G. C. MENDIS

PROBLEMS OF CEYLON HISTORY

THE COLOMBO APOTHECARIES' CO., LTD.
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This book deals with four main topics. The first chapter defines history and distinguishes it from literature, religion and archaeology. This is done by an examination of four recent books on Ceylon's past, how far they conform to modern histories or fall short of them, and what problems they raise on that account.

The next three chapters deal mainly with historical method and technique. The second chapter distinguishes history from myth. It examines whether the yakkhas and the nagas referred to in the ancient chronicles are historical or mythical beings. The third chapter distinguishes history from legend. It examines two ancient legends of Ceylon, relating to Vijaya and Pandukabhaya, discussing whether they deal with events that actually took place or not. The last chapter first distinguishes historical fact from religious truth, and next analyses the *Mahavamsa*, the ancient chronicle of Ceylon, and shows how a history written by a Buddhist bhikkhu in the sixth century A.D. differs from a modern history.

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CONTENTS

CONTENTS—(Contd.)

PREFACE

The object of this little book is to examine the problems met with when reading or studying Ceylon history and to see how far they can be solved. Problems arise primarily from an ignorance of the definition of history as accepted by modern historians. Hence history is explained as a social science, a story of change and causes of change, and an account of political, economic and social developments of a community from its earliest beginnings up to the present day. This is done to a considerable extent by an examination of four recent books on Ceylon's past, seeing how far they conform to this definition and how far they fall short of it.

Problems of Ceylon history arise also from a failure to distinguish historical fact from literary and religious truth, and from an adoption of methods and techniques appropriate to general and religious literature and other social sciences but inappropriate to history. Hence history is distinguished from general and religious literature and from archaeology, and methods and techniques in history from those adopted in the others.

Problems arise also owing to difficulties historians themselves meet with in understanding the full significance of recent developments. These are discussed by comparing two histories of Ceylon that appeared in 1964 with the special object of describing the developments in Ceylon since 1948 and the causes that led to them.

Historical methods and techniques are illustrated further by distinguishing historical persons from supernatural or mythical beings; historical stories from legends which are mere projections of the mind; and historical facts from religious beliefs which depend

on religious experiences or other religious beliefs and not necessarily on historical evidence; and finally by a comparison of the ancient chronicle, the *Mahavamsa*, with a modern history.

The four chapters, of which this book consists, are in fact four essays. The first deals with modern problems in the study of Ceylon history. It is to a considerable extent an examination of *A Concise History of Ceylon* up to 1505 by Prof. S. Paranavitana and C. W. Nicholas, *The Story of Ceylon* by Prof. E. F. C. Ludowyk, *Ceylon* by Prof. S. A. Pakeman and *Ceylon* by Dr. S. Arasaratnam, and the problems they raise.

The second, third and fourth deal with historical method and technique, examining some opinions held today about ancient Ceylon history. The second distinguishes history from merely mythical stories. It shows what the terms yakkha and naga connoted in the ancient Pali chronicles, whether they were historical or mythical beings. The third distinguishes history from legend. Two stories of early Ceylon, relating to Vijaya and Pandukabhaya, are examined, and what is discussed in this essay is not so much the myths they contain but the parts of the stories which have been incorrectly accepted by many as actual happenings.

The fourth distinguishes history from religion and deals with the visits of the Buddha and the *Mahavamsa* in general. It discusses on what grounds the visits of the Buddha are accepted as true by Buddhists and how the *Mahavamsa*, written by a Buddhist bhikkhu in the sixth century A.D., differs from a modern history in its object, its subject-matter and its methods and techniques.

G. C. MENDIS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have to acknowledge my indebtedness to What is History? by Prof. E. H. Carr, the George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures delivered in the University of Cambridge in 1961, and to a Symposium-Approaches to History (Routledge and Kegan Paul) edited by H. P. R. Finberg, especially the chapter on Archaeology and Place Names by F. T. Wainwright. These two books helped me to clarify my views and systematize some of the conclusions I had arrived at earlier.

I have also to thank Mr. W. J. F. La Brooy, Mr. L. E. J. Fernando and Mr. D. J. Nanayakkara for reading through the manuscript and offering their comments, each from a different angle. I have benefited much from their criticisms, but they are not responsible for any of the opinions expressed. My thanks are also due to Prof. E. F. C. Ludowyk and Prof. S. A. Pakeman for permitting me to quote from their books, *The Footprint of the Buddha* and *Ceylon*.

Chapter I of this book is an expansion of a lecture delivered at a meeting of the British Council in October, 1965, and Chapter III, section one, a modified version of a contribution to the Paranavitana Felicitation Volume, 1965. An article by me on the visits of the Buddha appeared in the Times of Ceylon, and articles on the Yakkhas and the Nagas in its Christmas Numbers, years ago.

G. C. M.

1

WHAT IS HISTORY ?

FOUR RECENT BOOKS ON CEYLON

History, generally speaking, deals with change and the causes that lead to change in the political, economic and social life of a people or peoples living within a certain geographical area. The problems of Ceylon history arise mainly from a misconception of the word "history" as used by scholars today, from a confusion of historical fact with truth as conceived generally in literature or in religion, and from the adoption of methods and techniques used in other sciences inappropriate to history, or from the difficulties in tracing the causes of recent events the significance of which is not yet quite clear to historians themselves.

Perhaps the best way to understand these problems is to study four recent books on Ceylon and see how far they fall short of historical standards and what difficulties they raise on that account. Two of them are essentially histories of Ceylon. The other two are accounts that seek—with varying success—to record actual happenings, but lack some essential features of historical description. One deals with the raw materials used by the historian rather than with history as such. The other approaches its subject as much from the literary as from the historical angle.

The first to appear was *A Concise History of Ceylon* by Prof. S. Paranavitana and C. W. Nicholas published by the University of Ceylon in 1961. Next came *The Story of Ceylon* by Prof. E. F. C. Ludowyk published in 1962 by Faber and Faber. In 1964 Ernest Benn Ltd. published *Ceylon* by Prof. S. A. Pakeman as a volume in the Nations of the Modern World. The fourth, which appeared

the same year, *Ceylon* by Dr. S. Arasaratnam, was an American Spectrum Book in their series, Modern Nations in Historical Perspective.

A CONCISE HISTORY OF CEYLON

A Concise History of Ceylon is so named because it is mainly a concise version of the University *History of Ceylon* Vol. I Parts 1 and 2. This latter work embodies a series of articles by scholars of various professions to provide the raw materials for the writing of a history of Ceylon up to the arrival of the Portuguese. *A Concise History* is written by two archaeologists, one an expert and the other an amateur, the same two scholars having been mainly responsible for the editing of the University *History of Ceylon* up to 1505. Prof. Paranavitana is also a trained epigraphist while C. W. Nicholas was a collector of inscriptions and devotedly studied them for many years.

In two respects this History deviates from the original. In Chapters VIII to XIII the country of Kalinga with which Ceylon had close relations from the tenth to the thirteenth century has been taken to be a region in Malaysia and not the well-known Kalinga in India. This is based on an article, *Ceylon and Malaysia in Medieval Times*, in the Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society Vol. VII of the New Series. With regard to the Tamil Kingdom in the north the account is based mainly on another article in the same number of the same journal. It is not based on the chapters on the subject in the original work.

This book, as stated already, is not so much a history as a collection and an examination of the main raw materials from which a historian may select his facts to write a history of Ceylon. Its value, therefore, is not as a reconstruction of history or as a historical interpretation or as a coherent and continuous narrative of political, economic and social changes in Ceylon up to 1505.

Consequently it is not a particularly helpful book for the study of Ceylon history by students who have little knowledge of the subject. It is certainly of interest to the general reader who wants to get from the past a knowledge of an antiquarian nature besides history. More than that it is a valuable contribution to the scholar engaged in the reconstruction of the past history of Ceylon up to 1505.

This is not to ignore the fact that the book possesses four very valuable cross-sections of Ceylon history in Chapters VI, IX, XIV and XVIII,[1] and a very clear account of the Dambadeniya, the Gampola and the Rayigama kings and of the Kotte Kingdom up to 1505. These probably describe the past more accurately than any earlier work. The defects of the book lie mainly in the treatment of history as such. History is here often approached from the archaeological or literary angle and not from the historical. The *Mahavamsa* and the *Culavamsa*, for instance, are not sufficiently examined according to historical criteria before their accounts are checked with evidence from archaeology, epigraphy and other sources.

THE STORY OF CEYLON

The author of *The Story of Ceylon* "attempts to narrate the story of the important events and persons crowded into the two thousand years and more of Ceylon history". Such a work will undoubtedly be a story. A story of persons will not be a history as history deals not so much with individuals as with man in society, not so much with personal accounts as with political, economic and social changes. It will not be a history unless the stories of persons are utilized as a means to illustrate a wider and significant change. A story of events will not be a history unless the events are chosen for their historical significance, and not for other reasons however interesting in themselves.

1. See page 15

The book in fact consists not of one story but of many, and each is differently treated. The First Section, Ancient Ceylon, deals with Ceylon unaffected by the West. It examines the raw materials of history and analyses them according to their degree of authenticity, and not so much as a contribution to an account of change and causes of change. This Section is further defective as at times the author accepts too uncritically some conclusions of scholars who are not primarily historians like Prof. Paranavitana and Bhikkhu Rahula. It is true that both these writers deserve our respect as experts in their own fields of archaeology and Buddhism, but their conclusions are not so valuable when they enter into the field of history.

The Second Section, Old Ceylon, deals with the rule of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the early British Governors. As Dr. Arasaratnam pointed out earlier in a review, this section is in fact Ceylon in transition from the ancient to the modern. Chapter Ten, Between Old and New, in this section, if it was meant to give a picture of the Kandyan Kingdom, should have been included in Ancient Ceylon. If it was meant to describe Robert Knox it should have followed the chapter on the Dutch. *The Story* is more historical from Portuguese rule probably because the author was able to base his work more on histories.

It should be added, however, that Prof. Ludowyk's work shows that he has read history widely. He sees to it that his facts are authentic. He deals more with races than with individuals, and when he deals with individuals he generally uses them as a means to illustrate history.

The chief weakness of the book from a historical stand-point, however, is that the angle of approach is in many respects literary and the canons of judgement are often literary. This is probably the reason why this book is the most readable and most interesting out of the four.

The author himself does not consider it a history in the ordinary sense. The only excuse for its inclusion in this discussion is that it is referred to as a history in the jacket of the book, it has been reviewed as a history, and it is considered by many in Ceylon to be a history.

From what is stated, it should not be assumed that any criticism of *A Concise History of Ceylon* or *The Story of Ceylon* affects necessarily the value of the other works of their authors. Both of them are scholars who have attained a high standard in their respective fields. Prof. Paranavitana, as an archaeologist and epigraphist and as a scholar of Sinhalese, has a high reputation not only in Ceylon but also among oriental scholars all over the world. He possesses great skill and ability and has worked assiduously with a dedication rarely seen in Ceylon. Prof. Ludowyk is also a scholar of extraordinary attainments. He was, for many years, Professor of English in the University of Ceylon, and apart from writing books has edited stimulatingly many literary texts.

THE TWO HISTORIES

Ceylon by Prof. S. A. Pakeman and *Ceylon* by Dr. S. Arasaratnam are essentially two historical accounts and fall into a different category from the other two. Both these writers had a somewhat similar objective. Prof. Pakeman wrote "to give an account of the political, economic and social conditions in Ceylon in the fifteen years since she attained independence and the historical events which led up to it". Dr. Arasaratnam "opens with a survey of the problems facing contemporary Ceylon (1947-1962) and then outlines briefly two and half millennia of the island's history to explain, in part, the historical causes of the present dilemmas".

Though the object of both was to give mainly an account of what has happened since 1948, the way they deal with the past, which led to Independence and to later developments, is quite different. Ceylon began to develop into a modern nation only

4135—2

after it came under the British. What is happening even today, Prof. Pakeman seems to conclude, is due mainly to changes that took place under British rule. Hence he devotes only about thirteen pages to ancient and medieval Ceylon and nearly half the book to British rule. On the other hand Dr. Arasaratnam devotes nearly half the book to the pre-European period and only a seventh of the book to British rule. He seems to find the causes of the present dilemmas mainly in the period prior to 1505, and little in the developments from 1796 to 1948. Probably he was more influenced by current controversies than by basic historical facts.[2]

THE MAHAVAMSA AND THE CULAVAMSA

The value of these four books cannot be assessed without an examination of the historical value of the Pali chronicles, the *Mahavamsa* and the *Culavamsa*. All of them depend very much on these two especially for their material prior to the thirteenth century. Prof. Paranavitana in his narrative of Ceylon up to about 1200 A.D. does not use these works as sources of history as any modern historian should, but makes them the main basis of his account.[3] Prof. Ludowyk too in his early chapters tells us what the *Mahavamsa* and the *Culavamsa* say and judges them as stated already as to their authenticity.

Dr. Arasaratnam too makes much use of these chronicles, and draws from them some inferences which cannot be upheld historically. For instance he seems to infer from the Vijaya legend and some events that followed that Ceylon history began not only with the Aryan settlers but also with Dravidian immigrants; that while the Aryans supplied Ceylon with the early cultivators the Dravidians supplied it with its early craftsmen. These chronicles at times predetermined even for Prof. Pakeman what the ancient and medieval history of Ceylon should be. He devotes most attention

2. See pages 25, 28.
3. See pages 3, 17, 79.

to the three kings, Devanampiya Tissa, Dutugemunu and Parakramabahu I, dealt with more fully than others in the chronicles. Hence an assessment of these four books will not be complete unless these chronicles themselves are brought into the discussion and judged along with them.

The *Mahavamsa* is a poem written in the Pali language. It relates the history of Ceylon from its legendary beginnings up to the reign of Mahasena (A.D. 302). It was composed by a Buddhist bhikkhu at the Mahavihara in Anuradhapura about the sixth century A.D.[4]

The *Culavamsa* consists of three sections. The first of these (Chs. XXXVII.51—LXXIX.84) continues the story to the end of the reign of Parakramabahu I (A.D. 1186). It was composed early in the thirteenth century, most probably at Polonnaruwa, by a Buddhist bhikkhu called Dharmakirti. The date and author of the second section (Chs. LXXIX.85—XC.102), which ends with Parakramabahu IV, are not known, but it must have been written later than A.D. 1333, as the narrative is continued up to that year. The third section was composed in the reign of Kirti Sri Rajasinha (A.D. 1747–1781) by the Buddhist bhikkhu, Tibbotuvave Siddhartha Buddharakshita, who continued the epic up to his time.

Both these chronicles seem to have been based on Sinhalese writings. The first Sinhalese work which appears to have come up to the introduction of Buddhism was probably written about the first century A.D. This work seems to have been continued up to the Chola occupation in Anuradhapura and from then on in Polonnaruva till this city almost ceased to be the capital of Ceylon.

As the author of this essay read the four books referred to with the care they deserved, they raised in his mind a series of questions: Is history a form of literature or a social science? If it is

4. See page 75.

a social science, what is a historical fact? In what ways does history differ from other social sciences? What then is its subject matter and with what aspects of life does it deal? How does history differ from general literature and religious literature? In what ways does a historical fact differ from a general truth or from a religious truth? What is the relationship of history to archaeology? Are they not sciences fundamentally different? When a litterateur or an archaeologist writes history, unless he has equipped himself with a firm grounding in its methods and discipline, is he not bound to be influenced more by his own studies and the methods he pursues in his own field than by historical methods and techniques? Can one stretch sufficiently far the meaning of the word history to include the reflections on the past—often quite interesting and valuable—of the archaeologist or the literary man? Can a historian trained in the methods and techniques of modern history write a satisfactory account of ancient and medieval times?

Are not further problems raised by what is sometimes called current history? Does not an attempt to write meaningfully of so recent a period as from 1948 to today lead to the writing not of a real history but of a pragmatic account? Is it possible, till after recent events have stabilized, to trace their causes correctly or adequately?[5]

CEYLON HISTORY TODAY

It will probably help this study if the present situation with regard to Ceylon history is examined before these questions are considered. The situation today is due mainly to the fact that there was no serious attempt to teach it in schools for its own sake till the second quarter of this century. The need for a study of Ceylon history in English schools was realised earlier at the beginning of this century. An appeal was then made to the Government that it should be taught in schools. The greatest impediment at the time to its teaching was the lack of a suitable textbook. Next was its

5. See page 26.

exclusion from the curriculum of a school since it was not a subject for Cambridge Local Examinations. The object of many Ceylonese to get it included as a school subject was to rouse in their children a pride in their past and an appreciation of its glories. The object, if any, of the British officials—to say the least—was to prevent the use of Ceylon history for such a purpose. They wanted Ceylon history studied, if at all, for its own sake. They did not want Ceylon history taught to rouse any definite set of emotions.

The first serious attempt to teach Ceylon history was made only in 1927. Then a course of lectures on Ceylon history was delivered for the first time to teacher trainees for English schools at the Government Training College, Colombo. The lecturer did not find it an easy task to prepare his talks. Nor was it easy for the students to study their subject.

The only complete history of Ceylon then available was the little book by L. E. Blazé written more from a literary than a historical angle. There were also William Knighton's *History of Ceylon*, Donald Obeyesekera's *Outlines of Ceylon History*, written to supply the need for a school textbook, H. W. Codrington's scholarly *Short History of Ceylon*, but these three came up only to the beginnings of British rule. There were other books which covered shorter periods like Paul Pieris' *The Portuguese Era* and *Ceylon and the Hollanders*.

All these were undoubtedly helpful but were not adequate. They left too many gaps for a scientific study of Ceylon history from its earliest beginnings up to 1927. Moreover these books were not strictly historical. They were written by men who did not possess a deep knowledge of history as such or a training in the methods and techniques by which a historian acquires the knowledge he needs and interprets the facts he collects. Blazé's speciality was English language and literature. Obeyesekera specialised in Law and Moral Sciences. Codrington was scientific in the collection of his facts, but was primarily a numismatist and an epigraphist.

Advances in the study of Ceylon history have been made since then in many directions. Far more of Ceylon history is known today than then. Many persons possess a deep knowledge of history as such and of historical methods and techniques. Many books dealing with a section of the past have been written by them. There are good translations of some Sinhalese, Pali, Portuguese and Dutch works and there are many well versed in these languages to assist a historian. Many have made also a study of the auxiliary sciences like chronology, archaeology, geography, geology, linguistics and philology and a historian can make use of their conclusions.

But there is yet much historical evidence, especially of the Dutch Period, still unexamined. Many archaeological sites remain unexcavated. Numerous inscriptions have yet to be edited. A fuller, critical examination from a historical standpoint of the *Mahavamsa* and the *Culavamsa* and other Sinhalese historical works has yet to be made. Not enough evidence for the period prior to 1505 has yet been elucidated and evaluated to make it possible to relate the history of Ceylon adequately as a political, economic and social account or as a study of cause and effect. It is probably for this reason that in the *Story of Ceylon* the period before 1505 is mainly an evaluation of the sources while the period thereafter is mainly a historical account of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British.

Perhaps the best way to begin a further examination of these four books is by answering the following questions. What is history? What are the methods and techniques adopted in writing a history? In what respects does history differ from general and religious literature and from archaeology?

THE BEGINNINGS OF HISTORY

It is clear that many still cling to old ideas of history and do not accept its present definition. The meaning of history has changed from time to time. Up to the eighteenth century history was

reckoned vaguely as a form of literature. In the nineteenth century it developed into a social science. But many still consider it as a form of literature while others do not distinguish it clearly either from literature or from other social sciences.

History at first differed from other forms of literature as a chronological account; but it did not cease to be reckoned as a branch of literature. It was at times a work of imagination like legends and was not necessarily built on evidence.

The chronology itself was made up by adding the reigns of kings. It began from an important event, and, if monks or priests constructed it, they chose one of religious significance like the death of the Buddha or the birth of Christ. If there were any gaps they were artificially filled in like the reigns of the early kings of Ceylon.

Much interest was often shown in ascertaining on what ground one king followed another—did he do so due to birth or any other cause? Then history gradually became a series of biographies of kings on account of what they did.

History often became in addition a history of religion and what each king did for that religion. This happened when the writing of history fell into the hands of monks and priests, men engaged in the theory and practice of religion. This accounts to a considerable extent for the nature and contents of the *Mahavamsa* and the *Culavamsa* which developed as literary works by bhikkhus.[6]

HISTORY AS A SCIENCE

In the nineteenth century history went through a radical transformation. It developed into a social science, a work of laymen, and a discipline distinct from literature. At the beginning of this

6. See page 76.

century, history had reached such a point that J. B. Bury in an inaugural lecture went so far as to say that history is a science—no less, no more.

History as a science came to be based on authentic facts. It ceased to include myths and legends or to trace events to supernatural, unnatural or imaginary causes. It dealt with truth in the concrete, with conditions that actually existed, with events that actually took place, and with natural causes that actually led to them. In short it dealt with the past as it really was.

If that is the definition of history, does *A Concise History* conform to it? Does it always deal with past events as they actually happened? To take one example, it concludes that the original Sinhalese came from North-West India to Lata in Gujarat and from there to Ceylon. Did the earliest Aryan settlers actually come from N.W. India?

The reasons given are: (1) Onesicritus' writings (about the fourth century B.C.) show that there was communication between the ports of the mouth of the Indus and Ceylon. (2) There was a Vanga and a Sinhapura in the north-west. (3) The Maddas, a princess of which people married Vijaya's brother, lived in the Panjab. This indicates that the original Sinhalese were connected with the lands of the Upper Indus. (4) According to the *Mahabharata* powerful chiefs called *gramaneyyas* lived on the banks of the Indus. Brahmi inscriptions refer to *gamanis* in Ceylon. (5) These inscriptions also refer to Kambojas who once lived in the borderland between Pakistan and Afghanistan. (6) The characteristics which the language of the early Sinhalese inscriptions have in common with the eastern edicts of Asoka are also found in the extreme north-west.

The reasons given here are discussed in greater detail in the larger University *History of Ceylon*. The first reason given provides a possibility and not a probability and therefore historically it is

not a sufficient reason by itself. The second and the third are based on the legends of Vijaya and Panduvasudeva. The writer of this essay examined the Vijaya legend very closely and discussed its historical value in detail in the *Paranavitana Felicitation Volume*. This discussion has been printed with some modifications in this book.[7] The conclusions reached may be summarized as follows. The early form of the story as found in the *Dipavamsa* is probably not earlier than the first century B.C. The historical cause for the growth of the legend was that about this century Ceylon came to be called the Sinhaladvipa. The story was developed by Buddhist bhikkhus and, whatever it reveals about Ceylon of the first century B.C., it gives hardly any evidence about the first Aryan settlements apart from what was obvious at the time the legend came into existence. Hence can we take account of the second and third reasons?

The Brahmi inscriptions of Ceylon, according to Dr. Saddhamangala Karunaratna in the *Paranavitana Felicitation Volume*, seem to belong to the second century B.C. and after. Hence can anyone reasonably infer that the Kambojas referred to in them should refer to some of the original settlers? The *Mahabharata* is an epic that developed during some centuries before and after the Christian era. Any evidence in it has to be carefully examined and timed before any connection between the *gramaneyyas* and the *gamanis* of Ceylon is accepted. This has not been done. Hence the fourth and fifth reasons are subject to criticism. The sixth is just as good evidence to prove that the Aryans came from the east of North India as from the north-west.

Hence it cannot be reasonably inferred from the evidence quoted that the early Aryan settlers came from North-West India and it cannot be taken as a historical fact.

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7. See page 49

Another assumption made in *A Concise History* is that from the tenth to the thirteenth century Kalinga referred to in the Pali chronicles has to be taken as a region in Malaysia. Prof. Nilakanta Sastri, a scholarly Indian historian of the highest rank and one well-versed in the history of south-east Asia and an author of a book on Sri Vijaya, examined in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Ceylon Branch, Vol. VIII, Part I, Prof. Paranavitana's arguments for a Malaysian Period of Ceylon History and rejected them. Prof. Paranavitana replied in Vol. VIII Part II. His reply would have been acceptable had he collected all the important references to Kalinga in the *Culavamsa* Part I from the tenth century and examined in turn each one of them and proved that they referred not to a region in India but to one in Malaysia. Even if it is found in the *Culavamsa* or in any other work that in Ceylon in a few instances Kalinga was referred to as a region in Malaysia, it will not necessarily confirm Prof. Paranavitana's thesis or his inferences.

Prof. Ludowyk in the *Story of Ceylon* shows greater concern over the authenticity of the accounts in the *Mahavamsa* and the *Culavamsa*. He divides them into Poetry and Myth, Legend and History, History and Legend and the Shaping of History. In other words he passes judgement on these sections on their authenticity though he does not tell us how he came to test their validity. He seems to judge them from his wide knowledge of such literature in other countries than from an examination of these sections themselves. He fails to note that even from legends at times some historical facts could be gleaned. The accounts of the visits of the Buddha for instance provide us with some definite information about certain early religious buildings.

HISTORY AS CHANGE

But any series of facts or events that actually took place do not make a history. A history is not an antiquarian study. A history

of Ceylon does not consist of any facts about its past. It is also not with any facts, as Prof. Carr points out, that a historian is primarily concerned. It is true a historian must be accurate; but this is a necessary condition of his work just as much as an architect has to see that well seasoned timber and properly mixed concrete are used. But he need not relate in detail how one king followed another unless these events led to changes historically significant. Such details though necessary for the construction of a chronology are not essential to a historical narrative. It is certainly helpful to have a series of cross-sections of Ceylon's past[8] as Prof. Paranavitana and C. W. Nicholas ably provide at four stages in *A Concise History*. But what is required more in a history is an explanation how and why each set of conditions changed into another.

History is essentially an account of change and the causes that led to the change. It is this definition of history as a story of change and causes of change which Prof. Paranavitana seems often to ignore and which Prof. Ludowyk does not sufficiently take into account. This is not surprising. Such an account cannot often be given by anyone who has not equipped himself for such work. Anyone to obtain a knowledge of history usually spends about three years in a detailed study of some civilization. In Ceylon he follows a course in Ceylon history and for a background knowledge makes a study of Indian history and of modern European history. If he proposes to write on Ceylon history he spends at least two years more in doing research and acquiring a knowledge of historical methods and techniques. He devotes even more time if the study of documents involves the acquisition of the knowledge of one or more languages. It is only after equipping himself in this or some other way that he can decide what facts are basic for history, and select, for instance, what facts best explain how Ceylon has come to be what it is today.

8. See page 3.

A historian has also to take into account that the contents of history are limited to definite topics. They consist mainly of political, economic and social developments and their interaction on one another. The nature of history when it formed a part of literature has already been discussed. When history developed into a social science it became at first mainly a political history probably on account of the evidence available and the nature of the interests historians had acquired. When economics developed into a science in the nineteenth century its importance as a factor in historical development was realised. Then especially in this century economic facts were considered along with political facts by writers of history. Finally with the development of the study of sociology, social history dealing with the nature and structure of society, with the activities of the different social groups and their relations to one another, came to be considered along with political and economic developments. Religion and culture were included in social history or treated separately according to the extent of their historical significance.

WRITTEN RECORDS

Thus if history is a narrative of change and the causes of change, of cause and effect, the effect being the change, of political, economic and social events, it has to be based mainly on written records. It can be supplemented with the evidence of auxiliary sciences like archaeology, geography, geology and chronology, but it is only written sources that can yield to the historian the evidence he really needs.

History therefore cannot include pre-history for which there are no written records like the period prior to the arrival of the Aryan settlers. It cannot include proto-history for which there are only legends like those of Vijaya, Panduvasudeva and Pandukabhaya[9]. It can deal with these only from what could be gleaned from later evidence or from auxiliary sciences.

9. See page 49

A scientific history of Ceylon can begin only from about the first century B.C. when written records began to be kept. These included stories about Ceylon before and after the introduction of Buddhism. Reliable history begins from about the time of Asoka when inscriptions are found; but even from then the accounts up to Vattagamani Abhaya contain many legends. For the period prior to the Aryan settlements there are not even ancient legends. Therefore history as such cannot begin earlier than the introduction of Buddhism.

But even written records are a problem to the historian. In fact they are his main problem. Written evidence is highly complicated and difficult, if not at times impossible to check and evaluate. A written statement is direct evidence only of the state of the mind of its author. What is stated is processed by his mind if not by those of others. It has, therefore, to be checked to see whether it is true or false, trustworthy or untrustworthy.

To check this evidence historians do not depend on common sense but follow complicated critical processes. They gradually learn and gain a competence in handling the relevant evidence and meeting the relevant problems, and thus avoid making serious mistakes.

The chief contribution to Ceylon history made by *A Concise History* is in the way Prof. Paranavitana has checked the *Mahavamsa* and the *Culavamsa* with evidence collected from archaeology, epigraphy and other sources, and shown how far the chronicles could be relied on as historical evidence on those grounds. Had he first examined the *Mahavamsa* and the *Culavamsa* by the complicated critical processes by which written documents are tested by historians, and checked the conclusions arrived at with the aid of archaeological and epigraphical evidence his account would have been more accurate and more acceptable, and would have been a better historical work.

HISTORY AND LITERATURE

It will help to get a clearer idea of history if it is distinguished from literature. Many references have already been made to literature though not so much to point out how it differs from history. In literature a writer, if at all possible, tries to produce a dramatic account. He seizes what is humanly interesting and avoids what is dull and tedious. This means in his choice of material he differs from the historian.

Literature may be placed in a complicated social setting like many of Shakespeare's plays. But it is primarily an account of individuals and of individual characters, and deals with causes of mainly individual action. History on the other hand deals with individuals as members of a society, as units of a political, economic and social community.

Literature is further a creation of the mind. It is often an entirely imaginary account like myths and legends. What is demanded of it is only that it should be true to experience. What literature usually emphasises is human interests and what it often gives expression to is certain emotions. It thus appeals to emotion as much as to reason. It is not concerned with what actually happened but with what could have happened. The method in literature is also different. It goes from the universal to the singular and permits analogy. The method in history is generally inductive and analogy is used merely to illustrate.

A Concise History at times seems to make no distinction between literary truth and historical fact. In dealing with the story of Pandukabhaya it says: "There is no justification to doubt the historicity of Pandukabhaya. The narrative of the campaign of Pandukabhaya, with the limited numbers of men taking part therein, the general absence of superhuman deeds of valour performed by the hero and the probability of the strategy and tactics

deducible therefrom inspires one's confidence . . . Pandukabhaya can be called without any hesitation the founder of the Anuradhapura Kingdom."[10]

This part of the *Mahavamsa* is undoubtedly a realistic account true to life. If it is to be proved historical, arguments must be adduced to show that it is an account of what actually took place. The story of Pandukabhaya itself seems to be mythical and legendary. It along with that of Panduvasudeva seems to belong to a second cycle of legends. It is in many respects similar to the story of Vijaya and Kuveni. It seems in many cases to be indebted for its ideas to Jataka stories and Krishna legends. The description of Anuradhapura with its references to Nighanta Giri and the Yonas seems to be one of the first century A.D. rather than of the fourth or the third century B.C. Hence it hardly provides a basis to draw such an inference as Prof. Paranavitana does or to imagine that Pandukabhaya was a historical person and that he actually waged a war against his uncles.[11]

If it is justified to quote a passage from *The Footprint of the Buddha* about the authors of the Pali chronicles, Prof. Ludowyk's judgement too seems to be influenced more by literature than by history. "As their writers had no intention either of exploring the psychology of the persons of history or of making use of opportunities to develop human interest or to judge situations and characters from points of view other than the formalistic religious, they are scarcely to be blamed for imperfect artistry or of inexplicable morality."

The Story itself starts with a search for a clue. This Prologue gives valuable and interesting information but is it possible to find a single clue for a history as for a story? The many stories of which *The Story* consists are treated differently and do not give a conti-

10. See page 70.
11. See page 63.

nuous political, economic and social narrative. The first part as stated already deals more with the raw materials of history and the second part more with the story of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British.

HISTORY AND RELIGION

History is also different from the writings of men engaged in the theory and practice of religion. Being primarily concerned with the salvation of individuals these scholars deal with individuals as such and not so much with society. They judge events and persons from standards of morality and happiness and not from the extent they lead to changes. Religious truth need not be a historical fact provided it conforms to religious belief. The causes of events need not be natural but could be supernatural.

In short the difficulty that a historian meets with in examining religious literature is that it transcends his scientific apparatus and the nature of evidence he employs. He finds that many beliefs in religion, whether in Buddhism or Christianity, are beyond historical examination. Professor Butterfield, for instance, in his work on *Christianity and History* points out that history cannot scientifically establish or scientifically disprove the divinity of Christ.

The visits of the Buddha seem to belong to a similar category.[12] The belief in them seems to depend not on historical evidence but on the supernormal powers possessed by the Buddha. It is no doubt on account of this that Prof. Paranavitana omits to give an account of them in *A Concise History*, though he includes other legends in which there is incidentally no more history than in the story of the visits. The author of the *Mahavamsa* would also not have said that Mahinda came to Ceylon by air unless he believed, as Buddhist books showed, that an arahant had the power to do so.

12. See page 72

The Buddhist chronicles pass judgements also on grounds of *kamma* which a historian has not the means to test. The *Mahavamsa* for instance says that King Coranaga went to the Lokantarika hell. The *Culavamsa* attributes the violent death of Dhatusena to the consequence of a deed in his own life-time. "When this king was building the Kalavapi he saw a bhikkhu sunk in meditation, and as he could not rouse him out of his absorption, he had earth flung at the bhikkhu's head." It also attributes the Dutch invasion of Kandy in the time of Kirti Sri Rajasinha not to the desire of the Dutch for power but to the misdeeds of the Kandyan people and to the neglect of the deities who protected them. These explanations remind one of a story related by Professor Butterfield in his *Christianity and History*. He tells us how in a *viva voce* examination at Oxford they were left completely and permanently baffled by a candidate who ascribed everything to the interposition of the Almighty and therefore felt himself excused from the discussion of any intermediate agencies.

The author of the *Culavamsa* seems to state at least once what should have happened rather than what actually took place. He says Kasyapa lived in fear of the other world. If he were a good Buddhist he should have so lived. Owing to his act of parricide he should have expected to suffer in the next life too. But according to archaeological evidence he does not seem to have been concerned so much by such a fear, as he seems to have enjoyed fully the amenities and the pleasures of this world.

The greatness of rulers in the chronicles also depended often not on their prowess as kings but on what they did for Buddhism. Vijayabahu was undoubtedly one of the greatest kings of Ceylon. He expelled from Ceylon a mighty power like the Cholas after a series of arduous and well-planned campaigns. He did little for Buddhism and therefore gets little prominence from a Buddhist chronicler when today he would perhaps be characterised as a

great "national" hero. Dutugemunu and Parakramabahu I on the other hand receive much more attention as they did much for Buddhism after their wars.

These references are not meant to belittle the *Mahavamsa* and the *Culavamsa*. According to Rhys Davids they would not suffer in comparison with Christian medieval chronicles in England and France. Before the tenth century A.D. India possessed no chronicle to compare with them. But they undoubtedly contain many gaps. They give us little information about economic and social history apart from the history of Buddhism. They unfortunately for want of other material have in some ways predetermined the early history of Ceylon. But for them what would we know today of our past till the end of the twelfth century A.D.?

HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

For a proper understanding of history and for a correct evaluation of *A Concise History*, history must also be distinguished from archaeology. It is true that archaeology provides the historian, especially the medieval historian, with much evidence that he cannot obtain from any other source. As on Sigiriya, it sheds light on many aspects of the past of which the *Culavamsa* reveals little. If the past is approached both from the Pali chronicles and from what archaeology reveals, it is possible to draw more detailed and accurate conclusions than we could reach by studying one or the other alone. In fact but for archaeological evidence we would have a poor picture of Ceylon of the period before 1505.

But what archaeological evidence yields to a historian should not be overestimated. It can give pictures of the past and cross-sections of a civilisation but cannot provide a continuous narrative. It cannot give a story of cause and effect. It cannot provide direct evidence for political and social developments. In fact it can only assist the writing of a history.

Further, archaeological evidence is fundamentally different from historical evidence. Owing to this difference archaeologists and historians use different methods and techniques, different principles of interpretation, and draw from them different conclusions. Archaeological evidence consists of material objects visible and tangible. In them there is little room for misunderstanding, and differences of opinion need arise only in their interpretation. It is evidence of practical skills attained and of the technological processes used by craftsmen, for instance in the construction of reservoirs, of aesthetic interests, as revealed in sculptures and paintings, and of the order in which physical developments occur as shown by a comparison of monuments.

As a result an archaeologist often fails to grasp the complexity of historical evidence. He may not realise that a statement in a chronicle like the *Mahavamsa* is not basically so simple and free from complications as an object of archaeology. Perhaps if Prof. Paranavitana had realised fully the complexity of written evidence he would not have come so easily to conclusions about a Malaysian Period of Ceylon history or to a belief that from the tenth to the thirteenth century whenever the word Kalinga is used in the *Culavamsa* it refers to a region in Malaysia.

Further, archaeologists sometimes make mistakes through not taking into account the fact that there are limits to inferences from archaeological evidence. One such mistake seems to have been made in *A Concise History* with reference to Kasyapa and Sigiriya. The *Culavamsa* says: "He betook himself through fear to Sigiri which is difficult of ascent for human beings. He cleared the land roundabout, surrounded it with a wall and built a staircase in the form of a lion .... Then he built there a fine palace worthy to behold, like another Alakamanda, and dwelt there like the god Kuvera". On account of this and other reasons C. W. Nicholas in *A Concise History* says that Prof. Paranavitana infers that Sigiriya

was built like another Alakamanda and Kasyapa reigned there as a god-king personifying Kuvera, the god of wealth.

Prof. Ludowyk in his *Footprint of the Buddha* sums up what Prof. Paranavitana wrote in 1950 in the R.A.S. Journal (Ceylon Branch) on "Sigiri, the Abode of the God-king". "New light on the intention of Kassapa in his choice of Sigiriya as a royal capital was thrown six years ago by Dr. S. Paranavitana in his persuasive thesis that the usurper, as the *Culavamsa* conveyed it in a simile, was determined to build for himself a palace resembling Alaka, the Himalayan abode of the god Kuvera. Supported with a wealth of learning and illustration the thesis claims that Kassapa's transformation of the rock was not motivated primarily by military consideration. Nor could the inauguration and completion of such a grand design have been possible to a man anxious only to secure himself from probable attack. He was driven by his desire to arrogate to himself the dignity and stature of a god-king, a conception much closer to Brahmanical thought than to the orthodox Buddhist. This change in the theory of kingship was not in any way an innovation on the part of Kassapa, but his acceptance of a fairly widespread notion which must have been heretical to the monks of the Mahavihara. This intention could, in Paranavitana's view, be illustrated in the details of the architectural design of Sigiriya with their resemblance to those of Kuvera's palace . . . These conceptions of a divinity of the king, which palace and precincts set out to demonstrate, would account for the hostility of the Mahavihara towards an usurper who was after all, neither better nor worse in his record as a private person than some of the kings the Buddha knew and some of those embalmed in the Ceylon chronicles."

It is quite possible that Kasyapa in transforming the rock of Sigiriya into a comfortable fortress was not motivated primarily as in his original choice of Sigiriya by military consideration or by an anxiety to secure himself from a probable attack by his brother. But can archaeological evidence, though it may illustrate

certain aspects of historical evidence, provide by itself reliable conclusions about motives and beliefs? Can a simile—that he built a palace like another Alakamanda and dwelt there like Kuvera—when it is only an illustration, be quoted as evidence and a conclusion drawn from it that Kasyapa lived in Sigiriya personifying a god-king?

As Dr. P. E. E. Fernando pointed out during the course of the discussion on the subject no special significance should be attached to such a simile as such similes are common in Pali and Sinhalese literature. The authors of the *Culavamsa* use almost the same simile on two other occasions. In Ch. XXXVII.106 Buddhadasa is said to have protected the city (Anuradhapura) as wealthy Vessavana (Kuvera) protected Alakamanda. In Ch. LXXXI. 3 Senapati Subha is said to have founded on Yapahuva a city as Vessavana the city of Alakamanda.

Even if Sigiriya was built like Alakamanda on Mt. Kailasa, it does not provide adequate evidence, even if analogies are provided from other countries, to prove that he went there due to a desire to arrogate to himself the dignity and stature of a god-king. Nor do such statements prove that such conceptions accounted for the hostility shown to Kasyapa by the Mahavihara bhikkhus. All known and knowable evidence in Ceylon with regard to such a subject should have been collected and examined before arriving at such conclusions.

HISTORY AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Prof. S. A. Pakeman was Professor of Modern History in the University College of Colombo for about twenty years and has served in many capacities after that both in Ceylon and England. The present writer himself had his training first under him. His book, *Ceylon*, reveals the deep knowledge he possesses of history and of historical method.

Dr. Arasaratnam obtained first class honours in History and became a Lecturer in History in the University of Ceylon. He had a training in research in London and Holland. His thesis on Dutch Power in Ceylon 1658-1687 shows his ability and skill as a writer of history.

But their two books, however historical they are, raise further problems. Can a history be a pragmatic account? In this respect both these books seem to suffer. The objectives of both these books are similar. They are to deal mainly with the period from 1948. One is a work in the *Modern Nations* series. The other is in a *Modern Nations in Historical Perspective* series. Ceylon became a modern nation only in 1948. The period 1948-1962 is too short to assess how Ceylon came to be what it is today. Further the developments in this period are still too recent to see them in their correct perspective. The result is that these two books, too much influenced by recent happenings, the significance they attach to them, and what they consider were the causes that led to them, take their present divergent forms.[13]

Prof. Pakeman devotes only thirteen pages to the Ancient and Medieval Kingdoms. He agrees they had features of greatness but takes the view they were mainly medieval. Further they had little, he seems to think, to do with recent developments. "To the historian," he says, "the history of Ceylon before the coming of the European invader shows an island whose people had a certain sense of racial unity, maintained largely through the Buddhist religion, but, after the tenth century, rarely united effectively under a single ruler: a kingdom rather weaker than the neighbouring kingdoms of southern India, and coming therefore every now and again completely under the control of one or other of them, yet maintaining its identity by trying, and often succeeding, in playing off one of them against the other; but ultimately having retreated to that part of the island which was more defensible than the ancient

12. See page 8.

northern part—and of the latter, some given up to Tamil settlers, the rest deserted and reverting to jungle. Economically, a peasant economy, with the people living largely on rice as their staple food, the products of the coconut palm and some vegetables, and a rather thin, if profitable, trade on the west coast, carried on almost entirely by foreigners, some of whom—the Muslims (later called Moors)—settled in the island for trading purposes. Culturally, a tradition of learning derived from India, based on a classical language, Pali, and maintained largely by the order of bhikkhus, the Sangha; a tradition of craftsmanship, in relation to sculpture, decorative carving, painting and architecture, some of much merit, and greatly influenced through the centuries by the culture of the mainland, yet keeping its native characteristics. Socially a condition perhaps most easily described as feudal, the relations between rulers and ruled, and between the various grades of society, being based on services in return for the holding of land, interlocked with a pervasive but not too rigid caste system."

In other words what Prof. Pakeman seems to think is that Ceylon prior to 1505 has to be compared with medieval Europe, Sigiriya rock fortress with European castles, the viharas with Christian cathedrals and the political, economic and social system with the feudal system in Europe.

Dr. Arasaratnam's assessment is not very dissimilar, but he devotes nearly half the book to the period before 1505. Influenced by the objectives of his book he deals with it more as the story of the Sinhalese, the Tamils and the Moors than as the history of Sinhalese and Tamil kingdoms, of kings and chiefs, of monks and priests, who really made history. He deals with the period after 1505 not as a continuation of the story of the Sinhalese, the Tamils and the Moors but as a story of the Portuguese, Dutch and British who gave to Ceylon a degree of unity and a framework of development.

Another question these two books raise is, Can a historian who has done research in modern documents deal satisfactorily with ancient and medieval history? Prof. Pakeman avoids dealing in

detail with the first two millennia of Ceylon history, probably because he did not consider it essential to his study. A detailed account certainly was not necessary for his purpose. Dr. Arasaratnam's account of the period after 1505 is historically sound. He did research in the Dutch Period and produced a very valuable volume. But his account of the period before 1505 is weak. He at times mixes fact with fiction, legend with history and what actually happened with what the Tamils believe; and consequently his conclusions are at times unsound.

The communal structure of Ceylon as it existed before 1505 no doubt has not changed much. The Sinhalese, the Tamils and the Muslims yet think of themselves as distinct communities. They still follow mainly Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. They often explain modern events in ancient terms. The frictions today, however, are due mainly to changes effected by the British. The Colebrooke reforms, for instance, more than anything else led to the rise of the English-educated middle class and the consequent attainment of independence. The Donoughmore reforms led to the transfer of the power of ultimate control of Ceylon from the middle class to the mass of people and incidentally into the hands of those who were still imbued with the ancient traditions; and this led to English being replaced by Sinhala as the language of government and Christianity being replaced by Buddhism as the main religion of the country. The Colebrooke reforms of 1832-33 led to the establishment according to law of equal rights for all and the Donoughmore reforms of 1931 enabled those lagging behind to attain equality of opportunity. These led to friction between the haves and the have-nots just as earlier the grant of equal rights to all Protestant denominations led to friction between the Anglicans and the Nonconformists.

Another question that arises is, Can a historian trace the causes of recent developments until they are stabilized? In order to explain them Prof. Pakeman devotes, as already stated, only thirteen

pages to ancient and medieval Ceylon and nearly half the book to the British Period. Dr. Arasaratnam devotes nearly half the book to the period before 1505 and only about a seventh to British rule. Prof. Pakeman no doubt notices that there were conflicts among the Sinhalese and the Tamils before 1505, but he does not seem to notice much connection between them and the frictions of today. He sees the causes for the developments in 1948, 1956 and 1960, no doubt correctly, in the changes during the British Period. Dr. Arasaratnam appears to see the causes for them mainly in the developments before 1505.

This essay in the main answers the question, What is history? History has been discussed as a social science, an account of change and causes of change, a story of cause and effect, an account of political, economic and social history; its difference from general literature, from religious literature and from archaeology.

Four recent books have been examined to illustrate what has been stated. In fact what has been emphasised in the first two books are their defects when examined from the historical standpoint. They are both valuable on other grounds and possess many virtues; and for these reasons they will be read widely. The two books by the historians have their own value, however much they differ in tracing the causes of recent events and in the treatment of the period prior to the coming of the Portuguese. The object of this essay is not to belittle them but to advance in schools and outside the scientific study of the history of Ceylon.

II

HISTORY AND MYTH

1. THE YAKKHAS

According to ancient traditions, Ceylon is said to have been inhabited by yakkhas and nagas. Since the nineteenth century for various reasons many have taken these beings as peoples who lived in Ceylon before the coming of the Aryans. Perhaps the best way to test whether this inference is historically correct is to collect all the references to them in the chronicles and in connected accounts and see what exactly their authors meant by these two words.

The oldest of these traditions is the Valahassa Jataka (196).

THE VALAHASSA JATAKA

Long, long ago, in the island of Tambapanni, there was a yakkha city called Sirisavatthu peopled by yakkhinis.

Once a ship was wrecked near this island, and the five hundred merchants and their chief who travelled in it were cast on its western shore.

At this time the yakkhinis were walking along the coast from the River Kalyani to Nagadipa in search of prey. When they saw these men they did not wish them to run away finding that this was not a land where men lived. To dispel all fears they caused the merchants to see cattle and dogs and men ploughing fields. They themselves dressed beautifully, and, carrying children on their hips and accompanied by a band of maids who carried food, they approached the men.

After a few words of greeting were exchanged, the yakkhinis offered the merchants gruel and rice, and the latter, who were famishing, partook of the food, little thinking that they were being entertained by cruel yakkhinis.

When the repast was over and the men were resting, the yakkhinis made friends with them, and questioned them as to where they dwelt, where they had come from, whither they were going, and why they had come there. The merchants replied that their ship was wrecked and for that reason they had sought refuge there.

"O merchants," said the yakkhinis, "our lot is not better than yours. Three years ago our lords departed in a ship. They have not returned, and are probably dead. Stay with us, sirs, and we shall be your wives."

The yakkhinis then won the hearts of the merchants with the wiles and charms of women, and lured them to their city. The men, whom they had made their husbands earlier, they had bound with magic chains, and cast into a prison. The chief yakkhini made the leader of the merchants her lord, and five hundred yakkhinis took the five hundred merchants for their husbands.

That night when the merchants had fallen asleep, the yakkhinis rose, slew the men whom they had made their husbands earlier, and devoured their flesh. When the chief yakkhini returned after this dreadful deed, the chief merchant, who awoke, embraced her. He found her body cold, and understood at once that she was a yakkhini and had devoured human flesh.

The next morning the chief merchant, when he went out to wash his face, told his companions that they had taken as wives not women but yakkhinis, and that they must escape immediately from their clutches, as otherwise when other men came to the island they would be killed and devoured.

Half the number agreed, and fled with their chief merchant. The rest were loth to leave their beautiful wives, and in course of time were killed and devoured by the yakkhinis.

* * * *

The ancient Sinhalese knew this tale but the *Dipavamsa* their oldest chronicle, though it gives the story of Vijaya and his landing, does not mention that he met any yakkhinis on his arrival in Ceylon. This is as it should be. According to this chronicle the Buddha came to this island before the landing of Vijaya, expelled the yakkhas, and settled them on another island called Giridipa.

THE EXPULSION OF THE YAKKHAS FROM CEYLON

On the full-moon day of Phussa (January) eight months after his enlightenment, the Buddha left Jambudipa, and came to sanctify the island of Lanka. He knew that here his doctrine would shine in glory and that the yakkhas, who inhabited it, had to be driven out to make it a place fit for the dwelling of men.

At that time there was a great gathering of yakkhas in their usual place of meeting, the delightful Mahanaga Garden, twenty-four miles long and eight miles broad, which lay on the right bank of the Mahavali Ganga. The Buddha came here, and stood hovering in the air over their heads and above the place where the Mahiyangana Dagoba now stands. To frighten the yakkhas he produced rain, storm, and darkness, and they in fear begged him to release them from their terrors.

"I will banish this fear and relieve you from your distress," said the Buddha. "Give me a place where I may sit down."

"We, O Lord," replied the yakkhas, "give you even the whole island. Release us from fear."

The Buddha then freed them from their terror. Next he caused the pleasant island of Giri to come near, and when he had settled the yakkhas on it, he made it return to its former place.

* * * *

But the *Mahavamsa* makes Vijaya meet yakkhinis on his arrival, and makes Pandukabhaya secure the assistance of a yakkhini in his war against his uncles. It is probable these stories originally developed as independent accounts as they took no note of the story of the expulsion of the yakkhas.

KUVENI

Vijaya, the first king of Ceylon, was the eldest son of King Sihabahu of Lala, and he and his seven hundred followers were banished by Sihabahu from his kingdom on account of their evil ways. Leaving their country in a ship, they wandered for some time finding no place of refuge on the coast of India, and at last reached the unknown shores of the island of Lanka.

Soon after they disembarked, a yakkhini appeared before them in the form of a bitch. As dogs are found only in a place where there are people, one of Vijaya's companions followed it hoping to find a village. Before long he came to a pond, and here seated at the foot of a tree was Kuveni, the mistress of the yakkhinis, spinning like a woman-hermit.

The man, who was weary, bathed in the pond to refresh himself. Then when he was about to depart, Kuveni stopped him, "Stay, thou art my prey!" she cried.

Kuveni, according to her habit, wanted to devour the man but she did not find it possible, as Vijaya and his followers each wore a magic thread. She, therefore, seized him and hurled him into an underground abode. The rest of the seven hundred came in turn, and she did likewise with them.

Last of all came Vijaya. Seeing the woman-hermit he said, "Lady, hast thou seen my men?"

"What dost thou want with thy people, prince?" she replied. "Drink thou and bathe."

As she knew his rank Vijaya at once understood that she was a yakkhini. Drawing his bow he caught her in the noose about her neck. Then seizing her hair with his left hand, and lifting his sword with his right, he cried, "Slave, give me back my men or I slay thee!"

"Spare my life, sir," replied Kuveni. "I will give thee a kingdom, and do thee a woman's service and any other task that pleases thee."

Vijaya was afraid to trust her. But she, to satisfy him, took an oath, and restored his men to him. To fill their hungry stomachs she gave them rice, which had been in the vessels of the merchants who had been devoured by her.

When the meal was over, Kuveni assumed the form of a lovely sixteen-year-old maiden and adorned herself with ornaments, and Vijaya attracted by her beauty made her his wife.

Not far from this place, where Vijaya landed, lay Sirisavatthu the city of the yakkhas. That night all the yakkhas gathered there to celebrate the wedding of the daughter of their chief who dwelt at Lankapura.

Kuveni, who feared that she would be killed for allowing men to make their habitation in Lanka, suggested to Vijaya to destroy all these yakkhas and seize for himself the kingship of the whole island.

"How can I slay the yakkhas?" asked Vijaya, "They are invisible."

"I will utter a sound wherever they are," replied Kuveni, "and whenever your hear my voice, strike. By my magic power your weapon will fall on their bodies." Having thus slain the yakkhas Vijaya wore the garments of the yakkha-king and bestowed the other raiments on his companions.

After this the followers of Vijaya settled in Lanka. When they had fully established themselves they wanted to consecrate Vijaya king. But this could not be done as a maiden of a kshatriya or royal

family had to be consecrated queen at the same time. Messengers were therefore sent to southern Madhura to ask for a royal princess and the Pandu king consented to give his daughter in marriage to Vijaya.

Vijaya could not have Kuveni as his wife any more; for no princess would agree to live under the same roof as a yakkhini. "Go thou, dear one," said Vijaya, "leaving the two children behind. Human beings are ever in fear of non-human beings. I will spend a thousand pieces of money and make thee an offering."

Kuveni was seized with fear. She knew what reception awaited her at the hands of her own kith and kin whom she had helped Vijaya to destroy. She reminded him of the services she had rendered and of the son and daughter she had borne him. At last when Vijaya paid no heed to all her pleadings and tears, she took her son and daughter and left for Lankapura.

When she reached the city, she entered it, leaving the children outside. The yakkhas who saw her thought she came to spy on them, and one killed her with a blow of his hand. The children, who had heard what had happened, fled to the region around Adam's Peak. There the brother took the sister to wife, and founded the Pulinda, the race of hill-men.

CETIYA

Pandukabhaya was the third king of Ceylon after Vijaya. Long before his birth it was predicted that he would slay his uncles and ascend the throne of Lanka. The uncles tried their utmost to change the course of destiny, but the yakkhas saw to it that what the gods had decided should not be upset by the interference of men.

Even when Pandukabhaya was in his mother's womb, the yakkhas, Citta and Kalavela, kept guard over him. After his birth Pandukabhaya was taken in a basket to Dvaramandala by a serving-woman to prevent him from being slain by his uncles. The

princes who had gone hunting met her on the way, but before they could discover that the basket contained the little Pandukabhaya, Citta and Kalavela caused a boar to appear and made them pursue it, leaving the woman to continue her journey.

Later when he was fighting against his uncles, he took possession of the fortified camp near the huge rock, Dimbulagala, called Dhumarakkha Mountain in ancient times and Gunner's Quoin today. When he was residing there he heard that a mare with a white body and red feet wandered about the Tumbariyangana pond, which lay close to his camp. This was really a yakkhini called Cetiya, who lived on the rock and often assumed this form.

One day Pandukabhaya saw her, and, desiring to capture her, followed her with a noose. When she noticed him, she fled without making herself invisible, and he pursued her. She circled the pond seven times, plunged into the Mahavali Ganga, and returning ran seven times round the rock. Once more she went three times round the pond and plunged into the river near the Kacchaka ford, now Magantota.

Here Pandukabhaya seized her by her tail. At the same time he caught a floating palm-leaf feared by the yakkhas. The palm-leaf transformed itself into a sword on account of his merit, and he thrust it at her to kill her. Cetiya begged him to spare her life and promised to conquer the kingdom for him. Pandukabhaya accepted the offer. Mounting her he went up the rock and lived there for four years.

In the war that followed Pandukabhaya rode on her, and followed her counsel. When he became king he placed the yakkha Kalavela on the east side of the city and the yakkha Cittaraja at the lower end of the Abhayavava. The slave-woman, who had helped him and was reborn as a yakkhini, he settled at the south gate of the city. Cetiya, in the form of a mare, he placed within the royal precincts. He made annual offerings to these and other

yakkhas, and on festival days he sat with Cittaraja beside him on a seat of equal height. Gods and men then danced before him, and the king passed the time merrily.

* * * *

It is clear that the story of Kuveni is indebted to the Valahassa Jataka. The similarity in details is too great for one to be independent of the other. The dog as the sign of the existence of a village, the consumption of rice and other food, the shipwrecked traders devoured by yakkhinis, and the city of Sirisavatthu, are all referred to in the Jataka. This Jataka seems to have influenced also the story of Sinhala in the *Divyavadana*. This story related in India to explain the origin of the name Sinhaladvipa seems to have come into existence when Ceylon came to be known by this name. Later it came to be included in the Buddhist Sanskrit work called the *Divyavadāna*.

THE STORY OF SINHALA

"This is not a king's daughter," said Sinhala. "She is a rakshasi from Tamradvipa."

"All women," replied King Sinhakesari, "are rakshasis. Forgive her. If you will not accept her, I shall take her."

"O King," said Sinhala, "She is a rakshasi. I shall neither take her nor give her to you."

Sinhakesari was the king of Sinhakalpa. During his time there dwelt a rich merchant by the name of Sinha, and Sinhala was his son. Sinhala was of matchless beauty, and the father, did not deny the son any pleasures that he wished to enjoy. Sinhala, however, was not content. He wanted to travel, cross the seas, and see other lands. Sinha tried to dissuade him, but finding it useless allowed him to go.

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On a lucky day, accompanied by a large caravan of five hundred merchants, Sinhala started his journey. He travelled to many countries seeing towns and villages. At length he reached the shore of the sea and alone arrived at Jambudvipa. Here he met a rakshasi, and in ignorance took her for his wife.

The rakshasi at first did not wish to kill Sinhala, but, urged by her companions, assumed a frightful form and went up to him. Sinhala, understanding that she intended devouring him, drew his sword to kill her, and she in fear fled from him.

When Sinhala returned to the caravan the rakshasi followed him. She fell at the feet of the caravan leader, and told him that she was the daughter of the king of Tamradvipa, and was given in marriage to Sinhala. When they were travelling their ship was wrecked in mid-ocean, and she was abandoned by him to her fate. She succeeded, after great difficulty, in saving herself, and followed him.

The caravan leader spoke to Sinhala, and pleaded for her, but Sinhala replied that this was not a king's daughter but a rakshasi from Tamradvipa, and narrated the story.

When Sinhala went back to Sinhakalpa the rakshasi took the form of a pretty maiden and followed him carrying a little boy, beautiful in appearance like Sinhala. She entered the capital of Sinhakalpa, and stationed herself at the gate of Sinhala's residence. When the people who passed by noticed the similarity between the boy and Sinhala, she repeated the story she narrated to the caravan leader.

This story was conveyed to the parents of Sinhala and they asked their son to forgive her and take her back as his wife. Sinhala told them, as before, that this was not a king's daughter but a rakshasi from Tamradvipa, and refused to have anything to do with her.

The rakshasi next went to the palace of the king. When the king heard that a beautiful woman desired to see him, he ordered his ministers to bring her before him. When she arrived, the king inquired why she had come. In replying she complained to him about the cruel treatment meted out to her by Sinhala, and begged him to interfere on her behalf.

The king summoned Sinhala to his presence and asked him to take her back, but Sinhala refused, and warned the king against her. The king, however, was loth to send away such a beautiful woman and in spite of what Sinhala said admitted her to his harem.

Sometime afterwards when the king and his wives had gone to sleep the rakshasi returned to Tamradvipa. There she collected her companions, came with them to Sinhakalpa, and devoured the king and the whole harem.

The next morning the news spread that the gates of the palace were not open and that birds of prey hovered over the buildings. Sinhala, when he heard the talk, told the ministers that the king and his harem must have been devoured by the rakshasis, and the ministers when they entered the palace saw only skulls and bones.

King Sinhakesari had no heir, and the people asked Sinhala to be their king. Sinhala at first was unwilling to take up such a responsibility, but yielded finally to the wish of the people when they pressed him and promised to obey him faithfully. He ruled the country with great wisdom always working for the welfare of his subjects. The country soon became prosperous and the people quite happy.

After some years, however, Sinhala gave up the government of Sinhakalpa. He collected a large army, and set sail to destroy the rakshasis who had killed Sinhakesari and the other inmates of the palace.

When Sinhala approached Tamradvipa the rakshasis collected to meet him. Sinhala and his soldiers put a large number of them to the sword. The rest of the rakshasis then submitted and begged for their lives. Sinhala granted them their request, and became the first ruler of the island. From that time onwards Tamradvipa, from the name of its first king, was known as Sinhaladvipa.

* * * *

The story of the princess and the lion too seems to have been influenced by the Padakasalamanava Jataka (432) which gives the story of a brahmin and a yakkhini. Here again the details are too similar for one to be independent of the other.

THE BRAHMIN AND THE YAKKHINI

Once upon a time the sinful wife of the king of Benares, according to the Padakusalamanava Jataka, was born as a yakkhini with a face like a horse. She dwelt in a rock-cave in a vast forest. Through this forest ran the road from the eastern to the western border. When people came along this road, the yakkhini killed them, and devoured their flesh. After serving Vessavana for three years, she obtained leave to devour people in a certain space, thirty leagues long and five leagues broad.

Once a wealthy brahmin came that way with a large retinue. The yakkhini suddenly rushed on him, and the frightened attendants fled leaving him to her mercy. Immediately she placed him on her back, and returned to the cave. There she conceived an affection for him, and instead of killing him made him her husband. After that, whenever she went out in search of prey, she closed the entrance to the cave with a huge stone in order to prevent him from escaping.

The Bodhisatta came to life at this time as a son of this brahmin and this yakkhini. When he grew up, he lifted the stone that covered the entrance of the cave and let his father out. The yakkhini said

nothing on account of her love for him. Another day he asked his father why his father's mouth differed from that of his mother. The brahmin replied that he was a human being while his mother was a yakkhini who devoured human flesh.

After that the Bodhisatta expressed his unwillingness to live any more with her, and, placing his father on his shoulder, tried to run away. The yakkhini caught them on the way and brought them back. Another time he got beyond the limits of her territory before she could seize them, and thus excaped from her power.

* * * *

The story of Kuveni seems to have been influenced also by the Devadhamma Jataka. As in the story of Sinhala here too the term yakkha is replaced by the term rakkhasa.

THE BODHISATTA AND THE RAKKHASA

According to the Devadhamma Jataka (6), the Bodhisatta asked his brother Surya to run down to a pool close by, drink and bathe there, and bring him and his second brother some water in a lotus leaf. When Surya reached the pond and went down to the water a rakkhasa who had been given power by Vessavana over this pond, seized him, hauled him into the depths of the water and imprisoned him in his own abode. Finding that Surya did not return Bodhisatta sent his second brother who too was treated in the same way. When he too did not return the Bodhisatta himself went after them and traced their footsteps down into the water. Realising at once that the pool must be the domain of a rakkhasa he girded on his sword, took his bow in his hand and waited. Then the rakkhasa appeared to him in the guise of a forester and invited him to drink and bathe in order to continue his journey comfortably. Recognising him to be a rakkhasa, the Bodhisatta said, "It is you who have seized my brothers." "Yes," replied the rakkhasa. "All who go down to the pool belong to me except those who know what is

godlike." "I shall tell you what is godlike," said the Bodhisatta, "but I am travel-strained with my journey." Then the rakkhasa bathed the Bodhisatta, gave him food and water to drink and laid out a couch for him in a gorgeous pavilion. Thereupon the Bodhisatta sat on the couch and explained what was godlike to the rakkhasa. Finally the rakkhasa brought forth the two brothers and restored them to the Bodhisatta.

THE MEANING OF YAKKHA

All these stories reveal what their authors meant by the term yakkha. The meaning of the word is clearly the same as in the Pali Canon and in the Pali commentaries. The yakkhas in them are invisible spirits, non-human beings (amanussa), like the nagas, the kumbhandas, and the gandhabbas, who at times assume human form. They belong to the first of the upper worlds and live under the dominion of Vaisravana (Pali Vessavana), but sometimes under the same dominion inhabit this world. They are in some ways beings similar to the angels and devils in Christian literature.

The author of the University *History of Ceylon*, Volume I Book I Chapter VII, however persists in the view that yakkhas could be the aborigines of Ceylon. He comes to this view after considering the statements in the Valahassa Jataka, i.e. the tales it influenced, and in the Travels of Fa-Hsien.

"These stories," he says, "were no doubt modelled on the actual experiences of merchants who, from very early times, came in search of pearls and precious stones. They sometimes met with a hostile reception from the primitive inhabitants of the Island, but sometimes peaceful trade may have been possible. It is not unnatural that the merchants should regard these shy, elusive and rather impulsive inhabitants as supernatural beings."

It is possible that what Fa-Hsien relates is based on actual experiences of merchants and by the term demon he meant the Vaddas of Ceylon. But there is not enough evidence to prove that the Valahassa

Jataka was similarly based on actual experiences of merchants or by the term yakkha its author meant the aborigines of Ceylon. As Prof. Paranavitana states in the same work, Book I Chapter VI, "Nothing has been recorded in the chronicles, or in other writings, of any men whom the Aryan settlers in the Island met when they first came here. The Yakkhas with whom Vijaya and his successors are said to have had dealings, and the Nagas referred to in the traditional accounts of Buddha's visits to Ceylon, are clearly stated in the chronicles to have been non-human beings."

2. THE NAGAS

There are not such detailed accounts of the nagas in the *Mahavamsa* as of the yakkhas. They are referred to mainly in connection with two of the visits of the Buddha. The Buddha, says the *Mahavamsa*, paid his second visit to Nagadipa out of compassion for the nagas. A war was about to take place between the naga kings. One of these was Mahodara who was gifted with miraculous powers, and ruled over a naga kingdom in the ocean. The other was his nephew Culodara, in whose keeping was a throne set with gems which Mahodara was also anxious to possess. Culodara had no desire to part with this treasure, and therefore the uncle made preparations to fight the nephew, and obtain it by force.

When the battle was about to begin the Buddha came flying through the air and hovered over the battle-field. He filled the place with dread darkness, and struck the nagas with terror. He preached to them on the virtues of concord, and the frightened nagas were so impressed by this sermon that they presented him with the throne instead of fighting for it. When he sat on it, they served him with celestial food, and eighty million nagas who lived on the mainland and in the ocean became his followers. The Buddha, before he left, returned the throne to the nagas saying: "In remembrance that I have used this, do homage to it, ye nagas kings! This will bring blessing and happiness to you."

The Buddha paid his third visit to Ceylon in response to an invitation by the ruler of the region of Kalyani, the naga king Maniakkhika, the jewel-eyed, who decided to follow his teaching during his first visit. He sat beneath a canopy on a throne inlaid with gems, and Maniakkhika entertained him and his five hundred companions clad in yellow robes with celestial food, while millions of nagas thronged around to pay him their homage.

Nothing more is stated in the *Dipavamsa* and the *Mahavamsa* about these ancient beings, who inhabited this island and whose meetings with the Buddha form the subject of some of the oldest ballads of Ceylon. But fortunately the *Mahavamsa*, which records these legends, tells us more about other naga kings who lived outside Ceylon.

The naga king Mahakala, like Mahodara, possessed wondrous powers. He lived for millions of years, and was able to see four Buddhas in his life-time. The great Indian emperor, Asoka, hearing of his existence sent for him. When the naga king came he offered him a throne placed under a white canopy, and paid him homage. Then he expressed a desire to see the form of Gautama Buddha, and Mahakala created a beautiful image of the great sage.

Another naga king, Aravala, lived in Kashmir. He too possessed miraculous powers. Once he caused hailstorms to pour down upon rice crops and floods to overwhelm the land. On hearing this, the great Buddhist missionary who went to Kashmir, Majjhantika, hastened to the place to put an end to his evil actions. This enraged Aravala still more, and he caused fierce winds to blow, clouds to give forth rain, lightning to flash here and there, mountains tops to be hurled down and nagas in grisly forms to belch forth smoke and fire. But Majjhantika was too powerful for him, and the naga, when he was subdued, offered him a jewelled throne, and became a disciple of the Buddha.

The nagas are associated with gem-set thrones also in other Buddhist works. A book which gives a life of Gautama Buddha says that when he was once born as the powerful naga king Atula he presented to the Buddha of his time, Vipassi, a golden seat inlaid with seven kinds of gems.

The conception of the nagas as protectors of relics probably led to their connection with Buddhist sanctuaries. All the dagobas of Ceylon have relics enshrined within them, and since medieval times, probably owing to the influence of Mahayana Buddhism, metal plates with passages from Buddhist scriptures inscribed on them have also been placed within the relic chambers of most of them.

THE NAGA IN BUDDHIST ART

Figures of nagas carved out of stone are to be seen near many of these dagobas. A five-headed naga king, for instance, is to be found on the eastern altar and a seven-headed cobra on the southern altar of the Jetavanarama or the Eastern dagoba at Anuradhapura. Figures of seven or nine-headed naga kings are also to be seen at the entrance to dagobas and religious buildings in Anuradhapura and in Polonnaruva.

In Buddhist art the naga appears in two forms, either as a mere animal or as a human creature. The figure is always that of a cobra and not of any other serpent. It is represented with many heads just as Hindu gods always figure with many hands. The number of the heads varies but it is always odd, three, five, seven or nine. The naga in human form is characterized by the many-headed hood surrounding the head. In Ceylon art all these forms of the nagas are to be found and perhaps the human form with the head surrounded by a nine-headed hood is peculiar to this island.

The association of nagas with precious objects was due to the fact that the Nagaloka or the realm of the serpents was considered to be a place of delight and wondrous charm, covered with jewels

and other treasures. Buddhist works are not always definite with regard to its real position in the universe. Some books represent the nagas as haunting the sky and upper regions. They are at times definitely referred to as inhabiting the first of the upper worlds above the earth. But the general idea that prevailed in ancient times was that the Nagaloka was the lowest of the nether regions called the Patala.

The author of the *Mahavamsa* undoubtedly held this view. When relics were needed to be enshrined in the Ruanvali Saya in Anuradhapura, Sonuttara, a Buddhist monk was asked to fetch them from Nagaloka. Sonuttara then plunged into the earth, and reached the palace of the naga king. After he obtained the relics he came out of the earth again through his cell.

There are many entrances to this Nagaloka. One could enter it through the bottom of the ocean, through holes on the peaks of hills, or through lakes and water-holes. This is the reason why the nagas were often represented as dwelling in the ocean, on the mountains, in lakes and ponds and on lands surrounded by water. Mahodara had his kingdom in the ocean, and it is from there that Mahakala took the relics to his palace. Culodara's father lived on the Kannavaddhamana mountain. The naga king Aravala lived in a lake. Ceylon being an island was said to be a place haunted by the nagas and it, or a part of it, was called Nagadipa.

The representations of nagas in Ceylon sculptures also show that nagas were connected in Ceylon with wells and tanks. Figures of the nagas were often placed on the dams of tanks, such as the one still to be seen at Anuradhapura on the dam of the Tisavava above its sluice. In Mihintale a three-headed hood of a cobra is to be found carved on the rock above a pond. The vessels of clay with figures of nagas now to be seen at the Colombo Museum were also found near this place.

There is an interesting story in a book of the Buddhist Canon about a naga who bacame a Buddhist monk. When the Buddha was alive there was a certain naga who was ashamed of being a serpent. He thought that if he became a Buddhist, he would be redeemed from his serpent state, and would be able to become a human being. He, therefore, assumed the shape of a youth, went to the Buddhist monks, and asked for admittance to their Order. His request was granted, and he was duly ordained. He resided in the monastery and shared a cell with another monk.

Once his companion got up in the night, left the cell, and walked to and fro in the open air. Thereupon the naga, thinking himself safe from discovery, fell asleep in his natural shape. When the monk returned, he found a coiled snake in the cell, and terrified, cried for help. Awakened by the noise, the naga, assuming human form once more sat down on his seat. The other monks of the monastery hurried to the cell, and asked for an explanation from the naga, when the frightened monk related his story. The naga confessed that he was not a human being, and explained why he sought entrance to the Order.

There is no doubt, as this and other stories show, that the nagas were looked upon by Buddhists as beings that acutally existed, and that they were as real to them as angels and devils were to medieval Christians. This story also makes it clear, if other accounts do not, that the nagas were never thought of by them as human beings.

THE MEANING OF NAGA

Nevertheless many persons still class the nagas of Ceylon mentioned in the *Mahavamsa* among the aborigines of this island. The one who first gave currency to this view was perhaps James Fergusson, the author of *Tree and Serpent Worship*. He expressed the opinion that the nagas were not originally serpents, but serpent worshippers, an aboriginal race of Turanian stock which

inhabited Northern India and were conquered by the Aryan invaders. Dr. C. F. Oldham, the author of *The Sun and the Serpent*, thought that the nagas were not demons, but were so called because they claimed descent from the sun and had the hooded serpent for a totem. Hermann Oldenberg, the famous German-Indologist, did not rush to such conclusions. He considered the nagas to be demoniacal beings similar to the were-wolves, who like tiger-men and swan-maidens appeared in human form.

Professor Vogel of Leiden, who has dealt exhaustively with the subject of the nagas in his book *Indian Serpent Lore*, refers to the theories put forward by Fergusson, Oldham and Oldenberg. He finds no foundation either in Hindu or Buddhist literature for the views held by Fergusson and Oldham. He differs also from Oldenberg. "The Nagas," he says "may occasionally assume human form, but they do not belong to the human world. Theirs is the Nagaloka, wherever that mysterious realm of the snakes may be located. They are decidedly un-human (a-manusha) and in Buddhist writings they are frankly classed as animals. In the legends they usually exhibit a bewildering blending of human and serpentine properties, they may even act entirely as human creatures, yet there can be no doubt that their real nature and form are those of the serpent. In the Naga the animal preponderates, at least according to earlier conceptions, whereas the were-wolves appear to be primarily conceived as human beings."

III

HISTORY AND LEGEND

1. VIJAYA

An examination is made in this section of the legend of Vijaya to see whether it has any historical value: whether the accounts of its main events were handed down by the original Aryan settlers; if not, whether they yield some evidence of the first Aryan settlement; if not, whether they are no more than speculations of a later date without any historical foundation when all memory of the first settlement had disappeared. The conclusion reached is that they yield no evidence of any events that actually took place; they are a mere fiction of the mind produced by one or more persons, subject to the knowledge they possessed of India and Ceylon at the time the story arose, and influenced by what they thought and believed with regard to human nature and human activity. Next from evidence available it is shown how, if it is mere fiction, the legend grew into the form found in the ancient Pali chronicles of Ceylon.

THE DATE OF THE LEGEND

The Vijaya legend cannot be earlier than the middle of the third century B.C. when Buddhism was introduced into Ceylon. It has been argued that it is of popular origin and does not savour of the Buddhist vihara, and that, if it were an original composition of bhikkhus, Vijaya might have been made a virtuous and noble person. There are certainly grounds for thinking so. But a comprehensive analysis of the legend shows that it is clearly a composition of Buddhist bhikkhus and is very different from the stories of the heroes of Dutthagamani which seem to have arisen among the ordinary people; it in fact forms a part of the

early Buddhist legends, and is developed not from popular tradition but from ideas and details of Buddhist works, especially the *Jataka*.

This is not a recent discovery. As far back as 1906 the German scholar, Otto Franke, put forward the view that the *Dipavamsa*, in which the legend first appears, is composed out of verses and pieces of verse of the canonical literature and was in language and ideas influenced, above all, by the *Buddhavamsa*, the *Cariyapitaka* and the *Jataka*. Wilhelm Geiger, though he did not agree that it is such a compilation, admitted that Franke had shed further light on the manner and composition of the author of the *Dipavamsa* and that the evidence produced showed that the author of the *Dipavamsa* was strongly influenced by these works, and was familiar with the metre and diction of their verses.

The legend does not seem to be earlier than even the first century B.C. As stated already it is first found in the oldest Pali chronicle of Ceylon, the *Dipavamsa*. The *Dipavamsa*, as it is found today, cannot be earlier than the fourth century A.D., as its story comes down to A.D. 302. The *Mahavamsa*, which contains an expanded account of the legend, is placed by scholars about the sixth century A.D. The historical introduction to the Pali commentary, the *Samantapasadika*, the only other ancient account of Ceylon, may be placed, if its subject matter is made the criterion of judgement, between the *Dipavamsa* and the *Mahavamsa*.

It is fairly well established that the Sinhala original of the historical introduction to the *Samantapasadika* was written about the beginning of the first century A.D. It was earlier believed, according to the Pali chronicles, that the Sinhala commentaries to the Pali Canon, hitherto handed down orally, were written down in the time of Vattagamani Abhaya (B.C. 89-77). But Dr. E. W. Adikaram has produced evidence to show that the event took place some decades later about the time of Bhatika Abhaya (B.C. 22—

A.D. 7). The *Mahavamsa* was based on an ancient Sinhala chronicle and the story in that up to the introduction of Buddhism may be placed, therefore, about the second half of the first century A.D. The early portions of the *Dipavamsa* which reveal an earlier tradition than the historical introduction to the *Samantapasadika* may, on that account, be placed about the first century B.C.

There is further evidence to confirm that this legend is not earlier than the first century B.C. It is clear from the *Dipavamsa*, which contains the earliest form of the story, that it was composed to account for the name Sinhala which came to be applied to the island. Its ninth chapter begins as follows:—

> Lankadipo ayam ahu sihena Sihala iti
> dipuppattim imam vamsam sunatha vacanam mama.
>
> "This was the island of Lanka called Sihala after the lion. Listen to this chronicle of the origin of the island which I narrate".

This name Sihala (Skt. Sinhala) is undoubtedly late. The ancient names of Ceylon were Tamraparni (Pali Tambapanni) and Lanka. According to the evidence available the older of these was Tamraparni. Early Greek writers from the fourth century B.C. such as Onesicritus and Megasthenes refer to Ceylon by its Greek from Taprobane. Asoka refers to Ceylon as Tambapanni in his inscriptions. Tambapanni is also the name by which Ceylon is known in the Pali Canon. Lanka, the next name, is commonly used along with Tambapanni in the early parts of the *Dipavamsa* and the *Mahavamsa*.

The name Sihala on the other hand is rare in both these chronicles. It occurs in the former only once and that is in the Vijaya legend; in the latter only twice, in the Vijaya legend and in the account of Vattagamani Abhaya of the first century B.C. where this king is referred to as Mahakala Sihala. Thus it is clear that

this name was not in common use in Ceylon either for the island or for the people even up to the beginning of the fourth century A.D. when both the chronicles come to an end. In fact the name Sihala and Sinhala is popular in Ceylon only in later Pali and Sinhala writings. It is not known in early Indian literature too and is popular only in classical Sanskrit literature. The first reference to Ceylon as Sinhala in Indian literature is in the *Divyavadana*, a work about the third century A.D., though some parts of it may go back to the first century B.C.

THE HISTORICITY OF THE LEGEND

The next point to consider is whether its main theme that Vijaya and his followers gave the name Sinhala to the island is a historical fact. The evidence available seems to suggest that they did not, but that the island for some unknown reason first got that name and the people got their name from it. Had the people actually given the name they would have been called by this name from the earliest times, throughout the chronicles. But this is not the case.

To trace names of places to persons was undoubtedly in keeping with the ideas of the time. The chronicles mention certain ancient villages of Ceylon. According to one tradition their foundation is traced to the followers of Vijaya. According to another their names originate from the brothers of Bhaddakaccana, the queen of Panduvasudeva. The conclusion to be drawn from these two traditions seems to be that the names of villages were anterior to those of the so-called founders which differ in the two legends. It is in the same tenor that the origin of the name Sinhala is explained. In Ceylon it is traced to the son of Sihabahu or Sihala and his followers. In India in the *Divyavadana* it is a merchant called Sinhala, who became a king in India and later came to Ceylon and destroyed the rakshasis, that gave the name to the island.[1]

1. See page 40

Thus the Vijaya legend and the Sinhala legend are agreed that the island bore the name Sinhala but differ as to who gave it that name.

Other evidence available too seems to confirm that Sinhala originally was the name of the island and the people got their name from it many centuries later. As stated already according to the *Dipavamsa* and the *Divyavadana*, the story is narrated to explain the name of the island. In the *Samantapasadika* the name Sihala occurs, but only in reference to the island. It is stated there that because the commentary to the *Vinaya* was written in the speech of Sihaladipa, the meaning thereof was not clear to the bhikkhus overseas. In the inscription of the Indian emperor Samudragupta of the fourth century A.D. it is clear that it was the island that was called Sinhala as the people are called Saimhalakas, the people of Sinhala.

Thus if the island gave the name to the people and not the people to the island, the legend that the first Aryan settlers gave the name to the island cannot be in conformity with historical fact, and if the story, which emerged about five centuries after the first Aryan settlement, does not record what actually happened it is also not likely to provide any reliable evidence as to how, whence and why the original Aryan settlers came to this island.

OTHER JUDGEMENTS

But many did not dismiss the legend so easily. They assumed that some points in it could have been handed down by the original settlers and could be historical. They probably came to this conclusion because all available evidence confirmed the statement in the chronicles that the Aryan settlers came to Ceylon from North India. For instance, the Ceylon Brahmi inscriptions from the second to the first century B.C., scattered in most parts of the Dry Zone, reveal that the language in them is allied to the Aryan languages of North India of that time and that the civili-

4135—4

zation represented in them, like that of the early parts of the ancient Pali chronicles, is that of North India and not that of the south.

But this statement in the story that the first Aryan settlers came from North India need not be a tradition handed down by the original settlers. A little consideration will reveal that the assertion that the Aryan settlers came from North India was the only inference the bhikkhus of Ceylon in the first century B.C. could have made. They were aware that South India was inhabited by a people who spoke quite a different language, Tamil. According to the Akitta Jataka (480) there was a Damila kingdom in South India. It is said that an ascetic who went from Benares to Karadipa near Nagadipa sojourned on the way at Kavirapattanam in the Damila kingdom. Besides there had been two Tamil invasions of Ceylon from South India in the second and the first century B.C. and there were Tamil traders in Anuradhapura at this time. Therefore the Buddhist bhikkhus would have known that their language differed from that of the Dravidians and that the Aryan settlers could not have come from South India.

It was also natural for them to conclude from the fact that they came from North India that they came also by sea and, from the evidence available at that time, that they came along the western coast of India and landed in the north-west of Ceylon. Most ships to Ceylon at that time came along the western coast of India and touched the north-western coast of Ceylon on their way eastwards. Further, as will be shown later, the *Jataka* book refers to a western route, but not to an eastern one. In any case, there does not seem to have been during the first century B.C. any clear memory that ships came along the east coast. In the third century B.C. Asoka sent embassies from Pataliputra (Patna) to Ceylon, and he is likely to have sent them along the east coast. If the voyages were along the east coast, the envoys would have sailed down the Ganges and the bo branch would have been sent down the Ganges. But the *Dipavamsa*, the early parts of which seem to go back to the first

century B.C., states that the ministers of Ceylon who went to meet Asoka reached Pataliputra after crossing the Vindhya forest and that the bo branch reached the ocean after crossing the same region.

There were others who believed that some other parts of the legend too could be true. The *Mahavamsa*, unlike the *Dipavamsa*, places Lala between Vanga and Magadha. It was argued, not on historical but on philological grounds, that this Lala could be identified with Radha in Western Bengal. But what was more necessary to have proved was that such a place in Western Bengal was known in Ceylon at the time the story arose. There is also the further objection that the early Aryan settlers could not have come from Vanga, Kalinga or Lala in Western Bengal as these regions were yet unaryanised at the time. On this and other grounds Lala had to be identified with Lata near the mouth of the Narmada.

Some tried to establish the truth of the legend by rationalising impossible elements. According to what is believed today there could be no offspring by the union of a human being and an animal. Hence some argued that Vijaya's grandfather could not have been a real lion but an outlaw or a bandit. But what really mattered is not what is believed today but what the people in India and Ceylon believed at the time the story arose. There is no indication in the story that it was not an actual lion. Nor is there anything elsewhere to show that the ancestors of the Sinhalese did not believe such stories.

Another objected to this method of rationalisation but considered the yakkhas were the aborigines of Ceylon, not necessarily the Vaddas. He probably argued from analogy as in the *Rigveda* at times the aborigines are referred to as yakshas. On the other hand as some Ceylon scholars pointed out, what mattered was what the term yakkha connoted in the Pali Buddhist works. In them the term yakkha along with nagas, kumbhandas, and gandhabbas refers to non-human beings who according to beliefs at the time could assume human forms and form unions with human beings.

In any case it is not legitimate to draw any inferences from the story of Kuveni or the story of Vijaya's union with a princess of southern Madhura as these stories are not in the *Dipavamsa* and seem to have been later additions in the *Mahavamsa*. The *Dipavamsa* at the very beginning gives a list of the main topics with which it deals. They are the visits of the Buddha, the coming of the relics and of the bo branch, the coming of the Sasana and of the Pali Canon and of the chief of men (Vijaya). According to this chronicle the Buddha expelled the yakkhas from Lanka and placed them not in the highlands of Ceylon but in another island called Giri. Thus it is also illogical apart from other reasons to consider that Vijaya met with yakkhinis on his arrival.

There is also a further objection to any inference that Vijaya married a princess of Pandya. There is no certainty as to where southern Madhura lay. It is true that Geiger took the view that it was the Madhura of Pandya. If the story of Vijaya's union with princess of Madhura is a much later account than the rest of the story, Geiger may be correct. In the *Mahavamsa* account it is stated that the Vanga king had as his queen a princess of Kalinga, the neighbouring kingdom. It may be assumed that Vijaya was similarly made to marry a princess of neighbouring Pandya.

But if the story was early, Geiger may not be correct. In the Ghata Jataka[2] there is a reference to a northern Madhura but there is no indication in the *Jataka* book where southern Madhura lay. It is not likely to have been in southern India as this region rarely comes within its purview. Further the craftsmen and a thousand families of the eighteen guilds who accompanied the princess are associated in the *Jataka* book with Kasi in India.

If the other traditions in the early Pali chronicles of Ceylon are also taken into account it will be seen that the Tamil kingdoms hardly come into the picture. There is no reference anywhere in

2. See page 66

the *Dipavamsa* to Chola, Chera or Pandya. None of the Buddhist missions, according to the chronicles was sent to any of these kingdoms though Asoka's inscriptions mention Chola, Chera, and Pandya as places where he sent envoys. As in the *Jataka* book the Pandus are associated with North India. It is from Sihapura in Lala that Panduvasudeva came to succeed Vijaya. It is also from North India that Bhaddakaccana, the daughter of Sakka Pandu, came to Ceylon. In the *Mahavamsa* too there is no reference to Pandya. Chola is mentioned only once and that is with reference to a later king, Elara.

A. M. Hocart gives an explanation for the additions of the story of the rejection of Kuveni and of the story of Vijaya's marriage with a Pandu princess. He says it could have originated from the need of a consort of equal birth for purposes of the story of Vijaya's consecration. This explanation seems to be correct as the *Mahavamsa* states in another place that Panduvasudeva could not be consecrated king till he had a (ksatriya) consort. If this is accepted the addition in the *Mahavamsa* that Sihabahu's mother was a princess of Kalinga could be accounted for in the same way.

Another inference made was that the Sinhalas were of totemistic origin. This too is without an adequate foundation. There is undoubtedly enough evidence to show that there were in India and Ceylon tribes which bore the names of animals and birds. The *Mahavamsa* and the *Culavamsa* mention Lambakanna, Moriya, Tarachcha, Bahbhojaka and Kulinga. Geiger thought that the Sihalas too were some such tribe and that all these were totemistic. Apart from the Vijaya legend there is no reference in the ancient Pali chronicles to a tribe called the Sihalas. Is not the evidence then inadequate to infer that the Sihalas had a totemistic origin when all the available evidence seems to prove that they derived their name from the island?

It is now left to examine the legend further and see how it developed. To do this one has to go back to the Ceylon of the first century B.C. and examine the social conditions of the time, the type of knowledge the bhikkhus possessed, and the sources of information that were available to them for the construction of this story.

Buddhism, as stated already, came to Ceylon about the middle of the third century B.C. The Buddhist bhikkhus, unlike the early Aryan settlers, kept contact with those of their Order in India and knew something of the geography of India and of the peoples that inhabited it. They had also the Pali Canon at their disposal. It had already been pointed out that the authors of the *Dipavamsa* were strongly influenced by the language and the ideas of the *Jataka* book. This work provided a mine of information on which any writers of stories could have drawn for ideas, material, and models to develop any stories of their own. The story in question had to explain how the island came to be called Sihala, from which part of India the people, who gave the name, came, why they left India, what route they took to come to Ceylon and where they landed in this Island.

The *Dipavamsa*, as stated already, contains the oldest form of the legend. It refers to the union of the princess of Vanga with a lion, the birth of the two children, Sihabahu and Sivali from this union, the departure of Sihabahu at the age of sixteen with his mother and sister from the cave, his founding the city of Sihapura in Lala, the birth of Vijaya and Sumitta and thirty other sons, the expulsion of Vijaya and his followers by Sihabahu from his kingdom owing to their cruel deeds, their landings at Supparaka and Bharukaccha, their expulsion from these ports owing to their misbehaviour, their arrival in Lanka, the origin of the name Tambapanni and the colonisation of Lanka.

This story appears from its form to be a summary to help the memory. It is so short that it is difficult to be certain whether in general it was in harmony with the *Mahavamsa* story. One fact, however, is clear. It did not conform to the *Mahavamsa* story in some details and did not include, as stated already, a story of a meeting of Vijaya with Kuveni and of Vijaya's marriage with a Pandu princess. It probably did not include also the story of the marriage of the princess of Vanga with her maternal cousin, the depredations of the lion, and the killing of the lion by Sihabahu.

It is probable that the stories of the union of the princess with the lion, the birth of the children and the departure from the cave, were developed with ideas and details from the Padakusalamanava Jataka (432) where there is a reference to a caravan that travelled from the eastern to the western border, a cave, and the birth of a son from a union of a brahmin and a yakkhini.[3] The *Dipavamsa* improves on this prose version of the Jataka by referring to Vanga on the east and Lala on the west instead of the eastern and the western border. The mention of these two countries shows further that the knowledge of the bhikkhus went beyond the Pali Canon where neither of these places is mentioned.

The establishing of cities is also a common feature in the *Jataka* book. For instance in the Cetiya Jataka (422) a brahmin tells the third prince, "You leave by the west gate and go straight on till you see a maned lion; that will be the sign that you are to lay out a city there and dwell in it; and it shall be called Sihapura." This story may have suggested the founding of Sihapura by Sihabahu.

The reason why Vijaya and his followers had to leave India may have been suggested by the Ghata Jataka (454) where the king's nephews roused the anger of the people by deeds similar to those which Vijaya and his followers committed.[4] The taking

3. See page 40
4. See page 66

of the western route by Vijaya may also have been due to the influence of the *Jataka* book. According to the Sussondi Jataka (360) Sagga, the minstrel of the King of Benares, travels from Benares to Bharukaccha and taking a ship going to Suvannabhumi (Further India) is shipwrecked, and lands in Nagadipa.

The *Dipavamsa* accounts finally end with a fanciful explanation of the name of Tambapanni. Tambapanni may mean that which has the copper-coloured leaf, but *panni* (Skt. *parni*) cannot be derived from *pani* which means hand. It has been stated already that the *Dipavamsa* account originates in an attempt to explain the name Sihala. It ends with another aetiological myth to explain the name Tambapanni which is much older.

The *Mahavamsa* account is much fuller and includes additional episodes and details. It alters, in some respects, the *Dipavamsa* account. It confirms the view that the composers of the Vijaya legend undoubtedly lived in the world of the *Jataka* tales.

The *Mahavamsa* story of the princess and the lion provides clearer evidence of the influence of the Padakusalamanava Jataka.[5] In it the place of the yakkhini is taken by the lion and that of the brahmin by the princess. The new elements in the story, the depredations of the lion and the killing of it by Sihabahu, have some features in common with the Sutana Jataka (398). The story of the plundering of Vijaya shows more clearly its closeness to the Ghata Jataka.

The union of Sihabahu and Sihasivali, and the birth of thirty-two sons to them may have been suggested by the *Dhammapada* commentary or the story of the Sakyas where there is a reference to the birth of twin children sixteen times and where the Sakya princes are said to have married their sisters to keep up the purity of the race. The possibility of human offspring as a result of unions

5. See page 40

between human beings and animals or supernatural beings may have been suggested also by similar examples in the *Jataka* book.

The story of Kuveni is clearly indebted to the Valahassa Jataka (196) which seems to have influenced also the story of Sinhala in the *Divyavadana*.[6] The similarity in details is too great for one to be independent of the other. The dog as a sign of the existence of a village, the consumption of rice and other food, shipwrecked traders devoured by yakkhinis, and the city of Sirisavatthu are all referred to in the Jataka. The story of the treatment of Vijaya's followers by Kuveni may have been suggested by the Devadhamma Jataka (6).[7] According to it the Bodhisatta asked in turn his two brothers to go to a certain pool, drink, bathe and bring some water in a lotus leaf. They in turn were seized by a rakkhasa or yakkha, hauled into the depths of the water, and imprisoned. Then when the Bodhisatta himself went there they were restored.

It may be that most of the additions were made to adorn the tale. One addition, however, seems to have been made to point a moral. It is said that Sihabahu failed to kill his father, the lion, as long as the lion had a feeling of tenderness for him. This story appears to have been developed to illustrate what is said in the *Dhammapada* in the section dealing with anger.

CONCLUSION

The University *History of Ceylon* Vol. I Part I Book I Chapter VII deals with the Vijaya and the Pandukabhaya traditions. The author of this chapter believes that a search has to be made for the truth behind these legends. He thinks some elements of truth about the past could have percolated through these traditions and it is the duty of the historian to unravel them. "A common procedure," he says, "is to reject the miraculous and the improbable, and to

6. See page 37
7. See page 41

accept the rest as the authentic history of the Island. But this alone is not sufficient because that which is plausible may not have taken place." C. W. Nicholas in *A Concise History of Ceylon* agrees with him. According to him the early chapters of the *Mahavamsa* contain "much that is fabulous and unreal but the elimination of myth, magic and miracle from the work will not leave a residue of history".

One way to test the historicity of the residue is to examine the validity of its sources. After examining the traditions about Vijaya the author of Chapter VII comes to the conclusion that they contain three germs of truth: (1) It is possible the nucleus of the tradition of Sihabahu and his mother goes back to the totemistic origin of the Sihalas. (2) Lanka was colonised from Jambudvipa. Of the immigrants the most lasting impression was made by the Sihalas. (3) The yakkhas refer to the earliest inhabitants.

These three inferences in Chapter VII have been examined in this section There is no satisfactory evidence to establish that any section of the early Aryan settlers bore the name Sihala, that the name Sihala is of totemistic origin, and that the term yakkha in the Pali chronicles referred to the aborigines.

Thus the Vijaya legend, according to evidence available, is not a historical account. It does not provide a clue to the origin of the name Sihala, or how, when, whence and why and along what route the first Aryan settlers came to the island. Its value lies in the fact that it is a literary work, an epic poem, a product of the mind, and not the story of the first Aryan settlement as it actually took place. It has a religious value, especially on account of its connection with Buddhism. Its historical value is that of any epic. It is written to account for Ceylon being called Sihala. It gives an insight into the ideas and beliefs held by the people of Ceylon at the time the story came into existence, into their political, econo-

mic and social environment, into the knowledge of the geography of India they possessed and into the literary works with which they were acquainted.

2. PANDUKABHAYA

The Pandukabhaya legend and the legends of Panduvasudeva and Abhaya, related in the *Dipavamsa* and the *Mahavamsa*, seem to belong to a second cycle of legends and they seem to be no more historical than the Vijaya legend.

The Pandukabhaya legend too seems to have been developed some centuries after the fourth century B.C. There is no evidence that any records were kept before the introduction of Buddhism. The account of Pandukabhaya in the *Dipavamsa* seems to be no earlier than that of the legend of Vijaya in it which seems to have been developed about the first century B.C. The account of Pandukabhaya in the *Mahavamsa*, like the Vijaya legend, may not even be earlier than the first century A.D. If the Nighanta Giri mentioned in the description of Anuradhapura in the *Mahavamsa* is the same as the one referred to in the account of Vattagamani Abhaya, the story is clearly not earlier than the first century B.C. If the Yonas referred to are Greek traders, the description may not be earlier that the first century A.D., as Greek traders do not seem to have come to Ceylon before that time. If the reference to the marking of the village boundaries by Pandukabhaya indicates what had been established for administrative or revenue purposes up to the time the story came into existence, it is not likely to be much earlier. Further the Pandukabhaya legend in the *Mahavamsa* shows the influence of Krishna legends of which no signs are found in the Vijaya legend, and, therefore, could be even later. Thus it seems to be an account without any historical features prior to the first century B.C.

The Pandukabhaya legend seems to be unhistorical also because it contains as many or more mythical features. As in

fairy stories it repeats numbers like seven, twelve and sixteen and gives other popular numbers. Panduvasudeva comes to Upatissagama on the seventh day. Sakka Pandu has seven sons. Bhaddakaccana is wooed by seven kings. Pandukabhaya escapes death for the first time at the age of seven. He occupies the Aritthapabbata for seven years. His second escape is at the age of twelve and he goes to to stay with the Brahmin Pandula at the age of sixteen. Near the Kasapabbata he gathers seven hundred followers, the same number that followed Vijaya to Ceylon. As in the Vijaya legend the number thirty-two recurs. Bhaddakaccana comes with thirty-two followers who marry the thirty-two ministers of Panduvasudeva. The king of Vanga offers a thousand pieces of money to whoever kills the lion and Abhaya offers a thousand pieces to Pandukabhaya to induce him to keep to the land on the other side of the river.

Further, as in the Vijaya legend, soothsayers play a part. They assure the success of the journeys of both Panduvasudeva and Bhaddakaccana and predict that they would be king and queen respectively. Like Vijaya they are both protected by supernatural beings. The leaves in the hands of Suvannapali, as in the case of Sihabahu, Sihasivali and their mother, turn into vessels of gold.

THE DIPAVAMSA ACCOUNT

The account in the *Dipavamsa*, like the Vijaya legend in the same work, is fragmentary and perhaps only served to help those who narrated the story to recall it. According to it Panduvasa married Kaccana, the daughter of Pandusakka, who came from India. Ten sons and one daughter were born to them. The eldest of them was Abhaya and the youngest was the daughter Citta who was called Ummadacitta. Panduvasa came to Upatissagama in the year of his coronation and reigned for full thirty years. After that Abhaya reigned from the same place for twenty years. Gamani,

the son of one of Kaccana's brothers, formed a union with Citta, and from this union Panduka was born. Panduka to guard himself lived at Dovarikamandala. He was born in the year Abhaya became king. On his twentieth year he became a rebel. When he reached his thirty-seventh year he killed seven of his maternal uncles and became king in the town of Anuradhapura. In the tenth year of his reign he established the boundaries of the villages and ruled for seventy years over men and yakkhas.

The *Dipavamsa* narrative not merely lacks the embellishments of the *Mahavamsa* account but also makes no reference to some of its episodes. Just as in the story of Vijaya, no mention is made of his union with a princess of Madhura, so here no mention is made of the marriage of Pandukabhaya to Suvannapali. There are also a number of minor differences. While the *Mahavamsa* calls the hero Pandukabhaya the *Dipavamsa* merely calls him Panduka or Pakundaka which may mean no more than one of the Pandus. This name hence may apply to Krishna. Krishna's father was Vasudeva while in the *Mahavamsa* Pandukabhaya's grandfather is Panduvasudeva. The *Dipavamsa* also does not mention any of the places in which battles were fought or those occupied by Pandukabhaya. The only place it mentions is Dovarikamandala which according to the *Mahavamsa* xxiii. 23 was near Mihintale.

THE SOURCES OF THE LEGEND

The authors of this second cycle of legends too seem to have developed their stories mainly with the help of the Jatakas. *Jataka* influence is apparent both in the main narrative and in the details of the stories. These stories also show the influence of the Pali commentaries and, in the *Mahavamsa* accounts, as stated already, of Krishna legends. It is possible that at the time the Pandukabhaya legend came into existence the descent of Sinhalese kings was traced both to the Sakyas and the Pandavas or that in the stories themselves an attempt was made to give such a descent.

The story of Panduvasudeva and Pandukabhaya, apart from a few names, clearly shows the influence of the Ghata Jataka (454). According to this Jataka, Mahakamsa, the ruler of Uttarapatha, had two sons Kamsa and Upakamsa and one daughter named Devagabbha. On her birth it was foretold by the brahmins that a son born to her would one day destroy the country and the lineage of Kamsa. After the death of Mahakamsa his two sons wished to kill the sister, but finally they decided not to give her in marriage. Causing a building to be erected on one pillar they made her lodge there, and Andhakavenu watched her and his wife Nandagopa served her.

Upasagara of northern Madhura came to stay with his friend Upakamsa. With the help of Nandagopa he got into touch with Devagabbha, and as a result of their union she conceived. When the two brothers heard of this they did not object to the union but decided if a son was born to her to kill him. The first child was a daughter and after that ten sons were born. Each of these sons were exchanged in turn for a daughter of Nandagopa. The eldest of them was Vasudeva.

These sons when they grew up went about plundering. The people complained, and, each time, the King rebuked Andhakavenu, who finally revealed that they were not his sons. Later these ten sons killed their uncles and assumed sovereignty. Then they proceeded to conquer the whole of India and came to Dvaravati. This city had the sea on one side and mountains on the other. It could not be captured, because, whenever enemies approached, a yakkha who kept watch took the form of an ass and brayed. Then the whole city rose in the air and deposited itself on an island in the middle of the sea. When the enemy were gone it returned. But following the advice of the ass the ten brothers suceeded in capturing the city. After this they conquered the whole of India and lived at Dvaravati dividing the kingdom into ten shares.

The *Dipavamsa* account, apart from names and years, hardly goes beyond the details of the Jataka, and the story originally could have been closer to it. The similarities in the accounts in the *Mahavamsa* and the Jataka are too close for the resemblances to be accidental. The story of Citta and Dighagamani, the prophecy of the brahmins, the nature of the buildings in which Citta was lodged, the part played by the female attendant, the exchange of children, the name Vasudeva, the ten sons, the acts of plunder, the yakkhini who takes the form of a mare, and the war against the uncles in the *Mahavamsa*, are all reminiscent of the Jataka. Thus it is clear that the legend is not based on actual events but on the Jataka.

This Jataka itself can be traced to Krishna legends. The *Mahavamsa* account shows that other Krishna legends too were known in Ceylon. The attempts to kill Pandukabhaya by putting to death all the young children of the place and later by the killing of shepherds are all reminiscent of Krishna. Kamsa ordered the killing of all children who did wonderful deeds in order that Krishna might be killed, and it is said that Krishna along with his brother Rama lived with herdsmen to escape being killed by Kamsa. Ideas from other Jatakas too seem to have contributed to the growth of the story. According to the *Mahavamsa* Sumitta married the daughter of the Madda king. According to the Kalinga Bodhi Jataka (479) Prince Kalinga married the daughter of the Madda king. In the Kusa Jataka (531) the ministers went in search of a wife for Prince Kusa to the Kingdom of the Maddas. In the *Mahavamsa* Pandukabhaya is educated with his later purohita. The education of a prince along with a son of a brahmin, who is later made his purohita, is a feature in the Cetiya Jataka.

The account of Pandukabhaya's campaign seems to have been influenced also by the Mahajanaka Jataka (539). According to it Polajanaka, when he fell out with his brother, went out to a frontier

village, took up his abode there, made himself master of the frontier district, and finally with a large host attacked his brother and defeated him.

According to the same Jataka the queen who was with child put her treasures in a basket and escaped. On her way Sakka met her and took her in a carriage. Inside the carriage she found a cloak and a cake. This is reminiscent of the story of the serving woman who took Pandukabhaya in a basket, and when she was questioned by the uncles said she had in it a cake for her daughter.

Still other ideas from Jatakas could have influenced the story of Pandukabhaya in the *Mahavamsa*. Pandukabhaya is said to have seized Cetiya by the tail and grasped a palm leaf. In the Ayoghara Jataka (510) a yakkha is said to fear a palm leaf. According to the *Mahavamsa* on festival days Pandukabhaya sat with Cittaraja beside him on a seat of equal height and having gods and men to dance before him took his pleasure. According to the Kurudhamma Jataka (276) "every third year in the month of Kattika the kings used to hold a festival called the Kattika Feast. Then the kings used to deck themselves out in great magnificence, and dress up like gods; they stood up in the presence of a yakkha named Cittaraja, the king of many colours, and they would shoot to the four points of the compass arrows wreathed in flowers, and painted in diverse colours. This king then, in keeping the feast, stood on the bank of a lake in the presence of Cittaraja and shot arrows to the four quarters."

The story of Cetiya is similar in many respects to the imaginary account of Kuveni. Both Kuveni and Cetiya lived near a pond. Both when threatened with death offered to secure a kingdom. In the Ghata Jataka which seems to be the basis of the story of Pandukabhaya it is an ass, as stated already, that helps, and not a mare. The change was perhaps due to the influence of the Padakusalamanava Jataka. According to it the queen of Brahmadatta

of Benares was born as a yakkhini with a face like that of a horse. She dwelt in a cave in a vast forest at the foot of a mountain and used to catch and devour men who went from the eastern to the western border.

The story of Bhaddakaccana too seems to lack any historicity. Sakka Amitodana is not mentioned in the Pali Canon, and is referred to only in the Pali commentaries. According to them he was the son of Sihabahu and Kaccana and the father of Ananda, Mahanama and Anuruddha. There is no mention anywhere of a son called Sakka Pandu.

It is possible that many of these stories arose around places like Dvaramandala, Lohitvahakanda and places and objects of worship that existed in the first century A.D. In *Mahavamsa* xxxvii. 44 King Mahasena is said to have built a thupa at the place of the Yakkha Kalavela where there was probably a shrine for him. It is possible there was a shrine for Cittaraja at the lower end of Abhayavava. The yakkhini with a horse's face seems to have been worshipped within the royal precincts while another had a shrine at the south gate of the city.

CONCLUSION

The author of Chapter VII of the University *History of Ceylon* Volume I Part I Book I in dealing with the Pandukabhaya traditions says there are many similarities between this legend, the Jataka and the Epic and Puranic stories and these can be rejected as borrowings. But he seems to accept some parts of the rest as based on fact. For instance he seems to take for granted that Pandukabhaya is a historical person. "It is natural," he says, "especially in the historical traditions of the remote past that the ancestry, birth and early life of a hero should be clouded in legend and carry little historical value. But the reasons why such stories

gathered round him is because he may indeed have been a person who appeared to his contemporaries as a hero. Thus there is usually some historical basis for such tradition."

There is no doubt that the ancestry, birth and early traditions of many a hero is clouded in legend and bear little historical value. But it does not follow that characters who possess a legendary ancestry, birth and early life are necessarily historical persons. The author of Chapter VII adds that Pandukabhaya is the hero of the early part of the *Mahavamsa* much in the same way as Dutthagamani is the hero of a later section. This is undoubtedly true. But though there is enough evidence to prove that Dutthagamani is a historical person there is no evidence to prove that Pandukabhaya is one such.

Finally the author of Chapter VII concludes that the war Pandukabhaya waged to win the kingdom and the foundation of Anuradhapura constitute the core of the historical tradition and that the tradition that it was Pandukabhaya who first made Anuradhapura a capital city is very strong.

The story of the war in the *Mahavamsa* undoubtedly appears to be a realistic account. But the story of the war against the uncles is mentioned in the Jataka. The story of the strategy of the war could have been derived from the Mahajanaka Jataka. Hence the war could be taken as a borrowing as much as the rest of the story. It is true the topographical details are accurate. This is not surprising as any persons developing a story are not likely to make mistakes with regard to its geographical setting with which they are familiar. Further the topographical details are not in the *Dipavamsa* and may have been added later. The author of Chapter VII himself admits that they could have been a later addition. Hence the accuracy of the topographical details is no evidence in favour of its historicity.

According to early legends, Anuradhapura seems to have been the capital city at the time Buddhism was introduced to Ceylon. But before its foundation is attributed to Pandukabhaya it must be established that the kings prior to Devanampiya Tissa are historical persons. Pandukabhaya himself is a part of the Krishna legends. The *Dipavamsa*, as stated already, calls him only Panduka and he may be no more than one of the Pandus. Further are there not numerous examples of stories that gathered round unhistorical persons whom later generations considered as historical?

Thus Pandukabhaya seems to be no more a historical person than Vijaya, and, like Vijaya, seems to have been included to fill the gap in the list of kings from the *Parinibbana* of the Buddha to Devanampiya Tissa.

IV

HISTORY AND RELIGION

1. THE VISITS OF THE BUDDHA

A statement that the visits of the Buddha were not historically true led to an acrimonious controversy a few years ago. The resentment aroused by it is understandable. Many Buddhists found it difficult to agree with a verdict against a tradition accepted for over two thousand years. Some asked why they should doubt a statement in the Pali Commentaries, in the *Dipavamsa* and the *Mahavamsa.*

VIEWS OF BUDDHIST SCHOLARS

One way to decide this question is to examine what other Buddhist scholars who dealt with these visits have said in their historical accounts. D. B. (Sir Baron) Jayatilaka writing in *The Buddhist* of first October 1921 stated: "What truth underlies the graphic accounts we have of these alleged visits, it is impossible now to determine. The Pitakas are silent on the point. The Master's activities during the first few years of his public ministry are recorded in the scriptures with a fair degree of fulness. But they contain no reference to any visit to Ceylon. The religious enthusiasm of the early converts and in no less degree their national sentiments doubtless co-operated in producing a belief which associated the founder of their new faith with the dawn of history in their island home and made it for ever sacred to them by the hallowed touch of the Master's feet."

Some years later in his history of *Pali Literature in Ceylon* Dr. G. P. Malalasekera repeated, though in different words, what

Sir Baron said earlier: "It is a significant fact that the Pali Canon itself which gives a fairly complete account of the Teacher's doings during the first few years of his ministry, does not make any mention of a visit to Ceylon. We may, therefore, be justified in concluding that the story first gained currency soon after the official introduction of Buddhism into Ceylon owing to the religious enthusiasm of the early converts and their national sentiment which co-operated in producing a belief associating the founder of their new faith with the dawn of history in their island home which was thus made for ever sacred to them by the touch of the Master's feet."

But why did Sir Baron and Dr. Malalasekera argue from silence in the Pali Canon and ignore what is said in the commentarial literature? Probably because, if they accepted what is said in the commentarial literature, they would have had to answer further questions. Were the Pali commentaries developed in India or in Ceylon? Were the references to the visits added here or in India? If it was an Indian tradition why was it not included in the Pali Canon? If it is a Ceylon tradition who gave the writers of these commentaries the information? According to the same sources the Aryan settlers were not here at the time of the visits. The yakkhas and nagas were not human beings.

But many Buddhists who accept the visits of the Buddha on the authority of the commentaries are intelligent men. They know only too well that the Buddha himself advised his followers not to believe what is not reasonable. Therefore they must have some good reason to believe that these visits actually took place.

GROUNDS FOR BELIEF IN THE VISITS

Perhaps it may help us to understand why they do so if we take into account that beliefs in such visits are not peculiar to Ceylon or to Buddhism. Other countries, not mentioned in the Pali Canon as visited by the Buddha in his life-time, claim similar visits. According to Sarvastivadin works the Buddha visited Kashmir

and subdued a naga of great power, and according to a Burmese Buddhist work the Buddha visited Burma too. It was once believed that Christ visited England and it is said that this belief still persists as an article of faith among a small religious organization. It is also said that it was this belief that inspired Francis Thompson to write the beautiful poem entitled *The Kingdom of God.*

There are also other Christian beliefs, which, according to historians, have little or no historical evidence to support them. But Christians do not abandon them on that account. On the other hand if these beliefs are assailed, they too rush into controversy in their defence, determined to prove they are true.

What can we infer from all this? Is it not that religious inferences need not depend on historical evidence, and that historical fact and religious truth fundamentally differ? The historian's object is to reconstruct the past as it really was, and in collecting his material the question he continuously asks is "Did this happen?" By this process he eliminates myth and legend which do not conform to his requirements, and takes them into account only when he wants to find out the customs, ideas and beliefs of the time in which these stories arose. Even a Buddhist writer of history will have to observe the canons of historical criticism to get at this special aspect of truth. This Sir Baron and Dr. Malalasekera did.

But men interested in religion seek another aspect of truth and to realise this they ask other questions. They do not use the methods and techniques of historians for their purposes but adopt other methods and other techniques that suit their special study. Religious truths do not necessarily derive their validity from historical events or other historical evidence. Religious enthusiasm and national sentiment may contribute to their growth, but they, generally arise from religious experiences and from or as a result of other religious beliefs.

The Buddha, according to Buddhist beliefs, possessed supernormal powers. He could foresee the future. He could move from place to place through the air. He could subdue yakkhas and nagas. Therefore would it not be reasonable to infer that he visited this island and made conditions in it favourable for a human settlement to enable the establishment of his religion? Is it surprising then that he sanctified in advance the spots where his shrines were to arise?

The accounts of the visits arose as religious stories. They were esteemed by the faithful not for any historical significance but on account of their spiritual value. They conveyed to them the greatness, the power, and the compassion of the Buddha. As a Pali commentary says when they listened to these stories they felt a serene joy in their hearts.

The historian and the religious man approach these stories with different objects and come to different conclusions. One examines them to see whether they record actual events to make use of them for his purpose. The other examines them to see what spiritual truths they impart and what benefit he can derive from them.

2. THE MAHAVAMSA

Ceylon is undoubtedly fortunate in possessing a chronicle like the *Mahavamsa*. It compares well with chronicles written about the same time in France and England, and has no rival in any part of India. The *Mahavamsa* gives a continuous chronological narrative of Ceylon from its early beginnings up to the end of the third century A.D. It is true that, in the first part of the *Mahavamsa*, the stories of the earliest kings like Vijaya and Pandukabhaya are entirely legendary. It is true that though it begins to shape into a history with the introduction of Buddhism it still continues to relate many legends and stories of little historical value. Though it is on the whole reliable from the first century B.C.

it contains far too few details for the writing of a history to satisfy modern requirements. But it is a matter for gratitude that a Buddhist bhikkhu in the sixth century A.D. attempted even such a history as this, for few countries are blessed with a source-book of such antiquity and value for its beginnings.

When the *Mahavamsa* was written, the writing of history in Ceylon was in the hands of bhikkhus, and they could not have written a work beyond the levels of their knowledge. They were men engaged in the study and teaching of Buddhism, and whatever they wrote had to depend on the knowledge they possessed and what was useful to them and their work in the spread of Buddhism.

AIM AND CONTENTS

Hence the author of the *Mahavamsa* composed his work, as some who deal with literature do, to rouse a definite set of emotions. He wrote to rouse faith (pasada) and religious emotion (samvega) in his readers. He also wanted to teach moral lessons. In dealing with Elara he says that though Elara did not put aside false beliefs, he gained miraculous power by freeing himself from the guilt of walking in the path of evil. Then how much more, he asks, should one established in pure belief renounce the guilt of walking in the path of evil? Being a Theravada bhikkhu he gave an account of the history of Theravada Buddhism in India and Ceylon and what kings did for its development. All this he placed in a chronological framework as was then done in histories, making use of a chronology constructed by his predecessors by adding the reigns of kings. Incidentally he gave some details of what kings did in maintaining custom and order, subduing rebellions and expelling foreign invaders. Naturally he hardly dealt with economic development as such or with buildings other than of a religious nature. Nor did he show any concern about techniques and tools of architecture, sculpture and painting or technological processes

by which reservoirs and canals were constructed. These to him possessed not one of the permanent values possessed by matters of religion.

The author of the *Mahavamsa* as a bhikkhu had also his own ideas as to how a history should be written and of what material it should consist. In the first chapter he dealt with the visits which the Buddha made to create in Ceylon the conditions favourable for the spread of his religion. In the second chapter he gave the lineage of the Buddha. In the next three chapters he gave an account of the three Buddhist Councils in India which approved the *Vinaya* and the *Dhamma* of the Pali Canon. In chapters six to eleven he dealt with Ceylon history: chapters six and seven with Vijaya, eight, nine and ten with his successors, Panduvasudeva, Abhaya and Pandukabhaya, and eleven with Devanampiya Tissa in whose reign Buddhism was introduced into Ceylon. In chapters twelve to twenty he dealt again with Buddhism: twelve with the converting of the different countries and thirteen to twenty with the coming of Mahinda, his entry into the capital, his acceptance of the Mahavihara, his acceptance of the Cetiyapabbala Vihara, the arrival of the Relics, the receiving of the great Bodhi tree by Asoka, the coming of the Bodhi tree, and the *Nibbana* of Mahinda and of Sanghamitta.

In chapters twenty-one to thirty-seven he dealt with kings. Apart from Dutthagamani and Mahasena he grouped them numerically—Five, Ten, Eleven, Twelve and Thirteen Kings. Of these seventeen chapters, eleven dealt with Dutthagamani: chapter twenty-two with the birth of Gamani, twenty-three with the levying of the Warriors, twenty-four with the war of the two brothers, twenty-five with victory of Dutthagamani over Elara, twenty-six and twenty-seven with the building of the Maricavatti Vihara and of the Lohapasada, twenty-eight to thirty-one with the building of the Mahathupa and thirty-two with Dutthagamani's

entrance to Tusita Heaven. In short, of these thirty-seven chapters, twenty-one dealt with Buddhism and the remaining sixteen with what kings did for Ceylon.

DUTTHAGAMANI

The author of the *Mahavamsa* dealt with Dutthagamani much more fully due as much to religious as to historical reasons. Dutthagamani it is true expelled the Tamils from the northern plain and brought Ceylon under one sovereignty. But even this political action is valued highly because it enabled Buddhism to flourish once more in Ceylon. Dutthagamani further built the Lohapasada, the uposatha house, and the Mahathupa, the dagoba of the Mahavihara, which was the greatest centre of Theravada Buddhism till the end of the tenth century A.D. In addition he exemplified by his own actions the values and virtues of Buddhism. He treated with chivalry the dead body of his enemy, the Tamil Elara. The *Mahavamsa* says: "When he had thus been victorious in battle and united Lanka under one canopy, he marched into the capital with chariots, troops and beasts for riders. In the city he caused the drum to be beaten, and when he had summoned the people from a yojana around he celebrated the funeral rites for Elara. On the spot where his body had fallen he burnt it with the cita-falque, and there did he build a monument and ordain worship. And even to this day the princes of Lanka, when they draw near to this place, are wont to silence their music because of this worship."

Further Dutthagamani, though he won a great victory, did not take pride in it or in the majesty to which he had raised himself. He showed concern like the Emperor Asoka about the destruction of innumerable human beings caused by the war. The *Mahavamsa* says: "Sitting then on the terrace of the royal palace, adorned, lighted with fragrant lamps and filled with many a perfume, magnificent with dancing girls who appeared like nymphs, while he rested on his soft and fair couch, covered with costly draperies,

he looking back upon his glorious victory, great though it was, knew no joy, remembering that thereby was wrought the destruction of millions of beings."

MODERN HISTORY

Such an account, however valuable, cannot be a history of any country in any modern sense. Nor can it be reconstituted, as many writers have done, by omitting what is not historical fact, by modifying what is partially factual, and by adding what has been omitted. This could have been done if history was merely a description of the past as it really was and of what actually happened. But a modern history is much more. Its object is different. It attempts to trace the history of a country from its early beginnings to what it has come to be today. Its contents differ. It deals with political, economic and social history. It answers questions different, for instance, from those the author of the *Mahavamsa* asked. The author of the *Mahavamsa* seems to have asked the question, what lessons of permanent value can be learnt from these doings of rulers, chiefs and craftsmen, and attached importance to them accordingly. A modern historian of Ceylon asks the question, how did kings and chiefs manage their affairs two thousand years ago in the political, economic and social sphere, and how have they come to do things differently afterwards. The answer to the second question cannot be based on the facts supplied to answer the first. Hence the construction of a modern history has to be started anew from the beginning with the collection of facts on a new basis. The valuable historical evidence, direct and indirect, in the *Mahavamsa* will be first collected. To this other evidence from other works like the *Dipavamsa* will be added. Then other evidence from inscriptions and auxiliary sciences like geography, archaeology, ethnology and philology will be included. From all this evidence happenings which led to change or which

explained the causes for changes in the political, the economic and the social system will be selected and the course of history reconstructed.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

To give one illustration. The *Mahavamsa* gives the barest evidence with regard to developments in irrigation and agriculture. It mentions some tanks and canals and the names of the builders of some of them. Of the greatest tank-builder of the period, Mahasena, it merely gives the names of the sixteen tanks and the canal he constructed and infers he gained merit on that account. This is far too meagre and unsatisfactory for an account of economic developments in a modern history, and more evidence, if available, will have to be collected.

An insight into the value attached to them can be derived from the *Culavamsa* though it deals with a later period. It gives some evidence of what the laity in ancient times thought of these tanks and canals. There is a story, the only story recorded in connection with a tank in the Pali chronicles, in reference to the huge reservoir, the Kalavava, built by Dhatusena in the fifth century A.D. It states that Kasyapa after depriving his father, Dhatusena, of his kingdom ordered him to reveal to him where his treasures lay. Dhatusena replied that he would let him know if he was allowed to go to the Kalavava. When he was taken there, he plunged into the tank, bathed and drank its water. Then he said to the King's followers, "This here, my friends, constitutes my whole wealth."

This tank which Dhatusena considered his treasure was no doubt treasured also by the people of those days for the services it rendered them. The construction of the Kalavava led to the development of the region to the north of Sigiriya. It enabled Kasyapa to utilise the resources of this area and reign from this rock fortress. It also enabled Anuradhapura to obtain a regular supply of water through the Jaya Ganga which connected it to

the Tisavava. Similarly the tanks and canals built up to the end of the reign of Mahasena must have served the people in various ways.

The *Culavamsa* in its account of Parakramabahu the Great too gives further insight into the value attached to these irrigation works by the people of old. It shows for instance how keen Parakramabahu was when he was ruler of Mayarata to store even rain water. According to the Chronicler Parakramabahu is said to have addressed his officials thus: "In the realm that is subject to me, apart from any strips of country where the harvest flourishes mainly by rain water, there are but few fields which are dependent on rivers with permanent flow or on great reservoirs. Also my kingdom is much straitened by many mountains, thick jungle and widespread swamps. Truly in such a country not even a little water that comes from the rain must flow into the ocean without being made useful to man." This reveals further why tanks and canals were built and valued so much.

More information about the ancient irrigation works can be obtained from secondary sources like *Ancient Ceylon* by Henry Parker and *Ancient Irrigation Works in Ceylon* by Dr. R. L. Brohier and from the writings of C. W. Nicholas who attempted to trace their growth from village tanks to huge reservoirs. These works were written by collecting, examining and evaluating information from the chronicles, from inscriptions and innumerable other sources and bringing to bear upon those scattered bits of information insights derived from modern technical knowledge. Even so they did not produce any work which constituted a history of ancient irrigation. But from all these works some idea can be formed of the economic development of Ceylon up to the end of the third century A.D. even if we fail to gain knowledge of some important features of the development of these works and their contribution without which any such history will be incomplete.

It is this network of tanks and canals built during that time that sustained the ancient civilization. It is these that made possible the expansion of agriculture which maintained not only the people engaged in it but also the innumerable officials who maintained peace and order, the craftsmen and labourers who built the tanks and canals, the religious buildings and the palaces, and the Buddhist bhikkhus who maintained and spread their religion and contributed to the civilization and culture of the people. Hence in writing a modern history adequate attention has to be paid to economic developments and what contribution they made to political, economic and social changes.

In the same way evidence for changes in the political and social conditions too has to be collected when a modern history is constructed. This does not mean that Buddhism will be ignored or that its contribution to the growth of the people will be belittled. Under social conditions the history will deal with the introduction of Buddhism, its developments in Ceylon, how it affected politics, economics and social conditions, how it disciplined and civilised people; and in this way it will draw attention to its contribution to the history of Ceylon in general. But all this will be done in a way different from the *Mahavamsa*. The *Mahavamsa* will be examined and evidence collected and the history of Buddhism will be dealt with in the modern way.

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INDEX

CEYLON TODAY & YESTERDAY

This book deals with the main factors in Ceylon history. It gives first an account of Ceylon's relations with South-east Asia and India and then of those with Portugal, Holland and Britain. It analyses next the history of Ceylon from the angle of internal developments, and divides it into three periods.

Finally it deals with the Donoughmore reforms, which granted adult franchise and brought about Ceylon's recent developments as a welfare state; how Sinhala replaced English as the language of government and Buddhism replaced Christianity as the main religion of the country; and how in this process differences arose between Sinhalese and Tamils and Buddhists and Roman Catholics.

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In addition to numerous contributions to learned journals, his works include *The Early History of Ceylon, Ceylon under the British, The Colebrooke-Cameron Papers,* and *Ceylon Today and Yesterday.*

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'Dr G. C. Mendis, my old student, colleague and friend, a pioneer in research, study and writing on the history of Ceylon, and the scholar and teacher who was responsible for getting the subject going in Ceylon University . . .

'Dr G. C. Mendis . . . the first Ceylonese to undertake a scientifically-minded study of his country's history.'

—*S. A. Pakeman, formerly Professor of Modern History, Ceylon University College, in* **Ceylon** (*Nations of the Modern World—Ernest Benn,* 1964).