

An Analysis of the Buddhist Monk during the British Colonial Period

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Introduction

Changes in social institutions became widespread and extensive and far reaching since the occupation of the whole Island by the British. Although previously the country was invaded by the Portuguese and the Dutch, it was the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Colebrook Commission Report in the 19th century that propelled Sri-Lanka into rapid change, in its social and economic progress. The establishment of the printing press during the time of the British rule can be regarded as a profound social event in the history of Sri-Lanka. The Introduction of modern technology into the country should be recognized as the greatest contribution by the British. It can be pointed out that this knowledge of technology changed the traditional social structures prevailing in Sri Lankan society at the time. Poets began to depict the emerging contemporary society into poetry.

In this paper examines the nature of the disposition of monks, the power exercised by the monks, and how the lives of monks changed during the colonial period are examined. It also shows how the Christians portrayed the Buddhist monks from their point of view and their attitude towards Buddhist monks influenced the ordinary people. It is from this perspective that the poetical works of this period are analyzed.

For this research paper most materials used in this study have been obtained from publications and materials available at the Colombo Museum, the Department of Historical Documents in the main Library of the University of Peradeniya, the Asia and African Sections and Social Science Sections of the British Library in London.

Buddhism under Colonial Rule

It is essential to describe the lives of monks in the social background of the period. Anne Blackburn in her research on 'Locations of Buddhism' (2010) mentions that we know very little about Buddhism in Sri Lanka under high colonialism. It is not only that, she also mentions that we do not have a clear account of the nature of external stimuli to Buddhists of Sri Lanka during the 19th century (Blackburn. 2002: 1). In her study she has discussed one pioneer Buddhist monk Hikkaduwe Sumangala Thero. There is another prominent research done by Kithsiri Malalgoda. "Buddhism in Sinhalese Society 1750 – 1900." He also discusses the 19th century religious background of the Buddhist priests and how the lay people were involved in Buddhist activity. From the point of view emphasized by Malalgoda three major factors came up during this period (1976:2).¹ Tissa Kariyawasam in his research "Religious Activities and the Development of a new Political Tradition in Sinhalese 1852 – 1906, has discussed the emergence of three sects or Nikayas of Buddhist society, in the first chapter titled Religious Activities of the clergy. This has been a theme in the new poetical traditions too.

In the 19th century, modernization, which is defined as the revolution of knowledge had already begun. Manfred Halpern says that 'the revolution of modernization involves the transformation of all systems by which man organizes his society- the political, social, economic, intellectual, religious and psychological systems (Manfred. 1966:179.) Modernization however, represents a serious challenge to the ability of religious traditions to accommodate to change. Modernization poses a dilemma for religious traditions and their adherent (Ibid: 13). As Buddhism was colonized during the British period, it had created a new context (Bond. 1992: 14). The other factor already mentioned is that Buddhist monks and Buddhist society were given good support by the kings before the colonial period. But in the first three decades

of the 19th century colonial administration in Sri Lanka and the imperial government it had been less enthusiastic in their response to Buddhism and Buddhist monks in Ceylon (Silva. K.M.de. 1973: 183). On the other hand, the more important matter was the state's neutrality in the increasing conflict between the Christian groups and the indigenous religions, especially Buddhism (Ibid: 188). As mentioned by K.M. de Silva, Buddhism in Ceylon was fundamentally different from Christianity in that it had no central organization (Ibid: 190). This point was very important for the existence of Buddhist monks. It is very clear that there was no pivot to generate the system of Buddhist society in this period, and consequently, there ensued decadence in Buddhism. However, in the last quarter of the 19th century emerged the Buddhist revival, which prompted an active vernacular education and the resurgence of nationalism (Ibid: 203).² M.U.de Silva mentions that bhikkhus played a dominant role in society (2004: 31). When analyzing the poems of this period, it became clear how poets have portrayed characteristics diversity among the Buddhist bhikkhus. It might have been the impact of colonization and modernization. Basically it is very important to define the role of monks during this period.

Through the explanation of the meaning 'bhikkhu' (bhikkhuwa, pāvidda: Buddhadatta: 371) according to the Vinaya Pitaka (The book of discipline) is 'beggar'. The term bhikkhu connotes that meaning. Another meaning of this word is 'wearing torn robes (Parajika Pali: 56).³ The household life hinders laymen who wish to earn merit as it gives rise to desires, which are treated as obstacles in the path of a bhikkhu (Sn. Pabbajjasutta).⁴ A bhikkhu has to rid himself of all desires. That is one of the basic characteristics of a bhikkhu (Gunawadena: 1993:53). Accordingly, a bhikkhu has to always refrain from amassing riches and avoid getting involved in economic activities. Robert Binning has explained this succinctly in his book (Binning. 1857: 19).⁵ Although the Bhikkhu Sasana the order of monks had its first beginnings in India in the

middle of the 3rd century BC, it is a wellknown fact that Mahinda Thero was the pioneer who established the Buddha Sasana in Sri Lanka. He was the son of Emperor Asoka the Great and it was during the reign of King Devanampiyatissa that he arrived. His arrival marked a turning point in the history of the island, and it was since then that the history of Sri Lanka became more authentic than the previous period (Adikaram. 1963: 109). But evidence show that the order of the history the indigenous Buddhist monks started with the Anuradhapura Maha Vihara Vasi Bhikkhus of With the arrival of Mahinda thero , the social system in Sri lanka underwent a drastic change. With Buddhism becoming the state religion the bhikkhus were able to consolidate their authority in the political arena.

Theoretically Buddhism became the state religion and it also signaled the beginning of the assertion of power by the bhikkhus in the political arena. The first dwelling (kutiya) of the bhikkhus became the earliest spiritual and educational institution and it shows that during that period several basic powerful characteristics of the bhikkhus were formed. .At the beginning it was the 'common' (snghika) vision to form the fundamental theories which were opposed to their personal desires'. The way of life of the ruling kings and the nobles influenced the bhikkhus to change their behavior. It was also seen that the excessive favors lavished to them contributed to this change. This was contradictory to the main aims of the bhikkhu sasana even at the time of the Buddha. The Vinaya Pitaka clearly says the lives of bhikkhus underwent certain changes according to time places, of their dwelling (Ibid: 191). When the king granted his favours the religious rites were performed well but when no favours were available things became very uncomfortable. In different eras of the history of Sri Lanka, it was seen to be so. If the traditional bhikkhus, main aims were to purge themselves of unwanted desires, then their character would be undecided or undetermined in the traditional society. During the

first stages the bhikkhu sasana was divided into 'grantha dhura and vidarsana Dhura.'

The contemporary bhikkhus understood the society they lived in. According to the analysis of grantha dhura, bhikkhus were directly involved in social activities. vidarsana dhura demanded them to rid themselves of unwanted desires. This division was strongly and deeply influenced by society. Although this division took place one cannot say that grantha dhura is superior to vidarsana dhura but there arose a competition between the two (Adikari. 1999: 59-120). Before the invasion of the Europeans into the Island during the Kotte period, the position of the bhikkhus in society was firmly established. But when society changed, bhikkhus' behavioural patterns also changed as it was evident in the Seethawaka and Mahanuwara periods.

In the Mahanuwara known as the 'dark era', the bhikkhus who did not adhere to the traditional customs and principles of the ssana were called ganinnses. They practised all kinds of arts and vocations. Some of them managed the temple properties and nurtured their families and relations with the income from those properties (Vacissara: 2003: 3rd Chapter). With the passage of time and when traditions changed, Venerable Welivita Saranamkara took the lead role in changing and re - establishing the true traditions of the buddha sasana. He was the precursory instrument in the resuscitating of the modern bhikkhuhood. Thus the name of Welivita Asarana Sarana Saranamkara is held in high esteem even this day and respected as a remarkable character. It was in this background that the invasion of the Island by the British and the beginning of the colonial era took place. The colonialists had their own way of thinking and this forced the bhikkhus to change their attitudes and outlook. Even during the time of the Buddha this was very evident and it was in direct infringement of the fundamental aims of the bhikkhu tradition. The vinaya pitaka says that bhikkhus' behaviour and aims changed according to the times and the places.

Venerable Weliwita's representation of the Bhikkhu Ayojana is clearly seen in the 19th century. There were two problems that the bhikkhus had to solve at that time. Their chief problem was to eliminate the obstacles and criticisms that the Christians levelled at their behaviour. The other factor was to protect the traditional educational system (Arangala. 2004:75). The character of the bhikkhus became active due to these two reasons. In one way the social changes brought about by the British were seen as a formidable challenge to the bhikkhus. According to the Colebrook proposals in 1832, the state decided to close down the Sinhala and Tamil schools. The translation of the Bible and Christian missionary work was sponsored by the state and full support was extended to it (Wimalananda. 1963: 159). This development led the bhikkhus to change their attitudes and behaviour. Therefore temple - oriented education was revived. The horoscopes of the children who came to the temple for studies were read by the head priest and those who were found to be bold and brilliant were ordained. In this background the temples and their traditional properties were protected and this gave birth to an educated bhikkhu society (Vajiragnana. 1992:9).

In the 19th century there were many conspicuously prominent personalities among the Buddhists clergy. Wāliwitia Saranakara Sangharaja thero who had a close relationship with the community of monks was an outstanding personality in the contemporary field of education. Walane Siddharta, Galle Medhamkara, Hikkaduwe Sumangala and Ratmalne Dharmrama were among the other distinguished theros. When initiating Vidyodaya and Vidyalkara Pirivenas, bhikkhus like Hikkaduwe Sumangala, Ratmalne Sri Dharmrama, Weligama Sumangala, Dodandwe Piyaratana, Welitota Wimalasra, Waskaduwe Sri Subuti rendered a yeoman service in protecting traditional education (Wickremasinghe. 1992:357) At the beginning, only oriental subjects were taught in the pirivenas (ibid: 26). There were other

bhikkhus who represented this generation of outstanding monks. Among them were Morapitiye Atthadassi, Denipitiye Sangharakkhita, Walne Sarananda, Ratmalne Sumanatissa, Galagamuwe Buddhharakkhita, Baduraliye Dirananda, Panadure Khemananda, Tiyanbarahene Wimalatissa, Ratmalne Wipulatissa, Walne Dhammananda, Godigamuwe Saranatissa, Kollupitiye Sunanda and Arukgoda Silnanda who contributed in various ways to promote the cause of Buddhism (Gunatilake. 1927:101). During the 19th century, Venerable Mohottiwatte Gunananda stood out as a radical personality. In this background, poets tried to depict in poetry that these bhikkhus had broken away from the traditional bhikkhu society and were very progressive.

Poetry illustrating the bhikkhu

To protect the traditional bhikkhus from missionaries and also from the changes in society was a problematical task. In the background of these changes and problems, it is not possible to talk about them separately. All living beings are members of society. The lives of bhikkhus are incorporated in many ways. In Buddhist society people pay a lot of attention to the behaviour of bhikkhus. There are two important occasions in a bhikkhu's life such as upasampad (Higher ordination) and parupanaya (Wearing of Robes) when analyzing the traditional Sri Lankan bhikkhus' social lives, education and preaching were the chief aspects that are conspicuous. Likewise bhikkhus who violated the traditions were criticized by the laity. During this period the critics who instigated the people to rise against the bhikkhus seemed to be those who were involved in the missionary movement or those from the Buddhist society. In traditional society the Buddhist bhikkhu was placed in a stemmed position. But those who acted contrary to the principles and precepts of the Buddha's teaching were condemned by the people.

The Behaviour and the Relationships of bhikkhus

In the new economical, political and social systems, the fundamental aims of the life of bhikkhu underwent a transformation. Earlier the main duty was to adhere to the tenets and duties of their religion. However they were encouraged or persuaded to participate in various activities related to the life of the lay people. This situation was a deviation from the Buddhist traditions. The cultural and social environment had ingrained the lay people an expectation that the bhikkhus should lead exemplary lives and had to be more refined and cultured than the ordinary laymen. They anticipated the bhikkhus to lead exemplary lives that demanded respect from the common people. The impression of the society in that period was that most bhikkhus were involved in activities to earn money.

samaharu viya weddu e nis dāna palak nā
samaharu waduvot v e ilauwat esemāi.
yakāduru tawa ātmāi e bāvin nā nātmat
watukaru wādivl nāwāwmat gihin wet māi
(Sasana Wrukshaya Nohoth Smana Thathwa Praksaya: 18)

(Some became native doctors (veddu), some were carpenters, and some were exorcists, Some were farmers and cultivators.)

samaharu godaweddui annu sindut wanannoi
samaharu gahagannoi Jbukul krayanw
samaharu wnijanuni e nis nā mudal den
samaharu badugannoi ai bāluwta mandā (ibid.19, 20)

(Some of the bhikkhus were quacks (goda veddo), some were traders and merchants Some were engaged in leasing,)

*äthäm aya govikam da karawati wawati
watupiti nopaman
mein samaharu harak bokara weset
wikun milagen*

(Sanga Satana:6)

(There were others who became cultivators. Among these were those who bred cattle and sold them for money.)

*täna täna gewal rh nätek matpänut w
apata inna palak n ä eka sagunta v den
samaharu govıyot v e nis palak nä in
medäka rata härımäi ktaktat obinne7*

(Ssana Wrukshaya Nohoth Smana Thathwa Praksaya: 19-20)

Some owned taverns where they sold liquor. ("People had no huts to live in as they too had been taken over by these bhikkhus. Some became farmers and had taken over the livelihood of the poor. So the only thing suitable for the people to do was to leave their country.) (Sangha Sasana describes that bhikkhus engaged in various occupations like carpentry, work, quack medicine, leasing, lending money on interest, writing auspicious times, etc.) Some had taken to the robes and learnt medicine. They went from house to house caring for the sick and earning money. Some learnt astrology and without even knowing their profession well, they wrote horoscopes and made auspicious times for people. This is how they earned money to provide for their families and relations." Because of the new social system that emerged, people were able to make money by engaging in business and trade. It was seen that bhikkhus too became a part of this social set-up to engage in business..

*samaharu naya dennoi
lodananweth dugimu loku
poliyama gannoi e nudunnoth sabemai
mebadu saguruwan sasne päviddowa unnoi
mebawa dosaya kiwoth nä ithin wäsimek*

(ibid:21)

“Some bhikkhus lent money to the poor at high interest rates. If the loan was not paid back they would be harassed. If this information was divulged to others they would have had no peace.”

*mudal sapay rägename nonisi wädawala yedemin
asal ayata nayata dethi lokupoli gänumata satutin
ekal ohuhata poliya dennata nohäki uninam wädiyn
wisal wana adikarana salawäda ganithi naduwak wigasin
(Sanga Satana:4-7)*

People tried to show that most bhikkhus participated in activities thus, violating the principles of their religion. Because of such activities these bhikkhus as a whole destroyed the sasana.

<i>domu lesa nopen</i>	<i>n</i>
<i>boruwen bawaya wana</i>	<i>n</i>
<i>laya bada wada</i>	<i>n</i>
<i>mahanu ek vi sasun nasa</i>	<i>n</i>

(Mokshadnaya hewath Nivan Soy adima: 59)

“These bhikkhus do various things to protect their bellies. Together they destroy the Buddha sasana.”

That this criticism gradually became more and more widespread. Perhaps the opportunists that helped the missionary movement at that time, relevant were instrumental in building a society that was bent on criticizing those bhikkhus. This situation created the background for the poets who criticized those bhikkhus, to condemn them the poets addressed them in abusive terms like “sangaiy, sangadando, hil palsangun, etc”.

*mebandu jada siri lakdiv sasun asse gate
nunuwana saṅgadando bäv kiyami mam metanhi
bali bili tawa me äd noyek se kirimen
sasuna ruka kapantai me gonunge dän sadanne
'emena mema hiwal wal pal saṅgun lakdivhi '*

This is how bhikkhus were being ridiculed by poets at that time. “These Buddhist priests behave like rascals performing various activities which lead to destruction of the ssana. These bulls will cut down the ssana tree” *hiwal palsafigun* means that bhikkhus who practise exorcism is not suitable for the priesthood.

During this period bhikkhus who were not living in accordance with the ‘vinaya’ were criticized by the society. The phrase, *sramana vedun sañdaha*, means the bhikkhus wearing yellow robes, with clean shaven heads went from house to house, begging for alms and spending their time with women. That is how they were criticized by society. “Buying paddy fields with the money they received from begging, they lent it at high interest all the time praising themselves for qualities they did not really possess. These bhikkhus should be killed by setting dogs against them. These words show how severe was the antagonism of society.

The general impression among the people was that bhikkhus took up the robes because they came from poor families. When the low caste people took to robes, they destroyed the ssana. Society expected people to pay respect and homage to bhikkhus only if they had not violated rules of the Vinaya. They were not worthy of respect if they were corrupt.

*kandat adinnata watak näti kollo lakdiv
sangaiyal unumatin ugato nowemäi
ring katun wasana tän samano yatotin
ännä päwiddo da owun nowadiv tama his*

(Sasana Wrukshaya Nohoth Smana
Thathwa Praksaya: 35-53)

(Uneducated brats joined the ssana because they had neither food nor clothes. They went into houses often and spent time with women. These bhikkhus should not be worshipped)

James Emerson Tennent maintained the same attitude the poets had about bhikkhus' behaviour. "Generally speaking, the Buddhist priests in Ceylon adhered in practice to the rule of poverty imposed on their order, and although a few acquired property clandestinely, and some connected with the larger temples and derived rich incomes from their endowments, the majority was wretchedly poor." (Tennent: 218-219) If a bhikkhu is steeped in a worldly life, his spiritual life gradually destroyed. He eats of a decorated plate, not from a begging bowl (pttare). He uses an expensive silk umbrella. He sells the robes that are donated to him and smokes cigars. (sanga hatana: 23) He does not like to travel without a car. But he goes from house to house begging shamelessly (ibid: 21) in the new commercialized society, the bhikkhus were induced to lead luxury lives. When a bhikkhu receives some money, he uses an expensive watch, wears expensive sandals etc, and goes hither and thither looking at beautiful objects. (sanga hatana: 22) He does not like to travel hither and thither without a car." This shows the decline and downfall of the order of monks during the Mahanuwara period. With all the material resources they had acquired, they were still not satisfied. Therefore poets were forced to reveal some of the hideous facts in the lives of the bhikkhus. (Dussilawatha hewath Dussilayan Handunganime Lakunu: 13, 22, 32)

*kollan dutuwitta äti ratu ptaya
bälmen sita genwati häma dmaya
älmen deti soñdaguru thama rätaya
Pulwan deviyani me kiyami ktaya*

(sanga hatana: 26)

("When bhikkhus see fair complexioned, good looking boys, they summon them to the temple and cohabit with them. "Oh Vihnu God! To whom should we say these things?")

Bhikkhus at that time ate sumptuous food and were infatuated with sexual desires. Society was aware that they would get disrobed at any moment.

*uchitan pacchithan k basa situ situ pätu de nowedo
evigasin ohu situ pätu deya divas näti aya kese dani
do wasana kala nek mihiri rasahara gatata supahas
lab nira tura madana balayaku sitata wesami karai
anuwana noyek jaramara*

(Siwralu Hatanaya: 9)

(These bhikkhus eat all the luxurious food and live in comfort. Their sexual feelings are aroused because of the life they lead. So they get involved in all sorts of misdeeds.)

The bhikkhus gave up eating from begging bowls and instead used gaily decorated plates. They smoked cigars too. They carried a walking stick and wore sandals and put a silk sarong over their shoulders. (Kupadi Hatana hewath Isthi Walippuwa : 48-50) These were the new characteristics of modern bhikkhus. In the poem, Kupadi Hatana, Carolis Appuhamy admitsthus, "I learnt some Pali when I was a bhikkhu. When I grew a beard I got all sorts of feelings and thought, "I must earn some money." Having thought so, I went begging to collect money to buy a silk sarong. I know everything about these bhikkhus. They take off their robes and lay them on their beds. But they show that they are dedicated to the robes. Cheating people using their false wives, they buy silk sarongs and wear slippers and carry a walking stick and put a silk sarong over their shoulders. (ibid: 49-50) (This is how the young priests think of collecting money to buy essential goods and they then leave the robe) In the midst of the new social system women too changed their clothes and behavior (ibid: 64-69). As we have seen, this made a strong impression on the lives of the bhikkhus who were leading a worldly life. According to Carolis Appuhamy

the women wore very short jackets showing their breasts. They wandered here and there shaking their hips to entice the young bhikkhus. This was another reason that led the bhikkhus to changes their attitudes.

According to Tissa Kariyawasam another reason that contributed to change the way of life of these bhikkhus was that there was no king, nobles or prelates to guide them or sponsor them (Kariyawasam: 51-52). There was no central authority to supervise these young bhikkhus officially or lead them along the correct path. The society that existed then was not conducive to sustain traditions. On the other hand there was another set of bhikkhus who were trying to demonstrate to other bhikkhus the way of leading a righteous life. In the 19th century there were two types of renaissances. In the beginning of the colonial era there were armed rebellions against the British rule and at the end of the century there was a Buddhist awakening (which was semi-political) and 'Désapremi Viypra' riots (ibid: 28).

The pioneer of this resurgence was Reverend Migettuwatte Gunananda. He was a brave and energetic priest who created great enthusiasm among the people, both in urban and rural areas, as they had a lot of bitter grievances relating to religion and allied matters. He was also a vociferous and an undaunted orator. He published many pamphlets and rose against Christianity and the missionary movement. Ven Gunananda was identified as the chief protagonist who tried to combat the Christian and missionary movements and his character was built up along these lines, Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala, on the other hand, was instrumental in upholding the literary traditions of the country. The yeomen service rendered by these two renowned priests during the second half of in the 19th century was a great blessing to Buddhists. It was highly admired by the poets as well as the by general public. Poets thought Migettuwatte Gunananda was worthy of respect and should be worshipped night and day

because he vehemently opposed the missionaries and Christians. They also thought Hikkaduwa Sri Sumamgala deserved the same degree of respect and admiration. Certainly Migettuwatte Gunnanda was of course, the most charismatic figure of the 1860 and 1870 eras (Malalgoda: 257). The Panadura vadayaya provided an occasion for Migettuwatte Gunananda Thero to display his unparalleled oratorical skills and strength of character. It also gave an impetus to the Buddhists to revive their religion against the attacks of missionaries. Consequently they united under Gunananda Thero and other Buddhist priests, and launched a Buddhist revivalist to fight against conversion of Buddhists into Christianity. Accordingly the Panadura debate was a great eye opener for the Buddhists in Ceylon as well as others all over the world (Wimalaratne: 34-35). Migettuwatte Gunananda Thero's oratorical skills reflected the strength of character of the bhikkhus at that time. It attracted the poets' attention whose poetry was well received by the society. To witness the Panadura vadayaya, poets describe how beautiful English ladies accompanied by their husbands were seated happily in the best seats while the poor went found it difficult to find seats. Some of them even had to creep between and under the seats to listen to the debate. People of different races came to view that debate. They were bedecked in gold jewellery studded with red and blue gems. Even Muslim women came to see the debate and wondered what sort of debate was going on when they saw women wearing a cloth tied around their waists and another strip of cloth across their breasts, and young men lovingly touching them. Migettuwatte Thero discoursed for an hour about the Bible and how barren and worthless the words in it were and created a lasting impression on the crowd who had gathered there (Gunanadanawana: 19-22). At the same time there were some people in the crowd who were incited to criticize and insult the great monk.

A reaction to this debate was clearly seen in an article that appeared in the newspaper Sathya Mrgaya. Organized missionary groups began to attack Gunananda Thero verbally. While being attacked Gunananda Thero displayed his caliber in various ways. According to a report in Satyalamkra newspaper his forceful debate had damaged the missionaries in a big way. The same source also mentions that Migettuwatte thero continued to deliver weekly sermons attacking the Christian doctrine to raise spirits of the Buddhists; (ibid: 26)¹³ he had also made use of puppet shows to depict and criticize the Christian doctrine. He also used various ways and means to draw Buddhists to his temple. He organized folk-drama festivals to establish a definite impression about the authority of bhikkhus in the minds of the rural people. Satyalamkra further shows that the main reason for holding these folk-dramas was to criticize the Christian doctrine. Ven. Gunananda's chief aim was to pay special attention to the places where large crowds of people gathered.

The Christians thought this was done to further insult them. It was also seen that although the Satyalamkra newspaper criticized Gunananda thero, the Satya Margaya newspaper tried its best to receive him. Many people in Sri Lanka knew that the High Priest of Kotahena Vihare, Venerable Mohottiwatte Gunananda gained many benefits and numerous favours for his sermons. Therefore he won many accolades worldwide. Those who could not tolerate this spread strong false rumors saying that he scolded and abused and told untruths about other races thereby misleading people (Sathyalankaraya: 136). He had to face a lot of opposition from the missionaries and even from some of the Buddhist who had their own personal reasons for criticizing him.

Satya Margaya says that the construction of the statue of Buddha at the Colombo Kotahena Dipaduttrama temple had started about 25 years ago but it had not still been completed due to the fact that people who were not pious took back their

donations and used that money for their own purposes. When they could not pay back the money to the temple they converted themselves to Christianity and abandoned and insulted Buddhism.(ibid)14

It is a wellknown fact that Mohottiwatte Thero did unparalleled service in uplifting the Buddha Sasana and received praise from all over the world for his great contribution. But there were some who were not in favour and spread rumors rapidly about him and tried to lead people astray (Sathya Magaya: 23). Gunnanda Thero was criticized not only by the missionaries but even by some Buddhists who had secret dealing with missionaries. On the occasion of his funeral, there were some people who spoke disparagingly about him as if he were a joke (Ibid: 23.)

“Pious people stood around the coffin and sprinkled rose water while heathens talked jokingly.” There were some who stood beside his coffin until sunset while others spent their money on the funeral and gathered there to pay respects to him. While gentlemen gathered and sprinkled rose water on the body, other foolish people made various accusations (Prera: 43, 46).

“I worshipped Mohottiwatte Thero for chasing the pig-like heathens. I bow down to him in worship.”

*situminikata bandu me sudul sasna rukhi
gedi kadamina denu danan wet budinwas
e yatidu neka bas dat sipkaduwe terunmaya
emena divi pudannem e yatidunge pmul*

(Dusilawatha hewath Dussilayan
Handunganime Lakunu: 47, 59, 60)

(“It was no one but our thero who uttered his sermons to convince us to protect our sasana which is so pure and like a wish-conferring gem, therefore I worship at the feet of Hikkaduwe Sumangala”)

The Panadura Wadaya drew attention because of the nature of the verses. It was reported that after reading the verses Dunapare Wadaya and insulting people coming and going on the road, a certain person was sentenced to prison with hard labour. (Sathyalankra: 21) While many facets of the character of Venerable Mohottiwatte Gunnanda are well – known, the character of Hikkaduwe Sumangala thero deserves equal recognition. Anne Blackburn in her study, *Locations of Buddhism*, introduces Bhikkhu Sumangala as one of the most central figures during the British period in Lankan Buddhism and the Island's wider society" (Blakburn: xii)

Another fact to be noted here is that Hikkaduwe thero's main aim was to react against the forces that were detrimental to the Sasana and to rebuild and revive it. He lived up to his ideals that Buddhism emphasized peace and good relations especially in a pluralist society and its qualities such as tolerance, compassion and co-existence. Hikkduwe Sumangala Thero was the chief incumbent of the Paramadhamma Chetiya Pirivena and also he was the torch – bearer of the national religious revival movement. He was actively involved in its activities during that crucial period. During this time several vihares were built in Colombo and many suburbs. To promote religious education Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara pirivenas were established and Welivita Saranankara Thero played an important role in the revival of arts. Between the years 1873 – 1875, Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara Pirivena were started and primary education imparted to novices by Hikkaduwe Sumamgala thero, Ratmalne Dhammloka thero and Walne Siddharta thero. (Wijebandara. 1994: 112) At that time English language had slowly taken roots in the country as the medium of instruction. Thus, the service of these Pirivenas had rendered to revive the Sinhala language and literature admirable. The bhikkhus who contributed to the present renaissance were scholars such as Hikkaduwe Sumangala, Ratmalane Sri Dharmma, Weligama Sumamgala,

Dodanduwe Piyaratana, Welitota Wimalasra, Waskaduwe Sri Subuti theros and Pandit Batuwanthudwe. These bhikkhus were the chief architects of the present revival of learning in the country. Amidst this background Sumangala thero was very vigilant and concerned about the conduct of some of the bhikkhus and he tried to chastise and reform them and retaliated to their behavior. (Dusilawatha hewath Dussilayan Handunganime Lakunu: 59, 35, 60)¹⁵ The pious and good Atthadassi thero having continuously learnt all the arts and crafts resided in Vanavasi Vihare. (Himathithlankaraya or Benthota Lakara: 45)

It is clearly seen here that when a bhikkhu showed his noble qualities, abilities or piety as a bhikkhu his brethren, never hesitated to respect him, and show their appreciation. Bhikkhu, who had led an unblemished life were respected by society. Thus, Yogyne Nandaramatissa Thero's character had drawn special attention of the laity.

*sasuanabare sarakal hima räsa band
muwatabare thiwäsu sarasavi land
thedesature path yasasäti para sind
neka satare therapat dam sugatinad*

(Naradam Therawatha.....: 30)

(Like the moon shining in the Sasana like summer sky, his mouth like a pond filled with lotus flowers, bhikkhu Yogyne Nandaramatissa's education and fame has spread all over the country.) Lankgoda Dheerananda Thero's character has also drawn attention and appreciated as he was also a prominent figure in the Buddha Ssana. Bhikkhus whose chief vocation was delivering sermons were highly regarded by the Buddhist society.

This discloses the fact that the 19th century poets found it a good opportunity to level either their criticisms or express appreciations regarding the bhikkhus describing their conduct. While the bhikkhu organization was built up as a powerful social institu

tion, printing technology was also established in society and it had exerted considerable influence on the way the bhikkhus conducted their lives. Bhikkhus, who held sway over norms in the society and acknowledge as authorities in that respect, had to struggle to protect their status defying the criticisms levelled against them. In the transitional social background in the 19th century, the prominent role played by the bhikkhus to safeguard religion and culture is remarkable.

Notes

1. During the 19th century, there emerged in Ceylon, numerically small but socially dominant new 'elites' or status groups 'whose religious needs and interests, as much as their economic bases, were different from those of the traditional peasantry. Secondly, the political milieu of colonial government, in which these changes in the traditional system of stratification occurred, also affected Buddhism in a more immediate and direct way: and brought to an end the backing that had long been given to Buddhism by secular authority.
2. At the time of Olcott's arrival in Ceylon, the Buddhist Revival in Ceylon was well under way. The Buddhist Revival of the 2nd half of the 19th century was the first phase in the recovery of national pride in nationalism in the 20th century.
3. Bikkhuti Bikkhakoti Bikkhu, Bikkhacariyam Ajju pagatoti Bikkhu, Bhinnapatadharoti Bikkhu
4. sambadhodyam gharavso rajassayatanam iti
abbhoksova pabbajja iti disvana pabbajji
pabbajitvana kayena papam kammam vivajjati
vaciduccaritam hitva jivam parisodhaim

5. The Buddhist priest was not a distinct caste like the Brahmins of India. On the contrary, they are devoted to a life of celibacy, so that anything like a distinct tribe could not exist.. They are chosen from among various classes, and educated for the priesthood in colleges appointed for the purpose. They live principally on voluntary alms and abstain from the fair sex altogether. Yellow is the sacred colour of Buddha's followers and the priests wear a long robe of this hue. They have their heads clean shaven and uncovered and generally carry a fan of palm leaf in the hand.
6. 6th chapter, "Sanskruithika Ithihsaya, "Pirihunu Bhikkhuwa".
7. Arnolis. 1884: 19, 20
Wadukama (carpentry) Gode wedakama (Quack medicine)
Mudal poliyata deema (giving money on interest) Nakat katayutu (writing auspicious times): garhita vidyvan vashayen salaka atha (These were condemned as low and disgraceful methods)

"Conscious of the dubious and evanescent nature of their influence, the priests occasionally resort to these expedients to sustain it, and combining the practise of medicine and astrology with their spiritual profession, the superstitious mystery with which these are enveloped , contributes somewhat to the object desired." (Sir Emerson Tennet, 218)

8. This book shows the importance of Bhikkhus walking along the Noble Eightfold Path as well as the criticisms launched against bhikkhus who lived as heretics and had non- Buddhist beliefs
9. Taruna liyeku kädawägenauth tarunek satose

Nomina adara situpalakara nithisurakina wilase
Amana mgon mahanu ratukollan räkawese se
Karana dusiri elikota mama pawasami koiwilase

10. In this book of verses it shows how the bhikkhus who were ordained in the Ssana became lazy and did not behave virtuously and practice their precepts. Although the aim of this book is to bring them back to the correct path it was a criticism against the bhikkhus too. The poet also mentions how the character of the bhikkhus changed by degrees after ordainment.
11. The book of verses , Kupadi Hatana hewath Isthi Walippuv., was written with the intention of criticizing people.
12. thanabge eliya dm thäna thäna ävidinaw
pahatiya kona kara kawamin naya gänumata yanaw
mana le denadaml sämathäna vimsananaw
wara kole wihaga mthin me puda gandaw
13. Tawat baibalaye sra näthi noyek dewal penna penn
Mahat e sabaye sitapu sämadenage sikwala ganna gann
Äwith ehi siti kuditi balalun samaharak aya panna pann
Wiyat apa himitum gat päya ikuth karamin unna unn
14. “Among these people there are now about three Christian families. From Saturday the 2nd of this month they are going to start a puppet show on the roads. It will start in Silva Kankanamage’s garden and there will be such a commotion that we will not be able to stay here. Mahaththaya (gentleman) we can’t even spend one night here They have started this puppet show (Bahubuta) with the thought of insulting

our Christian doctrine. The reason for this is that each day they have this show a jester comes and jokes and uses insulting words. This is done to insult a dead priest. Their brutal behavior is shown by their actions. Although they say they are pious and offer a lot of alms daily, they act like brutes in every way. Oh foolish humans! They blame others and hide their faults. They praise their own actions but before civilized people they are worse than excrement.”

5. Arnolis, 1884: 59, 35, 60

emena mema hiwalwal palsangun lakdiwehi
karana bal e sat ugath hikkaduwe

Prera, 1892: 23

<i>sat dāruwe</i>	<i>elu saku</i>	<i>magada basa</i>	<i>yati</i>
<i>pakeruwe</i>	<i>nyaka</i>	<i>tanaturak</i>	<i>ruti</i>
<i>kit dāruwe</i>	<i>namenuth</i>	<i>megamai</i>	<i>niti</i>
<i>sipkaduwe</i>	<i>visituru</i>	<i>dä yamu</i>	<i>yuwathi</i>