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***Buddha-Sāvaka and Christu-Sāvaka
(Buddhist-Christian Discipleship)***

***Towards a Pedagogical
Sri Lankan Hermeneutic***

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This dissertation is submitted
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STATEMENT OF SCOPE

The discussion here, envisages to bring in material together on a discourse on sāvaka in both Buddhism and Christianity. The discourse on sāvaka is not an alien phenomenon to any religious or secular persuasion. This study engages seriously in a particular manner the Buddhist Christian discipleship. It begins its process from a textual and an exegetical basis towards a pedagogy where Buddhists and Christians would be able to view in a dialogical movement for a new beginning of a religious discourse pertinently needed for Sri Lanka.

The thesis further believes, that at this point textual criticism would be detrimental to what they meant for the basis towards a pedagogy where Buddhists and Christians would be able to view in a dialogical movement for a new beginning of a religious discourse pertinently needed for Sri Lanka.

The proposed dissertation will deal with the very etymological significance and the exegetical basis of the words like:

SUTI - to hear

DHAMMA- Buddhist concept of teaching

DABAR- efficacious word

LOGOS - Biblical concept of the word

This study engages in a task of focussing in certain Buddhist scriptures and Biblical texts to propose a workable 'concept of sāvakaship' both comparatively and homoloogusly. But there is a strong constraint is not to be conclusive and judgmental on texts under any circumstance. So it is not attempted here. The thesis further believe that textual criticism would be

detrimental for the present study. A suitable basis is to be investigated here to develop a pedagogy where Buddhist and Christians would be able to view each others' tradition in a dialogical perspective. The author hopes that it will be a 'new beginning of a religious discourse' pertinently required for Sri Lanka's multi-religious, multi-ethnic, cultural situation.

It is necessary to elucidate the historical-political and socio-cultural background in which both the Buddha and Jesus preached their Dhamma. Their unique role as messengers of human history, their untiring preaching and the witness which resulted with the emergence of a Sāvaka Sangha and the Jesus communities as spirit filled men and women of the new insight of the master. The process of the discipleship shall be seen as basing itself on the praxis in both traditions. A disciple of Jesus (according to the Gospel) has to abandon all what he or she possessed and to take his or her cross and follow the master. (Logos-Word) (Luke 14:25 ff) and that there is no greater love for a disciple than to lay down his or her life for his or her friends (John 15: 13 ff). A Buddha sāvaka leads his praxis from Pariyatti (to know the word) Paṭipatti (follow in obedience to it) and Pativedha (which results in the intuitive perception of the Truth).

The message of these two 'gurus of Asia' had tremendous influence on their contemporary history. Their historical lives challenged the Brahmanic dominance and Pharasaic attitudes towards the ordinary masses in India and Palestine. In this discussion they will be regarded as two key figures who not only shaped history but also as who redefined human living and introduced a new dimension to life itself through their selfless and magnanimous simple living (appicchatā). Human history gathered a new impetus. Their Dhamma re-demarcated a new morality and discipline of love and forgiveness, metta,

muditā, karuna upekha. This turning point in history brings importance to the rest of the thesis (the political, social, religious and cultural situation and backgrounds of both Jesus and Buddha) where the sāvaka's praxis anchors all further deliberations in their spiritual journey in both traditions in accordance with inspiration received from their master.

The liberative witness value in the Biblical prophetism (Jeremiah, Amos) as 'Sāvaka paradigm" is of importance in this discussion. Prophets were not only the savakas of the God of Israel but also of the people of God. Their powerful word charged with zeal and commitment was a living symbol of the social conscience of the people. The word proclaimed by them in fact changed the life style of the nation and it's people. A new liberative morality where by people now can see their god as a living redeemer and a liberator who redeems from all structures of sin, leading them to enjoy the freedom of the children of God in truth and justice.

The discourse on Buddha sāvaka intends to be dealt with its scriptural foundation as;

- i) free hearer (freedom charter of the Kālāma Sutta)
(vijjā-carana sampanno D.II 146) not only possessed knowledge but lived.
- ii) announcer (caratha bhikkheve cārikam bahujana hitāya bahujana sukhāya) Sabbadānam Dhammadānam Jināti.
- iii) retainer of the Damma. (as enunciated in the Caṅki Sutta)
various steps of learning the Damma as listening, retention, examination, reflection and comprehension.

The hearer-announcer-retainer process yet again is for a specific mode of life, as in the Alagaddūpama Sutta is only a raft to cross over. The liberative and the witness value is, however learned one may be in the Damma; that all learning be of no avail if one does not live according to it, if the Damma is not translated into life.

Following are a few 'envisaged objectives' of the dissertation

a) A new contextual hermeneutic on the discourse on sāvaka; This elucidates a redefinition and a new meaning that may be associated on the 'role of the sāvaka.' What would be his or her role among thousands of struggling masses with appalling and burning questions of their daily living. Is sāvaka unto Dhamma is sāvaka unto people? Is the new 'sāvakaship" (Sāvakatta), the Dhamma - sāvaka oriented towards a Jana-sāvaka?

b) To initiate a fresh dialogue among Buddhists and Christians where each can view the other from an emically posited perspective. To shed the exclusive claims of superiority and to accept the realms and parameters of human outreaches to fathom and to accept each other's uniqueness. Also to exert united effort to renounce all attempts and tendencies towards religious syncretism. To embark powerfully upon all degrading situations within the context of Sri Lanka to uphold Peace, Justice Human dignity and Human rights.

c) Towards a new pedagogy to a Nation and it's citizens who have suffered two decades of violence and strife. The need to train young men and women for active non-violence basing it on the 'Buddhist-Christian Dhamma'. The need to train zealous sāvakas who would carry out the great task of peoples

conscientization programmes at the village level. (this section will be enflashed with the experiments done at a mixed village of Buddhist and Christians-Makewita Ja-ela in the district of Gampaha, the student had been the pastor in this village 1987 Oct - 89 Oct).

The Methodology

The method followed here would be partially exegetical and where necessary socio historical approach is applied. A hermeneutical method will also be sought after in some areas especially in the sections a,b,c. (See the 'ensaged objectives' of the statement of scope) This paper in it's entirety would be dealt with the 'phenomenological - experimental liberation approach' (author's own experimental approach) and invariably pivots on a comparative method.

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