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RELIGIOUSNESS IN SRI LANKA

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RELIGIOUSNESS
IN
SRI LANKA



Edited by
John Ross Carter



MARGA INSTITUTE
P. O. Box 601
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JOHN ROSS CARTER,
Colgate University.

Colombo, August 1978.

THE
SOUTH
AFRICAN

In the early days of the Republic, the Government was not only responsible for the welfare of the people, but also for the development of the country. It was the duty of the Government to provide for the needs of the people and to ensure that the country was developed in a way that would benefit all the people. The Government was also responsible for the maintenance of law and order and for the protection of the rights of the people. It was the duty of the Government to ensure that the country was governed in a just and equitable manner and that the interests of all the people were protected.

The Government was also responsible for the promotion of the welfare of the people and for the development of the country. It was the duty of the Government to provide for the needs of the people and to ensure that the country was developed in a way that would benefit all the people. The Government was also responsible for the maintenance of law and order and for the protection of the rights of the people.

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JOHN R. ...
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INTRODUCTION

John Ross Carter

Sri Lanka, through a creative capacity to absorb diverse political, economic, societal, and religious patterns, has nurtured a heritage of unique variety. There have been numerous political forms, economic structures, and social transitions in the history of this island country. And the people have tended, until perhaps quite recent times, to interpret those forms, structures, and transitions in the context of religious world-views, world-views that have developed within four great religious traditions: Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, and Christian.

The complex and changing events that formed the course of this remarkable country's history span the gamut of the human saga. People living through this unfolding of history tended to interpret those events that were a part of their lives by drawing upon the concepts, orientations; practices, and aspirations derived from their religious traditions and were enabled, by their creative appropriation of their religious heritages, to find meaning in what was happening. Each religious tradition provided within its world-view a view of the world that was coherent and because persons, through the centuries, chose to develop, and thereby were enabled to develop, a consistency in their lives congruent with the coherency of those world-views. Sri Lanka has been and is today religiously plural.

And Sri Lanka has been religiously plural since the beginning of its recorded history. Even before the first Buddhist missionaries came from India, an extra-civilizational society with its religious patterns was on the scene. Buddhists were not the only persons engaged with religious living to come from India; persons we now call Hindus also made their way to settle and to rear their children in this idyllic country. And Muslims have come, and Christians, too.

Four of the major religious traditions of mankind are present in Sri Lanka, four religious traditions that have shaped civiliza-

tions and sustained cultures that manifest the societal patterns and represent the integrative world-views of the majority of religious persons on this planet.

While the antiquity of each of these religious traditions in Sri Lanka is indeed significant, of primary importance is the religious pluralism that is a part of this country's history and has contributed mightily to the shaping of the contemporary scene, for the beliefs transmitted through each of these long standing religious traditions and the faith of persons passed on and appropriated anew from generation to generation are present today. It is then not the chronology of this varied religious heritage, not the date of arrival of this or that religious institution--as if each were a monolithic giant—that is of fundamental significance, but, rather, that persons in Sri Lanka have been responding religiously to these religious traditions, have been endorsing apprehensions of transcendence and discernments of the value of human life, and have been doing so for centuries.

Events occur, situations change, of course, and interpretations of those events and situations change, too; they vary from person to person, from century to century, from religious community to religious community. It is important to understand the religious interpretations given by persons living in the past to events of history that they witnessed or in which they participated. This is the historian's task. Important also are attempts to understand the religious interpretations given to events in the past by persons living in the history that is unfolding today. Such attempts, it would seem, are incumbent on persons seeking to understand some of the implications of living in a religiously plural society, in a religiously plural world.

The situation in which persons are living today in Sri Lanka is one of change. Change, of course, is built into the historical process *and* into the lives of persons. However, persons in Sri Lanka are met with a rapidity of change that, through its apparently relentlessly increasing pace, might tend to push one toward the borders of bewilderment. Further, this rapid process of change has been stimulated by trends and forces engendered within and extended from a variety of sources other than those that have developed from within the country's pluralistic heritage. This total fluid context manifest today in Sri Lanka has yet to find its meaning told by

those who are familiar with the foundations for meaning that have been passed down through the religious traditions. It seems that the present situation in Sri Lanka represents a time neither conducive for timid thinking nor hospitable for inflexible dogmatism. It is a time that summons the best minds to interpret political, economic, and social developments by applying more than political, economic, and social theories, to provide a conceptual context in which these processes are given purpose fundamentally rooted in the total well-being of persons. It is a time also to begin a process of telling the meaning of religious pluralism by sharing explications of a particular religious tradition, from within a particular religious tradition, that simultaneously are continuous with that religious heritage, faithful to the religious aspirations held by persons in other religious communities, and capable of being endorsed by all, allowing for alternative religious world-views and modes of the religious quest.

Of late, there have been symposia and conferences on themes of religion and peace, religion and race, religion and the legitimation of power, and religion and development, to name but a few. The contributions coming from such efforts are important, but they have yet to take us far enough, staying, as they have, in the realm of social ramifications of religious values. After all, what enduring religious tradition has not spoken in favour of peace, has not stressed the humane issues of brotherhood and the dignity of the human personality, or has opposed human and societal development? Indeed, such social ramifications of religious values are of great significance. But when one speaks of the religious qualities of human life, one is not necessarily speaking of the measurable, or conceivably immeasurable, political, economic, and social ramifications. In dealing with these social ramifications, one tends to work with discipline oriented methods of the social sciences to interpret patterns and processes which do often reflect religious values. But these methods and the relevant selected patterns and processes have been inadequate in elucidating the religiousness of others. In most cases, but significantly not in all, social scientists tend to study other people but write their conclusions for social scientists. The task that is becoming more clearly our responsibility today is to study each other and to make our work known to each other, to study ourselves and to write our conclusions for us. Until we glimpse and begin to understand each other's religiousness, that which underpins motivating religious values, the hope for

concord in a religiously plural society dims. Concord does not require identity or uniformity. There can be concord in variety, harmony of the parts, if we can find it.

History is replete with human foibles; the record is there for all to consult and on this point to agree. Undeniably present in that same history is the remarkable fact that four major religious traditions present in Sri Lanka have enabled persons, by participating in them, by being nurtured through them, by contributing to the creative continuity of those traditions, to create works of art that have endured, to formulate ideas that have summonsed that which is most noble in human behaviour, and to give of themselves through lives of service to others.

Although the works of art, the ideas, and the modes of religious living have differed among these religious traditions, they have nevertheless contributed to the shaping of religious communities. And these manifestations of religious world-views, i.e., art, literature, beliefs, institutions, practices, rites and ritual, community, have contributed monumentally to the appearance in the lives of persons of a quality of life, of religiousness. And because of a reciprocal dynamic that yields a cumulative process between persons and those traditions, the traditions are present today, and that on which the traditions are founded, that to which they point, is present in the minds and hearts of people living in Sri Lanka today.

Part of what religiousness is, part of what it means to be religious, if one reads aright the record left to posterity by those who have preceded us, is to be oriented to transcendence, which orientation provides perspective for the world in which one lives, yields a particular standpoint that enables one to discern the dignity of persons, meaning in events, and coherence in thought.

This orientation to transcendence can be seen in the capacity that persons continue to find in themselves to strive for an ideal not yet fully understood, to reach for that not yet to be grasped; not to cling to an ideal now become an idea, nor to swing an idea, as it were, now become a weapon to manipulate or club others. Although testimonies provided us by persons of the different religious communities have repeated that one confronts an inability here to grasp fully or now to comprehend completely transcendence, they have repeatedly stressed that this ability to strive and to reach forth, itself, yields deep joy and fascination, and does not produce,

as one in other circumstances might surmise, frustration. In discerning in themselves that capacity to reach and in that activity of reaching, persons have found where transcendence begins.

This is a book about religiousness; it is also a book about this quality of life in Sri Lanka. Of studies the most difficult perhaps, this attempt to come to understand ourselves in that dimension of life that we take most seriously cannot be thought to have been completed in the course of mankind's intellectual history or concluded in this book. We are really just beginning this study, both historically, globally, and here in this book.

Mankind has had a religious history and to the degree in which we see ourselves in the generic term 'mankind' that history is our history, on this point it matters little whether one sees oneself as religious. Mankind has had a religious history, it is there, a part of the past, our past, and that history is developing now; it is here, a part of the present, our present. Whether or not one sees oneself as religious in the present setting can, of course, have profound ramifications in one's life and in one's relationship with others. Even were one to suggest that one is not religious, even if clarity about what such suggestion were to entail be established, what religious people do, the decisions they make, their failures and accomplishments, even their day-to-day routines affect one's life, in school, on the cricket pitch, in the tea shop, in the paddy field, and in the bus queue.

On a wider scale in Sri Lanka, Buddhists, Hindus, Christians and Muslims have had and will have their daily lives influenced by the decisions made by persons of different religious communities. This interdependent, intertwined pluralism has at times held firmly in this country's history, and at times it has unravelled in devastating disarray. These strands might be held together by political ideologies—we have seen the sequence, independence, national identity, development—and then again, perhaps not. Conceivably, coming to understand the religiousness of persons of other religious communities might provide a more cohesive bond in this religiously plural context than we might have imagined. A clue is at hand; a trilingual person is possibly more at home in Sri Lanka because he understands what is being said by others in Sinhala, Tamil, and English—and through these linguistic media he, too, can share his thoughts, knowing that he can be understood. Similarly, but on a

more profound level, a person who is capable of discerning the religiousness of Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists can understand dimensions of human living endorsed by his neighbours—and through this discernment he, too can share his thoughts, knowing that he can be understood.

To attain this discernment is not an easy task. The trite statement, 'All religions are the same' is patently not in accord with the facts. The observation, 'All religions are one; they all go to the same goal' represents more a relativistic affirmation than a judgement based on what we presently know. Such attempts at synthesis usually fail to persuade others, especially those of other religious communities, and these attempts more often than not dismiss the intellectual problems involved in issues of religious pluralism.

One might begin the attempt to understand the religiousness of persons of other religious communities by making a concerted effort to gather information about those persons and religious communities, by observation, through conversation, by reading reliable sources, with the initial objective being the ascertaining of facts about the persons, their religious community, and their religious tradition. Then one might begin to reflect upon that information, incorporating into one's reflections the interpretations of that information provided by persons within the religious communities. One might then be in position to check one's understanding of interpretations of the past through rigorous historical scholarship, and one's understanding of persons of other religious communities, today, by asking them to evaluate one's understanding; whether it is accurate and adequate.

This book is designed to assist a reader to move from the initial stage of gathering general information to a level on which reflection ensues. Other volumes will be more helpful for one wanting to learn the history of the different religious traditions, or a series of interpretations of basic doctrines from within the different religious traditions. Other books will be of greater assistance for a reader primarily interested about what thinking is going on about the relationship of two religious traditions, most frequently set in the context of dialogue.

This book is set in a context of colloquia in which scholars and competent spokesmen are presenting to a religiously plural reading audience aspects of their own religious tradition, their own

religious aspirations, and issues that concern them. In reading this book, a reader will see a number of writers attempting to communicate what is important to them and of significance for those who participate with them in their own religious tradition. And these writers are doing this self-consciously in the context of religious colloquia, where we talk about ourselves as *homo religiosus*, religious man.

The contributions to this volume differ in orientation, topic, method, issues, concerns, and style. Some will focus more on history, others on doctrines, others on practice, and each in different proportions. But read in the context of colloquia and within the cover of one book, the reader will find each article contributing not only descriptive facts but also, and primarily, insights into what it means to be a participant of one of the religious traditions.

Common themes appear in the chapters of this volume. One will note a recurrent reference to history with interpretive comments about the period of colonial rule, a four hundred year period that is less than four decades behind us. The recent past of colonial rule is still important for understanding the situation in Sri Lanka and the ideas with which Sri Lankans are working. This recent past is also important in understanding the attitudes many in Sri Lanka have developed in a process of appropriating an earlier past. Historical events and the ideas formulated through a particular pattern of interpreting those events can be marshalled and arranged to provide a powerful ideology for numerous purposes, for good or ill—a simple task this, in spite of the fact that history hardly has been simple. That several of our authors have turned to the past, recent and ancient, and have done so independently, noting in the historical process some of the intricacies and complexities of events, the impactions and influences from abroad, the response, revival, reform at home, demonstrate a concern for religious living today. Things happened then that have brought us where we are today; and what happened then matters to us today, is part of where we are today.

One will note in this volume recurrent references to education, especially religious education. The issue will be misunderstood if one infers that our authors, mostly academics, are making a plea for narrow special interests. Religiousness entails a particularly meaningful orientation to the past *and* to the future. To argue

seriously that 'religion is a thing of the past' is not only to misunderstand the present but also to advocate a simplistic totalitarian position with regard to the future. Our authors represent a concern widely shared in this country that the religious education of their children or their parishioners and the children of others participating in other religious traditions will contribute to the future well-being of our youth. What happens to our young people in Sri Lanka, or elsewhere, matters to us today, is part of where we are today.

Pilgrimage as a form of religious expression has been long known in the religiously plural setting of Sri Lanka. Frequently, persons in Sri Lanka will join friends of other religious communities in going on a pilgrimage primarily related to that other religious tradition. And many, not limited to Muslims alone, will find a friend in al-Ghazālī of the twelfth century, who joins Buddhists, Hindus, and Christians in this country who have recognized through personal experience the symbolic force of pilgrimage, that pilgrimage in a wider sense is a religious journey throughout life, which is a journey into Salvific Truth (*dharmayātrā*).

In the highly literate, religiously pluralistic society of Sri Lanka, there has not appeared a book in which persons with advanced academic training, mostly professional academics, representing the four major religious traditions of Sri Lanka have written about themselves and their religious community in a self-conscious way, seeking to engender colloquia, conversations about ourselves as religious persons. This book, therefore, represents a first attempt. If this book is shown to have been inadequate in contributing to colloquia about religiousness in Sri Lanka, then it will have been taken seriously. And if this effort is taken seriously, it will have achieved its modest aim.

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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

(In Alphabetical Order)

John Ross Carter, B.A. (Baylor University), B.D. (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary), M.Th. (London), Ph.D. (Harvard)

Associate Professor of Philosophy and Religion, Director, Chapel House, Colgate University.

Rev. Lynn A. de Silva, B.D. (Serampore), S.T.M. (Union Theological Seminary, New York), M.A. (Birmingham), Ph.D. (Serampore). Director, Ecumenical Institute for Study & Religion.

The Right Rev. Monsignor W. L. A. Don Peter, B.A., M.A., Ph.D. (London)

Formerly, Rector, Aquinas College, Vicar General, Archdiocese of Colombo

The Hon. M. A. M. Hussain, retired District Judge, Advocate of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka.

W. S. Karunatilake, B.A. (Ceylon), M.A. (Poona), Ph.D. (Cornell) Senior Lecturer in the Department of Linguistics, The University of Sri Lanka, Vidyalankara Campus.

S. L. Kekulawala, B.A. (Ceylon), M.A. (London) Associate Professor of Linguistics and Head of the Department; Dean of the Faculty of Arts, The University of Sri Lanka, Vidyalankara Campus.

Abdul Majid Mackeen, B.A., Ph.D. (London), D.C.L.S. (Cantab.) Professor of Islamic Studies, The University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.

M. Palihawadana, B.A., M.A., Ph.D. (Ceylon) Professor of Sanskrit, The University of Sri Lanka, Vidyalankara Campus.
Post-doctoral Fellow, The Centre for the Study of World Religions, Harvard University (1972-1973)

S. Pathmanathan, B.A. (Ceylon), Ph.D. (London) Senior Lecturer in the Department of History, The University of Sri Lanka, Peradeniya Campus.

L. P. N. Perera, B. A., Ph.D. (Ceylon)

Senior Lecturer of Buddhist Thought and Head of the Department, Postgraduate Institute of Buddhist Studies, Vidyalkankara Campus

Post-doctoral Fellow, University of Lancaster (1975-1976)

Ven. Hevanpola Ratanasara, B.A. (Ceylon), M.A. (Columbia), Ph.D. (London)

Director, Postgraduate Institute of Buddhist Studies, Vidyalkankara Campus.

A. Sathasivam, B.A., M.A. (Ceylon), D.Phil. (Oxon), Pandit (Madura)
Professor of Languages & Cultural Studies and Head of the Department, The University of Sri Lanka, Colombo Campus.

Ven. Kannimahara Sumangala, B.A. Special (Ceylon), Pandit, Oriental Studies Society.

Formerly, Principal of Sri Sumana Pirivena, Ratnapura, and Visiting Lecturer at Vidyodaya University. Resident *bhikkhu* at Vijayasundararamaya, Waturugama.

S. Suseendirajah, B.A. (Madras), Ph.D. (Annamalai University)
Lecturer in the Department of Linguistics, The University of Sri Lanka, Vidyalkankara Campus.

G. D. Wijayawardhana, B.A., Ph.D. (Ceylon)

Associate Professor of Sinhala, The University of Sri Lanka, Colombo Campus.

Post-doctoral Fellow, University of York (1976-1977)

understanding of these sufferings together with their causes. In this respect Buddha stands unique among all other religious teachers in that he was the first to make a realistic analysis of existential facts. His aim was directed to finding a way for the elimination of suffering, and that for him was a non-dogmatic understanding of the facts of the world as they are (*yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa dassana*).

This understanding, this knowledge must be developed by oneself through constant application. Theoretically, the subscription to such a system of knowledge (*ñāṇa dassana-patipadā*) will rule out as irrelevant any type of worship or practice purely based on tradition and belief. *Dhamma*, the teaching of the Buddha, is described in Pāli canonical texts as: 'profound is this *dhamma*, difficult to be seen, difficult to be understood ... comprehensible by the wise' (*gambhīro ayaṃ dhammo, duddaso duranubodho ... paṇḍita vedanīyo*) and also as 'to be individually realized by the wise ones' (*pacattam veditabbo viññūhi*). It is thus the personal/individual aspect that is emphasized in canonical Buddhist thought. It does not recommend any type of worship or any other kind of *ritualistic* practice as a path leading to the attainment of ultimate reality. This has tended to make the basic *Buddha-dhamma* something that might appear sapless for the uneducated common man.

By the term *dhamma* (*dharme* in the common man's parlance), the average practicing Sri Lankan Buddhist understands the system of ethics, the code of principles for moral conduct which specifies for him what is good and what is bad (*hoṇḍa naraka*) and what is merit and what is sin (*ḥim pau*), whereas he resorts to the term *abidarme* (Pāli: *abhidhamma*) when he wants to refer to the philosophical aspects of Buddhist thought, that aspect which is to be understood by the wise. Canonical Buddhist thought does not present such an opposition of terms. Nevertheless such a distinction stands out as important from the average Buddhist's point of view, in that it can bring within the fold of *dhamma* not only Buddhist ethics and any other doctrines easy to grasp but also a highly complex system of practices supported by tradition. The popular interpretation of *dhamma*, even in the classical Sinhala literary texts, seems to be more oriented towards worship and devotion and many of the essential features of the Buddhist doctrine seem to have become unimportant. The most important facets of the Buddhist tradition for the common man have been the extol-

ling of the Buddha's virtues, following his example, listening to and practicing the *dhamma*. Realization of the *dhamma* for him has been through practice rather than through a process of meditative intellectualization. Such an attitude gave rise to a scheme of complex practices, rites and rituals drawing inspiration from the extra-ordinary virtues of the Buddha, *Jātaka* tales and related literature and other ancillary traditions. The non-exclusiveness, the liberal attitude of Buddhists has proved to be a strong source of inspiration for the incorporation and co-existence of cults and forms of worship without their coming into conflict with practices that are essentially Buddhist. Through day-to-day Buddhist practices, one can witness the common Buddhist's attempt to realize the *dhamma*. In the understanding of the significance of these practices it is necessary to know what beliefs and what traditions actually support those practices, and how meaningful they are from the view of the person himself who practices.

In the Buddha's own words the rationale for the Buddhist tradition is that 'life' is characterized by birth, decay and death. 'If, O monks, three realities were not to be observed in the world, the *tathāgata*, the *arahant*, the fully-enlightened one, would not be born in the world, the *dhamma-vinaya* (body of doctrines) made known by the *tathāgata* would not shine forth in the world; what are the three? Birth, decay and death. Because, O monks, these three realities are to be observed in the world, therefore the *tathāgata*, the *arahant*, the fully-enlightened one is born in the world, the body of doctrines made known by the *tathāgata* shines forth in the world'. (*Aṅguttara-Nikāya, dasama nipāta, ākankha vagga*).

The Monk and the Layman

The primary differentiation of the contemporary Sinhala Buddhist society is that between *gihi* and *pāvīdi*, laity as distinct from the clergy, and this is important. This is in full accordance with the Buddha's classification of the interrelated society founded by him into *bhikkhu*, 'monks', *bhikkhunī*, 'nuns', *upāsaka*, 'male-lay-devotees', and *upāsikā*, 'female-lay-devotees', although there is no order of nuns in the present day Sinhala Buddhist society. It is noteworthy that such a classification of the society stands in sharp contrast to the contemporary Sri Lankan Hindu Tamil society where the deep seated stratification is based on caste, thus faithfully upholding the traditional Hindu *varṇa-dharma*. This,

however, does not negate caste for the Sinhala Buddhist society. But when taken as a Buddhist society it is the clergy/laity dichotomy that stands out significantly over any caste oriented fragmentation of the society. This is beautifully brought to focus in the performance of any religious activity. It is basically this dichotomy that is brought out in the linguistic structure in such areas as pronominal reference and imperative verb correlates.¹ The clergy is further distinguished by having a special vocabulary² used by the laity when speaking with or with reference to the clergy. The Buddhist monk is not an officiating priest. He is the teacher, friend and the true guide of the layman. It is the duty of the laity to look after the needs of the monk, and in this sense the laity is often referred to as *dāyakayo* (lay-donors—both male and female). It is the duty of the monk rightly to advise the layman and to give him the necessary doctrinal instruction. He is also the foremost psychiatrist of the layman. The stability of the *sāsana*, 'Dispensation of the Buddha', is firmly founded on this cordial relation between the clergy and the laity. Both the educated elite as well as the less well educated commoner look to the monk for religious instruction as the living representative of the *Buddha sāsana*.

By dress and precept the monk, *bhikkhu*, is kept distinct from the layman. Technically speaking any male person who is duly ordained under a preceptor in any of the sects currently existing in Sri Lanka qualifies himself as a Buddhist monk. There are three sects, *nikāyas*: *siyam nikāya*, 'Siamese sect', *amarapura nikāya*, 'Amarapura sect' and *rāmañña nikāya* 'Ramañña sect'

1. W. S. Karunatillake and S. Suseendirarajah, 'Pronouns of Address in Tamil and Sinhalese: A Socio-Linguistic Study', *Indian Journal of Dravidian Linguistics*, Vol. IV, No. 1 (1975) pp. 83-97.

2. Consider the following items:

	<i>Laity</i>	<i>Clergy</i>
1. be/exist	{ innava hiṭṭinava }	vāḍa innava vāḍa hiṭṭinava
2. eat	kanava }	valañḍanava
3. drink	bonava }	
4. sleep	budiyenava	sātapenava
5. go	yanava }	vāḍinava
6. come	enava }	
7. food	kāma	dāne
8. tea	tē	gilampasa
9. shave the head	būgānava	visabānava
10. bring	ekkaenava	vāḍammanava

in that order of strength in membership. These subsume several sub-sects. Technically, any male child who is at least seven years old is a fit candidate for ordination, provided his parents approve. The handing over of a child to the *sāsana* is considered by the Sri Lankan Buddhists as one of the highest forms of merit that one could hope to achieve in this world. The consent of the parents is deemed a necessary condition for the primary reason that it aims at eliminating desire (*tañhā*) on the part of the parent towards the child, and for the secondary reason of due consideration of social obligation. Once one is ordained, the ideal expectation is that one severs all connections with one's prior house-hold life; and the child so ordained should stand in no self-conscious kinship relation to the people of his earlier home.

There are several conditions which might lead to the ordination of a child. Customarily the ordination of a child is determined: (A) by a reading of his horoscope, and as a result, (1) a child might be ordained because his planetary-position favours him to be so, or (2) a child might be ordained to avoid grave ill-luck which might befall him were he to remain a layman; (B) by the individual desire of the candidate to be ordained as a monk.

There are two stages to ordination: (1) *ṭabbajjā*, ordination signalling the entry of a candidate into the *sāsana*, and (2) *uṭasampadā*, higher ordination which qualifies the recipient as a *bhikkhu*, as one who has full membership in the order or *Sanḅha*. Both the *ṭabbajjā* and *uṭasampadā* are performed in strict accordance with the specifications of the *vinaya*, the code of ethics and monastic discipline which is meant to regulate the life and conduct of a monk as an individual and as a member of a community. The *vinaya* alone is considered the solid foundation of the order of monks and the *sāsana*, 'the *vinaya* is what conditions the longevity of the *sāsana*' (*vinayo nāma sāsanaṣṣa āyu*). Any act which requires the sanction of the *vinaya* is called a *vinaya-kamma* 'a *vinaya*-act'. The execution of a *vinaya-kamma* requires the participation of a minimum number of four higher ordained monks. Both *ṭabbajjā* and *uṭasampadā* fall within the category of *vinaya-kamma*.

Ṗabbajjā or ordination qualifies one to be a *sāmaṇera*, 'a novice'. Ordination is done ceremoniously and solemnly. The candidate to be ordained is usually brought in procession to the temple where he will receive *ṭabbajjā*. He is dressed like a prince in the traditional

style. This has a double significance: (1) it is supposed to symbolize the material prosperity and advantages of house-hold life which he is about to renounce; (2) it also reminds one of the great renunciation of Prince Siddhattha. After he is brought to the temple and handed over to the monks, his head will be shaven and he will be bathed. Then he goes before the assembly of higher ordained monks, dressed in a white cloth and shawl, with the 'eight requisites of a monk' (*aṭṭa-pirikara*)³ in hand, kneels down before the monks in submission and respect and requests the monks to give him ordination. Then he hands over the *aṭṭa-pirikara* to the chief preceptor and again requests for *pabbajjā*. Subsequently he asks for 'the ten precepts of a *sāmaṇera*' (*sāmaṇera dasasīla*) along with the 'three refuges' (*tisarāṇa*). The linguistic code adopted in the performance of a *vinaya-kamma* is directly from Pāli.⁴ Thereupon the preceptor monk dictates to him the *sāmaṇera dasasīla* along with the *tisarāṇa*, which the candidate repeats after him, after which he is dressed in a 'yellow robe of a monk' (*cīvara*) and admitted to the *sāsana* as a novice. What is ideally expected of a *sāmaṇera* is a thorough training in the *dhamma*, and such other duties, like preaching the *dhamma*, that are considered as duties that a monk is expected to perform for the benefit of the laity. A *sāmaṇera* is not eligible to perform any *vinaya-kamma*.

To qualify as a full-fledged member of the 'order of monks' (*saṅgha*) one must receive *upasampadā* through one's preceptor when one is at least twenty years of age. *Upasampadā* is a *vinaya-kamma* of a higher order which is done exclusively in the assembly of higher ordained monks of the particular *nikāya* to which the applicant belongs. The *upasampadā*, being one of the most important *vinaya-kammās*, is performed with great solemnity within special precincts called *sīmā*. These *sīmās* are of two types (1) *vihāra sīmā* or precincts within a Buddhist temple and (2) *udakukkhepa sīmā* 'precincts bounded by water', i.e., a *sīmā* with a river. Only higher ordained monks and the *upasampadā*-expectants will be present at this ceremony. At the time of the *upasam-*

3. *Aṭṭapirikara*, the eight requests of a monk are: the three robes, bowl, razor, needle (and ball of thread), belt and water strainer.

4. *Pabbajjāvākya*—formal statement requesting ordination: 'Pardon me, reverened Sir I beg for ordination; out of compassion for me, ordain me, reverened Sir, with this yellow robe in order (to prepare) to realize *nibbāna*, the emancipation from all suffering'.

padā whatever connections the *sīmā* might have with outside buildings, etc., are severed. The candidate for *upasampadā* appears before the *Saṅgha* dressed in white cloth and shawl and requests one of the senior monks to be his 'preceptor' (*upajjhāya*). This is called *upajjhāya-gahaṇam*. The preceptor will be referred to as *tissa* throughout the ceremony. Once he receives the approval of the preceptor, 'the teacher/instructor in the *vinaya* specifications/the initiating priest' (*kammācariya*) will introduce to the *nāga*, the candidate, the requisites of a monk, and then he will be asked to leave the assembly until he is further summoned. In the meanwhile the *kammācariya* requests the *Saṅgha* for permission to admonish the *nāga*. This being granted the *kammācariya* instructs the *nāga* as to how he should answer the questions on factors that stand as obstacles to one's higher-ordination (*antarāyika dhamma*) in the assembly by monks. With the permission of the *Saṅgha* the *nāga* is again summoned to the assembly and the *nāga* formally requests that he be given higher-ordination. The *kammācariya* then seeks permission from the *Saṅgha* to question the *nāga* on the *antarāyika dhammas*, which are then asked and if the *Saṅgha* is satisfied the *upasampadā* of the *nāga* is formally approved. Then the *karmavākya*, the formal statement which states that the candidate is qualified to receive *upasampadā* is said, after which it is declared that the *upasampadā kamma* has been performed. Questioning on the *antarāyika dhammas*⁵ is primarily to ascertain that the candidate has physical fitness and that he is free from all social obligations. A person thus higher-ordained receives the appellation *bhikkhu* which status qualifies him as a full-fledged member of the *Saṅgha* and thus he becomes eligible to participate in or to perform a *vinaya-kamma*.

The code of ethical conduct that is binding on a higher ordained monk is called the *bhikkhu-pātimokkha*.⁶ One of the important *vinaya-kammās* that a *bhikkhu* has to observe is the *uposatha-kamma*. This is expected to be done every fortnight and there must be a quorum of at least four *bhikkhus* for its performance. This is done in a special *sīmā*. At this ceremony the *bhikkhu-pātimokkha* is recited and explained, and the *bhikkhus* confess their minor offences if they have committed any. The main purpose of the

5. Cf. *Mahāvagga*, *mahākhanda*, section on *upasampadā kamma*.

6. *Bhikkhu pātimokkha*, code of *vinaya* conduct for the higher-ordained monks.

uposatha-kamma is to draw the attention of the *bhikkhus* to the *vinaya* and to see that the laws governing their moral conduct are re-enforced. Every year a *bhikkhu* is expected to observe *vas* 'retreat-ceremony' which is from August to October. During this period the *bhikkhus* usually confine themselves to the temples and the lay-donors are expected to look after them well. A *bhikkhu* who has observed a minimum number of ten such retreats qualifies to be called a *thera* 'an elder'. Only a *thera* is qualified to ordain another person as a *sāmaṇera* and as his pupil. On this depends the continuity of the *Saṅgha*.

The canonical term referring to a Buddhist layman is *upāsaka*. Theoretically, any person who has sought refuge in the three refuges' (*saraṇas*), namely, the *Buddha*, *Dhamma*, and *Saṅgha* qualifies as an *upāsaka*.⁷ Seeking refuge does not mean any submission or self-surrender. For a Buddhist, the *Buddha* is the incomparable moral guide and teacher, *Dhamma*, his lore, and *Saṅgha*, the living representatives of the *sāsana*. Seeking refuge in the *tisarāṇa* means the acceptance of this system of thought as a way of life and not as an easy and automatic way for deliverance. An ideal Buddhist layman (*bauddhopāsaka*) is a person who, having accepted the *tisarāṇa* as his refuges for his whole life (*paññupetaṃ saraṇaṃ gataṃ*), engages himself in the constant practice of virtue by observing *pañsil*,⁸ 'the five precepts', daily, and *aṭasil*,⁹ 'the eight precepts', on *ṭhoya* days. From a practical standpoint, however, a person born to a Buddhist family is considered a Buddhist. That becomes his second bias, language being the first. The usual term used to refer to a Buddhist is *bauddhaya* (or *buddāgamē minissu* people belonging to "Buddhism"), while the term *upāsaka* is customarily restricted to refer to a person who has observed *aṭasil* on a *ṭhoya* day.

Whereas the monk (*bhikkhu* or *sāmaṇera*) has to practice and instruct the laity in the *dhamma*, the average lay Buddhist, in his attempt to understand the *dhamma*, also engages himself in a complex set of practices, all of which one could subsume under

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7. Cf. 'Oh *mahānāma*, by the very fact that one has sought refuge in the *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and *Saṅgha*, one becomes an *upāsaka*'.
 8. *Pañsil*, five precepts of a lay-man, which is said with the *tisarāṇa*, following the *namaskāraya*, salutation to *Buddha*.
 9. *Aṭasil*, eight precepts, same as *pañsil* with the addition of three others.

'Buddhist practice'. As a religious tradition and a profound ethico-philosophical system the emphasis in Buddhist thought is on the attainment of absolute mental purity through an active process of meditative intellectualization. It does not answer the routine day-to-day needs of the average layman. However the very existence of a clergy, the high esteem accorded to the clergy, the clergy's role as teacher and guide of the laity, their mutual dependence and mutual relations—all these become contributive factors for the institutionalization of a set of habits, practices, and customs that are accepted and followed by the laity. A very close bond between the clergy and the laity must, indeed, exist and the continuity of the *sāsana* depends on such a harmonious and cordial relationship. Such a relationship essentially calls for representation and actualization, personification and symbolization which necessarily entail ceremony, rite and ritual. Also when *arahant* Mahinda introduced the Buddhist tradition to Sri Lanka over twenty centuries ago, it appears that he brought not only the *dhamma* but also a whole system of beliefs and customs which constituted an invariable concomitant of actual Buddhist practice current in India at the time. The liberal attitude of Buddhists then would also have permitted the incorporation of many of the religious practices that were prevalent in Sri Lanka at the time of the introduction of the Buddhist tradition.

The Conceptual framework for current Sri Lankan Buddhist practice

The main conceptual frame work for current Sri Lankan Buddhist practice can be said to be constituted by three basic conceptions: (1) the conception of the universe and cosmic time, (2) the conception of rebirth and (3) the conception of *karma*.

Conception of the universe and cosmic time

When one considers the early Buddhist texts and the later non-canonical commentarial literature one clearly finds two significant stages in the development and the formation of the Buddhist conception of the universe. One of the earliest terms used in the canonical texts to denote the universe is *loka*, a term which had the widest coverage of the cognitive world. Commentaries explain *loka* as 'space-world' (*ākāśa loka*) and also as 'the thousand fold universe' (*sahassadhā loka dhātu*). The next important reference to the universe is its being described in three stages as

'the thousand fold minor world systems' (*sahassī cūḷanikā loka dhātu*), 'twice a thousand fold middling world systems' (*dviśahassī majjhimikā loka-dhātu*) and the 'the major world system' (*mahā loka-dhātu*). Whether the universe is finite or infinite in extent is left unanswered (*avyākata*).

The next stage in the development of Buddhist cosmology is witnessed in the later Pāli commentarial traditions where the term 'sphere-wheel' (*cakkavāla*) is used synonymously with 'world-systems' (*loka-dhātu*), and these spheres are said to be infinite in number.¹⁰

Classical Sinhala writers seem to subscribe generally to the view of the universe as expressed in the later Pāli commentarial literature. The terms *loka*, *loka-dhātu* and *sakvaḷa* are used to denote the universe and are in most instances used indiscriminately. Each *sakvaḷa* is said to comprise the world of humans, gods, *māras*, and *brahmās*. This is in consonance with the recurrent phrase in the Pāli *Nikāyas* where the Buddha is described as having understood and comprehended the world of the description: 'this world together with the gods, *māras*, *brahmās*, the human beings, along with recluses and *brahmans*, the world together with gods and men....' (*imaṃ lokam sadevakaṃ samāvakaṃ sabrahmakam sassamaṇa-brāhmaṇiṃ pajam sadevamanussaṃ* . . .). Each *sakvaḷa* is described as having its own earth, sun and moon, the *deva* and the *brahma* worlds, the world of the *nāgas* etc.¹² These descriptions generally give the idea that a *sakvaḷa* was conceived of as some form of what one might call a single solar system or galaxy. In some contexts three *sakvaḷas* (*tun sakvaḷa*) are referred to as parallel to the three worlds (*tun-lō*), and still in other contexts *sakvaḷas* are said to be infinite in number and boundless in extent, parallel to the infinity in number of *lokadhātus*.¹³

Cosmic time is counted in terms of *kalpas*, 'epoch/aeon', and each *kalpa* is described in relation to years of the human world,

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10. Jayatillake, K. N., *The Message of the Buddha*, London: Allen and Unwin (1975), pp. 90-103.
11. *Dīgha Nikāya*, I. 62 (P.T.S. edition).
12. *Pūjāvāliya*, edited by Kirielle Nānawimala, Colombo: M. D. Gunasena & Co. Ltd., pp. 65, 127, 131.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 107, p. 189.

years of the world of gods, years of the world of the *Brahmās*, etc., through a scheme of proportionate conversions. Such *kalpas* are said to be infinite in number. At the end of each *kalpa* there is a dissolution of the world, and another world-system is said to dawn.¹⁴ This operates recurrently.

A *kalpa* blessed with the rise of a *sammāsambuddha*, 'fully enlightened one', is called a *buddhotpāda kāla*. A *kalpa* not so characterized is an *abuddhotpāda kāla*. This is essentially a conceptualization of cosmic time within a religious world-view, and this is a crucial distinction for a Buddhist. One aspires to be reborn in a *buddhotpāda kāla*, because it is only during such a time that one could hope for the accumulation of merit eventually leading to the realization of *nibbāna*, 'final emancipation'. A *buddhotpāda kāla*, also referred to as *buddhotpādaya*, is defined as a cosmic time span throughout which the *sāsana* of a Buddha continues.

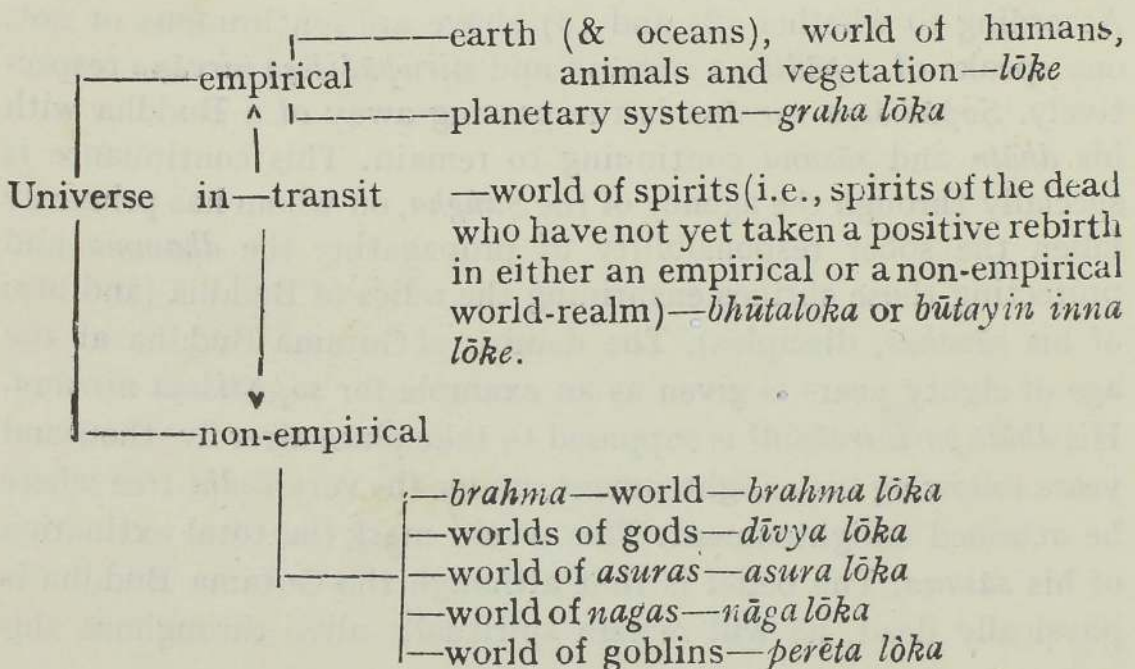
This continuity of the *sāsana* is determined in relation to the *parinirvāṇa* of a Buddha. *Parinirvāṇa* is explained as (1) 'the total destruction/eradication of the mental defilements', i.e. the attainment of enlightenment (*kleśa parinirvāṇa*), (2) 'the passing away/the physical death of a Buddha' (*skandha parinirvāṇa*), and (3) 'the complete extinction of the relics of a Buddha' (*dhātu parinirvāṇa*) and consequently the end of the *sāsana* of that Buddha. According to whether (2) and (3) above are synchronous or not, one speaks of *sopādiśeṣa nirvāṇa* and *nirupādiśeṣa nirvāṇa* respectively. *Sopādiśeṣa nirvāṇa* is the passing away of a Buddha with his *dhātu* and *sāsana* continuing to remain. This continuance is specially through the agency of the *Sanṅha*, on whom has primarily fallen the sober responsibility of propagating the *dhamma* and protecting those shrines enshrining the relics of Buddha (and also of his *sāvaka*s, disciples). The demise of Gotama Buddha at the age of eighty years is given as an example for *sopādiśeṣa nirvāṇa*. His *dhātu parinirvāṇa*¹⁵ is supposed to take place after five thousand years following his enlightenment, under the very *bodhi*-tree where he attained enlightenment. This would mark the total extinction of his *sāsana*. The belief is that although the Gotama Buddha is physically dead, he will remain spiritually alive throughout this

14. *Anāgatavaṃsa deśanāva*.

15. *Pūjāvaliya*, pp. 728-737.

whole time span of five thousand years. As an instance for *nirupādiṣeṣa nirvāṇa* is quoted the case of the would-be Buddha *Maitreya* and it is said that he will be physically alive for a time span of eighty thousand years instructing in the *dhamma* those fortunate ones of ripe intelligence and enabling them to realize *nibbāṇa*.¹⁶ A *kalpa* during which five *Buddhas* are born is called a *mahābhadrakalpa*, 'a most auspicious *kalpa*'. The present *kalpa* is considered as one such, its three previous *Buddhas* being *Kakusaṇḍa*, *Konāgama* and *Kāśyapa*.

The customary conception of the universe and cosmic time held by Buddhists is, in general, more or less the same as that represented in the classical Sinhala writings. The term *sakvaḷa* occurs in a Buddhist's speech, but is not so well defined semantically as the use of the term in the classical Sinhala literary works. The term which frequently occurs to denote the universe is *lōka*. In contrast to both the Pāli and classical Sinhala textual interpretations of the term *loka*, in customary Buddhist parlance *lōke* occurs with special reference to the observable earthly-sphere. The world of the gods, *brahmās*, etc., are considered as separate world-realms not probably constituting the same galactic system. The general arrangement of the universe by the average Buddhist can be projected in a diagram as follows:



16. *Anāgatavaṃsa desanāva*.

Except in anecdotal references, the *brahma lōka*, *asura lōka* and *nāga lōka* do not figure frequently in Sinhala discourse. The *divya lōka* concept can be expanded to cover broadly the following categories of gods: (1) the traditionally conceived of *divya lōkas*, which are said to be six in number.¹⁷ To the common man, of course, this numerical strength of the *divya lōkas* does not seem to matter, for he uses the general term *divya lōke* in the singular in a sense more or less parallel to the usage of 'heaven'; (2) there is also the category of major gods such as *viṣṇu deyyo* and *kataragama deyyo*, etc.; (3) guardian gods of the quarters—*hatara varan deyyo*; (4) provincial and local gods such as *ayyanāyaka deyyo*, *galēbaṇḍāra deyyo*, *saman deyyo*, etc.; and (5) tutelary gods of trees, rocks and houses, etc.

Although the conception of 'hell' (*apāya*) is a dominant and a necessary one it is never collocated with the term *lōka*, 'world', nor is it so understood. To the average Buddhist *apāya* is a place of pain and torture located below the earth. It is conceived of as a place with *yama* as its lord, his guards being called *yama pallo*. Classical Sinhala texts make references to several *apāyas*. Numerically they range from four to a hundred and thirty six.¹⁸ They are also stratified and accordingly named. This is in keeping with the Pāli tradition, especially that of the later commentaries. The average Buddhist, however, does not make such a distinction. He understands *apāya* in the singular, but it is very difficult to say whether there is any clear notion. Some tend to believe that *apāya* is located in this very world and point to extreme forms of poverty, suffering, and torture as instances. *Apāya* is not thought of as a place of eternal condemnation. It is a place where one suffers for one's sins and is a place from which one is relieved when one's sins are extirpated or the detrimental consequences of one's sins are extinguished.

Another category of beings that figures significantly in contemporary Buddhist discourse and practice is that of *yakku* 'demons'. There is no specific world-realm assigned to them. The popular belief is that they constituted a significant segment of the residents of Lanka in times of yore, and Gotama Buddha, in one of his visits, drove them away to a place called *uturukurudivayina*.

17. *Sadev lova*—the six divine realms.

18. *Lovādasaṅgarāva*, vss. 23, 36, 52, 66, 77, 89, 93, 103.

Yakku, as currently understood, can be viewed under two broad categories: (1) an open set generally referred to as *malayakku*. This is used to cover a class of dead spirits born as demons. They are supposed to be quite powerful and are considered as so reborn in order to take revenge from those that have harmed them in their previous life as human beings. They are supposed to haunt houses and sometimes take possession of human victims. It is also considered that one should have sufficient merit to be reborn as a *malayakā*. (2) The other category of *yakku* can be called a closed-set, because there is no possibility of anyone being reborn to this category. To this group belong demons such as *rīriyakā*, *kaluyakā* and *mahasohona*.

Rebirth

Another conception which is crucial in the determination of a Buddhist's attitude towards himself and the world and which to a very large extent defines his religiousness is the conception of rebirth. The canonical position towards rebirth is explained as follows:

The Buddhist theory of survival is a novel theory which is not to be found in the pre-Buddhist literature. It was a doctrine of survival without the concept of a self-identical substance or soul. The physical form, perception, feeling, will or intellect were not the soul, nor did the soul own them, nor was a soul to be found within them, nor again were they to be located in a cosmic soul. There was no self apart from a complex psycho-physical process and man was defined as a bundle of dispositions (*suddha-saṁkhāra-puñja*). Though there was no self-identical (*anaññam*) substance, there was a continuity (*santati*, *santāna*) of individuality, sometimes referred to as a stream of consciousness (*viññāna-sota*) or a stream of becoming (*bhava-sota*). Associated with a person's present body were the dispositions with potentialities for re-becoming (*ponobhaviko bhava saṁkhāro*).

All that is claimed in the rebirth case is that in a significant sense there is a continuity (*santati*) of the mind of the individual from one earth life to another. Every Buddhist actually does believe in a rebirth. In popular parlance rebirth is referred to as *anit ātme*. Although the term *ātme*, through its Sanskrit etymon *ātman*, would literally imply a 'soul-entity', *ātma* as used by Bud-

dhists is bereft of any such implication. It only implies the fact that one's present life is only a point in a continuity conditioned by the dynamic force of one's own *karma*, 'actions'. Some of the other terms that are used to refer to this state are *anitjātiya*, 'next-birth', a term which seems quite appropriate, and *saṃsāre*, 'cycle of births'.

It is equally interesting to note that the negative concept also occurs in popular discourse: *itin āyet ātmeyak nā*, literally meaning that 'there will be no future birth' which, however, actually implies that 'a person will not be reborn as a human or in any other favourable realm of life'. This phrase occurs usually with reference to people who commit grave sins, such as murder. The same idea is more forcefully conveyed by expressions such as *āyet mē kapē goḍa enḍa hambavenne nā*, meaning '(they who commit grave sins) will not be freed from the sufferings of the purgatory during this aeon', meaning thereby that they would have to endure purgatorial suffering for a limitless period of time.

Another term which brings to focus the popular conception of rebirth is *urume*. This term, apart from its legal interpretation as 'legacy/right of inheritance', is also used to imply 'right of inheritance/ownership (especially to property) as continuing from a past birth'. This is frequently used in situations where someone's property is passed on not to the legal inheritor but to someone else. In such a situation the recipient is called *urumakkāraya* 'inheritor from a past birth'. A parallel situation is where a person, for instance, leaves his home village or town, migrates to some other place and establishes his settlement there and within a relatively short time amasses landed property almost with no effort. In such a situation the person is said to have gone to his *urumatāna*, 'place inherited from past birth'. It is also worth noting the extension of the term *urumakkāraya* with reference to a prospective bride or bridegroom. Here the term is explained as *pera ātme iṅḍan paṭan āpū 'kenā*, 'the aspirant or the aspired from past birth(s)'.

These are only some of the key terms, abstractable from popular discourse, that are reflective of the conception of rebirth among Sinhala Buddhists. It can be said without qualification that this conception constitutes the bedrock of the practical religious life of Buddhists. All types of religious practices characterizable as 'Buddhist' have this conception as the deep seated motive factor.

From a purely practical viewpoint most of the practices customarily followed by Buddhists in Sri Lanka would be rendered less meaningful if not for this firm belief in rebirth.

Kamma

Closely connected with the conception of rebirth is that of *kamma*. This term occurs in the canonical Pāli texts to denote 'volitional actions'. These actions are classified as 'morally good' (*kusala*), 'morally bad' (*akusala*), and 'morally neutral' (*avyākata*). With reference to the mechanism of a *kamma*, it is further classified as 'bodily action' (*kāyakamma*), 'verbal action' (*vacīkamma*) and 'mental action' (*manokamma*). What is stressed in Buddhist thought is not so much the 'realizational aspect' of a *kamma* as such as the 'volition' and 'motivation' for its execution. To quote the Buddha: 'Oh monks, I take it that conscious volition is action' (*cetanā'ham bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi*). The morally good and evil actions are considered as liable to give rise to good and bad consequences respectively. The result of one's *kamma* may be manifest either in this very life or in a future birth unless the potentialities of the *kammic* results are extinguished or they cease to function because no opportunity is obtained for their fruition. The consequence or fruition of *kamma* is called *vipāka*. In relation to *vipāka*, 'consequence', and *kiicca*, 'function', *kamma* is further subclassified and discussed under several matrices.²⁰ The central teaching of the Buddhist tradition, however, is *kammakkhaya* 'the elimination of the effects of *kamma*', and not that of continuing to perform good *kamma* for the sake of rewards in continued *samsāric* existence. Rebirth is the natural consequence of *kamma*.

As is the case with the notion of rebirth, the notion of *kamma* is an ingrained belief among Buddhists. In popular speech *kamma* is referred to as *karume* (through Sanskrit *karma*). In contrast to the usage of Pāli *kamma*, the popular concept *karume* is specialized in a negative-retrospective sense almost always implying 'morally bad actions done in past births'. Most frequently *karume* refers to the unpleasant results of the morally evil actions committed in a past birth. Consider expressions such as 'one cannot avoid the implications of legacy and that of morally bad actions (committed

19. Jayatillake, *op. cit.*, P. 153.

20. Rev. Nārada, *Karmaya*, poson pustakamālā, (1932), No. 9.

in a past life)' (*urumeyi karumeyi valakkanda bā*); 'no one can cure a disease if it is a consequence of one's morally bad action' (*karuma leda sanīpakaranda bā*), etc. One usually resorts to *karume* for an explanation only under conditions of acute distress or unavoidable mishaps, such as the untimely death of a person, incurable illness, sudden loss of wealth and property, legal punishment for no obvious offence committed, or any other unexpected calamity. *Karume* in this sense covers both past *akusala kamma* as well as its *vipāka*. Consequently, synonymously with *karume* people commonly use such expressions as *pau pala denava*, 'effects of morally bad action befall someone', or *pau gevanava*, 'expiate for ones sins' etc. *Karume* is contrasted by such terms as *vāsanāva* '(literally) luck', *lābīma* '(literally—getting/receiving) meaning a state of being fortunate' and *hētuva* '(literally—cause/reason) meaning ones luck', all of which generally refer to one's fortune and happy life here as a consequence of one's good *kamma* done in a former birth.

Another related concept is *naya*, literally 'debt', which in this context means 'one's due to some one else or some one else's due to oneself's as a consequence of past *kamma* and is thus emphatic of the social aspect of *karmic* effects. The expression *nayakāraya* is used in this 'consequential' sense to mean either the 'debtor' of the 'creditor'. One quite often comes across the usage of this term, for example, with reference to children the birth of whom is supposed to have brought bounty and prosperity to the parents or to have brought utter disaster to the family. In the former case they are described as having been born 'to return the debt' (*naya denḍa ipadilā*), and in the latter case as having been born 'to collect the debt' (*naya ganḍa ipadilā*). In both these senses the term *nayakāraya* is used not only with reference to children, spouse, siblings, and servants but also with reference to domestic animals. Also one notes that this term is rather 'family-restrictive'. *Nayakāraya* in the 'fortune-bringing-sense' is used not by the recipient (family) but by the outsiders with reference to such a fortunate family. The insiders or the recipients use the more favourable term *hētuvanta* 'fortunate (one)' to characterize such a person or animal. The implication is that *naya* is always negative. From a social angle the concept *naya* emphasizes the unpleasant effects of the socially harmful actions, namely, wilful misappropriation of someone else's property, and exploitation, both with regard to money and labour.

It is interesting to note, however, that in current Sinhala Buddhist usage there is no single term that is fully equivalent to the Pāli term indicative of the generic category *kamma*. Consequently *kamma* is disjunctively conceptualized in its two aspects as either 'morally good action' (*kusala kamma*) called *piṃ* in Sinhala or 'morally bad action' (*akusala kamma*) called *ṣau* in Sinhala; whereas 'morally neutral action' (*avyākata kamma*) does not figure prominently in the conceptual matrix. This categorical cleavage in current Sinhala Buddhist usage, of one of the central doctrines of canonical Buddhist thought, signals a significant semantic drift—so much so that it almost puts contemporary Sinhala Buddhist orientations on a different footing from that of canonical thought.

Karmic action must necessarily be kept distinct from other types of actions, such as the execution of one's duties, services, etc., in that *karmic* action alone is understood as being responsible in the conditioning of one's future life hereafter. Almost every Sinhala Buddhist is conscious of this fact. Consider, for instance, expressions such as 'when we die it is only the results of the good and bad actions that we take along with us' (*yanakoṭa aran yanne hoṇḍa naraka vitaray*), 'it is only the (results of) bad and good actions that we take along with us' (*mārunayin ṣasse geniyanne ṣau piṃ deka vitaray*). For the practising Buddhist, this is a conceptual reality which constitutes the very foundation of all his religious activities. Although the central teaching of the Buddhist tradition stresses the ceasing to accumulate *kamma* of any sort (*kammukkhaya*), as far as Buddhist practice is concerned the emphasis is obviously on continuing to accumulate 'morally good action' (*kusalakamma*).

Every Buddhist aims at accumulating *kusalakamma* and rejoices in performing *kusalakamma*. The notion of rebirth because of *kamma* and the practice of performing *kusalakamma* for a better life in this current life and in the hereafter provide a fundamental dimension of the context in which Sinhala Buddhists set about to live religiously. Even the term *dhamma*, referred to as *darme* in colloquial Sinhala (through Sanskrit *dharma*), is understood by the common man as an equivalent to *kusalakamma* and refers not so much to the more abstract or philosophical teachings of the

Buddha. The desire, the eagerness to keep on accumulating *kusala-kamma* for a prospectively better after-life pervades the religious thought of most Sinhala Buddhists, although such an attitude stands in direct contrast with canonical Buddhist philosophy.

Theoretically the ultimate aim of every Buddhist is the attainment of *nibbāna*, 'ultimate reality'. According to the Theravāda tradition, *nibbāna* is said to be realizable through one of the three *bodhi*'s, 'enlightenments': (1) *sammāsambodhi* 'fully enlightened state, realizing which one is able to instruct others in the *dhamma*'; (2) *paccekabodhi* 'individual enlightenment, realizing which one is awakened to the *dhamma* oneself, but is not able to instruct others in the *dhamma*'; and (3) *arahantabodhi* 'state of enlightenment reached by listening directly to a *sammāsambuddha*'s preaching of the *dhamma*'. The aspiration (*prārthanā*) of the average practising Buddhist is finally to attain *nibbāna* by listening to the *dhamma* as will be preached by the future Buddha, *Maitreya*. Until such time, one continues to be reborn in different world-realms as conditioned by the effects of one's *kamma*.²¹ This is the central position taken for granted by the common Buddhist, and this belief alone governs and conditions his religious activity. Questioning its validity is to question the very foundations of Buddhist thought as understood by the average Sinhala Buddhist in Sri Lanka.

Buddhist Activities

The common practices of the Buddhists that are firmly founded on the conceptual framework outlined above, and which bring to focus their religiousness, are characterizable as centering on the accumulation of *kusalakamma*, 'morally good action or meritorious action', understood as *ṭṭim* by Buddhists in general. Broadly speaking, however, all those activities of a Buddhist, some of which are central to the manifestation of his religiousness and some peripheral, can be conveniently viewed under three major categories: (1) *puṇyākarma*, 'morally good actions which one does with conscious volition, the ultimate aim of which is one's own final emancipation through the realization of *nibbāna*'; (2) *cāritrakarma*, 'customary action or religious practices that are followed primarily because of social obligation'; and (3) *śāntikarma*, 'propitiatory

21. *Anāgatavaṃśa deśanāva*.

action performed by oneself or arranged to be performed by someone else, the results or effects of which are considered to be contributive to material well-being. All these share the features of observing *pansil* with the *tisarana* at the commencement of the action, and transference of merit to gods, spirits, all beings and departed ones, which mark the conclusion of the action. It is these features which qualify these as religious activities of the Buddhists. This is in contrast, for example, with the conducting of a meeting or any other ceremony by Buddhists, where the first item of the agenda could be the observing of *pansil*, but the conclusion is never the transference of merit.

Puṇyakarma

This term is used here to indicate only those meritorious actions volitionally performed by the individual with faith and belief, the ultimate aim being the realization of *nibbāna*, and the immediate aim being a better life hereafter. Although the formal correspondence to the Pāli term *puññakamma* (Sanskrit *puṇya-karma*) in current Sinhala is *piṃkama*, this latter term has not been selected to denote this category, because the term *piṃkama* covers a wider semantic field than what is implied by the Pāli term *puññakamma*. Collocations such as 'life is spiritually meaningless without listening to (and following the path of) *dhamma*' (*banak dahamak nāha iṅdala vāḍak nā*), 'life is spiritually meaningless if one were not to perform an act of charity, an act of merit' (*danak piṅak nokara iṅdala vāḍak nā*), 'if one were to enjoy a happy life one must perform acts of merit' (*sāpa labanda naṃ piṃ karanda onā*), etc., occurring frequently in contemporary Sinhala discourse, give ample expression to the relevance and validity of performing *piṃ*, 'acts of merit'. Abstinence, with understanding, from the commitment of all kinds of 'evil action' (*phāpakamma*) is generally considered as equivalent to the performance of *puṇyakarma*. As to valence, bodily and verbal action are considered more powerful with reference to *phāpakamma*, whereas psychological action is considered more powerful with reference to *kusalakamma*.

What is canonically emphasized with reference to the performance of a *kusalakamma* is the need for mental purity. It is not so much the externalization of a *kusalakamma* that matters as much as the quality of the mind at the preparatory, operative and post-realizational stages of the action. The main aim of doing

a *puṇyakarma* is the gradual attainment of mental purity and perfection, ultimately leading to the realization of *nibbāna*. This state is realized by the systematic training of the mind through the gradual eradication of the three mental 'black-outs', the root-causes of all evil action, namely avarice (*lobha*), ill-will (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*). An action qualifies to be a *puṇyakarma* only if it leads to the eradication of any one or more of these root-causes of evil. That alone leads to a better state of life hereafter.

All these three concepts find expression in popular discourse with the difference that *lobha* is singularly emphasized over others. In popular parlance two terms, *lōbakama* and *tanhāva*, occur, both of which together correspond semantically to the Pāli term *lobha*. Of these, *lōbakama* is generally understood as 'miserliness', that attitude of mind which makes one greedy and desirous of one's own possessions, the non-charitable nature in oneself; whereas *tanhāva* (borrowed from Pāli *tanhā*) is understood as 'one's covetousness', that attitude of mind which makes one crave for other's possession. These two terms denote the individual and social implications, respectively, of *lobha*.

Eradication of *lōbakama* and *tanhāva* is considered as effected through *dāna* 'charitable action'. *Dāna* occupies such a significant position in the scheme of *puṇyakarma* as popularly understood and practised that in most contexts *daṇ*, 'charity', is equated with *piṇ*, 'merit'.

Of the other two root-causes of evil action, *dosa* is referred to by the set of terms *irisīyāva*, 'jealousy', *vayire*, 'ill-will', and *korōde*, 'anger/ill-will'. Parallel to *moha*, the terms current in popular speech are *mōḍakama* and *mulāva* 'delusion', although neither of these sets of terms are powerful enough to communicate the total religio-philosophical implications of *dosa* and *moha*. This semantic inadequacy of the spoken Sinhala sets of terms '*irisīyāva/vayire/korōde*' vis-à-vis Pāli *dosa*, '*modakama/mulava*' vis-à-vis Pāli *moha*, as sharply contrasting with the set '*lōbakama/tanhāva*' covering as wide a semantic range as the Pāli term *lobha*, is fully expressive of the higher ethico-religious importance attributed to an understanding of *lobha*.

As to the realization of a *puṇyakarma*, some tend to believe that the very abstention from doing *paṇ*, 'evil action', constitutes

merit. This attitude is variously expressed in popular discourse. Consider the following expressions: 'to do merit is to abstain from sinning' (*piṃ karandva kiyanne pau nokara inna ekata*); 'if one's mind is pure there is no need to perform any action of merit separately' (*hita piriṣiṇḍu naṃ amutuveṃ piṃ karandva oṇa nā*), meaning thereby that the very mental purity is *puṇyakarma*. Those who hold this view consider all types of formal Buddhist practice as only complementary, but not necessary. There are others who tend to emphasize more the physical realizational aspect of an action to categorize it either as *piṃ* or *pau*. From the customary point of view, *pau* is socially detrimental action. In the popular Buddhist consciousness what seems to dominate conceptually as *pau* are *pāṇaghāta* 'killing of living beings' and, related with it, infliction of pain and torture to living beings, and harming others. Consider, for example, the following discourse piece which characterizes the popular conception of *pau*: 'killing living beings, inflicting pain and torture on living beings, beating, scolding and maltreating one's parents and elders—these are the worst forms of evil action' (*sattu marana eka, sattunta vada himsa karana eka, demaupiyanta vadhihiyanta gahana banina eka, nosalakū arina eka—mevva tamayi lokuma pau*).²² It is also worth noting that the term *paukāraya* 'evil-doer/sinner' is generally used with reference to those who commit the types of offences just described. Also the commitment of these actions are generally feared because of the anticipation of grave repercussions in future lives.

Shunning all types of evil action and directing one's mind to the performance of morally good action constitutes *puṇyakarma*. The ideal mental disposition required in the performance of a *puṇyakarma* is spoken of as *sardāva* (cf. Pāli *saddhā*, Sanskrit *śraddhā*). In colloquial discourse *sardāva* is characterized as a state of mental serenity, cheerfulness of mind bereft of the impingement of covetousness, ill-will and malice. It is a profound state of mind which motivates one to do *puṇyakarma*. This attitude of mind must be developed through right understanding, lest it may drop to the state characterized as *mōḍa sardāva* 'eagerness to do a *puṇyakarma* due to a mere emotional state of the mind like attachment/affection'. To achieve the real benefits of a *puṇyakarma* this attitude

22. From a colloquial conversation.

of the mind described as *sardāva* is a necessary condition, so much so that it is alternatively referred to as *phimhita* 'that attitude of mind motivating one to do merit'.

The consequences of a *puṇyakarma* are two fold: yielding benefits in this life (*pravṛttika*) and leading to a happy life hereafter (*phāṭisandhika*). The most significant distinction between *puṇyakarma* and the *cāritrakarma* and *śāntikarma* is the *phāṭisandhika* aspect of the consequences of *puṇyakarma*. This is verbalized by what is called *prārtanāva*²³ 'wish/aspiration'. The *prārtanāva* is usually given in Pāli, as the linguistic code which is commonly used in the verbalization of certain events in the total structure of a *puṇyakarma* remains chiefly Pāli.

The setting of a *puṇyakarma* can be individual (e.g., an individual's observing *paṇsil*), domestic (e.g., giving alms to monks at one's home), or social (e.g., at a temple or similar place where wider group participation is involved).

As popularly understood, charity (*dāna*) ranks highest in the scale of *puṇyakarma*. A distinction must be made between two types of charitable action, *dāna*, 'donation', and *pūjā*, 'offerings/respect'.²⁴ These find four distinct expressions in colloquial Sinhala: (1) *dāma/denava*, 'giving', (2) *dāne/damḍāma*, 'alms-giving/donation', (3) *pūjāva/pūjā karanava*, 'offer, dedicate', and (4) *vañḍinava/vāṇḍāma*, 'homage'. For convenience the first two will be referred to here as *dāna* and the latter two as *pūjā*. It is interesting to note that all these terms (basically and almost exclusively) imply the inter-human relationship with reference to charitable action.²⁵ Of the two terms, *dāna*, and *pūjā*, the latter has the specialized sense of 'dedicating/appropriating on offering to the *sāsana*', and as such it is indicative of a greater 'sacredness' than *dāna*, which is more general.

Both *dāma* and *dāne* imply the 'giving away of something', the necessary condition being that it must be accepted. The recipient can be of any status: inferior, equal or superior to the donor. Of these *dāne* has the special sense of 'alms-giving'. The more

23. Prārtanāva—usually stated in the verse 'by this merit may I not fall into the company of the unwise; may I always attain the company of the wise until I realize Nibbāna'.

24. C.P. *Dānam cadhanne cariyāca—Pūjāca Pūjanīyānam (mahā mangala sutta)*.

25. With reference to gods and other spirits a totally different set of terms is used to imply 'offering'.

important, the more valuable, the dearer a given object to a donor (as well as to the recipient), its giving is considered as accruing more merit. Consequently the donation of one's own parts of the body, also the freeing of a person or animal from execution (*abhaya-dāna*) are considered as higher forms of *pim*. However, in the popular Buddhist consciousness, what figures as *dāna* is chiefly 'alms giving'. *Dāna* also involves participation. It is a social act and a social virtue. A *dāna* performed by making others also participants in it is considered superior to a *dāna* performed by a single donor bearing the total expenses. The propelling thought in giving a *dāna* is the expectation to be reborn in happy states of life hereafter until one attains *nibbāna* in the *sāsana* of the future Buddha Maitreya. Often heard expressions, such as 'it is only if one gives that one gets' (*dunnot tamayi läbenne*), 'it is those who have done charitable actions in their past lives that enjoy comforts in this life' (*pera daṃ dunna ayayi dāṃ säpa viñḍinne*), testify to this.

The idea *da ut accipere* must not be literally interpreted. The wish to be reborn in happy states of life (as among gods and men) is not merely to get better dividends for one's generosity and charity, but only because by being so born will one be able to do *puṇyakaṛma*. Besides, there is also the reinforcing belief that one is destined to be reborn many times at least until the dawn of the *sāsana* of the Buddha Maitreya. This belief and faith make the performance of any *puṇyakaṛma* a more purposive action. The governing factor in the performance of a *dāna* is the powerful thought and determination (*adistāne*) to part with even what little one has.²⁶

Of the different types of *dāna*, that which is considered as procuring higher benefits and advantages in this life and life to come (*mahat phala mahānisaṃsa*) is the *sāṅgika dāna* (Pāli: *sāṅghika dāna*), a *dāna* given to the order of monks, for the acceptance of which there must be present at least four higher ordained monks. Such a *dāna* is offered either by inviting the monks to one's home, with due ceremony and respect, or by taking the alms to the temple and making the offering there. Every Buddhist naturally prefers the first because the very presence of the monks in one's home in

26. *Lōvādasaṅgarāva*, vs. 108.

such a context is considered representative of the presence of the *Saṅgha*, 'the whole order of monks both past and present',²⁷ and hence is considered a great blessing.

The key structural points in the formal realization of a *sāṅgīka dāne* are as follows:

(1) *Buddhapūjā*, the symbolic offering of alms to the Buddha (at the buddha-statue). This is usually done at the temple. *Buddhapūjā* has the three main components, water-offering (*phāṃ pūjā*), food-offering (*āhāra pūjā*), and 'beetle-chew offering' (*tāmbūla pūjā*). In this context *buddhapūjā* is a componential *puṇyakarma* within the structure of the major *dāna puṇyakarma*. It commences with the observing of *paṇsil* with the *tisarāṇa* by the devotees; then the three *pūjās*, *phāṃ pūjā*, *āhāra pūjā*, and *tāmbūla pūjā* in that order are formally pronounced to have been offered by the recitation of the relevant Pāli stanzas.²⁸ This is followed by the transference of merit to departed ones, gods, spirits, and all living beings, which is followed by the *prārtanāva*, 'aspiration', which concludes this *puṇyakarma*.

(2) At home or at the temple where the actual alms giving takes place, the first item is the observing of *paṇsil* with the *tisarāṇa* which is administered by one of the monks. This is quite meaningful in that it helps the lay participants to fully focus their attention on the *puṇyakarma* about to be performed, thus composing their mind, drawing it away from all types of distracted thoughts. It is also significant in that it enables the lay participants to establish themselves in *sīla* 'virtue', immediately prior to the performance of the *dāna puṇyakarma*. The establishing of oneself in *paṇsil* with the three refuges is thus symbolic of one's cleansing of the mind of all impurities conditionally.

(3) Then follows an admonitory discourse (*anusāsanāva*) by one of the monks expounding and extolling the advantages (*ānisaṃsa*) of giving a *sāṅgīkadāne*.

(4) Then there is the dedication of the prepared alms and the other requisites (*pirikara*) to the *Saṅgha*. *Pirikara* can sometimes include also an *aṭṭapirikara*. The offering of an *aṭṭapirikara*

27. The disciples of the Buddha beginning with Sāriyat and Mugalan.

28. Each of the offerings are accompanied with Pāli stanzas.

is generally regarded as a higher form of merit. This dedication of the *dāne* along with *pirikara* (with or without an *atāpirikara*) is called *pūjākaranava*. This dedication is formalized by one of the senior monks administering the following dedicatory stanza three times, which is repeated by the lay participants:

*saparikkhāraṃ (sātṭha parikkhāraṃ)
imaṃ bhikkhaṃ bhikkhu saṃghassa dema*

'We dedicate these alms together with the requisites (eight requisites) to the community of monks'. This dedication marks the spiritual completion of the *sāṅgīka dāna puṇyakarma*.

(5) It is after this dedication that the monks are individually served with food and drinks. After they have finished eating, the requisites are individually offered.

(6) A typified discourse is given by one of the monks extolling the advantages of giving a *dāna*, and instructing the laymen to rejoice in the *puṇyakarma* they have just performed. This is technically known as the *bhuktānumodanāva*, and is a kind of spiritual thanksgiving.

(7) Then there is the chanting of the wish-fulfilment and the benedictory stanzas in unison by all the monks present.

(8) Next there is the transference of merit accrued thereby to gods, spirits and other beings, and to one's own departed relatives.

(9) The *prārtanāva*, aspiration, concludes the formal performance of a *sāṅgīkadāne* which is an externalization of the *puṇyakarma* called *dāna*.

Under other categories of *dāne* one may mention *yadinnaṅṅa pulannaṅṅa dena dāne*, 'alms given to beggars and needy people'. *Yadinna* means a beggar who actually asks for charity, whereas *pulanna* is a person needy of food, but who nevertheless does not beg or ask anyone for food. How one would recognize a *pulanna* cannot be formally stated. It is a part of the culture and the religious consciousness that leads to this recognition. The alms given to a *pulanna* is considered as more meritorious than that given to a *yadinna* or *hiṅganna*, 'beggar'. *Dāne* is also given to animals and birds, and a representative category is the *balu-kapuṭṭu-dāne*, 'food given to dogs and crows'. Of the animals and birds, these (i.e., dogs and crows) alone are considered as the most insatiable, and feeding such a creature is also considered an act of merit.

We may also include *piṃdīma/piṃ anumōdan karavīma* 'transference of merit that one has accrued, or enabling another person to participate in the spiritual joy that has accrued to one by the performance of an act of merit'. Transference of merit to gods and to the departed kinsmen (*deyyaṇṇa, malagiya ṇātīnta piṃ dīma*) is an inextricable constituent in the technical structure of any *puṇyakarma*. Hence this is usually done more as a ritual, except, of course, when one is *still* experiencing the grief over a departed one, in which case one's religious consciousness is fully awakened and the merit transference becomes a more meaningful activity. To the learned, the transference of merit (especially to the departed ones) is philosophically significant as reflective of the fact that life is essentially characterized by death. Qualitatively, enabling another human being to enjoy in the spiritual joy one is experiencing by the performance of a *puṇyakarma* (*piṃ anumōdan karavīma*) is of greater significance. Transference of merit to gods, spirits and departed ones can almost be ritualistically performed, because one's disposition can be somewhat neutral, whereas in relation to another human being one has a definite emotional attitude. Ideally, in the case of *piṃ anumōdan karavīma* one strives to achieve a state of equanimity. Usually it is the merit accrued by the worship of shrines and sacred places that is so transferred to another human being. This type of sympathetic participation is considered equivalent to one's own visiting and worshipping at those respective shrines and sacred spots.

Pūjās (and *phūjākaranava*) occur in the sense of an offering dedicated to the *sāsana*, i.e., either to the Buddha or to the *Saṅgha*. A *phūjā* to the Buddha can be only symbolical. Hence a *phūjā* to the Buddha can be externalized only in the form of worship and homage (*vāṇḍima/vaṇḍanā kīvīma*) or an offering made to the *cetiya* which enshrines his relics, or the *bodhi*-tree which has been associated with him, and the *paṭimā*, 'the image of the Buddha'. Depending on their representational proximity to the Buddha, these main objects of worship are referred to as *sāvirika* 'bodily relics' (*cetiya*), *phāribhogika*, 'objects used by the Buddha (e.g., *bodhi*-tree)' and *uddesika*, 'objects symbolic of Buddha (*paṭimā*)'. Any full-fledged Buddhist temple will have a *cetiya*, a *bodhi*-tree and a *vihāre*, 'shrine-room for Buddha-*paṭimā*', usually located within the same precincts. Accordingly, the order of worship is first the *cetiya*,

then the *bodhi*-tree, and finally the *paṭimā*. In worshipping the *cetiya* and the *bodhi*-tree devotees usually circumambulate them to the right (*pradakṣiṇā*) three times with folded hands, as a mark of very high respect. The usual offerings made to the Buddha are water (*paṇ*), food (*āhāra*), flowers (*mal*), lamps (*phaṇ*), incense (*suvaṇḍadam*) and tea and soft drinks (*gilampasa*). 'Food and drinks' symbolically offered to the Buddha is called *buddhapūjēva*. Regular offering of *buddhapūjēva* is a temple duty.

All these offerings, apart from being a way of showing reverence and respect to the Buddha as a great teacher, also provide an ideal occasion for the lay devotees to contemplate the extraordinary virtues of the Buddha, and for one to attempt to follow in his foot steps. These acts of worship are made more sacred and meaningful by one's reciting the accompanying Pāli stanzas. As an example, the following stanzas are commonly recited in offering:

I offer at the sacred lotus feet of the Buddha, the Lord of sages, this collection of flowers, fresh-hued and fragrant.

vaṇṇa-gandha-guṇo petam—etaṃ kusuma santatiṃ

pūjayāmi munindassa—sivīpāda saroruhe

With this flower I revere the Buddha. May I attain final-bliss (*nibbāna*) by this merit.

Just as this flower withers away, so does my body reach a state of destruction.

pūjemi buddhaṃ kusumena rena

puññēname tena ca hotu mokkhaṃ

puṇṇam milāyāti yathā idamme

kāyo tathā yāti vināsabhāvam

Apart from being the aesthetically most beautiful thing which one could offer in reverence to such a great teacher, the flower is also remarkably indicative of quick evanescence. The flower is also an object that is readily available in Sri Lanka and can be gotten by anyone. And one need not necessarily go to a shrine room to offer a flower to the Buddha. The very sight of a flower is a pleasing experience. Reminding oneself of the great virtues of the Buddha, and with that contemplation if one were to offer a flower anywhere in the name of the Buddha, that act itself is considered a great *puṇyakarma*.

• As an instance of a *pūjā* made to the Saṅgha the offering of *kaṭhiṇa-cīvara* can be mentioned. *Kaṭhiṇa-cīvara* refers to the yellow robe offered to the Saṅgha at the end of the *vas* retreat. Retreat season (which is from August to October) is quite significant especially in the villages. It is during this season that the laity and the Saṅgha are brought closely together, and their relationship strengthened. During this period the laity has especially to attend to all the needs of the monks who are spending the retreat. Usually, the monks are invited by the lay-donois (*dāyakaṃyo*) to spend the retreat at the temple. Throughout this season, almost every evening, the laity makes it a point to visit the temple, engage themselves in such religious activities as worship of the Buddha with offerings of flowers etc., and also attending to the needs of the monks. Monks favour the laity by the exposition of *dhamma*. The end of the *vas* season is marked by the offering of the *kaṭhiṇa-cīvara* to the Saṅgha, which is done with due ceremony. This is generally referred to as the *kaṭina piṃkama*.

On the day the *kaṭina piṃkama* is due to take place, the white cloth for the *kaṭhiṇa-cīvara*, called the *kaṭina redda* or simply *kaṭine*, is brought in procession to the temple in the early morning. This is called 'bringing the *kaṭina*-cloth' (*kaṭine vāḍammanava*). Devotees participate in this religious activity with much interest and enthusiasm. At different spots, on either side of the road through which the *kaṭina* procession (*kaṭina perahāra*) is conducted, devotees gather, eager to participate in this *puṇyakarma*, at least by simply touching with both hands, in great respect, the *kaṭina*-cloth (*kaṭina pirikara*). At the temple, the *kaṭina*-cloth is handed over to the monks, who will cut it, stitch it, dye it (with saffron colour) and dry it on the same day, so that it is ready for wearing by one of the *vas*-observing monks that very same night. This offering of the *kaṭina*-cloth is called '*kaṭina pūja karanava*'. Theoretically, this dedication is made to the Saṅgha, 'the community of monks'. In this instance, it becomes the common property of all the monks who observed *vas* at that particular temple. These monks decide among themselves who should materially receive the *kaṭhiṇa-cīvara*. The monk who becomes the recipient of the *kaṭhiṇa-cīvara* will wear it on that night and preach the *dhamma* to the lay devotees assembled. The theme of this sermon is *kaṭhiṇāniśamsa* 'extolling the advantages of offering a *kaṭhiṇa-cīvara* to the Saṅgha'.

Another situation which clearly portrays the religiousness of the practising Buddhist is the *pōya* day. *Pōya* is determined by the phases of the moon; there are two in the waning and two in the waxing periods. Of these, it is the full-moon day which is usually understood as the *pōya*. This day is marked by the performance of the *puṇyakarmas*, virtue (*sīla*), and meditation (*bāvanā*). By *sīla* the average Buddhist understands the observance of the eight precepts called *aṭṭasil*. The persons who observe *sīla* are referred to by the term *upāsaka*. *Pōya* is significant for the practising Buddhist because it reinforces his ethical conduct and reminds him of the focus of his religious life. *Sīla*, 'virtue', is the step leading to *samādhi*, 'concentration, mental purity'; however, *sīla* is understood only *ethically* by the average Buddhist. On the *pōya* day, usually early in the morning, the *upāsakas*, clad in white, carrying trays of flowers and incense in hand, go to the temple and observe the eight-precepts specific of morally virtuous conduct (*aṭṭasil*) by repeating these precepts under the guidance of a monk.

After the morning observance, they engage themselves in such religious activities as worship of the Buddha, listening to *dhamma*, reading of *dhamma* texts, or meditation. Then there is the evening observance which is a renewal of the *sīla*. At night they will listen to an exposition of *dhammā* given by a monk. On the following morning termination of the *pōya* observances (*phavāraṇe*) takes place. This is done by again taking upon oneself the observance of *paṇsil*. For the common Buddhist, meditation (*bāvanā*) is an accompaniment of *sīla*, and therefore those who observe *sīla* on this day also engage in meditation. More than mental concentration, *bāvanā*, for the common Buddhist is actually the verbalization of the text-pieces which are also made topical in *bāvanā*. Contemplation of the virtues of the Buddha, *Dhamma*, and Saṅgha contemplation of the thirty-two putrid aspects of the human body, and 'expansion of loving kindness' (*maitrī bāvanā*) figure prominently among the common Buddhist.

The most significant *pōyas* for Sri Lanka Buddhists are (1) *vesak*, 'full moon day of May', (2) *poṣon*, 'full moon day of June', (3) *āsala*, 'full moon day of July', (4) *nikini*, which is generally called the '*vas-pōya*', 'full moon day of August', and (5) *durutu*, 'full moon day of January'.

Of these, *vesak*, which commemorates the birth, the enlightenment of the passing away of Buddha, is the most important *pōya* day of all the Buddhists. It is additionally significant for Sri Lankan Buddhists, because it also marks two of the visits of the Buddha to this island, in one of which he is said to have made the imprint of his sacred foot on the crest of *Śrīpāda*, 'Adam's Peak' and in the other he is said to have consecrated sixteen shrines. *Poson* marks the introduction of *Buddha-dharma* to Sri Lanka by the *Arahant* Mahinda. It also marks the establishment of the order of monks in the land. This is, hence, considered second in importance only to *vesak*. *Āsala* is significant as commemorative of the preaching of the first sermon (the *Dhammacakkapavattanasutta*) by the Buddha, the first *vas* observance in Sri Lanka, the laying of the foundation stones for the construction of the Ruvanvālisāya caitya, the enshrinement of the relics of the Buddha and *Arahants* at Ruvanvālisāya, and the commencement of the *daladā perahāra*, in honour of the sacred tooth-relic of the Buddha. *Nikini* is important for the commencement of the *vas* retreat which takes place in this month. *Durutu* is of the great religious significance for Sri Lankan Buddhists because it marks the first visit of the Buddha to this island.

Of all these *pōya* days, *vesak* can be singularly marked as the day which is most vibrant with religious activity, some of which are (1) the performance of the *puṇyakarma* of *sīla* (and *bāvanā*) by the great majority of Buddhists; (2) the performance of the *puṇyakarma* of *dāna* in all its possible dimensions, as vividly represented by *dan sīlas* for the purpose of serving of way-weary pilgrims and travellers with foods and drinks; (3) the performance of *ālokapūjā*, the *puṇyakarma* of 'worship with light', which is magnificently displayed by *vesak*-pandals; and (4) active and ardent participation in other forms of temple worship.

Apart from the ceremony and ritual accompanying a *pōya* day, which is both interesting and pleasing to the mind not only of the participant but also of the observer, what is nuclear from the religious angle is *sīla* and *bāvanā*. Observing *sil* is neither a custom nor a social obligation. It is purely an individual affair. Among those who observe *sil* on a *pōya* day it is the older age group that dominates.

Some of the motivating factors for the observation of *sīla*, that one can note through conversations with people of different age groups, are as follows: (1) to have observed *sil* on as many *pōya* days as possible is considered, generally by the adults, as one of the great merits, the remembrance of which will be a very consoling thought at the hour of death, or when one is seriously ill; (2) it serves as a firm determination—a powerful source for self-confidence; (3) as a help in the fulfillment of one's aims, desires, (e.g., a girl might keep on observing *sil* with the aim of getting a good partner or her mind's choice; and a married woman might observe *sil* with a view to attain better family harmony and happiness); (4) as a help in freeing one from danger and harm. Of these only the first emphasizes the *puṇyakarma* aspect of *sīla*, while the others tend to stress the more immediately beneficial aspect.

Cāritrakarma

Cāritrakarma refers to religious activity done as a matter of custom, the performance of which is more or less obligatory from a social point of view. As a member of the Buddhist society one is normally expected to perform such action.

A classic example for this mode of action is the *pāṃsakūla* rite. This is performed at the death of a person. Before the dead-body is finally removed for disposal, monks are invited to the home of the departed one, and are offered seats well-arranged. The casket carrying the dead body is placed before them, and white cloth (*mataka vastra*) is offered to the monks on behalf of the dead person, as an act of merit for him. The closest relatives, friends and others then observe *pansil* with *tisarāṇa* administered by a monk. This is followed by a doctrinal sermon made by one of the monks touching upon the three characteristics, realities of all component things (*saṅkhārā*), as taught in the Theravāda tradition, namely that all component things are impermanent (*anicca*), non-substantial (*dukkha*), and 'not soul' (*anattā*). Then all the monks chant in unison the following two Pāli stanzas, the first of which characterizes the characteristics of the *saṅkhārā*, the second being a sympathetic expression for the transference of merit (accruing from observing *pansil*, offering the *mataka vastra*, and listening to the doctrinal sermon) to the departed one:

All component things indeed are impermanent, they are characterized by rise and decay; having arisen they are destroyed; their cessation is happiness.

*aniccā vata sankhārā—uppāda vaya dhammino
uppajjitvā virujjhanti—tesaṃ vūpasamo sukho.*

Just as rivers full of water fill the ocean; even so the merit given here will accrue to the departed ones.

*yathā vārivahāpūrā—paripūrenti sāgaram
evameva ito dinnam—petānam upakappati.*

Sāntikarma

Sāntikarma represents those religious activities performed basically for benefit in this life. The best example for this is the *pirit* ceremony, i.e., the ceremonial chanting of a selected set of Pāli *suttas*, 'discourses', constituting the text popularly known as the '*pirit pota*'. *Pirit* ceremonies are held both at temples and at homes. In most temples, the *pirit* ceremony is held as an annual feature. Its purpose is to bring good fortune to the supporting village, unless, of course, it is an item of a larger *piṅkama* like enshrining relics in a *cetiya*, etc. *Pirit* chanting in a home is held for numerous reasons: to dispel the malfeasance of an evil spirit that is either haunting the place or a member of the family; to invoke blessing on a person who is ill; to bless a newly built house before moving into it; to invoke the blessings of the *tunsaraṇa* (i.e., the Buddha, *Dhamma* and Saṅgha) before one's marriage; to invoke blessing on a pregnant woman for easy delivery; and to invoke blessing prior to one's departure to a distant country. Of the *pirit* ceremonies held in a home, the most important one is the 'whole night *pirit* chanting' (*tuntispayē piritā*). A special pavilion is erected for this performance. Usually this ceremony commences around 9.00 p.m. and continues until dawn. At the time the monks are invited to enter, the casket of relics, and the *pirit pota* are also brought in procession, and are placed in the pavilion. These are supposed to be representative of the presence of the Buddha, *Dhamma* and Saṅgha, at the moment, in that home. As with any religious activity, this also commences with the observing of *pansil* with *tisaraṇa* by the devotees. After this a short admonitory discourse is made by a monk describing the benefits of the performance of a *pirit* ceremony. This is followed by the formal invitation by the laity to the monks to chant *pirit*. This is done by repeating the following verse after a monk:

In order to avert calamity, and in order to achieve all prosperity, to dispel all suffering, all fear, all diseases, proclaim to us the auspicious *pirit*.

vipatti paṭibāhāya—sabba sampatti siddhiyā

sabba dukkha vināsāya ...

sabba bhaya vināsāya ...

sabba roga vināsāya—parittaṃ brūtha mangalam.

This verse graphically describes the purpose and functions of *pirit* in popular Buddhist practice. Almost all the *suttas* chanted are discourses of the Buddha and as such do not have any mystic efficacy. The efficaciousness is generated in the minds of a devoted laity in this religious context.

Through the complex world-view of the Sinhala Buddhist and the many and intricate practices in which he participates, a fundamental orientation to life is apparant; to overcome greed, to develop a capacity to give, to eradicate suffering in the hope that somehow, sometime *nibbāna* might be attained. This gives us a glimpse of the religiousness of Buddhists in Sri Lanka.

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THE RELIGIOUS JOURNEY INTO
(DHARMAYĀTRĀ) DHAMMA :
BUDDHIST PILGRIMAGE AS AN
EXPRESSION OF RELIGIOUSNESS

S. L. KEKULAWALA

The Context¹

When *man* (*homo*) became *discerning* (*sapiens*), he would have asked some questions about himself, his immediate environment and his future; questions such as those succinctly stated in the introductory *mantra* of the *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* (1.1)—‘What is the cause? Is it *Brahman*? Whence are we born? Why do we live? Where is our final rest? Under whose orders are we, who know the *Brahman*, subjected to the law of happiness, and misery?’²

The first question posed in this *mantra* lies at the foundation of philosophical thought. What is the ultimate cause of the Universe?

1. This is an attempt merely to *introduce* the ethico-religious basis of Buddhist pilgrimage. It is an expression of the thoughts, feelings and experience of a Buddhist, with some knowledge of the *Dhamma*, brought up in a traditional Buddhist home, run by a deeply beloved mother well-versed in the performance of Buddhist practice, endowed with *saddhā*, *sīla*, *hīri*, *ottappa*, *suta* and *cāga*, deeply conscious of the necessity to develop *paññā*, in order to reach the oasis of *vimutti*, crossing over the trials and tribulations besetting the desert of *saṃsāric* existence—to her, life was one long pilgrimage, which nevertheless would one day bring her to the desired Haven of Peace.
2. The *Upaniṣads* constitute a set of sacred works of a mystico-philosophical nature, closely associated with the orthodox Vedic traditions of India. The more authoritative of them are pre-Buddhistic, and are held as one of the three sources of sacred knowledge, or the *prasthānatraya*. For a comprehensive introduction to Upaniṣadic philosophy and a very readable English translation of the *Upaniṣads*, see S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, London, 1953.

How did all this come to be? Should everything have a cause, and if so what is its nature—time, nature, law, chance, matter, energy, intelligence—neither of these, nor a combination of these?

The second question is equally important. It deals with our attempt to understand the nature, the mystery of both our own 'existence' here on earth and that of everything, animate and inanimate, that goes to form our environment, the world in which we live and die.

And this brings us to the third and fourth questions which have vexed the mind of man since time immemorial: the mystery of life and the equally ubiquitous problem of death. The origin and purpose of life, its relationship to the rest of the universe, the ultimate destiny of the individual—what is death and what happens thereafter—all these have been of paramount importance to the discerning mind throughout recorded history, in all climes, cultures and civilizations.

The fourth question deals with the eternal duality of life: Why should happiness and misery (*sukha* and *dukkha*) pervade our life? Under whose control are these dual varieties? Is man free, or is he in bondage, divine or otherwise? Is there a way out of this web, this seemingly impenetrable tangle?

The same questions have been asked in the *Samyutta Nikāya*³ but more existentially: 'a web within, a web without; the multitude is webbed in by the web; I ask of you, O Gotama, who indeed would unweb this web?' And Gotama, the Buddha, is said to have replied thus: 'The man of discernment who, having firmly taken

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3. The situation is dramatized; a deity is said to have visited the Buddha, and asked him the question:

*Anto jaṭā bahi jaṭā
 Jaṭāya jaṭitā pajā
 Taṃ taṃ Gotama pucchāma
 Ko imaṃ vijaṭaye jaṭaṃ.*

And the Buddha replies:

*Sile patitṭhāya nava sapañño
 Cittam paññaṃ ca bhāvayaṃ
 Atāpi nipako Bhikkhū
 So imaṃ vijaṭaye jaṭaṃ.*

These two *gāthās* form the theme of the most celebrated non-canonical Buddhist text, the *Visuddhimagga* of Buddhaghosācariya, second only to the canon itself in authority.

his stand on proper/virtuous behaviour (*sīla*) cultivates his mind (*citta*) and cognition (*paññā*),—the diligent, and self-possessed⁴ *bhikkhu*—he indeed would unweb this web.’

The Ethico-religious basis of Dharmayātrā

The whole of Buddhist practice,⁵ from the prerequisites, to the ultimate result can be summarized without the risk of extensive distortion.

(1) A man must have the initial qualification of a discerning intellect (*sapañño naro*) in order to understand that he is faced with the problem of the cycle of life, or *samsāra*, and that he must solve the problem somehow.

(2) Ideally, such a man in pursuance of the promptings of his own discerning nature, would renounce worldly ties; thus in the final analysis he is a *bhikkhu*, a man who has no material belongings of his own. Hence he is diligent (*ātāpī*) in attempting the realization of his one quest, and he is self-possessed, master of himself (*nīpako*).

(3) Again, his discerning nature prompts him to take his stand on *sīla* or the correct behavioural attitude to life (correct because that particular attitude is the one which is best suited, most conducive, to the realization of his goal). This includes right speech (*sammāvācā*), right action (*sammā kammanta*), right livelihood (*sammā ājīva*), and living accordingly.

4. *Nīpaka*—‘Self-possessed’. The P.T.S. *Pali Dictionary* translates this as ‘intelligent, clever, prudent, wise’. Franklin Edgerton in his *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary* gives its meaning as ‘chief’, ‘wise’, ‘prudent’; he also gives a possible meaning ‘constantly self-possessed’. In the present context the latter meaning is the best; a *bhikkhu* who is *akiñcana*, i.e., who possesses nothing, is indeed ‘self-possessed’.

5. In Buddhist psychological ethics, the ‘standard code of religious practice’ leading to final emancipation comprises a threefold division:

- (1) *sīlakkhandha* or *sīlasampadā*, code of moral duties,
- (2) *samādhikkhandha* or *cittasampadā*, code of emotional duties, i.e., the practice of concentration and meditation, and
- (3) *paññākkhandha* or *paññāsampadā*, code of intellectual duties, or practice of the attainment of highest knowledge. See P.T.S. *Dictionary*, sv.

(4) He develops his mind (*citta*) through right effort (*sammā vāyāma*), right mindfulness (*sammā sati*), right concentration (*sammā samādhi*) to such an extent that he attains the highest knowledge (*paññā*) which involves right understanding (*sammā ditthi*) and right thought (*sammā saṅkappa*), and thus being released from the web of life he attains *vimutti* or final emancipation from the bonds of *saṃsāra*.

Thus the attainment of *vimutti*, the *summum bonum* of life in Buddhist thought, is seen to be the final outcome of an individualistic psychological process of gradual refinement consciously developed by each individual,⁶ taking his stand upon an ethical behavioural attitude to life which is most suited for his needs; this attitude is technically called *sīla*.

The web in which man is entangled is woven with the three-fold strands of passion, lust or craving (*rāga*), ill-will (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) which have to be given up if one is to attain true knowledge and serenity of mind.⁷ Of these, *rāga* is the strongest, and mention is often made that man attains *vimutti* by cutting off craving.⁸ Again *rāga* and *dosa* are jointly said to be the cause of

6. *Tumhehi kiccaṃ ātappam
Akkhātāro Tathāgatā. Dhammapada, 276.*

'You yourself must strive; the Tathāgatas are (only) guides'.

7. *Appaṃ pi ce sahitaṃ bhāsamāno, dhammassa hoti anudhammacāri
Rāgaṃ ca dosaṃ ca pahāya mohaṃ sammappajāno suvimuttacitto
Anupādiyano idha vā huraṃ vā, sa bhāgava sāmaññassa hoti
Dhammapada, 20.*

'Even if he recites only a small number, if he is one who acts rightly in accordance with the law, he, having forsaken passion, hatred, and folly, being possessed of true knowledge and serenity of mind, being free from worldly desires, both in this world and the next, has a share in the religious life'. S. Radhakrishnan's translation, London, 1954.

8. *Ye rāgarattānupatanti sotam sayam katam makkatāko va jālam
Etaṃ pi chetvāna vajanti dhīrā anapekkinno sabbadukkhaṃ pāhāya*

'Those who are slaves to passions follow the stream (of craving) as a spider the web which he has made himself. Wise people, when they have cut this (craving), leave the world, free from cares, leaving all sorrow behind.' Radhakrishnan's translation.

man's sorrow, which when removed he attains freedom;⁹ and the man who would quickly clear the path to *nibbāna* is the wise man who is fortified by *sīla*.¹⁰

The practice of *sīla* is obstructed by *rāga* and *dosa* which are the positive and negative aspects of the same basic emotion of the feeling of 'I' and 'mine'—i.e., the feeling of possessiveness. *Rāga* and *dosa* give rise to *moha*, which is the negative condition of the mind, the positive condition of which is *paññā*. This negative condition is to be eliminated by removing the feeling of 'I' and 'mine', manifested by *rāga* and *dosa*. *Dāna* (liberality) is the first step in one's attempt to get rid of *rāga* and *dosa*. When one's *rāga* and *dosa* are subdued even momentarily, for that moment at least one is able to practise *sīla*. When through the practise of *sīla* the mind is directed towards the purification of the taints of *rāga* and *dosa*, it is ready to undertake the practise of *bhāvanā*¹¹, which leads on to the attainment of *samādhi*. The latter, when adequately developed, culminates in the individual's realization of *paññā* which in its turn dispels *moha*, facilitating the attainment of *vimutti*, freedom from the travails of *samsāra*. Thus *sīla*, or ethico-religious, virtuous behaviour, is the corner-stone in the construction of the mansion of wisdom (*paññāpāsāda*) which every Buddhist hopes to build for himself sooner or later in his sojourn through *samsāra*.¹²

9. *Siñca bhikkhu imaṃ nāvaṃ sittā te lahuṃ essati chetvā rāgaṃ ca dosaṃ ca tato nibbānaṃ ehisi. Dhammapada, 369.*

'Empty the boat, O mendicant; when emptied it will go lightly. Having cut off passion and hatred then you will go to freedom'. Radhakrishnan's translation.

10. *Etam atthavasam natvā paṇḍito sīlasamvuto
Nibbānagamanam maggaṃ khippaṃ eva visodhaye.
Dhammapada, 289.*

Realizing the significance of this, the wise and righteous man should even quickly clear the path leading to release'. Radhakrishnan's translation.

11. Literally, 'development', i.e., the development of the mind through concentration and meditation.

12. *Sīla* is called 'initial good', *ādikalyāṇa* because through *sīla*, one's mind is happy and unperturbed. This leads on to *samādhi* which is called 'medial good' *majjhekalyāṇa*, because concentration allows one to attain *paññā*, which is called 'final good', *pariyosānakalyāṇa*, because one now understands things as they are. This understanding brings upon him a feeling of disgust in regard to passion, which he therefore gets rid of, thus attaining *vimutti*. See *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, V.2.

The religious experience undergirding Buddhist pilgrimage is intimately connected with various aspects of *sīla*, the practices connected with which lead one on to those destined to develop *samādhi* and *paññā*.

Sīla is primarily *saṃvara*, self-discipline or restraint. This involves the two fold process of active participation in and conscious refraining from certain forms of behaviour—*cāritta sīla*, and *vāritta sīla* respectively. The former includes virtue in thought, virtue of non-transgression of precepts, discarding of non-virtue and the undertaking of virtue. A conception of *sīla* such as this is envisaged in those virtuous practices which have been laid down for (1) fully ordained monks and nuns, called *ṭṭimokkha saṃvara sīla*, (2) male and female novices called *dasasīla* and (3) laymen called *pañcasīla* and *aṭṭhāṅga sīla*.

The traditional four fold classification of *sīla* as virtue of the rules-of-the-order-restraint (*ṭṭimokkha saṃvara sīla*), virtue of the purity of livelihood (*ājīvaṭṭisuddhi sīla*), virtue of faculty restraint (*indriya saṃvara sīla*), and virtue connected with the requisites (*paccaya-sannissita sīla*) is sufficiently wide to cover the three categories of (1) monks and nuns, (2) novices and (3) laymen, mentioned above.

Ṭṭimokkha saṃvara sīla involves the cleaning of one's surroundings, the service to the sick, the old and the virtuous, the worship of one's teachers and elders, *dāgobas* and *Bodhi*-trees, the feeding of one's acquaintances, the avoidance of association with kings and ministers, harlots and heretics, the refraining from witnessing scenes of merry-making, study and practice of the *Dhamma*, and bearing oneself properly in dress and manners, etc. These are some of the duties of the active aspect of *ṭṭimokkha saṃvara sīla*. The other aspect, that of consciously refraining from certain aspects of behaviour, involves the abstaining from the ten paths of evil.

Indriya saṃvara sīla, as the very term suggests, is restraint or mindfulness of the five senses, (which includes the mind also in the traditional enumeration) from *lobha* (greed), *dosa* and *moha* in regard to their objects; i.e., the eye or the faculty of sight from *lobha*, *dosa*, *moha* with regard to form; the ear or the faculty of

hearing, regarding sound; the nose or that of smell, regarding odour; the tongue or that of taste, regarding flavour; the body or that of touch, regarding the tangible; and mind, regarding phenomena.

Ājīvapārisuādhisīla, virtuous propriety of livelihood refers to abstinence from taking life, stealing, sexual misbehaviour, uttering falsehood and slander, roughness in speech, fruitless and garrulous talk, and living a righteous life refraining from deceitful talk with regard to one's virtue or attainments.

Paccayasannissitasīla means virtuous conduct with reference to the four requisites,¹³ avoiding *lobha*, *dosa*, *moha* with regard to these, considering that they are but necessities of life, to be enjoyed only to sustain life for the purpose of crossing over *samsāra*.

Sīla as outlined above is an integral part of the life of a Buddhist from day to day and every moment.¹⁴ Life in its entirety is a pilgrimage to the discerning Buddhist in his perigrinations through the ocean of *samsāra*, which he crosses in the redoubtable boat of *sīla*, and any specific visit to a holy place is but a special occasion for the more intensive performance of activities connected with the *sanātana* pilgrimage of daily life. Hence what one does on a pilgrimage is but an extension of what one is expected to do or actually does in every-day life. And so I will mention in brief those central practices that form an integral part in the life of a Buddhist, both in his day-to-day life, and in a specific visit to a holy place.¹⁵

'Provisions for the Road'

Whether at home, or at a holy place, far or near, every specific act of worship or of any other kind of religious practice of a Buddhist is preceded by the uttering of a set formula of adoration to the Buddha (*namaskārapāṭha*) and the taking up of the three refuges

13. *Cīvara* (robes), *piṇḍapāta* (alms), *senāsana* (a place to live in), *gilānappacca* (medicinal requisites).

14. As a smith removes the impurities of silver, even so let a wise man remove the impurities of himself one by one, little by little, and from time to time'. *Dhammapada*, 239; Radhakrishnan's translation.

15. A man should practice virtuous conduct with the sort of care with which an ant protects its egg, a yak his tail, a man his only son or his sole eye'. *Visuddhimagga*, 36.

upon oneself (*saraṇāgamana*). This is usually followed by the observance of the five precepts (*pañca sīla*) unless one takes upon oneself the eight precepts (*aṭṭhaṅga sīla*), or the ten precepts (*dasa sīla*).

The *namaskārapāṭha*, 'My humble salutation to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, The Perfectly Enlightened One',¹⁶ forms the very first utterance of every single religious act, whether it be the individual, private act of worship on the part of a Buddhist devotee, or the religio-social act of a group of individuals gathered together for the performance of group worship, or of some important event in the life of the community. This is followed by the *saraṇāgamana* with the formula 'I go to the Buddha as my refuge, I go to the *Dhamma* as my refuge, I go to the Saṅgha as my refuge.'¹⁷ This is repeated three times thus: 'For the second time too I go to the Buddha for refuge', etc., and, 'For the third time too I go to the Buddha for refuge', etc.

All such formulae are uttered in Pāli,¹⁸ and no translation in English could adequately render the emotional attitudes and religious sentiments awakened in the mind of the sensitive devotee, since the linguistic aspects in the formulae carry connotative overtones which are the fruit of the cultural heritage of a Buddhist, brought up in a Buddhist environment, steeped in its own traditions, legends and beliefs, and reactions to linguistic stimuli.

'Going on Pilgrimage' (*vandanāve yāma*)¹⁹ may be to the village temple, or to a far away holy place, or to a number of such

16. *Namotassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa.*

17. *Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi
Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi
Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*

18. There is a recent movement to utter these in Sinhala translation which is appreciated by some 'progressive' Buddhists. Personally, I would prefer these to remain in Pāli, which is of deeper significance in that Pāli is supposed to be the Buddha's own language of preaching. If devotees are brought up in a Buddhist atmosphere from early childhood, the Pāli formulae would have a deeper appeal, and command a deeper sense of veneration than the language of day-to-day ordinary life.

19. Literally, 'going on worship'. As Major R. Ravenhart points out 'a Buddhist pilgrimage is not an occasion for long faces or solemn writing. On the contrary, it is light-hearted, with moments of deep reverence but in the main gay, even playful'. If most of what preceded, and some of what follows in this essay is 'heavy', it is in keeping with the spirit of those 'moments of deep reverence'.

places hallowed by sanctity and antiquity;²⁰ it may last for some minutes, and hour or two, or even a day or more. Yet unless one observes *sil* and the five or eight precepts the procedure of worship at any place is hardly the same. Thus after the recitation of the *namaskārapāṭha* and the *saraṇāgamana*, the devotee would take upon himself the five precepts.²¹

At a temple the commonest act of worship is to make an offering to the Buddha, and then to the *Dhamma* and the Saṅgha. In making an offering to the Buddha the act is carried out at the

20. In the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* the Buddha himself exhorted 'the believer' to visit holy places:

'There are four places, Ānanda, which the believer should visit with feelings of reverence; the places where he can say "Here the Tathāgata was born", "Here the Tathāgata attained to the supreme and perfect insight", "Here the kingdom of righteousness was set on foot by the Tathāgata", "Here the Tathāgata finally passed away in the utter passing-away which leaves nothing whatever to remain behind", and there will come, Ānanda, to these places, believers, Brethren and Sisters of the Order, and devout men and women'. See 'Sacred Books of the East', Vol. II, *Buddhist Suttas* by Rhys Davids.

The places thus mentioned by the Buddha are Lūmbinī, Buddha-gāya, Sārānāth, and Kusinārā, which are the four holy places *par excellence*. Other places too gained in importance soon, and by Asoka's time Sāvattthi and Rājagaha became as important as the above. Later many more such places were recognized, and the great Chinese pilgrims of the fifth and seventh centuries A.D. Fa-Hian and Hiuen Tsiang, visited almost all these places.

Hindus also engage in visits to holy places, and such visits were called *tīrthayātrā* or 'journey to the ford'.

21. *Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*
Adinnādānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
Kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
Musāvādā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
Surāmerayamajjapamādatthānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi

I take upon myself the precept of abstinence from taking life.

I take upon myself the precept of abstinence from taking what is not given.

I take upon myself the precept of abstinence from misconduct in regard to sense pleasures.

I take upon myself the precept of abstinence from uttering falsehood.

I take upon myself the precept of abstinence from taking intoxicants leading to heedlessness.

dāgāba or *stūpa* or *cetiya*, and/or at the *Bodhi*-tree (the tree of Enlightenment), and/or at the *paṭimāghara* (the shrine room or the structure where an image of the Buddha is kept, as a symbol of the living Buddha, for worship). In some temples all three places of worship await the devotee; in others two, or at least one. There is no temple where at least a *paṭimāghara* is not available.

Where all three are available the traditionally accepted order of selection for worship is the *dāgāba*, the *Bodhi*-tree, and the *paṭimāghara*.²² This is because most *dāgābas* contain *sārīrika* or *sarvajña dhātu*, physical relics of the Buddha, i.e., what remained of the Buddha's physical form after it was cremated at his *parinibbāna*. Such a relic is not an arbitrary symbol of the memory of the Buddha, but a part of his very physical form, and its worship is felt to be equivalent to the worship of the living Buddha himself.²³

A *dāgāba* may contain not only a physical relic of the Buddha; it may also contain a *pāribhogika dhātu* or a relic of what has been used by the Buddha, such as his begging-bowl. Thus a *dāgāba* may either be a *sārīrika cetiya*, or a *pāribhogika cetiya*, and such a *cetiya* is next in importance in the order of sanctity. The *Bodhi*-tree is also a *pāribhogika cetiya*, since the Buddha used it, in that he was seated in meditation at the foot of the *Bodhi*-tree, since the eve and up to the moment of attaining Enlightenment;²⁴ and what

22. The order in the following *pāda*:

Sārīrikadhātu mahābodhiṃ buddharūpaṃ sakalaṃ sadā....
the bodily relics, the great *Bodhi*-tree, and all statues of the Buddha.

23. The dialogue between Mahinda Thera and Devānampiyatissa:

'Long is the time, O Lord of men, since we have seen the Sambuddha. We lived a life without a master. There is nothing here for us to worship'. And to the question:

'Yet hast thou not told me, Sir, that the Sambuddha is passed into Nibbāna?' he answered, 'If we behold the relics we behold the Conqueror'.

Mahavaṃsa, XVII. 2-4. W. Geiger's translation.

24. At some holy places, as at Kelaniya, apart from the *Bodhi*-tree, the *dāgāba* itself is a *pāribhogika cetiya* since it enshrines an object which is considered so; even then, the *dāgāba* is worshipped first, to be followed by the worship of the *Bodhi*-tree.

has been used by the Buddha is considered to be hallowed by that very use.²⁵

In Sri Lanka we are fortunate to have a *Bodhi*-tree which is part of the same tree under which the Buddha reached Enlightenment at Buddhagayā, two thousand five hundred and twenty two years ago—the *Śrī Mahā Bodhi*-Tree at Anurādhapura which is traditionally held to be the southern branch of the *Bodhi*-tree at Buddhagayā, brought here by Saṅghamittā Therī, the daughter of the great king Dhammāsoka of India.²⁶ Apart from this most hallowed of *Bodhi*-trees there are the eight or thirty two *phalaruhabodhi*-trees, i.e., those *Bodhi*-trees that sprang up from the fruit of the main *Bodhi*-tree at Anurādhapura, and which were planted at various places in the island. *Bodhi*-trees other than these, though historically unaccounted for, are honoured, in that they are held to be symbols of the original tree under which the Buddha attained Enlightenment, and are thus worthy of being honoured and worshipped.

The Buddhist does not engage himself in tree-worship as such when he worships at the *Bodhi*-tree. He is worshipping a symbol of Enlightenment and of the Buddha. He is also honouring an

25. What has been used by a person worthy of honour is itself held to be worthy of respect, even today, in households which uphold traditional values. Thus in many Sinhala Buddhist homes, the father's favourite chair, his cup and plate, etc., are never used by any other member of the household, young or old, including the mother herself, even today. At the death of the father, these items of use are either offered to the temple, or stored away carefully; rarely, if ever, to be used. As a boy, the writer himself has had this experience, which unfortunately is not that of his own children! Such are the results of socio-cultural change, attempts at 'bridging the generations gap', etc., which shake up the very foundations of traditional society, foundations which have been stable enough to hold together the family, the basic unit of society. The tragedy is, modern values are almost incapable of replacing these foundations, which form the very source of that warmth of feeling for and understanding of the family bond, which keeps our youth secure from that emotional instability which is the bane of many young people in Western society.

26. This is the oldest surviving tree in the recorded history of the world. It has been held in the highest veneration since the day it was brought to Sri Lanka and many are the works in Pāli and Sinhala which have been written on the theme of the *Mahābodhi*.

object which has been honoured by the Buddha himself for one whole week during which he kept on gazing in gratefulness, unwinking, at the tree which helped him to attain Enlightenment.²⁷

Next to the *Bodhi*-tree, the *paṭimāghara* ranks in importance as a place of worship. The *paṭimāghara* is the place where a statue of the Buddha is placed for worship. In worshipping at the shrine room, the Buddhist does not engage himself in iconolatry or idolatry. The image of the Buddha is only an aid for the devotee to visualize as best he may, the physical likeness, the extraordinary features of the personality of the Buddha whom he worships.

The commonest offering at all three places of worship mentioned above is that of flowers. The devotee first washes his hands, then sprinkles water on the flowers. The table or platform where flowers are offered is also sprinkled with water. These form the preliminaries for offering flowers. Flowers are held in both palms cupped together, and the hands are held thus parallel to the ground at more or less chest-level. With eyes half-closed in fervent devotion, brought about by the very atmosphere,²⁸ the devotee recites the relevant *gāthās*:²⁹

This handful of flowers, replete with colour and fragrance,
I offer at the worshipful lotus feet of the Great Sage.

27. *Ime ete mahābodhi lokanāthena pūjitā
Ahaṃ'pīte namassāmi Bodhirāja namatthu te*

'The great *Bodhi*-trees which have been honoured by the Lord of the worlds, I too salute; O Lordly *Bodhi*-tree, my obeissance to thee'.
(Gratefulness is a highly valued quality in the Buddhist way of life.)

28. This is an atmosphere of silence, interrupted only by the indistinctive murmuring of the devotees' *gāthās*, and / or the rustling of the *Bo*-leaves in the gentle breeze, an atmosphere of calmness brought about by the participants' walk and demeanour, dress and deportment, an atmosphere of other worldliness, brought to conscious awareness by a blend of that particularly alluring smell of burning incense, cloth-wick and coconut oil with the indeterminable fragrance of a wide variety of flowers, of numerous clay lamps, extinguished now, only to be lighted a moment later by the eager hands of the very next devotee, reminding one of birth and death and intermediate activity, the evanescent transience of life itself.

29. A devotee may recite the *Namaskāraṇṇīya*, the *savaṇāgamana* and the *pañcasīla* formula, and then recite the following *gāthās*; or he may recite the following *gāthās*, without the preliminaries, which he would perform, after the specific offering of flowers, etc., have been made as part of a more elaborate act of worship to follow.

These flowers I offer to the Buddha; may the merit thereof bring about my release. And as the flower withers away, even so does my body come to destruction.³⁰

After offering flowers³¹ a devotee usually offers lamps and incense to the Buddha, reciting the following *gāthās*:

With this lamp steadily glowing and destroying darkness I revere the Buddha, the light of the three worlds, the light that removes the darkness of ignorance.

With this fragrant incense I revere the Buddha endowed with a body and mouth fragrant with the fragrance of innumerable good qualities.³²

At the *dāgāba*, if it enshrines a very special relic of the Buddha, as at Thūpārāma, Seruwila, etc. or at a *pāribhogika cetiya* such as Śri Pāda, a *gāthā*, which makes specific mention of the relic, or the significance of the place as the case may be, is also recited.

After the offering of flowers, lamps and incense (unless any other offering of food, etc., is made), the devotee would 'move on to a side' (*ekamantaṃ t̥hito*), and placing himself in an accep-

30. *Vaṇṇagandhaguṇopetaṃ etaṃ kusumasantatiṃ
Pūjayāmi munindassa sirīpādasaroruhe*

*Pūjemi Buddham kusumenanena
Puññena me'tena ca hotu mokkhaṃ
Pupphaṃ milāyāti yathā idaṃ me
Kayo tathā yāti vināsabhāvaṃ*

31. A Buddhist may offer flowers without gathering them, i.e., while they remain on the tree or plant itself, reciting the following *gāthā*:

*Kusumaṃ phullitaṃ etaṃ
Paggahetvāna anjaliṃ
Buddhaseṭṭhaṃ saritvāna
Ākāse mabhipūjaya*

'With folded hands I reflect upon that supreme Buddha, and offer this full-bloomed flower (to him), while it remains in the air'.

32. *Ghanasārapphadittena dīpena tamadhaṃsinā
Tilokadīpaṃ sambuddhaṃ pūjayāmi tamonudaṃ
Sugandhi kāyavadanaṃ ananta guṇa ganāhinam
Sugandhināhaṃ gandhena pūjayāmi tathāgataṃ*

table posture of his choice,³³ he would perform a more elaborate act of worship. Thus if he has not already recited the preliminaries of the *namaskāra pāṭha*, *saraṇāgamana* and *pañca sīla*, he would do so, and then he would reflect upon the virtues of the Buddha, *Dhamma* and the Saṅgha in formulae hallowed through canonical antiquity, thus:

Thus the Blessed one is Worthy, Perfectly Enlightened, Possessed of Knowledge and Insight, Well-traversed, Knower of the Worlds, the supreme charioteer of men who are to be tamed, Teacher of gods and men, Awakened, Blessed.³⁴ The *Dhamma* has been well-proclaimed by the Blessed One; it can be experienced here and now, and it bears fruit without delay; it is open, and has to be practised constantly, and it is to be realized by each one, for himself.³⁵

The Saṅgha—the disciples of the Blessed one, are well-established in virtue; they are straight-forward, set on the path of reason and practice. Eight individuals, they form four groups of two each. They are well qualified to accept offerings brought to them with due honour, are worthy of being saluted, and are a veritable field of merit.³⁶

33. There are four such postures:

- (i) *Añjalinamaskāra*, where the devotee performs obeisance placing his folded arms on his head, while remaining standing;
- (ii) *Pañcaṅgapatiṭṭhāpitanamaskāra*, where the devotee performs obeisance placing five parts of his body, viz., the elbows, knees and forehead, on the ground;
- (iii) *Ukkuṭikanamaskāra*, where the devotee performs obeisance seated on 'half knee', placing his folded arms on the forehead; and
- (iv) *Danḍanamaskāra*, where the devotee performs obeisance lying stretched out face downwards, 'like a stick', with hands folded on the forehead. Of these, the second is recommended for worship at a *cetiya* or in saluting a person worthy of such honour, while the third is recommended in observing the precepts, etc.

34. *Itipi so Bhagavā arahamaṃ sammāsambuddho sugato lokavidū anuttaro purisadammasārathi satthā devamanussānam Buddho bhavagā ti.*

35. *Svakkhāto Bhagavatā dhammo sandiṭṭhiko akāliko ehi passiko opanayiko paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhī ti.*

36. *Supatiṭṭhāno Bhagavato sāvaka saṅgho
Ujupatiṭṭhāno Bhagavato sāvaka saṅgho
Nāyapatiṭṭhāno Bhagavato sāvaka saṅgho
Sāmicipatiṭṭhāno Bhagavato sāvaka saṅgho
Yadidaṃ cattāri purisa yugāni aṭṭhapurisapuggalā esa
Bhagavato sāvaka saṅgho āhuneyyo, pāhuneyyo dakkhiṇeyyo
Añjalikaranīyo anuttaraṃ puññakkettaṃ lokassā ti.*

After this, other *gāthās* may be recited, depending upon the inclination of the devotee; if these latter are not recited he would recite the *gāthās* usually repeated at the conclusion of worship. The additional *gāthās* recited may include the following: those with which.

1. one worships the Buddha, the *Dhamma*, and the Saṅgha of bygone aeons;³⁷
2. one reiterates one's refuge in the *tiratana*, and begs forgiveness for one's transgressions;³⁸
3. one reflects upon the nine-fold qualities of the Buddha, one by one separately;
4. one worships the twenty-eight Buddhas;
5. one dedicates oneself to the service of the *tiratana*, to their worship, etc., and also to the worship of all the *cetiyas*, one's teachers, etc.³⁹
6. one worships the sixteen great *thūpas* simultaneously;⁴⁰

37. *Ye ca Buddhā atītā ca
Ye ca Buddhā anāgatā
Paccuppannā ca ye Buddhā
Aham vandāmi sabbadā*

38. *Natthi me saraṇam aññaṃ
Buddho me saraṇam varam
etena saccavajjena
Hoti me jayamaṅgalam
Uttamaṅgena vandeham
Pādapamsu varuttamam
Buddhe yo khalito doso
Buddho khamatu taṃ mamam*

In worshipping the *Dhamma* and the Saṅgha, the words '*Dhamma*' and '*Saṅgha*' are substituted for *Buddha* in the two *gāthās* given above.

In begging the *Dhamma* and the Saṅgha forgiveness, two gathas are used, with slight modifications of the above.

39. See *Buddha Ādaḥilla* of Vālipāṇṇe Śrī Upatissa Thera, Colombo; 1955, pp. 95-97, 100-102, 107-108.

40. *Mahiyaṅganam nāgadīpam
Kalyāṇam padalāñchanam
Divāguham dīghavāpi
Cetiyaṃ ca mutiṅgaṇam
Tissamahāvihāram ca
Bodhiṃ maricavattiyam
Sonnaṃāli mahācetiyaṃ
Thūpārāma bhayāgiriṃ
Jetavanam selacetiyaṃ
Tathā kācaragāmakam
Ete solasathānani
Aham vandami muddhani*

7. one worships the places where the Buddha spent the first seven weeks after Enlightenment;
8. one worships the *Bodhi*-tree in particular;
9. one worships all the *cetiya*s;
10. one worships one's parents;
11. one excuses oneself for any act of transgression on one's part, against the Buddha, *Dhamma* and the Saṅgha.⁴¹

Finally, one would transfer the merit one has thus accrued to the gods and other beings,⁴² also to one's dead kinsmen, and make a general aspiration culminating in one's own special aspiration whatever it be, made either in one's own language or in a traditional Pāli *gāthā*.

At the conclusion, or sometimes even in the course of the above sequence of worship, one may devote oneself to meditation too, and these usually take the form of a *maitrībhāvanā*⁴³ or development of thoughts of friendly compassion on all human beings, and *dvattiṃsākāra*⁴⁴ or reflection upon the essential impurity of the body.

During one's visit to a holy place one may also participate in special *phujās* or acts of worship. Thus one may participate in offering *Buddha phujā* or alms to the Buddha; this includes the offering of water, food of various kinds including fruit and betel, all of which is performed before noon. In the afternoon, especially in the evenings, as the shadows lengthen and darkness creeps in, slowly enveloping all living being in its fold, as Death the leveller himself would surely do sooner or later, in the shimmering light of the flickering flame of coconut oil lamps,⁴⁵ one may offer *gilampasa*, or medicinal requisites which often includes various kinds of drink prepared from fresh fruit. Both these acts are accompanied by the recitation of specific *gāthās*.⁴⁶

41. See Upatissa Thera, *op. cit.* pp. 147-148.

42. See *Ibid.*, pp. 181; also (sometimes) pp. 182-184.

43. *Ibid.* pp. 190-195.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 211; this is also called *Kāyagatāsati bhāvanā*.

45. Though replaced to certain extent by electric light and other forms of lighting nowadays. •

46. Upatissa, *op. cit.*, pp. 168, 171-172.



‘The Pilgrim’s Progress’

• In general, the practices we have mentioned tend to cultivate those qualities which would ultimately free the individual from the bonds of *samsāra*. Thus the quality of liberality (*dāna*), adequately developed, brings about a loosening of the bonds of ‘I’ and ‘me’ that enshroud the mind of the *samsāric* individual, tainted as it is with *rāga* and *dosa*, enveloping it in *moha*. This in its turn enables the mind to develop the higher ethical qualities of restraint by the practice of the precepts, etc. Such restraint of mind directs it towards the practice of *bhāvanā* along thoughts of *mettā*, the essential impurity of the body (*asubha bhāvanā*), the impermanence of life, etc. When the mind is thus conditioned it is ready to undertake more abstruse forms of meditation which would culminate in the attainment of *samādhi*.⁴⁷ The mind thus developed sweeps aside its negative aspect, or *moha*, and attains its positive aspect, *paññā*, which releases it from the bonds of *samsāra*, bringing about the attainment of *vimutti*.

Dharmayātrā is thus the embarkation upon a religious journey, undertaken in gradually progressive stages. The one goal is the *yātrika*’s (the pilgrim’s) ultimate attainment of *vimutti*.

‘Preliminary Preparation’

A *dharmayātrā*, a religious journey or pilgrimage, whether it is to the village temple, or to a far away place of sanctity, hallowed by antiquity, always entails certain basic preparations on the part of the pilgrim.

Physical cleanliness is thus an essential part of the procedure. The pilgrim, if he intends to observe the eight precepts on a particular day, would almost always ensure that he has had a bath, either that morning or the day before. If it is only a visit to the village temple for purposes of offering flowers, etc., he would make

47. Such forms of higher meditation, by their very nature, are naturally undertaken only by the monks; there is nothing, however, to forbid a layman from doing so, if his circumstances allow him to do so meaningfully.

sure that he has at least had a wash, and cleansed his face, hands and feet adequately.⁴⁸ Another aspect of physical cleanliness is the need to wear fresh, white clothing, newly washed for the occasion.⁴⁹

Essential requisites for worship are flowers, incense (which includes joss sticks and camphor), coconut oil and cloth wicks for lighting lamps. Almost any kind of *fragrant* flower may be offered; the lotus, the jasmine, 'sal' and *nā* flowers, however, happen to be favourites. If one is setting out on a distant pilgrimage, the aricanut flower occupies a special position; traditionally it is indispensable, not only for worship but for reverential adornment as well of the front of the vehicle in which one travels, since this flower is said to have the power to ward off evil and accidents that might befall the pilgrim.

Coins washed in water mixed with saffron, or cleansed by rubbing a piece of lime fruit against them and wrapped in newly washed old white cloth are also taken for offering at holy places, and these are called '*pañḍuru*' or gifts to be offered to the gods at *devālas* which often function within the precincts of the temple itself.

If one intends to offer food and medicinal beverages, these, too, are taken, and are kept separately from the articles of food (if any) the pilgrim himself would use in the course of the pilgrimage. Betel and its attendant requisites of aricanut, etc., are also taken, both for offering and personal use by those who enjoy a 'chew'. Vegetarian items of food are usually taken on a pilgrimage, cooked or uncooked according to necessity. Traditionally eggs and meat are taboo, though fish and dry-fish are not so considered.

Those going on distant pilgrimages[•] lasting several days if they are going by some kind of vehicle, would usually take rice and vegetables and other requisites for cooking, including utensils and even fire-wood. At certain *visrāmasālās*, or pilgrims' rests, however, such utensils are sometimes provided by the caretakers.

48. This is essential, even if one worships at one's own shrine-room at home.

49. Nowadays people tend to wear coloured clothes on visiting a temple, even though they would not do so, if they are to observe *sil* at the temple. The laxity in attire, is yet another sign of the crumbling of traditional values.

Items of refreshment such as tea, coffee, *tāmbili*, fruit and fruit juice are also taken; intoxicating drink is avoided. Sweets such as *aluva*, *aggala*, *talaguli*, various kinds of *dosi* such as *puhu* *dosi*, *kiri dosi*, *tala dosi* are commonly taken. *Aggala* with plenty of pepper and *iṅgyuru dosi* are traditional 'musts' on a pilgrimage to Śrī Pāda.⁵⁰

On distant pilgrimages, pilgrims usually spend the night either at the temple '*bana maḍuwa*' (sermon hall), a wayside school building close to the holy place, or at a pilgrims' rest. These latter have been erected at some places like Anurādhapura, Polonnaruwa, Tissamahārama by Buddhist societies which maintain them, or by individuals who have offered them to the temple concerned. Pilgrims' rests do not usually levy any occupational charges; but the pilgrims themselves would usually make a voluntary donation.⁵¹ Pilgrims' rests are usually clean and spacious enough, even though much remains to be desired by way of clean toilet facilities, which rarely, if ever, are satisfactory.

An essential item in the preparation for a distant pilgrimage is the *bāra*, or the undertaking of a vow. This involves the wrapping up of a coin, washed in water mixed with saffron or cleansed with lime juice, in a knot of old but fresh cloth, and making a promise to a deity or to the tutelary deity of some holy place, that if the pilgrim returns safely home after the pilgrimage he would make a specific offering to the deity or at the place concerned, within a specific period of time.

'Time and Place'

Like most religious acts, religious journeys, pilgrimages do not just happen. There is a place to which one wants to journey, and there is an ideal time for going. Traditional historical accounts provide a rationale for pilgrims setting out for a place at a particular time.

50. This is probably due to the fact that 'hot' sweets are capable of generating some internal heat or warmth to keep off the biting cold on the climb to Śrī Pāda.

51. Commercialisation, however, seems to be gradually settling in, even at pilgrims' rests, and there are a few such places which do levy a fee at present, though nominal as yet.

In setting out on a pilgrimage, most pilgrims would try to arrive at their destination either the day before a *pōya* day or on a *pōya* day itself. *Pōya* in general refers to one of the four main phases of the moon, namely, the full moon day, the new moon day and the eighth day after the full moon and the new moon. These days, are of significance to the Buddhist from antiquity,⁵² and any one who wishes to observe the eight precepts would do so on a *pōya* day. Actually, for a Buddhist any day is as good as another for setting out on a pilgrimage, and for observing *sil*, since auspicious times and days find no special significance in orthodox teaching; and accordingly we see pilgrims setting out on pilgrimages on any day convenient to them.

Yet, there are certain *pōya* days which have a special historical association with a particular holy place; and such *pōya* days are therefore held to be of special significance for that particular place, as the full moon day of the month of *Poson*⁵³ (May-June) for Mihintalē at Anurādhapura. Moreover, certain months or periods of the year are favoured for visiting some holy places, due either to exigencies of weather or traditional religio-social events being held during such months. Thus the period starting from the full moon day *Uñduwap* (November-December) to that of *Vesak* (April-May) is the traditional season for climbing the holy Peak—Śrī Pāda, while the month of *Āsala* (June-July) is of special significance for visiting Kandy, where a most glorious spectacle, the *Āsala perahāra* (procession), is held annually in honour of the Buddha's Tooth Relic.

On the full moon day of *Poson*, tens of thousands of Buddhist devotees congregate every year at Anurādhapura, the holiest of holy religious sites in Sri Lanka, in commemoration of that unique and unparalleled event in the history of our land, the introduction of *Buddha-dhamma*, which shaped the subsequent destiny of our land, even up to this moment, far more than any other single event.

52. See P.T.S. *Dictionary* under *uposatha*. Even in pre-Buddhistic India, these days were of special significance and various kinds of sacrifices were performed then, preceded by fasting and the observance of elaborate preliminaries.

53. There may be difference of opinion on the identification. See, e.g., W. Geiger, *Mahāvamsa* translation, p. 2, f.n. 3.

Imagine a day in the life of a people, two thousand three hundred years ago. It appears that this day, the full moon day of *Poson* about 236 B.E.,⁵⁴ was already a day of festivity in Sri Lanka. According to the *Mahāvamsa* the most celebrated ancient historical chronicle of Sri Lanka, Devānampiyatissa, the ruling monarch at Anurādhapura, the capital city of Sri Lanka, had declared this day a day of festivity. He himself decided to enjoy the day by taking part in the chase, the sport of royalty in ancient times. At the foot of the *Missaka Pabbata* (that is to say, at the Mihintalē Mountain, 8 miles to the east of Anurādhapura), while he was about to let loose an arrow at a deer, he noticed a figure, who addressed him by name and said, 'Samaṇas are we, O great king, disciples of the King of Truth. From compassion toward thee are we come hither from *Jambudīpa*'.⁵⁵ This was Mahinda Thera, son of King Dhammāsoka, who brought *Buddha-dhamma* to Sri Lanka. At the foot of the mountain itself, the king, together with his retinue of forty thousand men took refuge in the *tisarāṇa* and undertook to observe the five precepts. Thenceforth, the history of our land has been a part of the history of the Buddhist tradition.⁵⁶

Mihintalē where the introduction of *Buddha-dhamma* to Sri Lanka took place, and where Mahinda Thera lived subsequently, up to his *nibbāna*, and where after his cremation *thūpas* were built, thus became a hallowed place for Buddhists of Sri Lanka for all time to come.⁵⁷

From the very day *Buddha-dhamma* was introduced to Sri Lanka, it became firmly rooted in the hearts of people, and apart from the ever increasing number of male and female devotees, and monks and nuns, many Buddhist monuments came to be built in and around Anurādhapura, throughout its chequered history of more than a thousand years. Ruler after ruler vied with one another

54. Dates are based on Geiger. See *op. cit.*, pp. xxxvi-xxxix.

55. *Mahāvamsa*, xiv. 8, Geiger's translation.

56. See *Mahāvamsa* xiii-xx for an account of this inception.

57. Mahinda Thera is popularly referred to as the second Buddha—*anubudu*—in Sri Lanka. The *Mahāvamsa*, recording the fact of his death, uses words which truly do justice to its claim that it was 'compiled for the serene joy and emotion of the pious'. See *Mahāvamsa* xx. 30-33.

to build *stūpas* and monasteries, to look after the *Bodhi*-tree, to disseminate the *Dhamma*, to care for the *Sanḅha*, and Anurādhapura became the holiest of holy places in Sri Lanka, containing within its sacred precincts the most important relics of the Buddha, both *sārīrika* and *pāribhogika*, and replete with innumerable *uddesika cetiyas* as well. The *Mahāvamsa* is a history of the Buddhist tradition in relation to the political fortunes of the country; and a very significant part of the religious emotion a devoted Buddhist feels at the very thought of Anurādhapura, or the spirit of Anurādhapura he breathes into the core of his being as he gazes in serene faith and rapt admiration at the splendour that was Anurādhapura, is due to the legacy of legend and description that he has inherited through the *Mahāvamsa*, as current amongst the people of this land.

The following are some of the more important places of pilgrimage one visits while at Anurādhapura:

1. The *Thūpārama*,⁵⁸ the very first *stūpa* in Sri Lanka, built by King Devānampiyatissa, at the conclusion of the very first rainy season after the introduction of *Buddha-dhamma* to Sri Lanka. In this *cetiya* is enshrined the collar-bone of the Buddha.⁵⁹

2. The *Ruvanvālisāya* built by King Duṭṭhagāmaṇi Abhaya (382-406 B.E.), the most celebrated of the *stūpas* in Sri Lanka. It is called the *Mahāthūpa* and in it are enshrined a *droṇa* of the Buddha's relics which originally were honoured by the Koliyas of Rāmagāma.⁶⁰

3. *Śrī Mahābodhi*, the great *Bodhi*-tree at Anurādhapura, grown out of the southern branch of the original *Bodhi*-tree at Buddhagāya; brought hither by Saṅghamittā Therī, sister of Mahinda Thera, and held in the highest veneration even today; this is the best known of the *pāribhogika cetiyas* in the whole world.⁶¹

58. The first seven in the above list are among the sixteen holy places traditionally known and venerated as '*solosmastāna*'.

59. See *Mahāvamsa*, chapter xvii; the alms bowl of the Buddha, full of Buddha relics is said to be enshrined here.

60. The *Mahāvamsa* devotes four chapters (xxviii-xxxi) to the story of this *stūpa*. Many works would have been composed about this *stūpa*, the best known of which is the *Thūpavamsa*.

61. See *Mahāvamsa*, chapters xviii and xix; also the *Mahābodhivamsa*.

4. *Mirisavātiya*, built by King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī, enshrining a relic placed within his escutcheon.⁶²

5. *Abhayagiriya*, built by King Vaṭṭagāmaṇī Abhaya⁶³ (454-466 B.E.).

6. *Jetavanārāmaya*, built by Mahāseṇa⁶⁴ (808-835 B.E.), enshrining the belt of the Buddha, hair-relics and other bodily relics.

7. *Seluṇṇetiya*, at Mihintalē, one of the places sanctified by the Buddha himself, who sat there and preached a sermon to gods and *nāgas*.

8. *Ambatthalacetiya*, built by Mahādāṭhika-Mahānāga⁶⁵ (549-561 B.E.), and

9. *Lohaṭṭhāsa* built by King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī.⁶⁶

These are the better known religious edifices at Anurādhapura,⁶⁷ which are visited and adored by most pilgrims. The devotee wor-

62. *Mahāvamsa*, xxvi.

63. *Mahāvamsa*, xxxiii 81-83. This was to play a very significant role in the history of Sri Lanka in subsequent times. See *Mahāvamsa* chapter xxxvii; also the *Nikāyaṅgrahaya*.

64. *Mahāvamsa* chapter xxxvii; the *Mahāvamsa* gives no details on this celebrated *vihāra*, destined to play an important role in the future, probably because it was put up as a rival of the Mahāvihāra, which stood for orthodoxy, and to which tradition the author belonged.

65. *Mahāvamsa*, xxxiv. 71.

66. *Mahāvamsa*, xxvii.

67. Apart from these, there are other interesting sites, both religious and non-religious, a devotee visits at Anurādhapura. The Isurumuni Vihāra is one such, well-known for its exquisite sculptures of worldly themes, hardly to be expected at a Buddhist Vihāra; another is the Kuṭṭampokuṇa, the Twin Bath, esteemed for its simple but arresting charm of lay out and construction. Numerous tanks, big and small, add up to the old-world charm of the environment, though spoilt since of late by modern structures built with scanty feeling for the preservation of aesthetic harmony. It has recently been reported that the Government Agent, Anurādhapura, had been informed that some tourist hotels have directed their drainage systems to end up at the tanks, tanks where the pilgrim refreshed himself breathing in the coolness of gentle breezes wafting across waters that have witnessed the glory that has been, the local farmer and the simple housewife satisfied their daily needs of water for domestic and agricultural purposes.

ships at almost every one of these holy places, and apart from the general *gāthās* recited by him, as given above, each of these places is also worshipped by reciting a *gāthā*, composed in its own honour ⁶⁸

The *Āsala pōya* (June-July) is perhaps the most important of the *pōya* days, in respect of the religious festivities associated with it. The artistic heritage, the aesthetic sense, the traditional skills in the arts and crafts, the glory and splendour that is no more, and the national pride of the Sinhala Buddhist come to the forefront during this unique month of religious activity. The world famous *perahāra* at Kandy in honour of the Buddha's Tooth Relic, for the safety of which countless people have willingly laid down their lives, the possession of which has traditionally given our rulers the authority to rule over Sri Lanka, the edification of which has resulted in literary⁶⁹ and artistic creativity, is held during this month, and immediate preliminaries of which last for two weeks, to culminate in the grand cultural pageant of the *Randoli Perahāra* on the night of the full moon day. Festivals at other parts of the island are also held either during or shortly after this month, e.g., those at Alutnuwara, Navagamuva, Devundara, and Ratnapura.⁷⁰

In the history of the Buddhist tradition, both in Sri Lanka and in India, this month is also important because the conception of Prince Siddhārtha, the Great Renunciation, the preaching of the first sermon (the celebrated *Dhammacakkapavattana sutta* at Kāsi) by the Buddha, the beginning of the rainy season (the so-called Buddhist retreat), the first observance of the rainy season in Sri Lanka, etc., all took place on the full moon day of this month, and pilgrims flock specially to Kandy, and to other places for worship.

68. For specific *gāthās* on some of the more important places of worship, see *Buddha Adahilla*, pp. 111-121.

69. For example, the *Dāthāvamsa*, the *Daladā Pūjāvaliya*, the *Daladā Sirita*, etc.

70. The festivities at Kataragama, too, though non-Buddhistic, may be mentioned, since Buddhists often go on pilgrimage to Kataragama as well. However, they are able to participate in Buddhist worship, too, since the Kirivehera which is one of the sixteen great *stūpas* is situated at Kataragama, only a stone's throw beyond the Hindu temples.

Four tooth relics are said to have remained after the cremation of the Buddha, and that which was at Kalinga was brought to Sri Lanka in the 4th century A.D. by Prince Danta and Princess Hemamālā. Traditionally, when one worships a tooth relic, it is held that one worships all four together.⁷¹

The *Nikini* (July-August) *ṣōya* is also associated both with Buddhist history and practice. Thus the first Buddhist council at Rājagaha is said to have begun on this day,⁷² and the last day for the observance of *vassāna* (the rainy season) also falls on this day. During this month the pilgrim is beckoned to visit the Maṅgala-mahācetiya at Sēruwila on the eastern coast of Sri Lanka, where the Buddha's hair-relic and the frontal-bone are enshrined.

The *Binara* (August-September) *ṣōya* calls the pilgrims to Mahiyaṅgana, where an annual procession is held. One of the alluring sights here is the procession of the Veddas. A *ṣerahāra* is held at Kotte, too, during this month; but traditionally this is the season to visit Mahiyaṅgana, the goal of the Buddha's first visit to Sri Lanka. Hallowed as it is by the visit of the Buddha, it enshrines the hair-relics and the collar-bone relic of the Buddha, and is one of the sixteen great places of worship. According to the *Mahāvamsa*, the hair-relics were requested by the God Sumana, during the first visit of the Buddha; he built a seven-cubit high *stūpa*, enshrining these. Next, Sarabhū Thera brought the collar-bone of the Buddha from his funeral pyre, and enshrined it here enclosing the former *stūpa*, by enlarging it another twelve cubits in height. This was enlarged by Devānampiyatissa's brother, Uddhacūlābhaya, to thirty cubits, and by Dūṭṭhagāmaṇī to eighty cubits.⁷³ One of the eight *ṣhalaruha* Bodhi-trees also is said to have been planted here.

71. According to another tradition there are two tooth relics in Sri Lanka; while the better known one is at Kandy, the other according to this tradition, is enshrined at the Somāvati *cetiya*. For *gāthās* recited when all four Tooth Relics are worshipped together, see *Buddha Ādahilla* p. 127.

72. *Mahāvamsa*, chapter iii.

73. *Mahāvamsa*, i. 33-43. The Mahiyaṅgana *stūpa* is one of the two *stūpas* built in Sri Lanka, even during the very life time of the Buddha, the other being Girihanduvehera, at Tiriyāya in the eastern coast, built by the two sea-faring merchant brothers Tapussa and Bhallika.

The *Vap* (September-October) *pōya* has no special connection with any holy place of worship, even though it is important otherwise. Many religious activities are held, the most important of which is the *kathinapūjā* relating to the conclusion of the rainy season, the festivities connected with the offering of the *kathinacīvara*, the cloth annually supplied by the devotees to the monks for the preparation of their robes. Other events connected with the history of the Buddhist tradition in Sri Lanka, such as the setting out of Prince Arittha to India to request Asoka for the *Bodhi*-tree, took place on this day.⁷⁴

Il (October-November) *pōya* too has no special call for the pilgrim. It is however very important for other religious observances, specially those connected with *vassāna*. The rainy season is formally declared over on this day, and all activities connected with this important event pertaining to monastic life reach a climax on this day. This is the last day on which *kathinacīvara* could be offered; it is also important in the history of the Buddhist tradition, being, e.g., the day on which Ven. Sāriputta attained *nibbāna*.

The *Uñduwap* (November-December) *pōya* is of very special significance, and devotees make it a special point to visit Anurādhapura. This is the day on which Saṅghamittā Therī arrived in Sri Lanka with the southern branch of the *Bodhi*-tree, from Buddhagayā, a very important event in the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. This day is also significant in that her arrival with other *bhikkunīs* made it possible for the establishment of the *bhikkunī sāsana* (the order of nuns) to occur in Sri Lanka.⁷⁵

The *Durutu* (December-January) *pōya* is important in that the Buddha's first visit to Sri Lanka took place on this day; and the first construction of the Mahiyaṅgana *cetiya* took place as one of the results of this visit. Since festivities of Mahiyaṅgana are held in the month of *Binara*, however, pilgrims are more attracted to Mahiyaṅgana in *Binara*, than in *Durutu*. The annual *perahāra* at Kelaniya, however, takes place in *Durutu* and the devotees flock to observe the spectacle which highlights the cultural attainments of the nation. The importance of Kelaniya for the pilgrim

74. *Mahāvamsa*, chapter xviii.

75. For a detailed description, see *Mahāvamsa* chapters xviii and xix.

lies in that it is one of the sixteen great places of worship, hallowed by the third visit of the Buddha (which however took place in the month of *Vesak*). At Kelaniya is also enshrined the jewelled throne on which the Buddha sat. The high sanctity in which Kelaniya is held in the esteem of the pilgrim is evidenced in a folk-poet's statement that 'all sins committed as of one's birth will be no more, if one worships but once at Kelaniya'.⁷⁶

The full moon day of *Durutu* marks the beginning of the Śrī Pāda season. Pilgrims may start their pilgrimage to the holy mountain after this day, and the season continues up to the full moon day of *Vesak*.

The month of *Navam* (January-February) has no special significance for the pilgrim with regard to any special pilgrimage to a holy place. However it is important in the history of the Buddhist tradition, since certain significant events such as the appointment of the two chief disciples of the Buddha, and the Buddha's relinquishing the continuation of his life span can be associated with this month.

The month of *Medin* (February-March) too is not of very special religious significance, except that traditionally pilgrims tended to prefer this month to any other when visiting Śrī Pāda. From the point of view of the history of the Buddhist tradition this month is important, since the Buddha started on his long journey to Kapilavāstu from Rājagaha, after Enlightenment, on this day. The beauty of the season is sung in lyrical verse in the *Theragāthā*, 'the Psalms of the Elders', in the psalm sung by Kālu-dāyī Thera who persuaded the Buddha to visit his relations.

The *Bak* (March-April) *pōya* is of particular importance since this marks the Buddha's second visit to Sri Lanka. On this occasion he visited Nāgadīpa and pacified a dispute concerning a jewelled throne. The throne in question was later gifted to the Buddha, who handed it over to the Nāgas as an object of worship. The Rajāyatana tree which is said to have shaded him from the sun, was also given the Nāgas as an object of worship. Thus the *stūpa* at Nāgadīpa is a *pāribhogika cetiya*, and is one of the sixteen great places of worship. The month of March-April is ideally suited

76. 'Upandā siṭa karapu pau nāta vārak vāndot Kālaniyē'.

to visit this island, off the Jaffna Peninsula, situated amidst the billowing waves of the Indian Ocean, and the sensitive pilgrim is sure to enjoy both religious fervour and nature's beauty.

The month of *Vesak* (April-May) is the holiest of holy months for Buddhists the world over, and is of no exception to the Buddhists of Sri Lanka. The full moon day of *Vesak* is indeed a thrice blessed day for the Buddhists, since the Buddha's birth at Lumbini as Prince Siddhattha, his realization of Buddhahood at Buddhagayā, and the final attainment of *nibbāna* at Kusinārā are all said to have taken place on this day. Other events connected with his ministry are said to have taken place on this day; as for instance, his performance of the twin miracle at Kapilavāstu, on his first visit there, in the presence of his father and relations. To us in Sri Lanka this day is of still greater significance in that it is on the *Vesak* day of the eighth year after Enlightenment that the Buddha visited this island for the third and last time; and on this occasion he visited Kelaniya and Sri Pāda, where he placed his foot print at the top of the holy mountain. It is of further national significance since it is on this day that the recorded history of Sri Lanka starts, in that Vijaya, the Aryan invader of Sri Lanka, who wrested the island from the powerful non-Aryan autochthonous tribe of 'Yakkhas' and from whom the Sinhālas are said to have descended, is stated to have landed in this country.

The full moon day of *Vesak* sees a splendid example of the artistic capabilities of the Sinhālas, realized in the erection of numerous pandals usually depicting some incident in the life of the Buddha, either as history or legend, Gaily illumined *Vesak* lanterns of various sizes and shapes are made all over the island, and for three nights,⁷⁷ that of the full moon day and the two days that follow, these are lighted, and crowds go about in their thousands enjoying the beauty of these artistic creations. Devotees make their way to the temples, and many would visit Kelaniya and Anurādhapura where they would observe *aṭasil*, the eight precepts, and spend the day and night listening to sermons, narrating *Jātaka* tales, meditating and engaged upon religious discussion. Some however would relinquish their precepts at sun-down, and go out sightseeing, and enjoying to their heart's content the light and colour of the artistic creations.

77. The more elaborate *pandals* and lanterns are lighted for one whole week.

The full moon day of *Vesak* marks the end of the pilgrim season to Śrī Pāda, the pilgrimage *par excellence*. This holy mountain is more than seven thousand feet high and is situated in the central highlands off Hatton and Maskeliya. Its situation is indeed unusual, in that it is visible on clear days even from Colombo and Galle, rising above the surrounding hills, the formation of which imparts an indescribable charm to the holy peak. At first sight, it appears almost inaccessible. And until recent times the whole area was covered with dense jungle, with only a narrow pathway leading up to the summit. Even so, monks have lived at the peak since early times, even as early as the time of King Duṭṭhagāmiṇī. Some ancient Sinhala kings prepared the route thither, some provided wayside rests, while yet others undertook the pilgrimage themselves.

Even fifty years ago, going on pilgrimage to Śrī Pāda was often considered to be the last journey of the devotee, in that some are said to have made their last will, before undertaking the journey. The whole pilgrimage was one of severe self-restraint, in thought, word and deed. Hardly any one dared to go even in twos and threes, not to say alone. A group of twenty to thirty or more devotees, called a *naḍē* was formed, and the *naḍē* was put in the charge of a veteran climber to the peak, called the *naḍēgurā*. For the duration of the pilgrimage, nobody dared to question the authority of the *naḍēgurā*: his word was law and the uninitiated, those who had never been to the peak, called *kōḍukārayo*, were under his very special care.⁷⁸

The day before they set out, the pilgrims would go to the village temple, where they would worship and wish for a safe journey to and fro, and often a vow, too, would be made to be redeemed on their return home. Throughout the journey the pilgrims would be very conscientious in using the correct form of speech for the occasion, and a very special vocabulary⁷⁹ is used for this purpose. The use of the wrong word is called *kaṭavaraddaganava* (making a mistake in regard to the mouth, i.e., speech) which is attended with dire consequences to the guilty. People are most courteous, kind and patient, especially after they enter the precin-

78. Small children undertaking the pilgrimage for the first time are referred to as *kirikōḍu*—‘the suckling uninitiated’.

79. Thus, e.g., ‘going’ would be ‘*karuṇākaraṇava*’ in contrast to the ordinary ‘*yanava*’, likewise ‘*koṭābanava*’ ‘eating’ in contrast to ‘*kanava*’.

cts of the peak. However crowded the path may be, there is no pushing or jostling; on every lip is the one word *karuṇāvayi*, *karuṇāvayi*, 'please, please', and the addressee always makes room for the speaker.

At a place called Sītagaṅgula, where an icy cold stream babbles by amidst rocks and stones, the pilgrims bathe, offer *pañḍuru* and, dressed in fresh clothing, start the climb proper.⁸⁰ From now on, the haunting strains of devotional singing spread high and low over the hills, praising the *tisaraṇa*, invoking the protection of God Sumana Saman, the tutelary deity of the peak. The young and the old join in the singing, and as a 'climbing group' meets a 'descending group', they greet each other by singing in lilting rapturous tones:⁸¹ '*nāgala bahina mē naḍēta Sumana Saman devi pihitayi*' which immediately gets the reply: '*nagiṅṭa yana mē naḍēta Sumana Saman devi pihitayi*'. As they proceed at various places the pilgrims perform special rituals reminiscent of legendary incidents. Thus at a place called Gettampāna, where the Buddhā is said to have mended his robes, pilgrims engage themselves in imitative activity, and needle and thread are discarded thereafter, and as they near the summit of the peak where the route is the most difficult, their zeal is proportionately increased by the uttering of ritual shouts, crisp and brisk in tone, which clearly are meant to keep up their spirits, contrasting with the flowing cadence of the previous chants. And at last they reach the top, happy and elated, and worship at the sacred foot print to their heart's content, and they toll a bell, each pilgrim as many times as he has climbed the peak. Now they wait for sun rise, to witness the *irasēvaya* (the worship of the Buddha by the Sun God), one of the most captivating and enchanting sights that man ever beheld, to be experienced and to be enthralled thereby, never to be described adequately in words.

Satiated and contented, the pilgrim wends his way homewards, strengthened in body and spirit, to shoulder once more the responsibilities of *saṃsāric* life, whose essence is impermanence

80. This is the most popular route, through Hatton and Maskeliya.

81. 'May the grace of God Sumana Saman be with this group which is descending'. 'May the grace of God Sumana Saman be with this group which is climbing'.

(*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*), the realization of which leads one to the *dharmayātrā*, religious journey, pilgrimages on the path of purity.⁸²

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82. Cf. *The Dhammapada*, vv. 277-279.

LITERATURE IN BUDDHIST RELIGIOUS LIFE

G. D. WIJAYAWARDHANA

Sinhalese, which is the language spoken by the entire Buddhist population in Sri Lanka, is in possession of a rich classical literature dating from about the 10th century to the 19th century A.D. Of this, the prose literature deals almost exclusively with Buddhist themes, and the vast majority of the prose texts focus on the Buddha and his teachings. Through the ages, members of the Buddhist Saṅgha were the custodians of this wealth of literature and it was widely used by them in the practice of their religious life and in the dissemination of knowledge about the doctrine throughout the Buddhist community. This religious literature managed to escape the ravages of time, was well preserved and zealously guarded by the Saṅgha, and continued to play a significant role in the religious life of the community.

Throughout the ages, Buddhists held these texts in high esteem to the point of veneration. Even today, the book of *Jātakas* (stories of the Buddha's former births) and the book of Pāli *Parittas* (the collection of Pāli benedictory *suttas*) are referred to by words conveying extreme veneration, normally employed in referring to the Buddha or the order of monks. For Buddhists consider the texts embodying religious teachings as *Dhamma* in corporeal form and honour them with the respect due to the Gem of *Dhamma*. Moreover, the texts are the safe repository wherein *Dhamma* is preserved intact in the form believed, devoutly, to have been spoken by the Buddha himself. The continuity of *Dhamma* and hence of the entire *Sāsana* is greatly dependent on the fact that it has been committed to the written form. This process of committing to writing also preserved the authoritative nature of the doctrine as it contributed significantly to the elimination of errors and

lapses that could creep in due to human fallibility. In the history of Sri Lanka one hears of many instances where reigning monarchs venerated and paid homage to particular religious texts as if they were the Buddha himself in visible form.

When one considers the idiom and the style of language in which these texts are written, it is obvious that they were intended, for the scholar—the man of letters. In the traditional society facilities for learning were not widespread; and hence, literacy was confined to a small section of the elite. Even today, when literacy is widespread throughout Sri Lanka, the common man tends neither to have the leisure nor the inclination to engage himself in the pursuit of letters. In books belonging to the classical period, 10th century to the 19th century A.D., the language is somewhat removed from that of the present day as it contains certain archaic linguistic features and a vocabulary that is somewhat unfamiliar. Consequently, these books are not readily comprehensible to the ordinary reader. In spite of such drawbacks, there are a few important works with which Buddhists, monastic and lay, are familiar.

The acquaintance with these works could either be directly through personal perusal or indirectly through religious discourses one listens to at the temple or on religious occasions. Usually the village priest draws his themes from the works of the Pāli canon, but in their elaboration, material is also drawn from Sinhalese classical texts. This mostly takes the form of religious stories. Thus, through listening to the sermons the layman gets the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the classical Sinhalese works, even though he might not be literate enough or does not get the occasion to read them by himself. However, as far as the educated layman is concerned, one could expect him to keep a few well known books in his household to be read quietly to himself or aloud to his family during leisure hours. This would particularly be so if there be aged members in the household.

Of the large number of classical texts, the following could be mentioned as those that enjoy widest popularity among the Buddhist laymen, and which could most often be seen in the average Buddhist household:

- (1) *Jātaka Pota*
- (2) *Pūjāvaliya* and
- (3) *Saddharmaratnāvaliya*.

All these works are in prose and are written in narrative form relating stories dealing with incidents in the life of the Buddha or with his past births. In addition to these books of the classical period, some more recent and popular works of the lesser literary tradition are also commonly used. They are:

(4) *Tun Sarane* and

(5) *Buddha Adahilla*

Of these, *Tun Sarane* is a book of verse in the folk idiom, and *Buddha Adahilla* a booklet of religious instructions of a basic nature.

Of the classics, *Jātaka Pota* is by far the best known and respected work. It is referred to by the lay devotee and *bhikkhu* alike with a term of high respect, viz., *Jātaka Pot Vahanse* (the venerable book of *Jātakas*)—*vahanse* being an honorific generally used in respect of the Buddha, *arahants* and the *bhikkhus*, and also for such sacred objects as the relics of the Buddha and the *Bodhi*-tree. As was mentioned earlier, with regard to the use of this appellation for books, it is reserved for two works—i.e., this book and the book of *Parittas*. *Jātakas* mean birth stories and hence the *Jātaka Pota* is a collection of stories, as many as five hundred and forty-seven, purporting to be those of the former lives of the Buddha in his journey through *samsāra* over a vast expanse of time.

Perhaps this could be one reason why the book is held in respect by the Buddhist community. To many these stories are authentic records of the Buddha's former births in the course of his supreme endeavour to attain the exalted state of Buddhahood. Thus they concern a person of high esteem. He is one who deliberately renounced early release from *samsāra* in order to undergo the suffering of existence so that by attaining Buddhahood he could release others from the same suffering. From a Buddhist's point of view, no person could be worthy of respect and veneration to the extent that the Buddha is; and no other person's chronicle of existence is recorded running up to as much as five hundred and more lives. Hence, the *Jātaka* collection is indeed a unique work.

As a religious work the purpose of *Jātaka* stories is mainly didactic. Each story contains a moral expressed or implied. In each story the *Bodhisattva*, the being who in future is to attain enlightenment, is depicted as the principal character. He is shown

as possessing exemplary qualities, setting an example by word or deed for others to follow. In his sojourn in *samsāra*, the *Bodhisattva* practises the ten *pāramī dharmas* or perfect virtues which prepare him for ultimate enlightenment, and the *Jātaka* stories narrate how he practised them in each of his past births.

Not all the stories in this collection depict the *Bodhisattva* as a human being. In some he assumes a birth in the plane of heavenly beings, while in some others he is born in the animal kingdom. Even as a human being he is depicted in all walks of life. The common feature happens to be the fact that he is always cast in the central role. Thus, opportunity is provided to depict life in diverse situations and diverse aspects. Most of the stories conform to the fable form and contain underlying morals.

Historically, the *Jātaka* stories comprise the wealth of folklore extant in India before the Buddha's time, and were adapted to the Buddhist tradition. An outstanding characteristic in most of the stories, and the factor that is mainly responsible for their intense appeal, is the depth in which human nature is portrayed therein. Each such story concerns itself with a complex human situation and vividly caricatures human behaviour in diverse circumstances. They provide the reader a glimpse into the working of the human mind and an understanding of the fickleness, weakness and foibles of human nature that are responsible for oddities in human behaviour.

A king who sees that his wife pays more attention to their infant son than to himself is driven in a fit of jealousy to murder the innocent child. A tottering old woman attempts to kill her own son who looks after her, in order to please a young man who craftily praises her physical attractions. A misogynist who hates the sight of women from his birth is seduced to enjoy sex, and thereafter becomes so mad for female company that he intends to murder all menfolk so that he could have the monopoly of the pleasures of sex. A paramour who is almost discovered dallying with a young wife of an old man desires to clout the husband on the head before making good his escape. Thus the mysteries of passion, jealousy, hatred, avarice, are laid bare with penetrating insight into the complexities of human nature. The stories are so true to life and represent humanity so faithfully that they never fail to hold the reader in their grip and enrich his vision of human behaviour.

The *Pūjāvaliya* is a collection of stories drawn from the Buddha legend. The purpose of the book is to emphasize the superhuman qualities and the sublime nature of Buddhahood, thereby inspiring in the minds of the readers an intense feeling of devotion and esteem towards the Buddha. The theme running through the body of stories is the virtue of the Buddha, known as *arahant*, a being worthy of homage, and the method employed to exemplify this is to narrate episodes from the Buddha legend wherein he was venerated both materially and spiritually by all manner of living beings. The majority of the stories are from the life of the Buddha, but a few have been selected from his former births also. Similarly a few incidents subsequent to the demise of the Buddha too are included. Because of the detailed method adopted in the narration, the book amounts to a very comprehensive account of his life. Superhuman attributes and psychic powers of the Buddha as well as those of his main disciples are narrated in great detail. Awesome veneration is the emotion that the book seeks to evoke in the minds of its readers. The great popularity enjoyed by this work stems from the fact that it gives a vivid account of the Buddha's life in great detail and in evocative language, and creates a wondrous image of his unique and superhuman personality.

The *Saddharmaratnāvaliya* is another collection of stories pertaining to the teachings of the Buddha. These narrate the circumstances that led to his preaching of the Pāli verses in the collection known as the *Dhammapada*. The stories are taken from the Pāli commentary to the text of the *Dhammapada* and are written in Sinhalese with further elaboration. In addition to stories connected with the *Dhammapada*, the collection also includes a few other well-known stories in Buddhist literature.

The *Dhammapada* is a short book of Pāli verses belonging to the Buddhist canon and enjoys a very special place in the Buddhist community. It is a compendium of pithy sayings giving in a nutshell the essence of the Buddha's teachings. The verses are commonly used as themes for religious discourse. The eminent place that the *Dhammapada* occupies among Buddhist texts could be one reason for the popularity of *Saddharmaratnāvaliya* as well, the stories of which take the parable form and wind up with a short religious discourse. The humorous and lively style of the narrative also contributes to the appealing nature of this work. The author

pokes fun at the foibles and weaknesses of human nature. The humour is without malice and the reader is able to laugh with the author at the failings common to humanity.

Sinhalese language is in possession of a vast literature concerning Buddha and his teachings. In fact the bulk of classical prose literature deals almost exclusively with religious themes. In the changing circumstances of history how does one account for the immense popularity enjoyed by the few classical texts in particular? Why have they reached and continue to reach the multitude of readers more than any other?

Perhaps the main reason for this popularity lies in the innate desire in man to listen to stories. From early childhood one is exposed to stories, and listening to stories related by elders is a common source of entertainment in childhood. Both in India and Sri Lanka, one comes across a vast collection of folk tales capable of entertaining not only children but even adults. In India, and occasionally within the Hindu community in Sri Lanka, the practice is carried further by narrating stories in song to the accompaniment of music and also dramatizing them. A single story like that of the *Rāmāyana* is narrated in several ways designed to hold the attention of the audience.

Such literary forms as the novel, the short story and the drama are various expedients of narrating a story, and this basic narrative feature is responsible to a great extent for their popularity. The same holds true for various forms of narrative poetry as well. Consequently a large slice of all creative literature is narrative in character, and this holds true for all literatures through the ages in the history of mankind. Such art forms as painting, sculpture and dancing also have been put to frequent use for the purpose of narrating a story.

How can one account for the fascination that story holds for man? This is indeed a complex question. This could, in one sense, be a manifestation of the ever-present desire in man to know what happened. It may be that we are obsessed by an insatiable curiosity to know the unknown and, perhaps, to comprehend the incomprehensible. We are forever haunted with a desire to unravel the mysterious and to discover what is hidden. We like to know about our fellow human beings and to share vicariously their fate. We

react emotionally in diverse ways to what befalls our fellow travellers in this journey through existence. We learn from their experience.

It is not every story that holds our attention. Only some make a definite impact on our minds while others are discarded as dull and uninteresting. For a story to hold us in its grip it must contain an experience we can share. It must stir in us an element of wonder at realizing something which was hitherto unknown. It should form part of the gamut of human endeavour. It should bear the stamp of authenticity and provide room for 'willing suspension of disbelief'.

For, in listening to a story, one tends to identify with it and immerse oneself in the experience contained therein. A good story is indeed a slice of life. Even if it is presented in fable form with animal characters, its intrinsic affinity with the human situation makes it a part of human experience. Through the animal garb we perceive humanity, man's idiosyncrasies, his courage and his nobility. That animal garb is merely the costume in which great human drama is enacted.

The story shows us life from a rare vantage point, a ringside seat in the drama of life. Through the story we see a facet of human nature which may not be so obvious—nevertheless complex and moving. It provides us with the opportunity 'to see ourselves as others see us'. Consequently it provides an opportunity for introspection and takes one on a voyage of discovery—discovery of oneself—one's fellow human beings. It affords an opportunity to view life in its proper perspective, and to understand the complexities of human existence. It links man with his inner self.

Looked at from this point of view it might be possible to understand why stories like the *Jātakas* possess a universal and lasting appeal. Though presented in the form of former lives of the Buddha, this collection incorporates some of the best folk tales of the Indian subcontinent. They embody the traditional wisdom of our cultural heritage, and their wisdom is not restricted to any one religious tradition. They reflect the common lore of the traditional Indian culture, and although adapted to the Buddhist tradition, their intrinsic universality remains very much in evidence. Most

of the stories deal with poignant human situations that leave the reader deeply moved. The same is the case of most of the stories in *Saddharmaratnāvaliya* too.

The corpus of stories in these literary works is a part of the cultural heritage perpetuated over a long period of time. Although their origins are to be found in ancient Indian lore, they have lived among the Sinhalese for thousands of years—handed down first orally and then in written form. In this process they have absorbed a great deal from the socio-cultural milieu of our country. The skeletal story has acquired flesh and blood from local culture, and has been transformed into something indigenous. This transformation is best evident in the stories of the *Saddharmaratnāvaliya*. Thus the Indian story has come to absorb the cultural aspirations of the Sinhalese. The stories represent the quality of Sinhalese life over many centuries and covering many generations. Consequently, in one sense these could be viewed as representative of the social order of the Sinhalese in a bygone era. In fact they form a segment of human history that is usually not revealed from sources normally accepted as history.

Perhaps this too could contribute to the popularity and the abiding nature of the stories recorded in the texts. They form one's link with one's past heritage, i.e., with one's history. They link one with the aspirations of one's ancestors, and help to bridge the gap over many generations in one's search for the cultural coherence and unity running through history from the remote past to the present day.

The stories also form a segment of the cultural inheritance shared by the members of a community at a given time in its history. Thus in one sense they help one to apprise oneself of the religious aspirations and the inclinations of one's fellow members in society and form a bond that links its individual members together. Considering the major role religious parables play in the religious education of the Buddhist community in a society like Sri Lanka, it is safe to assume that a good part of the individual's awareness of the religious tradition too is acquired through this medium.

From among the works of the lesser literary tradition, *Tun Sarane* is a popular book of verse which is written to extol the virtues of the three refuges of the Buddhists, namely the Buddha,

Dhamma and the Saṅgha. This work has no pretensions to erudition and is a poem, simple in idiom and in language easily comprehensible. The virtues of the *tisarāṇa* (three refuges) are committed to plain verse and the metric patterns lend themselves to melodious singing. The poem also seeks to inculcate in the layman a deep sense of devotion and adoration towards the *tisarāṇa* and quite forcefully drives home the conviction that to a Buddhist the only source of solace is one's firm faith in the Buddha, *Dhamma* and the Saṅgha. The work is designed to appeal to the emotions of reverence and devotion.

Widely read as it is in the average Buddhist home, this book is also used for a very special purpose. An important centre of pilgrimage for the Buddhist in Sri Lanka is Śrī Pāda—a peak in the central highlands more than seven thousand feet above sea level, and the third highest in the country. On a rock at the summit of this peak, the Buddha is believed to have left the print of his left foot on one of his visits to the island. Annually, during the season which runs from December to April, Buddhists go on pilgrimage to this site. A good part of the journey to the mountain and the climb to the top has to be undertaken on foot, and the trip is not without its hazards. The route to the summit lies through thick forest and the climb is mostly attempted at night when it is less tiring. It is the practice among the Buddhist pilgrims to sing aloud in chorus the verses from *Tun Sarāṇe* on this long journey. This chanting helps to dispel the fatigue of the long journey on foot and also helps to overcome the feeling of loneliness while travelling through the dense jungle. These chants tend to scare away the wild animals. For such singing, verses from the *Tun Sarāṇe* are admirably suited. On the one hand they help the singer and the listener to contemplate the virtues of, and have faith in, the *tisarāṇa*, while attempting this hazardous journey. On the other, their musical nature lends itself to loud, rhythmic and melodious group chanting.

Buddha Ādahilla is a small book that invariably finds a place in many Buddhist households—but for entirely different reasons. While all the other works mentioned thus far are widely read, due mostly to their literary qualities, this small book serves a very practical purpose. It is a pocket-size handbook for the devotee, to be consulted in one's day-to-day religious practices. The book begins with practical hints regarding one's conduct at the temple,

how one should pay homage to various objects of veneration and so forth. It proceeds to give some elementary rules of social conduct for the layman. Pāli verses to be chanted in worshipping the *Triratana* (three gems), in making simple offerings of incense and flowers, and verses chanted in worshipping important shrines are also compiled for ready reference. Simple forms of meditation such as that on impermanence of life, impurity of the human body, loving compassion towards living beings and so forth are also given. The book ends with a collection of *parittas*, i.e., benedictory Pāli *suttas* and other Pāli stanzas commonly recited to invoke blessing.

This small practical manual for the lay devotee is by no means an erudite work. It is of very recent origin and of unknown authorship. Yet it serves a very important practical purpose in the Buddhist lay life and is the only work of its nature.

The role that religious literature plays in the religious life of the Buddhist lay community, undoubtedly, is a significant one. Through religious texts the lay devotee finds communion with the spiritual and the sublime. Considering the busy pace of modern life that one is constrained to live, one might not find it convenient to visit the temple frequently, observe the *uposatha* or practise meditation even if one is inclined to do so. But books could be read at leisure at one's own convenience, in the privacy of one's own surroundings. Reading links the devotee with his religious heritage and provides occasion for a person to contemplate the Buddha, *Dhamma* and the Saṅgha. Even if one is not given to scholarly pursuits, religious literature takes him on a comfortable journey to the realm of spirituality away from his mundane surroundings and establishes contact with the sublime. Reading and contemplation upon these subjects constitute a form of meditation.

Religious literature also advises and guides the devotee in the conduct of his day-to-day life. Religious books are meant to edify and admonish—to guide one on the path of righteousness. It is said that religious literature provides admonition and guidance like a kind and lovable wife—not by way of harsh and unpalatable indictments and commands, but through soft and loving words and gestures. Religious literatures reveals the obscure side of humanity; and by example rather than precept, demonstrates the

wickedness of evil and the godliness of virtue. It deals with the universality in human experience and affords the reader an opportunity to participate in that experience, thus providing him comfort in the trials and tribulations that are part and parcel of worldly existence. Through religious literature a Buddhist is able to identify himself with the entire brotherhood of Buddhists cutting across all spatio-temporal boundaries. And persons who have come to appreciate the guidance that religious literature provides participate, through this appreciation, in a brotherhood of religiousness cutting across all doctrinal and institutional boundaries.

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SANGHA FOR THE LAITY

L. P. N. PERERA

Ask any Buddhist monk in Sri Lanka today, what is your role *vis-à-vis* your laity? Pat the reply comes, 'Advising in respect of material and spiritual welfare' (Sinhala: *Arthayen dharmayen anusāsanā kirīma*). What is the significance of this reply? What is its origin and development in history? What does it mean in the contemporary situation? This chapter shall attempt to respond to these questions.

When one speaks of the 'significance of the Saṅgha for the laity', one is prone to think in terms of two distinct elements which go to form the societal base or foundation of the religio-philosophical movement known as the Buddhist tradition. While such a conception is not entirely meaningless, and while one can say that the Saṅgha as the yellow-robed Buddhist *religieux* could be easily differentiated from the Buddhist laity—the former being endowed with visible features differentiating it from the latter—the question may yet be asked: Buddhistically speaking, in its relationship with the laity, does the Saṅgha stand like the clergy in some theistic religious traditions? Oriented, as many of us are, to think in terms of theistic religious traditions—especially in terms of those from the West—it might be difficult for some of us to see in the Saṅgha and the laity a more intergrated whole.

Although the members of the Saṅgha, while seeking transcendence, may be said to assist the laity along the path of transcendence, the Saṅgha does not mediate, so to speak, between 'God' and man. Such 'mediation', as it were, is the case with some interpretations of the clergy in some theistic traditions. The Saṅgha and the laity, fundamentally, are not disparate elements of the Buddhist religious tradition, to speak of one in contradistinction

to the other. They tread the same path to attain the same goal—the difference between the two being only a matter of degree. As the layman is weighed down with worldly cares, in matters of spirit, as a Theravāda canonical text puts it, ‘the layman can never hope to emulate the *bhikkhu*—aloof and musing in sylvan solitude—even as the blue-necked peacock never can match the swan in flight.¹ Buddhists only place a higher value on the life of recluship (*ṭabbajjā*) recognized by them as superior to that of the laity, since the latter is more intertwined with the world.²

It is also important to realize that the founding fathers of the Buddhist movement envisaged a particular social arrangement through which the continuance and perpetuation of their movement in time and space would adequately be ensured. Sufficient consideration of such continuance and perpetuation was also needed, due to the added reason that the Buddhist tradition from the very beginning assumed a missionary complexion.³ Now, in the arrangement so visualized, the Saṅgha, on the one hand, and the laity on the other play equally important roles. For the Dispensation of the Buddha, the Saṅgha and the laity are considered to be of equal significance.⁴ The arrangement entailed the establishment of a four fold society consisting of (a) the *bhikkhus* (monks), (b) the *bhikkhunis* (nuns), (c) the *upāsukās* (male lay-devotees), and (d) the *upāsikās* (female lay-devotees)—a society duly qualified and equipped to shoulder the responsibilities of the Dispensation. That the Buddhist movement, from the very inception, did aim at this objective and attained it in full measure within the lifetime of the Buddha

1. *Sikkhī yathā nīlagīvo vihaṅgamo haṃsassa nopeti javam kudācanaṃ evaṃ gihī nānukaroti bhikkuno muṇṇino visittassa navamhi jhāyato* Sn. 221.

2. ‘*Sambādho gharāvāso rajopatho, abbhokāso ṭabbajjā*’ D.I., 63 et passim; M.I. 179 et passim.

3. ‘*Caratha bhikkhave cārikam bahujanahitāya bahujanasukhāya lokānukampāya atthāya hitāya sukhāya devamanussānaṃ*’ Vin. I, 21.

4. In our assessment of the relative position of the Saṅgha and the laity in the Buddhist religious system we are at variance with the Weberian hypothesis that originally the laity had no fixed status in the Buddhist community. Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, (Tr. from the German *Religions-soziologie* by E. Fischhoff), London, 1965, p. 61. Also Roland Robertson (Ed.), *Sociology of Religion*, selected Readings Penguin Books, Reprint 1971, p. 21.

himself may be noted in the following translation, abbreviated and summarized where necessary, from the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* of the *Dīghanikāya*:

Once upon a time, O Ānanda, immediately following my Enlightenment, I was staying at Uruvela on the bank of the river Nerañjarā, at the foot of the 'goatherd's Banyan tree'. Then, O Ānanda, Māra, the Evil One, approached me ... and addressed me thus: 'May the Blessed One pass into *Parinibbāna* now. May the Exalted One pass away from existence! The time is ripe for the Blessed One to pass into *Parinibbāna*:

When Māra spoke thus, O Ānanda, I replied to him in these words: 'I shall not pass away from existence, O Evil One, until the *bhikkhus*, the *bhikkhunīs*, the *upāsakas* and the *upasikās* shall have attained (true) discipleship, become wise, well-trained and learned, and are masters of the *Dhamma* and act in conformity with the *Dhamma*, following the precepts—until they, having learnt the *Dhamma* (as handed down by their teachers), shall be able to convey it (to others), to preach it, to make it known, to establish it, to open it up, to analyse it and lay it bare—and until they shall be able to preach well the wonder-working *Dhamma* by refuting the assertions of others by its own truth. I shall not pass away until this religious system of mine shall have become successful, prosperous, widespread, reached the multitude and become popular—that is to say, until it shall have been well proclaimed by gods and men'.

Again, today, O Ānanda, Māra, the Evil One, approached me at the Cāpāla Shrine... and addressed me (in the same manner, stating that the prerequisite conditions for my passing away as laid down by me are now fulfilled).

And when so addressed, I replied to Māra thus: 'Feel thyself comfortable, O Evil One, the passing away of the Tathāgata will occur ere long. Three months hence the Tathāgata will pass out of existence'.

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5. D.II, 112 ff. The *Sutta* states a little earlier (*Ibid.*, 104 ff.) that Māra arrived at the Cāpāla Shrine that day and reminded the Buddha that the time to attain *Parinibbāna* has arrived, and that the Buddha promised that he would do so at the end of three months.

While recording and summarizing the events of the last few months of the Buddha's life, through these words attributed to the Buddha himself, the *Sutta* suggests that, sandwiched between the beginning and the close of his ministry, there was a deliberate effort among Buddhists to adopt all measures necessary to stabilise the movement and to guarantee its continuance into the future. The Buddha is here portrayed as addressing his disciple and lifelong companion, Ānanda. In these passages one can note that the Saṅgha and the laity were clearly receiving formal recognition at least by the time of the close of the Buddha's ministry.

While it is granted that the *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs*, mentioned in the quotation given above, readily comprise the Saṅgha, it has to be stressed that the term Saṅgha (as used in the Buddhist system) primarily has a two fold meaning, and that both meanings are of equal significance for the Buddhist laity. This twofold sense of the term Saṅgha may be designated as the 'spiritual' and the 'institutional', respectively. A development unique to Buddhist thought is the idea of a 'spiritual community' referred to as the *sāvaka-saṅgha* (i.e., 'disciple-saṅgha') in contradistinction to the 'institutional community' (comprising only the *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs*) known as the *bhikkhu-saṅgha*. From the latter community, the institutional community, further developed the concept of an ideal confraternity known as the 'Saṅgha of the Four Quarters' (*Cātuddisa-bhikkhusaṅgha*)—a confraternity spread out in time and space—in whose name it became the practice of the pious laity to make donations, placing the gift, in actual practice, in the hands of the Saṅgha of any given locality.

The Buddhists (whether they be *bhikkhus*, *bhikkhunīs*, *upāsakas* or *upāsikās*) take 'refuge' in what they call the Triple Gem (*Ti-ratana*), comprising the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the Saṅgha, and the term Saṅgha in this context is described in the Buddhist canonical texts in the following terms:

The Disciple Community of the Blessed One (*Bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho*) has entered well on the correct path (*su-paṭi-panno*), on the straight way (*uju-paṭi-panno*), on the right track (*ñāya-paṭi-panno*), on the proper course (*sāmīci-paṭi-panno*). They are the Four Pairs of Persons (*cattāri purisayugāni*), the Eight Individuals (*aṭṭha purisa-puggalā*); this Disciple Community of the Blessed One is worthy of gifts (*āhuneyyo*),

is worthy of hospitality (*phāhuneyyo*), is worthy of offerings (*dakkhiṇeyyo*), is worthy of reverential salutation (*añjalikaraṇīyo*), is an incomparable field of merit for the world (*anut-taraṃ puññakkhettaṃ lokassa*).⁶

The Disciple Community (*sāvakaśaṅgha*) of the Buddha is said to be the 'Four Pairs of Persons' or the 'Eight Individuals'. Now, the 'Four Pairs of Persons' or the 'Eight Individuals' refer to those persons amongst the *bhikkhus*, *bhikkhunīs*, *upāsakas* and *upāsikās* who have progressed towards transcendence in the following order:

- (1) disciples who have entered the Path of Stream-winning (*sotāpattimagga*)—the first stage of spiritual progress;
- (2) disciples who have attained the Fruition of the first stage (i.e., *sotāpatti-phala*);
- (3) disciples who have attained to the Path of Once-returner (*sakadāgāmicimaggā*)—the second stage;
- (4) disciples who have attained the Fruition of the second stage (i.e., *sakadāgāmi-phala*);
- (5) disciples who have attained to the Path of the Never-
returner (*anāgāmicimaggā*)—the third stage;
- (6) disciples who attained the Fruition of the third stage (i.e., *anāgāmi-phala*);
- (7) disciples who have attained to the Path of the Arahant (*arahattamaggā*)—the fourth stage; and
- (8) disciples who have attained the Fruition of the fourth stage (i.e., *arahatta-phala*).⁷

These 'Paths' are stages of spiritual development, and the attaining of any given 'Path' and reaching the 'Fruit' thereof are separately distinctive steps on the way to *Nibbāna* or Salvific Truth. To the Buddha, true discipleship entails at the minimum one's 'entry into the stream' and joining the Path (*magga*) of the Flow (*sota*)—the first step of the path to emancipation—and once this foothold is gained, it is said, one does not stray or fall back to

6. M.I., 37; A.I., 208; III, 35 *et passim*.

7. *Visuddhimagga*, (Simon Hewavitarna Bequest series). p. 162.

the level of the 'worldling' (*puthujjana*), in contradistinction to whom the real disciple (*sāvaka*) is also known as *ariyaṭṭhala* or the 'Noble One'. Therefore the Buddhist commentarial tradition refers to the *sāvakaśaṅgha* also as *ariyaśaṅgha* or the Noble Community.⁸

Furthermore, the *sāvakaśaṅgha*, in the Buddhist view, comprises not only human beings, but also beings from the celestial realms who could be counted among the Eight Individuals. The Buddhist view of the cosmos recognizes five planes of existence (*pañca gatiyo*) and the Buddha's mission was the 're-structuring' or the 're-ordering' of consciousness at all levels of existence,⁹ which is the 'only way' (*ekāyano maggo*) leading to the 'emancipation of beings' (*sattānam visuddhiyā*).¹⁰ However, the demands of its practicality very much confine the application of the Buddha's message to two realms of existence—the celestial (*deva*) and human (*manussa*)—and the Buddha himself is looked upon in Buddhist thought as the 'teacher of gods and men' (*sattihā devamanussānam*).¹¹ Beings, both human and divine, to whom emancipation is guaranteed, from the moment of entry into the first 'Path', are so to speak on a par with each other, and all constitute the *sāvakaśaṅgha*. Through their moral and spiritual worthiness they are reckoned as Noble Ones (*ariyaṭṭhala*) transcending distinctions such as sex.

Although there has been, of course, some confusion now and then in appreciating the difference between the two terms *bhikkhūśaṅgha* and *sāvakaśaṅgha*, even from ancient times,¹² it should, however, be borne in mind that while very many members of the *bhikkhūśaṅgha*, especially during the Buddha's day, could be counted among the *sāvakaśaṅgha*, the latter need not include the

8. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

9. Trevor Ling, *The Buddha*, Temple Smith, London, 1973; Reprint 1974, p. 122 *et passim*.

10. D.II, 290.

11. The other (three) planes of existence, *viz.*, the lower states of suffering (*niraya*), the realm of departed spirits (*pettivisaya*) and the animal kingdom (*tiracchānayoṇi*), by their very nature, cannot really benefit by the Buddha's teaching.

12. Vin. I, 37; M.I., 378 f.

former in toto. It is this particular Saṅgha that the Buddhists venerate when they define the term as 'the Disciple Community of the Blessed One', although for many Buddhists today 'in ordinary usage and in public understanding, Saṅgha designates only the Order of Monks, the institutional society of ordained persons'.¹³ This does not, however, mean that the Buddhist who understood the difference between the two Saṅgha has lesser regard for the *bhikkhusaṅgha*. In fact it has been the Buddhist tradition that the layman, even when spiritually more advanced than the *bhikkhu*, always paid homage to the latter. The term *sāvakaṅgha*, therefore, designates a spiritual concept transcending spatio-temporal considerations. It is the ideal discipleship or fellowship held in the highest esteem by the entire Buddhist society. To the credit of the ordinary *bhikkhusaṅgha*, whose handiwork the definition of the *sāvakaṅgha* seems to be, it may be stated that they have never sought any eulogizing for themselves.

In the mind of the *bhikkhusaṅgha*, which held in highest esteem the *sāvakaṅgha*, the membership of the latter, it appears, has been looked upon as having been drawn solely from the former. It has been said that the *sāvakaṅgha* is to be considered 'an incomparable field of merit for the world', and this characteristic is made more meaningful by further extrapolation; that the *sāvakaṅgha* is 'worthy of gifts' (*āhuneyya*), 'worthy of hospitality' (*pāhuneyya*), 'worthy of offerings' (*dakkhiṇeyya*) and 'worthy of reverential salutation' (*añjalikaraṇīya*). With the exception of the last-mentioned characteristic which, no doubt, holds good with regard to any member of the *sāvakaṅgha*—male or female, human or divine—the other characteristics are meaningful primarily with regard to members of the *bhikkhusaṅgha*. Buddhaghosa, commenting on the term *āhuneyya* in his *Visuddhimagga*, says that *āhuna* (gift) in this context is an epithet for the 'four requisites': *catunnaṃ paccayānaṃ etaṃ adbhivacanaṃ*.¹⁴ The 'four requisites' referred to here are 'robes' (*cīvara*), 'alms food' (*piṇḍapāta*), 'dwellings' (*senāsana*) and 'medicines for the sick' (*gilānappaccaya-bhesajja*) specifically offered by the laity to the *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs*. These 'requisites' need not be offered to the members of the *sāvakaṅgha*

13. Edmund F. Perry & Shanta Ratnayake, 'the Saṅgha of the Tiratana', REI Occasional Papers, No. 1 (Evanston Illinois, 1973), p. 3.

14. *Visuddhimagga*, (Simon Hewavitarne Bequest series), p. 162.

drawn from among the laymen, laywomen and beings in the celestial realms. In their elucidation of the concept *sāvakaśaṅgha*, therefore, the *bhikkhusaṅgha* was perhaps influenced by a lack of precision in the use of the terms that existed from early times.

To the layman, of course, these attributes of the *sāvakaśaṅgha*, even if the *bhikkhusaṅgha*, the institutional order, alone be implied by the term, are of much significance. The layman who wishes to accrue merit, provides the Saṅgha, generally understood as the *bhikkhusaṅgha*, with material requirements, which, undoubtedly is the responsibility of the Buddhist lay society. As far as the laity is concerned, the worthiness of the *sāvakaśaṅgha* in the other respects mentioned above seems to flow from this primary consideration, the responsibility of providing material requirements, although the worthiness of the *sāvakaśaṅgha* stems from the important fact that it provides profound spiritual inspiration to the laity.

The *Bhikkhusaṅgha*, as the term itself implies, consists of *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs* only. Though participation in the community is not absolutely necessary for the attainment of transcendence, this is a community of men and women, who, having left behind worldly responsibilities, have adopted a particular mode of life recommended by the Buddha as being the most conducive to the attainment of transcendence. We have had occasion to observe that Buddhists have placed a higher value on recluship as differentiated from the life of the laity for the sole reason that the latter is more intermingled with the world. Such intermingling naturally results in obstacles to mental cultivation which, in turn, delay one's attaining transcendence. Thus, the texts emphasize only this difficulty and never stress an inherent soteriological impossibility in the lay status.¹⁵ In fact, there are accounts of laymen who led the religious life,¹⁶ and also who attained transcendence while being in the layman's garb.¹⁷ On the other hand, it has to be recognized that those who have attained noble states of spiritual existence are to be found mostly among persons who have left the household life.¹⁸ The life of the *bhikkhus*, therefore,

15. Vin. III, 12 *et passim*.

16. M.I., 490 f.

17. MA. (*Papañcasūdanī*), III, 196.

18. M.II, 161.

is a higher form of life, detached, as it is, from worldly cares. It is a life founded mainly on moral purity, self-control and contentment, as stated in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* of the *Dīghanikāya* and as reiterated elsewhere in the early Buddhist records.

The Buddhist *bhikkhu* was really a new type of recluse, leading a life characterized by refinement and decency. As a consequence of the attitude of early Buddhists towards the psycho-physical foundations of mental culture, the code of conduct governing the life of the *bhikkhusaṅgha* was considerably different from those of other contemporary ascetic groups. The life of the Buddhist disciple was neither degraded to subhuman levels, as are described at length in the Buddhist records dealing with the austerities of the day,¹⁹ nor pushed to the other extreme of self-indulgence—an extreme certainly resorted to by some religious groups of the times.²⁰ The *bhikkhu* was expected to lead a life which ensured his physical and mental well-being, but not mixed up with sensuality. Such a life has to be led not for its own sake, but as a solid basis for mental development. In outer deportment too, the *bhikkhu* was expected to look different from the other ascetics of the day.²¹ Much stress is laid on his decorum.²² It is the Buddhist view that a recluse should be suitably attired and be properly presentable.²³ The early Buddhist texts make a special effort to differentiate the *bhikkhusaṅgha* from the rest of the Indian *religieux*.²⁴ Internally, by living a religious life differing in conception and magnitude from other forms of such life, and externally with due care for deportment, in the eyes of the layman (who would not normally differentiate the *bhikkhusaṅgha* from the *sāvakaṅgha*), the life of the *bhikkhu*, in its totality, succeeded in establishing the claim that the 'Disciples Community of the Blessed One has entered well on the correct path' *supaṭipanno bhagavato sāvakaṅgho*.

19. Vin. III, 171 f.; M.I. 387 f.

20. Vin. II, 295 f.; D.I. 5; M.I. et 305, III, 21.

21. Vin. IV. 185 f. 349 f.; also A.V. 88.

22. Vin. II, 115 and IV, 102. Also *v. supra* fn. 21 & Wax Weber, *The Religion of India* (The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism), Illinois. U.S.A., 1958, p. 225; Oldenberg, *Buddha*, (Tr.) Calcutta, 1927, p. 155.

23. *Nanu nāma pabbajitena sunivatthena bhavitabbaṃ supārutena ākapasampannā ti* Vin, IV, 102.

24. Vin. I, 44 and 90 f., 305 f.; II, 114 f. See also D. III, 115.

Just as the *bhikkhu* was different from other ascetics of the day, as an organized community the *bhikkhusaṅgha* too was quite different, from its very inception, from other ascetic Orders in India, however much one may be tempted to think that it was originally an off-shoot of a community of wandering mendicants (*paribbājakas*)—an off-shoot which accepted the Buddha as their Teacher (*Satthā*).²⁵ The foundation for the establishment of a new Order of recluses was laid at the very beginning of the Dispensation with the Buddha's advice to the *Pañcavaggiya Bhikkhus* regarding the extremes of the conditions of living that a recluse should avoid.²⁶ In the early Buddhist texts, the Buddhist system of mental culture in its totality is sometimes referred to as *ariyassa vinaya*, conceiving it completely in terms of discipline, showing thereby that the *bhikkhusaṅgha*, from its early days was a well organized community with a discipline of its own, although pre-Buddhistic and contemporary influences may have had a bearing on its formulation. It was a new type of religious Order with which the Buddhist laity was concerned.

Furthermore, the *bhikkhusaṅgha*, from its very inception, was accorded a specific position by the Indian society within its own structure. In ancient India the 'goers-forth' constituted a community recognized as such both by the people and the State.²⁷ Belonging as they did to the two fold stream of ancient Indian intellectual and spiritual culture, popularly known as the *samanābrāhmanā*, the Saṅgha enjoyed many rights and privileges by virtue of such recognition. As an intellectual brotherhood, the Saṅgha formed part of a larger society, both religious and secular, with which it had close interrelations.

Now, the significance of a given religious community to its lay supporters would depend in no small measure on the nature of the interrelations obtaining between them. As far as the Saṅgha and the Buddhist laity are concerned, this interrelationship, far from being loosely knit, as one might sometimes be inclined to

25. This is the view, for example, held by Sukumar Dutt. v. his monograph *Early Buddhist Monachism*, (First published 1924), First revised Indian Edition, 1960, p. 12 *passim*.

26. Vin.I, 10. See also M.III, 230 f.

27. Vin.I, 75. See also Sukumar Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India*, London 1962, p. 43.

imagine, was one firmly welded together. As noted in the passage quoted above from the *Mahāparinibbānasutta*, to the world at large the Buddha had a message, the transmission of which was the responsibility of the Buddhist four-fold society. However, this, in practice, was mostly confined to the *bhikkhus* from the very inception of the Buddha's ministry. Thus, the foundation for this interconnection was in the Buddha's admonition to the first sixty *Arahants* to carry his message to the world. The *bhikkhus* were expected to proclaim far and wide the newly re-discovered *Dhamma*. In the judicious performance of that task the Saṅgha found no reason, though its members have given up the household life, to recoil from reasonable lay-company. Through close rapport the layman's intellectual horizons and spectrum of interests have to be gauged to decide on the *modus operandi* in the delivery of the message of 'immortality' (*amata*). There was also the *bhikkhus* sense of indebtedness to the layman, for it is the latter who provides him with the essentials of life—food, raiment, shelter, and medicaments. And he repays the layman with the 'highest gift'—the Gift of *Dhamma*. Furthermore, in times of strain and stress the laity saw in the Saṅgha the source for counsel *par excellence*.

The life that the Saṅgha led also encouraged strong interrelations with the laity. The canonical texts show how the layman, on his part, entered practically daily into the life of the *bhikkhu*. Such interrelations have to be allowed and recognized in terms of Buddhist monastic discipline.²⁸ Referring to the *Vinayapitaka*, the corpus of Theravāda monastic laws, on this point, a very careful student of the subject has the following to say:

for the believing laity, though naturally not to the forefront in the *Vinaya*, are in a remarkable way never absent, never far distant. They perpetually enter into the life of the Order as supporters, critics, donors, intensely interested.... Thus the *Vinaya* does not merely lay down sets of rules whose province was confined to an internal conventual life. For this was led in such a way as to allow and even to encourage a certain degree of intercommunication with the lay supporters and

28. Even Buddhist monasteries are expected to be built at sites accessible to the laity; see Vin. I, 39.

followers, no less than with those lay-people who were not adherents of the faith.²⁹

This mutual concern between the Saṅgha and the laity should not be construed to mean that it is proper for the Saṅgha to participate in every matter concerning the laity, or that the Saṅgha may take an unbridled interest in secular affairs. As is indicated in the formal request that one makes in seeking admission into the Buddhist Order, one's objective in joining the Saṅgha is to deliver oneself from all suffering, and to attain transcendence. A limit is obviously set to the Saṅgha's worldly interests and connections. Whatever the particular perspective from which one might view the matter, if the 'moral living' or the 'higher life' (*brahmacariya*) as enunciated by the Buddha is to survive and be pursued to its completion by both the *bhikkhusaṅgha* and the laity, this close interrelation between the two is, indeed, an indispensable condition. Within this framework of a close mutual relationship emerges a responsibility of the Saṅgha towards the laity, and the significance of the Saṅgha, as an institution for the laity, actually stems from this responsibility.

Now, in terms of this responsibility, the role of the Saṅgha *vis-à-vis* the laity may be described as two fold: (a) Direct and (b) Indirect. While the direct rôle was no doubt quite emphatic and meaningful in the early days of the Dispensation, the indirect role assumed greater magnitude in subsequent times.

The 'direct role' is the attempt to lead the laity out of *samsāric* suffering. This is to be achieved by both precept and example. Just as much as the method of transcendence by way of instruction in the *Dhamma* (*pariyatti*) needs to be taught to the laity and its observance (*paṭipatti*) by the laity for the attainment of its objectives (*adhigama* or *paṭivedha*)³⁰ be ensured, the Saṅgha was also expected to set an example by its own efforts at attaining transcendence. Herein lies the greatest significance of the Saṅgha for the

29. I.B. Horner, *The Book of the Discipline*, Part I (Sacred Books of the Buddhists, Vol. X), London, 1949, p. xvi f.

30. On the relationship of this terminology with the concept *Dhamma*, see John Ross Carter, 'Dhamma as a Religious Concept: A brief Investigation of its History in the Western Academic Tradition and its Centrality within the Sinhalese Theravāda Tradition', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (1976), pp. 668-669.

laity. While the role of the Saṅgha is primarily to present the *Dhamma* as the surest guarantee to emancipation, the Saṅgha itself is expected, ideally, to progress towards transcendence. While the Saṅgha and the laity tread the trail illuminated by the Buddha, the layman being burdened with worldly cares, is bound to lag behind. Since the Saṅgha sets the example and the laity follows, the latter, when observing the rules of higher morality, aim at a higher level of moral attainment by taking upon themselves the duty of scrupulously emulating the *Arahants*, most of whom were undoubtedly among the *bhikkhusaṅgha*, at least for that 'day and night'.³¹ The laity is expected to measure up to the ideal life of the Saṅgha, for this is the best guarantee of attaining Salvific Truth. This, incidentally, does not amount to a vindication of the Durkheimian theory that 'it is necessary that an elite put the end too high if the crowd is not to put it too low'³²—an interpretation that is inapplicable here, although some students of the Buddhist tradition attempt to apply it.³³ This, therefore, is the 'direct' role of the Saṅgha *vis-à-vis* the laity; the duty of directly helping us to realize the *Dhammacakkhu* or insight into the *Dhamma*.

The 'indirect role' is the attempt to ensure that the laymen, so long as they live in *samsāra*, live well. This takes two forms, namely, living this life and living the next,³⁴ and by 'next', is to be understood all lives till the attainment of transcendence, which should be the aim of any serious minded person. And living well in the Buddhist sense in the next life, if one is not reborn into a good station as a human being, is possible only in a 'good bourne' (*sugati*) or better form of life, which ordinarily means birth in a celestial realm.

According to standard Theravāda teaching, the religious life should have in view an ultimate goal, though stages in the process leading to that goal are possible. One stage is heaven (or rather 'the heavens'), but the goal remains *Nibbāna*. The heavens are within

31. A.I, 211 f.; IV, 249 and 389.

32. E. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Collier Books, New York, U.S.A., 1961, p. 355 f.

33. See Trevor Ling, *op. cit.*, p. 138, where Durkheim is quoted and Ganathan Obeysekera is cited as corroborating this view.

34. 'Tassa ayaṅ c'eva loko āraddho hoti paro ca loko' D.III, 181.

samsāra, while *Nibbāna* is without. Heaven is a 'conditioned' (*saṃkhata*) existence—a state which is inadequate—while *Nibbāna* is the only state 'not conditioned' (*asaṃkhata*). 'There is, O Bhikkhus', the Buddha is reported to have said, 'that which is not-born, not-become, not-made, not-conditioned. If that which is not-born, not-become, not-made, not-conditioned were not, there would be no release from the born, the become, the made, the conditioned'.³⁵ *Nibbāna*, therefore, is beyond cause and effect; it is the only state worth striving for. Heavenly bliss is not the goal,³⁶ though, of course, some of those who practice the Buddhist religious life may be born in the heavens.³⁷ Birth in heaven is to be regarded as a benefit resulting from a religious life of a person whose mind is not yet set on the higher ideals.³⁸

It is, however, the nature of the average person, the ordinary or the 'uninstructed worldling' (*assutavā puthujjano*) to aspire to be born at least once in heaven in the hope of attaining *Nibbāna* thereafter. In the scale of values of the 'uninstructed' Sri Lankan Buddhist, heaven certainly ranks high. In a frequently repeated phrase expressing his religious aspirations, he shares his hopes to sojourn in the most salubrious regions of *samsāra*, await the Buddha Metteyya, and then to attain *Nibbāna*. The historical Buddha Gotama is himself recorded as attracting people into the religious life under him with what is called 'progressive talk' or 'graduated discourse' (*ānuṃpubbikathā*) in which an early item is known as 'discourse of heaven' (*saggakathā*). However, this is immediately followed by a 'discourse on the peril, the vanity and the depravity of sense-pleasures', which the Buddha wants one to renounce. The purpose of such talk, it is said in the texts, is psychologically to condition the individual to appreciate the Buddha's main teachings leading to Salvific Truth, and therefore 'heaven' is never held out as an end in itself. The Saṅgha and the laity tread the same path to transcendence, and consequently the idea of getting 'heaven' for oneself should be a matter for contempt and revulsion for

35. Ud. VIII, 3.

36. D.II, 239; M.I., 103; II, 37 f.; A.I., 115; IV, 55 *et passim*.

37. D.II, 208, 221 *et passim*.

38. 'Cittam hīne' *dhimuttam uttarim abhāvitam* A.IV, 239 f.

the laity since it is expected to be so for the Saṅgha.³⁹ As the *Samyuttanikāya* implies, a religious life having any objective other than the eradication of *dukkha* is to be looked upon as a way of life of the foolish.⁴⁰

Notwithstanding this attitude of the Theravāda tradition, the lure of heaven, to the laity in particular, is none the less present. The laymen should, therefore, make the best of *samsāric* existence, for if life in *samsāra* be wisely lived, in the ultimate analysis it should still pave the way to transcendence. He has therefore the soft option of attempting, as a text puts it, 'to conquer both this world and the next' (*ubho-loka-vijayāya patipanno*),⁴¹ in that, through ethical living, he shall make a success of this life and the next.⁴² Effort directed at such *samsāric* success, in a way, has nothing uniquely Buddhistic in it. It is referred to as the 'good old rule' (*porāniyā pakati*),⁴³ and this when viewed in Buddhistic terms means the practice of the *Dhamma* or Norm as socio-morality. 'One who lives upto this Norm is called "one established in the Norm" (*dhammattha*), or "one living the Norm" (*dhammajīvī*) or "one practising the Norm" (*dhammacārī*). *Dhamma* thus is an inferior path, compared to the higher spiritual Path, which is the Noble Eightfold Path leading to *Nibbāna*. Therefore in the popular parts of the Canon this *Dhammā* is specifically called "the path to heaven" (*sagga-patha*) or "the way to heaven" (*sagga-magga*).⁴⁴ This appears to have been the sense of *Dhamma* as promulgated by the Buddhist Emperor Asoka through his Edicts.

Now, how could the *Saṅgha* be significant to the laity in the practice of the *Dhamma* in this sense? The *Singālovādasutta* of the *Dīghanikāya*,⁴⁵ for instance, explains the domestic and social duties of the laity and says that while the layman, as far as the *religieux* are concerned should minister to them in five ways;

39. A.I., 115.

40. S.II, 24 f., *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, sv. 'celestial'.

41. D.III, 181.

42. *Ibid.*

43. J. VI, 151.

44. O. H. de A. Wijesekera, *Buddhism and Society*, (Tenth Lecture under the Dona Alphina Ratnayake Trust), Colombo, p. 11, and reference given therein.

45. D.III, 180 ff.

namely, by affection in act, speech and mind; by keeping open house to them; and by supplying their temporal needs, the latter should, in return, show their love for the layman in six ways:

- (1) by restraining him from evil ;
- (2) by exhorting him to good;
- (3) by loving him with kindly thoughts;
- (4) by teaching him what he had not learnt;
- (5) by correcting and purifying what he has learnt;
- (6) by revealing to him the way to heaven.⁴⁶

Here one sees the moral upgrading of the layman that the *religieux* could undertake—an upgrading leading to success in this life and paving the way to a good birth in the next. Of course, this is a role to be understood as being applicable to the *religieux* of any persuasion and not necessarily the Buddhist. Viewed in terms of *Dhamma* proper, what is envisaged here does not go beyond 'moral training' (*sīla*), and therefore the role of the Saṅgha in this context should be to ensure that the life of the laity is well lived so that such life may serve as an effective springboard for transcendence, if and when necessary, for according to Buddhists one is free to choose one's own ends.

How can the *Saṅgha*, in terms of the role-relations as mentioned above, ensure a well lived life for the laity? Simple, though, they may appear, the implications of the role of the *Saṅgha* in these terms are quite profound.

Buddhists measure the success of the life of the laity on this earth in terms of both moral uplift and material well-being. The requirements of moral uplift and material well-being, in turn, necessarily lead to Buddhist social philosophy and the practice of the Buddhist social ethic. And, it is through the economic and political affairs of a people that the social ethic of a given religion has to seek practical expression. Therefore, for the attainment of this objective the Saṅgha may legitimately take interest in such affairs so long as such interest does not hinder its own moral and spiritual progress. From the point of view of the life of the Saṅgha, too, reasonable involvement in such mundane matters may become necessary since

46. D.III, 191.

the Saṅgha, as an institution, is part of the larger secular society. It is indeed necessary that the Saṅgha and the laity together seek to ensure for themselves an economic and political system which subscribes to the 'right view of life' (*sammāditṭhi*) as enunciated by the Buddha. This is basic to moral development.

Although it is an open question whether the Saṅgha from its very inception looked at its responsibility towards the laity in the 'indirect role' quite consciously in this light, it is well known that the Saṅgha frequently worked closely with the political powers of the day. In the history of the Dispensation, while on the one hand State support for the Saṅgha became occasionally necessary, sometimes the Saṅgha itself directed State policy (both in Sri Lanka and elsewhere) in conformity with the Buddhist concept of Universal Righteousness, as expressed by the term *Dhamma* itself. This, undoubtedly, created the necessary societal base for the practice of the Buddhist social ethic. And the successful discharge of the obligations of the Saṅgha towards the laity, as may be inferred from the *singālovādasutta*, pre-supposes the existence of economic and political values compatible with the religious pursuit of Buddhists.

Several areas of activity might be listed to suggest some dimensions of the relationship between the Saṅgha and the laity, as they developed through the centuries. When asked to comment on the role of the Saṅgha in relation to the laity, a *bhikkhu* enrolled in the University provided the following points in the tabulated form as set out below:

How the *bhikkhu* influences the Buddhist laity

I. With regard to the family:

- (1) The *bhikkhu* refrains from evil, and leads the laity to do the same.
- (2) He engages in meritorious acts, and assists the laity in this.
- (3) He trains in moral virtues, and leads the laity to do this.
- (4) He provides blessings at birth.
- (5) He admonishes in adversity.
- (6) He advises in time of good fortune.

- (7) He blesses, admonishes, and advises on every important personal and family occasion starting with birth and ending with death.

II. With regard to society:

- (1) He advises regarding the securing of social needs.
- (2) He officiates on ceremonial occasions.
- (3) He blesses new ventures and enterprises.
- (4) He advises in relation to agricultural pursuits, e.g., the determining of auspicious times for the sowing of paddy.

The young *bhikkhu* mentioned that his list was not complete, but it is typical of what any other young *bhikkhu* would say on the subject. Another *bhikkhu* of an older generation who is more imbued with traditional monastic culture, when asked to explain what *artha* and *dharma* mean in the expression mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, explained *artha* only as 'the correct path to worldly welfare' (Sinhala: *laukika diyunuvaṭa hari pāra*). He was not inclined to make any special comment on the term *dharma*. Even in the analysis of the *bhikkhu*'s influence on the laity provided by the young *bhikkhu*, the focus is on *artha*, which of course, is not dissociated from *dharma*. The *bhikkhu* today is not unlike a 'parish minister'. In any event, *dharma* does not seem to entail an activity or relationship that goes beyond the moral upgrading of the layman, as referred to in the *Singālovādasutta*. The moral development of the laity implied through these role-relations is clearly confined to mundane welfare. The significance of the 'direct role' appears now to have no firm recognition, although moral advancement, significantly, also forms the first step in an individual's 'upward way' to transcendence.

The form of the Buddhist orientation that reached Sri Lanka, in the 3rd century B.C., was that promulgated by Asoka, which was primarily the presentation of the *Dhamma* as the 'way to heaven' (*saggamagga*). The arrival of Mahinda in Sri Lanka meant the arrival of Buddhist culture, as it was understood at that time. However, the *Dhamma* remained what one might call 'Asoka-oriented', and in terms of actual practice, especially among the laity, there is hardly any evidence in the history of Sri Lanka that it went beyond the practice of Buddhist morality (*sīla*) to which the

Asokan State was well attuned. And, with the *Dhamma* prevalently interpreted as the 'way to heaven', there developed in Sri Lanka a strong tradition of 'merit making' (Sinhala: *piṃ kirīma*) in which the *bhikkhu* has a key-role to play.

A contemporary scholar of the Buddhist tradition has said that the Buddhist movement (as other religious movements) started as a 'civilization', but has ended up as a 'religion',⁴⁷ though in this instance his conception of 'civilization' differs from the way we commonly conceive of it today. Such an assertion, though seemingly bizarre, is nevertheless true. Religions are 'reduced civilization'. As for the Buddhist movement, the process of 'reduction' commenced not after Asoka, as has been suggested,⁴⁸ but somewhere between the passing away of the Buddha and the establishment of the Asoka Buddhist State. If, as suggested previously, the early Buddhist movement is to be looked upon as an effort at re-structuring consciousness at all levels of existence, the process of achieving that objective, to judge by what we quoted from the *Mahā-parinibbānasutta*, was certainly in full swing by the time of the Buddha's demise. When and how this process and effort stopped, no one knows; but that it stopped before Asoka's day appears probable because instead of referring to *bhikkhus*, *bhikkhunīs*, *upāsakas* and *upāsikās* as true disciples who have 'become wise, well-trained and learned, and are masters of the *Dhamma*...' as the Buddha had done, Asoka in his First Minor Rock Edict found it necessary to recommend to the *bhikkhus*, *bhikkhunīs*, *upāsakas* and *upāsikās*, certain sermons on the *Dhamma*, which, in his view, they 'should hear frequently and meditate upon.'⁴⁹ The 'civilization' visualized by the master was no more; and it was left to a latter-day *upāsaka* to recommend that the disciples learn what they should have known! Asoka certainly made the best of a given situation, but he could not have arrested the shrinkage of the Buddhist 'civilization' into a 'religion'. It is this shrunken Buddhist 'religion' that left its Indian shores for Sri Lanka and other lands.

47. Trevor Ling, *op. cit.*, p. 17 *et passim*.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 167 *et passim*.

49. R. Thapar, *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, 1961, p. 261; and J. Bloch, *Les Inscriptions d'Asoka*, 1950, p. 154 f., as quoted by Trevor Ling *ibid.*, p. 160.

The establishment of the Saṅgha in Sri Lanka with the arrival of Mahinda was a significant landmark in the history of the nation, as for the first time in the island there came into being a well-organized religious community dedicated to the moral, spiritual and social uplift of the people, although vestiges of Brahmanic and Jaina monastic Orders were already present.⁵⁰ And there quickly developed that close rapport between the Saṅgha and the laity, so essential for the Buddhist movement.

Summarizing the attitude of the Saṅgha and the laity towards each other in Sri Lanka from ancient times, a scholar of early Sri Lankan Buddhist history states as follows:

(a) *Attitude of the layman to the bhikkhu:*

From the king down to the poorest man each one tried to the best of his ability to perform the duty of helping to maintain the *sāsana*. We have already had occasion many times to refer to the piety of the ordinary poor peasant and how he strenuously sought to help the monk who led a righteous life. Suffice it to repeat that even poor men and women who could only eke out a hand to mouth existence tried all possible means to keep the *bhikkhus* in comfort. Even in times of famine when people lived on leaves they did not fail to share their scanty provisions with the *bhikkhus*.

(b) *Attitude of the bhikkhu to the layman:*

The monk who was thus looked after did not fail to perform his duty by the lay supporter. *His duty consisted predominantly in teaching the people as to the way of right living* (italics mine). It is not easy to overestimate the importance of the part played by the *bhikkhu* in bringing about in Ceylon that high standard of culture which she enjoyed for a period whose parallel in duration is not to be found in many other countries in the world⁵¹.

50. See E. W. Adikaram, *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, Colombo 1946, pp. 43 ff., and Walpola Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, Colombo, 1956, p. 43 *et passim*.

51. Adikaram, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

The *bhikkhu* in Sri Lanka, as noted here, had from the very early days considered his duty as predominantly that of 'teaching the people as to the way of right living'. The *bhikkhu*, being the teacher of the people, was no doubt the most educated in the society of the day. Learning, both religious and secular, was generally his domain, and both the king and the peasant would learn from him and seek his advice. There were also occasions when the *bhikkhu* evinced interest in the affairs of state, and as already observed, such interest may be justified so long as it does not hinder his own spiritual progress. Unfortunately, however, such interest seems to have stemmed from a conception of a 'Buddhist State'—a conception germinating from the Asokan model and certainly alien to early Buddhist thought⁵²—and attempts are being made to count this interest mistakenly as a legitimate aspect of the social dimension of 'Buddhism'.⁵³

This, in brief, is the story of the inter-connection between the *saṅgha* and the laity in Sri Lanka upto the arrival of the Western Powers. The interrelations between the Saṅgha and the laity, in which their mutual significance is rooted, weakened under Western influence. In fact, colonial policy and Western missionary activity in Sri Lanka upto early British times had the effect of weaning the laity away from the *Saṅgha*.⁵⁴ This, coupled with a number of other causes, resulted in the Saṅgha losing to some extent the exalted position it held in the past among the Buddhist laity. However, the traditional links between the two, though weakened, are not severed.

Notwithstanding this somewhat dismal picture of the recent past, the power and stability within the Buddhist tradition in Sri Lanka can by no means be underrated. It is the Buddhist tradition that has succoured the faithful for over two thousand years. The Saṅgha, the custodians of that tradition has always come to the aid of the laity in times of trial and tribulation. All this was possible with a 'religion'. If the Buddhist movement had spread as the 'civi-

52. Walpola Rahula, *op. cit.* p. 54f.

53. E.G., Trevor Ling, *op. cit.*, pp. 165 ff.

54. See Hevanpola Ratnasara, 'A Critical Survey of Pirivena Education in Ceylon from 1815 with special reference to Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara Pirivenas', Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1965, (unpublished), p. 37 *et passim*.

lization' that it was in the Gangetic Valley, the grandeur of its efflorescence in the hands of the Saṅgha in Sri Lanka might have baffled one's imagination.

The time is now ripe for the Saṅgha to resurrect itself and to take its place at a meaningful level in the life of the nation. With attempts to build up a righteous society in Sri Lanka today, the significance of the Saṅgha to the laity is bound to assume a new dimension. There is good reason, therefore, why Buddhists are still Buddhists.

ABBREVIATIONS

The abbreviation for Pāli Texts refer to the standard editions issued by the Pali Text Society, London.

A.	<i>Anguttaranikāya</i>
D.	<i>Dighanikāya</i>
J.	<i>Jātaka</i>
M.	<i>Majjhimanikāya</i>
MA.	<i>Majjhimanikāya—Atthakathā</i>
S.	<i>Samyuttanikāya</i>
Sn.	<i>Suttanipāta</i>
Ud.	<i>Udāna</i>
Vin.	<i>Vinayaṭṭakāya</i>

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'REACHING OUT' AS AN EXPRESSION OF 'GOING FORTH'

HAVANPOLA RATANASARA

The Buddhist community, since its inception in India, has been characterized as four fold, not along caste lines but by means of ethical and religious considerations. In the Pāli canon one notes the frequent phrase, 'the Buddha, surrounded by the four fold retinue' (*cāttāro parisā*), which retinue was comprised of monks (*bhikkhus*), nuns (*bhikkhunīs*), lay male devotees (*upāsakas*), and lay female devotees (*upāsikās*). Present today in Sri Lanka are *bhikkhus*, *upāsakas*, and *upāsikās*.

In the light of this structuring of the Buddhist community and through a recognition of the significance of the *tisaraṇa* (the Buddha, *Dhamma*, and the Saṅgha) for all Buddhists, the place of the *bhikkhu* in and for the Buddhist religious community, which is also in society, is very important.

The strength of the order of monks (*bhikkhusaṅgha*) both in quality and in quantity depends upon the decisions made by Buddhists, primarily those made by our young men who seek admission into the order, but also by a continuing process of considering the fundamental purposes of life on the part of the laity. The relationship of the *bhikkhus* with the laity is, of course, integral; guidance by the former depends greatly upon the support received from the latter. This integral relation requires that all Buddhists endorse the fundamental norms provided by the Buddha for a purposeful and meaningful life.¹ For the Buddhist community to thrive and

1. For a discussion on the relationship of the Saṅgha and the laity, see Dr. L. P. N. Perera's contribution to this volume, 'The Significance of the Saṅgha for the Laity'.

develop as a religious community, there must be the Buddhist laity committed to following the teachings of the Buddha. And also, there must continue to be among us young men who are prepared to make the decision to commit their lives fully to the life of a *bhikkhu*.

There are many reasons that might lead a person to join the order of *bhikkhus*, probably as many reason as there are *bhikkhus*. In many cases, persons find that they have within them a religious sensitivity, a seemingly inherent capacity to discern spiritual experience, a pattern of tendencies (*vāsanā*) and abilities that stem from former births and leads them to seek to lead their lives within the fraternity of *bhikkhus*.

Others might seek admission into the order as a result of spending some years reading the religious texts that form a part of the Buddhist tradition. In the course of their reading and study, they become persuaded, as it were, to commit their lives as *bhikkhus* to that path, that way of life through conviction.

The unsatisfactory and transitory nature of things, a fundamental perspective of the Buddhist tradition, might strike with penetrating force in the life experience of some persons. Old age, sickness, and death are familiar to us all, but they might strike some of us harder than others. Bitter disappointments in personal relationships, the futility of striving for acquisitions when the recurring experience has been one of loss, the suffering of others, and many other experiences that form a part of the human predicament might lead a person to decide to enter the monastic order.

Others might seek admission into the order because their parents have suggested it. Such suggestions might arise for several reasons: the parents are primarily concerned about the son's spiritual welfare; economic difficulties at home; perhaps a relative has entered the order and those who know him have seen his development in learning and in understanding. On occasion, a young man might enter the order of monks at the suggestion of the *bhikkhu* in charge of the local temple, who has seen in the young man qualities that would tend to make him find meaningful the life of a *bhikkhu*.

Of course, these reasons that have been mentioned cannot be so easily separated. Usually, some dimensions of each are present in the thinking and situation in which each person finds himself when he decides to follow the way of the *bhikkhu*.

Since the days of the Buddha's ministry, most of those who have joined the order of monks have been young persons. We are deeply pleased to say that this tradition continues today in Sri Lanka. The Buddha made it clear that it is rarely the case that a person who becomes a *bhikkhu* in old age comes to possess those qualities and achievements expected of a *bhikkhu*. Unlike the practice in Burma and Thailand, when one seeks entrance into the order of monks in Sri Lanka, one seeks that entrance having made the decision to live the life of a *bhikkhu* as long as one lives. In a few instances, some who have lived the life of a *bhikkhu* for a number of years might decide to put aside the robes, symbolic of this way of life. This decision usually comes as a disappointment to all concerned. But in most cases, the person who changes his mind looks back upon his time in the fraternity of monks as a time of learning and growth.

The admission of a person into the order of monks is considered to be a highly meritorious act. Buddhists in countries in which the Theravāda tradition is present perform elaborate ceremonies at the time of a person's entering the order.² The degree of formality, colourful and elaborate procedures connected with these ceremonies suggest not only that they represent a major transitional moment in a person's life but also that the act is highly meritorious. A widely held belief in Sri Lanka is that the family relatives of a person who enters the order will attain *nibbāna* within seven life sequences.

The technical term used for the act of admission to the order of monks is *pabbajjā*. *Pabbajjā*, 'going forth' means leaving one's own house and going forth to a houseless state (*agārasmā anagāriyam pabbajati*). This notion of 'going forth', or 'going out', has many connotations. There is in this notion a degree of renunciation

2. For an account of the ordination ceremonies as conducted in Sri Lanka, see Dr. W. S. Karunatilake's contribution to this volume, 'The Religiousness of Buddhists in Sri Lanka Through Belief and Practice'.

not only in relation to society but to oneself as well. There is also present in this notion an idea of process, of development, of moving forward. In this act of 'going forth' there is the primary purpose of attaining *nibbāna*, a state of perfection, of bliss, of emancipation.

When one undertakes the *ṣabbajjā*, one goes forth into the community of monks. One seeks to leave behind the former close association with the members of one's family and begins to treat all persons equally. One is not left alone in making this transition; one is living with a community of likeminded persons, the order of *bhikkhus* (*bhikkhusaṅgha*).

'Venerable sir' the candidate says at his ordination ceremony, 'having given these robes to me, please admit me to the order of monks for the purpose of overcoming all forms of misery and the realization of *nibbāna*'. This formula, addressed to the candidate's preceptor (*ācariya*), reveals that the admission to the order is made, in the final analysis, at the request of the candidate himself. Hence, this is a deliberate and wilful undertaking on the part of the person who wishes to become a *bhikkhu*.

The newly ordained *bhikkhu* begins a study of the teachings (*dhamma*) of the Buddha and the code of conduct (*vinaya*), under the supervision of a senior monk. This study tends not to be an accumulation of facts that might put one in good position for passing an examination. There is a qualitative dimension to the study undertaken by a *bhikkhu*. He reflects thoroughly on what he is learning and applies what he is learning to the situation of his own life. When the *bhikkhu* reads the Buddha's teaching about the way things are, for example the nature of the body, the *bhikkhu* will set about to try to find the meaning of the view that the body is nothing but a composition of thirty-two constituent parts which are of a transitory nature, and he will apply this line of thinking to the case of his own body.

Throughout his studies and his activities with his brothers in the order, the *bhikkhu* lives in a learning situation; his purpose in being where he is to pursue the development of the total personality. This requires that the *bhikkhu* learns from the texts, learns from others, and learns from himself. Discipline, of course is required, not only in the gathering of information, in memori-

zing Pāli *suttas*, but in working to eradicate detrimental tendencies in his own life. Becoming disciplined in body, speech, and mind is not an easy task, but this the *bhikkhu* sets out to do.

The guiding principle for a *bhikkhu* seeking to learn, to discipline himself, to develop his personality fully, to live harmoniously with his colleagues in the order, is the notion of non-attachment. When one glimpses the freeing quality of not being attached, one is near the middle path, which tends to yield a balanced personality.

Inclinations, temperaments, and interests differ among *bhikkhus*. The major concern within the order is that the *bhikkhus* invest their talents and abilities as wisely as possible in keeping with the purpose for which they 'went forth'. Some *bhikkhus* choose to live a more disciplined contemplative life, devoting most of their time to meditation. In the course of their development they will tend to find solitary places such as forest hermitages or caves to continue their religious quest. These persons represent a long and much admired tradition within the Saṅgha, dating from the time of the Buddha. These 'forest dwelling monks' (*vanavāsī bhikkhus*) have committed their total effort to the realization of *nibbāna*. 'Forest dwelling monks' serve to remind other *bhikkhus* of the importance of meditation in the process leading to the realization of *nibbāna*.

Another very old tradition within the Saṅgha, dating from about the first century after the demise of the Buddha, is that represented by the 'village dwelling monks' (*gāma-vāsī bhikkhus*). *Bhikkhus* who find the study of the religious texts rewarding and who also find it meaningful to maintain social contacts around temples tend to reside in a temple near a village or in a village or in an urban setting. The great majority of *bhikkhus* in Sri Lanka are dedicated to this mode of living and its related patterns of conduct.

For many centuries, dating from the early decades of the order of monks in India, *bhikkhus* have been 'reaching' out to others, to be of service to others: to teach, to advise, to attempt to set a worthy example for others. This 'reaching out' to help, done by *bhikkhus* who have demonstrated the qualities of truthfulness, honesty, justice, and reliability, has probably been one of the most

important activities contributing to the longevity of the Saṅgha because it is from those others who are helped that young men decide to 'go forth' into the Saṅgha.

There are ten cardinal points that a *bhikkhu* is expected to keep in mind at all times. One among these points mentioned in the *Dasadhamma Sutta* is that a *bhikkhu* should realise that his life is dedicated to others or depends on others (*paraṃpatibaddhā me jīvikā*). In addition to this, *bhikkhus* are aware of the instructions given by the Buddha to the sixty *bhikkhus* in the early stage of the establishment of the Buddhist tradition.

Released am I from every bondage, human and divine, released are you from every bondage, human and divine. Go forth, O *bhikkhus*, for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many, through compassion for the world, for the benefit, for the well-being, for the happiness of gods and men. Preach the *Dhamma*, good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end, perfect in letter and spirit; declare the religious life, pure and perfectly complete.

'Reaching out' in service to others is an important part of the life of a *bhikkhu*, one who has 'gone forth'. It is natural that a *bhikkhu*, being a dependent of the laymen around the temple, feels some degree of obligation to the people. Although he is not expected to develop attachment to one family, he considers it his responsibility to render whatever assistance that is requested by the people as long, of course, as this assistance is consonant with the spirit and the letter of the Buddha's teachings.

Obviously, the religious practice of a *bhikkhu* is somewhat hampered by being engaged in what some have chosen to call 'secular affairs'. But when all is said and done, a *bhikkhu* in charge of a village temple really does not mind taking some of his time to help a poor villager in getting this son or daughter admitted to a suitable school, or to go along with a villager to an urban hospital in order to consult a better physician. In the history of this country, when calamity, natural or man made, has struck a village, it has been the case that the village *bhikkhus* have called the people into the temple and have given advice and in some cases have rendered protection.

A man trained as a *bhikkhu* in the teachings of the Buddha has, through his reading of and reflecting upon the discourses of the Buddha, acquired an ability to analyze human problems to understand the problems, their intricacies, subtleties, and contributing factors. He has come to see human problems in their true perspective. Knowing that human problems are usually intertwined with will (*chanda*), hatred (*dosa*), fear (*bhaya*), and delusion (*moha*), and having sought to divest himself of the presence of these emotions, a *bhikkhu* is in a fine position to help a person see the human problem. This training and the symbolic character of the robes that he is wearing contribute greatly to the successful counselling that a compassionate *bhikkhu* can render in service to others.

Bhikkhus served as educators for centuries. Literate, well versed in the human saga recorded in the literature of his tradition, the *bhikkhu* was the teacher and educator for the faithful. And many there are even today who remember learning the alphabet for the first time at the feet of a *bhikkhu* in the village temple. But the patterns of education in Sri Lanka have undergone great changes in the course of this country's recent history. And *bhikkhus* have contributed to and have been influenced by these changes in education.

After Sri Lanka gained its independence, in 1948 *bhikkhus* became concerned about the neglected condition of the traditional system of education that had deteriorated during the long centuries of foreign rule. Special schools known as *pirivenas* were opened, primarily for the education of *bhikkhus* but also attended by lay students.

For some time, *bhikkhu* education in the *pirivenas* has been a controversial topic within the community of monks. Generally, there are two schools of thought on this matter: (1) the older generation of *bhikkhus* has tended to confine the scope of education to the traditional monastic education with stress on Pāli and Buddhist Studies; (2) a younger element within the community has tended to deviate from the traditional pattern of curriculum and has urged the study of new subjects which are generally called 'secular'. Throughout this process of discussion related to the development of *bhikkhu* education a notable characteristic has been 'change with reluctance'. In recent times, the difference between the *pirivena* curriculum and the curriculum of the government schools has tended to differ very little.

This state of affairs was not endorsed by the older group of *bhikkhus* in our country. The trend to adopt new curricula was a topic for serious criticism by the members of the *Pirivena* Education Commission held at the beginning of this decade. This commission recommended a new type of curriculum with an emphasis on teaching subjects such as Pāli, Sanskrit, History, Buddhist Culture and allied subjects as compulsory. The commission also recommended that the *bhikkhu* students should prepare themselves for the examinations conducted by the Oriental Studies Society.

Another recommendation made by the commission was that the *bhikkhu* students who complete their education in *pirivenas* be prepared for higher education at a Buddhist University, especially established for this purpose. Although this proposal has not yet become materialized, the thinking behind it is very significant. It shows clearly the attitude regarding *bhikkhu* education on the part of the older generation of *bhikkhus* in this country.

Another process related to the education of *bhikkhus* has also been developing in recent years; this has to do with university education for *bhikkhus*. During the early years of the development of university education in Sri Lanka—in about 1940, a small number of *bhikkhus* were interested in university education. At that time there was no encouragement for *bhikkhus* to pursue university education either from the Buddhist clergy at large or from the Buddhist laity.

In 1948, with a handful of *bhikkhus* at the University of Ceylon a special diploma course for *bhikkhus* was started. But this course of study ended with the first group of students because facilities for its continuation were not provided by the university. A few of the younger members of the order entered the University in particular cases through their own efforts.

Gradually, more and more *bhikkhus* entered the University and almost all of them enrolled in the faculty of Oriental Studies from which they graduated in subjects such as Pāli, Sanskrit, Philosophy, Sinhala, and Buddhist Culture. But within a few years, the interest of *bhikkhus* in the University went beyond the boundaries of the more traditional subjects to include university degree courses in Geography, History, Economics, Education and the like.

Two strands have developed among *bhikkhus* largely due to the form of education that they received. Those *bhikkhus* who received their education along the lines of the traditional curricula for Buddhist Studies at the *pirivena* have continued rendering service in education in those *pirivenas* and in their temples. Those *bhikkhus* who received their education in the University have rendered their services in education at the government schools, and some have joined the staffs of the University of Sri Lanka.

Some Buddhists criticize *bhikkhus* who study subjects considered to be secular. But in a developing country like Sri Lanka, one might want to question the wisdom of this attitude. If the *bhikkhu* is to fit in properly to the present day changing world, to advise meaningfully the laity, it is imperative that the *bhikkhu* also be well trained even in secular areas of study. How wonderful it would be both for our country and the government, were, for instance, the *bhikkhus* in the temples of the areas and villages affected by the Mahaveli Development Project to have graduated in subjects dealing with land reclamation, agriculture, geography, economics, even engineering!

Two decades ago a small number of *bhikkhus* who had received a university education saw in the society at large that a gross injustice was being done to the majority community of Sinhala Buddhists by a minority elite. This group of *bhikkhus* joined hands with some influential laymen and leading elderly *bhikkhus* of high ecclesiastical standing to launch a country wide campaign to restore a full appreciation for the significance of the Buddhist tradition in this country. In its beginning phase, this campaign was somewhat like a religious revival attempting to rekindle an appreciation. But, in time, the campaign became more politically oriented, especially when requests were made to the government at the time, and particularly when those requests were not granted. Buddhists were coming to a point at which they felt that their legitimate rights as Sinhala speaking Buddhists were not being granted by the government. Many *bhikkhus* saw it as their duty to take direct action against the government of the time. The campaign took on a decidedly political flavour.

The leading *bhikkhus* in this movement felt that it was not possible to lift the standards of Buddhists and to restore conditions to their satisfaction without some struggle of a political nature.

Speaking at a series of public meetings in the different parts of the country and attempting to explain conditions to the people, the *bhikkhus* saw themselves continuing in an advisory role, long a part of the history of the Saṅgha in Sri Lanka. When the general elections were held, the government of the time was defeated and a new government was formed. This is how some *bhikkhus* took part in politics in 1956.

Although this campaign was launched for a specific purpose, and when it appeared the objective had been accomplished many *bhikkhus* withdrew from political activity, some *bhikkhus* have continued to be engaged in politics even today. On the whole, this is an individual matter since the authoritative bodies of the Saṅgha have not declared that *bhikkhus* should take part in politics.

The greatest problem arising throughout the country as a consequence of *bhikkhus* becoming engaged with politics is that the affairs of the temples become disturbed. Fortunately, people in Sri Lanka take politics seriously. Unfortunately, we tend to take politics too seriously, becoming emotionally involved to the extent that the system of party politics has crept into our personal lives. Under these circumstances, when a *bhikkhu* favours one political party, the people supporting another party become hostile to him. Consequently, the affairs of the temples become disrupted, and participation in temple activities tends to become divisive. This is a relatively recent trend developing in the temples. Consequently, most *bhikkhus* today feel that they should not become heavily involved in party politics.

The Buddhist temple, the centre of religious, cultural, and social activity must be a place where persons belonging to all political parties can come and take part in religious activities. The temple must also be a place where people can meet and discuss various problems pertaining to the common good of the people. Two influential voluntary organizations, the *Lankā Jātika Sarvodaya Shramadāna Sangamaya* and the *Jātika Urumaya*, stress the significance of the temple as a centre for development. Both these organizations advocate the principle of 'non-alignment' in party politics. A large number of *bhikkhus* connected with these two voluntary organizations also feel that the role of a *bhikkhu* must be maintained within the framework of non-attachment.

The framework of non-attachment can lead us all to welfare without greed, lively competition without anger, purposeful living without delusion. And within this framework, the *bhikkhu* who 'reaches out' in service to others is expressing one of the ramifications of his decision to 'go forth'.

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The first part of the manuscript contains all the notes
which were made by the author during his stay in
London. And in the second part the author has
added all the notes which he has written since he
returned to his native country.

London, the 1st of January 1784.
I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of
your letter of the 27th inst. and in answer
to inform you that the same has been
forwarded to the proper authorities for their
consideration. I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
J. G. G.

THE TRADITION NEEDS REVIEW; AN EXAMINATION
OF POSSIBILITIES OF REFINING THERAVĀDA
INTERPRETATION

KANNIMAHARA SUMANGALA

In the following pages, I shall attempt to present (I) some ideas which have been discussed among members of the Saṅgha and others in Sri Lanka during the last few years, and briefly (II) to share a few observations about the significance of the Saṅgha for a *bhikkhu*. The ideas in the major portion of these pages concern important aspects of the theoretical side of Theravāda Buddhist-religiousness and, in effect, they constitute a plea to review the interpretive apparatus which has been adopted by the Theravāda tradition based upon the Pāli commentaries. The brief observations in the latter portion of these pages are intended to suggest that although a *bhikkhu* living today might criticize ideas and interpretations advanced by members of the Saṅgha who have 'gone forth' before, that way of life in the Saṅgha, present then and continuing today, is still found to be fulfilling.

I

One of the earliest philosophical exercises of persons living in India was the search for what constituted the essence of man. We find evidence of this quest over the whole early period beginning with the Vedic speculations. One of the very first answers these thinkers came up with was that the essence of man was his breath. The word used for breath was *ātman*. So far had this idea of breath being the essence of man gone that later, when one wished to ask 'What is the essence of man?' the question took the form: 'What is man's *ātman*?' The early *Aranyaka Upaniṣad* speculations, the atmosphere of which is also vividly reflected in the *Sutta Pitaka*

of the Buddhist tradition, dealt with this question in numerous different ways, one of which was that as one's experience deepened, different things appeared to constitute the essence of man.

Thus, in the early Upanisadic literature we come across the idea of the human personality as five 'sheaths', which respectively consist of physical matter, the breath, the 'mind', 'consciousness', and finally the feeling of 'bliss'. The terms used to explicate this view in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (II. 2-5) are extremely significant

1. *anna-rasa-maya ātman*
2. *prāṇamaya ātman*
3. *manomaya ātman*
4. *vijnānamaya ātman*
5. *ānandamaya ātman*

In the *Dīgha Nikāya* of the Pali Canon, we come across a most remarkable passage which both illumines and is illuminated by the above idea. In the ninth discourse of this collection (*Poṭṭhapāda Sutta*), the Buddha, in the course of a discussion with a *parivrājaka* named Poṭṭhapāda, pointedly asked him, 'What do you understand as *ātman*?' (*kaṃ pana tvam attānaṃ pacesi*). Poṭṭhapāda's immediate answer is, 'I understand the *ātman* as gross (*olārika*), and as made of material elements (*rūpī-cātummhābhutika*), as subsisting on material foods (*kabalinkārāhārabhakkha*)'. But this is not all; he goes on to speak of two other *ātman*s, one that is 'mental' (*manomaya*), which at the same time is 'endowed with all the various limbs (of the physical body)' (*sabbangaṃ paccangi*) and is also 'not devoid of faculties' (*ahīnindriya*) and a third that is non-material (*arūpī*) and is 'made up of consciousness' (*saññāmaya*). It is indubitable that in this discussion what is being examined is a notion much like the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* idea. In point of fact, Poṭṭhapāda's first *ātman* exactly corresponds to the first in the *Taittirīya* list, his second to its third and his third to its fourth.

It is also a remarkable fact that this part of the discussion in the *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta* arose in consequence of Poṭṭhapāda's asking the Buddha, 'Is consciousness the *ātman* of man, or are consciousness and *ātman* different (entities)?' (*saññā nu kho bhante*

purisassa attā udāhu aññā saññā añño attā). It was then that the Buddha requested Poṭṭhapāda to reveal his own idea of what *ātman* is. What appears to be even more remarkable is that towards the end of this long conversation, the Buddha goes on to speak of his own idea about three kinds of *ātman* that one could come by (*atta-ṭaṭilābhā*). They are interrelated to one another like milk and curds and butter, and it is with the transcending of all three of them that his *dhamma* is concerned.

In fairness to the Upanisadic seers, we must admit that they too viewed the religious experience as a progression; one begins by identifying the body itself as one's essence and then step by step one goes deeper and deeper still. This is exactly how the Buddha viewed the religious life; in his terminology it was a process of discarding (*paḥāna*—in numerous contexts and also in our particular *sutta*) first gross and then the subtle. In other words, in this context he has also used the word *ātman* to mean the essence, but he denies that any of these amounts to an essence, because all of them are capable of being transcended. It is in that sense that the *khandha* analysis is also used to buttress the *anattā* argument. It does not imply that the ultimate state at which man arrives is a nullity. What the Buddhist *anattā* notion communicates is that neither body nor 'mind', nor pure 'consciousness' amounts to an ultimate essence. If *ātman* had been defined as that which ultimately cannot be transcended, then the Buddhist view would be that *nibbāna* is that *ātman*. The tradition regrettably has almost consistently depicted the *anattā* concept so as to make the Buddhist position appear to be a nihilistic one, which emphatically is not the case.

Let us continue with the 'three kinds of *ātman* that one comes by (*tayo attapaṭilābha*) of the *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta*. The three are

1. *olārika attapaṭilābha*
2. *manomaya attapaṭilābha*
3. *saññāmaya attapaṭilābha*

The first is obviously the body. Like Poṭṭhapāda, the Buddha also describes it as 'consisting of material elements and feeding on material foods'. As to the second and the third, what is stated in the *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta* raises questions of a fundamental sort which it is impossible to brush aside.

Let us take the second one. Here, too the Buddha also employs the same words as Poṭṭhapāda to describe it: it is 'material-mental, endowed with all the various limbs, and not devoid of the sense faculties'. Several clues that we have found in the *suttas* make us think that behind this lies a profoundly important idea which for some reason or other was either ignored or lost sight of by the traditional *Abhidharma* and commentarial interpretations, particularly of the Theravāda school.

To be more exact, it is not that the tradition does not possess material that helps us to understand the underlying concept; rather, its significance is not explicitly brought out. In fact, to have brought out that significance would have been embarrassing to the tradition, moored as it is in extensions of the early notions of *anicca* and *anattā*. In our view, it is these 'extensions' that bedevil humane and common sense understanding of the teachings contained in our earliest and most authentic sources, namely the *suttas* of the Pali canon.

What are the 'clues' the tradition provides us with to understand the second (and consequently also the third) of the Buddha's 'three kinds of *ātman* that one comes by'?

There is first of all the tradition's own cosmological categories with counterparts in the *jhānic* process, or the ascent of consciousness into various stages in the type of meditations known as *samatha* (*samādhi*). According to the cosmological categories, the worlds are three fold, or there are three kinds of 'existence' for living beings: namely,

1. *kāma bhava*
2. *rūpa bhava (rūpa loka)*
3. *arūpa bhava (arūpa loka)*

This 'cosmology' is paralleled and is explicated by the notions that the tradition had about the stages of 'spiritual' and meditational experience. These are

1. ordinary sensual experience
2. *rūpa jhāna*
3. *arūpa jhāna*

(The qualification 'ordinary' is necessary for number 1, because we will presently have to say that 2 and 3 also share the most significant characteristic of 1, namely, phenomenality as opposed to ultimacy.)

The second, *rūpa jhāna*, is usually rendered as 'fine material' in translations. The reference is to the 'trance' experiences in the first four *samatha* meditations, which involve a progressive divestment of consciousness from the features usually found in mental experience, such as running through sense impressions and synthesising apprehensions (*vitakka-vicāra* etc.).

The third, *arūpa jhāna*, is usually rendered as 'non-material' in translations. Here the reference is to the trance experiences of the last four *samatha* meditations, which are even further divested of features commonly associated with experience. They involve a progressive thinning out of 'consciousness' itself, to such an extent that the last of them is called 'neither consciousness nor non-consciousness', or the 'extreme of (possible) conscious experience' (*saññagga*). Unfortunately, these translations can give to the reader unaccustomed to Buddhist usage the very opposite of what the tradition wished to indicate: they are not states of oblivion, but states of high concentration.

What is pertinent to our inquiry is this: the state of 'mind' of beings in the second and third cosmological categories is the same as the state of consciousness attained in the second and third categories of experience; that is to say, in *rūpa loka* one has the condition of 'mind' that is attained in *rūpa jhāna*, and in *arūpa loka* one has the condition of 'mind' attained in *arūpa jhāna*.

Now, when we return to the concept of the 'three kinds of *ātman* that one comes by' we instantly see that each of them corresponds to a cosmological and the parallel experimental or *jhānic* category. Thus we have:

<i>olārika attapaṭilābha</i>	: <i>kāma loka</i> : ordinary sensual experience
<i>rūpi manomaya attapaṭilābha</i>	: <i>rūpa loka</i> : <i>rūpa jhāna</i>
<i>arūpi saññāmaya attapaṭilābha</i>	: <i>arūpa loka</i> : <i>arūpa jhāna</i>

This, in itself, is not anything sensational. However, this is not the only clue that the traditional material supplies us.

In describing the trance experiences, there is an amazing statement found in some *sutta* texts (e.g., *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*).

‘When the mind is thus “concentrated he ... makes from this body another body which is material as well as mental, which has all the (various) limbs, which is not devoid of the faculties. (it would be) just as if a man would draw out a shoot from a *muñja* plant; it would occur to him: ‘Here is the *muñja* and here is the shoot. The *muñja* is one (thing) and the shoot is another; but it is from out of the *muñja* that one draws out the shoot. Or (it is) just as if one would draw out a sword from the sheath ... or a snake from a basket’.

As usually interpreted, this means that in the state attained in trance, one can ‘make’ or ‘create’ a body which is ‘mental’ which is not devoid of the sense faculties and which has all the (various) limbs (of the physical body).

Firstly, we must observe that the description of this ‘mental body’ is identical with the second of the ‘three kinds of *ātman* one could come by’. On the face of it, the sequel to this is that this second *ātman* is not a *real* thing at all, but something that can be developed or created by mind when in trance state.

However, the text does not quite allow us to take this line of interpretation, which is the traditional one. The three similes that the text contains all speak of ‘drawing out’ something from a sheath or cover or basket (i.e., sword from the sheath, shoot of grass from the plant, snake from the basket).¹ If the word which is translated as ‘creates’ is original to the passage and if this translation is beyond question, then the passage is slipshod if not self-contradictory. It would not be so if these possibilities can be excluded. Moreover, in that case, we have here a notion that tallies with the Upanisadic *kośa* (sheath) idea, which is also consonant with the notion in the *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta*.

So our ‘clue’ in this most important reference is as yet inconclusive. But we can probe further. And for this we can take as our starting point the surprising description of the second kind of ‘*ātman* one could come by’ as both mental and material.

1. Interestingly enough, where the word for shoot of grass, *isika*, is explained in the *Sandaka Attahkathā*, there is a variant reading which emphasizes that the shoot was something that was already there, *thita*. Does this variant reading carry a trace of an earlier interpretation that was lost or suppressed?

In the *Samyutta Nikāya* there is a *sutta* (No. 2 of *Vagga III, Ayogulavagga* of the *Iddhipāda Samyutta*) where we also have a reference to a 'mental body'. Here, in a conversation between the Buddha and Ananda, reference is made to the Buddha going to the world of *Brahmas* by means of his 'mental body' (*manomayena kāyena*).

Of course, the notion of existing in a non-physical form, which is 'mental' and yet is also a 'form' (*rūpa*), is clearly admitted even in the traditional interpretation. According to the traditional teaching, the beings of the *rūpa loka* (*rūpi Brahmas*) existed in this manner. Usually we dismiss or ignore these notions as merely cosmological ideas. But when we see it suggested that the Buddha, while yet alive in the world of human beings, could go to this *rūpa* world by means of the 'mental body' this means that it was thought that one like the Buddha could also get into the same form as those beings. When we take this in conjunction with the other references discussed above, it is but proper to pause to consider these notions in broader perspective.

Now a thing that is consistently said about beings of the second kind of *loka* (namely *manomaya-kāyika-brahma-loka* or *rūpi brahmaloka*) is that in their subtle 'bodies' they still possess several of the faculties which human beings also possess. Thus they, too, are capable of the operations of mind that are known as the '*mano-dhātu-trika*', 'the triad of (activations of) the element of mind'.² In addition to this, those of the *rūpa* world also had the faculties of hearing and seeing. As far as they are concerned, then, the Buddhist tradition recognized a 'mental body' with a number of faculties. On the other hand, none of this existed for the *arūpa* beings. Theirs was a consciousness which could not be subsumed under the terms '*mano*' (mind) nor did they have these other faculties. Thus the tradition recognized

1. beings with physical body— the 5 senses and mental activity
2. beings with mental-'body', 2 senses and mental activity
3. beings with only a superfine (non-material) consciousness

2. We need not go into a discussion of this 'triad' here. Suffice it to say that according to the traditional interpretation they constitute the initial events that set in motion any cognitive operations.

Now, if we take the references we discussed earlier as indications of a notion that human beings also have a '*manomaya* *atta-paṭilābha*' and that one like the Buddha could extrapolate this and communicate with certain classs of beings through it, it will be pointed out that this is not wholly in conformity with the traditional view. The traditional view does not speak of a *manomaya rūpa* for the human being. When the exegetical tradition speaks of mind, it means a series of mental events arising and vanishing so rapidly that to speak of a *manomaya rūpa* becomes rather difficult within its conceptual framework.

However, the traditional view clearly implies that what the Buddhists called *mano* ('mind') is indissoluble from *rūpa*: where there is no *rūpa*, there the 'triad of (activations of) the mental element' is also not found. The nature of beings of the *arūpa* world fits best into what the *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta* calls *arūpi saññāmaya attapaṭilābha*.

Nor is this all. The traditional teaching regarding mental events contains a most problematic side to it. It classifies all mental events as involving a function of one or other of the senses. Thus mental events springing from seeing objects are forms of 'eye-consciousness'; those springing from hearing are forms of 'ear-consciousness', and so on. But for a thought that arises from a previous thought we do not have a corresponding 'organ', as normally understood. However, the tradition which named the five senses as 'abodes' of the various kinds of consciousness, posited a sixth 'abode' (*vatthu*) for thought-consciousness (i.e., thoughts springing from other thoughts). To this the early *Abhidharma* texts gave the name *vatthu* or *vatthu-rūpa*. A most interesting comment on this *vatthu* is found in the *Paṭṭhāna*: (it is) that form depending on which the *manodhātu* and *manoviññāna dhātu* prevail' (*yaṃ rūpaṃ nissāya manodhātu ca manoviññāna dhātu ca vattanti*). Now *manodhātu* mentioned here belongs to the 'triad of (activations of) the mental element'.

Thus the *Paṭṭhāna* did not name any known physical organ as the seat of 'thought-consciousness' (*mano viññāna*) but it gave a description from which we can nevertheless deduce that it was (1) a 'form' (*rūpa*) and (2) different from *mano dhātu*. It would have been consistent if the *Abhidharma* called this seat of thought cons-

consciousness *mano-vatthu* (just as it called the seat of eye-consciousness, *sakkhu-vatthu*, etc.); instead it called it just *vatthu*.

This probably led to some misconceptions in the commentarial tradition, which began to regard the seat of mental events as the *hadaya-vatthu*, which is of course the usual name for the physical heart. The anomaly of the heart as being regarded as the seat of consciousness was noticed by the Sinhalese *Abhidharmist*, Vagīśvara *paṇḍita*, who then tried to explain it by saying that this *hadaya-vatthu* is not the physical heart, but something spread all over the body. He was on the right track.

The *Paṭṭhāna* says that the seat of mental activity is a *rūpa* but does not identify that *rūpa* with any well-known physical organ. This seems to show that at one time there was the view that the seat of mental activity is not a *rūpa* in the ordinary sense, i.e., not any part of the body as such; it is rather a different kind of *rūpa* as obviously is the *rūpi manomaya attapaṭilābha* ('the physical-mental *ātman* that one could come by'), which in its turn tallies well with the view that *mano* or 'mind' (Upaniṣadic *manah*) had actually a subtle 'physical' character.

Let us now summarize what we have so far discussed: (1) there is an early reference to a *manomaya attapaṭilābha*, which the Buddha himself acknowledged; (2) in *dhyāna* it is possible to separate a 'mental form' from the physical body; (3) the Buddha goes to the *Brahmā* 'worlds' by means of a 'mental body', and the characteristics of those who live in some of these worlds corresponds with characteristics of the *manomaya attapaṭilābha* (both are *rūpi* and *ahīnindriya*); (4) the seat of mind is a *rūpa*,³ but not any ordinary sense organ, as far as the early texts go; even the exegetical view of the 'mind' seems to imply some sort of 'physical' basis for it.

At this point we must refer to the statement in the *Mahātān-hāsamkhaya Sutta*, of the *Majjhima Nikāya* according to which among the necessary factors for successful conception of a being is the presence of a *gandhabba* at the moment of the union of a male and female. This *gandhabba* has been explained as 'the being who has arrived there'. This does not seem to be quite consonant with

3. The idea occurs, e.g., in *Mahā-assapura Sutta* (No. 9 of *Majjhima Nikāya*).

the traditional explanation of rebirth which accounts for the arising of potential consciousness in the newly born being as the immediate effect of the *karmic* thrust of the final consciousness of one whose death has just occurred.

If, in place of the (quite untenable) view that the heart is the 'seat of mind', we adopt the view that the basis of consciousness is a subtle physical form not normally so cognizable and that it is this subtle physical form that is referred to not only as *manomaya attapaṭilābha* and *manomaya kāya* but also as *gandhabba*, in the references mentioned above, then much that is obscure in regard to the notion of rebirth also would straightway disappear. The Buddha explained rebirth much as if it were a process in which someone went over from one existence to another. For instance, in describing the supra-sensory ability to see the process of death and rebirth (*cutūpapātā-ñāṇa*) he, in effect, says the following:

It is as if there were two houses between which stands a man whose sense of vision is unimpaired. Then a man goes over from one of these houses to the other. The man standing between the houses sees this event. It is the same way that one who has *cutūpapātā-ñāṇa* sees beings dying and being reborn.⁴

From this it becomes clear that according to the Buddha the being who dies and is reborn maintains sufficient identity over the whole event for an outsider to see the transition and to be able to say that the one who died goes to a new existence; changes occurring in him are orderly and gradual enough to validate the common sense view that the person who is me in the present birth will be the one reborn at my death as one who is identifiable with myself.

The *Sarvāstivāda* school had the idea that between one's death and movement into life in another body there was an intermediate phase. They called the being who existed in this phase the *antarābhavika*. It is most interesting to note the description of the *antarābhavika*: he is 'one having the (same) form as (that which he had in) the previous existence' (*pūrvakālabhavākṛti*). The Sarva-

4. Cf. *Pañcattaya Sutta* (No. 102 of *Majjhima Nikāya*: If some one teaches the existence of consciousness apart from body, sensations, etc., it is not something that is tenable.

stivāda *Abhidharmakośa* has this idea, but the Theravada *Abhidhamma* rejected it as a heresy (a *micchāditthi*, as the *Kathāvatthu* calls it). But surely the notion of *gandhabba*, which we mentioned above, indicates that some such teaching was part of the original stock of Buddhist concepts. I tend to think that a similar notion is implicit in the term *antarāparinibbaya*,⁵ 'one who attains *nibbāna* in between' (which should mean 'after death and without taking on a new physical existence').

The *antarābhavika*, having the *pūrvakālabhavākṛti* is not a Theravada idea. It seems so strange to us now because we have got on to another track. Remember the person endowed with knowledge of how beings die and are reborn; what this implies is that the one who died had after death the *pūrvakālabhavākṛti*, which enabled him to be recognized as the same being.

The early idea of impermanence (*anicca*) as held by the Buddha or Sāriputta was not so extremist as to deny the unity of being the person. It does not preclude the possibility of another seeing that which left his body at death and re-entered a new life. Surely this that leaves one body and re-enters another is not something physical or mental in the normal sense. It must be a subtle *mano-maya kāya*, 'mental body'.

A fast changing mind was, of course, mentioned by the Buddha, but not one that changes in such a way that we cannot recognize the unity of personality between two moments or even between quite a considerable gap in time. Change is gradual. That the philosophy of gradual change implies constant change is true, but in practice the nature of constant change is such that it does not prevent us from recognizing things and forms. It is that kind of impermanence that the Buddha taught. What takes place through *saṃsāra* or the cycle of births and deaths is such change.

In contrast the latter day idea is so presented as to make one think that Buddhists have a problem in accounting for the continuing unity of personality. This makes no sense; it is an instance of an idea taken to absurd lengths. The Buddha only spoke of things that are consonant with observable reality. The evidence he relied

5. See *Samyojana-puggala Sutta* of *Puggalā Vagga* of the 4th *Nipāta* of *Samyutta Nikāya*.

on was of the kind that a modern law court would regard as admissible—not these *Abhidhamma* ideas. There really was no necessity for the *Abhidhamma* extremism.

To acknowledge a *manomaya attapaṭilābha* could seem, on the face of it, to be a rejection of basic Buddhist ideas. It is of course not so. It does not imply an *ātma-svarūpa* (form of personality) that never changes. The Poṭṭhapāda reference makes it quite clear.

But let us also not ignore the difficulties inherent in the traditional exegesis. Let us, for example, take the famous passage.

I point out the world, its origin, and cessation, and the path leading to cessation in this fathom long body itself.

(*imasmin yeva byāmatte kalevare lokam ca paññāpemi, lokasamudayaṃ ca lokanirodhaṃ ca lokanirodhagāmiṃ paṭi-padañ ca*) (*Aṅguttara Nikayā*, II. 48)

The *lokanirodha* mentioned here is a reference to *nibbāna*. Why is it that, too, is said to be within ‘this fathom long body’? I have discussed this in one of my articles published in Sinhala, and I indicated there that here, too, as in the idea of a ‘subtle body’ discussed above, we probably have a notion which classical Vedānta borrowed and put to good use, but which the Buddhists overlooked in their enthusiasm of *anattā*. However, I do not minimize the difference between the Buddha’s teachings and Vedānta—chief among which is that the Buddha taught *vipassanā* (-*prajñā*) as the only possible path leading to the realization of Reality, whereas the Vedantic tradition taught only *samādhi*. According to the Buddhist view, one can never attain *nibbāna* by means of *samādhi* meditation.

The traditional Theravada perspective regards *nibbāna* as ‘becoming an object’ of mind, i.e., that the mind ‘sees’ *nibāna* at the moment of attaining *sotāpatti*, etc. This idea is not found in the early texts. Nowhere from the *Sutta Piṭaka* can one show an instance of this notion being maintained.

Statements such as ‘impermanent is mind, impermanent are dhammas’ (*mano aniccaṃ dhammā aniccā: Cūlarāhulovāda Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya*) make it unlikely that in the early teachings *nibbāna* was regarded as a *dhamma*, i.e., as something which can

become an object of mind. If we include *nibbāna* among *dhammas* we will have to say it, too, is subject to change. The idea of *nibbāna* being a *dhamma* and so something that could become a mental object is one that the commentarial tradition had developed. What we should speak of is one's coming into the state of *nibbāna*, of divesting oneself of all that makes up the 'me'. Attaining *nirodha* is this divestment and arrival at the state of *nibbāna*. There is then no 'me'—no dichotomy—but to say 'I see *nibbāna*' implies a dichotomy which the *nirodha* state cannot have. Just as *nibbāna* is not of the apparatus that is 'me', it is also not 'out there' so that I can see it as an object. We cannot say that one 'becomes' *nibbāna* either. What would be correct to say is that when what is not *nibbāna* is shed, *nibbāna* alone remains. This seems to be the correct position in view of the unsatisfactoriness and insupportability of the traditional idea that *nibbāna* can become an object (*ārammaṇa*) for the mind.

There is much more to be said about these matters, much more evidence to be adduced, which it is not possible to do here. It will be clear from what little was discussed above that there is a strong case for a re-examination of the entire corpus of material enshrined in the Theravāda canon, from the point of view of the history of development of ideas in the tradition. In fact, I would say this is absolutely necessary. I would also say that more and more members of the Saṅgha are coming round to this attitude, although resistance to it is shown at the beginning when one says such things. I, myself, have found that my colleagues in the Saṅgha become open-minded when it is shown to them reasonably that the evidence of the old texts calls for a fresh examination of the traditional doctrines. There are many of us who share the view that it is only by doing this that the Buddhist point of view can become even more glorious than it is found to be.

In this context, I think that inter-religious conversation can become quite meaningful. People of different traditions and points of view can discuss their disparate views and beliefs dispassionately if they are men of good will. The result will be to make us all think again about our respective traditional ideas. I believe this will make better Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, and Muslims of those involved.

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To acknowledge a *manomaya attapaṭilābha* could seem, on the face of it, to be a rejection of basic Buddhist ideas. It is of course not so. It does not imply an *ātma-svarūpa* (form of personality) that never changes. The Poṭṭhapāda reference makes it quite clear.

But let us also not ignore the difficulties inherent in the traditional exegesis. Let us, for example, take the famous passage.

I point out the world, its origin, and cessation and the path leading to cessation in this fathom long body itself.

(*imasmin yeva byāmatte kalevare lokaṃ ca paññāpemi, lokasamudayaṃ ca lokanirodhaṃ ca lokanirodhagāmiṃ paṭipadañ ca*) (*Aṅguttara Nikayā*, II. 48)

The *lokanirodha* mentioned here is a reference to *nibbāna*. Why is it that, too, is said to be within ‘this fathom long body’? I have discussed this in one of my articles published in Sinhala, and I indicated there that here, too, as in the idea of a ‘subtle body’ discussed above, we probably have a notion which classical Vedānta borrowed and put to good use, but which the Buddhists overlooked in their enthusiasm of *anattā*. However, I do not minimize the difference between the Buddha’s teachings and Vedānta—chief among which is that the Buddha taught *vipassanā* (-*prajñā*) as the only possible path leading to the realization of Reality, whereas the Vedantic tradition taught only *samādhi*. According to the Buddhist view, one can never attain *nibbāna* by means of *samādhi* meditation.

The traditional Theravada perspective regards *nibbāna* as ‘becoming an object’ of mind, i.e., that the mind ‘sees’ *nibbāna* at the moment of attaining *sotāpatti*, etc. This idea is not found in the early texts. Nowhere from the *Sutta Piṭaka* can one show an instance of this notion being maintained.

Statements such as ‘impermanent is mind, impermanent are dhammas’ (*mano aniccaṃ dhammā aniccā: Cūlarāhulovāda Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya*) make it unlikely that in the early teachings *nibbāna* was regarded as a *dhamma*, i.e., as something which can

become an object of mind. If we include *nibbāna* among *dhammas* we will have to say it, too, is subject to change. The idea of *nibbāna* being a *dhamma* and so something that could become a mental object is one that the commentarial tradition had developed. What we should speak of is one's coming into the state of *nibbāna*, of divesting oneself of all that makes up the 'me'. Attaining *nirodha* is this divestment and arrival at the state of *nibbāna*. There is then no 'me'—no dichotomy—but to say 'I see *nibbāna*' implies a dichotomy which the *nirodha* state cannot have. Just as *nibbāna* is not of the apparatus that is 'me', it is also not 'out there' so that I can see it as an object. We cannot say that one 'becomes' *nibbāna* either. What would be correct to say is that when what is not *nibbāna* is shed, *nibbāna* alone remains. This seems to be the correct position in view of the unsatisfactoriness and insupportability of the traditional idea that *nibbāna* can become an object (*ārammaṇa*) for the mind.

There is much more to be said about these matters, much more evidence to be adduced, which it is not possible to do here. It will be clear from what little was discussed above that there is a strong case for a re-examination of the entire corpus of material enshrined in the Theravāda canon, from the point of view of the history of development of ideas in the tradition. In fact, I would say this is absolutely necessary. I would also say that more and more members of the Saṅgha are coming round to this attitude, although resistance to it is shown at the beginning when one says such things. I, myself, have found that my colleagues in the Saṅgha become open-minded when it is shown to them reasonably that the evidence of the old texts calls for a fresh examination of the traditional doctrines. There are many of us who share the view that it is only by doing this that the Buddhist point of view can become even more glorious than it is found to be.

In this context, I think that inter-religious conversation can become quite meaningful. People of different traditions and points of view can discuss their disparate views and beliefs dispassionately if they are men of good will. The result will be to make us all think again about our respective traditional ideas. I believe this will make better Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, and Muslims of those involved.

II

Life as a monk (*bhikkhu*) enables one to devote one's attention to problems such as the ones we discussed here. The opportunities available outside the temple for such pursuits are indeed more limited. While the often expressed idea that the Saṅgha should involve itself more actively with society has much to commend it, I personally prefer the more contemplative life. Actually, we cannot separate life into active and passive compartments. Contemplativeness is also a form of action. What one seriously thinks and discovers flows into the mainstream of social thinking and becomes effective in conduct and relationships. In a sense, contemplativeness is action at the very root of action. The *bhikkhu* who is really capable of seeing a human problem from an uninvolved position, who can see the 'pros' and 'cons' of the issues involved is the one to whom the layman likes to resort in times of personal crisis. The Saṅgha becomes a strong institution to the extent that it is a haven to which lay society, caught up in the intricacies of day-to-day life can hope to turn when its own tensions become too hard a burden to bear. It is by trying to live up to that ideal that the Saṅgha can best fulfill its role. Many of us *bhikkhus* find this to be the case through personal experience.

Thus, life in the Saṅgha is fulfilling in many different ways: one can be a thinker, an experimenter with ideas, a helper to fellow men in distress—and yet one is also not isolated. One feels that among good fellow monks one is in the company of the best of men. Even the novice usually does not feel that he lacks anything, e.g., the sense of protection and contentment that a child experiences in his family relationships. One's teacher is most often just as fatherly and motherly as one's parents were, and fellow monks are one's brothers.

It is distressing to note that not all those who 'go forth' make the best use of what is made available to them. It is particularly regrettable that many young monks today are not sufficiently attracted to the study of Pali and therefore to the Buddhist textual tradition. As for most of us who are attracted to the monastic life, we are not only happy to remain as monks, we even wish to be reborn in such a condition that we can again become members of the *bhikkhusaṅgha* with its long tradition of holding aloft the banner of the noble life among mankind.

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அன்புடன் உங்கள் புகாரைப் பற்றி கவனித்துள்ளேன்.

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DHAMMA TODAY AND TOMORROW

M. PALIHAWADANA

- (1) If these *bhikkhus* lead proper lives, the world may not be devoid of Worthy Ones.¹ (*ime ca bhikkhū sammā vihareyyuṃ asuñño loko arahantehi assa*)
- (2) Not equal in their effects indeed are *dhamma* and *adhamma*.² (*na hi dhammo adhammo ca ubho samaviṭṭakino*)

In this chapter we hope to make an attempt to explore, as far as possible within its brief confines, what it means and how it feels to be a participant in the Theravāda Buddhist tradition today, at this period in its rather long history of about 2400 years.

When one tries to form a clear idea of what we are setting out to do here, it strikes one that it is like trying to discuss the health and well-being of a person who has lived an unusually long life and whose continued existence is rather surprising in a world that—looked at from outside—must be growing ever stranger to him. But on second thought, it appears that this is not quite the case, since we are ourselves part and parcel of this very old person and also, the world may not have grown all that strange in spite of the centuries that have elapsed since the birth of this tradition. So our task is rather to explicate, as a matter of personal experience, the anguish and the difficulties and also the sense of fulfilment that are our lot in this age and time, as participants of the Theravāda Buddhist tradition.

But of course, as we set out on this venture, the query will still remain at the back of our minds: What enabled the Theravāda tradition to survive the rigours of its long existence? For, after

1. *Dīgha Nikāya, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta.*

2. *Theragāthā*, verse 304.

all, the Buddhist *Dhamma* was the matrix of many different religious systems in Asia and not all of them have succeeded in coping with the terrors of the world. Nor is this quite an unfamiliar topic: it reminds one of the *saddhamma-antaradhāna*, disappearance of the *saddhamma*, the title of a chapter in *Milinda Pañha*³ which discusses the question of how long the tradition will last. Even the Buddha, in one of the rare occasions where he did something in disregard of his own judgement and in deference to that of others, has referred to a rather similar matter when he said that as a result of what was done on that occasion the life of the *saddhamma* will be cut short by half and it would last only for 5000 years.⁴ The Buddha may well have been right, but then he was not referring to the successor religious traditions that were founded upon the *Dhamma* that he lived and proclaimed. On the other hand, it could also be that the Buddha, if he did say what is ascribed to him in the *vinaya* text, was not really making a prophecy but was expressing a sense of exasperation. For, in another important statement, which I have chosen above to illustrate the theme of this explication, the Buddha quite unequivocally suggests that in this matter the future is there for his followers to shape; it is not a given, either way. It will all depend on how we choose to live.

In any case, it would be correct to say that the *sāsana* is not above the law of impermanence—the *sāsana*, not of course the *Dhamma*.

Now the *sāsana* embraces all that is 'ecclesiastical'; complementary to it there stands the *loka* which comprises all that is civil and political. Together they comprise the phenomenal sphere which we experience in our day-to-day lives.

This phenomenal sphere to which we are related, this *loka-sāsana*, is a congeries of 'conditioned elements' (*paṭiccasamuppannā dhammā*) which are without exception subject to time. They are by their very nature ephemeral.

Although we ourselves, and this phenomenal sphere in which our existence has its context, are ephemeral, there are two 'elements'

3. *Milinda Pañha, Meṇḍaka Pañha, 1.7.*

4. *Vinaya Piṭaka, Culla Vagga x, bhikkhunī khandhaka, mahāpajāpati-gotamī vatthu.*

of the universe that are constant and unvarying, but which nevertheless are amenable to our experience, in the sense that we can understand them at first hand as a direct experience:

- (1) The regular pattern of causation in terms of which all conditioned phenomena arise and exist

and

- (2) the Timeless Unconditioned Reality.

Referring to the first, the Buddha is said to have stated that 'whether Tathāgatas appear or not, this state of things exists, namely the constancy of phenomena, the regular nature of phenomena, (i.e., their) conditionality'.⁵

We can look around and study the nature of the world that we experience; and if we do that in a thoroughly intelligent and systematic way, we will understand that there is a basic pattern underlying the processes of this manifold world. As the text goes on to say, 'this the Tathāgata discovers and comprehends; having discovered and comprehended it, he points it out and reveals it....'

The Buddha's discovery under the Tree of Wisdom enabled him to comprehend the unitary pattern in terms of which the 'discrete' phenomena of the world could be integratively understood; the 'law' of the 'conditioned arising' of phenomena (*paṭicca-samuppāda*).

Hence it is that the Buddha proclaimed to the world that underlying the bewildering complexity of phenomena we could see the operation of a unitary pattern of causation. In spite of its bewildering variety, the universe is not really such a haphazard or unrelated, or chaotic, congeries of events; they are not *adhicca-samuppannā*,⁶ to say it in the words of the texts, but are *paṭicca-samuppannā*.

Now it is in terms of this unitary pattern that man too, if he cares to, can understand both the nature of his life and its complexities as well as the way by which he may get away from these complexities.

5. *Samyutta Nikāya* (PTS ed.) II, 25 *passim*.

6. *Dīgha Nikāya* (PTS ed.) I, 28 *passim*.

The world being not an incomprehensible chaos, all the different members of mankind share an essentially similar predicament, and that is the insecurity and mortality and final unsatisfactoriness of existence. This is the same for all of us.

While the unitary causal process has brought about this predicament of man, it also provides the way out of it. That is to say the 'exit' (*nissaraṇa*) from this predicament is also available to man *via* a similar causal process.⁷

The path of release follows the causal pattern in the sense that it amounts to discovering how the present predicament came about and initiating action which sets one in a train of events that culminate in the discovery of the Timeless Unconditioned Reality (*Nibbāna*), and this discovery at one stroke transforms the individual. This discovery becomes the initial causative factor of a process which eventually puts an end to the continuity of the conditioned existence of the person concerned.

In other words, with the discovery of the Timeless the attraction of the temporal effectively begins to wane; thus a new causal process is set in motion which runs counter to the process of worldly living (*paṭisotagāmi*), i.e., the *dhamma*-living in the most true sense.

In principle, whether the *sāsana* exists effectively or not, one can always make this *dhamma* that goes against the current available to oneself—provided one is able to make the right choices. The time in which one lives may be favourable to this enterprise or not, but in principle there is no reason why one should be unable to make the right choices. Man is a free agent capable of initiating action which can eventually set him on this other course if he chooses to do so. He is not inevitably bound to the unsatisfying.

The first of these right choices that can set the individual on the path to transformation is that he use his native capacity for well-grounded thinking (*yoniso manasikāra*) and perceive the nature of his predicament. Thus he may take the first step all by himself, unaided by others.

7. See, e.g., *Visuddhimagga* (H.O.S. ed.) XXII. 79.

8. *Majjhima Nikāya, Ariyapaṭisotagāmi Sutta: Dhamma is paṭisotagāmi and hard to see; those held captive by attachments will not see it.*

There is also another possibility: it may be that it is the call of another (*parato ghosa*)⁹ that makes him see his predicament.

Now, who could these others be whose words may draw a person into the orbit of the religious quest? Obviously they could only be the living experiencers of the Timeless Truth (Buddhas, *Arahants*, etc.) or an intelligible tradition (*pariyatti*, etc.) founded by such experiencers.

But why should one embark on the austerity of such a quest which can only cause one to turn away from much that one ordinarily holds dear and attractive? For basically the lure of the Timeless is a call to transcendence. Well, the reason is that existence which proves itself to be ephemeral and unsatisfying has also provided us with an intelligence that may refuse to embrace the unsatisfying but may much rather seek a way out (*nissarana*) of the unsatisfying.

Through twenty-five centuries or so this message was communicated in Buddhist Asia. It was the content of the *parato ghosa*, 'the call of another', to which millions of men and women responded in varying degrees of concurrence, in the conviction that it was a credible appraisal of the nature of human existence.

Of course the message was not universally accepted in the lands where it was proclaimed. It was challenged by the Brahmanical world-view with which it contended from the very beginning of its career in the land of its birth. But the Brahmanical world-view itself contained such elements as would allow mutual interpenetration of challenger and challenged. There can be no doubt that both sides borrowed from each other. If the Buddhists suffered institutionally in this first meeting of religions in which they were involved, and yet the attraction of the noble life was sharpened in the minds of men as a result of it, the issue must still be considered a triumph for *Dhamma*.

But a more serious, because less constructive, challenge appeared when adherents of Islam crossed the Indian Ocean, and by land the borders of Hindustan, and penetrated into Buddhist Asia bringing in their wake a totally dissimilar world-view based

9. See, e.g., *Anguttara Nikāya* (PTS ed.) I. 87 and *Manoratha Pūraṇī* (*Anguttara Nikāya Commentary*) (PTS ed.) II. 157.

on a West Asian theism that was very different from the theism of Brahmanical India.

We do not need to go into historical details here. What is significant for us is that from now on the situation that confronted the Buddhist movement is a meeting of differing civilizations, speaking significantly different idioms of the language of human religiousness. The tragedy of this confrontation has not been unfolded in all its details.

Tragedy was not diminished when new waves of invaders came to Asia from western Europe, who sought to be conquerors of the spirit as much as of the flesh. Again the minutiae of the unfolding events, fascinating as they are, do not concern us in this context. What is relevant here is that these events, spread over centuries past, brought the Buddhist movement in South Asia to its 'today' in one very significant respect: it now finds itself located among communities subscribing to other world-views brought or produced by the action of mercantile and colonialist impulses emanating from West Asia and the European continent.

However, the events that brought the Buddhist movement to an awareness of a multi-religious world do not account for all the complexities of the 'today' in which it finds itself. In great part these complexities stem from other momentous events, again associated with the heartland of Western civilization.

The Christian missionaries who arrived in the colonial outposts in various parts of Asia from the 16th century onwards were the conscious carriers of a civilization that was itself soon to go through a vast transformation of its own. The first bursts of cannon fire from Portuguese ships anchored in the harbour of Colombo were heard in 1505: over the next two centuries the Portuguese and the Dutch brought us not only guns but also Catholic and Protestant clergy and Bibles, and presses to print them with; the Latin and Portuguese and Dutch languages, and schools to teach them in—in short, the major tools to convert, to instruct and to communicate, among other things. And while such events were taking place in Asia, in Europe Descartes was born and had lived and died and the 'century of genius' was on in full swing, changing the intellectual complexion of the Western world.

Over the next two centuries and a half, such developments in the West percolated into Asian awareness slowly, very slowly indeed, but nonetheless surely, through the various instruments of communication forged in these lands from the early period of the colonial enterprise.

Thus it is that in our 'today', we are linked inextricably with all that has changed the West in the last three centuries: rationalism, scientific materialism, industry and technology, democracy and communism—coping with an aggressive civilization and its life styles, its languages and literatures and philosophies and their distinctive ways of conceptualization and expression. Its orthodoxies impose themselves upon us and its controversies become our own.

That is where we find ourselves; that is our 'today' and the context in which our 'tomorrow' is to take shape.

II

Now to go back to the message that the Buddhist movement had been communicating and our acceptance of it as a credible appraisal of the nature of existence, of its recommendations as a valid program of action in the world; has the appeal of that message and its proclamation somehow diminished in intensity, as between our 'yesterday' and our 'today'?

If we overlook the complexities, such as the unavoidable inaccuracies inherent in our assumptions about our 'yesterday', there can be no doubt about the answer. "Yes, indeed, there has been a diminution in intensity and a shift in emphasis". Let us elaborate upon that point a little.

If we speak of the past of a centuries-old religious tradition as if it were a single changeless yesterday, we are surely being guilty of a massive error. In a movement which embraces the lives of millions of human beings of diverse backgrounds, subject to diverse influences and possessing diverse temperaments—in such a movement even to have a single century of strict uniformity is almost a miracle. Clearly that is not the way that religious traditions have been operating.

But yet it is possible that an orthodox elite submitting itself to the rigours of a conservative intellectual discipline may preserve

a uniformity of outlook and doctrine over a long period of time. The Elders of Theravāda were surely such an elite and we can undeniably see this conservative trend in the record of their activities throughout the classical period. Thus over centuries we see in the written records a uniformity of theory which, however, cannot be a true reflection of what went on in the lives lived by the millions of men and women who participated in the Buddhist movement.

There must necessarily have been changes, and we can understand how they were accommodated if, for example, we ponder on the significance of the Buddhist notion of *kusalacitta* ('wholesome thoughts' that were regarded as essential in any religious act). In terms of this notion an offering, for example, is a truly religious act only if given with a willing heart, knowing that the recipient is worthy of the gift;¹⁰ it then reinforces the donor's potential proneness to turn away from greed (*alobha*). In Theravāda the theoretical basis of all ethics, the conceptual bedrock of *dhamma* as lived is this notion of *kusala* or *puñña*: the interior transformative effect of the performed act. Both ritual acts and meditation provide a setting for transformative action to take place within us. Both constitute *puñña* and were so understood; but each person followed what seemed to him most desirable, either one or both, while some rejected the ritual acts altogether. Some saw *puñña* most of all in dynamic acts that were socially effective: charity, philanthropy, *śramadāna* and so on—and this is quite a legitimate interpretation of the wide-embracing concept. There is only one provision to be satisfied: the genuineness of the feeling and awareness that accompanies the act, for it becomes *puñña* only in proportion to its interiorization.¹¹ It should always be possible to interpret the act as strengthening the doer's proneness to turn away from greed, ill will and ignorance. This is its morally wholesome content. Theoretically no act is morally effective so long as it is not interiorized by a flash of awareness or contemplation. In this sense a *puñña* act is always, in the final analysis, an act of contemplation.

10. See *Majjhima Nikāya* (PTS ed.), III. 257.

11. See, e.g., *Upāsakajaññālankara*; *pubbe va dānā sumano/dādam cittam pasīdayam datvā c'attamaṇo hoti/esa yaññassa sampadā*. Colombo, M. D. Gunansena, 1961, p 257.

Sound common sense and institutionally defensible considerations led this theory to be given the greatest emphasis. It recognized the fact that the large majority of lay devotees, and even of the Saṅgha, could lead lives of some measure of religious fulfillment only by the performance of acts rather than by pure contemplation. Thus it provided for a vastly more cheerful conception of the religious life than would have been possible without it.

However, it was always possible for the *theras* to interpret the significance of certain acts in this official way which might have had another significance unofficially. Thus, for example, while certain recitations were in terms of theory, meritorious because of the thoughts they were deemed to arouse, because of their morally transformative potentiality, in the minds of participants they were also imbued with 'power' of another kind and were able to grant benefits in quite a different way.

The theory also enabled almost any kind of popular religious act, provided it did not involve the specific symbols of another tradition, to be appropriated into the corpus of Buddhist religious practices.

With such a blanket provision to interpret the significance of acts, the Saṅgha could hold the *sāsana* to its early contemplative and intellectual moorings only by deeply perceptive and persuasive leadership. Such leadership was not always forthcoming and it would seem that the history of the *sāsana* bespeaks a progressively increasing leaning towards activities which had either a minimal religious significance or none at all.

We can see from this how, from a theoretically defensible development, a subtle shift of emphasis can follow with the greatest ease.

And this brings us to another important point.

In our discussion one of the central problems meriting attention is, how valuable was 'the call of the wise' (cf. *parato ghosa*, above) held to be, and how effective is it in fact today?

In a myth of prediction found in some popular Buddhist works,¹² it is depicted that there comes a time when the teachings of a Buddha are not available to man (*abuddhotpāda*), which is of course a time when the call of the wise is not available, when man is on his most uninspiring own, a time of moral collapse. Other than the Buddhas themselves, the wise through whom the call of *dhamma* could have gone forth in the world are, at the highest level, the *Arahants*—but an age is not said to be ‘outside the period of a Buddha’s arising’ (*abuddhotpāda*) just because *Arahants* were not known to be alive then. This age of despair would be truly upon us when an effective Saṅgha had vanished, when wise and learned and sincere *bhikkhus* are not available. The Saṅgha can be said to exist only if it exists as a moral force testifying, by personal conduct and understanding, to the attractiveness of the vision that a Buddha opens up for mankind. A Saṅgha that is not so is, according to the texts, a counterfeit Saṅgha.¹³

Thus, in the history of the *sāsana* the quality of the Saṅgha’s leadership was felt to be a crucially important matter. In that light it is worth attempting to assess the impact of the changing situation on the *sāsana* today.

In the past, in Buddhist lands, at least in South Asian Buddhist lands, no greater privilege could be enjoyed in society generally than the privilege of becoming a member of the Saṅgha. In terms of influence the temple ranked next to the seat of political authority and at times it was hardly second to it. And the monk was the educator *par excellence*.

One of the most striking changes in the social scene is that this is no longer so. Wealthy and influential families no longer consider it a privilege to have one member join the Order. The most intelligent boys no longer become monks; they either enter the university to study medicine, the sciences or engineering or they study law and accountancy and become Western-style profes-

12. E. g., *Pūjāvaliya*, Ch. XV, *Nigrodhāvāma Kathā* (referring also to Buddha’s *anāgatavaṃśa-deśanā*: These ideas are obviously developed from notions expressed in such early sources as *Dīgha Nikāya*, *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda Sutta*).

13. Cf. *Dhammapada* stanzas 260, 261, 264-267, *Majjhima Nikāya* I, *Cūla-assapura Sutta*.

sionals. With notable exceptions—and this must be emphasized—it is the less intellectual young men that are left available to the Saṅgha. It is not a matter for surprise then that the number of great *theras* seems to be getting fewer and fewer and that the brilliant young *bhikkhu* graduating from the monastic 'seminary' and electing to remain in the *sāsana* is not a frequent phenomenon.

If in the comparison between the talent that goes into the professions and the talent that goes into the Saṅgha, the latter seems to be unduly deprived, that is a matter that intellectuals among the Buddhists may bemoan more than the mass of Buddhist devotees. There is no necessary correlation between intellectual brilliance and what we may call the *dhamma*-like living. But yet, in another respect, this is a development that should be quite disturbing.

We are living in times of multifaceted challenges. This is a time when opinions have often to be expressed on complex and subtle issues that involve fundamentals, when delicate decisions have to be taken and justified, when a defensible flexibility may be as much required in a monk as a well-founded adherence to what is traditional. And this judicious balance at all levels must be sought out by minds that are perceptive, well informed and willing and capable to rise above the merely sectarian. At such a sensitive juncture in history as today, when what is imperiled is the cause of mankind as a whole, intellectual brilliance *in the right kind of person* will not merely be an asset for the Saṅgha; it is surely an indispensable qualification needed for it to fulfill its rightful role.

Let us try to have a synoptic view of some of these great issues on which attention may be focussed as we approach the awesome close of the turbulent century in which we have been living—issues in relation to which the Buddhist leadership may be called upon to collaborate with their counterparts in the other religious communities for the good of mankind as a whole.

In religious forums across the globe Western religious leaders are crying out for a meeting of minds on the one hand on issues that seem to separate the great religions of the world and on the other on those that, more significantly, unite them. For quite understandable reasons, the initiative in this regard has so far come almost exclusively from the Christian world. Other religionists

were at first rather cool to these overtures—perhaps not unjustifiably in view of the aggressive history of the Christian missionary enterprise, memories of which have not quite faded in Asia. But men of good will cannot continue to reject the invitation for dialogue, certainly not the Buddhists; nothing in their tradition could justify such a stand. This is a situation which demands from men of religiousness neither isolationism nor compromise but willingness to learn as much as to teach, to probe and to be probed, to be open and sensitive and to see beyond the superficial; a situation in which, in the Buddhist case, one would like to see a Saṅgha leadership with compassionate and well-informed and brilliant minds, capable of understanding, and communicating with not only their own traditions but also those of others.

In another possible (but by no means as yet certain) development, Buddhists might well be faced with a situation in which the orthodoxy has slipped out of their domain and is in the hands of an elite whose inspirations are drawn from scientific materialism of the West. Even if this does not happen, it may be doubted whether the Saṅgha can—and even whether it should—continue to enjoy the status of an orthodoxy, because modern communities seem to be less and less willing to be ‘church-dominated’; this the Buddhists will have no right to bemoan, because they must finally hope to be free from the ‘addiction to views’.

The role and the power of the orthodoxy in traditional cultures may not have been properly assessed—but it certainly is a power with which the ‘outsider’ deals, with a great deal of caution, often observing a certain sort of strategic silence in the face of its many claims and demands. It may be that it is for this reason that scientific materialism has not strongly disputed some of the claims of Buddhists in Buddhist lands.

But, in a freer atmosphere, it is possible to think of various areas of thought where Buddhists and the upholders of science may find cause for disagreement; they may question the Buddhist notions of *kamma* and rebirth; they may dispute the aspect of the causal theory that advances the uniquely Buddhist notion of a spiritual evolution; it may be disputed whether man is changeable as the Buddhist tradition represents, whether awareness or introspection has the transformative efficacy the Buddhists see in it.

Such controversies should be meaningful and will be essential, since our concern should be with the truth and not with any theory. But in such a context, exactly what the tradition has to say, in all its details, should be clear in the minds of those who will be delving into these matters; in other words, the Buddhist understanding of *pariyatti-dhamma* should then be accurate and profound, perceptive enough to catch the nuances that point out where the religious outlook parts company with the scientific.

This seems to be quite important because, although the *dhamma* as a teaching follows a reasoned-out, 'scientific' approach on almost every matter up to a certain point, it always proceeds further into a field whose reality and validity the scientific approach will normally not concede or be concerned with, or at least, is as yet not concerned with.

Predominantly scientifically and technologically oriented societies do not seem to be now saying that science and technology have all the answers to the issues facing mankind. So the task of religious traditions is to be well acquainted with their specific perspectives, different from those of science or economics or technology, which may be just as necessary for understanding the problems of man as anything else.

III

Technological progress has been dazzling and terrorizing man for only a comparatively short period in the history of civilization, but long enough for man to be able to take a detached and mature view of its achievements. It cannot be denied that that mature view contains an element of profound disenchantment.

The disenchantment with technology reveals to us the hidden presence of religion everywhere. It is technology that constructs the objects or shapes the objective world, but it is religion which says how to deal with it. Or to put it another way, there is a religious dictate in regard to every object, in regard to every thing of the objective world.

It is not always the case that the body dictates and the spirit obeys: it is often the case that the spirit advises and the body is unable to resist the advice—certainly so in the long run.

The cheer, the brashness, the self-confidence of youth builds the material world, brings about the 'conquest of nature', the technological achievements that make life so much easier to live. However, it does not, it has not yet been able to, banish the fundamental mortality and insecurity that eventually overtakes man. The awareness of mortality leads to the renunciation of violence, power and egoism. It brings on the fragrance of culture to life, culture not in its narrow sense, but culture as the hall mark of the mature human being, capable of tolerance and patience, willing to yield place to others, able to recognize that the world is for all to share and for none to appropriate for himself, or for his group or for his way of living, his views or even his ideals.

It is such culture that *dhamma* seeks to bring about. It derives from the Buddha's diagnosis that 'preoccupation with self' is at the root of all of mankind's ills. The *dhamma* asks us to be men and women of a certain quality and also—what is more to the point in a practical sense—men and women in whom certain other qualities are not present: avidity, malice, ignorance and thoughtlessness, all of which are involved in the 'preoccupation with self'. The imperative the *dhamma* has set before us is 'renounce the consciousness of self', and the *dhamma* holds that this is possible.

The basic implication of that imperative is that everything is not meant for my use nor every one to subserve my interest. The *dhamma* served to inculcate this teaching in thousands of different ways. It has been made to seep into the consciousness of a culture for centuries on end. It has entered into the consciousness of its members where it has been acting as *a force among the many forces* that have a share in the equilibrium of life.

It is important not to overlook the fact that the *dhamma* view is entertained in the first place because it sounds reasonable, and something, *though not everything*, in what we must call human nature is some how attracted to this view.

When we concede something to the moral challenge, it asks more out of us. That just seems to be the way man's religious impulse operates: we cannot discard it even though it keeps continually challenging. Neither has it ever been possible for men to obey its demands in their entirety.

We live, at any given moment, by striking a balance between contending inclinations. The *dhamma* ideal induces in us a whole series of inclinations which we cannot abjure even if we would. Social cohesion in this culture has been possible because we have been following at least some of the aspects of the mosaic that is the *dhamma* ideal.

Dhamma saves, not by man's *dhamma*-like conduct alone, but also, and just as importantly, by the appeal of that conduct to man.

To take an example: Reason, as does common sense, advises us that violence must remain a potential option in certain circumstances—and indeed almost all men follow common sense in this respect. But we must admit that this is because it is hard to be *dhamma*-like in every situation. We admit that what is *dhamma* like is to abjure violence in every situation, and our consciousness of this certainly tends to reduce violence in us—which will not be the case if we did not hold the *dhamma* view.

It is important to realize that the Buddhist does not, because he is unable to, always live by the light of his ideal. But that this is the ideal to which he subscribes makes a considerable difference. Thus he cannot, at the same time that he subscribes to the Buddhist vision, become a Marxist—because Marxism, though not advocating violence for its own sake, does indeed see it as permissible and right and necessary in certain circumstances. From the Buddhist point of view one can only say that violence is invariably productive of a violent result: it makes him violent who takes recourse to it.

It is in this way that *dhamma* has been operative in the lives of men and women: as an ideal which has given direction to their lives, but which they were not able to fulfill in all its exacting demands.

The point in saying this is to indicate that basically the situation today is what it always was. That people subscribe to Theravāda in the 'modern' world scarcely means that it 'exists' in a strange new world. In a very important sense it is still the same kind of world as it ever was. Changed it certainly is, and yet not basically different.

As in the past, so now too there are Buddhists, and there will be, in the future, who only subscribe to the Buddhist ideal. We have no right to say that they are not Buddhists, though we cannot say that the ideal suffices without it being applied.

But to accept the ideal is already to be under its allure. What one is attracted by, one tends to pursue, even if it 'goes against the current' (which the *dhamma* does, now as in the past). This seems to be one significant implication of what we may call the 'law of *dhamma*': the causal process can take us in the direction of *dhamma* because of the potentiality lying hidden in the nature of man to be attracted by a higher moral and spiritual condition. To be attracted by the call of the senses is on the other hand to move along the current. The teaching recognizes the fact that man is capable of being attracted by the call of *dhamma* even as he is attracted by this other, commoner, attraction.¹⁴

This implicit Buddhist view can be regarded as supplying an important additional element to our understanding of man's evolutionary equipment. Even if biological evolution may be regarded as over as far as man is concerned, yet built into him lies an untapped potentiality towards individual moral or spiritual development. In this way we can understand the almost universal attraction of man to some form of religiousness or other.

Man's religious potentialities seem up to now to have been realized in full measure only in rare instances. But by and large, man does not seem to be turning back; hence is he rightly called *homo religiosus*.

The other implication of the 'law of *dhamma*' is that *dhamma* finally prevails over *adhamma*; *dhamma* rewards more, and hence succeeds in the long run. That is how nature operates.

Is it really the case that *dhamma* is rewarding? Let us consider 'awareness' to gain some clarification of this point. Awareness in a sense is the whole of the Theravāda path. As the *Dhammapada Commentary* says: '(if) the entire word of the Buddha included in

14. Cf., e.g., the concept of *ariya*-and *anariyapariyesana* and the explication of *jātidhamma* in *Ariyapariyesana Sutta* of *Majjhima Nikāya* I.

the three *Piṭakas* (is) taken up and given expression to, it boils down to the word *awareness*'.¹⁵

What is awareness in this sense? It does not mean a few minutes' silence or reflection or meditation once in a while. It is a full-time affair, but demands no more than the keenness of interest in seeing what is going on within oneself, a thing that is practicable even in the maddening world of ours.

In a religious sense how does awareness operate and how does it succeed?

When constantly aware, the fact becomes clear, as a conviction, that the consequence of our common reactions to situations is a series of debilitating inner convolutions. This brings on, not instantly, but in the long run, a natural wish to move away from such reactions. But then, one also realizes that one cannot 'push' this wish, one cannot dictate to the life process to behave as one wants; and this one sees as a fact of life. But awareness continues and continuing awareness brings about a continuing closeness to the actualization of that wish—not perhaps as a result of having wished, but because the human organism is made to adapt, given the right conditions. In this case awareness (which is *dhamma*-living) seems to provide the 'right conditions'. One would think that what the 'law of *dhamma*' means to say is exactly this.

Has man's restlessness reached the point when awareness is too much of a burden to him, and the 'law of *dhamma*' cannot operate? Is it only a theory, a fossil, important to understand the past, but not meaningful to the fabric of the life lived today, and likely to be lived tomorrow?

That is of course something that is left to us to decide. As the quotation at the head of this paper suggests, we are free agents and the nature of our future will be decided by the way we choose to lead our lives. The path *can* be followed and *can* become an operative factor in the historical process. If I live *dhamma*, I will not disintegrate nor shatter another's peace. And if my neighbour lives *dhamma*, I too am secure for that very reason. Hence the

15. *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*, comment on *Dhammapada* stanza 21.

Buddhist definition: *dhāretī ti dhammo*, 'It is called *dhamma* because it sustains' (from the root *dhar*, to hold, to bear, etc.).¹⁶

The path, however, is not an end in itself, nor are 'Buddhist views' an end in themselves. In the final analysis both have to be left behind. That is why, for example, the *Atthasālinī* likens the first part of the praxis to the building of a wall of protection and the second part to pulling that wall down.¹⁷ In this regard, the *prajñā* tradition of the Buddhists was even more forthright, and they resisted even the exaltation of mind¹⁸—from which come all the paths and all the views. Thus, the religion must transcend itself must be regarded as an ultimately necessary 'Buddhist' position.¹⁹

Here one may recall the Buddha's emphatic repudiation of dogma, of anything to be defended as 'my position'. The parable of the raft²⁰ (like it, *dhammas* are also to be discarded, once one has crossed over to 'the other shore') was no doubt meant to drive home a similar point. Extremely significant is the commentarial note on this passage; it says that the *dhammas* to be (finally) discarded are *samatha* and *vipassanā* (i.e., 'meditation' in all its aspects); and it quotes *Majjhima Nikāya* I. 456, 'Thus, O Udayi, I advocate the abandonment of *nevasaññānāsaññāyatana* too. You will not see any fetter, small or great, whose rejection I do not advocate', and *Majjhima Nikāya* I. 260, 'And this view, O *bhikkhus*, so pure and so clear (obtained through *vipassanā*), do you not hold on to, not amuse yourselves with, not regard as (some) treasure'²¹

The modern Buddhist in particular, mindful of what is being done to further the psychological understanding of man today, will necessarily be appreciative of this stand in the old Buddhist tradition. He knows that he can benefit from the tradition for what it

16. *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* (PTS ed.) I. 229 *passim*.

17. *Atthasālinī* (PTS ed.) p. 214.

18. Cf. the *Prajñā Pāramitā* notion of *acittatva* as in *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* (P.L. Vaidya, edition, pp. 9-10) and Conze's note on this in *The Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom*, p. 73. The notion is not entirely unfamiliar to Theravāda; cf., *Visuddhimagga* (H.O.S. ed.) XXIII. 30, *acittakā hutvā nirodham patvā*, etc.

19. See *Majjhima Nikāya* III, *Aggivacchagotta Sutta*, *passim*.

20. *Majjhima Nikāya* (PTS ed.) I. 134.

21. Cf. *Sutta Nipāta* (PTS ed.) vs. 844; *Dhammapada*, vs. 87 *passim*, *Papañca-sūdanī* (PTS ed.) II. 109.

has to teach, and he also knows that it is by its very nature not restrictive, in the sense that it does not demand a restriction of mental horizons. To be truly 'homeless', as the Buddha's teaching advocates, is ultimately to be able to be free of a familiar inner world.

It is interesting to contemplate some of the 'fallout' of such a stand as this. For example, how will it stand in relation to such a modern notion as that of 'seeking identity'? If oppressed by a 'lack of identity', the Buddhist can only explore the full meaning of this sense of oppression, not blindly agree that an 'identity' must be established.

For the Buddhist the basic message is, 'Do not get stuck anywhere' and not 'Come this way', for there is no 'here' or 'there' where one finally settles down.

Thus, the *way* cannot be allowed to become a subtly unconscious preparation ending with the actualization' of an 'object, that is really mind-made, i.e. hallucinatory.

But will not the idea that everything is to be transcended itself lead to a conditioning of mind by mind? That idea, and what issues from it, should not be made the basis for an intellectual position to which one will accord the status of an '-ism'. After all, having said, 'transcend everything', you cannot revel in 'transcending'. This final injunction, intelligently applied, admits of no exception; by itself it is relevant to itself.

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THE HINDU SOCIETY IN SRI LANKA: CHANGED AND CHANGING

S. PATHMANATHAN

In the plural society of Sri Lanka, comprising two major ethnolinguistic groups and four main religio-cultural communities, the Hindus constitute about a fifth of the total population. The Hindu tradition is confined almost exclusively to the Tamils concentrated in the northern, eastern and central parts of the island and also to some extent in Colombo and a few other urban centres in the other parts of the island.

Although the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, as socio-religious systems, have much in common they differ in two important respects. The Hindu tradition has no organization comparable to the Buddhist Saṅgha. It has no organization or establishment which could command the allegiance of all Hindus living in the island. Even the *mutts* of the types to be found in South India do not exist in Sri Lanka. Hindu religious practices and observances are regulated by custom and tradition, and therefore traditional Hindu society has remained basically conservative until recent times. Although the *brahmins*, who officiate as priests in most Hindu temples and conduct rituals and domestic ceremonies and social functions, belong to a particular caste, they have no organization of any sort and function in an individual capacity. They may exert some influence in society but they scarcely involve themselves, in their capacity as *brahmin* priests, in public affairs. Their attitude to such matters has been one of indifference. The Hindus in Sri Lanka have therefore not been under the guidance of *religieux* in public affairs. The secular outlook of the Hindus on political matters is partly traceable to the absence of the guidance or pressures of *religieux* in Hindu society. The Buddhist Saṅgha, on the other hand, has played a crucial role in political and social affairs.

Buddhist revivalism had strong political overtones and the close connections that had existed between the Saṅgha and the State in the remote past have been revived to some extent in the modern Democratic State by a special provision in the Republican Constitution adopted recently.

Almost all Hindus in Sri Lanka are Śaivites, being the adherents of the Śaiva Siddhanta School which developed in Tamil Nadu in South India during medieval times. As a religio-philosophical system, Śaiva Siddhānta is based on the body of literature called the *Āgamas* and the religio-philosophic thought of the Nāyanmārs who were the architects of Śaivite revival in South India during the seventh and eighth centuries. The collection called *Thirumurai*, divided into twelve sections and comprising the hymns of the four leading exponents of medieval South Indian Śaivism, Gñāna Sampanthar, Appar, Sundarar and Māṅikkavāśakar, and the philosophical treatises of Meykaṇḍa Devar, his followers and disciples constitutes the canonical literature of all Tamil Śaivites. This literature is placed by them on equal footing with the four Vedas. The rituals performed by the *brahmins* are, however, based on the Vedic and Āgamic tradition. Śaivism as practiced in Sri Lanka is in general terms, therefore, a blend of the *Vedāgama* tradition with that of the Śaiva Siddhānta.

Śaivism has imparted a sort of homogeneity to traditional Tamil society and it has, along with the Tamil language, inspired close and continuous contacts between the Hindus of Sri Lanka and South India. The Hindus of Sri Lanka have looked to South India for religious and cultural inspiration. Pilgrimages to Chidambaram, Madurai, Ramesvaram, Thiruchchendur, and other Śaivite centres considered obligatory for all pious Śaivites have made the Hindus of Sri Lanka familiar with the religio-cultural developments in South Indian Saivism. Another source of South Indian influence on Hindu Society in Sri Lanka is the employment of South Indian architects and other artisans for the construction of temples and the casting of images. The dance from *Bharata nāṭyam*, which is essentially religious in theme and is popular among the Hindus, is sustained in Sri Lanka primarily because of the contacts with schools of dancing in South India. Religious dignitaries are also often invited from India to conduct discourses on Śaiva Siddhānta and other related matters.

The Hindu tradition revived in Sri Lanka during the nineteenth century, after a long period of suppression under European colonial rule which began with the Portuguese conquest of the Kingdom of Kotte around 1591 and that of Jaffna by 1626. All the leading Hindu temples in Jaffna and in the western littoral were demolished by the Portuguese *conquistadors*, and their properties were seized and given over to the Christian missions. Under Portuguese rule Hindu religious practices and observances were proscribed by law. Hindu temples could survive only at Tambalagamam, Tirukkōvil, and Kokkaddichcholai in the eastern littoral, which did not come under Portuguese rule. Thus, except in a few isolated localities, the Hindu temple which was the principal religious and cultural institution created and sustained by Hindu society in Sri Lanka was eliminated, and it could make its appearance again only after the British conquest. The restoration of the temples was not accompanied by a restoration of their properties and the loss of wealth they suffered under the Portuguese colonialists was a permanent one. The Dutch, who dislodged the Portuguese from the island in 1658, followed a policy similar to that of the Portuguese, but not with the same zeal. Towards the end of the period of their rule, the Dutch relaxed somewhat their prohibitive laws against the indigenous religious traditions and permitted the reconstruction of some temples in Jaffna. The reconstruction and restoration of Hindu temples in the Tamil districts developed in full swing in the nineteenth century.

A Hindu revival was possible during the period of British rule because the new colonial government, unlike those of the Portuguese and the Dutch, adopted a liberal attitude towards religious questions affecting the colony. Although many British officials had strong prejudices against the Hindu and the Buddhist traditions and tended to favour Christianity, the policy of the British colonial government in matters affecting religion was in general, one of toleration. Soon after the British conquest, the whole range of Hindu religious beliefs and practices, which were almost forbidden under the Portuguese and the Dutch, surfaced again. Moreover, the bulk of the population of '*Jaffnapatnam*' and the vast majority of the Tamils in the eastern littoral were found to be Hindus. Surveys undertaken by British officials and missionaries revealed that the attempts made by the Portuguese and the Dutch to make the Hindus conform to European standards in matters of religious

beliefs and practices through coercive methods did not produce the desired results. The gap between the intentions of the rulers and the faith of the ruled had remained wide.

Portuguese and Dutch rule did not lead to any great change in society or in the mode of production. The first two European colonial powers retained the traditional feudal type of social organization and they did not introduce measures which would have thoroughly exposed the traditional society to European influences. The contact between the Europeans and the natives was confined to the forts, the Church congregation and the realm of commerce. With these exceptions there was no serious encounter between the European society and the traditional Hindu society on a social and intellectual footing.

The challenges faced by Hindu society in the nineteenth century were much greater than ever before. The British rule initiated a process of modernization which resulted in a great transformation of the economy, the social structure, and the mode of government. It also led to a certain extent to social mobility which weakened traditional modes of social organization and kinship ties. The nineteenth century also witnessed the introduction of Western secular education of the modern type. Traditional society became exposed to Western influences as a result of the economic and social changes that were taking place in the colony. The most effective instrument for the transmission of Western and modern values to the indigenous society was English education.

The development of the machinery of administration, the professions and commerce provided avenues of employment to an ever increasing number of youth who had substantial educational accomplishments. Those families who could afford to educate their children sent them to the English school established at the locality closest to their residence. English education in the early nineteenth century was a monopoly of the Christian Missions. The Protestant Missionary organizations, the Baptist Missions Society, the Church Mission Society and the American Missions, were the pioneers of modern education in those parts of the island where Hindus were traditionally concentrated. The missionary organizations sought to propagate Christianity through education and other means. Hindu children, educated at missionary schools, were often compelled to discard Hindu customs, and the conversion of some

of the Hindu youth at missionary schools became a matter of great concern in the Hindu society. Historical circumstances seemed to provide justification for missionary propaganda; the Christian West was at the peak of its power and prosperity; in politics, government, industry, commerce, learning, science and technology it led the world, whereas Hindu and other Asian societies appeared backward, their social and religious systems seemed outmoded. Missionary propagandists attributed the progress of the West to Christianity and the decadence of Asian society to 'oriental religions'. Under such circumstances many Hindus who received modern education became sceptical of traditional Hindu values.

The Hindu revival was a product of the confrontation between the values and ideals of the West with those of traditional Hindu society in northern Sri Lanka. The Hindu revival in Sri Lanka was largely the work of Arumuka Navalar who has been described as the champion reformer of the Hindus. Navalar proved himself to be a man of dynamic energy, unrivalled scholarship and dauntless courage. He excelled as religious propagandist, author, commentator, editor and organizer. Besides, he is generally acclaimed as the father of modern Tamil prose. His life and work contribute in large measure to the revival of the Hindu intellectual and religious tradition. Traditional Hindu society found itself re-animated and in position to withstand and even combat missionary propaganda, and the threat of the proselytization of the Hindu on a mass scale no longer persisted. The revivalist movement even succeeded in bringing back within the fold of the Hindu tradition some intellectuals who had been converted to Christianity.

A notable feature of the Hindu revivalist movement was the acceptance of Western values in secular affairs. The value of a modern education was realized and stressed by Navalar himself. In the schools he established, provision was made for the teaching of secular subjects like History, Geography, and Mathematics. Above all he recognized the intrinsic value of the Western methods of organization and propaganda and endeavoured to adopt them for his purposes. The Hindu revival was confined primarily to elite circles among the high-caste Hindus in the Northern Province and the metropolis. The programme for the reform of the Hindu religion could not be carried out as effectively as envisaged because the movement did not have a mass base. The reform movement was

confined to the spheres of religion, education and cultural tradition but it did not directly concern itself with matters relating to social problems.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century and later the Hindu elites of Sri Lanka came under the influence of the Hindu reformist and revivalist movements in India. They were attracted and even inspired by the teachings of Ram Mohan Roy, Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Some of them developed a pan-Hindu outlook and studied the Vedanta with interest. The most notable among such men were the legislator, Sir Muthu Kumaraswamy and his more famous son Ananda Coomaraswamy, both of whom sought to reinterpret Hindu ideals and philosophy in the light of the modern intellectual tradition of the West. They also emphasized the need to synthesize Hindu ideals with dynamic and egalitarian values of the West.

In 1893, Swami Vivekananda who shared these views and had had a charismatic appeal visited Sri Lanka and delivered a number of lectures which inspired local Hindus to organize a number of Hindu associations. A branch of the Ramakrishna Mission was soon established in our country, and it reached the peak of its development during the time of Swami Vipulananda, who organized a number of mission schools in the Eastern Province. His activities led to a revival of the Hindu tradition in the eastern littoral and arrested the progress of proselytizing efforts by the Christian missions. Swami Vipulananda was the second great champion reformer of the Hindus in Sri Lanka. Unlike the Hindu revivalist movement of northern Sri Lanka, which was sectarian in outlook and championed the cause of Śaiva Siddhanta, the Ramakrishna Mission which had a 'pan-Hindu' and even a universalistic outlook emphasised the essential unity of all religions and placed all religions on a footing of equality. It recognized that each religion had its own intrinsic value for the spiritual upliftment of mankind. Yet it vigourously opposed all forms of proselytization and justified all forms of orthodox Hindu worship. The influence of the Ramakrishna Mission also has been largely confined to the middle classes and Hindus in the island sometimes found that their commitment to the ideals of Ramakrishna Vedānta conflicted with their loyalties to Śaiva Siddhānta. As Śaiva Siddhānta forms part of the religious and cultural heritage of the Hindus of Sri Lanka it had a wider and more emotional appeal.

Hindu social organization, based on a hierarchical division of occupational groupings or castes, is founded on the traditional concept of *varṇāśramadharmā*. Each caste had its rights, privileges and obligations defined by custom. In traditional society the violations of the customs concerning caste observances met with stern disapproval. In a sense the hierarchical division of Hindu society on the basis of castes amounted to an institutionalization of inequality. The values of such a traditional society sharply contrasted with the modern ideal of social equality. Traditional Hindu society proved to be vulnerable in its encounters with Christian missionary organizations and modern values largely because of this inherent weakness in its social organization. Conversions to Christianity or even to Islam held out the prospect of relief from civic disabilities imposed on the *harijans* by traditional society dominated by upper-caste Hindus.

The administrative and professional elites among the Hindus, who had imbibed Western values through education, recognized the need for social reform on the basis of equality and made appeal through Hindu organizations and the press for the removal of untouchability. The conscience of the upper caste Hindus who had received some form of modern education was stirred by the campaigns launched by Mahatma Gandhi against untouchability in India, where the question of social reform was taken up by the nationalist movement in its programme of national regeneration. In Sri Lanka there was no nationalist movement comparable to the Indian one, and no serious attempt was made on an intensive scale to face the problems arising from 'caste-ism' and untouchability.

The impact of Gandhian ideology along with other factors made the Hindu elite groups adopt a favourable attitude towards movements directed against 'caste-ism' and untouchability. The influence of Marxist ideology brought a new dimension to the whole question by inspiring the depressed sections of Hindu society to organize several forms of protest against civic disabilities imposed on them. However, the most decisive influence on the thinking of the lower-middle class caste Hindus on the question of social reform and the emancipation of depressed sections of society has been exerted by the social philosophy of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam of South India.

Another development which began to influence the thinking of the upper-caste Hindus on matters of social behaviour was the emergence of Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka since the fifties. The Federal party which dominated Tamil politics since 1954, and campaigned for autonomy for the Tamil areas, included the removal of civic disabilities in its action programme. This party which effected the complete politicization of the Tamil masses and had the solid backing of the lower-middle class, the peasantry and artisan communities was able to secure social acceptance for the campaign against untouchability. Some of its leading members who hailed from aristocratic families openly identified themselves with the cause of the *harijans* when violent disputes arose between upper-caste Hindus and the *harijans*. Their efforts successfully secured the election of its *harijan* nominee to the Senate in the third parliament of independent Ceylon. Besides, this party nominated a member of the *harijan* community as its candidate to a Ward of the Jaffna municipal council where a majority of the voters were caste Hindus, and secured his election for many consecutive terms and was able to elect him as Deputy Mayor when it commanded majority support in the Municipal council. The election of a member of the *harijan* community to the National State Assembly, in 1977, by a very large majority from a constituency in the Jaffna peninsula, where the inhabitants are predominantly conservative upper-caste Hindus, may suggest that traditional Hindu society is slowly but steadily changing because of the influence exerted by the dynamic and egalitarian values of modern civilization. Restaurants and hotels in towns and some of the leading Hindu temples, such as the Kandaswamy temples at Nallur and Mavattapuram, and the Amman temple at Nainativu, have now been made accessible to all irrespective of caste. These gestures have attracted the sympathy and support of educated sections of the *harijans* to the Tamil nationalist cause and their support for Marxist parties, which advocate a much more radical programme, has steadily declined since 1960. In villages where traditional values persist, civic disabilities against *harijans* are still a reality and problems arising from 'caste-ism' and untouchability could assume new dimensions leading to serious crises unless a radical programme of action for the removal of civic disabilities is implemented soon.

The role of the *brahmins* in Hindu society in the island has been a restricted one in contrast to the position of dominance they have held in South India. In Tamil Nadu, where the *brahmins* are to be found in very large numbers, they administered most of the leading temples, collected all the income from them and held most of the arable land. They secured a monopoly over modern education and dominated the professions. *Brahmin* ascendancy in social, economic and cultural affairs resulted in widespread resentment among non-*brahmin* communities and it led to the emergence of the purist movement which stressed the urgency for purifying the Tamil language by putting an end to the increasingly excessive Sanskritization which was attributed to *brahmin* influence. Increasing and widespread resentment over *brahmin* domination in society found expression in the activities of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam which carried on a vigorous campaign against *brahmins*, Sanskritization, Vedic culture and old customary Hindu values.

In Sri Lanka, the *brahmins* have been found in very small numbers and they never held a position of dominance in traditional Hindu society. The Hindu temples were administered by upper-caste Hindus and the *brahmin* priests were the employees of the temple management. The *brahmins* never became a wealthy and landowning group in society and they identified themselves with the rest of Hindu society in political and cultural affairs. The Tamil language in Sri Lanka always held its ground and was never threatened by excessive Sanskritization. Therefore the ideas propagated by the purist movement and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in South India had no wide appeal among the Hindus of Sri Lanka. The *vellalar* or the community of agriculturists who dominated traditional Hindu society endorsed orthodox Hindu values which served their interests. Vedic rituals continued to be performed by *brahmins* and the Sanskrit language is widely used in rituals and on ceremonial occasions. The only concession to the purist demand is the provision made for the recitation of Vedic hymns in Tamil at wedding ceremonies in Jaffna.

There has been a significant change in the role of the Hindu temple in recent times. Every town and village had at least two or three temples which were mostly managed by the most influential land-owning families of the locality. Apart from being a centre of worship, the Hindu temple has been the principal centre of cultural and social activity in traditional society. The entire

village community was involved in its maintenance and in conducting the annual festival and in providing temple services. In an agrarian society dominated by landowners it was possible to compel all sections of the community to render customary services for the maintenance of the temple establishment. The annual festival conducted at the temple used to be the main cultural and social event of the year. It brought about periodic gatherings of the villagers and provided them with cultural entertainments. Besides, at such gathering there was considerable buying and selling of commodities such as pottery, brassware, textiles and cosmetics.

There has been a remarkable decline in the importance of village temple activities because of the impact of modernization resulting in greater social mobility, improved transport facilities and the appearance of the news media and the cinema. The landed interests no longer enjoy the position of dominance which they once held in rural society and the temple is no longer as effective an instrument for the perpetuation of traditional societal values and the hierarchical mode of social organization.

This development, however, has not led to a decline of religiousness among the Hindus. While the village temple has tended to decline, temples which are of regional importance continue to receive great attention. The Kandaswamy temple at Nallur, the ancient Śaivite temple of Thirukketiśvaram at Mantai and Kōnēśvaram at Trincomalee and a few others attract an ever increasing number of pilgrims and devotees during festival occasions. Although Hindu intellectuals have become increasingly sceptical of ritualism and religious observances, they do not display great enthusiasm in discarding them. Their attitude is generally one of conformity as long as such observances are morally not reprehensible. Generally all Hindus cherish the religious, philosophical and cultural traditions fostered by their religious tradition and they show great concern for their preservation. As the Hindu tradition, along with the Tamil language, forms the basis of Tamil identity, an emotional attachment to Hindu values will continue to persist. The Hindu tradition enjoys some sort of national recognition; days on which the *Thai Pongal*, *Śivaratri*, Hindu New Year, and *Dēepavali* are celebrated and are national public holidays. Besides, in all state schools the Hindu tradition is taught as a subject to Hindu children at the primary and secondary stages.

It is widely recognized among elite groups and the Hindu youth today that civic disabilities against the depressed sections of Hindu society should be abolished. Experience shows that this could not be realized in full measure by propaganda or by legislation. The educational upliftment of the *harijans* as a whole and an improvement of their living conditions may go a long way towards a fundamental change in the patterns of social behaviour of the upper-caste Hindus. A total transformation of the traditional Hindu society along modern lines could be achieved only by a much greater social mobility and far-reaching changes in the patterns of economic life. These could be generated only by a nation committed to a dynamic social and political philosophy with a mass appeal transcending ethnic and sectarian barriers.

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THE HINDU RELIGIOUS HERITAGE IN SRI LANKA: REVIVED AND REMEMBERED

A. SATHASIVAM

The Hindu tradition is composed of a number of complex systems of thought and practice, the most important of which are Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, and Śaktism. In a sense, a standard sociological definition of 'religion' as 'a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, uniting into a single moral community all those who adhere to those beliefs and practices',¹ is applicable to these systems. The heritage of the Śaivas, or Śaivites, those for whom Śiva is the supreme God, represents the primary religious heritage of the Hindus of Sri Lanka. Śiva is worshipped by Śaivas in his diverse forms, perhaps the most popular of which is the *Śivaliṅgam*. Into the sphere of a Śaiva's devotional relationship enter also Śiva's consort, Pārvati, his children, Pillaiyār (Gaṇēsha) and Murugan (Skanda), and associated minor gods like Bhairavan, who was born of Śiva's blood. To Śiva, Śaivas attribute all the functions and attributes of Brahmā and Vishnu. He is the creator, preserver, and destroyer of all, and he is known by many names: Rudra, Sadāśiva, Aran, Īśvara, Mahēśvaran, Nateśan, Naṭarājah, Sangaran, Mukkaṇṇan, Sitambaran, and Paramēśvaran. To this supreme God temples have been dedicated by Śaivas and are scattered throughout the Hindu centres of worship in Sri Lanka.

Hindus are the second largest religious group in Sri Lanka. Precise records are difficult to obtain, but according to the population census of 1971, there were 2,239,310 Hindus in Sri Lanka who formed 17.6 percent of the total population of 12,711,143. Hindus

1. Leonard Broom and Philip Selznick—*Sociology*, A Text with adapted Readings, 4th Ed. P. 305.

in Sri Lanka are almost all Tamils. Among the Tamil community 80.59 percent of the Sri Lanka Tamils and 89.33 percent of the Indian Tamils were classified as Hindus.² An analysis of the Hindus by their distribution in various districts shows that the highest proportion was in the northern District of Jaffna where the Tamil population was high. Apart from Jaffna, their proportion reached over 50 percent only in the three districts of Vavunia in the North, Batticaloa in the East, and Nuwara Eliya in the centre hills where their proportion ranged between 52 percent and 66 percent.

The beginning of what appears to have been important strands of Śaivism in Sri Lanka dates back to the pre-Buddhist period. Citing evidence from the *Mahāvamsa*, inscriptions and epigraphy, some historians point out that for about four centuries before the beginning of the Christian era very many people of Sri Lanka, perhaps the majority, expressed their religiousness through patterns that have formed a part of the Hindu tradition, Brahmanic and Śaivite. Dr. Paranavitana wrote,

When we consider that phallic worship was the principal religious faith of the Tamils, the nearest neighbours of the Sinhalese, it is not difficult to believe that the latter people were also attached to this cult before they adopted Buddhism, and also continued to honour the Sivalinga even after this event. Proper names such as Siva, Mahasiva and Sivagusa occurring in the earliest inscriptions show that this god was worshipped by the Sinhalese of the earliest period.... The more intellectual among the people perhaps followed the Brahmanical religion.³

Professor Ellawala, concluding his study of the religious practices in early Sri Lanka, made a series of relevant observations. 'It becomes clear', he said, 'that the majority of civilized people in pre-Buddhist Ceylon were followers of Hinduism in one form or another....'⁴ Speaking of forms of worship in the early period, he

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2. *Sri Lanka, Census of Population 1971*, Department of Census and Statistics, 1978. p. 89.
 3. S. Paranavitana—'Pre-Buddhist Religious Beliefs in Ceylon, *JRAS. CB.* 1929 p. 302-327.
 4. H. Ellawala, *Social History of Early Ceylon*, Department of Cultural Affairs, 1969. p. 161.

suggested, 'Thus the people of Ceylon during this period may have easily come to know of their form of worship—Śaivism side by side with Brahmanism'.⁵ And elsewhere, he noted, 'phallic worship found part of the religion of the people of Ceylon in the time of Paṇḍukābhaya.'⁶ On the likelihood of the worship of significant śaivite deities, Professor Ellawala commented, 'Archaeological evidence from Mihintale suggests the existence of the Dravidian God Gaṇēṣa in Ceylon during the pre-Christian centuries,'⁷ drawing our attention also to the possibility that, 'Velusu in our inscriptions may very well be a reference to Murugan'.⁸

This evidence in Sinhalese history and archaeology bears testimony to the likelihood that Śaivite religious practices formed a part of the earliest known civilization in Sri Lanka. Tamil literature produced in Sri Lanka during the later periods mentions traditions recording at least four Hindu shrines as dating from the pre-Christian era. These are the three Śiva temples of Tirukēthīśwaram in the Mannar District, Kōnēśwaram in the Trincomalee District, and Muniśwaram in the Chilaw District and the fourth temple dedicated to Śakti, consort of Lord Śiva, in the island of Nāgadīpa. All these Śiva shrines of ancient time contain in the sanctuary a phallus or *liṅgam*, i.e., the male symbol of fertility, which is a familiar accompaniment of the worship of Śiva. According to *pūraṇic* traditions, Nāgas worshipped at the Tirukēthīśwaram and Nāgēśwari temples, and Rāvana, the King of Lanka, worshipped at Kōnēśwaram and Muniśwaram. Hymns sung by St. Sambandar, of the 7th century A.D., and St. Sundarar, of the 9th century A.D., about Tirukēthīśwaram and Kōnēśwaram are the earliest literary records preserved. These hymns form part of the religious syllabus of Hindu school children in Sri Lanka.

The history of the Hindu tradition in the early centuries of the Christian calendar in Sri Lanka shows that related religious practices became less pervasive in the Sinhalese areas as more and more people became Buddhists. When the Buddhist community

5. *Ibid.*, p. 158.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 158.

became formed, it tended to develop institutional forms different from the rest of the population, particularly with regard to places of worship, religious ceremonies, and the order of monks. The *brahmins* had no religious rites and ceremonies to perform, and their place became occupied by *bhikkhus* as teachers and advisors of the community.⁹ However, the Sinhalese kings patronized the *brahmins* and continued to employ them as *purohita* in their court. This system continued until rather recent times. There is very little evidence to be drawn from inscriptions dated prior to the Cola invasion in the 10th century A.D., to tell us about the Śaiva religious practices of the period. But under the patronage of the Colas, numerous Śiva temples were built in Polonnaruwa and other centres of worship in the Anurādhapura kingdom. The Śiva temple in Kantalai and Tirukkovil, both in the Eastern Province, were built during this period.

One major feature of the Hindu worship in the middle ages is that more and more people began to worship Muruga (Skanda), the second son of Lord Śiva. The four ancient Muruga shrines, namely Nallūr and Māvittapuram in the Jaffna peninsula, Cittira Velautar in the Trincomalee District, and Katirgamam (Kataragama) in the Southern Province, were rebuilt or enlarged by the 15th century. By this time Pillaiyār (Gaṇēsha), the eldest son of Lord Śiva, found temples built for him almost in all the villages where Hindus lived.

Śaivism was patronized by the kings of Jaffna from the 14th century, and by the king of Kandy from the 16th century. Śaivism appears to have been made the court religion of the Kandyan kingdom by Rājasinha I (1582-1592).¹⁰ It continued to flourish in the Kandyan kingdom from 1739-1815, when Tamils from South India ruled the kingdom. Thus, in the 18th century a larger section of the population of Sri Lanka was familiar with Hindu religious practices than was the case in the pre-Christian era. The introduction of South Indian labour, by the British, into the tea plantations of the Kandyan areas in the 19th century brought a dramatic increase in the Hindu population of the Central Province. These

9. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

10. Rev. James Cartman, *Hinduism in Ceylon*, Colombo, 1957, p. 45.

Hindus, professing the cult of Śiva, worship, among other gods, Māri Amman, the village gooddness of infectious diseases, particularly of small pox.

A most significant revival movement among the Hindus in northern Sri Lanka began with Arumuka Navalar (1822-1879) in the nineteenth century. His revival movement was not confined to Sri Lanka only but reached out into South India as well. He is affectionately called 'Navalar' by the millions who profess Śaivism in Sri Lanka and India. The Śaiva tradition had been seriously curtailed by alien forces for about two centuries. The Portuguese came to Jaffna at a time when persecution appears to have been the order of the day in Europe. They pursued a familiar policy of persecuting persons whose religious world-view they did not understand; and those who were persecuted were Śaivites. Many fled to India and settled there. The vast majority of those who remained in Jaffna adopted the *via media* of outwardly professing Catholic belief while nurturing inwardly their Śaiva faith. But they were unable to participate in their Śaiva religious practices in their essential details. Their inability to attend to their religious observances such as temple worship, fasting, and initiation left their religious tradition somewhat empty. The Dutch, who followed the Portuguese, were less severe, but were none the less anxious to impose their religious beliefs on the people. The advent of British rule gave the Śaivites freedom of religious practice.

It was then that this country gave birth to Arumuka Navalar. He saw himself as setting out to rejuvenate Śaivism, to bring out its latent powers and fully to arm it for defence, and even for offence. He wrote several pamphlets in Tamil defining Śaivism, the chief characteristics of a Śaivite, insanitary acts, evil acts which are forbidden in a temple or its surroundings, etc. He had established several schools in the city and the remote villages and introduced the teaching of Śaivism as a subject of study. He wrote several levels of readers on Śaivism to suit the ages and abilities of the children. He outlined the basic doctrines of Śaivism and the Śaiva Siddhānta philosophy, founded by Meykaṇḍa Devar, a *Śūdra vēllāla*, who lived on the banks of the Penner river, north of Madras, during the thirteenth century.

Śaiva Siddhānta, which is the Tamil school of Śaivism, draws its doctrines not only from the *Āgamas* but also from the teachings of the Śaiva saints of South India, known as Nāyanmārs. Though Śaivism has pre-Vedic roots, Śaiva Siddhānta, as practised today in South India and Sri Lanka, is traced to the teachings of Meykaṇḍa Devar in his monumental work *Śiva-gñāna-bodham* of the 13th century. Śaiva Siddhānta considers the 28 Śaiva *Āgamas*, the 12 Śaiva anthologies known as *Panniru Tirumuraikal* (6th-12th centuries A.D.) and the 14 *Siddhānta Śāstras* (12th-14th centuries) as authoritative scriptures.

Āgamic culture is pre-Aryan and Dravidian in origin. Indian tradition has all along demonstrated two strands in Indian religious philosophy and ritual—the Vedic and non-Vedic traditions. The non-Vedic *Āgama* tradition is that which has come down (*ā-gama*) from time immemorial. The Indus Valley religious worship and practices are often traced to Āgamic culture. This Āgamic culture has come to embody the special teachings of Śiva imparted to Umā, his consort. These teachings are contained in the 28 *Āgamas* called 'Śivāgamas'. These *Āgamas* teach a religious orientation, theistic in form and connected with temple worship. Devotion, or *bhakti*, is the highest form of religious *sādhana*, or practice, according to the *Āgamas*. Symbolism in the form of images and *yantrās* play a very great part in the religious practices of the Āgamic schools of thought. These *Āgamas* are more devotional in tone than philosophical. They elaborately deal with temple architecture, installation of images, conducting of festivals in temples and the proper times for conducting the *pūjās* in the temples. The earliest reference in Tamil literature to the Śaiva *Āgamas* is found in the *Tirumantiram* of Tirumular, in 7th century A.D. This work contains a comprehensive summary of the religious doctrines and philosophy of the *Āgamas*.

Religious practices based on the Vedic tradition are different from those based on the Āgamic tradition. Temple ritual is connected with *pūjā*, and is Āgamic; *homa*, or the fire ritual is Vedic. According to the *Śiva-gñāna-siddhiyar*, a Tamil treatise of the 14th century, the Vedas are for the worldly minded who desire to enjoy the pleasures of the world, and the *Āgamas* are for the spiritual aspirant whose sole aim in life is to realize God.

The Śaiva Siddhānta philosophy teaches man how to live well, to think rightly of God, the world and himself. It is the way of life of the Tamil people. One observer, Rev. Goudie, has written,

As a system of religious thought, as an expression of faith and life, the Śaiva Siddhānta is by far the best South India possesses. It represents not only in the South but in the whole of India the highest watermark of Indian thought and Indian life. It is the religion of the Tamil people, by the side of which every other form is of foreign origin.¹¹

This religious system, founded by a non-Aryan *Sūdra vēllāla* Tamil and based on the Āgamic or non-Vedic tradition, had received opposition from the *brahmin* community, which was the guardian of the Vedic tradition. The differences between these two traditions are seen in the emphasis given to religious practices. Though the major expressions of Indian philosophy are concerned with the self or spirit of man and its attainment of release from its present condition, the philosophy based on the Vedic tradition has as its core concept an Absolute Principle called *Brahman*, which defies description in its final essence. However, Śaiva Siddhānta thought, founded on the *Śivāgamas*, has as its central doctrine three categories: namely, God (*Pati*) soul (*pasu*) and the bonds (*pāsa*). All these are eternal and are dependent of each other. God is Śiva, the highest reality. The individual soul is of the same essence as Śiva but not identical therewith. Śaiva Siddhānta, true to its religious aim and purpose, has not attempted to reconcile the categories to the Ultimate Reality. Regarding the Śaiva Siddhānta practices, the religious life of a devotee is divided into four stages. These are *Cariyā*, 'physical work', *Kriyā*, 'prayer and *pūjā*', *Yoga*, 'meditation', and *Gñāna*, 'divine knowledge'. These essentials of Śaiva Siddhānta were enunciated afresh and their religious significance was rekindled by Arumuka Navalar in Sri Lanka and South India.

Navalar, working for the removal of abuses in Śaiva religious observances, inspired in the minds of a large section of the enlightened Hindu community a desire to inform themselves of the doctrines of their religious heritage. He started a series of lectures

11. A. Viswalingam, 'Siddhanta', *Hindu Dharma* (Journal of the University of Ceylon Hindu Student Union, Peradeniya) 1959-60 p. 2.

every Friday, beginning the first week of March, 1847, in a school established by him in Jaffna. In the very first lecture he explained that the Vedas were common to all Hindus, but the *Āgamas* are specific religious literatures for the *śaivites* to follow.¹² Those who practise the Vedic rituals will attain merit, but those who follow the Śaiva Path will attain salvation. The *brahmins* reacted violently to his lectures, abusing him and claiming that they were superior to the Śaivites. The larger section of the Hindu public agreed with Navalar and followed the religious practices recommended by him.

One such important practice is initiation or *dīkshā*. The distinguishing characteristic in this practice is holy ash, which is smeared with three finger-tips, forming three distinct bars or lines upon sixteen different parts of the body. The uninitiated will just rub the ash upon his forehead. All Śaivites, irrespective of caste or sex, are entitled to wear this *dīkshā* or three distinct bars of the Śaivite. Navalar started preaching against the Vedic *brahmins* conducting *pūjā* in Śaiva temples. He refused to receive holy ash from the Vedic *brahmins*. He advised the public not to invite the Vedic *brahmins* to perform ceremonies. Eventually his efforts proved a great success. *Brahmins* could not exist without the support of the Hindu community at large. They all, gradually, started wearing the Siva *dīkshā* markings and conducted *pūjās* in the temples according to the rules prescribed in the *Sivāgamas*. Navalar conducted a similar campaign in Chidambaram, South India, and got the Vedic *brahmins* to conduct *pūjās* there according to the *Sivāgamas*. This more than anything else, brought a unification of the Śaivites and standardised the religious practices throughout the country. Śaiva Siddhānta had been brought to the doorstep of every man and woman.

After Navalar's death in 1879, his disciples in Jaffna and South India continued his work. Religious lecture series in temples became very popular, and more and more intellectuals became engaged with a study of the religious and philosophical doctrines of Śaiva Siddhānta. The period 1900-1950 saw a number of publica-

12. V. Kanagaratnam, *Biography of Arumuga Navalar* (in Tamil) Jaffna 1968. p. 50.

tions on Śaiva Siddhānta. In 1900, Mr. Nallasvami Pillai started a monthly English magazine *The Śiddhānta Dīpika*, or lamp of the Siddhānta, for the purpose of giving expression to the best thought of the Śaiva sect. And in 1911, he published a very useful volume called *Studies in Śaiva Siddhānta*. In 1913, Mr. S. Sabaratna Mudaliyar of Jaffna published a book called *Essentials of Hinduism in the light of Śaiva Siddhānta*. The same year saw the publication, *Philosophical Śaivism or Śaiva Siddhānta*, by Rev. S. Gñāna Prakasar, O.M.I., a distinguished Tamil Scholar and Catholic priest of Jaffna. In 1934, Mr. S. Sivapadasundaram, a college principal, wrote a book called *The Śaiva School of Hinduism*, still considered a standard reference work on Śaivism and Śaiva Siddhānta philosophy.¹³

The introduction of free education, in 1945, brought far reaching changes in the sphere of Hindu religious education, worship and practices. Before the opening of Hindu schools by the Hindu Board of Education in the North, school education was the monopoly of the Christian missionaries. Only Christianity was taught in the schools and even Śaivites had to follow the classes. There were cases of Śaivite pupils disobeying the order of a Methodist School in Jaffna when it ordered that pupils should not wear holy ashes. Those who disobeyed were sent out of the school. Under the then existing regulations, the State could not prevent such acts of the denominational schools. The Education Ordinance, No. 1 of 1920 attempted to vindicate the neutral role of the Government by prohibiting the teaching of any religion in state schools and by insisting on a conscience clause in respect of denominational schools. The relevant clause runs thus:

It shall not be required as a condition of any child being admitted into or continuing in an assisted school that he shall attend or abstain from attending any Sunday school or any place of worship, or that he shall attend any religious observance or any instruction in religious subjects in that school or elsewhere from which observance or instruction he may be withdrawn by his parent or guardian or that he

13. Rev. James Cartman, *Hinduism in Ceylon*, Colombo, 1957, p. 184.

shall attend that school on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs....¹⁴

No doubt this was an improvement over the earlier legislation. But at a time when Christianity held sway over the destinies of those who were clamouring for public office, when the label of 'Christianity' was interpreted as an open passport for acceptance into high society, no ordinary 'parent could have been expected to have the courage to exercise this right and open his child to all anxieties that were in store for him. The ill effects of this Education Ordinance have been removed by the Education Ordinance, No. 26 of 1947.¹⁵ This provided for the introduction of religion into the curriculum of state schools. More and more Hindu children had the opportunity of learning the religious tradition of their parents in the schools they attended for their general education. When the Assisted Schools and Training Colleges Act, No. 5 of 1960, came into operation, most of the denominational schools in the island were nationalized. The State, with the abolition of the denominational system, had taken almost absolute ownership and control over the entire range of schools in the country. Successive governments have made religion a compulsory subject in the school curriculum from grades one through ten. Now every child of school going age can study the religious tradition that he practises at home.

The content of the Hinduism syllabus, that had been in force up to 1965, included both the Vedic and the Āgamic traditions. This syllabus was primarily concerned with the cultural heritage of India. The social changes that took place in Sri Lanka since Independence (1947) brought the Śaivites from poor families and the so-called lower classes of the Hindu society to the forefront in public life. More and more Hindu temples were admitting the so-called untouchables. Saivism of the Sri Lanka variety became a force in the Tamil society. Free education and the economic development of the country contributed largely to these changes. There had been numerous requests from the major Hindu organizations

14. *Education in Ceylon: A Century Volume*, 1969, Part III, p. 967.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 969.

for a change in the content of the Hinduism syllabus. Śaiva doctrines and religious practices with emphasis on popular or folk aspects were requested to be contained in the childrens' curriculum. The Department of Education acceded to this request and introduced 'Śaivism' in place of the earlier 'General Hinduism'. The content of this Śaivism syllabus contains the various aspects of the religious tradition in which the Hindu population of Sri Lanka participates. The current syllabus of the General Certificate of Education—Ordinary Level (Grade 10) is as follows:

Hinduism (Śaivism)

1. History of Śaivism:

(a) Antiquity of Śaivism, Śiva worship in the period of the Indus Valley Civilization, Śiva worship in the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas*, Origin of the *Śivāgamas* and the practises.

(b) Origin of the twelve Śaiva *Tirumurai* (Anthologies): Names of those who sang the hymns and their date, Classification of *Tirumurais*, Those who compiled the *Tirumurais*, Those who ordered the Compilation, Greatness of *Tirumurais*, Benefit by their recital.

(c) Śaiva Siddhānta Literature:

Fourteen Siddhānta Scriptures, Names of those who wrote, Philosophical contents in them.

(d) Origin and Development of the Śaiva *Mutts*, Origin of the Śaiva *Mutts*, their Development, Contributions.

(e) Śaivism in Sri Lanka:

Ancient Śiva temples, Arumuka Navalār's Contributions to Śaivism.

2. Śaiva Siddhānta Philosophy:

Truth about the Three realities, Nature of God, Soul, and Bond and their relationship.

3. Śaiva Practises:

Identities of the Śaivites; Holy Ash, *Rudrāksha*, Temple worship, Worship of *Guru*, *Liṅgam* and Śaiva Saints, the Four Paths leading to salvation: *Cariyā*, *Kriyā*, *Yoha* and *Gñāna*; *Dīkshā* (Initiation); Fasts in honour of Śiva, Gaṇēsa, Umā and Skanda.

4. Śaiva Rituals:

Marriage; Funeral, Srārda, Abhishēka, Philosophical explanations.

5. Four Śaiva Saints:

Sampanandar, Appar, Sundarar, and Māṇikkavāsakar.

Four Santānāsiriyar:

Meykaṇḍa Devar, Arulnandi Śivācchāriyar, Maraigñāna Sampantar and Umāpati Sivācchāriyar.

The objective of providing religious instruction in schools is to help the leaders of tomorrow to understand the true significance of their religious heritage and the religious practices in which they participate at home, and to help them to discern the ideals on which the concepts of right and wrong are based. Whether this objective has been achieved is not yet known. Some people think that educated young people in Sri Lanka are either in revolt against their religious traditions or, at least, very little concerned with them. This impression has been the result of thinking that these traditions are completely at odds with the modern scientific-technological world.

It is true that a section of the Hindu youth in South India, taken by the rationalist movement of Periyār Ramasamy Nāyakkār, revolted against the traditional institutions of religion. There have been many reasons in their background for this move, such as caste differences, poverty, unemployment, excesses of *brahmin* control, etc. There have been no cases of their learning religion in any structured, formal manner in schools and other institutions of learning. Those young Hindus, especially from the non-*brahmin* classes, were not carefully nurtured in the intellectual classics of their religious traditions.

The case of the Hindus of Sri Lanka is very different. Here, Hindu youths have strong religious roots and generally remain firm in their relationship to those roots. Children generally join their parents in visiting the temples and in performing the traditional religious rites. In schools they receive carefully structured formal religious instruction from sincere teachers who are always

keen to help their students see what is entailed in living religiously. School children and even the university students go on pilgrimages to ancient Hindu shrines such as Tirukkētiśwaram, Kōnēśwaram, Nāgadīpa, Kataragama and Adam's Peak. Birth anniversaries of the four most famous Śaiva Saints are celebrated in all the Śaiva schools. Young girls undertake fasting and attend the temples, after physical purification, and perform their worship in conformity with the rules prescribed for such occasions. They learn these rules from their parents and study the mode of worship in their text books. Older people engage in special prayers or undertake vows in relation to the passing of examinations, obtaining promotions, curing of personal or family illnesses.

A Hindu is generally a God-fearing person. He, as an expression of his religiousness, finds intimate relationship between his religious tradition and daily life wherein he, through his faith, finds life enriched by the religious grounding and support furnished through the sacred acts.

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RELIGIOUSNESS IN THE ŚAIVA VILLAGE

S. SUSEENDIRARAJAH

The purpose of this brief chapter is to share some observations about Śaiva beliefs and practices today in Śaiva villages primarily in the Jaffna area of the Northern Province of Sri Lanka.

Among the several sects within the Hindu tradition, the sect that is dominantly followed and practised in Sri Lanka is Śaivism. Other Hindu sects are notably absent in Sri Lanka. This, among other factors geographical, historical, and social has made Sri Lanka Śaivism different from that practised in Tamil Nadu in India. Śaivites in India and Sri Lanka differ primarily in their attitude toward Vaishnavism. Śaivism and Vaishnavism in India are to a great extent contrasting systems whereas in Sri Lanka the worship of Vishnu is complementary to Śaivism. There are not Vaishnavites in Sri Lanka but there are a few temples for Vishnu. Śaivites in Sri Lanka venerate Chidambaram, where the presiding deity is Śiva, Lord Nāṭarājah, and Sirirangam and Tiruppati, where Vishnu is the presiding deity.

Religious practices in Śaiva villages have in the course of time changed and they continue to change. But some of the more basic and fundamental practices appear to have endured. Progress in general education, the impact of science on human living and thinking, contact with the cultures of other religious communities, radical social, political and economic changes and new thinking based on all these factors have effected some change in the traditional Hindu practices at various levels. In other words, there has been some relinquishing of religious practices, at one time deemed to be sacred, because of an interpretation of what is called rational thinking. However, for village Hindus the religious practices are

fundamentally based on an enduring tradition and therefore one does not come across the emergence of any new practices worthy of primary consideration.

It may be pointed out at the outset that villagers do not generally have an understanding of the traditional philosophy and dogmas of the Hindu religion. Hindu villagers in Sri Lanka may not even be aware of the presence of various sects in the Hindu tradition. Until very recent times they never had an opportunity to receive formal instructions in the doctrines of the numerous strands of Hindu thought and they tended to confine themselves to their traditional occupations. Two or three decades ago even a graduate who had studied a few subjects would have remained no better informed than an average villager as far as his religious heritage was concerned. Until recently people did not bother to acquire a knowledge of their religious tradition through formal study. Perhaps the Hindu mode of imbibing the religious heritage is different from others. There has been a unique tradition of engendering religiousness and transmitting religious consciousness among Hindus for centuries. Though today formal instruction in schools is a necessity, that same very old method is still followed, but now with the aid of printed books.

So one might ask at this point, how, generally speaking, do Hindus (*Śaivites*) develop insight into their religious heritage? The core or essence of their faith and religious belief is never presented to them directly as formulas or in *sūtras*. To attempt to do this might be too much of an overdose! Several old stories considered sacred are related; biographies of Saints and divine men and women are told; the lives of the *avatāras* are depicted; historical incidents rooted in the tradition are narrated; ceremonies and rituals are performed and witnessed in temples and in homes; songs and devotional hymns are sung; dramas are acted and children are thereby encouraged to discern ideals. All these activities might appear on the surface to be of little significance, but some people, having heard and witnessed them at a relatively young age, have come to internalize their religious significance and have found them to yield profound meaning in the course of life.

One is often reminded of these stories when one grows up and has various new kinds of experience in life. At such points one is perhaps able to realize the religious and truthful significance of these stories. For example, one learns the story of Brahmā and Vishnu attempting to explore, to find the feet and crown of Lord Śiva. One is told that Brahmā signifies knowledge and Vishnu signifies wealth; both failed in their attempt and Lord Śiva was beyond their reach. At an early age, the child is enabled to correlate Śiva, Brahmā and Vishnu with three recognizable human forms in a drama or a play. It is a fine story from the point of view of the child. It is only at a later age that the mature person realizes through his own experience that God cannot be reached through knowledge or wealth. And numerous are similar examples.

In spite of such an apparently unorganized knowledge of his religious tradition, the villager practises Śaiva rituals and internalizes Śaiva ways of life and thinking through various means in which local tradition and one's own religious inheritance during one's cycle of births play an important role. No doubt the villager is religious; he firmly believes in his tradition and has faith in God. He believes that God is everywhere and in everything. In other words, he is constantly aware of the presence of God. At some moments in his life he gets a keen inner desire to feel God. He also knows that the talent is within him. He longs at times to have loving fellowship with Him. There are several contexts in which he associates himself and his activities closely with God.

Thus a villager's life is very much bound with religion. Faith functions in all his activities and movements. The successes and failures of his life are the act of God—so he believes.

There is today a disparity between the religious life of urban dwellers and villagers in Sri Lanka. One seldom finds the religious attitude of the villagers present among urban dwellers. This disparity arises from a number of causes, the most prominent of which is the preoccupation of the villagers with agriculture which depends very much upon nature. This dependence upon nature gives an added importance to the natural forces in the life of man, who consequently participates in a variety of religious activities, offerings and prayers designed either to pacify or please the deified

powers which play such an important role in his life. Thus, in a village, life is spent in the lap of nature, in sharp contrast with life in cities where the influence of the seasons and nature upon the lives of the inhabitants is of an entirely different quality.

Such circumstances and the general contingency of life induce the villager to think of God as many times as there are indications of failures and disasters. He works hard to thwart such indications, but in moments when his capacity fails he surrenders to God saying 'you are everything' (*ellām nī tān*) and perhaps he attains peace of mind. Because of such exigencies in life he tends to develop a close association with God as manifested in one of the village temples. He becomes very attached to a particular deity and develops love for that deity, but always with a sense of fear. This kind of mental fear-with-love is commonly referred to in Tamil as *ḥaya ḥatti* (*bhaya bhakti*). He speaks out desperately, of course, in his silent prayers, to God; if he were an ardent devotee of that deity he would argue with Him and take liberty to question Him as to why he should face sufferings—'Is it due to my past birth? I have served you and continue to serve; are there no remedial measures? Why are you silent? Why do you remain with your eyes closed? Open them and see my sufferings!' He hopes to discern divine responses in his dreams and through certain other familiar means. He believes that God will communicate to him at least through one of his most ardent devotees at a *ḥūjā*. There are devotees in villages who relinquish their customary circumspect behaviour during *ḥūjās*. They move into a divine mood and pleasure, a state of mind commonly referred to as *āvēcam* in Tamil, and begin to dance. Sometimes they announce important predictions and, on occasion, they relate their previous birth. This kind of dance is usually referred to in spoken Tamil as 'the dance one does, being kindled with divine spirit' (*uru ḥatti āṭuratu*). No doubt there is in this a kind of communion.

The Śaiva villager believes that God comes in the form of a human being to help and to save people. Just as Lord Śiva came in the form of a cooly to help an old lady to build bunds on a river bank, so He could appear again and the devotee, in the depths of his heart, continues to expect a divine response.

As a last resort, a Śaiva villager goes to the temple of the deity whom he worships and does a kind of *satyagraha*. He says, 'Oh God, unless you do this or grant this, I am not going to move out of this temple'. He remains in the temple, focusing his faith more and more on Him. This action is commonly called *kōyililai p̄ali kiṭakkiratu*. Even when a villager suffers from an incurable disease he may resort to this religious activity, which amounts to putting the entire blame on God for one's suffering. If one goes to Celva Canniti, a temple in Jaffna, one could observe devotees performing this action, which, significantly, also amounts to throwing oneself totally into the hands of God.

There are also times when a devotee becomes impolite with God, and speaks of a particular deity as deaf, blind, or a stone; expressions such as 'blind deity' (*kuruttut teyvam*), 'deaf Ganesha' (*cekittuṭ pillaiyār*), etc., are not uncommon. There are also times when a devotee, as an expression of a dramatic personal relationship curses (*tittu*) the God for being indifferent. He even gives up his faith in that deity for a moment. But again, being helpless, like a child, he clings to Him. All these expressions of religiousness are evident in the day-to-day life of the Śaiva villager.

Another factor revealing the close association of one with God can be seen in the choice of a pronoun to address and to refer to Him. In Tamil, certain pronouns in the second and third person, such as *nī*, *avan*, and *aval*, are considered very impolite. People avoid using these pronouns in their day-to-day communication with persons who are not close to them. In a wider context, these pronouns indicate contempt, disrespect and disregard and are provocative. On the other hand, the use of these pronouns also indicates familiarity in some restricted contexts. Children in villages usually use *nī* when speaking with parents, and even when they are taught to use the polite forms they switch to *nī* when they are overly pleased by an affectionate act of their parents. Villagers always address God with *nī*, and in the third person they refer to him with *avan*. They speak of *avan ceyal* 'His action', or *avan arul*, 'His Grace'.

In all these expressions one sees the family relation of parent and children also existing between God and His devotees. For a Śaivite, his father and mother are the first known God. He learns

this in his infancy, 'mother and father are the first known God' (*annaiyum pitāyum munnari teyvam*); and then learns 'it is very good to worship in the temple', (*ālayam toḷuvatu cālavum nanru*). These lines are from an ethical literary work, *Koṅṅraivēntan*, a book intended for introducing the Tamil alphabet indirectly in the traditional type of learning. This was written by a poetess called Avvaiyār, a name which now represents an ideal human mother.

In times of suffering and danger, villagers address a male deity as 'Oh Father, God' (*aṅṅū kaṭavule*), or 'Oh Father, Master' (*aṅṅū cuvāmī*), and a female deity as 'Mama, Mother' (*ammā tāyē*), or 'Mother' (*āccī*). Thus one looks upon God as a mother or a father, but more as a mother. The mother's love for children in our society knows no limit and perhaps needs no explanation. People often say 'the mind that begot the child is mad (after the child)' (*petta maṅam pitti*).

In all these respects, Hindu villagers are only following a long tradition and the path of Śaiva Saints and other great religious persons. In the *Tiruvācakam*, composed by the Saint Māṅikkavācakar, in the ninth century A.D., one can see similar relationships. Māṅikkavācakar addresses God, 'Oh Father and Mother' (*ammaiyē aṅṅā*). For him, God is more than a father or a mother. It might be difficult for us even to comprehend the mental state of Māṅikkavācakar without attaining the maturity (*paṅkuvam*) of his mind. Māṅikkavācakar sang, 'You pity me a sinner more than the mother who constantly thinks of her child and feeds the child with her milk' (*pāl niṅaintu ūṭṭam tāyiṅum cālaṅ paṅintu nī pāvīyēṅukku*). Another Saint, Tirunāvukkaracar, of the seventh century, sang, 'You are (my) father, you are (my) mother, you are (my) elder, you are (my) uncle and aunt, you are (my) wife....' (*aṅṅaṅ nī, ammai nī, aiyaṅum nī, aṅṅuṅṅaiya māmaṅum māmiyūm nī, oṅṅuṅṅaiya mātarūm nī...*). Śaiva villagers in Sri Lanka constantly sing these refrains.

In this context, one is reminded of Subramaniya Bharathi, a poet of this century, treating Kannaṅ (Lord Krishna) as his *guru*, lover, comrade and servant. One sees that the poet has established 'all kinds of relation' (*sarva vīda bandu*) with Him. The poet goes further; he establishes relation with a crow and other birds, and even with the sea and mountains. Everything is God.

The action of *kōyililai paḷi kiṭakkiratu*, mentioned earlier, is not something new. Similar action is endorsed in the Tamil epic *Cilappatikāram* of the third century A.D., where Canto 9 speaks of a lady as *pātu kitantālai*. This lady wanted a deity to revive a child who died while being fed with milk. Even the practice of cursing God is in the tradition. Tiruvalluvar, the author of a famous literary work, *Tirukkural* (2nd century A.D.) said, 'If God has made some to beg and live, let Him also wander like them and perish' (*irantum uyir vāḷtal vēṇṭiṇ parantu keṭuka ulaku iyarriyān*).

The Śaiva villager usually has a dynamic sense of relationship with God. At times he feels that God, like his parents, will look after him, but at other times he sets aside this conviction and earnestly seeks God's favour. This dynamic sense of relationship with God is not unlike the more formally structured *mārga* notions of Vaishnavism: *mārjāra mārga*, the way God comes to the soul, and *kapi mārga*, the way the soul clings to God.

Generally, almost every one in a village becomes more and more religious when they pass their fiftieth birthday. One intuitively gets a greater sense of the presence of God and becomes more God conscious than before. The fear of death and anxiety about life after death might gradually urge one indirectly to turn to God and to seek to do good. Almost every one feels the urge to serve God and, if possible, to serve the village too. So one comes forward to serve the village temple and the village at large, to continue to build the rest of one's life on the basis of this new urge. Each Hindu village in Sri Lanka will have its own stories about a few who changed their ways of life radically due to a new religious urge, conceivably in the course of one night, for the betterment of humankind. There was a case of a person who was very talented and well educated but because of his addiction to alcohol he lost his functional capacities and the utilization of his talents, losing in the process the respect of the public. Much against the advice of his dear mother, father, wife, brothers, sisters, his close friends, doctors and other prominent and influential persons who felt that his talents were being wasted, he remained continually drunk. He became jobless and was mentally frustrated. He never appeared to be religious. His mother, an elderly pious lady, on the other hand, was very religious and frequently prayed quietly to a particular deity in her village for the betterment of her son's life. In his hallucinations, it is said, he was quarrelling aloud with the deity, whom his mother

worshipped almost day and night, for not allowing him to sleep. He was treated medically for his hallucinations and insomnia but not for alcoholism. When he no longer had hallucinations and was cured of insomnia, he said that the deity, one belonging to the minor pantheon of Hindu Gods, wanted him to organize the renovation of the temple and that he would do it and abstain from alcohol forever. Miraculously, it seems, he has become free from alcohol, he is well and at ease, and he does the things expected of a religious person. Villagers comment that his mother's prayers had been answered by the village deity. People now speak often of the Grace of that deity and have come forward to take part in the temple renovation activities.

Formal worship occupies a significant place in Śaiva village life. Villagers worship primarily as an expression of their faith in God and of their love of their family with a deep concern for a better life for their family in this present existence. One imbibes the necessity for worship even while a young child. Mothers often tell the child to worship a deity at home. The child is taught to place both palms together in front of a picture of a deity and the mother says, 'Oh God, foster (me)!' (*ampānē vaḷattu viṭu*). Mothers do this frequently. As the child grows older, it attempts to repeat what Mother says and gradually begins to say it on its own. Then this practice becomes a habit and a form of play for the child to repeat it often. As life continues and the child becomes a mature person the practice becomes more profound and meaningful.

Mothers take the child to the temple for the first time, usually on the thirty-first day of its birth, on which day the birth pollution is also removed by the priest at home. Thereafter, regular *pūjās* (weekly or monthly) are usually made in the name of the growing child and mothers continue to take the child to the temple whenever they go. The child develops a liking for the temple. The temple 'vehicle' (*vākanam*), decorations if any, flowers, plants, sounds of bells, light in oil lamps of various designs, fragrant holy ash and sandal paste, sweet holy water, sweet meats like *poṅkal* and *mōtakam* offered at the end of the *pūjā* are attractions for children. No one seriously compels children to go to the temple and to worship. Children imitate their elders at home and at the temple. Worship is fun for them.

Usually Śaivites have an image of a deity or a picture of a deity at home for worship. Worshipping a deity by utilizing such representations is the simplest form of worship one does at home. The person who worships must be clean in his body and mind. A bath cleans one's body and refreshes one's mind. One washes one's mouth also as many times as one worships. One begins one's worship physically refreshed and symbolically purified in body, mind, and speech. The place of worship, too, must be very clean, free from various kinds of pollution, called *tutakku* in Tamil. Not all people take pains to maintain the required standard for worship at home.

After the bath in the morning and before worship, one smears holy ash on one's forehead. Saints have sung about the significance of holy ash, believed by villagers to have symbolic power. With the holy ash on one's forehead one prays to the deity of one's choice. Usually the eyes are closed and the palms are held together while one is praying, either standing or sitting. This form of worship is done twice or at least once a day. It precedes breakfast and/or dinner. When the bell of the village temple is heard, one invokes the name of the deity of the temple either aloud or silently wherever one is in the village. Formal prayers are also offered, usually to Lord Ganesha, when one starts a new venture either at home in the garden, or at the place of work.

The temple is considered the most proper place for worship, such worship being held to be more effective and rewarding. People take great efforts to keep these temple areas clean, refraining from entering while they are under pollution, as the case might be of a woman during her menstrual period, who will neither dare to enter the temple nor even touch the things meant for *pūjā* there. It is a sin to disturb the sanctity of the temple.

Usually worship in a temple is made during *pūjā* times. *Pūjās* are usually made twice a day, in the morning and in the evening. Every village has its own temple erected mainly for a particular deity, and in most cases for Śiva, Ganesh, Muruga, Vayiravar, and Kāli. People believe in the traditional saying, 'Do not live in a village where there is no temple' (*kōyil illāta ūril kuṭiyirātē*). When, in a village, there are several temples for different deities, one of them tends to become dearer to the hearts of the people because of

the 'Grace' (*aruḷ*) showered by the deity of that particular temple. Such an orientation to the temple is built into the hearts of the people through the test of time. Some temples become well known for the *aruḷ* and people flock to such temples from other villages too.

Participation in various temple activities whole-heartedly is also considered a form of worship; both men and women consider it a sacred duty to serve the temple and to maintain it properly. Maintaining the cleanliness of the temple, meeting the daily needs of the temple *pūjā* by providing flowers, milk, coconut, oil, rice, etc., supplying the bells, lamps, etc., conducting annual festivals, temple renovations and expansion are all forms of service. Some forms of service are done individually and others, collectively. When villagers do a service they try their best to do it whole-heartedly; 'one should do it whole-heartedly' (*muḷu maṇalōṭu ceyya vēṇum*) is often said. They are aware that half-hearted action is not fitting for God. There are, of course, a few villagers who show no faith in God and who never take part in religious activities, remarking 'For us there is no God, there is no temple. But the attitude apparent in their comments suggests a regret for not having a state of mind necessary for worship. A widely held belief is that one, even to worship God, needs His Grace; as Saint Māṇikavācakar said, 'having worshipped Him through His Grace' (*avan arulāl avan tāl vanaṅki*).

With feet, hands, and mouth washed, one enters a temple with faith at the time of the *pūjā*, and really feels as if one is entering a new world where there is peace and calmness. As one enters the temple, one raises both hands onto the head, seeking the God's saving Grace. The neatness of the temple, the fragrance and smoke coming from camphor, the flowers, the sounds of conch, drum and *nātaswaram*, the tunes of the devotional songs, the cry of 'arōkarā' on the part of the devotees, and one's accumulated inner feelings for God elevate the spirit of a person at least for a moment. Worshipers cannot long resist drops of tears falling gradually. The feeling of self is brought low.

Prayers are also sometimes accompanied by vows. Vows are often made in advance to achieve certain objectives, great or small, depending on the need of an individual. A farmer makes a vow to give an amount of milk to the temple provided his cow yields a

certain expected quantity, or for an oil lamp, provided his daughter gets married. People often say, 'God will not forsake us' (*kaṭavul kai viṭār*). Vows are promptly fulfilled on achieving the objectives. Slackening in fulfilling the vow is not only a sin but also will be courting the wrath of the deity. Having made a vow a person perhaps gets the necessary motivation to act confidently towards achieving something.

Fasting is also common as a religious practice. There are a number of occasions when one fasts, and purposes for which one fasts. Self purification is one purpose; others are to remove the evil effects of a planet or to appease the Sun or Saturn, or to achieve an objective, such as marriage. Today, girls of marriageable age also tend to fast in order to be joined in marriage with an admirable husband. When one fasts, there is some kind of unusual state of physical sensitivity and that state keeps one reminded of the motive of one's fast. People believe that by concentrating deeply on a single thought, they might be able to realize in it the desired form. A certain amount of physical restraint and mental alertness helps one to concentrate on and to think of God. Acts such as rolling one's own body on the ground around the temple, even in the hot sun, piercing one's body with needles while performing *kāvaṭi* dance or going to distant temples, say from Jaffna to Kataragama on foot (*ṡāta yāttirai*), are familiar activities that can be observed during festival seasons.

All actions are to be evaluated as either contributing to virtue (*puṅṅiyam*) or to sin (*ṡāvam*). Causing any form of suffering by any kind of action is sin, and causing wholesome pleasure to living beings is *puṅṅiyam*. The type of birth one attains in the future depends on one's actions—*puṅṅiyam* and *ṡāvam*. A phrase is often heard, 'He who sowed *tiṅai* (a kind of grain) will reap only *tiṅai*' (*tiṅai vitaittavan tiṅai aruṡṡān*). Since the notion of *karumam* (*karma*) is pervasive in our world-view, one interprets the present birth as a continuation of the past, and one correlates the present suffering with the actions in the past birth, particularly the major miseries. The minor miseries are interpreted as the evil effects of certain conjunctions of planets. One also often hears 'All these (present birth actions) are unfinished actions of the past birth' (*itu ellām vitta toṡṡa kurai*).

Villagers believe that by one's action one can become super-human. They are aware of *mahātmās* who rose to such heights, referring to them as 'divine beings' (*teyvaṣ piṟaṣṣu*). Such beings are a source of inspiration for one who seeks to discipline thought, speech, and action. Every one naturally has at least a slight desire in the depths of his heart to develop spiritually and this is extended into a concern that others also reap virtue. Often one says, 'do this, you will get virtue' (*itayc cey, unakkup puṇṇiyam kiṭaiikkum*). But no villager preaches or delivers a sermon, and seldom do they discuss religion with each other. Perhaps every one tries best to practice what he understands to be the best.

Thus the villager has a considerable number of assumptions pertaining to the so-called supernatural: heaven, hell, rebirth, salvation, virtue, and sin, which are generally believed to be real dimensions of human living. Most people believe that heaven and hell are two places where the souls of good and bad people respectively enjoy pleasure or suffer after death. They believe that it is difficult to be born as a human being in this process of life and of lives, both human and non-human, in the past, present, and in the future. The poetess Avvayār speaks to them, 'Rarely one is born as a human' (*aritu aritu māṇitarāy piṟattal aritu*). And the '*Tiruvācakam* often reminds them of this process: 'I am fatigued, having taken birth as grass, a weed, worm, tree, animal, bird, snake, stone, man, ghost, minor *devas*, *acura*, *muni*, and *devas*' (*ṣul āki, ṣūtu āy, ṣulu āy, maram āki, ṣal virulam āki, ṣaravai āy, ṣāmpu āki, kal āy, maṇitar āy, ṣēy āy, kaṇaṅkaḷ āy, val acurar āki, muṇivar āys tēvar āy.... ellāṣ piṟaṣṣum piṟantu ilaittēn*).

Many moral beliefs are, of course, associated with religious practices. In the villages religiousness is nurtured by a discipline of character and the worship of God with fervour. Detrimental acts such as violence in any form, alcoholism, adultery, and theft, are held to be sinful. People who pretend to be religious are ridiculed by the saying, 'What (they) study is the *Tiruvācakam*; what (they) destroy is the Śiva temple' (*ṣaṭiṣṣatu Tiruvācakam iṭiṣṣatu civaṅ kōyil*).

Refraining from killing a living creature is a basic principle in the Hindu tradition. The decision not to eat meat or flesh is more fundamental than non-killing because a Śaivite feels that usually the cause of killing creatures is the desire to eat their flesh. Thiru-

valluvar also emphasises this point in his *Tirukkural*: 'If the world does not kill for eating, no one will give flesh for (the sake of) money' (*tiṅar poruṭṭāl kollātu ulakeniṅ yārum vilaiṭ poruṭṭāl ūṅ taruvār il*). The practice known as vegetarianism, though not personally endorsed by all, is highly regarded and those who are vegetarians are respected in the society from a religious point of view.

On some occasions all try to be vegetarians; in some cases persons become vegetarians for the first time after they have passed their seventieth birthday, and all try to avoid, meat, fish, and eggs totally on Fridays and on festival days. They usually use separate vessels, spoons, and even fire places for cooking non-vegetarian items in order to avoid a kind of pollution. They refer to the vessels (usually earthen) used for cooking meat, fish, etc. as 'bad vessel' (*tīya caṭṭi*), as against 'good vessel' (*nalla caṭṭi*) used for cooking vegetarian foods.

A lot of importance is attached to devotional hymns known as *Tēvāram* and the *Tiruvācakam*. Saiva Saints who lived during the period from the 7th century A.D. to the 9th century travelled from place to place in Tamil Nadu offering worship at the temples and singing the glory of the Lord in the company of devotees. *Tēvārams* were sung spontaneously by Saints Tirunāvukkaracar, Tiruñāṅacampantar, and Cuntaramūrti. Tiruñāṅacampantar (7th century A.D.) sang of the Lord of Tirukkēṭiccaram in the Maṅṅar district in Sri Lanka and of the Lord of Kōṅamāmalai in Trincomalee. Saint Cuntaramūrti (8th century A.D.) also sang of the Lord of Tirukkēṭiccaram. Saint Māṅikkavācakar composed the *Tiruvācakam*, and the *Tirukkovaīyār*. *Tēvārams* and the *Tiruvācakam* have been sung in a melodious language with rare appeal to anyone seeking spiritual communion. With some knowledge of literary Tamil one could understand most of these poems. They are simple, soulful utterances. The saying goes that if a person does not melt at the sweet strains of the *Tiruvācakam* he will never find himself in a melting mood at anything he hears.

Saivites in villages have several occasions and opportunities to sing or listen to the *Tēvārams* and the *Tiruvācakam*. There is a community in the villages, called *paṅṭāram* which specializes in singing these hymns. These *paṅṭārams* sing them when they go from house to house on certain days of religious significance. For

instance, during the Tiruvempāvai festival in December, *paṇṭārams* go around the village starting at about 3.00 a.m., singing the songs of Tiruvempāvai (from the *Tiruvācakam*). Hearing these hymns, people get up in the early morning and get ready to go to the temple for the *pūjā* at 6.00 a.m.

Villagers, although uneducated and illiterate, can recite some of these devotional hymns, since these hymns are passed down orally and one first learns them when in one's youth. Known to the villager, too, are the contexts of these hymns, why and where they were originally sung and what effect that singing had. A Śaiva Saint sang a song in order to make a dumb person speak. Another Saint revived a boy who had died of snake bite. On another occasion, a Saint went to a temple to worship and found the doors tightly closed. He sang a hymn and the doors were opened. So these devotional hymns and the biographies of these Saints have a great appeal to and make a strong impression on the villagers. These songs are considered to have mystic powers. When sung, they sooth and soften our minds, they make us forget the pressures of the world, they enlighten us to visualize and to realize the glory of God, they give us solace and bring us down to the basic realization that we are nothing compared to Him. And then our religious spirit becomes elevated. Soon after one sings the *Tēvārams*, one cannot remain with pride or arrogance. One becomes not only a devotee of God but also a devotee of all devotees. A sense of humility arises and a sense of equality dawns. A man in the highest rank addresses a man in the lowest rank as *cāmi*, 'swami or master'. Saint Tirunāvukkaracar sang, 'Even if one is a *Pulaiyan* (the lowest caste) who kills and eats the cow, one is indeed the God whom we worship provided one is a devotee of Lord Śiva.

Festivals are of major importance in village life. Festivals are sacred occasions for prayer and worship, as well as for enjoyment. The rich and the well-to-do become benevolent and give alms to the priests and the poor. The social importance of the festivals are inseparable from their religious importance; some of the festivals being also important from a cultural point of view, others, because of a close relation to the seasonal cycle and various activities characteristic of agricultural societies.

Śaiva villagers in Sri Lanka often say to each other, 'Be without doing anything' (*cummā iru*). As an alternative expression, in some contexts, they also say, 'Subdue your mind and remain' (*maṇatai aṭakki iru*). The profound meaning of these statements becomes clear when one sees their usage in a hymn by Tāyumāṇavar (17 century A.D.).

One could control and conduct an elephant. One could close the mouth of a bear and a tiger. One could mount the back of a lion. One could make a snake dance. One could move about in this world without being seen by others. One could send *dēvas* on errands. One could remain young always. One could get into another body. One could walk on water. One could sit on fire.... but subduing the mind and remaining in the state of *cummā* is difficult.

One wonders if this well known passage and frequently repeated phrase, 'Be without doing anything', is a kind of mutual wish.

THE FAITH OF MUSLIMS IN SRI LANKA THROUGH BELIEF AND PRACTICE

M. A. M. HUSSAIN

Persons who attempt to submit their lives to the Will of God and who participate in a religious community shaped and sustained by the religious tradition of Islam, are called Muslims. In Sri Lanka, they number slightly more than one million and constitute about 7.1 per cent of the total population. Most of them are descended from the Arabs and are known as Moors—a name given to them by the Portuguese who came to the island in the early 16th century A.D. About 42,000 are Malays who trace their ancestry to Java and about 29,000 are of Indian origin.

The Muslim community in Sri Lanka, far from being confined to a compact area, is scattered abroad throughout the island and is dispersed among the Sinhalese and Tamils in all the nine provinces of the country. The Eastern Province has the highest concentration of Muslims with 28 per cent, the Western Province has 26 per cent, the Central Province has 15 per cent and the North-Western Province has approximately 10 per cent of the Muslim population. The Southern and Northern Provinces have about 5 per cent. The remainder are distributed among the Sabragamuwa Province, North-central and Uva provinces.

In the matter of marriage and divorce, and of inheritance, this community was and is governed by its own laws. This gives a clue to the mainsprings of Muslim conduct which are based on the religious tradition, inasmuch as these apparently secular laws are also part and parcel of the religious heritage that is Islam. In order to conserve the true religious spirit, Muslims have followed the Islamic tradition that stresses belief in the Existence and Oneness

of God and the Prophethood of Muhammad (Peace be on him), the Last Day and a few other tenets to which are attached some practical duties of which (1) prayer, (2) fasting, (3) alms giving, and (4) pilgrimage are the principal.

Beliefs

Muslims believe that Islam is the code of life which God, the Creator and Lord of the Universe, has revealed for the guidance of mankind.

Man needs two things for his proper development; namely, (a) resources to maintain life and to fulfill the material needs of the individual and society and (b) knowledge of the principles of individual and social behaviour, to enable him to have self-fulfillment and to maintain justice and peace in human life. God has provided for both these needs in full measure. To cater for the material needs of man, God has provided nature with all its resources which lie at the disposal of man. To provide for man's spiritual, social and cultural fulfillment, God raised His prophets from among men and revealed the code of life which can guide man's steps to the Right Path.

Islam is an Arabic word meaning submission, obedience, commitment and peace. If we submit to God's will, obey His laws, and commit ourselves to His charge, we will have peace within ourselves and with other people, as well as peace on earth.

This message of submission was preached by all the prophets of God who guided man to the Right Path. Man, however, veered away from that path again and again and distorted or lost the code of guidance which the prophets gave him. That was why other prophets were sent to restate the original message and guide man to the Right Path. The last of these prophets was Muhammad (Peace be on him) who presented God's Guidance in its final form and arranged to preserve it for all time. It is this Guidance which is now known as *al-Islām* and is enshrined in the Qur'ān and the life-example of the Prophet.

The basic Islamic concept is that the entire universe was created by God whom Muslims call Allah and who is the Lord and the Sovereign of the universe; He alone sustains the universe. He created man and appointed for each human being a fixed period of

life on this earth. Allah has prescribed a certain code of life as the correct code for him. At the same time He has conferred on man freedom to choose or not to choose the code He has revealed. One who chooses to follow the code revealed by God becomes a Muslim and one who refuses to follow it becomes a *kāfir*.

If a human being makes a declaration, 'There is no God except God; Muhammad is His Prophet', he enters into the fold of Islam. This declaration is known as the first announcement (*Kalima*) and relates to the concept of Oneness of God (*Tawhīd*) and the prophethood of Muhammad (Peace be on him).

Tawhīd is the central pivot around which the whole doctrine and teaching of Islam revolves. It means that there is only One Supreme Lord of the universe. He is Omnipotent, Omnipresent and the Sustainer of the World and of mankind.

The Qur'ān gives a number of reasons why man must believe in the Existence and Oneness of God.

Truly, Allah said:

O mankind! Worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, so that you may ward off evil, who has appointed the earth a resting place for you, the sky a canopy and who causes water to pour down from the heavens, thereby producing fruits as food for you. Do not, then, set up rivals to Allah, when you know better. (2:21, 22)

This is the fundamental religious orientation which Muhammad (Peace be on him) asked humanity to adopt.

Tawhīd is an important metaphysical concept and answers the riddle of the universe. It points to the supremacy of the law in the cosmos, the all-pervading unity behind the apparent diversity. It presents a unified view of the world and offers the vision of an integrated universe. It is a mighty contrast to the piecemeal views of some scientists and some philosophers, and unveils the truth before the human eye.

Tawhīd means that all men are the creatures of one God—they are all equal. Discrimination based on colour, class, race or territory has no basis in fact, and is untenable. It is a remnant of

the days of ignorance which chained men to servitude. Humanity is one single family of God and there can be no sanction for barriers of prejudice and racial discrimination. Mankind is one—not bourgeois or proletarian, white or black, Aryan or non-Aryan, Westerner or Easterner. Islam gives a revolutionary concept of the unity of mankind. The Prophet came to unite humanity on the word of God.

Tawhīd also defines the true position of man in the universe, God is the Creator, the Sovereign, and man is his viceregent on the earth. Man is exalted to the noble and dignified position of being God's deputy on earth and his life is endowed with a lofty purpose, *to fulfill the Will of God on earth*. Fulfilling the will of God will solve all the problems of human society and establish a new order wherein justice, peace and prosperity will reign supreme.

The starting point of Muslim faith is this faith in the Oneness of God (*Tawhīd*).

The second part of the *Kalima* signifies that man has not been left alone to grope in the dark without any guidance for the conduct of his life. God has revealed His Guidance through His prophets and Muhammad (Peace be on him) was the last Prophet. To believe in a prophet means to have faith in his message, to accept the Law which he gave and to follow the code of conduct which he taught.

Thus the second basic postulate of Islam is to believe in the Prophethood of Muhammad (Peace be upon him), to accept the religion which he preached, and to follow his guidance.

Every prophet strove to build man's relationship with God on the principle of God's sovereignty and the acknowledgement of the authority of the prophet as a source of divine guidance. Every prophet said:

I am to you God's messenger, worthy of all trust. So be committed to God, fear Him and obey me. (26:107, 108)

Guidance is revealed through the prophets. It is their duty to put the revealed guidance into practice in their own lives and in the society they try to reform. All the prophets are representatives of God, but they are human beings and their lives are models for man-

kind. Muhammad (Peace be on him) is the last prophet and therefore the final model for mankind. To believe in him means to accept his authority as representative of the Supreme Ruler and to follow his example in thought and behaviour. The code of conduct, the law which is to decide the rightness or otherwise (*ḥalāl* and *ḥarām*) of actions is given by God through the prophet and is known as the *Sharī'ah*. Belief in the prophet involves acceptance of the *Sharī'ah*, the message he has conveyed and its implementation in all dimensions of life. By doing this, the Will of God is fulfilled on earth.

Nay (O Muhammad), by your Lord, they can never become believers until they accept you as final arbiter in all their disputes and submit to your decision wholeheartedly, without feeling the least resentment in their hearts. (4:65).

The evidence of one's acceptance of God and His Prophet lies in conducting *all human affairs* in accordance with the Law revealed by them:

And those who do not make their decisions in accordance with that revealed by Allah, they (in fact) are the disbelievers. (5:44)

Thus, belief in God and His prophet means commitment to obey them and to fashion individual and collective life in the light of the Law and Guidance provided by them.

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) has further instructed us to have faith in the existence of God's angels. This is the second article of faith in Islam. The Prophet said that angels are created from light. This suggests they are immaterial beings and therefore invisible to the physical eye. They are not endowed with powers of discrimination like those of human beings. They may be said to partake more of the attributes of the powers of nature than of men. Their function is to obey Allah's commands and they cannot disobey. Inasmuch as man is endowed with a free will while an angel is not, man is superior to an angel. This superiority is evident from the fact that angels were commanded to make obeisance to man.

It was with the spiritual senses that the Holy Prophet received the revelation brought by the angel Jibril (Gabriel). Angels were sent to help the believers against their enemies. Every person is attended by two recording angels, one of whom records his good

deeds and the other his evil deeds. The Qur'ānic verses lead us to the conclusion that the laws of nature find expression through angels. It is due to this function of theirs that they are called messengers.

The function of the angel in the spiritual world is the same as his function in the physical world, to serve as an intermediary in carrying out the Divine Will which is to bring about the spiritual evolution of man. According to Islamic teachings, angels have a close connection with the life of man from his birth till his death, and even after death, in his spiritual progress in Paradise, and his spiritual treatment in Hell.

The most important function of angels in the spiritual field is the communication of the Divine message to the prophets. The prophet not only sees the angel but also hears his voice, and the angel is to him therefore a matter of fact. This must be taken in a spiritual sense. It is through the help to revelation that man is able to realise what spiritual life is and to develop his inner faculties and thereby advance spiritually.

The third article of faith of the Muslim is his belief not only in the Qur'ān but also in all the books of God; books which God has sent down to mankind through His prophets from time to time. At its very commencement the Qur'ān mentions 'And those who believe in that which has been revealed to thee and that which was revealed before thee'. (2:4)

Every nation had a messenger or prophet and a book was granted to him by God. Those that are specifically mentioned are Tawrāt (Torah), Zabūr (Psalms), Injil (Gospel), and the Qurān.

The fourth article of faith for a Muslim is his belief in all the prophets of God. Names of twenty-four of them are given in the Qur'ān and they must be remembered by a Muslim. To believe in some prophets and reject others is condemned as *kufr* (unbelief).

The Muslim also believes that the prophets of God, by virtue of their prophetic office, were free from any sin or even minor fault. If they had faults they could not be models for mankind. The prophet's example inspires a living faith in the hearts of his followers and brings about a real transformation in their lives. It is only a prophet who is a man who can set such an example.

The fifth article of Islamic faith is belief in life after death. This is an essential condition for being a Muslim. A belief in life after death is concomitant with belief in the Existence of God. If one has no faith that there is life after death, one has no faith at all.

The opening chapter of the Qur'ān, which a Muslim recites more than 30 times a day in his prayers, reminds him of the day when every deed of his will have its reward. This repetition of the idea of the requital of deeds impresses upon the mind the reality of a future life. When a person believes that in the life to come good deeds will be followed by rewards and bad deeds by evil consequences, he will endeavour to do good deeds and to avoid the bad. Faith in life after death provides a great impetus towards good deeds and a great restraint upon evil deeds. This faith also provides a nobler motive for a good deed. When one is filled with this faith, one does not do a good deed expecting a reward for it here in this life. One's deed is for a higher and nobler reward and relating to the life beyond the grave.

If one disbelieves in this doctrine or casts doubt on it, one is considered an unbeliever. The denial of life after death makes all other beliefs meaningless. This denial also destroys the very sanction for good life.

The life beyond the grave is a life of spiritual advancement far superior to the progress man makes in this life. The foundation for that life is laid in our life on earth. The Hereafter is not a mystery beyond the grave; it begins in this life. For the good, the heavenly life, and for the wicked, a life in Hell, begin here, though the limitations of this life do not allow people fully to realise the other. This belief is based on faith in the messenger.

Muslims expect the inevitable arrival of the Day of Judgement or of Requital, the Resurrection, man's presence in the Divine Court, and the administration of reward and punishment. The more we reflect on the nature of the cosmos, the clearer it becomes that the existing system is not a permanent and everlasting system, for all the forces working in it are limited in their nature, that one day they will be completely exhausted.

More than all, if there is no life after death, the purpose of this life would be frustrated; there would be no consummation of

the deepest yearnings of the human soul. The most ardent wish of any believer is the enjoyment of nearness to God. The continuation of life after death need not involve the assembly of a dead body's bones and particles after everything has disintegrated and decomposed in order to reconstitute the body. Our present body is developed for terrestrial existence; it is fashioned for conditions of this life. Life after death cannot and does not mean that the dead will be reassembled and reconstituted upon the earth.

The Prophet has said on this subject: 'The conditions of the life after death are such that the eye has not seen them, nor has the ear heard of them, nor can the mind of man conceive of their true reality'. This is a subject on which sure knowledge can be gained only through revelation. Even through revelation, man can acquire knowledge of the life after death only in the language of symbol and metaphor.

The explanation offered by the Qur'ān has to be approached with this in mind. The Qur'ān draws attention to the phenomena of sleep and dreams to illustrate that man is capable of undergoing experiences and receiving impressions without physical participation in space and time. A verse, 39:42, seems to indicate that by pondering over his experiences during sleep man can derive an understanding of the nature and reaction of the soul and its condition after death.

The Qur'ān invites attention to physical birth into this life for the purpose of illustrating the process of rebirth through which the soul passes after death (36:77-81; 23:12-16). It is true that we describe the conditions of the life after death to some degree in terms of human speech. But the conditions of life after death have not the same character as the conditions of this life. Compared with the conditions of this life, they are purely spiritual, and yet they are so manifested that they are felt and experienced and realised with far greater intensity than are the conditions of this life in the course of our existence here. It is not possible with our present faculties to realise the true nature of the conditions of the life after death. All that is possible is to attempt some approximate, intuitive understanding of them. As the Prophet has said, it is not possible for the mind of man to conceive of the true reality of these conditions. The Qur'ān states 'No soul knows what bliss is kept hidden for it as a reward for its good works'. (32:17).

A study of the Qur'ān reveals that each human being through his or her conduct during this life develops certain qualities or defects in the soul which either render it capable of an appreciation and an enjoyment of the conditions of the life after death or which cause it to react painfully to those conditions.

Certain types of conduct in this life are described by the Qur'ān as defects or shortcomings which will affect the soul in the life after death. For instance, the Qur'ān says that he who is blind in this life will be blind in the life after death, and will find himself even more astray (17:72). This obviously does not mean that a person who is physically blind in this life will be spiritually blind in the next. Blindness in this context here means spiritual blindness, and one who remains blind to truth in this life remains blind in the life after death. In other words, one who has failed to develop spiritual insight in this life will be blind in the life to come.

Further, those who are placed in authority and misuse that authority, thus creating mischief in the land instead of strengthening and cementing human relationships, will be afflicted with spiritual deafness and blindness (47:22-23).

All human actions leave the impress of their quality in the soul, and the soul when it enters upon the life to come carries the sum total of this impress with it, and reacts in that life accordingly.

The record of a person's acts and their consequences will be presented to him, as in an open book, and he will be told to read his book and to follow the course that it lays down for him. His reactions will be determined by his record. He will himself render an account of the manner in which he spent his life on earth and that very account will constitute his reward or his punishment (17:13-15). In this view, the significance of personal responsibility is greatly stressed, and the basis of ethics is shown to be our own good or evil as furthering or obstructing our development. Another man cannot bear our burden.

On that Day when man will stand before God's judgement, all the members of his body and the faculties of his mind, which he might have misused, would bear witness against him. Some might think that if they conceal their evil deeds from the rest of the

world, nothing would happen to them! But God can give 'tongues to trees' and can make every fact in life, known or unknown to the world, contribute to the elucidation of truth and justice (41:20-25).

The consciousness of living every moment of one's life in the sight of God is the most effective deterrent against wrongdoing and the most potent incentive towards righteous action. Those who live their lives in the full consciousness of being in the sight of God every moment shall enter upon the new life in perfect spiritual health and all their reactions will be joyful (39:73-74).

The Qur'ān teaches that while the rewards and joys experienced in the life after death will be everlasting and ever intensifying, the pains and torments will come to an end; all mankind will ultimately find admission to the Grace and Mercy of God. We have been told that mankind has been created for the purpose of becoming manifestations of God's attributes (51:56). That being the Divine purpose, it follows that it must be fulfilled in the case of everyone. God says, 'I will inflict My punishment on whom I will; but My Mercy encompasses all things'. (7:156).

Indeed, mankind has been created for the fulfillment of God's Mercy (11:119). When pain, punishment and torment will have achieved their purpose, which is curative, and itself a manifestation of God's Mercy, Divine Mercy will then enable each human being to react joyfully to the conditions of the life after death.

The Prophet has said that a time will come when hell will be empty, and the cool breezes of God's Mercy will blow through it.

The sixth article of faith for a Muslim is *Taqdir*. In this connection the meanings of the words *taqdir*, *qadar* and *qadza*, which are in common parlance among Muslims, must be understood.

Qadar means the Divine measure of things or the creating of things subject to certain laws while *qadza* means the ordering of a thing to come to pass.

The authority who is quoted by most writers in this connection is Ragheb. He equates *qadar* with *taqdir*. According to him, God's *taqdir* of things is in two ways, by granting *qudrat*, i.e. power, or by making them in a particular measure and in a particular manner,

as wisdom requires. For example, it is the *taqdir* of a date-seed that out of it what grows is the date-palm, not a mango tree or a jak tree. It is the *taqdir* of the sperm of man that out of it grows man and not any other animal.

Taqdir is therefore the law of measure which is working throughout the whole of creation, and this is the sense in which the word is used in the Qur'ān when it speaks of a *taqdir* for each and every thing that has been created (87:1-3; 25:2; 54:49; 36:38, 39).

The law according to which food, provisions and other things are provided in the earth is also called a *taqdir* of God; and so also, the law according to which rain falls on the earth, and the law according to which night and day follow each other (41:10; 15:21; 23:18; 43:11; 73:20).

Though man is included in the creation, and his *taqdir* is therefore the same as the *taqdir* of the whole creation, he is also separately spoken of as having a *taqdir* similar to the law of growth and development in other things:

From what stuff hath He created him? From a sperm-drop:
He hath created him and then mouldeth him in due proportion (80:18, 19).

All these verses show that *taqdir*, in the language of the Qur'ān, is a universal law of God, operating as much in the case of man as in the rest of nature. This law extends to the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth, and the heavens and all that exists in them. It is fully explained in two short verses (87:2, 3).

Who creates, then makes complete,
and Who makes according to a measure, then guides.

Four things are mentioned regarding everything created, including man, its *khalq* or Creation, its *taswiyah* or completion, its *taqdir* or measure, and its *hidayah* or guidance to its goal. The law of life, as witnessed in nature, is exactly the law described here. Everything is created so that it may finally attain to its completion, this completion being brought about according to a law or a measure within which everything works by Divine guidance. Thus the *taqdir* of everything is the law or measure of its growth and development. While one seed might grow into a blade of grass,

another might become a huge tree. Everything has its own line of development and so has man; therefore his *taqdir* is not different in fundamental nature from the *taqdir* of other things. An incident in the life of Caliph 'Umar (the second Caliph) illustrates the meaning very clearly. Caliph 'Umar ordered Abu 'Ubaida to give up a plague-stricken place and to remove the troops to a healthier spot, and refused to go there himself. He was asked by Abu 'Ubaida: 'Dost thou fly from the *qadza* of Allah?' i.e. from what God has ordered. 'Umar's reply was 'I fly from the *qadza* of Allah to the *qadar* of Allah'. What he meant was that if God had brought about plague by His *qadza*, in one place, another place was free from it, and it was His *qadar*, i.e., a Divine law, that they should betake themselves to a place of safety. *Qadza* is therefore only the ordering of a thing to come to pass, while *qadar* signifies the creating of things subject to certain laws. I mention this because the notion of *taqdir* might be misunderstood to mean that everything that a man does or whatever happens to him during his lifetime is irrevocably predetermined for him by God; whether he performs good deeds or indulges in evil acts, man has no control over them because they have been predestined for him.

Taqdir, meaning absolute decree of good and evil by God, is not known to the Qur'ān. God created us with certain powers. We could exercise these powers in one way or another that produces good or evil. For instance, God has gifted us with the power of speech, which we can use either to do good or to do evil to humanity, either to tell a truth or to utter falsehood. Similarly, we have been endowed with numerous other powers which may be used either for good or for evil. The Qur'ān therefore has not dealt with the question of the creation of good and evil at all. It speaks of the creation of heaven and earth and all that is in them; it speaks of the creation of man; it speaks of endowing him with certain facilities and granting him certain powers; it tells us that we can use these powers and faculties within certain limitations, just as all other created things are placed within certain limitations—and the limitations of each kind are its *taqdir*. But in the Qur'ān there is no mention of a *taqdir* that can be interpreted as meaning either the creation of good and evil deeds, or an absolute decree of good and evil by God.

It is true that God is the first and ultimate cause of all things. But this does not mean that God is the creator of the deeds of man. He has, of course, created man. He has also created the circumstances under which he lives and acts. But still He has endowed man with a discretion to choose how to act, even though under certain limitations, just as man's other powers and faculties are exercised under certain limitations and only in accordance with certain laws. This discretion man has been given. The Qur'ān says:

The truth is from your Lord; so let him who pleases accept (it) and let him who pleases reject (it). (18:29)

As man can exercise his discretion or will in doing or not doing the truth, he is responsible for his own deeds and is made to suffer the consequences.

All the faculties with which man has been endowed have emanated from the great Divine attributes. Yet human attributes are imperfect and can be exercised only under certain limitations and to a certain extent. God is all-seeing and all-hearing; man also sees and hears, but the human seeing and hearing cannot be compared with the Divine attributes of seeing and hearing, being imperfect. Man's knowledge of things, his exercise of power over things and his exercise of his will in relation to things stand on a par. All these are subject to limitations and laws. Man's will stands in the same relation to the Divine Will as his other attributes stand to the attributes of the Divine Being. He can exercise his will under limitations and laws, and there is a very large variety of circumstances which may determine his choice in each case. Man remains a free agent and responsible for what he does.

Practice

The day begins for Muslims an hour or so before sunrise. All those living in the vicinity of a mosque hear a melodious chant and wake up from their sleep to attend to their daily chores. But for this chant, they would require an alarm clock to wake them. For the Muslim this chant is a call for his morning prayer.

The Muslim call for prayers is given out in the Arabic language by a man standing in a minaret or lofty place, facing Mecca. The man is known among the Muslims as *Mu'addhin*, and the words he uses are collectively called *adhān* (call to prayer). He repeats:

- (1) Allah is the Greatest (four times).
- (2) I bear witness that there is no God but God (twice).
- (3) I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God (twice).
- (4) Come to prayer (twice).
- (5) Come to virtue (twice).
- (6) Prayer is better than sleep (twice).
- (7) Allah is the Greatest (twice).
- (8) There is no God but God (once).

This is a call to come to virtue. No one within hearing distance of the call can ignore this invitation. This is an appeal from an individual soul to the soul of humanity to turn to Allah, to follow the lead of Muhammad (Peace be upon him) as Allah's messenger, and to come to participate in the spiritual feast for progress and nourishment of the soul. This call impresses upon the hearer the Greatness and the Oneness of Allah and the Apostleship of our beloved Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and is in itself an epitome of the teachings of Islam. It tells him that man must not worship anyone except Allah and that anyone can achieve complete self-development, which is success in life, through the realization of the Divine in him (her), which is brought about by prayer to Allah.

Every morning, every noon, afternoon, evening and night this message is carried to the ears of the residents of the localities where Muslims live.

When the call to prayer is over, the *mu'addhin* as well as the listeners make a petition to Allah.

Whatever the pursuit or occupation a person may be engaged in when he hears the opening phrase of the Call—Allah is the greatest—he immediately transfers his attention from the business in hand to the worship of God, which is the ultimate goal and object and, indeed, the fulfillment and consummation of one's faith.

Wherever Muslims reside, we cannot fail to see a mosque which is a rectangular building with minarets at the corners, and facing Mecca, a semi-circular niche for prayer known as *miḥrāb*. When one enters a mosque, one is facing Mecca and stands before this recessed niche in the wall of the mosque which indicates the direction of Mecca (*qiblah*). Outside, one finds fountains or faucets for ablution. Inside, to the right of the *miḥrāb*, is the pulpit (*minbar*) for the spokesman (*khaṭīb*) to stand on while addressing the congregation. There are no pictures or symbols in the mosque that might distract the worshipper while praying or meditating.

It is to this simple building the faithful hasten when they hear the call for prayer. This does not mean that prayers cannot be said anywhere else. One may pray anywhere on God's earth, provided of course the place is clean. The Prophet has said, 'The whole world has been made a mosque for me'.

Even so, the mosque plays an important part in the life of a Muslim. When we speak of the mosque here, we also have to remember that the Qur'ān imposes a duty on the Muslim to defend and protect all houses of worship, including those belonging to other religious communities (22:40). It is also to be noted that in this verse the mosque is mentioned last, but with the distinctive feature that in the mosque God's name is remembered most.

Those who resort to their religious buildings only once a week might not understand why we say God's name is remembered most in the mosque. As we have already mentioned the mosque is visited five times a day for the remembrance of God's name. The whole atmosphere of the mosque is charged with the sense of the Divine name. There is the call to prayer (*adhān*) five times a day, which rends the air with cries of the greatness and oneness of God. There is the individual service carried on in silence, but with God's name on the lips of every individual worshipper. There is the public service in which the *Imām* recites aloud portions of the Qur'ān, that tell of Divine Grandeur and Majesty, with the refrain of *Allāhu Akbar* repeated at every change of movement; and when the prayer is finished, there is again a chorus of voices, proclaiming His Greatness, making the mosque echo and re-echo with the remembrance of God.

When all this is going on in the mosque, one must not think that the Muslims believe that God dwells in the mosque. But the devout one feels His Presence there as a hard fact of life. The mosque is the centre of Muslim religious life.

Here in the mosque the Muslims meet five times a day on terms of perfect equality, in a spirit of true brotherhood, all standing in a row before their Great Maker, knowing no difference of caste, colour or rank, all following the lead of one man. All differences and distinctions are, for the time being, obliterated. The doctrine of brotherhood of man is put into practice five times a day in the mosque, which becomes a training ground for equality and fraternity. Without the mosque, the mere teaching of the brotherhood of man would have remained a dead letter.

The mosque, besides being a house of worship, is a cultural centre as well for the Muslim community. Here the Muslim community is taught all aspects of its temporal and spiritual well-being. The Friday sermon is a regular weekly lecture on all such aspects. The mosque is also used to teach the Qur'ān and the heritage of Islam.

When the call to prayer is heard, one can see Muslims wending their way to the mosque and taking ablution in preparation to offer their prayer. There is no mosque without facilities to take ablution. It is a common sight to see mosques sited on the banks of rivers, or of running brooks. In towns every mosque has a fountain, or water taps for the purpose.

Prayer is always preceded by the washing of the face, hands, and feet. Ablution is the key to prayer. It is enjoined by the Qur'ān

O believers! When you prepare yourselves for prayer, wash your faces and hands (wash) your feet to the ankles. (5:6)

The Muslim proceeds on the basis that prayer is a means of purification of the soul and cleanliness of the body and garment is a very important prerequisite of prayer. The Qur'ān that he reads daily emphasizes the importance of outward cleanliness (74:1-5). The two ideas of the purification of the soul and of the body are often mentioned together in that Book (2:222). The importance is obvious. Inward purity is the real aim, but outward purity is a

necessary preparation for it. A pure mind in a pure body is the watchword of Islam. Ablution has a cleansing and refreshing effect, which attunes a person in advance to participation in the solemn worship of the Divine.

When one watches a Muslim performing ablution, one sees only the physical act of washing certain parts of the body. All the physical acts, however, would not constitute ablution unless the worshipper pronounces to himself the *niyyah* or intention to perform the ablution for removing impurity and for the acceptance of prayer. The concept of the *niyyah* or intention is very important in the life of a Muslim because he believes that the merit or otherwise of every action is judged by the intention with which it is performed. It follows that the process of ablution rightly understood is both physical and symbolic. When a Muslim washes his hands he not only washes the dirt from those hands but also cleanses his hands of all wrong deeds that can be indulged in by mankind. Similarly, cleansing the mouth would also mean purging the mouth of those falsehoods which are against the principles of Islam. Further, washing of the face is not mere physical washing, but also the presenting before God of a personality that has made an effort to wash itself of its weakness and incidental aberrations and is being presented before God in a purer form. The washing of the feet is another symbolic act which, apart from giving physical cleanliness, is an effort to seek God's pardon for those acts which one might have committed when one was using one's feet, so to speak, to go astray. If the intention is to purify oneself and remind oneself that one is going to give up doing wrong, then ablution is a splendid preparation for the actual prayer that is to follow.

The concept of prayer in Islam finds expression in many ways. The most important is the one known as *Salāt*, which is one of the pillars of the faith and is obligatory. The *Salāt* comprises five daily services.

Subh, the morning prayer, is said after dawn and before sunrise. This makes it necessary for the Muslim to habituate himself to rising before sunrise. But if he gets up late on some days he may still say his prayer but only after the sun has risen to some height. *Zuhr* or the early afternoon prayer is said when the sun begins to decline, and its time extends until the next prayer, *‘aṣr* or the late

afternoon prayer. 'Aṣr is performed when the sun is about midway in its course to setting, and its time extends until the sun begins to set. Maghrib is the prayer which is said immediately after the sun sets, and its time extends until the red glow in the west disappears. 'Ishā' or the night prayer is said after the red glow in the west disappears, and its time extends till midnight. The length of time for each of these services varies from fifteen minutes to half an hour. When the worshipper is travelling or is under pressure of valid necessity, the noon and afternoon services may be combined, and the sunset and the late evening services may be combined.

The only service during which a sermon is delivered is the Friday noon service, which takes a little longer, depending upon the time taken for the address; on the average it occupies about an hour.

Friday is a special day for Muslims. Special preparations are made for the Friday Services which takes the place of the *Zuhr* prayers. They take a bath in which the cleansing of the mouth with a tooth brush (*miswāk*) is a noticeable practice. They put on their best clothes and use perfume and go to their work in the morning. When the call for prayer is heard they leave off whatever business they are engaged in and go to the mosque. Though all prayers are equally obligatory, the Qur'ān has specially ordained the Friday service (*jummah*) at which it enjoins all Muslims to gather together. Any other prayer may be said individually but not the Friday service which is essentially a congregational service. That is why one finds a larger congregation at the Friday service in the central mosque of the locale.

A special feature of the Friday service is the sermon before the prayer service is held. The audience is enjoined to sit in respectful silence and listen to the *Imām's* sermon which may deal with any subject relating to the welfare of the community. The sermon is intended to educate the hearers, to awaken them to a general sense of duty, to lead them into the ways of their welfare and prosperity and warn them against what might be a source of loss or ruin to them. It gives them information as to what to do and what not to do under certain circumstances; it exhorts them to do the right thing. It throws light on all questions of life.

Friday is not a day of rest for the Muslims. There is in Islam no sabbath or seventh day for Divine worship. That is why the Qur'ān plainly speaks of the ordinary daily business being performed before and after the Friday service. The Muslim leaves his work on a Friday when he hears the call for prayer and resumes it after he has finished his prayer, in keeping with the injunction:

O you who believe! When the call is made for prayer on Friday, then hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off all business; that is better for you if you know. And when the prayer is ended, then disperse abroad in the land and seek Allah's grace. (62:9, 10)

The daily services are led by a member of the Congregation, preferably the one who understands the Qur'ān best. There is no priesthood or anything corresponding to ordination or taking Holy Orders in Islam. Every Muslim is (or should be) competent to lead a congregation in the services.

The five services a day are hardly burdensome. All the five services taken together do not occupy more than about two hours—no more time than a cinema-goer spends at a time in the cinema hall. In the eyes of a Muslim, a diversion such as cinema, or the formalities attendant on a ceremonial dinner, or a rubber of bridge has little value, whereas participation in congregational worship is nourishment to the soul. It can be, and in most cases is, a cathartic experience.

The frequency of the services has also a very special value. The beginning and the end of each day are devoted to drawing near to God during the *Ṣubḥ* and '*Ishā*' services. The greater part of the day must perforce be occupied with mundane pursuits, though from the Islamic point of view, there is no sharp division between the natural and the spiritual, the secular and the religious. Nevertheless the dominant character of some pursuits and occupations tends to have more of the one or of the other of these qualities.

In the midst of these pursuits and occupations the Muslim is reminded, two or three times in the course of the day, of his duty to God and his duty to his fellow beings, and he is summoned to participate with others in the common act of homage to the Maker

of all. Participation in the service lifts his whole being to a higher plane, from which he returns to his normal pursuits and duties refreshed and invigorated.

When the Muslim is engaged in the *Salāt* he is expected to realise that he is in the very presence of God; at the very least he is expected to be conscious that God is looking at him. Throughout the *Salāt* the worshipper's mind, indeed his whole being, is centred on God. If his thoughts wander, he has to rally them back into the Divine Presence.

The principal part of the service is the recitation of the opening chapter of the Qur'ān, called the *Fātiḥah*. This chapter is, as it were, the heart and soul of the service. It is one of the shorter chapters of the Qur'ān comprising only seven verses, but its meaning is comprehensive. It may be rendered as follows:

- (1) In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace.
- (2) All praise belongs to Allah, the Sustainer of all the worlds.
- (3) The most gracious, the dispenser of grace,
- (4) Master of the Day of Judgment!
- (5) Thee alone do we worship; and unto Thee alone do we turn for aid.
- (6) Show us the straight way—
- (7) The way of those upon whom Thou has bestowed Thy blessings, not of those who have incurred Thy displeasure, nor of those who have gone astray.

Thus the worshipper, at the very outset, finds himself in the presence of his Maker, and seeks to impress his mind and soul with a certain concept of the Majesty of Allah by reminding himself of His four principal attributes, (1) Divine Providence, (2) Divine Benevolence, (3) Divine Mercy, (4) Master of the Day of Re-compense.

When he contemplates on these attributes, he comes to the conclusion that He who possesses these attributes in perfection is alone worthy of worship and is the Only Being from Whom help

may be sought in all contingencies for all righteous purposes. It is conviction that he gives expression to, when he utters—‘Thee alone do we worship; and unto Thee alone do we turn for aid’.

He then makes his supplication that in all his affairs he may be rightly guided and may be enabled to adopt and pursue beneficent means for success, such means as would enable him to be included among those upon whom the Grace of Allah descends, to keep him from incurring Allah’s displeasure, and to safeguard him from going astray.

In the *Salāt* the worshipper again and again returns to the contemplation of the Majesty of God, imploring Him to guide and direct his life and effort along beneficent channels. This repeated effort made in the right spirit, in humility and sincerity, leaves its impress on the mind and soul of the worshipper and cleanses him thoroughly of all dross. The Qur’ān says that the *Salāt* purifies a worshipper and washes him clean of all evil and misbehaviour (29:25). And the Prophet has said, ‘If a person has a stream of pure water running at his doorstep and he washes himself thoroughly in it five times a day, no impurity would even approach him. Remember, the *Salāt* is such a stream.’

The average Muslim in Sri Lanka, though he does not know the Arabic language, is exposed to weekly discourses on his religious duties on Fridays. He is told that the *Salāt* must be duly observed and that it is the principal means of seeking God’s help. The Qur’ān tells him to seek from God in steadfast patience and in *Salāt* (2:153).

In addition to the five obligatory services, Muslims are exhorted to get up in the latter part of the night for individual prayer, in the same form as the *Salāt*, as a supererogatory service (17:79).

Throughout one’s day and night, throughout one’s life there is occasion for private prayer. No time is prescribed; no formalities have to be observed; there is no set form of words for such prayer. The heart and the soul as they may be moved make submission to their Maker and seek nearness to Him. The prayer a Muslim most frequently resorts to is the first verse of the opening chapter of the Qur’ān: ‘In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious,

the Dispenser of Grace'. Another interpretation of this verse is 'In the name of Allah, who sustains us and has made all manner of provision for us in advance, and who rewards righteous action with beneficent results'. Occasions for this prayer are numberless during the course of day. One says it as grace before meals, when one takes a glass of water or a cup of tea or any other refreshment. One says it whenever one commences a task whether light or heavy. The idea is that everything, including our faculties and capacities, belong to God and is a bounty from him, which we use only with His permission. The concluding grace at meals, taught by the Prophet, is 'All praise is due to Allah who has given us to eat and drink and has made us obedient to His will'.

Muslims are fond of the following prayer from the Qur'ān: 'Our Lord, grant us good in this world and good in the life to come, and keep us safe from suffering through the fire'. (2:201). This makes one exert oneself to attain good in this life as well as in the hereafter.

Even for the purpose of being enabled to offer proper worship to God, Muslims seek His help.

My Lord grant me that I may be duly grateful to Thee for Thy favours which Thou has bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and that I may act righteously so as to please Thee, and make my progeny righteous also. I do turn to Thee, and, truly, I am of those who submit ourselves to Thee. (46:15)

Muslims have different prayers taken from the Qur'ān for every occasion such as boarding a vessel, riding a vehicle, entering a building, and addressing an audience. These prayers illustrate a person's attitude of mind and the values that determine his conduct.

Another form of prayer is the remembrance of God, that is to say, reflecting upon His attributes and the manner of their manifestation. The Qur'ān describes this as a sign of wisdom and a characteristic of 'men of understanding, who remember Allah while standing, sitting, or lying down, and ponder over the creation of the heavens and the earth' (3:190, 191). Here we have the distinguishing characteristics of the faithful. Muslims are neither recluses who retire to a corner of solitude for the remembrance

of Allah nor do they pursue the conquest of nature without ever thinking of the Author and Lord of creation. On the one hand, they are described as remembering God in the midst of all worldly affairs and worldly pursuits, standing, sitting and lying on their sides, being thus fully conscious of the Divine Presence everywhere and in all conditions; and, on the other, they set out for the conquest of nature with the full consciousness that nothing has been created in vain and that a purpose underlies the whole of creation. This is the grand objective which the Islamic heritage conveys to a Muslim living today; to conquer self by remembrance of God and to conquer nature by pursuit of knowledge.

For the whole month of *Ramaḍān* all Muslims who are in good health and not engaged on a journey observe the fast, that is to say, they abstain from food, drink, smoking and sexual intercourse from dawn to sunset for a period of one month.

In Islam, fasting is a regular and continuous means to the development of the inner faculties of man. By making the institution permanent, all ideas of distress, affliction and sin are taken away from it while its true object is stated to be '*that you may guard against evil*'.

As a moral discipline, fasting trains man to suffer the privation of the good things of life which are at his command in order to obey the command of Allah. He undergoes this discipline day after day for a month. Just as physical exercise strengthens a person physically, this moral exercise strengthens the moral side of his life. The idea that everything unlawful must be eschewed and that evil must be resisted is thus developed through fasting. Fasting is a boon to the Muslim in another sense as well. It teaches him to overcome his physical desires while leading his ordinary life. Food and drink are available to him; he has his desires. But fasting for one month in the year teaches him the higher lesson that, instead of being a slave to his appetites and desires, he demonstrates that he is their master, being able to change the course of his life if he so wills it. The man who is able to rule his desires, to make them work as he likes, in whom will power is so developed that he can command himself, is the man who has attained true moral greatness.

More than anything else, it is the God-consciousness of the fasting Muslim that strikes one when one considers the fast of Islam. There is no desire more intense than the desire of satisfying one's thirst and hunger when food and drink are available, yet this very desire a Muslim overcomes, not once or twice, as if it were by chance, but day after day, regularly for a whole month, with the set purpose of drawing closer and closer to God. He can avail himself of the best food, yet he prefers to remain hungry; he has the most delicious drink in his possession, yet he does not quench his parching thirst: he touches neither food nor drink simply because he believes that it is the command of God that he should not do so. In the inmost recess of his house there is none to see him if he pours down his parched throat a glass of a delicious drink that is there, yet there has grown in him the sense of the nearness to God to such an extent that he could not put a drop of it on his tongue. Whenever a new temptation comes before him, the inner voice tells him at the critical moment, 'God is with me', 'God sees me' and he overcomes the temptation. Not the deepest devotion can of itself develop that sense of the nearness to God and of his Presence everywhere, which fasting in the month of *Ramadān* does. A new consciousness of a higher life, a life above that which is maintained by eating and drinking, has been awakened in him, and this is the life spiritual.

In addition to its physical, moral and spiritual values the fast as prescribed by the Qur'ān enables a Muslim to realise a social value as effective as that which is realised through prayer. Through prayer, the rich and the poor, the great and the small of the district are brought together five times a day in the mosque where they stand shoulder to shoulder in parallel rows and a healthy social relationship is established. This relationship remains to a large extent symbolical and some Muslims might tend to interpret this symbolic relationship rather superficially. When they go home they live in different environments. The rich sit down at tables laden with dainties and relish their food, while the poor cannot find food sufficient even to satisfy their hunger. In these circumstances the rich might not feel deeply for the poor and might not genuinely sympathize with them. There are barriers between the two classes, barriers which become removed when the rich are made to feel the pangs of hunger as their poor brethren do. When this experience is gone through, for a whole month, a rapport is established between

all men. The rich and the poor are thus brought to the same level. This awakens sympathy for the poor in the hearts of the rich, and it is for this reason that the helping of the poor is specially enjoined in the month of *Ramaḍān*.

The Muslim is taught that doing acts of charity (*ṣadaqāt*) in the month of *Ramaḍān* is meritorious. He is exhorted to spend freely on little children, on relations and neighbours during *Ramaḍān*. It is also recommended that it is best for a person to give charity secretly. During the month of *Ramaḍān* Muslims practice charity in a very large measure. What is known as *zakāt al-fitr* (the giving of food grains) is given even by the poor Muslim before the 'Īd prayers, the prayers celebrated at the end of the month of fasting. *Zakāt al-fitr* is given out of the staple food-grain of the land. About three or four measures or seers are given on behalf of each member of his family and dependents, including the giver. According to the teachings of Islam this is an organised institution. Here we observe that into every Muslim heart is instilled the idea that even when in his happiest mood he must never forget the distress of his poor brethren. The principle of gathering the *zakāt al-fitr* (charity) and the distribution of it has now been abandoned by the Muslims in Sri Lanka and the result is that a most beneficial institution of Islam for the uplift of the poor and needy has been neglected with its necessary consequences.

As far as the individual is concerned the month of *Ramaḍān* provides an opportunity for concentration and intensity of the awareness of the presence of God. The supererogatory service of prayer known as *tarāwīḥ* is performed after the late evening service ('*ishā*') every night of the month. More time is devoted to the study of and reflection over the Qur'ān than at other times. Though normal occupations and duties are carried on as usual, everything is subordinated to the main purpose of developing the awareness of the presence of God. In most of the Muslim villages in Sri Lanka, the '*ulamā*' delivers a course of religious lectures throughout the month of fast.

During the last ten days of *Ramaḍān* some people stay continuously in a mosque and devote the whole of the time to the study of the Qur'ān and to the remembrance of God, reflecting on His attributes and the manner of their manifestation. This is called the

state of *I'tikāf*. This is the culmination of the moral and spiritual discipline instituted by Islam.

Thus we see the whole purpose of fasting is to promote righteousness which is a progressive cultivation of spiritual values. 'He who abstains from food and drink during the month of fasting, but does not strive to safeguard himself against moral lapses starves for no purpose'. There is a saying of the Prophet to the effect that whereas there are high spiritual rewards for all other worship and righteous action, the ultimate reward of a person who observes the fast solely for the sake of God, is God Himself.

At the end of the month of fast comes '*Id- ul-fitr*, the Festival of the breaking of the fast. No fast can be observed on this day. But again, in conformity with the spirit of Islam, the only matter prescribed for the Festival is an extra service in the forenoon which is followed by an address by the *Imām*. This is a day of happiness born of a sense of satisfaction with having performed a duty imposed by God. At this moment of joy the Muslims gather in their numbers for the service. The purpose is to glorify God, to celebrate His praise, and to render thanks to Him for the guidance provided by Him, particularly with regard to all that relates to the observance of the fast, and for having enabled them to observe it as it should be observed.

We have already observed that, among other things, charity looms large in the life of a Muslim in the month of fast. Charity is one of the main principles of Islam. In the very beginning of the *Qur'ān* charity is referred to as spending 'benevolently out of what we have given them'. This represents charity in a broad sense; all acts of benevolence and doing good to humanity are included in it. For, what God has given to man is not only the material wealth which he possesses but also the very faculties and powers with which he has been gifted.

In order to understand Muslim religiousness we have to see where the doing of good to man fits in the scheme of things. The Muslim cannot claim salvation on the basis of dogmas alone. Of course, he must have a belief in God, in Divine revelation and in the Hereafter. But Islam means something more; it means the realisation of the Divine presence in the life of man by prayer or

through one's entire submission to the will of God, and the service of humanity which is charity. Of the two, prayer takes precedence over charity inasmuch as it prepares man for the service of humanity. Either of them by itself would not avail him, for the Qur'an says:

Woe to the praying ones, who are unmindful of their prayers, who make a show (of prayers) and withhold acts of charity.
(107:4-7)

In the pressures of urban living often it appears that a man has little time for his brother and in such case that man has not understood the concept of Islamic charity. However, in the villages of Sri Lanka when a resident of the locality goes to the mosque to pray, after prayer he often looks around for strangers to whom he might tactfully extend an invitation to share a meal, which is invariably accepted as hotel facilities are rarely available. And the injunction to take care of orphans is always obeyed. There is an admonition among Muslims in Sri Lanka when one might espy a tendency to misuse or fail to care for an orphan: 'Don't scratch your head with a firebrand'.

To remove a thorn from a path that is frequented by man is referred to as *sadaqāh* or a charitable deed. Such is the broad concept of charity. The Qur'an speaks of charity not only to all men but also to dumb creation.

The attitude of mind of the Muslim when he does a charitable deed is that he does it as a duty which he owes to the other man without in any way appearing to be superior to the person benefited by his deed. Therefore no reproach or injury to the receiver accompanies the good deed.

Another aspect of the Muslim charity is that only good things and well-earned wealth should be given in charity; things unlawfully earned should not be given, nor would such be accepted. I remember an occasion when a group of people from a far-away village came to me to solicit my help to collect money to buy a generator to light their village mosque. When the name of a person as one likely to give the whole sum required to purchase the plant was mentioned, one of the group inquired about the source of the prospective donor's wealth. When it was mentioned that he was a

bookmaker the group stoutly refused to have any part of his wealth for their purpose. This is not one isolated instance; it represents a practice widely observed in our community.

Those who though poor are ashamed to beg are sought out and given assistance without any third person knowing about it.

Charity is not all voluntary in Islam; there is also an obligatory aspect of it called *zakāt*. Wealth cannot be earned in Islam but lawfully. Even this lawfully earned wealth should be further purified by giving a portion of it as *zakāt*. The giving away of a portion of one's wealth to the poor members of the community is a source of blessing; it increases the wealth of the community as a whole and purifies the heart of the giver.

The two commandments, to keep up prayer and to give *zakāt* are considered basic ordinances of the religion of Islam, and the observance of them is often mentioned as being sufficient indication that one is striving for submission to the will of Allah.

The possessor of wealth is required to contribute annually one fortieth of his wealth to a common fund which is managed by the state or by the community where there is no Muslim state.

From the Islamic viewpoint, three parties seem to be entitled to share in the wealth that is thus produced. The workmen, skilled or unskilled, the person who supplies the capital, and the community. The community's share in produced wealth is the *zakāt*. After this has been set apart for the benefit of the community, the rest is purified and may be divided between the other two parties.

The *zakāt* is assessed on both capital and income. Its incidence varies with reference to different kinds of property. The proceeds of *zakāt* are devoted to relieving poverty and distress, to sharing the message of Islam, providing ransom for prisoners of war, helping those in debt, providing comfort and convenience for travellers, supplying capital where talent is available but funds are lacking, providing stipends for scholars and research workers, meeting the expenses involved in collecting and administering the *zakāt*, and generally towards all things beneficial to the community as a whole, such as public health, public works, medical services,

and educational institutions. It thus fosters the welfare of the community.

Thus we would observe that the Qur'ān does not recognise *zakāt* as a private charity. It is sad to note that the remarkable institution of *zakāt* has tended to become neglected by the Muslims in Sri Lanka except for a niggardly contribution to the Baitul Mal Fund.

An important part of Islamic worship is the *hajj* or pilgrimage to Mecca, which takes place in the twelfth month, *Dhul Hajj* or pilgrimage month of the Islamic year. It is obligatory on every adult only once in his life, and its performance more often is voluntary. This obligation is subject to the condition that one is able to undertake the journey to Mecca, which means that one is physically strong enough to travel, and has the means to pay for the journey and to provide for the maintenance of the dependents whom one leaves behind.

The preparations that are made for the journey when one is determined to perform *hajj* are somewhat different from those made for other journeys. When one sets out on a journey to earn one's livelihood or for the sake of pleasure or holiday, one does so for one's own personal need and desire. But the journey that is called *hajj* is not undertaken for the gratification of a personal wish. On the other hand, it is undertaken solely in compliance with the will of Allah, in humble obedience to His commandment. No man would prepare for this journey unless he has a deep-seated love of God, and the desire to honour this great obligation in his heart.

When a person has made up his mind and makes ready for the journey, his whole mental outlook undergoes a change. His heart is aflame with the love of God, his mind is bent toward Him; there is no place in it for evil thoughts. As for his past sins and misdeeds, he seeks repentance, representing a turning back to go along the path of righteousness. This brings about a moral revolution which engenders intense repugnance towards evil and constant yearning after righteousness, manifesting itself in conduct.

With the integration of beliefs and practice, Muslims have come to understand the meaning of community (*ummah*); the community of Islam, past and present, and also globally. Through faith in God, by means of this sense of community, Muslims have a basis for community among all men of good will.

THE RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF MUSLIMS IN SRI LANKA IN MANIFESTATION AND MEANING

ABDUL MAJID MACKEEN

The Muslims form an integral part of the people living in Sri Lanka and number an estimated one million out of some thirteen million inhabitants of the island. They are generally scattered all over the island with main concentrations in the Eastern Province, as Mr. Hussain has noted in his chapter, 'The Faith of Muslims in Sri Lanka Through Belief and Practice', and in Colombo, Beruwela, Puttalam, Galle and Mannar. The Muslim community is a conglomeration of various historically evolved groups¹—the Moors who are the descendents of the Arab settlers, the Malays of Javanese and Malayan origin and diverse groups of Muslims from India. The largest single group of the Muslim Community are the Moors who emerged as a distinct component of the local population in the wake of the great Maritime expansion of Arabs and their trading activities in the East; a process which began from pre-Islamic times and continued until the early years of the present century, implanting the nuclei of the early Muslim settlements in places like Gujerat, Malabar, Beruwela, Colombo, Coromandel Coast, Chittagong, Acheh, Malacca and Canton. The Moors of Sri Lanka were so called by the Portuguese and in local parlance the word has been rendered as 'Yonaka' in Sinhala, and 'Sonahar' in Tamil. The main sources of Arab migrations were Yemen and Hadramaut in Southern Arabia. The Malays who form the smaller component of the Muslim community are an admixture of the descendants of the early Javanese settlers who came in the early 17th century A.D. and the later arrivals from Malaya during the latter part of the 19th century.

1. Colonial Office, *CEYLON, Report of the Commission on Constitutional Reform, 1945*, pp. 39-40.

From the Malabar and Coromandel Coasts, the gradual influx of Muslims, who were themselves the descendants of the early Arab settlement in those regions, —increased during the 19th and early 20th century and they remain the third element in the composition of the Muslim Communities.

As a fully utilized spoken language Arabic failed to survive through the centuries except among the last groups of Arab settlers, who made Sri Lanka their home in the 19th and early 20th centuries. However, Arabic continues to enjoy a pride of place throughout the Muslim community as a language of religious worship and instruction, of culture and cultural affinity with the Muslim world at large. The communication-medium that served the needs of the rapidly growing Muslim community was Moorish, a language based on Arabic, Tamil and Malay vocabulary originally written in the Arabic script. The use and expansions of this language by the Muslims of India from medieval times gave a great impetus to its development among the Muslims in Sri Lanka, a linguistic medium in which the early Muslim scholars of Sri Lanka also made valuable contributions to Islamic religious literature. Apart from this a large proportion of the Muslim population in the Tamil speaking environment has adopted Tamil as an effective language of speech while others in Sinhala speaking areas have acquired the Sinhala medium which in recent years has made rapid strides as a language of speech and communication among the Muslims. The Malay language, too, has survived mainly as a spoken dialect among the Sri Lanka Malays.

From the decades that followed the death of the Prophet Muhammad, the Muslim community had been structured into two main strands, based originally on political and later on religious grounds, called the Sunnites and the Shiites. The former supported an elected Caliph to head the Muslim community after the demise of the Prophet while the latter refused to accept the appointment of Abu Bakr as the first elected Caliph, holding that the office must go to the legitimate heirs of the family of the Prophet and thus they held that Ali was the rightful heir to the office. The overwhelming majority of the Muslim population of the world is Sunnite, a term which is now applied to the representatives of the central orthodox doctrine of Islam based on the *Sunnah*, the norms established by the Prophet Muhammed, and backed by the majority

of the followers of Islam. In Sri Lanka, too, the vast majority of the Muslims are Sunnites while representatives of the Shiite strand are to be found in small numbers among some components of the Indian Muslim business community in Colombo.

The practice of Islam all over the world is governed by a system of religious law called the *Shari'ah*. The Islamic legal system, which derived its main inspiration from the revelational norm embodied in the Qur'an and the Traditions of the Prophet, evolved into a mature system over the centuries and eventually became structured into distinct schools of law called *madhhabs*, of which four major schools have survived to this day amongst the Sunnite followers. These four major schools are the Hanafi School (named after the jurist Abu Hanifah d. 767 A.D.), the Maliki School (named after the Jurist Malik d. 795 A.D.), the Shafi'i School (named after the jurist Al-Shafi'i d. 820 A.D.), and the Hanbali School (named after the jurist Ibn Hanbal d. 855 A.D.). By far the largest number of the Muslims in Sri Lanka are followers of the Shafi'i School of Islamic law, while small sections of the Muslims from India follow the Hanafi School.

The Islamic World-View

Before we attempt to capture something of the nature of religiousness among the Muslims in Sri Lanka, we might do well to consider the Islamic world-view, particularly with regard to religious experience. There are three terms in the Islamic vocabulary—*Imān*, *Islām* and *Ihsān*—which express the three-dimensional quality of Islamic faith.

By *Imān* is meant 'faith' or 'belief'; it represents the basic commitment of the mind to certain universal postulates. The essence and attributes of Allah, His Angels, His Revelations, His Messengers and the Hereafter form the substance of this *Imān*.² A person who is so committed is called a *Mu'min*. This basic commitment of the mind is a fundamental principle which every Muslim must acknowledge without question. It is basically a process

2. The doctrine concerning the power inherent in the incidence of Good and Evil, too, form part of the creed. For a presentation of factors in *Imān*, see the discussion by Mr. Hussain in his contribution to this volume, 'The Faith of Muslims in Sri Lanka Through belief and Practice'.

of the mind and involves no visible external act observable by others. By contrast the word '*Islām*' in this context stands for the practical consequence which follows the acceptance of *Imān*; it involves a set of external duties made obligatory on every Muslim of responsible age. These duties are:

- (1) the declaration of the basic creed i.e., there is no God but Allah,
- (2) regular performance of the *Ṣalāt* (ritual prayer),
- (3) payment of wealth tax called the *Zakāt*,
- (4) observance of fasting during a specified period of the year, and
- (5) the pilgrimage (*Hajj*).

These five acts are so fundamental in the religious system of Islam that they have been described as the 'Pillars of Islam' for on them rests the ultimate realization of the fruits of the Divine Master-Plan for the guidance of mankind. The emphasis here is on 'practice' rather than 'belief' alone and its uniqueness lies in the fact that they have reduced the abstract and often transcendental notions of religious philosophy into norms of practical conduct which have been brought within the reach of the mass of humanity.

The third dimension *Iḥsān* connotes the experiential quality of religious life. It injects into faith (*Imān*) and practice (*Islām*) an inner realization of the meaning of the external forms of religious practice. In *Iḥsān* there is stress on the spirit of worship such that the worshipper feels that he is near to Allah. In the later terminology of Islam, this branch of the Islamic religious life was called *taṣawwuf* of Sufism which spread as a movement among the rank and file of the Muslim community the world over producing several *Ṣufī* Orders which went by the name of *Tarīqah*.

Holding this three fold aspect of religious life in Islam, that is, *Imān*, *Islām*, and *Iḥsān*, as central, keeping it well in mind, a study of the practices and observances of Muslims tends to reveal the purpose behind those activities and this purpose illumines the meaning of religiousness for the persons involved. In the remainder of the chapter, we shall focus on that range of practical duties subsumed under the term *Islām* for the obvious reason that they

alone provide the visible manifestations of the daily and widespread practice of Islam in Sri Lanka. We shall consider here four of the five 'Pillars' on which the practice of Islam is built; namely, the *Ṣalāt* (Ritual Prayer), the *Zakāt* (the property tax), the Fast, and the *Hajj* (Pilgrimage). The first 'Pillar' concerns the formal declaration of the Islamic Creed, i.e., 'There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His servant and Messenger'.

The *Ṣalāt*

The institution of the *Ṣalāt* is one of the most popular instruments of religious worship in the life of a Muslim. The *Ṣalāt* is the name given to a form of Islamic ritual prayer which consists in a series of bodily postures and movements accompanied by prescribed recitations glorifying the name of Allah and imploring His guidance. The practice of this ritual prayer is a common sight in all mosques in Sri Lanka and in any part of the world. According to Islamic religious law, every responsible Muslim is under obligation to offer this ritual prayer at five different times a day, either in the mosque or elsewhere, and it may be offered either in congregation or individually. However, prayers in congregation are considered more meritorious and are hence recommended. This *Ṣalāt* is a fundamental requirement in the practice of Islam and has lent itself to diverse interpretations³ by great Muslim scholars who have from time to time attempted to delve into its inner meaning. To al-Ghazālī (d. 1111 A.D.), the most outstanding exponent of classical Islam, the *Ṣalāt* basically meant a communion⁴ with Allah and an immense spiritual discipline. To Muslims it symbolizes spiritual ascent drawing man nearer to Allah, the ultimate reality. There are three major aspects of the *Ṣalāt* which if understood properly could reveal something of the nature and purpose of the entire institution.

(a) The Purificatory Act⁵

The process of the physical purification which precedes the entry into the state of *Ṣalāt* ranks first; before entering into communion with Allah, there must be adequate preparation by way of

3. See f.n. 6 below.

4. The word communion is used here in the sense of personal conversing with Allah (*Munājāt*). See, al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-Arbāʿīn fī Uṣūl al-Dīn* (Cairo, 1344 A.D.) p. 26.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-29.

purification, a term which included both external as well as internal purity, purity of the physical body of man and purity of his spiritual conscience. A Muslim devotee attains external purity by performing a ritual act of washing the different parts of his physical body before he enters into the sanctuary of worship. This act of physical purification is called *wuḍū* (i.e., ablution) and is considered to be fundamental and something which must be performed with meticulous care, observing every point in the ritual rules governing the act as set out in the religious law. The prescription of this purificatory act before the commencement of the *Ṣalāt* is based on the principle that there is an essential connection between matter and spirit, the state of the former must induce an effect in the latter. Only clean water, says al-Ghazālī, can produce the desired effect of freshness and purity in the person using it to cleanse himself. Apart from cleanliness of body, the clothes and garments of the devotee also must be clean for they help to prepare the person to attain a sense of physical purity. External acts elicit internal response and accordingly there can be no internal purity unless there is external purity; hence the insistence on clean water and clean clothes for the purpose of producing a state of physical cleanliness, which ultimately would induce a feeling of internal purity—something indeed deeply spiritual.

al-Ghazālī uses symbolic expressions to explain the meaning behind the whole process involved in purification; the garments of the worshipper represent the outer peel, his body the inner peel and finally his heart itself the innermost pulp. Consequently the object in donning clean garments is to cleanse the outer peel and that of keeping the physical body clean, to cleanse the inner peel, and that of inducing purity of the heart, to cleanse the innermost pulp. The most important aim in this process of purification is to cleanse the heart from the defilements which attach to it through defective traits of human character. al-Ghazālī firmly believes that purity from without is destined to effect the illumination of the human heart. Speaking of the effects which follow the act of purification, al-Ghazālī says that when we perform the act of ablution fully and consequently feel a sense of cleanliness outwardly we will experience a state of rejoicing and purity in our inner self, a state which we had not experienced before the act of ablution. This type of inner response follows from the close affinity which

exists between the phenomenal world and the spiritual world; the outer body is of the phenomenal world while the heart is of the spiritual world by virtue of its basic nature, and its association with the phenomenal world is that of a stranger away from his natural surroundings. To the same extent as certain effects befall the physical body from the intuitive awareness of the heart, so does a degree of illumination enter the heart from the states and experiences of the physical body. Outward cleanliness is, therefore, capable of inducing an effect on the inner self. These are part of the wonders of the divine realm often incomprehensible to the human mind. al-Ghazālī sums up his exposition of the meaning behind the act of purification by stating that if we fail to capture, after performing the act of ablution, something of the purity accompanying it, then it indicates that the blemishes which have defiled our hearts as a result of being carried away by the lust and temptations of this world, have deadened the sensitivity of our hearts such that we can no longer experience the hidden graces of Allah and we remain weak and unresponsive to things that are spiritual.

(b) The Form of the Ṣalāt⁶

A Muslim worshipper performs the Ṣalāt in a definite form which includes particular postures and movements. Each one of these postures and movements has a name and duration. A Muslim begins his prayer by assuming a standing position with his forearms folded across his stomach;⁷ then he takes a bowing

6. al-Ghazālī, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-31; this Islamic prayer (the Ṣalāt) has also been understood to reveal a cosmic significance. The different postures of the Ṣalāt are said to represent the total involvement of the kingdoms of the universe—the mineral, the animal and the plant kingdoms—in the worship of the Creator manifested in the agency of man: the standing posture in the prayer represents the worship of the mountains (mineral kingdom) which remain upright and motionless; the bowing posture, the worship of the members of the animal kingdom who have been themselves created perpetually bent and leaning forward; the prostrating posture, the worship of the plant kingdom in which the roots of the plants are spread out on the ground. This interpretation, it would appear, is based on a verse of the Qur’ān which reads: ‘Hast thou not seen that unto Allah payeth adoration whosoever is in the heavens, whosoever is in the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the hills and the trees and the beasts and many mankind’ (Qur’ān, 21:18). See *Islamic Herald*, Vol. 1. No. 7 (November, 1975) p. 13, for the above interpretation of the Ṣalāt.

7. See Fig. (a).

position with the forearms placed against his knees,⁸ followed by a standing position again before he finally submits himself in prostration.⁹ Brief seated positions¹⁰ are assumed between the prostrations. These basic movements are accompanied by prescribed recitations, both silent and loud, in remembrance of and to the glorification of Allah. These aspects of the formal prayer are generally familiar to the worshipper who observes them as a matter of course, but they indeed constitute significant requirements, which must be complied with at any cost, for each one of these rites has a deeper meaning which can induce definite effects in the heart of the worshipper in the same manner as the ritual of purification could, but with a more profound impression in this case.

al-Ghazālī attempts¹¹ to explain the meaning behind the form of *Ṣalāt*, by visualising it in symbolic terms. The *Ṣalāt*, he says, has been cast in a certain mould in the same way as the other creations of Allah have been given a specific mould comprising a spirit, a body, limbs and so on. The form of the *Salat* is therefore, conceived of as possessing a spirit, a body and limbs; these being symbolised by the different features of the act of the *Ṣalāt*. Intention, singleness of mind, and the presence of the heart in the course of performing the act represent the spirit of the *Ṣalāt*; the standing and seated positions represent its body and such essential movements as bowing and prostration represent its basic physical parts like the head, the hands and the legs, while the important supplements to those movements and postures such as the extended bowing and prostration, represent perfection in total form, colour and presentability. The different recitations prescribed at different stages of the prayer represent the sensory organs found in the physical body, like the eyes, the ears and so on; the knowledge of the meaning of the different recitations and the presence of the heart represent increased responsiveness of the sensory powers of hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch. Since the fundamental notion behind an act of the *Ṣalāt* is that of exaltation and defence, disregard for the formalities of worship lead to a negation of these very objectives.

8. See Fig. (b).

9. See Fig. (c).

10. See Fig. (d).

11. *Op. cit.*, pp. 29-30. •

(c) The Spirit of the Ṣalāt¹²

The third and undoubtedly the most central point in the whole process of the Ṣalāt is the preservation of the spirit of worship involved in it. We have already referred to al-Ghazālī's rather extraordinary description of the institution of the Ṣalāt as being symbolic of a living creature with a definite organic structure including what he termed the 'spirit of the prayer'. He makes the final point that the experience of this spirit in prayer, represented by such characteristics as single-mindedness, the presence of the heart in the whole process of worship and the experience in the heart of the meanings of the words and movements which occur in the act, is the most rewarding attainment of a worshipper: 'Do not prostrate or bow unless your heart is truly submissive and surrendered to Allah in accordance with your outward expressions, for the purpose of worship is the surrender of the heart, not the physical body'.

The words which accompany every posture and movement in the act illustrate the total commitment of the mind of the worshipper to the supreme greatness of Allah. These words, therefore, imply total realization and resignation. The worshipper often repeats 'Allah is the greatest', and this means there can be nothing in his mind which appears to him greater than Allah. He begins by affirming 'I have turned my face to Allah', and then his mind is solely directed towards Allah and turned away from others. When he says 'Praise be to Allah' his heart overflows with gratitude to the Creator, the Nourisher and the Sustainer for His blessing upon him and his heart is in perfect rejoicing. He seeks His help and guidance in abject surrender, believing that power and authority belong to Him and to Him alone. This state of spiritual feeling permeates the entire process of the Ṣalāt, in motion, in stillness and in the sound of the prayer.

The Zakāt¹³

The institution of the property tax called the *Zakāt* is one of the primary duties imposed upon all eligible Muslims. The performance of the twin acts of the *Salāt* and the *Zakāt* is a constant theme in the Qur'ān. These two acts were the earliest duties urged upon

12. Al-Ghazālī, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-32.

13. Al-Ghazālī, *ibid.*, pp. 32-36.

the nascent Muslim community of the seventh century A.D. The *Zakāt* constitutes one of the five practical consequences involved in accepting Islam. In the eyes of Islamic Law, the *Zakāt* represents the annual or (in the case of agricultural produce) the seasonal payment of tax on property to be made by those on whom such payment is obligatory towards certain specific needs of the Muslim community. It is generally obligatory on all eligible Muslims who have had in their possession a specific minimum value of property either in agricultural produce, or in certain types of animal stock, or in gold or silver and generally in all articles of trade, to pay specified percentages of the value of such property as the *Zakāt*. The benefits of the *Zakāt* are spread over a variety of persons and causes such as the poor, the needy, the *Zakāt* collecting functionaries, converts, emancipation of slaves, the debtors, maintenance of those who strive in the cause of Allah, and the way-farers. The uniqueness of this institution lies in the fact that it derives its binding force from the precepts in religious law as well as from the nature of its ethical value. The stark contrast between the deeply spiritual significance of the ritual prayer (*Salāt*) and the immediate material significance of the institution of the *Zakāt* might seem irreconcilable with the common purpose of the two institutions in promoting the moral and spiritual progress of man. Muslim jurists were largely concerned with the exposition of its legalistic framework. The mind of al-Ghazālī, however, went far beyond the sterile requirements of the religious law. al-Ghazālī was no mere jurist; he reached the stage when he could no longer separate an action from the experience which results from it. Both the bodily movements involved in an act of ritual prayer, as well as the material value involved in the institution of the *Zakāt*, were geared towards the same objective. He has dealt with the theme of the *Zakāt* in a manner quite typical of the spiritual bent of mind of a thinker who by sheer experience was awakened to the realities of the immortal spirit in man.

‘The expending of wealth for good causes’ comments¹⁴ al-Ghazālī, ‘is a fundamental element in the religious system of Islam and on that sole account—quite apart from the manifold benefits which accrue from it to the state, society and needy individuals—ranks as an obligation for all Muslims. Man, according to al-Ghazālī,

14. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

is faced with a trying dilemma—the love of wealth and the love of Allah. The love of material wealth is ingrained in human nature but the love of Allah springs from the Divine commandments proclaimed to all men who tend to measure the depth of such divine love by the sole yardstick of faith. Allah, however, has chosen a material scale to determine the extent of their love for Him and to test the validity of their claims of divine love, for it is of the nature of man to part with those belongings which are most dear to him for the sake of the beloved who is uppermost in his mind. Given this test to judge man's control over and attachment to his material possessions, mankind could be classified, according to al-Ghazāli, into three groups. The first group includes the highest of them in rank and merit; they are strong of will and shall have complete mastery over themselves. Members of this group have reached a stage which enables them to expend everything they possess leaving nothing in store for their needs; they are persons of proven integrity in upholding their allegiance of love for Allah at every moment of their lives. The paragon of this class of men of supreme devotion and love for Allah was, says al-Ghazāli Abu Bakr, the first Caliph of Islam. At an hour of need he set aside his entire possessions in the cause of Islam at the request of the Prophet and thus proved that the love of God was the thing dearest to him in life. The second group consists of those of the middle rank who have not altogether succeeded in totally detaching themselves from their possessive attachment to wealth and property. Of course such men tend to hold wealth not for edification but to expend it at the request of somebody in need of their assistance. By themselves they lead contented lives given to the worship of Allah. Should a person seek their help, they not only hasten to fulfil his needs but go beyond the obligatory *Zakāt* in providing for the needy; their apparent purpose in storing wealth is to provide for the future need of others. Finally, al-Ghazāli speaks of the third group who in his opinion are the lowest in rank and merit. They are the weak-minded who confine themselves only to the minimum of the obligatory *Zakāt*; they neither increase their dues nor decrease it.

Having enumerated these three groups of persons on the basis of their attitude to wealth, al-Ghazāli suggests that the willingness of each group to expend their wealth will depend upon the extent of their love for Allah. The levels of the first and second groups, he feels, are beyond the reach of the average man who may, at best, endeavour to lift himself above the third group and attain the

lower rungs of the second group. Such men should set aside a little more than the obligatory minimum for *Zakāt* purposes, for restricting ourselves to the bare minimum of what we are required to give is a symptom of miserliness. As a matter of general policy, one should not let a moment vanish without some kind of charitable deed being done in excess of one's legitimate dues. Charity does not consist only in the expending of money; every kind word or deed, such as visiting the sick and accompanying a funeral, belong to the class of charitable deeds.

Al-Ghazālī develops¹⁵ further the theme of the *Zakāt* and lays down five considerations which he thinks must govern every act of the *Zakāt* and charity. The first of these is secrecy. He quotes a prophetic tradition in which he speaks of the merit of an act of charity done in such secrecy that what the right hand offers the left hand does not know. By observing secrecy one will be able to deliver oneself from the traits of hypocrisy which dominate the texture of the human soul and tend to destroy it. The purpose of spending out of one's possessions is to eliminate the blemish of miserliness in man, but in the process of achieving this man should not fall into the illusion of hypocrisy, for that would defeat the sacred objective behind charity. The second point he stresses is the need to guard oneself against the feeling of patronage towards the recipient of charity. It is, of course, not unusual for a giver of charity to feel that he is a benefactor of the poor recipient over whom he assumes an air of superiority and consequently expects expression of gratitude from his beneficiary or in default abhors his conduct. This indicates an attitude of superiority which one claims for oneself; but one must realize that it is not oneself but he who is the real benefactor, for by his acceptance of one's charity he has in fact done an act of honour to one. The hidden aim of *Zakāt* is also to purify the heart and cleanse the soul from such mean afflictions as those of miserliness and avarice; hence *Zakāt* is very much a means of purification. Therefore, if a person helps to purify us by accepting our donations it is indeed he who deserves gratitude from us. al-Ghazālī draws the interesting analogy of the medieval blood-copper who served a man in no small measure by drawing out the bad and harmful blood in him; likewise the recipient of the *Zakāt* is comparable to the role of a blood-copper for the blameworthy

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-36.

traits of man like miserliness and avarice find their way out of human nature through the services of those who accept his alms. Thirdly, property laid out both for the purpose of the obligatory *Zakāt* as well as for optional charity should be legitimate and of a superior quality, equally valuable to the giver as it is to the recipient of charity. The Prophet is reported to have said, Allah is good and accepts from his servants only those things which are good. The moral which al-Ghazālī tries to establish here is that sincerity of intention is essential if an act of charity or assistance to others is to bear fruit. A person who is motivated by selfish ends would try to honour his obligation for the *Zakāt* or his special responsibility for a charitable deed by discarding his unwanted goods in the name of the *Zakāt* or charity, of course knowing very well that the goods concerned cannot be of much use to the recipients. Weakness of this sort only indicates that his thought and deed are not inspired by the love of Allah. The fourth element worthy of attention in the performance of an act of *Zakāt* is large-heartedness and delight in one's acts. Even one cent given with joy and warm feeling is more meritorious than a thousand given in detestation. The last of the five considerations which according to al-Ghazālī determines the validity of an act of *Zakāt* is the choice of a suitable beneficiary. It is of utmost importance that one selects a God-fearing beneficiary who would convert the material benefits bestowed on him to useful ends in his continued devotion and submission to God; or one may give it to a person who is righteous but destitute by force of circumstances, for the care for the welfare of mankind is a primary concern of which every eligible person must take his legitimate share.

The Islamic Fast¹⁶

Fasting as a religious discipline is a common feature in most religious systems and dates back to very early times. It is practised in different forms with varying degrees of emphasis. In Islam, the institution of fasting remains a major duty of all eligible Muslims; it was made an essential part of the religious system at Medina in the second year of the *Hijrah*. The obligatory duty of fasting occurs only in the month of *Ramadān* during which all eligible Muslims must observe the fast by totally abstaining themselves from any kind of food or drink during the whole of the day

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-38.

time. The nature of this exercise demands a firm mind and a high degree of will-power to preserve the stern test of spiritual stability. Apart from this annual event of the fast of *Ramadān*, there are many optional acts of fasting at various times and for different purposes. But all these forms of fast have one thing in common, a most exacting trial of human endurance. There is no institution in Islam with so immense a spiritual appeal and so spontaneous a response from its adherents, of all ages and walks of life, as fasting. It is in fact a mass movement and thoroughly compulsory in nature. Muslims, whether young or old, are simply drawn to it by its irresistible appeal. The religious law of Islam, of course, defines the rules and formalities of fasting, but the nature of this sublime institution is such that no person can escape the inner personal experience intrinsically associated with it.

There are two immediate purposes behind this spiritual exercise. Firstly, fasting leads to a type of self-restraint which is so secretive an act—unlike the ritual prayer (*Ṣalāt*) or the property tax (*Zakāt*)—that nobody other than Allah alone would know its true nature. Secondly, fasting provides the greatest cure for the evil tendencies when these predominate in man and the hunger involved in fasting curbs all human desires which lead to evil. al-Ghazālī classifies fasting into three categories both from the point of view of time involved as well as its inner significance. As for time, the minimal performance consists in fasting only in the month of *Ramadān*. The maximum is fasting throughout the year on alternate days; this is the highest form of fasting and is more meritorious than fasting throughout the year continually, for if a person were to fast daily in one continuous stretch then fasting becomes a habit with him and he would no longer experience the self-surrender of his soul, nor the purity of his heart, nor the weakening of his physical desires, for the human soul gets conditioned only by being exposed to states which are non-habitual and not by taking to certain patterns of behaviour which become habitual. A situation of this kind, says al-Ghazālī, is not beyond one's grasp. He illustrates this further by citing the example of physicians who advise their patients against getting perpetually addicted to medicine, for they say he who consumes medicine every day as a matter of habit will not derive any benefits from it when he really falls sick, because his body gets so accustomed to the medicine that it no longer responds to it effectively. Fasting is a medicine for the soul of man

when it falls sick, but its curative effects can be lost by the soul becoming immune to its effects.

al-Ghazālī relates the story of Abd Allāh b. Umar, a companion of the Prophet, who once asked the Prophet about the most ideal form of fasting. 'Keep the fast for a day and give up the fast on the following day', replied the Prophet, saying there is no form of fasting more meritorious than that of fasting on alternate days. There is also an intermediate form which stands between the minimum period of the annual *Ramadān* fast and the maximum period involving fasting on alternate days. This intermediate fasting consists of the annual fast of *Ramadān*, which extends for about thirty days, and a few optional fasts on certain specified days so that together one third of the year would be spent in the practice of fasting, which al-Ghazālī feels could do immense good to the spiritual conditioning of man.

The significance of fasting cannot be measured alone by the length of time involved in this exercise. To reap the full benefits of fasting one must appreciate its true and inner significance. Consequently, the level of fasting would depend upon the meaning which is associated with this sublime spiritual act. There are three stages of fasting; in the first and the lowest stage the devotee only abstains from taking any food or drink, but his physical body does not desist from its evil tendencies. This is the fast of common people who only give nominal significance to the institution of fasting. In the second stage, the body of the worshipper too, practices abstention such that his sensory organs are subjected to so stern a moral discipline that each and all of his organs shall be preserved from the devastating effects of evil, whether they afflict his tongue, eyes, or any other part of his body. In explaining the behaviour characteristic of this stage of fasting, al-Ghazālī says that one should abstain not only from food but one's tongue also should abstain from such evil practices as back-biting and one's eyes from the temptations to look at others with suspicion, the purpose being to elicit a pattern of ethical conduct in the worshipper. These two stages do not represent an end in themselves; they only show the stages and symptoms leading to the supreme end in the third stage where the worshipper begins to experience the essence of spiritual awakening.

The first stage of only abstention from food or drink as prescribed in the religious law is only the formal approach to fasting.

The second stage, where conformity to the ritual rules of fasting promotes a certain mode of human conduct, represents what may be called the ethical approach to fasting. But the third stage of attainment leads the worshipper to the realm of spiritual experience. al-Ghazālī defines this stage in more detail. It involves the emptying of the heart of all thought but Allah, setting one's heart entirely upon the remembrance of Him. This is the fast of the elect amongst the elect of the servants of Allah, and represents the stage of perfection in the journey of the soul to Allah. It is also important that a devotee should, after the end of his day's fast, take food considered lawful in the religious law and be moderate in taking food, for moderation in eating keeps the body healthy and excess leads to sickness and is often a hindrance to devotion.

The Hajj¹⁷

The pilgrimage to Mecca, or *hajj*, forms a basic constituent of Islamic practice, and is perhaps known to the world at large more widely than any other religious institution of Islam because of its international involvement. As a religious or customary institution, pilgrimage is among the oldest observances of mankind and has been practiced from ancient times by adherents of diverse beliefs whether in the animistic environment of primitive society or in the religiously developed surroundings of later times. In its widest sense, therefore, pilgrimage remains a living tradition in the surviving religious systems of the world, including Islam. The uniqueness of its character and definition in Islam lies in the fact that it ranks as an obligatory act on all eligible Muslims, to be accomplished at least once in a lifetime.

The *Ka'bah* in Mecca was the focus of the pilgrimage, the greatest event in ancient Arabia, which drew pilgrims from distant places as far as Yeman and Hadramaut in the south, from the shores of the Persian Gulf, from the deserts of Syria and the distant environs of Hira and Mesopotamia. But the customary practices then associated with the visit to the sanctuary of *Ka'bah*, held to be originally built by Prophet Abraham as the House of God, had suffered so great a corruption that they reflected the colour of the animistic and polytheistic traditions which had tainted Arabian society through the ages before the mission of Muhammad. The

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 39-41.

original sanctity of the *Ka'bah* as the House of Allah, purified for worship and retreat in remembrance of God, is associated by Muslims with the mission of Prophet Abraham who proclaimed the same monotheistic creed as did Muhammed several centuries later. The retention in Islam of this institution of pilgrimage to the sacred House of Allah in its pristine purity, therefore, is ample evidence of the antiquity of the central religious message of Islam, the restatement of the doctrine of *Tawhīd* or Oneness of God.

Students of Islamic history will recall that after Muhammad transferred from Mecca to Medina in the early years of his mission, neither he nor the Muslim adherents had access to this sacred centre, the *Ka'bah* in Mecca, until after the treaty of non-aggression was concluded at Hudaibiyyah in the sixth year of *Hijrah* and consequently this institution was made an obligatory act in the religious system of Islam only from the sixth year of *Hijrah* onwards. Four years later, in the tenth year of the *Hijrah*, Muhammad performed his last pilgrimage, called the Farewell Pilgrimage, to the sanctuary in Mecca. This was also his last farewell to the city of his birth, for after his return to Medina from this pilgrimage he passed away and so returned to Allah, having completed his mission of proclaiming the eternal word of Allah. From that year till now, covering a stretch of almost fourteen hundred years in time, devotees from the farthest territories of the Muslim world have converged annually to the sacred centre in Mecca in fulfillment of a duty which introduced a living sense of all-embracing brotherhood among the followers of Islam. This annual gathering of the Muslims in the sacred precincts of the House of Allah reaffirms the basic conviction of every Muslim that he is part of a universal community, that his world recognizes no boundaries other than the boundaries of Allah, and that he is bound to a spiritual conscience of unlimited scope and appeal.

The performance of this religious duty of *hajj* involves a series of observances on the part of every pilgrim, beginning from his approach to the bounds of the holy land until he leaves Mecca for his homeland, covering approximately a period of some ten to thirteen days. The commencement of the act of pilgrimage is marked by entering into a state of dedication for worship by the donning of a simple garb of unsewn white cloth in two pieces, and the completion of the act is indicated by the removal of this pilgrim's garb and thus leaving the state of consecration which began with the

putting on of the garments of the pilgrim. During this period of consecration, which lasts as long as ten days, the devotee dedicates himself absolutely to the worship of Allah by observing various rites of symbolic value which serve to recondition him to draw near to Allah in the very House of Allah. The process of mental and spiritual transformation which occurs in the pilgrim, during this spiritual journey of his, attains its peak when sometime between noon of the ninth day and the break of dawn of the tenth day he retires to the hill of 'Arafah', about seven miles from Mecca and surrenders himself in total resignation to Allah. All ritual observances which he is called upon to maintain convey to him the Omnipresence and Oneness of Allah and leads him to the unique spiritual experience of his nearness to Him.

These are some of the more apparent features associated with the institution of *hajj*, but there is a deeper meaning that is expressive of faith that underpins these features. In dealing with the subject of the *hajj*, al-Ghazālī interprets the whole institution and the symbolisms associated with it in a manner scarcely attempted in works of religious law which primarily aim only at formulating the rules of external rituals connected with the pilgrimage. Typical of the man who identifies an inner meaning to every external act, al-Ghazālī saw in the pilgrimage of the *hajj* an act of deep spiritual significance; he proceeds to speak firstly of a code of ethical conduct desirable in the life of a pilgrim, and secondly of inner spiritual secrets which lay in the depth of the outer symbols which characterise the *hajj*.

The performance of the *hajj* must be governed from start to finish by adherence to an ideal norm of moral conduct on the part of the pilgrim. al-Ghazālī enumerates several points which every pilgrim must observe throughout this whole journey. It is essential, he says, that a pilgrim should choose a suitable pious companion and also possess lawful sources of maintenance, for such a pious companion would be a source of great strength in producing a salutary atmosphere promoting good and dispelling evil, and such lawful provision would illuminate his conscience and add to his mental happiness. He must divest his hands of any involvement in trade or commerce so that his thoughts shall remain undiffused and his mind undivided, for otherwise his motive cannot attain the sanctity and purity so indispensable in accomplishing this sacred duty. The pilgrim should be generous in providing food to others during the journey and engage himself in useful and pleasant

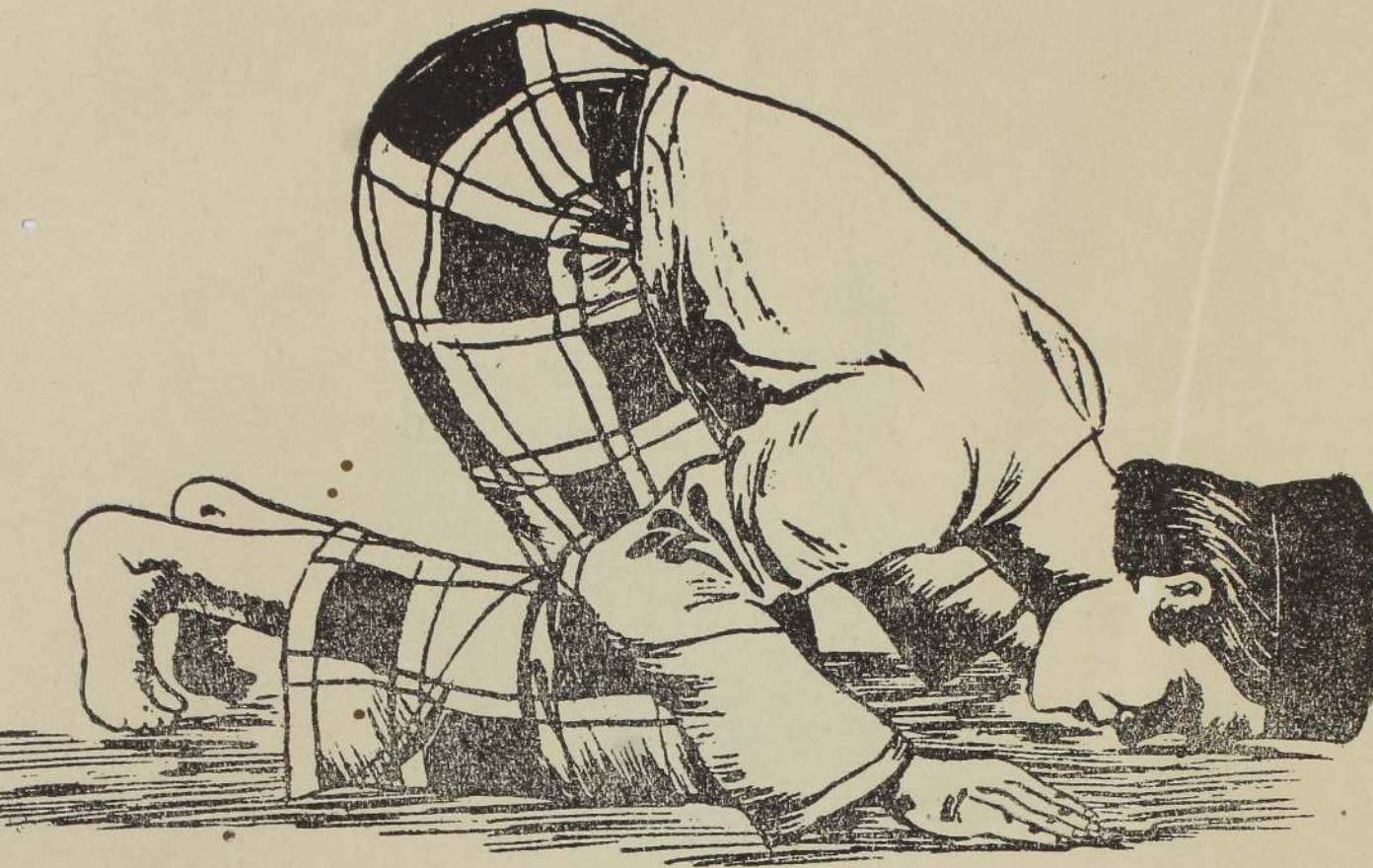
conversation with his companions and with others who might be helping him in his journey, such as those who provide transport. The devotee should refrain from indecent talk, from disputation and from superfluous conversation about secular affairs. On the contrary, he should confine his speech only to the most essential material needs and then give himself to contemplation and the reading of the Qur'ān. He should discourage ostentation and lavishness in the mode of travel. He must be cheerful in whatever he expends of his funds and must endure the trials and tribulations of the journey in the conviction that they are evidence that this act of pilgrimage has been successful and rewarding.

al-Ghazālī's interpretation of the significance of the institution of *hajj* is indeed penetrating. The *hajj* is a religious ritual that symbolizes a profound meaning. al-Ghazālī emphasises two fundamental aspects of its inner meaning; in the first place it presents in Islam what approximates to a centrally organised order of life which was a predominant feature in other religious communities. One of the unique features which distinguishes Islam from other religious systems is that it has no definite clerical organization, no monks and no monasticism and no priestly tradition, features which were common to most other religious traditions. The *hajj* therefore provides the only centrally organized religious institution defined by territory and seasons, and in that sense it provides the nearest counterpart of the organised religion of other communities. Allah had bestowed a singular honour on the ancient *Ka'bah* and called it His House and made it the sole converging point of assembly for all His worshippers. He sanctified the environs of His House in honour of the sacred precinct. He made the plain of 'Arafah' the open courtyard of the sanctuary and sanctified the sacred enclave by banning acts such as the killing of animals or the felling of trees. And He has given to it the likeness of the court of a king so that visitors from every corner of the earth may approach the Lord of the worlds in perfect humility and submission, acknowledging the fact that there cannot be any likeness conceivable in the human mind to Allah, who is unlimited by either locality or space. Here the pilgrim experiences his utter abjectness in the sight of Allah. The performance of the *hajj* involves many acts which might appear to some as contradicting human nature and defying the reasoning faculty. Hence there is a need to set aside such interpretation of the reasoning instincts of man and to approach Allah through the self-surrender involved in worship.

The second interpretation which al-Ghazālī gives to the *hajj* is that every act and phase of activity involved in the *hajj* bears resemblance to and is symbolic of a person's journey to the Hereafter. He compares the farewell of a pilgrim to members of his family at the commencement of his journey to the farewell of a person on the verge of his death; his departure from his homeland, to his departing from this world; his transportation to Mecca, to his being carried in the funeral procession; his wearing the garb of a pilgrim, to the shroud put on a corpse before burial; the whole journey from its commencement to the arrival at the plain of 'Arafah, to his journey from the day of death to the day of resurrection; his fear of the desert robbers who may waylay him, to his anxiety about the questioning after death by the angels Munkar and Nakīr; the fear of the beasts which he may come across during the journey, to the worms which may attack his body in the grave; and his separation from his family and relatives, to the solitude of the grave and its aloofness. For al-Ghazālī every act is a symbol of some deeper significance and so ends the author his illuminating interpretation of the various stages of the pilgrim's progress to the House of Allah.

The purpose of worship, al-Ghazālī says, is to establish fellowship with Allah through remembrance of Him, to withdraw from the World of Deception and to dwell in the World of Eternity. But Muslims cannot attain this goal unless we draw near to Allah with love; we cannot attain to Divine Love unless we gain intuitive knowledge of Allah; we cannot gain either intuitive knowledge of Allah or His Love except through contemplation and constant remembrance of Him. But such remembrance of Him will not subsist in our hearts unless we resort to definite modes for remembrance. The various forms of worship, therefore, provide us with these modes, manifested in Sri Lanka with meaning in the hearts of Muslims.





THE CATHOLIC PRESENCE IN SRI LANKA THROUGH HISTORY, BELIEF, AND FAITH

W. L. A. DON PETER

On August 13, 1967, a Catholic priest received a message from the Venerable Walagedera Somaloka Tissa Nayaka Thera, a patient at the Ayurvedic Hospital in Colombo. The Catholic priest went straightaway to the hospital. After a pleasant conversation, when the Catholic priest stood to leave, the Venerable Thera said to his friend: 'Now bless me according to your faith, and I will bless you according to mine'. This they did.

Members of the Roman Catholic Church have been in Sri Lanka for several centuries, and they represent all strata of society in the country. Their places of worship, churches big and small, some of them imposing buildings, such as St. Lucia's Cathedral, Kotahena, and the Basilica at Tewatte, are to be seen in many parts of the country, especially on the western seaboard and the Jaffna peninsula and Mannar where Catholics are most numerous. Their popular shrines and centres of pilgrimage, such as Our Lady of Madu, St. Anne's of Talawila, St. Anthony's of Kochchikade and St. Jude's of Indigolla, are well known in the country, and sometimes visited also by adherents of other religious traditions. The Basilica of Our Lady of Lanka at Tewatte is the national shrine of Sri Lanka's Catholics. Catholic priests in their white robes and Catholic religious, especially nuns, in the respective religious habit of the various orders, are quite often seen in the country. The Catholic Church has been in the forefront in education in Sri Lanka, especially before the government take-over of denominational schools in 1960, and some of the leading schools in the island are run by Catholic priests and religious and attended also by non-Catholic pupils. Catholics constitute a notable section of the population of the country and are by far the most numerous of Sri Lanka's Christians.

Although Catholics represent a minority of the inhabitants of Sri Lanka, there remains among them an awareness of being singularly fortunate that they are able to profess the Catholic faith, which they greatly value, and which has been handed down from generation to generation for centuries. Indeed they regard it as a blessing that the Portuguese were instrumental in opening the way for European missionaries to bring the Catholic faith to Sri Lanka, although the contact which Sri Lanka had with Portugal as a colonial power was damaging to the country in many respects.

The first Catholic missionaries to come to Sri Lanka during the Portuguese period (1505-1658) of our country's history were the Franciscans, members of a religious order founded in the thirteenth century by St. Francis of Assisi and noted for such mediaeval men of learning as Bonaventure, Alexander of Hales, Duns Scotus, William of Ockham, Adam Marsh and Roger Bacon. In the days of colonial expansion of European powers, spearheaded by Spain and Portugal in the latter part of the fifteenth century, the Popes in order to encourage these two Catholic nations to spread their faith throughout their colonies, granted them special privileges, in return for which they were required to extend their patronage (*Padroado* in Portuguese) to the Church in the colonies, which meant that they had to provide them with missionaries as well as funds for the maintenance of missionary personnel. It was thus that King John III of Portugal sent to Sri Lanka in 1543, at the request of Bhuvanekabāhu VII, king of Kotte (1521-1551), who needed Portuguese support against his brother and rival, Māyādunne of Sitawaka (1521-1581), the first group of Franciscans, and entrusted to them the whole island as their mission field.

For nearly sixty years Franciscans were the only missionaries in Sri Lanka except for a few secular priests, that is, priests who are not members of religious orders but are directly subject to the local bishop. The Franciscans led to Christianity Bhuvanekabāhu's grandson and successor Dharmapāla (1551-1597) and many of his subjects. When the kingdom of Kotte, a protectorate of Portugal in Dharmapāla's reign, came under Portuguese rule at his death, as he, not having issue, had gifted his kingdom to the king of Portugal, missionaries of other orders were also invited to assist the Franciscans. In 1602 came Jesuits, members of a new religious order, the Society of Jesus, founded in the second quarter of the sixteenth

century by a group of seven Paris University men, one of whom was Ignatius Loyola, their leader, and another, Francis Xavier, who became the first Jesuit to come to the East, and arrived in India about the time the first group of Franciscans came to Sri Lanka, and was himself much concerned about the implanting of the Catholic faith in the Island. The Augustinians or Austin Frairs came to Sri Lanka in 1606; and in the same year came also members of the Dominican order, which produced Thomas Aquinas, one of the greatest thinkers of mediaeval Europe, after whom a leading Catholic educational institution in Sri Lanka, Aquinas College, is named. It was by members of these four orders—Franciscans, Jesuits, Augustinians, Dominicans—that missionary work was carried out in Sri Lanka during the Portuguese period.

The period that followed, the Dutch period (1658-1796), was a trying time for the Catholics. The Dutch, through fear that Catholicism in Sri Lanka as well as the Portuguese language might continue to provide political links with Portugal, sought to root out both, an attempt that, however, failed. They expelled all the Catholic missionaries from the country, proscribed the expression of Catholic faith, took over Catholic churches and schools for the use of the Calvinist Reformed Church of Holland, subjected Catholics to fines, imprisonment, confiscation of property and deportation for practising their faith, forbade them under pain of death to harbour Catholic priests, and made every effort to get them to accept the Calvinist doctrine. It was a time when on the one hand the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka was purified of its dross, for those who had joined it from unworthy motives soon fell away, and on the other the loyalty of the remainder to their faith was proved, for in spite of the disabilities and hardships they had to endure, they bravely and tenaciously held fast to their faith. It is a source of inspiration and pride to Sri Lanka's Catholics that in the dark days of the Dutch persecution their forefathers remained true to their faith.

The missionaries of the Portuguese period had made the mistake of not recruiting a local clergy, with the result that when the Catholic missionaries were banished from the country by the Dutch, there were no priests to minister to the thousands of Catholics in the island. They were without a single priest for thirty years. It was then that, in 1687, an Indian priest of Goa, Joseph Vaz, hearing

of the sad plight of the Catholics of Sri Lanka, entered the island secretly and in disguise, and braving great hardships and dangers and the ever-present risk of falling into the hands of the Dutch, devotedly attended to the spiritual care of the Catholics, first single-handed for about a decade, and thence forward with the assistance of a handful of other Indian priests from the Congregation of the Oratory he had himself founded at Goa before coming to Sri Lanka. Although the island was juridically part of the Diocese of Cochin, it virtually became an independent unit because of the persecution, and Father Vaz and his colleagues had to manage Sri Lanka's Church by themselves. At a time when posts of authority and responsibility in the Church in Asian countries were held by European missionaries, we have in Father Vaz a unique instance of an Asian in charge of an Asian Church manned entirely by Asian missionaries. That he was eminently equal to the task and wisely guided the Church in the unusual situation in which it found itself is amply borne out by the history of the times. To no other churchman, foreign or local, do the Catholics of Sri Lanka owe so much as to Father Vaz, whom they rightly venerate as 'the Apostle of Sri Lanka' and whose heroic deeds they remember with gratitude and admiration.

To him they are specially grateful for directing one of his colleagues, Jacome Gonçavez, a gifted linguist and writer, to learn the languages of the country, Sinhala and Tamil, and to produce a Catholic literature in these languages, especially in Sinhala, for the use of Sri Lanka's Catholics. Father Gonçavez very creditably carried out the work assigned to him by his superior. Although he did not know a word of Sinhala when he came from India, he thoroughly mastered the language and produced a literature, extensive and varied, in prose and in verse, in elegant literary language as well as in simple conversational idiom, and sufficient to provide the Sinhalese Catholic of his day, nay even of today, with a wide knowledge of his religious heritage and faith—twenty-two books in all, running to thousands of pages, some of which merit to be ranked among the classical works in the language—a remarkable achievement for a single man in the circumstances in which he lived and worked, an achievement that has very deservedly earned for him the title of 'Father of Sinhalese Catholic Literature'. He wrote also fifteen books in Tamil, four in Portuguese, and one in Dutch.

It was by Indian missionaries from Father Vaz's Oratorian Congregation in Goa that the Catholic faith in Sri Lanka was kept alive in the difficult days of persecution until, after about a century and a quarter, religious freedom was restored to the Catholics with the British occupation of the island, and it became possible for European Catholic missionaries to come to Sri Lanka again.

And come they did. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate came from France, Jesuits from Belgium and Italy, and Sylvestro-Benedictines from Italy. Oblates took charge of the Dioceses of Colombo and Jaffna, Jesuits of Galle and Trincomalee, Sylvestro-Benedictines of Kandy, and the Diocese of Chilaw was entrusted to the secular clergy—six Dioceses in all with Colombo as the Archdiocese. Today there are eight ecclesiastical territories, the new ones being Badulla and Anuradhapura, carved out of the Dioceses of Kandy and Jaffna, respectively. Members of these religious orders served not only the Church, but also the country, especially in the field of education. Christopher Bonjean, a French Oblate and first Archbishop of Colombo (1886-1892), championed, already as a priest the denominational system of education, which was established under the British in the eighteen sixties, and continued down to the take-over of the schools by the government in 1960. To mention a few others, LeGoc, Peter Pillai, Matthews and Long, all of them Oblates, distinguished themselves as educators. Gñāna Prakasar, an Oblate, and S. G. Perera, a Jesuit, are well known as historians.

The religious orders that worked in Sri Lanka in the British period took in local recruits and at the same time saw to the formation of a diocesan (secular) clergy as well, so that today the Church in Sri Lanka is manned almost entirely by Sri Lankan clergy. All the bishops are Sri Lankans; so are the great majority of the priests and religious. The decision of our government in Sri Lanka not to allow new foreign missionaries into the country has been no serious setback to the Church, while the services of the few foreign missionaries who yet remain in the country are greatly valued by both their local colleagues and the people. At the same time Sri Lankan Catholics can take pride in the fact that they are now in a position to send their own sons and daughters to work in other countries. There are Sri Lankan priests and religious serving the Church today in Pakistan, Malaysia, Australia, South America, and elsewhere.

From this brief history, we note that Catholicism came to Sri Lanka from the West and in alliance with Western colonialism. Christianity, like the other great religious traditions present in this country, had its origin in Asia. But historically the Christian faith was first carried to the West, and it was from a Christian Europe that, from towards the end of the fifteenth century, it was brought to African and Asian countries. It is true that the Saint Thomas Christians of South India have a tradition that their forefathers received the faith from the Apostle Thomas, and it is known that Nestorian Christians were active in the East from the seventh to the tenth century, but the number of Christians in either case was small. It was with the colonial expansion of European powers that organized Christian missionary work was undertaken in Asian countries.

The first European power to extend its dominion into Asia was Portugal. It not only established its power in some countries and exploited them commercially, but also aggressively propagated Catholicism among the inhabitants. This was done not merely because it was the desire of the kings of Portugal, urged on by the Church, to spread their faith, which they considered to be the only true one, but also because they expected it to be a bond that would strengthen their political ties with their subject peoples. The general attitude of both the Portuguese authorities and the missionaries towards other religious traditions in their colonies was not merely unsympathetic but positively hostile and destructive, and at the same time they resorted to rather questionable methods to propagate their own religion. Although Catholics might regard as a blessing the introduction of their faith into the country even through such earthly and unwelcome agents as the Portuguese, the fact that the attempt to propagate Catholicism was made by a nation that deprived the people of their political sovereignty, exploited the country for their own gain, caused bloodshed and destruction by war, and sought to exterminate the traditional religions by repressive and destructive measures, tended to engender in the inhabitants not only a strong antipathy to the foreigner but also a suspicion of the religion he brought.

Catholicism might have been more acceptable to the people had it been introduced purely as a religious faith, without it being allied in any way with European imperialism. St. Francis Xavier

took Catholicism to Japan—the first Christian missionary to set foot in that country—and during the two years he laboured there (1549-1551) established several sizeable catholic communities in that country without being supported by Portugal politically, militarily or otherwise. We have in Sri Lanka itself the striking example of Catholic missionaries being welcomed and courteously received by Buddhist kings when they came only as teachers of a religious faith, not as representatives or agents of a foreign power. When Catholics in the parts of the country that were under the rule of the Calvinist Dutch government were being penalized for their faith and their priests hunted—Christians persecuting Christians!—Father Vaz and his companions, who had come into the country only to minister to the Catholics, were received and treated with the greatest respect and friendliness by the Buddhist kings of Kandy, Vimaladharmā Sūrya II (1687-1706) and Sri Vira Narendrasimha (1706-1739).

It seems therefore that if Catholicism, and other forms of Christianity that came to Sri Lanka after it, have sometimes been looked upon as 'foreign' to the country, it is not so much because Christianity was introduced from outside—so was, in this sense, the Buddhist tradition—but because it was the religion professed and imposed on the country by people who, by the use of superior arms, robbed the country of its independence, reduced the inhabitants to the humiliation of servitude to them, and exploited the country for their own gain and to the detriment of the inhabitants. It is largely Christianity's association with Western imperialism that has tended to make Asian peoples regard it as 'foreign' to them.

In any case, Catholicism is a religion in Sri Lanka with a four hundred-year-old tradition, and no Catholic would consider his religion as 'foreign', nor are Catholics and other Christians in any way less patriotic than their Buddhist, or Hindu, or Muslim brethren. Catholicism is as much a religious tradition of the country as any other that has existed in the island for a longer period. Catholics represent not only the oldest Christian Church in the country, but throughout their history they have contributed in no small measure to religiousness in Sri Lanka.

However, the form of Catholicism that was brought to Sri Lanka and other Asian countries was one closely identified with European culture. The missionaries brought not only a reli-

gious tradition but also a culture which they regarded as superior to the cultures of colonial peoples. Moreover, the missionaries, who looked upon oriental religious traditions and the cultures influenced by them as 'pagan', found it difficult to adapt Christianity to the indigenous cultures of Asian peoples. Thus, even till now, Catholicism in Sri Lanka has preserved to a large extent its European character. Attempts are being made, rather belatedly, to absorb Catholicism into the country's culture. For instance, Latin, which has traditionally been the religious language of Catholicism, has recently been replaced by Sinhala and Tamil. However, Catholicism's European look, which has been there with it for the past four hundred years, need really not make the Church seem foreign to Sri Lanka. Just as Europeans would not be surprised to see the Buddhist tradition in Europe retain some of its oriental texture, so it would really not surprise Asian peoples to see the Christian tradition in their countries retaining to some extent a European garb. Indeed, the tendency among Asian peoples, even in politically independent countries, is to adopt more and more from the culture of the West. What has prevented wider acceptance of Christianity in Asian countries is therefore not so much its European look, but the fact that, as already noted, it had been allied with European imperialism, which held so many of the Asian countries in its grip till our own times.

Nor does the fact that Catholicism is an organized religion with members among other nations and its centre in a foreign country prevent Sri Lankan Catholics from being truly Sri Lankan. Just as there are other international organizations, educational, scientific, social, commercial, philanthropic, etc., which a Sri Lankan may join without in any way being disloyal to his own country, so could a Sri Lankan be a member of an international, or rather supranational, religious body as the Catholic Church without in the least failing in his loyalties to his motherland. A Catholic's obedience to the Pope, the Head of his Church, is confined to the spiritual order and will not interfere with his allegiance to his native country. On the contrary Catholic teaching fosters among its adherents genuine patriotism, and exhorts and urges us to come forward to serve our country in political, educational, social and other

fields. Sri Lankan Catholics have not in the least been wanting in this respect.

The fact that the Catholic Church is a world-wide religious organization has actually enabled it to work for the promotion of international peace and harmony and for the educational, social and cultural welfare of peoples. In every country the Church is well known, not only for its work in the sphere of education, but also for its social and charitable work in which religious orders of both men and women play a prominent part. So it is in Sri Lanka. In the Portuguese period, the Confraternity of Charity, known as the *Misericordia*, was introduced into the country. There were in fact three *Misericordias* at the time, in Colombo, Galle and Jaffna. Charitable work under Catholic auspices proliferated in the British period. The Church established orphanages, homes for the aged, homes for the deaf and the blind, nursing homes, etc., for which in most cases financial assistance was obtained from Catholics and Catholic organizations in the West. At the international level, it is for the purpose of promoting human welfare, particularly world peace, that the Pope has diplomatic relations with governments, and his representatives, known as Nuncios, reside in various countries, which in turn are represented at the Holy See by their ambassadors. Sri Lanka too is one of more than one hundred countries that have diplomatic relations with the Holy See.

The Catholic faith, which thus came to Sri Lanka and bound its adherents in close spiritual fellowship with others of the same faith in other parts of the world, is first learnt by the child in the bosom of the family and from his own parents. In a home where both parents are devout Catholics and a religious atmosphere prevails, the child will come to learn of God and our dependence on Him, of the redeeming mission and action of Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, and of the mediatory role of the Virgin Mary and the Saints. The child will take part in various religious exercises with the parents, particularly night prayers in the home and, as he grows older, Sunday Mass in the church. Catholic parents will naturally want their child to grow up as a sensitive, devout Catholic, and will therefore themselves try to be an example and inspiration to him in the practice of the faith.

It is a great advantage to a child to be reared religiously in that way, as I gratefully reflect upon the experience of my own childhood. The Catholic parent will not subscribe to the view that religion should not be 'imposed' on the child, but that he should be left alone to choose his own religion as he grows up. Does not a child imbibe the culture of his parents? Religion is part of culture. Parents, therefore, who communicate their culture to their children can also justifiably communicate to them their religious faith as well. We as children never felt that religion was being imposed or forced upon us by our parents. It came quite naturally to us from them, just as we learnt our language, social customs and civic duties from them. The child when grown up is of course free to choose another religious way of life, or to have no religious commitment at all, but early training in a religious heritage and way of life is a great boon to one. The saying that the child is father of the man well applies also to religious education given to one in childhood. Such a religious education cannot however, be given totally and integratively to one in childhood when the parents do not share the same faith. Difference of religious orientation in the parents tends to cause confusion in the child which tends not to be wholesome for a child at an early age.

The religious education a child receives in the home should continue and be supplemented in the school. But the school cannot impart a worthwhile religious education unless it can provide a child with a religious atmosphere in which he will be able not only to learn his faith more thoroughly but also to learn to live it, for religious education is not merely the imparting of a knowledge of religious teachings, but a training to a way of life according to the tenets of the religion concerned. That is why the Catholic Church in this country has all along been in favour of the denominational school system, which was a very workable arrangement of partnership between the state and religious bodies, the state subsidizing the schools and supervising education, and the religious bodies responsible for their management, to see especially that the child is given a good religious education, for close contact and cooperation between the school and religious denominations is essential for a meaningful religious education in the school.

It is because the denominational school system provided an agreeable and satisfactory arrangement for religious education that the Catholic Church in this country built at great cost a large number of schools chiefly in the predominantly Catholic parts of the country, schools which have been known for the high standards they attained not only in studies but more especially in the moral training they imparted. Although Catholic denominational schools were meant for Catholic children, pupils of other religious traditions were also admitted into them, largely because the parents themselves were anxious to have their children admitted to these schools. In the case of some schools, non-Catholic pupils even outnumbered the Catholic pupils. But in spite of its concern for religious education and its insistence that Catholic children should be given a well grounded religious education, that being in fact the *raison d'être* of the Catholic denominational school, the Church refused to teach the non-Catholic children attending Catholic schools their respective religious heritages, taking the view that to do so would be to indirectly uphold what it considered to be an error. The refusal to teach the Buddhist tradition to Buddhist pupils in Catholic schools was one of the reasons that led the Buddhist Commission Report of 1956 to urge that the government should take over all denominational schools, which thereafter, as state schools, would teach all pupils their religion. It is to be regretted that the Church did not consider at that time that it was a good thing to help non-Catholic pupils learn their religious tradition and to practise their faith—an attitude that has however changed after the Second Vatican Council—but on the other hand we have also to take note of the fact that the mere teaching of religious doctrines in the state schools, even if it is satisfactorily done, is not going to make one a genuine Buddhist or a true Catholic.

As a child grows older, he will learn more and more about the Catholic faith, mainly in the school, both in studying religion in the classroom and in taking part in various religious exercises and activities. And as a result of such knowledge he will tend to make his own by personal choice the faith he had received from his parents in childhood.

There are, of course, people who continue to practise as adults the 'religion of their childhood', the religion passed on to them by

their parents, merely because it is the religion of their ancestors, or their community, race, country or nation. They accept the religious tradition received from the past, or as part of a traditional culture, just as they accept traditional social customs. As religion, apart from its cultural aspects, purports to teach a doctrine or truths pertaining to man's life and destiny, which is really its basic function, one cannot meaningfully practise one's faith without an intelligent inquiry into and understanding of its teachings, and their acceptance from personal conviction.

Among Catholics too we meet these two types, that is, those who are content to be traditional Catholics and whose practice of the faith does not generally go beyond the routine performance of certain religious rites, and those who have made an intelligent study of the faith and therefore accept it, not because it has been handed down to them, but because of personal realization of its worth: and they are therefore able to practise it, not to conform to tradition, but for the sake of the spiritual benefit one can derive therefrom. Needless to say the Church cannot be too happy or satisfied with the first type of Catholic. Hence its concern to give a thorough religious education to the young, which has to be done not only in the Catholic home but also in the Catholic school.

In school, in the lower grades the child learns Christian doctrine from the Catechism, and also comes indirectly in contact with the Bible from the Bible stories he learns in the course of his study of the doctrine. In the upper grades, however, he is introduced to the Bible itself, mainly through the Gospels, one of which is studied as part of the syllabus for the General Certificate of Education, Ordinary Level examination. From the Gospels the pupil comes to know the life and teachings of Christ recorded in them as they were known to his disciples.

The Gospels are the chief source for the teachings of the Catholic faith. They are the most important of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament part of the Bible.

The four Gospels, so similar in many respects and yet so different, are unique writings in all religious literature. Written by Christ's Apostles (Matthew and John) or others (Mark and Luke)

during the lifetime of the Apostles with information gathered from them (Luke 1:2-3), they are remarkable for their straightforwardness and utter sincerity. They tell us briefly about Christ whom the Apostles had personally known, who had taught and trained them for their future work, and for whose sake they were prepared to suffer anything and even give their very life, which many of them actually did. Their attempts to win converts to the love of God in Christ in Palestine and other neighbouring countries and in Rome itself are recounted in the Acts of the Apostles, another of the books of the New Testament.

Christ entrusted his teaching to the Church he founded with his Apostles as its nucleus or foundation and with one of them as its head—Simon, named 'rock' or Peter by him and given special authority and prerogatives (Matthew 16:18-19)—whose successor is the Bishop of Rome or the Pope.

Christ did not ask that his teaching be committed to writing, but some of it came to be written down in the time of the Apostles—the teaching contained basically in the Gospels and elaborated to some extent in the Epistles which also form part of the New Testament. From internal evidence itself we see that it was not the purpose of the Gospels to record all that Christ did or taught. The Catholic Church, therefore, does not regard the Bible as the sole source of divine revelation. It is the Church that is the repository of Christ's teaching, whether written down in apostolic times and included in the Bible, or not written down then but passed on to the successors of the Apostles. The Church is also the official teacher and interpreter of Christ's teaching.

Christ wants his teaching to be accepted as the indispensable means for man to attain his destiny (e.g., Luke 10:16; John 13:20; Mark 16:16). If his teaching is that important, it is necessary for us to know it correctly. What is said in human language can be misinterpreted or understood in various ways. This has in fact happened with respect to Christ's teaching itself as evidenced by the number of Christian Churches that have sprung up, which differ in doctrine although all claim to have Christ as their teacher. We should therefore expect Christ to have given us the means also by which his teaching can be known exactly as meant by him. The

Catholic Church holds that Christ has given that means—that among the special prerogatives given to Peter and his successors is the assurance that they would be preserved from error when, in the role of pastor of the universal Church, they teach and interpret Christ's teaching. The Church holds that this prerogative, known as 'Papal Infallibility'—a much misunderstood concept—is included in 'the power of the keys' given to Peter—'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven'. (Matthew 16:19). It is only if heaven will not permit Peter to err that this promise of Christ can be fulfilled. And that is what the Catholic Church means by infallibility—that Peter and his successors, as guardians, teachers and interpreters of Christ's teaching, have the assurance of being preserved from error.

The unique affirmation of the Gospels, not to speak of the other books of the Bible, is that Christ is not just a human teacher of a religious faith, but God Himself, God Incarnate—that he, called in Scripture the 'Word', is one with the Father who sent him, and the Holy Spirit, whom he promised to send after his return to his Father and whose descent on his disciples is recorded in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. In the opening words of his Gospel, John makes this solemn declaration: 'In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through him.... The Word was made flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth' (John 1:1-3, 14). Christ himself said he was one with the Father, and therefore God, and worked some of his miracles in testimony of this. Another manifestation of his divinity, his resurrection, is testified to by his disciples and others, and recorded in the Gospels.

Belief in the existence of God is basic to Christianity. From what we see around us on our tiny planet and in space, the immensity of which itself baffles us, one might reason that all these things could not have come into being without an all-powerful and supremely intelligent force behind them as their source, and call that

force God. It is of this manner of reaching a knowledge of God that the psalmist speaks when he says:

The heavens declare the glory of God,
the vault of heaven proclaims his handiwork;
day discourses of it to day,
night to night hands on the knowledge.
No utterance at all, no speech,
no sound that anyone can hear;
yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their message to the ends of the world.
(Psalm 19:1-4)

But the Christian's knowledge of God comes from another source—from what Christ has revealed.

Christ not only said he was God but also revealed to us something of God's nature which we would never have known without such revelation. He speaks of himself as being one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, thus revealing to us the presence of three divine persons in God, the mystery of the Trinity, which St. Patrick, Apostle of Ireland, is said to have compared to the three-lobed leaf of the shamrock, and a Sinhalese poet of the seventeenth century, Alagiyavanna, compared to the 'word', with its three elements of sound, symbol (orthography) and sense (*Kustantīnu Hatana*, vs. 1).

We accept this doctrine, the central and fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith—as well as others—on Christ's word. It is because I am convinced that I could believe what Christ says that I accept his teaching, even when what he tells me is beyond my comprehension. Indeed I am not surprised that God cannot be brought within the narrow compass of my limited human intelligence.

Linked with this mystery of the Trinity is the other basic doctrine of Christian faith, the mystery of the Incarnation, by which is meant that the Second Person of the Trinity, while remaining a divine person, assumed human nature, and was born of the Virgin Mary, as Jesus Christ. Christ is therefore the Word made flesh, God become man.

Christianity has meaning and value only because of our faith in Christ as God. From a Christian's perspective this theme, the

divine character of Christ and of his mission, dominates the entire Bible. The Old Testament part of it is a record of divine intervention through human agents to prepare for Christ's coming on earth as man, and the New Testament records his coming, his life, his teaching, and the provision he made by instituting the Church not only to have his message carried to all men but also to communicate divine life to man. He who is God became man to enable us to partake of His divine life so that we also may share His blessedness. This is the whole purpose of Christianity, the fulfillment of Christian faith.

It was for this purpose, to communicate divine life to man, that Christ founded his Church. He has given the Church what are known as Sacraments, instituted by himself, as the channels through which divine life is communicated to his followers. It is through the Sacrament of Baptism, conferred on a child shortly after birth, that he receives for the first time the divine gift of supernatural life, which makes him a child of God. As mere humans we are only God's creatures and God is only our Creator. But when lifted to the supernatural level by participation in divine life through Baptism, we become children of God, and God is our Father. Just as on the human plane we call 'father' the one who communicates to us our human nature, so on the supernatural plane God becomes our Father as He communicates to us our participation in His own divine nature.

Since God is our Father, we have duties and obligations towards Him, just as it is a child's duty to love, respect and obey his parents. Indeed the primary purpose of religion, as the Catholic sees it, is to fulfill these duties towards God our Father. Worship and communing with God by prayer and meditation therefore become part of our religious life. We will also seek to do God's will, whether manifested directly by Him (the Ten Commandments) or through the Church which has the authority and responsibility to give guidance to its members. Thus religion for the Catholic involves a twofold move—one from us towards God our Father, as man endowed with reason and freedom must make the move towards God on his own, and the other from God towards us to make us share His divine life so that finally He may share also His beatitude.

To provide us with the highest form of worship of God and also to enable us to commune with God in the most intimate manner, Christ instituted and gave his Church what is known as the Holy Eucharist.

In Old Testament times the Jewish priests offered to God sacrifices of animals. These sacrifices were but shadows of the supreme and perfect sacrifice that Christ was to offer by his death on the cross. By his death as man, he offered to God, on man's behalf, homage of infinite worth, for it was the homage of a divine person, and thus made full atonement for man's sin, enabling him to partake again of divine life through the Church, the divine life God had originally given to man along with his human nature; and which he had lost by sin.

In the Jewish sacrifices the victim and the priest were distinct. In Christ's sacrifice, however, he was not only the victim but also the priest. When he could very well have escaped death, Christ allowed himself to be put to death, and thus was a priest offering the sacrifice of his own life for man. 'I am the good shepherd..., and I lay down my life for my sheep....No one takes it from me. I lay it down of my own free will'. (John 10:14, 15, 18.)

Christ not only offered his life to atone for man's sin, but took another step as mysterious as the first; he made it possible for his sacrifice on the cross to be again and again reoffered till the end of time by instituting, as recorded in all the Gospels, the Holy Eucharist, that is, the conversion into himself, into his body and blood, of the substance of bread and wine, through the ministry of a priest ordained for the purpose, whereby his sacrifice on the cross is mystically renewed. This, known as 'the breaking of bread' in the early Church, is the sacrifice of the Mass.

It is Catholic belief that the Mass is the highest form of worship man can offer to God, as it is a re-offering of the sacrifice of Christ himself, a sacrifice of infinite value. This is why Catholics consider it a serious obligation, unless prevented by legitimate reasons, to go to church to offer the sacrifice of the Mass at least once a week on Sundays, for no other form of worship can replace the Mass. There are various forms of popular religious cults among Catholics, such as devotion to the Saints, celebration of festivals, religious

processions, pilgrimages to sacred shrines, veneration of images and relics, and devotional exercises of various types—practices which occur in other religious traditions as well, although the doctrinal basis of such practices in Christianity may be different—but the Mass is for a Catholic a form of worship which far surpasses all the others.

But why should there be worship in the form of sacrifice, one might ask. If one believes, as a Catholic does, in the existence of a supreme, all-perfect, almighty God Who is the source of all things and union with Whom is to be man's final destiny, then sacrifice is the highest form of expression of man's acknowledgement of God's supremacy, his dependence on Him, and his desire to be united with Him. Sacrifice is a form of acknowledgement of God's power over life and death, of His being the source and support of all things, of His supreme dominion, and of His being the Absolute.

The Holy Eucharist is not only a sacrifice but also a means of communing with Christ. After Christ becomes present in the bread and wine at Mass and the sacrifice is offered, the priest and the people can partake of the bread (or wine or both) and thus receive Christ—which is known as Holy Communion. Christ remains present in the recipient until the specific character of the bread (or the wine) changes. Long before he instituted the Holy Eucharist, Christ made known that he would give his followers his flesh and blood as their spiritual nourishment to help preserve in them the divine life he was going to communicate to them through the Church. 'I am the bread of life.... I tell you most solemnly, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you.... For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink'. (John 6:48, 53, 55.)

Later, when he instituted the Eucharist, 'Jesus took some bread, and when he had said the blessing, he broke it and gave it to the disciples. "Take it and eat" he said, "this is my body". Then he took a cup, and when he had returned thanks he gave it to them. "Drink all of you from this", he said, "for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, which is to be poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins"'. (Matthew 26:26-28.)

Church law requires that Catholics should receive Holy Communion at least once a year, but we are urged to receive it as often

as possible with the proper dispositions. A memorable day in the life of a Catholic is the day of the First Communion, the day on which one receives Christ in the Eucharist for the first time, generally at the age of seven or eight, a day of rejoicing for obvious reasons, not only for the recipient, but also for the members of one's family and close relatives and friends. And it is customary also to give Holy Communion for the last time to a Catholic on his or her deathbed, a moment when Christ's help is especially needed.

It is also a Catholic custom to keep, after Mass, a part of the Eucharistic bread in churches, in a special pository, called the Tabernacle, for the purpose of giving it to the sick and the dying, and for prayer and adoration before it, for to a Catholic Christ is really and truly present in the Eucharist, just as he was when he lived on earth, the manner of presence alone being different. Because of this belief in the Real Presence of Christ, the church is truly a temple of God for a Catholic, and this explains why through the centuries Catholics have spent enormous sums of money and taken great pains to build handsome churches and to richly embellish them.

Thus the Eucharist holds a central place in Catholic cult and life. Through it Christ has provided his followers with a form of worship of the highest order, the Mass, and has also given us a means of communing with him, both by reception of the Eucharist and by prayer before his Eucharistic presence.

Along with the Sacrament of the Eucharist, Christ instituted also the Sacrament of Holy Orders, for the express purpose of dispensing the Eucharist. One receives the Sacrament of Orders or is ordained a priest in the Catholic Church primarily and essentially as a minister of the Eucharist. The priest in celebrating Mass, in administering Holy Communion to the faithful, the sick and the dying, and in living near Christ's Eucharistic presence in the Church, not only lives his life for Christ, but also in close contact with him. It is a great privilege, and a source of much comfort for priests, that they serve the living Christ in the Eucharist.

In view of the special functions and duties of the priestly state, the life of self-sacrifice it entails, and the high moral and spiritual attainments it postulates, one needs to have a special vocation or calling to this state. For generations sons of Sri Lanka

have dedicated their lives to the services of God as priests. Various factors might lead one to choose the priesthood as one's life's commitment, such as the deeply religious environment of home and school, the example of devoted and dedicated priests one has known, the suggestion made by devout Catholic parents or teachers to choose this life, the urge one may feel as a result of some spiritual experience to live a life of total dedication to God, the inspiring life of a saint or the heroic deeds of a missionary; but the final decision must of course come from oneself after mature deliberation, consultation and prayer.

To study for the priesthood one enters a seminary. In a Minor Seminary, which is more or less an ecclesiastical high school, the candidate pursues his secular studies. In addition to the subjects of the normal school curriculum, he will also study some subjects that will be of special use to him as an aspirant to the priesthood. Nearly every diocese in Sri Lanka has a Minor Seminary.

On completion of secular studies, at least secondary studies either in a Minor Seminary or in an ordinary school, a candidate is admitted to a Major Seminary for ecclesiastical studies. In Sri Lanka there is one Major Seminary, the National Seminary at Ampitiya, Kandy, which educates for the priesthood candidates from all the dioceses of Sri Lanka. It is affiliated to the Pontifical Urban University in Rome.

In the Major Seminary a candidate has normally to study for a minimum period of six years before he is ordained. During this period he has to give himself fully to ecclesiastical studies—a two-year course in Philosophy, followed by courses in the major religious disciplines of Theology (dogmatic, moral, ascetical, pastoral), Holy Scripture, Canon Law, Church History, Liturgy and Comparative Religion. There are also several minor subjects such as languages and cultural studies. The study of these various subjects is intended to give a candidate the intellectual formation he should have to carry out his duties as a priest.

Seminary studies are of tertiary level, very much like university studies, but there is a notable difference between the one and the other, which is that in the seminary great stress is laid on the moral and spiritual formation of a candidate. This formation is in fact of the greatest importance. Proficiency in ecclesiastical sciences

alone does not make one a fit candidate for the priesthood. Apart from knowledge, there are special qualities of mind and heart, of character and temperament, required of him; he should have also a disposition to a celibate life; and he should be able to face the problems and hardships of the priestly ministry. In seminary training, therefore, there are various religious exercises for the purpose of giving a candidate a moral and spiritual formation in addition to the intellectual one.

Not all candidates who enter the seminary reach the goal of the priesthood. Some, after further study of the priestly calling and what it entails, may decide, in consultation with their spiritual counsellors, to leave the seminary at one stage or another of the training course; some may be asked to leave on grounds of unfitness for the priestly life in the opinion of those in charge of the training. Even in the case of those who fail to reach the priesthood, the training they have received in the seminary will by no means be a loss, for precisely because of such training they will be better qualified to serve the Church as Catholic laymen.

Seminary life is not all solemn faces and serious study. Those who have been through the seminary look back on their seminary days as one of the happiest periods of their lives. They are no doubt days of study and prayer in the quiet and seclusion of the seminary and under the watchful but kindly eye of superiors, but they are not without pleasant diversions in the company of fellow students who though doubtless serious-minded in view of the goal before them, are nonetheless full of gaiety and fun which makes seminary life quite agreeable.

On successful completion of the seminary course one is ordained a priest. Ordination is conferred by a bishop. The new priest is accredited to the diocese for which he has been educated and ordained, and the bishop of the diocese becomes his superior, to whom he vows obedience at his ordination. The great majority of the priests of a diocese function as pastors or assistant pastors in parishes. Others are assigned to educational and social work or other services.

The pastor in the parish is like the *bhikkhu* of the village temple—a 'guide, philosopher and friend' to the people. Just as the *bhikkhu* lives in the premises of a temple, so does the pastor live in a

presbytery attached to or in close proximity to a church. The *bhikkhu* is a teacher of the *Dhamma* to young and old and exercises this function especially when preaching *bana* or sermons. Similarly religious instruction by means of the homily or sermon at Mass and by the catechizing of children is an important duty of the pastor. Like the *bhikkhu* the pastor is also a counsellor to the laity in their religious and moral problems. A celibate like the *bhikkhu*, the pastor lives alone or with his confrères, just as the *bhikkhu* lives, sometimes singly, sometimes with other *bhikkhus*, generally his own pupil monks. Not being burdened with the cares of a family and obligations towards a wife and children, the pastor, even as the *bhikkhu*, is able to make himself freely available to the people and devote his time to them to a far greater extent than a married man would normally be able to do. Just as the *bhikkhu* chants *pirit* for the benefit of the laity, so does the pastor, using ritual prayers, invoke, in the name of the Church, divine blessings on the people on various occasions.

The pastor, however, has other functions which the *bhikkhu* does not have. Being a priest, the pastor offers the sacrifice of the Mass, especially on Sundays, to enable the people to offer to God a corporate act of worship. The pastor also administers the Sacraments, especially Baptism as the channel of communication of divine life to the newborn child or to adults entering the Church, the Sacrament of Reconciliation or Confession for the forgiveness of sin, Matrimony for Christian wedlock, Extreme Unction to spiritually fortify the dying or dangerously ill, and Holy Communion to the faithful at Mass, and to the sick and those in danger of death. The pastor may be called any time in the day or the night to give the 'Last Sacraments', the final spiritual ministrations, to the dying.

A priest, as the spiritual father of his flock, has to be available all the time to the faithful entrusted to his care. His manifold duties hardly leave any time for himself, especially if he is in charge of a large parish with several thousand Catholics. Even though it is by lofty ideals that one is led into the priesthood, the priest remains human, and may sometimes feel disheartened when weighed down by work, the responsibilities of his office, or the solitariness of his celibate life. On such occasions he will find strength and solace in prayer, especially before the Eucharistic presence of Christ; he will remind himself of his life's commitment; he will be comforted

by the kindly advice of a superior, a spiritual counsellor or priest friend. The priest, who participates in the priesthood of Christ, has to be, like Christ, not only a priest but also a victim. He will see, therefore, that celibacy not only enables him to give himself more fully to the service of others, but also brings the sacrificial element into his life: by celibacy he has willingly made a sacrifice, a lifelong sacrifice, of married life. Similarly all the pressures that weigh on him contribute to making his life a sacrifice. The priest has to keep before his mind that in sharing Christ's priesthood, he has to share also the sacrificial or victim aspect of that priesthood. Then, at Mass, when Christ is re-offered as victim, the priest also will be able to offer himself, united with Christ in his victim role, which will give meaning and fulfilment to his priestly calling, whatever the outcome of his other activities. A priest's life is thus a hard one, very exacting, and involving much self-sacrifice, but it is also a rewarding life, even from the human point of view, not certainly in terms of material reward, but in the comforting knowledge that one is serving a divine Master and working as His agent, through the Church, to establish His reign in the hearts of men. As a celibate, one makes a sacrifice of the pleasures and consolations of family life, but one has the reward of being the spiritual father of a large family and the means by which the young and the old committed to one's care are helped in their striving after God.

Apart from the priesthood, another institution through which the Catholic Church has rendered service throughout the world is the Religious Order. In Sri Lanka also, not only Catholics, but others, too, have had contact with religious, especially nuns, in the various educational and social-service activities in which they are engaged.

The priesthood or Holy Orders was instituted by Jesus Christ, but not the Order of Religious. The latter is an institution of the Church which, however, has its source in Christ in that it takes him as the model and his teaching as the inspiration and foundation. It is a way of life that seeks to follow Christ as closely as possible. Indeed every Christian seeks to be a follower of Christ, but the religious are as it were 'professionals' who dedicate their whole life to the pursuit of Christian religious and moral perfection according to Christ's teaching, even as a *bhikkhu* devotes himself to treading the *Dhamma* path more intently than the laity. The religious bind themselves by vow to follow Christ's example and teaching especially with respect to poverty, chastity and obedience. While this

is basic to religious life, each order generally has some specific service to fellow men for which it has been founded—teaching, nursing, care of the aged, orphans and the destitute, missionary activity, social work—and each order has its rule or constitution approved by the Church. The religious, not being ordained priests, do not offer the sacrifice of the Mass or administer the Sacraments as the priest does, except those Sacraments that can be administered also by the laity.

In Sri Lanka, there are two well known non-priestly religious orders of men, both engaged in educational work. These religious, not being priests or 'Fathers' but members of a fraternity of non-ordained men, are known as 'Brothers'. One is the order of the Brothers of the Christian Schools or Christian Brothers, founded in France in the eighteenth century by John Baptist de la Salle. Their best known school in our country is St. Benedict's College, Kotahena. The other is the order of the Marist Brothers, also founded in France about a century later by Marcellin Champagnat. Maris Stella College, Negombo, is their chief educational institution in Sri Lanka. There are besides two orders of men founded in Sri Lanka itself, the Brothers of St. Joseph and the Franciscan Brothers, both engaged mainly in educational work.

The religious orders of women working in Sri Lanka are many. Mention might be made of those that have been longest in the country and have the largest membership. The first to come to Sri Lanka, in 1862, were the Holy Family Sisters, an order founded in France. They have all along been in the forefront in the field of female education in this country. Seven years after their arrival came the Good Shepherd Sisters, also an order of French origin, which is engaged in educational and social work. In 1886 came the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, an order which had its birth in India but spread extensively in the West. These nuns were for a long time engaged in nursing in the General Hospital in Colombo, the State Hospital in Mannar, and the leper asylums at Hendala and Mantivu. The Little Sisters of the Poor, a French order, came in 1888. They run the Homes for the Aged in Colombo and Batticaloa. The Sisters of Charity, a Belgian order, came in 1896 and have been active in the field of education. So also the Sisters of the Apostolic Carmel, who came from India in 1922. There have also

been two indigenous orders founded mainly for education—the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier, with their headquarters at Bolawalana, Negombo, who were absorbed into the Good Shepherd order in 1957, and the Sisters of the Holy Angles, founded in Galle Diocese in 1903.

There are besides three orders of cloistered contemplative nuns dedicated to the Christian ascetical life—the Carmelites, from France, who have three convents (Mattakkuliya, Colombo; Katugastota, Kandy; and Kalegana, Galle); the Poor Clares, from England, who have their convent at Tewatte, Ragama; and the Benedictines, from Italy, at Wennappuwa.

A Sri Lankan priest in Jaffna, Father B. A. Thomas, founded a contemplative order for both men and women—the Rosarians. The order, which has several convents in Sri Lanka, has spread also into India and has several monasteries in that country.

All these orders, though mostly of foreign origin, now have large numbers of local recruits, and the local Major Superiors of nearly all of them are Sri Lankans.

A characteristic of religious life is the dedication of persons to the causes they serve and the tasks undertaken by them. In the case of the orders that came from abroad, the early members who worked in Sri Lanka were of course foreigners. It was not for any earthly reward that they had left home and country and come to a distant land to labour in our midst. They were different from the colonial masters we have had—Portuguese, Dutch, British—who sought profit for themselves, exploiting the country commercially and otherwise. They had come to give, not to take away—to give their time, talent, energies, in short their whole life, to serve us.

As religious, foreign or Sri Lankan, are committed to poverty, even the salaries they earn as teachers, nurses, etc., go, not to each one's pocket, but to the common fund of the religious community, from which all that can be spared is spent on the cause to which they are dedicated. The service rendered by them to their fellow men is not inspired by mere philanthropy. It goes further and deeper. It is for God's sake—man being an object of God's love and concern—that they serve their fellows. In the last analysis, therefore, it is love of God that leads them to sacrifice themselves for others.

A noteworthy feature of Catholic life is the devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ, and therefore Mother of God. In Catholic cult she has a place second only to that held by Christ himself. It is Catholic belief that as Mother of Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, she was immaculate, that is, free from all sin, that she bore Christ and gave him birth preserving her virginity, that she was assumed into heaven after her mortal life, and that as on earth she was co-redemptrix in being associated with Christ in his redemptive mission, so now in heaven she is mediatrix and distributrix of the blessings of the redemption.

A concrete expression of the cult of Mary is the large number of churches dedicated to her, whether already in the early days of Catholicism in Sri Lanka or today. In the Portuguese period, all the popular shrines that drew pilgrims were in fact churches of the Virgin Mary—Our Lady of Mondanale and Our Lady of Deliverance (*Livramento*) in the Kingdom of Kotte, and our Lady of Miracles in Jaffna. At Attanagalla there was even a church dedicated to Our Lady of the Sinhalese. Today too the greatest Catholic centre of pilgrimage in Sri Lanka is the sylvan shrine of Our Lady at Madu in the Vanni. The devotion of Sri Lanka's Catholics to the Blessed Virgin led to the proclamation, with the Pope's official sanction, at a solemn ceremony at Tewatte on 5th February 1947, that she is their national patroness, to be venerated and invoked under the title of Our Lady of Lanka. The Basilica subsequently built at Tewatte in honour of Our Lady of Lanka is their national shrine. Such places as Lourdes in France and Fatima in Portugal where apparitions of the Virgin have been recorded are well known pilgrim centres of the Catholic world.

An event which has been of unique significance to Catholics, an event that has profoundly affected the Church has been the Second Vatican Council. It was convened by Pope John the XXIII in 1962 and was concluded under Pope Paul VI in 1965. Similar councils, attended by bishops from the entire Catholic world, have been held from time to time throughout the history of the Church to deliberate on weighty matters affecting the Church, and Vatican II was the twenty-first of such councils. The previous council, the First Vatican Council, was held in 1869-1870.

In summoning the Council Pope John had chiefly in mind what he termed *aggiornamento*, that is, making the Church relevant to

the modern world. Although the teachings of Christ, committed to the Church, cannot change, the Church, in propounding his teachings, has to take note of changes and developments in society.

A remarkable factor in modern society is the rapid growth of knowledge and literacy. The Church, in keeping with the times, therefore wants its members to be more enlightened in the faith and live it more responsibly. This means that there should be less regimentation in the Church and greater freedom for more responsible action. The preparedness on the part of the Church for liberalization has, however, been misconstrued and stretched too far by some with the result that they have taken greater liberties than they are entitled to, even with respect to the Church's teachings, so that there has been some confusion in the Church in recent times, which has been described also as a 'crisis', and which has had repercussions in Sri Lanka as well as in other countries.

One of the notable steps taken by the Council has been to reform the Liturgy or rites of worship. We have already referred to the use of our own languages instead of the traditional Latin. One can obviously take part in a service more intelligently when it is held in a language one understands. Along with the changeover to national languages has come also the use of indigenous music in worship, whereas till now Gregorian Chant or Plain Chant has held pride of place in Catholic liturgical music. Moreover, greater variety has been introduced into the services and more room given for adaptation. Provision has also been made for a greater use of Scripture in the services, and for the laity to be more actively involved in them. In general, the changes have been made to bring out more clearly the significance of the rites, and to link worship with life.

Since the Council, the Church's attitude to other Christian Churches has also very noticeably changed. The traditional stand of looking down upon other Churches as being in error has given way to a more friendly, conciliatory and constructive attitude, and efforts are being made, both at the Church's centre and locally, towards greater dialogue with the Churches with a view to a better understanding of one another and a breaking down of prejudice, and for the purpose of joint study with union as the final goal.

So has also the Church's attitude to other religious traditions changed. To the early missionaries these traditions were prejudged as 'pagan', 'heathen', 'superstition' or 'idolatry'. They condemned them *a priori*, and consequently hardly any attempt was made by them to study and understand them. Men like Robert de Nobili were rare exceptions. Today, however, not only does the Church regard these religions with respect, but there has also been a move towards dialogue with persons participating in these religions, and a genuine interest in studying their religious heritage. To promote dialogue, a Secretariat for non-Christians has been set up at the Vatican itself, with a Cardinal as its President. The visit of Pope Paul VI, in December 1970, to Asian countries, including Sri Lanka, the first Buddhist country to be visited by a Pope, was also a gesture of good will and friendliness to Asian peoples and their cultures and religions.

As a Catholic and Catholic priest, and as one who is convinced of the value of religiousness in one's personal life and in society, it is for me a cause for regret that in Western society, where there has been progress materially, there appears to have been also retrogression in regard to religious belief and practice. To such an extent has this taken place that Europe that was once greatly influenced by Christianity can hardly be called Christian today. In fact, we now speak of Europe as de-Christianized. Europe that brought the Christian faith to the so-called 'pagan' lands, which were by no means pagan, has itself become pagan. Europe that sent emissaries to preach the Christian Gospel in 'mission lands' has itself become a mission land needing to hear afresh the message of Christ. Ignorant of the worth of the faith of their fathers, some in the West are searching for substitutes to satisfy the spiritual hunger they experience.

It may be possible for one to live a morally good life without religion, but the purpose of religion, as a Catholic sees it, is not merely to help man avoid sin and evil, which is only something negative, but rather to enable him to do something positive and indeed creative, which is communing with God, final union with whom is the ultimate goal of life.

What has drained religiousness from Western society is, as I see it, ignorance of the Christian faith on the one hand, largely due

o state control of education and consequent secularization of it, and on the other the secularization of life which follows from education divorced from religion. Secularism has thus ousted to a great extent religiousness from Western society. The permissiveness one notices in the West, especially in relation to sex and marriage, with its attendant evils affecting particularly the young, is the inevitable outcome of secularization of society. Secularism is the major problem the Catholic Church in the West, not to speak of other Churches, has to contend with. Indeed it has made inroads into the Church itself. There are signs that it has contaminated not only the laity, but even priests and religious.

There is the danger that the spirit of secularism will creep into Sri Lanka society as well. This is in fact the greatest danger that not only Catholics but all religious persons are facing. Will religiousness in Sri Lanka evaporate as the country makes progress economically and the material quality of life reaches higher levels? This is a question to which serious attention should be directed by all who value religious living.

This chapter commenced with a reference to an experience I had with the late Venerable Pundit Walagedera Somaloka Tissa Nayaka Thera of Maha Cetiya Pirivena, Ambalangoda. That deeply moving exchange was mentioned to suggest that in spite of difference of religious heritage, in spite of deep personal convictions relating to one's own faith, participants in various religious traditions, precisely because of their common belief, nay conviction, of the value of religious living, could get together and work together to help preserve and further religiousness in our country. All the major religious traditions that are represented in Sri Lanka have contributed to the religiousness that pervades our culture and society. And the persons of those same religious traditions, I think have to strive unitedly to preserve that religiousness for posterity.

If we can bless each other, as the incident mentioned at the beginning of this chapter has demonstrated, surely we can work with each other to help preserve and further religiousness in our country.

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CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY WITHIN COMMUNITIES

LYNN A. DE SILVA

There is a widespread feeling among many today that all religious traditions are played out; they communicate only ways of escape from the tragedy of living and the realities of social responsibilities and obligations. However, recent events in our country and in others point to the need for religious persons to solve the moral crisis that has overtaken many countries. In the last Throne Speech after the present government came into power the President said: 'My government is of the view that nothing could be achieved without solving the moral crisis that has overtaken the country'.¹ He went on to say,

My government firmly believes that all religions have contributed to the codes of conduct and moral standards that civilized nations and peoples seek to follow. The breakdown of these standards and of discipline arises where the influence of the teaching of religion is divorced from the conduct of daily life. My government will seek to remedy this deficiency.²

The President affirmed that in this quest to build a righteous society (*Dharmista Samajaya*) he will encourage and foster all religions—Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam. He has clearly indicated that religions have a vital role to play in building a *Dharmista Samajaya*.

Some time after the Janata party in India came into power a newspaper reporter in an interview with the Prime Minister, Shri

1. *National State Assembly Debates*, official Report, Vol. 23, No. 1, 4th August 1977 (Government Printing Press, Sri Lanka), p. 92.

2. *Ibid.*

Moraji Desai, asked him what his life's ambition was. He got an unexpected answer. The Prime Minister said that his life's ambition was 'the realization of God and of Truth'. Commenting on this the Indian paper *The Examiner* said in an editorial, 'Perhaps for the first time since the days of Mahatma Gandhi, the current political atmosphere in the capital appears to be permeated all around by faith in God and patent religious fervour'.³

Many people in many countries, that have gone through a moral crisis, have begun to realize more and more the truth that 'Righteousness exalteth a nation'.⁴ We realize as never before that all religious persons have to come together and to share their spiritual resources to build community in the midst of communities of various traditions and cultures. It is this realization that brought together members of five different religious traditions—Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, Christian, and Muslim—to a Consultation held in Colombo in April, 1974, in order to spell out the 'resources and responsibilities of living together'. This Consultation declared,

We are conscious that we live under a common threat of physical and moral and even spiritual destruction whether by warfare or starvation, whether by exploitation or enforced indoctrination. At certain points in all these areas we were conscious of compromise and lack of responsibility on our own part and on the part of our neighbour but we also saw signs of hope where people were sharing their joys and their sufferings, their resources and their responsibilities. We saw such sharing as a hallmark of world community where hopes of goodwill, trust, peace and brotherhood might be fulfilled.'

However, it was not the 'threat of physical and moral and even spiritual destructon' that brought these people together, but, and in fact more so, the realization of the common basic unity of all human beings, which was affirmed as follows:

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3. Quoted in *Catholic Information Service News Letter* (Social Communication Centre, 45 Kynsey Rd., Colombo 8, Sri Lanka, June 1977), p. 4.
 4. Proverbs.
 5. *Towards World Community—Resources and Responsibilities of Living Together*, Memorandum of a Multilateral Dialogue, Colombo, April 1974, published by the Study Centre for Religion and Society, 490/5 Havelock Road, Colombo 6, Sri Lanka, 1974, p. 13.

We also recognize and acknowledge real common links, based on a sense of the universal interdependence and responsibility of each and every person with and for all persons; we together recognized the *fundamental unity of human beings as one family* and committed ourselves to strive and, if necessary, to be ready to pay a price to realise the equality and dignity of all human beings.⁶

It is in this context that we will seek from a Christian point of view, how one might see the spiritual resources within Christianity and within Christians for wholesome community living here. We Christians begin our reflecting on community from our acknowledgement that God, as known to us in Jesus Christ, is Father and Creator and that from the beginning He created man to have fellowship with Him and with others. Consequently, our reflections here are based on the first article of the Apostle's Creed.

I Believe in God: Father, Creator

The Apostles' Creed,⁷ which Christians say together in congregational worship, begins with the words, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth'. Christian living begins with an act of faith. Arguments to prove the existence of the object of faith are not an essential part of faith. In fact they could have a negative effect. Paul Tillich exposes the folly of trying to prove the existence of God as follows:

Arguments for the existence of God presuppose the loss of the certainty of God. That which I have to prove by argument has no immediate reality for me. Its reality is mediated for me by some other reality about which I cannot be in doubt, so that this other reality is nearer to me than the reality of God. For the more closely things are connected with our interior existence, the less are they open to doubt. And nothing can be nearer to us than that which is at times farthest away from us, namely God. A God who has been proved is neither near enough to us nor far enough away from us. He is not far enough, because of the very attempt we have made to prove Him. He is not near enough, because

6. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

7. The Apostles' Creed is a concise statement of Christian doctrine, coming down from ancient times. Its title is first found in 390 A.D.

nearer things are presupposed by which the knowledge of Him is mediated. Hence this ostensibly demonstrated subject is not really God.⁸

In religious faith people act in exactly the same way as do scientists. Science begins with and advances by hypothesis only. Underlying all scientific experiments is the unquestioned hypothesis of the uniformity of nature—that as things have been so they will always be and given the same conditions, things as they are in one place will be the same in another place. Accepting this as a given fact scientists make an adventure with experiments and tests. Faith is a mixture of fact and adventure.

In religious faith, people take a hypothesis and subject it to the exacting tests of life. Christians begin with the hypothesis that God is and that He has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. This is not a matter of mathematical certainty, but an adventure checked and tested by experience, out of which certainty grows. It is this certainty that enables people like Mahatma Gandhi to say,

I am surer of His existence than of the fact that you and I are sitting in this room. I can also testify that I may live without air and water but not without Him. You may pluck out my eyes, but that will not kill me. You may chop off my nose, but that will not kill me. But blast my beliefs in God, and I am dead.

I claim to be a man of faith and prayer, and even if I were cut to pieces, I trust God would give me strength not to deny Him and to assert that He is.⁹

It is generally accepted that the earlier versions of the Nicene Creed¹⁰ began with the words 'We believe' This means that Christian faith is the faith that a person has in community. 'I believe' is meaningful only in the context of 'We believe'. The word 'faith' properly understood, describes a relation between persons and a person that exists only in relation with other persons. A Christian's faith is a faith that is shared with a community of believers.

8. Quoted by John Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God*, Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 177.

9. *Havijan*, 1938, 14.5.

10. The Nicene Creed is also a concise statement of Christian doctrine, issued in 325 A.D. by the Council of Nicaea.

This in effect means that faith for a Christian is not a belief he holds in isolation from others but an orientation that draws him into a relationship with others. *Right relatedness* is the essence of Christianity. It is based on the fact that man is not individual but 'communal' by nature.

Man

The Creed begins with the words 'I believe'. Who is this 'I'? What is the nature of this 'I'? In other words, what is the nature of man?

If we ask an ordinary Christian today what his views are concerning the nature and destiny of man, he is likely to speak in terms of the immortality of the soul. This notion is certainly a firmly established traditional belief of Christians, yet it is one of the greatest misunderstandings of Christianity. It is a notion that has entered Christian thinking through the influence of Greek philosophy, but it is altogether alien to what the Bible teaches about the nature and destiny of man. Biblical scholarship has established quite convincingly that there is no dichotomous concept of man in the Bible such as is found in Greek thought. The biblical view of man is holistic, not dualistic. There is nothing in the Bible to support a doctrine of the immortality of the soul. On the contrary, quite surprisingly one finds in the Bible much that is in accord with the Buddhist doctrine of *anattā*, according to which man has no immortal soul, or permanent entity within him.

According to the biblical view, man is a psycho-physical unity, of 'soul' (*psychē*) and 'flesh' (*sarx*). This bears a close resemblance to the Buddhist analysis of man in terms of *nāma* (name) and *rūpa* (form). *Psychē*, like *nāma*, corresponds to the physical aspect of man, which represents more or less those processes that come within the field of psychology, and *sarx*, like *rūpa*, corresponds to the physical processes with which the biologist is concerned. Both the Buddhist and the biblical views of man agree that there is no distinguishable, immortal soul within this psycho-physical (*nāma-rūpa*) aggregation which constitutes a person.

Or taking the fivefold analysis of personality (the *pañcakkhandha* theory) into *rūpa* (matter), *vedanā* (sensation or feeling), *saññā* (perception), *saṅkhāra* (mental formations) and *viññāna* (consciousness), we could say from the biblical point of view in

respect of each of these, as the Buddha does in his second sermon (the *Anattalakkhana Sutta*), 'that is *an-attā*'—not-self or not-the-self. That is to say that none of the aggregates can be identified with the self or soul and together they do not constitute the self. According to the biblical teaching, in whatever way you may analyse man—either according to Buddhist psychology or Western psychology—there is nothing in man that can be identified as a soul-entity, nor do all the component parts put together constitute a person as an independent self-existent being.

One reason for the misunderstanding about the notion is the rendering of the Greek word *psychē* in the New Testament and the parallel Hebrew word *naphesh* in the Old Testament (the New Testament was written in Greek and the Old Testament in Hebrew) by the English word 'soul' in the old versions of the Bible. But an examination of these two words as used in the Bible clearly show that they do not refer to an immortal entity within man. The word *nephesh* occurs in a creation sequence at Genesis 2:7. As the Revised version has it: 'and the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul'. But in verse 19 this very same word is used of animals and birds, which would mean that they too have immortal Souls. But this word simply means 'living creatures' as the New English Bible and other modern translations have rendered it.

Like *nephesh*, *psychē* is used in the sense of 'life', 'vitality' or 'aliveness'. It is never used in the sense of a distinct entity within man. Even in the well-known verse; 'Do not fear those who kill the body; rather fear him who can destroy both body and soul in death' (Matt. 10:28), where there seems to be a dualism, it is pointed out that the so-called soul can be destroyed and therefore cannot be immortal. In modern translations such as the New English Bible *psychē* is translated in most instances, 'life'. That is the essential meaning of the word and nowhere does it imply immortality.

Buddhists have used the metaphor of the bubble to indicate the nature of the psycho-physical aggregate to which the name person or self is conventionally given. In the Bible there are three striking metaphors which have a Buddhist flavour.

Firstly, there is the metaphor of *dust*. 'Dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return'.¹¹ Man is therefore like the grass of the field that withers and perishes.¹² Secondly, there is the metaphor of the *shadow*. Man is as empty as a shadow, says the psalmist: 'Surely man stands as a mere breath; surely man goes about as a shadow'.¹³ Thirdly, there is the metaphor of the *mist*. 'What is your life' says St. James, 'for you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes'.¹⁴

Not only would Christianity deny an immortal ego-entity within man but also exclusive individuality, so that we could say that the person (*puggala*) thought of in purely individualistic terms in his singularity and independence does not in reality exist and in fact cannot exist. No man can isolate himself and live independently. If such a state were possible it could be described by the metaphors, *dust*, *shadow* and *mist*.

In the Bible authentic selfhood is understood in terms of relationality, so that the unit of personal life is not in the egocentric 'I' but in the mutually interacting 'I'-'Thou'. The person as subject is only a derivative aspect of the person-in-relation. Modern biblical theologians owe much to this rediscovery of the biblical understanding of man to Martin Buber. As Buber puts it, 'The individual man for himself does not have man's being in himself, either as a moral being or a thinking being. Man's being is contained only in community in the unity of man with man—a unity which rests—however, only in the reality of the difference between I and Thou'.¹⁵ In a classic work *I and Thou* Buber has developed this idea and one could quote from this book at length. Here is one sentence: 'Man is neither organic nor rational but dialogic, that is, man becomes the authentic being only in a living relation with other individual's'.¹⁶ Many have expressed this truth about man's authentic being as relationality or mutuality in different ways. Karl Marx, who was

11. Genesis 3:19.

12. Isaiah 40:6.

13. Psalms 39:5-6.

14. James 4:14.

15. *Between Man and Man* (trans. R. G. Smith, London, Kegan and Paul, 1947), pp. 147-48.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

also a Jew, said that the human essence in its reality 'is the ensemble of social relations'.¹⁷ Martin Heidegger's philosophy rests on the realization that 'all existence is co-existence'.¹⁸ Kenneth Cragg puts it well when he says 'one cannot be without inter-being'.¹⁹

Persons are not separate individuals like grains of sand in a bag: they are as St. Paul says 'members one of another'.²⁰ Without the one the other cannot exist. As Professor Everett once put it,

We ask the leaf, are you complete in yourself? and the leaf answers, No, my life is in the branches. We ask the branch, and the branch answers, No, my life is in the trunk. We ask the trunk, and it answers, No, my life is in the root. We ask the root, and it answers, No, my life is in the trunk and the branches and the leaves. Keep the branches stripped of leaves and I shall die. So it is with the great tree of being. Nothing is completely and merely individual.²¹

The more we know of what personality or self-hood is the less is it possible to draw circles round persons portioning off one from the other. No man is an island. The biblical basis for this understanding of man is the concept of the *Imago Dei* (image of God). That man is created in the image of God means that he is created for and exists in a relationship apart from which he is nothing, because he is created out of the dust of the earth—a figurative way of expressing man's nullity. Bishop Lesslie Newbiggin brings out the meaning of *Imago Dei* with a striking illustration.

The image of the king's head on a coin is part of the coin, and cannot be separated from it. Even if the king dies, the image remains on the coin. But there is another kind of image. On a still and cloudless night we may see the image of the moon in the water of a lake. So long as the water is unruffled by the wind, and the moon is not covered by cloud, the image will shine out—clear and beautiful. But if the cloud comes

17. *Selections in Feuerbach*, p. 244.

18. *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 177.

19. *Christianity in a World Perspective* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1969), p. 150.

20. Ephesians 4:25.

21. Quoted by H. E. Fosdick, *The Meaning of Prayer*, p. 181.

between the moon and the earth the image will disappear, or if the water is ruffled by wind the image will be scattered and distorted. Thus the image of the moon in the water does not belong to the water just in the same way that the image of the king on the coin belongs to the coin. The image depends upon a certain relationship between the moon and water. If this relationship is broken, the image is distorted.²²

The most important word that describes this relationship in the New Testament is *Pneuma* (Spirit). The word 'spirit' denotes the human spirit as well as the Divine spirit, the two being implicates of each other. Man is spirit only in relation to God who is Spirit. God is Eternal, and man shares this quality with the Eternal only in relationship with Him. In the Bible the term 'spirit' functions descriptively as the central or core concept of the authentic 'self' which exists only in a relationship. Karl Barth uses a striking illustration to clarify the relation of man as spirit to the Divine spirit. 'The Spirit is in man and belongs to him' he says, 'as the mathematical centre is in and belongs to the circle'.²³ Without the circle there can be no centre. Man cannot exist apart from the relationship in which he is because he has no soul.

To say that the spirit is in man and belongs to man does not mean that he is a manifestation of the Divine Spirit as in *Advaita* philosophy. The finite self as Spirit is qualified by its relation to Spirit and is dependent on that relationship. It is not a spark of the Divine.

It is in this relationship that authentic self-hood can be found. It is found by losing oneself in the relationship or in other words by communion with the Divine Spirit or God; by abandoning oneself wholly to God so that nothing of the exclusive self remains.

God

Man as we have seen exists only in relation. Man is always Man-in-relation. Man is related to nature and to other men. Man's relation to nature is an 'I-It' relation in which nature is object to man as subject. Man's relation to other men is an 'I-Thou' relation

22. *Sin and Salvation* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1956), pp. 61 f.

23. *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. III, part 2 (Edinburg, T. & T. Clark, 1960), p. 354.

in which each one is more than subject and object to each other. There is another dimension to this 'I-Thou' relationship. Man is related to a Reality or power 'above' or 'beyond' himself, i.e., beyond his material existence which is subject to impermanence, decay and death—*anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā* as Buddhists have expressed it. People of different traditions have spoken of a transcendental reality as Brahman, Allah, 'Buddha'-life, *Nīrvāna* or *Dharma*. Religion is therefore an expression of man's relation to the limits of his existence, to the cause and end of his own life. That ultimate frontier of human existence, in whatever way it is conceived, is what the term God signifies.

There has always been, consciously or unconsciously, an intuition, a feeling, a vision of, to quote Alfred North Whitehead,

something which stands beyond, behind, and within, the passing flux of immediate things; something that is real, and yet waiting to be realized; something which is a remote possibility, and yet the greatest of present facts; something that gives meaning to all that passes, and yet eludes apprehension; something whose possession is the final good, and yet is beyond all reach; something which is the ultimate ideal, and the hopeless quest.²⁴

The term God is used to signify this 'Something'. There has never been and probably never will be a completely satisfactory concept of this 'Something', which Christians call God. But there has always been and always will be a reaching out of the mind for a worthier and greater concept of God. That reaching out, that quest, expressed particularly in worship, is itself a significant aspect of man's experience of God, in his pilgrimage towards that ultimate Goal.

The highest concept of God we find in the Bible is the concept of LOVE. God is thought of as a loving Father. This implies a relationship between God and man. The whole of the Christian ethic is based on this love-relationship between God and man.

St. John says in his epistle 'God is Love'.²⁵ This love is not a philosophic abstraction, but a concrete reality actualized in history:

24. *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), p. 275.

25. I John 4:16.

'In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only son into the world, so that we might live through Him'.²⁶ In the next verse St. John underlines the essence of the meaning of love (*Agape*) which is of fundamental importance: 'In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his son to be an expiation for our sins'. Christian faith starts not with man's love for God but with God's love for man. Love is not self-derived; love has its source in God.

This distinguishes the essential Christian experience from all kinds of erotic mysticism. In other religious systems in the Hellenistic world, God was thought of as the object of mystical desire (*eros*) rather than its subject. Verse 10 contradicts this general Hellenistic view and the word *Agape*, scarcely found in non-Biblical Greek, is deliberately chosen to mark the difference.

The classical expression of the Hellenistic view is found in Plato's *Symposium*. For Plato as well as for Aristotle and other Greek religious writers love is *eros*, a passionate craving for beauty which is a type of sexual desire, and insatiable craving of the born, the conditioned and temporal beings, for the Unconditioned, the Absolute, the Eternal. This word *eros* has in modern usage been arbitrarily narrowed down to sexual passion very much similar to what *kāma tañhā* means to Buddhists. But at its best *eros* is a passionate quest of the creature for God and as such contains in it the seed of *Agape*. This is what makes the transformation of the erotic element in *eros* by *Agape* possible.

By erotic elements we mean two things. Firstly, *eros* is self-centred, it is a form of self-love, it is love turned inwards. In this sense it is what Buddhists call *bhava tañhā*, craving of self-existence. On the other hand *eros* is dependent on contingent factors, which change and are partial. Accordingly, *eros* changes and is dependent on the changing moods of repulsion and attraction, of passion and sympathy. In other words *eros* is self-dependent and is conditioned by the changing moods of the self. It is with such erotic love that agapaistic love is contrasted.

But *Agape* does not destroy *eros*. In *Agape* the love that longs is transformed into the love that gives; self-love is purged from self-

26. *Ibid.*, 4:10.

centredness and becomes the love that 'seeks not her own'.²⁷ Such love is possible because *Agape* unites being with being within the Divine Being. It is when God is loved in and through my neighbour and my neighbour is loved in and through God's love for him that love is purged from those detrimental orientations that some of us in Sri Lanka describe as *kāma tanhā*, *bhava tanhā* and *vibhava tanhā*. In this relationship of love I never become the object of love, and self-concern does not amount to selfishness.

This new dimension of love is seen in the New Testament within the context of the sacrificial love of Christ. The Christian basis for love, as St. Paul puts it is this: 'God proves his love for us by this, that Christ died for us when we were still sinners'²⁸ and St. John says, 'We know what love is by this, that he laid down his life for us'.²⁹ This means as C. H. Dodd puts it, 'that the coming of Christ, and in particular his death "for our sins according to the scriptures"³⁰ constitutes the means by which we are cleansed from the taint of sin, and enter into the sphere of divine forgiveness, with the newness of life that it brings'.³¹ That God provided such a means for us, at such cost, indicates what is meant by the love of God.

'God is Love' is the great declaration that love is at the heart of the universe. The Christian basis for that declaration is God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ. The self-giving sacrifice of Christ is the motivation and inspiration for ethical love. Christian love in action is located in the divine *Agape*: 'Beloved if God so loved us, we ought to love one another'.³² The source of ethical love is not in man. If that were so love would be a self-dependent, self-generated and self-centred emotion. The source of ethical love is God. 'Only he who is already loved can love, only he who has been trusted can trust, only he who has been an object of devotion can give himself'.³³ In the Odes of Solomon this truth is beautifully put thus: 'I should not have known how to love the Lord, if he had not

27. I Corinthians 13:5.

28. Romans 5:8.

29. I John 3:16.

30. I Corinthians 15:3.

31. *The Johannine Epistles* (Moffatt Commentary), p. 112.

32. I John 4:11.

33. Rudolph Bultmann, *Offenbarung und Heilsgeschichten*, p. 58. Quoted in *Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957) Vol. 12, p. 281.

loved me. For who is able to distinguish love, except the one that is loved'.³⁴ Love is therefore not merely a human emotion; it is never to be derived from history, or from human existence.

This grand and majestic insight that God is love, that He loved us and that we ought therefore to love one another expresses a Christian's understanding of the relation of faith and life, of ontology and morality, metaphysics and ethics. The ultimate ground of morality is the Divine Reality and at the same time the Ultimate Reality can only be discerned morally. It is in our relationships with our fellow man, it is when we love our neighbour that 'God abides in us'. The 'vision of God' has been the goal of the mystic but the truth is that 'no man has ever seen God'. That vision is not the Christian aim in this life. The promise that we shall see God³⁵ refers to the blessed 'life of the age to come'. That vision has, however, been realised not in the sense of a mystical rapture but in the sense of an actualized fact in the incarnate Christ. 'He who has seen me has seen the Father'.³⁶ For us now to have that vision is to have communion with God through what we know of Him in Christ. Communion with God is possible now in the act of loving one another. 'No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us'.³⁷ Here the highest aim of man is defined in terms of ethical love and not in terms of mystical contemplation. Our knowledge that God is Love depends not on a mystical vision but on a 'moral mutuality', of the love of being for being within the Being of God.

If we are to understand God or Ultimate Reality aright we must realize that there is a reciprocity between the within and the beyond; there is a reciprocal relationship between the ethical and the metaphysical, between the existential and the ontological. No concept of Ultimate Reality that does not combine these two aspects can satisfy the heart and mind of man.

When we speak of our relationship to God we usually speak in terms of a subject-object relationship. We think of God out there with whom we, the subjects, have come into a relationship. We

34. *Ibid.*, p. 281. Quoted by A. E. Brooks, *The Johannine Epistles*, p. 119.
35. Matthew 5:8.
36. John 14:9.
37. *Ibid.*, 14:12.

must be careful about our language here, we must make a careful distinction between the experience of an object and an objective experience. Our experience of God is an objective experience but we do not experience God as an object outside us. I do not experience God as an object, for instance, as an object like a tree which I could see. But my experience is an *objective* experience because that experience is within me and beyond me. It transcends me. And because God is Transcendent He is beyond conceptual formulation; He is indescribable and ineffable. However, symbols help us to grasp something of the reality of God. One of the common symbols that is widely used to signify God is the symbol of light. This symbol, as John Macquarries, a distinguished modern theologian, says, 'lights up for us levels of meaning and of reality in ways that perhaps conceptual language could not do, above all, if the language is abstract'.³⁸

The symbol of light recurs throughout the Bible. There was light at the beginning of creation, when God said, 'Let there be light'; there was light at the theophany to Moses in the desert, and the Israelites were led by the pillar of fire. The light symbol recurs frequently in the New Testament, for it is present at the Incarnation and at the Transfiguration. Christ calls Himself the light of the world.

'God is Light' says St. John, 'and in Him is no darkness at all'.³⁹ The psalmist describes God as clothed in light,⁴⁰ and St. Paul speaks of God as the Lord of lords 'who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light whom no man has ever seen or can see'.⁴¹ This last is an assertion of the Ultimacy of God.

When St. John says that 'God is Light' he is using a symbolic expression that had a universal significance in religious and philosophical thought and is particularly marked in the Johannine writings.

A Greek writer who lived a short while after St. John gives a vision of Creation. He begins by saying that first there was bound-

38. From *God Talk*.

39. I John 1:5.

40. Psalm 104:2.

41. I Timothy 6:16.

less light; then an ocean of darkness. The creation of the world began when a holy word came out of the light and descended upon the darkness. That light, he says, is the Mind of God.⁴²

Philo, a Jew who lived in Alexandria, who had imbibed both Greek and Hebrew culture, says, referring to the words of the psalmist quoted: 'God is light, and not light only, but the archetype of every other light; or rather, more ancient and higher than any archetype'.⁴³

The *Logos* in the fourth Gospel is equated with 'the real Light' which is equivalent to what Philo calls 'the archetypal Light' and Christ the incarnate *Logos* is called the 'Light of the world'. Although in the Gospel the writer stops short of going all the way in adopting the language of current religious philosophy in defining God in terms of Light, in the Epistle he is less guarded. In spelling out the teaching in the Gospel, he is, as C. H. Dodd says, 'giving it a turn which brings it nearer to the current forms of expression, and nearer, no doubt, to the language of the heretics whom he is criticising'.⁴⁴ In view of the need to communicate in an intelligible language he even risks the possibility of syncretism and defines God in metaphysical ontological terms as Light.

When St. John says that the being of God as light excludes any trace of darkness he is affirming that there is no contradiction in God. This is a truth that persons other than Christians at the time could fully endorse. They would agree with St. John in his metaphysical definition of God and see nothing distinctive in what he is saying. But St. John does not leave the matter there. Immediately he goes on to state the ethical implications of the metaphysical assertion. He is not interested in a mere metaphysic; he is concerned with its existential implications. Light for him symbolizes the holiness and purity of God; darkness, of moral evil. Therefore it follows that some degree of moral goodness is essential if one is to have

42. *Corpus Hermeticum*, 1.4-6, Quoted by C. H. Dodd, *op. cit.*, p. 18 (see above, note 31).

43. *De Somnis*, 1.75. Quoted by C. H. Dodd, *op. cit.*, p. 19 (see above, note 31).

44. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

fellowship with God, So, 'If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness we lie, and do not live according to the truth'.⁴⁵

It was necessary for St. John to stress this point because that was an age of religious fervour which made much of emotional and mystical experiences as the criterion of true religiousness. Such an experience was taken as a sign of union or fellowship with God. But mysticism and emotionalism did not always go with moral seriousness. Mysticism has its place in the Christian life when it is mutual and not individual. Thus the most mystical of Christians, St. John, habitually uses the plural 'we' 'us' 'ours' which in this Epistle appears a number of times. So St. John insists on an ethical criterion. The ethical significance of light is clearly brought out in St. John 3:19-21 and the moral connotation of the term is seen elsewhere. Those who 'walk in the light' are 'the children of light',⁴⁶ who bear 'the armour of light',⁴⁷ and in whom is found the 'fruit of light'.⁴⁸ St. John's argument is this: Because God is pure, he who seeks fellowship with God must also be pure. Here again there is the danger of mere subjectivism. So St. John says that fellowship with God must lead to our fellowship with one another, 'If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another'.⁴⁹ St. John spells out what this means in other parts of the Epistle. 'He who says he is in the light and hates his brother, is in the darkness still. He who loves his brother abides in the light'.⁵⁰ Thus light as a moral quality is love in action. Just as light is an attribute of God, so love is also an attribute of God. If light is a symbol of God's ultimacy, love is a symbol of His concreteness.

Creator

The Apostles' Creed refers to 'The Creator of heaven and earth' and not to 'The Creation of heaven and earth'. It is a confession of faith in God as Creator. The implication of this confession is that man is related to God as creature; the doctrine of Creation is all about a Creator-creature relationship. It has an existential and

45. I John 1:6.

46. Luke 16:18, John 12:26, Ephesians 5:8b.

47. Romans 13:12.

48. Ephesians 5:9.

49. I John 1:7.

50. *Ibid.*, 2:9-10.

not cosmological significance. That the universe has been created is taken for granted. It is a universe and not a multiverse because one Mind has fashioned it and one purpose holds it together. 'The Universe can best be pictured', says Sir James Jeans in *This Mysterious Universe*, 'as consisting of pure thought.... Its creation must have been an act of thought'.⁵¹ However, it is not the physical fact of creation that is of significance but the meaning it has for us—its existential significance.

This existential significance of Creation has been expressed by the biblical writers by the use of myths, symbols and stories and in a language which was meaningful to people at that time. It is essential that we discover the existential motivation behind all these and restate it in relation to the existential situation. The Buddhist concept of *Tilakkhana*, the three marks, namely, impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and soul-lessness (*anattā*), gives us a very useful and comprehensive analysis of man's existential predicament. Modern existentialist writers have said much about the notion of impermanence, suffering, the anxiety of meaninglessness. The doctrine of creation provides an in-depth understanding of the existential significance of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*.

Quite contrary to a widespread notion, the doctrine of Creation is not the starting point of Old Testament theology. Such a wrong notion has arisen due to the fact that the Bible begins with the creation stories. But we know that these narratives belong to a later date. In fact Israel's religious history begins with the Covenant,⁵² with the call of the Fathers, and not with the act of Creation. The word 'Covenant' in the Bible is used in a special sense to signify a relationship between God and man. It is a sovereign dispensing of grace on God's part with corresponding obligations on man's part. The doctrine of Creation in the early days of Israel's history did not form an essential part in the credal formulations of the Covenant faith and did not have the prominence given to it in later times.

The first prophet to take serious note of the doctrine of Creation was Jeremiah, who saw the meaning of God's sovereignty, in fact that God was Creator, and who perceived in the constancy

51. Quoted by Christmas Humphreys, *Karma and Rebirth* (London: Murray, 1943), p. 104.

52. Jeremiah 27:5 cf. 104.

and orderliness of nature the pledge of His faithfulness promised in the Covenant.⁵³ The doctrine of Creation finds its deepest expression in the message which was written about that time. This is a significant point, because it was during the *suffering* in Exile, when Israel was taken into captivity in Babylon, that the Hebrew people seriously asked the question about the meaning of existence and found the answer in the doctrine of Creation, which underscored the relationship between the Creator and creature, thus reasserting their Covenant faith. They had an apprehension of the human predicament similar to the apprehension of the life situation made by Buddhists through the notion of *dukkha*.

It was after a long experience, that with the eyes of the Covenant faith, they saw the significance of creation which came to be a central tenet in their faith. Thus Creation was embraced within the theological meaning of the Covenant relationship and came to be interpreted as the first act of God's saving deeds. As the first act, Creation was understood as pointing forward to the making of the Covenant and the Covenant was understood as reaching backward to include Creation.

When the Israelites were led to ask why God created the world, their answer was, as E. Jacob puts it,

God has created it for the covenant, that is to say because of his plan of love and salvation for humanity by means of Israel; in creating the world God already had the covenant in view, and it is this motive which gave to the idea of creation its specific orientation.⁵⁴

Karl Barth has succinctly explained what this means. He says that creation and Covenant are related to each other in a double manner, namely (1) the Covenant is the internal basis of creation and (2) Creation is the external basis of the Covenant. This means that creation is not merely an isolated act that happened in the past; it is a continuous process by which God of the Covenant creates and maintains His creation. It is through Covenant and Creation that He works out His eternal purpose.

53. Psalms 74:12-17.

54. Quoted by M. N. W. Roth, *Old Testament Theology*, p. 158.

Hence, the biblical doctrine of Creation is a doctrine concerning the relationship between God the Creator and man the creature, and is not a phenomenological account of how all things were brought into being. Its primary interest is in the Creator-creature relationship and not in an empirical description of the tangible world of sense experience. The interest in the empirical world is that it is the environment in which the creature is placed, and the nature of which the creature shares. It is pre-eminently a religious affirmation about the sovereignty of God and the absolute dependence of the creature. The intention of the Creation story in Genesis 1:8 is not to analyse man's essence or to define God's nature, but rather to indicate man's task and his relationship as creature to the Creator.

The Christian doctrine of Creation is not, as is ordinarily supposed, based solely on the accounts found in the book of Genesis. There are quite a number of passages, some phrases, some hymns, some discourses, some affirmations and some allusions concerning Creation in other parts of the Old Testament as well as the New Testament.⁵⁵

We should take into account all these passages when we think of the Christian doctrine of Creation, with special emphasis being placed on the New Testament passages.

Just as the Old Testament belief in Creation as expressed in the Creation stories of Genesis and other passages pre-supposes, and radically transforms the then contemporary cosmological views, so the New Testament inherits and transforms the Old Testament faith in God as the Creator of all things.

One important characteristic in the New Testament passages is that the stress is on the meaning and purpose of the divine Creation as it affects the life and destiny of individuals. Emil Brunner considers the passages in St. John 1:1-14, Colossians 1:15-17 and Hebrews 1:2, 2:3 as decisive for our understanding of this doctrine. Commenting on the first passage, he says,

55. Frequent reference is made in the New Testament to the original creation, e.g., Mark 10:6; Matt. 19:4; Mark 13:9; Matt. 24:21. Romans 1:20; II Peter 3:4.

In the Prologue to the Gospel of John the Creation is mentioned in a way which we find nowhere else in the Bible. Here it is clear that when a believer in Christ speaks of the Creation, he means something different from 'explaining' why there is a world, or why things exist. In this witness to the Creation we are all addressed, and the meaning of our existence is defined. Here there is no question of confusing the Creation with a cosmogony. Here the Word which became flesh in Jesus Christ, and the Word of Creation, are one. In this Word of Creation the eternal decree, and in it also the purpose and meaning of all existence became plain.⁵⁶

Three points in this passage must be carefully noted: (1) The doctrine of Creation has nothing to do with a cosmogony; it does not seek to explain why there is a world, (2) It defines the meaning of existence, (3) It reveals the purpose and meaning of existence.

If we take a comprehensive view of all the biblical passages, we would see that even the Old Testament passages are written from an existential point of view. In an article on 'God and His Creation', Claus Westermann emphasises the point that the Creation passages aim at reminding the readers '*what it means for them that their God is the Maker of heaven and earth*'. (Italics mine). They are not passages which describe the procedure or the act or acts of Creation. Westermann says,

There is no passage in the Bible which was written to inform the present generation about the procedure of the act or acts of creation. The reason is a very simple one: this was not needed.... These chapters (the very first chapters of the Bible) were written for a community, and the stories which preceded the writing were spoken to a community for which it was self-evident that the world was created by God. The fact of creation was for them nothing new.... The original and basic form of speaking about God as Creator is not a recounting of how God created the world but a praising of God as Creator.⁵⁷

56. I Corinthians 8:6. See *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption (Dogmatics, Vol. II, London: Lutterworth Press, 1964)*, p. 8.

57. *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, Vol. XVIII, March 1963, Nos. 3 part 1.

John Macquarrie also stresses the fact that the question of creation must be considered existentially, that is to say, 'as a question relevant to understanding our own existence in the world rather than as a speculative question about how things began'. He says,

We get rather striking confirmation of the predominantly existential motivation behind the interest in creation if we consider the two creation stories at the beginning of the Old Testament. The second of these, which is much older, begins with the creation of man, and then an environment is built up around him. The motive of the story is to find an identity, a self-understanding, and the world of nature comes into the picture almost incidentally. In the first and later story a much more sophisticated kind of thinking is reflected, one that is moving out of the mythological into something like a speculative level of discourse. Now a good deal is said about the ordered creation of nature, yet the existential interest is strong, for man is represented as the culmination of God's work, and the earth is there that he may 'subdue it' and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over living things that move upon the earth.... In any case, it is in man alone, that is to say, in ourselves, that we have any first hand knowledge of creaturely being.... So we are in profound agreement with Karl Rahner's assertion that 'it is at man above all, that we must look in order to learn what the Creator-creature relationship is'.⁵⁸

In sum, the doctrine of Creation arose out of an existential situation, when the Israelites were in Exile, and were brought into relation with the Covenant, within which, a solution to the existential problem could be found.

The Creator-creature relationship is best expressed in the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. Although as a formula, *creatio ex nihilo* does not appear in the Bible, the idea is implicit in some passages. There is at least one place in the literature of later Judaism where this formula is found, namely 2 Maccabees 7-28—*ouk ex on tōn epoiēsen autā o theos*. The idea is expressed in Hebrews 11:3—

58. *Principles of Christian Theology* (London: S. C. M. Press, 1966), pp. 196-97.

'By faith we perceive that the universe was fashioned by the word of God, so that the visible came forth from the invisible'. (New English Bible). So also is the phrase in Romans 4:17—'God... who summons the things that are not yet in existence as if they already were'. (New English Bible). It is also possible that the priestly writer of the Genesis narrative, as C. A. Simson argues, 'was endeavouring to present the idea of a *creatio ex nihilo*, at least in so far as he could conceive of it' in the opening words of the first chapter.⁵⁹ It is not for anything other than a very good reason that the idea of *creatio ex nihilo* has been considered in the history of Christian thought as the most adequate expression of the Biblical doctrine of creation.

This doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* has a two fold significance for us. It implies the absolute impermanence of all things apart from the Creator who maintains them by the power of His word in existence. As they were created out of nothing at His Word, so they vanish into nothingness at His Word. As all things, including man, have been created out of nothing, so all things including man stand *vis-a-vis* the threat of non-being. On the other hand it implies the absolute Lordship of God over existence. In other words God is Uncreated, man is the created; God is the Unconditioned, man is the conditioned.

Although creation bears the signature of God, His judgement can so fall upon his people that the earth can be returned to pre-Creation chaos.⁶⁰ In spite of creation man is threatened by the possibility of chaos. According to the perspective of Genesis, chaos surrounds the habitable world on every hand. Man's life was suspended above the formless abyss and surrounded by the waters of chaos] which threatened to engulf him and his world. He thus lived existentially with the threat of falling into the abyss of non-being. Unless the Creator upholds His Creation by His power the waters would sweep in and the world would return to the pre-Creation void.⁶¹ The Creator's continuing power is necessary to uphold His creation without which it will fall back into chaos.⁶² The regularities of nature depend on God's Covenant faithfulness.⁶³

59. See *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. I, pp. 465-67.

60. Jeremiah 4:23-26; v. 23 echoes Genesis 1.2.

61. Genesis 7:11; 8:2.

62. Psalms 104:29-30.

63. Genesis 8:22; cf. 9:13-17.

The truth of Man's creatureliness, of his being threatened by non-being, which is implicit in the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, is well stated by Karl Barth.

Creaturely reality means reality on the basis of *creatio ex nihilo*, creation out of nothing. Where nothing exists—and not a kind of primal matter—there through God there has come into existence that which is distinct from Him.... Everything outside God is held constant by God over nothingness. Creaturely nature means existence in time and space, existence with a beginning and existence that becomes, in order to pass away again. Once it was and once it will no longer be.... The creature is threatened by the possibility of nothingness and of destruction, which is excluded by God and only by God. If a creature exists, it is only maintained in its mode of existence if God so wills. If He did not so will nothingness would inevitably break in from all sides. The creature itself could not rescue and preserve itself.⁶⁴

Taking man himself as the paradigm of creaturely being, the characteristic of which is dependence and 'nullity', John Macquarrie also sees the importance of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* as expressing this truth about man's creatureliness, or what we might call his nihility and transitoriness.

The importance of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* would seem to be that it draws attention to the fact that any particular being stands, so to speak, between nothing and Being. It is, in so far as it participates in Being, but at any time it may cease to be. It both is and is not, for in order for anything to be something particular and determinate and recognizable as such, it is necessary that we should be able to say not only what it is, but what it is not. This means in effect that negativity enters into the very way in which any particular being is constituted, or that nullity (nothingness) is an essential constituent of creaturehood. Again, man is the paradigmatic case, for we have seen that he actually experiences the 'nothingness' that entered into his existence. But this negativity, which in man can get

64. *Dogmatics in Outline* (London: S. C. M. Press, 1960), p. 55.

raised to the level of explicit consciousness, is a universal characteristic of creaturely being.⁶⁵

This is a perception of great significance for a true understanding of the human predicament—the fact that existence is null and void. Therefore the negativity which characterises human existence will not be real if it can be conquered from existence itself. Buddhists in Sri Lanka also have long known that the ultimate means of over-coming nihility or nullity of existence cannot be developed by any power limited to existence itself. The Christian view is that nothing can exist by itself. As Karl Barth puts it,

What exists, exists, because it exists not of itself, but by God's word, for His word's sake, in the sense and in the purpose of His word.... God upholds all things (*tā pantā*) by His word.⁶⁶

This is the existential meaning of the doctrine of Creation. Rudolf Bultmann puts it very strongly when he says,

This then is the primary thing about faith in Creation: the knowledge of the nothingness of the world and of ourselves, the knowledge of our complete abandonment.⁶⁷

'The knowledge of our complete abandonment' implies a state of being immutable, indifferent and insensible to self when nothing is left but the Divine Reality.

A realization of the nihility inherent in creaturely existence leads to the suffering of utter despair for those who seek meaning and value independently of the Creator. Men who attempt to manipulate the world and their own life as if they had a real independent existence, are inevitably driven to nihilistic disillusionment which can be overcome only in a realization of man's creaturely dependence, which will drive him to seek for the Power that sustains all things.

Conclusion

What bearing has the notion of relatedness and love of neighbour on practical living in Sri Lanka today? What relevance has the

65. *Principles of Christian Theology*, p. 198.

66. *Dogmatics in Outline*, p. 57.

67. *Existence and Faith*, p. 177.

Christian understanding of man as having the capacity for an 'I-Thou' relationship for a socially relevant ethic? Christians will be able through faith in God the Father and Creator to find community within the Church and because of faith, as an expression of faith, reach out to form community with all neighbours.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer used a very striking expression 'Holy Worldliness'. By this he meant a simultaneous involvement in this world through participation in a reality that takes one beyond this world. John Macquarrie, interpreting Bonhoeffer's thought, says that 'holy worldliness' means 'an acceptance of and an involvement in the world—this material world where God has been pleased to set us', and 'yet always there must be a searching below the surface of things for the holy depths that give meaning to this whole worldly existence and rescue it from pointlessness, if not indeed from sheer absurdity'.⁶⁸

If we search below the surface of things, we would, in the light of the above discussion, discover three basic dimensions of holy worldliness. They are interrelated and merge with one another; I call them *mutuality*, *non egoity* and *transcendence*.

By mutuality I mean right-relatedness. That means to be rightly related to one another, overcoming alienation of man from man. This is not simply having some nice feeling about one's neighbours and doing charitable deeds. The man who is rightly related is one who has a deep concern for social justice and the removal of those things that create divisiveness between man and man. Thus, we could say that the concern of a Marxist for the abolition of class distinctions is a spiritual concern. Anything that is done compassionately to remove alienation of man from man, whether by the so-called religious men or by the so-called secular men, is spiritual. This understanding enables us to see morality in its right perspective, not as the observance of rigid absolute laws but as responsible living for the good of one another. Morality is not the adherence to inflexible absolute laws. Moral principles are situationally adaptable for responsible living for the common good of man. This is what it means to be a socialist man. In Christian terms this is what 'love thy neighbour' means.

68. *God and Secularity* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1968), p. 66.

By nonegoity I mean the realization that one is nothing in himself. It means overcoming the notion of 'I', 'me', 'mine' that stands in the way of right relationships.

To be rightly related to others one must be rightly related within, because the causes that separate man from man are within man himself. 'What causes war, and what causes fightings among you?' asks St. James; 'Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and cannot obtain'.⁶⁹ In one word it is selfishness or *tanhā* and everything that promotes selfishness must be removed.

Right relatedness often means a fundamental change in attitude, a basic change in mind, a prerequisite for change in society. Revolutionaries and peacemakers have recognized this principle. The well known Cuban revolutionary, Che Guevara, recognized this truth. It is said that his whole outlook was governed by one fundamental principle, that no matter how much you change society, no matter how much you restructure it, unless you create a new man, unless you change his attitudes, it all ends up in greed, lust and ambition'.⁷⁰ And a statement of the purpose of UNESCO reads, 'Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defence of peace must be constructed'.

To this end it is necessary that the egocentric life of craving and self-interest be conquered by the deliberate denying of the self. Jesus put it very strongly when he said,

If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.⁷¹

The third dimension of holy worldliness is transcendence. The love shining from the eyes of a bride, a scientist's devotion to his research, a mother's concern for her son, the haunting sweet-

69. St. James 4:17.

70. *The Speeches and Writings of Che Guevara*, ed. John Gerassi (London Cox and Wyman Ltd., 1968), p. 48.

71. Matthew 16:2-2; Luke 9:22-24.

ness of music, the sense of wonder at the radiance of the sunset, the sense of immensity at the sight of the starry skies, the compulsions to reason and to question, the never ceasing creative urge in man to create something new and higher and not remain satisfied with what is, the experience of nullity or 'anatta-ness' which makes him realize that there is something beyond the born, the made, the created and the quest for meaning are all experiences that bring us to the threshold of something more. Even in atheism there is a dimension of transcendence, for atheism is a protest in the name of hope for the not yet comprehended. Man inclines towards this something more in veneration, aspiration, hope and worship. In Marxism and other social ideologies, transcendence finds expression in faith-decisions made in hope oriented towards a glorious future; it creates a sense of glory. In religions this hope is oriented to a glorious future even beyond the grave. This also creates a sense of glory which finds expression in worship. In theistic religions transcendence is based on a personal God. Transcendence is a summons from the Beyond that enables man to go beyond himself by which alone he can discover authentic selfhood.

The quality of transcendence is in everyman whether he be a materialist, a Marxist, a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Muslim, or a Christian. There is a beyond in science; the wonder and mystery of the immense range of depths in physical matter. There is a beyond in reason; an ever receding something beyond the grasp of the mind—the inexplicable—what Buddhists have called *avyākata*. These point to an ultimate Beyond which gives meaning to the proximate beyonds—the experiences of transcendence in everyday life. Even after a hearty meal in a classless society there will still be a hunger for something MORE—for the BEYOND.

The search for community in a multireligious society urges us to seek a form or forms of spirituality that can be shared by people of different religious traditions and even ideologies. A basic criterion for such a spirituality can be derived from the notions of relatedness and love of neighbour, notions familiar to religious persons around the globe, notions embedded in the first article of the Apostle's Creed. Religions have generally tended to emphasise inwardness (a characteristic particularly of renascent religions) to the neglect of social action, and social ideologies have tended to emphasise social action to the neglect of inwardness. The under-

standing of 'holy worldliness' consisting of the three dimensions of mutuality, nonegoity, and transcendence, will perhaps lead us to participation in a common spirituality linking inwardness with action, solitary contemplation with mutuality and transcendence with social involvement, community within communities.

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