

1981. This was however restricted to the coastal zone as defined by this act and the statutory obligation was at the discretion of the director, CCD. EIA became a legal requirement for the whole country through the amendments to the National Environmental Act in 1988. However the relevant provisions came into

a written analysis of the predicted environmental consequences of a proposed prescribed project and containing an environmental cost benefit analysis, if such an analysis has been prepared, including a description of the project, and includes a description of the avoidable and unavoidable adverse environ-

mental Act empowers the minister to prescribe projects in respect of which environmental assessment would be necessary. These have been gazetted by the minister in section 23 Z of the NEA. Three lists have been gazetted describing the projects that would require an IEE/EIA before they

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Mettananda – fighter for Buddhist rights

By Nemsiri Mutukumara

His critics call him a crusader. Uncharitably ten years after his demise, one would find Mettananda's biting invective was not without substance.

He was not opposed to any religion. Religion to him was as essential to man as teeth to the mouth. What Mettananda decried and denigrated was irreligious and anti-religious behaviour in the name of religion.

With equal displeasure he looked down upon capitalism, communism and imperialism as vulgar, ignoble and base extremes that should be avoided. He scorned and frowned on attempts to commercialise religion.

He harboured no grudge against the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British or their descendants for preserving their identity, manners and habits and languages and their nomenclature by themselves.

To him they were another race like the Sinhala and Tamil. They had a right to live in the Sinhaladvipa, the land of their adoption he believed, despite the fact they had come to 'conquer and civilise the heathens'.

After their conquest and subsequent defeat, the descendants of the conquerors chose to live with the 'natives'.

Mettananda left no word in his vocabulary unused to inflict a crushing blow on the Sinhala people for aping imperialists. He branded as 'Thuppahis' those who robbed or borrowed or leased out Portuguese and Dutch names and paraded them proudly. He was unmercifully harsh on the Sinhala Buddhist Dons and Donas, Pereras and Silvas and Fernandos and the like.

He looked at them contemptuously. He denounced them as decadent remnants of colonialism, mercilessly, publicly and forthrightly.

His mission was to salvage the identity of the Sinhala and the Buddhist from the debris of colonial imperialism. This he performed with a clear vision. He foresaw before anybody else could the gloomy future of the Sinhala people due to the divide and rule policy of the imperial powers: the denial of educational opportunities; the plundering of their traditional homelands for commercial purposes and the discriminations shown against them in trade and commerce.

He found the panacea for all ills. It was in the field of education. He spelled out in no uncertain terms in his maiden speech as Congress President at the Galle sessions that the future of the people lay in the restoration of Buddhist education. His call to the Buddhists to rally round the Buddhist Theosophical Society, the pioneering organisation of Buddhist education was well responded.

For the first time in the history of Buddhism the Sinhala bhikkhus committed to writing the sacred Tripitaka in Sinhala language on Sinhala ola leaf in the Sinhala village of Aluvihare. But in the very land Sinhala Tripitaka was written there was no Sinhala Tripitaka.

That agitated Mettananda's mind. Under his presidentship in the Congress, he laid the foundations for a Tripitaka Trust for the publication and the distribution of the Sinhala Tripitaka.

Along with him were elected two able lieutenants the former Prime Minister the late Dudley Senanayake as a joint secretary and former President J. R. Jayewardene as an assistant secretary. Both of them were in their twenties.

That was the time when the Buddhist Congress enrolled young blood every year. Such intelligent honest and capable young men carried their mission with great aplomb and allowed others to succeed them without anchoring themselves to positions of power.

Mettananda's vision of a Triptaka Trust bore fruit with Mr Jayewardene playing a major role with Dr. Malalasekera in translating and publishing the Tripitaka in Sinhala.

Had Mettananda and Malalasekera been alive, they would have been shocked to learn that the Sinhala Tripitaka they brought out with much labour had been destroyed by white ants.

Mettananda was desperate. He was in a hurry. Time was running out. Before long something must be done



to save Buddhism from the 'thuppahis'. The Buddhist Commission Report was his 'Magna Carta'. The Kotelawala Government failed to take note of the Buddhist Commission recommendations.

When S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike pledged himself to act upon its recommendations in case he was returned to power, Mettananda threw in his lot with Bandaranaike. Incidentally the historic meeting was

held at Ananda College on February 4, 1956.

After the Bandaranaike-Philip Gunawardhana coalition was swept into power in 1956, Mettananda reminded the MEP Government of its promises. Buddhist leaders associated with the Buddhist Commission were given various kinds of rewards – ambassadorial office, senatorships and such big time jobs.

Mettananda could not be bought over. He stuck to his guns and his cause. Bandaranaike called him a fanatic. His colleagues departed from the national struggle leaving Mettananda in the cold.

He took up the challenge. This time with more guts and gusto. When the Congress abandoned and deser-

L. H. Mettananda shot into religio political prominence with the appointing of the Commission of Inquiry into the state of Buddhism by the All-Ceylon Buddhist Congress in 1954

He was then heading the country's leading Buddhist educational institute – Ananda College.

Twenty years earlier – on December 24, 1934 to be exact – he served the Buddhist Congress as its president for one year. After a prolonged silence he rejoined the Congress to help make far-reaching recommendations that created a revolution in our society.

ted its child Mettananda adopted it. He formed the Bauddha Jatika Balavegaya. Like the young hero Dutugemunu collecting his dasa maha yodhaya Mettananda looked around for young men because the older generation had betrayed the cause. Young men in the top berths of Government and private sector rallied under the banner of the BJB.

In order to accomplish his task on behalf of the

Buddhists he would even join with the devil and thwart the calculated campaign carried out by the Thuppahis and anti-Buddhist elements to annihilate the people's culture.

He joined hands with Philip Gunawardhana. But his flirtation with Philip was short-lived.

Mettananda came to the fray again. He supported Sirimavo Bandaranaike. Although he was in a mighty hurry, some people in the Sirimavo Government were indifferent towards Buddhist needs.

Mettananda became disillusioned. All those whom he supported in order to win back the privileges enjoyed by the Sinhala people during the time of the Sinhala kings had failed him miserably. Those who rode to power with his help thought Mettananda was ambitious. Mettananda's was a different kind of an ambition.

It was never self-centred. He shunned power and fame. His main ambition was to restore to his people their rightful place. In his dealings private and public, he displayed a hallmark of sincerity. He was honest to himself and to the cause.

After his departure, the BJB died an unnatural death. Mettananda's BJB men received rewards from every succeeding government. His men forgot Mettananda and his ideals.

As a young parliamentarian of the Jayewardene government pointed out that Dutugemunu the heroic king of the Sinhaladvipa lived in every Sinhala youth, so does Mettananda live in every Buddhist who is not tainted with thuppahi culture.

This article is published in connection with the Birth centenary celebrations of Mr. L. H. Mettananda.