



BUDDHIST-MUSLIM CO-EXISTENCE IN SRI
LANKA: A STUDY OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS
OF THE VEN. WALPOLA RAHULA THERA
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MUSLIMS'
PERCEPTIONS

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses and analyses Muslim-Buddhist co-existence in Sri Lanka in the contributions of Walpola Rahula. The problematic areas in Muslim-Buddhist co-existence are identified in the context of majority and a minority situation with special reference to Sri Lanka. This study consists of six chapters. The introduction provides background of the problem and the methods of study while describing the history of co-existence between the Muslims and the Buddhists in Sri Lanka briefly. The intellectual milieu of Rahula that contributed to his involvement in religious revivalism and peaceful co-existence is discussed in next chapter. The involvement of Rahula in Buddhist revivalism as a Buddhist revivalist and as a Buddhist philosopher is presented in the fourth chapter. In this regard, his efforts to mainstream the bhikkhus into social leadership and reconstruction of Buddhist thought are highlighted. The following chapter analyses his role in promoting inter-communal co-existence at the individual and social levels while evaluating the impact of his contributions from the assessments of his supporters and opponents. In the conclusion, the British colonial policies and anti-colonial ideologies are analysed in the challenges of co-existence while religiosity of the people is also highlighted. The study found genuine efforts of Rahula to promote peaceful co-existence among the communities, especially between the Sinhalese and the Muslims.

خلاصة البحث

إن هذه الدراسة تقوم بدراسة التعايش وتحقيق الوحدة والانسجام بين المسلمين والبوذيين، وتحليلهما تحليلًا علميًا دقيقًا عبر خطابات العالم المفكر البوذي والبولا راهولا ومساهماته في هذا الجانب. ويتم في هذه الدراسة تحديد المناطق ذات الإشكالية في التعايش بين المسلمين والبوذيين في سريلانكا خاصة، وتحديد المشكلات الناتجة عن مفهوم الأغلبية والأقلية. وتتضمن هذه الدراسة ستة فصول، تعرض في المقدمة معلومات أساسية للقضية المطروحة ومنهجية الدراسة، وكما تقدم وصفاً تاريخياً للتعايش بين المسلمين والبوذيين في سريلانكا. ويدرس البحث أيضاً الخلفية الثقافية للمفكر البوذي راهولا الذي أسهم في تقديم رؤية جديدة للديانة البوذية والتعايش السلمي بين كلا الطائفتين بعده مجدداً في الديانة البوذية وفيلسوفاً معروفاً. وفي هذا الصدد، تم تسليط الضوء على جهوده لتوجيه رهبان البوذية إلى القيادة الاجتماعية وإعادة بنائه للأفكار البوذية. ويتم الأخذ في الاعتبار أيضاً دوره في الترويج للتعايش السلمي بين الطوائف على المستويات الفردية والاجتماعية، فضلاً عن تقييم إسهاماته عبر التقييمات الصادرة من مؤيديه ومعارضيه. وتقوم هذه الدراسة بتحليل السياسات الاستعمارية البريطانية والإيديولوجيات المناهضة للاستعمار في ظل مواجهة تحديات التعايش في الوقت الذي يتم فيه أيضاً دراسة الحالة الدينية للشعب. وتظهر الدراسة جهوداً حقيقية من جانب راهولا في العمل على إقرار مبدأ التعايش السلمي وإشاعته بين الطوائف، ولأسيما بين السنهاليين والمسلمين في سريلانكا.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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Date

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SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MUSLIMS' PERCEPTIONS**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Abstract in Arabic	iii
Approval Page.....	iv
Declaration Page	v
Copyright Page.....	vii
Acknowledgements.....	vi

CHAPTER 01: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background of Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	4
1.3 Justification of the Problem	5
1.4 Objectives of the Study	5
1.5 Research Questions	6
1.6 Methodology	6
1.7 Literature Review.....	7

CHAPTER 02: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF BUDDHIST-MUSLIM ... CO-EXISTENCE IN SRI LANAKA	19
2.1 Background of Muslims in Sri Lanka	20
2.2 The Origin of Muslims of Sri Lanka.....	22
2.3 Muslim-Buddhist Co-existence in Pre-colonial Period	24
2.4 Muslim-Buddhist Co-existence in the Portuguese and Dutch Period	26
2.5 Muslim-Buddhist Co-existence under the British Rule	36
2.6 Buddhist Revivalism and Sinhalese Nationalism	38
2.7 Muslim-Buddhist Co-existence after Independence	44

CHAPTER 03: INTELLCTUAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF VEN. WALPOLA RAHULA.....	55
3.1 Spiritual and Religious Background	57
3.2 Academic Background	63
3.3 The Decline Status of Buddhism	64
3.4 Lack of Awareness among the Bhikkhus.....	67
3.5 Political and Cultural Imperialism	68
3.6 Movements for Independence and Revivalism.....	70

CHAPTER 04: THE CONTRIBUTION OF WALPOLA RAHULA TO BUDDHIST REVIVALISM	80
4.1 Rahula as Buddhist Revivalist	83
4.1.1 Rahula's View on Politics.....	86
4.1.2 Qualifications of Bhikkhus to Play Socio- Political Role.....	96
4.1.3 Criticism on Rahula's View of Politics.....	99
4.2 Rahula as Buddhist Philosopher.....	102
4.2.1 The Doctrine of Buddhahood.....	104
4.2.2 The Doctrine of <i>Anatta</i>	107
4.2.3 The Doctrine of <i>Bhavana</i> (Meditation).....	115
4.2.4 The Concept of <i>Dukkha</i>	123
4.2.5 The <i>Samudaya</i>	126
4.2.6 The <i>Niroda (Nibbana)</i>	128
4.2.7 The Concept of Megga.....	132
4.3 View on the Contribution of Rahula to Buddhist Revivalism	135
CHAPTER 05: THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF WALPOLA RAHULA TO PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE.....	146
5.1 Theoretical Aspect of Peaceful Co-existence	151
5.1.1 The Causes of Violence and Hatred in Buddhism	153
5.1.2 Peaceful Co-existence at the Individual Level.....	156
5.1.2.1 The Ethics and Morality (<i>Sila</i>)	159
5.1.2.2 The Mental Discipline (<i>SamÉdhi</i>).....	162
5.1.2.3 The Wisdom (<i>PannÉ</i>)	164
5.2.2 Peaceful Co-existence at the Social Level	167
5.3 Practical Aspect of Peaceful Co-existence.....	175
5.3.1 Free Education Programme.....	175
5.3.2 Consultation with the Authority.....	183
5.3.3 Interfaith Dialogue	184
5.4 Peaceful Co-existence and the Muslims of Sri Lanka	187
5.5 Muslim Perception on Rahula.....	189
CONCLUSION	199
BIBLIOGRAPHY	205
APPENDIX A	215
APPENDIX B	286

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Sri Lanka is an island in the Indian Ocean, at the base of the Indian sub-continent, 880 kilometres north of the Equator. The total land area of Sri Lanka, excluding inland water, is 62,705 square kilometres.¹ The GDP per capita of Sri Lanka is presently USD 2,053 and the literacy rate is 91.3%.² Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country with a total population of 20 million.³ Buddhism is the religion of the majority in the country and widely regarded as the home for Theravāda Buddhism.⁴

The amiable spirit of co-existence between the Muslims and the Buddhists of Sri Lanka changed with the coming of Western colonization, especially the British. They introduced their policy of divide and rule, and communal politics. In addition, they portrayed, particularly through their writings, Muslim aggression towards the Buddhists, such as the plundering of their temples and the killing of their monks. As a result, paranoia and mistrust developed in the relationship between the Muslims and the Buddhists. This situation became worse with the destruction of the Bamiyan statues of Afghanistan by the Taliban government in 2001.

Nevertheless, some Buddhist and Muslim leaders have attempted to improve understanding and cooperation between their communities in the country. Among

¹ Central Bank of Sri Lanka, *Sri Lanka Socio-Economic Data 2010*, Vol. xxxiii, June, 2010, 4.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ According to Gunapala Dharmasiri, Mahāyāna School of Buddhism was the dominant ethos of Sri Lanka from 5th to the 11th centuries. Gunapala Dharmasiri, "A Buddhist Critique of Theravāda" in *Pāli Buddhism*, edited by Frank J. Hoffman and Deegalla Mahinda, (Survey: Curzon Press, 1996), 141-155.

such scholars was the Ven. Walpola Rahula Thera, who was widely regarded as one of the most learned and enlightened scholars of the Buddhist tradition and was one of the most influential Buddhist monks and ascetic philosophers of the last millennium. In his effort to promote co-existence in Sri Lanka, Rahula attempted to reinterpret some of the major concepts of Buddhist philosophy such as suffering (*dukkha*),⁵ and Buddhist doctrines such as non-violence (*ahimsā*), ethics and morality (*sīla*), mental discipline (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*).⁶ For instance, he reinterpreted the First Principle of Buddhist philosophy “suffering” (*dukkha*) which, in the orthodox context, states that life is suffering to mean that it is imperfect wisdom. Rahula saw this imperfect wisdom as a form of exclusivism, rejecting the spirit of co-existence. This, he said, was imbedded in the concept of *tanhā* which means a desire or a thirst. This *tanhā* is instrumental in the shading of human feelings, and among such feelings are distrust, hostility and hatred.⁷

Rahula described getting angry and quarrelsome as the evil which spoils religious quest and kills the happiness of life. He said:

One of the principle evils in life, according to Buddhism, is ‘repugnance’ or hatred. Repugnance (*pratigha*) is explained as ‘ill-will with regard to living beings, with regard to suffering and with regard to things pertaining to suffering.’⁸

According to Rahula, abhorrence and hatred is principle evil and it kills happiness in the life. It is the ill-will which produces suffering and pain. Therefore, Rahula concluded, a Buddhist cannot make his or her way to *Nibbāna* without freeing from ill-will, hostility and hatred with regard to fellow men.

⁵ Ibid, 18.

⁶ Walpola Rahula, *Zen & The Taming of The Bull: Towards the definition of the Buddhist Thought*, (Colombo: Godage International Publishers, 2003), 45.

⁷ See: Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, (Kuala Lumpur: the Buddhist Missionary Society, 1978), 23 – 28.

⁸ Ibid, 28.

Moreover, according to Rahula, inadequate interpretations of the Buddhist tenets of the three Jewels (*Tri-ratna*: the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha) also misled the Buddhists in their relationship with non-Buddhists. For instance, the *Dhamma*, the second jewel of *Tri-ratna* for Rahula is not simply something which guides a person to his own happiness and salvation, nor is it an objective of worship,⁹ but it is love, compassion, and service to others. Therefore, a Buddhist who seriously practices *Dhamma* should not think only of his own happiness and salvation, but that he has to care for his fellow beings regardless of the person's religion.¹⁰ Thus, in his view, religious tolerance is an important character of a true Buddhist who practices *Dhamma*.

Because of Rahula's concern for peace and tolerance, he highlighted the philosophy of non-violence (*ahimsā*) as a practical solution to minimize hostility on the minority groups in Sri Lanka.¹¹ He drew the government's attention to preserving the rights of minorities and maintaining peace and harmony as religious duty by quoting from *Jātaka* Text of *Kuddaka Nikāya*. This text prescribes non-violence (*avihimsā*) as one of the important duties of a pious king who practices *Dhamma* in his life.¹²

Furthermore, Rahula played an important role in attempting to restore peace and religious harmony among the people of Sri Lanka after the catastrophe of July 1983.¹³ He vigorously condemned that incident and he published a pamphlet

⁹ See: Ibid, 32-34.

¹⁰ See: Ibid, 76-85.

¹¹ Ibid, 84.

¹² Ibid, 85.

¹³ Black July, as these events have come to be immortalized. Tension had long existed between the Sinhalese majority and Tamil minority in Sri Lanka. But they began to veer into violence in 1972 when the Sinhalese government declared that the national language would be Sinhalese and the national religion Buddhism. These decrees effectively marginalized the minority in every way, as they were systematically denied access to universities, places in the government, and were widely discriminated against. Hostilities came to a climax on July 23, 1983, when riot broke out and many Tamils were

appealing to the government and the Tamil rebels to stop fighting and to solve their disputes through dialogue.¹⁴

Rahula, immediately after that incident, founded a committee consisting of the representatives of each religion to avoid further such incidents and to promote peace and harmony among the people of different faiths and this was the first ever in Sri Lanka.¹⁵ He conducted various activities with the help of this committee including educating the people on the importance of unity and peace through publication, preaching, dialogue and the media. Many interactive programmes were also organized by this committee.¹⁶

However, this great scholar's contributions to national peace and unity, religious harmony and peaceful co-existence have been marginalized in contemporary Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study is undertaken as an attempt to explore the works of Walpola Rahula in the context of Buddhist- Muslim co-existence in Sri Lanka. This is because peaceful co-existence among the various communities of Sri Lanka in general, and between the Buddhists and Muslims in particular, is urgently needed. Hopefully, this work will throw some light towards the harnessing of amiable co-existence in Sri Lanka.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The communal riots which took place in various parts of Sri Lanka since the beginning of the 20th century show the increasing hostilities and distrust between the

killed. According to government 350 Tamils were killed. However, according to Tamils' estimation 2,000 Tamils were murdered. And tens of thousands of Tamils' homes and businesses were destroyed. See: Stanly Jayaraja Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed? Religion, Politics, and Violence in Sri Lanka* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 70-72.

¹⁴ Walpola Rahula, *Fight is Against Terrorism and not Against the Tamil People* (Sri Lanka: Department of Information, government press), 4.

¹⁵ Ruhul Haq, D.U:6.

¹⁶ Ibid.

communities in general and between Muslims and Buddhists in particular. The thousand year old cordial relationship and peaceful co-existence between Muslims and Buddhists in Sri Lanka was challenged by the arrival of Western colonization and Buddhist revivalism. The British political policies were the root cause of anti-Muslim sentiment among the Sinhalese. However, after Independence, it continued through the writings and speeches of Sinhalese Buddhist revivalists. They used orientalist's writings on Muslim aggression towards Buddhists. Therefore, Muslims believed Buddhist revivalism in contemporary Sri Lanka is a threat to peaceful co-existence. However, the discourses and the contributions of Rahula, a prominent revivalist, actually showed the efforts to develop mutual understanding and cooperation between these two communities. This work, therefore, attempts to study Walpola Rahula's discourses on inter-communal co-existence in the context of Buddhist-Muslim co-existence in Sri Lanka.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

The interest in this study is to expose the state of Muslim-Buddhist co-existence in Sri Lanka by identifying the problematic areas. In the course of this study, the contributions of the scholar and activist, Walpola Rahula will be explored and highlighted. Hopefully, these ideas can help other scholars and activists in their pursuit for peaceful pluralistic living in Sri Lanka.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study has the following objectives:

1. To study the Muslim-Buddhist co-existence in Sri Lanka,
2. To understand academic and spiritual background of Ven. Walpola Rahula

3. To explore the contributions of Ven. Walpola Rahula towards Buddhist revivalism,
4. To analyze Rahula's contributions to communal harmony in Sri Lanka,
5. To examine Rahula's revivalist thought that contributed to peaceful co-existence between Muslims and Buddhists in Sri Lanka.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How was the Muslim-Buddhist relationship before the Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism in Sri Lanka?
2. Who was Walpola Rahula?
3. What were the contributions of Walpola Rahula to Buddhist revivalism?
4. What were the contributions of Walpola Rahula to pluralistic co-existence?
5. How did Walpola Rahula's revivalist thought impact Muslim-Buddhist co-existence?

METHODOLOGY

This research is based on textual study which involves a critical analysis of the Buddhist perspective on peaceful co-existence. This includes exploring Rahulas' attempt to revise Buddhist concepts and historical description of peaceful co-existence. The intellectual milieu of Rahula will be studied too to understand the factors that contributed to his involvement in religious nationalism and in peaceful co-existence. The contributions of Rahula to Buddhist revivalism and religious nationalism will be critically analyzed to bring out his role in peaceful co-existence.

The study used interviews to evaluate the impact of Rahula's contributions to Buddhist revivalism and peaceful co-existence on Muslim-Buddhist relation in Sri Lanka. Thirteen Sri Lankan people were involved in the study. They included two professors, one associate professor, one educationist, five social activists representing different schools of thoughts, one journalist, two politicians and one family member of Walpola Rahula. They were selected based on academic qualification, involvement in social activities, and participation in religious revivalism. In order to be comprehensive, one family member of Rahula, his colleagues in interfaith dialogue and one of his students also were included.

Interviews were used to foster interactivity with participants, elicits in-depth, context-rich personal accounts, perceptions, and perspectives. Interviews are recorded in their natural setting to document. The interview questions were informal which allowed the informants to produce elaborated and detailed answers. Most of the interviews were conducted in the informants' offices or their residences.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

Gunadasa Liyanage wrote the biography of Walpola Rahula (1907–1997) in his book *On The Path: Biography of the Venerable Aggamahapandita Professor Dr. Walpola Sri Rahula, Chancellor of Kelaniya University, Supreme Master of Buddhist Scriptures*.¹⁷ Liyanage elaborated Rahula's academic and religious backgrounds and the factors that influenced his character. According to him, the writings of Buddhist revivalists, communism and Indian nationalism were the main influencing factors on Rahula. Liyanage's *On The Path* covers a wide range of Rahula's life and

¹⁷ Gundasa Liyanage, *On the Path: Biography of the Venerable Aggamahapandita Professor Dr. Walpola Sri Rahula, Chancellor of Kelaniya University, Supreme Master of Buddhist Scriptures* (Colombo: Buddhist Cultural Centre, 1995).

contributions. However, Liyanage did not give much detail on Rahula's contributions to peaceful co-existence. In fact, Rahula assisted the author in this preparation of his biography.

Walpola Rahula's academic contribution is explicated in *Buddhist Studies in Honour of Walpola Rahula*¹⁸ edited by Somaratna Bālasūriya. In this book, local and international Buddhist scholars evaluated the contributions of Rahula to Buddhist revivalism from different dimensions. They portrayed his significant role in articulating the Buddhist mind. However, the articles in this book hardly mentioned Rahula's contributions to peaceful co-existence in a paragraph.

The historical background of Theravāda Buddhism and its influence on Sri Lankan society is very important in understanding the contributions of Rahula. This is because, his efforts in reconstructing Buddhist thoughts and redefining the role of bhikkhus by referring to history and the scripture. In this regard, Donald K. Swearer's article on *Buddhism in Southeast Asia* in *Encyclopaedia of Religion* is useful. It provides the development of Buddhist movements since its early phase to the European invasion of Southeast Asia including Sri Lanka. The historical account on the classical period in this article is comprehensive.

P.V. Bapat traced the early development of Buddhism in his articles 'India and Buddhism and Asoka' in a compiled book *2500 Years of Buddhism*.¹⁹ He gave detailed account of the contributions of Asoka in the expansion of Buddhism outside of India and the formation of sects. He provided a short account on understanding Buddha in the various Buddhist schools. This article provides information on Asoka's mission to Sri Lanka and the background of Sri Lankan society and culture.

¹⁸ Somaratna Bālasūriya, (Ed.), *Buddhist Studies in Honour of Walpola Rahula*, (Sri Lanka: Vimamsa, 1980).

¹⁹ P. V. Bapat (Ed.), *2500 years of Buddhism* (India: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1976).

Robin A. E. Coningham studied the early history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka in his research article *Monks, Caves and Kings: A Reassessment of the Nature of Early Buddhism in Sri Lanka*.²⁰ He used archaeological evidences to conclude that Buddhism existed in Sri Lanka before Asoka's mission. This is in contrast with the stories in *Dipavamsa* and the *Mahāvamsa*, two Sri Lankan chronicles. The majority of historians, who discussed the history of Buddhism including Walpola Rahula, believed that Buddhism was adopted by Devanampiya Tissa in the 2nd century B.C.E. Coningham raised a question as to why Sri Lankan Chronicles connected Buddhism with King Devanampiya Tissa. He said that it was caused by the legitimization of kingship. This article can help to understand the historical exposition of Rahula and how it has been politicized in contemporary Sri Lanka.

As mentioned earlier, Rahula's contributions to Buddhist revivalism consists of his effort to reconstruct the Buddhist philosophy and doctrines and to redefine the role of bhikkhus in modern time. James P. McDermott's article on *Nibbāna as a Reward for Kamma*²¹ which traced the goal of *Nibbāna* in Theravāda tradition will help to understand Rahula's efforts to reconstruct the Buddhist philosophy. McDermott analyzed two contradictory concepts of *Nibbāna*. For instance, he discussed the question whether *Nibbāna* is obtainable from meritorious actions or only from meditation. According to him, *Nibbāna* is obtainable not only through meditation but also merit-making actions.

The doctrine of *Bhāvana* is another misunderstood notion in modern time. Iiana Friedrich Silber discussed this problem and its' status in Theravada Buddhists in his article *Dissent through Holiness: The Case of the Radical Renouncer in Theravada*

²⁰ Robin A. E. Coningham, "Monks, Caves and Kings: A Reassessment of the Nature of Early Buddhism in Sri Lanka", *World Archaeology*, Vol. 27, No. 2, (Oct., 1995), 222-242.

²¹ James P. McDermott, "*Nibbāna* as a Reward for Kamma", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 93, No. 3, (1973, July-September), 344-347.

Buddhist Countries.²² According to Silber, hermitage life in Theravāda Buddhist countries is regarded as the only way to practice of *bhāvana* and though it only followed by small groups of bhikkhus. Silber exposed the differences between *Aryanwāsi* and *Gramavāsi* in Theravāda countries in order to explain the status of *Aryanwāsi* to *Gramavāsi*. This article also traces the religious position of *Anagarika* - a position between *Aryanwāsi* and *Gramavāsi*.

Martin G. Wiltshire's article on *Ascetic Figures before and in Early Buddhism: the Emergence of Gotama as the Buddha*²³ further explored the discussion by Silber on hermitage life by referring to the biography of the Buddha. He traced the anthropological and historical evidences to understand the origin of meditation. Thus, analysis of Iiana Friedrich Silber and Martin G. Wiltshire on *bhāvana* highlighted the contributions of Rahula to reconstruct the doctrine of *bhāvana*.

Gunapala Dharmasiri criticized the traditional understanding of the doctrines of Buddhahood in his article *A Buddhist Critique of Theravāda in Pāli Buddhism*.²⁴ He discussed how the concepts of *Nibbāna* and *pari Nibbāna* were misunderstood in Traditional village Buddhism and how the Sangha had dominated the Buddha's teachings in the context of religious authority. He finally suggested a re-reading of classical Buddhist literature in modern philosophical light to reconstruct the concept of *Nibbāna*. Dharmasiri's discussion is useful to understand the contributions of Rahula to reconstruct the doctrine of the buddhahood.

Mainstreaming the bhikkhus in social affairs and politics is another important contribution of Rahula to Buddhist revivalism. Steven Kemper's article shows up

²² Iiana Friedrich, "Dissent through Holiness: The Case of the Radical Renouncer in Theravada Buddhist Countries", *Numen* 28, No. 2 (1981), 164-93.

²³ Martin G. Wiltshire, *Ascetic Figures Before and in Early Buddhism: The Emergence of Gotama as the Buddha*, (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1990).

²⁴ Gunapala Dharmasiri, "A Buddhist Critique of Theravāda in Pāli Buddhism" in Frank J Hoffman & Mahinda Deegalla (Eds.), *Theravāda Buddhism* (Survey: Curzon Press, 1996), 141-153.

Rahula's motivation to redefine the role of bhikkhus in the country. He studied the beginning of Buddhist reaction to colonialism and he discussed the bhikkhus' involvements in anti-colonial movement in his article *The Buddhist Monkhood, the Law, and the State in Colonial Sri Lanka*.²⁵ He discussed how colonial policies led the Buddhists to misunderstand non-Buddhists in Sri Lanka and how bhikkhus contributed to the evolution of anti-non-Buddhist sentiment. He focused on colonial law and customs to analyze the influences of colonial policies on the Buddhists.

Epics of Dutthagamunu in *Mahāvamsa* is the central issue in the discussion of Rahula on the role of bhikkhus in Sri Lankan politics. Dhammavihari took this issue seriously in his article *Recording, Translating and Interpreting Sri Lankan Chronicle Data*²⁶ and tried to defend the warrior attitude of King Dutthagamini by establishing the horrific historical background of the time. However, according to him, wrong translation of Pāli verses in *Mahāvamsa* and romantic description of incidents misled the reader to find paradoxes between Buddhist theory of non-violence and using Buddhist religious sentiment for war. He said that the wrong translation of the word “*kunte*” in the verse *kunte dhatum nidhapetva* of *Mahāvamsa* has misled historians to perceive Buddhism as irrelevant to the contemporary world as it supports terrorism. Thus, according to Dhammavihari, it was translated by Hikkhaduwe Sri Sumangala Nayaka Thera (1887) as the weapon *kunta* (bearing a relic of Buddha on his spear) that enabled later writers on Sri Lankan history to give the national and religious consciousness. He said Walpola Rahula in his *History of Buddhism in Ceylon* (1956)²⁷ repeated the same mistake. According to him, the meaning of *kunta* is a ‘sceptre’. He

²⁵ Steven Kemper, “The Buddhist Monkhood, the Law, and the State in Colonial Sri Lanka”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Jul., 1984), 401-427.

²⁶ Bhikkhu Dhammavihari, “Recording, Translating and Interpreting Sri Lankan Chronicle Data”, *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, Vol. 10, (2003), 94-116.

²⁷ Walpola Rahula, *The History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, (Sri Lanka: The Buddhist Cultural Centre, 1956).

argued that these references to the relic of Buddha on his spear as well as remorse for all the people he had killed had to be discarded in the face of historical realities. This article helps to evaluate Rahula's historical interpretation of bhikkhus role.

R. A. L. H. Gunawardana studied the historical analysis of Rahula in his book *Robe and Plough: Monasticism and Economic Interest in Early Medieval Sri Lanka*.²⁸ According to Gunawardana, Rahula exaggerated the role of the Sangha in ancient Buddhist society in his PhD thesis. Gunawardana pointed out shortcomings in Rahula's perception of the society and the role of bhikkhus. According to him, Rahula had overstated the role of the Sanhga in ancient Sinhalese society. This book will help to understand Rahula's motivation in writing about the role of the bhikkhus and the new way of interpretation.

Richard Gombrich briefly discussed Rahula's contribution to Buddhist revivalism, especially to redefine the role of bhikkhus in contemporary Buddhist society in his book *Theravada Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo*²⁹. According to him, Rahula's contributed to bring the bhikkhus into politics and social service. However, Gombrich did not indicate the consequences of Rahula's role as well as he did not speak about his contributions to peaceful co-existence.

Rahula's contributions to Buddhist revivalism brought changes in traditional Buddhist society. It raised, especially, an important question 'What does it mean to be a Buddhist?'. The local and foreign scholars discussed this issue since Heinz Bechert published a book *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft in den Ländern des Theravada*

²⁸ Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough: Monasticism and Economic Interest in Early Medieval Sri Lanka* (Arizona: The University of Arizona Press, 1979).

²⁹ Richard Gombrich, *Theravada Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo* (Oxford university, 1985).

*Buddhismus (Buddhism, State and Society in the Countries of Theravada Buddhism)*³⁰ in 1968. In 1970, Gombrich and Obysekara studied this issue in their book *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka*³¹ and found different answers to this question based on different religious sects. Gananath Obysekare and Richard Gombrich classified the contemporary Buddhist phenomena in Sri Lanka into three: Traditional village Buddhism, Protestant Buddhism and contemporary urban Buddhism. However, they hardly found differences between Protestant Buddhism and contemporary urban Buddhism. The distinction between the laity and the Sangha was the central feature in the traditional village Buddhism.

The recent research by Bond in *The Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka: Religious Tradition, Reinterpretation and Response*³² expanded Gananath Obysekare and Richard Gombrich's finding and classified Buddhist phenomena into four, namely: Protestant Buddhism, Neo-traditionalism, Insight Meditation movement and The Social ethical interpretation of Buddhism. Among these movements, Protestant Buddhism which led the Buddhist to have radical attitude with non-Buddhist is influential in Sri Lanka.

Martin Southwold examined such influence of 'Protestant Buddhism' in contemporary Sri Lanka, especially in rural areas. He took samples from villages and towns and analyzed them in his article *True Buddhism and Village Buddhism in Sri Lanka*.³³ Martin, in order to analyse the influences of Protestant Buddhism in rural society, he defined Buddhism in villages as "true Buddhism" while Protestant

³⁰ Heinz Bechert, *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft in den Ländern des Theravada Buddhismus - Buddhism, State and Society in the Countries of Theravada Buddhism* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1968).

³¹ Richard Gombrich & Gananath Obesekara, *Buddhism Transformed Religious Change in Sri Lanka*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publication Pvt., Ltd, 1990).

³² George Bond, *The Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka: Religious Tradition, Reinterpretation and Response* (Carolina: University of South Carolina, 1998).

³³ Martin Southwold, "True Buddhism and Village Buddhism in Sri Lanka" in J. Davis (Ed.), *Religious Organization and Religious Experience* (London: Academic Press, 1982).

Buddhism which is popularized in urban areas as “modern Buddhism”. He found the positive tendency among the rural people towards ‘Protestant Buddhism’. Thus, these articles help to evaluate Rahula’s influences on contemporary Buddhist society and the significance of his role in reconstructing the Buddhist thoughts.

Christopher Queen and Sallie B. King tried to show the legal status of socio-political affairs of the bhikkhus and their contribution to engaged Buddhism. They described such engagement as ‘energetic engagement’ in their work *Engage Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movement in Asia*.³⁴ They discussed the question whether the social role of the bhikkhus in contemporary world is historically new. This book exposed the influence of Rahula on contemporary bhikkhus and how they had taken social and political leadership in Sri Lanka.

Asanga Thillekaratne highlighted the negative aspect of Rahula’s efforts to redefine the role of bhikkhus in contemporary Sri Lanka in his article “*Fifty Years of Buddhism in Sri Lanka: 1948-1998*”³⁵ explained how the politics of the Sangha brought tension in Buddhist and non-Buddhist relationship in Sri Lanka. He pointed out how Buddhist revivalists, especially Rahula contributed to create tension between Buddhists and non-Buddhists.

Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah earlier raised this issue in his book *Buddhism Betrayed?: Religion, Politics and Violence in Sri Lanka*.³⁶ Tambiah investigated how the Buddhist monks who were ideally dedicated to non-violence got involved in violent politics. In Tambiah’s view, it was the consequence of Rahula’s book *The*

³⁴ Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King, (Eds.), *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

³⁵ Asanga Thillekaratne ‘Fifty Years of Buddhism in Sri Lanka: 1948-1998’ in *Dialogue*, No. xxv, Vol. xxvi, 1998-1999.

³⁶ Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *Buddhism betrayed?: Religion, politics and violence in Sri Lanka*. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992).