

Communalism and Political Modernisation in Ceylon

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Recent discussions of political development in the new states have been concerned with the objective conditions of modernisation and in particular with the relation between tradition and modernity in such states. In their important work on the politics of the developing areas, Almond and Coleman had already postulated the culturally mixed character of all political systems, drawn attention to the fact that there is no system which is all-modern, and that every polity contains an admixture of the traditional and the modern. For Almond "all political systems—the developed Western ones as well as the less-developed non-Western ones—are transitional systems, or systems in which cultural change is taking place".¹ This postulate was a cardinal assumption of the theorists of the "Princeton School". Lucian Pye, for example, recognised that in dealing with political processes, it is not possible to rely exclusively on distinctions such as traditional-modern, urban-rural and so on, for "the process of organising sentiments, articulating and aggregating interests, and the orderly extension of participation always entails a combining or fusing of many elements in a people's cultural tradition".² From another point of view, this principle was reiterated by David Apter when he stated that traditional societies are not necessarily static existing in a kind of equilibrium, "enbalméd in a religious framework", and defying all change. On the contrary, in practice, "traditionality in its various forms and patterns is an essential part of the study of modernisation (particularly its political aspects) precisely because it too changes".³ The attempt by the Rudolphs to challenge the assumption that modernity and tradition are radically different may not therefore appear novel, but these writers have sought "to accord tradition a higher priority in the study of modernization than has often been the case in previous analyses of it", and to analyse "variations in the meaning of modernity and tradition and suggest how they infiltrate and transform each other".⁴ These authors point out that studies of American political behaviour have suggested the persistence of such traditional forces as local history, ethnicity, race, and religious community.

The literature focusing exclusively on so modern a society as America tends to contradict the notion that tradition and modernity are dichotomous. It suggests

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- 1 Gabriel Almond and James Coleman, (ed.), *The Politics of the Developing Areas*, Princeton University Press, 1960, p. 24.
 - 2 Lucian W. Pye, (ed.), *Communications and Political Development*, Princeton University Press, 1963, p. 18. For the heterogeneity of political cultures, see Lucien W. Pye and Sidney Verha, (ed.), *Political Culture and Political Development*, Princeton University Press, 1965, 516. *et. seq.*
 - 3 David E. Apter, *The Politics of Modernisation*, University of Chicago Press, 1965, p. 57.
 - 4 Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoebler Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India*, University of Chicago Press, 1967, pp. 1, 9.

instead that there may be certain persistent requirements of the human condition that tradition, as it is expressed in the past of particular nations, can and does satisfy.⁵

Yet the concept of modernisation presupposes some political systems which are more modern and some which are more traditional than others. There might therefore be some justification for models of political modernity, but these have generally tended to be compounded out of Western experience and show a lingering nostalgia for the democratic polity.⁶ Within the sphere of governmental rule and authority, to be sure, modernisation is recognised to be marked by the degree of specificity of function, the extent of universalistic norms of conduct, and the prevalence of achievement considerations in recruitment. As regards political processes, Lucian Pye identified the following as being "minimum considerations" in the assessment of political modernisation :

- (a) increase in capabilities of the society to mobilise the people in national efforts;
- (b) widening of participation in ways which affect the decision-making process;
- (c) existence of a wide range of interests, all freely represented and well-rooted in the social and economic life of the society as a whole;
- (d) ability to direct social change purposefully, without being buffeted by social forces;
- (e) stability, orderly transfer of power, respect for constituted authority, adherence to legal procedures and a clear recognition of the rights and duties of citizens.⁷

A modern society has been regarded as characterised by a high degree of urbanization, widespread literacy, comparatively high per capita income, extensive geographical and social mobility, a relatively high degree of commercialization and industrialization of the economy, an extensive and penetrative network of mass communication media, and generally, widespread participation of members of the society in modern social and economic processes.⁸ But the paradox, as Apter pointed out, is that while in Western societies modernisation was caused by industrialization, in non-western societies industrialization comes, if at all,

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁶ See Chong-Do Hah and Jeanne Schneider, "A Critique of Current Studies on Political Development and Modernisation", *Social Research*, 35:139, Spring, 1968. Despite their reservations regarding models of tradition and modernity, the Rudolphs themselves find certain contrasts "heuristically useful". *Op. cit.*, p. 3, fn. 1.

⁷ Pye, *Op. cit.*, pp. 17-18.

⁸ Cf. Almond and Coleman, *Op. cit.*, p. 532.

as the effect rather than the cause of modernization.⁹ As the Rudolphs put it :

Because Western nations have realized certain objective conditions such as industrialization, urbanization, and literacy before political democracy, they are often assumed to be requisition of it. Such assumptions and inquiries have the effect of limiting the models of modernization to the experience of Western nations. The myths and realities of Western experience set limits to the social scientific imagination, and modernity becomes what we imagine ourselves to be.¹⁰

Besides, a further element of confusion may be added to the discussion of political modernization by the relativity of the term. What is modern "is not necessarily a fixed condition or point in time. What is considered modern today may not still be so regarded next year".¹¹ Nor is modernization equivalent to westernization for although in many colonial territories the processes of modernization began in the pre-independence period under the impact of westernization, the objective of the new states is not the complete acceptance of western civilization but rather the adaptation of selected Western ideas and techniques to indigenous ways of life.

The Rudolphs have argued forcefully that established notions of political modernity might have to be amended and revised in the face of the persistence of traditional forces in the contemporary politics of countries so remotely different as India and the United States of America, and that political modernity, contrary to broadly shared assumptions, may even involve ascriptive and corporate features.¹² For these writers, the exploration of internal variations and potentialities for change within manifestations of tradition provide the clue for the study of political modernity. In this article, we attempt to explore the interaction between traditional forces and modern political institutions and processes in Ceylon, and to ask ourselves whether the Rudolphs' theory has any relevance for the Island.

ELECTORAL DEMARCATION AND COMMUNAL POLITICS

The evolution of parliamentary institutions in Ceylon had a long history in the colonial period. The Island could claim the oldest democratic electorate in South Asia, universal franchise having been introduced in 1931. But the tendency to organise and aggregate interests on the basis of communal loyalties also had its roots in the colonial past. This tendency became pronounced after independence; and the heterogeneity of the political culture, resulting from the divergence between the urban modern subsociety of westernised elements and the traditional mass of the rural population, was accentuated by the fact that interests continued to be articulated in terms of race, religion or language group. Modernization, to be sure, has effected significant changes in social stratification.

9 Apter, *op. cit.*, p. 53 ff.

10 Rudolph and Rudolph, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

11 Knight Biggerstaff, "Modernisation and Early Modern China", *Journal of Asian Studies*, 25:608, August, 1966.

12 Rudolph and Rudolph, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-14.

The diffusion of a free, compulsory, system of education, and the change, introduced in 1956 of the language of administration and, earlier, of the medium of instruction, at once threatened the hegemony of the westernised elite, and gave rise to a rural political elite which has become increasingly influential in the political process. Recruitment to the political elite now proceeded from a broader social base. But this has not been achieved without aggravation of intergroup tensions. The serious communal violence of 1958, and the prevailing atmosphere of distrust and hostility between the Sinhalese and the Tamils, political assassination, attempts to overthrow the constituted government by *coup d'etat*, civil resistance, *satyagraha*, and the increasing resort to government under a state of emergency, are all symptoms of imbalance within the body politic which processes of modernisation have failed to resolve. Ironically enough, as Coleman pointed out, modernisation itself tends to strengthen the forces of particularism, and, though the governing elite might consciously try to foster a sense of national loyalty among the population, near-autonomous communication systems among different communal groups might in fact perpetuate communal cleavage and cultural distinctiveness.¹³

It is generally overlooked especially by those who point to convenient scapegoats for the recent communal discords, that traditional features are built-in to the modern political constitution of Ceylon. The representation clauses of the Ceylon (Constitution) Order-in-Council, 1946, which are in force, provide that :

- (a) electoral areas be demarcated on the basis of one seat for every 75,000 persons and in addition one seat for every 1,000 square miles of area in each province;
- (b) each electoral district should have as far as possible an equal number of persons and delimitation should take account of transport facilities, physical features and the community or diversity of interests of the inhabitants;
- (c) where it appeared that in any area of a province a substantial concentration of citizens were united by community of interests (racial, religious or otherwise) but were different in one or more respects from the majority of the inhabitants of that area, delimitation should make possible the representation of that concentration of citizens;
- (d) multi-member constituencies be established, wherever, desirable to ensure adequate representation of minority interests.

The considerations which underlay the adoption of this scheme have been summarised thus by Jennings: first, it would provide increased representation for the minority communities without introducing communal representation; second, the system would give weightage to the rural population as against the

13 Almond and Coleman, *op. cit.*, pp. 545. 557.

urban population; third, it would give weightage to the (more backward) Kandyan Sinhalese as against the Low-country Sinhalese; fourth, it would give weightage to the backward areas as against the more developed areas. "The communal motive was dominant: that is, the primary intention was to give a greater proportionate representation to the minorities, but the other advantages were foreseen".¹⁴

Constituencies were demarcated with the specific object of securing the return of a minimum number of minority candidates, and indeed, the first Delimitation Commission were able to predict with a remarkable degree of accuracy, the racial composition of the first Parliament, elected in 1947. The balance of communal forces established in the Constitution has been disrupted to some extent by the disfranchisement of the Indian community in 1950, and seats held by Indian Tamils in the 1947 elections have become Sinhalese seats in and after the elections of 1952.¹⁵ Indeed, when in 1959 a new delimitation was carried out, the principle that the resident population (nationals as well as non-nationals) should be taken into account in demarcating seats on the basis of 75,000 persons for each electoral district was retained, though the franchise had been restricted since 1950 to citizens. One result of the 1959 delimitation, which increased the number of elected seats in Parliament from 95 to 151, was to further increase, proportionately, the Sinhalese representatives in Parliament. Thus, while in the 1947 elections the Sinhalese had obtained approximately 71 per cent of the total number of elected seats in the legislature, the figure rose to approximately 78 per cent in the 1956 elections and to 80 per cent in the 1960 and 1965 elections. Ceylon Tamil representation has averaged 12 per cent of elected seats in the legislature since independence, and the Ceylon Moors, approximately, 6 per cent.¹⁶

Another consequence of the disfranchisement of the Indian community is that the principle of equal electoral districts (already modified in the constitution in the interest of minority weightage) has been further compromised. Since the number of seats is determined by the resident population and not by the number of citizens, the average number of voters per electorate is smallest in the

14 Sir Ivor Jennings, *The Constitution of Ceylon*, Oxford University Press, 1949, 3rd ed., 1953 pp. 213-15.

15 The disfranchisement of the Indian Community was due to a constitutional amendment which made the franchise dependent on citizenship. The Indian and Pakistani Residents' (Citizenship) Act, enacted in 1949, prescribed certain qualifications for the grant of Ceylon citizenship to Indians but it was only in 1962 that the claims of Indians for citizenship had been finalised, 134,000 of the 825,000 applicants under this Act being admitted to Ceylon citizenship. A further 300,000 Indians are to be given Ceylon citizenship in terms of the Indo-Ceylon Agreement of October 1964.

16 These figures are to be compared with the following percentages of total population based on the 1953 Census, for the chief racial groups in the island: Sinhalese 69.36; Ceylon Tamils 10.93; Indian Tamils 12.03; Muslims 5.73.

Kandyan areas, where the concentration of Indian residents is heaviest.¹⁷ This imbalance will no doubt correct itself after the citizenship status of the Indian community has been resolved. The operation of Ceylon's citizenship law resulted in 60,000 persons of Indian origin being enrolled in the electoral register at the 1965 general elections, and with the operation of the 1964 agreement, this number will be added to in the course of subsequent elections.

Thus the idea of a communal balance of forces is imbedded in the constitutional provisions for electoral delimitation. The communalization of politics is therefore a necessary consequence of the political system. The organisation and aggregation of interests could be made more effectively on the basis of group loyalties than on the basis of ideology or issues. Such a system could hardly work without stresses and strains in the absence of a basic consensus among the chief communal groups. The lack of such a consensus provides the clue to contemporary politics in Ceylon. For the Sinhalese, the objective conditions of modernization can be realised only when the discrimination and injustices suffered by the Sinhalese Buddhist majority during the period of colonial rule had been redressed and compensated. The continued use of English in the administration and in education was seen as an instrument for the perpetuation of the privileged position of the westernized elite. The minority communities were not responsible for the plight of Sinhala Buddhists, though they had benefitted from the policies of the colonial power. But it was incumbent on the minority communities to understand the problems of Sinhala Buddhists and accept the fact that they had to be solved.¹⁸ The implementation of the Sinhala Only Act and the restoration of Buddhism to its traditional rights as the religion of the majority were therefore the twin pillars of the Sinhalese communal programme. For most Tamils, however, the Sinhala Only policy represented a clear trend of anti-Tamil discriminatory legislation, which had begun with the enactment of the citizenship laws soon after independence, and which must be strenuously resisted if the Tamil cultural heritage was to be safeguarded from the encroachments of the Sinhala renaissance. The 1965 manifesto of the Federal Party insisted: "If the Sinhalese and Tamil people are to enjoy equality and equal opportunities our Tamil language should enjoy parity with the Sinhala language throughout the length and breadth of Ceylon We will never accept Sinhala".¹⁹ Resistance to the Sinhala Only Act and alleged administrative

17 The average number of voters per electoral district, in each of the 9 Provinces in Ceylon is as follows: Western Province 41,000; Southern Province 38,500; North-Western 33,000; North-Central 19,500; Central 24,500; Uva 19,000; Sabaragamuwa 30,000; Northern 29,500; Eastern 24,500. Uva and Sabaragamuwa constitute the Kandyan Provinces, while the Northern and Eastern provinces were the main areas of Ceylon Tamil settlements. These figures are computed from the Report of the sixth Parliamentary General Election of Ceylon. *Sessional Paper 20 of 1966*.

18 For an exposition of the Sinhalese point of view, see the presidential address of Mrs. Bandaranaike at the 15th annual sessions of the SLFP. Reported in *The Ceylon Observer*, 21 July 1967.

19 *Ceylon Daily News*, 6 March 1965. Regulations framed in January 1966 have since made Tamil virtually an official language with Sinhala, in the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

discrimination against Tamils, opposition to colonisation of Sinhalese in Tamil majority areas, demands for regional devolution, a federal state, these are the main elements of the Tamil communal programme.²⁰ Given such basic divergence on fundamental issues, it is not surprising that periods when the Sinhala Buddhist programme was sought to be translated into legislation (as during the regimes of the two Bandaranaiques) should have engendered the greatest communal conflicts, while periods when the communal *status quo* was left largely unchanged (as during 1948-56 and 1965 to the present) should have projected an image of communal harmony.

However, whether communal tensions were ascendant or in abeyance, the communalization of politics has certainly contributed to increased political consciousness and political participation among all communal groups in the island.

BUDDHISM AND POLITICS

Although the constitution has been predicated on the assumption of a balance of communal forces, the dominant motif of contemporary Ceylonese politics is Sinhala Buddhism. Recent experience suggests that individuals, groups, as well as the institutional structures of parliamentary democracy are adapting themselves to the dominant Buddhist ethos. A close link had always existed between the state and religion in the traditional Sinhalese political system. The Sinhalese king became the defender of the Buddhist faith and it came to be looked upon as the king's special duty to uphold the religion and its institutions. It was not merely that, in consequence, the Buddhist *sangha* came to have a deep influence on royal policy, but the continuance of the *Buddha-sasana* was identified with the well-being of the Sinhalese royal family. The now established practice that the Prime Minister (and other incumbents of high office) must offer a tray of flowers at a Buddhist temple after appointment re-establishes at a symbolic level the old connection between the state and the *sasana* in Ceylon. The manner in which since independence, the main Sinhalese political parties have incorporated religio-cultural issues into their originally largely secular party manifestoes is also an indication of the force of the revived Buddhist tradition. Yet Buddhist political interests are not articulated entirely in and through the medium of the political parties acting through parliamentary channels. As intellectual leaders of the village community and repositories of the traditional culture of the Sinhalese, the *sangha* have become deeply involved in issues of contemporary politics.

20 There is however, no political homogeneity within minority ethnic and religious groups. While language politics will continue to divide Sinhalese and Tamils, there is disagreement among Tamils on other demands posed by the Federal Party, such as federalism, regional devolution, a Tamil university, and so on. The political allegiance of Tamils is divided between the Federal Party and the Tamil Congress, the latter standing for greater collaboration with the Sinhalese. Other Tamil parties are likely to come up in the near future. The political support of the Muslims is fairly evenly divided between Sinhalese and Tamil parties; a new political organisation calling itself the *Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam* is already challenging the hegemony of the Ceylon Workers' Congress among Indian plantation workers who have been registered as Ceylon citizens.

Perhaps the most important fact about the contemporary political role of the *sangha* in Ceylon is their tendency to be divided in allegiance to the political parties but to demonstrate an impressive corporate unity on certain political and social issues. Since, unlike Christian churches, the *sangha* did not have an ecclesiastical hierarchy or a central organisation to exact political conformity, monks were free to support the political parties of their choice. Sectarianism within the *sangha*, based on caste, accentuated the diversity of their political outlook, with the high-caste *bhikkus* of the *Siam nikaya* tending towards political conservatism, and the *bhikkus* of the *Amarapura* and *Ramanya nikayas* (consisting largely of members of minority castes like the *Karawa*, *Salagama* and *Durawa*) being more disposed towards political and social change. Since 1947 *bhikkus* have played a prominent part in every general election but two,²¹ campaigning for the one or the other of the main political parties. At the 1947 elections, the contest was between the United National Party (UNP) on the one hand, and several Marxist parties on the other. The slogan "religion in danger" was therefore used against the Marxists, and *bhikkus* were brought out in support of UNP candidates. Since then, this slogan has recurred at various times during elections; but it is a commentary on the increasing importance of secular concerns within the *sangha* that the slogan has tended to lose much of its force, not only because the *sangha* are themselves divided on it, but also because many *bhikkus* have publicly avowed their belief that Buddhism is in no danger of destruction at the hands of the Marxist parties.

However, what makes the *sangha* politically important is not what divides them but the factors which bring them together and give them a corporate unity. Chief among these factors is the role played by the *sangha* in the recent evolution of Sinhalese nationalism and the resurgence of Buddhism in the island. The rise of the *sangha* as an important political force is associated especially with the election campaign of 1956. The *bhikkus* had participated actively in earlier elections as well, but they had done so mostly in their individual capacities and not as members of specific Buddhist interest groups. In the 1956 election campaign, *bhikkus* for the first time appeared as disciplined electoral agents, acting either in concert with lay Buddhist leaders or amongst themselves, as political groups with specific objectives in view.

The *sangha's* disillusionment with the UNP government of Sir John Kotelawela (1953-'56) found political expression in the formation of pressure groups demanding for Buddhism its "rightful place".²² Two of these were especially

21 The exceptions were the elections of March and July 1960, when the *sangha* refrained from all political activity following upon the involvement of two prominent *bhikkus* in the assassination of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike in September 1959.

22 The useful account of these events in W. Howard Wriggins, *Ceylon: Dilemmas of a New Nation*, Princeton University Press, 1960. ch. VI and IX, has now been supplemented by Donald E. Smith, "Political Monks and Monastic Reform"; Donald E. Smith, "The Sinhalese Buddhist Revolution"; and A. J. Wilson, "Buddhism and Politics, 1960-65", all in Donald E. Smith (ed.), *South Asian Politics and Religion*, Princeton University Press, 1966.

important: the Buddhist Committee of Inquiry and the *Eksath Bhikku Peramuna* (the United Front of the Buddhist monks, EBP). The unofficial Buddhist Committee of Inquiry was a body of prominent *bhikkus* and Buddhist laymen appointed by the All-Ceylon Buddhist Congress in 1954 to inquire into the state of Buddhism in the country. Its report, published in English and Sinhala in 1956,²³ was a severe indictment of the existing UNP government for its pro-western, pro-Christian orientation, and for its neglect of Buddhist interests. It demanded, among others, the creation of a Buddha Sasana Council, amendment of section 29 of the constitution which gave protection of the privileged position of racial and religious minorities, the state take-over of all government assisted schools and training colleges, the replacement of Sundays with *poya* holidays, the banning of horse-racing, the prohibition of the sale of intoxicating beverages, the termination of the services of Catholic nuns working in government hospitals and making Ceylon a republic. The report was a significant document of the Buddhist resurgence. It became an effective instrument in the hands of the political *bhikkus* of the EBP.

The EBP was itself organised in 1956 by Buddharakhita Thero of the *Siam* sect (who was later implicated in the Bandaranaike assassination) with over seventy-five regional associations of *bhikkus* affiliated to it. It supported the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and its electoral allies (collectively called the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna - MEP) at the elections. The monks of the EBP not only published political literature but addressed meetings and campaigned from door to door with the slogan that a vote for the UNP was a vote for Catholics, and a vote for the MEP a vote for Buddhists.²⁴ The objectives of the EBP were contained in a Declaration of Ten Principles which included demands for the implementation of the Buddhist Commission Report and the institution of Sinhala as the one official language of Ceylon.²⁵ The ten principles were accepted by Bandaranaike on behalf of the MEP during the course of the election campaign.

Whatever divergences might exist within the *sangha* in other respects, *bhikkus* of all castes and political persuasions have been united in their conviction that gross injustices had been perpetrated on Buddhists during the colonial period and that it is a primary duty of independent governments of Ceylon to redress Buddhist grievances and accord to Buddhism its rightful place as the religion of the majority of the people. They were also united in their belief that an essential pre-requisite of according to Buddhism its rightful place was the resumption of the state's patronage of Buddhism, the withdrawal of which, during the colonial era, had led to the present low state of the *sasana*. Making

23 An abridged English version of the Sinhala report was published under the title *The Betrayal of Buddhism*, Balangoda, 1956.

24 Wriggins estimated that about 3000 *bhikkus*, the majority of whom belonged to the Amarapura and Ramanya sects, campaigned actively against the UNP at these elections. Wriggins, *op. cit.*, pp. 347-48.

25 Donald E. Smith, "Political Monks and Monastic Reform", *op. cit.*, p. 493.

Buddhism the state religion found favour neither with the *sangha* nor with lay organisations such as the Buddhist Congress and the Buddhist Committee of Inquiry. Indeed, the latter had strongly affirmed the need for a secular state, and had recommended the creation of a body similar to the Buddha Sasana Council in Burma, in which should be vested the prerogatives traditionally exercised by Sinhalese Kings. In 1957 Bandaranaike appointed a Buddha Sasana Commission to deal, *inter alia*, with the internal discipline of the *sangha*, the management of temple lands and so on. Its report, submitted in 1959, recommended the creation of a Buddha *sasana* Council (a bi-cameral Buddhist legislative body, one chamber of which would be composed of the *sangha*, the other of the *sangha* and the laity combined), the creation of ecclesiastical courts and the creation of a government department to deal with temple property. But such radical changes are frowned upon by the conservative heads of the Siam sect, and so far nothing has come of the proposals.

In other respects, however, the period since 1956 has witnessed the progressive implementation of the main Buddhist demands, such as the enactment of the Sinhala Only Act, the increase of state patronage of Buddhism, the banning of horse-racing, the termination of services of Catholic nuns in government hospitals, the State take-over of assisted schools, and the declaration of *poya* days as holidays.

From ancient times, the prosperity of the *sangha* and the fortunes of the *sasana* in Ceylon had depended on the well-being of the Sinhalese nation. When the Sinhalese nation had been divided among itself, or when it had been subjugated by a foreign power, the *sasana* itself had suffered. While the Buddhist religion had to face considerable hardships during the colonial period, in the pre-colonial era itself recurrent Tamil invasions from South India had posed a serious problem for the Buddha *sasana* as well as for the Sinhala nation. It is not surprising, therefore, that the *sangha* should be deeply concerned with the present integrity of the Sinhala nation, and that it should play its old role of protector of the Sinhala heritage and culture. For the *sangha*, the image was easily evoked of the cultural threat to the Sinhala language posed by the demands of Tamil leaders, and of the political threat to the Sinhala nation posed by the unrestricted grant of citizenship and franchise rights to persons of Indian origin in Ceylon. The Mahanayake Thero (the chief incumbent) of the *Ramanya Nikaya* was exaggerating his case, but expressing a common fear among the *sangha* when he declared:

If the Tamils get hold of this country, the Sinhalese will have to jump into the sea. It is essential, therefore, to safeguard our country, the nation, and the religion and to work with that object in mind.²⁶

When Prime Minister Bandaranaike entered into a pact in 1957 with S.J.V. Chelvanayagam (the leader of the Federal Party) granting certain concessions to Tamils, it was a demonstration of protest by the *sangha* that led to its abrogation.

²⁶ *The Sun*, Colombo, 26 May 1967.

When, in January 1966, the Dudley Senanayake government framed regulations, under the Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act of 1958, which sought to provide for the use of Tamil in the Northern and Eastern provinces, Buddhist *bhikkus* were among these who denounced the regulations, and a *bhikku* was accidentally killed by police firing against demonstrators. The Mahanayake of the Malwatte Chapter of the Siam sect was among the severest critics of Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake for his government's Indo-Ceylon Agreement Implementation Bill of 1967, which was held to be inconsistent with the letter and spirit of the Indo-Ceylon Agreement of 1964 and the interests of Sinhalese.²⁷

The *sangha* has also been greatly concerned with the danger to Sinhalese interests implied in a party system of government, where Sinhalese political parties (UNP and the SLFP) were perpetually in conflict with each other and one of which might form an alliance with Tamil parties which could be prejudicial to Sinhalese interests. At a meeting of the three sects of the *sangha* at Malwatte Vihara on 25 April 1967, the Mahanayake Theros of Malwatte and Asgiriya *viharas* declared that "the solution of national and economic problems could not be made by a party system of government which subsists on mutual rivalries, hatreds and revenge". It was alleged that due to rivalry among the Sinhalese, minority communities were able to unreasonably advance their interests. Hence, an appeal was made to party leaders to "at least temporarily do away with their greed for power and unite to make an honest endeavour to solve national problems such as those relating to language, economy and the grant of citizenship to Indians resident in Ceylon".²⁸ These appeals were made at a time when the UNP minority government of Dudley Senanayake was being widely criticised, especially by the parliamentary opposition, of neglecting Sinhalese interests on language and the Indo-Ceylon question because of its political dependence on the Tamil parties. In this respect, however, the *sangha* represent a line of thinking which is not absent even in lay circles,²⁹ that is, one based on the assumption that the minorities, if presenting a united front *vis a vis* Sinhalese parties, could effectively hold the balance between them and exert a disproportionate influence on the main issues of political debate.

But this theoretical possibility must be viewed against the context of the objective political situation. Just as individuals, groups, and structures are adapting themselves to a dominant Buddhist ethos, the present outlook of Sinhala Buddhism itself is accommodative rather than aggressive. The teaching and practice of Buddhism has emphasised the virtues of toleration, non-violence and peaceful co-existence and the *sangha* are assertive only to the extent of redressing past wrongs and present grievances of Sinhala Buddhists. Besides, the objective political situation itself places limits on Sinhala extremism. Twice since independence, in March 1960 and March 1965, the general elections did

27 See Press statement of the Malwatte Mahanayake Thero in *Ceylon Daily News*, 18 May 1967, and text of a letter by him to the Prime Minister in *ibid.*, 27 May 1967.

28 See *Ceylon Daily News*, 27 April 1967; *The Sun*, 4 May 1967.

29 See e.g. *Ceylon Daily News*, 2 March 1967.

not result in an overall parliamentary majority for any single party, and the prospect can recur at future elections. The main Sinhalese parties contending for political power are therefore compelled to the conviction that the religio-cultural demands which they advocate may have to be implemented by some future Parliament with the support of the minority parties and groups. In other words, the requirements and processes of modern party politics place limits on the influence of tradition in the political system.

ROMAN CATHOLICISM AND POLITICS

In the realm of Catholic politics, too there appear to be promising trends in the direction of secularization and modernisation.

The Roman Catholic community has always been an influential and powerful political group in the island. Constituting 7 per cent of the total population (Christians as a whole constitute 9 per cent of the total population), Catholics have been well represented in the higher administrative services, in the officer cadre of the armed services, in the professions and in business. Besides, the Catholic Church has had two other sources of influence – extensive holdings in land, and an excellent network of schools. Although Ceylon's constitution does not contain a chapter of fundamental rights, section 29 restricts the competence of Parliament to pass legislation which discriminates against of, favours any racial or religious minority. By section 29 (2) (d), which protects the internal constitution of an incorporated religious body from alteration by acts of Parliament, the Church has enjoyed considerable legal and financial advantages which were not available to the Buddhist religion. The greatest political advantage enjoyed by it in relation to the Buddhist *sangha* however, was its strong ecclesiastical organisation, and the existence of a disciplined priesthood subject to control by the church hierarchy. Not surprisingly, therefore, the Catholic Church was the first of the religious interest groups to organise itself politically. In every general election since independence, the Catholic Church openly opposed Marxist parties, and came out strongly on the side of the UNP. Just before the 1952 elections, the Roman Catholic Archbishop issued a pastoral letter which declared that no Catholic with any Christian conscience could vote for a candidate who belonged to a political creed banned by the Church, whether communism or any other, or who had pledged himself directly or indirectly to an electoral program inimical to God, or who was in sympathy with those who were hostile to the Church.³⁰ Till recent times similar injunctions were given to the faithful by the priesthood through the medium of the pulpit. The Church hierarchy did not favour the principle of a separate political party, but used the Catholic block vote on behalf of a party sympathetic to Catholic interests. Catholic votes have hitherto been cast predominantly on behalf of UNP candidates and constituencies where Catholics predominate have invariably returned UNP candidates. Catholics are settled largely in the coastal belt extending north from Colombo as far as Puttalam. In the nine electorates in this area, all but

30 See Donald E. Smith, "The Sinhalese Buddhist Revolution", *op. cit.* p. 471.

two (Chilaw and Wennappuwa)³¹ have consistently returned UNP candidates at the three general elections held between March 1960 and March 1965. The table below gives the ethnic and religious composition of these electorates, based on figures supplied by the 1959 Delimitation Commission Report. Three recent events, however, have deeply affected the position of the Catholic Church in relation to political parties and provide the background to what would appear to be a reevaluation of its political outlook: the take-over of denominational schools by the government in 1961, the attempted *coup d'etat* of 1962, and the replacement of Sundays with *Poya* holidays.

ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION OF ELECTORATES IN THE
COASTAL BELT FROM COLOMBO TO PUTTALAM

Electorate	RACE				RELIGION				
	Sinha- lese	Ceylon Tamil	Mus- lim	*Others	Budd- hist	Hindu	Islam	Chris- tian	Others
	<i>Per Cent</i>				<i>Per Cent</i>				
Colombo North	55.7	16.6	6.3	21.4	28.2	15.7	9.1	46.9	0.1
Wattala	83.8	5.5	2.5	8.2	41.2	5.7	3.6	41.1	0.4
Jaela	93.0	2.3	0.2	4.5	34.3	2.8	0.4	62.3	0.2
Negombo	76.7	9.8	7.4	6.1	11.8	4.9	8.9	74.3	0.1
Katana	88.7	8.3	0.2	2.8	48.2	1.8	10.3	49.5	0.2
Wennapuwa	93.9	1.8	0.2	4.1	33.1	2.3	0.5	64.0	0.1
Nattandiya	90.6	1.7	3.2	4.5	45.5	3.6	3.4	47.4	0.1
Chilaw	77.9	10.0	5.0	6.2	47.6	10.6	6.4	35.3	0.1
Puttalam	34.7	18.9	41.0	5.4	8.9	9.2	43.1	38.7	0.1

Source: Report of the Delimitation Commission, *Sessional Paper XV of 1959*.

*'Others' include Burghers, Europeans and persons of Indian and Pakistan origin.

The state take-over of assisted denominational schools by the government of Mrs. Bandaranaike in 1961 illustrates the basic issues underlying the communal question and variations in the meaning of modernity. The legislation provided for the state take-over of all grade III assisted schools; Grade I and II schools were to be allowed the privilege of remaining as private non-fee levying schools (or with the right to levy fees provided the consent of parents and teachers had been previously obtained by means of a referendum), but could admit only children of the same denomination as the school. The system of grants-in-aid was done away with and religious instruction was made compulsory

31 Wennapuwa was represented by a Catholic SLFP member between 1960 and 1965, but at the March 1965 general election was won by a UNP candidate. Chilaw voted SLFP in March and July 1960, and UNP in 1965. In addition, in by-elections held in Negombo and Nattandiya since March 1965, the successful candidates have been UNP. The basis of delimitation between the 1947 and 1956 general election was different.

in all schools. Buddhist opinion laid great stress on educational reform as being one of the primary requisites of modernisation in Ceylon. The Buddhist view, as expressed in the Buddhist Commission Report, was that Christian dominance in the field of education had been due to the support of a colonial government which had deliberately discriminated against Buddhists. Consequently, the Christians, forming only 9 per cent of the population, controlled a large segment of education, and most of the leading secondary schools in the island. Since these schools were being maintained by government grants, the cost of Christian predominance in education was in fact being borne by Buddhists who constituted 65 per cent of the population. Hence, the principle of equality and equalisation of opportunity demanded that the state should step in to redress the existing imbalance in education.

The Catholics, too, appealed to principles of equality, minority rights and universal human rights in resisting the take-over. While repudiating the allegations of the Buddhist Commission Report,³² the Catholic Church laid great emphasis on the necessity to train children in a religious atmosphere and against a religious background. It was also alleged that in depriving Catholics of the right to have schools, the take-over legislation violated section 29 (2) (a) of the constitution, which declared: "No such law shall prohibit or restrain the free exercise of any religion", and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guaranteed to parents the right to choose the kind of education given to their children.³³ In a statement issued after the second reading of the Bill, the Catholic Hierarchy of Ceylon opposed the take-over as restricting "the free exercise of the religion of a section of Ceylon citizens", and called upon "all lovers of true freedom in the country to join us in warding off an attack on fundamental human rights".³⁴ The Catholic Church was supported in Parliament by the UNP, the Federal Party and a former Prime Minister W. Dahanayake. The government point of view was expressed by Sirima Bandaranaike in a letter to the Catholic hierarchy.³⁵ The Prime Minister argued that the training of children in a religious atmosphere and in a religious background could not be claimed as a peculiar prerogative of any particular Church or religion, all religious bodies having this paramount duty to perform. The government could not give any preferential treatment to any religious denomination, "especially when it is the State that bears almost hundred per cent of the cost in regard to the so-called "Assisted Schools". Moreover, the Bill did not prohibit any religious organisation from propagating unhampered its faith — indeed, Grade I and II could opt to run as private schools without prejudice to the national free education system, i.e. they could levy fees if a referendum among teachers and parents authorised such a procedure, while this provision also

32 *The Catholic Messenger*, Colombo, 10 and 24 March, 7 April 1956.

33 *Ceylon Daily News*, 31 August 1960.

34 Text in *ibid.*, 29 October 1960; earlier, the Archbishop of Colombo himself, in a message to Catholics, enjoined them to be restrained and act with dignity in their hostility to the measure. Text of message in *ibid.*, 22 August 1960.

35. Text of letter in *ibid.*, 25 October 1960.

met the conditions demanded by Article 26 (3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Besides, in many other countries, the Roman Catholic Church had accepted without stipulation the system of state education.

On 10 November 1960 the Prime Minister refused to see a delegation of Catholic women who had gathered before her official residence to protest against the Bill.³⁶ Later in the month 500 Catholic families staged a sit-in demonstration, occupying two Catholic schools in Colombo; from here, the agitation spread to the western coastal belt, where Catholic parents moved into about 60 schools to resist the take-over. Catholic students themselves staged a demonstration outside the office of the Lake House Press.³⁷ Direct physical violence between government forces and Catholics seemed inevitable; but the situation was saved by the Indian Prime Minister Nehru's intervention with the head of the Catholic Church in India, Cardinal Gracias.³⁸ The latter undertook a visit to Ceylon, and after he had had consultations with the Ceylonese Catholic hierarchy and members of the government, the *satyagraha* was called off. Nationalisation of schools was made effective in December 1960. The measure had been strongly supported by the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, the Communist Party, the All-Ceylon Buddhist Congress and other Buddhist organisations. In 1961, the government passed legislation to vest in the crown without compensation, all the property of schools taken over under the Director of Education through the Act of 1960.

A further setback was the implication of several high-ranking Catholic army and police officers in the attempted *coup* of 1962. The communalization of politics in Ceylon has not been without its impact on the army. From the early 1950's the island's armed services had been subject to strong criticism from Buddhist interest groups on the grounds of Christian domination of their officer cadre, and demands had been made by organisations such as the All-Ceylon Buddhist Congress that recruitment to the armed services should be made on the basis of a ratio corresponding to the numerical strength of the various religious groups inhabiting the island. The army, in particular, reflected within itself the clash, if not of ethnic, at least of religious loyalties in the island's politics. Until the abortive *coup* of 1962, the army was officered at the higher levels predominantly by Christians, the majority of these belonging to the Catholic faith. Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism, therefore, could not generate any enthusiasm among an important section of the army leadership. Indeed, during the crisis over the schools nationalisation, when the army and police were called out, the Prime Minister was constrained to appeal to the armed services to rise above sectarian loyalties in the solution of an important national issue. The 1962 *coup* was attempted barely two months after this crisis and was engineered by a group of Christian army and police officers. According to one of the *coup* leaders, the plan was to arrest not only the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of External Affairs and the ministry's Permanent

36 *Ibid.*, 11 November 1960.

37 *The Statesman*, Delhi, 28 November 1960; *The Hindu*, Madras, 2 December 1960.

38 See E. F. C. Ludowyk, *A Modern History of Ceylon*, London, 1966, p. 260 and n. 16.

Secretary, both of whom had the power to issue orders to the Service Commanders,³⁹ but also leftist leaders and the Acting Captain of the Navy; the army commander, (a Sinhalese Catholic) and the British Air Vice-Marshal of the Royal Ceylon Air Force were to be restrained and prevented from leaving their houses. After these arrests the Governor-General (Sir Oliver Goonetilleke) was to be "coerced" to take over the government.⁴⁰ The involvement in the *coup* of the cream of the army's Christian elite has changed the balance between religious groups in the armed forces.⁴¹ The army commander and the majority of officers at commander level are now Buddhists. Although the Catholic Church was not directly involved in the *coup*, it has certainly lost considerable influence in the armed services as a result of it.

Introduction of the *poya* day as the weekly holiday in place of Sunday was another of the Buddhist demands which the major parties felt constrained to accept and implement. Though included in the Buddhist Commission's list of demands, the *poya* day issue did not become a pressing public question until the middle of 1964. During the 1965 election campaign, both major parties, the UNP and the SLFP, promised to implement *poya* holidays if returned to power, and after its electoral victory in 1965, the UNP carried out its promise with effect from 1 January 1966.

In contrast to its resistance to the schools take-over, the Catholic Church, after an initial hesitance, accepted the change with studied equanimity. Indeed, Church dignitaries even attempted to rationalise their acceptance of a measure which was undoubtedly unpopular with the Christian community generally with the argument that what was important was the observance of the Sabbath, and that this need not necessarily be kept on a Sunday. Yet, the fact that this unpopular measure was enacted not by an SLFP government but by the UNP, which had received the consistent political support of Catholics, was not without influence in determining Catholic attitudes. During the by-election campaign for the predominantly Catholic Negombo constituency, in July 1967, the Catholic Church for the first time adopted a neutral line as between the UNP and the SLFP contestants. In the week preceding the by-election the Catholic organs, *Gnanartha Pradeepaya* and *The Catholic Messenger* carried identical editorials on the subject, "The Negombo Election and Religion", which stated that while it was necessary for the parties to explain their attitudes *vis a vis* Catholics, it was even more necessary for them to publicise their attitudes "on issues involving religion; on their achievements in the economic development of a nation in dire economic straits, on their record of ridding the country of the running sore of corruption; on their accomplishments in the sphere of justice, equality and fairplay to all citizens of the land . . . in a word, let them place before the people their record

39 The Prime Minister, too, had this power, but she was apparently considered to be ineffective to prevent the *coup*.

40 Report in *The Hindu*, 14 February 1962.

41 In August 1963, for example, of 16 senior army officers at commander level, 10 were Buddhist and 6 Christian, 3 of the latter being Catholic. See *H. of R. Debates.*, 1964, Vol. 53, coll. 1048-49.

of actual achievement and performance which can be assessed, rather than dangle before them the bait of religion".⁴²

Interestingly enough, on 8th July 1967, the Minister of State, J. R. Jayawardena, had, on behalf of the Prime Minister and Minister of Education, communicated to the Archbishop of Colombo, the government's intention to permit the levying of fees in private non-fee levying schools in the regulations to be framed in the proposed National Education Bill.⁴³ This attempt to placate Catholic interests did not entirely remove Catholic disillusionment with the UNP; for though the UNP retained the Negombo seat, its majority was reduced by 8000 votes.⁴⁴ In a subsequent by-election for another Catholic majority constituency, Nattandiya, the UNP candidate barely retained his seat, the UNP majority being reduced by over 5,000 votes. While these two by-election results were in part a reflection of a general movement of opinion away from the government due to other factors, such as consumer scarcities and the high cost of living, it is reasonable to infer that they were also an indication of growing Catholic resentment against the government. Indeed, it would appear that the Dudley Senanayake government's failure to implement its promise in regard to fee-levying in private schools has led to a hardening of Catholic attitudes towards the UNP. In December 1967, the Archbishop of Colombo was impelled to write to the Prime Minister communicating his surprise and disappointment in this connection, stating that :

... if no redress is granted even at this late stage, we shall be compelled to take certain steps regarding our schools and other matters that we would not have otherwise contemplated.⁴⁵

The Archbishop later reportedly declared to a deputation of Catholic members of the government parliamentary group that "the National Government has let us down".⁴⁶ In such a context, demands for the formation of a Catholic party have been revived; and although these have been rejected by the Church hierarchy as being divisive of national loyalties,⁴⁷ Church support of the UNP can no longer be taken as a foregone conclusion.

CASTE POLITICS

In their study of the changing role of caste in India, the Rudolphs have suggested how "the establishment of political democracy and competitive partisan politics helped to reinvigorate caste by giving it new functions and structures", and how "caste associations and leaders, under the influence of the continuing dialogue between democratic institutions and processes and those of traditional society, (had) begun to create new and larger forms of consciousness,

42 Quoted in *Daily Mirror*, 10 July 1967; see also *Ceylon Daily News*, 10 July 1967.

43 See *The Nation*, Colombo, 6 February 1968.

44 For the issues involved in the Negombo by-election, see K. P. Misra, "Political Behaviour of the Little Rome", *South Asian Studies*, 3: 20-32, January 1968.

45 Text of letter in *The Nation*, 6 February 1968.

46 *Daily Mirror*, 30 January 1968.

47 See *Ceylon Observer*, 19 March 1968.

organization, and action". At the same time, paradoxically, political parties helped to weaken caste organizations "by articulating and mobilising divisions within them and by translating these divisions into extra-caste norms and structures".⁴⁸ In this sense modern politics appeared to be an instrument for both the revival and supersession of traditional society.

The absence of empirical studies of caste political behaviour precludes us from drawing definite conclusions about the experience of Ceylon in what is assuredly a core area of traditional politics, but certain comparisons and contrasts with caste in India suggest themselves. Caste was not ritualized in Ceylon, as in India, nor, except in the Tamil north, where the caste system corresponded to the South Indian prototype,⁴⁹ was untouchability practised. The Buddhist ethic itself was egalitarian, and the value attached to achievement rather than ascriptive considerations had been stressed by the Buddha himself.⁵⁰ Neither India's caste pluralism, nor the rigidity of her ritual taboos, existed in Ceylon. There was no Brahmin caste even in the Tamil north; in the Sinhalese system, the *goyigamas*, the highest caste, were also the most numerous, constituting about 50 per cent of the population.⁵¹

In India, the constitution and public law gave protection to scheduled castes and backward classes by providing them with reserved seats and privileges in education and employment. In Ceylon, too, the principle of minority weightage includes within its ambit minority castes, and delimitation commissioners have deemed it to be their duty to take account of the caste factor in electoral delimitation. The two-member constituency of Ambalangoda-Balapitiya, for instance was created by the first Delimitation Commission purely on caste grounds. The second Delimitation Commission considered it a pernicious policy to carve out separate electorates for castes "thereby perpetuating their alleged under-privileged status, when it is everybody's desire that class distinctions should disappear". But even this commission could not waive the claims of minority castes for adequate parliamentary representation. It stated, somewhat apologetically:

Where however economic community of interest of certain groups of people coincided with their religious or caste community of interest we have as far as practicable carved out electorates to represent those interests. In other cases, we have given concentrations of the various so-called under privileged classes, a strong voice in the choice of their representatives.⁵²

Thus, caste politics, too, found its sanction in constitutional law. The political mobilisation of castes did not take the structural form of the caste association in Ceylon, as it did in the case of certain castes in India. But there were recognised caste leaders through whom caste interests were aggregated and organised. To

⁴⁸ Rudolph and Rudolph, *op. cit.* pp. 97-98.

⁴⁹ See Michael Banks, "Caste in Jaffna" in E. R. Leach (ed.) *Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon and North-West Pakistan*, Cambridge University Press, 1969, pp. 61-77.

⁵⁰ See G. P. Malalasekera and K. N. Jayatileke, *Buddhism and the Race Question*, UNESCO, 1958, p. 36, *et. seq.*

⁵¹ Bryce Ryan, *Caste in Modern Ceylon*, Rutgers University Press, 1953, p. 95.

⁵² Report of the Delimitation Commission. *Sessional Paper XV of 1959*, pp. 12-13.

win an election a candidate had to belong to the right caste in relation to the constituents of the area, a fact which is carefully considered by party nomination boards. Caste considerations have, perforce, to enter into the calculations of a Prime Minister appointing his cabinet, for caste leaders have to be rewarded for their political support. A leader of a minority caste in office, whether political or administrative, is like a beacon light to his caste fellows. For it is through him that they are able to get a job for a son, a scholarship for a nephew, a contract, and so on. A recent appointee to the Senate, the first member of the *Durawa* caste to be so appointed, was feted by his caste fellows in a triumphal whistle-stop tour from Colombo to his village, a hundred miles south. For some time to come, states R. S. Milne, "it is almost inconceivable that the Prime Minister (of Malaysia) could be other than a Malay".⁵³ In Ceylon, for some time to come, it is inconceivable that the Prime Minister could be other than a Sinhalese and a *goyigama*, apart from being other than a Buddhist. Ascription therefore plays an important part in recruitment to political roles in Ceylon; at the same time, however, caste has enabled especially the traditionally underprivileged elements in the electorate to participate meaningfully in the democratic process. In the Rudolphs' sense of the term, tradition has been modernised.

Marshall Singer's account of the changing political elite in Ceylon is supported, *inter alia*, by evidence of an increasing representation in Parliament since independence of the *Salagama* (cinnamon peelers) caste. He does not wholly accept "the popular contention" that "the SLFP is the party of the lower castes and the UNP is the party of the *Goyigama*". For Singer, the Fourth Parliament "would seem to indicate a general loosening of *Goyigama* control in favour of the lower castes" though "in terms of positions of rank the *Salagama* seem to fare best when the SLFP is in power".⁵⁴ This was written before Mr. C. P. de Silva, a *Salagama* and a prominent member of the two Bandaranaike administrations, crossed the floor to join the UNP. Rather than the simple dichotomy postulated by Singer, it would appear that the political allegiance of caste leaders has an important bearing on the political outlook of castes, and when the allegiance changes, the outlook is also likely to change.

Since the *Goyigama* constitute approximately 50% of the population, and since they are predominantly settled in rural areas, it seems reasonable to infer that both the UNP and the SLFP, neither of which can win an election without a solid base of rural support, have a large following among the *Goyigama* community. Christian voters, among whom *Karawas* (fishers) predominate, have habitually voted UNP. The *Karawa* establishment, in which is found the wealthiest men in the country, is decidedly pro-UNP. However, if our prognosis of Catholic politics is right, there is likely to be a change of the *Karawa* attitude in the future.

53 R. S. Milne, "Political Modernisation in Malaysia", *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, 7: 14, March 1969.

54 Marshall Singer, *The Emerging Elite: A Study of Political Leadership in Ceylon*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1964), p. 65.

Support from other minority castes such as the *Salagama* and *Durawa* (toddy tappers) has alternated between the SLFP and the Marxist Left. These castes are particularly strong along the coastal belt extending south from Colombo to Devinuwara; and the fact that this area has generally since independence returned anti-UNP and especially leftist candidates to Parliament has led writers to believe that the minority castes in this area have voted left.⁵⁵ Indeed, much of the earlier political activity of the Marxist LSSP was concerned with the upliftment of under-privileged castes, and this party, as well as other leftist parties have been the chief beneficiaries of caste protest votes. After its advent to power in 1956, the SLFP, too, gave greater prominence to representatives of minority castes than had been the case before. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, for instance, selected a Sinhalese member of a minority caste as one of the six appointed members in the 1956 Parliament, though the earlier practice had been to appoint only members of ethnic minority communities. Yet it is clear that the support derived from the western coastal belt by the SLFP and the left-wing parties is not due entirely to caste protest. This area is also the most highly urbanised, the most literate, and the most westernised of regions in Ceylon. The trade union movement, too, derives its chief support from this region. Secularisation of behaviour patterns as well as caste protest contribute to the strength of the Left in this area. The *Salagama* attitude would appear to have changed with the change in political allegiance of C. P. de Silva. Thus, while caste solidarity had often a determining role in elections, cultural homogeneity within castes, had not proceeded so far as to engender a uniform political outlook for each caste.

CONCLUSION

If the hold of ethnic, religious, and caste communities on political norms and behaviour remains significant in Ceylon, this is so partly because communal politics found sanction in constitutional provisions designed to ensure the political participation of minority groups and a communal balance of forces in the country. We have argued that the first of these conditions—participation—has become an attribute of the political system, but that the second—communal balance—has given way to the notion of a dominant Buddhist ethos, which is finding increasing acceptance among individuals, groups and structures.

In so far as it engendered parochialism, commitment to local ties and group loyalties, communalism conflicted with modernisation. But communal politics also increased political consciousness and allowed minority, especially under-privileged groups, to participate meaningfully in the democratic process. Moreover, achievement considerations did play a part within the boundaries of communal ascription, as evidenced by Tamil contesting Tamil, or two members of the same caste contesting each other at elections, or the major Sinhalese parties doing the same. Whatever view of modernisation one might take, it is clear that the two levels of politics, communal and party, acting and interacting on each other, were both necessary components of the democratic process in Ceylon.

⁵⁵ See, for instance, Wriggins, *op. cit.* p. 136.

Recruitment to political roles is both ascription and achievement oriented. There is no communal bargain entrenched in the constitution, such as the 4-1 proviso in Malaysia. University entrance, as well as entrance to the public service, was competitive for all citizens; but ascriptive considerations did enter the picture in nomination of candidates for parliamentary elections, appointment of ministers, voting behaviour, and so on.

If we take differentiation and specialisation to be an essential attribute of political modernisation, the most important fact, from the perspective of this article, is the manner in which elements of the traditional role structures are operating concurrently with modern institutions. This applies especially to the role of the Buddhist *sangha* and the pervasive influence of Buddhist interest groups in contemporary politics in Ceylon.

There are, however, trends in the direction of secularization. With the gradual achievement of Buddhist demands, the *sangha* themselves are likely to confine themselves more and more to secular political concerns. The Catholic political outlook itself would appear to be undergoing a process of secularization. It seems likely that the rural Buddhist voter is likely in the future to concern himself less with religio-cultural issues than with those of economic development. Most important, the major political parties have seen the need, whether from the exigencies of party politics or from political convictions, to articulate a national rather than a group consensus. Thus, though modern democratic politics works within the framework of communalism in Ceylon, there is no necessary dichotomy between the demands of the two.