

The Buddha Image And Ceylon

D. T. DEVENDRA

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This book boldly suggests that the Buddha Image originated in Ceylon. The Sinhala Buddhists were not inhibited, like Indians, in showing the Blessed One in human form. Their artistic achievements reached high and are evident in works of great excellence. They showed originality in several ways. The clear statements of their chronicles, that one king enshrined a golden Buddha image in the 2nd century B. C., and another a while later but close to the time popularly accepted as the earliest time of the Indian Buddha Image, have been argued against by most scholars. This book questions why they have not been argued for. The book is particularly necessary when the Buddhist world is celebrating the 2,500th year of the Buddhist religion. Not a single scholar has studied the Buddha Image in Ceylon with any degree of attention and free from prejudice. The book is a plea to them to do it now.

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THE BUDDHA IMAGE AND CEYLON

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**This Buddha Jayanti Publication
is affectionately dedicated to
My Wife
and to Wepulla (Edward), Tissa,
Yasmin, Somasiri and Ransiri Menike.**

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1

BUDDHISM AND THE SINHALESE

The evolution of the image of the Buddha and the adoration of this image in Ceylon, which is today regarded as the Land of Pure Buddhism, are subjects that have not received due attention. Studies of the aspect of Buddhist art in the Island and of the cult have been concentrated on India. This is quite natural. For it is in India that Buddhism arose.

Whatever India's claim to precedence in this matter may be, it is an inescapable fact that the country in which Buddhism found birth, failed to hold fast to the teachings of the Buddha, as such. Ceylon is today the repository of the Buddha Dhamma. It cherished the name and the teachings, with surpassing affection, for two thousand years and a quarter from that day when King Devanampiya Tissa (247-207 B. C.) received

them on behalf of his people from the saintly Mahinda, son of the Indian Emperor Asoka.

Indeed, through the varying fortunes of their story, the island folk and their monarchs took it as their most sacred duty to hold and to protect the Doctrine. When the Tamils made incursions periodically from the south of India, they invariably strove, as part of the tactics of war, to obliterate Buddhist buildings. But the native Sinhalese made it the first task of rehabilitation to restore the damaged buildings and to provide for the *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunis*.

Islam as such did not affect the island. But Christianity did to some extent, five centuries ago. It was the Portuguese *conquistadores* who brought it in the form of Roman Catholicism. Political and economic pressure, backed by military might, did not leave such a deep impression upon the people as might have been expected. The south-western littoral where they, and the Dutch and the British who followed them in turn and had held power until 1948 and exerted the greatest influence, has today the largest concentration of Buddhists. The percentage of the population of the several Christian denominations put together, even inclusive of those who are not citizens, is appreciably less than ten, to use round figures.

With the Hindus the relations were different. There being a great many points of agreement between the two religions, a harmony prevailed which also resulted in a happy blend of cultures and beliefs. The Sinhalese, who alone are Buddhists, are nearly all of them Buddhists.

It is not difficult to understand the position of Buddhism in Ceylon, just as it is easy to appreciate the connection between the religion and the Sinhalese race. The Sinhalese made their own contribution to the religion of the Buddha and its diverse ways of expression in their land. Unfortunately even archaeological research in the latter field has been slow and not sustained. Many a scholar has not been able to divest himself of the preconceived idea that cultural currents received impulse from India. The idea may ultimately be proved true. But in order to test how far it is true, searches have to be made with open minds. We generally hear of Amaravati, Andhra, Gupta, Pallava, Chola, Pandya, Vijayanagara and even Madura styles and influences. We have yet to hear of Sinhalese characteristics—of art and architecture, at any rate.

The way of Buddhism as expressed in the Island was the way of the native Sinhalese. To them the religion was the flesh of their flesh.

The Sinhalese are a resilient race. Their capacity for adapting themselves into situations was, as their history shows, immense. It is this trait which helped to ensure their continuance. Having had ethnic beginnings in 543 B. C.,¹ they have steadily maintained individuality of race and language, besides keeping up in general, their devotion to the first religion they embraced. The Western influences, which were globally felt in increasing degree in recent years, were at work almost unceasingly in the little island. But they could never destroy the Sinhalese pattern of life and thought.

Such influences were absorbed where deep; the rest stirred only the surface.

This quality of the Sinhalese becomes more evident from a contrast with the Ceylon Tamils, the next major race. The Tamils could not disavow the language, the religion and such other features of life which they, a Dravidian people, brought with them centuries back when they, too, crossed the sea from India.

It is obvious that the Sinhalese are a people whose culture calls for examination in order that their achievements may be recognized and interpreted. This quest is likely to reveal aspects of their originality.

It is one of these aspects of originality which forms the subject of the ensuing discussion. That is to say, the contribution of the Sinhalese to the Buddha image.

The image of the Buddha has persisted through historical times down to our very day. The devout Sinhalese Buddhist does not hesitate to speak of constructing images of heroic size. The ideal is one hundred and twenty feet or eighty cubits; one such is quietly taking shape at Veherahena near Matara in the south. The idea does not terrify him, for his people had achieved it so frequently. He reads it in the *Mahavamsa*, the Great Chronicle. He sees it expressed in stone when he visits the Ruined Cities as pilgrim.

He also reads of Jambudipa or, in his tongue, Dambadiva, which is his name for Buddhist India where, he learns, that the Buddha was born and whence his own land was illumined. Here are great memorials and wonderful to the faith, put up by loving

hands long ago, and being sustained by hands as loving, albeit now in the name of culture.

The story of India's achievement in the Buddha image with which this discussion is directly concerned must first be read, so that the image in Ceylon may stand out against a background with which most of us are familiar. It is a congenial background.

2

THE IMAGE IN INDIA

The best authorities assign the earliest Buddha image in India to the first century after Christ. "The appearance of the Buddha image must be placed about 50 A. D.," wrote the Dutch savant, Dr. J. Ph. Vogel, in a recent article.² He, along with several other informed scholars, does not implicitly rely on the Kanishka chronology which has yet to be settled. Consequently, the Shah-ji-ki-Dheri reliquary and the Friar Bala statue, both inscribed, which are respectively dated to the first and the third regnal years of that monarch, are considered as standing on rather unsteady chronological grounds, if we should assume the dates (78, 128 or 144 A. D.) ascribed to them by most writers.

The earliest periods of history, or proto-history,

are associated with the days of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa about the third millenium before Christ. From here have been obtained several figurines of quality which leave no doubt whatever that the sculptor's art had been a developed one. The head of the bearded man, wearing a tunic spangled with a trefoil design, from Mohenjo-Daro; the torso of a lime-stone figurine excavated under scientific conditions in Harappa; the dancer, as well as other pieces of sculpture, sufficiently display the commendable degree which had been attained in the art of modelling the human body in those dim days.

In relief there is the well-known three-faced horned figure seated in the posture of a *yogi*. Some enthusiasts see in it a first glimpse of Siva who later developed into the Maha Yogi, the three faces evolving into the third eye and the triple horns into the Trisula. How far this is tenable from the strained arguments adduced in support is not necessary for our inquiry. What is important is that the people of the Indus Valley civilization were familiar with image-worship.

Next to the Indus Valley civilization come the times of the Rig-Veda. The tendency in these Vedic times differed in rather material ways from that in the preceding era. The former inclined to give prominence to the female principle sometimes known as the cult of the mother-goddess, although there were other lesser deities. The trend in Vedic times was, on the contrary, towards the idea of a single God. Indeed in their hymns is reflected the idea of an underlying unity in the universe and that God is one, however

many may be the epithets which may be applied to him. An important feature of the mythology was thus the pre-eminence of the male principle. Such goddesses as Prithvi, Aditi, Ushas, Sarasvati were relegated to a comparatively subordinate position.³

The Vedic times reveal that a prominent place had been given to ritual. Perhaps the use of objects as symbols of the gods cannot be entirely dismissed. There is one passage which suggests that Indra was represented by either an image or symbol. In the allusions to the Sisinadevas some scholars see an indication of the symbol of phallic worship.⁴

This tendency was most noticeable towards the close of the Vedic period. Truly enough, the learned began to expatiate on the futility of externals and endeavoured to stress the spirit of the teachings. But the common man, doubtless encouraged by the priest, was bemused by all these metaphysical dissertations. He sought something concrete for himself. He began to show his inclinations towards certain deities. One of these was Rudra whom he soon came to regard as Pasupati.⁵

After Vedic times a sort of darkness descended on the land. We have now reached the middle of the sixth century B. C. This was close to the time of the Buddha and Vardhamana Mahavira, the last Tirthankara of the Jain succession of teachers.

Cyrus had founded the Achaemenian Empire of the Persians. He was on the doorstep of India and could no longer be held back. Soon the districts west of the Indus became tributary to him. Darius the

Great, who came after him, mentions Gandhara by name in his Behistun inscription of *circa* 515 B. C. And the name of the province appeared prominently amongst those of others who were subject to him. Darius sent a naval expedition to the Indus which was led by Skylax. The result was that the Indus Valley was annexed to the Persian Empire as far as the deserts of Rajputana.

Persian control of Indian provinces continued under Xerxes the son of Darius. The Indians had to provide, among other things, contingents to the formidable Xerxes when he went to war in Europe. These Indian soldiers were spear-and bowmen who fought their Persian lord on the soil of Europe, about the fifth century B. C.

The question now arises: Had these men no knowledge of the cult of the image as they passed through three lands where it was in vogue, that is, Persia, Egypt and Greece? It is inconceivable that they had not. Though travellers tell tales, we know how quick roving soldiers are to observe unfamiliar details, introduce new ideas and, talking freely of them to ever-widening audiences, unconsciously publicize their experiences.

The Persians were followed into India by the Greeks of the conquering hero, Alexander. One of the Indian kings who opposed him was Porus. In an incident of this engagement lies what may be taken as the first unchallengeable historical reference to image-worship in India by an Aryan tribe. It is found in a passage by Quintus Curtius. He says that an image of

Herakles was borne in front of the Paurava army.⁶ However one may accept the god's identification, the significance of the image is what is momentous here.

There are Greek references, too, to the Indians' worshipping Zeus Ombrios or Zeus of the Rain-Storms. Besides these, Patanjali mentions the exhibition and sale of images of Siva, Skanda and Vaisakha by the Mauryas who rose into power after the fall of the Greeks. It is to be noted that Mauryan India had direct relations with Syria, Egypt and countries of the Hellenistic West. In the Indian metropolis there was resident a considerable body of foreigners for whom special laws were promulgated and other provision made in various ways. In the third century B. C., one Mauryan king, Amitraghata-Bindusara the father of Asoka, procured sweet wine and dried figs from the West. A classical writer tells the later story of how a half-starved, storm-tossed Indian sailor was brought by the coast-guard of the Arabian Gulf before King Euergetes II (145-116 B. C.)

Before the conversion of the Abyssinians to Christianity in 330 A. D., the strongest outside influence may have been Buddhism, in the view of Wilfred H. Schoff.⁷ He quotes the opinion of James Fergusson that the great monolith at Axum is of Indian inspiration "the idea Egyptian, but the details Indian. An Indian nine-storied pagoda, translated in Egyptian in the first century of our era!"

Fergusson noted its likeness to Indian temples like that at Buddha Gaya, that it represented "that curious marriage of Indian with Egyptian art which

we would expect to find in the spot where the two people came in contact and enlisted architecture to symbolize their commercial union." Schoff adds his own comments. "Such an alliance was to the advantage of the Hindu traders. The Homerites stopped their vessels at Ocelis on the Arabian shore, taking their cargoes thence to Egypt by caravan; here was a new power that allowed them to trade to Avalites and Adulis, and even to march overland and take their wares to Egypt themselves. Ujjeni and Bharukachcha, Axum and Alexandria were in close connection during the first and second Christian centuries, and the observer of early relations between Buddhism and Christianity may find along this frequented route greater evidence of mutual influence than along the relatively obstructed overland route through Parthia to Antioch and Ephesus."

These notices suffice in themselves to reveal that the Indians, of the times well before the date generally assigned to the beginnings of the Buddha image in their land, would have been familiar with the adoration of images by their own people as well as by those westward. About the time of the invention certainly this was the case.

How was it, then, that the Buddha image was not created earlier than the first century A. D.? Before the answer could be suggested some further points have to be examined.

Some opinion attributes the origin of the Buddha image to Mathura which is held to have created an independent type, with its emphasis on the spiritual

or idealized aspect. Others think that Gandhara where arts and crafts flourished under dexterous hands, may be Indian, was the home; that the Gandhara artists fashioned it on the realism of the Bactrian Greeks of the region.

The Gandhara Buddhas are very human. The body is naturalistically shaped, the garments are the everyday cloak of the noble, so to say. The sculptors wanted to show a man in his warm flesh and blood, as they visualized him, whilst their fellow artists of Mathura sought to express the ideal of a refined soul and were less concerned about the externals. This deviation from the apparently accepted tradition also occurs, though not in many instances, in the south. In the valley of the river Kistna, at Amaravati, Jagayyapeta and Nagarjunikonda are mostly found symbols to signify the presence of the Buddha. But one or two instances of the Buddha in human form also exist.

At Sanchi, Barhut and Buddha Gaya, which are co-eval with Mathura, there is no image. The Buddha is always suggested by a symbol. Thus there appear to have been divergences of attitude between the south and mid- and North-Indian peoples towards iconic representation. Generally, the art seems to have been passing through similar stages about the same time in these widely separated regions. For, though the mind tends to conceive India as a single entity, the vast size of the country, the geographical disposition and topography, not to mention the bewildering diversity of race or speech, are factors that should always be kept in the mind. If Gandhara and Mathura

should be considered separate schools of artistic thought though established on India's soil with Indian personnel, there is no great difficulty in conceiving the same parallel in regard to the land and the peoples of Dakshinapatha and still further south. Each region expressed itself in its own idiom. This becomes quite apparent from a study of the early Buddha figures of Gandhara and of Mathura.

It is now pertinent to look into the minds of the early Indians who, for the first known time in their history, gave visible form in several media to the Buddha—that figure who stood above all men, who had last walked among their forefathers some five hundred years earlier.

3

INDIAN ANICONIC ART

The joyous figure of the Woman-and-Tree in a bracket of a Sanchi *toran*, several representations of tree-spirits generally called *Yakshis*, and of *devata*, not to speak of numerous reliefs at Sanchi, Barhut and similar places, these reveal the high degree of skill in sculpture which the Indian craftsman of Mauryan times had achieved. But such representations are animistic or material. They are not of a personality with, what one might call, the divine touch. Why, therefore, did the Indians avoid—deliberately, it seems clear—the portrayal of a Holy One in human form?

The Buddha and Mahavira were the two towering figures amongst India's spiritual leaders of the age. That age had been under the spell of Brahmanism with its ritual, often complicated, its sacrifices and

layers of society. Both the great teachers addressed themselves to certain immediate problems and perplexities which stood in the way of man's emancipation, those that held the spirit of man in thrall.

The Buddha was unequivocally against this slavery towards ritual. He warned that no man could reach the rare heights and excellences unless he cast off the dross of externals. Ritual and sacrifice implied subservience to a higher power. They drained man of confidence in himself. They subordinated him to an all-pervading, all-powerful, external God, an illusion, *maya*.

From those far-off days to our own there have been subtle folk to quibble that the Buddha did not deny the existence of such a God as described above. Theists triumphantly call it "the Silence of the Buddha."

The Buddha had no time to spare for merry jugglers of words whom nothing pleases so much as the reverberations of their words of thundering sound. He had a serious message for mankind. He did not hold audience to answer the question whether bicycling would stand in the way of reaching Nibbana.

The answer of the Buddha was quite plain. If he had believed in the existence of an Almighty God he would forthrightly have called upon men to bow down to the will of such a power, to dedicate themselves to that Eternal. This could quite will be if ritual and sacrifice be eliminated, thereby taking men away from the shadow to lead them to the substance.

It is necessary at the same time to bear in mind that in India of those times there were no religious

groups to whom the question of whether an Almighty exists or not appeared such a vital one as to touch their very being. A belief such as this is, naturally, the essence of a pure monotheism like Islam and, less intensely, of Christianity—to take two later religions. Thus the zeal of a belief in God manifested itself strongly in the after-centuries. This is all more clear when we remember how temporal might backed their efforts to force their monotheism upon “heathens” and “unbelievers.”

To assume that this urgency for God was felt in the time of the Buddha is to lose all sense of time and to project the mind of today into yesterday. We are familiar with Islamic and Christian conceptions. But the ancient Indians were casual.

The Buddha throughout his teachings never spoke of an All-Pervading Spirit of the Universe. He emphasized man's power over himself, man's ability to free himself by his own efforts from the round of birth-death-birth. No teacher who believes in an Almighty God will do this. No Prophet of God will, either. Still less God Incarnate.

Siddhatta Gotama was mere man. By himself he reached *bodhi* and became the Buddha. His one experience demonstrated the fact that no external power aided him in his quest of the unborn, uncreate. That was the Way he showed others. They who follow it cross the stream on a raft and thereafter, having reached the other shore, throw away the contraption as it would be of no use to the *sotapatti*, stream-winner. The end of the journey was Nibbana.

The ultimate of the teaching of Mahavira was for souls to be released from transmigration. They would then reach the pure and blissful abode, Siddha-Sila. As in Buddhism, so in Jainism there was no room for a Supreme Creator. The end taught by both teachers never took the followers to the heaven of an Almighty God.

“It may be added that, with the exception of Yoga, all these ancient systems are strictly atheistic, i. e. they do not admit an absolute Supreme God; even in Yoga, the Isvara is not the first and only cause of everything existent.”⁸

The Buddhist and the Jain were the most prominent among the new religions which arose in the Brahmanical world of the day. In them there being no place for One-God who had to be prayed, sacrificed to, or propitiated and invoked, no temples were needed to be erected by those who professed the two systems. Instead grew the institution of *aramas*, forest or park hermitages. These later developed into the abodes of monks which we know as *viharas*.

In the early Buddhist books there is mention of places to be honoured. Such, for instance, are *Cetiyas*.⁹ These *Cetiyas* were places, sometimes even trees, which were directly associated with the Buddha or Holy Ones. The word was originally not limited in meaning to *stupas*. The *stupas* would contain relics and then they were worthy to be honoured. No mention is made of images or image-houses.

Mahavira had passed away. The Buddha, too, ceased to be. He was *Devati-Deva*, a God above

Gods. He stood, in the estimate of his followers, on a plane so vastly eminent as to be inconceivable. It would be as daring as a challenge to the gods to visualize in the likeness of man, this *Maha Purusha*, the Man Pre-Eminent who transcended the gods. How conceive his image?

And yet in the Dying Discourse, familiar as the *Maha Parinibbana Sutta*, the Buddha categorically stated that certain places associated with his life and activity were worthy to be honoured.¹⁰ They became shrines. The man himself was too elevated to be thought of in terms of flesh and blood. No one would be so bold as to delineate him in human form.

To some whose vision was limited, he probably was a God *par excellence*. It would be sacrilege and blasphemy to conceive him, therefore, in the form of man with man's frailties.

Similar must have been the thoughts that arose in the minds of the followers of Mahavira, and close to them the concepts of Hindus when they had marshalled their ranks against Buddhists, Jains, Ajivikas and the hosts of "heterodoxy" who had taunted them.

We have noticed earlier that whilst Vedantic metaphysicians of the earliest times decried sacrifice and ritual to call the attention of men to the spirit of the Vedas, the common man did not find sustenance in the intellectual pabulum offered, but sought the homely aid of a concrete object to worship. Thus we find that Saivism, as it came to be crystallized into that form familiar to us today, at first refused to

express the creator in human shape. God stood above it. He could be conceived in the known creative instrument, the phallus. Consequently, the ideas regarding the expression of the Almighty which ran in Saivite minds were not very different from those which held the Buddhists and the Jains.

Anthropomorphic representation was a later phase. But the experience of making images had been acquired centuries earlier than they were made for the cult purposes of the three religions mentioned here.

The earliest translation of the Buddha into sculpture was by a symbol. In fact there were quite a number of them: the *Cetiya*, the Bodhi Tree, *Svastika* marked on a cushion or seat, *Sri Pada* or the representation of the feet, sometimes with the Tri Ratna emblem marked on them in order more easily to convey the significance—a *chatta* or sun-shade held over an imagined person in a procession, the *Tri Ratna* by itself (also called the Buddhist *Trisula*), a "Pillar of Fire," the *Dhamma Cakka* or the wheel of the Good Law and even an ambulatory, these are the best known of them.

The symbols were not necessarily absorbed into a mere architectural scheme. On the contrary, they were so displayed as to convey their full import. That is to say, we find worshippers grouped around them, bowing down with folded palms, offering flowers and garlands before the symbol, and otherwise so disposed that there is no ambiguity with regard to the artist's intention. The Indians were unmistakably

tending towards something different, on lines which Dr. Benjamin Rowland has well expressed. "Even the representation of the Buddha by such symbols as the footprints and the empty throne in Hinayana art not only implies a devotion to the person of the Teacher, but strongly suggests that he was already regarded as a supernatural personage."¹¹

We have now come to the period of Asoka the noble Mauryan who, in an amazing moment, was inspired by Moggaliputta Tissa the Holy One to send Buddhist missionaries abroad. To Lanka came the most fruitful of these missions. It was led by Asoka's son himself.

The time soon came, for Mutasiva did not live long. He was succeeded on the throne by Devanampiya Tissa, his second son. Precisely a similar situation arose in the third Christian century. King Gotabhaya crushed a heresy and the fleeing dissidents met in India the heretical monk Sanghamitra. He was determined to spread the new teachings in the island. But he waited for the death of the king and of his elder son and immediate successor before he came to secure the favour of the younger son, Mahasena.

4

BUDDHISTS BEFORE MAHINDA

Mahinda, the Buddhist emissary of an imperial father, did not come to Ceylon immediately. Instead, he sojourned a while in Vidisa the home of his mother, Devi, as she prepared a suitable monastic residence for her son. The king of Ceylon, Mutasiva, was old.

There is no reason to assume that Mutasiva's name reveals anything of the religion he professed, such as that he was a follower of Siva. The names Mahasiva, Mahadeva and even Suriyagupta, were borne by early Buddhist monks. This does not suggest their connection with Saivism or the worship of the sun-god, Suriya.

Mahinda, who felt that an aged man was hardly the person to change his views in revolutionary fashion, was content to bide his time.

Evidence, even if meagre, can be deduced from the *Mahavamsa* and elsewhere to show that Buddhism must have been known in the Island before the advent of Mahinda. There are several references to various sects whose adherents were found in the land between the arrival, in 543 B. C., of Vijaya who founded the Sinhalese race and the appearance of Mahinda in 247 B. C.

Naked ascetics or Jains, Ajivikas whose leader was Makkali Ghosala, Paribrajakas, were definitely three of such religious sects. There is no valid reason, therefore, to imagine that Buddhists were conspicuously absent from amongst this varied collection of people who represented some of the progressive thought of India.

References are made to *Sramanas*, but whether Jain or Buddhist is not explicit. No sanctions or taboos have been imposed upon Buddhists in regard to crossing the sea. Buddhists were no less adventurous than the others in showing their zeal. And between India and Ceylon it is evident that there was continual intercourse.

That this intercourse brought cultural contact, as evidenced from the presence of the followers of the several sects, is a factor far more powerful in establishing the fact of connexion between the two lands, than mere material considerations like commerce or politics. Unless conditions had been favourable in Ceylon, it is reasonable to suppose that this intercourse could not have taken place.

Vijaya and his seven hundred original colonizers would never have been totally ignorant of the existence

of such an one as the Buddha, as of Mahavira or Makkali Gosala, the pre-eminent "reformers" of the time in Jambudipa.

These considerations lend undoubted colour to the statements, in both the earlier *Dipavamsa* and the later *Mahavamsa*, which refer to the Princess Bhaddakaccana, come to be queen to Ceylon's second king, as a Sakyan lady. Her father, Pandu, was the first cousin of the Buddha. Panduvasudeva, her husband, was the youngest son of Sumitta brother of Vijaya.

The Sakya connections as well as the identification of Moriyas with Sakyas, the synchronizing of Vijaya's landing with the *Parinibbana* of the Buddha, the Buddha's three visits of Ceylon and the probable family relationship of Devanampiya Tissa with Asoka, elaborated by A. M. Hocart and H. W. Codrington have been interpreted by them as due to a desire to connect Ceylon with the Buddha.^{1,2} In formulating such a theory the facts of intercourse with India and the presence of the followers of the Indian religions already mentioned have been clearly ignored. Placed in their context, the Sakyan kinship of Ceylon's earliest kings assumes a necessary significance.

To revert, Bhaddakaccana with her attendants is described as having come to the island habited as a nun. Now the Order of Nuns to which they could have belonged could most reasonably be that founded by the Buddha, with his "little mother" Mahapajapati Gotami as its first Superior. With the Sakya connections it is reasonable to suggest that it is not Jain but Buddhist nuns who were meant. We may here

recall that when the Princess Hemamali brought the right eye-tooth of the Buddha from Kalinga in the fourth century of our era, she came with her husband in religious disguise.³ The parallel is not accidental. The two stories ring true.

In addition to this it is well to bear in mind that King Devanampiya Tissa, the patron of Mahinda, had sent to Asoka in north India for the requisites for his coronation. This cannot be understood unless we presuppose one of two things, namely, that the two were related or the continued connection between the two countries. It is accepted that Asoka's power but touched the fringe of south India and, therefore, the report of his might would not have unsettled the king of the island, to such degree as to make him seek the emperor's patronage. Rather, the explanation is as already indicated.

Notwithstanding all that has been said so far, it is established that it was Mahinda who brought the Buddha Dhamma. This should only be understood to mean that his mission was a formal establishment of the religion. It was a sort of embassy, from monarch to monarch direct. It was received by the Ceylon king and, with him, large numbers of his people became Buddhists. Buddhism now became the official religion of Ceylon.

The change was an epoch in Ceylon's history. It deserved to be recorded in flaming letters in the country's annals as, indeed, it was chronicled.

What occasion, therefore, to allude to the existence of stray, perhaps unorganized, groups of

Buddhists leading their quiet lives in the land, equally uninfluencing the generality of inhabitants even as the followers of other religions did?

In this lies the most probable explanation of the silence of the first chroniclers over the existence of Buddhists in Ceylon before the arrival of Mahinda. Almost similar was the position in India until the advent of Asoka.

5

AFTER MAHINDA CAME

To learn how thoroughly Mahinda, the enlightener of the island, set about organizing the new religion, one has to read the *Dipavamsa* and the *Mahavamsa*. The *Dipavamsa* gives a succinct description which is a good picture of the quick measures he took to see that the orthodox doctrines were firmly established.

The monastic life as he knew it in India was instituted. Monks' dwellings and religious structures were organized with their proper appointments. The rules of discipline were explained. The laity were initiated into the manner of providing food and other requisites for monks. *Suttas* were recited, the art of preaching to congregations taught. Sinhalese men and women were admitted to the Order. The use of cave-dwellings for retreat was indicated.

Briefly then, he introduced the secular andy la aspects, as he knew them, to the generality of people.

Now we should address ourselves to issues more direct to our purpose. More than once in the descriptions of the foregoing we come across flowers being offered by the king to the apostle of Lanka. Mahinda, however, did not accept them for himself. He received them, it is true, but he scattered them on the ground (miracles are mentioned) in consecration of certain events to come.

This offering of flowers is a significant gesture in view of what follows. It may be noted that the practice of it on this scale and in these circumstances is exclusively Buddhist. Said Mahinda to the king.¹⁴ "In the first month of the summer, on the full moon, on the Uposatha day, we have come hither from Jambudipa; we have dwelt on this most excellent mountain. During five months we have not left the Tissarama nor the mountain; now we will go to Jambudipa; permit it, o lord of charioteers."

The king replied: "We serve you with food and drink, with clothes and dwelling-places; the whole people has taken refuge (in the Faith); what causes you dissatisfaction?"

"We have no object here to which we may pay respect by salutations and by rising from our seats, or by raising our clasped hands, and by respectful contemplation. For a long time, o great king, we have not seen the Sambuddha, the highest among men."

"Verily I have understood you, venerable sir; I will erect a most excellent Thupa; find you out a

suitable place (?); I will build a Thupa in honour of the Teacher."

But a *thupa* would have no meaning by itself. This Mahinda knew and, calling a companion, spoke to him.

"Go, chief Sumana; repair to Pataliputta, and address thus the righteous king Asoka: 'Your ally, great king, has been converted to the faith of Buddha; grant to him (some of) the most excellent relics; he is going to erect a Thupa in honour of the Teacher.' "

Sumana received from the Emperor an alms-bowl full of relics. From elsewhere he obtained the right collar-bone of the Buddha and these were duly enshrined in Thuparama Dagaba at Anuradhapura. It is the first historical *stupa* of Ceylon.

Uttiya (207-197 B. C.) who succeeded Devanampiya Tissa on the throne, was as zealous a patron of Buddhism as his predecessor had been. In an inscription at Mihintale, Mahinda's mountain abode, the king has been honoured with the descriptive epithet *Dama Mita*, Friend of the Dhamma.¹⁵ It was Uttiya's misfortune to have to arrange for the obsequies of Mahinda who had died an aged man. To enshrine the main portion of the remains from the cremation, Uttiya resolved: "I will erect a great Thupa to the east of Tissarama." And he did, a most excellent one. Unfortunately, it has not been identified to this day.

The great king Abhaya, who is more familiarly known as Dutthagamani (161-137 B. C.), conceived the amazing idea of building a *stupa* of incredible size.

Its size was surpassed twice later, by two *stupas* at Anuradhapura, whilst another great king attempted, at Polonnaruva in the twelfth century, to build the biggest of all of Ceylon's *stupas*. He, however, failed to bring his work to fruition. It has been proved from archaeological evidence that Ruvanveliseya, which is the name by which this Maha Thupa is best known today, was originally of practically the same dimensions as it is now.¹⁶ How he sent for architects and how he examined the designs they submitted are as romantic as any fairy tale. But what is most important to remember at this stage is that the stupendous *stupa* which he began, and which his brother and successor Saddha Tissa completed, was then *the most colossal stupa in the Buddhist world*.

If Ceylon borrowed the idea of the *stupa* from India, it was a Ceylon king and his people who showed initiative and courage in striking out on colossal lines surpassing any similar structure by the Indians. There was something in the islanders after all! There was everything to show that they could achieve effects more grandly than the Indian did—in one activity, at any rate.

Dutthagamani also built the remarkable nine-storeyed Loha Pasada. Kanishka's giant tower was erected *more than two centuries later*. Dutthagamani's predecessors of a century or more before had put up no mean edifices themselves, in the name of Buddhism.

Wherever the first lessons of architecture were learnt, the Sinhalese had shown that they could excel in them.

Archaeologists have failed us in regard to these early structures except a casual *stupa*. Just so have they not been able to reveal, with tolerable chronological data through their science, the art of the early sculptor, who must have been at work on these buildings as certainly as the architects themselves. Inscribed pieces or other remains are sadly wanting in the country and scientific studies are, unlike in the neighbouring land, severely handicapped. A. M. Hocart who, when Archaeological Commissioner, had been patiently trying to build sequences purely from archaeology, was constrained to confess that no remains had been definitely identified as such for the periods styled by him pre-Buddhist Sinhalese (5th century B. C. to *circa* 250 B. C.) and Early Buddhist (*circa* 250 B. C. to *circa* 100 B. C.)¹⁷

Fortunately, we have one early piece. It is a large stone sculpture in the round of king Bhatiya, and presently stands in the courtyard of Ruvanveliseya. It is very weathered, but the legend in the script of the period is invaluable. It is surprisingly close to the period of the origin of the Buddha image in India.

6

THE IMAGE

There were no reasons for the Sinhalese mind to be hesitant in its approach to the creation of an image of a Holy One. The pre-Mahindian era did not see the prevalence of any cult which made the people subservient to an Almighty God.

There is no record that pre-Vijayan Ceylon had passed through the stages of the Indus Valley or Vedic men. Nor of such contacts as the Indians had with the Persians, Greeks or others. It is permissible, therefore, to attribute an open mind on this matter to the Sinhalese who lived between Vijaya's time and the arrival of Mahinda.

Indeed, applying the experience of our own days, we should not be far wrong if we should suppose that the image was a homely article then as it is now.

Nobody has a dread of it, nobody considers it too sacred or awesome a thing, to house in a holy of holies after solemn ceremonies of consecration. The Buddha image is always with us today.

Some of the early images were small in size. They were carried about from place to place, even across the seas. Numerous such images are owned by Buddhist monks. The lay community, too, has its own.

The first specific reference to a Buddha image in Ceylon in Mahinda's day occurs in the *Mahavamsa*.¹⁸ It is connected with King Jetthatissa I (265-275 A. D.), the elder son of Gothabaya. Jetthatissa is mentioned as having found in Thuparama "the great and beautiful stone image that was placed of old by Devanampiya Tissa in the Thuparama."

That image has been mentioned several times but every description of it says that it was of stone. This image was obviously no ordinary one, for, besides being transported on two occasions by different kings to their special establishments, other kings lavished great attention on it. Buddhadasa set jewels in its eye-sockets; Dhatusena saw that these had been lost by his time and he provided jewels for their replacement. He also made a crest and a halo for it, studded the hair with blue gems, probably sapphires. He built a house for it. Silameghavanna repaired the old shelter and had the image adorned with gems. Sena II restored the temple which had decayed; his queen had a blue diadem placed upon the image.¹⁹

Jetthatissa removed the image to an establishment of his own. The new place was the monastery

known as Pacinatissa-pabbata vihara. The identification of the Vihara has, for all practical purposes, been settled by Dr. S. Paranavitana the recently retired Archaeological Commissioner, who excavated the remains.²⁰

“In the year 1940, however,” he remarked, “an inscription of about the fifth century A. C., was discovered on the landing slab of a flight of steps belonging to a ruined structure of which nothing else was then visible above the ground. This short record contains the name of “Pajina-tisa-pava-vihara” (Pali: Pacina-Tissa-pabbata-Vihara) apparently referring to the site itself.” In the course of his careful work he was able to reveal several important details of the buildings. Among them was “another instance of a *hatthi-pakara*-the oldest specimen of this architectural feature so far known anywhere in Ceylon.” There were short octagonal *Yupa* (*ayika*) pillars with rounded head and the equal-armed *visva-vajra* cross, that is, one whose each arm terminated in the Thunderbolt (Tibetan: *dorje*) motif.

Mahasena, brother and successor (275—301 A.D.) of Jetthatissa, removed the image to the Abhayagiri monastery in the north of the city. It was probably the very image which Fa Hien, in the fifth century described in glowing terms.²¹

The problem now arises: If Devanampiya Tissa had been responsible for the image, why had it not been so mentioned in the annals of his own achievements, but was attributed to him by the chronicler in the annals of a subsequent king, although in the same part of the *Mahavamsa*?

The omission to refer to it would be an important omission *only if Buddha images had been considered sacred objects in the third century before Christ*. There is no reason to suppose that they were so regarded. It is a matter of record that images or image-houses found no place in the then scheme of adoration. An image was made of ordinary substance which had no sanctity attached to it.

Two kinds of *cetiyas* are mentioned in the early literature as worthy of veneration. They were the *stupa* and Bodhi Tree. The one enshrined a portion of the very body of the Buddha and was thus a Saririka Cetiya. The other, the Paribhogika Cetiya, received his contact, even by proxy, by reason of the original tree in Buddha Gaya under which he had meditated until he attained to Buddha-hood. The early image was not invested with any such associations.

Some early writers had also regarded that an image was worthy of adoration if it enshrined a relic. This view is evident in the following passage.²²

“Atha ye parinibbute tathagate cetiyam bhindanti bodhim chindanti dhatumhi upakkamanti tesam kim hotiti: bhariyam kammam hoti ti anantariya sadisam; *Sadhatukam pana thupam va patimam va badhamanam bodhi-sakham chinditum vattati*, sace pi tattha nilina sakuna cetiya vaccam patenti chinditum vattatiyeva, paribhoga cetiyato hi sariracetiyam mahantataram cetiyavatthum bhinditva gacchantam bodhimule pi chinditva paritum vattati ya pana bodhisakha bodhigharam badhati tam geharakkhanattham chinditum na

labbhati bodhi attham hi geham, na gehatthaya bodhi. Asanagharepi eseva nayo; yasmin pana asanaghare dhatu nihita hoti, tassa rakkhanattheya bodhisakham chinditum vattati, bodhi jagganattham ojoharana sakham va, putitthanam va chinditum vattati yeva.”

(Then what will happen to those who after the passing away of the Tathagatha, destroy a *cetiya*, cut down a Bodhi Tree or tread on relics; That will result in a grave *kamma* similar to *anantariya kamma*. It is proper to cut off a branch of a Bodhi Tree provided it obstructs a *stupa* or *image containing relics*. It is also proper to cut off a branch if the droppings of birds that roost on it should fall on the *cetiya*. Of the *paribhoga* and *sarira cetiyas*, the more important is the latter. It is even proper to cut off and remove a root that damages the foundation of a *cetiya*. If a branch of a Bodhi Tree obstructs a *bodhigara* it must not be cut off to protect the latter.

The house serves the Bodhi Tree and the Bodhi Tree the house. The same rule applies in the *asanaghara* also. If relics have been enshrined in an *asanaghara* and a Bodhi branch obstructs it, the latter may be cut off. In order to maintain a Bodhi Tree it is proper to remove a portion that has decayed or a branch from which the sap is dripping.)

The *Papancasudani* in which the above occurs is the commentary on the “Majjhima Nikaya.” It was written by Buddhaghosa on the invitation of Buddha-

mitta Thera with whom the commentator lived at Mayura Pattana.

It is quite obvious that the practice of enshrining relics in images was much earlier than the fifth century when Buddhaghosa translated the Sinhalese commentaries into Pali. For his were translations from the Sinhalese and this Sinhalese literature would seem to have existed in written form at least in the first century A. D.

It is necessary to keep in mind what has been said before, namely, that the earliest canonical texts authorize the veneration of relics. The wide prevalence of this type of veneration was, however, more evident with what may be called popular Buddhism.

Devanampiya Tissa's stone image was removed to Abhayagiri Vihara towards the close of the third century. Unfortunately for all studies, every trace of it appears to have been lost. But all hope of identifying it should not be entirely abandoned.

It is a duty of the expert patiently to study the several images at Anuradhapura and to see which of them approximates to the description of it, however vague. When the city fell from its pre-eminence before the onrushing Cholas towards the end of the tenth century, some of these images were removed elsewhere, probably even as far as Polonnaruva the next capital. But there seems no need to go so far in search of this image. The search at Anuradhapura has yet to begin.

Experts are also slow and cautious. In the absence of inscriptional or literary evidence they become still more wary. This is a normal attitude.

Their training restrains them from disseminating loose ideas and wrong notions. Nevertheless, it is the expert in whose province lies the study of this subject, on whose judgement the rest have to rely.

Considered from this point of view, the study of the expert in elucidating the finer points of the image in Ceylon has progressed little. For the average man he has given little that is tangible. Style, aesthetic impressions, the disposition of robe or arrangement of hair on the head, the cranial protuberance or the auspicious mark between the eyebrows, all these are rather nebulous and help to no great extent. Most of the language used, in fact, is mere word-plating done in the critic's factory.

There has been no serious attempt to isolate a few examples and study them singly with selected Indian specimens of the earliest times, in patient detail with a view to discovering a probable artistic canon in Ceylon. There are some who hold that in India, for instance, the Gandhara Buddha figures invariably measure five heads to the total height.²³ Now this may or may not be consistent. But it reveals an attempt to seek a possible standard of measurement. No such thing has been tried out in Ceylon. The few measurements which have been published are casual and with no attempt at standardization. They, therefore, do not provide data upon which to interpret.

Devanampiya Tissa's image might well be one of several Buddhas found today in Anuradhapura.

At Pankuliya there is a most unusual Buddha of limestone, which is the material which characterizes

the earlier works.²⁴ The stone of this particular image is very friable and steadily disintegrating. The hands are in a gesture which was never popularly adopted here. This image, Archaeological Commissioner H. C. P. Bell wrote, "offers one of the most taking and effective presentations of the seated Buddha to be met with anywhere in Ceylon." No date was offered by him. One of his successors in office was inclined to ascribe it to the eighth century. But the grounds were not stated.

As almost a matter of policy, the invariable dates attributed to the works we find at Anuradhapura were the eighth to the tenth centuries—a conservative estimate, the city having fallen in the tenth century. It is, of course, impossible to believe that the finest works seem to have fallen into these two last centuries.

A Buddha of undoubted class is housed in a small shrine close to the steps to the Sacred Bodhi Tree. It is now touched up, as is usual with images that have been damaged or have to be prepared for regular worship, unlike those left open to the sky as archaeological pieces. Even with the restoration it is easy to see that this image is one of the best examples of ancient sculpture.

At Ruvanveliseya and Isurumuniya there are others, though in modern dress.

The Colombo Museum houses one of the finest stone seated Buddhas of Anuradhapura. It was found near Toluvila. Fortunately, it was the least damaged of that city's ancient Buddhas. Bell, whose eye was "at once attracted by the burly back and shoulders"

described it as "admittedly the finest yet brought to light at Anuradhapura."²⁵ Though yielding in the mere matter of size to the outstanding image in the environs of Abhayagiri, it surpassed all the three images in that area, he categorically asserted. Benjamin Rowland was much struck by this image.²⁶

"Although some seated Buddhas from Anuradhapura are related to later Andhra models, the Indian prototype for this statue is to be sought in such Kushan images as the Buddha from Katra. We note the same herculean physical proportions," he observed. "In few other representations of the Buddha in yoga trance do we get such a sense of the complete self-absorption and serenity of the Enlightened One. This impression of the perfect embodiment of the idea of *Samadhi* is conveyed through the very simplicity of the conception; the perfect material equilibrium of the figure connotes the perfect mental state of Sakyamuni through the massive stability of the triangular base formed by the locked legs, surmounted by the erect columnar body which supports the perfectly impassive mask-like face."

He suggests a date not later than the third century.

There are some good examples in the Archaeological Museum, too, along with others which have the foreign touch. But our discussion will centre round indigenous products.

The best group, however, still remains in the Abhayagiri area. The most widely venerated of this trio in the Outer Circular Road is known to devotees

as the Samadhi Pilimaya. Its foldless robe rests smoothly on the body.

The nobility of this work in stone leaves an indelible effect on the thoughts of the beholder. People are never tired of quoting the few telling words in which Jawaharlal Nehru described it when the vision of it brought peace to his mind when he was in Dehra Dun gaol.

This is the image which, many feel, truly expresses Ceylon stone Buddhas in the most eloquent words. They take it to be the great and beautiful stone image of Devanampiya Tissa.

The next best known of the Buddhas (third) in the same area lies facing two inscribed tablets not far from the Stone Boats. The eyes are missing and the sockets suggest that eyes of some special substance, say, even rock crystal, had been set in them. Sometimes there were regular ceremonies for the removal of eyes from important images and of re-setting them, anointing them with unguents, collyrium and other ingredients at an important festival. Such an instance is mentioned from Polonnaruwa with regard to the standing Stone Buddha in the Ata-da-ge or the Temple of the Tooth of Deva, the Army Commander of Vijayabahu I in the eleventh century.²⁷ The third Anuradhapura Buddha in the northern area is the most mutilated of the trio; treasure-seekers had wantonly destroyed it in September 1913.²⁸ It has been given a late date by an expert. Once again his grounds are arbitrary.

The other stone Buddha (second) in the precincts is in the parkland between these two. Because it is not

easily seen, it is the least visited. It is itself not a common example, its hands being placed in the same position as the Pankuliya image. It, too, has been dated late, once more with no reasons.

There are traces in the extensive nothern area, close to the Abhayagiri and to the Lankarama, of there having been other seated statues of stone. A number of them could have been removed, particularly during the larger part of the nineteenth century which followed the fall of the last King in 1815. At this time there was an influx of monks from the Seven Korales, or the Kurunegala area, who assumed charge of many a deserted shrine. They even gave "a habitation and a name" of their own, where there were not easily evident from the records with which they were familiar. Still later,* when the government began evincing interest in the antiquities of the ancient Raja Rata, chiefly Anuradhapura and Polonnaruva, and this interest culminated in the enlightened directive of Governor Sir Arthur Gordon leading to the origin of the Archaeological Survey in 1890, there were people no less zealous than the monks of the Seven Korales who bestirred themselves on behalf of Buddhist remains. Instances are known of the transfer of images and other pieces by these well-intentioned people.

However, we are warranted in fairly assuming that some of the best of such ancient sculpture still remain in Anuradhapura. It is Anuradhapura that will solve the problem.

The first text notice of a Ceylon Buddha image in the *Mahavamsa* occurs in the annals of King

Dutthagamani who constructed the colossal Ruvanveliseya. He caused to be placed in the centre of the relic-chamber a jewelled *bodhi-tree* with many adornments. The chronicler now continues.²⁹

“Rows of vases (some) empty and (some) filled with flowers made of all kinds of jewels and filled with four kinds of fragrant water were placed at the foot of the Bodhi-tree. On a throne, the cost whereof was one koti, erected to the east of the bodhi-tree, he placed a shining golden Buddha-image seated. The body and members of this image were duly made of jewels of different colours, beautifully shining. Maha-Brahma stood there holding a silver parasol and Sakka carrying out the consecration with the Vijayut-tara shell, Pancasikha with his lute in his hand, and Kalanaga with his dancing girls, and the thousand-handed Mara with his elephants and train of followers. Even like the throne to the east (other) thrones were erected, the cost of each being a koti, facing the other regions of the heavens. And even thus, so that the bodhi-tree was at the head, a couch was placed, also worth one koti, adorned with jewels of every kind.”

And now this is a most significant reference. It cannot be ignored. Two points are fairly clear from it. The first is that there was a Buddha image on each throne. The second is that the central theme was the Bodhi-tree and not the image. This latter point further implies that the image was not so vital in the scheme of veneration in the second century before Christ, a point which has been made earlier.

The construction of Buddha images is chronicled too in the first portion of the *Mahavamsa*, in the reign of King Vasabha (67-111 A. D.), Voharika Tissa (209-231 A. D.) Gothabhaya also called Meghavannabhaya (249-262 A. D.) and Mahasena (275-301 A. D.), with the last of whom this first compilation ends, were other early monarchs responsible for Buddha images. The images as recorded were not only of gold or stone but also of bronze. Ivory statues are mentioned as having been made by King Jetthatissa II (328-337 A. D.) who is stated to have set the model for Buddha images.³⁰ It has now become a popular aspect in a Buddhist temple with its own shelter, the image-house.

We might recall that in regard to works of pre-Christian times stamped bricks and literary data, especially the latter, have been the chief means of revealing the few occasional finds. No sequences have been built from other material, so that one is not given any knowledge of the works of the third, second or even the first century before Christ, through purely archaeological effort.

In suggesting a date, therefore, for a sculpture such as an image, the first stage has invariably been a comparison with Indian examples and the next perhaps is the general impression it creates on him who is attempting a study. No endeavour has been made to understand the image by itself, as one likely to possess its own characteristics which need careful and patient listing.

After that alone may one turn aside for comparisons. The first and almost exclusive pre-occupation

with comparisons has been fatal to a dispassionate study of the subject in the island. It has prevented the best scholars from making an unprejudiced study.

It is for these reasons that the literary references are most important, for those who can bring an open mind to bear on the subject. When the expert has failed to provide his special material, there still remain the records of the chronicles upon which a study can be built.

In what context was the original idea of creating an image conceived in Ceylon? If we read the annals of the kings from Mahinda's time to that of Vasabha, we shall see that they deserve careful examination.

In the first flush of Buddhist enthusiasm Devanampiya Tissa and his immediate successors engaged themselves in constructing buildings for the religion with rare energy. These were not confined to residences for *bhikkhus* or *bhikkhunis*, but included such edifices as *stupas*, structures for and about the Bodhi Tree, and others besides.

Dutthagamani in the second century B. C. conceived the idea of erecting a stupendous *stupa*. Indeed the *stupa* was not original to Ceylon. What is emphasized is the vastness of the project. The king who conceived it was an extraordinary person. He had shown his incredible ability for organization and capacity for work by the war campaign he had carried out against an experienced soldier and righteous and esteemed monarch, alien though he was, who had sat many years on the throne of the Sinhalese. And he had destroyed him.

When Dutthagamani planned the building of the Ruvanveliseya his genius for organization was as evident as in his war against Elara. His achievement that astounds one, however, was the international event which he organized in connection with his great work. Those who have anything to do with planning for such gatherings on solemn occasions today, best appreciate an effort such as this king's.

To the entire Buddhist world Dutthagamani sent his invitation. It was accepted by the leading *theras* and in Anuradhapura assembled pre-eminent monks from the uttermost parts of India, from the Himalayan foothills and from Afghanistan.

The *Mahavamsa*, albeit with much exuberance, thus lists the distinguished foreign Buddhists.³¹ "With eighty thousand bhikkhus from the region of Rajagaha came the thera Indagutta, the head of the great school. From Isipatana came the great thera Dhammasena with twelve thousand bhikkhus to the place of the cetiya.

"With sixty thousand bhikkhus came hither the great thera Piyadassi from the Jetarama-Vihara. From the Mahavana (monastery) in Vesali came the thera Urubuddharakkhita with eighteen thousand bhikkhus. From the Ghositarama in Kosambi came the thera Urudhammarakkhita with thirty thousand bhikkhus. From the Dhakkhinagiri in Ujjeni came the thera Urusamgharakkhita with forty thousand ascetics.

"With a hundred and sixty thousand bhikkhus came the thera named Mittinna from the Asokarama in Pupphapura. From the Kasmira country came the thera Uttinna bringing with him two hundred and

eighty thousand bhikkhus. The wise Mahadeva came from Pallavabhogga with four hundred and sixty thousand bhikkhus, and from Alasanda the city of Yonas came the thera Yonamahadhammarakkhita with thirty thousand bhikkhus. From his dwelling by the road through the Vinjha forest mountains, came the thera Uttara with sixty thousand bhikkhus.

“The great thera Cittagutta came hither from the Bodhimanda-vihara with thirty thousand bhikkhus. The great thera Candagutta came hither from the Vanavasa country with eighty thousand ascetics. The great thera Suriyagutta came from the great Kelasavihara with ninety-six thousand bhikkhus.”

This was no ordinary achievement. And if such stupendous ideas should have arisen in Ceylon, was the conception of a Buddha image so extraordinary for the island that it could not have arisen at the time of this builder of the great *thupa*?

Consider Vasabha two and a half centuries later, also chronicled to have constructed “four beautiful Buddha-images and a temple for the images in the fair courtyard of the great Bodhi-tree.”³² This king during his reign of forty-four years showed his remarkable energy by having constructed a large number of reservoirs, “these twelve tanks and twelve canals he constructed, to make (the land) fruitful.” He was ingenious as well. “When the king had constructed many bathing-tanks here and there in the capital he brought water to them by subterranean canals.” This device did not originate in the fancy of the chronicler who compiled the *Mahavamsa* in the fifth or sixth

century. For, archaeological excavations at Sigiriya (late fifth century) have revealed subterranean waterways and sunken fountains, and the mention of Sigiriya and its genius occurs in the later part of the chronicle under different authorship.

The existence of Buddha images chronicled in Ceylon, previous to that of the first one epigraphically datable in India, does not need much further discussion. It is easy enough to doubt the words of the chronicler. But which expert, assuming them as working hypotheses, has troubled to test their accuracy or otherwise by an examination of the early images without prejudice? Hitherto the basis has been the datable examples from India. From these examples the expert has endeavoured to deduce the origin of the Sinhalese image. He has ignored the literary evidence available in Ceylon with which it is quite open to him to examine the local origins and to compare results with the Indian examples.

This is the plain truth. It is patent from a study of the opinions of those who have written so far of the Buddha image in Ceylon. Such statements are *ex cathedra*.

7

SYMBOL AND TRADITION

It is a significant fact that whilst India evolved from the aniconic to the iconic stage in Buddha statuary, there is not a jot of evidence that Ceylon passed through anything even remotely suggesting any such travail. Not in our earliest surviving examples of Buddhist art do we find a single one of those early devices in India by which the presence of the Buddha was represented. "At Kantaka Cetiya in Mihintale which is earlier in date than the first century B. C. and was therefore one of the earliest religious monuments in the Island" and most probably dating back to the third century B. C. or soon afterwards,³³ we get some remains of the most archaic of Ceylon's plastic arts.

To the best of the author's knowledge there is, at one of the *vahalkada* frontispieces, one of those pre-

iconic Indian symbols in relief. This is the Tri-Ratna emblem. But what is noteworthy is that it is used decoratively in an insignificant corner. Not one of the other symbols occurs here or in any of the other well-known shrines of Anuradhapura's earliest period.

Now it is important to bear in mind that in India the symbols have been employed *per se* to demonstrate quite visibly that the Buddha was being adored by proxy. Worshippers are grouped around them and flowers sometimes indicated, so that their place in the scheme of veneration is quite patent. They were the Buddha Vipassi or Gautama to the aniconic mind.

No such instance occurs in Ceylon. If the Sinhalese Buddhist had borrowed the idea of the image, how was it that he did not borrow the symbol? Why did he not pass through the same evolution of worship of symbol to image?

No expert has applied his mind to this. No authority has interpreted the lack of these symbols of veneration in Ceylon. It is utterly incredible that the Sinhalese Buddhist restrained his urge for personal homage until he obtained from India the perfected image. Where do we find the working of his mind expressed in terms of art in the intervening period?

Granting that his own Buddhist art had its origin in India, one expects it to have followed the natural course of progress and development that is evident in all other cultural aspects. Of pre-Christian works, as we have earlier observed, little has been revealed by archaeology. We should not deduce from

this silence that all art of pre-Christian Ceylon has perished, but only that it has not been revealed by archaeology as such. For, no archaeologist would be so bold as to assert that this piece or that is not pre-Christian. If, for lack of sufficient evidence to convince him, he does not pronounce that a piece is pre-Christian, it only reveals his reluctance to commit himself. It does not prove that the piece is not pre-Christian.

That naught remains visible above the ground from pre-Christian Buddhist art in Ceylon cannot be conceded. Too many records there are of artistic work lavished on Buddhist monuments—be the ideas borrowed—for one to believe that they have all perished.

From these considerations there is only one conclusion possible. That is, the *fact that there was in Ceylon no aniconic Buddhist art*. This could be interpreted in one way alone, that, as the *Mahavamsa* says, the Buddha image was in vogue from the very beginnings of the religious art in the land.

Some aniconic symbols have indeed been occasionally discovered in different circumstances. The *svastika*, Buddha- or *nandi-pada*, *dhamma-cakka* and the Tri-Ratna are found incised on bare rock, as undoubtedly auspicious signs, below a rock inscription of *circa* first century B. C.³⁴ By no stretch of imagination do they suggest that they were venerated as Buddha substitutes. Most often, however, they were found buried, amongst other deposits, in those stones which are generally called *Yantragal*. And in curious circumstances, namely underneath the feet of the

Buddha image. Paronavitana's comments on some of these objects found at Medirigiriya Vata-da-ge somewhat explain the trends of thought. The original foundation of this building in earlier than Kanittha Tissa.³⁵

“The symbols, no doubt representing popular pre-Buddhist religious beliefs and practices, are generally of better workmanship than the figurines representing deities. Among these are such familiar symbols as the *svastika*, the discus and the *nandipada* which need not detain us.”³⁶

Incidentally he found two symbols of a unique character which, as far as his knowledge went, had not been met with in India. This, though immaterial to the present purpose, proves that Ceylon could think originally.

“The purpose of burying these images of gods and religious symbols under the feet of the Buddha image also deserves consideration. It could not have been for the purpose of showing any respect to them, for the position they occupied can hardly be called a dignified one. The average worshipper who came to pay homage to the image of the Buddha would not have suspected their presence in that position. The likely explanation is that the figurines of the deities were buried as a symbolic act to proclaim that these pre-Buddhist gods and godlings whom the average man continued to believe in were reduced to the position of humble servants of the Buddha—the God of Gods, and that the symbols were placed in the positions they occupied to denote the contempt which the true

Buddhists entertained for the cults and superstitions associated with them (in Pali, *kotuhala-mangala*).”

Some pre-Christian symbols used for a similar purpose, purporting to have been picked up from Veralanda, an ancient *dagaba* on the Kurunegala-Galewela Road, reached the author who has commented on them elsewhere.³⁷

The explanation of the archaeologist does not convince one that pre-Buddhist *symbols* continued to command any reverence in the minds of Buddhists long centuries after they had been used in India or Ceylon. On the contrary they had obviously ceased to have any meaning. It is much more likely that the symbols, the gods and godlings, came to be merely auspicious signs. It is inconceivable that, if they continued to do duty for the Buddha himself, the image would, as it were, trample upon them. For that would signify that the Buddha trampled upon himself. Indeed, the pilgrim too did the same thing, as may be seen in the position of a *nandi-pada* which is adored by the elephants sculptured on the outermost band of a weathered moonstone from Oggomuva.

Thus we have only the facts that some of the aniconic symbols have merely been found and even so, decoratively or as deposits. Nothing more. It is also necessary to bear in mind that some of the better known symbols, such as the vacant seat, the garlanded Bodhi Tree, the *chatta* over an imagined Buddha, which have the clearest signification that the Buddha is represented, have never been found. Not even the veneration of the *cetiya*.

Were the Sinhalese Buddhists lacking in originality and competence—at least as far as art was concerned? It is appropriate to examine a wide range to decide this.

In the first century before Christ Buddhism in India was as strong a force as it was in Ceylon. Three Buddhist Councils were held in the land of origin of the religion and a fourth by Kanishka in the first post-Christian century. It is odd in this situation, therefore, that the Indian Buddhists had never thought of the idea of settling the teachings within a permanent framework by committing them to writing.

To Ceylon Buddhists occurred the original idea of writing down the scriptures. It was carried out at Aluvihara in Matale in the time of Vattagamani Abhaya (Valagamba) in the years 89-77 B. C.³⁸

Nobody can here challenge the fact that a new idea had taken birth in the island.

The Ceylon contributions to the cause of Buddhism were steadily increasing. The number now is already a worthy record of achievement. The island people were no mere borrowers but were able to think, plan and organise by themselves. It may well have been that the Indians borrowed from them—in so far as the particular topics were concerned, at any rate. Certainly Sinhalese monks were at work in India from time to time as far as is traceable up to the fourteenth century.

On the level of art, Ceylon has a creditable record down the ages. There are several examples in

architecture which could be regarded as their own achievements. Of these the first place is taken by the rotunda, the Vata-da-ge. Parnavitana says that "for a study of Indian architecture, Ceylon affords two types of buildings which have had a distinctive development in this Island." He proceeds to explain.

"The type was not unknown in India, being represented in bas-reliefs as well as by a few rock-cut examples. In India itself, however, the wooden apsidal caitya-hall replaced the circular at a very early date. In Ceylon, the circular shrine continued to be in vogue up to the fifteenth century."

The next place is given to a building of which, fortunately, there is an excellent survival.

"The second architectural type distinctive of Ceylon is the brickbuilt shrine with vaulted roof and massive walls, rising from a heavily moulded plinth. The type is not exactly paralleled in India itself or in any other region influenced by the Indian culture. There is, however, reason to surmise that it was evolved in Ceylon from prototypes of which no traces now remain in ancient India."³⁹

In spite of the extreme caution with which the above have been made, the reader will not fail to note that the two types—however dimly originating in India—saw their flowering in the Island.

The same authority found an unusual type of building in the south, that small classical gem of architecture which is known as the Dondra Galge (Galgane). Suggesting the tentative date of the seventh century to it, he sums up his impressions.⁴⁰

“So far as our knowledge goes at present, no architectural prototype to the Galge can be found even if we go further afield outside the range of Dravidian architecture. In ground plan it may bear some affinity to Gupta temples which comprise a *garbha-grha* and a pillared porch in front. In the Galge, the place of the pillared porch of the Gupta temple is taken by a walled chamber. Until a prototype can be found for it in India, it is, I think, reasonable to maintain that the Galge at Devundara is the result of an attempt to introduce stone architecture to Ceylon, which however, did not lead to the creation of distinctive local style, as such attempts did in various parts of India.”

Two centuries later was built an exceedingly chaste stone building, again of small dimensions, which he himself examined.⁴¹ This is the Bodhi-ghara at Nillakgama. It is a datable monument of a class of which it is the sole surviving example, in the entire Buddhist world, which was found to retain its original characteristics. The clean lines of the building and severely restrained treatment together with its harmonious proportions, have amazed many a visitor with its nearness to the dainty little temples created by classical Greek architects. Somehow one cannot get away from the impression that these two stone monuments are akin in feeling and spirit, that they epitomize the aesthetic attitude of the classical Sinhalese Buddhists.

In image making, no less than in the above, Ceylon bears worthy tradition, as Sir J. Emerson Tennent has recorded with China.⁴²

“Statues of Buddha were frequently sent as royal presents, and so great was the fame of Ceylon for their production in the fourth and fifth centuries, that according to the historian of the Wei Tartar dynasty, A. D. 386-556, people from countries of Central Asia, and the kings of those nations. emulated each other in sending artisans to procure copies, but none could rival the productions of Nan-te. On standing about ten paces distant they appeared truly brilliant, but the lineaments gradually disappeared on a nearer approach.”

Tennent says that the earliest embassy from Ceylon was in the beginning of the fifth century. It bore “a jade-stone image of Buddha, exhibiting every colour in purity and richness, in workmanship unique and appearing to be beyond human art.” The Sinhalese monk-sculptor Nanda (Nan-te) went with four companions in 456 A. C., taking with him “the three-fold image of the Buddha.” The amazing effects which it had have been already described.

To digress, the Chinese trace to Ceylon, the first foundation of monasteries.⁴³ The Chinese order of Buddhist nuns was created by Sinhalese women who travelled to that country in the fifth century.⁴⁴

The Chinese, we must remember, had extensive dealings with India. In fact it was from a Yueh-chi (Kushan) chief that the Buddhist scriptures were first communicated to the Chinese in 2 B. C.⁴⁵ The period when Ceylon images were considered of outstanding merit was, it should be noted, the period of the Golden Age of Gupta art.

Not to Ceylon, therefore, does one personally look if one is in search of first rate *objets d'art*. And yet it was Ceylon that provide them.

Does this signify nothing?

In the thirteenth century a unique Ceylon image was taken to Thailand and created unprecedented devotion and attention in the country.⁴⁶

The intervening years saw in Ceylon itself the production of amazing works. Of these it would suffice to take the Aukana standing Buddha, which is considered by many competent people as the finest stone statue in all Asia. If this were not enough there is at Maligavela another nearly as big but *completely in the round*, which had been transported here from a quarry (*ASCAR* for 1934), and the over powering group at the Gal Vihara in Polonnaruva.

Among other themes one which astonishes the visitor is the monumental sculpture of a sage at Potgul Vehera. Hocart considered that it "stands in a class by itself; its breadth and dignity cannot fail to impress; the face shows no attempt at idealization, so much so that one is tempted to suppose that it is a potrait; if so, it is almost unique in Indian art, which only tried to take an interest in portraiture under the influence of the Kushan kings."⁴⁷ Incidentally it has, been identified by Paronavitana as that of a king holding his emblem of authority, the yoke.⁴⁸ To the author this identification is unacceptable and he discussed it in the *Ceylon Daily News* of 9th October, 1956. Whatever it represents it is a tribute to the unquestioned skill shown here in treating the

human form and on monumental lines. Portraits of kings are recorded to have been made; one has been already noted; several others found on ancient sites (e. g. at Ambastale, in the Polonnaruva Quadrangle) most probably are of the same category.

Other aspects of Ceylon art are deserving of merit. The Bodhisattva figure from Situlpavuva with its noble face and body which seems so amazingly modelled as to show the very warmth of life, Avalokitesvara at Buduruvagala, the reliefs at Isurumuniya, torsos, *naga* guardstones, "the portrait of a lady," Kantaka Cetiya heads. Many, besides these, exhibit the easy skill of the sculptor of ancient Ceylon.

There are others with which this list can be lengthened. There are the remarkable moonstones, particularly that at the so-called Queen's Pavilion in Anuradhapura "which," commented Hocart "for perfection of technique is unsurpassed in Ceylon"⁴⁹ and, the author wishes to add, elsewhere for that matter—for the moonstone was never developed outside Ceylon. Wherever the idea originated, and some would see the germ in the examples in relief at Amaravati, the moonstone as a thing of wondrous beauty was certainly a creation of Ceylon.

Enough has been said to demonstrate the originality of thought amongst the Buddhists of ancient Ceylon. The skill of the people in rendering the human form has been amply demonstrated, It is in this background of ideas that we must place their calling into being a Buddha image in the earliest centuries in

which Buddhism established itself as a powerful mental activity and motivated unexpected artistic expression.

The point at issue is this and not the origin of the veneration of the image, nor when that veneration formed an integral part of popular religious practice.

It does seem clear from the foregoing that the attitudes of Buddhists towards the image in early India and Ceylon were characterized by a specific difference. This difference was manifest in the inhibitions of the one towards anthropomorphically representing the *maha purusha*, whereas the Sinhalese Buddhist was singularly free of them. This freedom of thought, coupled with the demonstrable skill in calling forth the human body in art, enabled the Buddhists of Ceylon to think on new lines. Buddhist worshippers were given tangible and concrete shape to their yearnings when, not satisfied with mute stock and stone, they would seek a realistic visual aid in their devotions.

8

SOME CHARACTERISTICS

Three of the most recent expressions of opinion will now be examined in order to obtain an idea of our subject. The first is by Paranavitana.⁵⁰

“The earliest type of Buddha image known in Ceylon is that of the Andhra School. A life-size Buddha image of marble, obviously of South Indian origin, has recently been unearthed at an ancient site in Ceylon. There is epigraphical as well as literary evidence to indicate that a brisk intercourse existed in this period between the Buddhists of Ceylon and their co-religionists in the Kistna Valley. It therefore appears that the school of sculptural art established in Ceylon during the earliest period of its history as a result of the cultural wave which affected its civilization in the time of Asoka and the century or two

which immediately followed, came into contact with the more mature art of the Andhra country and thereby improved its technique and modified its style."

Soon after, he refers to the "many notable examples of plastic art which have to be ascribed to the period between the fifth and the twelfth centuries. The only means at our disposal to date these works is their style taken in relation to the stylistic evolution of sculpture in India, which is capable of chronological treatment."

Now this fairly represents the Ceylon expert's approach to indigenous works. There is the obsession with style and that stylistic evolution on the supposition that it is capable—to what extent, is not indicated—of chronological treatment. There is no evidence of applying seriously to the indigenous examples in detail in the first instance, to explore the possibility of there having existed an individual school.

It is true that brisk intercourse existed between south India and Ceylon at the time referred to. It is also equally true that intercourse as brisk must have existed between Ceylon and other parts of India. In fact the most momentous Buddhist mission of Mahinda did not come from the Kistna Valley. Obviously the other parts of India, chiefly the Vedisa District, might have influenced the activities in Ceylon as powerfully as south India did. Therefore to lay stress on south Indian influences and to make no effort to examine others, is to confine oneself to a readily available aspect. Conclusions from such one-sidedness are

necessarily vitiated by reason of the fact that these are not broad-based, not derived from intensive research.

There was, in other words, no reason why south India should have overwhelmed Ceylon's early art, as it were, whilst the influences of the central and northern areas of India have never been recognized. It would almost seem that the contacts with the latter ceased with Mahinda's mission. The position further implies that intercourse and influence were one-way, that is to say every suggestion is that Ceylon was affected by India. But nobody explores the other possibility that Ceylon may have influenced India.

"In common with the rest of the Buddhist world, Ceylon, too, some time after the beginning of the Christian era, adopted the practice of worshipping images of the Buddha. This innovation in the ritual aspect of Buddhism afforded ample opportunities to the sculptor, some of the Buddha images being reckoned among his greatest achievements. As already remarked, the earliest type of the Buddha image seems to have reached Ceylon through the Andhra country. This is an image in the round, with the right shoulder bare, and the drapery shown in regular schematic folds in relief. A somewhat mutilated Buddha image of this type, considerably more than life-size, found at the Ruvanveli Dagaba in Anuradhapura, has been attributed to about the second century A. D. This image which is of crystalline limestone, of which material, indeed, are the vast majority of the early Buddha images found in Ceylon, has now lost much

of its original character by being subjected to restoration by inexpert hands.

“To a period two centuries later, i. e. about the fourth century, has been attributed the well-known Buddha, seated in the attitude of meditation, at a ruined shrine close to the Northern or Abhayagiri Dagaba at Anuradhapura. Of this image, too, the right shoulder is bare; images with both shoulders covered are not known from Ceylon. The drapery, a very thin material, is shown as clinging to the body without folds. In this, as in other respects this image has affinities to the type of Buddha found in the later cave temples of Ajanta. It is also worthy of note that the seated images of Buddha found in Ceylon are all in the attitude of meditation. An exception, however, is an image found at Pankuliya, one of the outlying monasteries of Anuradhapura; it is in the *abhaya mudra*, the attitude of bestowing protection.

“In these two images, as well as in a number of others of the same age, the artists of Old Ceylon had achieved no small measure of success in what they, in common with the artists of other Buddhist lands, aimed at in fashioning an image of the Master—to visualize the Great Sage as the embodiment of Supreme Wisdom and Unbounded Compassion, serene in the peace of Nirvana. These two ideals of Wisdom and Compassion correspond to strength and grace in the aesthetic sphere and it is very rarely that perfect harmony of the two has been achieved in plastic form. The masterpieces of the Gupta age in India generally emphasized the quality of grace—this is in keeping with

the emphasis which the Mahayanists laid on *karuna*, compassion. The best Buddha images of Ceylon, on the other hand, bring to the fore the quality of strength. The ancient Sinhalese artists evidently contemplated on the Buddha more as Dasabala than as Mahakarunika."

Rowland, who has understood the spirit of the Ceylon image, comments.⁵¹

"Chief among these examples of Sinhalese carving are a number of Buddha statues originally arranged around the base of Ruwanweli dagaba. Two of the dolomite images are standing Buddhas, and a third, traditionally identified as a likeness of Dutthagamani, is perhaps more likely the Bodhisattva Siddhartha. The Buddha figures have an awe-inspiring hieratic quality induced by their massive scale of proportions and the rather archaic rigidity of pose. It needs but a glance to see in them a Singhalese adaptation of the type of Buddha image fashioned at Amaravati under the later Andhra dynasty. To an even greater degree than the Andhra prototypes these statues have a heaviness and grandeur immediately suggestive of the very earliest Indian Buddha effigies made under the Kushans at Mathura."

On the sedent Buddhas. "The seated Buddha images from this early period of Singhalese sculpture are, if anything, more interesting and aesthetically moving than the examples of the standing type."

More recently than both these scholars, Dr. A. B. Griswold set down his thoughts when he visited the island with Pierre Dupont shortly before the latter's sudden death in Bangkok.

“In contrast to the transplanted Hellenism we saw in Pakistan, the Buddha images of Ceylon are manifestations of a unified art. They are orchestrations on a few themes established long ago, changing so little over the centuries that it is often hard to date them even in the vaguest terms. While the eye still searches in vain for iconographic novelty, while it still fails to focus on their subtle plastic values, these figures seem monotonous; perhaps that is why relatively few examples have been published. Their vigour and refinement invite more careful attention and being numerous yet so little varying they fall readily into series that challenge the student of art. No doubt Ceylon, so long regarded by the countries of South-east Asia as the fountainhead of Hinayana, exerted a considerable artistic influence; yet that influence is not evident. It could be more easily assessed if a chronology were established.”⁵²

A consideration of these opinions expressed since 1950 is helpful in arriving at an estimate of the place of the Ceylon image in Buddhist art. Incidentally, one cannot but be struck with the ultra-cautious attitude of the Ceylon archaeologist, which is a sharp contrast to the freedom with which the other two scholars have expressed themselves.

As already indicated in our discussion, the image in the island has to receive a fresh study. That study can no longer be postponed on the excuse that a chronology cannot be built principally for lack of epigraphical evidence. There is important material by way of differences from the Indian traditions and

style. It is such differences that will help in placing the Ceylon image on its own position unaided by adventitious comparisons with Indian work.

Now, the first century A. D. being the most generous time of origin of the Indian image, we have to take note of the fact of the rise of Mahayanism under Kanishka, who popularized—assuming he did not inspire—the anthropomorphic idea. He even issued a coin with the figure of the Buddha.

There is no denying that between the first and the third centuries A.D. the Indian Buddha image was not only developed but became acceptable to worshippers, separated though they were by wide stretches of land. If Ceylon had now been waiting for India's lead, then we should expect results in the time of Mahasena who was a headstrong and daring supporter of heterodoxy. He dared to the extent of hurting the formidable Maha Vihara, with the intention of destroying that Chapter so thoroughly that nothing might remain of the home of orthodoxy. We should expect to find, with this influx of new and powerful ideas from India, a representative collection of Buddha images in the land—that image which, according to the theories of some scholars, was anathema to orthodoxy.

But if we are not disappointed, Hocart certainly was. "The dearth of images in Ceylon at the time when Mahayanism was dominant still remains a puzzle. Fergusson and Burgess in their *Cave Temples of India* (p. 297) remark, "It is indeed this multiplication of images of the Buddha which is most charac-

teristic of the Caves of the Mahayana Sect." It is not the case in Ceylon."⁵³

The lack of survivals during Mahayana times cannot be explained away on the probability that there had been images and they were of perishable material or of small size. If Ceylon accepted India's tutorship, stone images should have been evident, free-standing or in relief.

No, the explanation is that the image was not of momentous importance in veneration. Its use was not widespread.

To revert to the singularities of the earlier Ceylon image. The standing Buddha at the Ruvanveliseya, which has been given a date falling suspiciously in line with the earliest Indian images, may be ignored with its companions in the present inquiry. Standing images were never very popular as they were not typical of early Ceylon.

It is the seated images that became traditional in the Island and it is from them that anything of significance can be gleaned.

The famous Abhaya^giri Buddha (first) which is ascribed to the fourth century, a date no less suspicious, close as it is to Mahasena who transported here the great and beautiful stone image of Devanampiya Tissa, may be taken as representative of the characteristics of the earliest period. The Tolu^vila image is equally so.

The images rested on stands (*asana*) and were never flush with the ground as it were. Every known image was set up in this manner. This practice was not invariable in India.

The size was dominating. In fact, the monumental character and colossal size seem to have been almost a *sine qua non*, unlike in the neighbouring land. The sculptor strove to render great strength to the body, representing the lines firmly and abhorring soft roundness.

There is no evidence that the halo was indicated in any manner. Nor does one ever find any mark between the eye-brows which may be taken as *urna*. And yet this is found in Andhra. The earliest mention of the *urna* and the "diadem" (apparently the *usnisha*) in the *Mahavamsa* is in the late fifth century when King Dhatusena (455 - 473 A. D.) ornamented the Abhayagiri image with them. The same king added a "bandolier of gold" (*hemapatta*) which has been suggested as the strap thrown over the left shoulder to suspend the begging-bowl.⁵⁴ There is a mediaeval damaged stone statue at Moragoda in Padaviya which has a groove running round the body about the area of the ribs, below the nipples, much in the same way as for a belt which holds up the upper edge of the under garment as is commonly found on many Tibetan, Chinese and Japanese images. In the author's view this is the *hemapatta* as surviving in late iconography.

The legs are not shown interlocked, the almost universal yogic pose of India. The conception of a Maha Yogi apparently never touched the Ceylon Buddhist who had no conflict of ideas in him. Hinduism did not bother him. Indeed it is in recent years that *yoga* has come to be talked of to some

extent, mainly on account of breathing systems popularized by members of the Theosophical Society. They largely inspired Buddhist activity in the country, beginning with the arrival, on May 15th, 1880, of Colonel Henry Steele Olcott and Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky.

The legs are shown one on the other without the semblance of rigidity, in fact, lightly placed in easy position. In mediaeval images the feet are given some rhythmical movement and, as it were, curve slightly upward. This difference is very apparent among other pieces from the twelfth century seated Buddhas at the Gal Vihara, Polonnaruva.

The stance of the body is firm and not taut. There is a sense of firmness and weight but never a hint of muscular effort. It truly express the carriage of the body of the Buddha as he sat with his back lightly touching the Bodhi Tree, according to tradition. It is also the position indicated for meditation.

The heel is quite prominent and rounded almost to the point of exaggeration. This was often the case with the toes. There is not a single auspicious mark on the sole. This lack cannot be explained away on the theory that any such marks may have been shown in whatever coating had been applied to the image. Auspicious marks should, even in a rare case, be shown in relief on the stone. Such was the case in India where a large number shows them.

The hands, like the legs, are in an easy position, the right resting imperceptibly on the left. But this

is the general delineation in later times. In the best of the earlier Anuradhapura images they were cupped.

The waist was plain. There never was a hint of line or garment underneath, unlike in most early Indian classical examples. A most odd exception, and unique so far as the author is aware, is the Padaviya image. The lower waist, that is the region of the lower belly, is dressed in front in the design of lotus petals. The separating incisions of the petals are quite clear, though quite stiffly rendered. This strange idea deserves investigation, although the example is presumably the only known one.

The robe was diversely treated. In the principal Abhayagiri image two ridges which mark the edge are the sole suggestion of the covering. The robe of the third Abhayagiri image has several ridges to indicate the folds and these are arranged symmetrically but well spaced, unlike in some where they are much closer together and schematic. There was variety, but the earlier images were certainly plainer.

Never did the robe cover both shoulders. In a Colombo Museum headless seated Buddha there is a hint of the robe coming over from the rear more or less to touch the right shoulder, but this sculpture cannot be regarded as a local work. Ceylon Buddhas, except in recent years, have the right shoulder bared. Yet in Andhra we find both styles of dressing the robe.

What made Ceylon reject one and confine itself to the other—if Ceylon was inspired by south India?

The face reflects majestic dignity and complete triumph over emotions of which it showed never a trace. That is to say, the ideal of passionlessness which is proper to the Buddha, has been attained by the sculptor. The nose of the best Abhayagiri Buddha is a restoration by an Archaeological Commissioner whose canons of harmony and proportion were strange to Ceylon.

In Ceylon there are no smiling Buddhas. However much some may regret it, the Ceylon Buddhist considers the Teacher to have risen above any inclination to fit into a special situation. The Buddha was the preceptor. He showed the Way and was no companion of others' moods. He taught that as a man must conquer anger and hatred so, too, must he conquer love and joy. So that it is a lofty serenity, unruffled by human passions which the sculptor most associated with the Buddha. The Teacher himself described, in this contemplative stage⁵⁵, "the Bhikkhu, by the putting away alike of ease and of pain, by the passing away alike of any elation, any dejection, he had previously felt, enters into and abides in the Fourth *Jhana*, a state of pure self-possession and equanimity, without pain and without ease. And he sits there so suffering even his body with that sense of purification, of translucence, of heart, that there is no spot in his whole frame not suffused therewith."

The hands show the greatest difference between the Ceylon and the Indian image. Whilst the latter freely used the entire *repertoire* of *mudras* the symbo-

lism in Ceylon was confined to two. These are the *dhyani* and the *abhaya*. The *abhaya mudra* is indicated in only two instances among the seated stone figures at Anuradhapura, that is, at Pankuliya and the Abhayagiri (third). These have been ascribed to later dates without specific grounds. Among bronzes there is the large Buddha image and an elegant small one, the latter from Bell's collection, in the Colombo Museum. The other seated images are in *dhyani mudra*.

There are no instance of *bhumisparsa*, *varada* and *vitarka* mudras. Three instances of *bhumisparsa* occur in the Colombo Museum. One is a small clay seal in the Colombo Museum with a legend in Sinhalese characters of the ninth century⁵⁶; the third which seems as foreign was discussed by Coomaraswamy⁵⁷ A hollow gold statuette in *bhumisparsa* was found in an excavation at the Western Monastery in Anuradhapura, generally dated to the latest period in that ancient city. But it is very doubtful whether this is indigenous.⁵⁸ The wide mouth and the position of eyes are totally against local style. This *mudra* is however found in recent times to some extent as a result of Siamese and Burmese contacts.

The First Sermon, so popular a favourite in India and indicated by *dhamma cakka*, is totally absent. With the wheel flanked by two deer on the base of the seat it makes a pretty natural picture. But Ceylon does not possess a single example of either the *mudra* or the park scene.

The lack of such *mudras* should not be attributed to accident. The exclusive adoption of two hand

gestures must convey a deeper meaning. It may become clearer from sustained study.

In the later Buddhas, in the Polonnaruva, murals, we come across the *vitarka mudra*. Even this is indicated by the thumb and forefinger forming a circle and not by the use of the open palm with two middle fingers bent to mid-palm.

There are two late instances of an unusual hand position. One is in the second Buddha in the Hinda-gala fresco assigned to the seventh century. The hands are opened to receive offerings, quite in an attitude which may be reckoned as unique. The position of the legs closely resembles that in an Amaravati frieze.⁵⁹ But there is greater relaxation. A painting in a cave at Maravidiya, Dimbulagala, which is attributed to the eleventh or twelfth century, shows the right hand with hand, open and extended.⁶⁰

These are not the only main features. The figure in general was hardly ever shown in movement. There is, however, mention of the three-flexioned body *tribhanga*. One of these examples survives in high relief in brick and stucco. It is in the twelfth century Northern Temple, Polonnaruva. It was fairly popular in Andhra. The Buddha in definite movement appears at the same place in a mural in the well-known Sankissa-Ladder scene. But only in these few instances is there deviation from the accepted position of immobility.

In regard to the general position it is noteworthy that neither the seated nor the standing image was

other than straight. The slight hunch of shoulders which makes some of the Indian images stoop, as it were, does not occur in a single Ceylon example.

The standing figures, which are mostly colossal, were invariably in the *abhaya mudra*. Their principal variation lay in the arrangement of the folds of the robe. But even here the undergarment was never as elongated as in India where some example exaggerated its length in the robing style which is being continued in Burma and Siam. In this, too, Ceylon examples exhibit the traditional restraint.

Some of the standing images are breath-taking. Undoubtedly the best among them is the noble Avukana figure. This forty foot giant is a superb work in any age. Its dates traditionally from Dhatu-sena. There is epigraphical evidence that it had a shrine in the 8-9th century. Upon this conservative estimate alone, it deserves to be reckoned among the masterpieces. Its neighbour at Sesevuva, too, is of a high order. Carved in less high relief within a niche, it is strikingly suggestive of the Bamian giants. Incidentally, on a recumbent Buddha in a cave at the same place thick cotton strands have been pasted to mark the folds of the robe—another curious point of agreement with an ancient technique.

The giants at Buduruvagala, and at the Lankatilaka in Polonnaruva in stone relief and brick-and-plaster respectively, are rather close to the style of the Jinas in their woodenness, if one may so describe the general impression. But the torso of the damaged Tivanka image, which is contemporaneous with the

latter and closely located to it, shows astonishing skill in modelling. The legs are full and fleshy and convey the impression of pulsating life. It, too, is the work of a master. In the Colombo Museum there is a standing stone Buddha of much smaller size which never fails to please with its almost perfect size and proportions. The colossal standing sculpture at the Gal Vihara is not a Buddha but Ananda. The author has discussed it elsewhere.⁶¹

Except in selected examples, therefore, it is the Buddha in *dhyana* which was popular in Ceylon. For that reason it is the seated Buddha that deserves our best attention.

A marked characteristic of ancient Ceylon art was the isolation of the Buddha figure, most evident in the earliest examples. The predominating idea was to concentrate on the Enlightened One, to exclude all those embellishments, even groupings, which tend to distract. The devotee should focus attention on this, and the purpose would be defeated if there is a plethora of figures or objects in association with the image.

The mind had to be seriously applied—as the teachings on meditation describe, it had to be one-pointed. Therefore, unlike in India, the Buddha image was the focal point. This fact distinctly reveals the Ceylon attitude.

To some extent it explains, too, the absence of ornate *toran* with their crowded scenes or those *facades* one knows well in India. Generally speaking, however, the best Ceylon work is distinguished by the

absence of ornamentation, the emphasis on essentials and more extensive deployment of relatively plain or surfaces, in contrast to Andhra conceptions. Merit or otherwise apart, the difference between the plain Ceylon work and the almost over-decorativeness of south Indian has always been very marked.

Experts have, for some reason or other, failed to give this difference the attention it deserves. It should come into the ken of those who presume to make a serious study, especially a comparative study of Ceylon works with those in South India.

What of the wealth of images in India and the corresponding lack in Ceylon? So some might object. The answer is easily given. The most intense activity was centred on Anuradhapura in the earliest period. The number of the Buddha images in the northern triangle, with its base-line from the east-coast to the west, fully justifies the fact of a long and worthy sculptural tradition for the thirteen centuries from that day when Buddhism was formally brought into the land. The argument derives greater strength when one considers the general size of the Island, the population and the region where activity was greatest, as contrasted with the vastness of India.

From what has been seen it is clear that in all aspects of the art India has a diversity which is never present in Ceylon. To such an extent is this variety lacking, that one is led to conclude that the artist's freedom came to be restricted and he was forced into working on set lines. The art having originated early, the canons got crystallized early and unwarranted

freedom was not permitted to the sculptor. If so, the inevitable impression is that Ceylon's early Buddhist images are archaic.

It is not contended that Ceylon's art is superior to that of India. All that concerns us is the birth of the idea of the Buddha image in the island. Nothing which has been said should even remotely suggest that Ceylon art is superior to the Indian.

In conclusion, a note of warning has to be sounded against the blind application of later canons of art to these earlier images. Coomaraswamy first sought to derive them by inquiry into the methods of the craftsmen of the present century.⁶² The codes of today were doubtless the heritage of a period when decadence had set in four centuries ago. The stress on the people and tribulations they underwent sometimes halted the artistic life. Indeed, the very succession of *bhikkhus* had been lost and had to be revived from Siam late in the eighteenth century. The standardization he attempted has, therefore, to be considered with this reservation.

The art of Ceylon was, in fact, more original than is supposed. We find for instance, that the figures of layfolk were placed within the temple. Moggallana I (491—508 A.D.) "had statues made of his maternal uncle and of his wife and placed them there, as well as the beautiful figure of a horse."⁶³ This is a most unusual thing for the orthodox land, but true even if this were the sole instance.

We have similarly to appreciate that the art of the Buddha image was sometimes not so severely

hieratic as some would suppose. There is inscriptional evidence that an image was made *in the king's* size by Mahinda IV (956-972 A. C.)⁶⁴ A similar case is recorded by tradition in the late eighteenth century.

Such exceptions rule against a stern conservatism, even though in a land of monks extremely alert to Theravada and watchful of heresy to the extent of eradicating the doctrines and practices of heterodoxy.

9

CONCLUSION

The attitude of the expert to the study of Ceylon's sculpture hitherto may be summarized in the words of a quondam chief of the Archaeological Survey.

"It is with great hesitation that I offer a few notes on sculpture in Ceylon. But we are badly in need of some orientation. The dates assigned to some works are extravagant; for instance, an obviously twelfth or thirteenth century Buddha was assigned to the first century B. C., at which time the type of Buddha was not in existence. While it is impossible to arrive at certain and exhaustive results without constant access to the magnificent collections of Indian museums, it is possible to eliminate the worst errors, and to fix a few landmarks."⁶⁵

That hesitation has not been overcome since.

Our discussion has indicated some general outlines which should help in setting up the framework of a chronology, applying the mind firstly to the possibility of the Buddha image having originated in Ceylon.

Comparison of styles is open to error. Specific proofs of such an error may be cited from an example or two.

The facial features of the Man (with horse) at Isurumuniya and those of the Buduruvagala group, are unmistakably in the same style, if allowance were made for the difference in the depth of relief. Yet, the chronology suggested for them differs by at least a century. The robe of a seated Buddha at the Pabalu Vehera, Polonnaruwa, does not show any folds as in the best Gupta style; but the plain scalp is an uncommon feature; the legs are in the twelfth century style. Such points could be adduced many times over.

The Buddhists of Ceylon held the image of the Enlightened One differently from those Indian Buddhists who scribbled legends, as Friar Bala did, on the pedestals. So that one hardly ever comes across an inscribed local image.

Similarly, the image was held much too earnestly and seriously in Ceylon for its shrine and environs to be decorated with suggestive motifs wherein females and *mithuna* couples are shown in several postures, often with intimately exaggerated details, as in some Indian shrines.

That foreign importations have been made through the centuries is an established fact. It is as

true that the Buddha image of Ceylon has not been studied with a view to discovering whether it can stand on its own merits. It is absolutely clear that no expert has troubled to work on the lines of reference in the *Mahavamsa* to Buddha images about the third and the second centuries B.C. and the first century A.D. If to accept the references be considered chauvinistic, to overlook them, on the other hand, is to be untrue to science on a matter which may help to solve a problem.

It is beyond any doubt that Ceylon showed originality of ideas in some matters. Ceylon has turned out works of art of the first quality over the long centuries, in such excellence as to set the model to some lands with which it had cultural contact, and the author proposes to deal with them on another occasion. In point of actual fact, the tradition in Thailand is that the Buddha Image was created in Ceylon.

The task before the serious student is to isolate the essentials of a Ceylon image, arrive at a reasonable chronological datum and test for the possible origins of the Buddha image in the Island. In such a quest he must boldly evaluate the *written records*.

SOME MEASURED BUDDHA IMAGES

Description	Height	Across Knees	Head	Across Shoulders	Length of foot	Archaeological Record
SEATED Toluvila (now in Colombo Museum)	5ft. 9 in.	5ft. 9 in.	3ft.	3ft. 5 in.		First Report (p.4) & 1890 (p.3)
Pankuliya	6ft. 9 in.	6ft. 0 in.				1891 (p. 6)
Abhayagiri (in <i>abhaya mudra</i> , the second statue)	7ft. 6 in.	6ft. 4 in.				1911-12 (p.36)
Abhayagiri (Samadhi, the first statue)	7ft. 6 in.	7ft. 0 in.				First R. (p.4) & 1890 (p.3)
Puvarasankulama	4ft. 8 in.					1933 (p.18)
Tantirimalai	7ft. 6 in.	7ft. 7 in.	8ft. 8 in.	4ft. 4 in.	2ft. 2 in.	1907 (p.34)
Gal Vihara (Large)	15ft. 2½ in.	14ft. 8 in.	4ft. 5 in.	8ft. 9 in.	4ft. 2½ in.	1907 (p.36)
Gal Vihara (Cave)	4ft. 7 in.	4ft. 4½ in.	1ft. 5¾ in.	2ft. 7 in.	1ft. 1½ in.	1907 (p.36)
STANDING Avukana Colombo Museum (labelled 3rd cent. A.C.)	38ft. 10 in. 5ft. 11 in.		6ft. 6 in. 0ft. 11 in.		6ft. 10 in. 0ft. 11½ in.	1895, p.6, ft. nt.

NOTE:— S. Paranavitana wrote of the Buddha from Puvarasankulama: "This image which is in Gupta style and is one of the best pieces of ancient sculpture to be seen anywhere in Ceylon has been considerably damaged by treasure-seekers" (*ASCAR* for 1933, p. 18). The site is about two miles from Kadurupitiya near an abandoned tank. Bell, mentioning that it is two miles from Mihintale, noted a long rock inscription covering some thirty lines. He dated this to the third or fourth century A. D. (*ASCAR* for 1893, p. 6).

EXPLANATION OF NOTES

1. The traditional Ceylon date for the Buddha's Parinibbana and Vijaya's arrival. It is followed in Burma, Siam and other Theravada lands. The alternative date suggested by scholars are all open to objections.
2. *Artibus Asiae*, XVII, p. 184.
3. *An Advanced History of India* (Majumdar, Raychaudhuri & Datta), 1950, p. 39.
4. *AHI*, op. cit., pp. 37, 40.
5. *AHI*, op. cit., p. 50.
6. *AHI*, op. cit., pp. 82, 139.
7. *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, p. 64.
8. Hermann Jacobi in Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. VII p, 465 ft. nt.
9. *Cetiya* in its extended meaning; *stupa*, *thupa* and *dagaba* are here indiscriminately used for the same type of structure.
10. *Dialogues of the Buddha* (Digha Nikaya II), tr. ch. 5.
11. *The Art and Architecture of India* (Pelican History of Art series), p. 34.
12. *A Short History of Ceylon* (H. W. Codrington), pp. 12, 16.
13. *Pujavaliya* (Eng. tr. by B. Gunasekera), p. 25.
14. *Dipavamsa* (Eng. tr. and ed. by Hermann Oldenberg), Ch. XV v. 1. ff.
15. *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon Annual Report* for 1933, p. 14.
16. S. Paranavitana in *The Stupa in Ceylon* (ASC. Memoir Vol. V), p. 7.
17. *Ceylon Journal of Science* (Sec. G) Vol. II, p. 78.
18. *Mahavamsa* (Eng. tr. by Wilhelm Geiger), ch. XXXVI, v. 128 ff.
19. *Mahavamsa* (Culavamsa I) op. cit. ch. LI, v. 87.
20. *ASCAR* for 1940-45, p. 22 ff.
21. D. M. de Z. Wickremasinghe in *Epigraphia Zeylanica* Vol. I, p. 230.
22. *Papancasudani*, pt, II, ed. (1926) by Dhammakitti Sri Dhammananda. It is repeated from *Manorathapurani*, Pt. II.
23. Henry Trubner in *Art Quarterly* for Autumn 1951. (publ. by the Detroit Institute of Arts), p. 255.
24. A. M. Hocart, in *C. J. Sc.* etc.
25. *ASCAR* (First Report) for July, 15-August 31, 1890, p. 4.
26. *The Art and Architecture of India*, op. cit., p. 214.
27. *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. II, p. 247.
28. *ASCAR* for (1912-13), p. 6.
29. *Mahavamsa*, op. cit. Ch. XXX, v. 71 ff.
30. *Mahavamsa*, (Culavamsa I) op. cit., Ch. XXXVII v. 100 ff.

31. *Mahavamsa*, op. cit., Ch. XXIX, v. 30 ff.
32. *Mahavamsa*, op. cit., Ch. XXXV, v. 89.
33. *ASCAR*, for 1936, p. 15.
34. *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. I, Plate 19 and corresponding text.
35. *ASCAR* for 1940-45, p. 32.
36. *ASCAR* for 1946, p. 16.
37. *ASCAR* for 1955, p. 10.
38. *Nikaya Sanghrawa* (Eng. tr. by W. F. Gunawardhana), pp. 10-11.
39. *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, Vol. XCVIII, No. 4822, p. 593.
40. *ASC, Mem.* Vol. VI, pp. 9 ff.
41. *ASCAR* for 1954, p. 27.
42. *Ceylon*, Vol. I, p. 591.
43. *Ceylon*, op. cit., p. 592.
44. Sylvain Levi (in translation) in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Ceylon Branch), Vol. XXIV, No. 68, p. 107 ff.
45. *A. H. I.*, op. cit. p. 140.
46. S. Paranavitana in the *J. R. A. S. (C. B.)*, Vol XXXII, No. 85, p. 192 ff.
47. Codrington's *S. H. C.*, Chapter on Archaeology.
48. *Artibus Asiae*, XV, p. 209.
49. Codrington's *S. H. C.*, Chapter on Archaeology.
50. *J. R. S. A.*, op. cit., p. 595 ff.
51. *The Art and Architecture of India*, op. cit., p. 213.
52. *Artibus Asiae*, XVIII, p. 180.
53. *C. J. Sc.* op. cit., Vol. II, p. 80.
54. *Mahavamsa* (Culavamsa I), op. cit., (Geiger) ft. nt. 7 to Ch. XXXVIII, v. 64.
55. Samannaphala Sutta in the *Dialogues of the Buddha*, II.
56. Paranavitana in the *C. J. Sc.*, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 47.
57. *Bronzes from Ceylon, chiefly in the Colombo Museum* (Memoirs of the Colombo Museum, Series A, No.1) fig. 177. This image, however, does not seem to be a Sinhala work.
58. *A. S. C. Mem.*, Vol. I, Pl. 62.
59. *Classical Indian Sculpture* (Chintamani Kar), Pl. 73. Also Pl. XXIX, *Sculptures from Amaravati in the British Museum* (Douglas Barrett,) Lond. 1954.
60. *C. J. Sc.*, op. cit., Vol. II, Pl. LXXXIV. Every vestige of ancient work at the site has been obliterated by the application of tenacious layers of cow-dung in recent years, by a crazy vandal who effected his purpose under cover of the thick, wild-beast infested jungle of the mountain.

61. *Sir Paul Pieris Felicitation Volume*, (Colombo, 1956); Maurice Percheron *Le Boudha et le bouddhisme* (Series "Maitres Spirituels," Editions du Seuil (aux Bourges 1956) Pl. on p. 37, and the author's article in the *Ceylon Daily News* of Sept. 21, 1956.
62. *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*.
63. *Mahavamsa* (Culavamsa I), op. cit., Ch. XXXIX, v. 52.
64. D. M. de Z. Wickremasinghe in the *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. I, p. 229.
65. A. M. Hocart in the *C. J. Sc.*, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 95.

DESCRIPTION OF PLATES

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I. The stone Buddha of Toluvila, Anuradhapura, in its original setting before removal to the Colombo National Museum. In his First Report, Archaeological Commissioner Bell described it at p. 4.

"The wonderful sharpness and depth of the features, the softness of expression, the symmetry and repose of the body, give the image a *tout ensemble*, which contrasts markedly with the stolid 'figure-head' appearance as characteristic of these Buddhas in stone. The eye-lids, the under-lips, and ears are carved with a life-like reality not reached in the case of the other Buddhas already known. The nose is chipped, but so slightly as to be practically unnoticeable from the front; the fingers are somewhat worn, and there are a few cracks. With these slight blemishes the Sage sits as serenely contemplative as when votaries flocked to worship and make their offerings upon his altar. The figure is rather flat-chested." At the back of the head is a peculiar rectangular block 10 by 4½ in. The fold of the lower belly runs along rather prominently like a fleshy ridge.

II. The great stone Buddha on the Outer Circular Road in the Abhayagiri area, north Anuradhapura. It is the Samadhi Pilimaya of local fame. The nose is a recent gift of one Archaeological Commissioner. This image was described by A. K. Coomaraswamy as "certainly the greatest work of art in Ceylon, and is not surpassed, in India" (*Mems. of Colombo Mus.* No. 1, p. 6).

III. The second stone Buddha in the Abhayagiri area. Its hands had been in the same *mudra* as in V.

IV. The third stone Buddha in the Abhayagiri area. It faces the pair of inscribed tablets.

V. The limestone Buddha at Pankuliya, Anuradhapura. It is the earliest colossal stone statue with hands placed other than in the pose of contemplation. Though generally described as in *abhaya mudra*, the pose may equally well have been that of discourse (*vitarka mudra*). Excavating the site of the image-house where this statue was found, Bell noted: "Cross trenches disclosed unmistakably that the present vihare was not the earliest erection. It stood on the site of an older and larger building, 38 ft. 6 in. square, with an irregular portico on the south." (*ASCAR* for 1891, p. 6.).

An inscription in *circa* eighth century Grantha engraved on the riser of a step, and another tenth century Tamil on a pillar, (*C. J. Sc.*, Sec. G., Vol. II, pp. 13, 28, 29 and Pl. XXI) have been

among the epigraphs found at Pankuliya. There is no evidence that they are contemporaneous with the statue. It is by no means improbable that the statue was much earlier than either of them.

VI. Stone Buddha from Gal-amuna, Medirigiriya.

VII. Small-sized stone Buddha, presently in the Colombo National Museum.

VIII. Standing Buddha of limestone in the Colombo Museum. From head to foot it measures 5 ft. 11 in. A groove runs from the front of the right shoulder to back. The left hand had probably been in *abhaya mudra*. The robe is indicated by a thick edge on the chest, otherwise it clings smoothly to the body. At the back, however, the folds are clearly demarcated branching off in opposite directions from a thick central band serving for the folded edge of the robe. The design strongly suggests inspiration from the branch of a coconut-tree. The termination of the inner garment is shown a mere one inch longer than the outer robe which latter has the thick swag. The lower belly is much less prominent than in the case of I. The work is labelled third century A. C.

IX. Standing Buddha presently housed in a shrine at Ruvanveliseya, Anuradhapura.

X. Standing stone Buddha in Thuparama, Polonnaruva. That it is the Anuradhapura type can easily be seen. It has marked differences from IX.

XI. The stone colossus at Avukana. From a short engraved record at the site its date has been suggested by S. Paranavitana as between the fifth and the eighth century A. D. at the latest. (*ASCAR* for 1952, p. 33 and for 1955, p. 24). The edge of the robe on the chest has been rendered with ease singularly unlike in any other example.

XII. Three limestone Buddhas from Medirigiriya. It will be easily seen that they are the Anuradhapura type and, further, that each has its own peculiarities. S. Paranavitana dates the shrine in which they were found to the third or fourth century A. D. (*ASCAR* for 1946, p. 13).

XIII. Bronze Buddha presently in the Colombo National Museum, from Kankanodai, Batticaloa. It is labelled eighth century and may be studied with XI.

XIV. Bronze Buddha from Badulla, presently in the Colombo National Museum. A. K. Coomaraswamy dated it to the fifth or sixth century A. D. The figure has deviated from the alignment illustrated in his *Bronzes for Ceylon, chiefly in the Colombo Museum*. Mem. op. cit., Pl. XVII fig. 46.

XV. Small metal Buddha found a few years ago at one of the *vahalkada*, Ruvanveliseya, Anuradhapura.

XVI. Buddha sheltered by Mucalinda the Naga King, from Seruvila.

XVII. Buddha from Toluville *pilima-ge*, Anuradhapura. It is fig. 47 of the Colombo Museum Memoir (*op. cit.*) and was dated by A. K. Coomaraswamy to the fifth or sixth century A. D. It may be compared with XIV.

XVIII. Buddha from Bell's collection in the Colombo Museum. It possesses many unusual artistic features and seems to be strongly individualistic.

XIX. The magnificent torso of the colossal brick-and-plaster Buddha in three flexions, in the Tivanka-ge (Northern Temple or, popularly, Veluvanarama), Polonnaruwa. It is definitely of the twelfth century A. D.

XX. Bodhisattva from Situlpavuva. S. Paranavitana described it as "one of the most remarkable pieces of sculpture so far found in the Island." (*ASCAR* for 1934, p. 20)

XXI. The Dutthagamani sculpture, so-called, in the courtyard of Ruvanveliseya, Anuradhapura.

XXII. Sculpture from Medirigiriya. Probably dating back to the early centuries A. D., it has several characteristics which distinguish it from most other sculptures.

XXIII. Ruvanveliseya, Anuradhapura, as it is today. A conjectural restoration of one of the *vahalkada* is seen at left. The Elephant-Wall (*hatthi-pakara*), also restored, is in the foreground.

XXIV. fig. 1. Galgane or Galge, Devundara (Dondra).

XXIV. fig. 2. Bodhi-ghara at Nillakgama.

XXV. The head of the Avukana Buddha. The flat and the horizontal pieces are additions by devotees with much zeal and little art, some decades ago. The head measures 6 ft. 6 in. Note the sculptor's attention to details.

XXVI. The upper portion of the Bodhisattva from Situlpavuva.

XXVII. Vajrasattva holding the *visva-vajra* (Double Thunderbolt) in his right hand. This remarkable bronze was found at Medirigiriya, is 6½ in. high, and is dated to the fifth century.

XXVIII. Head of Bodhisattva from Seruvila, presently in the Colombo National Museum.

XXIX. Head from Kantaka Cetiya, Mihintale, presently in the Colombo National Museum.

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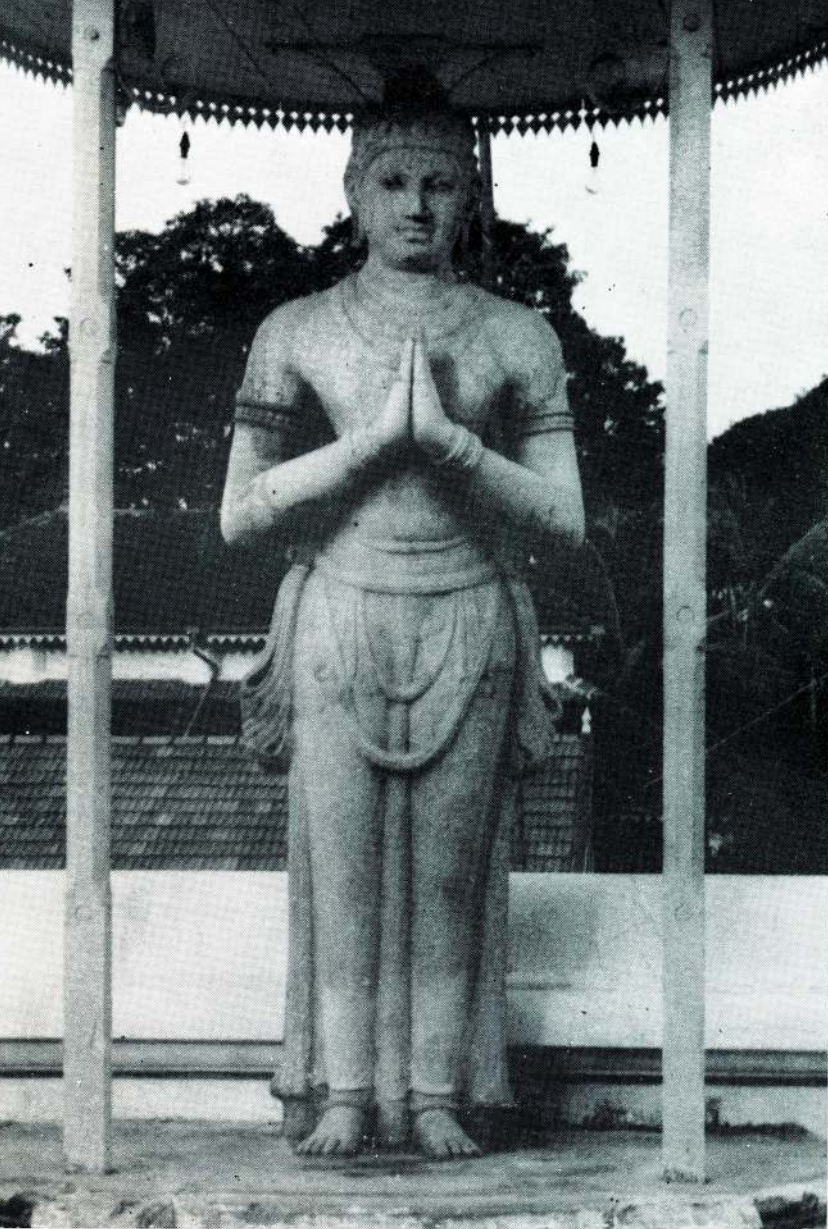


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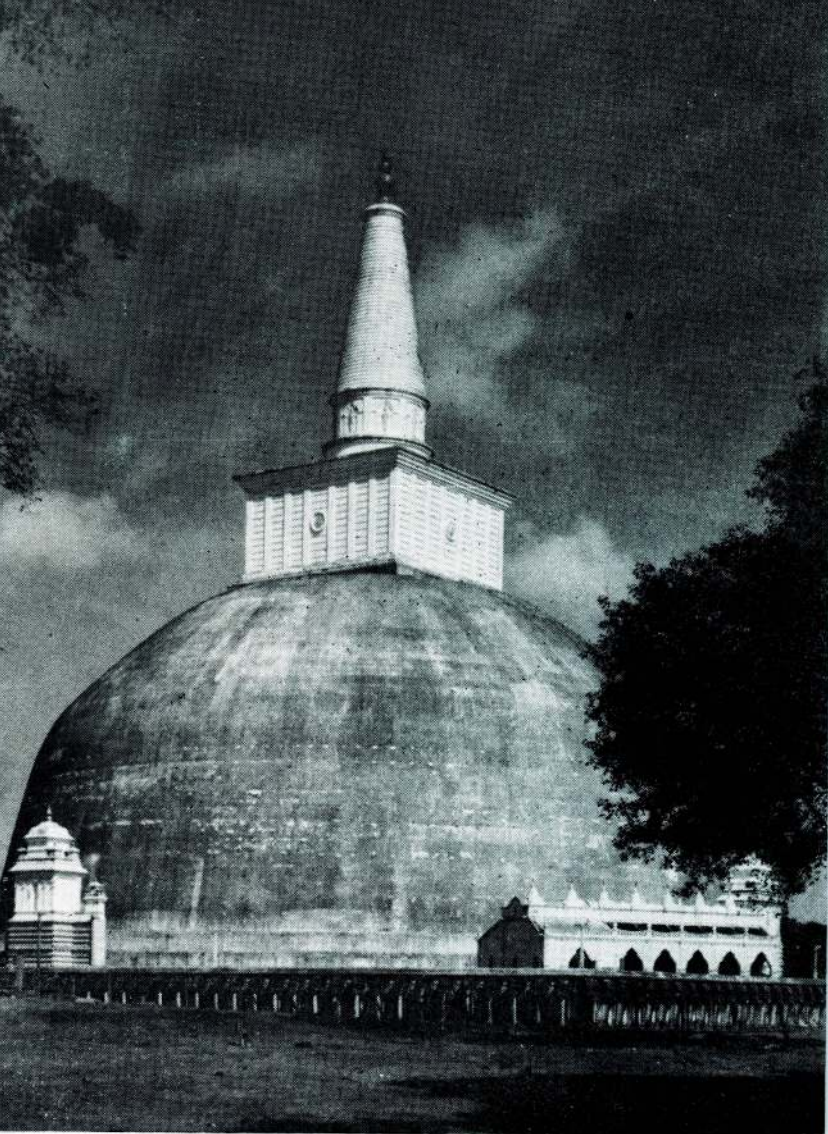




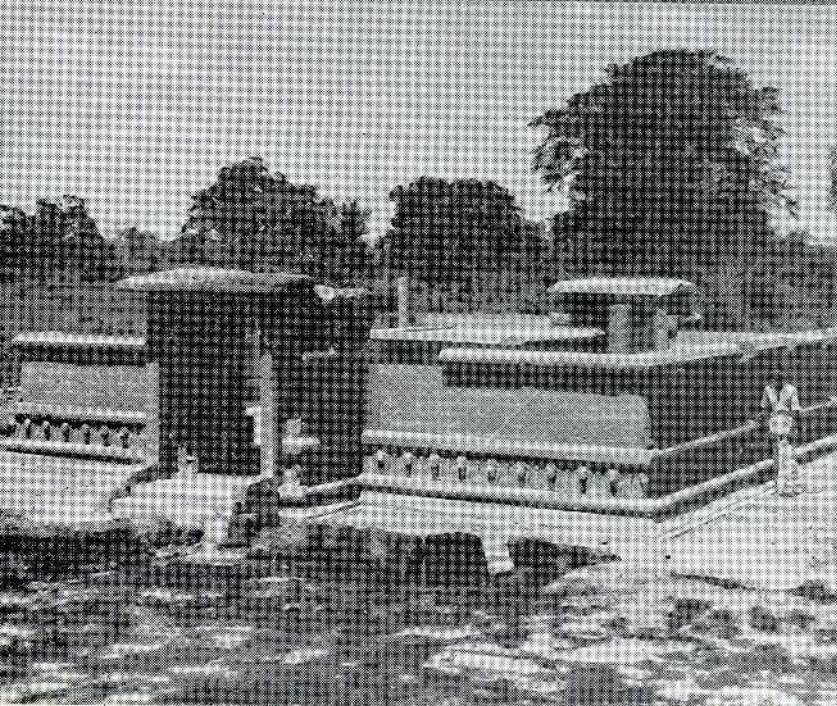




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excavations, explorations, research, publications, etc., is found in the Annual Reports of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon from the year 1948. Besides this work, he has lectured before the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch) and elsewhere. He has published a large number of papers since 1935, and is the author of *THIS OTHER LANKA* (Ola Book Co., Colombo, 1941).

D. T. Devendra was in the educational service for over two decades and his career in it ended with his being College Principal. He is now an Assistant Editor of the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism which is being compiled under the patronage of the Lanka Bauddha Mandalaya (Buddhist Council of Ceylon) with Professor G. P. Malalasekera as its Editor-in-Chief.

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