

BEYOND

Rite

TO

REALITY

Towards

A

CONTEXTUAL  
THEOLOGY

by

Sevakas of the  
Ministries' School

— UVA —

SEVAKA SEVANA

PUBLICATIONS [2] / DECEMBER 1976

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## INTRODUCTION

SEVAKA SEVANA makes its second bow before the public.

This time our *sevakas* (ministers) present subjects closely allied to, and within the scope of, what is called sacramental theology. Long past is the time of the 'death of God', in Theology. In Christ, Christians affirm that the *agios athanatos*, the God beyond death, is alive and renewing the world with His Breath, His Spirit.

CONFIDENT as we are of being in the "heart of Uva province", and assured by Dr. Hilary Cruz last year in his Pastoral Symphony in Uva, "that much of our life and work will be among the down - and - outs, the down-trodden", and that history will surely understand us and uphold us and acknowledge" us, we venture to present a few theological reflexions and share with you some of our theological thinking.

THIS TIME WE ASK YOU for your theological 'indulgence'. In a church that is in transition from some older ways to some newer ways, the tussle will be present between various, and basically two, theological methods. The Synod of 1974 bore witness to it: "the divergence between the two preliminary drafts of conclusions was one of theological method, inductive and deductive; the disavowal of the third draft, the substance of which continued to make deduction from *a priori* principles without reaching down to reality, meant the rejection of a certain manner of reflection. A worn - out theological approach had failed and had been exploded" (1). To us, the transition is precisely here: we need the best of the past linked to the most hopeful of the future, and thus we need to complement the two trends from real life and practice to principles and from principles to real life.

THERE IS ONLY ONE THEOLOGY: that which fosters and deepens, in Christ, our faith in God and in God's people. Like an outburst of a blossoming flower, this may grow out into a variety of aspects: hope, liberation, development, peace, work, revolution, political theology, but basically it points to, and takes its rise from, Christ. (2)

IT IS WITHIN THIS deeper understanding, as "children of the Council", to borrow a phrase from the revered Pope Paul VI that our faith seeks to understand = *fides querens intellectum* - that which we believe.



SOME YEARS AGO, the theologian Henri Denis queried in a loud title in France: "Les Sacrements, ont-ils un avenir?" —Do the Sacraments have a future? And he answered with a resounding 'yes', that they were needed in the world more than ever before. It was succinctly worded in a recent seminar resolution of some missionaries from twelve countries gathered at Tewatta, Ragama:

"The Pastoral and Sacramental ministry must be aimed at promoting the presence of Christians in society to be witnesses of Christian values. In our social work the criteria should be care and concern for the people. Are we really reaching the people, meeting their wants, or are we concerned with our methods and projects as social engineers and social manipulators? Do we really try to build up self-reliant human communities, not isolated, but mobilising the resources of the country... to improve the quality of human life, ... Do we co-operate with all agencies at work which are effective — whether governmental, Christian or non-christian ? (3)

THERE IS NO POSSIBILITY for a Christian to participate affectively and effectively in the renewal and development of Uva if he is not a convinced, committed person, animated by the desire to be in relation: with human persons, with structures for the good and for the betterment of the people; with moves for renewal of life as a true generation or re-birth (*Baptism* is his constant reminder); with renewed efforts at reconciling and mediating as God's 'middlemen' (4) (here, *Penance* is strong reminder); with efforts at a sharing of the world's goods equitably and with justice as a family shares food, or as food shared makes for true family-spirit in rite and truth, in Symbol and Reality (*Communion/Sacrifice* is effective reminder of this aspect of life).

A BASIC INSIGHT which has become a common factor in our discussions in the redaction of this number of *Sevaka Sevana* has been: that the spirit of sharing of the world's goods is productive of self-sacrifice, and the spirit of self-sacrifice absorbed adopted, assimilated, made one's own, is productive of sheer sharing of the world's resources, of a region's resources, of a country's goods and skills and wealth.

WHY? Because the christian (catholic) regards the Eucharistic celebration as the source and summit of christian living. He believes that the Church is both visible and invisible, human and divine, or *theandric* in some way (5). If the Church visibly washes, humanly and manifestly shows in her rite, called Baptism, what she means to do and does, she believes in the manifestation of the grace of special enlightenment she calls Baptism. All her



sacraments are thus points of encounter with the Person of Jesus Christ, human and divine. Man is of a "sacramental nature" to use the word of Coffey-Varro (6). The Church, in celebrating her Sacraments celebrates her communion with Christ. She knows she lives the mystery (secret) of her existence and life by these gestures which Christ performs in her. She must continue to ask herself in each sacrament what she preaches to men: is the reality of Baptism really lived out? Are the roots of evil being detected when Penance is celebrated? It is here that we profoundly believe that the Church makes the Sacraments, and the Sacraments make the Church. It is not only a question of making, in the sense of 'fabricate'. That, she does effectively. But she also must see to it that the sacraments make, fashion, form, transform the Church so that her children may be real witnesses to Christ's love *in the world*, rejecting the worldly spirit (laukika) and adopting as *they* go through this world, the other-worldly spirit (lokottara).

THE CHURCH ANNOUNCES to the world at large what must happen to mankind: acceptance of divine favour, praise thanksgiving, self-sacrifice and self-offering, to the Father through the Son, in the Spirit. It is in this milieu of life, the Church, within it and in relation to it, that the hidden work of grace goes on in the hearts of all men. The Church is that part of mankind that knows and avows salvation or liberation in embryo, fulfilled towards greater fulfilment.

ACCORDINGLY, *Sevaka Mathew G. Silva* writes of universal Self-Sacrifice which despite heavy odds, seems to be a push in the heart of every man. In relation to sacramental Baptism, he reflects on the Baptism of desire, one time relegated to a mere footnote.

*Al Haj S. M. A. Raschid, J.P.* Vice-President of the Congress of Religions addressed us on Vesak Day 1976 urging us to examine the necessary role of selflessness in all religious aspirations, a point of typical insistence in the life and teaching of the Buddha.

*Sevaka Lakshman P. Ranasinghe*, leads the reader towards a deeper understanding of the variety of ministries and the diversity of living-out the Priestly Ministry (Orders) in catholic-christian life, especially according to needs and tasks of the local Church. This needs much soul-searching and a basic selflessness on the part of the church.

*Sevaka Patrick Joseph* treats of an action-oriented Ecumenism for Uva; a leaving-aside of mere doctrinal, theoretical, bible-Book study for the moment while we pursue the possibili-



ties of working together, thoughtfully and prayerfully with our christian brethren, *with all men of goodwill, for All*. He insists on a more serious look and a deeper study of *wider ecumenism*. His plea could not be more urgent, nor more sincere.

*Sevaka Frederick Perera* without over-simplification, places two rites side by side: the rite of the Eucharistic celebration-and-vigil of old, and the rite of the Pirit - Bana - Dana service(s) in Buddhism. In the one, he sees: Word-hymn-homily/Offering/Consecration/Communion-sharing. In the other he sees: Dhamma-gatha-bana/Pooja/Dana. He rightly reckons that due to historical reasons, the Buddhist had to withdraw from bloody sacrifices of animals and so the Buddhist ritual framework avoids the *yaga*. His plea for sharing and self-sacrifice is cogent.

(*Sr*.) *Milburga Fernando*, staff-member, lecturer in Christology and Grace attempts to outline the religious aspirations and the not-so-religious aspirations of some people in the rural areas of Uva. Her interviews, comments, reflexions lead us to examine the dialectic of faith and fear; the opening up of the formerly 'remote' regions of Uva. With sympathy, but with an insistence on purification of attitude of mind, she provides the reader with the life and aspirations of the simple, loving, self-dedicated villager of Uva.

In a section termed: *Not for immediate implementation but for research and study*, we have found it useful to present an article by a well-known Dominican from France, *Fr. Luneau, O.P.* Its African background could easily be transposed to Sri Lanka, but that in itself would be 'jumping the gun' unless there is a serious study and reflexion as part of the praxis of our people.

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We need not tell you once again that these are attempts of theological sophomores! They have almost ended two years of study, have known more people, lived in villages and met with difficulties of real life. Here again, they profit from experience but they appreciate your remarks and long for your suggestions which will help them get closer to the mystery of faith and closer



to the people whom God loves so much. How happy we will be if you could take a pen and jot down some useful hints so that they may be better *Sevakas*, better ministers for Uva.

Dear Readers, we count on you.

Michael P. Rodrigo, omi  
(editor)

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Notes:

- (1) Synod of Bishops, 1974, J. Dupuis, *Vidyajoti*, journal of theological reflection, April 1975, pp. 146-169. (Page 169) (Catholic Press, Ranchi, India).
- (2) Today we have Theology of terrestrial realities (Georges Thi's, Chenu, Congar, J. B. Metz, Schoonenberg, Michalson, Frosini and others); Theology of Work (Chenu, Auer, Truhlar, Todd J. M.); Theology of Peace (Comblin, Coste, Lochet, Schmidt; and a few others); Political Theology (Cox, Metz, Moltmann, Schurman, Lehman, Roqueplo and Maier (among others); Theology of Liberation (Pironio, Gutierrez, Freire, Antonio Fragoso, Camara, Alfaro being the key theologians); Theology of Hope (of which the most outstanding exponent is Jurgen Moltmann); Theology of Development (Flick-Alszeghy, Remes-Regidor, Alfaro, Land, Laurentin, Comblin, Shriver); Secular Theology (Harvey Cox), Theology of Revolution (Schauil, Cox, Daim, Diez-Alegria, Rich, Fragoso, Todd and others). Secundo (Jean) has attempted a powerful synthesis between Liberation/Revolution/as a systematized theology.
- (3) Oblate Seminar on Social Justice, Summary Conclusions (mimeographed) 1st October 1976 (available: Fr. Herman Fernando, 40, Mazenod house, Farm Road, Colombo 15, Sri Lanka).
- (4) see Fernando, Milburga (Sr.), S.D.S., "Middlemen and Middlemen", *Sevaka Sevana*, publications I, December 1975, pp. 7-12,
- (5) "Theandric": God-man. The sacramental action within the church is a theandric action since it proceeds from Christ, the theandros.
- (6) Robert Coffey/Roger Varro: *Eglise, signe du salut/Centurion/Paris*, 1971, p. 78.



# UNIVERSAL SELF-SACRIFICE AND A BAPTISM OF DESIRE

Sevaka MATTHEW G. SILVA

As a teacher in a Government school, I have a fascinating task, both at Leangahawela village and at Kahagolla, close to Diyatalawa. As a student of the Ministries' school, this is how I prepare for serving Uva: at both sides of the desk -- on the teacher's side in the morning and on the student side in the evenings! But more than that, I learn in the mornings too. As a student of Theology, studying the importance of religious rites and initiation, I studied Baptism: cultic baptism, baptism of blood and baptism of desire. That is in the christian scheme of explanations. But around me I find that over 90% of those I teach are Buddhists, and youths of Other Religions. How much of self-sacrifice, sheer loving-kindness, goodness I see in them and in the teachers. How serious they were in the pursuit of human and religious values. This set me thinking. Reflecting. In the Gospel of Jesus according to St. Matthew do we not read (ch.10:42) that "if anyone gave a cup of cold water to one of these little ones (disciples) he will not lose his reward"? Easily and without theological depth, I am led to believe that this kind act reveals the baptism of desire. We speak most often, among christians, about the baptism that christians have received, but what do I do when the live-long day I find so much good around me? Living in close proximity to people, I see them living by living Faiths (R. C. Zaehner).

It is this which makes me probe even the surface of the problem of the "baptism" of desire. Would that theologians of eastern countries take up this interesting question for study and research. This article is offered in the hope that they will make a deep study of this question of a Universal self-sacrifice.

Today we hardly meet any christian who says that Christ died to save only the christians (1.). All christians are convinced

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## Notes/References:

- (1) A 'heretic' called Jansen or Jansenius said in the 17th century: Grace is given only to a few, to the tiny minority of men whom God wills to save. He does not will to save all men, nor did He die for all but only for the minority He determined to save. See Philip Hughes, History of the Catholic Church, 1962, p. 200



that He died for *all* men. But, for centuries, missionaries and christians in general wanted to convert, to change the hearts of those whom they all too easily, in their historical context, took to be in "darkness and in the shadow of death". Relative to the times they must have been right, or at least, that is how they felt about it. Today, when conversion, change of heart, keeps all christians busy with changing their own hearts to look at the world anew, more and more are making soul-searching attempts to be in relationship with the world which Christ came to save and not condemn (John 3:16). Some might say that this is a useful and healthy exercise. Others might call this a collective self-love. Time there was, when some christians had almost a morbid desire to count numbers, a quantitative increase of christians was most wanted while the quality of christian life was not much talked of. Here again, perhaps we cannot blame them, because, being busy with the Church herself, their reflexion outside the given framework was slow in coming. Then again, it was perhaps because christians seemed more concerned with the salvation of the soul as being more important than the body, that they hardly gave a thought to the total liberation of the full man, even though they saw that all the Sacraments, or encounter-points of the Church were meant for the whole man. (2).

As we exist, we are both personal and societal: any change within me is bound to have results in society, in others, and any pressure from others is bound to have its effect on me. In this brief article, primarily meant for christian readers, since it is written by a theology student, there will surely be some reaction on the part of readers of Other Religions, but let me assure them that the article is written more to provoke thought and reflexion than as a deliberate defence or criticism.

If the faithful of Other Religions would follow the theological reflexion of the present time with regard to those outside the christian faith, they might probably feel that the Church has changed her strategy and is now using a "devious way" of saying that all men are christians. This is not true. They might even make the remark: "kapanda beri atha simbinava vage" —you christians cannot cut off our hand, so you kiss it—meaning that "we cannot convert them, and so we use theological ruses to say they are already christians, thus adopting subtle imperialism". In fact, these words are put within quotation marks because they

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- (2) Recent studies in Sacrament-Theology and Anthropology insist that the Sacraments are points of encounter between Christ and the full person. Further, Pope Paul mentioned in his Development of Peoples that "development must be integral, promote the good of every man and of the whole man" (DP, 14, 1967). Also; Neunheuser, B., in *Sacramentum Mundi* I, p. 138, article on Baptism.



were uttered half in jest and half-seriously by someone who had skimmed through the pages of some reading matter on the subject of conversion or change of heart.

In fact the bare thread of the theological matter is this: western theologians emphasised for very long that there is "One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism" (Ephesians 4:5), meaning that there is only one baptismal entry to the Mystery of Christ (Baptism meaning *photismos* (Gk.) or enlightenment, illumination). They further explained that this one Baptism was a triple one: of Water, of Blood, of Desire. It was a baptism of water and the Holy Spirit, because it is seen as the cleansing of sinful man by water the universal solvent taken up to its highest symbolism within the Reality. Those who suffered and died for Christ were regarded as having had their witnessing unto blood. This was baptism of blood. In these two aspects "baptism was seen to be the cleansing of sinful man in the precious blood of the Lamb of God by the water that flowed from the open side of the Crucified" (Neunheuser) (3).

Baptism of desire was generally relegated to a short note or footnote and even glossed over, since most of the christian West believed not only in Baptism but especially in the Baptism with water. Today, however, western theologians have treated Baptism of desire at somewhat greater length (4).

"The gratuitous election of God's own people does not imply that his saving action outside of his people is rare or exceptional. Mankind is now in a new situation after the Incarnation, for he has acquired an objective orientation, based on the free divine choice, to be reconciled with God" (Gregory Baum, *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. 1., p. 145). Baptism of desire is not desire for baptism. It signifies the action of God to save and sanctify men outside what we call the visible Church.

There is a *photismos* prior to Baptism, prior in history and sharing in the fulfilling-image (baptism gives light: John's Gospel has the notion of Light and the notion of Life. Communication of the divine life comes to man under the form of illumination (John 8.12). Creation is regarded as a lighting-up or a manifestation of the Truth and Goodness of God. Andre

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(3) Neunheuser, Burkhard, Baptism, *Sac. Mundi* I, pp. 136-144. (p. 143)

(4) Baum, Gregory: Baptism of Desire, pp. 144-146, 5 cols. in *Sac Mundi* I. Also: Fransen, Piet, *The New Life of Grace*, pp. 164-166  
Hillman, Eugene, *The Wider Ecumenism*, ch. 3 and 4,  
Schillebeeckx, E., *Christ the Sacrament of Encounter with God*, 1963.



Feuillet maintains that the fact that the light shines in the darkness is a valid declaration for all time. It means that the spiritual light shines and that moral darkness hinders the light. Commenting on John 12:46: "I am come as a light into the world", Feuillet says that the first idea is the Coming and the second is the enlightening. In John 1:9, the first idea is the Illumination, the second is the coming,. From this too, Feuillet deduces:

1. Every man is illumined by the Divine Logos (as the very source of Light/Life).
2. This meaning gives a very wide sense to the coming of the Logos: men should exist by coming into the world and then be illumined.
3. The Logos comes to the world to enlighten men, not only after the Incarnation but from Creation. Here, it is not only the Logos increate, but the presence of the Logos from the beginning of Creation is asserted.

Feuillet holds that Christ the Revealer, Illuminator of all men could here refer to the whole religious history of mankind and that the Fathers of the Church held this as an important idea: men like Justin, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, Augustine had more equitable and kindly judgments on the so-called "outsiders" or so-called "pagans". Reasoning of this kind, supported by the sacred Scriptures of Christianity, is the foundation of the Baptism of desire. (5).

It is not surprising then that men of other Religions do appreciate the Logos Incarnate as Christ. They appreciate the Christlife, as for example, Gandhiji is said to have done in reference to the Beautitudes proclaimed by Christ (Matt. 5). This does not mean to say that those outside the visible Church accept all the terminology which we present: baptism, baptism of desire, supernatural, etc. An initial readiness to listen may not be forthcoming because the very word "desire" (asava) may be foreign to oriental ears. From then on, they would stop listening, automatically. We will then have to rethink our terminology and our reality in the light of the post-Vatican church, and by reading the signs of the times.

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- (5) Feuillet, Andre, Prologue to the Fourth Gospel (*Le Prologue du Quatrieme Evangile*) Desclee de Brouwer 1968, p. 315.  
also see Rodrigo, M., *The Moral Passover from Selfishness to Selflessness in Christianity and the Other Religions of Sri Lanka* (Dissertation for doctorate, 1973, Cath. Inst., Paris) pp. 10-14 (Unpublished material), (241 + 89)



The Logos will know how to draw men to the light of truth. We will not have any undue anxiety in this regard but must remain true witnesses to the truth always. Lord Buddha too has said that truth is a deathless word (Sutta nipata). Have christians seen the light of truth in the life of the masses of this country? Men of Other Religions, especially of the older eastern religions possess very deep human values which impel others towards them as moths towards the light (6). These values are easily recognised wherever they appear and Christians are expected to have a ready eye for them whenever they do. Given the training and understanding of a christian, no one will grudge him his point of vantage or his viewpoint (dṛṣṭikonaya in Sanskrit-derived Sinhala) namely that Christ, the Logos Incarnate is also self-sacrifice Incarnate from the moment of his self-emptying (kenosis) described in a Pauline epistle (Phillipians 2). Many feel that self-sacrifice is the greatest and most important ideal and virtue in life. Christians know and say that Christ is the highest example and the source of Self-sacrifice. In his article on the Baptism of desire, Baum asserts:

“Holiness is always the work of Christ. Because we are by nature divided, torn between two opposing tendencies in us, the decision making the selfless triumph over the selfish tendency in us is God’s merciful doing in us. Whenever a man finds in himself the freedom to renounce self-centredness and give way to selfless concern for another, what happens to him may be described as a dying unto himself and a rising to a new life, liberated—at least on one level—from the connatural ambiguity of his own striving”(7).

- (6) From the outset, our Ministries School has tried to detect the presence of human values in the beliefs and activities of people. N. Gunasekara writes in **Pilot Survey Stage Two, July – Aug. 1975** (mimeog. p. 3): “In Koslanda, I asked a lady “why did you not charge more for the papaw?”. Her answer was: “These Tamils are poorer now and getting dispossessed. I could have sold it for more and obtained a decent profit. There are many who make profits here. But she is hungry”. I was amazed. Just about a 100 miles away it could have been sold for Rs. 2/50 or 3/ i. e. 15 times as much as she took here, but here was an instance of the poor being kind to the poor”

Another instance recorded by Sevaka Leo Frederick Perera: “A hopper woman at evening time by the banks of the Menik ganga at Kataragama: “Why do you sell hoppers for 15 cts, while others near by in the boutiques sell for 20 and 25 cts?”. She said:” I don’t know really, except that profit leaves me cold. I want to serve poor people. How hungry they are on an evening when they come here, and often they do not have much more than for two or three hoppers. Today it might be me, tomorrow you, who will be hungry. One never knows. I buy a little rice, go home and prepare these hoppers with this in mind and I feel happy. Other places perhaps have to pay more for their shops. I sit under this tree” (ibid. p. 5)

- (7) Baum, art. cit., p. 146



Christ's self-sacrifice was born of love. He loved men and so gave up his life for men. All his virtue (vir: man, manliness), strength, is one with his love for men. Such is the faith of christians.

Buddhists, acquainted with the Birth stories of the Buddha (Jataka stories) will find that the main theme of these stories is the self-sacrifice of the *Bodhisattva* and that through them, Lord Buddha is shown as the epitome of self-sacrifice in Buddhism.

Man has an innate tendency to glorify himself and his possessions at the expense of others. Religion comes in to warn him that this evil should cease and that man should not succumb to this propensity to evil. What results from our giving in to them are called counter-values, and what results from our acceptance of good impulses—christians believe—is from the Spirit of truth. These, they call kingdom values today. The church does not coincide with the fulness of the Kingdom. It is the sign, sacrament and pledge of the Kingdom which began in embryo but which will reach fulfilment beyond. If we search the "concepts" of the "Underground streams" of Islam, and Nibbana, we might be able to find an area which defies visualization, conceptualization. So too we must search "Kingdom" and go beyond it to attain the Truth. But Kingdom values, fully human values are pointers to the beyond: St. Paul gives them in a thoughtful couplet:

- desires of the Spirit: are the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control;
- desires of the flesh: works of the flesh: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing and the like.

The four *brahmaviharas* of loving kindness (*metta*), compassion (*karuna*), joyous sympathy or gladness in another's well-being (*mudita*) and equalmindedness or equanimity (*upekkha*) mentioned in the Buddhist *Digha Nikaya* (III. 220) come immediately to the mind of the christian reader who has deepened his study of Buddhism.(8)

Bhikku Nanamoli's translation and commentary on these four Sublime States or *Brahmaviharas* (sometimes called the four *agamas*) could easily lead us to accept a Buddhist base for work of Development with justice, a kind of charter for Buddhist impulses for Social action for the people:

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(8) Gard, Richard, *Buddhism*, Washington sq. press, p. 138



— “it is melting, loving-kindness, solvent. When there is suffering in others, it causes good people’s hearts to be moved, or alternatively it combats others’ suffering, attacks and demolishes it, thus it is compassion. It is scattered upon those who suffer, it is extended by pervasion, thus it is compassion. Those endowed with it are glad. It likes to see beings succeed. Equanimity is characterized as promoting the aspect of neutrality towards beings. Its function is to see equality in beings. The general purpose of these four divine abidings (brahmaviharas) is the bliss of insight and an excellent (form of future) existence”. (9)

Call it *agape* or *metta* or love in its fullest formless source, and one may get closer to its reality.

The Christian believes that the source of Life, Light, Love is one. What then is the purpose of the rite of enlightenment or illumination which christians call Baptism of water and the Spirit?

God is invisible. Man is visible. Man’s spirit is invisible, intangible. Christ, the God man is visible and invisible. Because the Church expresses and contains Him in some way, she too is theandric (as they say: expressive of the man-God, man/andros, andropos and God/theos), expressive of the visible-invisible. Thus, is she the Sacrament in the world. Baptism, as the key sacrament which initiates God’s people into His church, is also obvious (visible) and hidden (invisible). Quite naturally christians have a visible rite of Baptism: an outward sign or (visible) manifestation of an inward grace (invisible) mystery, quite in line with the description we give of the Church. Since man needs a ritual to express himself in his symbolism, Baptism of water and the Spirit goes on within the church, but its symbolic meaning of cleansing, purifying renewing, change of heart as deep as a rebirth—these are things that religion hardly speaks of in real life. The obvious on-going process of purification should be a liberation of self and others from the heel of selfishness. Martyrdom (baptism of blood) most faithfully portrays and presents the Death-Resurrection of Christ, the triumph inherent in the self-emptying. Baptism of water and the Spirit, or Baptism of blood, or the Baptism of desire are more than ever needed in the world today for they all refer to enlightenment, progress on the pathway to final fulfilment, righteousness for man’s *buddhi*, *cetana* or his entire higher Self.

(9) Nanamoli, Bhikkhu, *The Path of Purification*, pp. 343-344. Part II. ch. ix, 92-97 quoted in Gard, *Buddhism*, pp. 138-139



## SELFLESSNESS—Buddhism's necessary role in Other Religions

*A Muslim's Viewpoint on Buddhism*

Al Haj S. M. A. RASCHID, J. P.,

Vice-President, Congress of Religions, at the Sevaka Sevana Vesak Festival at the Town Hall, Vesak Day 1976, Bandarawela (\*)

Today, 2600 years ago Prince Siddhartha Gautama was born. Today, 2565 years ago he became a Sammasambuddha, attaining Buddhahood in the Enlightenment or Self-realization. Today, 2520 years ago he departed from this planet into Nibbana or *mahaparinibbana*. Consequently today is the triple anniversary of all these three events, and on this memorable day I propose to submit a very bold suggestion. Perhaps some may term it a revolutionary suggestion. Others may term it reactionary. But, may I suggest that the appeal be assessed dispassionately and with calm. May I ask that this be accepted in the true spirit in which it is offered.

Before I submit my suggestion, may I also make a few introductory remarks. Throughout the world, there is a magnetic re-awakening and a sense of polarization with regard to Religion. We have local and international organizations vitally interested in this field: individuals and groups and large international organizations are working together in these matters. *Locally* we have the *Congress of Religions*, *Centre for Society and Religion* (Dir: (Fr.) Tissa Balasuriya), *The Study Centre for Religion and Society* (Dir: (Rev.) Lyn de Silva), *Sevaka Sevana Ministries' School* (Dir. (Fr.) Michael Rodrigo). *International centres* are: *Brahmo Samaj (India)* Bombay, *Lutuli Foundation* (S. Africa), *The Temple of Understanding* (Washington, USA), *World Conference on Religion and Peace* (NY, USA), *World Council of Churches* (Geneva, Switzerland), *Universal World Harmony* (Cheltenham, England), *Dartington Solar Quest* (Devon, England), *Findhorn Foundation* (Scotland), *Comoto Organization* (Kyoto, Japan), *Peace, Health and Prosperity* (Tokyo, Japan), *Kosei Institute* which publishes *Dharma*, *World* (Tokyo, Japan).

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(\*) First speech of the day, at the 11th Sevaka Sevana festival of Vesak, May '76.



At the first World Spiritual Summit Conference (Calcutta, India: Oct. 22-26 1968, and sponsored by the (Washington) *Temple of Understanding USA*), I said the following: "In the very country in which we are assembled, in 300 BC, the Emperor Asoka said: 'No man reverences his own religion unless he reverences other religions also'. Then we have Mohammed who said, in the 8th century A. D., in Sura II, verse 206: 'There shall be no compulsion in religion'. In the 13th century we have Francis of Assisi who said: 'Lord make me an instrument of thy peace. Where there is hatred let me sow love'. That was in thy past. Just a few years ago, a man, a common man like you and me, was the first martyr, not for religious tolerance but for religious equality. That was none other than Gandhi. It is in the fitness of things, I think, it is the divine Will, that we are assembled here in the country of the first man to lay down his life, not for religious tolerance, but for religious equality....."

"We are not a mere organization doing nothing tangible. On the very eve of my departure from Ceylon we presented to the national government a demand, in the name of the Congress, for a just wage, as a matter of social justice. We also demanded from the government, mark my words, we were demanding from the government that religious education, both primary and secondary, should be readily available. The Prime Minister of Ceylon has accepted these demands and we are sure they will be implemented in the near future, if not by this Prime Minister, at least by the future Prime Minister".

"So we are functioning in a very tangible way. It is in that context that you, each one of you, have to function. Go back to the place you come from. It may be a lane, a street, a village, a city or a state. Irrespective of what it is, go back with this noble message of establishing small Temples of Understanding..." (1)

Religion must be dynamic enough to serve man in this life as well as the life hereafter(2). To what extent is religion to be held responsible for the various problems and confrontations that exist today between man and man, between elders and youth, and between ideologies and nations...

- (1) Extract from "The World Religions Speak", ed. Finley P. Dunne, jr, Publ: Dr. Junk, The Hague for the World Academy of Art and Science. Al Haj S. Raschid's speech therein was delivered at the First Spiritual Summit held at Calcutta, India, and sponsored by the Temple of Understanding, Washington DC/USA (oct. 22-26, 1968)-Ed. note.
- (2) The Buddha says in the Dhammapada: Dhammam care sucaritam, Na tam ducaritam care Dhammacāri sukham seti zsmim loke paramhi ca (Lead a righteous life, but not one that is corrupt. The righteous man lives happily both in this world and in the next). Dhp. xiii, The World, Lokavagga' 169. Transl. Siri Sivali, 1954,



Fear of the unknown may have been very great in our ancestors. This fear-complex may have been used by religion to extract absolute obedience by highlighting the punishments that awaited the wrong-doer, in his life after death or in his rebirth. To what extent does this fear-complex influence or affect modern man in his religious convictions, conceptions and practice?

The role that religion has to play in the life of the modern man cannot be identical with the role it played for our ancestors. To save man's soul in his life after death was the keynote of religion in yesteryears. Today, how many of the world's billions will be swayed convincingly by this slogan?

If religion is to play any role, let alone a vital one, in modern life, it must be dynamic enough to serve man in this life as well as the life hereafter. To save man's soul appears a negative approach. This approach has not had the desired effect as may be seen, quite tangibly, in the unsteady state of man, particularly the youth. Bloodshed and anarchy, poverty and unemployment or underemployment, rebellion and primitive permissiveness are the order of the day notwithstanding man's success in the scientific field - including the exploration of the moon and outer space.

A fast-changing world, a shrinking world where a man from the north pole is able to meet his counterpart in the south within a few hours, a communicative and visible world through radio and TV, needs a dynamic religion that can serve man in all spheres of his activities—be they spiritual, material, mental or physical. Any religion that remains static is bound to lead man, quite unconsciously, away from religion and the chaos can well be imagined. (3)

It can be safely predicted that in the future there shall never be any more Asokas sending their own princes to far-off lands to preach a new religion or 'philosophy'; no more crusades; no more jihads; no more zealot missionaries going out on feet into the hinterlands of the five continents to proselytize by fair means

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(3) See also Raschid, Al Haj: A New Role, in **PHP** (Peace, Happiness, Prosperity) Magazine.

Parts of the final paragraphs have also appeared in **Dharma World** by Al Haj Raschid in an article; Middle Path of Gautama Buddha—panacea (Ed.)

\*\* The dates of Lord Buddha's Birth, Enlightenment and Mahaparinibbana cannot be known with great accuracy. Jacques Bacot from fairly accurate Tibetae records, claims 578 BC for his Birth; 498 BC for the Mahaparinibbana. The Buddhoslogist Etienne La Motte puts the latter date at 486 BC. (See J. Bacot, *Le Bouddha*, PUF, 1947, p. 3, 19.)



or foul; never shall these occur again for man has reached the point of realization that any one group following a particular religion or creed or philosophy can no longer claim that their's is superior to the other's and that the other should be converted. None can claim that their God, their heaven, their Nirvana, is more real or truer than the other's.

Now, man's wisdom has ripened to such an extent that he collectively or individually explores the areas of understanding in preference to misunderstanding, in preference to conflict, mistrust, hatred, acrimony. He now tries to accomodate the other man's point of view in a spirit of good-will and tolerance. He desires to be one with himself, yet at the same time he wishes to be one with his fellow-beings; to embrace the universe and mankind as a whole, though he is confronted with known and unknown forces of good and evil.

From time immemorial a seeker after eternal truth, of late, man has intensified his efforts not solely for his benefit but for that of the whole human race, so that there shall be world peace, happiness, harmony, contentment. Man now envisages to use as an instrument any or all the world religions to achieve this noble goal.

It is in this context that I declare that one of the bold steps that should be taken to achieve the goal for the followers of the other world religions, is to follow the Middle Path (Majjhima Patipada) enunciated by Gautama Buddha. It avoids both extremes of worldliness, excessive indulgence in worldly pleasures on the one hand, and extreme self-mortification on the other.

The Middle Path cannot obviously, be followed without accepting the Four Noble Truths, i. e. :

- (1) Suffering;
- (2) Cause of Suffering;
- (3) Cessation of Suffering
- (4) Path leading to the cessation of Suffering.

The Four Noble Truths lead to the Noble Eightfold Path. The adherents of the other World Religions cannot offer any serious objection to the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path of



**Buddhism.** Once again, let me reiterate that such practice will in no way nullify or weaken the ardour and fervour of their own individual faith.

Let us now examine what precisely is this Noble Eightfold Path. They are:

- (1) Right Understanding; or Right View;
- (2) Right Thoughts of non-attachment or renunciation (nekkhama samkappa)  
loving-kindness (avyapada samkappa)  
harmlessness (avhimsa samkappa).  
The above attributes promote selflessness, remove ill-will and avoid hatred or greed or cruelty.
- (3) Right Speech;
- (4) Right Action;
- (5) Right Livelihood; (this helps to perfect one's morality)
- (6) Right Effort or Endeavour;
- (7) Right Mindfulness;
- (8) Right Concentration which will act as a mirror, where everything is clearly reflected with absolutely no distortion whatever.

Can it be denied then, that the Founders and Preachers of all the World Religions have tacitly, if not directly, conceded by their speech and action the existence of the Four Noble Truths? In fact by their speech and action, life-style they have ardently followed the Noble Eightfold path; have practised Compassion and Forbearance. Can anyone say that this is not true? Can anyone convincingly deny this claim? Can anyone say that there is only one Path to God; or to Heaven; or to Nibbana? This may be a highly controversial matter. Be that as it may, there can be no valid, serious objection to the Four Noble Truths and the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path of Buddhism by the adherents of the Other World Religions.



## RETHINKING MINISTRIES—At the Service of Uva

Sevaka LAKSHMAN RANASINGHE

When I came here as a member of this Ministries' school at *Sevaka Sevana* in January 1975 after two years of Sociology, Statistics, Anthropology, Logic and Oriental Religions, I made much reflection on the very notion of service, of ministries and could not help thinking that the State too is interested in Service—we have Ministers, a Prime Minister, Ministers with and without portfolios. Basically therefore, the English system must have had a deep sense of *service* when it organised Ministries in a government and even more so, when it wanted its officials to sign, in relation to the public, those sincere words: "*your obedient servant*".

The catholic diocese of Uva began in 1973 and it fairly coincides with the Province of Uva. Long neglected for a variety of reasons, the two districts of Moneragala and Badulla, comprising a little less than one-sixth of the total land surface of Sri Lanka, have seen a fair amount of development since 1970.

Sri Lankan society was somewhat self-reliant in the times of the Sinhala kings. By now, we are used to hearing that former civilization, described as a threefold unity of temple, tank and village. One-inch maps of Uva would show that our people were interested in cult, agriculture and culture<sup>(1)</sup>. The temple stood for their otherworldliness and desire for *nibbana*, the tank which fed their fields and helped in their daily needs, kept them interested also in the world, and village life which helped them share labour, also let them share leisure time profitably. This was perhaps the general pattern of village life. The self-reliance born of sufficiency usually makes one hold one's head high and

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- (1) Sri Lanka has 25,000 villages and in them live 85% of her population. This unit or core-cell of society comprises three distinct elements interdependent and interlocking: the village community, the irrigation reservoir and the Buddhist monastery which is the repository of the people's system of belief, faith and authentic cultural traditions. One-inch survey maps of Sri Lanka reveal this triple reality in a number of places in Lower Uva, even long after the *wewa* (tank) has gone to ruin by neglect.



encourages one to work harder. It makes for a proud and independent people, in the better sense of the phrase. All this does not mean that our people had no vices, but certainly, peace and calmness and the Right means of livelihood (*samma ajiva*) -virtues insisted upon by Buddhism, must have entered their lives in good measure.

## The Faith and Spices

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese invaded Ceylon (Ceilao) pushed by the search for spices. They used whatever means they had to dominate over our people. Some places they destroyed and many persons they put to the sword. They also brought the catholic religious doctrine and worship in the available Latin forms and led our people in good ways and bad to accept that faith(2). The Dutch came with a similar idea for trade, to oust the Portuguese and to present their special brand of christianity, slightly reformed they thought. Goanese priests like Venerable Joseph Vaz and Jacome Gonsalvez—at two different times—helped to keep the catholic faith alive in these times of stress and persecution, in a spirit of true *service*. The Dutch were great builders and must have surely taught our people to build sturdy homes, an art which kept some coastal people in work when the British planters came later on.

The British people, also a christian nation with an Anglican christianity then came on the scene due to changes of fortune among Dutch and British empire builders out there in Europe, and it seemed as if they came to stay. They made deep and far-reaching changes in the style of our people's living. Heating up underneath but erupting now and again was the rightly rebellious spirit among our people who detested this form of secret attack and violence under the name of western civilization.

The spice-hunting Portuguese tested our people's strength in Uva but were chased out. Randeniya's column bears witness to this fact. The British with apparent good-will deforested large tracts of up-country land, changed habits and patterns of life of

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(2) King John III of Portugal is supposed to have written in 1552 to his Viceroy in Ceylon, who behaved badly towards the Sinhalese: "In Ceylon, Particularly, I desire that you endeavour to cultivate the friendship of the natives in order that not only the Faith may be propagated but also for the sake of the cinnamon from which my custom houses derive much profit" )Quoted in *Studp Centre Occasional Papers*, n. 4, sePt. 1976. Relationship Between Developed and Developing Nations, Study Centre for Religion and Society, Havelock Road, Colombo 6, Sri Lanka. p, 22/eii)



our people, especially our hill-country region, and consequently of the low-country, even lower Uva, since streams flow from high to low. It is unlikely that they understand even now, neither they nor their "successors", the rightful desire the suffering peasants of Uva have, to get back their own land. British violence was countered with some violence led by Keppetipola Dissave in 1818 when nothing else would work and even today low rumblings are heard in Uva. As recently as 1971 when youth protested against new forms of violence, they began an attack on police stations in Uva. (3)

In this process of invasion, raping of natural resources and habitat and styles of living, the pace of our true progress was retarded. One might say the clock was put back. So many would say that it is a good thing that civilization came with its motor car, telephone and refrigerator, but very few think of how dictatorial the telephone is, how important it is to keep your lungs today free from smoke and how good it is for your health to eat fresh food.

Uva was thus heavily neglected by the British except in those things which helped the British to help themselves. The educational system was geared mainly to the making of white-collar workers and for those who could find a place in society and thus be defenders of their cause some day. Colombo was so built and fortified with all kinds of good things that it would attract many a schoolboy or school girl from the village. Has this trend stopped? A little bit, I think, but it still goes on. Some go to Colombo, from there to Katunayake airport and then outside freely, flying like a bird to "better" lands while their poorer brethren are toiling here for the country and for the people. By continuing unthinkingly the system of education the agricultural plan was upset for the present and for the future. Opportunity for employment lessened in the villages. Money,

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- (3) "Wellawaya and Moneragala police stations were the first hit" (C. D. N., 6th April 1971)

One easily recalls a text of (Fr.) Michel Quoist in this regard:

"There is now a proletariat of peoples, comprising the millions of men who are virtually slaves, many of whom die of hunger every year. Perhaps the sociologists can work out statistical tables to tell us how many tens of millions have died in the last few decades, in the concentration camps of underdevelopment. Maybe then those who advocate the violent suppression of every revolutionary movement, on the grounds that such movements risk "bloodshed" will begin to have second thoughts. One may wonder whether lives sacrificed to maintain "law and order" are less precious than those sacrificed in "disorder". Is violence always justified when it is used to put down revolutions, and always unjustified when it is used to make revolutions?" (Christ is Alive, Doubleday and Co, Dublin/London, p. 14)



knowledge of skills, college education came to those who succeeded in the city and some big towns. The sinhala rural peasantry began to feel the burden. They would clear the jungles but it would soon return to eat them up. The British allowed and took further the divisions between Up-country and low-country sinhala people, between Tamil estate labourers and sinhala workmen and villager. By dividing, it was perhaps easier to rule the people.

Today it is no use crying over spilt milk and of no use to look back and to look down on those who acted without much wisdom, forgetting their christianity all the time. Does not R. H. Tawney wind up his book on *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism with the words*:

“Compromise is as impossible between the Church of Christ and the idolatry of wealth, which is the practical religion of capitalist societies, as it was between the Church and the State idolatry of the Roman Empire” (p. 220, Pelican 1942 ed).

They were caught in a system of trade and commerce and wanted profit without limit. Today, we reflect that all men are one man in a certain way. We must try to repair the damage they did, the havoc they unthinkingly wrought on our people. This is reconciliation, mediation and change of heart. We christians are responsible, for we are in solidarity with all humans and all christians, and if we have sinned against our fellowman as humans, we have to undo what we have done, and do what we have left undone.

This chance of reparation became greater as we deepened the sense of commitment to the nation after 1948, after 1956 and especially after 1970, when the era of the common man, of the rural masses was intensified.

Furthermore, if Vatican II insisted on a pilgrim church, a servant church, it was a demand to go back to the original spirit of the Gospel. The “servant church” is minister, expressing herself in different ministries, in different ways of service according to need. It was the mission for today, of Christ’s basic mission of the priestly ministry or of a variety of ministries. Uva’s needs would show the varying types of work to put her on her feet again. More than that, the diversity of ministries in the New Testament shows us a possible variety of ministries, dif-



front services in the Uva of today (4) Removal of prejudice, restoring of confidence, understanding of another's viewpoint, missionary listening rather than mere missionary presence, positive efforts at undoing damage, helping in social integration, in the linkup between land and people, man and environment, in development with motivation - all these and more, would call us to Uva, to an undying commitment to a cause. Our nation ate from here, it was formed here, it could give fight to the exaggerated sense of hoarding prevalent in the west and in elitist areas of Third World countries, from here.

### Dialogue: Part of Reconciliation

If in British and post-British times, names of religions were listed up and their adherents numbered by Census-people with great satisfaction, we are now living in an era of *Living Faiths* (after R. C. Zaehner, Spalding Prof. of eastern religions). The archeological, historical interest has given way to a religious and sociological interest. Up until recent times, Buddhists were discriminated against and Christians received the plums of office and of privilege. If you know your history you will readily understand any rural Buddhist monk who reflects sadly on the English activities in Uva. We have met them in Bibile, Nannapurawa, Obbegoda, Bolgalla, Buddama, Araluwinna, and in many of the 137 viharas of Uva. Sedate, sober persons who have the love of the country and of the people as their prime concern. They have forgotten the time of the Christian-Buddhist Panadura Vadayya (debate between the two religions), and they have forgotten the time of the vicious booklet on the Holy Virgin Mary, Kanni Mariyage Hatti in 1956. But they look forward to a sincere collaboration not with any strings attached. We were preparing for the recent Vesak festival in May 1976 and a young Buddhist monk in Bandarawela asked us a very pertinent question: "You Christians did not even visit or look at a temple, formerly. You were not allowed to associate with us. How come you are doing dialogue? Why don't you worship your own religion and let us worship ours?" Answering that very question has brought us in closer dialogue with him and him with us.

- (4) In the New Testament (NT) we see the apostolic church adjusting itself to historical situations: Paul mentions the *charismata* (God-given qualities) in Romans 12:4-8; 1 Cor 12: roughly divided into Ministry of the Word (apostles, prophets, teachers); Ministry of healing (miracle-workers, healers); Ministry of administration and leadership (helpers, administrators), and finally that ministry which Corinthians wrongly prized most, Ministry of Ecstasy (speaking in tongues, or glossolalia). Then comes another threefold Ministry of Bishops, priests, deacons (deaconesses also). These are examples of the church's responding to historical needs. (see Green, Michael, *Called to Serve: Ministry and Ministers in the Church*, Hodder, 1964, pp. 21-35)



We had three festivals of Dialogue in 1975: *Thai Pongal*, a Hindu harvest festival saw us gathered at our Samagisala trying to learn of the depth of symbolism in Hinduism and exchanging views with our visitors; it became a still more important festival this year when more people came to it and discussed at greater length while we had simple food and drink together. A second festival was with our Muslim brethren on *Milad-un-Nabi*, the holy Prophet's birthday. One of our dialogists, who had also taken part in the Singapore Islamo-Christian sessions in 1975 helped with colour slides. This year, still more people came for this festival and appreciated the trends of exchange of views and encounter.

By far the most important feast of Dialogue was on *Vesak Day*. At the Town Hall, about 300 people gathered last year with a Christian chairman and Hindu, Muslim, Christian speakers greeting and feasting their Buddhist brethren on this all-important triple festival of Lord Buddha's birth, Enlightenment and parinibbana. The Venerable Amarakongama Amarawansa of the Diyatalawa Pirivena made a deep statement as a *pin anumodam* (thanksgiving): "Till today one would have thought that the Buddha Jayanthi of some years ago was the climax of it all. Today, we find that we have all gone further in a Dhamma Jayanthi where doctrines of truthfulness get together to feast Buddhism. It is a signal victory for Religion". In 1976, May, before a larger crowd at the Town Hall, the Vesak festival was held with a delegation present from the Congress of Religions. Its President, Mr. T. Amarasuriya rejoiced in this kind of common festival; Al Haj S. M. Raschid, Vice President paid high tribute to the "Morality and selflessness in Buddhism", a Hindu spoke of the greatness of Lord Buddha, while a Christian gave the theme of Buddhism and Liberation. Multi-religious Dialogue all hoped, would have come to stay and foster deep human values in Uva. Multi-dialogue trends were clear already in the Muslim festival of 1976 at Sevaka Sevana, when a Buddhist monk spoke on "Islam and the Prophet". The Venerable Hapugoda Dhammananda, Missionary-emeritus from the Mahabodi Society, who has worked for twenty-two years in India said in the closing moments: "This is the first time that I see this type of multi-religious dialogue and exchange in Sri Lanka". He has since contacted us to think deeper of a possible centre which he has in mind for this kind of Buddhist-Christian and even multi-lateral dialogue.

Readers will forgive me if I have given a 'newspaper' tone to something that happened many months ago, but this kind of dialogue must go on, for it is part of our mutual change of heart,



what we christians call reconciliation. For us it is a part of the reconciling of the world that Christ came to do (Ephes, 2:15-18).

To assure that this kind of mutual reconciliation, dialogue of religions continues, we feel that there must be a ministry of dialogue in the diocese of Uva. This could well be one of the Other ministries—other than the priestly ministry. As we find in our *Prognostique for the Ministries* (Sevaka Sevana):—

“a ministry of dialogue would entail: meeting with the rank and file of Buddhists Hindus, Muslims, Marxists in Lower and Upper Uva; a fair knowledge of Sinhala, Tamil, English for communication; a reasonable knowledge of Sanskrit, Pali and Arabic for the study of Other holy Scriptures; a meeting with leaders and chiefs of other Religions; an understanding of the cultural patterns and lifestyles of men of Other Religions in a multi-lateral dialogue; assiduous work with christian lay groups to form dialogists who will, in their turn help parishes, the diocese itself and other committed groups to dialogue at the so-called grass-roots level; a working together and in common with religious and non-religious groups at development and justice. The physionomy of this ministry will evolve in the context of Uva province. A total of two years basic training will be needed, but two years more if the Sevaka is to commit himself still more deeply, with the priestly ministry” (5).

This envisages one who while working assiduously in one place, will still be able to cut across the whole diocese and help in “dialogical” work. The changing of attitudes will be an important task for him (6).

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- (5) Sevaka Sevana has a *Prognostique* on a Ministry of Dialogue, Ministry of Development/Justice; of Social Integration; of Education-Formation; (Unpublished material). We select only two ministries here for the purpose of our article. Even the outline of these ministries could undergo still further change.
- (6) At the present time, there are priestly ministers who have, probably as a transition, shown the possibility of a variety of ministries: a priestly minister is actually in Kumbukkana working on a farm; another, as pastor is doing multi-lateral dialogue with youth; still another will assure a harvest as he works with people in Buttala; another pastor, in Padinnawela is in the work of dialogue. The idea is, that while they work as pastors or as “frontier-priests”, more and more laymen will also take up work of this sort in their own sphere.



## Other Ministries

Then also, the Indian labourer has been held up to public gaze in recent times as the victim of injustices and lack of privilege. Many books, films, TV programmes (like the famous Granada TV programme) came to discuss him and in the process, the Estates were nationalized by the Sri Lankan government last year. The re-settlement of the village pattern, upset by British big business of the last century and of this century, and the re-settlement of the estates and its personnel (especially the estate-worker) brings much hard work in some kind of social integration. There was mutual antagonism, mutual hostility, formerly. A socialist government is rightly pushing for a study of this problem and a hopeful integration without assimilation or absorption of a minority culture. They (the minority) belongs also to the Common Man. Isn't it a civic duty of every person to help remove tensions, to smoothen conflicts and to see that the burden on the people lessens? There has been the case, in Moneragala, of a Sinhala man keeping his Tamil wife in her own Tamil garb at his own desire and at her request. This is their own married-couple freedom. In another case, the man forced her to wear his Sinhala style dress but later relented. By that time, she had begun to like it; in still another situation, the wife begged that she be allowed to wear the Sinhala-style Kandyan or low-country sari, because "she likes it, very much". This shows that there are varying situations when a question of culture comes up and we need someone who would study both peasant and worker in this case, their psychology, their needs, their aspirations. Even if only for the time being, we need a ministry of *social integration* in Uva. This too needs further study.

Furthermore, since this is a new diocese, "we cannot have new wine put in old bottles", an image which tells us that all things must be seen with a freshness and a newness (as the Sinhala-Tamil New Year reminds us so powerfully once a year). Repairing the damage done to our people and the ravage done to our natural resources, mainly by neglect, means that we have much to do from the viewpoint of development and Justice. The Church must involve herself therefore, not only in Upper Uva where she had some of her institutions, but also in Lower Uva, to work with and in the spirit of the LUDP (Lower Uva Development Project) for our people. This is part of *our* reconciliation let us say, reparation: to build a new man, since we were partly responsible in not allowing this new man to have continued growth in the last century, due to our passive solidarity with "christian" nations that turned wild (some would say rapacious). I deliberately put christian in inverted commas, for



such people were not truly christian, especially those who did such wrong. I am reminded of a Project official at the Moneragala Kachcheri who told us: "this is where we need religion, to give our people in the throes of development a proper, cultural, spiritual motivation to work harder, not to see to their own ease and comfort but to work for the country, for its people, to have hope in the future" (Interview, May 1975). I read somewhere that true progress means that we must see "not so much to the GNP but to the GVP of a country (the gross Village product)". This is a good point for reflexion.

When one reads the following lines and one loves one's country truly, one cannot afford to let it down and run away to another country: it is a news-snippet in our Uva scrap book in our community-room:

"At Nawalapitiya on Sunday, Mr. Ariyadasa, Minister of Health opened a new hospital wing and said: 'In the ancient era, this country was termed the Granary of the East, and some people might assume that the population might have been about 3,000. This could not be so because it was said that there were 1,700,000 acres of cultivated paddy land in the Uva Plateau then. Today, Mr. Ariyadasa said he could not say whether there were even 17,000 acres'" (Daily Mirror, June 23rd 1975).

When we have to get back to a sense of self-reliance coming also from self-sufficiency in food, we need a proper sense of Development with justice. Perhaps a new ministry (or service) would be one of rural-urban development work. A former Prime Minister said that "the proper service of man is man". The sense of dedication that this entails must be found everywhere: in those nearer to Colombo and in Colombo and in those far away from the centre. To promote the brotherhood of man, the literacy of the people, sharing, equality, to stop overdevelopment and *taiha* (hoarding)—all this is very necessary in a Sri Lanka that looks in hope to the future. The Prognostique suggests:

"—such a ministry of development/justice, needs careful training in Politics and Morale politique and sociology (sociology may be presupposed); the minister-student will work at an understanding of the Corporations, Boards, Government departmentns, Kachecheris, Village committees, Rural development work, Paladawardhana committees, Grama sevaka services, District Development councils; he could undertake projects sponsored by Church/state organisations and analyse them to see how they can effectively help



in the process of nation-building; food production and food distribution, low cost housing, employer-employee relationships, Trade union movement. He must be capable of working with administrative and political authorities of a given area for the true common good, always being *for* people and never wantonly *against* them. He will keep with the current socialist tendency to remove bribery, corruption, injustice and will not be satisfied with mere talk of dedication and freeing the people from economic bondage but will do everything in his power to uplift man and give him a deeper sense of dignity. The physiology of this ministry will evolve in the context of Uva Province. One year basic training; one year specialised training. Two years more if opting for priestly ministry.”(7)

### **Priestly Ministry: Permanent Commitment to Serve**

It seems that Douglas Hyde, who wrote “I believe” suggested that we get “them and get them young”. He is said to have worked with young people to transform their minds to work for communism when he was younger. He never forgot the methodology. All the ideas of development, justice, dedication, common good must be given mainly as the person grows in his social, community, religious framework and that with a critical attitude of mind. We therefore need another ministry in Uva diocese: one that pushes forward towards non-formal education at all levels and towards Adult education also. To help people help themselves to become better citizens, to help in the task of self-reliance and self-formation, is the wider task of the minister of any religion, especially of the religions working in a developing country.

The Vatican II *Gaudium et Spes* asserts: ‘Freedom acquires new strengths by contrast, when a man consents to the unavoidable requirements of social life and takes on the manifold demands of human partnership and commits himself to the service of humanity’ (*Gaudium et Spes*, 31, para 2). Our ministers in training for Uva and the entire presbyterate of Uva would do well to reflect on this statement.

A Roman newspaper once said: ‘the new situation in the church in some countries calls for new kinds of ministries and consecrated life.. in addition to the priestly ministry’ (*Osservatore Romano*, August 8th 1974 p. 4). While studying the possibilities of varying the ministries in Uva, and while attempting to diver-

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(7) Prognostique, Sevaka Sevana, (p. 2) 1975



sify them, there has also to be an attempt to live out the priestly ministry in different ways, according to need. The Other ministries suggested earlier—we have left out reflexions on a ministry of Adult Formation, of Social services if we are in a transitional position from an old social-service type of church to a church working for social justice by social action—does not mean that we leave out the most authentic form of self-dedication the church has seen so far, namely the priestly ministry(8).

Walter Kasper truthfully and courageously said in 1969 at a time when the crisis in the priestly ministry was being felt that “the unity of the church is not closed in upon itself; it stands as a sign and sacrament of the unity of the world. The priestly ministry, then, involves a broader ministry on behalf of the peace and unity of mankind. It is closely tied up with one of the deepest and most pervasive longings of contemporary mankind”(9). This gives us hope and courage in Uva which might still become once again the granary of Sri Lanka while at the same time deepening its religio-cultural values, for “man liveth not by bread alone” and if we lose our cultural and spiritual motivation, have we not lost much, something like gaining the whole world and suffering the loss of ourselves, as Pope Paul translates into urgency in the Development of Peoples?

What we have offered in this article are only a few points which might be useful for the local Church of Uva, and indirectly might be helpful to the universal church so sorely tried in so many parts of the world by the changing face of its priestly ministry and by uncertainty, real or made-up. As long as selfless ministers of every type are produced within the Church, ordained or not ordained, and as long as small groups operate to keep the spirit of unity and truthfulness, mankind has very much hope. Seeing the longings of Uva for fuller life as they move surely and swiftly along the road to it, we cannot but recall the words of Leslie Dewart when he urges the Church to be more universal in her outlook effectively “by championing the cause of the human race by rising above the provincialism of loving itself more than it loves mankind.”

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(8) Priestly ministers like Edicio de la Torre and some colleagues are in gaol in a S. E. Asian country; Fr. Camillo Torres gave up his life for his people as a guerilla fighter. He said he joined the guerillas to find meaning in the Eucharist he had celebrated for so long as a sign of the liberation of his people—a liberation-to-be.

See also: Greinacher, Norbert. The Non-territorial Pastorate and the Part-time priest, *Concilium*, March 1969, vol. 3, n.5, pp 53-57 (Transl.



by S. King). In the same number, Karl Rahner asserts forcefully: "Today, exegesis, history of dogma, history of the Church, ecclesiastical sociology and the needs of the contemporary church force us to take a more radical look at what can and what cannot change in the Catholic priesthood" (Concilium, March 1967, 'What is the Theological Starting-Point for a Definition of the Priestly Ministry?' pp. 43-46/p. 45, col. 2)

- (9) Kasper; Walter, A New dogmatic outlook on the Priestly Ministry, Concilium / March 1969, vol. 3. n. 5., p. 18.

It is a useful effort for the country if in the course of Dialogue and working together in Small Groups, catholic priests would link up with Buddhist monks and vice versa 'Asian, Action' says:

"The most promising and appropriate agency to provide initiative in the task of the rural peasantry for collective organization and action is the Buddhist Clergy because they are traditionally the embodiment of the people's ethos; because in the past the local Buddhist priest (sic) in the village temple provided inspiration, dynamism and guidance to the village; and because the Buddhist clergy still have the potential to play this role" (Sri Lanka National Heritage Programme, in ACFOD's Asian Action (Asian Cultural Forum on Development, 1976, no date, p. 14)

In our recent live-in in the villages of Obbegoda, Terela, Bolgalla we sevakas learnt a great deal from the Buddhist monks of the area. They are in the forefront of desires for reform, for development and work with the people. The Ven. Batugamma Pannaratne Thero of Bolgalla, when realising that a good part of the village of Araluwinna and Bolgalla would like to leave the village and abandon the village, said: "I will stay with you and help you even if there is only one man left in the village to be helped". Similar instances are common.



# ACTION—ORIENTATION IN UVA'S ECUMENISM

Sevaka PATRICK JOSEPH

The Nairobi conference of the World Council of Churches focussed attention on the distinction between a structural unity and a functional unity. It opted for united action rather than united churches, and went on to question: "Are there such action programmes in our country?". "What would be the aim of such programmes?" in our situation (NCC Booklet, Diocesan press, Madras, 1974, p. 51).

On what grounds can we co-operate in common action? This is a difficult question to answer but, it is certain that we do not need total union in doctrine as a prime need, despite the doctrinal "accords" of Windsor and Canterbury on the Eucharist and Ministries (Orders). Christ first fed people and then spoke to them to promise the Eucharist. Quite in line with this is Bishop Robinson's book on Liturgy Coming to Life. The Church of Uva needs more reasoned activity in the line of development for its peasants and workers. This needs banding together for action to help people help themselves. Didn't Christ say in "his final message that we should serve and not be served"? It is by our common service that we come together, not by testing the truth or falsehood of our approaches to the Christ mystery. When we thus come together, bury our differences and collaborate, we can bring a new dimension to christianity, and even to the history of religions.

## Ecumenical Movement

The ecumenical movement comes from 'oikoumene' (meaning all the whole inhabited earth). In fact originally it had a wider meaning than the usually narrow one of "christian churches ecumenizing". As signs of the end Christ says that the Gospel will be preached throughout the whole world (oikoumene) (Matt. 24:14). The author of the Hebrews in 2:5 says: "God subjected the world to come (oikoumenen)" and this refers to a still wider unity. The Latin used refers again to the whole earth: orbem terrae.



But what has been called the ecumenical movement has used it for something rather tamed: "the whole development of inter-ecclesiastical relationships and attitudes of which the goal is the renewal of divisions among christians" (Sacramentum Mundi, vol. 2, p. 192, Hasler, A. B.). But so far, most of the attempts at ecumenical union in many parts of Sri Lanka, or let us say in the world, have centred around the word, less often on presence, and least of all, in activity for people. Even if this has been done in some parts of the world, the urge to justice is not fully backed by the WCC in all the countries in which its movement is felt. In Uva, where people are advancing in development, pastors who present Christ should unite more by presence and activity than merely by word.

It is also true that the witness value of all christians together would be greater if all christians gave one single witness without division, but we cannot erase history. A deeper ecumenical dialogue as regards word and teaching will push us to work and activity, but may I make a plea for priorities: In areas of *Doctrine* and *word*, we need study of the Bible and of Gospel interpretations together; of Ministries; of the Virgin Mary and her role in the Church; of Social Justice; concrete collaboration in Theology with joint pastors' study days and yearly recollections; improved understanding of one another's theology; collaboration between the Filamatalawa theological school and Sevaka Sevana and the National seminary; greater help to laymen to assist them to theologize so that they may go on their own, eventually.

By *Presence* and *Activity* we could see to the use of each others' pulpits and having pastors' study sessions and meetings of laymen in towns, rural areas, and estates; working together on social action projects rather than mere social welfare projects; work on study surveys; collaboration in cult-dramatic enterprise; in development work with the dynamism of justice and removal of tanha (so hated by Buddhism); working to understand the Buddhist ethos and the doctrine and mental attitudes of Other Religionists, for as someone said: "We have spoken too long and now let's listen to them".

Our intention is not to introduce a forced harmony of doctrine in the use of "pulpits". We do not say that they should be used for sermons, primarily, but at least for talks, instructions on common subjects since there can be question/answer for clarification. In Badulla, our christian pastors meet. In rural areas do they wish to go it alone? In some dioceses, the minister of one church is present while the couple is being married. He does nothing and is not invited to do anything. We need to rethink



this sort of behaviour. In the question of *communication in sacris* (that is, joining in each other's Eucharistic celebration) we must avoid embarrassment, neglect (i.e. we must update our rules of communication) in such a way that we still feel the pain of our differences by abstaining from a too frequent inter-communion or even a frequent inter-communion.

Methodist missionary records give us the history of the Methodist movement in Ceylon. The first Methodist missionaries to Sri Lanka arrived at Weligama on 29th June 1814, a year before the Kandyan convention. Their next station was in Colombo, in the Pettah and the Colombo Conference was on July 14th with Jaffna, Batticaloa, Matara and Galle by ballot. The "simplicity and godly sincerity" of the conference is on record. Coastal "converts" came to Kandy in 1836 and the first missionaries to be stationed in Uva, at Bandarawela and Badulla were stationed in 1885. Uva saw a Boys' Reformatory and Industrial School at Diyatalawa, a home for orphaned girls at Badulla, a Women's Hospital and Dispensary at Welimada, a school at Lunugala, but there was nothing regarding the education of estate children who must have looked like children of a second order, other than human. There was even then, some preaching shared with the Anglicans at Passara, but there was a creche for estate workers' children in Lunugala as early as 1934. It was later that there came to be 23 estate schools with 1022 children. This goes to show how much some of the christian churches worked *for* people. Today, Anglicans and Methodists and Catholics are active not only in social welfare—which might still be necessary—but also in a study of the Buddhist ethos, a study of social action. Deeper witness seems necessary, according to the readings of the signs of the times.(1)

If we live as brothers and sisters whether in being Anglican, Methodist, Catholic or whatever it be, we will know that religion is there not to separate us but to unite us. All religions could unite in Action-points. Didn't Christ take people from what they knew to what they did not know. What of the Samaritan-woman situation. He took her from ordinary water to the water of eternal life. Then also in the case of the Vineyard through which he walked in the Kidron valley: he took it as a chance of

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- (1) What we indicate is a possible trend. It is already happening in Badulla. The Anglicans work together with the Catholics and Methodists on Y's men work (YMCA); on Rehabilitation of Beggars; Buddhists - Christian dialogue; Sinhala - Tamil friendship society; Unemployed Youth; Campaign against Bribery and Corruption. What is suggested here, is that this working together should be an example to other areas, parishes and sectors of the Province of Uva.



evangelizing his apostles on the true Vine and branches. So too, if men of Other religions see us work together on Action-points to uplift our fellow men who are oppressed on all sides in this Third World country, Sri Lanka, then they would stop to think still more deeply of man's true destiny. This is wisdom. It was Lord Buddha who said: "If by giving up a lesser happiness, one may behold a greater one, let the wise man give up the lesser and look to the greater" (Dhammapada 291, vaggā 21). To share with others and to work for others is certainly a greater happiness.

### Presence, word, activity

If formerly the process was Presence

word  
activity,

now we think it is time that we upset the plan according to need in this country and have: activity

word

presence taken as one telescoping into the other, but always by making a start from where the people are in their present situation. The sacred Council of Vatican II "exhorted the catholic faithful to recognize the signs of the times and to take an active part in ecumenism" (Ecumen Decr. 4), but in Sri Lanka could we not translate this into "christian faithful, faithful to Christ, could recognize the signs of the times and take an active part in wider ecumenism, towards all mankind", in the sense given in our article, above: namely ecumenism for the whole earth? What we mean is that if ecumenism is to go further, we must, for Sri Lanka at least, change the order given in the decree on ecumenism (6, para 3):

- biblical and liturgical movements
- preaching of the word of God
- catechetics
- apostolate of the laity
- new forms of religious life
- spirituality of the married life
- church's social teaching and activity.*

It is this last that should be given emphasis, according to need in our country at the present time. Catholic readers know that Pope Paul made an appeal: "We are sure that all Christians, our brethren, will wish to expand their common cooperative effort in order to help mankind vanquish selfishness, pride and rivalries, to overcome ambitions and injustices, to open up to all the road to a more human life, where each man will be loved and helped as his brother, as his neighbour" (Development of



Peoples, 82). Activity easily degenerates into "activism", a soulless enterprise. If we christians of all denominations give up our fears and inhibitions, our likes and dislikes regarding unity, our proneness to take the Church unity octave as a "loud week" devoid of continuity (as if life belongs to *one* week); our desire to come together merely to enjoy each other's *presence*: our mere listening to each others' private or community interpretation of the word but precisely to act, prayerfully with interior conversion ("newness of attitudes of mind" - Ecum. Decree, Vat. II, n. 7), then we would be moving towards the formation of the total, integral man in Uva and in the rest of Sri Lanka. We would be seeking the Kingdom and His justice together as christians, and all else shall be added unto all of us: doctrinal understanding, Bible work, unity, close communion, intimate presence, solidarity, for otherwise, christians who love each other, one another, on a colossal world level, call it WCC or Vatican II, would also look like selflove on a large scale. But if we accept to work for the other, "without any strings attached", as the saying goes, then we would truly be wanting our neighbour's good. In fact, it is only then that we can see the worth of the Pope's final appeal:

"Finally, we turn to all men of good will who believe that the way to peace lies in the area of development" (meaning the total upliftment or liberation of the full man). (2)

If we christians of Uva are keen on such a programme for deeply human action, evangelically, for without social justice there is no Gospel, then we would certainly "speak in tongues", meaning something deeper than *glossolalia* of the charismatic renewal of today. Christians of all kinds would learn the idiom, the thought patterns, the customs, culture, religious language, message and terminology of those of Other faiths who may be generally among the most harassed and oppressed of Sri Lanka. We would be learning of him who is meek and humble of heart, who, Risen is yet hidden among his people.

In fact, "what has been done, can be done". There have been attempts at understanding through dialogue. We have celebrated the Thai Pongal festival with the Hindus by inviting them for two years now, to tell us what their feast meant to them and what we thought about its sublime significance. We have celebrated Vesak twice now, by inviting those of Other Religions (other than Buddhism) to feast their brethren and honour the great Teacher of the orient, called by Edwin Arnold, the Light of

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(2) Pope Paul VI Development of Peoples, n 83



Asia. We have celebrated Milaud-Un-Nabi in '75 and '76 with delighted Muslim and Hindu friends of ours, to unravel the meaning of those festivals. One group said: "Let's stay a little longer here. This is the first time we Muslims and christians have got together to be present and to learn from each other. For me, this is wider ecumenism, or is it *wider*? May I suggest two things in this brief article:

1. Could our accredited theologians of Asia study this kind of ecumenical relationship rather than merely take the overflow of the western theology of ecumenism with christians, only. Our problems *are* different. That is the richness of our diversity within the One Lord and in One Faith: To be true to the church's universal mission (and today dialogue is necessary) we must think and act differently.
2. What useful reply do I give youth today when, in their action-orientation, in their constant meeting with people, they begin to be attached to one or other ideology (mentioned in Pope Paul's Letter to Cardinal Roy, 1971)? Can our ecumenism take in sympathetically what they are saying, go along with them and examine their views and appreciate them while making a critical study of their approach, with them?

This small article is sent out in the hope that theologians will study still further the question of action-oriented ecumenism in Sri Lanka.



## SHARING—being a few reflexions on Pirit and Bana; Night vigil and Eucharist

Sevaka FREDERICK PERERA

It was early July, 1976. Eleven Buddhist monks chanted verses at a Pirit ceremony close to where we live. The 150 white-clad devotees gathered round the pirit mandapaya (Pavilion for chanting) at 9.30 p. m. and began the service of chanting, listening. It all ended in the light of dawn the following day.

The drummers started beating the drums or tamettama (tom-toms) heralding the monks and leading them to the pavilion. The pavilion was gay with white parched rice and white cloth (pavada) on the floor, and betel twigs and Naleaves hung gaily from the ceiling cloth. Water pots abounded with yellow drooping arecanut flowers and a large pot, the Purna Kumbha, filled with lustral water, or *pirit pan* eventually, took the centre-piece. This new clay pot is regarded as a sign of newness of life, they told me. A *dayakaya* or layman in close link-up with the Temple carries the *Pirit-pota* on his head. Some call it *Pot-vahanse* (reverential term personifying the dhamma, probably in reference to the Samyutta Nikaya word: "He who sees Dhamma sees me, says Buddha"). It was only then that the monks walked in under the canopy of white cloth. The relic of the Buddha which was also carried in procession was a way of presence of the Buddha. The *sil samadham vima* and the pronouncing of the three (triple) Refuge now finds deeper meaning, for the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha are all present.

There was still another ceremony within this rite: the *pirit-nula* or holy thread was fixed on to the neck of the water-pot and was drawn around the inside of the chairs of the monks, joining up the monks, the water and the people present. It was a sure sign of communion (com-munion, a kind of fortified presence together, as Clifford Howell would say commenting on the word Communion in christianity). At least, to me, it clearly showed the design of unity in that service. The pirit-service thus became a way of asking blessings for that school at which the ceremony took place, but within the asking or the wishing for blessings, for protection, there was the expression of community unity. The chanting of pirit is meant to ward off all



danger and illness, What could have degenerated into mere custom, had been taken up by the monks of old to signify a ceremony where the *devas* are also invited to be present (*devas* may signify holy men who have purified themselves, *div* or *dipa* meaning light,) The Buddha as being higher than all the *devas*, as the *devatideva*. (1)

After the all-night ceremony, in the early hours of the morning, each devotee was given water (*pirit-pan*) to drink. As the monk distributed it, each one took a little water, drank it and touched his/her own face with it. The *pirit-nula* was then cut up and distributed to each. The monk tied it personally on all the men present, but gave a piece each to the women. Those who wanted *pirit nul* to be taken home to those who could not come, were given a piece each.

As they took these pieces of thread to those who were at home, I could not help thinking of a still deeper communion of those present and absent. It may well be that these lines are over-simplified, or that my reflexions were subjective, but I could not help thinking of the early days of the Christian church when the eucharistic Bread was shared by all present, and then a portion of it was sent to the absent priests. It was called "fermentum" and was a strong bond of unity.

The following day, the festival was not yet over. If protection, purification were the signs of the all-night "vigil" ending with a sign of communion of present-absent, the rounding off was just before noon of the following day with the *Dana* or almsgiving or sharing of food with the monks. The sense of table-togetherness (commensality) was very evident at the noon meal. They had boiled rice (fruit of the labour of a large number of rural people), vegetables, dried fish as *Food (ahara)* and *thambili* (king coconut) as *Drink (panaya)*. Curd and treacle (milk and honey) followed. A monk spoke a few words on the text he chose from the sacred Buddhist scriptures and it was only then that the meal began.

I noticed an item of deep interest which showed not only the notion of presence, but also the sign of thanksgiving and gratitude to the Lord Buddha who by his giving of the Dhamma to his followers is enshrined in their hearts. Each monk left a handful of rice aside as part of the offering to the Buddha.

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(1) **Deva** is one who is purified. Deva is related to the word *div*, *dipa* (light). **Devatideva** is the term given to Buddha, god of gods, one who has perfected himself beyond recall as the *Tatagatha* (gone beyond recall).



More than that, always the Buddha is taken as completing the figure of the monks present at the ceremony. If ten monks are invited, the figure is announced as 11. When the monks finish eating, the "acolytes" (abhiṭṭhaya) took their share with them to the temple. Prior to their departure, the monks spoke a few words of thanks or giving merit (pin) to those present. Usually one of the monks does it on behalf of the others. This is the *pin anumodam*. In it he asked the protection of the *devas*, of the Buddha, blessings on the place (school), on the purpose of the building, and for their intentions. Finally all present and absent were mentioned.

*Dana* is given great prominence in Buddhism. Feeding monks is the most beneficial act of charity. The Anguttara Nikaya says: if one gave to a person of Right Views, it would bring great fruit. If one gave to a person who is a stream-winner, there would be greater fruit; to an *Arahant*, still greater; to a Buddha, even greater" (AN, iv. 244) (2).

For the christian, the highest sign of sharing of life, food, earthly goods—is the Eucharist. When an informed christian sees a *pirit* ceremony linked to a *sanghika dana*, he cannot but see two aspects of togetherness and unity very similar in outline to his own eucharistic service. He would readily see some link between the eucharistic sign of sharing, with which he is familiar, and which he is prone to take as principle of analogy, and the food and drink of the *dana*, the *pirit-nula* expressive of common unity. The christian (catholic christian) says that the Church is sign and sacrament of Christ in the world of today. It is a bond of unity and a sign of liberation in the world but the Church is not blind to the signs found in the world. If only for the purposes of further study, one would like to table the similarities:

- (2) Dr. Lynn de Silva, **Buddhism: Beliefs and Practices** 1974, Wesley press, Colombo, pp. 211. *Dana*: a study on page 94ff. *Pirit*—a study on pp. 81–90. Readers can complete the description given on these pages with Dr. de Silva's insights and observations: some of them are more detailed. One of the Dasaparamitas of Buddhism (Ten Perfections) is *Dana*. The other are:

*Dana* (Almsgiving)  
*Sila* (Perfection) of Virtuous conduct.  
*Kshanti* (Patience)  
*Viriya* (Energy)  
*Dhyana* (Meditation)

*Prajna* (Comprehension)  
*Upaya* (Expediency)  
*Pranidhana* (Resolve)  
*Bala* (Power)  
*Jnana* (Knowledge)

In the christian rite of the Eucharist, the bread and wine (food and drink) of the eucharistic Thanksgiving are called **Donum** (a word close to the Sanskrit *Dana* meaning gift of God to us. The Holy Spirit is also called **Donum Dei**, Gift of God. The gifts of man to God are called *munera* (gift). Eucharistic Prayer I uses the phrases: *haec dona, haec munera* (God's gifts to us, and our gift to God).



### *Pirit ceremony*

- new clay pot filled with pirit pan (water)
- night vigil
- gathas, bana (sermon)
- prarthanava
- outer-circle and inner-circle of unity through pirit-nula: all eat at *dana* (morrow)
- heralding with drums, bells
- *dana*: people give to monks; monks share among themselves: recalling of presence
- presence of Buddha signified by extra number; by setting apart an offering
- *pin anumodam* (thanks-giving to all) intercession/remembrance of all present and absent

### *Eucharistic service of early Church*

- ablutions at entry to church, or sprinkling with water (newness of life)
- night vigil
- hymns, chants, homily
- prayer
- outer and inner unity by fermentum of Holy Communion. All partake of Holy Communion
- heralding with bells
- *donum*: "gift of God to men"!  
*munera*: "gift of men to God"
- presence of Christ in the sign: Community, Minister, Word, Eucharist
- entire prayer is eucharistic, a Thanksgiving/intercession, remembrance of all present and absent, living and dead.

The Hindus had the notion of bloody sacrifices, offered to the gods, even to the highest God. Due to aberrations, their approach was rejected by Lord Buddha who adopted the *pooja* part (offering) but rejected the *yaga* part of the offering. Buddhism therefore, technically and officially has no bloody sacrifices, but unbloody, food offerings which are an essential part of popular Buddhism. The *pooja* matures into a *dana*. Christians have two aspects of the Eucharistic celebration: One is the *re-presentation* of the death and resurrection of Christ, and the other is the *meal* aspect. We announce His life-giving death until He comes again in glory (1 cor. 11). It is the fullest summary of his self-sacrificial life. Then again, an essential orientation is that Christians offer to the Father *through* Christ the Son. It is only then that they share the mystery of the death-resurrection (the *dukkha-sukha*) or the sorrow-joy mystery in one).

In the Buddhist ritual, the *meal* aspect is given greater importance, and the share-offering takes place in the "presence" of the Buddha, meaning that he is gratefully and historically *re-called*. As the Tatagatha, he cannot return but his memory is invoked. The bloody aspect of sacrifice cannot be recalled by



Buddhists for a historical reason: the Hindu *Satapatha brahmana* said: the brahmin priest is a human god; there are two kinds of gods, the gods of heaven and the learned brahmins who are human gods; the sacrifice is divided between these two, the sacrificial gifts are for the gods, the fees (*dakshina*) for the human god". The spirit of this mercenary motive was not liked by the Buddhists. Sacrifice too easily became an end in itself. The *bodhisattvas*, saw the futility of *yagas* like *gini-yaga*, *handi-yaga*, *dahaiyaga*, *kudu-yaga*, *le-yaga*—fire-sacrifice, spoon sacrifice, bran sacrifice (cereal), powder sacrifice and blood sacrifice, according to the *Brahmajala sutta*. The *Dummedha jataka* says that these are useless if bereft of inner meaning. In the *Udai-brahmana sutta*, *Tikavagga* (AN), we have the story of a man who asked the Buddha. "Do you have any regard for bloody sacrifices of animals?" To this the Buddha replied: "I accept inner sacrifice suitable for arhats. Such sacrifice is the giving of good things to others (*dana*). This is the best sacrifice good for this world and for the hereafter".

The Buddhist too, thus believes in 'inner meaning' and unbloody aspect of sacrifice.(3)

Christians use the Eucharist, the un-bloody *representation* of the Death and Resurrection of Christ as a sign of sharing, of unity. He who compared the kingdom of heaven to a Great Supper, guided his church to use a meal ritual from the Sabbath meal, employed by individual families for meeting with friends. It was known as the *chaburah* meal. Its ritual lent itself easily to being combined with the Eucharistic celebration. Sharing of things is an important element in the human community. Human community is made of inter-acting persons, and possessions are an extension of one's personality. If one increases one's possessions at the expense of others, one lessens one's personhood. If one shares one's possessions one increases one's own and another's personhood. Lack of sharing leads to a breakdown in relationships and a deepening of *krodha* (hatred) and *tanha* (bad desire). In Corinth, St. Paul's Christians had begun to divide

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(3) see 1 Peter 2:5. . . . "to offer **spiritual sacrifices** acceptable to God through Jesus Christ".

Isaiah 1:10-17: "bring no more vain offerings. . . make yourselves clean, learn to do good. . . defend the fatherless"

Hebrews 9:9:14: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself . . . to God purify your conscience from dead works to serve the Lord. . ."

Psalms 50: "Create in me a clean heart. . . put a right spirit within me"

Lumen Gentium (on the Church 34): "All these become 'spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ' " (quoting 1 Pet. 2:5)



themselves into groups, relatives with relatives, friends with friends and thus the symbolic brotherhood of the meal was being lessened and would be lost. The religious meal ended in drunkenness. When the meal was really to follow, there was nothing left to eat because the poor had not brought anything along. Paul exclaims: "You shame the poor". It was another way of saying that they had not done any self-emptying, no self-sacrifice(4), Paul does not attack the meal but only the abuses of the meal.

The way the *Sanghika dana* is seen is an admirable lessen in symbolism that all observers, participants must use. Gross inequality in eating houses, in wages for workmen, in the sale of vegetables if there is gross profit-making at the expense of the poor man who sweats out producing them from his small plot (it is an important food for the *dana*), then there is no reality in the symbol. If the line of division between rich and poor, rural and urban is still being kept in many Third world countries in the matter of food; if pawnshops press the division between the haves and the havenots and the utter disparity between them, and we persist in the symbolism of a shared meal and forget its reality, we are not purified. The *dana* fails to be a *dana* in reality but only a symbol. The Eucharist fails to be objectively worked out but only inwardly enjoyed, only looked at, if christians stop sharing with the world.(5)

In sharing, human brotherhood is deepened and achieved and expressed. If we shared our property or wealth or food or skills in proper distribution and just proportion christians recognize a typically christian presence, and share as He shared. It is admirable to see how field-shares give a yield of paddy which is shared with the monk by way of food (raw or cooked). When the monk used to go on his rounds with the begging bowl (*pinda patha*) he used to collect from many houses food which they shared with him. He used to bring it to the monastery, and in poverty—for beggars cannot be choosers—he shared it with the household monks and others of the *vihara* or *avasa*.

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- (4) S. Paul refers to Christ's self-emptying: **Philippians 2:7**

Also: **I Cor. 11** for S. Paul's indictment on those who shame the poor. (verses 18-12)

- (5) A hopeful farmer in a **goda-bim** of Terela in Moneragala district (October '76) said: "Even if we get only one chundu (25 grams) of rice at harvest time, we feel we must offer it in the temple. Our eating comes after that".

For the inequalities in towns, see our article in **Sevaka Sevana** (1), December 1975, **Trades in a hill-country town** (pp. 13-22). See p. 18-19.



All men, be they Buddhists, Christians, or of any other religion, or of no religion are offered signs of sharing life by the food they share at table. In general people gather three times a day for their meals, sometimes five times in affluent areas of Europe. This gathering can be solemn on festive occasions, for a birth, a wedding, a contract or engagement, a death or for any social gathering. Even at funerals, after the last words over the grave, Sri Lankans invite people to come home and *eat* and *drink* "something". How many miss the three meals a day? How few have even two meals a day? Are there not any who have just "something" to eat, once in a few days? Whenever the ritual enjoins a meal as Sanghika Dana, or as Eucharist, or prasadam, we are intrinsically urged to carry the sharing into life, for all these rituals are meant to take us out into life. One can see how the hard work of the farmer on his shared land—Ceylon land ownership was individual but cultivation operations were collective—in the times of the Sinhala kings, led him to share the *kanna* (harvest) in rejoicing with the Buddha, the devas, household, friends and relations. This spirit of sharing was carried out nearly throughout the year when the monk came to beg for his share of food, fruit of their labour, for he formed them as guide, philosopher and friend. In our village live-ins at Obbegoda, Bolgalla Buddama, Terela, we saw how people gladly took dry rations or cooked food to the monks, in October 1976.

It is the high symbolism of sharing that keeps reality and sign alive, always seeking total fulfilment in real life. Religion is the reminding agent. The rituals of religion are meant to look inward to symbolism and reach outward to reality, to real life. If this is done in ever-widening circles, the out-reach of the symbol is extensive. The Liturgy Constitution giving fresh meaning and form to the Worship of the Catholic Church since 1963, says that the Celebration of the Liturgy is source and summit of christian living. As *source*, it must go down to all of daily life; as *summit*, to it must lead whatever is done by christians all the day and all their life long, or as someone said: the Eucharist is not just part of the day but the heart of the day". We have thus no difficulty in understanding why Pope Paul VI said in his Development of Peoples as he faced a world where some had over 50% of the land of their country, others had 85% of the land, and still others had 74.5% of the land:-

"To quote St. Ambrose: you are not making a gift of your possessions to the poor person. You are handing over to him what is his. For what has been given in common for the use of all, you have arrogated to yourself. The world is given to all, and not only to the rich... that is private property does not constitute, for anyone, an absolute and uncon-



ditioned right. If certain landed estates impede the general prosperity because they are extensive, unused or poorly used, or because they bring hardship to peoples, or detrimental to the interests of the country, the common good sometimes demands their expropriation" (DP. 23, 1967).(6)

In the sight of such widespread *tanha* (bad desire) to hoard one's wealth; in the sight of such open rejection of the Eucharistic message, could we not say that love, self-sacrifice, sharing seem forgotten, for here we see that Religion has not failed man, but man has failed his religion.

## Glossary

arahat (sometimes arhat): a perfected one: a Buddhist saint

asvanna (asvenna): harvest (also kanna, kanne)

ahara: food, nourishment (see panaya)

bana: sermon, teaching, the Dhamma

dana: giving, alms, generosity, first of the Ten perfections or ten meritorious actions

dasaparamita: ten first perfections, or ten meritorious deeds: see footnote 2.

dukkha: sorrow, suffering, pain, affliction

deva: god, one who has perfected himself

devatideva: god of gods, most perfected beyond recall

gatha: verse of a Buddhist scripture text

purna kumbha: full pot, with water, for a pirit ceremony

pirit: ceremony of reciting sacred suttas to ward off evil, disease etc.

pirit mandapaya: pavilion for the pirit ceremony

panaya: drink (see ahara)

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(6) Procession (*processio* in Latin) was a proceeding to. It was a movement of all the people together towards God. The Eucharist was also called **Synaxis**, a coming together or collection of people. Procession was also synonymous with Eucharist as is seen in Jungmann's article on Eucharist, **Sacram. Mundi**, vol. ii, p. 267. The Eucharistic procession and meal were strong symbols of unity. It signifies, causes and expresses unity. Corospe says that in 1970, 5% of the Philippines held 85% of the land. Rudolf Strahm shows how 6% of owners have 94% of land in Brazil, and in 1963, 0.96% of Venezuelan owners had 74.5% of the land (sources Griffin/Camara, on p. 33 of Rudolf Strahm, **Fays industrialises, pays sous-developpes**, La Baconniere 1974.



pooja: or puja: offering

prarthana: optative "prayer"; wishing well to someone

pin anumodam: moment of offering merit, thanking someone solemnly in the rite

Samyutta nikaya: one of the five nikayas (sections) of the Dhamma

(Anguttara nikaya: still another of the five basic books of the sermons)

Sanghika dana: almsgiving to monks

sukha: happiness

'stream-winner' is a sotapanna

thambili: king coconut

yaga, yagaya: sacrifice



## TAVALAM\* OF FEARS AND HOPES IN RURAL UVA

— being cursory glances at beliefs, fears and hopes  
in some villages in Uva

Sister MILBURGA FERNANDO, SDS

The Buddhism of rural Uva seems to have absorbed much of the religious tolerance of Hinduism and also much from the benign influence of the Buddha and his principles of *metta*.

In some country areas of Uva there still persist some magico-religious beliefs and practices that are called 'superstitious'. Some of these practices may have been from pre-Buddhistic times and others have developed beside Buddhism. Orthodox Buddhism has little to do with them but easily allows them for the people who probably try to supply for whatever they feel is wanting in their form of religio-moral behaviour if they do not relate to the cosmos of all beings.(1)

This little article is unpretentious. Most of the material has been obtained from interviews in the rural areas, especially a little beyond the 9th mile post on the Moneragala-Amparai road. It may well be that some readers have already learnt much about customs of this type and of superstitious practices, but the view that this old world of superstition is breaking up somewhat, might let them prick their ears. Buddhist thought and practice have made no small progress in these parts and as the country opens up, the fears of people vanish to a great extent. People of a "lower" rung have not yet destroyed their fears while they move upward in the path of *sila* and wisdom and final *nirvana*. In discussions with Buddhists who are very eager about their life of thankful worship (or reverential devotedness seems the better phrase) towards Lord Buddha, one notices how the end is not

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\* See Glossary.

(1) Dr. Lynn de Silva says of the Paritta (protection) or Pirit ceremony of Buddhism: that "It is possible that this was adopted by the Buddha in place of the Rakshanamantras (protective incantations) of the Brahmanic religion in order to replace purely magical rite with something more meaningful and of religious value", Buddhism, Beliefs and Practices, p. 85. (Wesley press, Colombo, 1974)



glossed over even if the task of daily living pushes them to the edge of customs, superstitious practices. A *gura* of Obbegoda once said: "I place *pideni* (offerings) to the gods, devils and beseech the devils to depart, but I never forget Lord Buddha who takes the highest offering as *devatideva*. Of course we are all for *nirvana* (*api savoma nivan dakinda ona*). A kindly old couple in Ekiriyankumbura said earlier this year: "now of course, *preta*, *bhuta*, all is over. We observe *sil* every day piously with *bhakti*".

Charms, amulets, talismans, incantations (which we will call *mantrams* or *mantras* for our purpose) can all probably be traced to an inherent fear in the human mind seeking relationship of towardness, withdrawal or control. Magic and magical beliefs and practices come from a counter attitude; the mind seeks to control and subdue that which causes fear. We often meet people who attack fears head-on by attacking the source of fear. We call them courageous, but most often, "daredevil". Others use a place, thing or person, ritual to seek to manipulate the objective source that generates the fear. It is some kind of placating and controlling for my benefit.

## 1. Fear vs, Faith

We discussed at great length with a family descendant from the early hunting peoples of the jungle, known as the *veddahs*. A first generation *veddah*, his father took uneasily at first to the opening up of the Amparai road for what he termed "mixed benefits". His son, a young married person of about 25 years; whose wife is an ex-University girl was interviewed by our group and we found him a knowledgeable young man, looked up to as leader and know-all of the area, and this not in a bad sense of *mahadanamutta* but in the best sense of the word. Remarks in this article to which the name SD is attached, are from him, for his name is Somapala Dissanayake and his wife's, Nanda(2).

SD: "When our parents constantly mentioned *bali*, *thovil* and the like, in our childhood and early youth, we became gradually full of fear. Elders say: "there are devils lurking here". We feel "it must be so". This enters the marrow of the person and as long as fear dominates in your mind, you will believe in the devil everywhere. Or again, there is belief in *bhutas* or *pretas* (spectres, ghosts of dead people) or as they are called, *holman*. This too is generated by fear. One walks near a *sohona* (tomb)

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- (2) Nearly all the passages marked with quotation marks are from answers of Somapala and some are from Nanda, his wife. The section on superstition carries items of discussion (animals mentioned) as conclusions of the discussion with a family or two.



and hears the rustle of wind in a tree and pushed by the "pool" of childhood fears one thinks: "this is a devil". The *schona* symbolizes his mental state which influences his body. He soon has a fever born of fear. In fact his body is shaking. He does not see it as a banana leaf in the wind. He fears still more because fear generates more fear. Now this ghost (*holmana*) is coming. He does not have time to reason out that *hol* means *helevenava* (shaking), *mana* (mind). His shaking mind produces the ghost. When he manages to go home and narrate his experience in broken sentences, others put more fear into him: "it is such and such a devil". It could be *mahasona* or *valisohona*. Those around him undertake to go to a crystal-gazer to verify, or to a *gurunanse* (who, casually finds out in time the occasion of the fear situation) who takes a bow-like instrument with an *arecanut* cutter (*gire*) at either end and sees or watches (*pena*) it for an oracle answer. Having looked at it, he announces that the fear has been caused by *sohon yaka*, or *valisohona* or *mahasona*. The utterance somehow coincides with his findings from the visiting party! *Kumarayakka* is adept at getting rice and a bunch of plantations offered to himself. It is hung up and ripened and must be offered to *that* devil but devils don't eat any of this. Those gathered eat it all! Oftentimes, the guru says: now that the devil in question is *ririyakka* and *ririyakkhini* (blood-seeking devil and consort) a *thovil* is necessary. You must see that it is done. He insists on it and dwells on the word so strongly that the sick man agrees, his fears on the road to being removed by this kind of pedagogy. He feels: "this guru knows so much. I'm sure to be cured". There arises some kind of *faith* in the guru, in the cure, in the proposed action. (If he is present for the interview, he hears it himself, if not, those who get back insist on it). The fear sickened him, the "faith" heals his mind and body, or at least it is expected to do so. The word has a power ("balaya") to reassure him. The guru asks for a thread and oil, stays outside when he comes home, mutters the *mantram* (repetitive incantations), words to himself (3). He then comes in to the bed, mat or pallot of the sick person and continues in his hearing. The sick man gets a feeling ("hangima") that this *gurukama* and

- (3) **Mantram** is the sanskrit form and **mantra** is the sinhala form. At Bolgalla, N. E. of Monaragala town and accessible from the Potuvil road (at the 163rd mile-post), a man going to work fell from his bicycle in October 1976. He dismissed it as of no importance for he hadn't even a scratch. A week later it had swelled up and it pained his entire body. The family immediately put it down to jealousy and devilish work of someone they knew. The gura came and made incantations all afternoon till about 6 p. m. with oil and thread in his hands. "Gurukam: vedakam" is a common phrase: some take it as one for the other; others as one following the other. *Gurukam* is a mantra done by a technical, official gura (originally meant teacher, but now means someone who deals in the occult too); *vedakam* is ayurvedic medicine.



this thovil will set him aright and do him good. At the thovil ceremony, the dancer puts on a devil-mask, and when the *adura* asks "have you seen this sick man?", the dancer gives an unqualified 'yes', adding *when* he saw him—perhaps bathing near a water-hole (*puhuvala*) in a dried up river bed, watching from a tree, "I appeared to him". This had all been found out from the relatives earlier. More confidence arises in the sick man. Fear is being relegated to the back of his mind. Asked by the *kattadiya* (exorcist) if the devil is ready to leave the sick man, he agrees provided he is given a *dola pideni* (offerings of rice, pulutu, bulath, handun, coconut milk, 7 cones (*gotu*) of handun (sandalwood), 7 cones of monkey flesh are placed on the *pideni katuwa* (offering-table). Green rice (coloured out of the manioc-leaf juice), black rice (coloured out of soot), yellow rice (coloured out of saffron) are all offered, to the demons. The sick man seeing the elaborateness of the ritual is more deeply assured: he probably tells himself: "on such a big scale is this offering done and so the devil must surely leave me today. I shall be cured when this is over. "Even the words used by the devil-dancer in the appeal resound in similar tone:"

"yanda ki thenata yandath; enda ki thenata endath  
sitina thena sitintath. adath mage ruwan bandanayata asa,  
anun kiyana de nasa, ma kiyana de asa..."

(I command you to go where I tell you, to come where I command you. Stay where you are usually. Listen to my command; don't listen to what others tell you, but listen to what I tell you".

It is obvious that magic wants to control and subdue 'higher power'. When the sick man hears this over and over again, his faith increases in this exorcist. (SD): "This faith is not real faith (*sraddha*). It is *mithiya viswasa* (unhealthy, superstitious).

Occasionally, my interlocutor said: "Even today most of our people are in fear because of childhood superstitions. Even today when anyone falls ill in our village, it is first to the *gura* that they go to get a *gurukama* or *mantram* done. The younger people might opt for the hospital, but the older people, for the *gurukam mantra*.

### Objects of Fear: Women at the Bath

If a woman falls ill by some coincidence, after a bathe, it is generally taken that a devil struck her because it was 'drunk' with the fragrance of the soap she used, especially if, flouting all



warning, she went to bath on a forbidden day, Tuesday or Saturday (some say it is Friday). Appropriate incantations or even a *thovil* may be called for.

### Kaluwa Kotanawa

"On moonlight nights some village people believe that the devil puts on a "bigness" and straddles the road like a colossus. It is one immense blackness, feet on the road and head in the clouds. An eerie light is seen behind this figure, it seems. Woe to the traveller who attempts to go across under the 2 legs. Ignorant people run away and they say the figure strikes them in the back, presses them and kills them. Those who know mantrams mutter them on their hands and draw three lines across the road as a limit to the approach of this *yakkha*. I must say I only heard this. I have seen nothing of the kind. I don't know any mantrams by heart. I have a book of them for mere interest. Nothing has happened to me and so I do not fear. And also, since I don't fear, I don't see..."

### Mohini

"Mohini is regarded as a pretty *yakkhini* (she-devil). Many, including my wife, tell me not to take my flute and play it in the *pela* (watch-tower hut), for she lures the flute-player to his doom". "The man follows her invitation, goes up hill and down dale, even to a higher hill and kills him, it appears, she dances till he finishes playing. If he plays till she is exhausted, he wins. Generally, it is she who wins, with her boundless energy." Sompala then added: "I am not afraid. I play on till midnight and even beyond. Nothing has happened to me. As you see, all our rural, village customs are very different from city customs, marriage, death, *thovil*, ways of speech, mannerisms, clothes, food, all are different".

### Anjanam eli: crystal-gazing, light-telling

ND (Nanda, his wife): Why, what about light-telling? It is used as a means to find out where, when, why and by whom one suspects an event to have occurred, an event which one wants to avoid or get rid of. SD:- "I have seen 10-12 places where light telling is done by crystal-gazing or lamp-reading or saucer-reading. Here again it is fear that governs the whole thing. Those who have "seen" say they see Anjanam devi coming and Hanuman with a lamp. As for me, I don't believe and so I don't see anything. They say it shows where a *kodivine* has been done (charm placed), or even a treasure buried in the jungle (*kele nidhana*) can be found. Some look at a fingernail, others



at a betel leaf and give out the 'oracle'. (I would like to ask them, says SD, why these seers cannot find a *kele nidhana*, themselves!). Sri Lankans are very gullible. There is a controversy between Professor Dissanayake and a colleague. The former says that all this is bogus, and I accept it after my own reflections".

### A strange yakkhini

When SD and ND had finished talking I narrated an experience to them: one day in August 1975, from a house close to the Menik Ganga we went down to the river around eventide. The young wife drew attention to a long-drawn-out wail, thin as a shriek: "ouai...ouai...ouai..." it went on with 10-second pauses, like some woman in great pain. She said it was a *bodiliya*, a she devil, a yakkhini who had been born as such because as a woman she had died at childbirth. It has a particular distaste for men, it appears, but is frightened of pregnant women. In April 1976, on another study Survey in the Siyabalanduwa area, we heard a devastating rejection of this phenomenon: "There is no such thing as a *bodiliya*. Women and children hate to hear this frightful sound coming from an *uguduwa* (pole cat) that is unable to pass plantain seeds of a very succulent type of plantain, a rare species. That's the wail you hear..."

SD replied: "Some say 'bodiliya' or *bodilima* or *katussa* (large type of garden lizard or chameleon). Others say it is a ghost in lizard form. I never saw it. I don't believe in it at all. It seems that this *bodiliya* comes and hangs on the legs of a man, and he feels so heavy in the legs he dare not look at them. Men die of it. Those who know mantrams, use one, especially if they carry oil with them on their person. It runs away from women, and is also called a "yakkatussa". In connection with this there is also the "Big eye". Hunters speak of a frightful, ever-growing eye as big as a cart-wheel, when a torch is flashed on it. They say it is the evil. I met people who have seen it. It is linked, they say to the *bodiliyas* and if a man shoots at it in a frenzy, he will find a number of lizards dead there, in the morning. I do not know the habits of lizards, but since the chameleon changes its colour, it surely must have phosphorous on its body and if they nest together in a big circle, it would appear like an "eye" at night. How else can you find dead chameleons in the morning?" asked SD.

### Devil and Sickle

"Expectant mothers carry a sickle (*dekeththa*) because the devil fears sickles. It seems that a man was cutting illuk grass and a devil watched from a tree. The devil saw the curved knife



and touched it saying that it was 'bent owing to the cold', and tried to straighten it. He cut off his hands in the process. Devils are frightened of this instrument since then, and when expectant mothers carry it with them they are reassured and their fear is put out. "I think this is a glorified way of saying that a knife has a power of slaying and no enemy can come near when she is frai at that stage".

In this section we have seen how fears go along with most of these people in the rural areas, but due to the opening up of even some regions, and due to communication, literacy, education, there is a strong secular element and what can be called rationalization. Most Buddhist monks fearlessly call on them to purify their living of the Buddhist faith and to destroy their fears. This is a hopeful sign.

## 11. Power of a Human Word

In nearly all the above cases, the man who fears, fights back with a word, a word-deed or a series of words in a monotone. I call a word-deed or a word-gesture, the act of placing herbs on a wound while the incantation is being made, or the act of performing some deed *during* the utterance, or in some way accompanying it: the gura who muttered mantrams while holding the phial of oil in his hand; the man who confronted the colossal figure spoke and drew the three lines across the road; the man who listens to the *thovil* accepts the code of word (mantram) and gesture (*pideni*),

In day to day life we see that the word makes an important impact. The reader who goes on reading is fascinated by the power of words which bring home to him events unseen and unheard perhaps, but which move his imagination and intelligence. Words are full of power. The human word can make a person happy or sad. Good news or a scolding (incidentally the word *bana* is linked to the word *baninawa*: *bana* means sermon, preaching, while *baninawa* originally must have been neutral but later came to mean 'scolding') are heard and accepted differently. Words can put a person into rage, can heal a person psychically, even organically. Take the case of a person frightened of an operation, somehow accepting it because someone *spoke* to her a word of assurance. The subtle power of the human word can carry a message to an elephant across the path asking it to go away; it can send away snakes(4). Evil words uttered with evil

- (4) "When the Israelites were bitten by poisonous snakes in the wilderness, neither herbs nor plaster cured them, but your word, Lord, which heals all things; natural remedies were ineffective, God's mighty word saved them" (Wisdom 16:12) in the Bible. See also **Heinisch-Heidt**, *Theology of the Old Testament*, Liturgical Press, Minnesota, 1955, p. 124. God's image, man, carries great power in his word too.



intent have had the power of destroying, withering, killing. A curse can condemn another because of the power of the wish behind the word (5).

In the use of mantrams (or mantras) there is a series of sounds or words endowed expressly with magical power and expressed with direction and authority. Most Hindus and those Buddhists who do use mantras describe it as an emanation from the divine Voice or of Nature itself. It is a tapping of the sources of Energy or of the waves of air or breath of which the universe is full. The vibrant human voice strikes a "chord" on those waves (some may think of the bouncing effect of Telstar) and there is a round of contact. Human breath is called *vayu* and the word proceeding from it is *vacana*. These can have a powerful effect. They could easily become instruments under control so that higher powers may be controlled. In fact, Magic has been defined as the art of influencing events by occult control of nature, of spirits, of witchcraft. Just as "word" is neutral, and proceeding from the heart it can be loaded with well-wishing words or ill-wishing words like *seth kavi* (verses of good omen) or *vas kavi* (verses of ill-omen), scholars further distinguish between black magic and white magic, the one, done, with devilry, and the other without devilry or dead.

In villages where Buddhism has taken deep root, one seldom or never meets mantras used for ill. It is almost always white magic (for the categorizer) but a healthy use of the word-deed together (utterance of a cure-wish together) for the normal sympathizer. Close to Kande vihara on the Ella-Wellawaya road, is a young native-doctor who knows mantrams but who has had 400 snake-bite cures to his credit. In February 1976 he said: "My father handed me his book of mantrams on his deathbed, and I promised I will never use a single *against* any man". According to this man too, the utterance is best made coincidental with the placing of the herb on the sore spot.

Furthermore, in all these, there is an element of the 'suggestible voice' (6). It heightens the emotive-affectivity involved. Orthodox Buddhism replaced the superstitious and animistic beliefs and incantations of old and uses instead, the *pirit chanting*

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(5) See Eric Maple, *Incantations and Words of Power*, Aquarian press, Northamptonshire, 1974, pp. 62. Every form of magic, black or white, is contrary to Holy Scripture. See also: p. 40 of Maple's book: "incantations charged with intense emotion..." "To affirm and will what ought not to be is to destroy" (Eliphas Levi, the magician, quoted by Eric Maple, *ibid*, p. 14)

(6) Cf. Maple, p. 10.



tone and ceremony. The soothing monotone heightens the sense of mystery. Rhys Davids has said of pirit "the fervent utterance of the Paritta as synergy of thought sent forth by the utterers, are judged to be possibly effective medicine no less than the muscular and material appliances of medical art. They are intended to range benign agencies on the side of the patient and to keep far off those that may harm" (Dialogues of the Buddha, pp. 186-187, quoted by Dr. Lynn de Silva, Buddhism, Beliefs and Practices in Sri Lanka, p. 89). For the ordinary Buddhist peasant in remote regions of Sri Lanka, Nibbana may seem a high ideal; pirit may seem too difficult to come by, and so he relies on the *metta* the loving kindness of the one whom he calls Budu Piye (Lord Buddha, Father) and fears not to deal in *mantrams* as an expediency for the moment. There is no radical alienation from Buddhist tenets here.

SD: "*Vas Ekavi* (songs of curse and ill-omen) *kodivina*-are meant to produce evil in another". A person present with SD then said: "There is a bird protecting each one and if one knows his *nicha* time (time of its least strength) and do a *hooniyam* or *kodivina*, it strikes one's enemy. To this, SD subscribed adding: "They say it works. I do not know. I have no way of knowing, or verifying, for I too, am seeking for ten years now. I criticize these wrong things and may be hurting many while doing so but in my search I feel I have to do so. I challenge anyone to do a *kodivina* for me".

"There is also the "*asana poottuwa*" —spell over a chair or bed on which one sits. It looks like black magic, for there is devilry; it looks like white, for the merriment it causes. It is a comic sight to see one getting up with a chair glued to one's back. The *mantram* is uttered and the chair or bed marked with white chalk. The victim is well and truly stuck. People say they have done it and it has worked. There is a counter-mantra to remove the effect of getting stuck. All this is hear-say. It is surprising to see the power of man's word (*manussa vacana*). Mantra is by the word".

Then again, some say there is word power in a mantra to allow a young man to obtain his partner. Formerly, when restrictions, fear, shyness were common with regard to boy-girl relationships, the *atorasiya-ata* (108x8 times) was used. A cigar was muttered upon, that number of times and given to the man. He smoked it and was soon won over by the girl. Or again, if a man wanted a girl and she refused, was haughty or ignored him, he made a mantra, went to the girl and asked for a fire-brand (*ginipenella*) to light a cigar or cigarette. If the girl gave it with the left, he took it with the right; if with the right, he took it



with the left. The man left the place and soon the woman became *vasi*. This *vasi gurukam* is a mantra-ruse to possess a girl as life's partner. People say so. In this too, I cannot vouch for the truth, for I have not seen it verified—came SD's refrain.

### III. Superstitious Customs, Further Fears

Cardinal Newman says somewhat sympathetically: "They who are not superstitious without the Gospel will not be religious with it" (J. H. Newman, Oxford University Sermons, London, 1892, p. 118; also Willi Henkel, *Die Religiöse situation der Heiden und Ihre Bekehrung Nach John Henry Newman*, Off. Libr. Catholici, Rome, 1967, p. 76). Kloppenburg sounds less sympathetic in certain parts of his article, but is more positive in certain others: "The poverty and shallowness of what superstition has to say about the background of human existence prevent men from summoning up the courage of the real faith which would overcome fear, doubt and despair". Just as the truth of Buddhism can be obscured by some attempts at keeping superstition, so too, vigilance is needed in the christian churches and in christian life to see that "the weight of accumulated traditions does not obscure the truth...the Church must watch herself constantly and educate the faithful to a faith fully conscious of the nature of Christian life and strong enough to endure fear and doubt and to transform them" (7).

Couldn't one say that just as there are traditions and tradition which come down within established religions and orthodox faiths, so also there can be some ghostly customs which survive. Not being a latin scholar I am unable to say if there is a relationship between the word *super-sto* and *super-sisto*. In fact, *superstes* is given as witnessing, surviving, living beyond another. *Superstitio* (superstition) is given as binding, awe-inspiring oath. It is this latter word that carries the meaning *superstition*. Somehow I am reminded of a caravan (*tavalam*) of animals carrying sacks of cereals from the remote villages of Uva to the centres of trade (*polas*) in Kodayana, Moneragala, Buddama, Siyambalanduwa. The sacks are straddling their backs and they jog along to merry tinkles and an occasional whip. The fears of Uva and the hopes of Uva thus go on as surviving traditions within families and groups, within entire villages.

Superstition is an attempt to explain man's frightening existence, especially in what have been called limit-situations of life:

(7) Kloppenburg, Bonaventura, in *Superstition, Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. 6, pp. 193-195. (p. 195, col. 1)



birth, love, sickness, death, or in moments of deep anxiety. True, man is made in God's image and that man's word, is powerful, but given the ambivalence of the word coming from the ambivalence of the heart, it can be for good or for ill. Man's selfishness might increase, and then he is going counter to religion's most ambitious programme for man, removal of his own selfish attitude leading to sin.

The more one goes towards the interior and lives in the remoter regions of our country, in places like Madugama, Kandarapanguwa, Buddama, Kongaspitiya, Nauwagala, Magandhana etc., the more one hears of *subha* and *asubha lakuna* (good signs and bad), belief in lucky and unlucky signs. In a people emerging from semi-isolation, virtually to themselves except for a tarred road and the occasional sounds of a distant bus, there can still be the historical memory of living alone at the mercy of wind and weather, of weird sounds (rustle of dried leaves in the jungle, or or a sudden gush of wind). This is why they used what was most their own and still not their own—the human breath in human voice and word, the one thing they had, to defeat what they thought was weird, evil. A snake-bite gave flesh and form to this evil(8). Hundreds of such sarpa-vedahs (snake-bite doctors) exist in Uva, who have a small clientele on their own and undisturbed by the bureaucratic machine driven at high-power from the capital cities of rural Asia. I am reminded of the mother of a Buddama family: "I stepped out of my house with a bottle-lamp and the spirits blew it off. I went to walk outside at dusk to get firewood in, and I knew someone was following. The rustle of the leaves I can hear, told me so." The son dismissed it saying: "but, mother, it could be the wind or it could be your own footfall and echo on the rustling dried leaves". The Father, however, defended the mother saying: "What is to be done. Your belief is different. We came here into thick jungle. Left to ourselves we were lonely and had to rely on something to drive out our fears and so we used mantrams. This was the only way we had to show our daring, our fearlessness. Today, you are different because we stayed on and opened up this land, son". The son agreed reluctantly, but the old man drove home a point. It was in April 1976.

A family gathering at Siyabalanduwa on the Potuvil road: the father of the family sums up the situation on superstition: "I think that basically it is a question of insecurity. If one sets out on a journey in such 'un-opened' areas in Sri Lanka, where wild animals still lurk, it is natural that fears arise within you. I like to have an assurance when I set out that all will be well me,

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(8) See note 4.



and that I may succeed and not meet with death or disaster. A 'he' (or a she!) might be prejudiced and might not give me the true verdict. An animal has no grudges. So it is better to listen to a natural omen, categorizing them as good or bad. The sense of security thus deepens":

*Dog flaps ears*: taken as a bad sign, ill omen. Delay the journey. Stay for twenty minutes or so. In times when there were no clocks in Sri Lanka, these minutes were calculated by the time measure of "an old cow drinking water".

*Ulama* (vulture): night-hoots, accompanying each hoot with a rattle-like sound, close to a death rattle ("gudu-gudu-gudu..."). For generations the idea has survived, it appears, that when the ulama shouts, a death will occur near by. It cries since it is possessed by the devil. It presages disease and death. The sure remedy is to go backwards, to the tree on which the bird is perched, strip a piece of its bark with the left hand and get a mantra recited over it. The danger passes. The idea is that the devil possesses the ulama and the ulama, the tree.

*Cat*: a cruel animal, brooking no opposition but destroying any small creature it meets. If it comes on to your pathway when you step out of the house, you must delay the journey by twenty minutes (old-cow time)

*Lizard*: a gekko chirps three, four or five times or even more. The sound is taken as a warning: "don't do immediately what you set about to do. Hold on for a while". (Strange to say, the sound resembles 'tut-tut-tut' which sinhala people use by rubbing the tip of the tongue on the palate to show surprise or 'it shouldn't have been done') I am told, that in the Philippines, there is a popular superstition about the house or garden lizard: each note it chirps gives a different message.

*Crow*: on a dry branch in the morning cawing in a peculiar strain is an omen: a relative will die soon.

Thus, some of the *asubha lakunu* (ill omen) of Uva areas are cat, dog, ulama, lizard, bodiliya, crow and perhaps some other animals. Humans too can be carriers of bad signs: a person with an empty vessel: on setting out if you meet one with an empty plate, dish, bucket, jar; barren woman, stay back and do not leave the house. Delay twenty minutes (old-cow-time). Old woman carrying a stick is also bad. Western readers will be reminded of the sign of the old witches, old, bent, gnarled hands,



carrying a stick or broom. It maybe that in a Buddhist country like Sri Lanka, the nearest sign of death is old age and so this is sufficient reminder of death to stop going one's way.

*Death:* SD: "When a death occurs in our villages, people do not live in that house any more (at least that was the old custom). That is because of ghosts (pretas). The house is said to be haunted. Even two or three fear to stay together. All stay awake at night in a night—watch, partly through fear, partly through respect and love, and also as custom. There have been cases of people at this wake and falling ill. It is amusing to see some in the group so nervous and on the alert, that the slightest sound is enough to scare them. Some already decide that it is the dead man returning. In former times, when a death occurred, we had no petromax lamps or kerosene lights but an open fire. The eerie shadows playing on the faces of people and on trees, near by, must surely have wrought havoc on the imagination disturbed already much by the departure of someone they loved and knew well. Today, we have progressed and there is greater neighbourliness and so, others come and share the staying awake. I recall, as recently as 7 or 8 years ago, we did not stay in the same house after a death. We just went away. Today, no one leaves. The place is steadily opening up. There is: less isolation and more people. As for *pretas* from the dead, today so many youngsters are more rationalist. They may exist, we say, but no one has seen any. I, for one, will not believe in them. People tell us they exist, but I have no experiential knowledge (*athdekimakin kiyanta be*). It is the same with devils. I have never seen them, as I said before. We have read articles by men like Mr. Kovoov, Prof. Dissanayake and others. We read the *Silumina* very carefully whenever we go to the roadside boutique and so we find that we are gradually shedding these unnecessary fears which kept us bound. We are a little more free, in that sense. Also, our people generally do not bury on Tuesdays and Saturdays, especially in the further villages. If it has to be done for some valid reason, then they cut out a man's figure on a large tal-leaf (*talatu*) and insert it into the rough coffin, or in very early times, place it on the *dara seya* (sticks tied together as bier); the figure is meant to ward off death. It is like saying: "Death! (*Maruwa*), that is your next victim, not anyone from here" People feel that if this is not done, someone else will die soon from that same household.

### **A Touch of Economics:**

"There seems to be such a thing as trading on another's fears. This may be very close to what is happening in some established religions. The external gift is the same in contract



form: stipend, offering, etc., but it is only a sign of an offering for services done. "Most people resort to the occult, astrology etc. (nekath times) and thovil, not for the sake of others, but selfishly, for themselves. Previously the charge was not very much, but now it is graded and tariffed. For a small thing it is 2/50 cts; for a minor reading of a hososcope: 5/- Rs. and for a major reading 10/-, i.e. close to 1 US \$. The increase is due to the economic situation of the country. As the situation worsens, the price increases. Thovil tariffs are the same. Formerly, the dancer needed, besides his fee, one measure of rice. Now it is two measures and two yards of white cloth (probably for three jackets for his wife!). One coconut has become two now. How they have changed the former token *panduru* of one cent to ten Rupees, is hard to understand. It is not so strange to see the *adura*, the guru turn their profession into a trade. However the truth will never lessen but will always win. Today, thovils are getting less and les. Science, Medicine, Reasoning—all this is cutting into this system of fear. *Nakshastra*, the reading of horoscopes is a powerful influence in the village."

Agriculture rightly depends on moon-times because the wind, weather and tidal systems depend surely on the gravitational pull of the moon and other astral bodies. "There is much truth here. Here too, fear generates fear. Some guide their every moment with nekath (auspicious times). If a girl reaches puberty, the village elder (*mutta*) is consulted and her horoscope studied. He says impolitely to the man's face that he will die in a year's time. The man fears so much that he will probably die in a year. No one likes to be told this so suddenly. I know of a man who did not till his chena that year because the astrologer told him he'd die. He did not die that year, but neither did he get any food. He nearly died for want of food, for he did not grow any food in his chena that year, awaiting death. Here again, *nakshastra* is powerful, only if you take it in (*hithata gaththoth pamanai*) (9).

Somapala wound up thus: "If I live a good life, or try my sincere best to do so, and if I live my *pranati* and not harm any being, *kodivina* can have no effect on me. My *balaya* (strength) is then great, for I have done wrong to no man, I can humbly say. Some sins, especially the ones I commit against my fellowman reap fruit even in this life. I try to do good and so I

(9) *Nakshastra* is astrology. In fact, the Buddha and Buddhism dislike nekath *velava* or auspicious times. The Venerable Kapugama Sumanarama Thero wrote in, made an apt remark: "Lord Buddha never saw to auspicious times. Yet, the event of his Enlightenment happened in good time (*nekatha*). One's good and auspicious time is when one does good" (*Dinamina*, Sat. Jan 15, 1966, p. 8. col. 3: *sinhala: trad. mine*).



have no fear. I have this feeling consciously that I have nothing to fear. If I had less faith, I would have more fear. Everything is according to our *sraddhava* (faith), not *mithya viswasaya* (superstition).

## Conclusion

Buddhism with its loving-kindness and tolerance allows the simplicity (10) which leads anyone to opt for the immediate. As long as its influences are made vital in the villages by the monk-guide, magic, superstition will always take a second place, and this is as it should be. This is the corrective approach of the Dhamma. Superstition must be unmasked and rejected, but it must also be recognized as a symptom of deep human distress and anxiety. The impetus to selflessness and *metta* in Buddhism will be able to make Sri Lankan man feel less helpless and bring home to him his true place in the social, economic, scientific complexity of the world.

This article merely presents, especially in interview form, some data for the student of religion, for the theologian and for sociologists to think about. Sociologically, the historical trend of holding on to superstitious-religious beliefs in a pre-literate era is still with us in some way. Isn't this one way of preserving our simple way of life? Customs, superstitions, ritual *sirith-virith*, may have traces of 'primitive religion and animism' in them, but what if they enshrine the deep desire to keep our values? Paul Radin in his *Primitive Religion: Its Nature and Origin*, suggests that religion is not a mere process of meditation about man's life and destiny; it is a means of preserving the values of life. It may be part of man's mundane life but it also preserves the values currently esteemed by most members of the group.

Religion must always push towards higher wisdom and let the Truth emerge. If this is allowed to happen in Uva, as it is happening in some villages, whatever is useless and obsolete among superstitions will be shed, and what is true will be more confirmed as authentic and necessary for our people and for their genuine cultural advancement.

[10] Christians very easily pin down as sinful any and every type of trust in the occult sciences. It is true that there must be vigilance in these matters, but *Moral Theology*, even of 1960 has been sympathetic: "in superstition, ignorance excuses from subjective sin... At times... no sin at all in the implicit invocation of the devil because of ignorance, simplicity or error"; or again: "simplicity generally excuses one from sin" in cases where infallible efficacy is applied to certain objects (see Jones-Adelman, *Moral Theology*, Newman Press, Westminster, MD, USA, 1960, p. 96, n. 164, para 2; p. 97, art. 1).



## Glossary

- A:** adura: exorcist  
 anjanam eli: crystal-ball gazing  
 anjanam devi: goddess presiding over this.  
 asana: chair, throne  
 asana poottuwa: chair on which a charm has been done to pin down sitter as victim  
 athuraya: sick man, patient
- B:** balaya: power, strength  
 bali: devil-dancing where clay images of demons are used: 13,200 rituals.  
 bali adura: exorcist  
 bana: sermons or commentaries, teaching the dhamma: or dhammadesana  
 bhakti: devotion, devotedness, piety  
 bhuta: spirits, ghosts, beings.  
 bodiliya: bodilima: mythical creature resulting from a woman who died in childbirth.  
 bulath: betel/bulath hurulla: sheaf of betel leaves.
- D:** dekeththa (or dakaththa): sickle.  
 devale: house for gods where devotees pray and make vows  
 devatideva: god of gods, usually applied to the Buddha  
 dhamma: doctrine of Buddhism  
 dola pideni: offerings to the demons or gods.
- G:** ginipenella: or ginipelella: firebrand  
 gire: arecanut-cutter  
 gotta: cones or bouquet  
 guru, gura, gurunanse: variations of the name for teacher or mantram—reciter.
- H:** handun: sandalwood, incense  
 hangima: feeling  
 holman: holmana: (hellena manasa): mind shakes, vacillation. This means, a "ghost"  
 Hanuman: name of monkey in the Rama-Sita story  
 hoonyam: black magic: one of five subdivisions: jivam, bandhana, kodivina, angam, pilli
- I:** illuk: a species of grass. People use it for thatching roofs.
- K:** kapuwa: from kapa (pole or stick): officiating priest of the devala (also kapurala)  
 kattadiya: witch—doctor: sometimes, rural areas call, the native—doctor by this name  
 katussa: lizard. Even the bodiliya is called a katussa, sometimes.  
 kele: jungle: kele-nidhana is a treasure hidden in the jungle.



- kodivina: one type of hooniyam (black magic)  
 kumarayaka: kalu-kumaraya: black-devil or black prince  
 hindering child from being born.
- L:** lakuna: sign: subha lakuna and asubha lakuna: good sign  
 and bad sign.
- M:** Mahadanamutta: know-all. Legendary figure from sinhala  
 folklore.  
 Mahasona: devil frequenting burial places, cemeteries, cre-  
 mation grounds  
 mana: a species of grass like illuk  
 mantram: mantra (mantras): incantations, repetitive utteran-  
 ces of words or phrases  
 metta: maitreya: loving-kindness  
 mithya viswasa: superstition.  
 mutta: great-grandfather
- N:** nekath: auspicious time  
 nakshastra: astrology, science of divining times etc.  
 nibbana: nirvana: Unmade, Unmanifest, Uncreated reality  
 in Buddhism, the Ultimate.
- P:** panduru: offerings, vows, promissory tokens  
 pela: hut or home. Also means the hut on stilts used as  
 watch-hut against boar and elephant.  
 pel-kavi: verses sung by watcher in the pela at night  
 pideni food-offerings for the rack  
 pideni-katuva: offering-rack.  
 pranatipato: first precept of Buddhism: not to kill  
 preta: evil spirits harassing men: also bhuta.  
 pulutu: bedun: foods cooked in oil and used as secondary  
 dish for offerings.
- R:** Ririyaka (rudiru-yakkha): blood-seeking devil.  
 Ririyakkhini: she-devil, his consort.
- S:** sarpaveda: native doctor who cures snake-bite.  
 seth kavi (and vas-kavi): verses or songs of blessing. (or curse)  
 sila: morality in Buddhism.  
 sirith-virith (from charithra-varithra): customs, rites.  
 sohona: tomb  
 sohon yakka: devil or evil spirit frequenting tombs.  
 sraddha: faith trust  
 subha lakunu: lucky signs, good signs
- T:** tavalam: caravan of goods carried by a pack of animals  
 (bulls) in rural areas.  
 thovil, or tovil: deals with dangerous evil spirits who can  
 harm the devil-dancers themselves. Masks are worn by dan-  
 cers to personify devils to be placated,



U: uguduwa: pole cat

V: vacana: word

vayu: breath, spirit

vas kavi: verses of cursing, imprecation (see seth kavi)

vasi: vasi karanava or vasi gurukam: luring a partner or spiriting her/him away.

veddah: (or beddah) man of the bedde, jungle. Minority group in Sri Lanka.

vihara: Buddhist temple

velisohone: special devil frequenting burial place for a week after burial.

viswasa: faith, trust. (mithya viswasa is superstition). Viswasa is more 'belief'

Y: Yakkha, or yakka: devil, demon.

yakkatussa: another name for the bodiliya-lizard.

yakkhini; she-devil, consort.



(This article is meant for research and study, not for immediate implementation: —Ed.)

## A EUCHARIST WITHOUT BREAD AND WINE?

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Our era is characterized by an ever wider questioning. In such a movement of *remise en question*, that which is the object of study in this short article strongly risks putting on a specially radical tone. For there are few facts in church tradition so solidly established as the use of bread and wine for the eucharistic meal. From the very beginning, in fact, the Church remembers the action of the Lord taking bread and wine during the last Supper (1 Cor. 11, 23-26) and from that time onwards, she does this act again, re-presents it in memory of him (Acts 2:42). Is there any room for rethinking a tradition that goes back to the Lord himself and can we even think of doing so, in the face of such uncontestable authority? The very fact of formulating the question: "A eucharist without bread and wine"? will disconcert many who do not even think that the question might really be asked.

We do not have an *a priori* answer. We would wish only to bring to your reflexion a certain number of facts, recall the theological data, the basic ones which hold on to the very essence of the eucharistic sign, and taking all this into account, and knowing all this, judge the opportune-ness of the question raised.

### "Fruit of the Earth and of the Work of Man"

Who is the missionary, living in a country in which bread and wine are not the daily food of the people, who has not felt a certain *malaise* (ill at ease) on certain days. Nearly every day of the week, in the evening, he goes to a village and brings together the little christian community which the Word of God has set up there and awakened into life. He gets news from them and about them and before dinner he sets aside a long moment for the formation and instruction of his catechumens. Then comes the time for the meal! In savannah-land Africa he will take it alone, for that is a way of giving him honour. But his food, given in abundance (someone sees to it that he wants for nothing)



will be the food of all. He will eat boiled millet, rice. He will drink millet-beer (dolo). Millet and rice are the fruits of this earth, and to share it is to share something of the life of men and women whose daily hard labour lets the village have its necessities of life.

After the long evening watch, happy and relaxed very often as one knows it to be in Africa, the missionary will go to sleep in a house (hut) which has been specially prepared for him. It is similar to all the other village huts. In the morning he wakes up with the others, to the crowing of cocks and to the muffled sound of mortar and pestle as the women prepare the next meal of boiled millet.

It is just dawning and the christian community gathers round him to celebrate the Eucharist, before he resumes his journey to another village. He has tried his best to tell his community that the Mass is the summit of christian prayer, that each one at this moment offers himself with Jesus to the Father and that to the manifest this communion with Jesus who brings us close one with another, we must share together, his Body and his Blood, made present under our eyes under the signs of..... these little round hosts of flour which one cannot find in the village, the reason being that wheat cannot be grown there! The missionary had to bring them with him. Under the sign of a little bit of wine which the village does not produce, because it does not have vineyards, and which too he had to bring in a small bottle.

All this, to the reflecting person, appears passing strange. From the time of his arrival in the village the previous evening, the missionary shared the life of the village, their joys and griefs, their food and their hut. And here, at the very moment in which this sharing finds its highest expression, the community is bereft of the material means which would let her express such sharing. This earth which the word of the Lord has visited does not produce the signs of his Eucharist; one must bring from outside that which makes possible the visible gesture of his thanksgiving. If by ill-luck, the missionary has forgotten the bread and wine, the community will not have its eucharist. This community, planted on this earth, must receive from outside that which it needs to translate visibly the communion by which it lives, for lack of being able to give itself the bread and the wine deemed necessary.

Does one see the problem, which we could suspect must surely rest on some misunderstanding? So abnormal does it seem that a community of faith does not have all the means necessary for its Eucharist, even if this is on the level of the most ordinary signs.



To make things clearer, we think it is possible to draw from recent history. Up until very recently, no one imagined that it would have been possible in our communities to celebrate the death and resurrection of the Lord in a language other than latin. Then, one became conscious of the fact that it was paradoxical to go on announcing the Word in a language which the community did not understand, and when this step was taken, when each one regained his rights, given on the first morning of the Church, to hear the word of God in one's own tongue (ACTS 2, 6-81-1), one discovered that it would be good if the words and phrases of daily living would also find their way into the Eucharist. The former and the latter must speak the same language and it certainly is not disrespect towards the mystery to celebrate in an audible language to those who took part. The mystery of the Body and Blood of the Lord remained in its entirety but perhaps one understood better the way in which the community, here and now, found itself associated with that mystery. The ignorance of the latin language by the majority of the community has often made inroads on the very meaning of the mystery. One often thought that an unintelligible language saved the depth of the mystery, and this, all the more easily because one finds in certain cultural traditions a close link between the secret of an initiation reserved to a few and the utilisation of a language accessible only to that group. But today, one understands better that christian initiation is of a different kind and that it does not have to have recourse to secrets of language to preserve a mystery into which christian initiation introduces the person.

However, it appears as if at the present time, there has been no reckoning with all the implications involved in the simple fact of recognizing pride of place for each of the languages of the human community in the celebration of the Lord's mystery. A language means much more than the ensemble of signs conventionally chosen and offered to communication between human groups capable of understanding them. One knows that, today, a language does not mean a manner of *saying*, but another manner of *living* the human experience. Language is so close to life that each milieu, even in the very bosom of a cultural world apparently homogenous, the French society, for example, quickly creates its own language. How often have we not rebuked the intellectual or the technical man for using special words and avoiding the words of everyman?

The intimate link indissoluble, between language and life, gives life a stunning quality if it is true that on the morning of Pentecost, each one understood the marvels of God celebrated in his own language. It meant, from then onwards, that all human



experience is qualified for hearing and intelligence of that same word, and with that word, all that makes it possible, viz., this cultural milieu within which it comes to life and without which it remains undecipherable!

On this affirmation there is much to say but it will lead us far afield. At any rate, we are very close here, to the question under discussion. The act of a missionary sharing, for his evening meal, boiled grain and *dolo* goes beyond the need which pushes them to offer victuals of this kind because there is nothing else... It is already a certain type of communion with the life of men whom he wishes to lead to the gospel. These men are cultivators and their art, on difficult terrain, is precisely to wrest from the earth in the best possible conditions, a harvest of millet, rice, beans—which will defend them against hunger. To share food is to pay homage to the dignity of work. It is to recognize the seriousness of life. And on festive days it is still millet and millet-beer which one will find in the abundant gourds. “Fruit of the earth and of the work of men”, they are the basic elements of their feasting and their joy of living. There is no celebration, no thanksgiving without sending round the gourd in which beer ferments, except the great and final Thanksgiving which must give its rounding off to every human celebration. To me it would seem that here we are missing something essential to the truth of the Pentecost revelation.

### The Sign of the Eucharist

There is, however, a major difficulty and for many, an insurmountable one. For, it is not enough to make of the Eucharist, the thanksgiving of a reconciled people, however grand the gesture may be. It is essentially renewal for today, of the Supper of the Lord, who as a sign of his death, shared with his disciples some bread and some wine and nothing else, and who asked them to do this act in memory of him. From then onwards, how can we not come back to the bread and the wine whenever we propose to celebrate the meal of the Lord? From the outset, it is in the Breaking of the Bread that disciples of Emmaus recognized the Risen One (Luke 24:35) and the first brothers of Jerusalem “broke bread in their homes” (Acts, 2:46). Tradition is such that one does not see how a Eucharist which is not sharing of bread wine will still be this meal which the Lord wanted to be renewed as a memorial of his Pasch.

The problem arises especially, because of a too narrow acceptance of the eucharistic sign. The sign is not in the *bread* and the *wine* which in themselves do not have a privileged significance: it is not even in the fact of *eating* the bread and *drinking*. The



sign is in the *meal taken together*(1). In *sharing* the bread and the wine, Jesus wants to join closely and intimately those who are no more servants but friends (John 15:15) to the drama of His passover through death. There must be a gesture to express this communion, to speak out this sharing of the Passover: "And while they are *eating*, He took bread, and having said the blessing, He broke it and *gave* it to them saying: 'Take, this is my body'" Then taking a cup, he gave thanks and gave it to them and they all drank. And he told them: "this is my blood"...(Mark 14: 22-24). Mark's text underscores it well: "while they were eating". The action of Jesus takes place in the course of a meal, but it is quite something else, a different event, which the assertion of Mark does not allow us to foresee: "while they were eating...he took bread and gave it to them...He took a cup and gave it to them..." *The newness is in the sharing*, surely; there lies the meal of the Lord and the action of the Eucharist. Whether it be the sharing of *bread* and of *wine*, does it really matter to the truth of sharing? It is hard to pretend that it is so. The choice of Jesus reveals great wisdom: the bread and wine are elements familiar to the race of his people. How often is there question of bread in the Bible? And how many things have been said about wine: "joy of the heart; bitterness of the heart" (Sirach 31:28,29) according to the morning after...the night before. The richness of meaning is also seen by those who are called to share: the bread and wine are theirs for centuries. They recognise that which is shared with them, and with time they will discover why Jesus wished to make out of this ordinary food, the sign of another sharing.

But if the participants cannot recognise truly that which is shared, because it is foreign to them, where is the sign value?, where is the truth of the action? Will we not be able to find the sign and the truth in have recourse to ordinary food and drink which are the fruit of *this* earth, just as the Lord did for that *other* earth, other land in which he dwelt? Will the sharing of millet or rice, the sharing of beer (biere) or wine of the palm, be less the object of thanksgiving, *Eucharist*, if they were done in the name of the Lord? If they were done with the will to renew the gesture of sharing as it was given us on that evening of Holy Thursday, for it is He who is at the heart of the eucharistic

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- (1) As Ducuocq has written excellently: "in the Eucharist, the act of feeding oneself can be legitimately understood only in the symbolic act within which it takes place: the meal taken together. The basic meal of the Eucharist is not the act of feeding oneself, but the fraternal meal. It is together that we eat the bread, and to eat together, we must share. The act of feeding becomes human in the act of sharing" (Cf. *Le repas du Seigneur, sacrement de l'existence reconciliee dans Vivre l'eucharistie*, Lumiere et vie, n. 94, juillet-octobre 1969, p. 54.)



mystery and not the bread and the wine? As for us, the reply is unmistakable. From the fact that shared food is recognised by all the members of a community as the fruit of their earth (land) and a major factor of their subsistence, it can be the basis (and that is not essential) of the truth of sharing in the material-ness of the sign, and thereby, that shared food can also become, by faith, the foundation of the sacramental action of the Lord.

## The Grace of Pentecost

Perhaps we should say more? Only this widening of the sign, by the variety of elements able to be integrated into it according to the proper modalities of each culture, would give to the eucharistic meal its basic universality based not on a generalised use (because imposed) of bread and wine, but certainly based on the will to communicate in the death and resurrection of the Lord in the gesture of sharing received from Him. On the other hand, one finds it hard to understand how the communion in the Paschal mystery offered to all peoples through the centuries, appears straight-jacketed in the narrow channels of its material elements, made universal by obligation, when it was only part of the cultural apparatus of a particular world.

It appears then, that on the theological plane, one will find hardly any reason to go against the openness proposed here. We hope no one will see in this the last advertisement or slogan of "perpetual changers" who find it good to indigenise, this time, a two-thousand year old practice to which the young churches themselves have subscribed without difficulty. But the problem is *radically* other. It is not a matter of fad or fancy of the day, updating oneself and promoting a reform likely to arouse some people. It is more than that: a question of entering the integral truth we preach: the grace of Pentecost morning... the grace of Jesus Christ communicated to each man in the particularity of his condition and his culture. How have we omitted, in this precise case, the exegesis of Paul asking that "each one remain in the condition in which the word of God found him" (1 Cor:7:24). On the contrary, how many new Christians have had to consent to an exile, an exile we have imposed on them, often in good faith and without realising that our demands of the moment went counter to the "liberation" of which we were champions and heralds? Who does not see, in the question at issue, the considerable richness which will accrue to sacramental language if the autochthonous African, Asian community fully realised that she is (as African or Asian members of the world) totally qualified for the eucharistic meal and that through it, it is her land itself that is hallowed, and that even to the very produce of her land, by their becoming, in memory of Jesus, food for sharing.



"May the earth open and bud forth a Saviour". How one would like to see each evangelized person, for himself, taste the truth of the ancient Advent antiphon. May the eventual modification of the eucharistic *sign* proposed to certain communities prepared to receive it, not appear as a radical novelty but surely as a deepening of *meaning*.

### **Towards a Pluralistic Solution**

One would object to the question at the outset of this study: "A Eucharist without bread and wine?", saying that though it is legitimate in itself and liable to receive the reply one could foresee, it is really a question of a lost battle, a dated one. *Lost*, because traditional usage seems beyond all question; *dated*, because the progressive westernizing of the world has introduced everywhere, or nearly everywhere, bread and wine and that they belong today to the familiar world of the Dakarese and of the Saigonese.

This objection, very true in an urban situation, forgets basically the conditions of ordinary life of the rural milieux of Asia and Africa; bread and wine may be found there, but they do remain imported, foreign. They can not be in any way the gift or fruit of *this* earth and *this* people. And we have said sufficiently strongly that it appears necessary, or at least highly to be desired that the announcing of the Good News of reconciliation and of freedom to men reach even unto the "acceptance" and the "consecration" of these humble material elements which identify with his life.

Here we must offer a remark on the pastoral plane: one which is of great usefulness. Why should the eventual adoption of another custom in a given community, necessarily lead to the radical disappearance of a previous custom; that of bread and wine in the practice of this same community? Why can we not, think that a community could, according to circumstances, use bread and wine, millet and millet-beer, while the Eucharist remained the same since the shared meal in memory of the Lord and in His name would still be the same?

The tragedy is that we readily think in terms of "white OR black" and that what is done today risks too easily to appear to us as the denial of what was done yesterday. Why this kind of exclusivity which impoverishes seriously the riches and plurality of expression of the faith that is ours? In this matter, the history of the recent liturgical reform is very revealing: those who waited for it for a long time, for too long perhaps, are undnly upset if they still meet with liturgical customs



which recall too forcefully the past. Such persons are incapable of listening serenely and let us say contemplatively Gregorian melodies of long ago. Others; those who have not yet caught on, often because no one has taken the trouble to explain the reasons for change, patiently, hold on to the *status quo ante* and readily get together in such and such a parish of their town or village for a Mass whereat they will not risk being "provoked or attacked". Both, the one and the other party cannot tolerate the "passover", the "pasch" or, situation of 'passage or transition'. But it is precisely this situation of 'pasch' which is the true richness of faith, a living faith which the christian must perceive, as if by instinct, for the Spirit spells growth and change. The liturgy now speaks the language of men and we feel we have taken a long time to find again the basic traditional truth. But why should one be angry during International gatherings when one hears occasional latin chants? Why refuse the Gloria or the Credo learnt under every latitude, in the heart of all christian communities and which news the *sentiment* of a communion shared by all those who are present? It is clear—or it should be—that "communion in the faith" is beyond and that it is not less great within an assembly speaking all the languages of the earth to proclaim the unique Gospel of Jesus Christ(2).

So too, it should be possible for non-western communities to celebrate the Eucharistic meal in a certain diversity of shared food. The very possibility of this plurality and the surprise it would arouse in the community, will offer to those in authority the occasion for a wonderful catechesis, where will be revealed without any possible compromise, the heart itself of the Eucharistic Meal.

Our insistence on the catechesis, therefore, is deliberate. It would seem that in this regard, those responsible, the pastors, have often failed in their task primordial. Hasn't the Council reminded bishops that the preaching of the Gospel still remains their primary duty? How many times during the recent liturgical reforms, have we had the feeling that "replies" were given to a community which had not yet formulated its "questions", for lack of being aroused to the demands of their faith. Reforms

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- (2) How strange that we do not hear much comment in our churches, on the stunning text of Paul to the Romans: "One man esteems one day as better than another, while another man esteems all days alike; let everyone be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it in honour of the Lord; since he gives thanks to God; while he who abstains, abstains in honour of the Lord and gives thanks to God. None of us lives to himself and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live for the Lord; if we die we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. 14: 5-9)



which often fall flat because some have not known how to make people want them...reforms which grow old so fast that even today one hardly sees their need or *raison d'être*. Without any mistake, one must recognize today that there is a grave lack of catechesis in a number of churches. Rare are the true educators in the faith, capable of leading the community to ask for more.

Let me emphasise that an eventual modification of the Eucharistic discipline in the sense proposed here will not necessarily mean that it must be perforce applied to all the communities that could be concerned about it. Here too, who will become the advocate of diversity? Mgr. Zoa, some years ago, disliked the very phrase "African church", the situations were so different in Dakar, at Yaounde or in Dar-es-Salaam, and he opportunely recalled the seven letters to the seven Churches at the exordium of the Apocalypse. All are churches of Asia minor. All are "different". The author of the Apocalypse addresses himself to *each* of them. It is a pity that this has not been tried in communities, and that the price of experience has not been learnt without necessarily forcing everyone to think of 'universal'. It is not necessary that some work done in the Cameroons find immediate echo in Abijan or Ougadougou. There are as many peoples as there are needs. The creativity of the one does not necessarily condemn the passivity of the other.

This recognition of "diversity" appears to us fundamental. Thus, as it is said in the book of Revelation (Apocalypse): "Listen to that which the Spirit says to the churches. Nothing will progress if *all* must progress together. But why should it be unreasonable to hope that the research of some today will be exercised one day for the benefit of all? (Spiritus, 1971)

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There could be a polarization of thought and desire when readers have finished this article, and this is as it should be, because the Eucharist is the central Mystery of the Church, source and summit of christian life.

We ourselves endorse Father Luneau's deeply christian thought and propose this article for your reflection, in an Oriental country to which *wine* says very little, in a religious context. In truth, our Buddhist brethren have it as their central article of conduct based on faith (*sraddha*): "*I undertake to observe the precept to abstain from drinks and drugs causing intoxication*" (*Bhikkhu Nyanatiloka's translation*). "*Surameraya majjhama dhatthana veramani sikkha padam samadiyami*"



Map of the Galle District showing administrative boundaries, towns, and pilot survey areas. The map includes labels for towns such as Galle, Badulla, and Galle. A legend indicates that dashed circles represent pilot surveys in 1978 and 1979. An inset map shows the location of the Galle District within Sri Lanka.

Pilot Surveys  
1975-76

1st in-depth Live-in Survey  
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