of her lover, underscores the drama of the moment in a manner that does credit to any sculptor.

The "Man and Horse" is not a familiar theme in Buddhist art. Like the "Lovers" and the other reliefs at this shrine, it too could point to a Mahayanist (if not Hindu) inspiration. However, it is not readily



FIGURE 12.4.--"Lovers," Isurumuniya (photo: Siri Gunasinghe).

identifiable with any established iconographic motif: a prototype for this sculpture is not to be found in India. The elongated face is not a common physiognomical type found in Indian sculpture nor, for that matter, elsewhere in Sri Lanka: the other figures at Isurumuniya have faces that are round, fleshy, and related to the cherubic faces of the dwarf ganas. The "Man and Horse" group remains, in many ways, unique. Nonetheless, with his majestic yet benevolent gaze, the dignified posture, and the overall aura of divine isolation, this sculpture deserves all the praise lavished on it by art historians and aesthetes.

An extraordinary playful spirit is exhibited by the sporting elephants on the same rock as the "Man and Horse" group. Emerging from the rock, as it were, the elephants seem to step right into the waters of the artificial pond. The elephant has always been a favorite subject of the Sinhala artist and it would appear he had spared no pains in imparting not merely a realism but a most effective dynamism to this lovable animal. The Isurumuniya elephants and those on the rock walls of the "royal bath" in the "Gold Fish Park," (only a few hundred yards away) are possibly the most beautiful representations of the elephant anywhere in Sri Lanka. Although the ponderous majesty of the great beast has been very competently captured in many representations elsewhere, both in India and in Sri Lanka, nowhere has it been depicted with such gay abandon and playfulness as in these two groups.

The greatest achievement of the Sinhala artist, of course, is his version of the image of the Buddha. Both in form and in content, the Buddha image in Sri Lanka had remained unchanged (until the late eighteenth century, when a new type of image was introduced, possibly from Thailand) and was distinguished by the essential simplicity of its appearance and the deep spirituality of which it is the embodiment. Unlike the Indian images which,

when spiritually most significant, seem also to possess a certain degree of sentimentality that is almost human, the Sinhala images represent a personage who is completely withdrawn from the mundane environment. For those disciplined in the Theravada tradition, the Buddha image was symbolic of a state of mind from which all passions, cravings, and defilements had been eradicated. It was in fact the nirvanic state,⁷ the ultimate goal of the Theravada Buddhist.

The standing Buddhas of early Anuradhapura are invariably presented in a perfectly erect posture divested of all movement. The weight of the canonically flawless body is evenly distributed on the two feet. In its calm dignity, the image stands as the ultimate source of reassurance symbolized in the mudrā--the hand gesture. The Sinhala Buddhas are not divine beings, nor are they trapped in cumbersome human flesh: theirs is a transcendental (lokottara) state beyond both these sensuous worlds.

The Sinhala Buddhists have also maintained their notion of the Buddha as a superhuman being (Mahāpurusa) in expressing such superiority through sheer physical proportions. The standing stone image at Avukana, (fifth to eighth century) sculptured almost in the round except for a narrow strip attaching it to the parent rock, is perhaps the best known example of the Buddha of superhuman proportions. From head to foot it measures nearly forty feet and yet preserves the serenity of the smaller images which are themselves usually above life size. In the presence of this piece of monumental art, one cannot avoid being conscious of the Buddha's physical and spiritual powers. The abhaya mudrā (hand position symbolizing "dispelling fear," offering protection or reassurance) in its Sinhala variation, where the palm is turned inward in the direction of the Buddha's own face, instead of toward the devotee in the usual manner, is

quite significant as a protective gesture rather than one merely dispelling fear. Not far from Avukana, at Sesseruva, is another colossal Buddha, also measuring nearly forty feet in height, though not artistically as impressive as the Avukana Buddha. The Buddha from Maligavela, carved fully in the round and measuring, in its present damaged state, over thirty-four feet in height, is undoubtedly one of the most interesting pieces of monumental sculpture belonging to the late Anuradhapura period. Though there is no direct evidence connecting these images with Mahayana or other unorthodox traditions, one cannot help but observe in the exaggerated physical proportions an attitude to the personality of the Buddha that almost borders on the theistic. The relief group of colossi (Buddha, Bodhisattvas, Taras, and others) at Buduruvegala, carved in relief and originally finished in plaster and paint, leaves no doubt as to the presence of Mahayanist ideas among Sinhala Buddhists.

It is in the seated images, such as the one from Toluvila and the famous Samadi Buddha in the Mahamegha park at Anuradhapura (Figure 12.5), that the Sinhala Buddhist sculptor has achieved the best representation of the Buddha as the great ascetic immersed in meditation --the Theravada sculptural ideal that has remained unchanged during the whole history of Buddhist art in Sri Lanka. Buddha as the teacher or the symbol of ultimate wisdom--both identifiable in the dharmacakramudrā (hand position symbolizing teaching--literally, "wheel-of-the-law gesture"), popular in India during the Gupta period and after--failed to attract the imagination of the Sinhala Buddhist. The closest we have to this theme in the Buddhist imagery in Sri Lanka is limited to a very few statues (of the type of Pankuliya Buddha or the Badulla Buddha) in which the distinguishing iconographic feature is the vitarka mudrā--the gesture of argumentation.

As usual, precise dates are not available for any



FIGURE 12.5.--Buddha, Anuradhapura
(photo: Department of Archaeology,
Sri Lanka).

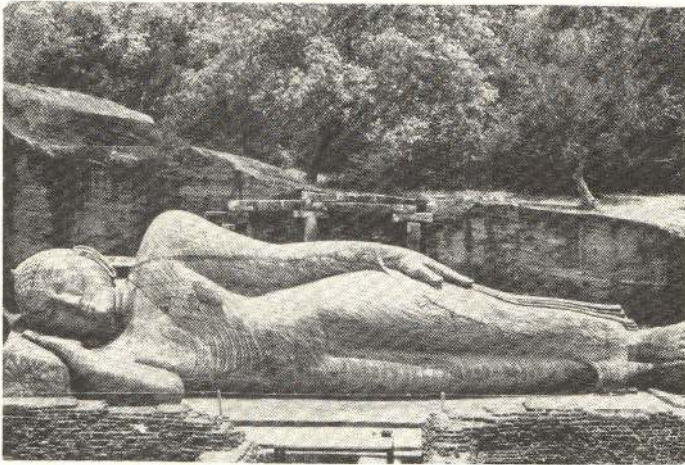


FIGURE 12.6.--Buddha, Polonnaruwa (photo: Siri
Gunasinghe).

of the earlier statues and the attempt to establish a chronological sequence and a parallel stylistic evolution has not produced tangible results. It has been customary to compare these statues with the Gupta Buddhas and date them accordingly from about the fifth or sixth century, A. D. Irrespective of whatever date one might assign to them, their supposed similarity to Gupta images does not seem tenable, for neither in style (despite the diaphanous look of the robe) nor in meaning do the Sinhala images subscribe to the Gupta ideal. The quiet dignity and the sense of perfect calm of the Sinhala Buddhas are not present in the Gupta Buddhas who appear to exist in an ornate heavenly atmosphere. The absence of a definable facial expression in the Sinhalese Buddhas is a clear departure from the Indian idiom. Equally significant is the modified "half lotus" posture in which one leg is shown resting on the other, as against the difficult lotus position with interlocked feet of the Indian images. Added to this easy posture is the equally simple position of the hands placed lightly on the lap in dhyāna mudrā (hand position symbolizing meditation), emphasizing quiet meditation. Completing this picture of the sage absorbed in himself are, of course, the eyes which, even in their present damaged state, appear to be focused on the feet, thus obliterating fully the surrounding world. This is the ideal state of mind to be achieved by a Theravada Buddhist.

The Buddha images of Pōlonnaruwa, on the other hand, are charged with a different spirit. The most obvious changes are to be recognized, of course, in the Galvihara group, where modes of expression and dramatic presentations unknown in the earlier epochs have been attempted. Thematically the two seated Buddhas (in the group of four) have not deviated from the older tradition: they are depicted in the samādhi pose expressing basically the conventional equanimity. Their faces, however, have acquired

a weighty fullness, a square-jawed broadness, and a lack of proportion that appears a little unusual when compared not only to the earlier Buddhas but also to the contemporary stucco sculptures of Polonnaruwa itself. A change that affects the overall surface structure and the consequent visual and aesthetic responses is the overburdening of the monastic robe with heavy pleats (including the flap falling over the left shoulder). The extremely ornate thrones with the seated Buddhas in the little vimānas (mansions), the company of gods, and the general theatrical setting all tend to portray these Buddhas in what might be called a paradisaical setting. With the gargoyles, the lions, the flames, and, above all, the vajra symbols on the predellas, one can see in these depictions a significance altogether alien to the Anuradhapura tradition.

No less interesting is the colossal (forty-six foot) recumbent Buddha of Galvihara (Figure 12.6), illustrating a mode of expression not known in the early imagery. The recumbent type of image, sufficiently popular from about the ninth or tenth centuries, has been generally assumed to be the representation of the Buddha's death--parinirvāna. However, this identification does not seem tenable iconographically, when compared with the Indian images regarding whose identification there is no doubt. There is no difficulty, however, in identifying this image as the sleeping Buddha. It has generally been recognized that images can be fashioned in one or the other of four postures: standing, sitting, walking, and sleeping. Of these, standing images and sitting ones were, of course, the most popular in Sri Lanka; the walking Buddha was seldom, if ever, attempted. Sleeping Buddhas, though rare in early Buddhist art, became very popular from the time of Polonnaruwa, with this Galvihara image as the most accomplished piece of work.

The identification of this image as the death scene

has suggested that the standing figure at its head is that of Ananda weeping at the passing of the master. The very unusual position of the crossed hands on the chest and the equally uncommon expression on the face are the main reasons for this identification. The expression can easily be seen as no more than a configuration of the natural markings of the rock and not a conscious depiction of sadness. Despite the unusual mudrā, or rather because of it, the image should be understood as another version of the Buddha in meditation. The hands crossed over the chest can be seen in a number of representations of the Buddha when, in the second week after his enlightenment, he gazed steadfastly at the bodhi tree. This act, though interpreted as a show of gratitude toward the tree under which he attained enlightenment, is, by implication at least, a case of continuous meditation: the peculiar position of the hand could be taken as just another version of the dhyāna mudrā when applied to a standing figure.

Among a fairly large number of Bodhisattvas, Taras, Hindu deities, and the like, most of them accomplished works of art, the so-called statue of King Parakrambahu the Great--more likely that of a sage--must be rated one of the greatest creations of the Sinhala sculptor (Figure 12.7). With drooping moustache, flowing beard, weighty abdominal muscles, and, above all, the rather intent expression, this statue stands out as an illustration of the seriousness and the wisdom one tends to associate with old age. The stylized coiffeur of matted hair and the sacred thread (weather-worn and not too clear) point to the likelihood of the subject being a religious personality. The conspicuous absence of jewelry or any other ornamentation makes the royal identity of the subject unlikely, in the same measure as the austere appearance makes his religious character more acceptable. More than any other iconographic element,

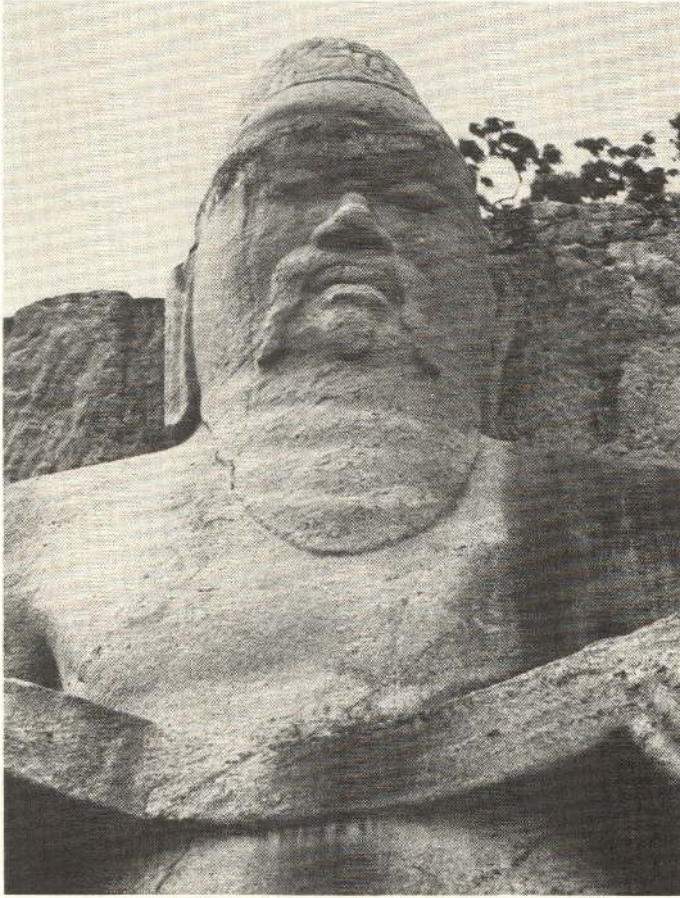


FIGURE 12.7.--"Sage," Polonnaruwa (photo: Siri Gunasinghe).

the object held in the hands poses the greatest problem in identification. Yet, it is also the best clue to the identity of the statue. Although some authorities see it, purely on literary grounds, as a representation of a yoke, it is, as tradition has it, a palm leaf book, which argues for the identity of the figure as that of a sage or a religious personality. In view of the dominant position of Hinduism during much of the Polonnaruwa period, particularly during the Chola occupation, that a section of the city developed into a center for Hindu learning and Hindu religious ceremonial does not seem an outrageous suggestion. This statue and the buildings associated with it may have formed part of a strong Hindu establishment. It is also likely that it was later maintained as a sacred site even by the Buddhist kings of Polonnaruwa who, according to literary evidence at least, had accepted Hindu custom in the matter of court ritual.

Probably the most outstanding female figure to have come out of the early Sinhala foundries is the bronze image (now in the British Museum) of Tara, sometimes also called Pattini. Almost life size, this image might be said to exemplify the idea of feminine beauty as has been known for centuries; just for that reason it has been considered a masterpiece. It is undoubtedly the simplicity of treatment that has attracted critical attention to it. Stylistically, this image belongs with a couple of other female figures of the early Anuradhapura period and above all with the women in the paintings at Sigiriya. The beauty of the figure derives from the clarity of definition of its form--emphatically shown under the clinging drapery--as well as the subtlety of its modeling and the calm dignity of its posture. The one element that detracts from the perfect artistry of the piece is the high crown, which, being clearly out of proportion, seems to be almost an alien element, vis-à-vis the absence of other surface ornamentation.

Painting

Despite the paucity of pictorial remains, it is with regard to painting that the ancient art of Sri Lanka is best known. The reputation of the Sinhala painter rests largely on the famous paintings of Sigiriya. Although the importance of these murals cannot be overestimated it would not do, from the standpoint of art history, to ignore a large number of other paintings indicating a long tradition, particularly the fine murals of Polonnaruwa and the less classical-looking paintings of the Kandy period.

The remains of what must have been an extensive painting program are not limited to around twenty pictures of women, most of them fairly well preserved (Figure 12.8). There being no obvious narrative function, each figure, or group of two, remains isolated as idealized portraits. Although there is no dramatic posturing or action (they are all shown above the waist only) these figures are not altogether lacking in a sense of variety. Not at all exuberant, the variety results from the juxtaposition of profile and three-quarter profile faces and the graceful, mannered gestures of the hands holding flowers. Variation in body colors, light to dark brown, and the elaborate coiffures and jewelry tend to affect the viewer's response in much the same way as the postures. But what sets them apart as great works of the painter's art is the use of face and body as vehicles for the expression of emotions. It is to the great credit of the artist that, within the limited context of idealized representation and uniformity of style, he has succeeded in delineating extremely subtle differences of feeling. A close examination will show that no two figures have the same look in the long open eyes or the same smile on the sensitively drawn mouths. Also, despite the fact that all of them conform to the same classic concept of the beauty of the female form--soft



FIGURE 12.8.--Painting from Sigiriya (photo: Courtesy of UNESCO and the New York Graphic Society, Ltd.).

flesh, slender waist, broad hips, full breasts--each one stands out as an individual evoking a different response. It does speak well for the artists that they have successfully avoided the monotony that could easily have resulted from such an array of semi-nude females, in many ways very similar to one another.

That such results have been achieved not by the use of a rich palette or a sophisticated painterly technique but, very simply, by the use of sensitive but freely drawn crisp lines is clearly of great artistic value. The sharp definition of eyebrows, eyes, and nose is of the essence of this art and not the shading or the use of highlights as in the Ajanta paintings, with which the Sigiriya paintings have always been compared, with little justification, however. Compared to the Ajanta paintings, the Sigiriya murals are spontaneous and less labored. While the Ajanta murals remain painterly in effect and show the hand of the colorist, the Sigiriya paintings appear clearly to be the work of artists who depended more on the descriptive strength of line rather than that of modulated color.

Despite some significant differences in their surface appearance, the Polonnaruwa paintings, the most important of the medieval period, should be regarded as a continuation of the technique and, to some extent, of the aesthetic as well, of the Sigiriya murals. The Polonnaruwa paintings remain faithful to the linear technique except that the lines are used to produce a more complex decorative composition; the palette is still much the same, although it shows a greater appreciation of tonal values, particularly in the use of highlights. The most obvious difference, however, is in what might be called a baroque exuberance in the expression of feelings quite typical of the Polonnaruwa art as a whole. Unlike the Sigiriya paintings, the Polonnaruwa murals are altogether narrative in character, whether it is the

jātakas and episodes from the life of the Buddha (as in the Tivanka image house) or the purely representational depictions of divine beings (as in the Galvihara shrine) that form their themes.

In the Galvihara shrine, the most interesting painting is that of an old man, perhaps a Brahma, paying homage to the Buddha. Contrasted with the younger divinities in the same painting, also worshipping the Buddha, the old man is undoubtedly a fine study of old age; it has been deservedly praised for that reason. It is noteworthy that the fluidity of line work, more suitable for delineating youthful figures, does not, however, hinder the characterization of old age. Artistic convention (basing itself on mythology) would visualize all divine personages as possessing blemishless form. Despite his age, therefore, the Brahma should not be depicted as a wizened old man; rather he is to be seen as a venerable personage whose age must be realized in the dignity of his pose and the placidity of his expression, rather than in the wrinkles of his skin. The balding head and the fringe of greying hair, the drooping moustache, the flowing white beard are not blemishes; they are symbolic of his wisdom, as is the sharp aquiline nose. The expression in his eyes, clearly communicating his own benign nature and his submissive veneration toward the Buddha, is artistically most effective.

A typical example of the pictorial art as used in a medieval Buddhist shrine can be seen in the Tivanka image house. These murals are arranged progressively in stages parallel to the devotee's progress from the mundane to the sublime. The architectural disposition of the shrine itself can be seen to be conducive to such a graduated experience of spirituality. The entrance vestibule has its walls all covered with jātaka illustrations which are expressly for the edification of those who are less advanced on the path of enlightenment.

These are popular stories--fables in fact--that illustrate the importance of individual training in what may be considered basic ethical propositions aimed at social well-being. In his exemplary lives as a Bodhisattva, the Buddha perfected these cardinal virtues which, according to the popular mythology of Buddhism, formed the foundation of his ultimate Buddhahood. These virtues are, in effect, the primary ethical values of a Buddhist society, and all Buddhists are expected to live a life based on them.

The paintings of the antechamber are calculated to produce a different effect since they deal with situations a stage beyond the purely mundane. The remains of murals here depict gods in their heavenly abodes exemplifying the kind of life the faithful followers hoped to live in the next world as a reward for their virtuous deeds here on earth. Unlike the jātaka illustrations of the vestibule, the murals of the antechamber are executed in a more flamboyant manner displaying greater artistic virtuosity in composition and expression, as befits such a theme. These are conceived not as narrative strips but as large situational scenes covering practically the whole surface of the wall. The figures are larger than life size and very impressive in their overpowering monumental presence. They are at the same time very engaging on account of their benign expression. In their colorful and sumptuous description of the heavenly atmosphere, the paintings in the antechamber must have been a very effective source of delight and a powerful stimulus for the practice of Buddhist virtue as far as the average follower was concerned.

After Polonnaruwa there are no important records of the pictorial art of Sri Lanka until the last phase of the Sinhala kingdom, that of Kandy. As a consequence (or as part) of the national and religious resurgence in the late eighteenth century, the old tradition of

mural painting was revived, but in a popular idiom aimed at the less sophisticated peasantry who formed the bulk of the population (Figure 12.9). It is not implied here that the peasantry was an institution peculiar to the Kandy period. All through its history, the Sinhala society was agrarian in orientation and it was undoubtedly the peasantry that formed the greater part of the population. But in Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa there was also an elite society consisting mainly of the Buddhist monks and the court personnel, who were obviously more sophisticated in their literary and artistic culture. The Kandyan Kingdom, on the contrary, was incapable of fostering any such intellectual class. This is clearly reflected in the plight of the Buddhist monkhood, which was anything but the vigorous institution it had been during the earlier epochs. The kind of art that became popular in the Kandy period was perfectly in keeping with these changes.

In all Kandyan painting, the technique is clearly linear, the line work alone producing the decorative patterns that fill the entire mural. To produce the decorative pattern, the artist must often emphasize the lines by repeated over-drawing. In the hands of the better artists the line becomes quite significant by virtue of the delicacy and the sureness with which it is drawn. Equally important from the decorative point of view (as is often the case in folk art) is the visual effect of colors selected especially for their brilliance. The arresting quality of the reds, and often enough also of the blacks, used to fill the backgrounds is unmistakable. Applied solid to fill the entire space, these brilliant reds and blacks have the tendency to emphasize the figure composition, it is one of the most effective artistic means whereby the painter could achieve clarity of definition in his composition. Colors were always filled in flat, with no grading of shades or mixing of tones;



FIGURE 12.9.--Painting from Madavala, Kandy
(photo: Dunstan de Silva, Department of
National Museums, Sri Lanka).

the result was naturally one of undisturbed two-dimensional surface ornamentation, which was undoubtedly intentional. The palette was largely limited to yellows and reds, with greens and blues used most sparingly. But the few colors were used with great decorative effect. These bold areas of color, contained within borders of black and white, are visually most appealing.

The subject matter of the Kandyan murals was drawn mostly from the jātakas and the life of the Buddha since these were dear to the devotees and were thoroughly instructive in Buddhist lore. While the episodes from the life of the Buddha were calculated to produce a sense of veneration toward the Buddha, for which reason they tended to be esoteric up to a point, the jātaka stories provided all the religious instruction required by a people who had no need or desire for the understanding of the deeper truths of the religion. It might even be suggested that the jātakas were selected as timely lessons to inculcate such virtues as were left unrecognized or had fallen from favor at any given time. The didactic import of the stories was such that they were illustrated in large numbers on interior and exterior walls where they were easily accessible for close examination. Intended for the same didactic purpose were the illustrations of the world of the gods and its opposite--hell, the latter depicting untold punishments for various sinful acts. Merit and sin are two of the most important "doctrinal" elements to have monopolized the devotee's mind during this period, and the paintings were expressly meant to emphasize these ideas.

Although many temple painters have been at work since the beginning of the twentieth century, repainting old murals or painting new ones, they have often produced only garish documents of artistic poverty. M. Sarlis, who was probably the most sought after painter of this period (cheap prints of his paintings hung in practically every

Buddhist home), produced works that were completely devoid of all traditional values. What is worse, they were poor works based on an equally poor Western aesthetics; they exemplify a misguided naturalism, combined with an empty romanticism, which seems to take cover behind the most fanciful, haphazard color schemes.

One of the more interesting experiments in Buddhist mural painting in modern times, however, is the work of Solius Mendis at Kelaniya, near Colombo. Here the paintings have been executed in a technique which, on many points, has moved away from the ancient tradition and must be viewed as the result of lessons learned elsewhere; the source apparently is Western art which, by Mendis' time, had become common enough, although Mendis may not have had any formal training in it. What he learned was interpreted in a new idiom which, for patriotic reasons, was thought to have descended from that of Ajanta and Sigiriya.

Almost all the artistic output of modern Sri Lanka until very recent times has been the work of artists largely nurtured on Western ideas and trained in Western techniques. The British were able to spread Western culture in a more enduring manner than the earlier colonial powers. Whether the lesson was successfully followed up or not is beside the point. What is significant is that the Sri Lankan art of the first half of the century, at least where the work of the more accomplished artists was concerned, avoided any contact with the past. Nevertheless, since Buddhism continued to maintain its position as the major religion of the Sinhala people,⁸ some of the artists felt encouraged in the task of pictorializing the traditional Buddhist themes. Foremost among these are George Keyt, who painted the murals in a suburban shrine in Colombo--Gotamivihara at Borella, and Tissa Ranasinghe, who has done some excellent sculpture based on Buddhist themes. Keyt, in fact, has little

to do with the ancient pictorial tradition except for having been inspired by some of the old themes. Completely Western in his training, like most contemporary painters, Keyt has accepted the mechanics of the Western idiom. But unlike many others, Keyt shows a strong love for the vibrant colors of the traditional paintings, particularly the Indian miniatures. It is not surprising, therefore, that Keyt appears as an easel painter who treats the wall surface as if it were a piece of canvas. His compositions are large and are cast in an heroic mold, rather than in the narrative manner of the folk artist of the Kandyan times.

Keyt's attraction for the traditional may have come from his association with Manjusri, who is well versed in the ancient tradition in painting and in Sinhalese culture in all its details, including its Buddhist content. It is interesting to note that, though Manjusri may have been a help to Keyt in the latter's work in the Gotamivihara, the best of his own works (and those of others who emulated him) are faithful copies of eighteenth and nineteenth century murals. Such copying implies, of course, that these murals are the national heritage; in a way, these artists--copyists as well as those who attempted a revival of the old idiom in their creative work--represent also the end of that tradition. Their judgment appears sound enough, for the art that has been produced since the Kandy period has to be looked upon as part of a large cultural movement and must be judged on the basis of an aesthetics that is no longer confined within national boundaries.

Notes

1. For purposes of art history, three periods, named after the capital city of each period, have been recognized: Anuradhapura (fourth century, B. C., to the eleventh century, A. D.); Polonnaruwa (eleventh century to the thirteenth century, A. D.); and Kandy (sixteenth century to the nineteenth century, A. D.).

2. Solid earthen or brick construction in the shape of a hemisphere containing relics.

3. The "orthodox" school of Buddhism practiced in Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Burma. It is also referred to as Hinayana. The other major school is Mahayana, practiced in Tibet and the Far East.

4. Stories of the past lives of the Buddha.

5. A mythical animal figure composed of elephant head, crocodile body, etc., used widely as a decorative motif.

6. The Cholas occupied Polonnaruwa for a short period, in the eleventh century, A. D., during which a few unpretentious Hindu temples were built. The Hindu bronzes belonging to this period might have been brought from India rather than turned out at Polonnaruwa.

7. Nirvana is the summum bonum of the Buddhists.

8. Although Hinduism is a major religion on the island, practiced by a large section of the Tamil population, its art (largely based on Indian models) has been of limited scope, playing a rather restricted role as a national artistic tradition.

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Chapter 13

A SURVEY OF THE SINHALA LITERARY TRADITION

Ranjini Obeyesekere

It can be claimed that the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka in the third century, B. C., resulted in the creation of the Sinhala language, literature, and nation. Buddhism developed very early as a written religion. As far back as the first century, B. C., Buddhist monks in central Sri Lanka (at Aluvihara) committed the Buddhist texts to writing. Monasteries quickly developed as the centers of literary and intellectual activity and soon a substantial collection of religious works, commentaries, exegetical writings, and historical records appeared in the vernacular Sinhala. Most of these works have not survived. We know of their existence from references in later texts and rock inscriptions. The only extant works are the historical chronicles, the Dīpavamsa (fourth century, A. D.), the Mahāvamsa (fifth century, A. D.), its continuation, renamed for convenience the Cūlavamsa (twelfth century, A. D.), and they were in Pali. These chronicles, written by monks "for the serene joy and emotion of the pious," are in fact a record of the succession of Sinhala kings: their characters, their major victories and defeats, and their peace-time activities, especially meritorious deeds in support of Buddhism. In short, they are a history of the creation and growth of the Sinhala Buddhist nation in the island of Sri Lanka. They present a fascinating blend of historical information, religious exhortation, and political nationalism--all done with remarkable literary skill. They illustrate the close and continuing association among the religion, the literature, and the state.

For example, King Kassapa V is described thus:

He was pious, had reached the path of salvation, wise as one who possesses supernatural powers, eloquent as the teacher of the gods (Brhaspati), deeply learned, a preacher of the true doctrine, practiced in all the arts, adroit in proving what is right and wrong, versed in statecraft, immovable as a pillar of a gate, standing firmly in the teaching of the leader of the path to deliverance, not to be shaken by the storms of other opinions, keeping himself from all guile, hypocrisy, pride; a mine of virtues as the ocean of all jewels.¹

By contrast another king, Udaya IV, is dismissed in one line:

The King was slothful and a friend of spiritous drinks to the undoing of his subjects.²

While the mutual support and strong sense of identification among the kings (state), the monks (religion), and the literature was the source of the latter's rapid growth and strength, this also, unfortunately, was often the cause of its destruction. Any attack by a foreign enemy on the political kingdom of Sri Lanka was inevitably accompanied by a systematic destruction of the monasteries and their religious and literary works. This was true not only in ancient times, where the chronicles record an unending succession of such attacks, but also of the more recent conquests by Western colonial powers, who used the same techniques to achieve the same ends. The Mahāvamsa describes the Chola invasions of the eleventh century as follows:

They sent the monarch and all the treasures which had fallen into their hands at once to the Cola monarch . . . and breaking open the relic chambers, they carried away many costly images of gold, etc., and while they violently destroyed here and there all the monasteries, like blood-sucking demons they took all the treasures of Lanka for themselves.³

Or, again:

Deeply grieved in his heart that on the island of Lanka so many books that dealt with the true doctrine had been destroyed by the alien foe, the Ruler called together laymen endowed with good

memory and with knowledge, pious, well instructed, free from indolence, skilled in quick and fair writing, and along with these many writers of books, and made all these write down in careful fashion the 84,000 divisions of the doctrine.⁴

This latter quotation illustrates yet another aspect of the Sinhala literary tradition. Precisely because it was linked so closely with the political and religious identity of the people, it was ardently patronized by the kings, constantly rewritten and revived after enemy attacks.

The evidence of the chronicles, references in later works, and slab inscriptions all suggest the existence of a vital and flourishing literary tradition in the early period (first to tenth centuries, A. D.). Unfortunately all that remains are the graffiti poems on the Mirror Wall of the fortress at Sigiriya. These short poems are obviously not representative of the major literary tradition of that time. They are merely the casual exercises of visitors to the fortress, roughly scribbled on the plaster wall. However, their skill and verve indicate something of the widespread nature and the vitality of the literary tradition that must have existed at the time. Among the graffiti poets are soldiers, artisans, monks, and even some women, in addition to the more traditional scholars. I quote a few poems:

She whose smile shows teeth like melon seeds,
whose downswept hair is like a cool dark cloud,
she draws me to her with a gentle smile.

Lovely this woman, excellent the painter!
She will not speak, but when I look
at hand or eye
I do believe she lives.

We being women sing on behalf of this lady,
'You fools! You come to Sihagiri and recite
these verses hammered out with four-fold efforts.
Not one of you brings wine and molasses
remembering we are women!'

Gold will not buy back the girl you had
long ago; and here, today,

what have you gained?
 The sky had been yours --
 in a dream.

The wind raged, bringing down the trees
 in their bud-time beauty --
 Thousands, hundreds of thousands;
 the curlew shrieked, the torrents
 roared down the Maleya mountains.
 But the night glowed tender, the leaves
 copper-color, in the sheet
 of innumerable fireflies.
 O long-eyed one,
 I read your message but
 what does it hold for me?⁵

One of the earliest works extant in Sinhala is a translation of Kavyadarsha's treatise on poetics believed to have been written around the tenth century, A. D. Again, the fact that a Sanskrit aesthetic treatise was translated into Sinhala suggests that a sophisticated literary milieu must have existed at the time.

In the period between the tenth and thirteenth centuries, A. D., Sinhala literature reveals the strong influence of the classical court literature of India. The elaborate techniques and metrical structures of Sanskrit poetry, the richly ornamented intricately balanced rhythms of classical Sanskrit prose, all found their way into the Sinhala literature of the time. The major Sinhala poetic works of this period are the Kavsilumina, the Muvadevdavata and the Sasadavata. All three are Buddhist in theme in that they deal with stories of the past births of the Buddha; but the focus shifts constantly to sensuous descriptions of "cities, seas, mountains . . . garden games and water sports, drinking bouts and lovemaking, strategy, marriages, births, politics, journeys, wars and heroes,"⁶ all decidedly secular activities!

Similarly in the poets of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries this process of secularization is carried to a further degree. The framework for all literary works remained Buddhist and their authors were still

mainly Buddhist monks, but the content of the poetry was not necessarily religious. Thus, for example, some of the best known lines of the monk Vetteve's poem Guttilla Kavya (a poem on Guttilla)⁷ deal with an evocative description of a city carnival:

The young bucks of the city
smear their bodies gaily,
with sandal and saffron unguents
and revel endlessly.

.
Clutching brimming drinking mugs
tottering in a sodden state,
eyes like lotus petals, red,
Yet others dance with drunken gait.

With scented flowers in their hair
and camphor garlands on their breasts
in jewelled ornaments decked out
the city women revel long.

Appearing to be nymphs from heaven
a myriad dancing girls all gay,
enter the assembly boldly.
Can one tear oneself away?

Singing sweet melodious songs
dripping nectar in one's ear,
dispelling grief and mental gloom,
the merry girls roam here and there.

In beauty they surpass the gods
their jewelled golden anklets ring
to watch these city maidens dance
would make an ascetic distraught.⁸

This secular interest opened up a new avenue for Sinhala creative writing. It resulted in a shift away from the heavy Sanskritization and scholasticism that had overtaken the language during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries under the influence of Indian aesthetic theories. The Sandesha (Message)⁹ poets describing scenes of contemporary life were forced to introduce a new flexibility into the language and use a more contemporary idiom and vocabulary. Unfortunately, this new creativity in the use of language and in the literature was short-lived. The arrival of Western European trading

powers, which began with the Portuguese in 1505, heralded a long period of political and religious conflict.

The coastal areas of the country first came under the rule of the Portuguese (1597), then the Dutch (1658), and, lastly, the British (1795). Sinhala literature for nearly two centuries suffered a period of neglect and decline under foreign domination. Around the middle of the eighteenth century there was a brief period of revival under King Kiri Sri Rajasingha (1747-1782) who ruled the central highland kingdom of Sri Lanka, which remained free of Western rule until 1815. This brief but intensely active period of revival, spearheaded by the monk Weliwita Saranankara, was an important landmark in the literary history of the country, in that it revived a dying tradition, fostered centers of scholarship for the study of classical and Buddhist texts, and even inspired some interesting secular works among a group of writers in the foreign-dominated southern coastal areas.¹⁰

The British conquest of the entire country in 1815 brought to an effective end the long-established and fruitful connections among Sinhala literature, the Buddhist religion, and the Sinhala nation. English was imposed as the language of governmental administration and of education. Christianity became the favored religion. The new colonial policy struck a severe blow to the Sinhala language and literature. It also resulted in drastic changes in the economic and social structure of the country, resulting in the creation of two mutually exclusive social groups--an English-educated, Westernized elite who formed a new aristocracy with significant economic and some political power, and a Sinhala-educated traditional literati who found themselves second-class citizens. The latter had no access to English, and so were kept out of positions of power and prestige. They, in turn, jealously guarded the traditional literature and the Sinhala language, and rejected any Western influences

as being alien and decadent.

When the first stirrings of political nationalism occurred around the end of the nineteenth century, they took the form, significantly, not of active political confrontation (as had been attempted unsuccessfully in the rebellions of 1818 and 1848) but of a religious and literary revival. The printing press, originally introduced for the propagation of Christianity, became a crucial weapon in the revivalist campaign. The age-long connection between religion, literature, and the national identity resurfaced. Buddhist revivalists like Anagarika Dharmapala saw themselves also as literary and political activists and set themselves to produce a resurgence of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism. "Āgama," "jātiya," "bhāsāva" (religion, race, and language) became important slogans. This period saw a phenomenal increase in all kinds of literary activities. Traditional works were edited, annotated, and published. Critical treatises, articles, and academic controversies filled the newspapers, journals, and periodicals of all kinds that had sprung up to fill a need.

At first almost all of the creative energies seemed to go into critical activities and political, religious, and literary controversies; but by the early twentieth century creative experiments in new genres began to appear. The novel, a modern Western genre, unknown to traditional Sinhala writing, was introduced and eagerly accepted by the rapidly expanding middle-class readership. Even the traditional literati found in it an ideal weapon to be used in the political and religious struggle against colonialism. All through Sri Lanka's history, literature had been a finely shaped tool with which to support and further the interests of the religion and state. The early twentieth-century writers re-established this connection, so that novelists like Piyadasa Sirisena and poets like Bhikkhu S. Mahinda were

unashamedly didactic and moralistic in their works. In an introduction to one of his novels, Piyadasa Sirisena proudly claimed that although he had sold more than 100,000 copies of his books (a staggering figure for the time), "none of these works were mere empty prattle. Although they may be counted as 'fictional stories' we have never written a book which does not direct the mind toward noble and righteous doctrine."¹¹ His novels contain long attacks on Christianity, the Westernized lifestyle of the English-educated elite, meateating, the drinking of alcoholic beverages, and other so-called European customs. He upheld Buddhism and what he claimed was the traditional Sinhala lifestyle. Interestingly, however, the value system he advocated was not in fact a traditional value system but one that had evolved among the Sinhala Buddhist educated class influenced by Western Christian contact.

In keeping with the traditional attitude toward literature, these early writers saw the novel not as a form of entertainment but as a means of furthering their cause. Certain elements inherent in the genre, however, such as the romantic love element, the secular world in which it was set, the ordinary men and women who were its heroes, the easily understandable, almost colloquial dialogue in which the new novels were written, all made them very entertaining and therefore enormously popular. However, since both readers and authors were brought up on the traditional view that literature had to serve a moral function, the infusion of didactic discourses into the text was readily, even enthusiastically accepted. Thus many of these early works are heavily didactic and virtually unreadable today. They have little intrinsic literary merit so their only significance is as a source of sociological and historical information.

Sri Lanka has not had a tradition of theatre. Drama at the level of folk ritual did exist, but there is no

evidence of court patronage for the development of a sophisticated theatre tradition such as existed in India during the classical period. The rapid urbanization that set in after the British conquest and the development of the plantation industry resulted in the growth of a new working class in the major city of Colombo. Cut off from their village roots and from more traditional forms of relaxation and entertainment, these people soon looked for new forms of leisure time activity and entertainment. Itinerant theatre groups from India, called Nutri players, soon found their way to Sri Lanka and became very popular. They performed a kind of operatic drama, with elaborate costume and staging techniques, not played in the outdoors as in folk festivals, but in halls with a proscenium curtain. These early Indian plays rapidly captured the imagination not just of the working class but also of the more affluent and educated elites already exposed to Western drama through their English education in missionary schools. The Tower Hall Theatre thus became an established feature of Colombo's city life.

John de Silva, a young lawyer and avid theatre goer, is the first major Sinhala playwright of this era. Using the historical themes and the elaborate staging techniques of Nutri theatre, he experimented with the production of Sinhala plays. As in Nutri, lyrics were substituted for dialogue and were sung to different ragas, which set the mood. John de Silva's early plays dealt with themes from Indian history, but he soon turned to the Sinhala chronicles for historical episodes and national heroes. Again, in keeping with the ethos of the time, these plays were strongly nationalistic and revivalistic. They consciously sought to foster a sense of pride in the Sinhala past. They were the counterpart of the modern novel and, although highly entertaining, were viewed certainly by the writers and producers as performing a social function. There is an interesting

story related about John de Silva by a biographer. His play Sri Vikrama Rajasinghe was being performed once at the Tower Hall. The scene of the capitulation of the Sinhala king to the British was being enacted. It was performed with such splendor and pageantry that the audience burst into spontaneous clapping. John de Silva promptly brought the curtain down, emerged before the audience, and addressed them: "Alas gentlemen, this is not an occasion for us to cheer like fools. This is an occasion of national sorrow and we must draw from it a message to protect our land, our nation and our religion."¹²

Such public interruptions were not unusual at his performances. It is said that he was in the habit of lecturing his audience during the interval of a performance in order to ensure that the message of his play was not missed! The impact of his nationalistic anti-colonialist message must have been far reaching because, after the riots of 1915, the colonial government banned his plays as being seditious.

Poetry, fiction, and drama had an enormous social and political impact during this era. The pace of political and economic change was so rapid, however, that these literary works quickly outlived their function. When the immediate message was no longer important, once political independence was won and the Sinhala Buddhist identity re-established, younger writers moved on to new areas of literary experimentation. The early novels and plays were soon forgotten. By the 1940's, Indian movies had replaced the Tower Hall plays as the entertainment of the urban working class population. Romantic and mystery novels such as those of W. A. de Silva and the early works of Martin Wickremasinghe became the popular reading material of the middle classes.

The writers of the mid-twentieth century--the major literary figures of modern Sinhala literature, Martin

Wickremasinghe, E. R. Sarathchandra, G. B. Senanayake, Siri Gunasinghe, Gunadasa Amerasekera--can in a sense be said to stand outside the pattern hitherto described in the literature. For the first time, perhaps, in its long history, the connection between the state, the religion, and the literature ceased to be the operative concern, the inspiration behind all literary work. Instead, a concern with literature as an end in itself, with aesthetic issues rather than didactic function, became pervasive.

One possible reason for this shift is that most of these writers reached the height of their literary powers during a period of political consolidation rather than one of political struggle. They were the sons of the native literati, the products of the educational system established by men like Dharmapala, the nationalist reformers and religious revivalists of an earlier era. Their education was Sinhala Buddhist in orientation, but it had also exposed them to English, giving them fluency in the language and a familiarity with the literature. The spread of education, the development of communications, and the growth of economic entrepreneurship fostered by the plantation industry, had all resulted in considerable social mobility. The sharp demarcation that had existed in an earlier generation between the Western-educated upper classes and the native or traditional literati now began to disappear. The educated class of the 1940's and 1950's was fluently bilingual and open to Western influences and to the impact of modern scientific rationalism. At the same time, they were proud of their traditional heritage and their native language and sought to achieve in their work a synthesis of East and West, tradition and modernity. Their quest took the form of literary experimentation. They introduced new genres, new attitudes toward literature, and tried to forge a flexible language in which to express

effectively the modern sensibility. They also sought to formulate new critical concepts and evaluative criteria with which to assess the past as well as their still experimental present.

The range of their experimentation was wide. Muni-dasa Kumaranatunge (1887-1944) was the first consciously to reject the Sanskritized form of the Sinhala literary language and the Sanskritic aesthetic theories that had dominated the literature. In doing so, he came up with a version of what he considered pure Sinhala, the language of a pre-Sanskritic era--Elu or Hela as he termed it. The Hela language that Kumaranatunge advocated turned out to be even more archaic, outdated, and incomprehensible than the Sanskritized Sinhala it sought to replace. The movement itself at first gained support because of its nationalistic implications, but it never took root. It remained a rather quaint style used by a small group of his supporters. However, Kumaranatunge's Hela campaign and the numerous speeches and articles he wrote in connection with it focused attention on the need for language reform, for experiments in a flexible, more colloquial form of literary prose. He also brought up the need for new evaluative criteria with which to assess traditional literature. Just because a work was old, he said, it did not necessarily have to be considered good.

Younger writers of the next decade carried the experimentation much further. G. B. Senanayake and Siri Gunasinghe introduced free verse, which soon became very popular among a group of young university poets called the Peradeniya school. This group of young writers also introduced other forms from Western literature like the stream of consciousness novel, symbolism, imagism, and so on, which they felt enabled them better to convey the modern experience.

Martin Wickremesinghe is the most important figure in this period. Deeply influenced by modern Russian and

European writers (read in English translations), he sought to explore the psychological and social world of rural Sri Lanka. He depicts the slow process of change which transformed these peasant groups into the urban, upwardly mobile middle class of his time. Apē Gama, translated into English as Lay Bare the Roots, presents his childhood world in a little seaside village in South Sri Lanka. His later short stories and novels--especially the trilogy Gam Peraliya (The Changing Village), Kali Yugaya (The Age of Kali), and Yuganthaya (The End of an Era)--are sensitive and perceptive analyses of the changing social scene over a period of nearly fifty years. Gam Peraliya has been made into a film (with English subtitles), and Yuganthaya has been translated into English. Several other novels have been translated into Russian.

E. R. Sarathchandra, a younger contemporary of Martin Wickremesinghe, was also involved in both creating and winning acceptance for a modern Sinhala literature. Sarathchandra's most valuable contribution was the new dynamism that he introduced into the Sinhala theatre with a series of innovative lyrical dance dramas that he wrote and produced (Maname in 1955, Sinhabahu in 1961, and Pematho Jayati Soko in 1969). In these works he combined the language and diction of traditional poetry, the lyric mode popularized by the Nutri plays, and the dance forms of folk ritual and synthesized them all into a sophisticated and movingly modern drama. His work inaugurated a period of great activity in the theatre and sparked off a series of new and exciting experiments by younger dramatists. For the first time in the history of the Sinhala theatre it attracted not only urban audiences but also a cross section of society, urban and rural, including the middle class, lower-middle class, and even the Westernized upper classes.

Almost all of the creative writers of the middle decades were interested in critical and theoretical

issues. While engaging in creative experiments in a variety of genres, they also engaged in an ongoing dialectic on critical and aesthetic theory, with each other and with the public. In doing so they produced a substantial body of critical work--essays, treatises, articles, books. Dissatisfied with the aesthetic theories of the Sanskritists, which had become formulated into stultifying metrical rules and formalistic literary conventions, these young writers sought to introduce new Western concepts.

Martin Wickremesinghe and E. R. Sarathchandra played an important part in this ongoing dialectic. Together, in the 1940's and 1950's, they worked out and solidified critical positions and evaluative criteria drawn from their reading of Western literature. Wickremesinghe's Vichara Lipi (Critical Essays) of 1941 and Sinhalese Literature (translated into English by Sarathchandra) were the first steps in this direction. Sarathchandra's Modern Sinhala Fiction followed in 1943, presenting a devastating critique of early Sinhala novelists. He maintained that since the form was borrowed from the West, it had to be evaluated in terms of the criteria applied to the genre in the West. It was not a popular position, and he and his colleagues were attacked by the traditional literati for introducing alien, decadent, Western values into Sinhala literature.

In Sahitya Vidyava (Science of Literature) published in 1950, Sarathchandra set about systematically introducing the Sinhala reader to modern critical concepts and attitudes. He chose, however, to use for these new concepts an already familiar Sanskrit terminology. In a masterly piece of synthesis and analysis, he redefined and extended the meanings of these terms, showing in the process that the modern Western ideas were not after all so very different from those of the classical Sanskrit theorists and could therefore be incorporated into a

single critical terminology. Thus, the Sanskrit concept of rasa was used to refer to the idea of aesthetic pleasure generated by a work of art, which Western critics, too, felt was an important function of art. The scientific analysis of meaning which the "New Critics" of the West had made was, he felt, very close to the analysis of meaning which the dhvani theorists had used.¹³ Thus, the Sanskrit term dhvani (secondary meaning) was used to identify the connotative as opposed to the denotative meaning of a word. The concept of organic unity, advocated by Western critics as essential for a creative work, was represented by the Sanskrit term auchitya (appropriateness) since in Sanskrit theory the term referred to the appropriateness of the individual parts of a work of art to the whole. Such an analysis not only helped refute the charges of foreignness and Westernization, but also provided writers with a critical vocabulary essential for the development of the literature.

It is true that neither Wickremesinghe nor Sarathchandra made any profound or original contributions in their critical writings. Theirs were merely attempts to assimilate, even rationalize, one value system in terms of another. They did, however, give to modern Sinhala criticism a critical vocabulary and a set of evaluative criteria necessary to support a new literature.

The most far-reaching contribution made by the writers of this generation was, however, in the forging of the new literary language of modern Sinhala. The gap between the classical Sanskritized literary language of pre-European contact and the colloquial Sinhala spoken by the growing middle class of the early twentieth century was very great. Modern Sinhala writers of the 1940's and 1950's were faced with the task of bridging this gap. They had to produce a language flexible enough to express the changing intellectual and social world of modern experience, wide enough in range to

incorporate the resources of the traditional language, and yet remain comprehensible to the larger world of the new middle class, which had evolved in the twentieth century. Their success is that they achieved just this. They not only introduced and experimented with new forms in poetry, new genres like the novel, new critical concepts and a critical vocabulary, but in doing so they hammered out a flexible, viable, richly textured literary prose that could be understood by a wide reading public.

Today, with new economic and political pressures, new emphasis and attitudes, the writers of the middle decades have been dismissed as ivory tower intellectuals, aesthetes uninvolved in political and social issues, writing about a personal private world and having purely literary concerns. They are even considered, especially by younger "committed" writers, to be outside the mainstream of Sinhala literature, since Sinhala literature traditionally was involved with the political and religious life of the nation. To a degree this is so, but a literature generally reflects the pervasive mood and concerns of a particular age. Political and economic issues were not the dominant concern in the 1940's and early 1950's. The confrontation with colonialism had already taken place in the political agitation and the religious revival of the early years of the century. The political process of granting independence had been set in motion. The modernization process was well under way. The task of the literary men of the time was to give expression to the modern experience, to evolve a medium in which to do so, and to gain for it acceptability. The revolutionary changes in the language, introduced and legitimized by the writers of this period, developed in response to deeply felt social needs and in that respect are no more alien than any other movement or period in the literature of Sri Lanka.

The measure of their success is seen in the work of their younger contemporaries, the poets of the 1970's.

In the words of one of them:

You cut down the forest
traced out a new road
so we who came after
could pick up rough rocks and stones
and chase in pursuit of you
down that same road.

You gave us a new speech
Freed us from our dumb state
So we then were able to
abuse you and shout at you
rudely and roundly.

You may have written tomes
about Sinhala culture
but aspects you've not yet seen
of Sinhala culture
we now reveal.¹⁴

These young writers use the Sinhala language with clarity and confidence and with a degree of unselfconsciousness that was never wholly present in the writings of the earlier generation. They do not have to contend with a Sanskritized language nor need they be wary of using a formalistic vocabulary if they choose to do so. The nationalistic demands for "pure Sinhala" or the supposedly decadent overtones of English borrowings no longer bother them. These are not the important issues anymore. They use the language as it exists today--as it is both written and spoken; with its borrowings, transformations, and inventions; with its vocabulary that spans the classical literature of traditional Sinhala poetry, the oral poetry of the peasant, and colloquial urban speech. There is no jarring or disjuncture. It is no longer the formalistic literary language of an elite, nor is it the colorless colloquial language of the early urban middle class speech, which some writers of the early twenties had tried to introduce. Theirs is a rich, multi-textured language that fuses the everyday

world of their living and the world of their reading and imagination. These worlds are no longer compartmentalized as they were for the writers of the earlier generation.

Parakrama Kodituwakku, Daya Gunasinghe, and Monica Ruwanpathirana are three outstanding poets who represent this younger group. Their works illustrate this richness and range. Their language draws easily and unselfconsciously on the riches of Sri Lanka's literary heritage and at the same time has a simplicity and directness that enables them to speak for and to a wider reading public.

One of the most striking aspects of this new poetry is its wide appeal. This in turn is a consequence of the transformations of Sinhala society that have been taking place in the last few decades.

Sri Lanka has had for well over twenty-five years a system of free education from kindergarten through university. This, more than any other single factor has contributed to the growth of a fairly large educated class. Whatever the political and economic end results of this educational system may be, there is no doubt that it set in motion a process by which the sons and daughters of Sri Lanka's rural peasant population have become upwardly mobile and now form an ever-increasing potential reading public. The clear-cut distinctions that divide an urban from a rural group do not exist among them. They span both groups. Educated sons of peasants may live in the cities, but they maintain close ties with their rural homes. Similarly, children of the working classes have also had access to the educational system and they too are beginning to form a part of this larger reading public.

The alienation from the wider society that characterized the literary elites of the late nineteenth century or the Westernized elites of the early twentieth century, or even the sense of personal isolation that comes through in the writings of the 1950's poets, is not

present among the writers of today. They write for a more broad-based readership educated like they are, who speak their language, whose concerns are their concerns, whose world is their world. Alienation is certainly not a problem for the Sinhala writer of the 1970's.

This close identification with the needs and aspirations of a larger group has led the creative writers of the 1970's to feel, themselves, the voice and the pulse of a new social group. It has given their poetry a degree of social concern not hitherto encountered in the literature. "Relevance," "commitment," "socialist literature," the "literature of confrontation" are the key terms of criticism in current use and reflect the specific concerns of both the poets and their public. It is significant that while there is definitely "commitment" on the part of these writers to make their work "relevant" to social needs and concerns, yet much of the work produced has maintained a tension and a vitality that has prevented it from degenerating into propaganda. It is indeed a fine line that divides the poetry of "commitment" from the poetry of "propaganda," but the poets of the 1970's have for the most part successfully maintained this balance. Not only have they produced--especially in the genres of poetry and drama--some of the best work yet done in the Sinhala language, but they hold great promise for the future of Sinhala literature.

Notes

1. Cūlavamsa, trans. by Wilhelm Geiger. (Colombo: Information Department, 1973), Chapter 52, v: 38-42.
2. Ibid., Chapter 53, v: 40.
3. Ibid., Chapter 55, v: 19.
4. Ibid., Chapter 81, v: 41.
5. Graffiti poetry adapted from the prose translation of S. Paranavitana by Ashley Halpe.
6. C. H. B. Reynolds (ed.), An Anthology of Sinhalese Literature up to 1815 (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1970), p. 100.
7. The Guttīla Kāvya by Vetteve Thera is a poem about the Buddha's former birth as a musician. His pupil Musila, ambitious and ungrateful, challenges the master to a contest. Sakra, king of the gods, intervenes and Musila loses the contest.
8. Guttīla Kāvya, verses 115-126. Translation by R. Obeyesekere.
9. Sandesa (literally, message) is the name given to a genre of poetry modeled on Kalidasa's Meghaduta (Cloud Messenger). The Sinhala poems generally use a bird to take a message to a distant shrine. The poem itself is, thus, a series of descriptive accounts and digressions about what the bird will see along the way.
10. Many of the poets living and writing in the southern coastal areas of Sri Lanka between 1750 and 1830 were pupils or the successors of pupils of Weliwita Saranankara Thera who initiated the literary and religious revival of the mid eighteenth century.
11. Piyadasa Sirisena, "Introduction" to Sucharita Darsaya (Colombo, 1925), quoted in K. N. O. Dharmadasa, "Nativistic Reaction to Colonialism," Asian Studies (April 1974).
12. Quoted in Dharmadasa, op. cit., p. 167.
13. See Ranjini Obeyesekere. Sinhala Writing and the New Critics (Colombo: Gunasena, 1974), Chapter 4.
14. Wimal Dissanayake, "For Martin Wickremesinghe," Rav Pīlirav (Colombo 1974). Translation by R. Obeyesekere.

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