THE CEYLON

JOURNAL

OF THE

HUMANITIES

THE CEYLON JOURNAL OF THE HUMANITIES will be published twice a year in January and July by the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya. This Journal, together with a journal devoted to the social sciences. will supersede the *University of Ceylon Review* founded in 1943. Each issue of THE CEYLON JOURNAL OF THE HUMANITIES will contain about five articles based on original research covering such subjects as Literature, Language, Philosophy, Religion, Archaeology and the Arts. The articles will be in English and will relate mainly but not exclusively to Ceylon. The inaugural issue of this journal will be published in January 1970.

Research articles are invited by the Editor from scholars both in Ceylon and abroad for publication in THE CEYLON JOURNAL OF THE HUMANITIES. Each contributor will receive free of charge twenty-five off-prints of his article. All manuscripts and all correspondence regarding articles should be addressed to the Editor. A Style Sheet will be sent post free on request to intending contributors.

The annual subscription is Rs. 10 in Ceylon and £ 1-0-0 or its equivalent abroad. Payment should be made either by Banker's Order to the credit of THE CEYLON JOURNAL OF THE HUMANITIES (Account Number 780. People's Bank, Peradeniya) or direct to the Managing Editor by cheque, money order or postal order. Subscribers will received the journal post free.

Institutes and libraries interested in obtaining the journal on exchange should contact the Librarian, University of Ceylon, Peradeniya. Booksellers interested in distributing the journal are requested to apply to the Managing Editor. A trade discount of 20 per cent will be allowed.

Articles

THE CRITIQUE OF PLEASURE IN SOREN KIERKEGAARD AND EARLY BUDDHISM

M. W. Padmasiri de Silva

Soren Kierkegaard's thesis concerning the "three stages of life" is considered by many scholars as his most influential doctrine. Kierkegaard worked out three levels or spheres of existence —aesthetic, ethical and religious. The Kierkegaardian critique of pleasure has to be elaborated by focussing our attention on the disjunction between the ethical and the aesthetic. Also relevant reference to the religious stage has to be made where it sheds light on the critique of pleasure.

The conflict between the aesthetic and the ethical stages is clearly presented in the two–volume work, *Either/Or*. This work has been described as the "summons to decide between alternate philosophies of life."[1] The life view of a young romanticist, presenting the aesthetic stage is found in volume I and that of a mature ethical idealist, depicting the ethical stage is found in volume II. The philosophy of the stages of life is discussed in many of his works: of these, *Stages on Life's Way* is the most important. This work examines the religious stage of life, in addition to the presentation of the aesthetic and the ethical stages.

In the first part of this paper an attempt will be made to present Kierkegaard's doctrine of the stages as basically related to the critique of pleasure. This doctrine will be compared to certain parallel concepts in Early Buddhism in the second part of this paper. The attachment to sensual pleasures (*kāmasukhallikā-nuyoga*) can be compared to the aesthetic life view, the morality (*sīla*) of the householder (*gahapati*) to the ethical stage and the holy life of the monk (*brahmacariya*) to the religious stage. The concept of the holy life in Buddhism however, offers certain distinctive differences in comparison with Kierkegaard's religious stage. In spite of certain broad similarities, such divergencies arise due to the theistic framework of Kierkegaard's philosophy of religion.

M. W. Padmasiri de Silva, Ph. D. (Hawaii) is a lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya.

[1] Soren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Volume I, trans. D. F. Swenson, and L. M. Swenson, Anchor Books, (N.York, 1959), (herein after abbreviated as *E/O* I) p. v.

Aesthetic Stage

"Every man, however lowly his talents are, however subordinate his position in life, naturally feels the need of forming a life view, a conception of life's significance and its purpose. The man who lives aesthetically does that too, and the universal expression which has been heard from age to age and in all stages is this: one must enjoy life."[1] The term 'enjoy', here, really refers to sensuous pleasures, for the primacy of pleasure is the most distinctive feature of the aesthetic stage. Words like "hedonism" and "romanticism" have been used by critics to describe this stage of life summarily.

Robert Bretall remarks that Kierkegaard uses the word aesthetic in its etymological sense of feeling.[2] Thus the aesthetic way of life is the life of feeling and immediacy. The aesthete is one who constantly lives in the moment.[3] Thus, he cannot conceive of a higher plane of existence which goes beyond this close knit world of immediacy. However, he guards this world of pleasure from boredom, by searching for variety. Regarding the aesthete's passion for variety, Kierkegaard's own words are the best: "See him in his season of pleasure: did he not crave for one pleasure after another, variety his watchword? Is variety, then the willing of one thing that abides the same? Nay, rather it is the willing of something that must never be the same. But that is just to will the manifold, and a man with such a will is not double-minded but at all variance with himself, for he wills one thing and immediately after the opposite, because oneness of pleasure is disappointment and illusion, and it is the variety of pleasure that he wills. Change was what he was crying out for when pleasure pandered to him, change, change!"[4]

Though the aesthete may get engrossed in commonplace and ordinary pleasures, it is the enigmatic, the surprising and the secretive kind of pleasure that can keep him fully absorbed. The aesthete has to drown the dullness and boredom that overtakes him in the search for pleasure. This sense of dullness has to be kept away by the category of the "interesting". The aesthete

---

[1] Soren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Volume II, trans. Walter Lowrie, Anchor Books, (N.York, 1959), (Herein after abbreviated as *E/O* II) p. 184.

[2] Robert Bretall, ed., *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, (London, 1947), p. xxii.

[3] *E/O* II, p. 183.

[4] Soren Kierkegaard, *Purify Your Hearts*, trans. A. L. Aldworth & W. S. Ferris, (London, 1937) pp. 43–4.

experiments with varying possibilities of the erotic, but yet does not make any commitment. That is why he renounces the bond of marriage. Searching for immediacy, variety, and novelty, he avoids any kind of stability or resting place. A passage from Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* describes the aesthete well — "Your life is wholly given to preliminary runs ... you have a predilection for the first sensation of falling in love. You know how to submerge yourself in a dreamy and glowing clairvoyance of love. You love the accidental ...."[1]

"With regard to marriage you have always behaved merely as an observer .... But honestly speaking, your psychological interest lacks seriousness and is rather a hypochondriac curiosity."[2]

The life of the senses can take diverse forms of refinement; yet the aesthetic life ultimately ends in despair. Vivid descriptions of the moods of sensuality are found in many of the works of Kierkegaard.

"The Banquet" in *Stages on Life's Way*, (sometimes, compared to Plato's *Symposium*) presents a vivid description of the sensualist. The motto for the occasion is "In Vino Veritas", which implies that no truth can be uttered except under the influence of wine. One of the characters refers to the "festive, seductive strains", that tore him from "the cloistered seclusion of tranquil youth."[3] The ideal banquet designed to incite and awaken the senses should have an exuberant abundance of wine, the fragrance of perfumes (which excites the senses most), a coolness in the atmosphere that voluptuously kindles desire, bright illumination, chamber music, strong and subdued, etc.[4]

Whatever subtle techniques of refinement are used, the aesthete who does not transcend the level of pure sensuality and hedonism ends up in despair. In fact, Kierkegaard's own comment on the five characters in the banquet scene, is that all of them "are consistent to the point of despair."[5] That is the final ground on which all of them flounder. The aesthete, however, fearing that his pleasures will turn dull and wearisome, advocates

---

[1] *E/O* II p. 7.
[2] Ibid., p. 8.
[3] Soren Kierkegaard, *Stages On Life's Way*, trans. Walter Lowrie, (Princeton, 1947) p. 43.
[4] Ibid., p. 41.
[5] Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans., D. F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie, (Princeton, 1944) p. 264.

5

what he calls "the rotation method." The panacea for boredom is to diversify the pleasures that one seeks; whenever pleasures show signs of waning one should change the object of pleasure. "My method does not consist in change of field, but resembles the rotation method in changing the crop and the method of cultivation . . . ."[1] Thus the pleasure seeker is advised to do away with permanent agreements and contracts, like binding oneself in marriage. Even permanent friendships and stable jobs are discouraged.

Some Typical Moods of the Aesthetic Life

Kierkegaard explores the aesthetic life with great ingenuity. Perhaps the emotional involvement with Regina Olsen stirred his imagination, and it is not surprising that Kierkegaard depicted the aesthetic life with a great deal of passion. Incidentally Kierkegaard does not write a neat academic treatise in the manner of a true philosopher. Rather he uses a semi-philosophical literary style.[2] "Instead of lecturing about romanticism and ethical idealism . . . he impersonates the different individuals who are passionately committed to these divergent outlooks on life."[3] Thus we get in his works, some remarkable life-like, phenomenological presentations of aesthetic moods. James Collins remarks, ". . . among all the moods cultivated by the Romantics, three seemed to Kierkegaard to voice the major chords of aesthetic sensibility: sensual immediacy, doubt and despair".[4] These moods Kierkegaard associated with three figures – Don Juan, Faust and Ahasuerus, the wandering Jew. Collins refers to the fact that these figures had fascinated the imagination both of the common people and of the great artists and confirms Kierkegaard's thesis that "the aesthetic approach makes a universal appeal to men of different interests and talents."

The name of Don Juan represents the very personification of sensuality. "The Middle Ages had much to say about a mountain not found on any map, which is called the mountain of Venus. There the sensuous has its own home, there it has its own wild pleasures, for it is a kingdom, a state. In this kingdom language has no place, nor sober-minded thought, nor the toilsome business

---

[1] *E/O* I, p. 288.
[2] This is connected with Kierkegaard's concept of Indirect Communication which upholds the use of literary media for communicating philosophical ideas.
[3] *E/O* I, p. v.
[4] James Collins, *The Mind of Kierkegaard*, (U.S.A., 1953) p. 50.

6

of reflection. There sound only the voice of elemental passion, the play of appetites, the wild shouts of intoxication; it exists solely for pleasure in tumult. The first born of this kingdom is Don Juan."[1]

Don Juan is the voice of elemental passion without any element of reflection. Goethe's Faust on the other hand brings in an element of the intellectual and the reflective, into the enjoyment of pleasure. Thus Don Juan and Faust are two aspects of the enjoyment of sensuous pleasure. "Mozart's Don Giovanni is depicted as the classical representative of the sensual or hedonistic view of life, and Goethe's Faust expresses the aesthetical personality of abstract intellectualisms."[2] Both are incapable of commitment and evade responsibility. They lack the ethical pathos of married life. However there is an element of "doubt" (which is of course purely intellectual) that enters into the Faustian type of aesthete. "For an open acknowledgement of despair, without any possibility of relief, Kierkegaard evokes another legendary figure, the wandering Jew."[3] In the words of Collins, "In the Wandering Jew, Kierkegaard saw the truest symbol of his age and the outcome of a closed aesthetic existence. Beneath the tranquillity and exaltation of the erotic and beneath the steady intensity of doubt, he found silent despair as the last word of aesthetic existence."[4] The aesthetic moods of doubt and despair will be referred to again, in the discussion below.

Critique of the Aesthetic Philosophy of Life.

Either/Or volume II presents a sustained critique of the aesthetic view of life. While the supposed writer of volume I is a young romanticist, the writer of the second is a more mature personality referred to as Judge William. The critique of the aesthetic philosophy is made from the standpoint of the ethical stage.

The aesthetic view of life is not the type of life-ideal that one could turn into a consistent philosophy of life. It collapses and ends in boredom, melancholy and despair. The life of pleasure breaks down, not merely because pleasures are followed by pain,

[1] *E/O* I, p. 88.
[2] F. N. Magill, ed., *Masterpieces of World Philosophy*, Allen & Unwin, (London, 1963) p. 613.
[3] James Collins, *The Mind of Kierkegaard*, (U.S.A., 1953) p. 61.
[4] Ibid., p. 62.

7

but because of something more deep, more insidious — namely, tedium, emptiness and meaninglessness. "How terrible tedium is — terribly, tedious. . . . I lie streched out, inactive, the only thing I see is emptiness, the only thing I move about in is emptiness. I do not even suffer pain. . . . Even pain has lost its refreshment for me."[1] Kierkegaard was basically pointing to the "tremendous dissonance" of the aesthetic life and its "total break with reality."[2] It is this illuminating insight into the nature of aesthetic life, that brings the Kierkegaardian analysis close to the Buddhist philosophy of Dukkha.

The aesthete is ultimately drawn into the frightful state of boredom. By planning means of diversion to avoid boredom, he runs into the impending ruin with greater force. The history of boredom can be traced to the very beginning of the world. "The gods were bored, and so they created man. Adam was bored because he was alone, and so Eve was created. Thus boredom entered the world. . . ."[3] "One tires of living in the country, and moves into the city; one tires of one's native land, and travels abroad; one is tired of Europe and goes to America and so on. . . . One tires of porcelain dishes and eats on silver; one tires of silver and turns to gold; one burns half of Rome to get an idea of the burning of Rome."[4] The burning of Rome was what Nero did and that is a self-defeating method.

It could be said that there are two forms of boredom. In one form a person's mood is directed to a specific object. He can be bored with a talk, a book, a play etc. This is a very superficial kind of boredom. One can also be bored not with any specific object, but with oneself. This is a more significant kind of boredom. It is referred to as a kind of nameless emptiness. More specifically, it is the sort of feeling a person has when he loses any sense of meaning in his life.[5]

---

[1] *E/O* I, p. 36.

[2] R. Thomte, *Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion*, (Princeton, 1948) p. 28.

[3] *E/O* I, p. 282.

[4] Ibid., p. 287.

[5] Erich Fromm cites an interesting category of patients who come with neurotic ailments-A type of patients who come to the psychiatrist not to get any specific symptom cured, but due to a general inability to lead a meaningful life. It seems that the purely philosophical reflections of Kierkegaard may be taken out of its outer garb of obscurity by giving it some such empirical delineation. See, Erich Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, Yale University Press, (New Haven, 1961) p. 72.

A similar nameless emptiness characterises the state of melancholy. There is something inexplicable and enigmatic in the melancholy individual. "If a melancholy man is asked what grounds he has for it, what is that weighs upon him, he will reply, 'I know not I cannot explain'."[1] Herein lies the infinity of melancholy.

Nero sought pleasures to drown his melancholy. He has gone through every conceivable pleasure. His life, depraved as it may be, has matured his soul; at least he experiences melancholy. But a metamorphosis is not possible, as a higher level of existence is necessary for that. However, if that is to come about, "an instant will arrive when the splendour of the throne, his might and power, will pale, and for this he has not the courage."[2] "Then he grasps after pleasure; all the world's cleverness must devise for him new pleasures, for only in the instant of pleasure does he find repose, and when that is past he gasps with faintness."[3] The spirit within him desires a metamorphosis, but he is constantly disappointed. He can only offer the satiety of pleasure. "Then the spirit with him gathers like a dark cloud, its wrath broods over his soul, and it becomes an anguishing dread which ceases not even in the moment of pleasure."[4] People use other expedients, more innocent than those used by Nero, to escape this condition. They induce forgetfulness by getting engrossed in work and entertainment.

The final dissonance of the aesthetic life breaks in through the threat of despair. It appears that every aesthetic life view is despair, and everyone who lives aesthetically is in despair, whether he knows it or not. However, this is the last aesthetic life view, but "This last view is despair itself"[5]. To a certain degree it is conscious of its own nullity; and when one knows that one is in despair a higher level of existence is possible.

If an artist or a painter, for example becomes blind, he will despair over this fact, this particular fact, and if his sight were restored to him, his despair would disappear. But this despair is not over any particular thing. If it is desirable to present this

[1] E/O II, p. 193.
[2] E/O II, p. 190.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] E/O II, p. 198.

9

in a more positive form, it can be described as the despair of "losing one's own self." Kierkegaard says that many people do not make an attempt to be conscious of this predicament. They seek escape routes, consciously or otherwise. "By seeing the multitude of men about it, by getting engaged in all sorts of worldly affairs, by becoming wise about how things go in this world, such a man forgets himself . . . ."[1] Kierkegaard says that a man will always notice something like the loss of an arm, a leg or five dollars. Yet, "The greatest danger, that of losing one's own self, may pass off as quietly as if it were nothing."[2]

"Despair is the most intensive expression of the threat of meaninglessness and emptiness; it constitutes the culmination of the aesthetic mode of existence."[3] At the start, however, the aesthete is too intellectual to realise this state, and it becomes a "despair in thought."[4] This purely intellectual mood is really "doubt", and not "despair", as it should be. Doubt (*Tvivl*) is a despair of thought, based on intellectual reflection. Despair (*Fortvivlelse*) on the other hand involves the whole personality.

A person can truly face the state of despair. For this he must turn away from external distractions, turn inwards and become deeply introspective. Thus he discovers the path towards the achievement of an authentic and integrated selfhood. That is how the dissonance and the discontinuity of the aesthetic life can be overcome. The individual should move from the vacillation and discontinuity of the aesthetic stage to the ethical stage, representing —choice, will, commitment, and freedom. The ethicist does not sow wild oats everywhere, but upholds the sanctity of marriage For him, home is something sacred and family life is built upon a deep and heartfelt sense of community. "He who lives ethically has seen himself, knows himself, penetrates with his consciousness his whole concretion, does not allow indefinite thoughts to potter about within him, nor tempting possibilities to distract him with their jugglery."[5]

[1] Soren Kierkegaard, *Sickness Unto Death*, trans. Walter Lowrie, (Princeton, 1951) p. 51.
[2] Ibid., p. 49.
[3] F. N. Magill, ed. *Masterpieces of World Philosophy*, Allen & Unwin, (London, 1963) p. 616.
[4] *E/O* II, p, 199.
[5] Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postcript*, trans. D. F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie, (Princeton, 1944) p. 263.

10

The Ethical Stage

In *Either/Or* volume II, it is shown that marriage really combines the best aspects of the romantic with the ethical and the religious. Judge William says that he has a two-fold task — to show the aesthetic significance of marriage and to show how the aesthetic element in it may be held fast inspite of the manifold obstacles of actual life. "Thus marriage is the truest transfiguration of romantic love."[1] While pure erotic love is based on the enigmatic, the secretive and the surprising, conjugal love stands for candour, openheartedness, revelation and understanding. While pure erotic love is described as restless and unstable, conjugal love is described in different terms. "It is faithful, constant, humble, patient, long-suffering, indulgent, sincere, contented, vigilant, willing, joyful."[2] Judge William says that the aesthete is afraid of marriage as he is afraid of peace and quietness. He says, "for you, an agitated sea is the image of life, for me it is still deep waters. Often have I sat by a bit of purling water. It is always the same, the same soft melody, the same green plants on its floor, swaying beneath its quiet waves; the same little creatures running about at the bottom, a little fish which glides under the protection of the overhanging flowers spreading out. . . . How monotonous, and yet how rich in change! Such is the home life of marriage: quiet, modest, purling. . . ."[3]

After Judge William closes his examination of the aesthetic validity of marriage he goes on to review the ethical personality. Here it is shown that what was said about marriage and love applies to life in general. The ethical man binds himself to others in the community and takes upon himself his obligations in marriage, friendship and work. The ethicist believes that every man has a calling and has to perform his duties.[4] As far as each man's duty is concerned, what matters is "not a question of the multifariousness of duty but of its intensity. When with all his energy a person has felt the intensity of duty he is then ethically mature and in him duty will emerge of itself."[5] In general when a man lives ethically his personality is centralized, not dispersed. "When a man lives aesthetically his mood is always eccentric

---

1 *E/O* II, p. 31.
2 Ibid., p. 142.
3 Ibid., pp. 146–7.
4 Ibid., p. 296.
5 Ibid., p. 270.

because he has his center in the periphery. Personality has its center within itself, and he who has not his self is eccentric."[1]

Religious Stage

As it is not necessary to work out the religious stage in detail, a summary of the relevant concepts pertaining to our discussion should suffice. In the words of a leading commentator of existentialism, William Barrett, "The real line of difference between the ethical and the religious Kierkegaard draws in his *Fear And Trembling*, and it has to do with the uniqueness of the individual, the single one, and with the calling of the religious man, who has to break with the ordinary moral code that his fellow citizens approve."[2] Kierkegaard cites the case of Abraham's sacrifice of his son Isaac. This has its parallel in the giving up of Regina. This "teleological suspense of the ethical," marks a violation of the accepted ethical code, but yet a transcendence to the religious stage.

The emergence of a crisis situation challenges the established ethical order. Thus the religious man upholds a higher transcendental reality, which to Kierkegaard was the existence of God. Really the religious transfigures the ethical with a new group of existential categories—suffering, guilt, sin and faith. Kierkegaard also makes an interesting study of the emotions of fear and dread, doubt and despair. *The Concept of the Dread, Fear and Trembling* and *Sickness Unto Death*, form an interesting trilogy that gives some insight into the psychology of certain emotions related to the growth of a religious personality.

The concepts of sin and repentance and the notion of religious suffering cannot be accommodated within the ethical stage. "As soon as sin makes its appearance ethics comes to grief...."[3] Suffering also plays a decisive role in the religious life, while it plays only an accidental role in the other stages. Kierkegaard sums up the position thus: "While aesthetic existence is essentially enjoyment, and ethical existence, essentially struggle and victory, religious existence is essentially suffering, and not as a transitional moment, but as persisting."[4]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 235.
[2] William Barrett, *Irrational Man*, (London, 1961) p. 148.
[3] Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Walter Lowrie, (Princeton, 1941) p. 152 note.
[4] Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. D. F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie, (Princeton, 1944) p. 256.

12

The Critique of Pleasure in Buddhism and in Kierkegaard

There are two basic attitudes to the enjoyment of pleasure in Early Buddhism. From one standpoint an attempt is made to describe the ills besetting the pursuit of pleasure in general. From another standpoint an attempt is made to make a distinction between pleasures obtained by correct means and wrong means, between pleasures obtained within limits and the excessive craving for it, between harmless pleasures and perverted lust (*visama lobha*)[1]. However, there is one thing common to both standpoints— there is no room for a life view which maintains the search for sensuous pleasure as the only ideal. The kind of ideal depicted vividly in Kierkegaard's "*Diary of the Seducer*", has been rejected by both Kierkegaard and Early Buddhism. This is the kind of view referred to by the Buddha as "*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*" (the way of sensuality). This is referred to as a low, pagan practice and is compared with an equally unprofitable extreme, the way of self-mortification. The Buddha recommends the eightfold path as the middle way.

The first standpoint referred to is the sphere of the holy life of the monk (*brahmacariya*) and the second standpoint refers to the lay morality of the householder (*gahapati*). In Kierkegaard's critique of pleasure too, we get a similar duality of standpoints: the ethical and the religious levels of existence. After we review the Buddhist analysis of pleasure, a clarification of the two standpoints (mentioned above) will be made.

Human activity is continuosly nourished by three types of craving: the craving for sensuous gratification (*kāma-taṇhā*), the craving for self-preservation (*bhava-taṇhā*) and the craving for self-annihilation (*vibhava-taṇhā*). Of these the natural proneness to seek pleasure and be repelled by pain is one of the most powerful bases of human motivation.[2]

Sensuality has a subjective and an objective aspect. The term *pañca kāmaguṇa* refers to the five types of pleasure objects

---

[1] *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, ed. R. Morris, London: Pali Text Society, 1885 (abbreviated as *A*), I, 160.

[2] *Majjhima Nikāya*, ed. V. Trenckner, London: Pali Text Society, 1948 reprint, (abbreviated as *M*), I, 341. Freud refers to this basic disposition as the Pleasure Principle. Kierkegaard considers the "agreeable/disagreeable", as the sensuous categories; *Sickness Unto Death*, p. 67.

13

obtained by way of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and the body; this is the objective aspect. Subjectively, *kāma-rāga* refers to desires and passions of a sensual nature.[1] The objects of pleasure are referred to as, "delightful, dear, passion-fraught and inciting to lust."[2] When a person's passions are roused, there emerges a kind of tenacity to hold on to these pleasures. This is the emergence of clinging (*upādāna*). Unless, there is this persistence of clinging, excitation of the sense organs is not sufficient, to rouse the individual to activity. The pursuit of sense pleasures are however, fed by deeper undercurrents. When clinging emerges, some latent tendencies (*anusayas*) have already been excited. Pleasant feelings (*vedanā*) induce an attachment to pleasant objects, as they arouse latent sensuous greed (*rāgānusaya*). Painful feelings on the other hand arouse latent anger and hatred (*paṭighānusaya*). The universality of this pleasure principle has been emphasised both in the works of Kierkegaard and early Buddhism.

Though people develop strong attachment to particular pleasure giving objects, they also seek variety and change. Thus man searches for variety, finding delight, "in this and that, here and there" (*tatra tatra abhinandinī*).[3] Kierkegaard too gives expression to man's restless search for diversity, in what he calls the "rotation method." Pleasures may be manifold and sweet (*kāmā citrā madhurā*),[4] yet they cause unpleasantness (*appassādā*), much suffering (*bahudukkhā*), and much t u r b u l e n c e (*bahūpāyāsā*)[5]. The Buddha says that though pleasures bring temporary happiness, in the long run they cause misery and regret.

Why is it that the drive for sensuous pleasure turns out to be ultimately unsatisfactory? Kierkegaard finds "boredom" to be the main enemy of pleasure and "despair" as the final breaking point of the aesthetic life. This Kierkegaardian approach to the aesthetic life offers some remarkable similarities to the philosophy of Dukkha in Buddhism. However, the Buddha offers a more comprehensive examination, and a wide variety of arguments based on empirical situations, while Kierkegaard was somewhat averse to systematic analysis.

[1] A VI, 68.

[2] *Samyutta Nikāya*, ed. L. Feer, London: Pali Text Society, 1884–1904, (abbreviated as *S*) IV, 60.

[3] S V, 421.

[4] *Suttanipāta*, ed. D. Anderson and H. Smith, London: Pali Text Society, 1948, (abbreviated as *Sn*) 50.

[5] M I, 91.

14

The critique of pleasure in Buddhism is grounded on the philosophy of Dukkha. But the word "Dukkha" is hard to translate by one word; nor is it possible to give a simple definition of this concept. "There is no word in English covering the same ground as Dukkha does in Pali. Our modern words are too specialised, too limited, and usually too strong. ... We are forced, therefore, in the translation to use half synonymns, no one of which is exact."[1] Thus the *P. T. S. Pali-English Dictionary*, admits the problems besetting the translation of the word Dukkha. There are a number of strands of meaning of this concept, and at least one significant aspect of it offers interesting similarities to the concept of "Anguish" found in contemporary existentialist literature. This resemblance has been discussed elsewhere,[2] and thus it is not necessary to examine this in detail. The word Dukkha has at least three broad usages—pain as a predominatly physical sensation, sorrow as something mental, and a general philosophical sense as unsatisfactoriness. In the third sense Dukkha has been translated by many words, some of which are, words like, disharmony, anxiety, and unsatisfactoriness. This meaning becomes prominent when Dukkha is considered as a universal characteristic of all samsaric existence, along with impermanence (*anicca*) and egolessness (*anattā*).[3]

Thus while it is incorrect to equate Dukkha with the "Angst" of the existentialist, there are some aspects of its meaning that offer certain similarities. Also, Kierkegaard, being the first existentialist thinker, did not give a clear meaning of anxiety or dread. His *Concept of Dread* is presented through the framework of the theological problem of original sin. He also brings in a number of ideas under dread, and the reader is left with a bewildering mass of ideas under this single concept, without a unifying theme except the word dread.[4] That is why his *Sickness Unto Death*,

---

[1] T. W. Rhys Davids and W. Stede, ed., *P. T. S. Pali-English Dictionary*, (London, 1952) p. 159.

[2] M. W. Padmasiri de Silva, "Buddhism and the Tragic Sense of Life", *University of Ceylon Review*, (University of Ceylon) Vol. 25, forthcoming.

[3] O. H. de A. Wijesekera, *The Three Signata*, Wheel Publication, (Ceylon, 1960).

[4] Here are some of the meanings associated with the word dread, in Kierkegaard's *Concept of the Dread:* There are possibilities of evil or temptational possibilities in us, that cause the emergence of dread; our eternal salvation or perdition is constantly at stake, and this implies the idea of appearing before God, which causes dread; everything in the province of existence is utterly

turns out to be a better rallying point for the theme of anxiety; despair is the key existential concept here. We have already referred to the theme of boredom, melancholy and despair in the works of Kierkegaard. It is this anlysis that offers an interesting parallel to the Buddhist doctrine of Dukkha. The life of the aesthete turns out to be "empty and void of meaning", or "its meanings are incongruous or entirely distorted."[1] Modern commentators of existentialism, too, regard this "threat of meaninglessness" as the basic component of existential anxiety.[2] This theme has been dramatically presented by Kierkegaard in the "Diapsalmata."[3] "My life is absolutely meaningless. When I consider the different periods into which it falls, it seems like the word *Schnur* in the dictionary, which means in the first place a string, in the second, a daughter-in-law. The only thing lacking is that the word *Schnur* should mean in the third place a camel, in the fourth, a dust-brush."[4] Kierkegaard also said that a man in despair may either be conscious of it or not conscious of it. Kierkegaard's contention that a man's despair may be unknown to him, is a very significant insight.[5] In fact the Buddha says that *avijjā* (ignorance, infatuation or delusion) is the primary root of all evil. Kierkegaard however, considers the concept of "original sin" as more basic than human ignorance.

Attitude to Pleasure

Now, it is possible, to refer back, to the two standpoints, about sense pleasures. From the first standpoint, the philosophy of Dukkha, has to be accepted as a whole, and there is no compromise regarding sense pleasures. This is the attitude that has

---

ambiguous, this aspect of absolute risk causes dread; there is also an ontological aspect—due to our inability to grasp the nature of Being, we cannot think of it or not think of it. These meanings have been carefully worked out by Jean Wahl; yet it seems that Kierkegaard is attempting to do too many jobs with one word. See, Jean Wahl, *Philosophies of Existence*, (London, 1969) pp. 66-7.

[1] R. Thomte, *Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion*, (Princeton, 1948), p. 29.

[2] This is sometimes referred to in the obscure language of the existentialist, as the "threat of Non-Being."

[3] *E/O* I, p. 35.

[4] A. V. 176. Ibid.

[5] "If despair is bewilderment (Forvildelse,) then the fact that one is unconscious of it is the additional aggravation of being at the same time under a delusion (Vildfarelse)." Soren Kierkegaard, *Sickness Unto Death*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, 1951) p. 68.

16

to be accepted by those who take to the holy life (*brahmacariya*). Those who follow the less ardous path of the householder (*gahapati*) are permitted to enjoy sense pleasures, if they are obtained in the legitimate manner. They should not, however, give in to excessive craving and perverted passions.

Let us take the path of the householder first. The Buddha makes an analysis of the types of people who are enjoyers of sense pleasures (*kāmā-bhogin*). A certain type of person, who seeks the enjoyment of pleasures, seeks wealth, unlawfully and by violence. So doing, he gets no pleasure for himself, does not share his wealth with others and does no meritorious deeds. This type is compared to the type of person who seeks wealth by lawful means. He gets ease, pleasure for himself, shares with others and does meritorious deeds. This one, makes use of his wealth without greed and longing: is guiltless of offence, heedful of danger and alive to his own salvation.[1] Here, an effort is made to distinguish the enjoyment of pleasures obtained on correct principles and wrong principles.

There is also a reference where it is said that the realm of the human beings is abundantly pleasant when compared with hell or with the animal world[2]. In fact pleasure is considered as a natural phenomenon and the world of earth is referred to as the sense sphere (*kāmāvacara*). The homily to Sigāla for instance, shows how man should organise his natural desires within an ethico-religious setting, and enjoy domestic happiness as a householder[3]. This will be referred to again.

Now let us take the path of the "holy life". In the majority of the sermons given to the monks, the emphasis is more on the misery of pleasures. Here sense pleasures are referred to as a source of danger and incompatible with the life of renunciation. This is all the more emphasised in the attainment of the higher stage of mental development. Apart from the call to restraint and the control of the sense organs, the monks have been advised to avoid situations that can excite lustful thoughts. Thus detachment from sense pleasures is the basis on which the monk has to work out his deliverance. In the sermons to the monks, the advantages of the "homeless life" (*pabbajjā*) over the life of the householder are

[1] A V, 176.
[2] M I, 81.
[3] D III, Sutta 31.

discussed. "The household life is confined and dusty, going forth is in the open; it is not easy for one who lives in a house to fare the Brahma-faring wholly fulfilled, wholly pure, polished like a conch shell."[1] This attitude may be compared with Kierkegaard's critique of the aesthete made from the religious stage. In fact Collins remarks that in the final analysis, for Kierkegaard, "the genuine alternatives are still the world and the cloister."[2] In Kierkegaard's own words, the real contrast is between, "perdition and salvation." In Kierkegaard, while an attempt is made to bring the ethical and the religious together (ethico—religious), there is also some tension between the ethical and the religious.

The Ethical in Buddhism and Kierkegaard

Buddhist ethics is certainly more systematic and broad based than the Kierkegaardian concern with the ethical. However, limiting ourselves, to the more basic aspects of Buddhist ethics, it should be said that the five precepts form the basis of lay morality. The eight precepts, on the other hand mark the transition to the religious stage. As Tachibana says in his *Ethics of Buddhism,* "While the five precepts are moral precepts, the eight are religious vows."[3] Regarding the place of sense pleasures, while the ethical emphasises the significance of chastity, the religious emphasises the factor of celibacy. Chastity is an important virtue, and it is one of the five precepts. The unchaste life of the married man is condemned and the sanctity of family life is upheld in Buddhism. Negatively, Buddhist laymen are expected to refrain from unlawful sexual relations. Positively, the homily to Sigāla for instance, lays down the basic duties of people that will ensure domestic happiness. The mutual duties of husband and wife are clearly described in this sermon; this also mentions the mutual duties of parents and children, servants and masters, teachers and pupils, friends and companions. recluses and laymen. This sermon gives a central place to the solidarity of family life and is a very close parallel to Kierkegaard's claim that marriage is the basis of ethical life.[4]

As was mentioned earlier, the basis of Buddhist ethics is broader than Kierkegaard's conception of the ethical. Out of the five precepts, the two dealing with chastity and the use of

[1] *Middle Length Sayings*, Vol. 1, Trans Horner, P. T. S. (London, 1954) p. 224.
[2] James Collins, *The Mind of Kierkegaard*, (Princeton, 1953) p. 47.
[3] S. Tachibana, *The Ethics of Buddhism*, (Ceylon, 1943) p. 48.
[4] *E/O* II.

18

intoxicants have a direct bearing on the life of sensuality. The other three are to abstain from killing, stealing and lying. These ensure the basis of community living. Even Kierkegaard's ethicist has a place in the social order, but as Collins points out, Kierkegaard's personal problems colour his conception of the ethical. Due to the crisis brought about by breaking off the engagement with Regina, he was probably impelled, to make marriage "the test case and centre of ethical life." This seems to have had an unbalancing effect on Kierkegaard's notion of the ethical. Sometimes his conception of the ethical appears somewhat limited, when it is exclusively focussed on the institution of marriage; sometimes it appears too general when he deals with the factor of choice as the essence of the ethical. Kierkegaard was of course averse to systematisation, whereas the path of morality (*sīla*) in Buddhism is worked out in detail. This appears to be one significant difference in approach. However, in fairness to Kierkegaard it must be said, as Mary Warnock points out, that what we find in Kierkegaard, "is a kind of ethical outlook", rather than a system of ethics.[1]

"These stages in his own development came to seem to Kierkegaard to be general stages in the development of human beings, who have the possibility of living at any of these stages permanently, or moving from the lower to the higher. Each move to a higher stage must be something which the individual decides, for himself, to make."[2] Now this is not accepted as a purely intellectual belief or as one based on satisfactory evidence, but as something a person would be prepared to live by, as something to which he would be passionately committed. In thus emphasising the importance of choice and commitment, Kierkegaard gives a central place to the factor of will.[3] If there is any Existentialist ethics, it is to be extracted from this total view of the world, in which each man makes his own choice of the truth for himself.[4] Thus what Kierkegaard offers is basically an ethical outlook rather than a system of ethics. While early Buddhism offers an ethics which is more systematic, a Buddhist can imbibe the spirit of some of the insights in the Existential outlook.

---

[1] Mary Warnock, *Existentialist Ethics*, (London: Macmillan, 1967) p. 2.

[2] Ibid, p. 5.

[3] For a very clear analysis of the theory of choice and the concept of will in Kierkegaard, see, Winfield E. Nagley, "Kierkegaard On Liberation," *Ethics*, Volume 70, 1959–60, p. 47

[4] Mary Warnock, *Existentialist Ethics*, p. 10.

A Buddhist who follows the rules of conduct practised by the majority without finding out for himself what it all means certainly needs a shaking. In the words of Kierkegaard, "There are many people who reach their conclusions about life like schoolboys: they cheat their masters by copying the answer out of a book without having worked the sum out for themselves."[1] A Buddhist could certainly agree with Kierkegaard's call to "interiorise" morals. This point will be taken again with reference to the religious life.

In general, it can be said that while the critique of aesthetic life and the sanctity of family life presented in Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* have their corresponding parallels in early Buddhism, the religious stage in Kierkegaard offers both significant similarities and radical points of difference to the concept of *brahmacariya* in early Buddhism.

The Religious Life (*Brahmacariya*) in Buddhism and Kierkegaard

There is a basic existentialist attitude to the religious life in general, which to some extent is also upheld in Buddhism. Firstly, Kierkegaard rejects the purely speculative philosophers, who attempt to grasp religious truth by the intellect alone. The Buddha also lays stress on the dangers of metaphysical speculation and calls upon every one to practise and follow his preachings. A healthy critical attitude is necessary, but by endless speculation people get entangled in a net (*jāla*) of theories. Secondly, practising a religion does not mean following religious rites and rituals as if that is all that matters. In fact, Kierkegaard is supposed to have had two enemies — the Hegelian and the one who goes to church regularly. The Buddha also condemned attachment to mere rules and ritual (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*). By attachment to external rites we lose the inner core of religion. Kierkegaard attempted to "interiorise" religion and make it "personal." The Buddha too emphasises the importance of self-knowledge and personal realization, choice and personal involvement. Thirdly, Kierkegaard says that it is sincerity and a passionate urge that makes a person a true Christian. It is this "existential pathos" that makes a person's religion authentic. The one following the Buddhist path of deliverence is also expected to be ardent, zealous and strenuous (*ātāpin*).

[1] Robert Bretall, ed. *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, (London, 1947) p. 19.

"I lay no wood, brahmin, for fires on altars.
Only within burneth the fire I kindle.
Ever my fire burns; ever tense and ardent,
I, Arahant, work out the life that's holy"[1]

However, to these three points of similarity, there are certain qualifications to be made. While the Buddha considers pure intellectual speculation to be unprofitable, the analytical function of reason is accepted by him within certain limits.[2] Secondly, while criticising the practice of mere ritual, the Buddha lays down detailed techniques and methods of meditation and the practice of morality. Where the Existentialist will say that morality will cease to be morality when it is "encapsulated in principles of conduct,"[3] the Buddhist will always have some general code of ethics. Finally while upholding the value of earnestness, sincerity and authenticity in the religious quest, a Buddhist will be critical of the emotional undertones of Existentialism.[4]

According to pre-Buddhistic customs in India there were four orders of life referred to as āsramas. They are (1) Brahmacārin or Vedic student, (2) Grihastha or householder, (3) Vānaprastha or hermit, (4) Sanyāsin or ascetic. Of these, only 1 and 4 were compulsory. Tachibana points out that, "The Brahman Brahmacārin corresponds to the Buddhist Sāmaṇera, and the Brahman Sanyāsin or Bhikṣu to the Buddhist Bhikku, if a Brahman passed at once from studentship to the ascetic life, without any intervention of the householder's life ...."[5] The difference between the Buddhist and the Brahman celibates, is that for the Brahman, it was compulsory for every one to lead a life of celibacy at the start, but optional in the middle part of life; for the Buddhist it is compulsory only for those who have become monks. The lay Buddhist observes celibacy only when he observes the eight precepts. In Buddhism the term Brahmacariya connotes the ideas of celibacy and a life of perfect holiness.[6] In general, the term Brahmacariya for the Buddhist, "covers the whole of the religious

---

[1] *Kindred Sayings* vol. 1, (trans.) Mrs. Rhys Davids, P T. S, (London, 1950) p. 221.
[2] K. N. Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, (London, 1963) Chapters 5&8
[3] M. Warnock, *Existentialist Ethics*, p. 59.
[4] There is an irrationalist element in Existentialist thought which, for instance, finds full expression in Nietzsche. Nietzsche is of course not an existentialist in the full sense of the word.
[5] S. Tachibana, *The Ethics of Buddhism*, p. 99.
[6] Ibid., p. 100.

life, from keeping the precepts to obtaining Arahatship."[1]

The Kierkegaardian concept of the religious life is grounded on the belief in God, and this is a radical departure from the Buddhist view. Secondly, the concept of sin is central to Kierkegaard's concept of the religious. As mentioned in his works, "No man can take note of God without becoming a sinner".[2] Notions of sin, guilt and repentance in the Christian sense, do not fit into the path of deliverance in Buddhism. Also the concept of "religious suffering" in Kierkegaard appears as an unprofitable extreme to a Buddhist. It is necessary to sum' up the Buddhist position regarding these aspects of the religious life in Kierkegaard.

"The doctrine of sin, as held in Europe, is a complex of many strands. One or two of those strands may be more or less parallel to statements found in the earliest Buddhist texts or to ideas expressed in Indian pre-Buddhist texts. But the doctrine as a whole, in any one of its various forms, is antagonistic to the Indian, and especially to the Buddhist view of life."[3] These words of Rhys Davids who examines the Buddhist attitude to sin, sums up the position well. Sometimes words like *pāpa* and *saṅkiliṭṭha* in the Pāli canon are translated as "sin" and a person who continuously does evil acts is referred to as a sinful person. Yet this does not imply that there is a complete doctrine of sin (in the Christian sense) in Buddhism. The doctrine of *karma* upholds ignorance (*avijjā*) rather than sin as the basis of folly.

Methods like repentance, mortification and self-torment are unprofitable; they are not effective techniques to deal with wrongs already commited. People should develop self-knowledge, acquire an insight into their bases of motivation and then develop counter patterns of behaviour which are not unwholesome (*akusala*). The only path open to an immoral man is to develop self-understanding and bring about a transformation in his character. Repentance, penance, religious atonement and ritual do not a purify man. Behaviour that emerges from the unwholesome roots of greed, hate and delusion (*lobha, dosa, moha*) have to be replaced by behaviour emerging from the wholesome roots, greedlessness, hatelessness and undeludedness (*aloba, adosa, amoha,*). Burdening one's mind with an

---

[1] Ibid , p. 101.

[2] Soren Kierkegaard, *Stages on Life's Way*, p. 465.

[3] Rhys Davids, "Sin (Buddhist)", *E.R.E,* Vol. XI.

22

unhealthy guilt conscience can have a paralysing effect on the person, who is capable of developing a healthy sense of shame of evil (*hiri*) and a healthy sense of dread of evil (*ottappa*).

The Buddhist concept of *hiri-ottappa* (shame and dread of evil), should not be confused with *kukkucca* which refers to the uneasiness of conscience, worry and remorse. In fact *uddhacca – kukkucca* (restlessness and worry) is considered one of the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) to the development of tranquillity and insight. This point is of crucial significance to the main subject of our paper, as the Kierkegaardian emphasis on concepts like sin, guilt and dread often take a pathological turn.[1] A Buddhist has to accept the position that while conscious deception is certainly evil, dejection and pathological guilt is damaging, unwholesome and unprofitable. Honest and diligent self-analysis is necessary but morbid introspection charged by feelings of guilt and deprivation is certainly harmful. Freud has worked out the harmful effects of such mechanisms in his concept of the super-ego.[2] This perhaps gives an insight into Kierkegaard's own predicament — "It would seem that, despite the most penetrating flashes of insight, he was unable to achieve a state of inner harmony."[3]

Regarding the relationship between the ethical and the religious, it seems that there is a more meaningful connection between the two spheres in early Buddhism. The path of deliverance in Buddhism falls into the threefold structure of morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*). The latter two always have a sound foundation in morality. Kierkegaard, on the other hand, exaggerates the dilemmatic situation in the ethical sphere, based on Abraham's sacrifice of Issac. The Buddhist attitude to moral dilemmas has been discussed elsewhere.[4] While Kierkegaard's "leaps" into the religious springs from the paradoxical and the dilemmatic, there is a more natural transition from the ethical to the religious in Buddhism; the training undergone by one practising the Buddhist path is referred to as a "gradual training" (*anupubbasikkhā*).

[1] This complex is embedded in Kierkegaard's own life history.
[2] Sigmund Freud, *Civilisation and its Discontents*, (London, 1957).
[3] M. O.'C. Walshe, "From Kierkegaard to Zen", *Buddhism for Today*, Allen & Unwin, (London 1962) p. 101.
[4] M. W. Padmasiri de Silva, op. cit.

23

Conclusion

Regarding the universality of the pleasure principle and the lure of sensuality, there is agreement between early Buddhism and Kierkegaard. Both uphold the sanctity of marriage and family life as an alternative to the wild appetites of unregenerate sensuality. The link up between the ethical and the religious (though more intergrated in Buddhism), is common to both systems, and the ultimate significance of the religious is also a common goal. The most significant factor that has emerged out of this study, is that the emptiness and the discordance of the aesthete presented in *Either / Or,* and the critique of sensuality, appear almost as a Kierkegaardian version of the philosophy of Dukkha. If so, the message of the Buddha should certainly be relevant to the existentialist.

There are significant differences: the ethical in Buddhism is much wider, and the theistic basis of the religious (especially the theory of sin) in Kierkegaard, cannot be accepted by the Buddhist. The treatment of dread and despair in Kierkegaard may be a good corrective to the sensualist; but it is overdone in Kierkegaard. There is obviously a strain of the masochistic in Kierkegaard. Early Buddhism considers this pathological strain of remorse and guilt, restlessness and worry (*uddhacca – kukkucca*), as a hindrance to the development of inner tranquillity and insight. In fact Buddhism advocates different techniques of therapy for different types of personality. For instance meditation on the misery and emptiness of pleasure is a good corrective to the lustful type (*rāga – carita*), whereas the practice of compassionate love (*mettā*) is a fitting corrective to the melancholy and hateful-natured (*dosa-carita*).[1]

Kierkegaard's work itself is a fine expression of the kind of spiritual anguish that emerges from the heart of a devoted and sincere man; but the path of liberation that he offers is unsatisfactory from the Buddhist standpoint. The Buddha has very clearly shown that in the final analysis, anguish cannot be mastered by anguish; anguish has to be mastered by equanimity.[2]

---

[1] See, M.W. Padmasiri de Silva, 'The Therapeutic Basis of Early Buddhist Psychology', *A Study of Motivational Theory in Early Buddhism With Special Reference to the Psychology of Freud*, Ph. D. Thesis, University of Hawaii, Unpublished.

[2] M II, Sutta 101.

24

GAJABAHU AND THE GAJABAHU SYNCHRONISM
An inquiry into the relationship between myth and history

Gananath Obeyesekere

It is a well known fact that ancient literary works and chronicles are full of material of a patently mythological character. Sometimes it is easy to distinguish the mythical from the historical, but at other times this becomes extremely difficult, particularly if the events mentioned have some kind of historical core or base. Matters become even more complicated when the mythic events or personages mentioned in ancient literature, (and sometimes the literature itself), are closely involved with regional or national patriotism so that scholars are tempted to reify myth as history in order to prove a point of national honour, or enhance the glory of the past. In Ceylon, fortunately for us, in addition to the traditions recorded in the chronicles, there exists a rich tradition of myth and ritual sung or performed in well known religious ceremonies. It is therefore possible to control the data found in the literary works with that of myth, so as to throw some light regarding the historicity or the mythical nature of the events or personages mentioned in these sources. In this paper we will be mostly concerned with one such personage — Gajabahu — an important Sinhalese King appearing in historical chronicles and literary works as well as in the contemporary Sinhalese ritual tradition.

My interest in Gajabahu emerged from my research on the Pattini Cult. The rituals associated with the goddess Pattini are performed in the Sinhalese low country in a large scale ceremony known as the *gammaḍuva* ("village hall"). There are also *devāles* for this goddess in almost every part of the country, and during annual *devāle* celebrations, myths of the goddess are sung, and

Gananath Obeyesekere, Ph.D. (Washington) is Professor of Sociology at the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya.

rituals are performed in her honour. One such ritual is the famous "water-cutting ritual," which, according to myth, commemorates the cleaving of the ocean by Gajabahu. This episode is recounted in the *Gajabā Katāva* ("the story of Gajabahu"), one of the ritual texts sung in the Pattini rituals of the *gammaḍuva*.

In the course of my research, I realized that an analysis of Gajabahu, from a non-historical and anthropological point of view, may help us to clear some of the ambiguities and contradictions that centre on this figure, both regarding his role in Sinhalese culture and history, and also in relation to the Tamil Sangam Epic, the *Silappadikāram*. The problem as far as the *Silappadikāram* is concerned pertains to what is known as the "Gajabahu synchronism" i. e. the attempt to date the *Silappadikāram* on the basis of references to Gajabahu (Kayavāgu) of Ceylon found in that work. The Gajabahu synchronism relates to the reference in the *Silappadikārm* that Gajabahu (Kayavāgu) was present at the consecration ceremony of the Pattini temple inaugurated under the patronage of Senguttuvan. Since Gajabahu lived in the late second century, according to the *Mahāvaṃsa*, the "Gajabahu synchronism" has been of crucial importance for South Indian historical and literary chronology. Most scholars, of every persuasion, with a few exceptions, are inclined to accept the Gajabahu synchronism. Scholars of the more patriotic persuasion (for example, Dikshitar), admit it *in toto* i. e. they are convinced that King Gajabahu of Ceylon was not only present at Senguttuvan's capital for the ceremony, but also, that he introduced the Pattini Cult to Ceylon as the commentator's addendum in the *Silappadikāram* states. Several scholars of the tough minded sort accept it with reservations. They are impressed by the fact that the *Silappadikāram* refers to both Gajabahu and Senguttuvan as contemporaries. Though the *Silappadikāram* was written much later, they believe that the reference to the two kings was based on a valid historical tradition.

The importance of the Gajabahu synchronism for South Indian chronology could be illustrated by a few representative quotations from leading scholars.

(a) "This allusion to the King of Ceylon enables us to fix the date of Imaya Varman . . . "[1]

[1] V. Kanakasabhai, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, second edition, (Tirunelveli, 1954).

(b) "The synchronism of Senguttuvan with Gajabahu I of Ceylon is the sheet anchor of the chronology of early Tamil literature."[1]

(c) Dikshitar after reviewing the "evidence" confidently affirms: "Thus the Gajabahu synchronism is explained and the date of the composition of the *Silappadikāram* settled once and for all."[2]

(d) Kamil Zvelebil, the famous Czech scholar of Tamil says that "the majority of historians agree with the so-called Gajabahu synchronism, that is the conception according to which the Ceylonese King Gajabahu I (171-193 A.D.) was a contemporary of the Cera monarch, Senguttuvan."[3]

(e) Nilakanta Sastri says that "it is not unlikely that the legend preserved the memory of a historically correct synchronism".[4] Paranavitana also gives assent to this view.[5]

In the following pages we shall demonstrate that the Gajabahu synchronism is worthless for purposes of historical chronology, since the Gajabahu of the *Silappadikāram* is a mythical, not a historical personage. This consideration will also take us to an analysis of the Gajabahu myth.

The Gajabahu Synchronism

In the *Silappadikāram* proper the reference to Gajabahu of Ceylon is as follows:

"The monarch of the world circumambulated the shrine thrice and stood offering his respects. In front of him the Arya Kings released from prison, kings removed from the central jail, the Kongu ruler of Kudagu, the King of Malva and Kayavāgu (Gajabahu), the King of sea-girt Ceylon, prayed reverentially to the deity thus: 'Please grace our countries just as you have done this auspicious day, a fete-day at Imayavaramban's sacrifice.' Then a voice from the welkin issued forth: 'I have granted the boon' ".[6]

---

[1] S. Natesan, "The Sangam Age in Tamilnad", *History of Ceylon*, Vol. I, C. H. Ray, Editor-in-chief. (Colombo: University of Ceylon Press, 1959) 206-207.

[2] V. R. R. Dikshitar, *Silappadikāram*, (Oxford, 1939).

[3] Kamil Zvelebil, "Tamil Poetry Two Thousand Years Ago", *Tamil Culture*, (1963) X, 19-30.

[4] K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *History of South India*, second edition, (Oxford, 1958) 112.

[5] S Paranavitana, "Lambakanna Dynasty: Vasabha to Mahasena", *History of Ceylon*, Vol. I, 179-191.

[6] Dikshitar, *Silappadikāram*, 342-343.

Scholars like Vaiyapuri Pillai have noted that this account merely mentions that Gajabahu was present at the ceremony. The reference to his having introduced the Pattini Cult to Ceylon occurs in *Uraiperukatturai*, which was added to the *padikam* by an early editor.[1] This account actually seems to contradict the former. It states that famine devastated the Pandyan Kingdom after Pattini destroyed Madura so that the successor to the late King "propitiated the Lady of Chastity by sacrificing a thousand goldsmiths, and celebrated a festival when there was a downpour causing fertility to the land. . . . On hearing this Gajabahu of Ceylon encircled by sea, built a shrine for the Lady of Chastity where daily sacrifices were performed. Thinking that she would remove this distress (of his land), he also instituted annual festivals commencing with the month of Adi; then the rains came to stay and increased the fertility of the land so as to produce unfailing crops. . . . "[2]

Thus this part of the story merely states that Gajabahu introduced and instituted the Pattini Cult in Ceylon. These contradictions, in combination with other reasons, have led Vaiyapuri Pillai to deny the validity of the Gajabahu synchronism, as well as the account of his presence in the court of Senguttuvan. He considers these later interpolations.[3] While agreeing with Vaiyapuri Pillai let us submit the Gajabahu episode to a further scrutiny employing an anthropological analysis of the episode.

The arguments advanced by the more dogmatic scholars are briefly as follows: Gajabahu of Ceylon is mentioned in the *Silappadikāram*; there were two Gajabahus mentioned in Ceylon chronicles, one in the 2nd and the other in the 12th century; the twelfth century is palpably too late a date; ergo Gajabahu of the *Silappadikāram* is Gajabahu I who reigned in the second century. That things are much more complicated is apparent from a critical examination of the Ceylonese chronicles. The earliest reference to Gajabahu I appears in the *Dīpavaṃsa* compiled by Ceylonese monks about the middle of the fourth century. There is a brief, succinct account which states that Gajabahu was the son of Vankanasikatissa. "Tissa's son Gajabahukagamini caused a great thūpa to be built in the delightful Abhayarama. This royal chief constructed a pond called Gamini, according to the wish of the mother; this

---

[1] Ibid., p. 6.

[2] Ibid., p.6.

[3] S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, *History of Tamil Language and Literature*, (Madras: New Century Book House, 1956) 144.

28

lord ordered the ārāma called Rammaka to be built. He ruled twenty two years over the Island.''[1] The Mahāvaṃsa, compiled in the 5th century is only slightly more detailed. Several references to pious deeds omitted in the earlier account are included here.[2] There are no references here to the Pattini Cult, or to Gajabāhu's visit to South India. These references are found in Rājāvaliya, a sixteenth century work and the Rājāvaliya written probably in the seventeenth century. Both these are written in Sinhalese as against the Pali of the early chronicles. The latter text mentions that Gajabāhu did go to South India and brought back Buddha relics and the anklets of the Goddess Pattini. Before we consider these latter accounts let us examine the implications of the Dīpavaṃsa and Mahāvaṃsa accounts of Gajabāhu.

The Dīpavaṃsa and Mahāvaṃsa composed as they are in the fourth and fifth centuries are close to the events of Gajabāhu I's reign. Moreover, the compilers of the two chronicles used pre-existent accounts kept by monks in Buddhist temples. It is therefore surprising that Gajabāhu's visit to India finds no reference here. Some writers (Dikshitar, Gulasekeram) argue that the lack of reference to this incident is due to Buddhist compilers who did not wish to be associated with a non-Buddhist cult like that of Pattini. This argument seems to me highly improbable for both chronicles are replete with references to so-called ''non-Buddhist'' practices and beliefs. Actually, according to popular Sinhalese tradition, Pattini is not a Hindu but a Buddhist deity and an aspirant to future Buddhahood. Moreover, according to Sinhalese tradition, Gajabāhu also brought back with him Buddha relics. It is even more surprising therefore that no reference was made to Gajabāhu's visit in the early accounts. Hence we shall draw certain *tentative* generalizations, which will be spelled out in detail later.

(a) The *Mahāvaṃsa* and *Dīpavaṃsa* make no reference to Gajabāhu's visit to South India, because Gajabāhu I of the chronicles made no such visit.

(b) The likelihood is that the Pattini Cult was not prevalent in Ceylon at the time of the composition of these chronicles. Nowhere in them is there a reference to the Goddess Pattini. Since the

---

1. B. C. Law (Ed.), *Dīpavaṃsa, The Ceylon Historical Journal*, (Colombo, 1958) Vol. 7.
2. Wilhelm Geiger (trans.), *Mahāvaṃsa*, (Colombo: Government Printer, 1911) 254-255.

later Sinhalese chronicles do mention Pattini one could tentatively conclude that the cult was introduced to Ceylon some time after the 5th century but before the 16th.

These conclusions will be spelled out in more detail in the analysis of the later Sinhalese accounts.

Let us now consider the sixteenth and seventeenth century Sinhalese accounts of the Gajabahu episode. The Sinhalese accounts in the two chronicles are basically the same, but since the *Rājā-valiya* is the more detailed one let us consider it.

"Gajaba, son of king Bapa Vannassi, succeeded to the throne. One night, when walking in the city, he heard a widow weeping because the king of Soli had carried away her children. He said within himself, 'Some wrong has been done in this city' and having marked the door of her house with chalk, returned to his palace. In the morning he called his ministers and inquired of them what (they knew of any) acts of justice or injustice in the city. Thereupon they replied, 'O great king, it is like a wedding house.' The king, being wroth with his ministers, sent for the woman, the door of whose house he had marked with chalk, and asked her (why she wept). The poor woman replied, 'I wept because among the 12,000 persons taken captive by the Soli king were my two sons.' On hearing these words the king expressed anger against his royal father, and, saying 'I will go tomorrow to the Soli country,' assembled an army and went to Yapapatuna, think-ing 'I will (myself) bring back the people forcibly carried off by the king of Soli,' and having declared it openly, he dismissed the army. Taking the giant Nila with him he went and struck the sea with an iron mace, divided the waters in twain, and go-ing quietly on arrival at the Soli capital, struck terror into the king of Soli, and seated himself on the throne like king Sak; whilst the giant Nila seized the elephants in the city and killed them by striking one against another.

The ministers informed the king of Soli of the devastation of the city thus being made. Thereupon he inquired of Gajaba, 'Is the Sinhalese host come to destroy this city?'. Gajaba replied, 'I have a little boy who accompanied me; there is no army', and caused the giant Nila to be brought and made to stand by his side. Thereupon the king of Soli asked 'Why has your Majesty come alone without an army?' Gajaba replied, 'I have come in order to take back the 12,000 persons whom your royal

father brought here as prisoners in the time of my father.' To this the king of Soli saying, 'A king of our family it was who, in time past, went to the city of the gods and gained victory in the war with the Asuras,' refused to send for and deliver the men. Then Gajaba grew wroth and said, "Forthwith restore my 12,000 people, giving 12,000 more besides them; else will I destroy this city and reduce it to ashes.' Having said this, he squeezed out water from sand and showed it; squeezed water from his iron mace and showed that. Having in this way intimidated the king of Soli he received the original number supplemented by an equal number of men, as interest, making 24,000 persons in all. He also took away the jewelled anklets of goddess Pattini and the insignia of the gods of the four devalas·, and also the bowl-relic which had been carried off in the time of king Valagamba; and admonishing the king not to act thus in future, departed.

On his arrival he landed the captives; sent each captive who owned ancestral property to his inherited estate, and caused the supernumerary captives to be distributed over and to settle in these countries, viz., Alutkuruwa, Sarasiya pattuwa, Yatinuwara, Udunuwara, Tumpane, Hewaheta, Pansiya pattuwa, Egoda Tiha, and Megoda Tiha. This king reigned 24 years, and went to the world of the gods."[1]

On reading this version the reader will note that it agrees with the *Silappadikāram* only in one respect — that Gajabahu visited South India and was associated with the Pattini Cult. It contradicts or omits details in the *Silappadikāram*. In the *Rājāvaliya* the reference is to Gajabahu having visited Cola (Soli), not Cera where Senguttuvan reigned. It is unlikely that he ever went to Cera (assuming for argument's sake that this account has some historicity) for he brought back the anklets of the Goddess Pattini *from Cola.* If this is correct the Pattini Cult must have been already fully institutionalized in Cola in the second century. Thus the *Silappadikāram* account which says that it was *started* in Cera by Senguttuvan is, according to the Sinhalese accounts, wrong. Gajabahu is presented in a role subservient to Senguttuvan in the *Silappadikāram*. In the *Rājaratnākara* and the *Rājāvaliya* he is presented as a grandiose hero. He brings back the insignia of the Gods of the four *devāles*, the bowl relic of the Buddha and 12,000 Tamil prisoners. There is no reference to his having introduced

[1] B. Gunasekara (trans.), *The Rājāvaliya*, (Colombo: Government Printer, 1911) 47-48.

the Pattini Cult to Ceylon. On the contrary the assumption in these two accounts is that the Pattini Cult was already in existence in Ceylon, hence the importance of bringing back with him the anklets of that deity. Moreover, we shall show presently, that Sinhalese sources state clearly elsewhere that Gajabahu did *not* introduce the cult. We will therefore have to dismiss the preposterous claims of some scholars who, like Natesan, say that 'the introduction of the Pattini Cult to Ceylon by Gajabahu I is confirmed by the *Rājāvaliya*, the Ceylon chronicle."[1]

Even a cursory glance at the Gajabahu story suggests that the account has no historical veracity. The highly improbable ignorance of the King regarding the fact that 12,000 prisoners were taken captive in his father's reign till reminded of this by an old widow, the cleaving of the ocean in two and other miraculous events show that this is hardly historical, though it may be based on some historical event whose nature we are in no position to infer. The account, however, is almost in point-by-point agreement with the Gajabahu myth sung in watercutting rituals. The inference is irresistible: the Gajabahu story is not a historical episode at all, but a mythical one associated with watercutting (and probably other customs) and incorporated into the two Sinhalese chronicles. Thus the reason why the earlier *Mahāvaṃsa* account does not mention the episode is that it simply did not take place historically. This is not only true of the Gajabahu episode but of others as well. Another famous origin myth—that of the *pūna yāgaya* (ritual of the *pūna* pot) as well as the Kandyan *kohomba kankāriya* — deals with the illness of King Panduvasudeva, Vijaya's nephew. The *Mahāvaṃsa* is singularly silent about this episode, whereas the *Rājāvaliya* restates almost *in toto* the mythic version of the episode. Once again the conclusion is that the myth evolved after the 5th century but before the 16th and is based on ritual data. But for some scholars these seem incontrovertible historical facts. The Professor of History of the University of Madras writing on South Indian colonization in Ceylon asserts: "One of the early references to such settlements is heard of in connection with the reign of Panduvasudeva. It is said that for the purpose of curing the illness of the King, certain Brahmins were brought from South India and they were settled in the capital."[2]

---

[1] Natesan, "The Sangam Age in Tamilnad", *History of Ceylon*, Vol. I, 212.
[2] K. K. Pillay, *South India and Ceylon*, (Madras: University of Madras Press, 1963) 136.

To sum up what we have said so far. The Gajabahu episode in the *Rājāvaliya* and *Rājaratnākara* is probably derived from the origin myth of the water–cutting ceremony or from similar myths and has nothing to do with the historical Gajabahu of the *Mahā-vaṃsa* who lived in the 2nd century. The myth, which associates Gajabahu with the Pattini Cult in a manner opposed to the *Silappadikāram* account, evolved after the 5th century A. D. The *ritual* of water–cutting is probably older than the *myth* of origin. For example, even in Ceylon water–cutting is also associated with festivities involving Skanda (Kataragama), Ganesh and Siva; here different myths of origin are involved. The probability is that the Gaja-bahu episode was used to explain the origin of water–cutting after the Pattini Cult became the dominant fertility cult in Sinhalese Ceylon. The Gajabahu story itself may have been current before then i. e. before the Pattini Cult became dominant. Indeed Gajabahu is a typical Sinhalese culture hero figure who like Vijaya, Panduvasudeva, and Malala Rajjuruvo of the Sinhalese ritual tradition was the 'originator' of various ritual and religious customs and institutions of the Sinhalese. If there was any historicity in these figures they have been completely transformed in the myth making process. Further analysis of the Gajabahu episode as depicted in the two Sinhalese chronicles and in our myths will make this process of mythicization clearer.

An important difference exists between the *Rājāvaliya* account and the myth of Gajabahu of the water–cutting ritual. The *Rājā-valiya* states that the 12,000 captives brought to Ceylon by Gajabahu were settled in the following regions: Alutkuruva, Sarasiya Pattuva, Yatinuvara, Udunuvara, Tumpane, Hevahata, Pansiya Pattuva, Egoda Tiha, Megoda Tiha. The water cutting ritual ignores this detail. A historical literalism in the analysis of the episode would mean that Gajabahu I who lived in the 2nd century waged a war in the Cola country-brought back many prisoners, and settled most of them in certain parts of the Sinhalese hill country. By contrast the Cola King who lived in Gajabahu's father's reign put his Sinhalese cap-tives to work in damming the Kaveri, a useful irrigation enterprise. It was singularly foolish of Gajabahu not to have used this human labour for similar construction purposes, for the hill country and the coastal regions where his captives were settled were, in the second century, a remote, inaccessible and inhospitable region, "a home of rebels and lost causes."[1] An anthropological analysis,

---

[1] G. C. Mendis. The quotation is from Dr. Mendis (personal communication).

treating this episode as a myth, yields a different set of conclusions. This version of the Gajabahu story is what I call a "colonization myth" functionally similar to the Moses myth of the Bible. As an origin myth it explains the existence of South Indian settlers in parts of Kandyan Provinces and coastal regions. These settlers may have come for various reasons—through waves of conquest, peaceful immigration, or 'introduced' by the Sinhalese kings themselves. The myth like other myths of this genre, is an explanation of the existence of these groups probably justifying their "anomalous status", to use Malinowski's words, in the Sinhalese social structure. Even now there are communities of low subcastes of the Goigama (farmer) caste in the Kandyan areas (e. g. near Ampitiya I have come across one such village) who claim their origin from this source. Their position is slightly inferior to the majority of *Goigama* castes: their inferiority as well as their origin, are explained in terms of the identical myth. The myth served as a useful mechanism for incorporating immigrant populations into the Sinhalese social structure till recent times. In the Sinhalese low country there are castes of Karava, Salagama and Demala Gattara (lit. Tamil *gotra*) who claim to have descended from those captives thus providing a mythical charter, in Malinowski's sense, for these groups.[1]

The earliest reference to 'Gajabahu's colonization is in the 16th century *Rājaratnākara*, which only states that the captives were settled in Alut Kuruva, near Negombo. A *kaḍaimpota* (an account of geographical boundaries), quoted by Bell, has another account of Gajabahu's colonization of Alut Kuruva.

"In olden times, after the Rawana War, from Kuru Rata there came to this Island a queen, a royal prince, a rich nobleman, and a learned prime minister, with their retinue, and by order of King Rama dwelt in a place called on that account Kuru Rata. In the year of our great Lord Gautama Buddha, Gajabahu who came from Kuru Rata, settled people in the (second Kuru Rata), calling it Parana-Kuru-Rata. In another place he sent 1,000 persons, and gave it to them calling it Alut Kuruwa."[2]

Alut Kuruwa is today populated by the Karava or Fisher caste, who in their myths trace their ancestry to the Kauravas (Kuru)

[1] B. Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion*, (New York: Doubleday, 1955) 101.
[2] C. H. P. Bell, *Report on the Kegalle District* (Colombo: Government Printer, 1904) 2.

of the Mahābhārata war. The major waves of Karava immigration to Ceylon occurred in the 15th century and after.[1] The Gajabahu myth, in its Rājaratnākara version, probably explains and justifies the existence of these and similar South Indian groups. The Kaḍaimpota version has actually converted Gajabahu to a Karava hero, whose home was not Ceylon but India. Furthermore he is a contemporary of the Buddha. No further eviednce is required to illustrate the mythic character of Gajabahu.

The viability of the Gajabahu myth as a mythical charter for incorporating immigrant groups into the Sinhalese social structure continued till recent times. The Demala Gattara caste of the Sinhalese low country who were recent immigrants to Ceylon also trace their ancestry to Gajabahu's captives. The Salagama (Hāli, Caliya originally weavers, later cinnamon peelers) who were earlier immigrants also have similar myths. The Portuguese historian of Ceylon, Father de Queyroz writing in the seventeenth century about the exploits of the Sinhalese says: "...and once they captured 12,000 foreigners with whom they peopled the country of Dolosdaz-Corla and from these, they say, are descended the Chaleaz who are obliged to get the cinnamon."[2] Dolos-das-Korale is in the Matara District where once again there are groups of the Salagama caste.

Thus the Gajabahu myth has been a continually viable one, justifying and explaining the existence of South Indian settlers in Ceylon. But at what period did this version of the myth arise? Two references in the Sinhalese chronicles give us important clues. Firstly, the areas where the captives were settled were in the Kandyan region and the coastal areas. These regions came into prominence in the 14th century and after, particularly with the founding of the Gampola Kingdom. The movement to the Kandyan areas was consequent to disastrous invasions by the Colas (10 century) and later of Magha (13th century), which ruined the magnificient civilizations of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa. It is most likely that this version of the colonization myth evolved after the 14th century. Moreover, these place names were hardly known in the 2nd century. Secondly, the Rājāvaliya version mentions that Gajabahu brought back with him the insignia of the gods of the Four Devales. The "Four Devales" refer to the

---

[1] M. D. Raghavan, The Karava of Ceylon, (Colombo: K. V. G. de Silva, 1961).
[2] Father Fernando de Queyroz, The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, (Colombo: Government Printer, 1930) Book 1. 15.

temples for the four deities — Skandha (Kataragama), Pattini, Nata, Vishnu in Kandy. The "Four Devales" came into prominence in the reign of Kirti Sri Rajasinha in 1775 A. D. though it existed at the time the *Rājāvaliya* was composed i. e. the 17th century.[1] The *Mahāvaṃsa* and *Cūlavaṃsa* make no mention of the Four Devales. The probability is strong that the concept of the Four Devales also evolved after the 14th century in Kandyan times. We can therefore roughly place this version of the Gajabahu myth between the 14th and 17th centuries.

There is some further evidence which is of some importance. The *Rājaratnākara* written in the 16th century makes no mention of Gajabahu bringing back with him the anklets of Pattini or the insignia of the Four Gods. The rest of the episode however is recounted. The *Pūjāvaliya*, a thirteenth century Sinhalese text, has even less to say about Gajabahu:

> Waknaha Tissa's son Gajabahu "learning that during the reign of his royal father, people were sent from *Lanka* to work at *Kaveri*, sent for his ministers, and having made inquiries was highly displeased and took in his hand the iron mace made for him by his royal father. Accompanied by his warriors, with the iron mace in his right hand, to lift which fifty persons were required, circumambulating the sea from right to left, he struck it (with the mace); divided the waters in two by virtue of his meritorious deeds; went to the sea-coast of Soli without wetting his feet; displayed his power; took away twice as many persons as went to work at *Kaveri;* made a law that henceforth the inhabitants of *Lanka* shall not go to work at *Kaveri*; placed guards round the coast; issued a proclamation in *Lanka* by beat of tom-tom; celebrated his triumph; performed many meritorious deeds; reigned for twenty two years; and went to the divine world."[2]

The *Pūjāvaliya* account makes no mention of his association with the Pattini Cult, with the Four Devales or with settling down captives in specific places, or the number of captives involved. Moreover nowhere in the *Pūjāvaliya* or in any of the other literature of the 13th century, as far as I could gather, is there any reference to the Pattini Cult. The evolution of the myth, as it is found in the chronicles, could be presented in the following table.

---

[1] R. H. Aluwihare, *The Kandy Perahara*, second edition (Colombo: Gunasena, 1964)
[2] B. Gunasekara (trans.), *A Contribution to the History of Ceylon, Translated from "Pujavaliya"* (Colombo: Government Printer: 1895), 21-22.

36

	Cleaves Ocean	Brings captives	Settles them	Brings Buddha relics	Brings insignia of Four Devales	Brings anklets of Pattini	Builds specific tanks & temples
Dīpavaṃsa (4th century)	−	−	−	−	−	−	+
Mahāvaṃsa (5th century)	−	−	−	−	−	−	+
Pūjāvaliya (13th century)	+	+	−	−	−	−	−
Rājaratnākara (16th century)	+	+	+	+	+	+	−
Rājāvaliya (17th or 18th century)	+	+	+	+	+	+	−

Does this mean that the cult was not dominant enough to be recorded in the *Mahāvaṃsa* and *Dīpavaṃsa*? There are probably many important incidents that have occurred in Ceylon's history which find no mention in the *Mahāvaṃsa* or *Dīpavaṃsa*; thus the absence of reference in the *Mahāvaṃsa* to a certain historical event is no real proof of its non-occurrence. But note that these two early chronicles actually mention Gajabahu; the "miraculous" exploits of Gajabahu are however not mentioned though these chronicles are full of "miracle" particularly when it comes to religious matters. It is therefore reasonable to assume that these works which contain enough "miracle" would not hesitate to record grandiose events regarding heroic figures if these events were current information at periods in which they were written. There is then a remarkable evolution of the Gajabahu story from the matter-of-fact historic accounts in the *Dīpavāṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa* to the elaborate myth of the *Rājāvaliya*. The mythic elements are present in the 13th century *Pūjāvaliya*, and absent in the 5th century. In the latter three accounts factual references to the construction of buildings and tanks are omitted. During this period the Gajabahu of history has been transformed into the Gajabahu of myth. The *Pūjāvaliya* version commences the myth–making process by reference to the cleaving of the ocean and the bringing back of captives.

We noted that the contemporary water–cutting ritual celebrated the cleaving of the ocean by Gajabahu and that this origin myth or a similar one was incorporated into the *Rājāvaliya*, in all likelihood. It is now obvious that this myth is also included in the

37

earlier *Pūjāvaliya, but without any association with Pattini.* The con-
clusions we can derive are the following: (a) The water–cutting
ritual is even today not only associated with Pattini but also with
Kataragama, Siva and Ganesh. (b) In all probability it is a
rite antecedent to the Pattini Cult. (c) In the Pattini Cult in Ceylon
water-cutting is associated with Gajabahu, but the only substantive
connection between the two myths in terms of their content is that
Gajabahu brought back with him the anklets of the deity. (d) The
Pūjāvaliya account makes no reference to these anklets or to Pattini.
(e) It therefore looks as if the Gajabahu myth was the origin
myth of water–cutting even before the Pattini cult was dominant
in Ceylon, or that it was a myth independent of the Pattini Cult.
As a matter of fact there is some internal evidence in the *Pūjā-
valiya* account to suggest that even this reference has to do with
a ritual. Note that in this account Gajabahu circumambulated from right
to left before he split the ocean with his mace. Such circumambulation
rites are performed as a prelude to any propitious ritual even to-
day and it is conceivable that this episode also refers to a ritual.
Incidentally, clockwise circumambulation (right to left movement) is
viewed as propitious, and anti–clockwise circumambulation (left to
right movement) is unpropitious, or inferior. Unhappily there is
some controversy regarding the problem of Gajabahu's circumambula-
tion of the ocean. The word for circumambulation is *pradakṣina*; whereas
all recent editions of the *Pūjāvaliya* give the word as *dakṣinakoṭa*.
Dakṣina could best be translated as gift or offering, and *dakṣina-
koṭa* could read as "having made a gift or offering." However
Gunasekara who translated this section of the *Pūjāvaliya* in 1895,
also published the Sinhalese edition in 1893.[1] His version which
is the result of the collation of several palm-leaf manuscripts has
pradakṣina-koṭa, 'having circumambulated'. Scholars whom I consulted
agreed with "dakṣinakoṭa" as the correct word; the reason they
gave was that it was an impossible feat for Gajabahu to have
circumambulated the ocean! My own view is that *pradakṣina-koṭa*
("circumambulated") is the correct interpretation, and *dakṣina-koṭa*
is simply a result of a literal interpretation of this episode by
editors. The final solution to this problem must await the collation
of old palm leaf manuscripts of the *Pūjāvaliya.*

Thus we state on the basis of the preceding argument that the
Gajabahu myth originated about the 13th century, and this myth

---

[1] B. Gunasekara (ed.) *Pūjāvaliyen uputāgannālada laṅkākatāva*, (Colombo: Govern-
ment Printer, 1893), 21.

was not associated with the Pattini cult. It is probable that this lack of association between the "Gajabahu Cult" and the Pattini cult continued through to the 15th century for the *Rājaratnākara* also has no reference to Pattini. However according to this account Gajabahu brought back with him Buddha's almsbowl taken to South India in the time of Valagamba (29–17 B.C.). What is the mythic significance of this inclusion? According to the *Mahāvaṃsa* Tamil chiefs from South India captured the revered bowl relic and took it to India.[1] The *Cūlavaṃsa* which continues the *Mahāvaṃsa* narration states that in King Upatissa's reign (352–409 A. D.) the stone bowl was used by the king himself for a rainmaking ritual[2]. No reference to the bowl having been brought back is however given in the *Mahāvaṃsa*. A strange *lacuna*, and a not very comforting one for mass religiosity.

Yet, what about the *stone* bowl in Upatissa's reign? The *Mahāvamsa* in the early references does not mention that the bowl was of stone[3] and its unlikely that the Buddha used a bowl made out of this particular mineral. The conclusion is again irresistible. The bowl relic was, next to the tooth relic, the major object of mass adoration and also associated with Sovereignty. It was taken to South India and lost in Valagamba's reign. Yet mass religiosity cannot brook this loss, and a stone bowl was substituted. (This course of events, incidentally, is identical with that of the history of the tooth relic which suffered similar viccissitudes but always managed to get back to Ceylon). But there is a serious lacuna here for if the bowl relic was lost in the 2nd century B. C. and yet existed in the 5th century A. D. and thereafter, who recovered it and how? Gajabahu, of course. Thus by the 16th century when the *Rājaratnākara* was written Gajabahu the culture hero was credited with this great achievement. Thus this version of the Gajabahu myth accounts for the presence of the stone bowl in Ceylon.

In the *Rājāvaliya* account of the 18th or 19th century two more elements are added to the Gajabahu myth: Gajabahu brings back the insignia of the gods of the Four Devales and the anklets of the Goddess Pattini. What are the Four Devales, and who are its Gods? The Four Devales are the temples of the Four Gods

[1] Wilhelm Geiger (trans.) *Mahāvaṃsa*, (Colombo: Government Press, 1934) 232-233.

[2] Wilhelm Geiger (trans.) *Cūlavaṃsa*, (Colombo: Government Printer, 1953) 19.

[3] Geiger, *Mahāvaṃsa*, 117-137.

39

(*hatara deiyo*)—Nata, Vishnu, Pattini and Kataragama located near the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy. One of the four gods is Pattini; thus Gajabahu brings the insignia of Pattini (one of the Four Gods) and her anklets, *which are her insignia*! These contradictions which arise from a literalist interpretation of the episode are resolved if we approach it once again as a myth.

The Four Devales are typically associated with Kandyan Kingship, for victory in war and for success in secular undertakings. Though the Four Devales may have existed earlier, they came into prominence in the time of Kirti Sri Rajasinha (1747-1782 A. D.). Kirti Sri Rajasinha also inaugurated the procession or *perahara* of the Temple of the Tooth with the four *devales* participating in it.[1] One origin myth of the *perahara* (there are others) states that it was inaugurated to celebrate the victory of Gajabahu in Cola. Thus the significance of the insignia of the Four Gods is obvious : it is linked to the inauguration of the *perahara* by Gajabahu. What about the separate reference to Pattini's anklets? The likelihood is that by the time the *Rājāvaliya* was composed the Pattini Cult had come into prominence and the water–cutting ritual was associated with other rites performed during annual Pattini rituals, as it is done even today in the *gammaḍuva* rituals for Pattini. If so the Gajabahu myth of water–cutting had to be linked with Pattini. This was done through that final version of the myth which stated that Gajabahu brought back with him the anklets of the deity.

We are not yet done with the Gajabahu myth. Gajabahu we noted is the culture hero to whom are attributed several deeds of cultural significance for the Sinhalese. The earliest extant form of the myth is the 13th century. It was clearly absent in the fifth. The question is at what period between the 5th and 13th centuries could the myth have evolved? A psychological interpretation of the content of the myth may give us a clue. Gajabahu is the hero leading his people from captivity in the Tamil Kingdom. He is like Moses of the Bible; he cleaves the river with a rod and parts the seas. Gajabahu is accompanied by Nilamaha Yodaya, who appears as a demon Kalu Kumaraya in other Sinhalese myths.[2] He brings back 12,000

---

[1] Aluwihare, 2-3.

[2] Paul Wirz, *Exorcism and the Art of Healing in Ceylon*, (Leiden: Brill 1954) 34-39

40

Colas in addition to the 12,000 Sinhalese. The number is explained by Spellman in his essay on the ritual significance of the number twelve in Indian culture. Spellman also quotes a Jain myth, strikingly similar to the Gajabahu one, where an ascetic predicting a twelve year famine led 12,000 of his people to a more fruitful land.[1] Gajabahu is the great hero, performing miraculous deeds, vanquishing the detested Tamils. The tone and contents of the myth are highly "nativistic", though not millenarian. It seems a wish fulfilment than a reality, a boost for the self esteem of a group subject to serious vicissitudes of fortune. The mythic fantasy is, we suggest, the opposite of reality. The question that arises then is, what period between the 4th and 13th centuries was conducive to the formation of this myth? The intervening historical events provide the answer.

The low point in Sinhalese fortunes commenced in the late 10th century with systematic South Indian invasions, unlike the more sporadic incursions of the earlier periods. Ceylon was a principality of Cola till 1070 when the Sinhalese chieftain Kirti raised the standard of revolt successfully and assumed the Crown as Vijayabahu I (1059–1114 A. D.). After Vijayabahu there was a temporary resurgence of Sinhalese civilization culminating in the reign of Parakrama Bahu the Great. The old capital of Anuradhapura had to be moved to Polonaruva as a result of the Cola invasions, and under Parakrama Bahu I Sinhalese civilization reached new heights. But the respite was temporary. In 1214 Magha of Kalinga landed in Ceylon with a large army and wrought utter destruction. The *Cūlavaṃsa* gives a detailed account of the destruction caused by Magha. The *Pūjāvaliya* written soon after Magha's invasion also mentions the tragedy of the Sinhalese. Both accounts mention the number of Kerala troops as 24,000 a figure which we pointed out cannot be taken literally. The *Rājāvaliya* gives the number as 20,000 in its brief account of the conquest which is quoted below:

> As moral duties were not practised by the inhabitants of Lanka, and the guardian deities of Lanka regarded them not, their sins were visited upon them and unjust deeds became prevalent. The king of Kalinga landed on the island of Lanka with an army of 20,000 ablebodied men, fortified himself, took the city

[1] John W. Spellman, "The Symbolic Significance of the Number Twelve in Ancient India", *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXII, No. 1, (1962) 79-88.

41

of Polonnaruwa, seized King Parakrama Pandi, plucked out his eyes, destroyed the religion and the people, and broke into Ruwanvali and the other dagabas. He caused the Tamils to take and destroy the shrines which resembled the embodied fame of many faithful kings, the pinnacles which were like their crowns, and the precious stones which were as their hearts, and the relics which were like their lives. He wrought confusion in castes by reducing to servitude people of high birth in Lanka, raising people of low birth and holding them in high esteem. He reduced to poverty people of rank; caused the people of Lanka to embrace a false faith; seized those who were observant of morals, and mutilated them, cutting off hands, feet etc., in order to ascertain where they had concealed their wealth; turned Lanka into a house on fire; settled Tamils in every village; and reigned 19 years in the commission of deeds of violence.[1]

While Magha was holding sway over the old capitals of Anuradha-pura and Polonnaruva, a Sinhalese Vijayabahu III established a Sinhalese Kingdom in Dambadeni (the Dambadeniya dynasty) to the south of the Old Kingdom. He was succeeded by Parakrama Bahu II, his son (1236–1271). His period was one of intense literary and cultural activity, though he also could not reunite the whole of Ceylon under his dominion. The *Pūjāvaliya*, which gives the first written account of the Gajabahu episode, was written during this period.

The socio-historical ethos of the time was conducive to the development of a nativistic myth. The late 10th and 11th centuries saw a serious decline in Sinhalese fortunes with the Cola conquest; there was a rapid rise to new heights of glory in the 12th century; and then in the early 13th it sank to the lowest yet in the history of the Island. If we are right that the fantasy in the myth is the opposite of the reality, the period of the depredations of Magha was probably the time when the myth evolved. We noted that while Magha was ruling in the old kingdom, Vijayabahu III established the Dambadeniya dynasty—the myth may have evolved in this region. If so the *Pūjāvaliya* written soon after merely committed to writing an existent myth.

When we compare the Gajabahu myth and the Magha account, we realize again that the former is a myth which is the opposite

---

[1] B. Gunasekara (trans. and ed.), *Rājavaliya*, (Colombo: Government Printer, 1900) 61-62.

of the later 'reality'; Magha invades Ceylon with 24,000 (or 20,000) Kerala troops; Gajabahu brings back 24,000. Magha plunders and terrorizes the Sinhalese, killing their King; Gajabahu terrorizes the Colas; Magha populates Sinhalese villages with Tamil *conquerors*; Gajabahu does it with Tamil *captives*. Even more important than these polarities are the social psychological functions of the myth which are to boost the self esteem of the peoples whose 'morale' had sunk low in an era of troubles. We note that these heroic exploits are foisted on Gajabahu who as a result was transformed from a historical into a mythological figure. Unlike millenerian myths the heroic exploits mentioned are projected into a glorious past, rather than a paradisal future. Both types of myths however express a 'fantasy' which is contrasted with the current reality. If so the danger in a literalist interpretation of the myth is obvious. As a typical example of such a literalist interpretation we shall quote from one eminent scholar.

"In the reign of the next king a small army of Colias invaded Ceylon and carried off much booty and a considerable number of prisoners. This insult was avenged by his son and successor, Gajabahu (the Elephant–armed), who invaded Tanjore with a large army. The king of Tanjore, intimidated by the sudden attack, acceded to all demands without a single act of hostility. It was the first expedition of the Sinhalese outside their island home, and their success brought about several important and interesting results. Twelve thousand Colian prisoners accompanied Gajabahu on his return home, and they were settled in various parts of the country, where they quite soon became part of the permanent population. Their descendants are scattered in many districts even at the present time, and their language has influenced Sinhalese speech in no small measure. A large number of Colian words found their way even into the literary dialect of the Sinhalese. The king of Cola also presented Gajabahu with the jewelled anklets of the Hindu goddess Pattini and the insignia of four Hindu deities, Vishnu, Kartikeya, Natha and Pattini. The cult of these gods and goddesses was thus introduced into the island; an extensive literature and folklore grew up around these names; special families dedicated themselves to their service, and observances and ceremonies connected with these deities continue to this day. A large

43

number of books dealing with the cult of Pattini are still available."[1]

What light does the preceding analysis of the Gajabahu myth throw on the *Silappadikāram* and the chronology of the early South Indian history? One thing is clear : in so far as the Gajabahu of the Pattini Cult is not the historic Gajabahu who lived in the 2nd century, the 'Gajabahu synchronism' has to be abandoned once and for all. Secondly, since the Gajabahu myth probably evolved in the period 10–13th century, a late date for the *Silappadikāram* is more in consonance with the Sinhalese evidence. However there are several problems yet unsolved, for even the most cautious Indian scholars place the *Silappadikāram* not later than the 9th century.

If so the Gajabahu reference, like Ilango Adigal's kinship with Senguttuvan, must be later interpolations, a characteristic feature of early literature. Some writers have used the independent references to Gajabahu in the *Silappadikāram* and the Sinhalese chronicles as proof of the historical authenticity of the protagonist (e. g. Gulasekeram). For the anthropologist this should prove no problem for myths have circulated in the Indo–European orbit from the earliest times. The Gajabahu myth evolved in Ceylon and probably diffused to South India, since channels of intercommunication between the two countries existed. When myths get diffused they may be adapted to the socio–historical context of the recipient nation. Hence we see the difference in attitude to Gajabahu in the two countries. In Ceylon Gajabahu, is the grandiose hero who saved his people from servitude: we noted that the nativism of the myth was conducive to the ethos of the 10–13th centuries, for this was a period where South Indian invasions were intensest. What about the ethos in South India (especially Cola and Kerala i. e. Cera) from where the invasions sprang? The reverse of the Ceylon situation must surely be true. This factor is given expression in the Indian adaptation of Gajabahu, for in the *Silappadikāram* Gajabahu is not the hero of Sinhalese myth. He is subservient to Senguttuvan who is the grandiose hero in the Tamil epic, also performing improbable adventures. Thus the two different adaptations of Gajabahu are a fascinating example of a mythic figure adapted to suit divergent socio–historic conditions in two neighbouring countries.

[1] G. P. Malalasekera, *The Pali Literature of Ceylon*, (Colombo: Gunasena, 1958) 50.

44

It also explains the different roles of Gajabahu in relation to the Pattini Cult. In the Indian version he introduces the cult to Ceylon under the patronage of the Cera King; in the Sinhalese version he terrorizes the Cola King and brings back the anklets of the deity, a religious object of great veneration. Looking at the Sinhalese versions *in toto* Gajabahu's action here is strictly analogous to his action in respect of the prisoners. The Cola King captures 12,000 Sinhalese prisoners. Gajababu brings them back and in addition 12,000 more South Indian prisoners. A Tamil (Damila) captures the bowl relic in Valagamba's reign; Gajabahu brings this back *and in addition* brings back the anklets of Pattini and the insignia of the Four Devales. There is method in the organization of the myth, but this cannot be elucidated by a literal examination of the myth.

The *Silappadikáram*, we noted, states that Gajabahu introduced the Pattini Cult to Ceylon under the patronage of the King of Cera, Senguttuvan. The Sinhalese Gajabahu myth does not agree with this. What do the Sinhalese *ritual* sources say about the Pattini Cult in Ceylon? The text of the *madu upata* sung in Pattini rituals, gives us the answer: the Pattini Cult was introduced by Seraman Raju, which literally means "King of Cera"! The term Seraman ("Ceraman") appears in the Sangam literature as a prefix for several South Indian rulers.[1] A literalist may now argue on the basis of this that the Pattini Cult was introduced by a King of Cera, probably Senguttuvan. But this is as far fetched as the Gajabahu hypothesis as far as we are concerned. Seraman Raju, like the Kings of Pandi and Soli, in other Sinhalese rituals, is also a mythical figure. Consider his case as described in the myths. He had a headache as a result of a frog, (who carried an enmity towards the King from a previous birth) having entered his nose. He came to Ceylon (for some inexplicable reason) and had a ritual performed. Divinities like Viswakarma, the divine architect, and Sakra, King of Gods, came to his aid. This event occurring in mythical times is a prototype of the present *gammaḍuva* ritual. Thus no historicity can be attributed to this myth. However while it is true to say that the action of the episode is set in mythic times, the myth like any other was composed in historical times. One plausible historical inference we may make from this myth is that the Pattini cult was introduced by Cera (Kerala) colonists

---

[1] Vaiyapuri Pillai, 95-66, 110-159

from Malaladesa (Malabar?). In Sinhalese ritual the words like Malaladesa, Pandi and Soli, refer to South Indian people generally rather than a specific geographic region in South India. Hence the only cautious inference one can make is that the cult of Pattini was introduced to Ceylon by South Indian colonists, probably during the systematic invasions of the period 10–13th centuries.

Gajabahu and Karikala

One of the fascinating problems that emerge in the study of the Gajabahu myth is the reference in the *Pūjāvaliya* and *Rājāvaliya* to Sinhala people taken captive by the Cola king in the reign of Gajabahu's father to work at the river Kaveri. It was these people that Gajabahu (like Moses) went to rescue. The name of the Cola king is not mentioned but the reference is clearly to the great Cola king, Karikala, who according to Nilakanta Sastri reigned around the 2nd century A. D. about the time of the historical Gajabahu's father. Post 8th century Telegu and Tamil literary and epigraphic accounts state that one of the achievements of Karikala was the enlargement of the river. What are we to make of this synchronism? Does it enhance the historicity of these events, or does it reflect an interrelated corpus of myth common to South India and Ceylon? An examination of Karikala, both as a historical and a mythical figure will help elucidate this problem.

We are fortunate that Nilakanta Sastri in his scholarly work on *Cola History and Administration* has sifted the literary and epigraphical evidence to disentangle the historical facts about Karikala from the mythical accretions which developed much later. In fact the development of the Karikala story follows almost the same pattern as that of Gajabahu—from the factual accounts of contemporary or near contemporary sources to the improbable and grandiose accounts of later works.[1] Nilakanta Sastri sums up some of the facts of Karikala's reign from the early literature as follows:

"He inherited the throne of Cola as a boy; illegitimate attempts were made by his relatives, for a time successfully, to keep him out of his birthright; by his own ingenuity and strength, and with the assistance of friends and partisans from outside, among whom may have been the maternal uncle Irumbidarthalai, Karikala after

---

[1] K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Studies in Cola History and Administration*, (Madras, 1932).

46

some years of confinement in a prison, effected his escape from it and succeeded in making himself king. An early accident from fire which maimed him in the leg for life seems to be rather well attested and to furnish the true explanation for his name"[1]

From the 8th century the Karikala of history gradually becomes converted into the Karikala of myth in Telegu and Tamil accounts. He is credited with several achievements two of which are relevant for our purposes here, viz. his construction of the flood banks of the Kaveri, and his conflict with the three-eyed king variously known as Trinetra Pallava or Trilocana Pallava ("Three-eyed Pallava"). The 7th or 8th century Mālēpādu plates of Punyakumāra (Telegu) mention that Karikala was the worker of many wonders "like that of controlling the daughter of Kaveri, overflowing her banks"[2]. The 10th and 11th century records known as the Tiruvālangādu plates of Rajēndra I, and the Leyden grant repeat this story, while the Kanyākumāri stone inscription adds a very important detail in its reference to kings who worked as slaves for Karikala. "(Karikala) who was as bright as the sun and who curbed the pride of the insubordinate, controlled the Kāvēri—which, by its excessive floods, caused the earth to be deprived of its produce—by means of a bund formed of earth thrown in baskets carried in hand by (enemy) kings."[3]

In the *Kalingattupparani* further exploits of Karikala are narrated and a probable reference to his having wiped out the third eye of an enemy; this reference is clearly made in the Ulās of Oṭṭakkūttan of the 12th century: "The Cola Karikala who took the eye of him who did not come to raise the Kaveri banks which took the earth carried on the heads (of subordinate kings)."[4] The same poet in his poem on Kulōttunga II makes it clear it was a third eye of one Mukhari that was lost, in all probability by sorcery based on imitative magic: "...we know of the wiping out of one eye traced on the picture so that the inimical Mukhari lost one of his three eyes."[5] The 14th century work the *Navocōlacarita*, a Telegu rendering of a Kannada work, expands this and introduces two further elements—the construction of a tank and a war waged

[1] Ibid., 44.
[2] Ibid., 27.
[3] Ibid., 28.
[4] Ibid., 30-31.
[5] Ibid., 32.

47

against insubordinate kings. Karikala decides "that he should raise the banks on either side of the river and dig a tank and earn for himself the religious merit thereof. So he sent his *samastas* (subordinate chiefs) from the various parts of the realm and all of them came up, with the exception of Bhāskara-Cōla and Mukkanti Cōla and others who held themselves back on account of their noble birth and other like reasons. The king undertook a *daṇḍayātrā* (expedition) against them, conquered them, and took them captives and compelled them to work on the construction of the banks of the Kaveri until the task was completed."[1] Though this work does not mention the three-eyed king, Telegu epigraphy of the 14th century states that the person who lost the third eye was a Pallava king.

The reader should bear in mind the following features in the development of the Karikala myth.

(1) Karikala raises the banks of the Kaveri.

(2) Subordinate kings work like common labourers in the project. One account mentions the loads they carried on their heads.

(3) A three-eyed king—known as Mukari, or Trinetra Pallava, or Trilocana Pallava, defied Karikala who, probably through magic, wiped out the third eye of the former.

(4) The *Navacōlacarita* does not mention the three-eyed king; instead it refers to several subordinate kings who defied Karikala, and against whom Karikala waged successful war.

(5) The account also mentions the construction of a tank by Karikala, though it is by no means clear what relationship this has with the bunding of the Kaveri.

Let us now examine how these elements of the myth are related to the Gajabahu and other related myths of Ceylon.

The connection between the Gajabahu myth and that of Karikala is the reference in the *Pūjāvaliya* and the *Rājāvaliya* that Sinhala people were taken captive by the Cola king and put to work in the river Kaveri. The reference is clearly to the Karikala myth, though that myth in its South Indian forms, makes no mention of Sinhala captives.

[1] Ibib., 35–36.

48

The *Gajabā Katāva*, the Sinhalese ritual text mentioned earlier, explicitly states how the Sinhalese captives were forced to work in the Kaveri. The first part of the *Gajabā Katāva*, sometimes known as the *Aṅkoṭa Haṭana* ("The conflict of the short-horn") states that in the time of Gajabahu's father there lived a poor Sinhalese villager who owned a buffalo with a pair of short horns. This buffalo was forcibly used by other villagers for their ploughing. The owner complained to the king, but the king only heeded the counter-complaints of the other villagers and offered no redress to the owner of the short-horn buffalo. The latter therefore decided to go to Soli-rata (the country of Cola). The King of Soli is described thus in the following verse:

> The great King of Pandi possessing three eyes
> He (Soli) destroyed; he broke Pandi's might; he dammed the waters.
> "I have no other recourse but to seek his help",
> Thus he prepared to leave for the country of Soli.

Our Sinhalese exile ingratiated himself into Soli's confidence and persuaded the king to dam the waters of the Kaveri. The King of Soli sent messages to the rulers of the eighteen realms; they all came to work in the Kaveri. But try as they might the waters of the Kaveri river washed out the mud used for the construction. The exile now told the king that he would find the men to build the dam. With a large fleet and many soldiers he sailed for Ceylon and landed at Magama. He ordered the soldiers to capture Sinhalese villagers; they captured 12,000 Sinhalese all in one night and returned to Cola where they were employed as labourers in the Kaveri.

One could, I think, reasonably conjecture the manner in which the Gajabahu myth was linked up with Karikala. The Gajabahu myth in the form in which it is expressed in the *Pūjāvaliya* and *Rājāvaliya* is, we noted, a "colonization myth", providing a charter for the existence of South Indian peoples in Ceylon. According to the myth Gajabahu, like Moses, brings his people from captivity. How did the captivity theme appear in the myth? I think the answer is a simple one. Alien South Indian groups who were settled in Ceylon had in some ways to justify or legitimize their existence here. Thus a charter had to be provided for explaining the obvious fact that they were alien, and yet, at the same time show that they were *not* alien and really belonged to the country in which

49

they were naturalized. This is a problem for any immigrant group in a larger society. The theme of captivity provides a resolution to the problem of how immigrant groups could be alien and not alien at the same time, for the myth states that in fact they were originally Sinhalese settled in South India (Cola) after being dispossessed from their original home in Ceylon. Thus the myth provides a charter of legitimation for the immigrant group. The dominant Sinhalese among whom they were planted could however keep them as a group apart by activating the same myth, and stating that they were in fact aliens, Cola slaves captured by their great King Gajabahu. For, it should be noted that Gajabahu brought back with him two categories of people – the original Sinhalese captured by the Cola king in his father's reign, and an equal number of Colas as captives. The further question of how these original Sinhalese people were made captives is neatly resolved by linking the Gajabahu myth with the Karikala myth; for Karikala was preeminently the Gajabahu-type culture hero for South Indian peoples, performing improbable deeds, putting "captives" to work in the Kaveri. What Gajabahu is to Ceylon, Karikala is to South India. Indeed Karikala like Gajabahu is a kind of colonizer, for according to several versions of that myth, he was responsible for rebuilding the city of Kanchi and settling it with immigrants. It is therefore highly apposite that the Gajabahu and Karikala myths should be interlinked in this manner.

Karikala Lore in Sinhalese Ritual

The relation between the Gajabahu myth and that of Karikala does not exhaust the study of the Karikala traditions of Ceylon. There are two other Sinhalese mythical traditions, somewhat contradictory to the one described earlier, drawing upon the mythical lore contained in the South Indian Karikala traditions. These several accounts unmistakably suggest that the South Indian Karikala traditions were widespread even in Ceylon, and were adapted to the socio-economic conditions of the country into which they were diffused. We will deal firstly with Sinhalese myth and ritual which indirectly draw upon the Karikala lore of South India described by Nilakanta Sastri. The Sinhalese text that we will use is known as the *Pataha* ("tank") and is enacted dramatically in the *gammaḍuva* ceremony. Since I have analysed this ritual elsewhere, I will only present those aspects of the ritual which show their relationship to the Karikala myths.[1]

---

[1] G. Obeyesekere, "The Pataha Ritual: Genesis and Function," *Spolia Zeylanica* (Colombo: Government Press, 1965) Vol. 30, part II, 3–20.

The *Pataha* ritual is a dramatic enactment of the following myth. The King of Pandi is an evil, arrogant king, possessing three eyes one of which is located in the middle of his forehead. He had a most wonderful city built by the divine architect Visva-karma himself, resembling the city of the gods. The king, ruler of the eighteen realms was also a cruel tyrant. The songs state that —

> No kind thought ever ripened in his mind,
> His power however ripened from day to day.
> His mind like a fearful demon's "ripened",
> Like Warrior Ravana ripened his strength.

The King of Pandi feels that he should build a "tank", so that his city will resemble that of the god Sakra, who also had a large pond. He therefore ordered his ministers to build a tank for him. The king, however, in his arrogance ignored traditional custom—he started work on an inauspicious day and hour.

The work on the tank got started and people worked there like slaves. The king himself supervised the work:

> Wearing robes worth a thousand gold pieces,
> Brandishing his sword studded with a thousand gems
> Like Ravana entering the field of battle
> Comes the great Pandi king to the tank.
> He grabs hold of idlers and beats out their brains.
> He cuts their bodies and slaughters the lads . . . .

A wave of fear and discontent runs around the camp, and people complain thus:

> O foolish king, in spite of his broad forehead
> To please him we carry large baskets on our heads.
> We suffer a thousand sorrows and misfortunes
> Our heads are bald by carrying these baskets!

Now the king ordered the rulers of the eighteen realms to come and work in his tank. All came, except the King of Soli (Cola), and they were made to work like common labourers.

> Even the kings who lived in the shade of goodness
> Did'nt have a thing to eat the live-long day
> They draw loads of earth and heap them on both sides
> They suffer terribly like rounded-up cattle.

The King of Soli not only refused to come but insulted the King of Pandi's emissary by lopping off his nose and ear and feeding him with excrement. Yet in the ritual, Soli is presented as a just king, contrasted with the evil Pandi. Various stereotyped acts of justice attributed to many South Indian kings (including Elara of Ceylon) are also attributed to Soli. Soli's insult to Pandi aroused the latter's wrath. Pandi decided to wage war against Soli, and marched into the country of Soli with his army. Soli undeterred, blew his conch and his friend, the God Sakra who heard this, created a huge downpour that engulfed and destroyed Pandi's army. Pandi himself managed to escape back to Madura, where he cursed Soli. As a result of his curse the land of Soli was devastated by a drought, which brought in its wake pestilence and famine. Another myth, also enacted in the form of a ritual drama known as the *amba vidamana* ("shooting of the mango") describes how Sakra came down to earth and wiped out the third eye of Pandi, and ended the drought in the country of Soli.

It is obvious that the *Pataha* ritual practised by the Sinhalese draws on the same body of mythological lore from which the Karikala myths derive. The similarities are striking. There are references to the building of a tank (as in the *Navacōlacarita*), the employment of crowned kings and their suffering, and above all to the three-eyed king. Though some historians have tried to prove the historicity of these events, the Sinhalese data add greater cogency to Nilakanta Sastri's view that they are myths. Indeed it is also probable that these myths were originally enacted as ritual dramas, even in their South Indian home. The wiping out of the third eye of Mukhari (or Trinetra Pallava) strongly suggests a ritualistic act, analogous to the wiping out of the third eye of Pandi in Sinhalese ritual drama.

In the *Gajabā Katāva* the King of Cola constructs a dam; he destroys an enemy, the three-eyed king of Pandi (always presented as the embodiment of evil in Sinhalese myth). In the *Pataha* these two persons coalesce; the evil three-eyed King of Pandi (Trinetra Pallava of South Indian texts) builds a tank and he has a conflict with Soli, one of the rulers of the eighteen realms. All these myths derive from a common source. In the *Pataha* ritual they are adapted to serve different social ends, as I have demonstrated elsewhere.[1]

---

[1] Though it is not possible to date with accuracy when these myths diffused to Ceylon, it is nevertheless important that we can trace its origins in South

Sinhalese Myths of Karikala

In the preceding ritual Soli and Pandi are not historical figures but mythical beings acting out a grand conflict between good and evil. However there is another set of myths, related to the preceding one, in which the king of Soli is explicitly identified with Karikala. These myths are the following: *Kāveri Ganga Diya Helīma* ("the dropping of the waters of the Kaveri river"), *Karikāla Upata* ("the birth of Karikala"), *Ganga Bändīma* ("damming of the river"), *Diyakeli Katāva* ("story of the water sports"). All these, like the preceding myths we had described, are part of the cycle of myths associated with the Pattini Cult.

This set of Karikala myths takes off from the description of the drought in the Kingdom of Soli described in the *Pataha* ritual. *Kāveri Ganga Diya Helīma* describes how the gods had assembled in heaven to review the affairs of the world, and saw with concern the drought that ravaged the Kingdom of Soli. One god, Mā Muni ("the great sage"), decided to help Soli and went to the *anotatta vila*, the pond sacred to Sakra. However this pond was protected by a snake named Kali. When the sage asked permission from Kali for some water from this pond, the snake refused. Then the sage took the guise of a *gurulu* bird (the enemy of snakes), chased the cobra away, and collected some water from the pond, into a pot. The angry cobra complained to the gods, who decided to help the cobra. One of the gods took the form of a crow, and flew down to where the sage was bathing with the pot of water lying near him. The crow tried to open the lid of the pot and the sage who saw this clapped his hands to scare the crow away. The crow, frightened, spilled the water from the pot; this flowed out into the country of Soli and became the river Kāveri.

Karikāla Upata describes the birth of Karikala. A King of Soli went out hunting with his followers. They saw a pond in which there were fish. The king ordered the pond to be filled with mud (in order to kill the fish). This was done and all the

India from the 8-14 centuries It is likely that they also reached Ceylon during the systematic South Indian conquests of the 10-13 centuries. Since working on the Gajabahu myth I have revised some of my views on the *Pataha* ritual, specially regarding its antiquity However my general analysis of the Pataha ritual is unchanged. I believe that it is a ritual of protest by ordinary villagers against the utilization of forced services by Sinhalese kings to build public works like tanks. It is also likely that the Karikala myths of India served similar social functions.

53

fish died. As a result of this heinous sin, there occured a continuous shower of mud, which killed(?) the king and his followers and destroyed much of the realm. The queen who was pregnant however managed to escape and sought shelter with a Brahmin couple. The text describes the various stages of the pregnancy and the arrival of the time of delivery. The actual delivery had to be delayed because the time was astrologically dangerous. In order to delay the birth the legs of the queen were tied with a silk cloth and, at the astrologically propitious time, this cloth was untied. The text then goes to describe the growing up of the boy and an incident that led to his becoming king. The state elephant of Soli got intoxicated with alcohol and went on a rampage. The young prince brought the elephant under control and the elephant went down on its knees before him. The people who soon assembled there brought a seat which was placed on the back of the elephant and the prince sat on it. The mother of the prince then rubbed charcoal on his feet and he was led triumphantly into the city and was accepted as the King of Soli. Since he was smeared with charcoal he was named Karikala.

Ganga Bāndīma describes the construction of the dam across the Kaveri by Karikala with the help of feudatory monarchs. Several attempts failed but at last they succeeded when they used *kumbal māṭi* ("potter's clay") and *tala tel* (sesame seed oil) for constructing the dam. *Diyakeli Katāva* describes the water sports held in order to celebrate the completion of the dam.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the evidence given above. Firstly, the Karikala myths of South India were also common to Ceylon and were associated with the corpus of the Pattini Cult. However the content of some of these myths seems to contradict the content of others. For example, according to the *Ankoṭa Haṭana*, Sinhalese captives were made to work on the Kaveri, whereas according to the *Ganga Bāndīma* this was done by the feudatory monarchs of Karikala. Such contradictions are expectable when attempts are made to link up one body of mythology with another body of related myths. Secondly, the lore mentioned in South Indian Karikala myths (such as the blinding of the three–eyed king, and the king's use of feudatory monarchs to construct a tank) is found in a totally different context in Sinhalese myths, such as the *Pataha*. This suggests that the lore contained in the Karikala tradition was part of a larger mythological corpus common to both South India and Ceylon. Thirdly, the Sinhalese myths of Karikala draw much of their content from a body of lore in South India stretching

from about the period of the *Silappadikāram* to the 17th century. For example, the statement in the Sinhalese text that Karikala's birth was delayed by tying the legs of his mother with a silk cloth has its earliest echo in a 14th century annotation to the third century text *Pattupāṭṭu* which states that "Karikala's birth was delayed by unnatural means and that he was retained in his mother's womb until the auspicious moment came for him to be delivered".[1] The Sinhalese text *Diyakeli Katāva* seem to be derived from canto VI, II of the *Silappadikāram*. The earliest reference in South Indian literature to the elephant incident mentioned in the *Karikāla Upata* is found in a commentary to the sixth century text, *Palamoli*, and repeated in more detail in the *Sevvandippurānam*, a 17th century work.[2] This work also mentions the destruction of Uraiyur in a sandstorm, which is probably the "rain of mud" described in the *Karikāla Upata*. The Sinhalese evidence clearly indicates that the Karikala myths recorded in the later period of South Indian history did not constitute a disconnected series, but represented a viable continuing tradition.

The Gajabahu Myth in Social Action

In the preceding pages I have dealt with the following problems: the evolution of Gajabahu from a historical to a mythic figure; the lack of validity of the Gajabahu synchronism; the relationship between the two culture heros, Gajabahu and Karikala; and finally the link between Karikala myths and the Sinhalese text, the *Pataha*. In the course of the analysis I have discussed the functions of one version of the Gajabahu story as a colonization myth used to justify the existence of South Indian settlers, legitimize their presence and anomalous status and incorporate them into the larger Sinhalese society. Let me develop this theme further and illustrate how this myth is actually used by some contemporary social groups.

My first illustration is from the *Karava* fishermen of Negombo. There exist today bilingual fishermen in the area between Chilaw and Negombo, speaking both Sinhalese and Tamil. They are therefore groups who are "anomalous" in respect of the exclusively Sinhalese speaking fisherfolk, south of Negombo, and the exclusively Tamil speaking groups north of Chilaw. They are thus marginal groups sandwiched between two exclusive linguistic areas. South of them are predominantly Sinhalese-speaking fishermen belonging to three castes—the Karava, Durave and Goigama. From the point

[1] K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, 20-21.
[2] Ibid., 24, 36-37.

55

of view of the latter groups they have a problem in relation to the former—how is it that while these bilingual fisherman are like themselves in some respects, they are also so different? The Gajabahu myth is again used to justify the anomalous status of the bilingual groups living in close proximity to the Sinhalese: they are Cola (Soli) captives of Gajabahu settled by him in this region. When recent immigrants from South India become better assimilated into the Sinalese social structure—when they become exclusively Sinhala speaking—the myth has to be refashioned so as to give a higher status to the better assimilated immigrant group. This point could be neatly illustrated in respect of the Karava community of Alut Kuruva, south of Negombo. The 16th century *Rājaratnākara* states that Gajabahu settled his captives in Alut Kuruva. Thus this form of the myth is the same as the one used to refer to present day bilingual fishermen. It is very likely that at the time the *Rājaratnākara* was written the Alut Kuruva fishermen were also recent immigrants, and hence they were treated as the Cola captives of Gajabahu, rather than the original Sinhalese rescued by him. Today however Alut Kuruva is Sinhalese speaking and its people have a clear Sinhalese identity. The Sinhalese Karava groups also believe that they are descended from the prestigious *Kauravas* mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*. The *Kaḍaimpota* version of the colonization of Alut Kuruva quoted by Bell is probably a later version of the myth to suit the changed status of the fishermen of Alut Kuruva. In this account Gajabahu is a contemporary of the Buddha who brought with him settlers from Kururata where the prestigious Kauravas lived.

The Gajabahu myth then is not a static one but expresses a dialectic between various social groups. The second example from the North Central province will illustrate this status dialectic carried to an extreme. From the point of view of the higher castes of the region the blacksmiths of Rotaveva are inferior. Their inferiority is explained by saying that they are captives of Gajabahu settled in this region. However, the Veddahs of the North Central Province give a different twist to this myth. As far as the Veddahs are concerned, they (the Veddahs) are the original settlers of Ceylon; the blacksmiths of Rotaveva as well as the Goigama folk (*raṭē minussu*) are all later immigrants and aliens in territory that is rightfully theirs. Thus Veddahs state that all groups in the North Central Province, excluding the Veddahs, are descendants of Gajabahu's captives. They are no doubt correct for it is very likely that most, if not all, Sinhalese groups in this island were at some period or other immigrants from South India. The Gajabahu myth is a symbolic way of expressing this sociological fact.

56

MUNIDASA KUMARATUNGA'S CONTRIBUTION TO SINHALESE LINGUISTICS

Sarathchandra Wickramasuriya

Ever since his death in 1944, (and even during the latter part of his lifetime), Munidasa Kumaratunga[1] has been a highly controversial figure in the Sinhalese literary world. However, Kumaratunga's most important achievement, his valuable contribution to Sinhalese linguistic studies, has not so far been subjected to any serious, detailed assessment. It is readily conceded even by Kumaratunga's most vehement critics, that he was one of the greatest classical Sinhalese scholars of the 20th century;[2] but his eminence as a great pioneer and revolutionary in the field of Sinhalese linguistics has so far remained unrecognized,[3] perhaps for two reasons:

Sarathchandra Wickramasuriya, M. A. (London) is a lecturer in the Dept. of English, University of Ceylon, Peradeniya.

[1] Munidasa Kumaratunga was born on July 25, 1887 at Dikhena in the Matara district. He entered the Training College for English teachers in Colombo in 1907, and, on passing out, was appointed Head Teacher of the Government School, Kadugannawa, in 1909. In January 1917, he was promoted to the rank of Inspector of Schools. Subsequently, he became Principal of the Training Colleges at Nittambuwa (Sept. 1927) and at Balapitiya (1929). Kumaratunga relinquished the latter post to become the editor of the *Lak Mini Pahana*, a Sinhalese newspaper, and two literary journals, *Subasa* (Sinhalese) and *The Helio* (English). He died on March 2, 1944, at the relatively early age of 57.
For a sketch of Kumaratunga's life and a complete bibliography of his works (comprising 118 items), see *Kumaratuṅga Munidāsa*, Ed. Sitinamaluwe Sumanaratana, (Colombo: Peramuna Press, 1955) pp. 355-69.

[2] c.f. මෑත කාලයේ ලංකාවේ විසූ සිංහල පඩුවන් අතර උසස් තැනක් මුනිදස කුමාරණතුංගයනට හිමි විය යුතුය යනු සියලු දෙනාම විවාද රහිතව පිළිගත යුත්තකි.
("Everyone should acknowledge without debate the fact that Munidasa Kumaratunga should receive an important place among the Sinhalese scholars of modern times").
— Dr. S. Paranavitana, Sitinamaluwe, op. cit., p. 9.
මුනිදස කුමාරතුංග පස්ඳිත රත්නය සිංහල භාෂාව පවතින තාක් පවතින්නකි.
("Munidasa Kumaratunga the great scholar will live as long as the Sinhalese language lasts").
— Dr. G. P. Malalasekera, *Sarasavi Sandaresa*, March 5, 1948.
මෑත කාලයෙහි සිංහලයන් අතර පහළවුණ ශ්‍රේෂ්ඨතම සිංහල පඩිවරයා . . .
("The greatest Sinhalese scholar to have been born among the Sinhalese in modern times").
— Ananda Tissa de Alwis, *Lankā*, March, 1946.

[3] c. f., however,
අන් හැමටත් වඩා මුනිදස කුමාරතුංග නාමය අනාගතයෙහිදී පසුවීමයන් අතර සිහිපත් කැරෙන්නේ, සිංහල ව්‍යාකරණය සම්බන්ධයෙනි.
("Above everything else, the name of Munidasa Kumaratunga will be remembered by future generations in connection with Sinhalese grammar.")
— Editorial, *Nuvana*, 15 March, 1944.

(1) the paucity of trained linguists and of up-to-date works on modern linguistic theory and practice in Ceylon; and (2) the 'puristic' and 'prescriptive' aspects of some of Kumaratunga's writings on Sinhalese grammatical usage.

Consequently, at the present time in Ceylon, the most widely prevalent "image" of Munidasa Kumaratunga is that of a linguistic dictator, a 'purist' who ignored the language of current usage and tried to foist upon his contemporaries the outmoded Sinhalese literary style of the 13th century, together with its now–obsolete verb forms, syntactic patterns, the characteristic use of the sound ඇ [*ä*], and the use of the suffix –එක් [–ek] in the indefinite forms of inanimate nouns.[1] Among a small minority of his followers, now collectively referred to as the 'Hela Havula',[2] on the other hand, Kumaratunga is revered as a great critic, poet, commentator, philosopher, polemicist and nationalist, and also as the final, omniscient authority not only regarding problems of Sinhalese grammar, but also on classical Sinhalese literature, ancient Sanskrit literature, and even poetics.[3]

Kumaratunga's contribution to Sinhalese grammatical studies is embodied in three important works: *Sidat Saṅgarā Vivaraṇaya* (1935). *Kriyā Vivaraṇaya* (1936), and *Vyākaraṇa Vivaraṇaya* (1938). The first of these is an elucidation-cum-critique of the *Sidat Saṅgarā*, the 'standard' grammar of Sinhalese[4] which had been composed (in verse) around the 13th century.[5] As clearly indicated

---

[1] 13 වන ශත වර්ෂයෙන් මෙපිට සිදුවුණු හැෂා විපර්යාසයන් තොතකා පැරණි වියරණ අනුව වර්තමාන භාෂාව ද යකස්වනු දැකිමට කුමාරණතුංග මහතා තුළ හටගත් ආශාව නිසා ඒ මහතාගේ උද්යෝගය උමතුවක් යයි කිව යුතු තරම් සිමාව ඉක්මවීය.

("Owing to Kumaratunga's intense desire to shape the contemporary language in close accordance with ancient grammar without paying due regard to the linguistic changes effected since the 13th century, his interest amounted to an extremism which should be called an obsession or madness").

— Editorial, *Dinamina*, 3 March, 1944.

[2] The literary group termed 'Hela Havula' was formed in 1940. Vide Sitinamaluwe Sumanaratana, op. cit., p. 363.

[3] Ibid., pp. 68, 105, 158, 220, 285.

[4] "The only standard Grammar of the Sinhalese" — Lambrick, quoted by James de Alwis, *The Sidat Saṅgarāwa*, (Colombo: Ceylon Government Press 1852), p. cclxiii.

[5] For details regarding the authorship of the *Sidat Saṅgarā*, see J. de Alwis, op. cit., p. 1 ff.; W. Geiger, *A Grammar of the Sinhalese Language*, (Colombo: The Royal Asiatic Society, Ceylon Branch, 1938) pp. 6-7; W. F. Gunawardhana, *Siddhānta Parīksaṇaya*, 1924) pp. 16-18; M. Kumaratunga, *Sidat Saṅgarā Vivaraṇaya*, (Colombo: Anula Press, 1935) 3-12; and R. Tennakoon, *Sidat Saṅga-a.* (Colombo: M. D. Gunasena and Co. Ltd., 1962) pp. ix-lix.

by two chapters named Prosodial Magic (ඉටුනිටු අදියර chapter 11) and Figures of Speech (ලකර අදියර, chapter 12) which had no ostensible connection at all with descriptive grammar, this treatise had probably been intended as a manual of style and versification for contemporary versifiers.[1] At the time when Kumaratunga wrote, the *Sidat Saṅgarā* had been elevated to such an eminent position[2] that it was considered sacrilegious to criticise it,[3] in spite of the efforts of Mudliyar W. F. Gunawardhana who had made a forthright critique of the first two chapters, concluding that he had "found that ... as a scientific manual, the book is really hopelesss".[4] The contemporary attitude towards the *Sidat Saṅgarā* is clearly indicated by Kumaratunga in his Preface:

'සිදත් සභරාව පැරැණි යැ, මහාස්වාමී කෙනෙකුන් විසින් කරන ලද්දේ යැ, අප සිංහල වාාකරණය උගත්තේ එයින් යැ, එහි ඇති දෙසක් වුවත් පෙන්නා දීම ගුරුද්‍රෝහී කමෙකැ'යි යනු ඇතැමුන් සිතන පරිදි යි. 'සිදත් සභරාව සර්වතෝභද්‍ර යැ, වාාකරණ ශාස්ත්‍රයෙහි කොටි ප්‍රාප්තිය යැ' යන මතය ගත්තවුනට විවරණය සවිෂ වියැ හැකියැ.

("The *Sidat Saṅgarā* is of long standing; it has been composed by a venerable Buddhist monk; we learned our Sinhalese grammar from this work; to point out even a single defect in it would be a gross betrayal of a teacher" this is what certain people believe. Criticism may be distasteful to those who hold the opinion that the *Sidat Saṅgarā* is omniscient and that it is the apotheosis of grammar.)

— *Sidat Saṅgarā Vivaraṇaya*, Preface, p. 12.

In this contemporary literary set-up, Kumaratunga's criticism of the "dear national monument consecrated by traditions of six

---

[1] "At the end two other chapters are added by way of appendix, one treating on Prosodial Magic, and the other on Figures of Speech" — Gunawardhana, op. cit., p. 27.

[2] "The reader must now be convinced of the great place the *Sidat Saṅgarā* occupies in Sinhalese literature, that great hold it has on Sinhalese imagination and the high position it holds in the world as the great grammar of the Sinhalese language" — Gunawardhana, op. cit., p. 18.

[3] c. f. "I am quite aware of the terrific storm this examination (i. e. of the *Sidat Saṅgarā*) will raise, especially in the less informed ranks of the Sinhalese literati. Those people have no sympathy with originality, and they have a constitutional hatred of modern ideas if opposed to the teaching of our great masters of old. They cannot conceive how any man of the present day can know anything better than those masters ..." — Ibid., p. 24.

[4] W. F. Gunawardhana, op. cit., Introduction.

and a half centuries, and bound up with a large amount of sentiment which has gathered round it during the last century and a half", [1] was in itself an act of great courage.

Kumaratunga's criticism of the grammatical dicta embodied in the *Sidat Saṅgarā* is almost always made on sound formal grounds. For example, in chapter 3, verse 18, the author of the *Sidat Saṅgarā* had classified the words අද ('today') and එ දා ('that day') as indeclinables. Kumaratunga submits incontrovertible formal evidence as to why the two words should not be included in this category:

සිංහලයෙහි 'අද' යනු නාමයෙකි.   අද – අදින් – අදට යනාදි විසින් ඒ වරනැගෙයි... 'එ දා' යනු නිපාතයෙක් වේ නම්, කවර දා – ගිය දා – ආ දා – උපන් දා – මළ දා යනාදිය ද නිපාත වෙයි.

("In Sinhalese, අද 'today' is a noun.   It is inflected, in the forms අද 'today', අදින් 'from today', අදට 'until today' and so on.   If එදා 'that day' is an indeclinable, කවර දා 'which date', ගිය දා 'the date of departure', ආ දා 'the date of arrival', උපන් දා 'the date of birth', මළ දා 'the date of death', etc. are also indeclinables")

—Ibid. p. 190.

In the *Sidat Saṅgarā*, සමාස (compounds) had been defined as "the combination of sounds (?) with several different meanings to express a single meaning" (chapter 5, verse 1).   Kumaratunga questioned, on quite logical and formal grounds, why, on the basis of this traditional definition, රජුගේ පිරිස් is assumed to convey 'several meanings', whereas රජ පිරිස්, which carries an identical meaning, is said to convey a 'single meaning':

" 'රජුගේ පිරිස්' යනු නානාර්ථ යැ, 'රජ පිරිස්' යනු ඒකාර්ථ යැ" යනුයේ කවර හෙයින් ද? අපට නො තේරේ. 'රජුගේ පිරිස්' යන තන්හි යම් බඳු නානාර්ථත්වයෙක් වේ ද, 'රජ පිරිස්' යන තන්හිදු එබඳු වූ මැ නානාර්ථත්ව- යෙක් වෙයි. 'රජ පිරිස්' යන තන්හි යම් බඳු වූ ඒකාර්ථත්වයෙක් වේ ද, 'රජුගේ පිරිස්' යන තන්හි දු එබඳු වූ මැ ඒකාර්ථත්වයෙක් වෙයි.

("Why is it said that 'රජුගේ පිරිස්' conveys several meanings but 'රජ පිරිස්' conveys a single meaning? We are nonplussed. Whatever plurality of meaning is contained in 'රජුගේ පිරිස්'

— Ibid., p. 254.

[1] Ibid., p. 24.

'රජ පිරිස්' also expresses the same plurality of meaning. Whatever singleness of meaning is contained in 'රජ පිරිස්', 'රජුගේ පිරිස්' also expresses the same singleness of meaning").

— Ibid., p. 254

The above quotations sufficiently illustrate Kumaratunga's attitude towards grammatical definitions—his insistence upon a scientific, logical rigour in the definition of grammatical terms and categories, a kind of insistence that is characteristic of the post–Bloomfieldian school of modern linguistic analysis. Also, like all modern structural linguists, Kumaratunga insisted that the setting up of separate grammatical categories could only be justified if such categorisation or classification was based on objectively demonstrable formal differences, and only if such a procedure helped to further the elucidation of the structural pattern of the language under analysis. Thus, he asserted that the sub–classification of Sinhalese words into two categories termed අන්වර්ථ and ආරූඪ was superfluous, since such a division had no bearing whatsoever on the grammatical structure, both types of words showing the same mode of inflection as well as usage:

අන්වර්ථ ආරූඪ යන දිවි හෙදය ද සිදත් සඟරාවෙහි දක්වුණු වාාකරණයට නුවුමනා යැ. අන්වර්ථ වූයෙන් හෝ ආරූඪ වූයෙන් හෝ වරනැගීමෙහි විශෙෂ යෙක් වේ නම්, පද යෙදීමෙහි විශෙෂයෙක් වේ නම්, මේ හෙදය ද උගත මතා මැ යැ. එබන්දක් නැති හෙයින් මේ නිකම් මැ බරකි.

("The sub–division into the two categories අන්වර්ථ and ආරූඪ, too, is unnecessary for the grammatical analysis contained in the *Sidat Saṅgarā*. If belonging to either of these subcategories indicates a difference in inflection or in usage, this difference, too, should certainly be studied. But since that is not the case, this is mere dead weight").

— Ibid., p. 127.

One of the guiding principles in all Kumaratunga's work was that each language possessed its own unique *system* of grammar, which could be deduced only through analysis of actual usage (but, unfortunately, for Kumaratunga, 'actual usage' meant not contemporary usage, but classical Sinhalese usage). At numerous points in his elucidation of the *Sidat Saṅgarā*, he demonstrates, conclusively, how the author of the traditional grammatical treatise was led to make incorrect linguistic statements about Sinhalese because his purpose had been to fit Sinhalese grammar into the grammatical frameworks of Sanskrit and Pali:

'මෙන්' නිපාත යෝගයෙහි පුථමා විභක්තායන්ත පදයක් සම්බන්ධ වීම සිංහලයෙහි නොලැබෙන්නකි. ද්විතීයාන්ත (දෙවන විභත ගත්) පදය සම්බන්ධ

61

වීම ලැබෙන්නේ මැ යැ. ඉතින් ධර්මිය ද්විතීයාන්ත පදය යෙදීම නම් ඒ පෙරැලියෙක් නොවේ, රීතියයි. සකු මගද දෙක්හි රීතිය වෙනස් වේ... සංස්කෘත මාගධ ප්‍රයෝගයන් බලා සිංහල රීතින් නියම කිරීම, පුතුගේ ලෙඩ බලා දුවට බෙහෙත් නියම කිරීම වැනි විහිලුවෙකි.

("The indeclinable මෙන් 'as, like' never occurs in combination with a noun in case 1 (Nominative) *in Sinhalese*. It always occurs with a noun in case 2 (Accusative)... If the practice is to use the noun in case 2, it is not an exception but the rule... In Sanskrit and Pali the usage differs ...The setting up of grammatical rules following the usage in Sanskrit and Pali blindly is like prescribing medicines for the daughter after having diagnosed the ailments of the son").

— Ibid. p. 101–2

After demonstrating, on formal grounds, that it was necessary to stipulate a neuter gender for Sinhalese nouns, (the *Sidat Saṅgarā* indicates the presence of nouns of two genders only, Masculine and Feminine). Kumaratunga goes on to say:

මෙයින් පෙනී යනුයේ ලිංග ව්‍යවහාරය පිළිබඳ වැ සිදත් සඟරා කාරයන්ගේ මතය ඉඳුරා වැරදි බවයි. සිංහල ව්‍යවහාරය පුදුසු පමණ නො පිරික්සා, බාලාවතාරයෙහි කියැවුණක් දුටු පමණින් ව්‍යාකරණ සූත්‍රයක් දෙසන්නට යෑම කොතරම් අහිතකර ද යනු මේ පැහැදිලි කෙරෙයි.

("This shows, therefore, that the opinion of the author of the *Sidat Saṅgarā* regarding the use of gender in Sinhalese is completely erroneous. It indicates clearly how detrimental it can be to attempt to enunciate grammatical rules in mere imitation of statements found in the *Bālāvatāra*, without having considered Sinhalese usage in sufficient detail").

— Ibid. p. 70.

This modern attitude towards linguistic structure is expressed not only in the *Sidat Saṅgarā Vivaraṇaya*, but in all Kumaratunga's works; it is the over-all principle which, perhaps intuitively grasped, helped Kumaratunga to liberate himself from bondage to Sanskrit and Pali grammar and to seek for Sinhalese a type of grammatical analysis that uniquely suited the language under description:

අප විසින් කළ යුත්තේ ඒ භාෂාවටත් මේ භාෂාවටත් හැකි තරම් එකහ වන සැටි බැලීමෙක් නොවේ, අප භාෂාවට ඉතා මැ සුදුසු පිළිවෙළ සොයා ගැනීමයි.

62

("What we have to do is not to attempt to see how far (the grammatical analysis) conforms to this language or that, but to discover the system that best suits our own language").

— *Subasa*, Vol. 1, No. 1, July 10, 1939.

සිංහලයට ව්‍යාකරණය සැපැයිය යුත්තේ සිංහල ව්‍යවහාරය විමැසිමෙනි, සංස්-
කෘත මාගධ ව්‍යාකරණ ග්‍රන්ථයන් පෙරළිමෙන් නොවේ.

("It is by scrutinising Sinhalese usage that a grammar for Sinhalese has to be supplied, not by scrutinising Sanskrit and Pali grammars").

— *Sidat Saṅgarā Vivaraṇaya*, pp. 215-6.

Kumaratunga's criticism of the *Sidat Saṅgarā* was not merely an attack on the 13th century grammatical treatise, but the expression of a completely revolutionary attitude in contemporary linguistics, for all the works of Sinhalese grammar up to Kumaratunga's time were mere paraphrases or slavish imitations of the *Sidat Saṅgarā* or works based on English grammar (e. g. *Pada Nītiya* by Weragama Punchibandara, 1888; *A Comprehensive Grammar of the Sinhalese Language* by A. M. Gunasekera, 1891; *Vyākaraṇa Mañjariya* by H. Jayakody, 1900; *Sinhalese Grammar* by D. E. Johannes, 5th Ed., 1916; *Sabdānusāsanaya* by Simon de Silva, 1928; and *Sinhala Bhāṣāva* by Rev. Theodore G. Perera, 1932).

Even as a commentator, Kumaratunga stands head and shoulders above earlier commentators of the *Sidat Saṅgarā*, for his was neither a word-by-word paraphrase of the original text, nor a purely destructive enterprise. In most cases where Kumaratunga rejects a grammatical dictum in the traditional treatise, he himself suggests an alternative method of analysis, often more formal, logical, or economical. Often, too, he clarifies and elucidates obscure or vague statements in the *Sidat Saṅgarā*. Nor does he look upon the *Sidat Saṅgarā* as being completely valueless (as Mudliyar W. F. Gunawardana had done); in spite of all its inaccuracies, he declares, the *Sidat Saṅgarā* embodies valuable insights into Sinhalese grammatical structure, which could be brought out by a detailed, logical, and impartial scrutiny, similar to the one he himself attempted:

විවරණයෙන් සිදත් සඟරා පෙළෙහි අවිපරිතාර්ථ දත හැකි ය, පැසැස්සැ
යුතු තැන් දත හැකිය, නො පැසැස්සැ යුතු තැන් දත හැකිය. . . සිංහලයෙහි
නියම ව්‍යාකරණ රීතිය ද සුදුසු තන්හි එයින් අවුලා ගත හැකි වෙයි.

63

("By detailed criticism, the obscurities of the verses of the *Sidat Saṅgarā* may be understood; by criticism also, its praiseworthy features as well as its shortcomings may be known. . . At relevant points, the inherent grammatical rules of Sinhalese, too, can be gleaned from it").

—*Sidat Saṅgarā Vivaraṇaya*, p. 12.

In 1938, three years after the publication of the *Sidat Saṅgarā Vivarañaya*, appeared *A Grammar of the Sinhalese Language*, by Prof. Wilhelm Geiger, published by the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. It was a typical product of the type of linguistic theory and practice in vogue at the time in Ceylon (and abroad), designated "Historical Philology" or "Etymological Grammar". The author of this grammar was then occupying the exalted position of Chief Editor of the *Dictionary of the Sinhalese Language*, taken in hand in 1935. At that time, philologists had not evolved a technique for dealing with syntax historically or etymologically, and the *Grammar* turned out to be, inevitably, not a synchronic grammar in the modern sense of the word, but a work on the evolution of Sinhalese morphology. The author himself was in fact obliged to admit the omission of a section on syntax which he rather lamely attributed to 'insufficiency of space':

"It will perhaps be regretted that I have omitted to treat the Sinhalese syntax in this grammar. But an exhaustive treatment of the subject was not possible within the space available for the present work. It cannot but be postponed for a later occasion".

— p. xiv.

Needless to say, the "later occasion" never materialised, and the syntax referred to never appeared in print. However, Kumaratunga was perhaps alone at the time in understanding that diachronic linguistic studies of the type represented by Geiger's grammar, however intrinsically interesting they may be, and however valuable as "contributions to the storehouse of human knowledge", could never be adequate substitutes for what Sinhalese needed at the time, that is, synchronic studies based on actual current linguistic usage. Kumaratunga's exhaustive criticism of Geiger's work, in 13 parts, may be found in the pages of *Subasa*, the journal Kumaratunga edited, from 24th July, 1939 to 5th February, 1940. Kumaratunga's critical attitude towards the method of Historical Philology currently in vogue in 'enlightened' linguistic circles in Ceylon may be gauged from the following statement:

64

"Whatever they (i. e. Geiger and the followers of his school of Historical Philology) say is prefaced by a scholarly digression on the most modern Science of Comparative Philology. Is not this Science that does not help one to compose a Sinhalese sentence correctly, as valuable as somebody's science of modern cookery that does not teach one to cook a little rice?"

— *Subasa*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 8th January, 1940.

Not only did Kumaratunga show that philological studies (as represented by Geiger's *Grammar*) could never take the place of descriptive grammar; he also demonstrated—with a single devastating example—the dangers of attempting to trace the origin of Sinhalese words to their cognate forms in the 'parent' languages, Sanskrit and Pali. Geiger's efforts were directed towards tracing the etymology of every Sinhalese word to its Sanskrit, Pali, or Prakrit origin,[1] but Kumaratunga contended that Sinhalese, like any other language, possessed a certain stock (large or small) of words of purely native origin. Geiger's derivation of the Sinhalese කොටි ('leopard') (Geiger, *Grammar*, p. 42) provided Kumaratunga with the necessary ammunition to ridicule the entire method of Comparative Philology:

"The word කොටි must somehow or other be derived from Sanskrit, Pali or Prakrit. The Professor fingered the great lexicons of Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit. In none of them did he find for the leopard a name beginning with ක. The Professor was bewildered. Can such a thing happen? කොටි must somehow or other be derived from one of those great languages. The Professor began again to explore the lexicon, this time to find a name with ක and ට in it, not for the leopard itself but for any kind of wild beast. His attempt was crowned with great success. . . . His face beamed with real joy... What made him so elated? It was the Sanskrit noun ක්‍රොෂ්ටෘ [kroʃtr] which means, not exactly a leopard, but another wild beast—a jackal. The leopard is a wild beast. The jackal is also a wild beast. It is true that there is no Sanskrit word that has the semblance of කොටි and that means exactly a leopard. But there is ක්‍රොෂ්ට, meaning a jackal. කොටි, a name of one wild beast – a leopard, must equally be applicable to another wild

[1] cf. "Prof. Geiger is out to prove somehow or other that the Sinhalese language has been draining all along from the two great reservoirs of Pali and Sanskrit through a Prakritic filter. Therefore whatever he does is aimed at the accomplishment of this mission . . ." *Subasa*, Vol. 1, No. 13, December 25, 1939.

65

beast – a jackal .. Oh! The stupid Sinhalese!... If not for me will they ever happen to possess such a beautiful etymology for their wretched word කොටි?... Whatever it be, now, it is an established fact that the Sinhalese leopard is a direct descendant of the Sanskrit jackal".

Subasa, Vol. 1, No. 14, 8th January, 1940.

However, Kumaratunga was not content with the demolition of the theory of comparative philology[1] and the 'omniscient' *Sidat Saṅgarā* hallowed by the passage of 800 years; he was, in his *Sidat Saṅgarā Vivaraṇaya* and the criticism of Geiger's *Grammar* in *Subasa* merely preparing the ground for an adequate, complete, grammatical analysis of the Sinhalese language. Although hampered by the lack of formal linguistic training, Kumaratunga set out, in his own way, to provide for Sinhalese its own structural grammar, unencumbered by etymological statements and by the grammatical dicta of Sanskrit, Pali or Prakrit.

From the above discussion, it is clear that a formalist kind of approach towards linguistic analysis, though nowhere explicitly stated or fully integrated in the form of a 'linguistic theory', begins to emerge in Kumaratunga's early work, i. e. in his criticisms of Geiger's *Grammar* and of the *Sidat Saṅgarā*. Kumaratunga's insistence upon clear, mutually exclusive definitions of linguistic terms and classes, his acceptance of formal criteria in the setting up of grammatical categories, his view that etymological or philological studies could never serve the purpose of synchronic and teaching grammars, and the principle that the structure of each language has its own unique features which would be obscured if any attempt was made to fit it to the grammatical frameworks of other languages, clearly indicate the beginnings of a formalist-structuralist approach towards linguistic analysis. Although there is no evidence that Kumaratunga had access to the works of contemporary European linguists, his major concepts bear a surprisingly close relationship to the linguistic theories and principles developed in the west by such pioneers in the field of linguistics as Ferdinand de Saussure, Edward Sapir and Leonard Bloomfield.

It remains to be examined to what extent an integrated linguistic theory was formulated and applied in Kumaratunga's last two

---

[1] "This is a strange land. Any nonsense will be a perfect science here if it is presented in words interspersed with a few high-sounding names such as philology, phonology, morphology, etc." — *Subasa*, Vol, 1, No. 16, February 5, 1940.

works on Sinhalese linguistics, *Kriyā Vivaraṇaya* (1936) and *Vyākaraṇa Vivaraṇaya* (1938).

The preliminary definition of ක්‍රියා ('verb') in *Kriyā Vivaraṇaya* is not based on formal, but notional grounds:

ධාත්වර්ථයක් දෙනුයේ ''ක්‍රියා'' නමින් මෙහි ලා ගනු ලැබේ.

("That which conveys the notion of a root is defined as verb")

Kriyā Vivaraṇaya, p. 1.

However, this was clearly an advance on the negative, in fact meaningless 'definition' provided in the *Sidat Saṅgarā* ("That which is neither substance nor quality, but in association with a subs-tance, develops out of root, assisted by the six cases, is verb"-1,23). Kumaratunga's subsequent classification and analysis of Sinhalese verbal roots is made on a purely formal basis. Each of the six conjugational classes he sets up has its own mutually exclusive set of inflectional suffixes. The categories of Number, Person, Tense, Voice and Kāraka are set up,[1] and their formal character-istics indicated. Each conjugational class is then taken up in turn, and is provided with a list of inflectional suffixes with which each root in the class may combine.[2] Changes consequent upon the combination of roots with inflectional suffixes are set out, as far as possible, in the form of (what a modern structural linguist would call) morphophonemic rules. Exceptional forms are set forth in a special subsection termed විශේෂ රූප සාධනය. One or more roots typical of each class are declined in full, and further exam-ples of the membership of each class listed at the end of each section. The derivation of nominal forms from verbal roots,[3] and the morphology of non-finite verb-forms,[4] too, are dealt with in considerable detail. The last section of the book, ධාතු පාඨය, is a lexicon of nearly 800 Sinhalese verb stems, alphabetically arranged.[5] Every stem in the lexicon is assigned to one of the six declensional classes, its lexical meaning given, and all the morphological forms it may assume in the various grammatical categories (together with any allomorphic alternants it may assume in usage) set out, in sche-matic form. Thus, in spite of certain shortcomings – especially the notional criteria employed in the preliminary definition – Kumaratunga's

---

[1] *Kriyā Vivaraṇaya*, (Colombo: Anula Press, 2nd ed., 1956) pp. 2-8.
[2] Ibid,, p. 12.
[3] Ibid., pp. 60-85.
[4] Ibid., pp. 85-106.
[5] Ibid., pp. 107-256.

67

Kriyā Vivaraṇaya sets up a model for comprehensive linguistic analysis, at least for one part–without doubt, the most important part–of Sinhalese grammatical structure. This work is, in fact, a valuable morphological study of the Sinhalese verb, embracing not only all aspects of morphological form, but also morphophonemic changes, certain aspects of syntax, and the lexicon.

However, a perusal of the stems listed in the lexicon (e. g. උවෙක්ස, අවදර, නහස්, පිළිබහ, බහව, බිනිස්, මොහ, රැහුර, ලදුර, විලිකුස් and the examples cited from classical Sinhalese literary texts[1] (e. g. පිරිසුදු හුදු මිලින් හා—මිලියෙත් සසඟනෙන් වි; මුනි රිවි උද දෙත තිතුළ කැන් මිලියෙනි අතුරදහන් බුදු) indicates that for the most part, Kumaratunga utilised as his corpus the literary language employed by Sinhalese classical writers before and up to about the 14th century (and, of course, used by Kumaratunga himself and his followers), and not the language used by his contemporaries, a fact which detracts considerably from the usefulness of *Kriyā Vivaraṇaya* as a grammatical study relevant to present needs.

Kumaratunga's most ambitious work, a work of such wide scope that it has not been surpassed nor even attempted up to the present day, was his *Vyākaraṇa Vivaraṇaya*, a grammar of Sinhalese, published in 1938. The Preface to this work indicates, once again, that a.though the author had had no formal grounding in modern linguistic theory and techniques, he had, intuitively grasped many of the main principles set out and affirmed in post-Bloomfieldian structural linguistics. For example, Kumaratunga affirms that *actual usage* should provide the corpus from which linguistic rules ought to be deduced:

ලෝකයෙහි ඉතා උසස් අන්ය භාෂා කොතෙකුත් ඇති විය හැකි ය. එහි ව්‍යාකරණය අති නිර්මල විය හැකි ය. සිංහල භාෂාවේ ව්‍යාකරණය හෙළි කිරීමෙහිදි සැලැකිය යුත්මත් ඒ එකකුත් නොවේ. ව්‍යාකරණය නම් භාෂා නීතියයි. එක් එක් භාෂාවේ ව්‍යාකරණය ඒ ඒ භාෂාවේ ව්‍යවහාරයෙන් විනිශ්චය කරනු ලැබේ.

("There may exist many other very great languages in the world. Their grammar may be admirably pure. But none of these should be considered in revealing the grammatical structure of the Sinhalese language. Grammar is linguistic usage. The

---

[1] For other illustrations drawn from classical Sinhalese texts, see pp. 50, 90, 101, 102, and 104.

grammar of each language is determined by the usage of that
particular language").

— *Vyākaraṇa Vivaraṇaya*, Preface, iii.

Here, Kumaratunga upholds one of the cardinal principles of modern
linguistics—that each language has its own unique *system* of grammar,
which can be deduced only by collating, analysing, classifying and
reducing to general rules the actual usage of its native speakers
(or writers), without being influenced by the grammatical rules of
other languages, however 'perfect' the latter may appear to be.
Indeed, Kumaratunga contended that grammar could be learned only
from actual practice, and that a grammar was the product of a
person who had made an extensive study of the usage of the
language under consideration:

ප්‍රයෝග මාර්ගයෙන් මෑ ව්‍යාකරණය ඉගෑනීම යෑ ප්‍රශස්ත.

("The best method of studying grammar is through practice")

— Ibid. Preface, iii.

ව්‍යාකරණ ග්‍රන්ථයෙක් නම්, සකල වාක් ප්‍රයෝගයන් මෑනවීන් විමසුවකු-
ගේ විනිශ්චයයි.

("A grammar is nothing but the considered opinion of one
who has carried out a thorough study of every linguistic usage").

— Ibid. Preface, iii.

Consequently, for Kumaratunga, the primary task of the grammarian
was to provide a synopsis of actual linguistic usage:

ව්‍යාකරණ කාරයා විසින් කළ යුත්තේ තමා ව්‍යාකරණය සපයන භාෂාවේ
ව්‍යවහාරය බලා, අළලා, පෙරා, කිරා, පිඬු කොටෑ දෑක්වීමයි.

("What the grammarian ought to do is to ascertain, collate,
review, assess, and summarise the usage of the language for
which he wishes to supply a grammar").

— Ibid. iii.

Kumaratunga attributed the incongruities and inaccuracies in the
Sinhalese grammatical treatises from the *Sidat Saṅgarā* to his own
day to the attempts of grammarians to fit the structure of Sinha-
lese into a Sanskrit or Pali mould. The inevitable result of this
process, he pointed out, was to obscure rather than to reveal the
inherent structure of the language:

බොහෝ සිංහල ව්‍යාකරණ කාරයෝ ස්වභාෂාවට ව්‍යාකරණය සපයන්නට
අන්‍ය භාෂාවල ව්‍යාකරණය ප්‍රමාණ කොටෑ ගත්හ. ඔවුන් ගත් මිම

69

පාලි සංස්කෘත වාාකරණයයි. ඒ මිම්මට සරිලන ලෙසක් කරන්නට ගියූ
හෙයින් ඔවුන්ගේ වාාකරණය බෙහෙවින් මැ සිංහල තත්වය වළහන්නට
වහල් වීයැ. . . . සිංහලයෙහි යම් රීතියෙක් වේ නම්, එය අනාා මහා
භාෂාවලැ ඇතිවීම හෝ නොවීම හෝ අපට පැකිලීමට කරුණෙක් නොවීයැ.
සිංහලයටමැ උරුම වූ රීති අපට විදාලා මැ උසස් සේ පැනිණ.

("Most Sinhalese grammarians adopted the grammars of other
languages as a criterion in trying to supply a grammar for their
mother tongue. The measure they accepted was the grammar
of Sanskrit or Pali. Since they tried to approximate as closely
as possible to Sanskrit or Pali grammar, their grammatical
treatises tended to obscure the intrinsic structure of Sinhalese
to a very great extent... Where a certain grammatical feature
exists in Sinhalese usage, the fact that it was present or absent
in other great languages was no cause for perturbation to us.
The usages exclusive to Sinhalese appeared to be the most
valuable to us").

— Ibid. iv.

Kumaratunga also upheld the view that statements about the history
of the Sinhalese race, etymology, comparative philology, the his-
torical development of the language, metrics, and "figures of speech"
should have no place in a descriptive grammar (to him, as to most
modern linguists, synchronic, descriptive grammars were primary,
and of the greatest practical value):

ජාතියේ ඉතිහාසය හෝ භාෂාවේ ඉතිහාසය හෝ වාාකරණාංගයෙක් නොවේ.
ඒ පිළිබඳ දීර්ඝ පරිවෙශ්දයන් ලියා වාාකරණ ග්‍රන්ථයක් විශාල කිරීම
අපරාධයෙකි. . . . අලංකාරය ද ඡන්දස ද වාාකරණයෙන් බාහිර වූ ශාස්ත්‍ර යි.
("The history of the race or of the language is not a gramma-
tical feature. It is a crime to enlarge a grammatical treatise
by including long chapters on these subjects... Figures of Speech
and Metrics, too, are sciences extraneous to grammar").

— Ibid. vii.

Considered as a whole, it could hardly be asserted that the
expectations generated by the linguistic principles enunciated in the
Sidat Saṅgarā Vivaraṇaya and the Preface to *Vyākaraṇa Vivaraṇaya*
are fulfilled by Kumaratunga's *Vyākaraṇa Vivaraṇaya* (1938). As
in *Kriyā Vivaraṇaya*, this work reveals Kumaratunga's considerable
labours of collation and analysis (as the author himself stated in
his Preface, the book was the result of over 27 years' labour).
Lacking a formal linguistic training, Kumaratunga had, perforce,

70

not only to invent his own grammatical terminology, but also to devise a methodology for dealing with syntax; for, up to his time, grammar had been considered to be synonymous with morphology, and syntax had rarely or never been dealt with by Sinhalese grammarians.

It is in the *Vyākaraṇa Vivaraṇaya* that we find, for the first time in Sinhalese, systematic treatment of grammar under Phonology, Morphophonemics, Morphology and Syntax. Kumaratunga begins with the definition of language as a collection of sentences — භාෂාවක් නම් වාකෳ සමුදායයෙකි, p. 2. The analysis of Sinhalese phonology in chapter 2 appears to be considerably indebted to the one provided by Mudliyar W. F. Gunawardhana in *Siddhānta Parīksaṇaya* (1924) (pp. 70–83); Kumaratunga's analysis is much more detailed than Gunawardhana's, but it also contains several grave inaccuracies —the result, once again, of the lack of an adequate phonetic training. For instance, Kumaratunga makes such statements as, that all Sinhalese vowels are voiceless, අප කියවන සෑටියට නම් සියලු ස්වර අශෝෂයි, p. 17; that only voiced sounds may be aspirated, අල්ප ප්‍රාණ හෝ මහා ප්‍රාණ වියැ හැක්කේ ප්‍රවෘත්ත ප්‍රාණ හෙවත් සප්‍රාණ ශබ්ද පමණෙකි, p. 19; and that the nasals of Sinhalese are always voiceless, ව්‍යාකරණ පොත්හි දක්වෙන්නේ ඩ ඥ ණ න් ම ං යන අනුනාසික ශබ්දත් ඝෝෂ ලෙසයි. එහෙත් කියැවෙන්නේ නම් අඝෝෂ ලෙස මැයි. p. 18.

The chapter on Morphophonemics or junction features in Sinhalese (chapter 3), is characteristic of Kumaratunga in its wealth of detail and particular attention to exceptions, marks a considerable improvement in comprehensiveness and analytic technique on traditional grammar as embodied in the *Sidat Saṅgarā* and its later imitations.

It is in the field of syntax, however, that Kumaratunga made his most important contribution to Sinhalese linguistics. In phonology, morphology and morphophonemics, he was enlarging upon the pioneering work of the "father of modern Sinhalese linguistics", Mudliyar W. F. Gunawardhana. The latter, however, had only dealt with the first two chapters of the *Sidat Saṅgarā*, and had not dealt at all with the syntax. Unlike Geiger and the ardent followers of his method of Historical and Comparative Philology, Kumaratunga was the first to perceive that syntax lay at the heart of grammar, and that therefore phonological, morphological and morphophonemic studies were important and necessary only so far as they enabled the grammarian to describe the syntactic

combinations into which words may enter, i. e. the typical syntactic patterns of the language under analysis.

After a very detailed description of the formal characteristics of the Sinhalese noun in chapters 6 and 7, Kumaratunga deals with the syntax of the noun in chapter 8. This chapter deals with the syntactical relations of the noun with verbs, indeclinables, and with other nouns. Thus this chapter includes the analysis of subject + predicate sentence patterns, features of concord and agreement, and types of adverbial, adjectival, and postpositional phrases. The three chapters (6, 7 and 8), running into 126 pages, comprise a full-scale study of the morphology and syntax of the noun in Sinhalese, similar to the grammatical study of the Sinhalese verb in *Kriyā Vivaraṇaya*. Once again, the initial definitions are set up on notional grounds, but the formal features of each category are subsequently dealt together with adequate illustrations. Thus, in *Kriyā Vivaraṇaya* and in chapters 6, 7 and 8 of *Vyākaraṇa Vivaraṇaya*, Munidasa Kumaratunga laid a solid foundation for a descriptive grammar of literary Sinhalese.

Kamaratunga's account of නිපාත (Indeclinables) in Sinhalese[1] is also an original contribution to Sinhalese grammatical studies. The definition of indeclinables in the *Sidat Saṅgarā*— පියවි නිසා හොත නොනිසා හොත කෙළේ නිපා නම් —("That which is produced in association with, or without, a root is called indeclinable"—i, 39) is too absurd to deserve any consideration or comment. By contrast, Kumaratunga's definition is as formal as any modern linguist would like it to be: නාම හෝ අඛ්‍යාත හෝ නොවන්නාවූ සියලු පද නිපාතයි ("All words other than nouns and verbs are termed indeclinables", p. 282). The sub-division of indeclinables into අකාර්ය නිපාත and සකාර්ය නිපාත[2] is based on differences in grammatical function. The two sub-classes are further sub-divided[3] on the basis of several types of criteria—notional, situational and syntactic.

Chapter 13, also an original contribution to Sinhalese grammar, contains a characteristically detailed study of derivational affixes in Sinhalese, and the morphophonemic changes consequent upon the combination of roots with derivational affixes. The importance of Kumaratunga's analysis becomes evident when we bear in mind the

---

[1] *Vyākaraṇa Vivaraṇaya*, (Colombo: M. D. Gunasena & Co. Ltd., 2nd Ed., 3rd Imp. 1963) Chapter 12, pp. 288-308.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 281-3.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 283-308.

72

fact that in the *Sidat Sangarā* and in all other subsequent grammatical treatises, උපසර්ග (prefixes) had been classified as පද (free forms or words). Kumaratunga, correctly, classed prefixes with suffixes, not with words.[1]

Kumaratunga's chapters on sentence structure in Sinhalese[2] represent, perhaps, the weakest parts of the *Vyākaraṇa Vivaraṇaya*. Here, he was obviously influenced to a great extent by contemporary text-books on English grammar.[3] The eight types of sentence elements he sets up for the analysis of sentence structure (Subject, Extension of Subject, Predicate, Extension of Predicate, Complement, Extension of Complement, Object, and Enlargement of Object), the division of sentences into three types (Simple, Complex and Compound), the classification of clauses and phrases, the chapters on the combination of sentences and "parsing", all resemble similar analyses in English traditional grammar texts too closely to indicate any originality. This type of analysis had been, moreover, attempted in several earlier works on Sinhalese grammar (notably, A. M. Gunasekera's *A Comprehensive Grammar of the Sinhalese Language*, 1891, and John Blok's *Sinhala Vākya Nītiya*, 1903).

Considered as a comprehensive Sinhalese grammar, Kumaratunga's *Vyākaraṇa Vivaraṇaya* cannot, of course, stand up to all the rigorous, formal–structural requirements of modern linguistics. Most of the definitions it sets up are based on notional criteria which modern linguists would totally abjure; its analysis of Sinhalese phonology contains many inaccuracies; and its chapters on Sinhalese sentence

---

1 ඇතැම් වෛයාකරණයෝ උපසර්ග ද පද විශෙෂයක් කොටැ සලකති. තනිවැ සිටැ කිසි අර්ථයක් නොදෙන බැවින්, උපසර්ග පද කොටැ සැලකීම ශාස්ත්‍ර විරෝධ වෙයි. මුලට යෙදි සධ්‍රග ප්‍රකෘති නිපදවන උපසර්ගය ඉදින් පදයෙක් වේ නම්, අගට යෙදි සධ්‍රග ප්‍රකෘති නිපදවන ප්‍රත්‍යය ද පදයක් වියැ යුත්තේයැ.

("Certain grammarians consider prefixes too, to be a class of words. Since prefixes, standing alone, do not convey any meaning, it is unscientific to consider them to be words. If a prefix, occurring in initial position as part of a compound root is considered a word, then a suffix occurring in final position in a compound root, too, should be called a word"—*Vyākaraṇa Vivaraṇaya*. pp-329-30.

2 Chapters 16, 17, and 18, pp. 375-412.

3 This has been conceded even by some of the chief disciples of Kumaratunga; see, for example,

හෙළ බසැ කියමන් බෙදීම (වාක්‍ය විභාගය) සඳහා මොවුන් විසින් හඳුන්වා දෙන ලද නියාව නම් ඉංගිරිසියේ බෙදුමේ පිළිවෙළ මැයි.

("The system introduced by him for the analysis of Sinhalese sentence structure is the system employed for the analysis of sentence structure in English") —Abiram Gamhewayo, in Sitinamaluwe Sumanaratana, *op. cit.*, p 123.

structure and types of sentences are based quite clearly on English grammatical structure. Just as the author of the *Sidat Saṅgarā* had tried to stretch Sinhalese structure on the Procrustean bed of Sanskrit and Pali grammar, Kumaratunga tried, in the later chapters of *Vyākaraṇa Vivaraṇaya*, (consciously or otherwise), to fit Sinhalese grammatical structure into an alien English framework. However, the detailed chapters on the morphology and syntax of the noun, the verb, the indeclinables, and derivation in the *Vyākaraṇa Vivaraṇaya* are sufficiently comprehensive and original to represent a contribution of considerable importance to Sinhalese linguistic studies.

Although a potential structural linguist, quite in advance of his age, and passionately interested in his mother tongue and all linguistic matters, Kumaratunga's belief in the pristine glory and "purity" of the classical Sinhalese literary language coloured his theory of, and attitude towards, linguistic analysis. Thus, both his *Vyākaraṇa Vivaraṇaya* and *Kriyā Vivaraṇaya* are based, at least for the greater part, on the linguistic usages and practices of classical Sinhalese writers from the 12th century up to about the 15th century; the occasional concessions he makes to contemporary usage are usually relegated to footnotes[1]. These two works cannot even be considered to be synchronic studies of classical Sinhalese, because Kumaratunga includes examples from contemporary colloquial usage, too, wherever such illustrations suit his particular purpose[2]. Strangely enough, while thus accepting both classical Sinhalese literary usage as well as contemporary colloquial usage, Kumaratunga presistently refused to give primary place to the literary usage of the vast majority of his contemporaries. His obsession with certain (now obsolete) features of classical literary Sinhalese[3] (e. g. the prescriptive use of ඇ and the use of the suffix –එක් with inanimate nouns),

---

[1] cf. note 3, p. 166.

[2] See pp. 206, 207, 301, 302, 306, for examples from non–literary, purely colloquial usage.

[3] Kumaratunga's ideal of literary style is implcit in the following statement from an unsigned article titled 'Contemporary Sinhalese' in *Subasa*, Vol. 1, No. 3, August 7, 1939:

ඉහළම් කොසට ගැණෙනුයේ මේ ලිපියෙහි එන්නා වැන්නයි (භාෂාවයි). මෙයට ඉහළම් සිංහලයැ යි කියන්නෙන් වෙන උසස් කමෙක් නියා නොවේ. සිංහලයට මෑ හිමි වූ සිංහල ලකුණ වූ සිංහලයට ආඩම්බරයක් වූ සිංහලයෙහි බොහෝ තන් නිරවුල් කොටැ දෙන්නාවූ ''ඇ'' යන්න සුඤු සේ යෙදෙන නියා යැ.

("The highest position is held by the literary style which is similar to the language employed in the present article. This is called the best Sinhalese,

his static view of language[1], his haughty, dictatorial, uncompromising attitude towards his critics and opponents[2], and his intemperate attacks on almost all his foremost fellow-writers, resulted in Kumaratunga's being cut off (except for a small group of his ardent admirers who comprised the Hela Havula) from the mainstream of contemporary literary activity. The inevitable result of this isolation was that Kumaratunga's substantial achievement in the field of Sinhalese linguistics (like that of Mudliyar W. F. Gunawardhana before him) did not receive the importance and the appreciation it rightfully deserved. Nevertheless, it is sufficient testimony to Kumaratunga's greatness that even at the present time, with four Universities providing facilities for linguistic training in Ceylon, an adequate, comprehensive and complete grammar of the Sinhalese language (spoken or written) remains yet unwritten, more than 30 years after Munidasa Kumaratunga attempted the task for the first time.

not for any other reason, but because it uses correctly, and in the appropriate places, the sound "ඇ", which is the distinctive mark of Sinhalese, a pride to the Sinhalese, and which clarifies many ambiguous instances").

[1] Kumaratunga believed that linguistic change was the result of the 'corruption' of the language at the hands of the 'illiterate' villagers, and that it had to be resisted as far as possible; cf.

ගම් වැසියාගේ කට යන යන අනට වියත් බස යවන්නට තැත් කළහොත් අගදි ලැබෙන්නේ නිකම් මැ ගොන් බයෙකි.

("If we try to change the language of the learned in accordance with the mode of speech of the villagers, the ultimate result will be nonsense"—*Subasa*, Vol. 1, No. 5, July 24, 1939; and "If such a form (i. e. කිකිළිට) occurs, it must be amongst those to whom Sinhalese is a language very loosely adopted"—Ibid., Sept. 4, 1939.

[2] cf. "You ask me to give my authorities. Well, let me frankly tell you that I am my authority. Nose-ropes are meant for the bull not for the man. If you ask Einstein to quote his authorities the poor man will simply be nonplussed"—*The Helio*, Vol. 1, No, 1, August 29, 1941.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON PROFESSOR PARANAVITANA'S CONTRIBUTION TO HISTORY

Sirima Kiribamune

An archaeologist by profession and training, Professor Paranavitana is a historian only by adoption. He began his career as an epigraphist and naturally became aware of the vast amount of historical material available in the inscriptions found scattered in various parts of the Island. The traditional knowledge of the ancient history of the Island was largely derived from the literary sources, especially the Pali Chronicles. The evidence of the inscriptions often enhanced the value of the Chronicles; there was much supplementary information in them and in a few instances they modified the accounts in the literary sources. Prof. Paranavitana soon found himself immersed in the epigraphical and literary material relating to the ancient history of Ceylon and from about 1924 began to make a steady contribution towards a better understanding of the past. The adoption of history by Prof. Paranavitana was perhaps inevitable especially because very little scientific research was being done on the early history of Ceylon.

It is unreservedly acknowledged that Prof. Paranavitana is a devoted and dedicated research worker. This is amply revealed by the large output of work which is almost staggering. Among the research workers of Ceylon, he outclasses them all as the most prolific writer. His primary interest has been archaeology and in a final appraisal, posterity will remember him for his services in that sphere. However, history writing has been an important sideline in Prof. Paranavitana's career and he has displayed an increasingly absorbing interest in it in recent times. The large variety of evidence in the ancient epigraphs of Ceylon has led this scholar to dabble in a wide range of subjects and it is well-nigh impossible for any serious historian to discuss a topic on either the ancient or medieval history of Ceylon without a reference to Prof. Paranavitana's views, whether he accepts them or not.

The acknowledgement of Prof. Paranavitana as a historian was made in 1957 when he was invited to edit the First Volume of

Sirima Kiribamune, Ph. D. (London), is a Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya.

The Sinhalese version of this article was originally published in 'Samskrti'.

the *University History of Ceylon*. His contribution to this work marks an important stage in his career as a historian. The need for a comprehensive work on the history of Ceylon, which could bring together the material scattered in a number of publications was a sorely felt need, and Prof. Paranavitana's handling of this task was, to say the least, extremely praiseworthy. The experience so gained, appears to have inspired him to undertake further investigations. Close on the heels of the *University History of Ceylon* was published his startlingly new interpretation of the problem of the Kaliṅga dynasty where he rejects the traditional view accepted in the *University History of Ceylon*. He has since vehemently defended his position that the Kaliṅga dynasty came from Malaysia, and has recently produced, what he believes is epigraphic evidence in support of his theory.[1]

Prof. Paranavitana has been chiefly interested in the period of Ceylon history from the earliest times to the coming of the Portuguese to the Island. Hardly any aspect of the history of this lengthy period has escaped his attention. In the course of his writings, he has commented on the political history of practically the whole of this period. The numerous articles written by him in the *Epigraphia Zeylanica* Volumes 3 to 5 are full of historical comments relevant to the periods to which the inscriptions published in them belong. An early attempt at a connected history of a selected period of Ceylon history is seen in the *Vākāṭaka Gupta Age*[2] where the history of Ceylon from Vasabha to Moggallāna I (c. 65 - 512 A. D.) is discussed. Of greater significance are his chapters on the political history of the island in the *University History of Ceylon*[3] and the *Concise History of Ceylon*[4]. In them he has covered the period extending from the early Aryan settlements to about 433 A. D. and the period from the beginning of the Dambadeṇi Kingdom (c. 1232 A. D.) to 1505 A. D. Prof. Paranavitana has taken on all the chapters on the cultural history of ancient and medieval Ceylon and this is his major contribution to the *University History of Ceylon*. Here he culls together ideas expressed more elaborately elsewhere, for the cultural history of the island finds very detailed analysis among his writings. Some aspects

---

[1] *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. V, Part III, p. 440 ff.
   Ceylon and Malaysia, Colombo, 1966.
[2] Ed. R. C. Majumdar and A. S. Altekar, Banaras, 1946.
[3] Vol. I, Pt. I, Bk. 2 chs. 2-5; Part II, Bk. 5, Chs. 1-3.
[4] Chs. 2, 5, 15, 16, & 17.

77

of the political institutions which existed in the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruva Periods have also engaged his attention. Of particular interest are his views on kingship and its origins in Ceylon.[1]

Social and economic history have not been his *forte*. In fact the chapters on this aspect of history written by him in the *University History of Ceylon* are inadequate, and one misses his usual confidence and exuberance. His interest in the problem of Ceylon and South East Asia dates back to 1932 when he wrote an article on "Religious Intercourse between Ceylon and Siam in the the 13th to the 15th Centuries".[2] In the recent past this aspect of Ceylon History has become his major preoccupation. The relations between Ceylon and Malaysia having been at first dealt with in a number of lengthy articles have now been incorporated in one book, *Ceylon and Malaysia*[3].

Basically equipped with a good command of Sanskrit, Pali and Sinhalese he displays a great familiarity with the ancient literature of both India and Ceylon. His intimate knowledge of Sinhalese and Pali literature from which he quotes freely has often given him a fresh insight into historical problems otherwise unsolved. He makes ready reference to Sanskrit sources as well and we find him making ample use of information gleaned from the epics and Purāṇas. With the information gathered from a variety of books, Prof. Paranavitana is in a position to marshall numerous arguments in support of a theory, often creating a majestic vision in front of his readers.

Prof. Paranavitana certainly does not lack intellectual courage when he proposes novel interpretations well outside the beaten track. In 1950 he fascinated scholars with his new interpretation of the Sīgiri rock as an abode designed for a god-king.[4] According

---

[1] "Two Royal titles of the Early Sinhalese and the Origin of Kingship in ancient Ceylon", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Gt. Britain & Ireland) July 1936.
"Some Aspects of the Divinity of Kings in Ancient India and Ceylon", *Proceedings and Transactions of the All-India Oriental Conference*, 16th Session, University of Lucknow, 1951, Vol. 2, (Select Papers).

[2] *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (*Ceylon Branch*), (*abbreviated JCBRAS*) Vol. 32, No. 85.

[3] *Ceylon and Malaysia*, Colombo, 1966.

[4] *JCBRAS* (New Series), Vol. I, 1950. pp. 129–183.

78

to the traditions incorporated in the *Cūlavaṁsa*, Sīgiri was built as a fortress city by King Kāśyapa who was apprehensive of his brother, prince Mugalan. There was no reason to doubt this explanation as the shifting of the capital from Anuradhapura, which was easily accessible, to the rock fortress that was Sīgiri and, the remains of walls, moats etc. at Sīgiri seem to indicate that security was a strong motive for the founding of this city. Struck by the well planned nature of the city and its artistic embellishments, Paranavitana does not concede that this was the hastily built retreat of a ruler. Instead he picks on a statement in the *Cūlavaṁsa* itself that Kāśyapa lived on Sīgiri like the god Kuvera on Alakāmaṇḍa and finds in it an explanation for Sīgiri. With great effort he tries to fit in the architectural features of Sīgiri to descriptions of Alakāmaṇḍa in literary sources. This of course is an extremely ingenious theory which may or may not be accepted.

The identification of the statue near the Potgul Vehera with Parākramabāhu I[1] and the Man and Horse's head at Isurumuṇiya with Parjanya[2] are two more examples of the fresh interpretation of archaeological data. In his historical writings a certain orthodoxy can be seen for some time more. For the most part this orthodoxy is maintained even in his contribution to the *University History of Ceylon* where the reconstruction of history is based mainly on the evidence available. However, one does get a foretaste of the type of historical interpretation and reasoning that is to come later from his chapter on the Aryan Settlements. Here he attempts a fresh interpretation of the known evidence, tracing the early Aryan settlers of Ceylon ultimately to North Western India. With his subsequent Kalinga theory, Prof. Paranavitana enters an entirely new phase of his career as a historian. This has sparked off a great deal of controversy, his most severe critics being Professor Nilankanta Sastri,[3] Dr K. Indrapala[4] and Dr. R. A. L. H. Gunawardana.[5] Prof. Paranavitana's

---

[1] *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 1952, pp. 109-217.

[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 1953, pp. 167–190.

[3] 'Ceylon and Sri Vijaya', *JCBRAS* (New Series) Vol. VIII, Pt. I, 1962 pp. 125-140.

[4] *JCBRAS* (New Series) Vol. XI, 1967, pp. 101 – 106.

[5] *Ceylon and Malaysia: A study of Professor Paranavitana's Research on the Relation between the two regions.* Paper read before the Ceylon Studies Seminar, University of Ceylon, March 28th 1969.

approach to this problem and the methods adopted by him to establish his case have caused a great stir among historians. Whether Prof. Paranavitana will be accepted as a scientific historian among scholars will largely depend on the outcome of the test he is being at present subjected to. He once enjoyed a respected position among historians. That he will keep this is not beyond doubt.

It is interesting to see how the transformation from a very cautious researcher to an intrepid theorist took place. In his very early articles, his aims are extremely modest. In them he attempted to make known the epigraphic evidence relating to certain events in Ceylon history, comparing it with the literary material for the purpose of corroboration and elucidation. At best he tries to show the inconsistencies if any between the two sets of evidence. For example, in what is perhaps his earliest historical article on the "Colas and Ceylon"[1], he makes a very factual evaluation of events, keeping very close to his sources. Attention to detail and an exhaustive ferreting out of the smallest bit of evidence is a noteworthy feature even in the earliest writings of Prof. Paranavitana. As early as 1928, writing on the subject "Mahayanism and Ceylon"[2], he was indefatigable in collecting whatever evidence he could lay hands on from the sources available to him. Here too what strikes one is how much the writer hugs his sources. There is no attempt to study the problem of Mahayanism against the background of Theravada Buddhism and there certainly is no speculation. In some of his early writings one even misses the critical approach so necessary in the evaluation of evidence for the reconstruction of history. In an article on 'Buddhist Festivals'[3] for instance, Prof. Paranavitana merely makes available to his readers whatever information could be had from the *Mahāvaṁsa* and a few other literary sources without any attempt to discuss the veracity of such information.

A modest scholar to begin with, Prof. Paranavitana acknowledges the contributions of other scholars in the same field of research. In a somewhat brief discussion on Village Committees in Ceylon[4], he quotes the views of others giving them due recogni-

---

[1] *Ceylon Antiquary & Literary Register*, Vol. 10, Pt., 1924, pp. 114–121.

[2] *Ceylon Journal of Science* (Section G) Vol. 2, Pt. 1, 1928, pp. 35–71.

[3] *Buddhist Studies*, ed. B. C. Law, Calcutta, 1931.

[4] *Ceylon Literary Register* (3rd Series,) Vol. 1, No. 2, 1931, pp. 49–58.

tion. To quote another example, when in 1933 he comments on the Potgul Vehera statue for the first time[1] he sets out the views of prominent scholars and is himself reluctant to come to a conclusion. This is in great contrast to the confidence with which he sets out his own interpretation of the same subject at a subsequent date.

Constant and painstaking research leads Prof. Paranavitana to break new ground quite early in his career. His articles on 'Matrilineal Descent in the Sinhalese Royal Family'[2], the 'Origin of the Kaliṅga Dynasty of Ceylon[3]', 'The Origin of Kingship in Ceylon'[4] etc. display a freshness of thought and the student of history is ever indebted to him for providing him with a new insight into the problems of the past. What is noteworthy is that in these articles Prof. Paranavitana allows himself to be guided by scientific historical methods. He emerges as a cautious historian when he says at the outset of his article on the 'Origin of Kingship in Ancient Ceylon':

> I therefore propose in this paper to pursue this line of study so far as the material available at present allows us to do so. The conclusions at which I have arrived by a study of the available data on this may not in the present state of our knowledge be taken as definitely established[5].

How different from the very dogmatic statements of later years, where one gets the impression that the last word has been said! In placing before his readers the inscriptional evidence relating to the Kaliṅgas of Ceylon, he lets the evidence lead him to the conclusion that the Kaliṅgas came from India. In the subsequent interpretation of the same evidence, he himself leads the evidence to a novel interpretation.

It is readily accepted that the validity of any historical reconstruction depends largely on the proper handling of the available source material. It is extremely important to investigate Prof. Paranavitana's attitude towards his sources and his handling of them. It is rather unfortunate that he is somewhat inconsistent and tends to change his methods depending on the problem at

---

[1] *Ceylon Journal of Science* (Section G), Vol. 2, Pt. 3, 1933, pp. 229–240.

[2] Ibid., pp. 235–240.

[3] *Journal of the Greater India Society*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1926, pp. 57–64.

[4] *JRAS* (Gt. Britain and Ireland), July 1936.,

[5] Ibid., 1936, p. 433.

81

hand. The *Mahāvaṃsa*, the chief Chronicle of the early history of Ceylon, necessarily comes in for a great deal of attention. He is rather sceptical about the historical value of the early chapters of the *Mahāvaṃsa*. He says: "It is however a moot point how much of really historical matter there is in this Chronicle before the introduction of Buddhism to Ceylon".[1] He concedes that there is a germ of truth in the Vijaya story as given in the *Mahāvaṃsa*[2] and is prepared to take the Paṇḍukābhaya story even more seriously. "The general absence of superhuman deeds of valour performed by the hero and the probability of the strategy and tactics deducible therefrom inspire one's confidence"[3]. As for the section dealing with the history of Ceylon from the reign of Devanampiya Tissa onwards, he is inclined to accept as historical the information in the *Mahāvaṃsa* except where there is evidence to the contrary. Putting forward his views on Sīgiri which do not conform to the *Mahāvaṃsa* view he takes great pains to explain his position. "It is legitimate to reject such points in the literary evidence on the history of a monument that are contrary to the evidence supplied by the monument itself"[4]. No one would quarrel with this principle of Prof. Paranavitana if he stops there. But he does not. He goes on next to strain the evidence of the monument to almost breaking-point in order to support a fresh interpretation even more fanciful than the one he has rejected.

In the employment of literary evidence for the purpose of historical interpretation, the main weakness one notices in Prof. Paranavitana's work is the indiscriminate use of such evidence. He is happy to draw from any text, without due consideration paid to its date and without testing the reliability or otherwise of that work, as long as it proves his point. Thus some of his arguments are not valid. The fact that his methods are not always scientific is veiled behind a thick profusion of detail which is some-times difficult to penetrate. To quote a few examples, the *Vāyu Purāṇa* is cited as a probable source from which the thirteenth century author of the *Hatthavanagallavihāravaṃsa* borrowed the idea that the name of Jambudvīpa pradeśa was applicable to Malaysia. His argument is that though the *Vāyu Purāṇa* is an earlier text, it would have been well known among the scholars of the thirteenth

1 Ibid., 1936, p. 452.
2 *Concise History of Ceylon*, 1961, p. 24.
3 Ibid., p. 31.
4 *JCBRAS* (New Series), Vol. I, p. 170.

82

and fourteenth centuries[1]. This type of evidence could be produced to prove anything. In an attempt to establish his theories regarding Sīgiri, the Potgul Vehera statue and the Man and Horse's head at Isurumuniya, literary sources of so many types and ages are quoted that one is spent with the effort of concentration and left somewhat bewildered and confused.

The Indian Epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* have provided numerous data in support of his theories. This evidence is often used in a very arbitrary fashion. For instance he says:

> The general opinion among scholars is that the Epics as we have them now, belong to the period between the third century B. C. and the first century A. D., though certain sections may go back to a date even earlier. The social and religious conditions which they depict, however, might very well hold good for the period of the first Aryan colonisation of Ceylon, about the fifth century B. C. [2].

With this he proceeds to build up his arguments. This certainly is not a very responsible way of handling source material. The Epic ideas are made to apply to all periods, the usual argument used being that they were popular in Ceylon at most times. In order to identify the 'Man and Horse' near Tisāvava, he goes to the *Mahābhārata* looking for a reference to such a combination and finds one[3]. Then again the identification of the statue near Potgul Vehera ascribed to the twelfth century A. D. rests largely on the idea of 'rāja dhara' or 'yoke of state' as found in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*[4]. A first reading of the copious arguments set out by Prof. Paranavitana in support of his many theories leave one totally impressed with the ingenuity of it all. One feels the compulsion of reading it again, this time more cautiously and carefully, and one begins to wonder whether an ingenious explanation is necessarily historical. It seems apparent that something in the evidence has suggested a hypothesis to him. He has then searched for the data and arguments from his great store of knowledge to support his hypothesis. Thus a massive superstructure has been built; but often the foundation is shaky.

[1] Ibid , Vol. 7, 11.
[2] *Memories of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon*, Vol. VI, p. 26.
[3] *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. XVI, p, 167 ff. "The Sculpture of Man and Horse near Tisavava at Anuradhapura, Ceylon".
[4] Ibid., Vol. XV, p. 209 ff. "The Statue near Potgul Vehera at Polonnaruva, Ceylon."

Paranavitana is endowed with an extremely vivid imagination and he tends to speculate a great deal. In the process, speculative possibilities are dressed up as certainties. Gaps in history are sometimes filled by his fertile imagination. Unable to find any evidence which would explain why the royal consecration was withheld from Vikramabāhu and his son Gajabāhu, he says:

> There must have been a body, a college of jurists whose decision was a prerequisite for a ruler's consecration and that body was independent enough to withhold its sanction for the consecration of a prince enjoying *de facto* sovereignty[1].

Often he selects his facts and sometimes adjusts them to illustrate his theories. They are no doubt interesting and suggestive. A preconceived theory can always be proved by some chosen facts arranged in a suitable manner. Thus some of his contributions do not constitute a dispassionate, scientific study of the events of history. The method of reasoning adopted by Paranavitana to establish that the Sinhalese came from North Western India would illustrate this point rather well[2].

At the outset he explains the geographical confusion in the *Mahāvaṃsa* story relating to the original home of Vijaya who led the first batch of Aryan settlers and points out that this evidence is inconclusive to decide what their original home was. The pitfalls as well as the contradictory nature of the philological and linguistic evidence suggested by certain scholars are discussed next. So far Paranavitana's reasoning seems quite valid. Having concluded that the evidence set out by scholars so far does not yield conclusive results, he himself sets out on a new quest.

Paranavitana attempts to settle the question by analysing proper names in the early Brāhmi inscriptions in order to see whether any known Indian tribes could be recognised among the Sinhalese of the 3rd and 2nd centuries B. C. We are introduced to two references to a mercantile corporation of 'Kabojhiyas'. They are equated with the Kambojas who according to the Pali Canon as well as the inscriptions of Asoka, lived in the North–Western extremity of India.

---

[1] *University History of Ceylon*, Vol. I, Part II, p. 531.

[2] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 88 ff.

As both Pāṇini and the Buddhist texts refer to the Yonas in association with the Kambojas it is thought possible that they too could have come to Ceylon with the Kambojas and evidence for this is found in the Paṇḍukābhaya story in the *Mahāvaṃsa* where is there a reference to a Yona settlement. This evidence is quite insufficient to establish the assumption that the Yonas came to Ceylon with the Kambojas. Although Paṇḍukābhaya has been assigned to roughly the fourth century B. C., the legendary nature of this particular section of the Chronicle does not inspire sufficient confidence in the historian to assume that the details in it reflect actual conditions prevailing in the 4th century B. C. The *Mahāvaṃsa* was composed around the sixth century A. D. Although it is known that the information in the *Mahāvaṃsa* is based on earlier works, it is not possible to fix the antiquity of any one section of it with certainty. Even if one takes the reference to the Yonas to be an indication of their presence in the island, we cannot be certain that this knowledge is even early as the 2nd or 3rd. century B. C. when the Kambojas could be dated. Thus the association of the Kambojas and Yonas in Ceylon is only an assumption which is not based on any reliable evidence. Furthermore, it in no way strengthens the next assumption that the Kambojas arrived in the island along with the original Sinhalese.

In order to establish the above thesis Paranavitana seeks the assistance of the *Mahābhārata*, a text which has become almost indispensable for Paranavitana's theories, and he finds in it a reference to the Kambojas.[1] He points out that the Kambojas are mentioned among a group of countries and peoples which comes after a reference to Siṃhapura. This is presented as further evidence for the contention that the Kambojas came to Ceylon with early Sinhalese, for Siṃhapura he says was their original home. Here again, we find a conclusion based on an assumption and not on clear factual evidence. The assumption here is that the Siṃhapura of the *Mahābhārata* is the Siṃhapura of the Vijaya story; for this there is not a shred of evidence. Siṃhapura was a popluar place name in India and Paranavitana himself has suggested that there was another Siṃhapura in Kathiawar[2], an intermediate area where he says the Sinhalese settled before they came to Ceylon. There is no independent eviednce that the Sinhalese were associated with the Siṃhapura of North Western India, this assumption resting entirely on the

[1] Ibid., Vol. I, Pt. 1, p. 89.
[2] Ibid., Vol. I, Pt. 1, p. 91.

earlier assumption that the Kambojas came to Ceylon with the original Sinhalese.

A reference to people known as the Vaṅkas in the *Mahābhārata* in close proximity to Siṃhapura is also cited as supporting evidence, for Vaṅga figures prominently in the Vijaya story. The explanation offered is that the later Sinhalese who were familiar with Vaṅga confused it with Vaṅka due to their obvious similarity. That there was such a confusion is again an assumption which is quite unacceptable because the Vijaya story is also associated with Magadha and Kaliṅga, regions very close to Vaṅga in Bengal. Paranavitana who is unable to find a Magadha and a Kaliṅga in North Western India dismisses them with the statement that they were introduced in the elaboration of details. He adds further that the shifting of names from one region to another is not rare in Indian history and cites the example of the Malavas who were living in the Panjab when Alexander invaded India and were later found in the Vindhyan plateau. How this provides an analogy for the shifting of Magadha and Kaliṅga to North Western India where the stories relating to the early Sinhalese take place is difficult to see. The Malava tribe could have shifted from one place to another but no such explanation could be offered for Magadha and Kaliṅga.

Paranavitana also refers to two personal names Sihila and Sihilaka which occur in two inscriptions of the 1st and 2nd century A. D. period from North Western India. Sihila is thought to be a later form of Siṃhala. Even if this was so, this evidence is far too meagre, too far removed in time to establish that there was a tribe by the name of Siṃhala in North Western India roughly about the 5th or 6th century B. C. While conceding that Paranavitana has made an interesting suggestion we cannot accept as historical a conclusion based on a series of assumptions.

Quite conscious of the fact that the above theory does not explain away all the problems arising out of the Vijaya story, a further proposition is made. The Sinhalese who were originally from the Upper Indus Valley are thought to have settled down in an intermediate area before they came to Ceylon. Thus Western India is brought into the picture. Vijaya's father according the *Mahāvaṃsa* settled down in Lālaraṭṭha where he built the city of Siṃhapura. Lālraṭṭha is taken to be the same as modern Lāṭa in Western India and Siṃhapura according to him could be identified

with either Sihor in Kathiawar or Hingur in the Indus delta. Perhaps what Paranavitana intends to convey is that the original Sinhalese introduced the name Siṃhapura to the new region in which they settled, for he has attempted to locate the city first in North Western India and next in Western India.

Apart from the identification of Lāḷaraṭṭha and Siṃhapura, Paranavitana uses further arguments in support of the view that the original Sinhalese settled down in Western India before they set out to Ceylon. For the most part they form a series of assumptions which cannot be treated as evidence. However, the view that the early Aryans came to Ceylon from Western India is plausible for other reasons.

Prof. Paranavitana's thesis regarding the Malaysian origin of the Kaliṅga dynasty of Ceylon is perhaps one of the most glaring instances which illustrates the unscientific and highly speculative nature of/his more recent writings. The weaknesses in his method of historical reconstruction have been laid bare by Dr. Leslie Gunawardene[1] who has subjected Prof. Paranavitana's views on this subject to a very detail analysis. The controversial nature of the linguistic evidence on which Prof. Paranavitana leans heavily and the arbitrary use of place–names have been pointed out, thereby rendering the conclusions arrived at by him equally controversial and often unacceptable. In this connection, in addition to the inscriptional and literary sources to which historians normally have access to, he introduces us to a new type of source material, minute writing inscribed on stone which is for the most part written in between the lines of original inscriptions, and sometimes over them. On certain slabs there are apparently many layers of writing. They are best described in his own words:

> The portion of the slab below the end of the Sinhalese inscription $4\frac{1}{4}$ in. in depth, is seen at close examination to be covered with writing in very small Sinhalese characters crowded together. The writing is badly weathered, and records of a later date have also been engraved over it. Nevertheless, it has been possible to decipher this writing by concentrated observation... The Sanskrit document is not brought to a close at the bottom of the slab, but is continued, reading upwards, from the last line of the Sinhalese record in the

---

[1] "Ceylon and Malaysia": A study of Prof. Paranavitana's research on the relations between the two regions" A paper (63/69, Series No. 6, March 28, 1969) read before the Ceylon Studies Seminar, Peradeniya.

same small characters to cover one half of the height of the slab. Starting from the top of the slab is another series of inscriptions, also written over the earlier Sinhalese writing of which the lines are continued downwards until they come to the point where the writing from the bottom upwards ends. The whole of the slab has again been utilized for another series of records in characters of a considerably later period. Moreover in certain parts, the writing of the earlier Sanskrit document has been copied in a later script of about the fourteenth century in minute characters faintly but sharply incised. On the stone, therefore, there are three or four layers of writing, one over the other, of which only the original writing, in bold letters deeply engraved, has been recognised so far.[1]

It is extremely doubtful whether such records could have been read by the average literate person even at the time they were inscribed and appear to have been meant only for the 'trained epigraphist'. The problem which faces the average historian is the verification of these records which at first, even to Prof. Paranavitana, "appeared as a hopeless task".

Juggling around with words, reading hidden meanings into them and speculating on their historical evolution are pet devices used by Prof. Paranavitana to prove his theories. For instance the term 'pṛthu kula' in the Buddha Gaya inscription is taken as a hidden reference to the Chronicle, the *Mahāvaṃsa*[2], this being one of the arguments put forward to establish that Mahānāma mentioned here is the author of the Chronicle. In an attempt to identify Uppala-vaṇṇā of the *Mahāvaṃsa* with the Vedic god Varuṇa, he argues that 'uppala' is ultimately derived from 'udakapāla' a possible epithet of Varuṇa. Unable to find a direct reference to Varuṇa by the epithet 'udakapāla, he points out that he was known as 'udakapati'. Vaṇṇa, the second component of the word Uppalavaṇṇa is derived from Varuṇa on the basis of analogous derivations mentioned by him.[3] The same method of reasoning is adopted to prove that the expression "podonavulu–puluṇḍāvuluyen" in a tenth century A. D. inscription is actually an invocation to Parjanya and Agni[4].

[1] *Ceylon & Malaysia*, pp. 43–44.
[2] *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. XX, No. 2, pp. 279 ff. 'Mahanama'.
[3] *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon*, Vol. VI, 1953, pp. 22—24.
[4] *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. XVI, p. 167 ff.

88

To base one's conclusion on the possibility that crucial words in one's sources went through a particular type of evolution, without actual evidence of such a process except analogy is, to say the least, extremely hazardous. Conclusions arrived at through this type of argumentation are therefore not historically valid. Obvious meanings of words are sometimes set aside in favour of fanciful interpretations. Thus, for instance, commenting on the term 'devoṭunu -mäñda-upan' he does not for a moment consider its obvious similarity to the term 'debisavajā' but resorts to a more complicated derivation where 'voṭunu' is derived from 'vartma' meaning route and the entire expression is interpreted as 'the land between the two routes'.[1]

Copyist's errors and emendations by copyists due to some reason or other are conventional explanations offered by Prof. Paranavitana when he wishes a manuscript to read the way he wants it to so that it would fit in with his scheme of thinking. By this method he manufactures data to prove his point. *Met-giri* in the Sinhalese Glossary of the *Mahābodhivaṃsa* (*Mahābodhivaṃsa-granthipadavivaraṇa-ya*), would be a copyist's error for Mey-giri.[2] Jambudvīpa should have been Jambidīpa and Varmasetu should have been Vartmasetu.[3] Such instances could be multiplied. Not much distinction is made between this type of conjectural evidence and factual evidence; and this makes his conclusions rather doubtful.

Employing so many different devices, Prof. Paranavitana clutters up his arguments with evidence drawn from such a variety of sources that sometimes he himself gets quite mixed up. His sole aim is to establish his point of view by every means at his dis-posal. Sometimes the type of argument used to prove one particular theory would be completely reversed to prove another hunch. Consistency therefore is not one of Prof. Paranavitana's strong points. Analysing the account of the *Daṭhāvaṃsa*, he says that the author followed the traditional story faithfully, but when describing Kaliṅga from where the Tooth Relic was brought he described the Kaliṅga of Malaysia for literary embellishment. No better reason is offered for transferring the scene of action from India to Malaysia. The confusion which would result in the minds of Dhammakitti's readers is not posed but the opposite argument is trotted out that

1 *JCBRAS* (New Series), Vol. 7. pp. 39—30.
2 *Artibus Asiae*, XVI, p. 182.
3 *JCBRAS* (New Series), Vol. 7, p. 30.

89

because the Sinhalese of the twelfth century A. D. were familiar with the Kaliṅga of Malaya the story would have been more convincing.[1] In fact one would expect the geographical confusion to make the story less convincing. However, when he wishes to identify Jambudvīpa of the *Hatthavanagalla–vihāravaṃsa* with Further India, contemporary usage is not considered at all but the author is supposed to have borrowed it from some work such as the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, a text which according to him would have been known to the educated elite of Ceylon.[2] This type of contrary argument does not in anyway behove a scientific historian who wishes himself to be considered seriously.

Much could be said on the credit side with regard to Prof. Paranavitana's work. Witticisms and pungent humour often characterize his writings, and this make them immensely readable. Commenting on the introduction of Buddhism to Ceylon, he says:

> Mahinda Thera and his companions are believed by the faithful to have transported themselves through the air... Those who are not prepared to believe that there was air transport in those days may give some thought to the manner of Mahinda's progress from Avanti to Ceylon.[3]

Replying to a critic he says with sarcastic humour:

> What a horse! But we must not be too hard on the poor beast. We must rather blame those who place animals in positions not quite suited to the abilities with which they are endowed by nature.[4]

Throughout his career, Prof. Paranavitana has never feared to modify or even repudiate as unsound views he once held. The theory regarding the Malaysian origin of the Kaliṅgas is a complete repudiation of the view he once held that the Kaliṅgas came from India.[5] Regarding the Potgul-Vehera statue one finds him making a rather guarded statement in 1933 that it might belong to about the eighth century A. D.[6] Later, however, he expresses the opinion

[1] *JCBRAS* (New Series), Vol. VII, pp. 24—21.
[2] Ibid., p. 1.
[3] *University History of Ceylon*, Vol. I, Part I, p. 138.
[4] *JCBRAS* (New Series), 1950, p. 168 ff.
[5] *Journal of the Greater India Society*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1936, pp. 57—64.
[6] *Ceylon Journal of Science* (Section G), Vol. 2, Pt. 3, 1933, pp. 229—234.

90

that it belongs to the twelfh century A. D.[1] Prof. Paranavitana's views regarding Nissankamalla's claim that he was descended from Vijaya have undergone a radical change as a result of what he believes is new evidence. Writing in 1959 he offers a rather laborious explanation making out that Nissankamalla's claim was with reference to another Vijaya who colonised another Laṅkā situated in Malaysia.[2] However, in 1965 in the light of his new discoveries he states that there is evidence that the Kaliṅgas were descended ultimately from a Sinhalese king Kassapa V and therefore had as good a claim to be considered the descendant of Vijaya as any other prince who occupied the Sinhala throne."[3]

There is no gainsaying that Prof. Paranavitana excels as a story-teller and always fascinates his readers. When he is analysing accepted historical data and is heading in the direction to which his evidence leads, he is at his best as a historian. There is much that Prof. Paranavitana has written in this vein, which is valid history. By way of illustration a few examples may be quoted. It is with great skill that he handles the the problem of the capital of Ceylon during the ninth and tenth centuries A. D.[4] He marshalls together the evidence of the *Mahāvamsa* and of archaeological sources to establish his point which he does with sufficient evidence and clear reasoning. The way in which he tackles the career of Kāvantissa and Duṭṭhagāmiṇī in the *University History of Ceylon* is masterly[5]. The reconstruction of the early history of Rohaṇa with the help of evidence gathered from the *Mahāvamsa, Dhātuvamsa* and the early Brāhmi inscriptions is both ingenious and plausible. The interpretation of the evidence of the *Dhātuvamsa* and the *Mahāvamsa* regarding the career of Kāvantissa, where he emerges as a shrewd diplomat and the chief architect of the political unification of Rohana, quite in contrast to the cowardly ruler painted by the author of *Mahāvamsa*, is extremely convincing. The evidence of contemporary inscriptions is cited to establish the historicity of the warriors of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī and the legendary nature of the stories about them are explained away with great finesse. The description of the war between Eḷāra and Duṭṭhagāmaṇī follows the *Mahāvamsa* account very closely. He does indulge in minor

---

[1] *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. XV, p. 209 ff.
[2] *JCBRAS* (New Series), Vol. VII, pp. 35–6.
[3] *Ceylon and Malaysia*, p. 73.
[4] *Ceylon Journal of Science* (Section G) Vol. 2, Pt. 2, 1950, pp. 141–147.
[5] Ibid., Vol. I, Pt. 2, p. 145 ff.

speculations such as the possibility of Elāra's agents having a hand in the estrangement between the two brothers Duṭṭhagāmaṇī and Saddhātissa but what is noteworthy about it is that he does not dogmatise.

Except for certain flights of fancy noticed in his approach to the problem of the original home of the Aryans who came to Ceylon, his contribution to the *University History of Ceylon* deserves great praise. The chapter[1] on the introduction of Buddhism is written in a very dispassionate manner. The historicity of the Third Buddhist Council and the mission of Mahinda are accepted, and for these supporting epigraphical evidence has been given. The relations between Asoka and Devānampiyatissa are also discussed in a very rational manner without unduly straining the evidence available. The possibility that there was some knowledge of Buddhism in Ceylon before the arrival of Mahinda is discussed but he does not present this as a fact due to lack of evidence. The *Mahāvasṃa* story of the arrival of Mahinda and later of Sangamitta in Ceylon, the patronage of Buddhism by Devānampiyatissa and the propagation of Buddhism by the Thera Mahinda and his followers is accepted although no credence is given to the miraculous element in it. The political history of the island from Duṭṭhagāmiṇī to Mahasen is also dealt with in a very matter-of-fact way. Here he seldom indulges in unwarranted speculation and in the main keeps close to his evidence in the reconstruction of history. His familiarity with the original sources of Ceylon history is used to great advantage and his conclusions will invite the serious consideration of historians.

Prof. Paranavitana has given fresh incentive to those interested in Ceylon's past and has set many to think afresh regarding problems which they once thought were settled. In conclusion we may quote Prof. Paranavitana himself, ". . . but whether one agrees with him on a particular point or not, no one will deny that his views are always stimulating.[2]" Prof. Paranavitana's views will certainly continue to stimulate and engross.

---

[1] *University History of Ceylon*, Vol. I, Pt. 1, Chapter 2.

[2] A review of Paul. E. Pieris, "Tri-Simhala—The Last Phase", *JCBRAS*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 91, p. 280.

ASPECTS OF THE BUDDHIST THEORY OF THE EXTERNAL WORLD AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL SCHOOLS IN BUDDHISM

D. J. Kalupahana

IT may not be surprising to see the teachings embodied in the Upanisadic texts lending themselves to a wide variety of interpretations because these texts record the utterances of a variety of religious teachers and philosophers. But it is certainly surprising to see how early Buddhism representing the ideas attributed to one individual, namely, Siddhartha Gautama, came to be interpreted in different ways by thinkers who were advocates of totally divergent philosophical systems, ranging from the most extreme forms of realism to unqualified forms of idealism. The purport of this paper is to examine one of the most important theories of early Buddhism namely, the theory of the external world which, in the course of time, underwent many changes and gave rise to different systems within the fold of Buddhism.

There is no doubt that the problems connected with the nature of perception and of the physical world have given rise to divergent systems of thought such as Realism, Phenomenalism, and Idealism. Therefore an examination of the problems of perception and of the external world, as they appear in the earliest Buddhist records, namely, the Pali Nikayas and the Chinese Agamas, will serve as a starting point in our discussion.

For the Buddha, the problem of perception was one of paramount importance, for he realised that all the misery and unhappiness in this world are due to the unwholesome tendencies generated by sense perception. It produced attachment which was the root cause of most of the suffering in this world. At the same time, the Buddha realized that a proper understanding of the operation of the sensory process would enable man to detect these evils and eradicate them thus paving the way for the attainment of perfect happiness. Hence, in the Samyutta Nikaya, the higher life (*brahmacariya*), lived under the guidance of the Buddha, is said to be aimed at understanding the process of perception.[1]

D. J. Kalupahana, M. A. (Ceylon), Ph. D. (Lond.) is a Lecturer in Pali and Buddhist Civilization at the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya.

[1] *Samyutta Nikāya*, ed. M. Leon Feer, (London: Pali Text Society, 1960 reprint) (Hereinafter abbreviated *S*) 4. 138.

The theory of sense perception is represented in the special application of the causal principle, consisting of twelve factors, by the phrase *salāyatana* (*liu ju ch'u* 六入處). The term *āyatana* which, to use a term from modern psychology, means a 'gateway',[1] denotes both the sense organ as well as the sense object[2]. The former is called the internal 'gateway' (*ajjhattika āyatana, nei ju ch'u* 內入處) and the latter, the external 'gateway' (*bāhira āyatana, wei jn ch'u* 外入處).[3] The origin of sense perception or cognition from this subject-object relationship is described in an oft recurring statement in the Pali Nikāyas and the Chinese Āgamas. It runs thus: "Depending on eye and visible form there arises visual consciousness; the concurrence of the three is contact; depending on contact is feeling; what one feels, one senses (that is, one recognizes); what one senses, one thinks about; . . . "[4]

A more elaborate account giving a strictly causal explanation of the process of perception than the one quoted earlier, is found in the *Mahā Hatthipadopama Sutta*. Here it is held that visual cognition, for example, results from the presence of three conditions, namely, (a) the existence of an unimpaired internal visual organ, (b) the entry of the external visible form into the range of vision and (c) an appropriate act of attention on the part of the mind[5]. All these conditions should be satisfied for any act of perception to be possible. Thus, it is maintained that if condition (a) alone is satisfied but not (b) and (c) there would be no perception; likewise, if conditions (a) and (b) alone are satisfied and not condition (c) perception would not be possible[6].

Condition. (a) represents a more precise definition of the first of the conditions given in the oft recurring formula of perception.

---

[1] Munn, Norman L., *Psychology. The Fundamentals of Human Adjustment*, (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., Fourth Edition, 1961) 507.

[2] *Compendium of Philosophy*, (being a translation . . . of the Adhidhammatthasangaha) by Shwe Zan Aung and Mrs. C. A. F. Rhys Davids, (London: Pali Text Society, 1963 reprint) 183, note 1.

[3] *Majjhima Nikāya*, ed. V. Trenckner and R. Chalmers, (London; Pali Text) Society, 1948) (abbreviated *M*) 1. 190; *Chung A-han Ching* (abbreviated *Chung* Fascicle 7; Sutra 2 (in *Taisho Shinshu Daizokyo*, abbreviated *TD*, edited by J. Takakusu and K. Watanabe, Tokyo: The Taisho Issai-kyo Kanko Kwai, 1924-9, 1. 467a).

[4] *M* I. 111-2: *Chung* 28: 3 (*TD* 1. 504b).

[5] *M* I. 190; *Chung* 7: 2 (*TD* I. 477a).

[6] Loc. cit.

94

This definition takes into account the possibility of a distortion of perception if the sense organ were not to be in perfect condition. Of special significance is the adjective 'internal' (*ajjhattika*, *nei* 內) because it is not the mere existence of the sense organ but the perfect condition of the internal structure of the sense organ that is important for the genesis of perception without distortion.[1] The Chinese version seems to imply a person whose visual organ is unimpaired.[2]

Condition (b) is defined differently in the Pali Nikāyas and the Chinese Āgamas. The Pali version emphasises the coming of the external object into proper focus or within the range of vision. The word *āpātha* occurring in the Pali text may be derived from *a* with causative or Class X of √*path* (to go, to throw, to send) meaning sphere or range (of sense organ), hence synonymous with *visaya* or *gocara*.[3] But along with this, the *Critical Pali Dictionary* as well as the *Pali English Dictionary*,[4] suggest another meaning, namely, "to become clear." The Chinese version more specifically gives this meaning when it maintains that "the external object should be illuminated by light."[5] In the later Buddhist texts, light (*āloka*), which purports to illuminate the object, has been laid down as a separate condition necessary for the genesis of perception.[6] This idea gained currency during the later period that the word *ābhāsa* (light) came to replace the earlier term *āpātha*.[7]

The third condition necessary for the production of perception is given as attention. The Pali text uses the phrase *tajjo samannāhāro*, where *tajja* means "born, of that" and *samannāhāra* connotes the idea of "bringing in together" (*sam* + *anu* + *ā* + √*hr*). E. R. Saratchandra has raised the question as to whether the phrase *tajja samannāhāra* refers to the automatic act of sensory attention brought about by the intensity of the stimulus or whether

[1] Loc. cit.
[2] Loc. cit.
[3] *A Critical Pali Dictionary*, ed. V. Trenckner, Dines Anderson, Helmer Smith, and others, (Copenhagen: The Royal Academy of Sciences and Letters, 1924), 101,2.
[4] Ed. T. W. Rhys Davids and W. Stede, (London: Pali Text Society, 1959 reprint) 102b.
[5] *Chung* 7: 2 (*TD* 1,467a).
[6] *Āryasālistamba-sūtra*, ed. L. de la Vallee Poussin in *Theorie des Douze Causes* (Gand: La Faculte des philosophie et lettres, 1913) 85. See also *Mādhyamikavṛttih*, ed. L. de la Vallee Poussin, (St. Petersbourg: Academie Imperiale des Sciences, 1903) (Hereinafter abbreviated *MKV*) 567.
[7] *Mahāvastu* ed. E. Senart, (Paris: L' Imprimerie Nationale, 1882-7) 3.66; 1. 6; *Sikṣāsamuccaya*, ed. C. Bendall, (St. Petersburg: 1902) 128, 129, 151, etc.

it meant a deliberate act directed by interest[1]. On the basis of the Sanskrit tradition he is inclined to accept the former interpretation and he rejects the traditional explanation given by Buddhaghosa[2]. His argument is based on the passages in the *Sālistamba-sūtra*[3] and *Mādhyamikavrtti*[4] where the phrase *tajjamanasikāra* occurs instead of *tajjasamannāhāra*. Saratchandra's contention that *tajjasamannāhāra* refers to the automatic act of sensory attention seems to depend on the undue emphasis laid on the term *tajja* to the neglect of the term *samannāhāra*. It may be noted that both terms *samannāhāra* and *mannasikāra* express an active meaning and this is also supported by the Chinese rendering of the Āgama passage which has *nien* (念), a character meaning "to think, to remember, to recall." It is true that consciousness is aroused by the contact of the ssnse organ and the sense object as indicated by the term *tajja*, but that itself without an act directed by interest would not produce a complete perception. Therefore, the term *tajja-samannāhāra* may be taken as implying both sensory excitation and deliberate act directed by interest on the part of the percipient.

The Nikāyas and Āgamas refer to the six kinds of pereceptions, namely, visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile and mental.[5] The *Mahā Taṇhāsaṅkhaya Sutta* maintains that they are so reckoned because of the different causes that produce them.[6] Thus, perception that arises depending on the visual organ and visible form is known as visual perception[7]. Elsewhere it is pointed out that the five sense organs (*panc'indriyāni, wu ken* 五根)—excluding mind (*man'indriya, i ken* 意根)—have different sensory fields and do not encroach upon or share the sensory fields of one another[8]. But mind (*mano, i* 意) can survey all the spheres and is a coordinating factor of the different perceptions, a form of *sensus communis*[9].

It is interesting to note that this description of perception is generally accepted by almost all the later schools of Buddhism. But the interpretation they give to the subject—object relationship and especially to the nature of the external object has differed widely

---

[1] *Buddhist Psychology of Perception*,(Colombo: The Ceylon University Press, 1958) 21.
[2] *Papañcasūdani* (Majjhima Nikāyaṭṭhakathā), ed. J. H. Woods and D. Kosambi, (London: Pali Text Society, 1928) 2. 229.
[3] 85.
[4] 567
[5] *M* 1. 53; *Chung* 8: 2 (*TD* 1.51c).
[6] *M* 1. 259; *Chung* 54:2 (*TD* 1. 767a).
[7] Ibid.
[8] *M* 1.295; *Chung* 58:2 (*TD* 1. 791b.)
[9] Ibid.

96

and it would be interesting to examine these differences and trace the causes that led to these differences so that in the end it would be possible to determine the nature of the philosophical standpoints to which these schools are committed.

Let us examine the philosophical implications of the statement of the theory of perception as given in the early Buddhist sutras. When this is done and a proper assessment of the philosophical standpoint of early Buddhism has been made, it would be easy to find out in what respects it differs from the interpretation given in the later Buddhist schools.

Examining the various descriptions of the nature of the world found in the early Buddhist texts, many of the modern scholars have come to the conclusion that early Buddhism as represented in the Pali Nikāyas and Chinese Āgamas is a form of realism[1]. But this seems to be a rather hasty conclusion arrived at without examining the levels of understanding and the nature of the people to whom the Buddha's discourses were addressed. It is well to remember here that a good part of the discourses of the Buddha were addressed to the trainee (*sekha*), to the uneducated ordinary man (*assutavā puthujjano*), rather than to the person with some kind of philosophical maturity. In such cases the Buddha was careful not to drag in epistemological problems and confuse his understanding. Instead, his teaching was based on a kind of commonsense realism, a realism which, according to a modern definition, takes for granted a premise such as "that sense experience reports a true and uninterrupted, if limited, account of objects; that it is possible to have faith and direct knowledge of the actual world"[2]. An attempt to safeguard his own philosophical standpoint by denying the real existence and direct perception of the external world was not going to be of much benefit in the matter of instructing the ordinary householder (*gihi*) who is prone to enjoy the pleasures of sense (*kāmabhogi*). Therefore one may not be justified in trying to

---

[1] Stcherbatsky, T. I., *The Central Conception of Buddhism and the Meaning of the Word "Dharma"*, (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1923) 54; Murti, T. R. V., *Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., Second Edition, 1960) 54, The most recent research also has tended to favour this interpretation, see Karunadasa, Y., *Buddhist Analysis of Matter*, (Colombo: Department of Cultural Affairs, 1967) 176.

[2] See *Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. D. D. Runes, (New York: Philosophical Library, no date) art. Realism.

97

present the Buddha's philosophical standpoint based on discourses which were addressed to such an audience.

On the other hand, we find discourses of the Buddha where he emphasised the fact that the knowledge of the external world is dependent on the activities of the senses. It is stated in many places that as far as the individual is concerned both the origin and cessation of the world are "within this fathom long conscious body."[1] Statements such as these were made with the hope of emphasising the efficacy of human exertion in the matter of changing the pattern of one's own life, rather than with the intention of justifying the idealist standpoint that the external world does not exist when not perceived.

But there certainly are discourses, which the Buddha addressed to the more philosophically mature minds, as well as records of discussions, which the Buddha had with some of the non-Buddhist philosophers of his time. It is to these discourses and records of discussions that we have to turn to in our assessment of the Buddha's philosophical standpoint. These are the discussions where philosophers like Jāṇussoṇi[2] and philosopher monarchs like Pāyāsi[3] figure. In these discussions and discourses, unlike those referred to earlier where the Buddha adopted a realistic interpretation of the world, we find the Buddha, with a keen awareness of the epistemological problems, avoiding all kinds of metaphysical theories and postulates. This attitude is very clearly depicted in the philosophical discussion which the Buddha had with Jāṇussoṇi regarding the definition of "everything" (*sabbam, i chieh* 一切), wherein the Buddha maintains that if one were to speculate on the nature of reality by depending on data available through sources other than sense perception one would be transgressing the limits of experience (*avisaya, fei ching chich* 非 境 界).[4] It purports to reject all speculative theories which go beyond the data of sensory experience, thus emphasising the empiricist attitude.

---

[1] *S* 1. 62; *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, ed. Richard Morris, (London: Pali Text Society, 1885–1900) 2. 48.

[2] *S* 1. 76.

[3] *Dīgha Nikāya*, ed, T. W. Rhys Davids and J. Estlin Carpenter, (London: Pali Text Society, 1938) (Hereinafter abbreviated *D*) 2. 316 ff; *Ch'ang A-han Ching* (abbreviated *Ch'ang*) 7 (*TD* 1. 42b ff).

[4] *S* 4. 15; *Tsa A-han Ching* (abbreviated *Tsa*) 13:17 (*TD* 2. 91b). See also Kalupahana, D. J., "A Buddhist Tract on Empiricism" in *Philosophy East and West*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press) 19:1 (January 1969) 65-67.

The recognition of the external object, which is not 'ideal', eliminates the possibility of reading idealism into the early Buddhist texts. At the same time the emphasis on sense contact, or to use a term from modern philosophy, sense data (*phassa*, *ch'u*), prevents any attempt to see any form of realism in those same texts. Statements to the effect that conceptions, theories or speculations regarding the nature of the external world should not be based on anything transcending sense perception or sense data (*aññatra phassā*, *pu yuan ch'u*)[1] lead to the irresistible conclusion that early Buddhism, while indirectly rejecting realism as well as idealism, presented a phenomenalistic account of the world. This phenomenalistic standpoint which denied a reality behind phenomena was the mainstay of the Buddhist rejection of the *ātma* -theories of the pre-Buddhistic thinkers.

But coming down to the period of the Abhidharma we find a gradual change in this philosophical outlook. The origin of the Abhidharma has been traced to the attempt to preserve the fundamental teachings of the Buddha by resorting to the method of collecting and classfying and at times elaborating the advanced teachings,[2] a tendency which was noticeable even in the sūtras of the Nikāyas and the Āgamas[3]. This process of collecting and classifying left the Buddhists with categories such as *skandha*, *dhātu*, *āyatana*, *indriya*, *satya*, etc. These constitute the subject–matter of all major works on Abhidharma. Empirical reality came to be reckoned in terms of material (*rūpa*) and mental (*citta*, *caitta*, or *cetasika*) facts. After this, it became necessary to give a definition of each one of these dharmas coming under treatment. Thus, matter (*rūpa*) came to be regarded as non–mental (*cittaviprayukta* or *cittavippayutta*, *acetasika*).[4] Such definitions led to a clear demarcation between material and mental facts. Moreover, these material and mental facts came to be regarded as realities (*paramattha* or

---

[1] *S* 2. 33; Tsa 14:1 (*TD* 2. 94a); also *Ch'ang* 12:1 (*TD* 1. 76a).

[2] *Abhidharmadīpa*, ed. P. S. Jaini, (Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1959) Introduction 29 ff.

[3] Cf. *D* 3. 117 ff; *Ch'ang* 20: 1 (*TD* 1 72c ff); *D* 3. 272 ff; *Ch'ang* 8:2 (*TD* I. 49b ff); *M* 2. 243 ff; *Chung* 52:1 (*TD* 1. 752c ff).

[4] *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*, ed E. Muller, (London: Pali Text Society, 1885) 125, 206–210, etc. But in the Sarvāstivāda the term cittaviprayukta was used to denote a category of dharmas which was drawn up later on, see Jaini, *Abhidharmadīpa*, Introduction, 93 ff.

paramārtha).[1] Thus the philosophy of the Adhidharma assumed the form of a *naive realism* or *pluralism*. This necessitated a change in the Ābhidharmika theory of perception too.

As if to answer the question "How is it that mind which is of a completely different nature, came to be sensitive to matter"? the Ābhidharmikas divided matter into gross matter (*mahābhūta*) and subtle matter (*upādārūpa*), i. e., matter which was derived from gross matter, and they maintained that the sense organs as well as the phenomena they are sensitive to are subtle matter.[2] Thus, what is perceived is only subtle matter; gross matter is a reality which cannot be settled by any possible observation or experience. This is the standpoint of the realist. This was very different from the philosophical outlook of early Buddhism.

The process of change initiated during the period of the Abhidharma did not stop at that. Philosophical speculation continued in the wake of the emergence of such pluralistic and realistic schools such as those of the Vaiśeṣika, and we find Ābhidharmikas too being influenced by their speculations. For example, the atomic theory, without apparently any antecedent history in the early Buddhist texts, appears during the time of the Abhidharma and absorbed the attention of most of the Buddhists. The acceptance of this atomic theory created innumerable problems for the Ābhidharmikas, and the attempts to solve these led to the emergence of many conflicting views and hence different scools within the fold of Buddhism.

A very lucid account of the atomic theories of the realist as well as the semi-realist schools is given by their opponents, the idealists[3]. These accounts are important not only because they present a concise and clear description of the atomic theories, but also because they examine and lay bare the defects and deficiencies of these theories. In the main, there were three atomic

---

[1] *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*, in the *Journal of the Pali Text Society* (London: Pali Text Society, 1884) 1.
    Tattha vuttābhidhammatthā catudhā paramatthato,
    cittaṃ cetasikaṃ rūpaṃ nibbānam iti sabbathā.

[2] See Karunadasa, *Buddhist Analysis of Matter*, 33 ff.

[3] *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi, Viṃsatikā et Triṃsikā*, avec le commentaire de Sthiramati, ...publie ... par Sylvain Levi, (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honore Champion 1925) (Herein after abbreviated *Siddhi*—Levi) 6 ff: *Alambanapariksa and V·tti* by Diṅnāga with the commentary of Dharmapāla, restored into Sanskrit... by N. Aiyaswami Sastri, (Adyar: Adyar Library, 1942) 3 ff.

100

theories which are mentioned in Vasubandhu's *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*. They are as follows:-

1 The object of perception is the (material) form consisting of parts (*avayavirūpa*) — the theory attributed to the Vaiśeṣika school.

2 The object of perception is the aggregate (*saṅghāta*) of atoms (*paramāṇu*) — the theory held by the Sarvastivādins.

3 The object of perception is an aggregate of atoms which have coalesced (*sañcita*) into one unit — the theory upheld by the Sautrāntikas.

The first no doubt is the Vaiśeṣika theory. Although the object is not described here in terms of atoms (*paramāṇu*), but only as a form (*rūpa*) consisting of parts (*avayava*), the Vaiśeṣikas recognized the existence of indivisible and eternal atoms which were considered to be suprasensible and bereft of magnitude. It is only when the suprasensible atoms combine themselves into a group of three or more that they assume magnitude and become perceptible. Thus the smallest group of atoms which has magnitude (*mahattva*) and colour (*udbhūtarūpa*) and which is perceptible is the tretrad (*trayāṇuka*).[2]

The Vaiśeṣikas may be described as thoroughgoing realists since they made a concerted attempt to prove that the complex whole (*avayavin*), though composed of parts (*avayava*), is different from each and all of them (*dravyāntara*),[3] and is directly perceived. According to them the parts as well as the whole are real. Thus the belief in the unity (*ekatva*) of the external object mentioned in the *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi* (*Viṃsatikā-bhāsya*) of Vasubandhu, is a reference to the Vaisesika belief in the unity of atoms in a compounded whole.[4]

The next theory is that of the Sārvastivādins. Referring to their theory of the external object, Vasubandhu says:

---

[1] 6. f.

[2] *Vaisesika Sūtra* iv. 1. 6: see also Bhaduri, S., *Studies in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika Metaphysics*, (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1947) 143: Chatterjee, S. C., *The Nyāya Theory of Knowledge*, (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1953 160—170.

[3] Bhaduri, op. cit., p. 230.

[4] *Vijñapti* (Levi) 6.

101

"It is neither a multiplicity (*anekaṃ*) because the atoms are not perceived when taken individually (*pratyeka*). Nor is it their aggregate because (the aggregate of) atoms do not constitute one (unitary) substance."[1] Here there are two aspects of the atomic theory of the Vaibhāṣikas being criticised by Vasubandhu. L. de la Vallee Poussin seems to think that only the first of these aspects represents the Sarvastivāda theory, for he says: "L' objet de la connaissance est les *paramāṇus, pratyekaṃ*, theorie Sarvastivādin,"[2] and attributes the second aspect to the Sautrāntikas.[3] It is rather difficult to believe that there was any school which upheld the view that the individual (*pratyeka*) atoms (*paramaṇu*) constitute the object of perception, for all the schools were agreed in maintaining that the atoms *per se* are suprasensible (*atindriya*). The view that individual atoms become the object of perception is not permissible according to Hsuan Tsang's version of the *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi* which de la Vallee Poussin himself was translating into French. Here it is said that "Les anciens Sarvastivādins pensant que les atoms pris individuellement, mais lorsqu'ils sont agglomeres, sont la 'condition en qualite' d'objet de la connaissance."[4] The implication is that the individual atoms *exist*, but that they could serve as object-conditions only when they are in aggregates. But still, if we are to consider the two problems referred to in the *Viṃasatikā* as two aspects of the same theory, the Sarvastivāda theory may seem paradoxical in that it recognizes the reality of individual atoms which go to form the perceptible aggregate, yet such an aggregate is not considered to be a unitary substance but only a multiplicity. But this aspect of the Sarvastivāda theory has been overlooked in a recent publication on the atomic theory of the Buddhists.[5] Here it has been pointed out that the Vaibhāṣikas postulated two kinds of atoms, viz, the *dravya-paramaṇu* (the unitary atom) and the *sanghāta-paramaṇu* (the aggregate atom, i. e. the molecule). But the passage quoted in support of this does not refer to *sanghāta-paramaṇu* but only to *sanghāta-rupa*

---

[1] Ibid., 6—7.

[2] *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*, La Siddhi de Hiuan-Tsang, traduite et annotee par L. de la Vallee Poussin, (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Guethner, 1928-9) (Hereinafter abbreviated *Siddhi* — Poussin) 44.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid. See also *L'Abhidarmakosa de Vasubandhu*, traduite et annotee par L. de la Vallee Poussin, (Paris: Societe Belge d'Etudes Orientales, 1923-31) 3.213.

[5] Karunadasa, *Buddhist Analysis of Matter*, 143.

(aggregate form).[1] Yet there is a statement which runs thus:
ta eva te saṅghātāh paramaṇavah sprsyante yatha rupayantà iti.[2]
Here the word *saṅghāta* is used only as an adjective to refer to
the atoms which have formed into a group and immediately after
this statement is a pointed reference to the fact that these agg-
regates cannot be considered as unitary substances (*saṅghātā eva
naikā ity arthah*).[3] If so, unitary atoms (*dravya – paramaṇu*) are
not considered as constituting *one* aggregate *atom* or molecule
(*saṅghāta – paramaṇu*), but only an aggregate form (*saṅghāta-rūpa*) of
atoms. The terms *saṅghata-paramāṇu* and *saṅghāta – rūpa* are used
as synonyms for *sthūla rūpa* (gross form).[4]

Thus, it is important to note that according to the Sarvasti-
vāda theory, the atoms exist individually, and that when they are
in aggregate form (*saṅghāta – rūpa*) they are perceptible or become
the object-condition (*ālambanapratyaya*) of consciousness. But
this aggregate is not to be considered atom–wise a unity (*eka*);
it is only a multiplicity (*aneka*). Thus the difference between the
Vaiṣeṣika and the Vaibhāṣika theories is that, according to the
former, the individual atoms go to form one whole, a unity, while
according to the latter, the indivisible atoms forming an aggregate
do not represent a unity but only a multiplicity. This paradoxical
view of the Vaibhāṣikas was severely criticised by Vasubandhu in
his *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi.*

The neo-Sarvastivādins, led by Saṅghabhadra, seem to have
attempted to solve this problem by maintaining that "the individual
atoms (*ekaikaparamāṇu*), when they do not depend on others
(*anyanirapekṣa*), are imperceptible (*atīndriya*), but that they are
grasped by the senses (*indriyagrāha*) when they are in a multitude
(*bahavah*) and when they depend on each other (*parasparāpekṣāh*)
for their existence."[5] This being the view of the neo-Sarvastivādins
it is not surprising that de la Vallee Poussin failed to find any
mention of it in the *Abhidharmokasa* of Vasubandhu,[6] but only
in Sthiramati's commentary on the *Trimsikā.*[7]

[1] *Abhidharmakosavyākhyā* (*Sphutārthā*), ed. U. Wogihara, (Tokyo: Publishing Asso-
   ciation of Abhidharmakosavyākyhā, 1932-6) 85.
[2] Ibid
[3] Ibid.
[4] *Siddhi* (Poussin) 45
[5] *Siddhi* (Levi) 16.
[6] *Siddhi* (Poussin) 45, note 1.
[7] See above note 50.

103

The third theory, namely, that postulated by the Sautrāntikas, represents yet another attempt to solve the problems arising from the atomic theory of the Sarvastivādins. Unlike the Vaiseṣikas, the Sautrāntikas refused to accept the view that the 'whole', consisting of 'parts' (*avayava*) is directly perceived by the senses. Neither could they reconcile themselves to the theory of the Sarvastivādins. Therefore, they maintained that while the atoms are indivisible units, they could coalesce or mingle together to form an object. Thus while the Sarvastivādins believed in the aggregation of atoms (*saṅghāta*), the Sautrāntikas advocated the coalescence of atoms (*sañcita, saṃyoga*).[1] It may be pointed out that, although de la Vallee Poussin has not been able to see any difference between these two theories and considered the terms *saṅghāta* and *sancita* as synonyms,[2] Vasubandhu's Viṃsatikā treats them as two different theories.[3] But unlike the Vaiseṣikas and the two groups of Sarvastivādins, the Sautrāntikas maintained that this object is not directly perceived.

It may be clear from the above description that in spite of the differences in the three schools of thought, there is one postulate common to all, namely, that the indivisible atom is imperceptible, that is, it does not serve as the object of perception. What serves as the object of perception is made up of the indivisible atoms. It was mentioned that the Ābhidharmikas, like the Vaiseṣikas, were realists and believed that the external object or form (*rūpa*) is non-mental (*cittaviprayukta, acetasika*). But this commonsense realism could not easily be maintained at a time when philosophical inquiry had attained a very high degree of maturity. Thus we find even some of the adherents of the Vaiseṣika school making concessions to this philosophical inquiry and trying to maintain that perception is partly inferential.[4]

The Sautrāntikas, by maintaining that the external object is not directly known and that it is known only through representations, deprived physical objects of much of the reality ascribed

---

[1] *Siddhi* (Levi) 7; *Ālambanaparikṣā*, 4.

[2] *Siddhi* (Poussin) 44.

[3] *Siddhi* (Levi) 6-7.

[4] Bhaduri, *Studies in Nyāya-Vaiseṣika Metaphysics*, 229 ff.

104

to them by commonsense. This led to a twofold development represented by the two schools of thought, the Mādhyamika and the Yogācāra.

Once a philosopher has gone so far as to deprive the physical objects of the reality which human beings are acquainted with through sense perception, two alternatives remain open to him. Either he may maintain that their nature is completely unknown and that we do not know anything about them. Or else he may maintain that they are merely ideas and that nothing exists outside the mind.[1]

The dialectic of Nāgārjuna and his followers was directed at proving the first alternative. They vehemently criticised the view that there is an aspect of reality in phenomena, an aspect which may be called "thing-in-itself" (*svo bhāvo*).[2] Dialectical arguments were adduced by them to expose the inherent contradictions in empirical propositions: the conflict between thesis and anti-thesis.[3] This negation of empirical propositions was carried to such an extent that the other Buddhist schools considered this to be a form of nihilism.[4] Although the reality of the empirical was negated, the Madhyamikas could not overlook the fact that causality (*pratityasamutpāda*) was considered to be one of the central teachings of the Buddha. Yet in early Buddhism, causality was considered to be the empirical reality. Thus the Mādhyamika negation of empirical reality would have implied the negation of the validity of causality. To overcome this discrepancy, the Mādhyamikas described causality in epithets such as 'non-ceasing' (*anirodhaṃ*), 'non-arising' (*anutpādāṃ*), etc.[5] thereby trying to show that it transcended empirical description. Hence, their philosophy may be described as a form of *transcendentalism*. Considering the fact that the aim of Mādhyamika philosophy was to provide a philosophical basis for the monistic (*advaya*) teachings of later Buddhism, especially as embodied in the Prajñāpāramitā texts, one may be able to justify the intention of the Mādhyamikas when they criticised the reality of the empirical world.

[1] Edwards and Pap, *A Modern Iutroduction to Philosophy*, 150.

[2] *MKV* 260.

[3] Murti, *Central Peilosophy of Buddhism*, 136.

[4] *Abhidharmadipa*, 270.

[5] *MKV* 3.

The Buddhists who upheld a form of realism could not escape this philosophical inquiry. The problem raised was how far the sense datum corresponded to the physical object which was considered to be the external reality.

In similar circumstances, the tendency had been to maintain that in spite of their correspondence they are distinct. This philosophical theory is generally called (epistemological) dualism.[1] The dualism consisted in the recognition of 'primary' and 'secondary' natures in phenomena. This was the kind of dualism advocated by the Vaibhāṣikas in their attempt to solve the problems arising from the acceptance of real external objects. They maintained that the 'primary' nature (*svabhāva*) or the "thing–in–itself" (*svo bhāvo*) was real, whereas the 'secondary' nature (*lakṣaṇa*) which characterizes our sense data was unreal. This epistemological dualism assumed the form of a *metaphysical dualism* when the Vaibhāṣikas insisted on the real existence of the "thing–in–itself" (*svo bhāvo*) during the past, present and future and believed that the characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*) were subject to change and transformation (*anyathātva*).[2] The dualism of the Vaibhāṣikas was therefore very different from the realism of the Ābhidharmikas. The acceptance of the unchanging or eternal substance behind the perceptible characteristics in phenomena brought them very much closer to the substantialist view (*ātmavāda*) of the Upaniṣadic thinkers. Thus we find not only the Mādhyamikas,[3] but also the Ābhidharmikas themselves,[4] criticizing the Vaibhāṣika view as heretical.

As a protest against the substantialist and realist views of the Vaibhāṣikas, we find the emergence of the Sautrāntikas who were generally known as 'representationists' (*bāhyārthānumeyavāda*).[5] They did not deny the reality of the external world, but emphasised the fact that it is not directly perceived, and that it is inferred by the series of impressions left in the mind by the momentary object, i. e. *representationism*. As a result of the apparent similarity between the Sautrāntika and phenomenalist standpoints, the Sautrāntikas were believed to be closer to early Buddhism than the

---

[1] Edwards, P. and Pap, A., *A Modern Introduction to Philosophy*, (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc., Ninth Printing, December 1963) 149-9.

[2] *Abhidharmadīpa*, 259-260.

[3] *MKV* 259.

[4] *Kathāvatthu*, ed. A. C. Taylor, (London: Pali Text Society, 1894-7) 1.115 ff.

[5] *Sarvadarsanasaṅgraha*, ed. V. S. Abhyankar, (Poona: The Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1924) 19.

Sarvāstivādins. Yet, the acceptance of the logical theories of momentariness and atomism clearly distinguished them from the empiricism of early Buddhism.

While the Mādhyamikas maintained that the real nature of the external object is not known and that it transcends empirical description, the Yogacāra school believed that the external object is merely an idea and that nothing exists outside the mind. In the *Viṃsatikā*, Vasubandhu is seen employing dialectical arguments against the realist views on the nature of the external world. The atomic theories of the three schools of thought, the Vaiseṣika, the Vaibhāṣika and the Sautrāntika, are here subjected to the severest form of criticism. The arguments are mostly dialectical. Vasubandhu not only denied the validity of sense perception, but even the possibility of sense experience. He held the view that sense perception is the result of false discrimination. Even extrasensory perceptions such as the "knowledge of the thought processes of others" (*paracittavidāṃjñānṃ*), which according to early Buddhism was a more valid form of perception than sense perception, came to be invalidated by the arguments of Vasubandhu. As in sense perception, here too, Vasubandhu pointed out, there is a discrimination as subject (*svacitta*) and object (*paracitta*).[1] Ultimate reality, for him, is ideation only (*vijñaptimātra*), without the duality of subject and object which is realized by the Buddha.[2] This is a form of *absotute idealism*.

As against this absolute form of idealism of Vasubandhu, we find the emergence of the school of thought which may be better described as *immaterialism* and which was advocated by Vasubandhu's pupil Diṅnaga. In his *Ālambanaparikṣā*,[3] Diṅnaga too examines the atomic theories of the realist schools mentioned above. But the arguments that he adduces against these theories are mostly epistemological in character. For example, taking the Vaiseṣika theory of the external object, Diṅnaga points out that the atoms (*aṇu*) are not the causes of the perception (*vijñapti*) of the object (*viṣaya*) because the nature of the atoms is not reflected in consciousness.[4] The argument is that though atoms are considered as causes of consciousness, they do not possess the form reflected

[1] *Siddhi* (Levi) 10.

[2] Ibid.

[3] *Alambanaparikṣā*, 3.

[4] Ibid., 6-7.

in consciousness because atoms themselves have no form and are imperceptible, although the object (*viṣaya*) consisting of the atoms may have form and may be perceptible. Thus Dinnāga's denial was only of the materiallty or substantiality of the external object, rather than of the sense data. What is important to note is that sensation, which may be described as an element of fact (*artha*) and which is external (*bāhya*), is not denied by Diṅnäga. His denial pertains only to the materiality, not to the externality of the object. According to him, from time immemorial this objective iaspect (*viṣayarūpa*) and the force which transforms consciousness into this subject–object relationship, that is, the sense organ, continue to be mutually conditioned.[1] Here there is no denial of the validity of perception, as in the philosophy of Vasubandhu the denial is only of matter. And his idealism may therefore be properly called immaterialism.[2]

The above analysis should amply illustrate how early Buddhism, starting as a form of phenomenalism, gave rise to different schools of thought such as realism, metaphysical dualism, representationism, transcendentalism, idealism and immaterialism, all arising as a result of the differences of opinion expressed on the nature of the external world.

[1] Ibid.

[2] See Kalupahana, D. J., "Diṅnäga's Immaterialism," in *Philosophy East and West*, April, 1970 (in the Press.).