CEYLON

Today and Yesterday

MAIN CURRENTS OF
CEYLON HISTORY

Dr. G. C. MENDIS

A. J. Wilson

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by

G. C. MENDIS, B.A., Ph. D., D. Lit. (Lond.)

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CONTENTS

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PREFACE

MANY works on Ceylon history have been published, but so far no serious attempt has been made to interpret the developments in Ceylon from the beginnings up to the present day. This book does not pretend to fill such a void. It incorporates two series of talks given over the Radio in 1955 and 1956 and some contributions to the Press. They are published in this form in the hope that they may fill to some extent the need for an analysis of this nature until a more comprehensive work is published.

Up to the coming of the Portuguese the main factors that affected the history of Ceylon were the Indian influences, the most important of which were in the twin spheres of religion and culture. So the first three chapters here deal mainly with relations with India, while the fourth examines in what respects the developments in Ceylon in that period differed from those in India.

The main factors that influenced Ceylon after 1505 came from the West, and chapters 5 to 9 deal with them. The first two of these show the limited extent to which the Portuguese and the Dutch influenced Ceylon. Chapter 7 deals with the Colebrooke Reforms which turned the course of Ceylon history in the modern direction. A clear knowledge of these reforms is essential for an understanding of modern developments. Chapters 8 and 9 describe the important developments since 1832 on the basis of these reforms.

Chapter 10 surveys the whole course of Ceylon history dealt with in the first nine chapters and divides it into three periods in relation to developments in European history. The first dividing line is placed at the beginning of the thirteenth century and the second about the year 1832 when the transition from the medieval to the modern period commenced.

Chapters 11 to 16 deal with recent developments. They show how much the past is still alive and how necessary is a knowledge of the past to understand the present. In these chapters the historical factors underlying these developments are discussed in greater detail. The Soulbury Commission

(some time before the arrival of which the chapter entitled "The Causes of Communal Conflict in Ceylon" was written) stated (1945) "that the problem of the Ceylon Constitution is essentially the problem of reconciling the demands of the minorities for an adequate voice in the conduct of affairs—so as to ensure that their point of view is continuously before the administration and that their interests receive a due measure of consideration—with the obvious fact that the constitution must preserve for the majority that proportionate share in all spheres of government activity to which their numbers and influence entitle them." Recent events have shown that this problem has not yet been resolved, and in some respects has been aggravated. Nor can it be solved until those in power realize that the economic development of the country is an essential pre-requisite for the solution of most other problems. Whether Ceylon can develop into a welfare state as the Donoughmore Commission (1928) envisaged also depends on her economic development.

The first nine chapters consist of Radio talks given in 1955 and 1956 in the Schools Broadcasting Service. "The Causes of Communal Conflict" is reprinted from the *University of Ceylon Review* (April 1943). The rest, with the exception of chapter 15 which is an expansion of a statement issued to the Press in June 1957, appeared in *The Times of Ceylon* between October 1956 and August 1957. The talks and the articles have been revised to mould them as far as possible into a coherent whole, but their contents remain the same.

For the material in these chapters I am indebted to many works which are too numerous to mention. However, I must acknowledge my debt to *The History and Culture of the Indian People* Vols. I–IV. (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan) and Prof. D.G.E. Hall's *A History of South-east Asia.* (Macmillan).

I thank the Director-General of Broadcasting for granting me permission to print the talks and the editors of the *University of Ceylon Review* and of *The Times of Ceylon* for allowing me to reproduce the articles on The Causes of Communal Conflict in Ceylon, Divisions in Ceylon History, Changing Buddhism, The Revolution of 1956, The Rise of Sinhalese Communalism, and History Should Be Rewritten, But Why?

G. C. MENDIS

August 26, 1957.

INTRODUCTION

IT has been customary to divide the history of Ceylon into two periods covering the ground before and after 1505. Such a division would meet with no objection if the main forces of Ceylon history were only foreign influences. Undoubtedly before that year Ceylon was influenced mainly by India and after that by the West. But, if the internal history of the island is made the basis of judgment, Ceylon history would fall roughly into three divisions. The first would be the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruva Period when Ceylon on the whole was united under a single ruler. The next would be the period from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century when Ceylon was disunited and more than one ruler governed at a time. The third would be roughly the British Period when Ceylon was united once more under a single government.

The first period. During the first period Ceylon for some centuries was ruled by Devanampiya Tissa and his successors, the Lambakarna dynasty which came into power in the first century A.D., and the Moriya dynasty which began their rule in the fifth century A.D. The rule of these dynasties was followed by a civil war between the successors of Sangha Tissa II (614) and Silameghavanna (619-628) until Manavamma (684-718) established himself firmly on the throne with the aid of a Pallava army from South India. His successors had comparatively peaceful reigns until Ceylon was compelled for its own safety to enter the orbit of South Indian politics from the reign of Sena I (833-853). Then began a series of South Indian invasions which culminated in the conquest of the northern plain of Ceylon by the Cholas in 1017.

Up to this time Anuradhapura remained the capital of Ceylon except for a short interlude. A son of the Moriya Dhatusena, Kasyapa I (473-491) having put his father to death, usurped the throne, made Sigiriya his capital for his own safety, and built the wonderful fortress there. It was during his reign that the famous frescoes, similar in style to those in Ajanta in the Deccan, were painted on the face of

the rock. But his stepbrother Moggallana (491-508) when he recovered his throne, established himself once more at Anuradhapura.

The northern plain of Ceylon was occupied by Tamils four times during this early period. They were expelled by Dutthagamani (161-137 B.C.) the ruler of Ruhuna, and by Vattagamani Abhaya (103-89 B.C.), Dhatusena (455-473) and Vijayabahu I (1070-1114), who first made themselves masters of Ruhuna and then marched to the north.

The Cholas (1017-1070), whose power in Ceylon Vijayabahu vanquished, made Polonnaruva their capital and so did the Sinhalese kings who followed them. On the death of Vijayabahu I there was a civil war between the rulers of Rajarata, Mayarata and Ruhuna, the three main political divisions of Medieval Ceylon, until Parakramabahu I (1153-1186) emerged victorious and became the sole ruler of the Island. At his death he left his throne to his sister's son, a prince of Kalinga. The result was that there was once more a civil war between the Kalinga dynasty and their opponents in Ceylon which ended in the disintegration of the Polonnaruva Kingdom.

The chief features of the civilization of this period was the opening up of the Dry Zone and the spread of Theravada Buddhism in that region. A network of canals and tanks was constructed and this made possible the development of rice cultivation throughout the northern, the eastern and the south-eastern parts of the Island. Those who contributed most towards this development were the Lambakarna Mahasena (275-301) who built among others the Minneriya Tank, the Moriya Dhatusena, whose chief work was the Kalavava, and Parakramabahu I (1153-1186) in whose reign the irrigation system reached its peak of development and the Parakrama Samudraya at Polonnaruva was constructed. The development of Buddhism is associated mainly with the Mahavihara in the northern plain and with the Tissamaharama in Ruhuna. The Anuradhapura kings who made the greatest contribution to the development of Buddhism were Dutthagamani who is said to have built the Ruanvalisaya and the Lovamahapaya of the Mahavihara, Vattagamani Abhaya and Gajabahu I (114-136) who were responsible for the Abhayagiri Vihara and Dagoba, and Mahasena who built the Jetavana Vihara and

Dagoba and supported the Mahasanghika sub-sect called the Vaituliyavadins. The two later kings who did most for Buddhism were Parakramabahu I and Nissanka Malla. The buildings they erected are yet to be seen in a good state of preservation at Polonnaruva.

The second period. The disorganized state of Ceylon at the beginning of the thirteenth century caused by the civil war made it a prey to further invasions from Pandya, and even from a far-off kingdom like Tambralinga. The result was that both North Ceylon as well as the rest of the Island broke up into a number of petty independent territories. From these at first evolved the Tamil Kingdom in the north and the Kingdom of Dambadeniya in the south-west. Parakramabahu II (1237-1271) who ruled from Dambadeniya tried to establish his power over the whole island but failed to expel the Tamils from the north or to restore the irrigation works in the Dry Zone. One of his successors Bhuvanekabahu I (1273-1284) was compelled to shift his capital from Dambadeniya to Yapahuva in order to be in a strategic position to resist the South Indian invasions. But he failed to check Tamil aggression and the Pandyas established their power even over the south-west for about twenty years, and Parakramabahu III (1302-1310) established himself after that at Polonnaruva only as a feudatory of Pandya. But when Pandya was invaded by the Muslims, Bhuvanekabahu II (1310-1325), the chief of Kurunegala, put his cousin Parakramabahu III to death and made himself the chief ruler of the south-west. The Kurunegala kings too lost their supremacy owing to a rebellion and Bhuvanekabahu IV, the chief of Gampola, became the chief ruler. It was in his reign that Lankatilaka and Gadaladeniya Vihares near Gampola were built.

The supremacy over the south-west next passed on to the chiefs of Rayigama which lay to the east of Panadure. One of these was Nissanka Alagakkonnara who checked the expansion of the Tamil Kingdom southwards and another was Vira Alakesvara who came into conflict with the Chinese. In 1415 the ruler of Rayigama, Parakramabahu VI, shifted his capital to Kotte, which continued to be the chief city of the south-west till 1565. Parakramabahu VI is well known as the last Sinhalese ruler to establish his power over the entire island. But his successors failed to maintain their control

over both the Kingdom of Jaffna and the Kandyan Provinces, and towards the end of the fifteenth century Vikramabahu of Gampola made himself master of the Kandyan Provinces as well as of the eastern region from Trincomalee to the Valave Ganga.

It was in the reign of Parakramabahu VIII (1484-1509) of Kotte that the Portuguese first came to Ceylon. In 1521 the Kingdom of Kotte came to be divided, and before long there arose a struggle for supremacy between the Kotte and the Sitavaka rulers. The Portuguese got involved in the war for supremacy and on the whole supported the rulers of Kotte till in 1597 they themselves became masters of both these regions. The Tamil Kingdom in the north went through similar vicissitudes till it finally came under Portuguese rule in 1620. The Kandyan Kingdom on the other hand resisted the invasions of the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the British till in 1815 it came under British rule. What took place in Ceylon from the arrival of the Portuguese to their fall is dealt with in chapter five and Dutch activities are described in chapter six.

The third period. Chapters seven, eight and nine relate how Ceylon came to be unified by a common administrative system and the development of communications, and how with the growth of a parliamentary form of government the power passed from the British to the people of the country. But the social divisions that developed mainly in the six centuries prior to British rule did not disappear with the administrative and economic unification of the Island and some of them became more marked during the last days of British rule in a competition for political power. In fact conflicts arose between the Sinhalese and the Tamils, the Low-country Sinhalese and the Kandyan Sinhalese, the Jaffna Tamils and the Batticaloa Tamils, who lived under the control of the Kandyan kings. The Tamils who earlier came to be distinguished from the Sinhalese by their language, Tamil, and their religion, Hinduism, now came to be influenced by the fact that they lived in the Dry Zone and thereby had an unequal chance of development with the Sinhalese who lived in the fertile Wet Zone. As a result they were driven to capture a greater share of posts in the government services than their numbers warranted. The Kandyans who came under Western influences

after 1815 had an unequal struggle with the Low-country Sinhalese. Similarly the Eastern Province Muslims and Tamils found themselves at a disadvantage against the Jaffna Tamils. Hence the unwillingness of the Kandyans to unite freely with the Low-country Sinhalese, and of the Tamils and Muslims of the Eastern Province with Tamils of the north. As a result of Portuguese, Dutch and British rule there arose also powerful Christian communities, and as a consequence of British rule an English-educated class which became the most influential section in the island.

The most recent development is the rise of the Sinhalese-educated Buddhist community who have allied themselves with the backward Muslim community for the control of political power in the country and the improvement of their own position. This resulted in a demand on the part of the Tamils for a division of Ceylon into Sinhalese and Tamil areas. All these developments are discussed in detail in the last six chapters.

1

THE CIVILIZATIONS OF S.E.ASIA, INDIA AND CEYLON

SINCE the attainment of independence in 1948 Ceylon has looked out in three directions for association with the outer world. Having been under British rule for about one-and-a-half centuries, and having formed close bonds with Britain in diverse ways during this period, Ceylon naturally—like India and Pakistan—joined the British Commonwealth which consisted of Britain and other countries which had once been British colonies.

But from 1954 Ceylon began to turn in another direction. She was not satisfied with being within the British Commonwealth alone (with India and Pakistan in it) but began to form another union with India, Pakistan and other countries of South-East Asia. This led finally to the Bandung conference sponsored by Burma, Ceylon, India, Indonesia and Pakistan and to which many other Asian and African countries were invited. Most of those invited sent representatives and among them were the other independent S. E. Asian countries —Cambodia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam North and Vietnam South.

This urge on the part of Ceylon for unity with India and S.E. Asia came from a number of causes. All these countries realize that they are under-developed in many respects and need peace to make further advances. Most of them have adopted a democratic way of life and thus are linked with the Western powers as far as the form of government goes. India, Pakistan and Ceylon are also linked with Britain in the British Commonwealth. Not one of them, however, is in a position to defend itself. India, Burma, Thailand and Vietnam, all have China to the north of them and India and Pakistan have Russia as well. Thus most of these countries have reason to keep away from both the American and Russian blocs for their security. Hence they united and formed a third bloc in order to exercise their influence in the cause of peace, bridging the gulf between these two blocs—the American and the Russian. In addition to this desire for peace, all these

countries other than Thailand have been under the rule of European powers, and as a result of the changes that took place during that period of foreign control they have developed to some extent similar interests and are today faced with some common problems which bring them together.

However, after the General Election of 1956 and the coming into power of a new political party, Ceylon has begun to turn more and more in the direction of India and seek guidance from the leaders of that vast sub-continent. Hence it will not be irrelevant to make a special study of Ceylon's connections with India in the past and see what history has to tell us with regard to these relations.

It is understandable why since the new political party took over the government of the country the enthusiasm for maintaining the connection with Britain has waned. But why is there no further development in the relations with S.E. Asian countries which began to be established anew only a few years ago? Geographically, though Ceylon is in close proximity to India, she is also on the highway of sea traffic from the West to the East and from the East to the West. Hence before the connections with India are examined, it may be worth while to glance at Ceylon's connections with S.E. Asia and see why Ceylon's connections with that part of the world were not further developed and strengthened.

Ceylon had no doubt contacts with S.E. Asian countries from very early times. Ships which came from China to India or which went from India to China often touched at Ceylon. Direct political relations with S.E. Asia, however, began only in the eleventh century. In the ninth century Ceylon came into the orbit of South Indian politics when the Kingdom of Pandya began to expand her power outside her borders. Then Ceylon allied herself with other South Indian powers to check this expansion and prevent any invasion of Ceylon. With the decline of the Kingdom of Pandya, the Kingdom of Chola began to push back her frontiers in the north, south and west, and finally gained control of the whole of the region south of the River Krishna and its tributary, the Tungabhadra as far as the northern part of Ceylon. After that the Chola Emperor Rajendra I led an expedition to the north as far as the Ganges, and, through naval action, established Chola suzerainty over the Maritime Empire of

Sri Vijaya, which held sway over the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra and Java, and controlled the sea routes from India to China.

When Vijayabahu I (1055-1114) made it his aim to free Ceylon from the Chola yoke he sought the alliance of rulers who feared Chola aggression. One of these was King Anawrahta (1044-1077), the ruler of Upper Burma, who at this time had extended his power over Pegu or Lower Burma. It is not known how long this alliance lasted but probably it was not for long as there is evidence to show that the Chola Emperor Kulottunga I had diplomatic relations with the Burmese King Kyan Zittha (1084-1113) about the beginning of the twelfth century. In any case Ceylon came into conflict with Burma in the time of Parakramabahu I. According to the Devanagala inscription, by which Kit Nuvaragal the Sinhalese general was rewarded for his victory over Burma, the King of Burma refused to contract a treaty with Ceylon. Ceylon thereupon made war and compelled Burma to come to terms. The *Culavamsa* gives a long account of this conflict but does not explain why the Burmese king broke off diplomatic relations with Ceylon, put obstacles in the way of Ceylon's trade, and tried to obstruct her relations with Cambodia. It is clear that Burma adopted a similar hostile attitude to a king of India, but the evidence is insufficient to infer whether this break with Burma was due to a change in the system of alliances in South India or to considerations of trade.

The next political event which connects Ceylon with S.E. Asia is the invasion of Ceylon by a S.E. Asian king. The Kingdom of Sri Vijaya which extended over an immense territory, though it recovered after the Chola invasions, broke up again in the thirteenth century. One of its most valuable dependencies in the Malay Peninsula was Tambralinga which had its centre in the region of Ligor. Its importance lay in the fact that it controlled the Isthmus of Kra. The ships that went to the Far East had either to pass through the Strait of Malacca between the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra or the Strait of Sunda between Sumatra and Java. Owing to the activities of pirates in these narrow seas, travellers avoided them and went overland, and the most popular of these routes was across the Isthmus of Kra.

Tambralinga appears to have made itself independent about 1230. In 1247 its ruler Dharmaraja Chandrabhanu

came with an army of Javanese, invaded Ceylon and devastated the country. Though he was defeated he appears to have secured a hold over some part of the north of Ceylon. In 1270 he returned with both Javanese and South Indian troops and, probably in alliance with Pandya, extended his territory in the north of Ceylon. After that he marched south and fought the Sinhalese king, but was severely defeated.

From that time Ceylon had no direct political relations with S.E. Asia till the seventeenth century. The Dutch when they came to the East settled in the East Indies, as the Portuguese were firmly established in India and controlled the Indian Ocean. In 1609 they made Batavia in Java their headquarters, and began to extend their trade. In 1638 they began their conquest of Ceylon and by 1658 gained a firm hold over a part of Ceylon. After that for about one hundred and forty years the Dutch activities in Ceylon were directed from Batavia, and the developments in Ceylon in some respects followed those of the Dutch colonies in S.E. Asia.

It is likely that Ceylon's economic relations with S.E. Asia before the arrival of the Portuguese and the Dutch were closer than its political contacts. The ships that touched at Ceylon ports from early times no doubt carried on some trade between Ceylon and S.E. Asia. The account of the war of Parakramabahu the Great against Burma makes it clear that at this time Ceylon had direct trade relations not only with Burma but with other S.E. Asian countries such as Cambodia. It is possible that one of the reasons for the conflict between Ceylon and Burma was their trade with S.E. Asia. The Kingdom of Burma at this time appears to have extended as far as the Isthmus of Kra. Similarly, whatever were the causes of the war with Chandrabhanu in the thirteenth century, it is clear that he had some control of this trade between India, S.E. Asia and the Far East.

In the last quarter of the thirteenth century Ceylon became a definite unit not only of the S.E. Asian trade but also of the trade which extended from the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf to China and Japan. The Muslims began to trade as far as China in the eighth century and by the ninth century they had a series of outposts along the route. Bhuvanekabahu I (1273-1284) took a definite part in this trade. In 1283 he sent an embassy to the Sultan of Egypt offering to supply him

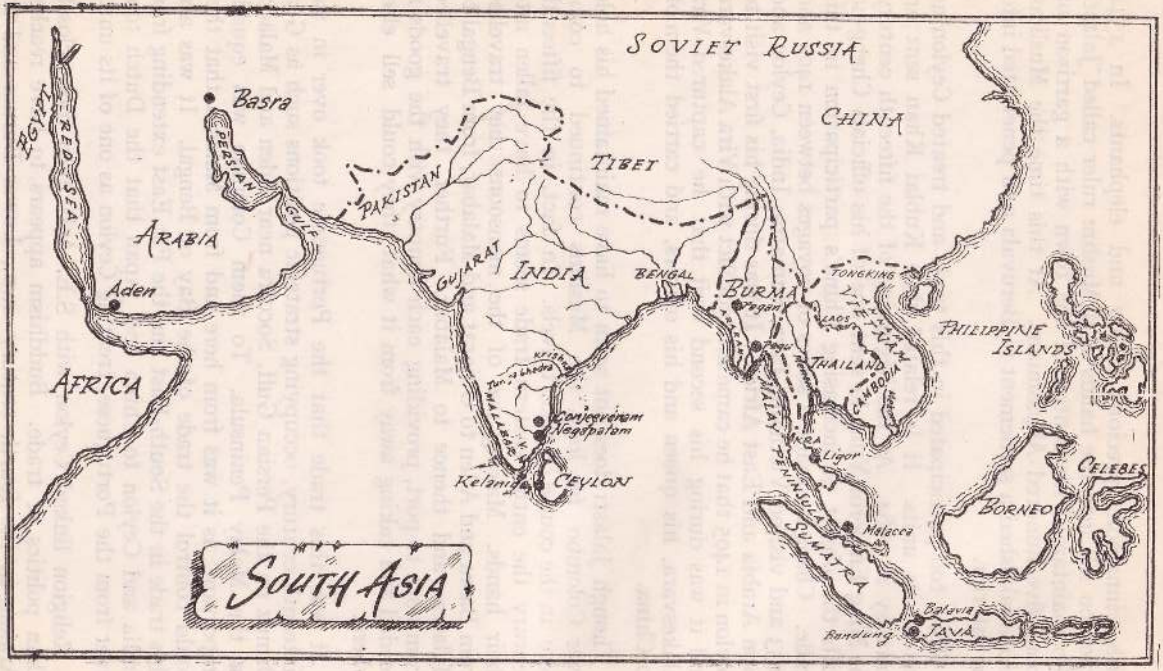
with cinnamon, precious stones and elephants. In 1344 Colombo fell into the hands of a Muslim ruler called Jalasti who maintained his control of the town with a garrison of about five hundred Abyssinians. At this time the Muslims also established a settlement in Beruvala and penetrated into the interior.

China too participated in this trade and treated Ceylon as one of its units. It is related that Kublai Khan sent an embassy in 1284. At the beginning of the fifteenth century the Ming Emperor Yung-lo sent one of his officials Cheng-ho with the object of increasing China's participation in this trade. Cheng-ho made a series of voyages between 1405 and 1433 and visited Vietnam, Java, Sumatra, India, Ceylon and even Arabia and East Africa. It was during his first visit to Ceylon in 1405 that he came into conflict with Vira Alakesvara and it was during his second visit that he captured Vira Alakesvara, his queen and his officers, and carried them off to China.

Though Jalasti does not seem to have maintained his hold over Colombo for long, the Muslims continued to come here in the course of their travels. In fact, in the fifteenth century the entire eastern trade seems to have fallen into their hands. Making use of the monsoons they travelled from Basra and Aden to Gujarat and Malabar, from Bengal to Malacca, and thence to Malabar. Further, they travelled from port to port, providing each country with the goods it needed and taking away from it what they could sell elsewhere.

It was this trade that the Portuguese took over in the sixteenth century, occupying strategic positions such as Goa, Ormuz on the Persian Gulf, Socotra near Aden and Malacca in the Malay Peninsula. To them Colombo was equally important, as it was from here and from Malacca that they could control the trade of the Bay of Bengal. It was also this trade in the South-East and the Far East extending from India and Ceylon to China and Japan that the Dutch took over from the Portuguese, treating Ceylon as one of its units.

Religion linked Ceylon with S.E. Asia even more closely than politics or trade. Buddhism appears to have reached Arakan in the fourth century A.D., Lower Burma and the Malay Peninsula in the fifth century, and later Thailand,



Cambodia, Sumatra, Java and Upper Burma. Buddhist missionaries of the Theravada school seem to have gone from Conjeevaram to Lower Burma. To the other countries they seem to have gone mainly from North India and the Deccan. No doubt the Buddhist monks of Ceylon had relations with the monks of these countries.

With the decline of Theravada Buddhism in India, Ceylon Buddhists turned more to Burma. When Vijayabahu I sought the alliance of Burma against the Cholas, Anawrahta was glad to extend his friendship to a Buddhist king. Vijayabahu I after he destroyed the power of the Cholas, sent envoys again to Burma to restore the *upasampada* in Ceylon. After that Ceylon monks maintained friendly relations with Burmese monks in spite of the conflict between Parakramabahu I and his contemporary in Burma. In the reign of Narapathisu (1173-1210), Chapata, a Burmese monk who came to Ceylon, returned with four Ceylon monks and ordained monks in Burma according to the Mahavihara tradition. This form of ordination was passed on from Burma to Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. As a result Theravada Buddhism became the dominant religion in S.E. Asia. It was with King Narapathisu that Vijayabahu II and Nissanka Malla corresponded.

Tambralinga too was a country which like Burma followed Theravada Buddhism. Before Chandrabhanu first invaded Ceylon, he along with the ruler of Siam sent a request for a statue of the Buddha. On his second invasion he demanded the Tooth and the Bowl relics of the Buddha.

Again in the fifteenth century Queen Shinsawbu of Lower Burma (1453-1481) sent a mission to Ceylon. The monks who came here received ordination at Kelaniya, and they on their return passed on this form of ordination to others. King Thiathura of Upper Burma (1469-1481) too had communications with Ceylon about the same time. In the eighteenth century, Buddhists of Ceylon in distress sought help in turn from Siam. The King of Kandy, Kirti Sri Rajasinha, sent a mission to King Boromokot (1733-1758) requesting him to send Buddhist monks to restore the *upasampada* in Ceylon. The Siamese Sect was established by the monks who came on that occasion. The names of the other two Nikayas, Amarapura and Ramanya, reveal their debt to Burma. The first of these was formed in 1802 by monks who received their

ordination in Burma. It was also monks who received their ordination in Burma that formed the Ramanya Nikaya in 1865.

The political and economic relations with Ceylon did not lead to any important changes in the conditions of these countries. The political relations were of a temporary nature. The economic connections too did not link Ceylon with these countries in any regular import and export trade. The chief link that connected Ceylon with Burma, Thailand, and Cambodia was Buddhism. Buddhism in Burma followed similar developments as in Ceylon, and was influenced both by Mahayanism and Tantrism, but in all these countries Theravada Buddhism finally asserted itself at the expense of all others.

But this factor failed to produce, except superficially, a civilization in these countries similar to that of Ceylon. In these regions the main racial type is Mongoloid and the background of these races is very different from that of the civilization of India. While Buddhism in Ceylon grew on a background similar to that in which it spread in India, Buddhism in these countries became interwoven with local cults such as Nat and Naga worship. Unlike in Ceylon, Hindu civilization reached these countries and influenced the royal courts and the upper classes before Buddhism. Further, the influence of the Chinese civilization on these countries was no less than the Indian. It was stronger over Annam, Tongking, and Indo-China. But both these civilizations, Chinese and Indian, by their impact, did not destroy the form of life in any of these countries. They did not alter the structure of society. Hinduism did not succeed in introducing the caste system. On the other hand, as is evident from their architecture and sculpture, these countries absorbed from India and China what they could without losing their individuality. Thus a study of India and Ceylon on the one hand and of the countries of South-East Asia on the other reveal that their civilizations differ considerably.

There is in contrast a close connection between India and Ceylon. Though Ceylon is separated by sea from India, it is geographically a projection of the Deccan. The wet zone of Ceylon is a projection of the Malabar region, and the dry zone of the Coromandel region. At the same time it is far away from all other lands on the west, the east and the south.

Whether we examine the racial types, the religious systems, the languages, the literature, the architecture, sculpture and painting, the political system, the economic conditions or the social structure, we see a close affinity between India and Ceylon.

This affinity has been recognized by those who have made a study of Indian as well as Ceylon conditions. In 1801 when Ceylon was about to be made a Crown Colony, Henry Dundas, the Secretary of State, considered what system of government should be adopted in Ceylon. There were two main systems of government among the British colonies at that time. One was found in some of the West Indian islands, where most of the settlers were British. The other was found in the colonies which had been captured from the French, and the settlers were mainly non-British. But Dundas decided to adopt neither system in Ceylon. He realized how similar the conditions of Ceylon were to those of India and wrote to Governor North: "On the present resumption by His Majesty of the temporary power of interference in the affairs of Ceylon formerly delegated to the East India Company it was far from being proposed to assimilate that Island or its Government to our colonies in the West Indies. But on the contrary whatever experience has shown to be politically wise in the Government of the British Territory on the Continent of India and appears, as is the case in this instance, applicable to the situation in Ceylon, it is the inclination of His Majesty's Government to preserve or to adopt."

This similarity between India and Ceylon was also noticed by others. In 1831 Colebrooke, one of the Commissioners sent from England to report on the Government of Ceylon, considered a knowledge of Ceylon helpful for an understanding of India. "Although administered by the Crown the Island of Ceylon was originally a Hindu province," he wrote, "and from not having been subject to the inroads of the Mohamedans, it offers at this day the most perfect example to be met with of the ancient system of Hindu government. A short analysis, therefore, of the system may be useful not only with reference to the particular interests of Ceylon but in elucidation of some questions of considerable importance in relation to the British settlements in India."

In short, Ceylon is in many respects a miniature of India, and it is not surprising that in a time of national and cultural

revival, whatever objections may exist on political grounds, Ceylon should turn once more to India for guidance rather than to a union of South Asian and S.E. Asian countries.

2

POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH INDIA

WHAT I propose to do in this chapter is nothing more than to sketch the political relations between India and Ceylon from the earliest times up to the present day. It is true that it is not possible to separate altogether economic, social and institutional developments from political changes, and that in order to understand the history of any country it is necessary to follow its developments as a whole; but for convenience of study I propose to separate the important strands and deal first with political and then with cultural developments, and I hope we shall not fail as we proceed, to note the inter-relation between them.

What do we understand by political history? A simple definition is : the story of those who exercise power in any state. Any attempts on their part to maintain or extend their power will come within that term. So will any attempt on the part of others to oust them from power. Today, according to our constitution, ultimate political power lies with the people. When at the last General Election the people ousted one political party and replaced it with another, their action was political. Thus political history includes wars and rebellions and changes among those who exercise power. Any action on the part of those in authority to maintain their power will also come under political activities.

If it is accepted that political history deals with questions of power, it is understandable why Ceylon had hardly any political relations with North India except for the four years (1798—1801) in which Ceylon was placed under the Governor-General of Fort William in Bengal. The kings of North India hardly extended their power to the very south of India and therefore were not interested in gaining control over Ceylon. Besides as a rule they had no large navies and were not interested in controlling the seas around.

There are, however, records which may suggest that Ceylon rulers accepted the suzerainty of the Maurya Emperor, Asoka, who ruled from Pataliputra in the third century B.C. and the Gupta Emperor, Samudragupta, who reigned from the

same city in the fourth century A.D. and extended his power by conquest as far as the River Krishna. But there is no evidence in India to show that Asoka exercised any control over Ceylon. All that we know from his edicts is that Ceylon was among the countries in which he arranged for the care of men and animals, the planting of medicinal herbs, and the spread of the Dhamma. It is the Ceylon chronicles which state that as a result of an embassy sent from Ceylon, Asoka requested that Devanampiya Tissa should be consecrated a second time. If this story means anything it does not imply that Asoka wanted to exercise suzerainty over Ceylon, but that the King of Ceylon wanted to be under his suzerainty. Indian evidence does not confirm this story. It is clear from Asoka's edicts that he did not place Ceylon within his domains but treated it along with the South Indian kingdoms as independent territory.

It is different in the case of Samudragupta. The claim to suzerainty is suggested by him while Ceylon records make no reference to such a relationship. In his famous Allahabad Pillar Inscription, Samudragupta gives a detailed account of his conquests and divides the rulers of India into four categories. The fourth consists of rulers who showed him their respect by personal surrender, by sending him gifts as tribute and by petitioning for a charter with the Gupta seal for the enjoyment of their respective territories. Among these were the Saimhalakas or the people of Simhala. Did the people of Ceylon then accept the suzerainty of Samudragupta? The answer is to be found in a Chinese record. In the reign of Kitti Siri Meghavanna (301-328) two Ceylonese Buddhist monks went to Buddha Gaya to visit the sacred places of Buddhism. On their return they complained of the inconvenience they went through for want of accommodation. Thereupon the King of Ceylon sent an embassy with presents to the Indian Emperor seeking permission to build a monastery there. The request was granted and a monastery was built. Thus even if Kitti Siri Meghavanna accepted the suzerainty of Samudragupta, it does not appear to have led to the payment of a regular tribute or to any control of Ceylon by the Indian Emperor.

On the other hand it was natural for South Indian rulers to attempt to gain control of the Island. Ceylon was comparatively more fertile and wealthier than any part of South

India and whoever gained control of it acquired status, power and wealth.

As far back as the second century B.C. according to the Pali Chronicles three Tamils, Sena, Guttika and Elara ruled over Ceylon. We have neither sufficient evidence about Sena and Guttika, nor reliable information about Elara to say anything definite about them. It is not clear whether they were invaders from South India or members of a local Tamil trade guild or both. Nor do we know what factors helped them to come into power or maintain their hold on the throne for so many years. The other legend that King Karikala of Chola invaded Ceylon about the second century A.D. and carried away many prisoners and that Gajabahu I retaliated with a counter invasion and brought back twice as many, has no basis of truth and it will serve no useful purpose to devote any time to the examination of this story.

There were two definite invasions of Ceylon in the first century B.C. in the time of Vattagamani Abhaya, and in the fifth century B.C. when the rebel Mittasena was ruling over the Island. It is not known who exactly were these invaders. Their names suggest that they were connected in some way with the Pandyan royal family. In the first century B.C. there were often wars in South India between the rulers of Pandya, Chola and Kerala. In the fifth century South India was in the hands of the Kalabhras and it is likely that many princes and chieftains who fought against them were deprived of their territories. It appears as if, in both these instances, some such chieftains taking advantage of the unsettled state of the Island at that time, invaded Ceylon successfully and made themselves masters of the northern plain. They maintained their power with the aid of their armies and seem to have won over some of the Sinhalese chieftains to their side. They did not derive any support from their mother country, and before long lost their hold over Ceylon.

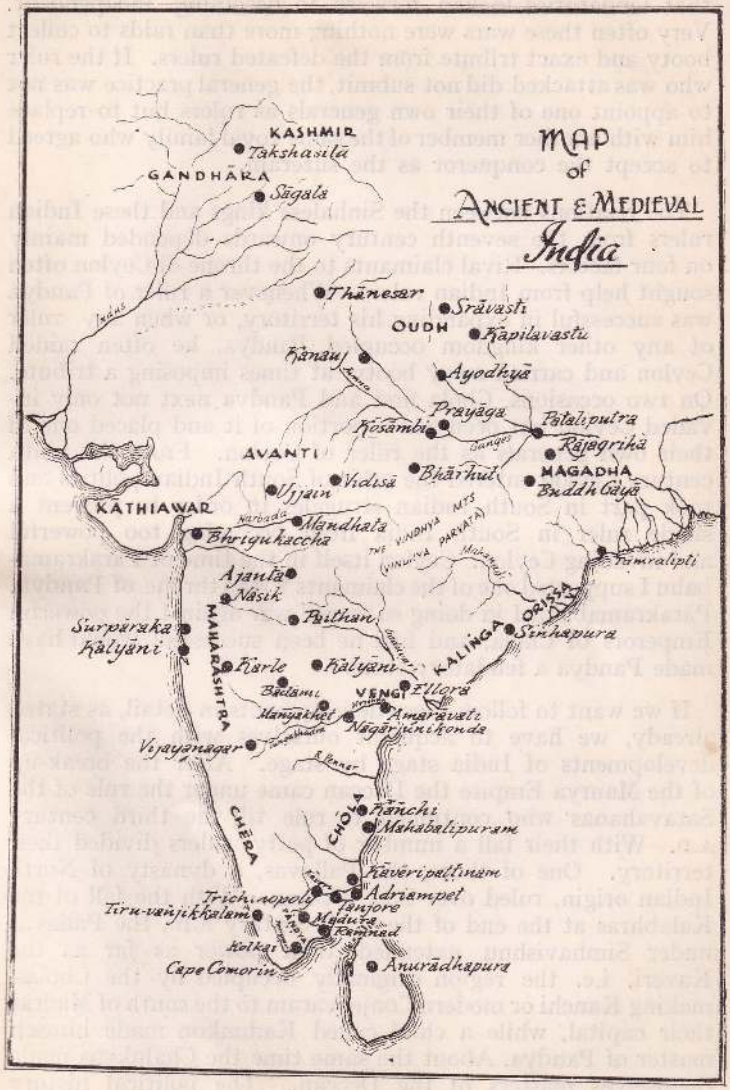
You will have noticed already that in order to understand Ceylon's relations with India we have to take note as well of the political conditions in India during those times. From the seventh century onwards we shall not be able to follow their relations unless we have a clear idea of the political changes and the rise and fall of kingdoms that took place at least in the Deccan. Further, to understand the rise and fall

of these kingdoms we should know something of the geography of the Deccan and the nature of those kingdoms.

The Deccan consists of India south of the Vindhyas. It was roughly divided into two sections by the River Krishna and its tributary the Tungabhadra. To the south of the river was the region generally called South India which was divided in ancient times into Chola, Pandya and Kerala. There was a fourth region in the north-west, the Mysore plateau. We shall henceforth call this part South India, and the region to the north of the River Krishna the Deccan. The River Godavari divided the eastern part of the Deccan into two sections and they were called Vengi and Kalinga.

The political history of the Deccan and South India consisted mainly of a series of wars between the various kingdoms for supremacy. Sometimes the kings of South India fought with one another, and the kings of the Deccan did the same. At other times, if a ruler in South India became powerful, he fought with the rulers of the Deccan, or the rulers of the Deccan took the initiative and fought with the ruler of South India who was growing in power. These kingdoms consisted also of many sub-kingdoms ruled by hereditary princes or chiefs who acknowledged the suzerainty of the chief ruler. All these feudatories had their own military forces to maintain their power and generally went to the aid of their suzerains during wars, or, if they felt that their suzerain was weak and his kingdom was likely to break up, they asserted their independence or accepted the lordship of another suzerain. Thus the boundaries of these kingdoms constantly changed and it is by no means easy to follow their fortunes.

Another fact we have to remember about these kingdoms is that they were never states in the modern sense. They cannot be compared with the post-fifteenth century European states such as England, France and Spain. These Indian rulers interfered very rarely with the social life of the people apart from building temples and endowing them. What they were mainly concerned with was the collection of the revenue with which they maintained their armies and the royal courts and endowed religious establishments. So did the sub-kings or the feudatories in their own territories, but they paid in addition a part of their revenue as tribute to their suzerains. It was in order to increase this revenue that the rulers tried to make further conquests, and in order to escape this tribute



that feudatories looked forward to becoming independent. Very often these wars were nothing more than raids to collect booty and exact tribute from the defeated rulers. If the ruler who was attacked did not submit, the general practice was not to appoint one of their own generals as rulers but to replace him with another member of the same royal family who agreed to accept the conqueror as the suzerain.

The relations between the Sinhalese kings and these Indian rulers from the seventh century onwards depended mainly on four factors. Rival claimants to the throne of Ceylon often sought help from Indian rulers. Whenever a ruler of Pandya was successful in expanding his territory, or when any ruler of any other kingdom occupied Pandya, he often raided Ceylon and carried away booty, at times imposing a tribute. On two occasions, Chola first and Pandya next not only invaded Ceylon but occupied a portion of it and placed one of their own generals as the ruler of Ceylon. From the ninth century Ceylon entered the orbit of South Indian politics and took part in South Indian struggles in order to prevent a single ruler in South India from becoming too powerful and invading Ceylon. Ceylon itself in the time of Parakramabahu I supported one of the claimants to the throne of Pandya. Parakramabahu I in doing so waged war against the powerful Emperors of Chola, and had he been successful would have made Pandya a feudatory state.

If we want to follow those developments in detail, as stated already, we have to acquaint ourselves with the political developments of India stage by stage. After the break-up of the Maurya Empire the Deccan came under the rule of the Satavahanas who continued to rule till the third century A.D. With their fall a number of petty rulers divided their territory. One of those, the Pallavas, a dynasty of North Indian origin, ruled over S.E. Deccan. With the fall of the Kalabhras at the end of the sixth century A.D., the Pallavas under Simhavishnu extended their power as far as the Kaveri, i.e. the region originally occupied by the Cholas, making Kanchi or modern Conjeevaram to the south of Madras their capital, while a chief called Kadunkon made himself master of Pandya. About the same time the Chalukyas made themselves masters of the Deccan. The political history of these regions thereafter consists of the attempts of these powers to extend their territory. In the middle of the eighth

century the main branch of the Chalukya family which ruled the western part of the Deccan was ousted from power by their feudatory, the Rashtrakutas. The Pallavas and the Pandyas maintained their power for another century, till the Cholas, the feudatory of the Pallavas, defeated both their suzerain as well as the Pandyas and became in the tenth century the rulers of the whole of South India. It was during the rule of the successors of the Pallava Simhavishnu that Manavamma, the son of Kasyapa II, went to the Pallava court, took part in the wars against the Chalukyas, came back to Ceylon with Pallava forces and succeeded on his second attempt in winning back the throne of his father. It was Sri Mara Sri Vallabha, one of the successors of Kadunkon who gradually expanded the territory of the Pandya Kingdom, that raided Ceylon in the time of Sena I (833-53). It was also against him that Sena II joined a South Indian confederacy led by the Pallavas, invaded Pandya, sacked the city of Madura and helped to place Varagunavarman II on the throne of Pandya.

It was when these wars led to the exhaustion of both the Pallavas and the Pandyas that a feudatory of the Pallavas, the Chola Aditya, began to expand his power at the expense of the Pallavas. It was his successor Parantaka I (907-955) who invaded Pandya and then Ceylon, because the Sinhalese King Kasyapa V (914-923) sent an army in support of the Pandya King. But Parantaka could not carry on the war for long in Ceylon as in 949 the Rashtrakutas who were expanding their power northwards and southwards attacked the Chola Kingdom.

Ceylon had relations with the Rashtrakutas too. It is not known whether Manavamma accepted the suzerainty of the Pallavas. But when the Rashtrakutas defeated the Pallavas and occupied Kanchi about 804, Aggabodhi VIII appears to have sent an embassy and accepted their suzerainty. The Rashtrakutas claim that nine years after they defeated Parantaka I they invaded Rameśvaram and exacted tribute from Ceylon. The Ceylon chronicles on the other hand claim that the Sinhalese General of Mahinda IV defeated them and entered into a treaty with them. Mahinda IV (956-972) too helped Pandya to rebel against the Cholas, and when Parantaka II after defeating the Pandyas invaded Ceylon,

he is said to have been defeated by the same Sinhalese General at Kayts.

The rise of the Cholas in South India in the tenth century was followed by a change in the Deccan in the latter half of the same century. In 973 the Western Chalukya feudatory Taila II ousted the Rashtrakutas and became master of Western Deccan. Rajaraja I (985-1015) sometime later began to expand the Chola Kingdom. He subdued Pandya and Kerala and occupied the northern part of Ceylon. After that he expanded his territory northwards occupying Mysore as well as Vengi, the territory between the Krishna and the Godavari, ruled by the Eastern Chalukyas. His son Rajendra (1014-1044) continued the expansion of the Chola dominions. He drove the Chalukyas further back, and subdued the East Ganga ruler of Kalinga with whom Mahinda IV had formed a marriage alliance. From there he made an expedition as far as the Ganges. In the South he completed the conquest of Ceylon and subdued the Kingdom of Sri Vijaya which included the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, Java and other islands and commanded the trade routes to the East. It was against him and his successors that Vikramabahu and Vijayabahu I of Ceylon waged war and their successes depended on the extent of the failure of the Cholas against their opponents in the north. It was finally a war of succession in Chola itself that helped Vijayabahu I to expel the Cholas from Ceylon. After that it was to safeguard himself from Kulottunga I, the new ruler who restored the Chola dominion, that he allied himself with the Western Chalukyas and the Kalingas.

It was when the Chola power was declining during the latter half of the twelfth century that Parakramabahu I interfered in the affairs of South India. The Chola power was so ineffective on its borders that Kulasekhara of Tinnevelly contested the right of Parakrama Pandya to the throne of Madura. Parakrama sought the help of Parakramabahu I. Kulasekhara, who could not resist the Sinhalese forces, obtained the aid of the Cholas who carried the war into Ceylon. But the war did not end there. The new Pandya rulers in turn tried to free themselves from the Chola yoke with the aid of Ceylon and thus Ceylon came into conflict with Chola on three further occasions.

The Chalukya Empire disintegrated at the end of the twelfth century and the Chola Empire at the end of the thirteenth century. Pandya made use of these developments to expand its power. Its power at first was checked by the new Hoysala power in Mysore. But Jatavarman Sundara Pandya (1251-1268) fought the Hoysalas and made himself supreme over Chola, Kerala, and North Ceylon. North Ceylon had more than one ruler during the thirteenth century, and a minister of one of these appealed to Pandya for help. This led to a second invasion of North Ceylon by a Pandya prince Jatavarman Vira Pandya. But it was Maravarman Kulasekhara (1268-1309) who taking advantage of a famine conquered Ceylon about 1280. After his representative, Arya Chakravarti, had ruled over Ceylon for about twenty years South Ceylon was handed over to Parakramabahu III, who acknowledged the suzerainty of Pandya. His successor Bhuvanekabahu II asserted his independence about 1310 when a war of succession broke out in Pandya, and Pandya was invaded by a Muslim force.

From the confusion that followed in the Deccan and South India there arose two kingdoms, that of the Muslim Bahamanis in the North and the Hindu Kingdom of Vijayanagar in the South. The Bahamanis kept the Vijayanagara kings busy. Hence the Vijayanagara rulers interfered little with Ceylon. They invaded the Tamil Kingdom in the North first in the reign of Hari-Hara II (1377-1404) and again in the reign of Deva Raya II (1426-1446) and exacted tribute from it. It was the death of Deva Raya II and the Muslim invasions that followed that enabled Parakramabahu VI to restore Sinhalese rule in the North.

After the Portuguese came to the East and gained gradual control of the seas, Ceylon had little to do with South Indian rulers. However, when there were rivals to the throne of Kotte and Jaffna and one party obtained the support of the Portuguese, the other party tried to obtain help from India. Vijayabahu (1518-1521) received help from the Zamorin of Calicut and Sangkily of Jaffna was aided at the beginning of the seventeenth century by the Raja of Tanjore.

Once the Portuguese gained control of the coastal provinces Ceylon's political connections with Indian rulers ceased, but not with India. The Portuguese in Ceylon were controlled

by the Viceroy of Goa and the Captain-General of Ceylon was directly under him. When the Dutch replaced the Portuguese the Dutch governors of Ceylon controlled the southernmost part of India. When Ceylon was captured by the British, from 1796-1798 the Maritime Provinces of Ceylon were ruled by the Madras Government, and from 1798-1801 Ceylon was treated as a Presidency of India.

These in the main were the political relations Ceylon had with India and the most important results were the Chola and the Pandya occupations of Ceylon and the way in which the Pandya invasions contributed to the break-up of the ancient Kingdom of Polonnaruva.

3

CULTURAL RELATIONS WITH INDIA

CULTURAL history deals mainly with the changing forms in religion, literature, music, architecture, sculpture, painting, learning and thought. Such developments are generally gradual, and it is not easy to find out when or how they began or ended. They are sometimes due to psychological causes, to an inner urge in the people themselves, which is difficult to discern by the normal historical methods.

Such changes do not, like political happenings, take place on the surface. They move like an underground river obeying their own laws. For instance, the change that took place in the Government in 1956 came within the view of everyone, but the cultural change that helped the overthrow of the previous Government was much more difficult to perceive.

Again, what is significant in political history is seldom equally significant in social history. A future social historian may not attach such importance, as many do today, to the political change that took place in 1956. He may interpret it more as an incident in the process of social change and less as an event that caused the change. Many persons credit Asoka with the spread of Buddhism in India and outside. But others who deal with the expansion of Buddhism may look upon Asoka's activities as a mere episode in that development.

Further, cultural history cannot be studied in isolation even as much as political history. As it is an expression of life it cannot be separated from life as a whole. Hence in these studies, we have to take into consideration the political and economic systems and the social institutions which formed the basis of cultural life.

The economic, social and political background of Ceylon was essentially Indian, and the modifications which it went through up to the end of the fifteenth century and to a limited extent after that time, were mainly due to Indian developments. In other words, up to the end of the fifteenth century Ceylon was a unit of the civilization of India and was thus closely

bound up with whatever changes that took place on the sub-continent.

This does not mean that life and culture in Ceylon was uniform with that of India. In India itself, owing to its vast size, cultural life varied from area to area according to the physical background of the races that inhabited them, the form of economic life which each followed, the social conditions peculiar to each area, and the expression or expressions of Hinduism each area preferred. Ceylon, like these diverse regions, possessed a variety of life and culture of its own, though, in the main, it was Indian.

The first point to be remembered then is that from the very beginning Ceylon formed a unit of the Indian civilization. It has been pointed out already that though Ceylon is an island, it is geographically a projection of the Deccan with two zones corresponding to the Malabar and the Coromandel regions. The early settlers too corresponded to the races in India and definitely came to Ceylon from there. The Veddas are a mixture of the negritos and the proto-australoids, two of the first races that came to India. They have still their counterparts among the hill tribes in Orissa. After the Veddas, came the Aryan-speaking peoples from North India. It is most likely they were not Aryan by blood. The tribes referred to in the *Mahavamsa* seem to be totemistic, and therefore could not be Aryan in origin. As the Aryans spread, their language was adopted and modified by non-Aryan peoples. The Aryan dialects of ancient India all reveal these modifications, but the modifications were greatest in the Sinhalese language. Another people that came to Ceylon were those who spoke the Dravidian tongue. They began to come from very early times, but their numbers became considerable only from about the tenth century A.D.

The chief occupation of the early settlers was agriculture, mainly rice cultivation. In the past, this form of economic activity was carried on in most parts of India. Rice, as we all know, requires a considerable amount of water for its cultivation. In the Dry Zone of Ceylon the water was obtained by the construction of reservoirs and by diverting water from rivers into channels. These methods of irrigation were in vogue in India prior to the Christian era. Rice-cultivation also led to the rise of villages around the tanks or

by the rivers and canals. Thus, as in India, the village became the economic, social and even the administrative unit.

Society also developed on lines similar to those in India. At the top was the royal family; then came the chiefs, priests and monks, and at the bottom the cultivators and the craftsmen. The "middle class", if any, was insignificant.

In India, in early times, the four divisions of society, the warriors, the priests, traders, craftsmen and cultivators, gradually divided themselves into castes and sub-castes. In Ceylon in earliest times there were the castes of Brahmins and Chandalas, and as time passed, with the joint family as the unit of society and with the acceptance of the belief in Karma and rebirth, the caste system was gradually adopted by the rest of society too.

In matters of religion too the early Aryans followed North India. Royalty and probably the upper classes followed Brahmanism and the worship of Vedic gods, as well as the forms of Hinduism which emerged about the sixth century B.C., such as the worship of Siva and Vishnu, while all classes seem to have worshipped local gods and *yakshas*, some of whom were common to India. There was something of Vedic culture too among the upper classes, for the earliest kings were surrounded by Brahmins as priests, teachers and physicians.

In matters of government and administration too the Indian system was followed in Ceylon. In pre-Christian times, Ceylon accepted the monarchical form of government. The administration was carried on through an hierarchy of officials ranging from the royal princes to the village headmen. The form of succession in the royal family from brother to brother, instead of from father to son, though not common, was not altogether unknown in India. The aims and scope of government, the administrative organization, the nature and methods of taxation, the institution of the royal court, the recruitment and organization of the army—all show that Ceylon generally followed India.

The ancient kings both of India and Ceylon were on the whole not lawmakers. They were not reformers of society. They only protected society to enable it to act and move as it wanted. They themselves as a rule followed custom. Custom

in Ceylon till the sixteenth century was not very different from that of India as the social background in both was similar.

Thus on the whole, Ceylon developed a background similar to that of India which enabled it to absorb fresh influences that came from India. What is now left to be done is to trace these later developments that took place in India and see how they affected the life and thought of the people of Ceylon. These changes came generally within the sphere of religion, as Hinduism and not government covered all aspects of life. Besides, in those times, literature, music, architecture, sculpture and painting were mainly the handmaids of religion. Thus, in the main, in order to study the cultural developments in Ceylon, we shall have to study the religious developments in India.

The second point to be remembered is that we cannot follow exactly the method we pursued in studying political history. Up to the ninth century Ceylon played no part in Indian politics, but from that century up to the end of the twelfth, Ceylon entered into the orbit of South Indian politics and influenced the developments in South India and in the Deccan. But the cultural developments on the whole were one-sided and there was only a one-way movement in the direction of Ceylon. It is true that Ceylon developed a commentary literature on the Pali Canon in Sinhalese, which was translated into Pali for the use of Buddhist monks in the sub-continent. There is also evidence of missionary work in India by the Theravada monks of Ceylon. An inscription at Nagarjunikonda shows that Ceylon monks spread their faith in North India and the Deccan. But we have no evidence to show how far that literature or the activities of the Ceylon monks influenced Buddhism in India. Further, in order to understand the cultural developments in Ceylon, we have to go beyond South India and the Deccan and trace in outline the main Indian cultural developments up to the end of the fifteenth century.

The first great event in the cultural history of Ceylon after the coming of the Aryan-speaking peoples is the introduction of Theravada Buddhism in the third century B.C. It not only brought to Ceylon a new form of Indian religion and fresh features of civilization, but it also continued to be the most important factor in our social life up to the end of the eighteenth century; for it was only in the nineteenth century

that western technology entered into serious competition with religious forces in Ceylon as a factor in cultural history.

Theravada Buddhism, once it came to Ceylon, spread in a century or two into every inhabited part of the island and became closely interwoven with the culture of the Sinhalese. It is true that it did not eliminate the old religious cults and was influenced in turn by religious movements from India and the West ; but nothing prevented it from being up to the end of the eighteenth century the main influence in the life of the Sinhalese people. It is not without reason that R. S. Copleston, once Bishop of Colombo and later the Metropolitan of India, wrote in the nineteenth century : "All their stories of home and childhood, all their national literature, all that was grand to them in history and science, the conquests of their kings, the great buildings of their country, all were engaged in the interests of Buddhism."

In order to understand this influence on our cultural life we should have a correct idea of Theravada Buddhism, and to get it we have to know something of its origin and development. A philosopher, or one interested in religion, will probably concentrate on religious beliefs and philosophical ideas, but as this is a study of history we shall deal as little as possible with them and concentrate more on the material factors that influenced the rise and growth of this religion, the signs of a revival of which we see so clearly today.

Reference has already been made to the religious system in India as described in the *Vedas*. The early Aryans worshipped objects of nature such as the sky, the sun, rain, thunder, fire, and offered them sacrifices to the accompaniment of appropriate prayers. There is no doubt the Aryans who came to Ceylon worshipped these gods, as there is evidence that Varuna, the sky-god, and Parjanya, the god of rain, were known in Ceylon in early times. As time passed, these sacrifices were elaborated in India, and it was believed that by their correct performance priests could persuade the gods to do their bidding.

This Vedic religion began to lose credit about the seventh or sixth century B.C. Brahmins as well as members of the Indian nobility began to doubt the efficacy of the performance of such sacrifices and questioned the belief in the need for such gods. They further refused to accept the *Vedas* as an infallible

source of spiritual truth and the rituals prescribed therein as the sole means of salvation.

It is not clear what causes led to these developments. It is not likely that they were merely the results of changes within the Aryan system itself. It is more likely that by the time the Aryans had spread to the central parts of North India they had begun to be influenced by non-Aryan forms of life and beliefs. They either borrowed new ideas and cults from them or, as a result of their influence, evolved new beliefs and practices. Whatever were the causes, there emerged at this time a belief in rebirth and *karma*, that men and women were born over and over again in this universe as human or other living beings and that the position of each individual in each birth depended on the *karma* or the actions in his previous lives. These beliefs made many persons dissatisfied with the mere performance of rites which assured them only of birth in a higher state of life. They began to look upon life with its endless cycles of births and deaths as something to be avoided and considered that the object of religious activity should be to obtain a release from life itself.

As a result there arose a number of new religions the object of which was to gain complete release or salvation in this life itself. Some were monotheistic and advocated the way of *bhakti*, or devotion to a personal god. Others were atheistic and denied the necessity of the Vedic gods and further objected to the pre-eminence given to Brahmins in spiritual matters. Of these, four sects played an important part in later times, namely the Vaishnavites and the Saivites, the worshippers of Vishnu and Siva, and the Jains and the Buddhists who followed the great teachers Mahavira and Gautama. The first two emphasized *bhakti*, an intense love and devotion on the part of the worshipper to his beloved god, and *prasada*, or grace which brought salvation to the devotee. Though Saivaism and Vaishnavism which repudiated the Vedic religion, were founded by persons outside the Brahmin fold, and developed in Western India away from the home of the Vedic religion, the Brahmins looked upon them with favour and espoused them as reformed religions and dealt with them in the epics, the later *Upanishads* and the *Puranas*.

Buddhism and Jainism arose in Eastern India where the pre-Aryan culture had not been fully submerged. The people

in these regions differed from those in the central parts of North India to some extent in race, language, and culture, and this probably explains why Gautama and Mahavira preached doctrines which deviated most from the path of Brahmanism. Both these teachers kept within the Aryan system, but, unlike the early Aryans, accepted the ascetic view that the world is full of misery and sought deliverance from the cycle of births and deaths. They both repudiated the Vedic religion and the necessity for sacrifices and prayers to gods, and advocated as a means of salvation a vigorous system of discipline based on a code of moral and spiritual behaviour. Thus they not only paid no veneration to the Vedic gods, but objected to the high pretensions of the Brahmins. Hence Buddhism and Jainism may be looked upon as a revolt against the Brahmanical religion, or as a development and modification of it by an emphasis of the ascetic side such as the renunciation of the life of this world, self denial and *ahimsa*. The Brahmins naturally did not view their doctrines with favour, as they did in the case of those of Saivaism and Vaishnavism, and looked upon these as heterodox teachings.

Gautama and Mahavira both realized that this life of austerity and discipline was possible only for the homeless ascetic, and made their followers join an order of monks. In this way they made them cut themselves away from the hindrances of worldly ties and pleasures and lead a life of celibacy and poverty, depending for their food and clothing on the alms of the laymen. This does not mean that they ignored those who were unwilling to give up the life of a householder. Their life was looked upon as a preparatory stage and they prescribed for them a different form of moral and spiritual life.

The Buddha allowed the laity to take refuge in himself, the *Dhamma* and the *Sangha* and urged them to follow eight of the ten precepts. They in turn supplied the needs of the *Sangha*, and by these means hoped to improve their chances of obtaining happiness in this life and of being born in a higher state of existence in the next one. But it is important to remember that the Buddha did not establish any organization for the laity. Nor did he make a serious attempt to wean them away from their worship of gods or other religious beliefs and practices of the proto-Hinduism of the time. Thus

organized Buddhism remained essentially a monastic-institution of which the laity formed no integral part. The layman remained a Hindu accepting Buddhism in varying degrees as the chief expression of Hinduism.

Thus the history of Buddhism from the death of the Buddha is in the main the history of the *Sangha*. As Buddhism spread, owing to diverse reasons, the *Sangha* divided itself into various sects. The chief reasons for these divisions do not seem to have been so much differences with regard to ideas about the Buddha or his doctrines or any forms of ritual as differences with regard to the rules of discipline. The *Sangha* were bound by the rules of the *Vinaya*, and at the fortnightly meeting they had to confess their error if they did not conform to any of them. If there was disagreement with regard to rules, the monks could not live in harmony within a *vihara*, or hold the fortnightly ceremony; and, as it was accepted that the rules should not be revised, those who disagreed, if they did not leave of their own accord, had to be expelled. The result was that such disagreements led to the rise of rival sects who became more inclined to accept new ideas and practices, and deviate from the original doctrines. This was inevitable as the Buddha did not nominate a successor. In the absence of a single head or even a supreme body of men there was no possibility of settling rival claims or co-ordinating the diverse views held by them.

The first great division in the *Sangha* is said to have taken place a century after Buddha's death due to disagreements between the monks of the east and those of the west. The result was that the *Sangha* divided into two sections, the *Mahasanghikas* or the *Acariyavada* in the east and the *Theravada* in the west. The chief centres of the Theravada sect at this time were Kosambi near modern Allahabad and Ujjeni in the district of Avanti. Afterwards the Mahasanghikas split into seven sects and the Theravada into eleven. Thus the history of Buddhism became the history of a number of monastic sects, and each of the important ones compiled its own canon including their own additions and claimed that it contained the original teaching of Buddhism.

The Theravada Canon or the *Tipitaka* consisted of the *Vinaya*, which dealt with the rules of discipline for the monks, the *Sutta*, the discourses of the Buddha and of his disciples

and the *Abhidhamma* which dealt with the philosophy of Buddhism. The *Tipitaka* is also called the Pali Canon. It was composed in an Aryan dialect or Prakrit. The Buddha preached to the people in their own dialects and enjoined upon his disciples that his teaching should be studied by the people in their own dialects. Buddhism at first spread in the eastern part of North India. From there it seems to have made its way westwards along the well known routes to Kashmir in the North-west and Avanti in the South-west. Pali is closer to the language of Avanti than to any dialect of the East though it was called Magadhi in Ceylon.

Another point to be remembered is that the Buddhists established monasteries wherever they went. These monasteries were originally intended to give suitable accommodation to the monks to carry on their studies and meditation. As time passed many of them developed into centres of learning for producing men well grounded in religion and philosophy for propagating Buddhism, and then, in addition, into centres of culture to which students and teachers flocked from various parts of the country.

Buddhism no doubt spread more quickly with the establishment of the Maurya Empire and the peaceful conditions that prevailed thereafter. It spread even quicker when Asoka became a lay disciple of the Buddha. About this time, if not earlier, Buddhism spread into the Deccan by the two well known routes, along the east coast and past Mandhata on the River Narbada and Paithan on the River Godavari. The Mahasanghikas who took the first route settled in the Andhra country while the Theravadins and those who broke away from them later, seem to have spread from the district of Avanti over the Deccan into South India. Some of the Theravadins finally came to Ceylon.

When Theravada Buddhists came to Ceylon and carried on their missionary work, the *Sangha* being a monastic organization did not come into conflict with Vedic Brahmanism, the worship of Siva or other Hindu gods, or the worship of *Yakshas* or local gods. Their work became complementary as their chief object was to make people give up the worldly life and join the *Sangha*. They preached to the laity too, but they did not try to wean them away from the worship of gods or local cults, though at times they seem to have tried to give

a new significance to old practices. One of the main contributions was no doubt the establishment of monasteries which, as centres of learning and culture, influenced considerably the life and thought of the people in a way which neither the few Brahmins nor those in charge of the local cults ever attempted to do.

The next great event in the cultural history of Ceylon is the coming of Mahayana Buddhism. Dr. Paranavitana has described its growth in Ceylon and shown to what extent it influenced the life and thought of the people. But in Ceylon it never replaced Theravada Buddhism and what is necessary is to see in what ways it enriched the life of the people or changed or modified the beliefs and practices of Theravada Buddhism. The chief difference in Mahayanism is that, apart from differences in doctrine, it incorporated the conception of countless Buddhas and *bodhisattvas*, encouraged the worship of certain gods and goddesses and recommended the use of *mantras* for attaining emancipation. There were also other features, but they were, up to a point developments that took place in Theravada Buddhism.

The Buddha, when alive, was treated with great reverence not only as a teacher of the way of release but also as one who lived the highest form of life and attained great spiritual powers. His followers appear to have developed a loving faith in him which took the place of devotion shown to a particular god like Siva or Vishnu. As time passed they developed certain practices to show their regard for him. They began to pay homage to bo-trees, under one of which they believed he attained enlightenment, and to dagobas which were believed to contain his relics. Further, they made pilgrimages to the four places: where he was born, gained enlightenment, first promulgated the *Dhamma*, and attained *Nirvana*. The Pali commentaries taught, in addition that the Buddha, unlike ordinary human beings, was not subject to disease and decay, and as time passed, his followers looked upon him as the god above all gods (*devatideva*). The Mahasanghikas, of whom the Vaituliyas were a sub-sect, went even further and deified the Buddha, placing him in the position of a god like Siva or Vishnu, and thus enabled the laity to satisfy their religious emotions.

These developments probably took place in the attempts on the part of the monks to make Buddhism popular and

attractive to the laity. Probably the same reason led to a new emphasis in Buddhism. In the first four Nikayas of the Pali Canon the chief emphasis is on the attainment of the state of an *arahat* by the pursuit of a course of self-culture and self-control. But later on, emphasis began to be laid, as in the *Nidana Katha*, on the career of the Buddha as one who as a *bodhisattva* or one destined to be a Buddha, put off the attainment of *nirvana*, and followed an arduous career performing certain meritorious acts or *paramitas* in order to prepare himself for Buddhahood for the sake of saving others. The Sarvastivadins, one of the sects that sprung from the Theravada, went further and accepted the view that a few beings might as *bodhisattvas* acquire the ten virtues or *paramitas* and aim at being Buddhas. The Mahasanghikas who spread to the Andhra country and deified the Buddha went further than the Sarvastivadins and preached that every being should become a *bodhisattva* by acquiring these virtues and aspire to be Buddhas. Thus they aimed not so much at effacement of self but at being of service to others. About the same time the worship of Buddha images came into vogue, and monasteries came to be built with image-houses in most parts of India. These developments led to the rise of Mahayanism in the Andhra country about the first century B.C. and it spread first to North-Eastern India and then all over North India in the first and second century A.D. Mahayana was so called because the Mahayanists followed the career of being a Buddha. In contrast, the Theravadins were called Hinayanists as they followed the lower career of being an *arahant*. The Hinayanists contended that Mahayanism was not expounded by the Buddha and that it was not possible for every being to attain the ideal of Buddhahood.

The Mahayanists not only worshipped the Buddha as a god but also extolled the advantages of worshipping *bodhisattvas* and winning their favour. The Buddhist layman, who yet worshipped gods besides following the moral precepts of Buddhism, now found in the *bodhisattvas* a substitute for his earlier objects of devotion if he cared to adopt them. At times he even attached more importance to the *bodhisattvas* than to the Buddhas as the former, he believed, could confer boons on him and save him from all sorts of misfortunes.

There are five points to be noted about Mahayanism. The Mahayana monks did not evolve any new rules of discipline

to replace the old ones but followed those of the Hinayana sects. Thus very often they lived in the same monasteries as the Hinayanists and influenced them. They did not insist on a person becoming a monk or nun to benefit by it. They opened its portals both to the monks and the laity and afforded them greater scope for worship and devotion. They adopted Sanskrit as the vehicle of expression and made the culture embodied in Sanskrit works available to their followers. Mahayanism became the most important form of Buddhism in India if not the most important form of religion. It followed the ways of the new Hinduism, the worship of Siva, Vishnu and other gods. The result was that it gradually became closer and closer to Hinduism.

The next great event in the cultural history of Ceylon is the growth of Hinduism. Reference has already been made to the Brahmanical religion of the early Aryans. With the rise of Buddhism and Jainism and Saivaism and Vaishnavism, the sacrificial form of worship of the Vedic gods declined. The Brahmins, however, absorbed Saivaism and Vishnuism and celebrated these religions in the new literature, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* and the *Purana*, which put into the shade the *Veda* and the *Brahmana*. These semi-historical works also dealt with other gods who were included in the Hindu pantheon such as Ganesa, Skanda or Murugan as well as *Yakshas* and tree deities, but they all give the supreme places to Siva and Vishnu.

The evolution of the worship of Vishnu can be traced in this literature. The first step was the identification of Vasudeva-Krishna with the Vedic deity Vishnu. Next he is identified with Narayana. Vaishnavism first flourished in Mathura and the North-west. From there it spread to Western India, northern Deccan and South India. Images of Vishnu were fashioned in the first century A.D. Like Buddhism and Jainism it also adopted *ahimsa* as one of its tenets. Saivaism is probably pre-Vedic in origin. Like Vaishnavism it spread all over India including the south. From very early times Siva was represented by images or phallic symbols.

One of the causes that helped the spread of Buddhism was the fact that Prakrit was the medium of expression in North India and the upper part of the Deccan till about the fourth century A.D. not only among the people but also in the courts

of most rulers. Asoka and most kings from the third century B.C. up to the end of the third century A.D. used Prakrit in their inscriptions. Sanskrit at first was mainly the language of the learned in the central parts of North India. But just as Aryan forms of speech replaced many earlier languages in India so Sanskrit gradually replaced Prakrit as the language not only of the learned but of the royal courts and of the upper classes. It was studied by scholars even in South India where Dravidian tongues were spoken. The spread of Sanskrit naturally helped the new Hinduism.

Brahmin literature was invariably in some form of Sanskrit. The *Vedas*, the *Brahmanas*, the *Aranyakas* and the *Upanishads* were composed in Sanskrit. This language was also systematized and kept pure by works on grammar as far back as the fourth century B.C. The *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* were all written in Sanskrit. Sanskrit from early times became the language of expression for semi-religious subjects such as law and custom, music, dancing, politics and administration, grammar, metrics and phonetics. Thus it is understandable why by the fourth century A.D., Sanskrit replaced Prakrit as the language of the upper classes, and even Buddhist writers such as Asvaghosa, Aryasura and Nagarjuna wrote their works in Sanskrit.

Just as Buddhism received an impetus with the establishment of the Maurya Empire so Hinduism began to spread more quickly with the establishment of the Gupta Empire in the fourth century A.D. and the peaceful conditions it created in the greater part of India. The Gupta Empire itself broke down in the sixth century A.D. but the Gupta age or civilization continued to flourish and affect all India for another two centuries. In fact India reached the peak of its civilization during this period. Poetry, drama and prose reached its highest level. The six systems of Indian philosophy took their final form. Advances were made in lexicography, grammar, mathematics, astronomy, music, dancing, architecture, sculpture, and painting. This was the age of Kalidasa. It was also at this time that the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* assumed their final form and the *Puranas* came to be written. The sculptures of Saranath and the paintings of Ajanta, too, belong to this age.

Saivaism and Vaishnavism during this time made great progress at the expense of Buddhism and in many parts

replaced it altogether. In South India the Vaishnava saints called *Alvars* and the Saiva saints called *Nayanmars* went about the country spreading Vaishnavism and Saivaism which gradually replaced Jainism and Buddhism.

From the ninth century it was the Hinduism of South India and Sanskrit culture that influenced Ceylon most. North Indian influence practically ceased with the invasions of the Muslims. Even after the fall of the Vijayanagara Empire these cultural influences filtered into Ceylon from the Kingdoms of Madura and Tanjore.

With the British occupation of India the influence of Hinduism and Sanskrit receded into the background. But the revival of Hinduism there influenced Hinduism in North Ceylon and Buddhism in the South. The cultural revival which led partly to the independence of India has affected Ceylon in the sphere of art, music and drama. Finally since independence and the cultural revival, Ceylon has begun to lean once more on India as it has not done since the sixteenth century.

4

THE DIFFERENCES IN CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN INDIA AND CEYLON

IT has been pointed out earlier that there were two geographical factors that influenced the history of Ceylon : the proximity to India and Ceylon's central position in the highway of sea traffic from the West to the East. This position on the highway of sea traffic up to the end of the fifteenth century did not affect the course of Ceylon history to such an extent as to leave a definite mark on it. The proximity to India on the other hand was the main factor in the history of Ceylon up to that time.

Up to the end of the eighth century Ceylon was influenced mainly by the Maurya, the Satavahana, the Gupta and the Pallava civilizations. In the ninth century Ceylon entered into the orbit of South Indian politics. At this time both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism were on the decline even in South India, and Ceylon could gain little from that region for its cultural development as the South Indian languages were Dravidian and its forms of religion were mainly Saivaism and Vaishnavism. But from the ninth century the culture of South India up to a point did affect Ceylon, as South India had already adopted Sanskrit too as a language of learning and South Indian influences could penetrate into Ceylon through this medium. Further, South Indians came to Ceylon from about the tenth century in larger numbers and in the thirteenth century established a kingdom of their own in the North. Thus South Indian forms of religion and culture came into direct touch with the Sinhalese civilization and exercised an influence on Buddhism and the social life of the people and on architecture and sculpture. Thus though the influence of North India over Ceylon weakened from the ninth century, South Indian influence continued to be the chief factor in the civilization of Ceylon. Hence, Ceylon, as before, continued to be a unit of the Hindu civilization of India.

It is easy to understand why Ceylon ceased to be a unit of the Indian civilization from the beginning of the sixteenth century. As stated already, Theravada Buddhism as well as Mahayana Buddhism had gradually declined in India owing to the inroads of Saivaism and Vaishnavism, and Ceylon Buddhists began to turn away from India to Burma where Theravada Buddhism flourished. When North India and the Deccan fell into the hands of the Muslims, they ceased to exercise any influence over this Island as Ceylon could no longer look to these regions for the development even of its cultural life. We have already noted that from the ninth century onwards Ceylon was influenced culturally by South India. These influences too were cut off to a great extent by the Portuguese, who from the beginning of the sixteenth century until their place was taken by other European powers, controlled the Indian seas as well as the highway of sea traffic from the West to the East. During the three centuries that followed Ceylon was influenced more by the West than by India and from the nineteenth century western influence became supreme as India too during this time came more and more under direct British influence.

In what ways then did Ceylon differ from India up to the end of the fifteenth century? Why did Ceylon develop a variety of life and culture of its own? Was it due to geographical causes, the fact that it is an island and, unlike all other units of Indian civilization, was not connected by land? Was it due further to the fact that, apart from the intervening sea, Ceylon was at the southernmost end, and all movements that arose in North India lost their force by the time they came as far as Ceylon? Or was it due to the fact that, though Sinhalese was an Aryan dialect and Theravada Buddhism was a North Indian religion, North Indian developments had to penetrate through a belt of Dravidian life and culture before they reached Ceylon?

These factors undoubtedly influenced the civilization of Ceylon. Being an island Ceylon was not affected by great upheavals like the rest of India and was able to maintain a continuity of civilization more effectively than any other part of the sub-continent. Owing to the intervening Dravidian region the civilization of Ceylon gradually began to deviate more and more from that of North India, except in so far as it influenced South India, and began to adapt itself

in some ways to the South Indian Dravidian pattern. But these were not the main causes that distinguished the civilization of Ceylon from that of India. The difference between Ceylon and India arose mainly from differences in development in the two areas.

What has to be noted is that the civilization of Ceylon, or that of the Sinhalese, derived its characteristic features from two factors : the Aryan settlement and the introduction of Theravada Buddhism. It is true that the original racial type and culture has been modified to a considerable extent by immigrants from South India and Theravada Buddhism has undergone changes to some extent through the influences of Mahayanism and Hinduism. But these changes have not been as radical as in India, so as to transform the early racial type and culture or eliminate the main features of Theravada Buddhism. Sinhalese language and culture have continued up to the present day and are demanding further recognition. Theravada Buddhism, unlike in India, has survived the pressure of other religions, and is attempting to adapt itself to the new conditions and play a prominent part in the life of the people as before.

Why did this happen? When the Aryan-speaking people came to this island there was no civilized society to contend against such as the British found when they came here. Thus their language and their way of life took root in this country without any opposition.

Similarly when Theravada Buddhism was introduced it had not to contend against any advanced religion. There were other religions like Brahmanism, Jainism and other religious as well as local cults. Brahmanism as a religion was practised by a few and it was not a missionary religion like Buddhism. The worship of Siva and Vishnu was again, followed by only a few. In any case both these religions were far from wide-spread and do not seem to have exercised much influence on the spiritual and intellectual life of the people. Jainism demanded extreme forms of asceticism and thus could not be a popular religion. Theravada Buddhism on the other hand not only provided a middle way in asceticism for those who sought release from this life of birth and rebirth but also a limited way for the layman as a preparatory process. Further, it did not interfere with the local cults

which, the people believed, assisted them to secure their wants in this life. More than all through its Pali Canon and monastic institutions it influenced the ideas of the people and provided them with some form of intellectual and moral life. In other words the contribution which Theravada Buddhism made was complementary and filled a vacuum which existed in the life of the Sinhalese people. It enriched their life with new ideas, new beliefs and new religious practices. The Pali language in which the new teaching was embodied provided something which the Sinhalese language lacked and, along with the art of writing which the monks introduced, it enabled the growth of the Sinhalese language. In fact the monks developed a commentarial literature in Sinhalese for the understanding of the Pali Canon and it was all written down before three centuries elapsed. The Sinhalese language itself was enriched with words derived from Pali and thus became a better vehicle for the expression of moral and religious ideas.

Moreover, Theravada Buddhism in Ceylon had not to contend, at any time, as in India, against powerful religions like Saivaism and Vaishnavism or a more expressive language like Sanskrit. Mahayanism to a considerable extent was an adaptation of Buddhism on the lines of Hinduism to withstand the force of Hinduism, and in this process it allowed itself to be absorbed by Hinduism. In Ceylon there was no such struggle against Saivaism and Vaishnavism and the need for such a development within the ranks of Theravada Buddhism did not arise.

Nevertheless Mahayanism came to Ceylon as a fresh stream and, though some of its doctrines were opposed to Theravada Buddhism, Mahayanist monks who followed almost the same rules of discipline as the monks of the Theravada sect in Ceylon, were able to live in the same viharas and influence the way of life of the monks of the Theravada sects. But Mahayana Buddhism in no way replaced Theravada Buddhism. It only added something to it, and, if it replaced anything, it was only the worship of the local gods for whom *bodhisattvas* were substituted.

In the greater part of India Buddhists also adopted the Sanskrit language for the expression of their religious ideas and beliefs. This was necessary because by the fourth century Sanskrit had become the language of the learned in India.

But the learned men in Ceylon were mainly interested in Theravada Buddhism, the Canon of which was in Pali, and few cared to study Sanskrit. On the other hand the study of Pali received a new impetus in the fourth century A.D. Theravada Buddhism still flourished at this time in South India and in many parts of the Deccan as well as in pockets in North India. Buddhaghosa came to Ceylon and began to translate the Sinhalese commentaries into Pali for the benefit of those in India. This led also to a revival of the study of Pali in Ceylon and it became thereafter the vehicle of expression of the learned monks. Hence Sanskrit, though it was studied later by many in Ceylon, did not replace Pali. Instead, Pali itself was studied as a language and grammatical works and glossaries were produced on the lines of Sanskrit works to make it a more suitable form of expression.

Nevertheless it is true that Pali from the fourth century A.D. retarded to some extent the development of the Sinhalese language, just as English retarded the development of Sinhalese during the last century. But in any case it helped the continuance of Theravada Buddhism and the development of the civilization of Ceylon on lines different from those of India.

But what distinguished Ceylon even more from India and also from the Jaffna Kingdom was the use of the Sinhalese language for purposes of literature from about the thirteenth century. Sinhalese which had been enriched by Pali as well as by Sanskrit came to be used even for religious purposes. Further, the Sinhalese language was examined in the way Pali had been examined earlier and made more suitable as a vehicle of expression and thought. Thus when Sinhalese became the language of expression of the learned, Ceylon began to deviate in language too from the rest of India.

How far then did Hinduism affect life in Ceylon? We have already noted how Mahayanism went beyond the bounds of Theravada Buddhism. It took over the new developments in Theravada Buddhism and Acariyavada Buddhism in India, and made further advances treating Buddha as a god and advocating the worship of the *bodhisattvas*. The *bodhisattva* images such as that at Valigama, the devales built for the worship of Natha, the use of *mantra* and the ritual connected with the Tooth Relic, as well as the spread of the

study of Sanskrit show how it influenced Buddhism in Ceylon. Natha is no other than the *Bodhisattva* Avalokitesvara or Lokesvara Natha. The Mahayanists looked upon him as a saviour of mankind.

The gulf between Mahayanism and Hinduism is not so great but if we want to trace the developments in Hinduism we shall have to go back to a period even prior to the introduction of Buddhism. We have already noted that the early Aryan settlers probably introduced the worship of Brahmin gods such as Varuna and Parjanya. Brahmins too accompanied them and worked as *purohitas*, teachers and physicians in the royal court. The evidence available seems to suggest that Sinhalese kings, in spite of their patronage of Buddhism, always employed a *purohita* to perform sacrifices on their behalf. The early Aryans also seem to have worshipped Siva and Rama who later came to be identified with Vishnu; and the worship of these gods, though limited to a small section of the people, continued even after the introduction of Buddhism.

In the very early days there appear to have been residences of Brahmin priests in Anuradhapura but there is hardly any evidence to show that they had anything like Buddhist monastic establishments where they carried on any studies or intellectual activities. There were villages where Brahmins resided and there are references to *caturveda mangalam* and *agrahara* but they do not seem to have been anything more than residences of temple priests.

Other gods too were worshipped. One was Upuluvan for whom a shrine was built in the seventh century A.D. at Dondra. Dr. Paranavitana identifies him with Varuna while later he was identified with Vishnu. Other Hindu gods such as Ganesa and Kuvera too seem to have been worshipped from very early times. It is not clear when the worship of Muruhan or Skanda was introduced. The evidence available suggests it is late. The worship of the god Saman on the other hand was very early.

Saivaism and Vaishnavism began to exercise a definite influence in Ceylon only as a result of their revival in South India in the seventh century. What influenced Ceylon was mainly Saivaism, and temples for the worship of Siva were set up at Mantai and Trincomalee probably by Tamil settlers.

Hinduism received definite encouragement during the Chola occupation and during this time both Siva and Vishnu temples were built. But the Siva temple No. 2 of the Chola style in Polonnaruva was built away from the Buddhist shrines. On the other hand the Siva Temple No. 1 of the Pandya style was built in the thirteenth century in the same city in the Dalada Maluva among the Buddhist shrines. From the ninth century there are also references to the support of Brahmins by Sinhalese kings, and after the Chola occupation ceased, Sinhalese kings are said to have built or repaired and endowed Hindu temples.

In the fourteenth century there is clear evidence of a sort of synthesis between Buddhism and Hinduism. Some of the Buddhist monks themselves sought the aid of gods for favours in this life. In some Sinhalese poems the poet after paying his homage to the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the *Sangha* invoked the Hindu gods for their blessings. Some poets wrote Sandesa poems in which they definitely asked for some favour from a god. In architecture we see the same development. Not only were devales built by kings and officials, but at times they were attached to vihares themselves. In the Lankatilaka vihara the inner shrine is the Buddhist Vihare and the surrounding corridor is the temple of the gods. The images of the gods there include Siva and Vishnu in addition to the tutelary deities Upuluvan, Saman, Vibhishana and Skanda. Alagakkonara when he fortified Kotte built temples to these same tutelary deities.

This synthesis does not mean that Hinduism in any way replace Theravada Buddhism. If Hindu gods replaced anyone it was the local gods and the *bodhisattvas*. The *bodhisattva* Natha appears to have been identified by some with Siva, and the god Saman with Lakshman, the brother of Rama. The gods were invoked for favours in this life but Theravada Buddhism continued to be followed for the attainment of Nirvana or a better state in the next life.

Thus Ceylon's development culturally differed from India and the main features of that development was the continuance of the Sinhalese language and of Theravada Buddhism.

5

WAS PORTUGUESE RULE A TURNING-POINT IN CEYLON HISTORY?

HISTORY has been defined as the story of man. This is by no means an adequate definition. It does not cover our modern ideas of history. History is no longer looked upon as a mere narrative. It is much more; it is an interpretation of human development, it is an explanation of how mankind has grown to be what it is today. It is true that human societies have not always had a continuous development. When we examine the stories of individual nations we come across periods of decline. But on the whole, history records at least in some respects a development in human societies.

As history is primarily concerned with development, it deals mainly with changes in human societies. It deals not only with political changes which older historians emphasized, but also with economic, social and institutional changes. Further, the modern historian shows how these changes interact upon one another; how economic changes lead to social changes and social changes lead to political and institutional changes; or perhaps, how political and institutional changes lead to social and economic changes. This is, perhaps, the most interesting feature of the modern study of history.

What then is a historical event? In what does its importance lie? A historical event is one that leads to change, and the importance of an event has to be gauged by the extent of the change it brings about. Take for example the grant of adult franchise in Ceylon. It was in itself a revolutionary step, and is now leading to a series of other revolutionary changes in the political, social and economic spheres. Hence one may justly claim this grant of adult franchise in Ceylon to be a most important event in twentieth century Ceylon.

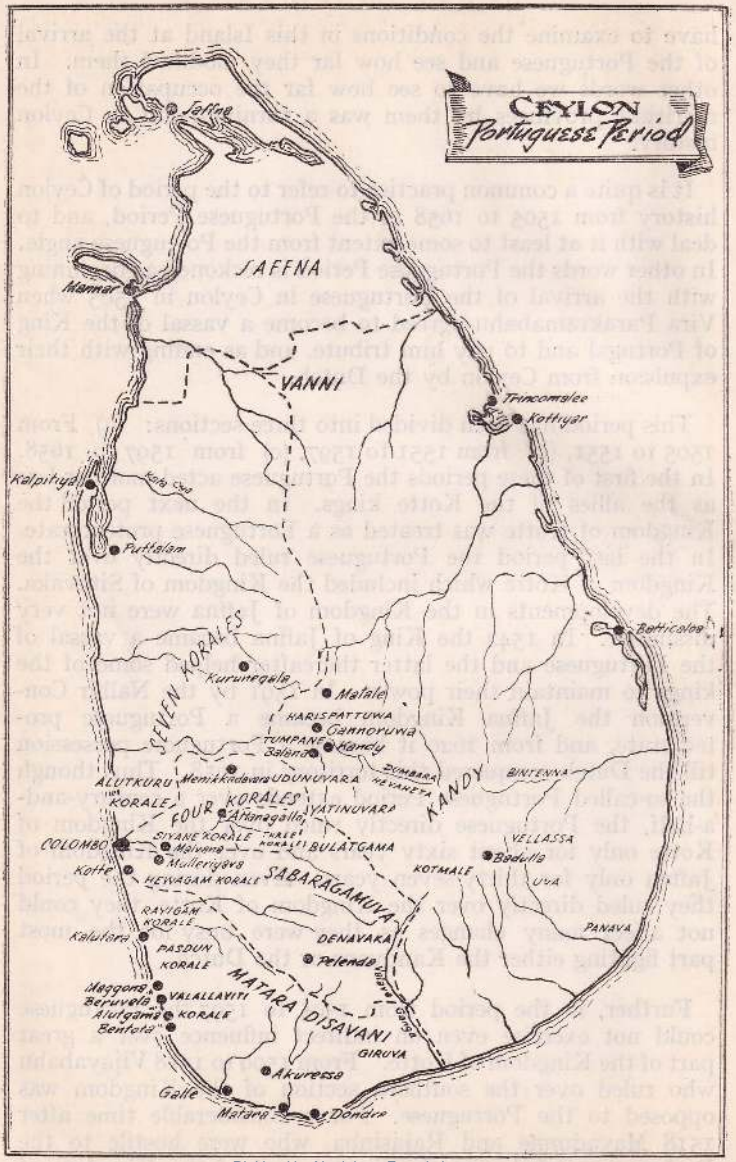
In this chapter I propose to deal with the historical importance of Portuguese rule in Ceylon. To estimate it, we have to examine the changes the Portuguese brought about in Ceylon. To gauge the importance of these changes we

have to examine the conditions in this Island at the arrival of the Portuguese and see how far they modified them. In other words we have to see how far the occupation of the maritime provinces by them was a turning-point in Ceylon history.

It is quite a common practice to refer to the period of Ceylon history from 1505 to 1658 as the Portuguese Period, and to deal with it at least to some extent from the Portuguese angle. In other words the Portuguese Period is reckoned as beginning with the arrival of the Portuguese in Ceylon in 1505 when Vira Parakramabahu agreed to become a vassal of the King of Portugal and to pay him tribute, and as ending with their expulsion from Ceylon by the Dutch.

This period has been divided into three sections: (a) From 1505 to 1551, (b) from 1551 to 1597, (c) from 1597 to 1658. In the first of these periods the Portuguese acted more or less as the allies of the Kotte kings. In the next period the Kingdom of Kotte was treated as a Portuguese protectorate. In the last period the Portuguese ruled directly over the Kingdom of Kotte which included the Kingdom of Sitavaka. The developments in the Kingdom of Jaffna were not very dissimilar. In 1542 the King of Jaffna became a vassal of the Portuguese and the latter thereafter helped some of the kings to maintain their power. In 1591 by the Nallur Convention the Jaffna Kingdom became a Portuguese protectorate, and from 1620 it became a Portuguese possession till the Dutch conquered this territory in 1658. Thus though the so-called Portuguese Period extends over a century-and-a-half, the Portuguese directly ruled over the Kingdom of Kotte only for about sixty years and over the Kingdom of Jaffna only for thirty-seven years. Even during the period they ruled directly over the Kingdom of Kotte they could not affect many changes as they were busy for the most part fighting either the Kandyans or the Dutch.

Further, in the period from 1505 to 1597 the Portuguese could not exercise even an indirect influence over a great part of the Kingdom of Kotte. From 1509 to 1518 Vijayabahu who ruled over the southern section of the Kingdom was opposed to the Portuguese. For a considerable time after 1518 Mayadunne and Rajasinha, who were hostile to the Portuguese, ruled over the greater part of the Kingdom of



Kotte. During the whole period they exercised little influence over the Kingdom of Kandy which consisted not only of the Udarata but also of the area on the east up to the coast.

This is not all. When the Portuguese ruled directly over the Kingdoms of Kotte and Jaffna, they did not change to any considerable extent the forms of government they found in these areas. They did not rule these territories according to the laws of Portugal. In 1597 on the death of Dharmapala, Jeronimo de Azavedo agreed at the Convention of Malvana to rule the Kingdom of Kotte according to the customs of the Sinhalese. Similarly in the Kingdom of Jaffna the Tamil customs were followed. It is true that the Portuguese compiled *Tombos* or land-registers but they were based on the *lekam mitis* of the Sinhalese kings. Hence Portuguese rule meant more a change of rulers than a change in the form of government.

In fact, the Portuguese Period may be looked upon as a continuation of the developments that took place after the abandonment of Polonnaruva as the capital of Ceylon. Then the old divisions of Ceylon, Rajarata, Mayarata and Ruhunurata, disappeared. In the thirteenth century a Tamil kingdom appears to have been established in a part of the north of Ceylon. From this time the rest of Ceylon was more or less ruled by independent or semi-independent chiefs. First the rulers of Dambadeniya, then of Yapahuva, Kurunegala, Gampola, Rayigama, and Kotte in succession came to be recognised as the chief rulers. The Kingdom of Kotte came into existence in 1415, and the Kingdom of Kandy was established by Vikramabahu about 1480. Thus on the arrival of the Portuguese there existed in Ceylon three different kingdoms, Jaffna, Kotte and Kandy, and the history of the so-called Portuguese Period is more or less a continuation of the history of these three kingdoms. Had not the Kingdom of Kotte been divided in 1509 and 1518, and had Vijayabahu, and later Mayadunne and Rajasinha, been content with the areas they ruled, the Portuguese may not have ever ruled directly even over a part of Ceylon. They were not anxious to acquire territory, at least at the beginning. They only wanted trade; and it was the ambition of the Sitavaka kings to be the sole rulers of the Kingdom of Kotte and perhaps of Kandy too, that brought the Portuguese in to the field. Had the Portuguese not been there, Mayadunne may have become

the sole ruler of the Kingdom of Kotte and then of Udarata and brought to an end, at least for a time, the internal wars of the Island.

If the Portuguese Period is really a continuation of the history of the Sinhalese and Tamil kingdoms, what is the justification for calling it by this name? If at all, should not this name have been applied only to the period from 1597 to 1658 when the Portuguese ruled directly over the Kingdom of Kotte? There is hardly any justification but an explanation may be given.

Till recent times most historians thought of history in terms of political history—changes of dynasties, wars, etc.,—and paid little attention to social, economic and institutional changes. If we take the history of Ceylon as political history, we cannot deny that during this period the Portuguese were the most dominant section in Ceylon. The Kotte and the Jaffna kings were for the most part their vassals. It is alliance with the Portuguese that the Sinhalese and Tamil kings first sought. The Portuguese army was well trained and efficient. It was well equipped with hand-guns and cannon, and in the open field it could defeat a local army more than ten times as large. The Portuguese navy controlled the Indian Ocean and the Portuguese could not be dislodged from Colombo as they could always obtain aid by sea.

Moreover, the chief sources for the reconstruction of the history of this period are Portuguese works and they deal primarily with their own activities. What we learn of the activities of the Sinhalese and Tamil kings is derived mainly from these works. Hence it is difficult to trace the history of this period from the angle of the Sinhalese and Tamil kings or to give a full account of the part they played. It is probably these reasons that caused this period to be called by this name.

If the Portuguese contributed little in the sphere of government and administration, what then was their contribution to the development of Ceylon? They certainly expanded the trade of the country. The Portuguese came to the East to capture its trade and to Ceylon for her cinnamon. The trade of Ceylon had been from the earliest times in the hands of foreigners. It was carried on by the South Indians, the Greeks, the Arabs, the Persians and the Muslims. The Portuguese took over this trade and carried Ceylon's products

direct to Europe. They were so concerned about the export of cinnamon that they appointed a special officer, the Captain of the Mahabadda, to supervise the villages occupied by the cinnamon peelers.

This was not their only contribution. They helped the Sinhalese and the Tamils to adopt new methods of warfare as well as to use guns and cannon. They were used mainly in self-defence and only helped at times to check the invasions of the Portuguese. The kings of Sitavaka undoubtedly adopted Portuguese methods to fight them, but failed finally to dislodge them from Ceylon.

Further, the Portuguese brought about social changes in the areas they occupied and to a small extent even outside. They did not look down upon the Sinhalese and the Tamils but mixed with them and intermarried with them. As a result many persons, including some of the upper classes, followed Portuguese customs and manners. They followed Portuguese forms of architecture in building houses, adopting the broad window called *janela* and the round form of tile still commonly used in the Island. In their houses they sometimes adopted furniture of the type used by the Portuguese. Words like *janela*, *mese* (table) and *almaria* (wardrobe) are derived from Portuguese. It became also the fashion to adopt the Portuguese forms of dress. Words such as *kamisa* (shirt), *kalisan* (trousers), *mes* (stockings), *sapattu* (shoes), *lensuwa* (handkerchief), *alpenetti* (pins), *bottama* (button), are also derived from Portuguese.

The most important contribution of the Portuguese, however, is the introduction of the Roman Catholic form of Christianity. When the Portuguese first came to Ceylon they were accompanied by Franciscan friars who ministered to their spiritual needs. But when Bhuvanekabahu invited Christian missionaries, they came to the Kingdom of Kotte in 1543 to convert the people to Christianity. Some of these went to the Kandyan Kingdom on the invitation of its king, Jayavira II. Others on the invitation of the people of Mannar entered the Jaffna Kingdom.

The Roman Catholic Church differed from Buddhism and Hinduism in many ways. It was controlled by the Pope in Rome through a hierarchy of church officials. Its clergy not only preached and performed religious rites but demanded

an adherence to its rules from the laity and punished them if they did not obey. In fact each church appointed a *merinho* or constable to seek the offenders and see that they were punished.

The clergy that came to Ceylon were the Franciscans, the Dominicans and the Jesuits. The Franciscans and the Dominicans were not monks who lived in isolated monasteries but friars. It is true they remained unmarried and lived a life of poverty, but they did not cut themselves away from the world. They lived among the people and ministered to them. The Jesuits came with the definite aim of educating the people.

The dogmas and the doctrines of the Church in some respects changed the people's attitude to life. For instance they went against the beliefs in karma and rebirth. But the Roman Catholic religious rites and forms of worship and the use of symbols such as the images of Christ and the saints appealed to the emotions of the people and they adopted Christianity sometimes *en masse*. The result was that the Church exercised a considerable influence on a large section of the people of the Island.

These changes, however, were not very considerable, and it cannot be concluded that Portuguese rule was a turning-point in the internal history of the Island, But as far as external influences are concerned it was certainly a turning-point. At the time of the arrival of the Portuguese the chief foreign influence came from South India. Our Indian problem today is a South Indian problem and it started many centuries ago. From the occupation of Rajarata by the Cholas the South Indian influence over Ceylon grew. It later led to the establishment of a Tamil kingdom in the North. This kingdom grew in power until it exacted tribute from the South. If we visit the Lankatilaka Vihara in Gampola we shall see that the grants of land to it are recorded both in Sinhalese and Tamil. In the fifteenth century Tamil influence over the Sinhalese court was considerable, and Ceylon may have come under the rule of Madura or Tanjore but for the arrival of the Portuguese. It is undoubtedly the Portuguese who checked this growing influence of South India and laid Ceylon open to the influence of the West.

There was also another growing influence that came from the Near East and India. The Muslims had been expanding

their trade towards the East from the eighth century. In Ceylon they had established themselves in Colombo and Beruvala, and were taking part in the internal trade of the Island. The trade of Ceylon at this time was in the hands of the Muslims, and it would not have been surprising if finally some parts of Ceylon came under Muslim rule as it happened in Indonesia. This expansion again was checked by the Portuguese who destroyed Muslim trade in the Indian Ocean and opened the trade of the East finally to the Dutch and the British.

Nevertheless,if we examine the history of Ceylon from 1505 to 1658 we can hardly call it the Portuguese Period. In the administrative sphere there was very little change. Apart from the emphasis placed on the export of spices, the economy of the Island underwent no serious modification. There was a considerable change in the social sphere, but even this was limited mainly to the area over which the Portuguese directly ruled. Thus this period is really a continuation of the history of the Sinhalese and Tamil Kingdoms.

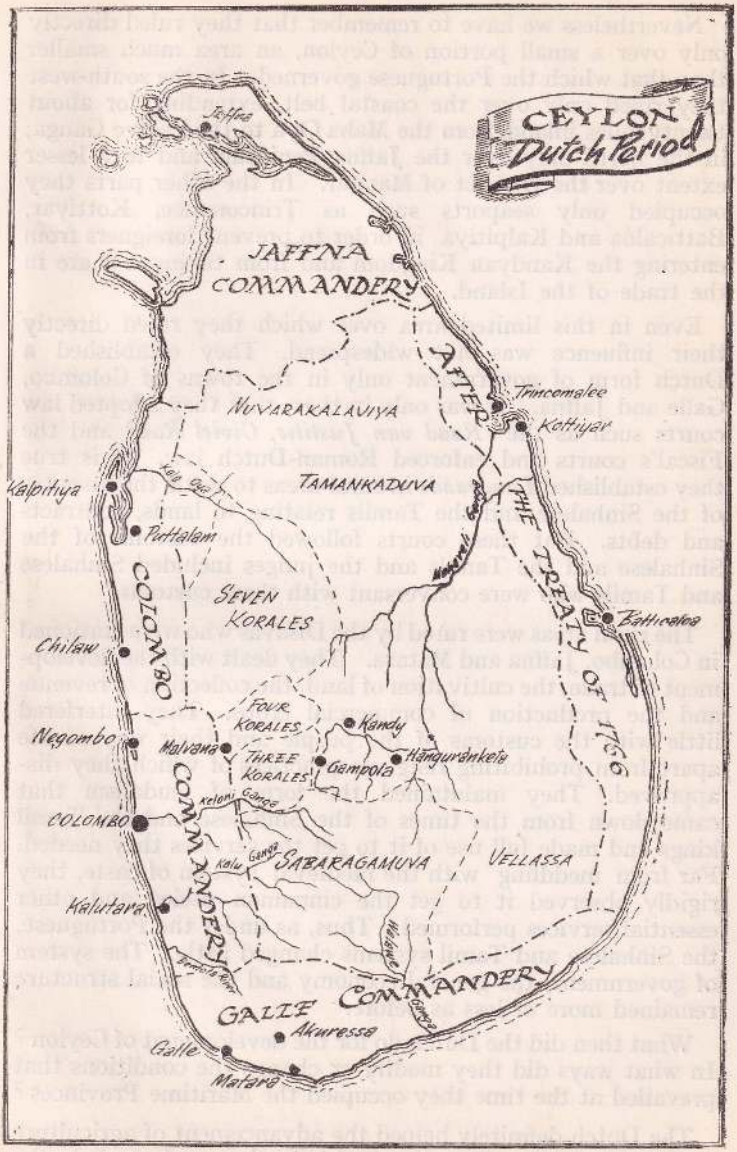
6

THE HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE OF DUTCH RULE IN CEYLON

IN the last chapter the importance of Portuguese rule in Ceylon was assessed. We noted that the Portuguese brought about little change in the sphere of government and administration. They left the Sinhalese and Tamil institutions and customs more or less as they were before. In the economic sphere they merely improved the trade in spices and other articles but made no noteworthy alteration in the system of agriculture. Their main contribution was in the social sphere. They introduced a new form of religion —Roman Catholic Christianity—which differed from Hinduism and Buddhism in organization, dogmas and doctrines, ritual and forms of worship, while some of their manners and customs were adopted by the upper classes who came into contact with them and by the converts to Christianity. Even these changes were not widespread and were limited mainly to the south-western area and the Jaffna Peninsula. Thus though they checked two important movements—South Indian and Muslim expansion in Ceylon—they did not bring about sufficient changes within the Island so as to make one consider their rule a turning-point in the internal history of Ceylon.

Did the Dutch who replaced them exercise a greater influence? Was their rule a turning-point in Ceylon history?

The Dutch undoubtedly ruled for a much longer period from 1658 to 1796. During these 138 years they were involved only in a few wars. They fought with the Kandyan kings first in order to stabilize their position in the territory they conquered from the Portuguese, and then towards the end of their occupation when their rule was threatened as a result of the King's negotiations with the British. Their object was to maintain peace as long as they could carry on their trade. They knew that war would not only hinder their trade but would also involve the Company in heavy expenses which the shareholders would not approve.



Nevertheless we have to remember that they ruled directly only over a small portion of Ceylon, an area much smaller than that which the Portuguese governed. In the south-west they ruled only over the coastal belt, extending for about twenty miles inland, from the Maha Oya to the Valave Ganga; in the north only over the Jaffna Peninsula and to a lesser extent over the District of Mannar. In the other parts they occupied only seaports such as Trincomalee, Kottiyar, Batticaloa and Kalpitiya in order to prevent foreigners from entering the Kandyan Kingdom and from taking a share in the trade of the Island.

Even in this limited area over which they ruled directly their influence was not widespread. They established a Dutch form of government only in the towns of Colombo, Galle and Jaffna. It was only in these that they adopted law courts such as the *Raad van Justitie, Civiel Raad* and the Fiscal's courts and enforced Roman-Dutch law. It is true they established *Landraads* in rural areas to settle the disputes of the Sinhalese and the Tamils relating to lands, contracts and debts. But these courts followed the customs of the Sinhalese and the Tamils and the judges included Sinhalese and Tamils who were conversant with these customs.

The rural areas were ruled by the Disavas who were stationed in Colombo, Jaffna and Matara. They dealt with the development of trade, the cultivation of land, the collection of revenue and the production of commercial crops. They interfered little with the customs of the people and their way of life apart from prohibiting religious practices of which they disapproved. They maintained the form of feudalism that came down from the times of the Sinhalese and the Tamil kings and made full use of it to get the services they needed. Far from meddling with the medieval system of caste, they rigidly observed it to get the cinnamon peeled and other essential services performed. Thus, as under the Portuguese, the Sinhalese and Tamil systems changed little. The system of government, the general economy and the social structure remained more or less as before.

What then did the Dutch do for the development of Ceylon ? In what ways did they modify or change the conditions that prevailed at the time they occupied the Maritime Provinces ?

The Dutch definitely helped the advancement of agriculture in their territory. They repaired irrigation works to help the

development of paddy cultivation. We have already referred to the constant warfare of the Portuguese who took to fighting as ducks to water. During these wars much of the country was devastated, especially the regions around Colombo, which were abandoned by those who inhabited them. In these the Dutch settled slaves from Tanjore and gave them their freedom if they cultivated their lands efficiently. Further, they encouraged the people to cultivate in their gardens commercial crops such as coffee, pepper, cardamoms, arecanuts and coconuts. They themselves opened cinnamon plantations instead of depending entirely on what grew wild.

Interested in trade and its development, the Dutch improved the means of communication in the south-western parts of the Island. Under the Sinhalese kings little was done in this direction as there was little trade and the economy of the villages was in the main self-sufficient. The roads constructed were limited mainly to towns. The canals were made primarily for irrigation purposes or to drain marshy lands. The Dutch on the other hand were greatly interested in trade and therefore in transport. They conveyed goods in vessels both by river and by sea along the coast. They opened up a road from Mannar to Matara, building bridges over streams and providing ferry boats across rivers. They improved the canal from Puttalam to Colombo, and in order to transport cinnamon during the south-west monsoon when it was difficult to ply vessels along the coast owing to the strong winds, they connected the Kelani Ganga with the Kalu Ganga by means of canals.

The Dutch raised the standard of building construction in the Island. They were great builders and they erected in Ceylon massive fortresses similar to those built in Europe in the seventeenth century. Like the fortresses, some of the houses they built can be seen even today. It is from them that we have borrowed the words *istoppuva* (verandah), *soldarè* (upstairs) and *tarappuva* (staircase). The need for buildings led them to develop certain crafts. It was they who established the carpentry industry in Moratuva and the tile industry in Kelaniya. The word *baas* used for a master-carpenter is also derived from Dutch.

Considerable changes in the social sphere too were carried out in the areas over which the Dutch ruled directly. The

Portuguese during wars destroyed Buddhist vihares and Hindu devales. The lands given as endowments to them they transferred to their own religious orders. Thus there was little of Buddhism and Hinduism left as forms of public worship within their territories. The Dutch persecuted at first the Roman Catholics and later the Muslims, the former mainly for political reasons and the latter on economic grounds. Though they helped the Kandyan kings to obtain Buddhist bhikkhus from Siam to restore the *upasampada*, they discouraged the revival of Buddhism in their own territory.

In this background the Dutch introduced the Protestant form of Christianity—the Dutch Reformed Church—and through it they exercised considerable influence over the people in the south-west and in the Jaffna Peninsula. The organization of the Dutch Reformed Church was different from that of the Roman Catholic Church and followed the form set up by Calvin in Geneva. It was governed by the clergy and the 'elders' elected by the congregation, and the ministers themselves were chosen in Holland by the congregations. Few Dutch clergymen came to Ceylon but the work of spreading Christianity was carried out through schools. The Dutch had a network of schools in their territory and education was imparted in them through the medium of Sinhalese and Tamil. Those who attended the schools learned not only the elements of Christianity but also reading, writing and arithmetic. The Dutch introduced the printing press into Ceylon and printed parts of the Bible in Sinhalese to be used in these schools. Thus a good percentage of the people in Dutch territory became literate.

The Dutch developed a system of government more thorough than any to which the people had been so far accustomed. We have already mentioned how the Portuguese prepared *Land Tombos* based on the *Lekam mitis* of the Sinhalese rulers. The Dutch not only compiled *Land Tombos* describing the lands and gardens of each village within Dutch territory and giving details of high and low lands, buildings, trees and taxes due, but also prepared *Hoofd* or *Head Tombos* of the proprietors of the holdings described in the *Land Tombos*. These described their age and occupation and the services and taxes due from each. They also kept *School Tombos* which gave a list of all persons baptized and married in each village. Further, they gave details of genealogy, dates of birth, marriage and death.

The Dutch lawcourts too were efficiently conducted in comparison with the courts in the Kandyan Kingdom. Though a Dutch Disava presided over the *Landraads* he made use of Sinhalese and Tamils conversant with custom to assist him in deciding cases. The Dutch codified the customs of the Tamils, the *Tesavalamai*, to enable them to settle cases more easily. Wherever Sinhalese and Tamil customs did not cover a case they applied Roman-Dutch law.

In addition to these two, other factors make Dutch rule important. The Dutch system of government was continued for some decades with little modification by the British and thus the Dutch influence lasted beyond the period of their rule. It is also to Dutch rule that we have to trace the beginnings of the modern period of Ceylon history.

When the British occupied the Maritime Provinces they did not alter the Dutch system very much. As far as the economy of the Island was concerned they continued the Dutch mercantilist system, and the British East India Company took over the trade of the Dutch Company. In the sphere of agriculture they continued to repair irrigation works and encourage paddy cultivation and the cultivation of commercial crops both in gardens and plantations. They made use of the canals built by the Dutch and continued the construction of roads. They too built fortresses and other buildings and gave work to carpenters and tile and brick manufacturers. The Protestant Missions that came to Ceylon after the British conquest began to work mainly in the areas where the Dutch Reformed Church had established itself, and thus built their churches on Dutch foundations. They themselves established schools on the lines of the Dutch as a means to spread Christianity, and established printing presses to publish books and journals. The British at first continued in many respects the Dutch system of government. They established in the towns law courts similar to those that existed in Dutch times. They adopted the Roman-Dutch law and gradually began to apply it throughout the Maritime Provinces. As the Dutch had done, they tried to rule the Sinhalese and the Tamils as well as the Muslims according to their ancient institutions and customs, and thus did not at first interfere much with either their form of feudalism or their system of caste.

We have already seen that the Portuguese checked the South Indian and Muslim expansion in Ceylon and laid Ceylon

open to Western influences. But the Portuguese themselves did not turn Ceylon in the modern direction. Those of us who have studied European history will remember that European historians divide the history of Europe into three periods; Ancient history, Medieval history, and Modern history. Ancient history deals mainly with Greek and Roman civilizations. Medieval history begins with the fall of the Roman Empire and ends round about 500 A.D. and Modern history begins with the break-up of feudalism and the Voyages of Discovery, the rise of the nation-state, the Renaissance, the Reformation and the use of the printing press.

The Voyages of Discovery are associated with the development of commerce and the break-up of feudalism. The Portuguese who came to Ceylon made some of these voyages of discovery. But the coming of the Portuguese to Ceylon did not lead to the break-up of feudalism or the development of commerce within the Island to any appreciable extent. Hence the Portuguese did not usher in the modern period of Ceylon history. It is to the Dutch that we owe the beginnings of the modern period though the changes they introduced affected the people of the Island only to a small extent. The Dutch too preserved the feudal system that existed in the Maritime Provinces, but with this difference. The people of Ceylon up to this time produced crops mainly for consumption, but the Dutch encouraged them to cultivate crops for sale and thereby helped the growth of trade within the Island. There was no Reformation in Buddhism or Hinduism as a result of Dutch rule in Ceylon, but the Dutch introduced the Reformed Church into Ceylon which cared little for religious ceremonial and stressed the education of the people so that they might read the Bible and learn the teachings of Christianity by themselves. This Church undoubtedly exercised some influence on the people, and it is also responsible for the establishment of the first printing press in Ceylon though it exerted little influence at this time. Though the Dutch system of law courts were limited to towns, the Dutch accustomed the people to the rule of law more than ever before. The codification of the Tamil *Tesavalamai* was a definite step in the modern direction.

Two other features of more recent times in Europe are the development of communications which followed the Industrial Revolution and the spread of elementary education by the

State. In both these respects the Dutch were in advance of many European nations, and they brought about similar changes in Ceylon. Even in England during the eighteenth century, elementary education was not so widespread as in the Dutch territory in Ceylon.

If we examine Ceylon as it is today, we shall find that the most advanced parts are those that were ruled directly by the Dutch, and at least a part of the credit for this must go to the Dutch. What happened in Dutch territory was that many persons became literate and got accustomed to the rule of law and the cultivation of commercial crops, and were able to benefit more quickly than others by the developments that took place under British rule.

But all these did not lead to any radical changes. On the whole the Dutch left alone the Sinhalese and Tamil systems. They encouraged the cultivation of commercial crops. They developed communications by the construction of canals. They improved the standard of building construction and gave an impetus to the development of crafts. They spread elementary education and accustomed people to the rule of law. But these changes were limited to the area over which they directly ruled and made little difference to the life of the people as a whole.

7

THE COLEBROOKE REFORMS

The Dividing line between the Past and the Present

IN the last chapter we saw that the Dutch exercised a greater influence over Ceylon than the Portuguese, but that influence was not so great as to lead to any important changes in the life of the people as a whole. Though the Dutch gave some impetus to trade it did not affect the economy of the people to such an extent as to alter to any considerable degree the form of 'feudalism' that existed in Ceylon. Though the development of communications helped the transport of cinnamon and other articles of trade in which the government was interested, they hardly touched the life of the people. The road which the Dutch made along the coast was nothing more than a sandy track. The peasants hardly used the roads as their agricultural activities were confined to their own villages. The influence of the Dutch Reformed Church was no doubt widespread but it could not have been deep as a large number of its members reverted to Buddhism and Hinduism after the British occupation of the Maritime Provinces. The education imparted in the schools, it is true, taught a new religion very different from Buddhism and Hinduism in its organization, doctrines and forms of worship, but it was conveyed to the people through the medium of Sinhalese and Tamil and not through a foreign tongue. Though the people got accustomed to some extent to the rule of law, they had not to adapt themselves to any new system of law as happened in British times. In fact the Dutch Period was more or less a continuation of the Sinhalese and Tamil rule.

In this chapter I propose to discuss the Colebrooke Reforms. In dealing with them we shall cover only a few years of Ceylon history and not long periods as in the last two chapters. But the space we devote to them is amply justified as they led to far-reaching changes in many aspects of the life of people, though the process is not yet complete, and is now receiving a set back in certain directions. In fact they are the most definite turning-point in the whole course of Ceylon history, and if we understand them clearly we shall be able to grasp

better the implications of the earlier period as well as the developments that followed them. These reforms led to radical changes in the economy of the country, in the system of civil or judicial administration, and in the structure of the Sinhalese and Tamil societies. They undermined the ancient Sinhalese and Tamil social system and ushered in a new era of progress and prosperity.

The Colebrooke Reforms put an end to *rajakariya* and paved the way for the development of commerce in the Island. *Rajakariya* was service rendered to the king, and in Ceylon those who held land rendered various services as determined by their caste. This system roughly corresponded to feudalism in Europe. In the Anuradhapura and the Polonnaruva Periods land on the whole seems to have been held without any definite form and service, but after the break-up of the Polonnaruva Kingdom almost all owners of land had to render some service. This system of *rajakariya* was modified by the early British governors, and on the eve of the Colebrooke Reforms the people had to pay a grain-tax in place of *rajakariya*. But yet they were bound to render services if demanded by the state for payment or for exemption from the grain-tax. In any case they had to work for a fortnight every year without payment repairing the village paths and bridges of their area. Governor Barnes utilized this fortnight's service for the construction of roads. For the same purpose he also exacted services in place of the grain-tax or for payment.

The chief objection to *rajakariya* in the eyes of Colebrooke was that it prevented mobility of labour. It bound the people to their land. They could not give it up and had to render services for holding them. They could not change their occupations and take to new types of work, such as crafts like carpentry, or business and trade, as their sole work. In short *rajakariya* hindered the transition from a feudal to a commercial capitalist society.

These reforms also did away with monopolies and other government activities in agriculture and trade. The monopolies were worked through *rajakariya* and when *rajakariya* was abolished they could not be maintained unless some other arrangements were made. Colebrooke did not want them continued in any form whatsoever as they had prevented free trade and private enterprise which he championed. In other

words, unless the monopolies were abolished there was little chance for people to take to trade and commerce.

A unified system of government was established for the whole Island. At the time there were three systems of administration in Ceylon: one in the Sinhalese districts of the Maritime Provinces, one in the Tamil districts of the Maritime Provinces, and the third in the Kandyan Provinces. Each of these areas was ruled in accordance with the peculiar customs of its inhabitants. The chief objection to this arrangement was that it checked the assimilation of the people of these areas. Now a single system was established for the whole country. The number of provinces in the three areas were reduced from sixteen to five. In fixing the boundaries of the new provinces the old divisions into Kandyan and Maritime Provinces or into Sinhalese and Tamil areas were ignored. The Kandyan Provinces in the lowlands were annexed to the Sinhalese and Tamil provinces on the coast. For instance the Nuvarakalaviya District became part of the Northern Province and Sabaragamuwa part of the Southern Province. Further, officials were recruited under a common system for work in Government offices of all the three areas.

This process of unification on a territorial basis was carried further into the judicial sphere. At this time there were two sets of courts in the Maritime Provinces, one under the supervision of the Supreme Court and the other under the control of the Governor. In the Kandyan Provinces a different organization existed. All courts there came under the final control of the Governor. Now a uniform system of courts and judicial procedure was adopted throughout the Island, and all courts were placed under the supervision of the Supreme Court.

The autocratic system of government was liberalized. At this time the Governor was all powerful. He was the chief military, executive and legislative authority in the Island. He was the chief judicial head in all civil matters. He was in addition, in the Kandyan Provinces, the final judicial authority in criminal matters. The right to *rajakariya* gave him further powers. He was able to compel people to work, regulate their wages, and employ them with or without payment according to caste or custom. The system of monopolies gave him indefinite control over their resources. He was further beyond the jurisdiction of the courts. He could imprison or banish

any person without trial or assigning any reason, and no court could question his right to take such action. It is true he was under the control of a Secretary of State in England. But at this time a letter from England to Ceylon or vice versa took four to six months and the Secretary of State was hardly in a position to control his actions.

On the recommendation of Colebrooke and his colleague Cameron the arbitrary powers exercised by the Governor to imprison or banish a person without trial were withdrawn. With the establishment of a common system of law courts under the supervision of the Supreme Court his judicial powers came to an end. With the abolition of *rajakariya* and monopolies he lost the powers he exercised through them over the people and their resources.

His powers were further reduced by the establishment of the Executive and Legislative Councils. Henceforth in matters of revenue and expenditure he had to make all decisions in consultation with the Executive Council. This Council, further expanded by the inclusion of other officials and six unofficials, was to be responsible for all legislation for which he alone was hitherto responsible.

Another important step taken was to adopt English as the language of Government and to establish schools where the medium of instruction was to be English. Today many may consider this an unwise change. But at that time no one appears to have raised any serious objection to it. In India the adoption of English as the language of Government was preceded by a controversy. The issue there was not whether Bengali or English,or Tamil or English should be the language of Government, but whether it should be Sanskrit or English. The study of English even by a small section, however, led to far-reaching results, similar in many ways to what happened subsequent to the study of Latin and Greek in Europe from the thirteenth century. The literary works of the Sinhalese and the Tamils at this time were mainly religious, and a large proportion of them emphasized the other-worldly view of life. Though early Buddhist teaching was rationalist in some respects and permitted people to exercise their own judgement, later writings had accepted the medieval social system with its ideas of status and its emphasis on authority. On the other hand English presented its students with the progressive

and liberalizing ideas of the civilization of modern Europe. Stirred by these, those who studied English began to think and act in new ways instead of merely following their ancient customs and the ways of their elders. They began to study the arts and sciences of Europe and learn what was happening in other parts of the world. The study of English history made them acquainted with new forms of government. They learnt how the British middle class gained control of the Government of England, and as time passed they began to demand a reform of the Legislative Council in order to gain control of the Government of Ceylon.

We referred to ideas of status in a medieval social system. The structure of Sinhalese and Tamil societies at the time was based on the institution of caste where the status of a person depended on his birth and not on wealth or on his intelligence. It was impossible for a man to change his caste, and as all occupations were associated with caste it was almost impossible for him to change his occupation too. We have already seen how the Dutch rigidly observed the caste system to get their work done. They were especially bent on securing a supply of cinnamon and saw to it that every man of the caste connected with the production of cinnamon kept to his occupation. Colebrooke and Cameron, who believed that all persons should be treated as equals in the sight of the law, were against the observance of caste distinctions, and on this ground too objected to *rajakariya* with which the caste system was closely interwoven. Colebrooke and Cameron even objected to any observance, in matters of government, of distinctions of race,and wanted all Europeans and Ceylonese treated alike. Hence they objected to reserving the Civil Service exclusively to the British and wanted Ceylonese admitted into it.

Thus we see that the Colebrooke Reforms altered radically the basis of Sinhalese and Tamil society. The abolition of *rajakariya* enabled them to dispose of their lands as they liked, migrate to another place if they so desired, and take to any new occupation if they considered it more suitable. The abolition of monopolies gave greater opportunities to people, thus freed, to take to trade and business. But these changes were far from adequate for the development of trade. In a country where each area was ruled according to its own customs and had different courts for each set of people, there

could not be any free movement, and under such conditions trade could not thrive. But the unified system of administration and the common system of law courts removed those obstacles. By the withdrawal of the judicial powers of the Governor and by placing all courts under the supervision of the Supreme Court, the judiciary was separated from the executive and was given the freedom to act independently of the executive. By the establishment of the Legislative Council, the unofficials were in a position to criticize government proposals for legislation if they went contrary to their interests. Further by making the rule of law effective throughout the country, traders and businessmen could always appeal to the courts against persons who broke their contracts or oppressed them. Trade thus regained a certain freedom of action which did not exist under the old form of government.

Thus we see that Colebrooke and Cameron realized how, if any change in Ceylon was to be effective, it was not sufficient to carry out a reform in one direction alone, but that the whole social system in all its aspects had to undergo a change. We have seen that the Portuguese and the Dutch brought about some changes especially in the social sphere but they did not seriously affect the life of the people as a whole. The Portuguese for instance introduced the Roman Catholic form of Christianity. It did not recognize caste, but it did not break up the caste system as the Portuguese did not make a corresponding change in the economy of the country. The Dutch Reformed Church too failed to weaken it as the Dutch adhered even more rigidly to caste for economic reasons. Colebrooke and Cameron on the other hand attacked the Sinhalese and Tamil social systems from all angles. By abolishing *rajakariya* they not only freed people from serfdom but removed the legal sanction for caste. Each caste was hitherto associated with a definite occupation but now any one had the right to change his form of work. The abolition of *rajakariya* also enabled the establishment of a unified form of administration as well as a common system of law courts. It also made possible the treatment of all persons as equal in the sight of the law. Further Colebrooke and Cameron realized that if the people were to benefit by the changes that were being introduced, they had also to accept a new attitude towards life. This was not possible unless they studied English and imbibed the new ideas that came from the West.

The Colebrooke Reforms are historically important as they mark the transition in Ceylon from the medieval to the modern. The abolition of *rajakariya* as stated already, corresponds to the break-up of feudalism, and the abolition of monopolies made possible the development of commerce. The establishment of a unified form of government is similar to the developments that created nation-states in Europe. The establishment of the rule of law and the use of the printing press introduced by the Dutch became effective only as a result of other changes produced by the Colebrooke Reforms. In Europe the changes from medieval to modern was a natural process resulting from a series of events which covered more than three centuries. The Colebrooke Reforms were a series of administrative reforms, each interconnected with the others, that produced similar results. The normal process is for economic changes to lead to social changes and social changes to lead to institutional changes. In this case the process is almost reversed. Institutional changes led to economic and social changes, more far-reaching than any that had been experienced in Ceylon before. The Colebrooke Reforms are thus a dividing line in Ceylon history. From them we can look back to the past, to the ancient Sinhalese and Tamil system. From them we can also look forward to the development of modern Ceylon.

8

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS AFTER THE COLEBROORE REFORMS

IN the last chapter we saw how the Colebrooke Reforms changed the legal basis of the economic,social and administrative system, of Ceylon. We noted how by the abolition of *rajckariya* people ceased to be bound to the land and were free to take to any new occupation they liked. This meant that no man was any longer bound to keep to the occupation which his caste determined. Besides, all persons were recognized as equal in the sight of the law and no one because of his birth could be punished in future by the courts in a way different from others. The abolition of monopolies made it possible for men thus freed to take to trade if they so desired, while the adoption of a unified system of administration for the whole Island with a common system of law courts made it easier for traders to carry on their activities with people in different parts of the Island. The liberalized system of government helped traders further as it enabled them to inform the Government through their representatives of the obstacles that hindered their work. Finally if they took to the study of English they were in a position to understand the implications of the changes in the modern direction and benefit by the new openings for employment which the new system created. If any one wanted to take to the cultivation of commercial crops he could buy crown land at a nominal rate, and if he opened up plantations near Kandy or along the Kandy road he was able to convey his produce at a cheap rate to Colombo. For at this time, for £1 a load of 1200 lbs. of coffee could be conveyed by road from Kandy to Colombo.

But a sudden change did not take place owing to the general conditions that existed in Ceylon on the eve of the Colebrooke Reforms. Ceylon at that time was a land of villages. There were hardly any towns besides Colombo, Galle and Jaffna. The villages usually lay in valleys where water was available for paddy cultivation. Apart from land bordering on the paddy fields and the huts in which people lived, the rest of

the area was generally covered with jungle. In the mountainous parts of the Wet Zone most land covered by tea and rubber today were dense forests. There were a few plantations but these were limited mainly to the Peradeniya and Gampola areas. The villages on the whole were self-contained and self-sufficient. The people produced their own food and their other wants were few. There were few roads to interfere with their isolation. People used footpaths for travelling and few persons went far away from their homes unless they went on a pilgrimage to a distant shrine.

In these areas there were only three classes of people—chiefs, bhikkhus, and peasants who included some craftsmen. The chiefs possessed some wealth as they owned *nindagam* and the vihares in the Kandyan provinces were similarly endowed with land. But the peasants and craftsmen were poor. The only area which showed some difference was the south-western part. There cinnamon grew wild as well as in a few plantations and gardens. There were also a few other plantations of coffee, cotton, sugar, indigo, opium, etc., while coffee, pepper, cardamoms and other spices were also grown in gardens. In addition to these, large areas along the coastal belt were cultivated with coconuts. There was little trade, and it was confined mainly to Colombo and the region around. But even in this area there were hardly any Ceylonese with sufficient capital to start trade on a big scale or open up plantations and wait for years to benefit from the investment.

There were also few roads in this region. The chief of these was the Colombo-Kandy Road. From this another branched off at Ambepussa and went as far as Dambulla, while Kandy was connected with Dambulla via Matale and with Kurunegala via Galagedara. There was also the coast road from Chilaw to Matara which was made in Dutch times. All these were rough clearings through forests or jungle and the approaches to rivers and streams were sloped so as to enable carts to cross them in ferry boats. The only exceptions were the Colombo-Kandy Road and the Ambepussa-Kurunegala Road where bridges spanned the rivers and streams. These roads were not constructed for economic reasons but to satisfy military needs, and helped the development of plantations only incidentally.

The Colebrooke Reforms themselves were more negative than positive. They mainly removed obstacles that hindered

progress and did little to disturb the life of the people. Thus in 1834 Government sold only about fifty acres of crown land and there was no opening up of plantations. There was also no expansion of either the internal or the foreign trade. History teaches us the inevitability of gradualness. However radical the reforms produced by the recommendations of Colebrooke and Cameron were, it was not easy to change the ways of a conservative and medieval people or their attitude to life. They had to be instilled with new ideas and shown the possibilities that lay in their path. The study of English progressed very slowly and few even among those who took to it studied it sufficiently to grasp the implications of these radical changes.

The economic situation in Ceylon, however, began to change after about five years. It happened as a result not of internal but external causes. The authors of the change were not Ceylonese but foreigners. The demand for coffee in Europe suddenly increased. Production in the West Indies became disorganized owing to the liberation of the slaves and the planters could not satisfy the British demand. In 1835 the Imperial Government helped Ceylon further by reducing the import duty on Ceylon coffee to the same level as that of West Indian coffee. About the same time Robert Tytler, who had studied the methods of coffee cultivation in Jamaica, showed how coffee could be made a paying concern in Ceylon. The British officials in Ceylon, who alone had capital, rushed to grow coffee. So did capitalists in India and Britain. The sales of crown lands went up and the coffee industry began immediately. Within ten years 367 plantations were opened up and about Rs. 30,000,000 was invested in the enterprise.

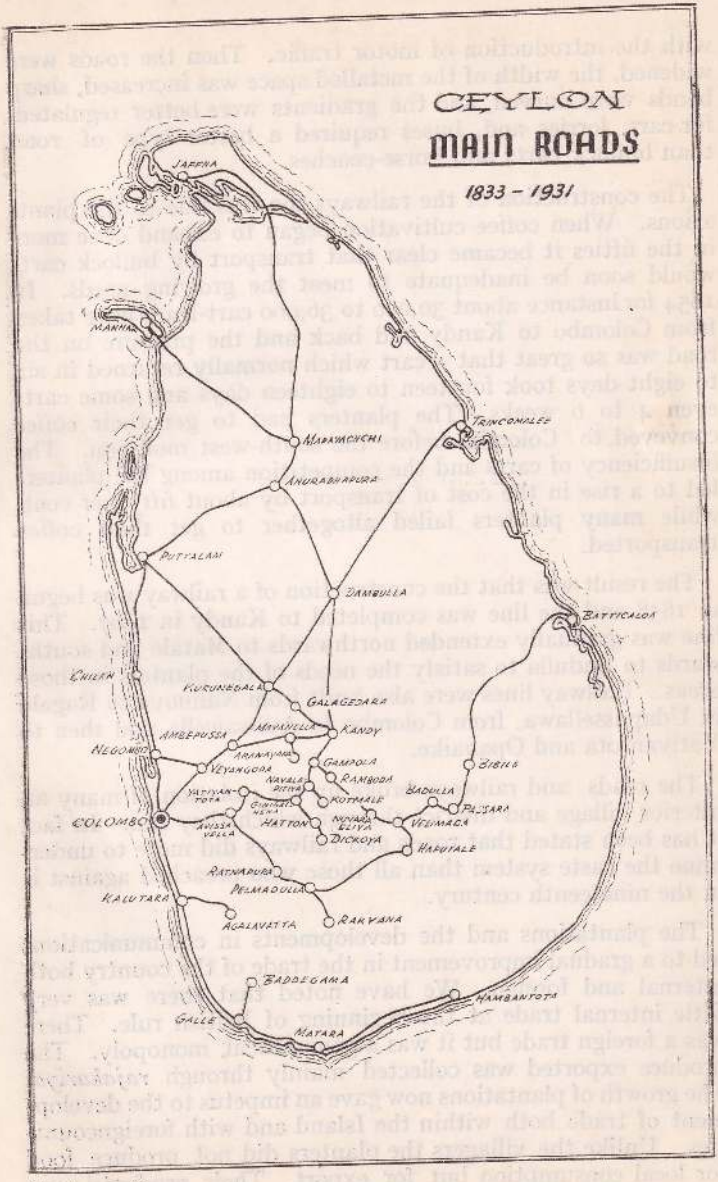
I shall not deal here with the coffee crash in 1847, the revival of the industry in the fifties and its expansion till about 1880, when as result of a pest it declined and ceased to be of any further importance. I shall not also deal with the attempts to plant cinchona and how finally tea took the place of coffee. Nor shall I give an account of the establishment of the rubber and coconut industries and their expansion. What is important to note is that as a result of the development of the plantations the economy of Ceylon, which up to the time of the Colebrooke Reforms was dominantly agrarian, now became dominantly commercial and capitalist. Ceylon now

began to produce crops more for sale in foreign countries than for local consumption.

The opening up of plantations in turn led to the development of communications. Cordiner points out that at the beginning of British rule there were no roads in the strict sense of the word. Wheeled carriages were used only in the neighbourhood of the larger European settlements situated on the sea coast. Such carriages were unknown in Kandy, and when the Kandyan ambassadors were conveyed in one of these in Colombo they insisted on the doors being kept open during the journey lest they be mistaken for prisoners ! Elsewhere travelling was done by foot. The richer folk rode on horseback or were carried in palanquins. Transport was possible mainly by river or canal and sea. The British ambassador and his party in 1803 took a month to reach Kandy. He was able to do a greater part of the return journey by boat from Ruanvalla and was thus able to complete it in about fifteen days. We have already noted that the first roads in the upcountry were built for military reasons. Sir Wilmot Horton extended these roads for administrative purposes. He connected Colombo with the remaining chief towns of the provinces, Jaffna and Trincomalee, as well as with Arippo, Nuwara Eliya and Badulla.

After 1837 the chief stimulus to the development of roads came from the plantations. The planters needed roads to send their produce to Colombo as well as to get foodstuffs and other supplies from there. In the forties a number of roads were built in the Western Province and in the district of Sabaragamuwa. In the third quarter of the nineteenth century the Matale, Kandy, Hatton, Badulla and Galle districts were opened up by roads. In the last quarter roads were also built in the Dimbula, Nuwara Eliya, Uda Pussellawa, Kalutara and Ratnapura districts.

Road construction went through various phases to meet the requirements of the plantations. As stated already, the early roads were mainly forest clearings and had no bridges or culverts. In 1841 the Colombo-Kandy Road was metalled. It created a revolution in transport as a cart which took 30 to 40 days for a return journey between Colombo and Kandy now took six to eight days. Roads continued to be metalled after this, but their next substantial improvement came only



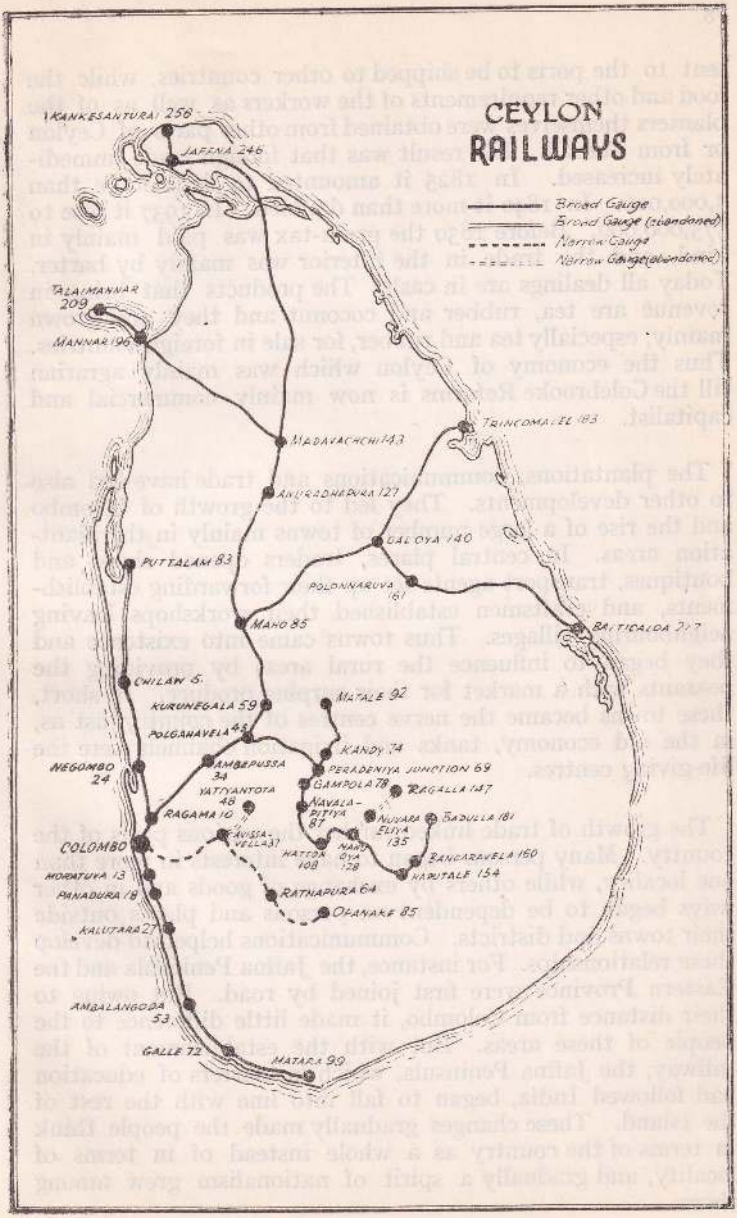
with the introduction of motor traffic. Then the roads were widened, the width of the metalled space was increased, sharp bends were curved, and the gradients were better regulated, for cars, lorries and, buses required a better type of road than bullock carts and horse-coaches.

The construction of the railways too was due to the plantations. When coffee cultivation began to expand once more in the fifties it became clear that transport by bullock carts would soon be inadequate to meet the growing needs. In 1854 for instance about 30,000 to 36,000 cart-loads were taken from Colombo to Kandy and back and the pressure on the road was so great that a cart which normally returned in six to eight days took fourteen to eighteen days and some carts even 4 to 6 weeks. The planters had to get their coffee conveyed to Colombo before the south-west monsoon. The insufficiency of carts and the competition among the planters led to a rise in the cost of transport by about fifty per cent, while many planters failed altogether to get their coffee transported.

The result was that the construction of a railway was begun in 1858 and the line was completed to Kandy in 1867. This line was gradually extended northwards to Matale and southwards to Badulla to satisfy the needs of the planters in those areas. Railway lines were also built from Nanuoya to Ragala in Udapussellawa, from Colombo to Avissawella and then to Yatiyantota and Opanaike.

The roads and railways broke up the isolation of many an interior village and district through which they ran. In fact it has been stated that roads and railways did more to undermine the caste system than all those who preached against it in the nineteenth century.

The plantations and the developments in communications led to a gradual improvement in the trade of the country both internal and foreign. We have noted that there was very little internal trade at the beginning of British rule. There was a foreign trade but it was a government monopoly. The produce exported was collected mainly through *rajakariya*. The growth of plantations now gave an impetus to the development of trade both within the Island and with foreigncountries. Unlike the villagers the planters did not produce food for local consumption but for export. Their products were



sent to the ports to be shipped to other countries, while the food and other requirements of the workers as well as of the planters themselves were obtained from other parts of Ceylon or from abroad. The result was that foreign trade immediately increased. In 1825 it amounted to little more than 5,000,000. In 1840 it more than doubled. In 1937 it rose to 575,000,000. Before 1830 the grain-tax was paid mainly in kind, and the trade in the interior was mainly by barter. Today all dealings are in cash. The products that bring in revenue are tea, rubber and coconut and they are grown mainly, especially tea and rubber, for sale in foreign countries. Thus the economy of Ceylon which was mainly agrarian till the Colebrooke Reforms is now mainly commercial and capitalist.

The plantations, communications and trade have led also to other developments. They led to the growth of Colombo and the rise of a large number of towns mainly in the plantation areas. In central places, traders opened shops and boutiques, transport agents set up their forwarding establishments, and craftsmen established their workshops leaving neighbouring villages. Thus towns came into existence and they began to influence the rural areas by providing the peasants with a market for their surplus produce. In short, these towns became the nerve centres of the country just as, in the old economy, tanks and irrigation channels were the life-giving centres.

The growth of trade linked further the various parts of the country. Many persons began to have interests in more than one locality, while others by exchange of goods and in other ways began to be dependent on persons and places outside their towns and districts. Communications helped to develop these relationships. For instance, the Jaffna Peninsula and the Eastern Province were first joined by road. But owing to their distance from Colombo, it made little difference to the people of these areas. But with the establishment of the railway, the Jaffna Peninsula, which in matters of education had followed India, began to fall into line with the rest of the Island. These changes gradually made the people think in terms of the country as a whole instead of in terms of locality, and gradually a spirit of nationalism grew among them.

The plantations, communications and trade also led to developments in the administrative system. They led to the establishment of the Department of the Surveyor General, the Public Works Department, the Postal Department, Harbour and Customs Departments and the Agricultural Department. This naturally increased the number of white-collar workers and helped to swell the growing middle class.

The establishment of plantations led to the immigration of Europeans and Indians into the Island. The Europeans found it profitable to exploit the resources of the country and in turn helped to develop it. The result is that about half the tea and rubber estates are still owned by them. These planters were in turn followed by European business men who took over a part of the trade. The Indian labourer who in his own country had little chance of eking out an existence found it profitable to come to Ceylon, and was in turn followed by Indian traders. The Indian labourer has no doubt helped to enrich the country, but he has also created an Indian problem in Ceylon.

Of the people of the country, those who benefited most by the growth of plantations were the low-country Sinhalese. They were fortunate, since they had advanced under Dutch rule. They had benefited by the education the Dutch had provided. They had learned from the Dutch crafts like carpentry and house-building to satisfy modern requirements. They had got accustomed to the rule of law which the Dutch had tried to introduce into the country. They now took contracts to open up the country for plantations. They built bungalows and coffee mills for the planters. They took up the work of transport using bullock carts. They started to trade in the new towns that arose as a result of the establishment of plantations. With the capital thus accumulated they themselves took to coffee planting. After the coffee crash in 1847 they exported half the coffee sent out from Ceylon. Even in 1869 when coffee cultivation was at its height, one-fourth of the coffee exported was theirs. It is true that when coffee failed, these people did not take to tea cultivation. Tea required more capital and greater skill in organization. But they took to coconut planting almost exclusively and opened up almost half the rubber plantations.

Thus the establishment of plantations and railways led to a revolution in the economic sphere. The people of Ceylon

began to change from an agrarian way of life to a commercial one. This helped the expansion of the middle class by the addition of transport agents, contractors, traders and planters. It led to the growth of towns, and the general advancement of a section of the people in the south western seaboard, in the Jaffna Peninsula, and in the towns of the other areas.

9

THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BRITISH PERIOD

IN the last chapter we dealt with the revolutionary changes that took place in the economy of the country. We dealt with the growth of plantations and how they contributed to the development of the roads and the railway, and how both these led to the development of trade within the Island and with foreign countries. We noted further, how all these led to the growth of towns and the further unification of the country. We learnt how these changes altered the social system by the growth of a middle class, and how among them a sense of nationality arose as they had to think in terms of the Island as a whole and not in terms of their particular locality.

In this chapter we shall deal with the administrative and constitutional changes that took place in the British Period. We shall see how the personal form of government through a hierarchy of chiefs that came down from ancient times changed into a bureaucracy which was responsible to the Governor and ultimately to the Secretary of State and Parliament and the British people. We shall see further how this system came to be modified and the bureaucracy finally became responsible to the people of this country. In other words we shall see how the British autocratic system of government which superseded a similar Dutch system and a Kandyan despotic system gave way gradually into a parliamentary democracy.

When the British conquered this Island the government of the country was mainly personal and was carried on chiefly with the aid of a hierarchy of chiefs. In the absence of communications the chiefs came under little control and they acted like petty kings in their districts. They were not paid salaries but were given *nindagam* over the people of which they had full control. There were no codes of law to guide them and there were few administrative regulations which they had to obey. They exercised civil and criminal jurisdiction and were all-powerful if they were in favour with their

superiors. The people, imbued as they were with ideas of caste, accepted their rule as the right form of government.

The Portuguese and the Dutch did not interfere with this system. The Dutch realized the danger of leaving such power to chiefs, but all that they did was to appoint Dutchmen to the highest posts. The British began very early to curtail the power of the chiefs. They deprived them of their *nindagam* for which the people were beholden to them, and made them salaried servants. Their judicial duties were transferred to magistrates. Since then the chiefs have gradually lost their power and in 1938 their places began to be taken by Divisional Revenue Officers. What is left of this system today are the village chiefs who still exercise considerable influence in the interior districts.

Along with these attempts to reduce the power of the chiefs the British tried to make the Civil Service efficient so that it could effectively supervise the work of the chiefs. They extended and improved the postal system to enable the officials at headquarters to keep in touch with those in the outstations. Further, detailed instructions were issued to all officials with regard to the way in which they were to carry on their duties. We have already referred to the administrative reforms carried out as a result of the Colebrooke Reforms. We have seen how the system of administration was unified both in the civil and the judicial sphere, and how an attempt was made to treat people on a territorial rather than on a communal basis.

These changes were carried further in the following decades. An attempt was made as far as possible to have separate officers for the judicial services. Roman-Dutch Law was increasingly applied in the Maritime Provinces and introduced into the Kandyan Provinces. In matters of commerce British law was adopted. The personal form of government came to be modified in other ways. At first most of the work of government was directed by Government Agents and their assistants, but gradually much of their work was taken over by technical officers. We have already referred to the establishment of a number of government departments. In addition to these a number of other departments were set up as the need arose.

With the development of communications the control from the centre increased. There was greater supervision of the

officers in distant districts and the Governor's responsibility for the entire government was better realized. Though the Colebrooke Reforms reduced the powers of the Governor, with the growth of the bureaucracy and the development of communications his power once more increased, though after a time the control of the Secretary of State over him in turn became greater. But the control of the Governor and the Secretary of State thus built up was again gradually reduced and brought to an end. We have seen that on the recommendation of Colebrooke a Legislative Council was established. It was formed with nine officials, and six unofficials. The unofficials consisted of three Europeans, a Burgher, a Sinhalese and a Tamil. The Europeans were chosen from among the merchants, the Ceylonese from among the upper classes. But this Council was merely an appendage to the executive, and had no power of its own. The unofficials were included merely for purposes of consultation in making laws, and they were in a permanent minority. They owed their position ultimately to the Governor who nominated them and thus they had little power.

We have seen how the economy of Ceylon came to be radically altered, and a highly organized system of bureaucratic government came to be established in the nineteenth century. But the constitution of the Legislative Council did not undergo a corresponding change. Not that there was no demand for a reform of its constitution. The European unofficials wanted it changed in order to gain wider powers for the unofficials and thereby satisfy their own needs. The only result was that the Legislative Council gained some financial control in 1839, 1867 and 1903; but even this did not help much as the Council had an official majority.

In the twentieth century the demand for a reform of the Legislative Council came from a new quarter—the Ceylonese middle class. Like the coming of the Europeans, the middle class too, as we have seen arose as a result of British rule. We have already noted how this new class came into existence. Towards the end of the nineteenth century they had increased in numbers and had become powerful and influential. They found the Europeans holding all the high posts in government and together with the planters and merchants more or less forming a separate caste. In the rural areas, the members of the old ruling families more or less governed the people. This

was in spite of the Colebrooke Reforms of 1833 which made all people equal in the sight of the law irrespective of their race and caste. The middle class was naturally dissatisfied with its lot, and demanded a reform of the Legislative Council as the British middle class had done in 1832 in their own country. It is true that the Ceylonese were not a nation and the society was multi-communal. But the territorial form of administration, roads and railways, and the common English language which was studied by the middle classes of all the communities linked them sufficiently and developed a national spirit to unite them against the British government.

A definite demand for a reform of the Legislative Council was made about 1908. But the middle class did not ask for self-government or even representative government. They wanted far less. The problems of government were now more economic and geographical, and less racial, and the administration for some time had been conducted on a territorial basis. Hence they demanded that territorial representation should replace communal representation. In order to make the members responsible to the people the demand was that election should be substituted for nomination. It was further requested that the middle class should be given the franchise. The new council was to consist of 13 officials and 12 unofficials, 7 for the provinces, 2 for Colombo, 2 for Europeans and 2 for the minorities. It was demanded further that Ceylonese should be associated with the administration and that the Executive Council should consist of one or two Ceylonese.

This demand was undoubtedly a step in the direction of parliamentary government. But the British at this time did not think it possible to establish even the beginnings of parliamentary government in Ceylon. Parliamentary government in their opinion required a homogeneous society, but the Ceylonese were not a nation. They were divided racially and even the middle class did not form a separate community. The demand for reform came from the English-educated middle class of the south-western sea board and the Jaffna Peninsula. As the new Ceylonese middle class, consisting of Sinhalese, Tamils, Kandyans, and Muslims, had no separate representation in the Council, the British gave them a seat called the Educated Ceylonese seat. They also gave the Low-country Sinhalese and the Tamils an additional nominated seat each. The demand for the right of election was

conceded to the Europeans, Burghers, and the Educated-Ceylonese. Thus four members no longer derived their position from the Governor but from their electorates and thus could act independently of the Government. The new council of eleven officials and ten unofficials came into existence in 1912, but yet it continued to be nothing more than an appendage of the executive.

Five years later, the middle class again pressed for reforms This time they were more hopeful, as the British, giving up their old views that a parliamentary system demanded a homogeneous society agreed to take the first step in giving parliamentary institutions to India in the provincial sphere. The Ceylon National Congress demanded semi-responsible government. It asked for a Council of fifty members, 40 territorially elected, and 10 nominated officials and unofficials. It asked for the retention of the control of the budget, though the Council would have an unofficial majority. It also asked for an elected Speaker, a wide male franchise and a restricted female franchise, and the inclusion of unofficials in the Executive Council with portfolios, two of whom were to be elected members. In other words, they wanted a British and Ceylonese executive to reflect the wishes of the Council and not of the Governor and the Secretary of State only. The territorially elected members would have dominated the Council, and the two elected members admitted to the Executive Council and who held portfolios would be responsible more to the Council than to the Governor. The British could have agreed to this demand only if they were willing to hand over the government of Ceylon to the Ceylonese within a short period of time.

But the British were not prepared to change the basis of the existing system of government. They wanted to leave unfettered the power of the Governor. They granted therefore a Council with 23 unofficials and 14 officials. Apparently, it was a grant of representative government. But a closer examination of the unofficial representation revealed that the British executive would still be in power. Of the 23 unofficials, 16 were to be elected. Of these 11 were to be territorially elected, and they were expected to be Sinhalese and Tamils. Three were expected to be Europeans while the seven others were to be nominated. In a crisis it was expected that the fourteen officials would be supported by the Europeans and the seven nominated members who owed their

seats to the Governor. In other words, the Government was in a position to influence 24 votes in a Council of 37.

The Ceylon National Congress refused to work the reforms and decided not to co-operate with the Government as the new constitution denied even the beginnings of self-government. The Governor thereupon agreed, if the Congress co-operated, to give a further instalment of reforms based on the recommendations of the new Council. The Congress on this assurance co-operated and the new Council came into existence in 1920.

After much discussion in the Council the next set of reforms was granted in 1924. The new Council was to consist of 49 members, 23 territorially elected members, 16 for Sinhalese areas and 7 for Tamil, 11 communally elected members, 3 for Europeans, 2 for Burghers, 1 for Ceylon Tamils of the Western Province, 3 for Muslims and 2 for Indians, and 3 nominated unofficials and 12 officials. Ceylon thus gained representative government. But the British Government probably expected that the Executive would be able to carry on the Government making itself responsible to the Governor as the Sinhalese and the Tamils who were anxious to secure self-government were still a minority in the Council. The Secretary of State appears to have believed that, the owing to the communal divisions in the country, minority members though elected, would support the British executive in all vital matters. But the Reforms of 1924 belied these expectations. Since the problems of Ceylon were more economic and geographical than racial, the communally elected members did not generally vote on communal lines. Further, being responsible to their electorates and not to the Governor for their seats they did not necessarily support the Government. Thus the British executive found it difficult to make itself responsible to the Governor and the Secretary of State. The result was the appointment of the Donoughmore Commission to make fresh proposals for the reform of the Legislative Council. The Commissioners considered the defects of the Constitution of 1924 as those of representative government, and decided to place Ceylon on the path of self-government by recommending the adoption of a form of semi-responsible government.

The Donoughmore Constitution came into existence in 1931. Every man and woman over 21 was granted the franchise. The State Council consisted of 50 elected and 8 nominated members. These were divided into Executive Committees

and each Committee chose its chairman. These seven chairmen with the three Officers of State formed the Board of Ministers.

You will have noticed that the British when granting these reforms changed from the attitude to which they had clung earlier that a parliamentary form of government required a homogeneous community. Nevertheless they eliminated communal representation which divided communities instead of welding them. In the last Council there were 11 communally elected members. In the new Constitution there were only 8 nominated seats for them. In adopting the Executive Committee system they deviated from the parliamentary form of government but they felt they had no alternative as there was no party system in Ceylon. But the most revolutionary step they took was the grant of adult franchise, for the number of voters went up from about two lakhs to about one and half millions. In addition to a homogeneous society, what is necessary for a democratic form of government is a literate if not an educated electorate. But the Donoughmore Commissioners took the risk of granting to the mass of the people, not by stages but at one step, a right which they did not demand.

From the time the Donoughmore Constitution was established demands were made for its modification. The chief criticisms were directed against the Committee system, the curtailment of the financial powers of the State Council and the abolition of communal electorates. But the Secretary of State refused to yield to their demands. In 1942 the State Council asked for Dominion status, and in 1944 the Imperial Government appointed the Soulbury Commission to go into the question of the reform of the Constitution. The Commission on the whole supported the scheme put forward by the Board of Ministers. They refused to yield to the demands for restricting the franchise or for restoring communal electorates. But they suggested the delimitation of electorates so as to help the minorities to secure more seats. They wanted the substitution of the Executive Committee system by the Cabinet system. They further recommended the establishment of a second chamber. The new constitution came into existence but it still failed to grant Dominion status. But on the insistence of the late Mr. D. S. Senanayake, Ceylon was granted full responsible government in 1948, and thus ended British rule over Ceylon.

10

DIVISIONS IN CEYLON HISTORY*

IS 1505, the year in which the Portuguese first came to this Island, a turning-point in Ceylon history? Does this date divide the history of Ceylon into two equally important sections?

It is almost unthinkable that today any person would answer the first question in the negative. It is also unlikely that anyone would contest the second. They would far sooner reject the legend of Vijaya as a myth than suggest another dividing line, or accept the that the period before 1505 should be given less space than the period after that date.

But considering the advances made in the knowledge of Ceylon history during this century, need we any longer regard 1505 as a dividing line? This division was based on a judgment made on the evidence we had on Ceylon history and the ideas of history held some decades ago. In fact, the dividing lines in Ceylon history, according to evidence available today, have to be sought elsewhere, and the extent of the space that should be allotted to the different periods has to be re-examined from fresh angles.

The acceptance of 1505 as the dividing line in Ceylon history is understandable. What would surprise us would be the rejection of it. Our history syllabuses in schools and in the University have accepted this division. The Ceylon history syllabus in Form II as well as for the S.S.C. examination begins with 1505. One of the two papers in Ceylon history at the University Entrance Examination ends and the other begins with this date.

Most history books written so far take a similar view. The Portuguese period invariably begins with the year 1505 and it is generally considered also as the date in which the Sinhalese period ends. Some even consider this date as ushering in the modern period of Ceylon history. Such persons at times dump the so-called Portuguese, Dutch and British periods together as of the same character and look upon them as the

*13th December, 1956.

Western Period of Ceylon history. Under such circumstances it is not surprising that many accept 1505 as the dividing line as if it were no less than an axiom.

The importance attached to the year 1505 is also due to another reason. Till about a quarter of a century ago, most people thought of history as political or dynastic history, and did not pay the attention that is given today to administrative, economic, social and cultural developments. These aspects were considered subsidiary, and many historians relegated them to a chapter at the end of the book or to a section at the end of each chapter. They looked upon history as a record of the achievements of the rulers and not of the people. Hence, from this point of view, they considered the period up to 1505 as a record of the achievements of the Sinhalese rulers, and the period after 1505 as an account of the activities of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British.

Was then the year 1505 of no real significance in the history of Ceylon? Has not the accidental arrival of Lourenzo de Almeida in Ceylon in 1505, and the treaty he made with the King of Kotte, any important bearing on later developments?

The chief result of the arrival of the Portuguese in Ceylon was that South Indian expansion ceased to threaten this Island, and the growing Muslim influence received a set back from which it never recovered. Had the Portuguese not come to this Island, Ceylon might have become a portion of South India or, like Java, come under the sway of the Muslims.

But the importance of this event, which undoubtedly opened Ceylon to Western influences, lies in the fact that it put an end to the Indian Period of Ceylon history and not to the Sinhalese Period or to Sinhalese and Tamil achievements. In 1505, there were in Ceylon three kingdoms: the Jaffna Kingdom which came into existence about 1235, the Kotte Kingdom which may be traced back to about 1415, and the Kandyan Kingdom which came into existence towards the end of the fifteenth century. Sinhalese kings ruled in the Kotte Kingdom till 1597, and the Tamil kings ruled over their territory till 1620, though both came under Portuguese influence somewhat earlier. The Kandyan Kingdom maintained its independence till 1815. Hence 1597 or 1620 or 1815 is a more suitable date than 1505 for a dividing line in Ceylon history.

Further, the rule of the Portuguese and the Dutch was not of such significance as to make us conclude that they ushered in new eras in Ceylon history. They did not bring about any radical changes in our administrative, economic and social systems. It is little realized that the Portuguese ruled directly only over a section of Ceylon. That section covered roughly the present North-Western, the Western, the Southern and the Sabaragamuva Provinces, the Jaffna Peninsula and a part of the Northern Province. Even over these regions they did not rule for long. Over the area of the Kotte Kingdom they ruled directly for only about sixty years, and over the territory covered by the Jaffna Kingdom for less than forty years.

The Dutch, though they governed for nearly one hundred and forty years, for most of the time ruled directly over a much smaller area. It consisted roughly of parts of the Western and the Southern Provinces, the Jaffna Peninsula and part of the district of Mannar. In short, the greater part of Ceylon at this time was ruled by independent Kandyan kings and the chiefs of the Vanni, and the oft-repeated statement that Ceylon suffered for four and a half centuries under foreign domination is undoubtedly open to question.

Apart from the fact that the Portuguese and the Dutch ruled only over a limited area, they did not alter very much the Sinhalese and the Tamil way of life even within that restricted area. They governed these regions according to the ancient customs of the people. They made no serious attempt, as it is imagined by some, to spread their languages either with the object of civilizing the people of Ceylon or to open the windows of the world to them. They did not make any important change in the Sinhalese system of administration. They retained in most respects the Sinhalese and Tamil system of economy. They utilized the caste system for their own purposes.

The only important changes they effected were through the introduction of the Roman Catholic and Protestant forms of Christianity within the restricted areas they ruled, and by their opposition to Hinduism and Buddhism within the same regions. In fact, even the British, up to 1832, roughly continued the Dutch system and ruled the people of Ceylon in accordance with their own institutions and customs, dealing

with them in their own languages, Sinhalese and Tamil, but giving them freedom to worship any religion they liked.

Another assumption on the part of some who take 1505 as the dividing line is that the decline of Ceylon started with Portuguese rule. Such a view cannot be upheld by any stretch of imagination. Indeed, even the limited success of the Portuguese and the Dutch in their attempts to occupy Ceylon was due to the fact that the decline of Ceylon had begun long before the arrival of the Westerners to this Island. The vigorous attempts made by Parakramabahu II in the thirteenth century and by Parakramabahu VI in the fifteenth century had failed altogether to check the disintegration. Had Ceylon been under a single monarch in the sixteenth century as in the days of Parakramabahu the Great, the course of Ceylon history might not have taken this turn. It is more likely, in that case, that the Portuguese and the Dutch would merely have formed alliances with the Sinhalese and the Tamil kings and come to trade agreements with them. Hence if we need a dividing line in Ceylon history, we shall have to go some centuries back or some centuries forward from 1505, treating the arrival of the Portuguese as a mere episode in the internal history of the Island.

The first important dividing line in Ceylon history is at the beginning of the thirteenth century. If an exact date is required, it may be placed about 1235 when Magha of Kalinga appears to have established a Tamil Kingdom in the north of Ceylon. After the death of Parakramabahu the Great, there was a civil war in Ceylon, a war of succession, which lasted nearly fifty years. During this time as a part of war strategy the tanks were breached, and the whole irrigation system, which reached its climax in the time of Parakramabahu the Great, broke down. As a result the entire civilization began to crumble and the resources of the kings suffered. Consequently, Buddhism, which depended a great deal at that time on royal and other endowments, too suffered, and henceforth there is little evidence of Buddhist activities in the regions of Polonnaruva and Anuradhapura. The old political divisions of Ceylon, Rajarata, Mayarata, and Ruhuna, disappeared. Then came into existence the Tamil Kingdom in the north, and in the south the Sinhalese power split among the chieftains.

After that, from time to time nominal kingship passed from the chief of one region to that of another till the Kotte

Kingdom came to be established in 1415 and the Kandyan Kingdom towards the end of the fifteenth century. Thus Ceylon remained divided for centuries. The attempt by Parakramabahu VI to bring the whole of Ceylon under Kotte probably failed owing to geographical reasons and the lack of communications. Had the Portuguese not been here, and had the Sitavaka kings, Mayadunne and Rajasingha, brought Ceylon even temporarily under their control, the same fate for the same reasons would probably have befallen them too.

But it may be argued that however important this dividing line at the beginning of the thirteenth century may be, it did not radically alter the life and thought of the people of this Island. Theravada Buddhism, though with some changes, flourished in the Kotte Kingdom. People continued their agrarian form of cultivation and followed a sort of feudalism. Nor was there any other change radical enough to be considered fundamental.

In European history, there is hardly any parallel to this event. Much more radical changes led to the break-up of the Roman Empire and the emergence of the Medieval age. The most important change in Europe according to historians took place about the beginning of the sixteenth century when the Medieval age began to transform itself into the Modern Is there no such dividing line in Ceylon history?

The passing of the Medieval age into the Modern in Europe is associated with a number of important events. It is true there is no agreement with regard to the date when this happened, and each writer fixes the time according to the relative importance he attaches to these events. Those who attach the greatest importance to scientific developments push it forward to the seventeenth century. Those who consider the Revival of Learning as the most important are inclined to push it back to the thirteenth century. There are others who object to any such division, as changes are gradual, and the developments in some parts of Europe did not keep pace with those in others, while in all countries the old and the new continued to exist side by side for a considerable time.

But on the whole, if the various factors and the extent to which they dominated are taken into account, the beginning of the Modern age may be placed about the beginning of the

sixteenth century. The chief events that historians generally associate with this change are the Voyages of Discovery, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Rise of the Nation States, the Invention of Printing, the Rise of the Middle Class, and the Establishment of Capitalism.

The Voyages of Discovery ushered in the commercial age and enabled the rise of the Middle Class and helped to break up feudalism. The Renaissance led to an acceptance of a 'this worldly' life and emphasized the importance of reason as against that of authority. The Reformation not only led to the reform of the Christian Church but also broke its unity, and gave an impetus to the rise of the Nation State. The printing press made it possible for learning to spread outside the religious bodies. In fact what is important is that so many events took place at about the same time, interacting on one another, and bringing about a change in society in so many different directions.

The Voyages of Discovery affected Ceylon too and increased its trade in spices, but it brought about no appreciable change in society during Portuguese rule. The Dutch introduced the printing press to Ceylon and even made a start with the rule of law and elementary education, but these too led to no fundamental changes in Ceylon society, as these rulers did not, by undermining the Sinhalese form of feudalism and the caste system, make a corresponding alteration in our economy and the social system.

In that case when did the Modern period of Ceylon history begin? Some place it in 1796, as most of the changes in the modern direction took place under British rule. Some place it in 1815 as it saw the end of the independence of the last Sinhalese Kingdom which survived Portuguese and Dutch rule in the Island. There are others who attach importance to this date on the ground that in that year Ceylon once more became united under one ruler as in the days of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruva.

But the change corresponding to that in Europe at the beginning of the sixteenth century really took place about 1832 as a result of the Colebrooke Reforms. It was in that year that the abolition of *rajakariya* and the trade monopolies based on it, made possible the development of plantations, free trade, private enterprise, and the growth of capitalism.

In 1815 though Ceylon came under one ruler, three different systems of administration continued in the Low-country Sinhalese, the Kandyan, and the Tamil areas. In 1833 a unified system of government with a common system of law courts was established, making Ceylon a Nation State and bringing it under the rule of law. The introduction of the English language led to a change in the thought of at least the upper classes, similar to that which took place in Europe as a result of the study of the Greek classics. The abolition of the arbitrary powers of the Governor made possible a free Press and the expansion of printing in the Island.

The Colebrooke Reforms went even further. The establishment of a Legislative Council with unofficial members eventually led to a democratic form of government. Finally, the development of plantations, the construction of roads, the expansion of the government services, the development of the law courts on modern lines, and the growth of education led to the rise of a middle class. But there was no Reformation in Buddhism or Hinduism, as they had neither a co-ordinated system nor a central authority to come sufficiently into conflict with the new Nation State under foreign rule. Thus, if we require a dividing line, we must place it either at the beginning of the thirteenth century when the ancient tank civilization broke down, or about 1832 when life in Ceylon turned in the modern direction.

Whatever the dividing lines are, is there any objection to assigning equal space to the periods before and after 1505? The answer to this question will depend on what we mean by history. Is it an antiquarian study or is it a subject with a definite aim and scope? Is Ceylon history meant to supply information about the past or is it also to be a means for studying the subject of history itself? Is the object of the work to give an account of the cultural developments or to describe her political, economic, social and constitutional changes and their interaction on one another?

History deals essentially with changes in the life of peoples. Hence in writing history we have to focus our attention mainly on important events that lead to such changes. In dealing with them we have to state when, where, and how an event took place. But more than all, we have to show why it was that the changes took place. Thus in history we deal

not merely with achievements and advances made, but also with the decline and fall of peoples. In dealing with both progress and decline, we have to trace their causes, and these form the main part of a modern history. It does not, therefore, necessarily follow that we have to devote more attention to the progress made than to the decline that followed. It may be true that in the past we have devoted more attention to the period after 1505. The main reason was that we had more source material and the kind of information needed to write a history. Another reason as stated already, was the definition of history that prevailed at the time.

There are certainly reasons today for devoting more space to the earlier periods of Ceylon history. The archaeological discoveries and the study of literary works and inscriptions have shed considerable fresh light on the past, and it is now possible to give a more connected account of the ancient period than we were able to do earlier.

All this information has further helped us to evaluate better the importance of those developments. As the recent elections have shown once more the past is still very much alive, and we have to acquaint ourselves with the ancient history of Ceylon if we want to understand modern developments. Besides, our conceptions of history have changed, and we are inclined to take more than ever before a sociological view. Hence we have to concern ourselves with society as a whole, with changes in all directions, rather than with political history as the main topic.

Even so, it is no easy task to apportion to the period before 1505 as much space as to the period after it. We cannot change the past as we like. History ultimately must depend on facts and not on emotion. Our attitude to it cannot change with each emotional set-up, or with the results of each General Election. If we want to devote as much space to the period before 1505 as to the period after it, we can do so only if we can prove that the inherent importance of the period, the intricacy of the problems involved, and the availability of the source material justify such a step.

Even for an understanding of the Sinhalese civilization there is more evidence in the sources after 1505 than before that date. Some may even go further and state that Ceylon history, regarded as the discipline of interpreting development

and not merely the collections of factual data, can only begin where the period before 1505 comes to an end. For before this date, more often than not, we have not sufficient evidence to trace the causes of important developments, or to show the interaction of political, economic and social events on one another, and the changes produced by such action.

Thus, if what has been stated so far is considered valid, neither the contention that 1505 is the dividing line in Ceylon history, nor the claim that the same amount of space should be devoted to the periods before and after that date, seems acceptable on historical grounds.

11

CAUSES OF COMMUNAL CONFLICT IN CEYLON*

COMMUNALISM is a disease which afflicts the body politic in India and Ceylon. It was one of the main obstacles to the attainment of self-government in both these countries. Arguments are advanced in favour of and against it, and remedies are suggested for its eradication. But few persons have tried to understand the root causes of this ailment. Many persons have their own explanations. Some trace it to caste, race and religious distinctions. Some consider it a creation of crafty politicians or of an unscrupulous British Government. There is no doubt that communal divisions usually coincide with caste, race and religious groups. It cannot be denied that communalism will not be so acute if there was no foreign government to take advantage of these divisions or no local politicians to exploit them to maintain themselves in power. But the reasons for the existence of divisions or the presence of a few who exploit them are not necessarily the root causes of the conflict. Others get nearer the truth when they attribute communalism to economic causes, especially the struggle to secure government and other appointments. An attempt is made in this chapter to examine the communal conflict in the light of recent historical developments. These reveal that communalism in its modern form is a very recent development. It came into existence as a result of the rise of the middle class, and the conflicts are mainly due to a struggle within the middle class itself for the spoils won from the British through the recent constitutional reforms.

What is Communalism? Ceylon during the last one hundred and fifty years has developed more or less into a nation state. It went through a political unification in 1815 when the British occupied the Kandyan Kingdom. It has gone through an administrative unification as a result of the adoption of a uniform system of government for the whole Island. It has further gone through an economic unification.

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The roads, the railway and the telegraph have broken down the isolation of the various villages and districts while trade has linked the interests of the various parts of the Island. These changes have in turn so knit together the interests of the various communities that today no community can act independently. Ceylon cannot again be divided into three separate divisions of the Low-country Sinhalese, the Kandyan and the Tamil districts. But though the country has been unified in the ways already mentioned, the people have not grown into a Ceylonese nation sufficiently cohesive, for instance like the British nation consisting of the English, the Scots and the Welsh. They consist of a number of communities among whom there is very little intermarriage such as the Sinhalese, Low-country and Kandyan, the Tamils, the Muslims and the Burghers. To these may be added the major and minor caste groups of at least the Sinhalese urban areas. Though the interests of these groups are linked together and their welfare depends on the advance of the country as a whole, the members of these groups often place the interests of their own community before those of the people as a whole, creating communal conflict and hindering national progress. One of the most urgent needs today is to reconcile these conflicting interests, and to do this it is first of all necessary to understand the causes of the conflict.

Communalism of the type we see today is undoubtedly a recent development. European writers such as the Portuguese Jesuit, Fernao de Queyroz, and the Englishman, Robert Knox, of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and James Cordiner and other English writers of the nineteenth century have left us pictures of Ceylon with its various divisions of society, but in none of their writings does one come across a communal conflict of the modern type.

The Sinhalese-Tamil problem, which is the most acute today can hardly be traced back even to the last century. Before the tenth century, A. D., there is no evidence of any serious difference between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. Up to that time the Tamil immigrants seem to have intermarried with the Sinhalese, as they do today in the Sinhalese coastal districts, and gradually merged themselves in the Sinhalese population. After the Chola occupation of Ceylon in the eleventh century they appear to have come in larger numbers and formed a fairly powerful body in the northern part of

the Island. And when Magha of Kalinga at the beginning of the thirteenth century established an independent kingdom in the north, it developed into a Tamil kingdom.

The centres of Sinhalese civilization at this time, partly owing to South Indian invasions, began to drift from the Dry Zone, first to the north-west, then to the highlands and finally to the south-west of the Island. Thus the Sinhalese and the Tamils became divided by territory, one occupying the Wet Zone and the other the Dry Zone; by language, one speaking Sinhalese and the other Tamil; and by religion, one following mainly Buddhism and the other Hinduism. But there arose no conflict between the Sinhalese and the Tamil peoples. It is true that Sinhalese and Tamil kings waged war for the expansion of their kingdoms, but the Sinhalese and the Tamil peoples as a whole carried on their agricultural activities, each race trying to eke out an existence for itself without coming into conflict with the other.

The same is true of the Kandyan Sinhalese and the Low-country Sinhalese. Before the seventeenth century there was little or no difference between these two groups, but during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the contact with the West transformed to some extent the conditions in the Maritime Provinces, while hardly any change took place in the highlands where the Kandyan rulers tried to exclude their people from all foreign influences. But during these centuries there was hardly any friction among the two peoples, and even when the British occupied the Kandyan provinces and gradually developed a common system of administration for the whole Island, there arose no conflict as the people of each region found that their interests did not clash with those of the other.

The position of the Muslims is somewhat different, but they too hardly ever came into conflict with the other communities in the nineteenth century. The Muslims consist of Moors, most of whom are of Indian origin, and Malays who have come from the East Indies. Most of the Moors are today either agriculturists or traders. They were at first mainly traders, but a large section of them settled in the Batticaloa district as agriculturists when the Portuguese expelled them from their territory. The rest, since the British occupation, have carried on their trade with little competition or opposition from the

other races of the Island. The Malays were soldiers under the Dutch and served in the same capacity under the British till the Ceylon Rifles was disbanded. Since then they have either entered the Police force or taken to other occupations.

The Burghers differ from the other permanent inhabitants of the Island owing to their European origin. The occupation of Ceylon by the British gave them a definite advantage over the other races, and they held high posts under the Government and rendered eminent service as doctors, lawyers and teachers. During the nineteenth century they worked together with the other communities and they led most Ceylonese movements and played an important part in the political life of the country.

In the nineteenth century there was a certain amount of conflict in this country. The Sinhalese chiefs at first opposed the British and the Government gradually crushed their power. Later they accepted their subordinate position and gradually became supporters of British rule. During the later period the conflict was again between the rulers and the ruled, especially between the European unofficials and the British Government. But there was little or no conflict among the various communities, and they generally lived in harmony.

Why do these communities then no longer live in the same manner? Why do they, whenever constitutional issues are raised, not sink for the common good their conflicting interests? To answer these questions it is necessary to go back to past history once more. At the time of the British occupation, this Island was a land of villages more or less self-contained, and the chief occupation of the people was the cultivation of paddy which they grew for their own consumption. Society was co-operative and static. The life of the people was based on ideas of caste, and they did not ordinarily expect to change the position to which they were born during the course of this life. The system of Government was feudal, and its work was carried on with the services performed by the people, each according to his caste.

The British Government from the beginning of its rule did not approve of this social system in which each man had his niche according to his occupation or the form of government which gave little opportunity for commerce and left no room

for the mobility of labour. It was further anxious to develop the resources of the Island and increase its revenues. Therefore it abolished *rajakariya* in 1832, breaking down the ancient co-operative feudalism, and prepared the way for the development of the present competitive commercial age which allows every man to choose whatever occupation he likes, irrespective of caste. It next began to place society on a commercial basis by encouraging the establishment of plantations. It sold crown lands at a nominal rate, exempted plantations from the land-tax, and used most of the revenue derived from the sale of land in constructing roads to the plantations.

These changes not only brought European capital and European planters into this country but also brought about an important change in the social system. At the time of the British occupation the society of Ceylon consisted mainly of two classes: the ruling class of the officials of the Court and the rulers of the districts, and the working class of agricultural peasants and craftsmen. There were few traders as trade was mainly a government monopoly. The British by their reforms brought into existence a new class between these two groups, the present middle class.

The establishment of the plantations provided new avenues of work for the people of the country. The clearing of the jungles and the construction of mills and factories gave employment to skilled and unskilled labourers as well as to contractors. The plantations did not produce food for their workers, and it had to be brought from Colombo and elsewhere. The products of the plantations had to be sent to Colombo for export to England and other countries. This involved a great deal of work and provided employment for hundreds of transport agents. Food, clothing and other necessaries had to be supplied to those who worked in the plantations, and small towns with boutiques and shops arose in plantation areas. Colombo developed into a commercial city providing work for all types of people. Those who accumulated wealth by taking to these new enterprises and other new occupations began to open up or buy estates, and gradually a small proportion of the tea estates, more than half the rubber estates and most of the coconut estates came to be owned by Ceylonese.

The new system of administration created by the British required a large number of Government servants, and

gradually a large number of persons from all races and castes though in unequal proportions, found employment in the Government services. In 1833 the British Government established a system of law courts throughout the Island bringing all people from the Governor downwards under a common system of law. The establishment of these courts led to a demand for lawyers, and the changes in social and economic conditions gave employment to large numbers.

Up to 1869 education in Ceylon was conducted mainly by the Christian Missions at their own expense. In that year the British Government accepted responsibility for vernacular education and agreed to give grants to Mission schools. This led to an increase of English schools and a large teaching profession gradually came into existence. The rise of towns and the development of estates led to a demand for doctors trained on modern lines to look after the sanitation of these places and the health of the people who lived in them. These and other causes led to the establishment of the Medical College and the development of the medical profession.

Thus arose the new middle class consisting of planters, merchants, transport agents, lawyers, doctors, teachers and Government servants, and they soon found that though they formed the most influential part of the community they had very little political power. In the country districts the descendants of the ancient ruling families still carried on the Government while in the urban areas in which they lived all the high administrative posts with a few exceptions were in the hands of the British.

The new middle class in order to acquire power did not plan to rise in rebellion against the British like the Sinhalese chiefs. They were educated in English and knew how the British middle class came into power. They had before them the example of the European unofficials who tried to gain control of the Government by securing an unofficial majority in the Legislative Council. They therefore began to agitate for a reform of the Legislative Council so that they might have a share in the control of the Government. In 1912 they gained a few concessions and in 1924 they obtained an unofficial majority and exercised a certain amount of influence over the Government. In 1931 they gained a considerable amount of political power under the Donoughmore Constitution, which

they exercised through the State Council and the local self-governing institutions. They captured most of the high posts in the Government which were once almost exclusively held by the British.

The middle class differed from all other groups. It crossed all existing groups drawing its members from all of them. It ignored the foundations on which all other groups rested and based itself on differences of wealth and enlightenment. Its members united for various purposes especially to safeguard and develop its interests. But it did not break away from the existing divisions, and did not develop into a separate group as there was yet very little intermarriage among the various communities. And now with the accession to power, the various sections of the middle class, instead of uniting further, began to compete with one another.

This struggle within the middle class itself is explained in various ways. Some point out that the demand for territorial electorates by the Ceylon National Congress, though justifiable on the ground that they alone satisfy a modern state, led to much misgiving. The leaders of all minority communities feared that they would have little chance of being chosen by a general electorate, while the Tamils feared that it would lead to a reduction of the proportion of their members. Others point out that the growth of a national feeling, which arose as a result of the unification of the Island and grew in strength with the opposition to British rule, led to a revival of the ancient cultures which instead of uniting the various communities divided them. Still others attribute communalism to psychological factors. They point out that some of the Burghers are so communal because they fear that the growth of a Ceylonese nation would lead to their own extinction as a community. Some of the Sinhalese would not be so keen to preserve their civilization and culture but for their fear that they would be swamped by Indians or that world forces were too strong for the survival of a small community like theirs. There is, no doubt, some truth in all these statements. But the attempt to preserve and develop ancient cultures need not necessarily lead to conflict. In fact such efforts should receive every encouragement as they would help to enrich the culture of the nation as a whole.

But the chief reason for the present conflicts seems to be that the various sections of the middle class soon realized that the spoils won from the British were insufficient to satisfy all groups. The number of places in the Legislative Council and the local bodies was limited and the posts in the government and other services were insufficient to meet their growing needs. The result was that they began to struggle among themselves and sought the aid of their respective communities to attain their ends. This was not difficult as the various communities had not attained the same stage of development. Some were backward educationally while others had not the same economic advantages. These inequalities helped to sharpen communal feelings and to develop a greater sense of group solidarity in those communities whose members felt they had an inadequate share of the spoils.

The Low-country Sinhalese found opportunities for advancement at their very doors. They acquired wealth as businessmen, contractors, transport agents, planters and proprietors of estates. They took advantage of the English schools opened by the Christian Missions and other religious bodies and took to government posts and the legal, the medical and the teaching professions.

The Tamils living in the Dry Zone could benefit little by the planting enterprise. Hence there was not much economic change in their area and they changed little socially. They were slow to give up their caste ideas and did not take to crafts and trade. But a considerable number, especially those of the advanced castes, took advantage of the English education provided by the Missions and entered the government service and the professions. As the places for lawyers, doctors and teachers were limited they began to concentrate on government appointments.

The Kandyans who were deeply attached to their village economy, feudal ways of life and caste ideas had neither the capital nor the necessary education to take sufficient advantage of the new enterprises, though they arose within their own territories. Education spread slowly among them as the Government left it chiefly to the Missions. The Missions at first established themselves mainly in the areas where the Dutch had already been at work, and paid little attention to the Kandyan districts. Thus, when the plantations were

opened, it was the Low-country Sinhalese who flocked into the highlands as carpenters, masons, contractors, transport agents and traders. The result is that today it is the Low-country Sinhalese and not the Kandyans who are the most influential in the urban areas of the Kandyan districts. In fact the Kandyan advance has been so slow that there is yet no powerful Kandyan middle class and their representatives in the State Council, unlike those of the Low-country Sinhalese and the Tamils, are drawn mainly from the old ruling families. That the Kandyan middle class has developed only recently is also seen from the fact that the Kandyan nationalist movement is mainly a youth movement.

The position of the Moors is not very different from that of the Kandyans. It is true that those who were traders found at first plenty of opportunity for extending their old pursuits. But owing to their attachment to their religion and their social conservatism not many attended the English Mission schools. The result was that few could take advantage of the new opportunities in trade or secure positions in other walks of life. And they, like the Kandyans, feel that they have been left behind by the other communities.

The Burghers though small in number are an influential community as they are almost exclusively a middle class body. Their main object today is to avoid a complete loss of that position to which they attained before other communities entered into serious competition with them.

The position of the various castes is not very different. It is not possible in this chapter to show how they have abandoned at least in the Sinhalese urban and suburban areas their old foundations and have changed into communal groups. Some castes, owing to the privileged or the advantageous position they held at the time of the British occupation, were able to benefit more than the others by the new changes. Today their progress varies and the middle classes of those communities who have been left behind are struggling to keep pace with those of other communities who had got ahead of them.

When the Donoughmore Commission arrived in Ceylon in 1927 to deal with the question of constitutional reforms the communal claims were placed before them. But the Commissioners showed little sympathy with these demands. They

no doubt realized that communal representation would only impair that unity given to Ceylon by over a century of British rule. The Earl of Donoughmore, who accompanied Montagu in his mission to India and took part in the discussions on constitutional reforms, knew how difficult it was to abolish special electorates once they are granted. The Commission recommended exclusively territorial electorates and the grant of the franchise to all men and women of a certain age. In other words, they did not concern themselves with the division of the spoils won from the British. They showed greater interest in the uplift of the masses who had little interest in the communal squabbles that had developed in the body of the middle class.

But the middle classes did not give up the struggle. They found that with the grant of universal franchise the ultimate power lay with the masses. They realized that the racial groups that formed the masses were not hostile to one another as the causes of conflict enumerated above did not operate among them. But they knew that they were communal for other reasons. The masses were not influenced to the same extent by the new economic and social forces that brought together the various sections of the middle class and gave them a common outlook. The middle classes now began to exploit this latent feeling of race and caste and spread their conflicts and jealousies among them for the attainment of their objects.

The exploitation of this communal feeling is most apparent in the struggles of the middle class for the attainment of power and status, especially at elections to the State Council and the local bodies. But it is not many who can be members of the State Council and the local bodies and the interest in their rise cannot extend to a very large circle. The conflict in reality is due much more to appointments in the government and other services and it is in the securing of these posts that communalism is most exploited.

The situation in India does not seem to be very different. Lord Morley dealing with the Indian constitutional reforms wrote to Lord Minto: "I half suspect what they (Indians) really want a million times beyond political reforms is access to the higher administrative posts of all sorts, though they are alive to the inseparable connection between the two." Another

well-known authority has pointed out that the Hindu-Muslim problem in its modern form emerged first in connection with the demand for simultaneous examinations for the Indian Civil Service in England and India. The Muslims realized that such a change would not benefit them and refused to take part in the agitation.

It is not maintained that there are no communal conflicts at all among the masses. Such a conflict was seen not long ago between the Indian and the Ceylonese workers. Nor is it suggested that all communal conflicts are due to economic causes alone. Local communal riots due to other causes are a common feature in Indian villages. What is pointed out here is that communalism of the type we see today is a recent development. The British helped to change the society of Ceylon from a co-operative and feudal basis into one with a competitive and commercial basis. The changes effected led to the rise of the middle class, but it did not develop into a separate community. The various sections of this class soon realized that the available posts under the Government and in the mercantile service were insufficient to satisfy their growing needs, and began to compete with one another. And in order to achieve their ends they sought the aid of their respective communities and transformed their individual conflicts into a communal conflict. Thus communalism is essentially a middle class problem and the chief causes of conflict are economic.

12

CHANGING BUDDHISM

*An Examination of the Report of the Buddhist Commission**

THE Report of the Buddhist Commission entitled 'The Betrayal of Buddhism' is one of the most remarkable documents of the age. It attempts to diagnose the ailments of Buddhism, prescribes remedies for their eradication, and makes proposals for its rehabilitation and restoration so that it may take its rightful place in Ceylon society as warranted by the number of its adherents. Its importance lies not so much in the correctness of the diagnosis, the remedies suggested or the methods proposed for the restoration of Buddhism, as in the fact that it has appealed to the sentiment of a large section of the Buddhists and captured their imagination. It has provided a case for Buddhist action which they lacked, and put forward a concrete programme and a set of demands which have replaced the nebulous theories and vague proposals which, up to this time, held the field. Moreover, no one can ignore a report which contributed to the defeat of a government which had some continuity for about twenty-five years and put in its place another which was expected to support its recommendations. It is clear that those who backed the Report have considerable power and are capable of bringing pressure on the present Government to make it act in accordance with its recommendations.

It is not difficult to expose the defects of the Report. Already critics have drawn attention to many of the inaccuracies, especially those in the historical introduction. The interpretation of past history is undoubtedly lop-sided. What is related is not a comprehensive account. Facts favourable to the case which the Commissioners wanted to present have been selected and important material which goes against it has been ignored. According to the Report, British rule is a period of decline. It attributes this decline too much to external factors such as foreign rule and the break-up of the institutions like the village community system and Sinhalese

*1st Oct. 1956

'feudalism'. It does not point out that Buddhism reached a lower ebb in the eighteenth century in the Kandyan Kingdom long before this region came under Western rule, and that the revival that took place under the leadership of the saintly Valivita Saranankara was made possible at least partly by the Dutch who helped to convey Buddhist bhikkhus from Siam to carry out the *upsampada* ceremony. Nor does it reveal the fact that Buddhism from that time made continuous progress at least in some directions.

All this, however, does not disprove that Buddhism has suffered under British rule. British governors and officials, especially during the nineteenth century, favoured at times Christianity and the Christians and discriminated against Buddhism and the Buddhists. While British neutrality in matters of religion was used as an excuse by the British Government for dissociating itself from Buddhism and shirking its responsibilities, it did not hesitate, whatever the reasons may be, to ally itself with Protestant Christianity. The adoption of English as the language of government removed the *Sangha* from the main currents of life, whereas in the past they had been to a considerable extent the leaders of thought in the country. Buddhist institutions were closely associated with the village community system, 'feudalism', and the caste system. Developments in commerce and communications under British rule struck a blow at them and have to some extent disorganized the Buddhist system and reduced the influence of the *Sangha* over the people. Further, as the Report points out, on the agitation of the missionaries the British Government dissociated itself ro m Buddhism without even providing, as Gladstone suggested, 'an honest working constitution'. Thus, however much one may disagree with the details of the Report, one cannot wholly disagree with some of its main contentions.

It is possible to go further and question some of the judgements and values of the Report. Can a religion ever be spread by means of government institutions? There is no evidence to test how far the Emperor Asoka, that great idealist and pacifist, succeeded in inculcating moral principles among his subjects by means of government officials. All that we know is that the empire built up by his grandfather came to an untimely end with his rule. The Report at times lacks clarity. It is assumed that in the past the lay Sinhalese followed a distinctively Buddhist way of life. Does Buddhism include

Hinduism or is Buddhism one of the expressions of Hinduism? Is not the Sinhalese way of life primarily a Hindu way? The structure of Sinhalese society was based on the institution of caste. Is caste in accordance with Buddhism? Many Sinhalese Buddhists worship Hindu gods. Is their worship a part of Buddhism? If Buddhism is distinct from Hinduism, do the Sinhalese laity follow primarily a Buddhist way of life?

But, when we point out these weaknesses, we have to bear in mind that the importance of this Report will not be reduced very much by such criticisms. The Report does not express so much historical or scientific truth as emotional or prophetic truth. Even if the causes ascribed to the decline of Buddhism are proved to be false, it will make little difference. What the Buddhists are primarily concerned with are the results; and it is from them that the Report derives its strength. The Report assumes that Buddhism is in danger of further deterioration, if not of extinction, and with it the Buddhist or Sinhalese way of life. What is important now is to restore and rehabilitate Buddhism and save the Buddhist or Sinhalese way of life. The chief enemies of Buddhism in Ceylon have been Christianity and Western rule. Hence an attack is made against Christianity and the forces of the West. That traditional Buddhism and even more the Sinhalese way of life are in danger there is no doubt. It is only of minor importance whether the chief enemies are Christianity and the American and the English way of life or whether they are modern science and materialism. Whatever they are, a battle will be waged for the preservation of Buddhism.

The Report is of absorbing interest for other reasons too. One striking feature is that it differs from all previous records of the attempts to reform Buddhism. Buddhism often declined and steps were taken to restore it. What was done on such occasions one can learn from the *Katikavatas*. They deal mainly with the reform of the *Sangha*, and the laity hardly comes into the picture. The first of these available was issued in the time of Parakramabahu I. It deals briefly with the history of the *Sangha*, the vicissitudes through which it passed until at this time the various sects were unified, and proceeds to give the rules to be observed by the bhikkhus. The last of these, issued in the reign of Kirti Sri Rajasinha, contains certain rules regarding the property of the bhikkhus. In other words these *Katikavatas* deal with the steps taken to

purify the *Sangha* and incidentally reveal its connection with temporal rulers. In the *Katikavata* of Parakramabahu I the Buddha Sasana is expected to last only five thousand years. This shows that this document accepted the Buddhist ideals of cosmogony that the world was gradually deteriorating and would come to an end with the *Kali Yuga*, the last of the four ages, and that along with it Buddhism too would deteriorate and would come to a similar end. Another idea that these *Katikavatas* accept is that this world is a place of pain and misery from which those who want to attain *Nirvana* have to withdraw in order to put an end to this birth and rebirth. There is no record of an attempt to grapple with the political, social and economic problems of the age apart from reforming the individual.

The historical section of the Report too is not in the Buddhist tradition. Unlike the postscripts to the chapters in the *Mahavamsa* and the *Culavamsa* it does not even imply that it is written to rouse serene joy and religious emotion, i.e. a revulsion from the world and its misery. It does not try to explain, as the *Culavamsa* does with reference to the Dutch invasion of the Kandyan Kingdom, that the decline of Buddhism was due to the *karma* of the people of Lanka or the displeasure of the guardian deities whom the people had neglected. It does not follow the *Mahavamsa* which gives as reasons for events not natural causes but the previous *karma* of one or more individuals. It does not emphasize impermanence or the other worldly view of life. The Buddhist Commissioners follow an entirely new method. Instead of emphasizing the vanity of this worldly life and suggesting a withdrawal from the world to put an end to birth and rebirth, they are out to transform the political, economic and social system. Far from taking the view that the world and Buddhism are destined to deterioration and extinction, they seem to assume the modern evolutionary view of life and take human progress for granted. Without attributing events to the former actions of the people they trace them to natural causes. They do not consider the Tamil invasions, Portuguese, Dutch and British rule as a medium through which *karma* worked itself out or the gods punished the misdeeds of the people, but attribute to them the decline of Buddhism.

Whatever may be stated about the decline of Buddhism under the British, the Report in itself is a great tribute to

the effect of British rule. The Buddhist Commissioners show that they have made an unprecedented advance in their conceptions and attitude to life as a result of the change brought about by the British. Their views show the influence of modern science and of the Christian churches. Some of the recommendations show that they are not even averse to some of the Roman Catholic institutions as they understood them.

In fact they seem to go further. They are not satisfied with even a state within a state but seem to be anxious that Buddhists should absorb the State itself. Buddhism has had a remarkable history. It has spread into many countries and taken root adjusting itself to new conditions absorbing and developing new ideas, but at no stage has it shown such a revolution in its ideas and conceptions. Indeed, British rule may justly claim the Report as its child, and an orthodox Buddhist of the old school may characterize it as a betrayal of Buddhism.

As would be expected from what has been stated already, the Report does not aim at a mere rehabilitation and restoration of Buddhism. It expresses an earnest desire that Buddhism should take its rightful place in Ceylon society. It wants Buddhism and the Buddhists to come into line with the position held by Christianity and the Christians. It seems to assume at the same time that if Buddhism is to survive it must have a rebirth and a reformation. It must adapt itself to the changed conditions and develop an organization in accordance with the needs of the times. The revolutionary attitude of the Commissioners is to be seen clearly in the proposals they make for action in the lay sphere. Like the Utilitarians of the early nineteenth century and the Marxists of today, the Commissioners seem to think that much can be achieved through governmental action. What is surprising is that they seem to think that even religious ideas and practices which are essentially a personal matter can be spread by this means; for many recommendations are made to modify the existing system of government and the laws in order to achieve their object. One may even wonder whether the Commissioners eschew liberal ideas of government and are in favour of fascist and totalitarian methods.

But no such revolutionary proposals are made with regard to the reform of the organization of the *Sangha*. Whatever

is recommended with regard to it seems to be the weakest part of the Report. Compared with the amount of space devoted to past history and the causes that led to the decline of Buddhism and of its influence over the country, the number of pages allotted to the reform of the *Sangha* or of Buddhist institutions is very little. The explanation for this probably lies in the present structure of Buddhism itself. The Buddhist organization at present is essentially monastic. There are lay organizations but they are not organically joined to the *Sangha* as the Christian clergy are united with the laity. Buddhism consists of three sects. The oldest of these is the Siam Nikaya which came to be established as a result of the Buddhist revival initiated by Saranankara within the Kandyan Kingdom during the latter part of the eighteenth century. It inherited a Buddhism which had developed in Ceylon for over two thousand years. This Buddhism is by no means the simple Buddhism preached by the early Buddhist missionaries and shows the influence of Mahayanism and Hinduism. The vihares owned by this sect possess a considerable amount of property which is generally referred to as the Buddhist temporalities. The second largest sect is the Amarapura Nikaya which was established in the early days of British rule. The third, Ramanya Nikaya, was established in the seventh decade of the last century during the Buddhist revival of that time. This sect at first tried to go back in some ways to the pure Buddhism of the Pali Canon. Neither the Amarapura nor the Ramanya Nikaya possesses any extensive lands and do not suffer from the disadvantages of wealth. While the Siamese sect, living mainly in the Kandyan provinces, draw their inspiration mainly from the past, the members of the other two sects (who have concentrated their activities to a considerable extent in the most progressive south-western part of the island which exercised so much influence at the last General Election) seem to be more influenced by modern ideas.

There have been other developments in Buddhism in recent times. One was the rise of the *Tapasa* bhikkhus who tried to practise Buddhism according to the original rules of the order. The other is the emergence of the so-called 'political' bhikkhus. The latter are definitely interested in the affairs of the world. They seem to chafe under the narrow bounds of traditional Buddhism and some of them seem to take refuge in Marxist ideas.

These recent developments in Buddhism have some parallels in the history of the Christian Church. They seem to indicate that at least in some ways Buddhism is going through a similar process as Christianity did in Europe in the sixteenth century. The Christian Church became more 'this-worldly' from about the thirteenth century and the rise of the *Tapasa* bhikkhus, at least superficially has its parallel in the developments under the leadership of St. Francis of Assisi. The rise of the so-called political bhikkhus resembles in some ways the Jesuit movement of the sixteenth century. The main difference is that the Roman Catholic Church with its usual foresight found new avenues for those dissatisfied with the objects of the old communities and established the new orders of friars and the order of Jesuits. Further, something like the resentment against the political influence exercised by the Pope in various countries of Europe finds an echo in some of the criticisms levelled in the Report against the Roman Catholic Church in Ceylon today. In Europe there was a Reformation and a counter-Reformation and signs are not wanting that the reform of Buddhism in Ceylon will follow a similar course.

There is no doubt that if the Buddhist religion is to be a dynamic force in Ceylon society it has to reorganize itself. Before British times it had adjusted itself to the village community system and the Sinhalese form of feudalism. Both these institutions are now out-of-date. Under the present conditions prevailing in Ceylon the need for a central authority is urgent both to meet modern demands as well as to undertake the duties performed in the past by Sinhalese kings and their officials. It is suggested in the Report that for this purpose a Sasana Council consisting of bhikkhus and laymen should be established. To deal with problems specially pertaining to the *Sangha* such as questions of discipline, the proposal is to establish District Sangha Councils and a Mahasangha Council. There are also proposals for the education and training of bhikkhus, but not for a closer union of the *Sangha* and the lay societies.

The Buddhist Commission, consisting of six bhikkhus and six laymen, was appointed not by the *Sangha* but by the All-Ceylon Buddhist Congress which is mainly a lay body. The bhikkhus in the Commission are mainly vice-principals of pirivenas. Only one is a responsible executive

officer of a Chapter, but it is said that he too, when he joined the Commission, had not accepted that post. Buddhism is essentially a monastic institution and therefore any reforms in Buddhism will have to be carried out mainly by the Mahatheras. Thus the attitude taken by the heads of the Malvatta and Asgiriya Vihares with regard to the Report is not surprising. "Your letter does not indicate," they declare in their reply to the Government, "that the Buddhist Commission is a government-recognized one, nor do we in the least recognize it ourselves. Therefore such an unauthorized body has no right whatsoever to take decisions on matters relating to the administration of our Mahasangha and its temporalities. As such is it legal for the Government to act on the recommendations of such a set-up?"

These objections, however sound, can only retard the movement to which an impetus has been given by the Report. The Eksath Bhikkhu Peramuna, consisting partly of 'political' bhikkhus, has more or less accepted the findings of the Report and has got the present Government to back it by helping the Sri Lanka Freedom Party to come into power. The Report seems to have the support of the bhikkhus of both the Amarapura and the Ramanya Nikayas and at least the tacit approval of a section of the Siamese Sect. The Peramuna seems to be determined to get the present Government to carry out the recommendations of the Report. Whether it will be able to bring enough political pressure to compel the Government to act as in the case of the Sinhala Only Bill is yet to be seen. A few of the bhikkhus who objected to any precipitate action which would lead to a schism in the *Sangha* have already left the Peramuna.

It is no easy task to reorganize a religion which had grown in a medieval environment and bring it into line with modern developments. Those who know the problems that cropped up in the Christian Church during the period of the Reformation can realize the difficulties that Buddhism will have to face. Perhaps the Buddhists are not altogether unaware of the difficulties that hinder even the establishment of a united Protestant Church in Ceylon. Any change is bound to affect, sometimes radically, the present organizations and their set-up. It cannot be expected that every Buddhist vihare will willingly surrender its semi-independent status. Will the Mahatheras without hesitation agree to come under a

Sasana Council consisting of bhikkhus and laymen? A bhikkhu, who left the Peramuna wrote some time ago: "Nearly three years were taken on setting up the bhikkhu organizations of the Sri Lanka Sangha Sabha. But even that period was not sufficient to get the co-operation of all the bhikkhus in every district of the Island. Bhikkhu unions in certain areas are nominally unions—they were never active organizations. There are still a number of other areas where bhikkhu unions do not exist at all. We have also received limited support from the Mahanayake Theras of the various Nikayas."

The problems will not end with the establishment of a United Sangha Sabha even if that takes place. Then will arise the questions with regard to discipline. The history of Buddhism shows how often there were schisms over problems connected with the rules of the Vinaya. Few bhikkhus seem to observe today the spirit of the Vinaya even if most of them keep to the letter of the law. There are others who openly defy them. Next will arise new problems connected with the doctrines. As a result of the obstacles to progress, will the Amarapura and the Ramanya Nikayas carry out a reformation and leave the Siamese Sect to follow up with a counter-reformation? Whatever happens with regard to reforms in Buddhism we have to remember that the Report of the Buddhist Commission appeared at a time when the temper of a large section of the Buddhists was ready for such a document and considering the backing it receives from the Government party some action is likely to be taken sooner or later.

13

THE REVOLUTION OF 1956*

Its Cause and Significance

MANY will agree that there has been a revolutionary change this year in the sphere of politics. A government which had some continuity for over twenty-five years has been wholly overthrown, and a new government with a new outlook and new ideas has come into power. The English-educated class with its doctors, lawyers schoolmasters planters and businessmen, have lost their leadership over the country and their place in the villages has been taken by the Buddhist monk, the Sinhalese schoolmaster and the ayurvedic physician. Perhaps as a reaction to what happened in the south, a revolutionary change has taken place in the north too.

Diverse causes are attributed to this change. Some say the United National Party was too long in the saddle, and people wanted to see new faces. Some say it was due to the withdrawal of the Senanayakes from the U.N.P. Some say that the U.N.P. as a result of its long period of power, had become corrupt. Others give other reasons. Many of these explanations are clearly superficial. Merely because the U.N.P. was too long in power it need not have become unpopular. Sometimes we prefer tried friends to unknown ones. But by such a statement if we imply that its policy was getting out of date, perhaps we are nearer the truth. If in saying that the U.N.P. had become corrupt, we mean that it did not spread its favours wide enough, then we can understand its unpopularity better. If by the withdrawal of the Senanayakes we mean that by the resignation of Mr. Dudley Senanayake, the U.N.P. lost a man whose sincerity and patriotism touched a chord even in the hearts of the ordinary people, many will no doubt agree. It is true that one single key cannot unlock all doors. The conditions in Ceylon vary from district to district and different influences are at work in different regions. The factors, for instance,

*20th Oct. 1956

that influence the townsfolk and perhaps those in the south-western coastal districts are not the same as those that affect the rural areas, and the results of the General Election in the towns and coastal areas cannot be placed in the same category as those in the rural districts.

But what is most remarkable is that the results of the General Election took by surprise not only the defeated but even the victorious, and the ordinary people who could not account for the change thought it was the work of the gods. This shows that we have to search deeper for the causes of this rejection of one section of the middle class and the enthronement of another. What is the significance of this change? Is it for the good of the country? Has the clock of progress been set back? Is the current of Ceylon's life moving backwards? To those that answer in the affirmative there are others who say that what is wrong is with those who accept such a view. They are obviously not standing on their feet but on their heads and see everything in a wrong perspective. Did not the Prime Minister, the present head of the Government, declare the other day in Kandy to the Mahatheras of Malvatta and Asgiriya that rivers flow forward and not backward? Those responsible for the change think that the current of Ceylon's life has been checked by foreign influences and almost choked by the impact of British rule. Now that independence has been achieved it is once more flowing, and if we want it to flow freely we must remove all the remaining vestiges of foreign control. The Sinhalese language has suffered. Buddhism has suffered. The ayurvedic system has suffered. They are now once more coming into their own. They have to be rehabilitated and restored, allowed to develop and influence our lives once again.

Is this a correct judgement? Does history support it? The only way to answer these questions is to go back about one hundred and thirty years and see what happened then. The British after their conquest of Ceylon tried for nearly thirty years to rule it according to its ancient institutions and customs, protecting Buddhism and the Sinhalese and the Tamil way of life. But Ceylon continued to be governed on deficit budgets. This made the British people think that there was something wrong and a Commission was sent from England to examine the system of government in Ceylon and make recommendations for its improvement. The

Commissioners, Colebrooke and Cameron, were Radicals. Like some people of Ceylon today, they had tremendous faith that not only conditions in the country but even human nature could be transformed by changes in institutions and laws. They were also at times irrational enough to imagine that people would always act according to reason. Nevertheless, in spite of his preconceived ideas, Colebrooke, after a study of two years, made a thorough analysis of the political, economic and social conditions of the island and came to the conclusion that the river of life in Ceylon was practically stagnant. There was a slight flow as a result of some changes made by the British, but there was a tendency for even that to be choked up. He next searched for the causes that obstructed the flow, and came to the conclusion that it was not British rule but the continuity of the ancient system that retarded the flow of the river—and he made recommendations to liberate Ceylon from the burden of its past heritage.

What Colebrooke discovered was that Ceylon was cramped by *rajakariya* (the Sinhalese form of feudalism), the caste system, the ancient system of learning and absolutism as the form of government. He found that *rajakariya* prevented economic development, and any improvement in commerce and industry. The caste system militated against people being treated as equals before the law and prevented the development of a democratic way of life. The absolute form of government stood in the way of a liberal system in which the people could have some share. He therefore recommended the abolition of *rajakariya* and the encouragement of the cultivation of commercial crops. He wanted the Government to discourage the observance of caste distinctions and treat all persons as equals before the law. He recommended the establishment of a unified system of government on a territorial basis in order to blend the various races and castes, to enable the development of commerce and to create a Ceylonese nation. He wanted the establishment of the rule of law and of executive and legislative councils to liberalize the system of government. He suggested the adoption of the English language for government purposes as he found Sinhalese and Tamil inadequate to satisfy modern requirements. He even went against the avowed policy of religious neutrality, and recommended that the education of the island should be entrusted to missionaries,

as he believed they helped the intellectual and moral advancement of the people. Thus he undermined the ancient political, economic and social system in order that the current of life may not only flow but flow in the modern direction.

What were the results of these far-reaching reforms? Gradually the current of our life began to stir and move. Our economy began to change. Agricultural industries and commerce developed and made the country prosperous to some extent. The caste system weakened and enabled the rise of a middle class on an economic basis. The study of English led to the rise of new ideas as is evident even in the Report of the Buddhist Commission. The old system of administration began to be modified and replaced by a modern bureaucratic system. The absolute form of government gradually gave way to a democratic parliamentary form of government. Buddhism and Hinduism began to revive, and the Buddhist movement started by the saintly Valivita Saranankara in the Kandyan Kingdom in the eighteenth century, and had spread into the low-country where Buddhism had weakened and deteriorated under the great disadvantages it had already suffered under the Portuguese and Dutch rule, began to receive an impetus from the support of the new middle class.

But the river of life as a whole stirred little. The current moved mainly on the surface and did not penetrate very much deeper than the English-educated middle class with its new ideas, new economic interests and new forms of life. The section of the people, once they realized their power, began to oppose foreign rule and demand self-government. But the British were not prepared to hand over to them the governmental system they developed unless it was representative of the people as a whole. They granted adult franchise and placed the ultimate responsibility for the government of the country on the entire community. The English-educated class was not deterred by this step. The grant of the adult franchise did not lead to a sudden awakening of the masses as the privilege did not come to them as a result of an agitation on their part. The English-educated class thought out the grounds on which they could solicit the support of the people and put forward their programmes. They extended their organizations and

did much, with the revenues at their disposal, for the betterment of the people in the spheres of education and health as well as in improving labour and economic conditions.

What then was the cause of the political change that took place this year? Was it due to independence as some think? If so, why did not the change take place earlier? Was it due to an awakening of the masses? If so, why was the change in the first budget of the new Government mainly in the interest of the lower middle class? The landslide in the last General Election was due mainly to the fact that there was yet another class who made some progress under British rule, but who felt at the same time that they were doomed to suffer, if not meet with extinction, as a result of recent developments. This is a class between the upper middle class and the masses in general, consisting of the Buddhist monks, the ayurvedic physicians, the Sinhalese schoolmasters and the unemployed persons educated by them.

What were the grievances of the Buddhist monks? Before British rule, they were the leaders of thought in the country, and most of the literary works were their productions. They exercised a great influence over the people who in turn treated them with reverence. When English became the language of the country they came to be excluded from the main currents of life and their influence came to be limited mainly to the stagnant parts of the country. In recent years many of them began to feel even insecure (though they would hardly admit this fear even to themselves) as they thought Buddhism too was declining. Buddhism in the past had adjusted itself to the village community system and the Sinhalese form of feudalism and in more recent times to the caste system. With the development of new economic forces all these institutions began to decline, and as these were the traditional supports of Buddhism it seemed that to some extent its very hold on its adherents was being undermined.

The ayurvedic physicians too exercised great influence in the villages in which they lived. With the advance of Western medicine the position of most of them deteriorated. In recent times to check this decline there has been a tendency to mix up the ayurvedic system with Western methods and the use of scientific instruments. This alarmed some of the ayurvedic physicians who went so far as to fear that these changes would

gradually lead to the extinction of the ayurvedic system itself.

The Sinhalese schoolmaster is a more modern product. He came into existence under Dutch rule. He was at first more than a schoolmaster as many other duties were entrusted to him. With the growth of the British administration other officials encroached on his sphere. With the expansion of English education his status deteriorated further. Though education in Sinhalese was advanced to the Senior School Certificate level the pupils in the Sinhalese schools had no future except as schoolmasters and unemployment began to face those who passed the Sinhalese S.S.C. Examination.

The Government Service provides the largest employment to the people of Ceylon. Taking no notice of the fact that it is trained intelligence that mattered and not the medium of instruction, they demanded that the language of government should be made Sinhalese. They expected that those educated in Sinhalese would be able to capture the government posts and those who carried on their activities in Sinhalese would at least get an equal status with those who conducted their affairs in English. It is not strange that the agitation for Sinhalese before long became an agitation for Sinhalese only. In a multi-communal society it was almost inevitable. The exclusion of English logically led to a cry for the exclusion of Tamil, through fear that Tamil would finally swamp Sinhalese.

This new class, unlike those in the saddle, thus had definite grievances. They had suffered as a result of British rule or had found that under the old system which was being continued by the U.N.P. without any radical change, their progress was limited. They found that after independence was attained their conditions did not improve, and in fact their very security was at stake. They were thus not merely concerned with redress of grievances but were fighting for their very existence. They knew how the upper middle class had organized themselves and had got rid of British rule. The Buddhist monks realized what great power a highly organized institution like the Roman Catholic Church exercised in the country and over their adherents. Therefore they too began to organize themselves to gain their due place in Ceylon society. When they found their agitation did not lead them very far, they planned political action and decided to influence the General Election. They realized fully that the only way they could get power was by getting the people to vote for the

candidates who supported their claims. The ordinary people, except in the towns and perhaps the coastal districts, were still passive and did not take any initiative in politics. This new class was in close touch with the people in the rural areas and had common interests up to a point. Hence they were in a better position than the U.N.P. stalwarts to persuade the masses to act in accordance with their instructions. In short, these currents which had hitherto little force and were being gradually pushed into the backwaters by the main current of active politics rose suddenly and instead of losing themselves in marshes and stagnant pools, flooded the main current itself.

The problem now is whether the flood will continue to swamp the main current, or will gradually subside making its own contribution and whether the main current will assert itself once more. The outcome will depend on the strength of the conflicting forces and in the way the new forces are met. We cannot ignore the fact that we lie not merely to the south of India but also on the highway of sea and air traffic from the West to the East. Will Sinhalese ever be able to replace fully a growing world language like English? Will ayurveda be able to withstand the pressure of modern medicine and surgery? How far will traditional Buddhism be able to resist not Christianity but modern science and materialism?

It is true no small country in Europe has yet discarded its national language whatever importance it has attached to a second language. Homeopathists still flourish and I believe there are still the old type of bone-setters in England. Even Westerners have shown an interest in Buddhism and to some of them it has a religious appeal. It cannot, therefore, be expected that the new movement will subside quickly. But will it absorb ultimately all life or will it be absorbed once more by the more progressive forces? The other day, when the Minister of Education declared that the Burghers would be absorbed by the Sinhalese and the Tamils, a cartoon in the local press portrayed a Burgher girl being accompanied by a young man in national dress and two old ladies watching them posing the question, 'Who absorbs whom?' That is the question. But the answer will depend not on individual action but on forces over which most of us will have no control. Whatever happens, it is clear, people cannot live for ever on the slogans and half-truths of the politicians. Nor can they be fooled all

the time, No one can make much headway with superficial ideas. Realities have to be faced and grievances met. Those who go ahead, taking no notice of new forces that spring up, will meet with disaster. Any government, if it is to survive, must pay heed to new demands, widen its basis to accommodate new forces, and make the necessary adjustments in its own organization. Otherwise it will be swept away. But it is not enough to keep constant watch, study the repercussions of adult franchise, and examine new developments. A government in power must also search deep for the causes of such development and not be satisfied with paying attention, as is done today, to merely what emerges on the surface.

14

THE RISE OF SINHALESE COMMUNALISM*

ONE of the problems of our life today is the gulf that exists between the English and the Sinhalese Press. It is true this wide gap varies from newspaper to newspaper, but anyone who reads both the English and the Sinhalese newspapers cannot help being struck by the wide divergence in their aims and sympathies. Each in many respects seems to live in a world of its own with little concern for the other's views. They seem to move on different planes avoiding any understanding of fundamental issues that separate each other.

It would not be such a catastrophe if this gulf is limited to the English and the Sinhalese Press. In fact, this division is only an expression of a rift in society itself. It is to a great extent a reflection of a disease in the body politic and cannot be eliminated till that disease is eradicated. It is only another aspect of the division between the English-educated and the Sinhalese-educated classes, the upper middle class and the lower middle class, the United National Party and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, the Buddhists and the Christians, especially the Roman Catholics, and the Sinhalese and the Tamils.

The English Press and the English-educated class are impatient with what is happening today. They feel worried that standards are being lowered, efficiency and discipline are being disregarded, the necessity for the study of English as a *sine qua non* for progress in any direction is ignored. They cannot understand the demand for making Sinhalese the medium of instruction in the University when such a step would make education at University level, other than in Oriental studies, impossible and probably disorganize the studies in the University as a whole. They deplore the precipitate way the Sinhala Only Bill was passed when the object of that Act could have been achieved peacefully if only time had been allowed to take its course. They are perturbed when Ministers and Members of Parliament

*11th March 1957

give vent to utterances which ignore issues they consider basic and make proposals which in their opinion will set back the clock of progress by decades and probably plunge the country into chaos.

On the other hand the Sinhalese Press and the Sinhalese-educated class are equally impatient with the pace of the present Government in carrying out the reforms they demand. They accuse those who oppose them of selfish motives. They charge such persons with clinging to their vested interests and objecting to the advance of any but their own section. They think the doctors oppose the improvement of ayurveda in their own interests, and that the lawyers for their convenience and advantage object to the immediate use of Sinhalese in the law courts. They look upon those who sympathize with the Tamils or emphasize the need for English as enemies of the Sinhalese race and language. Some of the Ministers who represent them, therefore, attack the English Press and the English-educated class for their opposition to the changes they want to carry out.

Such divergence in outlook and aims, all will agree, will not benefit either party or the country as a whole. But what is little realized is that this gulf is due to fundamental issues, and the most urgent need today is to bridge this wide gap. It is urgent for other reasons too. The solution of most other problems also depends upon how far this major problem is resolved. On this will depend whether we shall successfully put an end to the impasse between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. Only then shall we be able to give to the study of English the importance it deserves and prevent chaos in the University, or for a matter of that in the economic life of our country. On it also lies the future of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and of good government for a number of years to come.

What are the fundamental issues that bring about this divergence of outlook and aims between the English and the Sinhalese Press, the English-educated and the Sinhalese-educated classes? Why is the Sinhalese Press opposed to the interests of the English-educated class, of the Tamils and of the Christians, especially of the Roman Catholics? The causes are many, and each person may explain the rift from his own angle. But in the main it may be traced to certain acts of the British, in carrying out which they expected quite different

results. The British decided to spread the study of English for the advancement of the people of Ceylon. That was at least one of the objectives, whatever people may say to the contrary. According to the beliefs of the time they thought that if the minds of the people were filled with new ideas, these ideas would transform their outlook and probably change their very nature. At that time neither the evolutionary view of life nor the study of modern psychology had emerged. Hence in doing this they did not take account of the past heritage of Ceylon or the past culture of the Sinhalese. The result was that the Sinhalese who went to the English schools established by Government merely took over the English ways of life without either assimilating them or transforming the old ways of life and thought. Thus they gradually lost sight of their background of culture while those who studied through the medium of Sinhalese absorbed little of the new ideas. There was not sufficient blending of the old and the new. It might have been different had they adopted bilingualism and allowed the two cultures to influence each other. Instead, this process drove a wedge into Sinhalese society and divided it into two camps.

The British, moreover, established modern institutions in order to unify the various races and castes, and expected the old ones to wither away gradually. They were successful in the economic sphere. The Sinhalese form of feudalism as well as the village community system gradually broke down. The British also weakened the old divisions of society by undermining their foundations but they failed to break them up completely. Even the rise of the English-educated class, based on the English language and the new economy, affected little the old groupings, and in some respects it formed a fresh division apart from the old.

The old divisions, however, abandoned some of their original objectives and, adopting new ones, acquired another lease of life. Those groups, which had already attained a privileged position, held together, if possible, to retain it. Others, which lagged behind, united to come into line with the rest. Minorities closed their ranks as far as possible to safeguard their interests, and castes, for similar objects, turned into communal groups. The last to develop in this way were the Sinhalese-educated class and the Buddhists.

The Sinhalese-educated and the Buddhists benefited definitely by the British constitutional reforms. The Colebrooke Reforms, although they placed all persons equal in the sight of the law, permitted men of merit, ability, shrewdness, and capacity for hard work to gain ascendancy over others. But the Donoughmore and the Soulbury Commissions worked in a different direction. They were struck by the inequalities of life in Ceylon. The Donoughmore Commission tried to eliminate these differences by providing a welfare state and giving to all, whether Sinhalese, Tamil or Burgher, equal political rights. The Soulbury Commission went further and, in providing greater representation to minorities, actually increased the representation of the backward areas, thus giving the backward sections of the population a greater chance of coming into line with the rest.

The Sinhalese being a majority community had found it difficult to unite. They had no strong opposition except that of the Tamils to make them do so. They had to overcome the barriers of caste and religion. Besides, the English-educated Sinhalese, separated from the rest, had not sufficient sympathy with the Sinhalese educated class to lead them. The result was that the new communalism sprang from the Sinhalese-educated section and those who followed the Buddhist faith. The Sinhalese-educated class realized on the one hand that they were not so disunited as before and on the other that those who lagged behind had now a chance, if an effort was made, to improve their position. What had to be done was to capture the Government, just as the English-educated middle class had captured it from the British. Their numbers and the aims of the welfare state had made it possible for them to gain this end.

But the Sinhalese-Buddhist community realized that it was no easy task to maintain their ascendancy even if they gained political power. They had to fight against great odds in order to establish themselves and play their rightful part in the affairs of the country. The only way they could attain their objects was by developing the Sinhalese language and reforming Buddhism, with which their own development was bound up. There were already two rivals to the Sinhalese language. English was a world language and there was every danger that it would replace Sinhalese. If they succeeded against English, they feared Tamil might take its place in the

near future if not immediately. Tamil was the language of South India, and it had every chance of developing faster than Sinhalese. What was there to prevent it from replacing Sinhalese ultimately? Buddhism similarly was in a backward state. Some of its institutions were becoming obsolete. It had to reorganize itself but the obstacles in its way were great. Above all it had to compete with Christian organizations which had established themselves firmly and had made great advances in the country under British rule.

Thus the Sinhalese-Buddhists, fighting not merely for privileges but for their very existence, want to preserve their language and religion. They think the only way they can preserve Sinhalese is by making it the language of Government and by making it the medium of education up to the University level. Similarly they want to deprive the Christians of the privileged position they have attained, as otherwise the Buddhists would have an unequal struggle with the Christians and may finally fail. Thus, until the Sinhalese language is secure and Buddhism is firmly established, the present movement is not likely to lose its force unless some catastrophe takes place.

These facts explain why some Sinhalese are becoming so communal and some Buddhists are becoming so intolerant. That is why for instance they oppose the Tamil demands for parity as, in their opinion, to yield to them would be to commit suicide. The Sinhalese Press has, therefore, little sympathy with the Tamil claims. The Sinhalese-educated Buddhists have not forgotten that the break-up of their ancient civilization was at least partly due to Tamil invasions, and that in the fourteenth century Ceylon nearly became a Tamil country. They interpret the opposition to the Sinhalese demands for constitutional reforms, shown from time to time by the main body of the Tamils, not as a fight for rights and privileges but as an attempt to gain dominance over the Sinhalese. Remembering how Sinhalese disunity helped the election of a Tamil to the Educated Ceylonese seat in 1912, they look upon the fight for fifty-fifty in 1945 as a means to gain ascendancy depending on the disunity of the Sinhalese. As long as the Tamil language and Hinduism are fostered in South India, Tamils have nothing to fear for their language or culture, say the Sinhalese-educated. The Sinhalese on the other hand cannot look to any other source for the continuity

of their language and religion which have survived in spite of the vicissitudes which the Sinhalese people have gone through for over two thousand years.

In this context it can be understood why the Sinhalese Press disregards the demands of the English Press. It has to advocate something much more vital than the maintenance of efficiency and high standards. To it the development of the Sinhalese language is far more important than the maintenance of a high level in secondary or university education. It will not deny the importance of English, but it takes the view that this is not the time to emphasize it. Once Sinhalese is safe, English can be given its due place. Similarly, once Buddhism is placed on a sound footing, Christianity can be allowed the tolerance it deserves.

But one of the chief difficulties in the way of achieving these objects is the limited wealth of the country. Funds are necessary to develop the Sinhalese language to enable it to take the place of English, to set up Buddhism on an equal footing with the Christian churches and to raise the Sinhalese-educated class to the level of others (e.g. the Tamils), in the government services and in all other walks of life. If the Sinhalese-educated people, the Sinhalese language, and Buddhism cannot be raised up, the only way justice can be meted out to them is by levelling down the others. It will create much heart-burning and discontent among those who have already reached a higher position than the Sinhalese-educated. But even if they have reached this level by their own merit, justice demands, in the view of the Sinhalese Press, that they should make sacrifices for the sake of those who have been left behind.

No doubt many will not be impressed by such arguments. Some will question the advisability of such measures or the justice of some of them. Will the Sinhalese language ever attain the position aimed at by the Sinhalese Press? If Buddhism organizes itself in a new way on the lines of the Christians or in some other modern form, will not such institutions change the very nature of Buddhism itself? But such doubts will not deter those who fight for their very existence. Nor will they be concerned about fairness to others until, in their opinion, justice is done to them.

The English Press goes further and points out that the radical reforms demanded by the Sinhalese Press will not

solve problems but create many more. Whatever may be the motives of the reformers, they have to realize that no progress is possible in Ceylon unless there is communal harmony. Even if Sinhalese is made the state language, neglect of English would retard the progress of Ceylon. Moreover, Sinhalese, for its own development, for the evolution of its terms, ideas, and concepts, must come into close contact with a living world language like English. Did it not improve in the past by its contact with Pali and Sanskrit? True religion can never be aggressive. If Buddhists conquer the whole of Ceylon by means of political pressure, they may even destroy the spiritual values of Buddhism in that process.

More than all, for any progress in Ceylon the first prerequisite is economic development. When Colebrooke recommended radical reforms in Sinhalese society he also proposed vast changes in the economy of the Island. But for this economic development, even the Buddhist revival in the seventies of the last century would have been feeble and the movement today equally weak. The late Mr. D. S. Senanayake realized this great fact and spent most of his time not in striving for independence but in developing the economy of the Dry Zone. Mr. Dudley Senanayake was equally convinced of this fact. It is for no other reason that he even risked his premiership by abolishing the rice subsidy, and diverted the money so saved to development schemes. If this important fact is ignored and some of the vigour of this new force is not diverted to the economic development of the country, the Sinhalese-Buddhist movement itself may fail.

What has been stated already has no doubt made it clear that the wide gap between the English and the Sinhalese Press is due to fundamental issues. However much either side argues, without an appreciation of these basic differences the gulf between the two classes cannot be bridged. Even if the Sinhalese Press abandons its policy and takes up the causes advocated by the English Press it will not make much difference. The last General Election showed that the Press is effective only when it expresses public opinion, and can do little to change the deeper currents that influence life today.

Perhaps the most the English Press can do is to place before the English-educated class the point of view of the Sinhalese-educated class and the meaning of their present demands.

The Sinhalese Press will perform a similar service if it will only explain the point of view of the English-educated class: that they are thinking of a united Ceylon, and not merely in terms of Sinhalese and Buddhism, and that the Sinhalese and the Buddhist can make no real progress unless they take into account the aims and views of other sections of society.

But neither the Press nor the politicians who have to deal with day to day questions can offer solutions to the complex problems of today. The work of understanding and reconciliation must be carried out by others, and it is they who must offer the solutions to the Press and the politicians to accept or reject. If men of goodwill of all communities do not undertake this task and bridge this gulf by taking into account these fundamental differences in aims and outlook which affect varied interests, not only the Sinhalese and the Buddhists but the country as a whole will have to suffer the consequences of hasty and precipitate action.

15

THE SINHALESE-TAMIL PROBLEM AND THE LANGUAGE ISSUE

WHEN I visited Batticaloa and Jaffna (in June 1957) I was struck by the intensity of feeling over the language issue. The Tamils I met were concerned mainly with the Sinhala Only Act. Few spoke about the demands of the Federal Party. Hardly any showed interest in the enfranchisement of the Indian Tamils. Some were concerned about the establishment of Sinhalese colonists in the Eastern Province which they considered was the special preserve of the Tamil speaking peoples. Many were interested in federalism as a means to an end. But all considered 'the Sinhala Only Act' as something that affected their self-respect and dignity, and looked upon it as an attempt on the part of the Sinhalese to humiliate them by giving the Tamil language an inferior status.

The emotional state was such that few discussed even the adverse effects of the Sinhala Only Act which created this intensity of feeling. It undoubtedly placed the Tamils at a disadvantage. It hit them by reducing the number of appointments in the Public Services that would be open to them besides reducing the chances of promotion of those already in service; it brought about a feeling of complete despair among the Jaffna youths who were already worrying about securing employment in accordance with the education they had acquired. The Act was precipitately forced through Parliament by a majority vote without prior consultation and the acquiescence of those it adversely affected. And the Tamils who openly expressed their collective opposition to the Bill were humiliated and treated with violence when their grievances should have been redressed.

In addition to all this the strong feeling was intensified by the inaction of the Government for more than a year in guaranteeing by law even the reasonable use of Tamil promised to them. This delay had led to a loss of confidence in the Government and to a fear that it did not intend fulfilling its promises. Hence there was growing among these people a

feeling of insecurity, and this feeling was driving them to demand a federal state where at least in two provinces, whatever hardships they had to endure, they could live in peace following their own inclinations and a way of life directed by themselves.

This does not mean that I found the Tamils socially hostile to the Sinhalese. The Tamils admit that they, in all strata of society, mix with the Sinhalese and have good friends among them. They know that Buddhists are not antagonistic to Hindus, and look upon Buddhism as an expression of Hinduism. A few of them at least are aware that in the Buddhist Commission Report produced by the Sinhalese there is not a word against the Hindus and that it has recommended that Hinduism like Buddhism should be assisted by the State. They know that in social customs the Sinhalese have much in common with them. But yet, driven by this feeling of insecurity, they imagine that the Sinhalese people are out to deny them justice and equality in Ceylon society.

This distrust of the Sinhalese in the North and the East is due also to causes other than those stated already. One is ignorance of the implications of the recent developments in the Sinhalese area. They cannot understand the factors that led to the Sinhala Only Act as there has been no corresponding development, in the same proportions, in the Tamil area. Among the Tamils there is no powerful Tamil-educated class hostile to the English-educated class. There is no strong Hindu movement against Christianity. Among them English education has so permeated even the lower middle class as to prevent a clear-cut division between the upper and the lower middle class. Hence there is no powerful Tamil-educated lower middle class following Hinduism fighting for their rights against the English-educated Tamils or Christians.

The Tamils, therefore find it difficult to grasp the fact that the movement in the Sinhalese area was a development not so much against the Tamils but of the Sinhalese-educated Sinhalese of the lower middle class against the English-educated of the upper middle class. They do not understand that the English-educated Sinhalese are as much the victims as themselves. Further, it is a movement among the Buddhists, especially of the Sinhalese-educated section, against Christianity, primarily the Roman Catholic Church. It is only in a

lesser degree that the attacks in the Sinhalese Press are directed against the Tamils. The primary object of the Sinhalese-educated Buddhists is not to liquidate the Tamils but to establish their language and their religion on a firm footing.

Most Tamils also do not understand that there was an emotional crisis about two years ago among the Sinhalese-educated Sinhalese similar to that among the Tamils today. After Ceylon attained independence the Sinhalese-speaking Sinhalese found that this event made little difference to them. In spite of some of the actions of the last Government to help the cause of the Sinhalese language and Buddhism, the Sinhalese-educated Sinhalese remained socially inferior and counted little in the political and economic sphere. His religion, Buddhism, received less attention than Christianity which had attained a privileged position under the British.

The Buddhist monk did not play the important role he did under the Sinhalese kings, and was not granted the status he deserved as a monk of a religion which was followed by nearly two-thirds of the people. The Sinhalese schoolmaster received a lower salary than the one who taught in a school where English was the medium of instruction and was given a status lower than that of the English teacher. Above all, the pupils in Sinhalese Schools, even if they passed the S.S.C. Examination, had very, very few avenues of employment and had often to take up posts as servants. Unemployment became rampant among them and these Sinhalese-educated began to despair of their future. They began to demand social justice and those already employed pressed for a higher standard of living such as that enjoyed by the English-educated classes. They felt that the only way they could achieve their objects was by making Sinhalese the language of government and the medium of instruction. This meant the displacement of the English-educated class from their present position, but that was no consideration to persons underprivileged and living in a state of insecurity.

What then of the Tamil language? Was it not to be given equal status with the Sinhalese? The Sinhalese-educated feared, perhaps wrongly, that once English was replaced by Sinhalese, if Tamil was given equal status, Sinhalese would not be able to compete with it. What chance, they thought,

has the Sinhalese language spoken among less than six millions against a language used by nearly thirty millions in South India and Ceylon? Thus they were unwilling to give parity of status to Tamil and demanded a Sinhala Only Act. There is no doubt that many Sinhalese also knew that this would deprive many Tamils of the chance of securing employment under Government. But in this way they were meting out to the Tamils almost the same treatment accorded to the English-educated Sinhalese. Besides they were not willing to abandon the fruits of their victory at the General Election over the English-educated by giving them over to the Tamils.

There is another similarity in the developments among the Sinhalese and the Tamils. In the case of the Sinhalese too the language issue became ultimately the main one. It became associated with their cultural heritage and they fought for the language in order to preserve this heritage. Is language a master or a servant? Is it a means or an end in itself? In times of crisis when a people are faced with fear and insecurity it seems to be a characteristic of human nature to turn away from reason and make an idol of some factor which would draw together the community in the face of a common danger. At times, on such occasions, they deify a leader who they believe would lead them to their goal. At other times they idolize a language or a culture, a religious institution or a state. Then this idol becomes the centre of emotion overshadowing everything else.

The chief factor that makes the solution of the Sinhalese-Tamil problem difficult is the exaggerated fears and misunderstandings on both sides. Anyone who moves freely among the Sinhalese and the Tamils will soon realize that what both want is to live in peace and carry on their own activities. But the Tamils believe that the Sinhalese are out to liquidate them, while the Sinhalese hold the view that the Tamils are out to dominate over them. The fear of the Tamils is due mainly to recent events. The fear of the Sinhalese is due to past history and the demands of the Tamils, especially those of the Federal Party.

The Sinhalese population is nearly six times that of the Tamils. How then, the Sinhalese ask, can there be parity in language? Does it mean that there should be parity both in government of record and in government of communication? In the Sinhalese area has every deed, every survey

plan, every minute, every file, every sign-post, to be in both languages? Does it mean that in every Sinhalese locality wherever a few Tamils live, both in the boys' and girls' schools, there should be a Tamil stream even if such an arrangement is a financial impossibility? If the Tamils do not mean that, why do they not drop the word parity?

Why do the Tamils want an autonomous linguistic state? Will that not break up Ceylon into two? Will that not enable the Tamils to federate finally with South India and extinguish the Sinhalese? The Tamils do not want the Government to send Sinhalese colonists to the Eastern Province lest the political ascendancy of the Tamils there may be upset. Why then do they demand the complete enfranchisement of the Indians in the Kandyan provinces when such a set-up will reduce the Kandyan representatives by about half?

There is pressure on land in the central and the south-western areas as in the Jaffna Peninsula. The Kandyan peasant is often landless and lives very often on an inadequate or uneconomic plot of land. In the Southern Province where Communism is growing, the situation is even more serious. The Southern Province Sinhalese, like the Jaffna Tamils, migrate into every part of the Island, into the Kandyan highlands, into every part of the Dry Zone and even into the very heart of the Jaffna Peninsula and take up work as labourers, cultivators, bakers, carpenters and in other capacities. If colonization is denied to them in the Eastern Province will there be sufficient fertile land elsewhere for them to settle and eke out an existence?

If Sinhalese is to be the language of the Sinhalese-speaking areas and Tamil that of the Tamil-speaking areas some form of federalism is inevitable. But it has to be remembered that Ceylon is a small country and that it has had a unified system of administration for one hundred and twenty-five years. Under such conditions it is practically impossible to break up Ceylon into two as some Tamils suggest. Emotion can create crises but it cannot solve highly complex problems. If only the Sinhalese and the Tamils will delve deep enough into the problem they will no doubt realize that what is most important is not the language question or a federal state. What is urgent is for them to unite and develop the economy of the country and give security and freedom from fear to both the Sinhalese and the Tamils.

16

HISTORY SHOULD BE REWRITTEN, BUT WHY?

Are we going back to the past or drawing out of it?

SHOULD history be rewritten? No historian could answer this question in the negative. There is no finality to history. There is no end to the accumulation of facts, the evaluation of their significance, and their interpretation. Research into the past is going on ceaselessly. Fresh discoveries of facts force us to reassess the importance of earlier criteria. New developments in Ceylon and outside widen our vision, and as a result our perspective of the past changes. This does not mean that historians change the past or attempt to give an untrue picture of the past. They do not arrogate to themselves a power with which even God or gods are not credited. When new facts come to light which alter the picture or new experiences widen their horizon, they consider it their duty to rewrite history altering the old picture and giving it a new perspective.

But the question really at issue today is not whether history should be rewritten. On this historians as well as non-historians are agreed. The real question is why history should be rewritten. On this disagreement is clear as the popular views with regard to the need to rewrite history do not coincide with those of the historians. The requests put forward today for rewriting history do not seem to arise so much from the new material available to historians as from an emotional set-up which is in revolt with the immediate past as understood by those who express such views. In fact many who demand the rewriting of history are not so much concerned with the past as with the present. They want the past to justify the present as they understand it or fulfil the needs or the demands of the present. They are not inspired by a genuine desire to investigate a problem and find out the truth but to confirm a current popular assumption or prejudice. In short what the non-historians ask for is not so much a history as a literary work, not so much a statement based on and derived from facts, as a statement of facts which would give expression to their feelings.

One body that has put forward the suggestion that the history of Ceylon should be rewritten is the All-Ceylon Buddhist Congress. It is not clear why this organization made this demand. Just as some Christians still ask for a Christian interpretation of history, does the Buddhist Congress demand a Buddhist interpretation? In the *Mahavamsa* it may be said that there is some such interpretation. Its author wrote his work to rouse serene joy and religious emotion, an emotion which would produce a revulsion from the world and its misery.

The author of the *Mahavamsa* had also another object in writing his work. He wanted to teach moral lessons. In dealing with Elara he says "Only because (this monarch) freed himself from the guilt of walking in the path of evil, though he had not put aside false beliefs, did he gain such miraculous power; how should not then an understanding man, established in pure belief (Buddhism), renounce here the guilt of walking in the path of evil?"

If the object of writing history is to draw men away from 'the world', then it is almost a negation of the modern conception of history which emphasizes the importance of the events of this life and tries to explain their significance. Nor do historians today consider it their business, as medieval European historians did, to teach religion, morals, or other lessons. Modern historians have also resisted any attempt at a Christian interpretation as it would be a travesty of history, or, if such an interpretation is considered feasible, it would alter the conception of history as generally held by historians today.

But a Buddhist or an ethical interpretation does not seem to be the object of the All-Ceylon Buddhist Congress in making their demand for a rewriting of history. Nor does the Report of the Buddhist Commission convey such an idea. If we are to accept a statement of the Secretary of the All-Ceylon Buddhist Congress, the reasons for rewriting the history of Ceylon are other than these. They are mainly religious and national. Some history books according to him give distorted accounts. In general they do not give sufficient importance to Buddhism. Instead they minimize the role played by Buddhism and Buddhists in the history of the Island. They do not give sufficient publicity either to the heroic

deeds of Sinhalese in fighting against foreigners for the independence of the country or to the achievements of the Sinhalese in the field of culture and their actions in the preservation of their religion.

Such criticisms are not peculiar to Ceylon. There are Christians who complain that European historians do not bring out sufficiently in their works the important part played by Christianity and the Christian Church in the development of Europe. There was a time in Europe when nationalist histories were the order of the day and the deeds of heroes who fought against foreigners were given great prominence.

There are undoubtedly many reasons why the history of Ceylon should be rewritten.

First, as stated already, our knowledge of the past is not static. Today we know much more of the past than we did twenty years ago and very much more than we knew before 1890 when the Archaeological Department was established. Before that writers depended mainly on the Pali Chronicles for a knowledge of the Anuradhapura and the Polonnaruva Periods. But since 1890 archaeological discoveries of both monuments and inscriptions, and critical studies of the Chronicles and other literary sources, have helped us to learn not only more about the past but also to get a fuller and more accurate picture as well as a clearer idea of the value to be attached to that period when one deals with the whole course of Ceylon history. Thus in view of the new facts available, to which the Secretary of the Buddhist Congress too has drawn attention, no one can deny the necessity for rewriting the history of the early period.

This rewriting is necessary not only with regard to the period before 1505. For the period after that date too there is much more evidence today though the amount unexamined is much greater. When examined, this material will probably yield to us a much better idea of the Sinhalese and Tamil civilizations than the sources of the early period reveal. Besides, this period is a study of the impact of the West with its science and technology which will explain more than anything else the revolutionary changes taking place today.

Secondly, history should be rewritten also because the outlook of historians appears to change from generation to generation. Even if we examine historical writings during

the British Period by British administrators, Christian missionaries and Ceylonese, we find that their outlook and view of the past changed from time to time not merely as a result of the accumulation of historical facts but as a result of the widening of their horizon in general especially as a result of scientific developments and of the growing knowledge of the diverse civilizations of the world. The recent developments too have reminded us once more that the past is still very much alive and drawn our attention to the need for a re-examination of the nature of our ancient civilization.

Another reason for rewriting the history of Ceylon is the radical changes that have taken place during the last one hundred years in the conception and content of history as held by historians. Histories in the real sense are no longer written to teach religion or morality or any other lessons of life. The role played by any religion is not described except in relation to political, economic, and other social developments. History is no longer rewritten, as the Secretary of the All-Ceylon Buddhist Congress suggests, 'to create a sense of nationalism and patriotism among the future generations and to build up a nation of self-respecting men and women'. There is no doubt an urgent need exists for a history of Buddhism in Ceylon. There is also no objection to a series of national biographies or to a work to create a sense of nationalism and patriotism. But let not the last two types of books, though they provide historical material, be considered histories.

If what has been stated so far is accepted as valid it will be evident that the demand for the rewriting of history on the part of some is due to a lack of understanding of the modern conception of history. This is not surprising as the art of writing history did not reach a high level in Ceylon in the past. One of the greatest of the living Indian historians said the other day that though ideas of history and of historical literature are not lacking in Sanskrit writings, it is a well-known fact that with the single exception of the *Rajatarngini* (History of Kashmir), there is no other historical text in Sanskrit dealing with the whole or even parts of India. It is true, he added, there were chronicles, epic poems and *Puranas* which would have come under the category of *itihasa*, chronicles such as the *Vamsavalis* of Nepal, historical biographies such as the *Harshacharita*, but they cannot be regarded as history in the proper sense of the term.

Though Indians produced almost every form of literary work and reached a high standard of perfection in them, why did they not develop very far the art of writing history? The explanation given is that Indian religious thought in general denied any meaning or value to history. Indian historians usually did not seek to explain events by natural causes but by actions of men in their previous lives. Nevertheless the *Rajatarangini* approaches in some respects a modern history. Its author, Kalhana, though he did not always rise to his ideals in composing his work, believes that the mission of a historian is to make vivid before one's eyes the pictures of a bygone age. He considered it his duty to keep his mind unprejudiced. He critically examined the writings of others in the light of other available evidence such as inscriptions before he drew his conclusions. It is, however, not known what factors, foreign or local, influenced him to write this unique work.

Ceylon produced much more historical writings than any other part of ancient India. It can take pride in the Pali Chronicles, the accuracy of many of the facts of which has been proved by contemporary inscriptions. It has many other historical works such as the *Vamsavalis* besides many other works of a historical nature. But none of these works reached the level of the *Rajatarangini*. One of the long narratives we have is that of the reign of Parakramahahu the Great. But in that account many events unfavourable to Parakramabahu have been suppressed. Perhaps the greatest hero of Ceylon history is Vijayabahu I. He carried on for years a persistent warfare against the mighty Chola Empire and made Ceylon once more independent of foreign rule. But the *Culavamsa* gives very little information of his marvellous career. The author of the same work dismisses with a few verses the story of Sigiriya, the most striking, if not the greatest, of the ancient monuments of Ceylon. Hence it is natural that many who are versed in the ancient tradition of learning or are not in touch with the more recent developments that have altered the conception and content of history, should express views such as those referred to already.

According to modern ideas, history, as far as the collection of material is concerned, is a science of criticism. Once the facts are established, it turns into an interpretation of human

development. In this context it deals primarily with facts which lead to changes in human societies. In the past, history consisted mainly of political events. Then administrative and economic factors were taken into consideration. Today history is not so much the activities of rulers as the development of peoples. It thus takes into account not only political facts but also economic, social and other factors and their interaction on one another in this process of change. In other words, influenced by the theory of evolution, historians try to explain what is called the historical process: how and why Ceylon society or societies came to be what they are today. In this explanation undoubtedly the role played by Buddhism, the Sangha and the laity, will have to be described as a part of this historical process, though it may not follow the pattern of the historical introduction of the Buddhist Commission Report which appears to have been written in order to justify a view of the past held by the Commissioners without taking a comprehensive view of the recent past or without testing the accuracy of the facts they presented or the over-all picture they depicted.

Another reason which has led to the demand for rewriting the history of Ceylon seems to be a conviction on the part of some, especially non-historians, that the works hitherto written have not attached sufficient importance to the period before the contact with the West. This criticism has been dealt with and accepted. The charge is more dangerous when it is formulated with a slight but insidious alteration of stress, namely that historians have attached too much importance to the period after 1505, which in the opinion of the critics is a period of decline and of little significance until once more the Sinhalese and the Tamil people by their own activities emerged, put an end to British rule, and began to restore their own way of life. That such a view is held by many is not surprising. No less a person than K. M. Panikkar in his book *A Survey of Indian History* wrote: "The true history of India during the British Period does not consist of the activities of the East India Company or its successor the British Crown, but of the upheaval which led to the transformation of Indian society through the activities of India's own sons."

This view of Ceylon history has been examined in earlier chapters. It has been pointed out that the decline of the ancient civilization of Ceylon began much earlier than 1505,

in the thirteenth century. The Portuguese ruled directly over not much more than a third of Ceylon and that was only for about sixty years. The Dutch ruled over a much smaller area though their rule covered nearly one hundred and forty years. Though Buddhism had little chance in these restricted areas occupied by the Portuguese and the Dutch, foreign rule affected little the Sinhalese and Tamil ways of life within them. Even in the larger area where Sinhalese rulers held sway, Buddhism declined till the revival under the leadership of the saintly Valivita Saranankara took place. Under British rule this movement spread into the areas occupied by the Portuguese and the Dutch, and Buddhism made considerable advance though it did not receive royal aid as in earlier times. But what is even more significant is that Buddhism is now on the threshold of important reforms in its organization and its scope of social activity which are bound to affect its rules of discipline and its dogmas.

Thus what is needed is a history of Ceylon that depicts among other things not only the developments in Buddhism in Ceylon before 1505, the relation in which it stood to the ancient form of government, but also the vicissitudes which Theravada Buddhism went through after that date without suffering extinction as in many parts of India; a history that will trace in detail the effects of the impact of the West, especially under British rule, on Buddhism, the Sangha and the laity, and explain why this great religion with its long history is once more on the verge of great changes.

We shall also never understand the present developments with regard to the Sinhalese and Tamil languages and the interest aroused in Sinhalese and Tamil literature if we merely study the Sinhalese and Tamil cultural developments before 1505 or even up to 1815. In order to appreciate them we shall have to study the development of Sinhalese and Tamil schools from the times of the Dutch, the resurgence of the pirivenas under British rule, the developments of the Sinhalese and the Tamil Press within the last hundred years, the rise of the Sinhalese drama, the emergence of the Sinhalese novel and other new forms of literature. We shall have to examine the growth of the Sinhalese language not only before 1505 but after that, especially under British rule. It is true that just as the adoption of Pali, the 'world' language of Theravada Buddhism, by the educated for the expression of

their ideas retarded the growth of Sinhalese for some centuries, so the adoption of English by many as their vehicle of expression affected the growth of Sinhalese for some time. But the Sinhalese language at the same time became enriched, as it benefited earlier by its contact with Pali and Sanskrit, by acquiring from the English language and its literature new terms and concepts which it did not possess earlier. In other words today we are really not going back to the past but trying to grow out of it. It is true we have been for a while adopting an alien past. We need to correct this and see that the past we grow out of is our own; but that is a different matter from going back to our past. If we go back to our roots it is only to make them firmer in order to grow further and expand.

We have to note that even the present Government is not going against scientific and industrial development but is out to accelerate it. There is no attempt to abandon the democratic form of government which we inherited from the British for the old absolute or despotic form of government. There is no desire to give up the present bureaucratic administrative system in order to revert to the headman system through which Sinhalese kings ruled. There is no attempt to upset radically the new economic system or revert to forms of *rajakariya*. There is no urge to abandon the modern forms of transport for older forms of conveyance.

Can we then go back to the past only in our cultural and social life? When some Ministers of State and Members of Parliament abandoned the coat and trousers with their accompaniments for the so-called national dress, it may be argued that they did so because the latter is more suited to local conditions. But it is more likely they did so because they realized that the psychological evolution of our people has not yet kept pace with our technical development, and that if they are to identify themselves with the majority of them they have to take account of this discrepancy. This does not however mean that they are going back to old ways in other aspects of life.

It is a striking fact that when a new way of doing something is discovered even the discoverer himself does not fully understand what he is doing. When the automobile was first discovered it was built like a horse-drawn vehicle and not in its

modern form. Many people then thought it was merely another form of travelling and it took some time for them to realize that it signified a revolution in transport. Though only a pipe was needed to feed gas and only a wire to conduct electricity, electric lights were first designed like the gas lamps they replaced, and these in turn were patterned on the oil lamps which preceded them. Hence at first few realized that a revolution was taking place in the methods of illumination. Similarly the present revivalism in our social life is not a set-back but a facade which hides the revolution that is taking place in Sinhalese and Tamil society.

Hence, before we lay down what the new history of Ceylon should be, we should know what history is as it is understood today. We must also see that we do not allow our emotions to get the better of facts in making our assessment of the past and minimize the importance of the vast changes that have resulted from the impact of the West, with its science and technology, on our social life, though such social changes have not kept pace with those in our political and economic life.

INDEX

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