

A.T. Ariyaratne

BITAVA THANHA

pp 290 - 316

67

## The Buddhist National Movement

In 1951, a deputation of delegates of the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress (ACBC) led by Prof. G. P. Malalasekera met the then Prime Minister Mr. D.S. Senanayake and requested the appointment of a Committee to look into the discrimination to which Buddhists were being subjected. Though he assented to this at first, in the next meeting Mr. Senanayake informed everyone that the Constitution was a deterrent to such an action.

It was under these circumstances that the ACBC decided to appoint a Commission to collect 'Buddhist data' at the Annual General Meeting of 1953 held in Kegalle. Mr. N. Q. Dias, who worked as Registrar General, was instrumental in collecting a good deal of evidence for this report and so the relevant commission was received well by the Buddhist public.

The copious work of compiling the data was performed by Mr. L.H. Mettananda. The matter related to the clergy was handled separately by the Most Ven. Madihe Pannaseeha Mahanayaka Thero and Ven. Henpitagedera Gnanaseeha Nayaka Thero. Further, Buddhist leaders such as Prof. Tennekoon Vimalananda and the lawyer Mr. C.D.S. Siriwardena, helped in the final work. In 1956, 256 page report was handed to the Maha Sangha.

Neither the Government nor the UNP agreed to carry out the recommendations of this report but Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike and Mr. Phillip Gunawardena promised to implement them if they ever come to power. I was a youth when I attended the meeting held at Colombo Municipality where this promise was made. Buddhist leaders led by Mr. Mettananda through an Executive

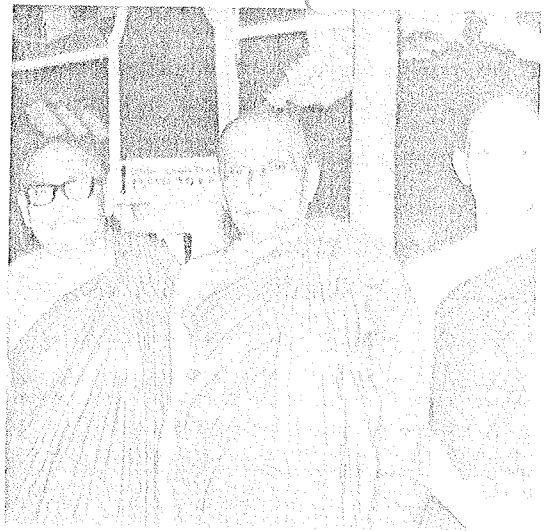
Committee supplied information to the SLFP and MEP United Front, while the clergy of all the Nikayas led by Ven. Henpitagedera Gnanaseeha Nayake Thero made the report accessible to the public and thereby engendered a lot of interest in it.

The historical political revolution that followed was enacted in 1956. But unfortunately due to the mediation of Mr. D.C. Wijeyawardene, a faction led by Ven. Mapitigama Buddharakkhita Thero with selfish motives of their own joined this alliance and diverted the revolution to an undesired end.

It was at this juncture that I got disillusioned with politics. An idea was born in my mind that a social revolution minus political colouring should be staged. The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement was the outcome of this thinking.

The first years of the decade of the '60s were crucial for Sri Lankan society. The expectations from the political ahimsa revolution launched by Mr. Bandaranaike were receding. The assassination of this leader in 1959 and the fact that the assassin was a monk in Buddhist robes were capitalised on by anti-Buddhist forces to decimate the respect hitherto accorded to our Maha Sangha.

The Buddhist resurgence spawned by the Buddha Jayanthi (2500 year celebration of the Birth of the Buddha) too was fading away. I always viewed the Buddha Dhamma and Sinhala culture in a universal context. It was never my intention to label us narrowly as Buddhists and fight for rights in a parochial way. Instead my dream was to acclimatize the whole world to a Buddhist ethos. Further, I was of the firm conviction that only through Buddhism could a socio-economic and political structure acceptable to



277 Prof. Ven. Henpitagedera Gnanavasa Thero, Ven. Gnanaseeha Thero and Sumedha Thero (a Swiss national)

everyone in our island be built. According to my way of thinking, working for the upliftment of Buddhism, would not entail attacking other religions. That would involve the destruction of the very cause. Yet this attitude did not prevent me from condemning and opposing any activity that was aimed at disparaging Buddhism.

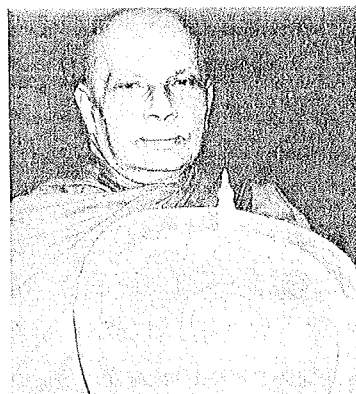


Photo 278:  
Ven. Henpitagedera Gnanaseeha  
Nayaka Thero

The optimum help for resuscitation of the sacred city of Anuradhapura was given by our movement. Among our other religious activities were the construction of an 11-mile-long road to Wilgam Vehera in Trincomalee and the repair of this temple, and helping in the preservation of such shrines as Seruwila and historical Girihandu Saya where the hair relic of the Buddha had been deposited by Tapassu and Bhalluka. In our further move of focusing public attention on these places of Buddhist vintage, the following were very helpful - Ven. Balapitiya Shantha Thero, Ven. Maduwa Ratanavamsa Tissa Thero, Ven. Balapitiya Chandrawimala Tissa Thero and Mr. A.H. Alwis who owned the ferry service at Trincomalee. Our work in the North and East around these shrines was immense and surpasses the work done by any other body before or since.

Two magazines begun by me entitled 'Nagenahira' (The East) and 'Janma Bhoomiya' (Birth Land) also had as their objective the drawing of public attention to these places. We built more than 100 Sanghawasas for monks who had passed out of Vidyodaya Pirivena and were residing in outstations. Ten schools for so-called 'low-caste' society children in Jaffna were built by us and handed to the State. Hindu leaders helped in that effort.

Weeratunga malli, an old Wesleyan, was in charge of construction of these buildings. On the suggestion of the Hindu leaders, the schools were named after senior Buddhist prelates and after lay figures such as Mrs. Somie Meegama, Mr. P. De. S. Kularatne, Mr. L.H. Mettananda and Mr. Ananda Semage. Only two schools were named after Hindu leaders. The President of the

Tamil Buddhist Society was a very energetic worker in our cause. Thus it was not on hatred and animosity we worked but on the positive tenets of Maitri (love) and Dana (giving).

Today, as then, certain 'National Buddhist Organizations' not only veered towards heretic beliefs but were acutely envious of me. Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy addressing the Ceylon Social Reforms League in 1907 once told the British, "You can rob us of all our natural resources. But do not descend to the crime of tainting the Sinhala social structure and culture. Enshrined in these Sinhala Buddhist villages is the social milieu that the whole world would need 100 years hence." It was Dr. Motwani, who stayed at our house for some time, who showed me a copy of this speech. I often used it to bring this gem of a speech to the attention of our Buddhist groups.

Dr. Coomaraswamy was a Tamil Hindu philosopher. Because of him, many Tamil scholars have seen the Sinhala Buddhists in this perspective. I was driven by an urge to nourish this philosophical view. But what did some of our nominally Buddhist leaders do? They wanted a Sinhala Buddhist State that would marginalise all other races and place themselves at its helm, in the style of our ex-rulers.

To commemorate the name of Anagarika Dharmapala using the Agrashravaka Vihara of Maligakanda I established an Anagarika Dharmapala Youth Society, enrolling 100 young men and women. I got Mr. A.T.C. Jinadasa to compose a commemorative song on this great savant and got the children to recite it. I followed the same program for the national heroes such as Ven. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Thero, Ven. Asarana Sarana Saranankara Sangharaja Maha Thero and Walisinghe Harischandra.

Certain genuine patriots getting sensitized to the voluminous work of our movement were now getting curious about me. Mr. L. H. Mettananda and Mr. T. U. De Silva were among them. The duo visited me at my House under the Breadfruit Tree and alerted me to the danger that a repetition of the destruction of Buddhists under Din Diem of Vietnam could happen in Sri Lanka. We were of the consensus that a work program to avert such a cri-

sis should be drawn up. Soon a proposal was made to hold the first meeting of the Bauddha Jatika Balavegaya (Buddhist National Movement). Pioneers of this movement included an erudite Buddhist scholar named Gunaseela Withanage, Mr. Premachandra De Silva, Mr. C.H. Perera, and Mr. Wijayananda De Abrew among others.

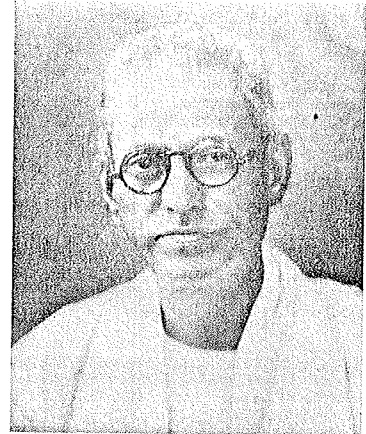


Photo 279:  
Mr. L. H. Mettananda

During this time, under the aegis of Mr. L. H. Mettananda an organization known as Buddhist Publicity Sabha was already running, with its office in Colombo 3. On November 7, 1962 under Mr. Mettananda's signature, an invitation letter was sent to a selected 100 to have a meeting. The theme of the discussion was to be "Future of the Sinhala Buddhist Society". The letter of invitation was as follows:

No. 161, Colombo 3.  
7th Nov. 1962.

Dear Sir,

#### A Discussion About the Future of Sinhala Buddhist Society

As a result of the Report of the Buddhist Commission that was brought to the attention of the Maha Sangha and the general public on February 4, 1956 and also due to the Buddha Jayanthi Celebrations of that year, a Buddhist renaissance of unprecedented level surged in the aftermath, a fact we are all aware of. This trend culminated in a social revolution too. But certain power-crazy individuals who marched on the wave of this trend and wish to maintain themselves on the crest exploiting it are eroding the very strength of that movement. On the other hand the anti-Buddhists have got together in a strong unified force and are waving their banners against Buddhism and the Sinhala race. We are hemmed in between the Catholic action and the Federal Movement, placing Buddhist rights in a dangerous situation. The so-called Buddhist leaders more propelled by self-ego than the public cause enhance the danger.

These factors here given rise to an alarming situation where in all state institutions and public institutions the Buddhists are discriminated against, cruelly. A deliberate plan along these lines is now being activated, so has come the time to face this situation.

As an initial step we wish to summon a discussion to generate a Sinhala Buddhist force unencumbered by party politics.

This meeting will be held at the Buddhist Women's Congress Hall, No. 400, Buller's Road, Colombo 7 at 5.00 p.m. Tuesday on November, 1962. Out of devotion to the Sasana I earnestly appeal to you to attend this meeting.

Signed

Yours truly,

L.H. Mettananda

We obtained the Hall of the All Ceylon Women's Buddhist Congress from Mrs. Somie Meegama, President and held our first meeting there. We personally met and invited Mr. D.B. Dhanapala, Davasa Editor, Mr. D.P. Jayasekera, Chief Telegraphs Engineer, Prof. K. Jayasuriya, Mr. Ananda Semage, Mr. W.J. Fernando, Ayurveda Commissioner and Mr & Mrs. A.N.S. Kulasinghe for this discussion.

I got a call from Mr. Nissanka Wijeratne, then Government Agent, Anuradhapura, saying that he was just appointed Secretary of the Public Service Commission and he sought an appointment with me. I invited him to my House Under the Breadfruit Tree.

He told me that it was no longer possible to tolerate the surging Catholic action and that our ancient Buddhist scriptures were being made a 'bon fire' on the Western Coast. He said he was in a frenzy to join a Buddhist revival movement.

Ancient Buddhist texts like the *Lovada Sangarawa*, *Lokopakaraya*, *Subhashitaya*, *Guttilaya*, *Muwa Dev Davatha*, *Saddharma Ratnavaliya* and *Poojavaliya* that we had learned by heart had suddenly disappeared from bookshops such as P. K.W. Siriwardena Bookshop and Samayawardena Bookshop. Rumour was rife that a certain group had bought them and consumed them to fire!

I told Mr. Wijeratne that the Buddhist resurgence should take place without antagonising other faiths. I told him that the Sarvodaya Movement I had founded was not focused on a single race or religion or creed but was based on pure Buddhist philosophy. Within these constraints I was ready to lend him any support. On his suggestion, we went to meet one Mr. Mettananda. Then we went on to meet Mr. Ronnie De Mel, who also agreed to support our cause. Both of them attended our first meeting and on my proposal, they were elected office-bearers.

Mr. Gunaseela Withanage, a very honest and learned intellectual, was made our Secretary. Mr. L.H. Mettananda, Mr. Nissanka Wijeratne and Mr. Ronnie De Mel were appointed President, Vice-President and Treasurer respectively. I volunteered to work as a Committee Member.

Another factor that led to the burgeoning of this movement needs mention. Towards the end of January in 1962 a coup-d'etat was planned to seize power. The figures behind this were Colonel F.C. de Saram, Royce de Mel, Deputy Police Chief C.C. Dissanayake, Mr. Sydney de Zoysa and several others at the helm of the army, navy and police. They were almost all non-Buddhist and the public viewed the coup-de-tat as an attempt to overthrow Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike's government. It could have been also an attempt to revive the pre-1956 conditions of the country which had existed before the social revolution that took place that year. Issues that they opposed included using Sinhala as the



Photo 280:  
IGP Mr. Stanley Senanayake

administrative language, teaching science via 'swabasha,' (native language) taking over state assisted schools, and other structural changes which comprised this social transformation. These proved an anathema to certain individuals who enjoyed plums of privilege. Further, they could not tolerate the leftist elements who were holding the reins of government.

The Police Superintendent of Colombo at this time was Mr. Stanley

Senanayake. His wife was Mrs. Maya Senanayake and father-in-law was Mr. P. De S. Kularatne. The Inspector-General of Police Mr. M.W.F. Abeykoon was alerted to this planned coup, but there was no response. Mrs. Bandaranaike was also alerted. Mr. C.C. Dissanayake, the Deputy Police Chief, was summoned and interrogated and handed over to Mr. S.A. Dissanayake, in charge of C.I.D., a brother of one of the conspirators but who was unaware of the machinations. About 20 were rounded up and remanded. A Special Court pronounced them guilty, but certain legal loopholes made their release possible a few months later by the Privy Council.

It was Mr. Stanley Senanayake who almost sacrificed his life to break up this conspiracy. Born in Kitulgala, his full name is Don Stanley Ernest Perera Rajapakse Senanayake. Born in 1917 he became a Police Superintendent in 1943. When I got to know him in 1961 he was Director of the Police Training School.

Maya Senanayake, daughter of Mr. P. De S. Kularatne, worked as Director of Swabasha Publications, which later carried the name P. De S. Kularatne Co. The first Sarvodaya magazines and newspapers were published there. Hence I used to visit their office daily in the course



Photo 281:  
With Mrs. Maya Senanayake

of which I got to know Mrs. Senanayake, Mr. Stanley Senanayake and their four sons, Sanjeeva, Saliya, Athula and Milinda. Mr. Senanayake was a regular visitor to the House Under the Bread Fruit Tree. I also used to be invited to the lectures at the Police Training School and the Police Headquarters.

We ended up really close friends. Though Mr. Senanayake played the chief role in sabotaging the coup-d'etat, influential people maneuvered to put him on paid leave and put off his appoint-



ment to the Chief of Police. During this time, between 1962 and 1968, he spent the evenings at my house reading books. I consoled him, saying his day would come. In 1970 he was reinstated. His call to office and a resumption of his duties brought me boundless joy.

We went on organizing the Buddhist National Movement meetings all over the country. Very senior prelates and lay intellectuals such as Prof. K.N. Jayatileke and Mr. K.H.M. Sumathipala delivered speeches. The latter used to make reference to the

Vietnam massacres and this really proved very emotive. Other speakers were Ven. Kalukondayawe Pannasekera Mahanayake Thero, Most Ven. Madihe Pannaseeha Mahanayake Thero, Ven. Devamottawe Amarawansa Thero and Ven. Baddegama Wimalawamsa Nayaka Thero.

Mr. Mettananda was in the habit of delegating the first speech to me since I always based my faith on ahimsa (non-violence) principles and refrained from attacking other religions. The BJB edited a small book compiling data about Catholic actions. Simultaneously, Mrs. Bandaranaike's government established a Press Commission. We utilised this Commission to highlight anti-Buddhist activities and focus attention on immoral acts treacherous to the nation. Retired District Judge, Mr. K.D. de Silva headed this Commission. Except for one meeting that was held during my hospitalisation, I spoke at all the other meetings. Mr. W.J. Fernando's Benz was often used to drive Mr. Mettananda and Mr. T. U. de Silva to these meetings. Sometimes vehicles belonging to Mr. D.P. Jayasekera, Mr. M.W. Karunananda and Mr. A. N. S. Kulasinghe too were used. I was often the driver. Mr. Dharmasena Weeraratne, a businessman, was another untiring warrior in our movement. People by the thousands flocked to our meetings held in Polonnaruwa, Medawachchiya, Badulla, Kandy, Ratnapura,

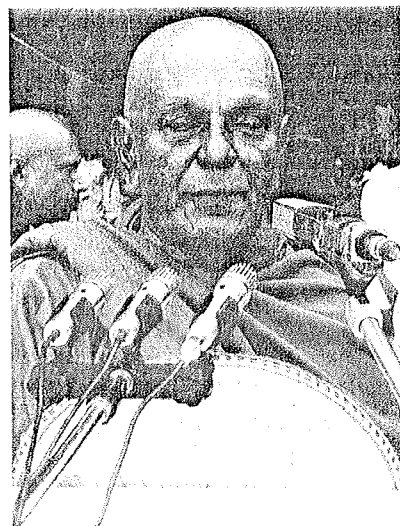


Photo 282:  
Ven. Baddegama Wimalavamsa  
Nayaka Thero

Kalutara, Beruwela, Galle and Matara. They used to come in processions. It was a Buddhist resurgence at its sizzling peak.

In some instances, Hindu leaders such as Sir Kandiah Vaidyanathan used to grace the stage along with Mr. Mettananda. In the highly attended meeting held before Ananda College, he was also present. Thousands from the Port Buddhist Association led by Mr. A. N. S. Kulasinghe and Mr. Punchihewa attended this meeting. The Hindu leaders were reacting to the conversion of Hindus to Catholicism in Thiruketheeswaram and joined hands with the Buddhists in their protests. Whether they wanted to or not, both Mr. Nissanka Wijeratne and Mr. Ronnie de Mel emerged as national leaders during this period. It was Mr. Gunaseela Vithanage really who toiled over the paperwork and research data of our Buddhist National Movement (in Sinhala it was called BJB). Mr. Premachandra de Silva and Mr. Wijenanda De Abrew were two other indefatigable workers.

About two or three late-comers to our movement began spurning the high ideals we stood for and veered this movement towards political leanings. I protested to Mr. Mettananda and left the BJB, desirous of concentrating fully on Sarvodaya work. With time, the BJB disappeared into oblivion, but it did much in its heyday.

At this time, I exerted a lot of energy to give an interpretation of our National Flag that would be acceptable to the people. The yellow and red colours could symbolize *Dhamma Dvipa* and *Dhanyagara* concept, respectively, (an Island of Righteousness and Economic Self-Sufficiency), the four *Bo* leaves could signify the full blossoming of a human's personality through the four-fold

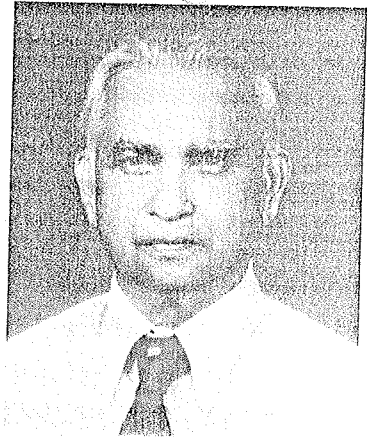


Photo 283:  
Dr. A. N. S. Kulasinghe



Photo 284:  
Mr. Wijayananda De Abrew

*Brahma Viharana* and the four-fold values on which human progress rests. The three feet of the lion, that touch the earth could symbolise *Anitya* (Impermanence), *Dukka* (Sorrow) and *Anathma* (soullessness) while the sword flashing in his right hand could represent the *Dasa Raja Dharma* - the Ten precepts that rule the behaviour of a good king. What does the very symbol of lion stand for? The qualities required by a progressive nation such as self-discipline, self-confidence, courage, self-sufficiency, abstention from immoral acts. That was my interpretation of the Lion Flag.



Photo 285:  
Mr. W. J. Fernando

Once seated in Havelock Golf Grounds, I enlightened Mr. Upali Senanayake with my interpretation of the Lion Flag. He not only committed it to memory but also got more information from a monk, like a mantram - sounding recitation that explained every part of the Lion Flag in the context of Buddhist philosophy. If one would just provoke him, he would go on and on and delve into Sarvodaya philosophy too. Such a patriot he is. Once he was Vice President of the Sarvodaya Movement as well.

Mr. L. H. Mettananda, mentioned before, stands out among the Buddhist mentors with whom I associated. I first saw him when I came to Ananda College way back in 1951 as a member of the Mahinda College Debating Team. It was the tradition then to stage an Ananda-Mahinda debate before the cricket match between the two colleges. Mr. Mettananda was impressed with my speech and praised it. After I joined Nalanda College staff we became good friends.

He was an exemplary character - humble, courageous, principled, living a simple life style and never bearing rancour. He spurned high posts offered to him by the State - even Ministerial and Ambassador posts. Economically, he was under pressure but would never give up his principles for personal gain. He was almost my Guru. Born on March 19, 1894, he passed away on November 1, 1967. We participated fully at the last rites of this great man.

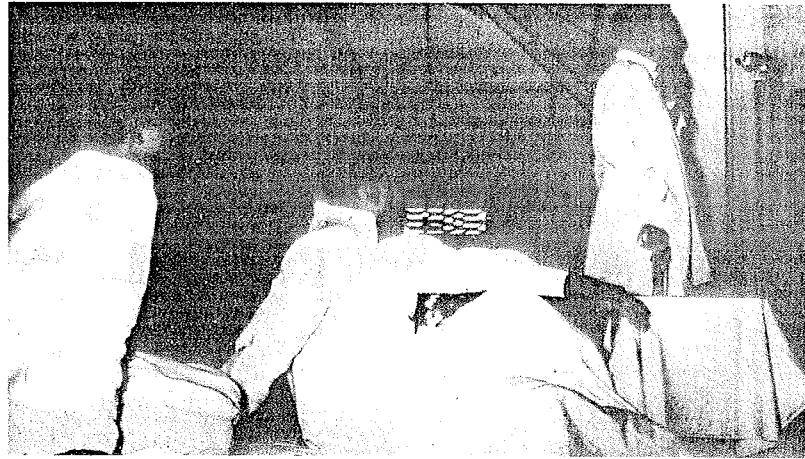


Photo 286: Mr. Wilmot A. Perera, Philanthropist with the present Cabinet Minister Hon. Ronnie de Mel (seated) during a Sarvodaya Annual Conference at the Dharmapala Vidyalaya, Pannipitiya

Before I end this chapter on the Buddhist National Movement, it is fitting to record a lapse on all of our parts. That is, that the Sinhala Buddhists did fight for the lost rights that could be gained from the socio, economic and political ethos we lived in, but we never courted enough support from non-Sinhala and non-Buddhist elements who also had their difficulties in generating national unity and national revival.

The Tamil Hindus were subject to the same discrimination that tormented the Sinhala Buddhists. It is true that a segment of their community once enjoyed the plums of top government posts. It has to be admitted that some of the discrimination that the poor Sinhala Buddhist was subject to hampered the progress of other communities also. Thus a Sarvodaya philosophy that could cater to filling the gap seen in the path of progress of all communities of the Island was my dream.

During this time I spent much of my time in improving my knowledge of Buddhism through the association of venerable prelates such as Ven. Dr. Kotagama Vachissara Thero, Ven. Bambaranda Siri Seevali Thero, Ven. Nattandiya Pagnasekera Thero, Ven. Ganegama Saranankra Thero, Ven. Kirivattuduwe Pragnasekera Thero, Ven. Talpawila Seelavansa Thero and Ven. Dr. Walpola Rahula Thero. I digested fully the books written by them.

## A Path to Buddhist Resurgence

**F**or many years we, who were privileged to have seen the resurgent movement that Anagarika Dharmapala and Walisinghe Harischandra inspired, lived in the hope that Purpose and Direction would be given to the forces they liberated. We thought we lived in vain and sorrowed at the thought that our hopes were dissolving into illusory dreams. But the birth and phenomenal development of the Bauddha Jatika Balavegaya (Buddhist National Movement) has rekindled the dying embers of belief that the long - awaited Movement has now arrived to lead us along the paths of justice and progress.



Photo 287:  
Anagarika Dharmapala

### The Three Great Ps

To me, the Rise or Fall of the Bauddha Jatika Balavegaya depends upon three great factors, namely, the Purpose, the Purity and the Programme of the movement. I call these the three great Ps. Streamlined organisation and propaganda and heartening enthusiasm of its members and the general public will not take the movement very far unless the movement is spearheaded with a

clear Purpose, immense Purity and an intelligent Programme. Does the B.J.B. possess these characteristics, and to what degree? Let us examine it for ourselves.

### **A Deceptive Approach**

At a time when the individual citizens of our country, both high and low, seem to be drifting aimlessly, without new values being developed to take the place of the values of the Buddhist Society that has been destroyed, and the community as a whole appears to have fallen into a state of uncertainty and indecision, the Bauddha Jatika Balavegaya has come into being. One can take a superficial look at the B.J.B. (Buddhist National Movement) and arrive at hurried conclusions based on the failings and achievements of personalities whose names are linked with the movement. Or else one can view it from an immediate objective which has been placed before the people by the B.J.B. to inspire them to a greater awareness of the society in which they live and a new alertness to its problems. Both these approaches are deceptive and they will not help us to understand the real significance of this movement from a national perspective.

### **Understanding the Balavegaya**

The personalities and the events which led to the birth of this movement, which has now gathered irresistible momentum, recede into insignificance when one understands the crying need at the present moment for a massive liberation of human energy and its proper direction in the best interests of the nation. If we are to survive and progress as a nation it is a MUST. From where and from whom can we expect the lead except from the Buddhists of this country, who constitute the vast majority of our population? Therefore, it is not a matter for surprise that this force has originated from among them. Neither should non-Buddhists have any fear nor lose hope, for basically, the awakening of Buddhists at this time is a natural consequence of past history and present trends. On the contrary, they should welcome it as a healthy sign and try to understand and comprehend the Purpose, the Purity and the Programme of the movement. It is necessary that these char-

acteristics should develop if the movement is to survive as a Bauddha (Buddhist) and Jatika (National) Balavegaya (Vital force.)

### **A Tribute**

I have had the privilege of discussing the problems of the nation with the dedicated men, both big and small, who constitute the core of the B.J.B. and have gleaned from them the motivations and the purposes which have inspired them and serve as their sign posts. To a people corrupted by the divisive forces of the past their attitudes have appeared strange and bred misapprehension. It heartens me to see that barbs of criticism and the fires of condemnation appear to be purifying them and increasing their sense of dedication. Moved as I am by the good that their movement holds out for the people of this country, an inner urge compels me to pay this tribute to them by way of putting down in writing the PURPOSE, the PURITY and the PROGRAMME of the B.J.B., as seen by me, a humble follower of Acharya Vinoba Bhave whose one ideal is service in the welfare of all.

### **A Noble Ideal**

We have come to the last stages of the Age of Science. A new age an age in which human civilization will reach its greatest glory is about to dawn upon us. History will call this age the Age of Science and Spirituality. Let us herald the dawn of this great era from Sri Lanka, this beautiful island home of ours, which I believe, is historically destined to be the centre of this newly - emerging world civilization.

No great task was successfully carried out without an idealism of the highest order as a forerunner to it. Today history has thrust upon us, the Buddhists of this country, the responsibility of serving humanity with an idealism of the noblest order. To work towards narrow objectives in life such as achieving and retaining power, and accumulating and spending wealth, is the pastime of ailing minds. It must be strictly left to those whose vision is confined to the small worlds they have created in their minds centering around their own individual selves. The strong should strive



towards the apparently unrealizable but always inspiring ideal of the noblest order. Even if the latter fall short of their distant ideal, still they will be far ahead of the accomplished but narrow goals of the former. That is the hard truth we must realize courageously within our own minds and hearts.

### **Age of Spirituality**

Our Great Teacher is our greatest source of inspiration and guidance. The goal he set before himself was spread far out into billions of years - nay, into many world cycles. Yet he achieved it and 2552 years ago humanity experienced for the first time - and may be for the last time for many many centuries to come - the Supreme Spiritual Development in recorded human civilization. That was the Age of Spirituality.

### **The Age of Dhamma Vijaya**

Dhammasoka was inspired by the Life and Teachings of the Buddha and the Age of Spirituality, he heralded in and lived through. Dhamma Vijaya became his one vision and ideal in life and he exerted the greatest civilizing force yet seen in the story of man to his day, and even to this day. Besides the Buddha's Age of Spirituality and Asoka's Age of Dhamma Vijaya, the one age that is bound to leave an indelible mark on the history of civilization with a view point of 'one world one civilization', is the Age of Science.

### **The Age of Science**

I say the Age of Science is coming to an end. After five centuries of immense growth and full maturity it is coming to an end. Historically it must be so for the germ of its own destruction was planted in itself the day science became the instrument of exploitation of man by man. This age has seen the rise and fall of empires and dictatorships, imperialism and capitalism. The historical reaction to the latter, Socialism, appears to be on the ascendancy. The truth that when the cause is removed the effect will cease to exist will apply here to socialism also and I consider it to be another passing phase or rather the last chapter in the Age of Science.



### **Age of Science and Spirituality**

This brings us face to face with the age that is about to dawn upon us - the Age of Science and Spirituality - and which I say is our responsibility to herald in. Weak heads may dismiss this idea as idealism of the maddest order, but a little thinking with a detached mind will clear any doubts on this score.

### **The Community Mind**

Let us come to real facts in the context of our own land and society, its economic resources and stages of political development and, above all, the pulse-beat of the nation; but with due sensibility as to how the world moves.

All actions are preceded by a 'chetana' - a motive. The mind is supreme. That is the Dhamma - the Truth. Popular action in a community is set in motion by what is called a 'mass mind'. The 'mass mind' or 'the community consciousness' has become the most precious product of democracy.

In 1956 we created a 'mass mind' with only the first 'P' - that is the Purpose - and brought about a significant political revolution. Unfortunately we did not possess the other two 'P's' - the Purity and the Programme - before us and the result was loss of direction and the nearly chaotic state of affairs we find in our country today.

Today the 'mass mind' is once again in a state of disintegration or fragmentation. But certainly it is wide awake, though in isolated parts, and waits till it hears the right call, the call with all the three 'P's'.

"Who was going to give it, and how?" was the question. The B.J.B. gave it as a trial. The people readily responded. But they had only the second 'P' - the Purity - with them, and that too not to a sufficiently satisfying degree. However they treaded the right path of purity of mind and heart. Can the members of the B.J.B. arm themselves with all the three 'P's' and awaken the nation from this suicidal slumber? I have unwavering faith that they can. Why?

### **A Buddhist Social Order**

The Buddhists to a great extent and the Hindus to a lesser extent, together command the greatest national resource of the present day. It is not the wealth, not the bureaucracy, not the armed forces and not even the votes as some do believe. In the cultural heritage of every Buddhist (and every Hindu) there is a superficially unseen but inwardly alive awareness of trends that link his present with his past. In spite of all the damage done in the past by foreign invaders and in the present by powerful and organised anti-national elements and action movements, still this awareness lies dormant but ready to come up at the proper call. This hidden 'mass mind' has undoubtedly influenced the subconscious of the remaining cross-section of our population who do not profess the Buddhist or Hindu faith. As such the B.J.B. aims at evoking the 'mass mind' of the population as a whole without any trace of sectarianism but with definite motive force originating from and invigorating the movement as a result of the seeds of Buddhist culture that have firmly taken root in our national way of life. In other words, the general population should be able to accommodate themselves in the Buddhist Social Order the B.J.B. envisages. That is the meeting point of Science and Spirituality.

### **The Lasting Force**

Catholic Action, organised religion, casteism, racialism, party politics and all the rest of the numerous divisive forces in society are spent forces. They are bound to decay and disintegrate before the irresistible tide of science that is already taking giant steps forward. The one and only force that can stand up to it and channel it along the path of general progress and well-being of all in society is the force of Buddhist spirituality. In fact science is the greatest friend of the Buddhist Way of Life and a proper blending of these two forces should be our one aim and Purpose. As soon as this purpose is set before the 'mass mind,' there is absolutely no doubt that both the intelligensia and the common man - irrespective of the faith he professes - will grasp it, accept it and augment with unprecedented response of the 'mass mind' whatever efforts the B.J.B. will make towards its realization.

### **Science and Non - Violence**

Science will not be appeased by an authoritarian, highly organised and commercialised religion. The Revivalism that is influencing Papal authority in the Vatican today will not be an effective answer to this challenge for the simple reason that the fundamental tenets on which the organised Christian Faith is built are shaken at their very roots. The fall of the might of the Dollar and the Vatican is only a matter of time.

Science has to be divorced from violence and wedded to non-violence if humanity is to survive on this planet; and I believe that humanity does want to survive. So do Messrs Kennedy and Krushchev. As such there is no other alternative than to accept non-violent science as the edifice on which the future world civilization has to be built. Non-violence has received the greatest sanction from Buddhist Philosophy, Buddhist Practice and Buddhist Civilization throughout history. Neither the Buddhist doctrine nor modern science recognizes any man - made barriers such as caste, creed, race, nationality or party politics. "Sabbe Satta Bhavanthu Sukhi Taththa," "May all beings be well and happy," is the key - note of both Non-violent Science and Buddhism. Buddhism does not strive to win over converts to its faith for it is not an organised religion as most other religions are. That is why we in Ceylon, occupy a unique place among the nations of the world today as the one nation which can evolve a non-violent social order where Science and Buddhism are combined.

### **Science and Socialism**

Socialism is the only real world force today which has received the greatest blessing of science so far. The exploration into the secrets of matter and the energy in it and the application of the knowledge thus gained to explore the secrets of space have sanctioned the validity of the materialist precepts of socialism. Thus science has made Socialism the most scientifically acceptable formula to put an end to the exploitation of man by man, for undoubtedly, in the economic field, it has no rival who has combined better the scarce resources of land, labour, capital and organisation for the general good of all.

An end to economic exploitation results in a state of sharing. We, the Buddhists, call it 'Dana,' for 'Dana' in the original Sanskrit context of the word meant exactly this, sharing. The logical outcome or the next stage, after a state of sharing has been brought about in a society, is morality. We are used to calling it 'Sila'. Both 'Dana' or 'sharing' and 'Sila' or 'morality' in a material sense may be achieved in a socialist exploitation - free society and it also may appear to be very attractive to the mind which is exclusively trained in material science. We do not agree as to the means adopted and generally advocated by protagonists of socialism. However, there is no question as to the superiority of socialism in the economic field viewed from the benefits it accrues to the community, as compared with the capitalist society where private ownership and cut-throat competition are the salient features. Similarly at the social level the socialist world can boast of a higher level of individual and social morality quite different from that of its greatest capitalist counterpart in the Western Hemisphere where morality has reached its lowest ebb.

### **Where Socialism Fails**

The human being is never content with a well fed stomach and good behaviour. The insatiable urge in him to explore into his inner being, his 'self,' raises its head at every turn. The material science and socialist dogma cannot quench this thirst. Neither can the outmoded beliefs of theistic religion exert an influence in keeping with the knowledge of science. In other words, in the socialist society in spite of the fact that sharing and morality (Dana and Sila) may be present still there is a significant vacuum which cannot be filled with materialism alone. In other words 'Dana' and 'Sila' need 'Bhavana' (meditation) - I would rather call it Realization of the Inner-Self, for the full bloom of the human being of the coming age. The present split in the socialist world demonstrates very well the utter futility of trying to work towards unity of mankind on materialistic precepts alone without giving it direction from self-purification and spiritual awakening.

### **Role of the B.J.B.**

It is in this attempt that the Bauddha Jatika Balavegaya ceases to be a reaction to any other 'ism' or 'action' or movement. It stands on its own rooted in our culture, as an all-embracing force, the resultant force of all the forces in the world which influence our society, and as the one force that can outlive the Age of Science and initiate the Era of Science and Spirituality. We should not be deceived by the illusion that our country is too small to undertake this gigantic task. No country is too small in the world of today to influence the rest of the world if singlemindedness of purpose is set before its 'community mind'.

Lanka today has all the requisites to awaken the community mind. Still our country is a land of villages. There is an elderly village population still holding fast to the traditional values of a religious culture, an adult population disillusioned by the failure of political parties, a young population ready to accept the leadership of a scientific course of action inspired by the science of today and the culture of yesterday, and a Maha Sangha who can spearhead the moral force of an all-round nationalist, but at the same time humanistic, revival.

A clear-cut Purpose, Purity of means for its realization and a Scientific Programme of social action under an enlightened and self-less leadership is bound to capture the imagination of the vast majority of population in our country irrespective of their caste, creed, race or political affiliations. Such a leadership has necessarily to be a non-party-political one and the B.J.B. has very wisely steered clear of all party-political affiliations.

### **A Non - Party and an a - Political Body**

Political parties are not indispensable instruments for the proper functioning of democratic institutions. Our present Parliamentary form of Government cannot be considered to be the only form of political institution which can preserve the democratic way of life. On the contrary, one begins to think that these institutions are wrong adaptations of democratic ideals and have not given back to the people what they aspired. Have we not wasted all our human talents and material resources by dabbling in this

mockery of party politics which we have mis-named Democracy but which in effect was Divisocracy? Democracy must begin with the people from below, with the village as the base. Today, in reality what is practiced as democracy is a burden on the people. It has resulted only in adding one more divisive factor into the community, and giving immense scope for the development of the individual's baser qualities of hunger for power, position and wealth rather than evoking his virtues of self-sacrifice, service and inner purity. All political parties must accept the blame for this state of affairs. Under these circumstances it is a very healthy sign that the B.J.B. has absolutely no tow with any one or all political parties. The B.J.B. has accepted ten guiding principles one of which in no uncertain terms has tabooed party politics.

The real ingredients of democracy are popular representation, a just administration, and an independent judiciary. A people must be able to formulate the principles and patterns by which they are governed, be confident that the law ensures that these are given effect to, and that the society they live in is safe from crime and violence and above all be provided with every opportunity to participate in matters relating to their own advancement.

A party system in the long run can be self-defeating. It can breed exclusiveness and hatred, dogmatism and intolerance. But an organisation that seeks to embrace all, purify them and make each and every one an instrument for good has a validity of its own which none can deny. The institutionalising of a permanent opposition requires an independent centre of power and balance in the person of a ceremonial Head of State without effective power, while a Head of Government representing only a section of the people wields the actual authority. A combination of President and Chief Minister in one person guided by a Council of all talents and relieved of the burdens of electoral management could more effectively handle a programme of development while Parliamentary Committees could by its representative character offer valuable advice in so far as the work of government affects the people and by its control of Finance ensure an essential check on irresponsible administration.

The co-ordination of the important departments of State to ensure swift translation of plan to fact and the establishment of an Evaluation Organisation to see that national planning is effectively implemented are matters of importance. But more important is a re-examination and re-patterning of our District units into a more viable form based on the irrigation basins to ensure the most scientific development. But the new Units must respond to popular control and the councils should reflect popular representation and decentralised block financing for delegated functions. But above all, the ultimate units must rest on our traditional villages re-vitalized by land reform and on new townlets based on industrial decentralisation. Here Local Councils village by village or town by town-with plenary powers to ensure proper social integration, economic justice and cultural development must be consciously adopted and actively fostered. Rationalising the pattern of all extension services, of educational facilities and welfare benefits like Hospitals and Social Service Schemes will follow, and imperceptibly but steadily the nation will be able in unity and in a new born sense of freedom and security, to lift itself into prosperity and happiness.

The B.J.B. can render invaluable service to the nation by placing before the 'mass mind' such revolutionary measures in a concrete form so that it reflects the true aims and aspirations of the people rather than those of a party whose one aim is to capture power. The B.J.B. is a non-political organisation which at the same time is a puritan force, an educative force, a corrective force and a constructive force. While being above party politics the B.J.B. can create the moral force necessary to influence the politics of the country in accordance with the noble and avowed ideals of the movement.

### **The Destination, the Method and the Means**

People of today invariably ask the questions 'What is the destination?' Which way do you propose to go? How do you propose to go?' before they embark upon any venture of national magnitude. In other words, they need to be satisfied as to the ends in view, the means adopted and plan of action.



### **The First Precept of the B.J.B. (Buddhist National Movement)**

In their first precept the members of the B.J.B. pledge themselves to dedicate their lives to the founding of a Buddhist Social Order in Sri Lanka, in which exploitation of man by man in any form, economic, social or political will be eliminated and where Justice, Equity and Welfare of All will be the salient features. Now the question arises as to what exactly is meant by a Buddhist Social Order? Firstly; the B.J.B., I believe, is making a serious attempt to find a very clear answer to this question. The Buddhist Philosophy of State, the form of Government and its instruments of power, the principles on which they have to function, the requirements and qualities of personnel who are most qualified to man them and the various other details on this subject are studied in great detail. I believe that an application of the principles of the Noble Eight Fold Path in a social sense, concepts of the Four cardinal principles (Chatussangraha Vastu), the Ten Buddhist Royal Virtues (Dasaraja Dharma) and the teachings in the Maha Parinibbana Sutra are being studied and orientated to formulate a concrete guide to this aspect of the foundation of a Buddhist Social Order.

### **Purity of Means**

The misguided notion that a good end justifies bad means has brought about untold misery and sorrow to humanity. However promising the goals set before the community by organised political and religious groups might have been the means they have resorted to have disillusioned all right-thinking people. The B.J.B. on the other hand has right throughout its movement kept the tone of the purity of means. The members of the B.J.B. are bound to a strict code of self-discipline. No distinction has been allowed between the morals of their private lives and their social behaviour and public conduct. I am very hopeful of the healthy impact that this aspect of the movement will have upon the community. Particularly, it is bound to have a terrific impact on the political and administrative personnel of our country.

Our achievements in the field of founding a Buddhist Social Order in this country will be exactly in proportion to the purity of



our minds and hearts. Without inner purity we can never build up fearlessness. Our actions will be shrouded in indecision and result in confusion unless this great quality of purity of thought is cultivated. For Buddhists the motive force for developing this purity should spring from the very foundations of the Dhamma, namely, the three characteristics, Anicca (Impermanence), Dukkha (Sorrow) and Anatta (Soullessness). This is the reality, the Science, so ancient but at the same time so modern; so simple yet so profound. Realization of the fact that there is no 'doer' but only the 'deed', is of foremost importance. An organisation which has members who can drown their small and insignificant individual selves in the great sea of Balavegaya deeds can purify the entire social structure. The 'mass mind' needs only the clue and the values placed before them will certainly be upheld and lived up to.

### **The Programme**

The programme is the third Great P. The 'mass mind' will not be content with, and cannot be kept on the alert for a long time on sentiments that come up as a result of anti-Buddhist or Anti-Nationalist forces. They have to be shown a constructive programme of work directed towards specific objectives in conformity with the broader and the ultimate goal of a Buddhist Social Order.

Firstly, this programme is formulated in such a way that every man is spurred on to non-violent and democratic social action with a determination to remove those unjust and discriminatory obstacles that stand against the progress of the nation on the ideals of a Buddhist Social Order. The remnants of a colonial past and the rudiments of its bankrupt civilization which were imposed upon us have to be removed unceremoniously. The sunken treasures of our cultural and religious past should be salvaged, polished by modern science and preserved for future generations. Neither the constitutional masterpiece of Sir Ivor Jennings nor the world language and culture of our Westernised privileged classes should be allowed to abuse our historical rights and impede the unique mission we have been historically obliged to carry on in this crucial period of history.

Secondly, this programme provides for every Buddhist to act individually and collectively in constructive activities in different fields, religious, economic and social. In the religious field priority is given to the study and practice of Dhamma to bring about a moral and spiritual reawakening, preserve and improve to ancient places of worship, to help to make the temples once again the true centres of community-worship and spiritual advancement, and to bring the Maha Sangha and laity closer to each other. In the economic field while supporting all progressive and socialist programmes of the State which are directed towards the elimination of economic exploitation of man by man, attention will be focussed on the maldistribution and improper utilization of the factors of production and the resulting failure to achieve the maximum welfare of one and all in our society whose population is increasing rapidly. The complete faith that is now placed in the efficacy of large scale organisations in the field of finance, commerce and industry, the excessive dependence that is placed on an import-export economy based on cash crops instead of on the more sound economy of self-sufficiency, and the lack of an integrated and coherent plan of national development giving every individual a place in its formulation and implementation, are being recognized by the B.J.B. as the major causes of our economic backwardness and inefficiency. While striving to put before the people and the governments in power the correctives for these ills the B.J.B. proposes to evoke the inherent strength the people have to solve their problems in planned community development programmes on the Shramadana Principles without depending entirely on State assistance.

In the social field an all-out campaign against all anti-religious and immoral practices, such as casteism, communalism, bribery and corruption, nepotism, production, distribution and sale of liquor whether with legal sanction or without, religious discrimination and anti-national and anti-social behaviourism, will be launched with all its might.

Thirdly, the B.J.B. programme will help the people to be educated in the utter futility of party politics in this age of science and an alternative system of party-less democracy where every

man can give his best to the community in the matter of self-government, will be placed before the people. In this instance the B.J.B. will only play the educative role rather than directly or indirectly participate in power and party politics.

### **Earnest Hope**

This is how I see the Bauddha Jatika Balavegaya. To me, it has an appeal both to the Head and to the Heart. Through the dedicated group of people who belong to one of those great world religions, Buddhism, I see a universality of outlook because their Dhamma teaches that. I repeat that the Age of Science and Spirituality is round the corner and the call for human unity and breadth of vision has come. It is my earnest hope that the B.J.B. will gain strength from day to day and help purify our people in view of their daily lives hitherto divided, selfish, irreligious and unworthy of serving humanity, at one of the greatest crossroads in the history of mankind. I conclude with the inspiring lines I hear ringing in my mind—

“The world’s great age begins anew,  
The golden years return  
The earth doth like a snake renew  
Her winter weeds outworn  
Heaven smiles and faiths and empires gleam  
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream,  
Another ‘Lanka’ shall arise,  
And to remoter time  
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies  
The splendour of its prime!”

---

This article was published by Sarvodaya Office, 493, Maradana Road, Colombo 10, on Sept. 1963.

