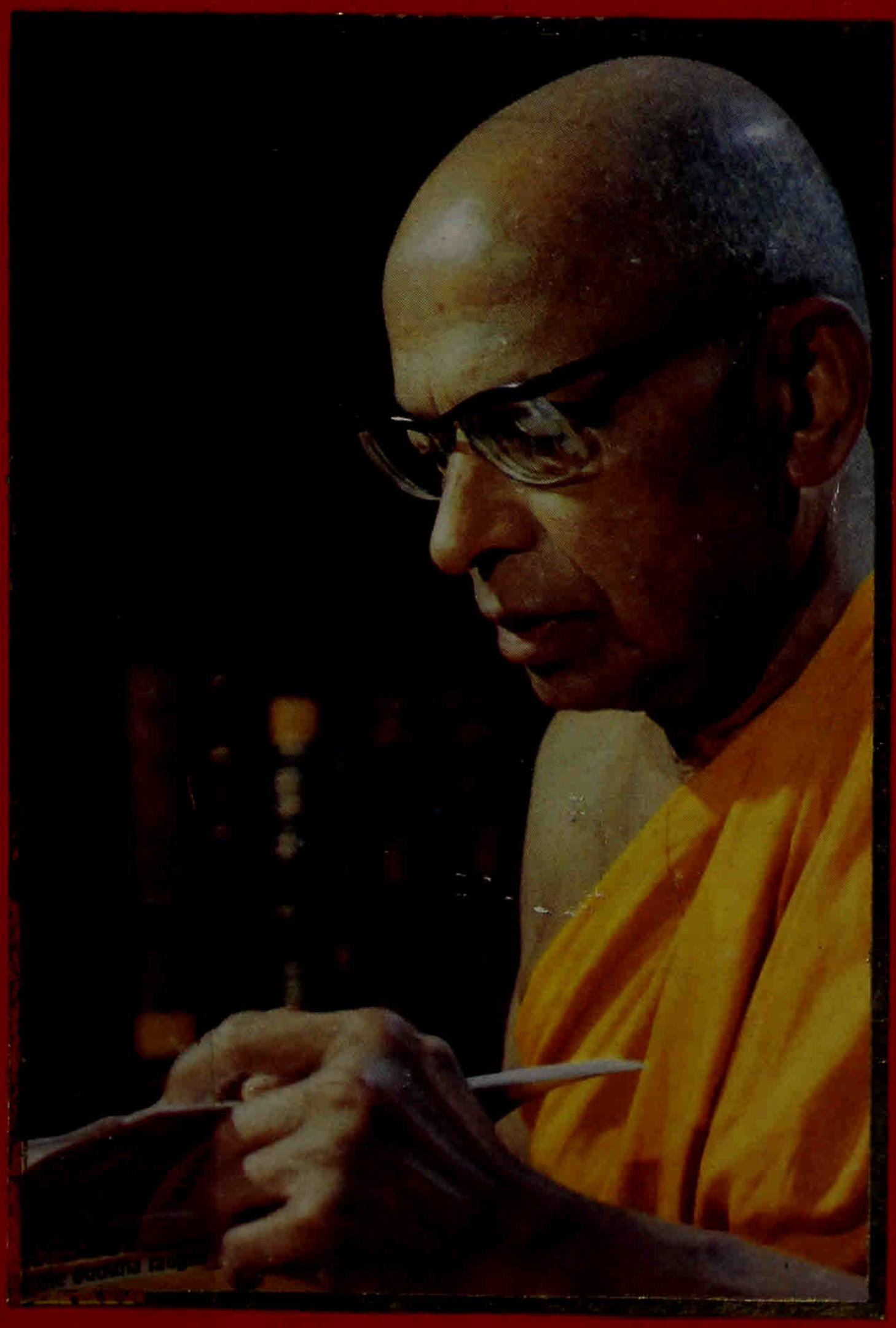
ON THE PATH

Biography of
the Venerable Aggamahapandita
Prof. Dr. Walpola Sri Rahula,
Chancellor of Kelaniya University,
Supreme Master of Buddhist Scriptures



Gunadasa Liyanage

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Professor Dr. Walpola Sri Rahula,
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With a Foreword by

Professor Edmund F. Perry

of Northwestern University, U.S.A.

Buddhist Cultural Centre
125, Anderson Road,
Nedimala,
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Sri Lanka

1995

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Gunadasa Liyanage

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THE AUTHOR

GUNADASA LIYANAGE, the veteran newspaper editor, author, writer, broadcaster and TV presenter, writes in both Sinhala and English. He has 33 Sinhala books to his credit of which 9 are popular novels and 8 are biographies. In English he has his controversial novel *Dona Kamalawathie*. His second English novel *Operation Elpitiya* (1993) was described by the *Sunday Observer* as 'perhaps the first serious novel written in English about the JVP insurrection' in 1971.

Gunadasa Liyanage is regarded as the leading biographer in Sri Lanka. In his first collection of biographies (1968) he had such eminent personalities' like Sirima Bandaranaike, Junius Jayewardene, Dudley Senanayake, Philip Gunawardhane, Colvin R de Silva, Ediriweera Sarachchandra and W.D. Amaradewa. Later he published separate books on the lives of President William Gopallwa, Wilmot A. Perera, D.B. Dhanapala, A.T. Ariyaratne and Bradman Weerakoon.

Over the national TV Gunadasa Liynage has been presenting biographies of eminent personalities by way of interviews, which are preserved in the archives of Sri Lanka Ruapvahini Corporation for posterity.

Revolution Under the Breadfruit Tree, a detailed biography of Sarvodya Leader Ariyaratne, was translated into Japanese and published in 1992 by the Asian Cultural Exchange Society in Japan. The Chinese translation of Liyanage's novel *Theveni Silpadaya Nokadami* was published in Peking in 1987.

For eight years Gunadasa Liyanage functioned as the Colombo Correspondent for the Hong Kong based *Asiaweek* magazine.

In recognition of Gunadasa Liyanage's services to literature, journalism and allied arts, he was conferred with the national honour of *Kalasuri* by the President of Sri Lanka on the National Heroes' Day in 1990.

ON THE PATH was first published in Sinhala under the title *Walpola Rahula Hamuduruwo* in 1994. In a review to the *Sunday Observer* of June 5, 1994, Professor Nandasena Ratnapala of Sri Jayawardhanapura University said: "Gunadasa Liyanage renders full justice to the life story of a very colourful, lively, intelligent and highly cultured Maha Thera living in the country."

CONTENTS

Foreword by Prof. Edmund F. Perry ix

Tracing the Path xiii

1. A great scholar is born 1
2. Village child who cried for the moon 12
3. From temple to hermitage 22
4. Off to India in search of higher education 36
5. Paragoda to Colombo and Dhammadassi becomes Rahula 40
6. Association with Lanka Gandhi and meeting Mahatma Gandhi for the first time 47
7. Meeting Krishnamurti 57
8. With Rabindranath Tagore and his pupils 63
9. Appearance of the Buddha at Kusinara 72
10. A graduate of London University 79
11. Samasamaja Party, Vidyalankara Pirivena and a fight over Buddha's relics 88
12. Among great scholars at Calcutta University 105
13. D.S. Senanayake clashes with political bhikkhus 111
14. Meeting Gandhi while fighting for free education 131
15. Rahula Thera settles another dispute over relics 149
16. An open warrant for his arrest - but, he addressed a public meeting in Colombo 152
17. Election battle of 1947 162
18. A founding father of middle path politics 170
19. A quarter century in France 179

20 A revolution in teaching Buddhism in American Universities 197
21. Vice-Chancellor of Vidyodaya University 212
22. Visiting Russia, East Germany and Czechoslovakia 223
23. Eleven years in London 231
24. Visits to Japan and Siam 242
25. Founder of Buddhist and Pali University 250
26. To Ketumati, on the banks of Diyawannawa 259
27. Clarion call to save the Sinhala race 269
28. Talking to Indira Gandhi about Tiger-terrorists 281
29. Sri Lanka's contribution for the Buddhist revival in China 287
30. Presenting Vallipuram Gold Plate to the nation 296
31. From Burma: Title of Aggamahapandita with royal honours 308
32. Visiting Borobudur in Indonesia 330
33. Walpola Rahula: The Author 338
34. Walpola Rahula: As seen by D.B. Dhanapala 353
35. Walpola Rahula: A citizen of the world 363
Index 389

Foreword

By Edmund F. Perry,

Emeritus Professor and Chairman, the Department of Religion

Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, U.S.A.

Outside of Sri Lanka, throughout the whole world, hundreds of thousands of people know the Venerable Walpola Sri Rahula as the renowned scholar of Buddhism. Few of these know the story and legends of his village origins, monastic and university education, or his leadership roles in the public affairs of his country. The present English translation of Gunadasa Liyanage's Sinhala account of Rahula's life will find a large and eager reading audience among those who know Rahula only as the scholar.

Through his faculty and research appointments at the University of Paris, Northwestern University in the United States, and the University of Oxford in England, the Venerable Professor Rahula has informed and influenced the minds of thousands of students and professional scholars who have attended his courses, seminars and lectures at these universities. Still other thousands have heard him on the lecture circuit of other universities around the world, and innumerable others know him as the author of *What the Buddha Taught*, the most widely read introduction to Buddhism in any language.

Students who have studied Buddhism with Professor Rahula now hold teaching and research positions not only in continental European countries, the United Kingdom and the United States, but also in Uganda, Australia, China, Japan and others. However, most of those who know this venerable professor from his courses, public lectures and

published books and articles are not specialists in the study or practice of Buddhism. They are rather students of performance, art and music; they are engineers, technologists and theoretical scientists; nurses, doctors and psychoanalysts; economists, historians and political scientists; teachers, journalists and corporate managers; janitors, launderers and shopkeepers. Though not identifying themselves as "Buddhists", but persuaded by Rahula's dictum that "the Truth knows no labels", legions of these who were instructed by Rahula would express deep respect and appreciation for the Buddhist resources that formed the mind and spirit of the personable scholar they know by the name Walpola Sri Rahula. It is arguable whether any other Buddhist in history has taught the Dhamma /Dharma to as many people in as many languages as Rahula has.

To those who have shared personal friendship with the Venerable Rahula, he exemplifies a persuasive model of the supramundane life, abounding in wisdom (not just facts of scholarship) and in nondiscriminatory good will. Whether teaching children to identify and write their first alphabet letters or correcting another scholar's mistake of fact, logic or judgment, this Rahula has typically communicated his wisdom with a tender concern for its recipient and with a dignity that engenders respect and welcomes further communication.

The Path on which Venerable Rahula lives his version of the Buddhist monk's supramundane life is a Path that runs right through the terrain in which we ordinary humans live our mundane lives. In 1964, when he accepted Northwestern University's visiting professorship, the Bishop Charles Wesley Brashares Distinguished Chair of Religion, a generous circumstance made me his host and departmental chairperson, and it gave my Christian family one of its most

definitive, endearing and enduring friendships. My wife, our three sons and I consider this a friendship of pure grace. Three anecdotes will illustrate this -and more. At the age of eleven our middle son almost unhinged his Sunday School teacher in response to her comment to his class to the effect that "only Christians go to heaven". He responded protestingly, "I don't want to go to any heaven that excludes my Uncle Rahula who is a Buddhist monk". Our youngest son now a theoretical physicist and mathematician, at the age of seven got his first pair of eye glasses and met the Venerable Rahula on the same day. Years later he recalled that day of double endowment with the double entendre, "I have always seen things better since the day I met Uncle Rahula". Our eldest son was with us in 1968 in a seminar of several days with then Vice- Chancellor Rahula of the Vidyodaya University of Sri Lanka. We were in the Department of Education's bungalow near the top of the mountain above Peradeniya in Sri Lanka. Our sixteen year old eldest son observed, "You always have to suspect that Uncle Rahula is speaking with two levels of meaning at the same time. What he says has simultaneously a mundane sense and some higher import".

In my observation of Professor Rahula's presentations to university audiences, professional research societies, and international conferences, he has seemed always clearheaded about the rules of evidence and logic in matters of the mundane world, including the translation and interpretation of Buddhist texts, and he sought always to distinguish carefully the possibilities and perils of mundane knowledge from that wisdom that derives from one's seeing the Truth. Making this distinction is surely necessary when we try to understand the Venerable's counsels on the exercise of power and the use of force in crises of national sovereignty- crises in the mundane world that call for

mundane management. It may be a misunderstanding of reality that tries to administer a national government by the discipline and ideals of the supramundane life.

To write a biography of this complex man living the supramundane life in our world will never be easy. Certainly at the present time a definitive, critical biography of Walpola Sri Rahula is impossible, because he is still alive and contributing to the story of his life and because the reverence evoked by the mention of his name and accomplishments is still a dynamic too powerful for a mundane biographer's skills and craft. Nevertheless we have an interesting and detailed biographical chronicle in this work produced is Sinhala by Gunadassa Liyanage and now translated into English by him. Liyanage is an experienced and respected literary figure in Sri Lanka. In this biographical narrative he has balanced attention to the details of Rahula's developing life story with a necessary accounting of the adoring acclaim that has attended much of Rahula's monastic, professional and public life. That biographical detail has not been made available heretofore in any systematic expression outside Sri Lanka. The Venerable's global legion of admirers will relish reading this account of a life begun in the rural village of Walpola, Sri Lanka, limelighted in the world's great universities, and punctuated with friendships with a Pope, diplomats, hippies, and a lot of ordinary people, to all of whom he unthreateningly introduced the Buddha's Path which has been the consummate resolution of nearly all the years of his long life.

May 10, 1995
Northwestern University
Evanston, Illinois U. S. A.

TRACING THE PATH

(Author's Introduction)

If a person can keep his friends and acquaintances spellbound for hours and hours merely by relating his life's experiences, adventures, or sometimes, even heroic failures, that person is sure to be having a history behind. He has lived with history, made history and has gone into history. He has lived his life in the true sense of the word 'live'.

On the other hand, if a person maintains that he has nothing special to talk about, that person has 'just lived' merely because he was born to this world to become a burden to the mother earth.

Walpola Rahula is a person who has an illustrious history behind. He has lived with history, made history and is continuing to do so even though he has just entered his 89th year.

Born intellectual - born militant - Walpola Rahula started making history over six decades ago. Today, he is an internationally recognised scholar, who is regarded as the world authority on Buddhism and Buddhist Philosophy.

While Rahula Thera continued to entertain his friends and acquaintances with his uncensored and unabridged experiences, for several decades, the world outside not directly connected to Rahula Thera, also continued to talk and discuss about his adventures and experiences, while discussing religious, political and social history of Sri Lanka. However, sometimes, there were discrepancies between the genuine Rahula episodes and what was discussed by the outside world. Yet, nobody took the initiative in recording the genu-

ine Rahula Story for the benefit of the present generation and posterity.

Enter Bellanwila Wimalaratana Thera, a young bhikkhu brimming with new ideas and bent on innovations.

In 1977 Wimlaratana Thera went to London to enter Lancaster University to work for his Doctorate. Medgama Vajiragnana Thera, the Chief of the British Buddhist Association, provided Wimlaratana Thera with accommodation for the duration of his stay in London.

By that time, the Ven. Dr. Walpola Rahula had left Paris to live in London. He had made his *avasa* at Gilling Court, Bellsize Grove, Hamstead. That was within walking distance from the place where Wimalaratana Thera was staying.

Rahula Thera and Wimlaratana Thera knew each other for some time, and the former used to address the latter with the pet name *'Bellanwila Lamaya'* or Bellanwila boy. Wimlaratana Thera made it a habit to visit Rahula Thera's *avasa* at least once a week for two reasons: to get Rahula Thera's help to solve some of the problems in his research and to enjoy a pleasant and highly informative chat with the older monk.

After enjoying Rahula Thera's stories for several weeks, one fine day Wimlaratna Thera took the courage to make a proposal: "Hamuduruwane," said Wimlaratana Thera, "your history - or rather your story - is not merely the story of an individual. It is also the story of our country, nation and religion, as well as the story of the Buddhsit education in the world. Most people have no proper knowledge of these stories. Even some of those who know have got their facts wrong. Therefore, Hamuduruwane, why not write your story as a book? It is going to be definitely a great service."

"May be, may be. But, I can't find the time to sit

down and write such a book," was Rahula Thera's blunt reply.

"Then, we will get somebody else to write it."

"Good idea! But, how to find an experienced biographer to handle it? Either we do a professional job, or else, forget about the whole thing?" said Rahula Thera, because he never compromised with half-baked jobs.

It was at this stage Wimalaratana Thera suggested my name (Gunadasa Liyanage) to entrust the project and promised to explore the possibility of obtaining my services.

In 1981 Rahula Thera decided to wish goodbye to London and settle down in Sri Lanka mainly due to two reasons: one was his appointment as the Chancellor of Kelaniya University and the other was the Government of Sri Lanka entrusting him with the responsibility of establishing the Buddhsit and Pali University. Some time later Bellanwila Wimalaratana Thera too returned to Sri Lanka after obtaining his Doctorate from Lancaster University.

It took some years for Wimalaratana Thera to invite me to write the Walpola Rahula biography. I promised to consider the proposal and give my word later.

To be very frank, I had my doubts as to whether I would be able to handle such a complicated project without coming into a head-on collision with the great monk.

I saw Rahula Thera for the first time as far back as 1948 when he participated in the inaugural meeting of the Mahajana Peramuna at Sri Palee College, Horana. Then, in the latter part of the sixties, my guru D.B. Dhanapala introduced me to Rahula Thera once. But our conversation was limited to a matter of only about ninety seconds. In short, I did not have any intimacy with the monk, which I consider is very

necessary to write the biography of any person. It must be stressed that before writing the biography of any living person, the biographer must become an intimate friend' of the personality concerned. Only then, and then only, that personality would talk freely with an open heart and without any reservations.

My heart was constantly telling me that I would not be able to cultivate that intimacy necessary to go deep into the life of Rahula thera. Even if I became intimate, would he tolerate my questions and 'cross examinings?'

It was this fear and doubt that made me not to commit myself to Wimalaratana Thera for a long period of time. In the meantime, Rahula thera's intermittent sojourns in Europe, put several full stops to the dialogue between Wimalaratana Thera and me. However, Wimalaratana, the dynamic young monk, was a determined man and never gave up his course of action with regard to the writing of Walpola Rahula saga.

After a few months' silence, in the night of January 26, 1992, I got a telephone call from Wimalaratana Thera saying that Rahula Thera wished to talk to me and that I would get a call in a few minutes' time. Though I could not believe it, the call from Rahula Thera came through and the two of us had a chat. His voice and the way he spoke sounded very friendly and unassuming, which made the fear and doubt haunting my mind disappear almost by fifty per cent. At the end, Rahula Thera invited me to Ketumati on a subsequent evening, along with Wimalaratana Thera. We decided to meet at Rahula thera's *avasa* - Ketumati - in Kotte in the evening of January 30.

It was only months later I realised how carefully Wimalaratana Thera had studied my mind and acted very diplomatically. How shrewd was he to extend the invitation to me through Rahula Thera himself? He had succeeded in making the two of us intimate even before we met each other physically.

And, when the three of us met at Ketumati, we had enough material in common to talk about while sipping tea. Starting with anecdotes about D.B. Dhanapala, Rahula Thera described how D.S. Senanayake clashed with the political bhikkhus and how the Kelaniya thugs assaulted him (Rahula Thera) in 1947. It was quite interesting and entertaining to listen to those historical episodes from the mouth of the history maker himself.

After listening to *'Perani Rasanga'* (old favourites) presented by Rahula Thera, I had discovered the great human being in Walpola Rahula - highly intellectual and militant - yet, very unassuming and friendly.

So, by the time we wished goodbye, I had made up my mind to undertake the task of writing the story of Walpola Rahula.

To begin with I had my first discussion with Rahula Thera at Ketumati on February 26, 1992. Our two hour discussion was quite open-hearted and Rahula Thera was particular to make me feel very comfortable in his presence.

After listening to the tapes, I wanted to visit Rahula Thera's birthplace and familiarise myself with the surroundings. For that too Wimalaratana Thera obliged and Rahula Thera too volunteered to join the trip. The three of us spent one full day at Walpola, Imaduwa and Paragoda areas. In spite of his age, Rahula Thera walked with us to all the places connected to his early life and explained everything by memory as if those vents happened the previous day. When we visited his ancestral home, 120 year-old Pingoda Maha Gedera, a large number of villagers gathered to see Rahula thera for he had gone there after a long lapse of time. An old woman of Rahula Thera's age was full of tears by seeing 'Ape Hamuduruwo' after a long time. She cried because she could not express her feelings due to a defect in her vocal system.

After touring Walpola area, I resumed discussions with Rahula Thera and recorded all of them on tape. I also perused various books and other documents for more information. In addition, I spoke to a number of people who had vivid memories of Rahula Thera's early life. Out of them I must make special mention of Dharmasiri Jayakody, the late T.B. Peramunetillake, and the late Piyasena Gunatillake. Pandit V.W. Abhayagunawardhane provided me with some very valuable information about the Pollathu Oya and the sorrounding area.

I started writing the Sinhala biography on April 22, 1992 (my 62nd birthday). While writing, further discussions and research continued for well over one year.

During the final stages I wanted to travel in the Walpola area once more for the specific purpose of finding a picture of the Ven. Paragoda Sumansara and to verify certain facts. For that trip too, Wimalaratana Thera provided me with transport facilities and Hettigoda Gamage Dharmasena (son of Rahula Thera's elder brother, Theberis Ayiya) functioned as the guide. Though I failed to find a photograph of Sumanasara Thera, I am very much grateful to Buduruwagal Piyatissa Thera, Chief Incumbent of Sudarshanaramaya, Hiriyamalkumbura, for allowing me to photograph a line drawing of Sumanasara Thera, preserved at that temple.

The Sinhala biography was completed in the latter part of 1993 and Kirama Wimlajothi Thera, Director of the Buddhist Cultural Centre, undertook to print and publish it. So far as printing was concerned, Sri Devi Printers at Nedimala did an excellent job.

Ultimately, the Sinhala biography of Walpola Rahula Thera *(Walpola Rahula Hamuduruwo)* was released at a well-attended meeting of intellectuals held at the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute in Colombo on February 8, 1994. I am very happy to keep on record that the book was well received by the people of all walks of life.

And, now, a word about this English version - ON THE PATH. I started writing (I don't want to use the word 'translating') in April 1994 and the final artwork was ready for the printer by the first week of June 1995.

I am very much grateful to the hero of this saga, namely, Venerable Aggamahapandita Professor Dr. Walpola Rahula Hamuduruwo, for going through, not only the manuscript, but also the final computer prints, and suggesting various improvements. As usual, Rahula Thera's pupil Galkande Dhammananda Thera, Ketumati's faithful housekeeper Semage Mervyn Fernando and H.G. Dharmasena helped me in various ways in making this book a reality.

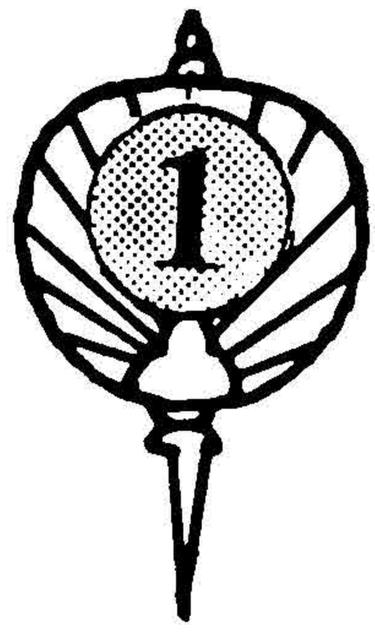
Prof. Edmund F. Perry, former Chairman of the Department of History and Literature of Religions at Northwestern University, U.S.A., illuminated the "Path" by writing and excellent Foreword. I don't know how to express my deep sense of gratitude to this great scholar of international reputation for the great honour bestowed upon this book and the author.

Immediately after the launching of the Sinhala biography, in 1994, Kirama Wimalajothi Thera, the enterprising young monk, had undertaken the printing and publishing of this English biography-ON THE PATH - too. I am very much indebted to him for his great service in promoting Buddhist literature. The credit for this elegant product - ON THE PATH - goes to the dedicated staff at Wimalajothi Thera's modern printing plant, Systematic Printers.

Gunadasa Liyanage,

June 8, 1995,

Mirihana,
Nugegoda,
Sri Lanka.



A GREAT SCHOLAR IS BORN

The Pollathu Oya, rising in the Nakiyadeniya hills of the Galle District, ends its journey in the Indian Ocean at Weligama in the Matara District. The mouth of the Pollathu Oya is known as the Pollathu Modara, and the bridge over the river is called the Pollathu Modara Bridge. Even in some of our ancient Sandesa poems, Pollathu Modara bridge is mentioned as a very important landmark of those times.

In its long and meandering journey from the hills, the Pollathu Oya reaches an almost plain valley through which it flows quietly for about fifteen miles before arriving at Weligama. Yakkalamulla, Walpola, Kodagoda, Imaduwa and Denipitiya are some of the villages that the quiet-flowing Pollathu Oya kisses on its way to the Indian Ocean.

Out of all these villages, there is one with special significance for us to begin the present saga.

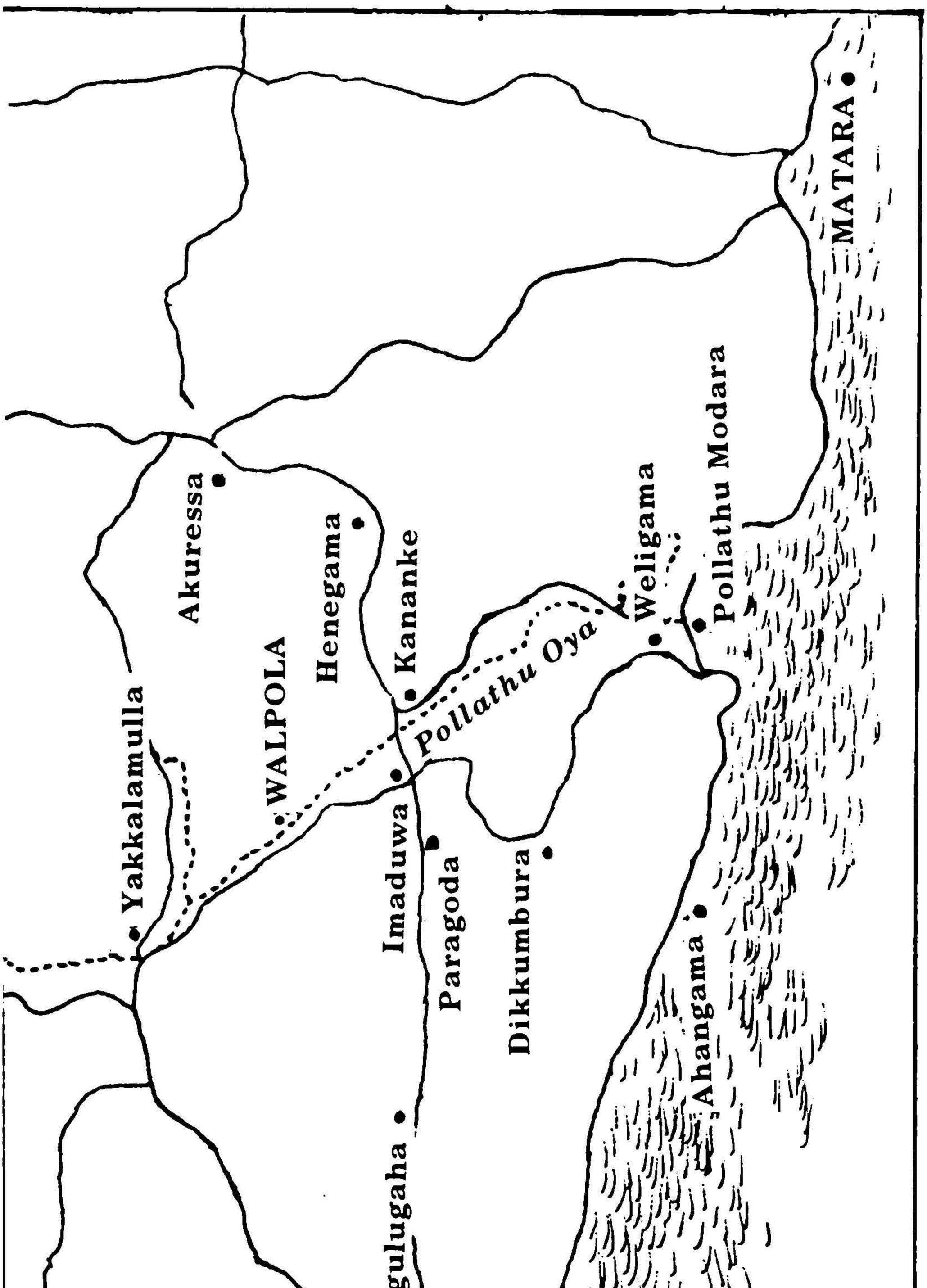
Travelling south some 115 km. from Colombo,

one reaches the ancient port city of Galle, which is enriched with both port and fort. About 2 km. further South, almost at the Southern end of the Galle city, there is a junction known as the Devata junction. The turn on the left is the beginning of the Akuressa Road. On the Akuressa Road, about 20 km. from Galle, there is the Imaduwa junction. Turning left and proceeding about 5 km., one comes to the Walpola village. Topographically, Walpola village is situated in the Talpe Pattu, in the Galle District in the Southern Province of Sri Lanka.

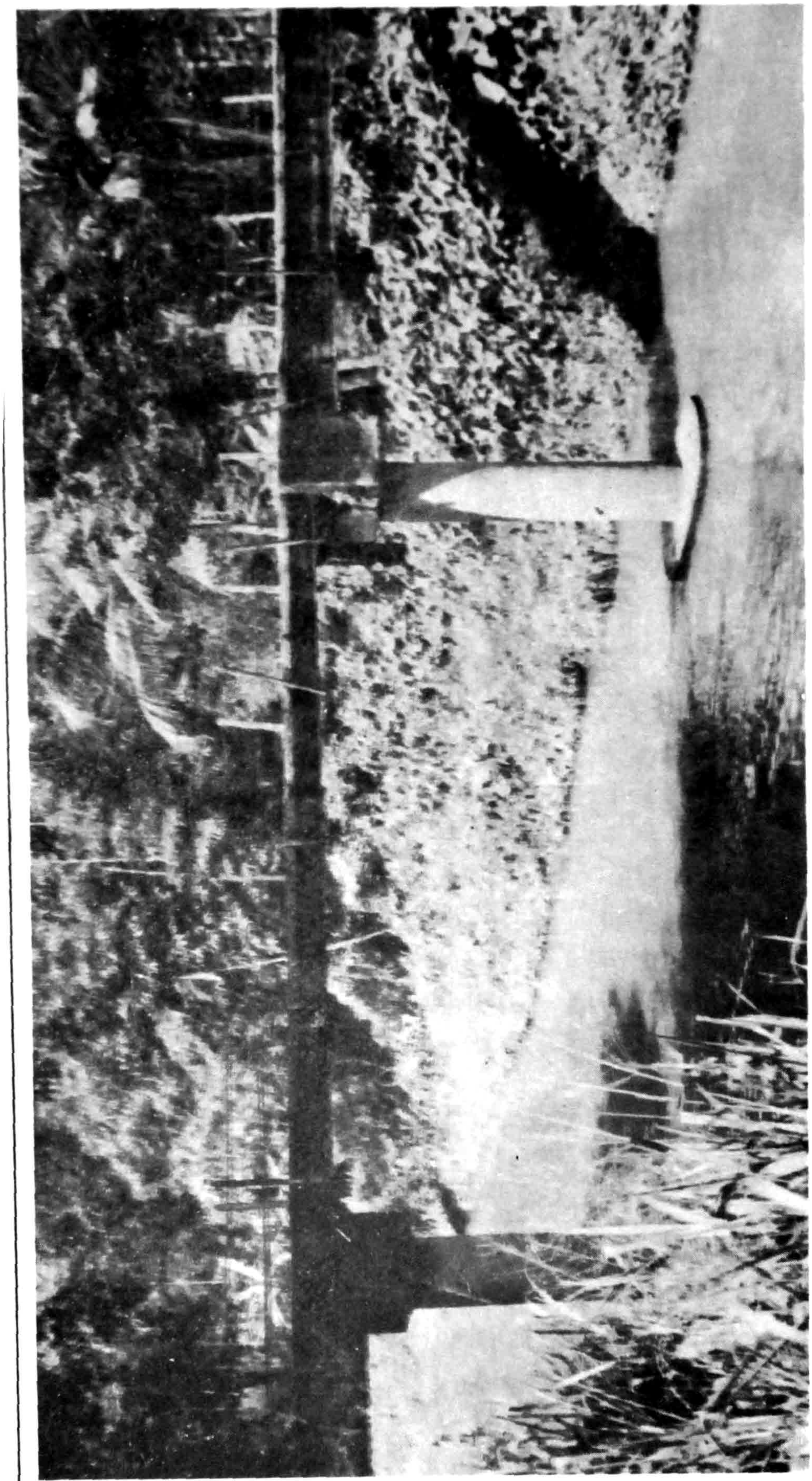
Let us have a look at Walpola village of about twelve decades ago. The Pollathu Oya is seen (as now) flowing right through the middle of the village and those travelling from Imaduwa reach the other side of the village by walking across the Pingoda *edanda* (log bridge) over the river. The *edanda* was made by placing areca trunks across the river. On crossing the river by walking across the log bridge one comes to Pingoda Garden, the largest and most important land in the area. It begin at the bank of the river and ends in a hillock further ahead. Beyond it is a thick jungle infested with all manner of animals ranging from elephants to leopards to bears and deer.

It was not very clear how far the jungle stretched from Pingoda in those bygone days, but, the oldtimers maintained that it was one thick jungle even upto Morawaka and Deniyaya areas.

By the third quarter of the nineteenth century, Hettigoda Gamage Don Karolis de Silva was the most prominent among the villagers of Walpola. He was a well-built handsome youth, the proud owner of Pingoda landed property which he had inherited from his parents. Though Karolis de Silva was a farmer by profession, he was more famous as a native doctor, astrologer and exorcist. He was also the acclaimed leader of the village and was respected by all.



Map showing the topography of Walpola village



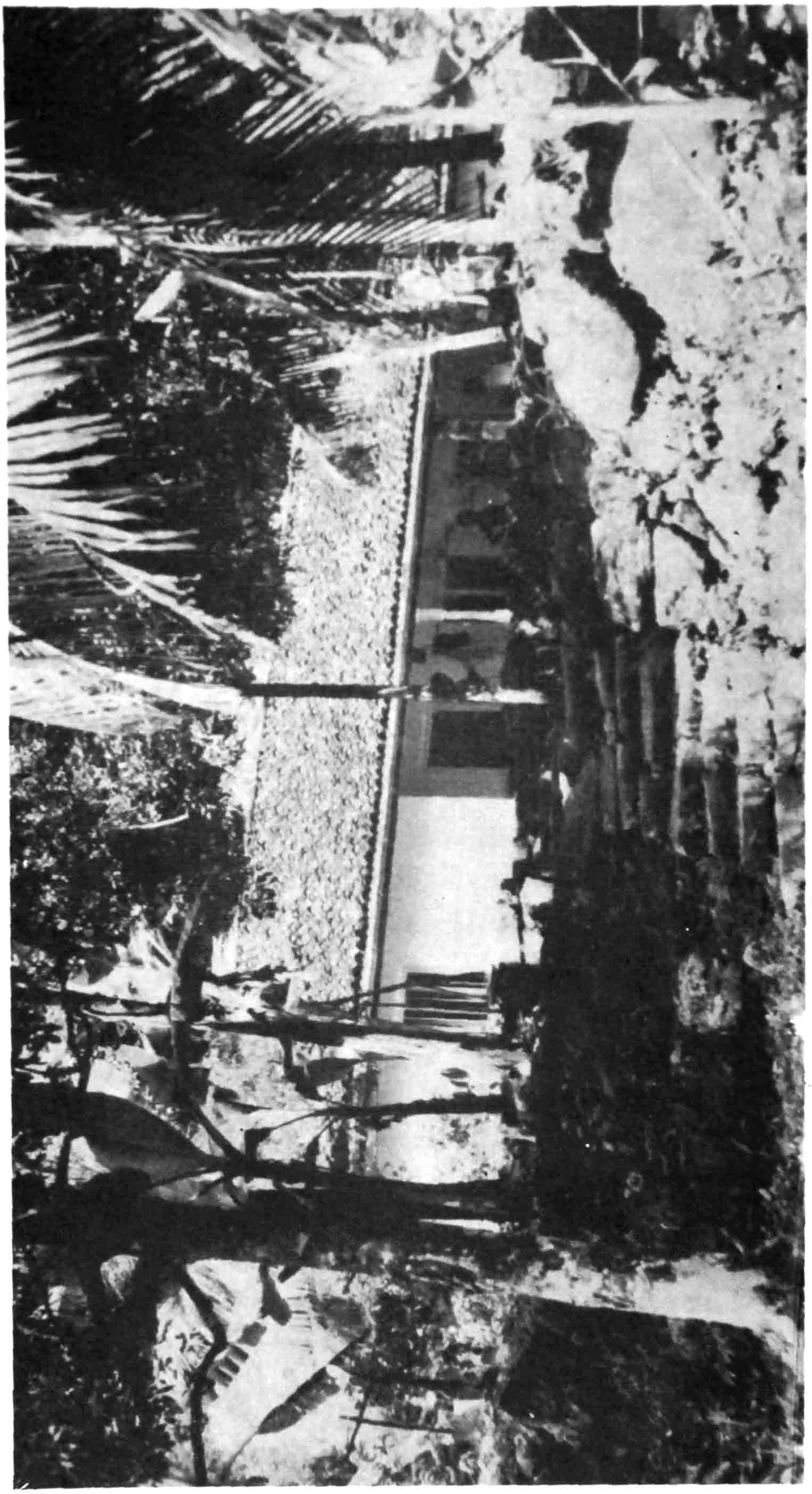
The log bridge over the Pollathu Oya is replaced with a concrete bridge today.

A great scholar is born

Incidentally, by the third quarter of the nineteenth century, a great seat of learning was established at Peliyagoda in Kelaniya. It was the Vidyalankara Sastra Salawa, started in 1875 by the great scholar monk, the Ven. Ratmalane Sri Dharmaloka Maha Thera. In later years, it grew rapidly and became the prestigious Vidyalankara Pirivena, which played a very vital role as a cradle of reforms in educational, social, cultural, religious and political affairs in Sri Lanka. While 1875 saw the emergence of this revolutionary seat of learning at Kelaniya, the very same year saw the building of a new house at Pingoda Gardens on the banks of the Pollathu Oya, some 145 kilometers south of Kelaniya. The new house came to be known as Pingoda Maha Gedara, where Walpola Rahula, who in later years, made Vidyalankara Pirivena his citadel of power and changed the course of Sri Lanka's history, was born. One of the stone pedestals of the verandah pillars bears the inscription 1875, indicating clearly the year in which the house was constructed. This historic house, built with wattle and daub walls and a tiled roof, stands majestically even today, despite its one hundred and twenty years of age.

After building the new house at Pingoda, Karolis de Silva, the eligible bachelor, decided to get married. The bride he selected was a young lady named Haththotuwagamage Silinduhamy from Borala, a village near Weligama. Needless to say that the wedding was celebrated with a grand party.

Karolis de Silva and his wife were, in the course of time, blessed with ten children, eight boys and two girls. The eldest came to be known as Loku Ayiya. He became the Village Headman and the family dubbed him Opisara Ayiya, while the villagers called him Opisara Ralahamy. The second member of the family was a girl. She was called Loku Akka or the eldest sister. According to the custom prevailing in the



Pingoda Maha Gedara

Haththotuwa Gamage Silinduhamy (Mother)

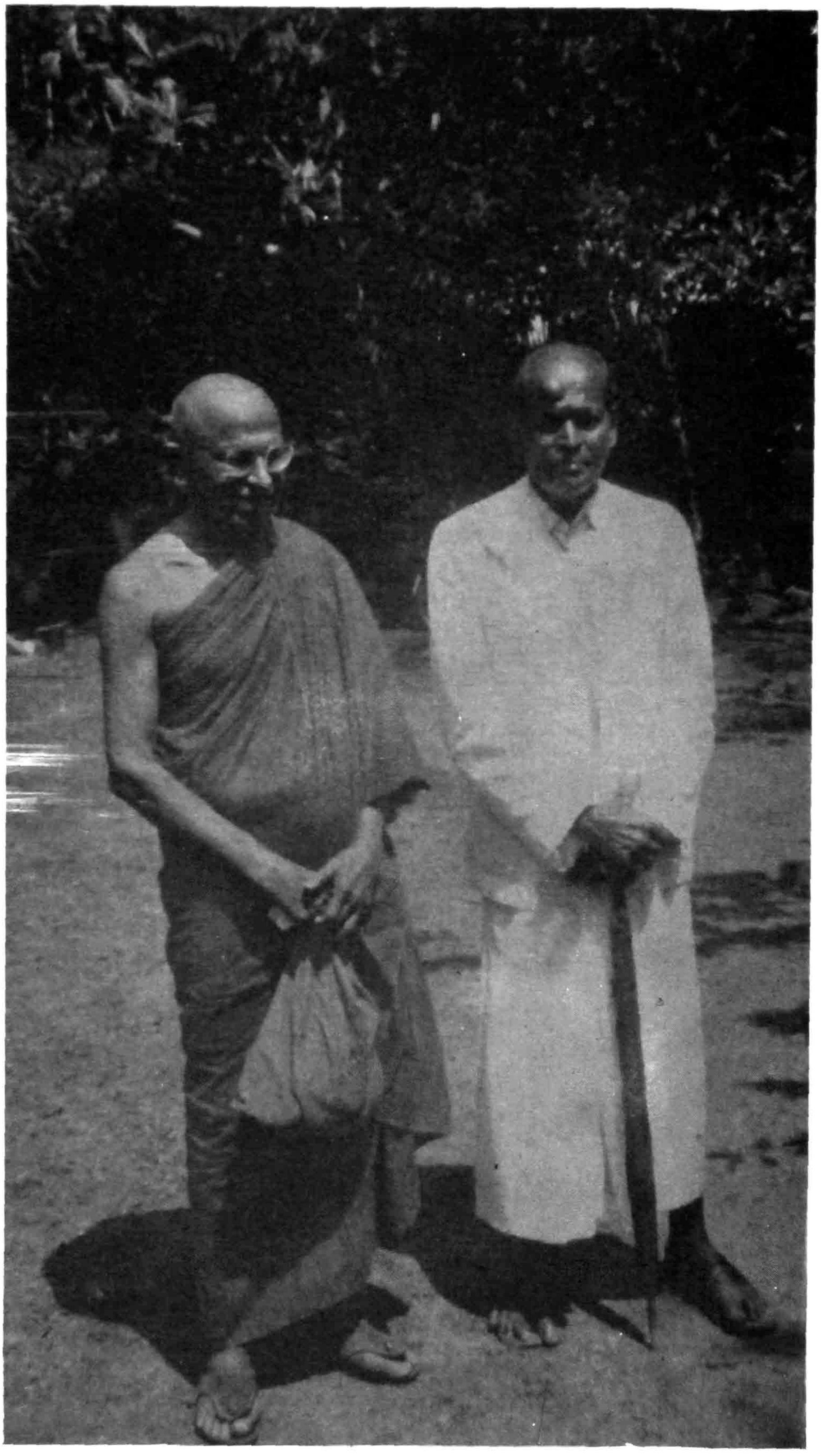
village, she remained at home helping her mother in the household chores. Later, she was given in marriage to Kodagoda, and was accordingly referred to as Kodagoda Akka. Madduma Ayiya, the third in the family, learnt the art of exorcism from the father and acquired a good practice. The fourth, Yakaduru Ayiya (meaning 'exorcist elder brother') too learnt the occult art and gained a better reputation in the field. Wadu Ayiya, the fifth, selected carpentry as his profession. The sixth in the family was a girl and was

known as Podi Akka. After marriage, she lived at Weligama and came to be referred to as Weligama Akka. The seventh was of extraordinary talent and drive. He was Mahathun Ayiya, better known in later life as Hendrick de Silva Hettigoda. After further studies in India, he became famous as an indigenous medical practitioner and an astrologer. He was the founder of the famous medical balm, "Siddhalepa"

Hendrick de Silva Hettigoda (Mahathun Ayiya)

Hettigoda Gamage Theberis (Theberis Ayiya)

Podi Akka (Weligama Akka)



Rahula Thera with Theberis Ayiya in 1983

which has become a household medicine today. For a long period of time, he functioned as the President of the Astrologers' Association of Ceylon. His famous book *Jeevitaya saha Grahayo* (Life and Planets) has become a handbook for astrologers. Siyadoris Ayiya and Theberis Ayiya were the eighth and ninth brothers who chose to be farmers.

The tenth or the youngest boy of the Hettigoda family was born on May 9, 1907. He too was named Hendrick - Hettigoda Gamage Don Hendrick de Silva - in full. It is not quite clear why the father decided to give the same name to two of his sons. (History has proved that the Hendricks were the only two outstanding members of the Hettigoda family). However, no one, either at home or in the village, addressed the younger Hendrick by his name. He was Punchi Malli or the little brother to the rest of the family and Appuhamy to the villagers. Some called him Appuhamy Malli or Appuhamy Putha.

It was this Hettigoda Gamage Don Hendrick de Silva alias Punchi Malli alias Appuhamy who in later years became the internationally famed scholar monk, Walpola Rahula.

VILLAGE CHILD WHO CRIED FOR THE MOON

One evening, Appuhamy's mother stepped into the front yard of the house carrying the toddler in her arms. The little fellow, on seeing the fascinating crescent moon that was visible above the foliage of the garden, wanted to possess that shining object up in the sky.

"Mother, please pluck the moon for me," he told the mother.

"My son, how can we pluck the moon? It is impossible," said the mother.

"No, I want the moon! I want the moon!" demanded the child and began to cry.

However much the mother tried to console the child, he continued to cry asking for the moon. The father and the other members of the family, who stepped out to see whether anything was wrong, started teasing the child and laughed at the little fellow's foolish desire to possess the moon.

The shrewd mother thought for a while and decided on a method that would help to pacify the child.

"My son, get down for a while. I will certainly pluck the moon for you," she said and kept the child on the ground.

While the child stood on the ground, still crying, the mother walked towards the kitchen and had a tete - a- tete with Hinni Appu who was a domestic help. Thereafter, she walked back to the front yard and took the child once again in her arms.

In a minute, Hinni Appu appeared with a long stick in his hand and asked the child to stop crying for he was going to pluck the moon for him. The child stopped crying.

The next moment, Hinni Appu tightened his loin cloth, placed the stick against the trunk of the breadfruit tree and began climbing it. As the man went up and reached the branches, the mother shouted from the ground and warned him to be careful as the breadfruit branches were very fragile.

After making himself comfortable on a big and strong branch, Hinni Appu leant against the trunk, picked up the stick, raised it towards the shining moon and pretended to pull the moon with the hook at the end of the stick. The other members if the family suppressed their laughter with some difficulty. Broken pieces of foliage began to fall on the ground. Yet, the moon was up in the sky. After breaking a fair amount of small branches with the stick, Hinni Appu raised his voice and told the mother that it was impossible to pluck the moon as the stick was not long enough. Saying so, he dropped the stick and began to come down briskly.

"Mother, if the stick was long enough, Hinni

Appu would have plucked the moon for me, wouldn't he?" asked the child.

"Yes my son, unfortunately the stick was not long enough to pull down the moon. I am late to cook the dinner. Let us go into the house."

Saying so, the mother walked into the house, carrying the child with her. The latter appeared to be quite content with the attempt made by Hinni Appu to pluck the moon. After that he never cried for the moon.

Today, our octogenarian - the Venerable Dr. Walpola Rahula - recalls this 'crying for the moon' - as the first incident that he can remember in his life. "Even after some 80-odd years, I can still visualise that particular Pingoda crescent moon shining above the breadfruit foliage," he reminisces.

At that time the most learned man in the Walpola village was Karolis de Silva. He firmly believed that he was more knowledgeable than even the chief priest of the village temple. And, that was a fact. He gathered all his knowledge by constant reading. On some nights, when the rest of the family were fast asleep, Karolis went on reading with the light of a coconut oil lamp. While reading at dead of night, he would all of a sudden laugh aloud disturbing the others' sleep. The following day he would read the particular section that made him laugh, to others at home, and they all laughed together.

Karolis not only read, but also took time to explore and probe into some of the things he came across in books. Once when he read that there was a *kiri palu* banyan tree at the spot where the Buddha landed in the Jaffna peninsula, he travelled all the way to Jaffna and spent several days there, looking for that particular tree. On another occasion, he

walked in the thick jungles of Samanala Kanda. (Adam's Peak), looking for the *Diva Guhava*, the cave in which the Buddha was supposed to have rested when He climbed the peak to place His foot print on the rock at the top. Though Karolis did not succeed in discovering any of these places or objects, he did gather valuable information and knowledge as a result of these exploratory journeys.

Karolis firmly believed that he was the most suitable person to teach the alphabet to his children at the auspicious times. So, in the case of little Hendrick too, he calculated an auspicious date and time to teach the alphabet. On the appointed date and at the auspicious time, Karolis sat on a small rock in the front yard along with Hendrick and attended to the ritual of *atha poth thabeema*. First he intoned the auspicious words: *Svasti Siddham* (meaning: May all aspirations be achieved), and then got the child to read the alphabet after him. After that, he held the right hand of the child and made him write a few letters on the slate. That historic rock, though partly covered with earth in later years, can still be seen in the front yard of Pingoda Maha Gedara.

At that time there was no proper school in the Walpola village. The village children had to learn their three 'Rs' at Gunatilaka Iskole, a school started in a private house by one Hallala Gunatilaka, a close relative of the well - known civil servant, Palitha Weeraman. Incidentally, Mr. Weeraman was a batchmate of Ven. Rahula at the University College in Colombo.

Clad in sarong and banian, and carrying the slate and the book, little Hendrick went to school on the first day with his father. Thereafter, his guides were the two elder brothers Siyadoris and Theberis. During the first few days, the elder brothers used to help Hendrick to cross the log bridge by holding his

Village school at Walpola

hand. But, very soon the boy brushed away the helping hands of his brothers and crossed the bridge himself, thus exhibiting his desire to be independent even at that tender age.

The village and its scenic beauty influenced Hendrick's life a lot. He saw the beauty of nature everywhere: not only on high over vales and hills, but also beside the river and beneath the trees.

The thick jungle behind the house was a mysterious world for little Hendrick. At night the wild boars used to invade Pingoda Garden, dig all over and play havoc. Some evenings, a young deer chased by a leopard ran out of the jungle and took shelter in the garden. While the treambling deer stood motionless, the leopard used to roar behind the shrubs, without stepping into the garden. After some time, the deer escaped into the jungle from another direction. Occasionally, leopards walked into the garden at dead of night, killed the cattle and dragged the carcases into the jungle.

There were hundreds of kittul palms in the jungle just behind the house. Loku Ayiya or the eldest brother used to get men to scare away the wild animals and tap the kittul flowers, for both treacle and toddy. On some days Hendrick used to walk into the jungle in the company of Loku Ayiya to see for himself the interior of the jungle.

The Pingoda Garden also had various kinds of trees - especially fruit and flower. Fruit trees such as orange, mango, rambutan and mangosteen were bountiful in season. Sometimes, Hendrick used to climb one of those trees stealthily, and eat the succulent fruits to his heart's content. Along the boundary of the front yard there were flowering plants like rose, shoe flowers, jasmine and *neela kobo* . Hendrick had an immense liking to this panoramic view and the

sweet fragrance of the flowers.

Sometimes, tamed elephants were brought to the Pingoda Garden to drag logs and do such heavy work. At the end of the day's work, the mahouts used to keep the elephants tethered with chains. Hendrick, on returning from school, very often had a hasty lunch and went after the elephants. He learnt a few words too of the 'elephant language'. One day, he succeeded in getting a mahout to give him a chance of riding an elephant. However, the young elephant who presumably liked practical jokes, once began to shake a small tree on which the boy was seated, frightening the little fellow.

When the Pollathu Oya overflowed, the flood waters reached almost the doorstep of Pingoda Maha Gedara. Some families in the low-lying areas, used to pack up their frugal belongings and take temporary shelter in Pingoda Maha Gedara till the flood waters subsided. On such occasions Hendrick enjoyed a lot by playing with the children of the displaced families. Incidentally, Hendrick's father was of the habit of carving the years on the stone-steps leading to the house, indicating the level to which the flood waters rose in each particular year. He appears to have been a small-scale historian who wished to keep a correct record of the tidal history of the Pollathu Oya for posterity.

As a young boy, Hendrick had his own brand of mischievous activities too. Sometimes, after a quarrel with his mother, he used to run towards the well saying, "I am going to jump into the well". Then , he took a stone and dropped it into the well creating a loud splash and hid behind the shrubs. Screaming mother ran out of the kitchen repeating the words "*Aney*, my son" and peeped into the well. Hiding Hendrick then came out of the shrubs with a hearty laugh.

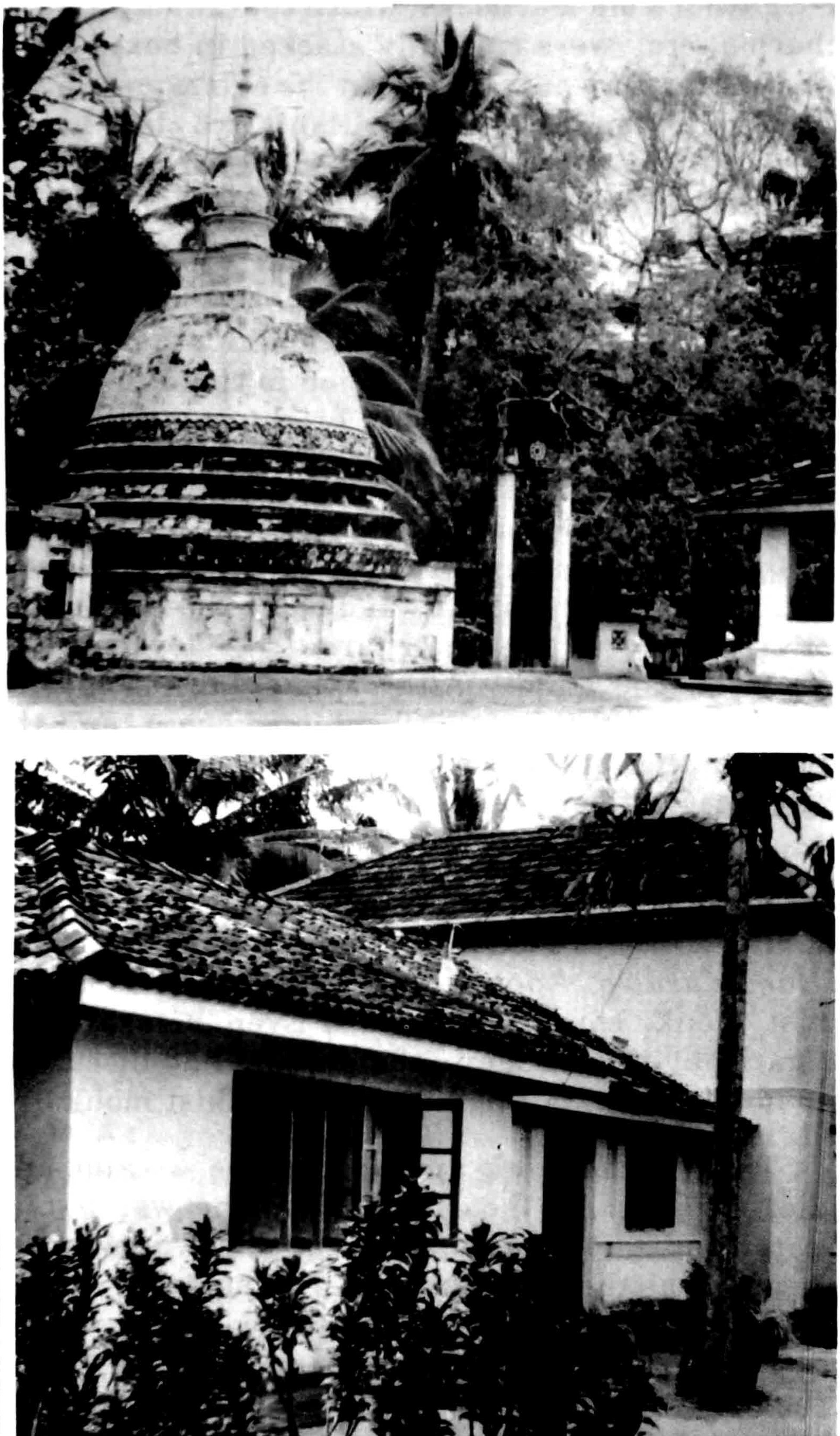
Father's ola leaf books, which contained *mantras* (charms) etc. were carefully stacked in boxes made out of *bata pothu* or reed. When the elders were away from home, Hendrick, along with his two elder brothers, used to open the boxes and have a careful look at the caricatures of various deities and demons drawn on ola leaves.

Hendrick was a typical unspoilt village lad of rural Sri Lanka. Unlike some of the other village urchins, he paid special attention to cleanliness and systematic work. He was very bright in studies too.

However, all of a sudden, Hendrick gave up schooling and stayed at home. It was a great pain for the parents and the elders. The mother firmly believed that it was due to evil eyes and evil tongues. So, she got the father to do some charm to remove the evil effects on the child. After a few days, Hendrick himself decided to go to school once again, and the happy mother used to whisper to the villagers about the efficacy of her husband's sorcery.

By then, Hendrick had given up almost all his mischievous activities. He was so staid and quiet that the villagers used to say that Appuhamy was like a *Hamuduruwo*. Appuhamy must be ordained a Buddhist monk, some remarked. Even before these remarks by the villagers, the parents had discussed the idea of making Appuhamy a Buddhist monk.

Though Hendrick appeared to be a calm and quiet child, in his heart of hearts, he was a real fighter and a revolutionary. And, that was why his education at the Walpola School came to an abrupt end within a short period of three years. It all happened when, one day, the Head Master wanted to cane the boy for a trivial reason. Without accepting the punishment lying down, Hendrick argued with the Head Master and said that he had no right to cane



Gothamaramaya Temple at Walpola

him. However the Head Master insisted, and before he could do so, Hendrick collected his slate and books and ran home. That was the end of Hendrick's school life.

For the rest of his life he never attended a class, either in a school or a pirivena, until he entered the University College in Colombo.

The father did not utter a word against Hendrick for quarrelling with the Head master and terminating his school life. Instead, he increased the number of hours he taught the son at home. In fact, from the very beginning, Hendrick had realised that his father's teaching was far superior to that of the village school.

In addition to learning at home, Hendrick was sent to the village temple for supplementary studies. At the Gothamarama Temple in Walpola, he read and mastered such ancient primary readers like *Nam Potha, Magul Lakuna, Buddha Gajjaya* and *Sakaskada.* He also learnt by heart all the stanzas in Sanskrit books like *Pratya Satakaya* and *Anuruddha Satakaya.*

Every morning Hendrick picked flowers from the garden to be offered at the temple shrine, before learning his lessons.

The daily visits to the temple made Hendrick a more and more religious minded boy. Gradually, with the parents talking constantly about ordaining him, Hendrick too began to like the idea and decided to enter monkhood.

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FROM TEMPLE TO HERMITAGE

The year nineteen twenty was a decisive one for Hettigoda Gamage Don Hendrick de Silva. As a young boy of thirteen, he was to be ordained a Buddhist monk that year.

The ordination was marked by a simple ceremony held at the Walpola Temple. Following age-old custom, the Ven. Pilane Seelananda Maha Thera was chosen as the boy's *Upadhyaya,* while the Ven. Paragoda Gnanatilaka, Chief Incumbent of the Walpola Temple, was chosen as *Acharya* or teacher. At the appointed time Ven. Seelananda shaved Hendrick's head, tied the *sivuru patiya* or the yellow cloth-belt round his neck and admitted him to the order of the Sangha as a novice. He was given the new name Walpola Dhammadassi. (It was about 8 years later, in 1928, that Walpola Dhammadassi changed his name to Walpola Rahula.)

Up to the time of Hendrick's ordination, there lived two Hendrick de Silvas at Pingoda Maha Gedara. With the ordination of the younger Hendrick, there

remained only one Hendrick, namely, Hendrick de Silva Hettigoda or Mahathun Ayiya.

As a newly ordained monk, Dhammadassi was very busy with his studies during the first few months and went home only occasionally. However, as the months passed he got fed up with the monotony of monastery life. When he saw the other children of his age playing and running about, he found himself attracted once again to the care-free life of boyhood. His heart was crying to give up robes and enjoy the life of a free bird once more. But, how to do it was the question. Dhammadassi had learnt from his teacher that a novice must always be clad in a robe and the *andanaya* or the under-cloth. Even while bathing the *andanaya* must be on his body. If it is removed from the body, the monkhood would get cancelled automatically. So, he decided to violate that rule in a very shrewd way, and redeem himself from the pledge of monkhood.

In order to implement his plan, Dhammadassi went home one day and joined the elder brothers for a bath in the river. Wearing only the *andanaya* he began to swim and bathe. After a while, as preplanned, he loosened the *andanaya* and allowed it to flow downstream. Though the brothers shouted and asked Dhammadassi to pick up the *andanaya,* the naked boy remained quiet.

Submerging up to his waist in water, Dhammadassi delivered a short sermon to his brothers, explaining that his monkhood was no more and that he was once again a lay boy. Wearing a sarong and a banian provided by a brother, Dhammadassi took the discarded robe and folded it. The next question he faced was how to go home and confront his parents. So, he marked time hiding at the far end of the Pingoda Garden, until dusk.

When Dhammadassi finally walked into the house in lay clothes, the mother almost fainted. "What happened?" she asked. Dhammadassi delivered another sermon to the mother, explaining how he lost his monkhood by accident. Unfortunately, our immature pandit failed to deceive or make a fool of the mother, for she realised too well, that it had been a contrived accident. She insisted Podi Putha should get back to robes and remain a monk. She cried, wept and threatened suicide if the son resumed lay life.

So, the young man was compelled to change his mind. But, the brothers were in a fix. How could they take Dhammadassi in lay clothes to the Walpola Temple and face the music from the chief priest? They decided to take him to another temple close by, namely, the Dikkumbura Temple.

Dhammadassi and his brothers travelled in a hackery and reached the Dikkumbura Temple, a few hours after dusk. The Chief Incumbent of the temple, Ven. Paragoda Saddhananda, had a sarcastic laugh on hearing the adventure of the young monk. He seemed to say that boys are always boys. Nevertheless, he robed the boy once again and kept him in his temple.

After a few days, when the storm calmed down, Dhammadassi was taken back to the Walpola Temple. Since then, he never thought of giving up robes. Instead, he determined to pay his entire attention to studies and become a great scholar.

Ven. Paragoda Gnanatilaka, the chief incumbent of the Walpola Temple, was not a very learned monk. Dhammadassi felt that he had nothing more to learn from him. So, his next attempt was to go in search of a truly scholar monk. The headquarters of Walpola and other temples in the area was Paragoda Raja Maha Viharaya. It has special mention even in

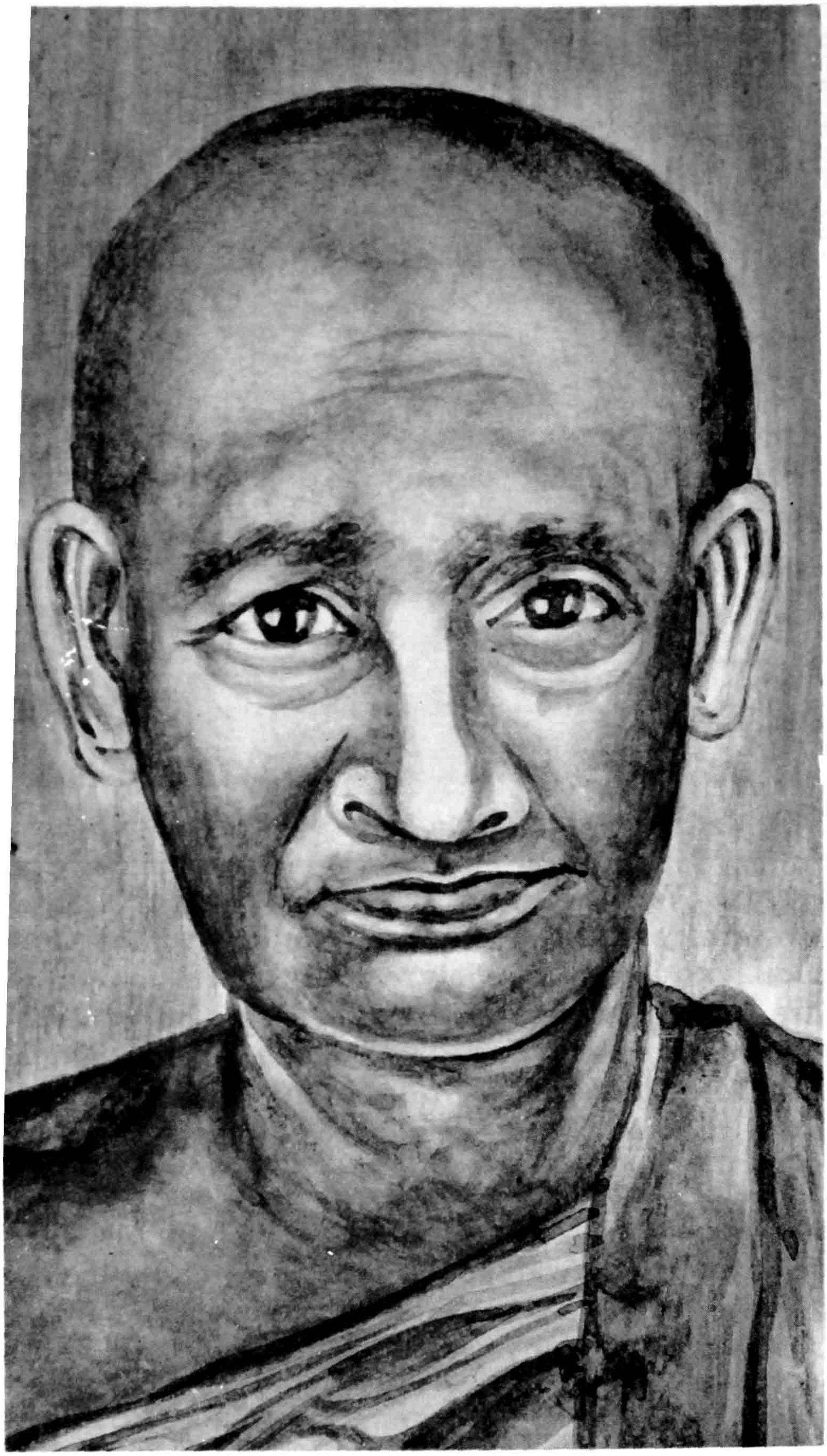
From temple to hermitage

Paragoda Raja Maha Viharaya

Martin Wickramasinghe's celebrated novel *Gamperaliya*. In Paragoda Temple, at that time, there was a great scholar monk by the name of Paragoda Sumanasara. Though Ven. Sumanasara hailed from the village of Deegoda, he was named Paragoda Sumanasara, in keeping with the then prevailing tradition of the Paragoda lineage of monks.

Before proceeding further, I must add some details about Ven. Sumanasara. He had his early education at Ranwalagoda Vidyawardhana Pirivena in Galle, where even the celebrated archaeologist, Professor Senarath Paranavithana, had been a student for several years.

Ven. Khemananda of Ranwalagoda Pirivena was a leading scholar in the Southern Province at that



Paragoda Sumanasara Thera

time and Ven. Sumanasara had the privilege of becoming one of his brightest pupils.

D. G. Adhayagunaratna of Matara, who was popularly known as Batuwita Ralahamy, was the Sinhala teacher of Ven. Sumanasara. Those days, Batuwita Ralahamy was regarded as the leading Sinhala scholar in South Sri Lanka. He had edited a number of ancient Sandesa poems, too. It is said that even Sir Baron Jayatilaka, another great scholar and Leader of the State Council at that time, used to seek advice of Batuwita Ralahamy on literary matters.

After learning Sinhala, Pali and Sanskrit at Galle, Ven. Sumanasara had come to Colombo, where he received further education, especially in Sanskrit, under Ven. Ratmalane Dharmarama and mastered all three languages.

Having completed his education, Ven. Sumanasara went back to Paragoda temple and devoted his time to teaching the younger monks. In order to work for the welfare of the temple and the village, he formed various societies, through which he tried to uplift the moral, social, cultural and economic conditions of the people of the area. On one occasion, he organised a big public meeting at Dikkumbura and invited the reputed nationalist, Piyadasa Sirisena, Editor of the *Sinhala Jathiya* to be the chief guest. Piyadasa Sirisena delivered a very impressive speech and told the people how they could organise themselves and solve their problems. Mr. Sirisena was so impressed with the excellent work done by the Ven. Sumanasara, that he wrote an editorial in his paper highly commending the monk's work.

It was this Sumanasara Thera who taught Sinhala, Pali and Sanskrit to Walpola Dhammadassi. He not only taught the young monk the languages,

but also inculcated a deep desire to master the Abhidhamma, in addition to learning various forms of meditation.

Says Ven. Rahula: "The greatest teacher I came accross in my life was Sumanasara Thera. He was a living example of virtuous conduct, kindness, compassion and scholarship. He gave me not only knowledge, but also fearlessness and militancy. In fact, it was Ven. Sumanasara who laid the foundation of my life."

It was decided to send young monks of Paragoda Temple to Maha Manthinda Pirivena in Matara for higher education. A house was rented at Walgama to be used as an *avasa* for the monks to stay. Dhammadassi too went to Matara along with the other young monks and stayed at Walgama. Occasionally, he went to Maha Manthinda Pirivena too, but never bothered to attend any classes.

"Why?" I asked Ven. Rahula. His reply: "It is a fact that my name is registered as a student of Maha Manthinda. Even today, my name is mentioned as an illustrious old student of that Pirivena. But, I never attended any classes there, because I firmly believed that after being a student of Ven. Sumanasara, there was nobody at Maha Manthinda to teach me anything new."

Ven. Sumanasara was a monk who constantly spoke about the necessity of leading a monk's life in the correct and proper manner. He always reminded his pupils about the great responsibility placed upon a monk who had received the Higher Ordination. However, by the year 1925, Ven. Sumanasara realised that it was difficult to lead the proper way of life, expected from a monk who had received the Higher Ordination. So, he decided to come down to the level of a novice by giving up Higher Ordination, and ther

practise meditation in a hermitage. According to the Vinaya tradition, this practice of giving up Higher Ordination is known as *Sikshapratyakhyanaya*. Six other pupils of Ven. Sumanasara, including Dhammadassi, volunteered to follow the Guru and live in a hermitage. For them, there was no question of giving up Higher Ordination as none of them had received it up to that time,

There was no forest close to Paragoda Temple where a hermitage could be established. The only one available was the small jungle land above the row of *Na* trees mentioned in Martin Wickramasinghe's *Gamperaliya*.

Hasty arrangements were made to put up huts and provide other facilities required for a forest hermitage in that land. And then, Ven. Sumanasara, along with his pupils, went to live there.

According to the teachings of the Buddha, there are thirteen *dhutangas* or ascetic vows, and *pindapata* or begging alms is one of them. In keeping with that vow a monk would go from house to house begging alms and then select and eat what is collected in the bowl. Yet, there is another ascetic vow called *pattapindikanga,* according to which, there is no liberty to select and eat. The monk must eat anything and everything collected in the bowl. Dhammadassi practised both wows.

Every morning, Ven. Sumanasara and the pupils came out of the forest hermitage to offer flowers and worship the Buddha in the shrine room of Paragoda Temple. Thereafter, they went round the village with begging bowls, collected food and returned to the hermitage. The rest of the day was devoted for meditation and studies. Keeping to a time table, Ven. Sumanasara taught his pupils not only languages, but also what the Buddha taught. Again, in the

evening, they all went down to offer flowers and worship the Buddha in the shrine room.

Ven. Sumanasara always liked an austere life. As such, in the hermitage, plates, cups and glasses were all taboo. Only the bowl was used for eating purposes. Well scraped and well cleaned coconut shells were used for drinking. As a result of this habit of using coconut shells, monks in the hermitage were nicknamed the *Polkatu Nikaya* or the Coconut Shell Sect.

It spite of the nickname, the *Polkatu Nikaya* was highly respected by the people of Paragoda and surrounding villages, because of their exemplary behaviour and their excellent knowledge of the Dhamma.

Once Ven. Sumanasara decided to go on a pilgrimage to places like Tissamaharama, Kataragama and Situlpawwa. Only Dhammadassi and another monk of Ven. Sumanasara's age were asked to join the journey. The other novices who found it difficult to walk long distances were asked to remain in the hermitage. Two elderly laymen joined the three monks to attend to their day to day neccessities on the way.

The party walked the entire distance from Paragoda to Tissamaharama covering about 120 km. On their way the monks obtained their alms by *pindapatha*. Besides begging bowls, they carried coconut shell cups too. The two laymen cooked a frugal meal for them at the places where the monks stopped for a rest.

After worshipping Tissamaharama Temple, they resumed the walk to Kararagama, some 25 km. away. There, they worshipped Kiri Vehera and spent the night. Early in the following morning, another long

walk from Kataragama to Situlpawwa was started. The distance was about 60 km.

On the way the party stopped at a village called Palu Gama (Deserted Village), for lunch. As it was almost a deserted village, the two laymen prepared the alms. The monks bathed in an old tank called Nandimitra Wewa. One of the preparations for lunch was a kind of leaf called *karakola* . It was the first time that Dhammadassi consumed.a *karakola* meal.

Having climbed the rocky road and worshipped Sithulpawwa, the party began to walk back to Tissamaharama to spend the night. The afternoon journey through the jungle was very risky, for many of the wild animals came to the road as the evenig drew near.Though the group met some wild elphants crossing the road there was no harm from them at all. After spending the night at Tissamaharama, Ven. Sumanasara and his party started their return journey to Paragoda, on foot.

As Ven. Sumanasara grew in age and knowledge he began to realise more and more the difficulty of continuing as a monk in the proper way. Ultimately, he gave up robes and took the lay name of Satyanatha Weerasingha. The ordinary people called him Pandita Mahattaya.

Though Ven.Sumanasara gave up robes, he did not want to leave the temple and lead the life of a house-holder. Instead, he put up a small hut in the temple premises and lived in it, continuing to teach the young monks. He also engaged himself in social activties. The fact that Pandita Mahattaya did not leave the temple, immensely increased the respect and affection the ordinary villagers had for him.

Being a person very concerned about the obligations that entailed Higher Ordination, and not quite

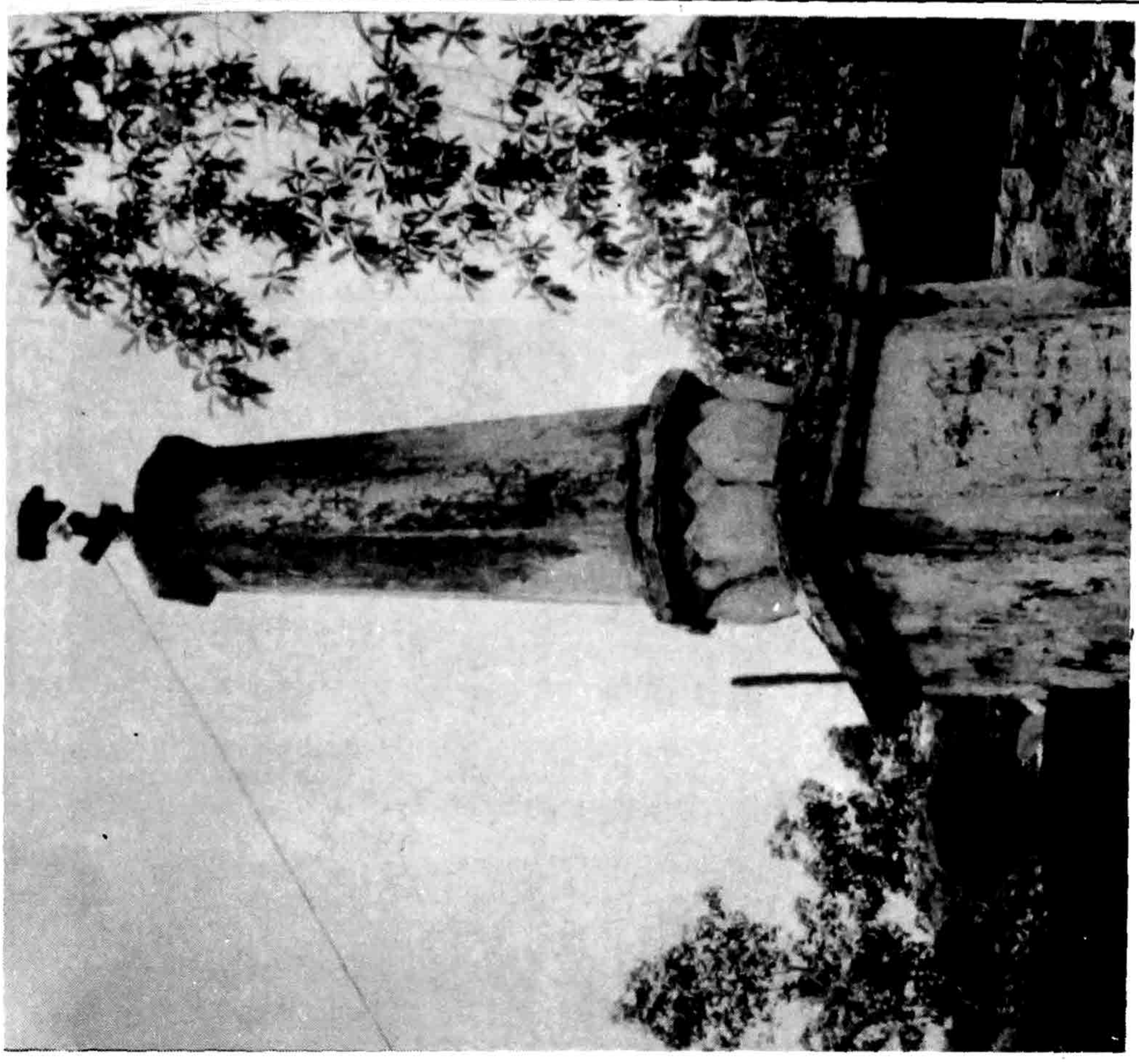
happy about the way the Higher Ordination was performed in Sri Lanka, Pandita Mahattaya took some of his pupil monks to Siam (present Thailand) and got them to receive Higher Ordination in the manner practised there.

Weerasingha, who was born at Deegoda on August 8, 1884, died on August 10, 1966, two days after his 82nd birthday, after an illustrious life as monk and mentor. People of all walks of life thronged to pay their last respects to this great and pious man. His body was taken from village to village, so that the people could honour their beloved Pandita Mahattaya, who had devoted his whole life for the welfare of the many.

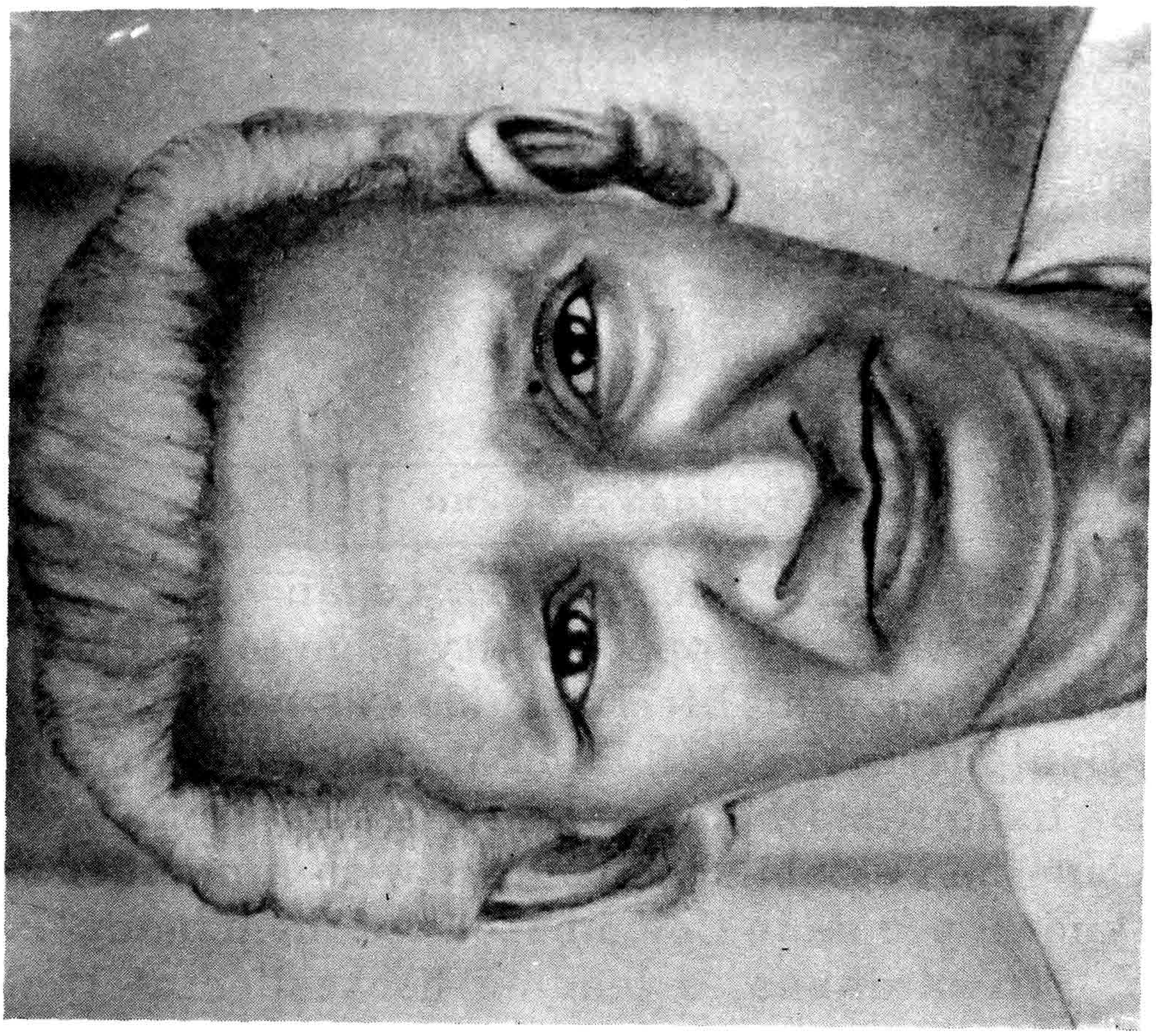
The funeral was held at Yakkalamulla, close to Walpola, in the presence of a vast gathering of both clergy and laity. The chief incumbent of Sudarshanaramaya, Hiriyamalkumbura, situated between Yakkalamulla and Walpola, was so devoted to Panditha Mahattaya that he wished to construct a monument for him. To fulfil the wish of the monk, two youths from Hiriyamalkumbura, namely Dayananda and Wimalasena, went to Yakkalamulla that night and brought a few small pieces of bone from the pyre and enshrined them in the monument. The Satyanatha Weerasinghe Monument can still be seen at the Hiriyamalkumbura Temple.

Ven. Paragoda Sumanasara (later Satyanata Weerasingha), has gone into history as a great scholar, religious reformer and social worker who had devoted his whole life for the well-being of the people. He still lives in the hearts of the elderly people in the South-ern Province, particularly in the Pollathu Oya valley.

As a result of the influence of Ven. Sumanasara and the popular nationalist newspaper *Sinhala Jathiya*, Dhammadassi started contributing articles

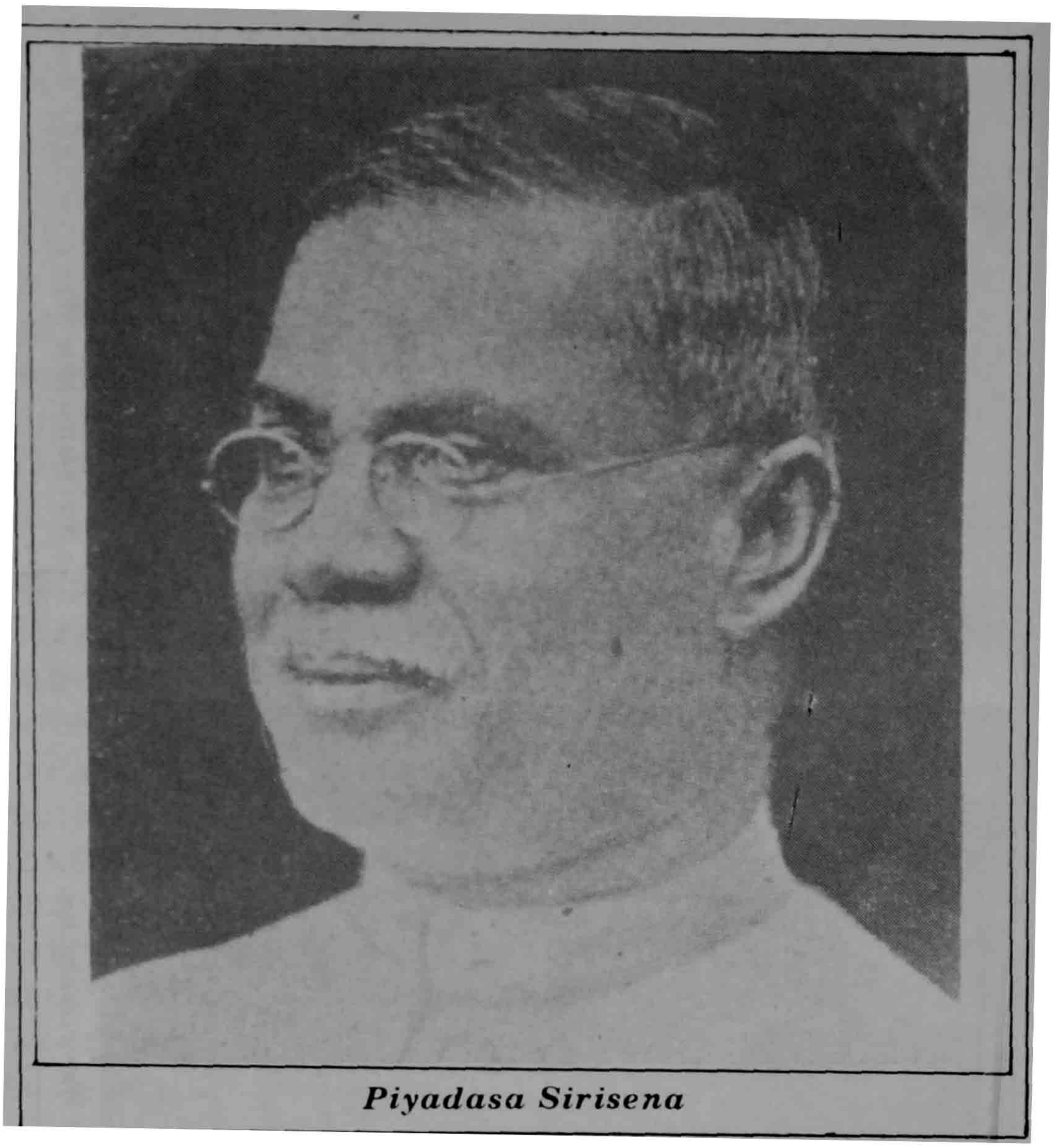


Satyanatha Weerasinghe monument



Satyanatha Weerasinghe

to that paper. His first series of articles was on the subject of 'Monkhood'. Those articles that went deep into the Vinaya rules in regard to monkhood, found a prominent place in the paper.



Piyadasa Sirisena

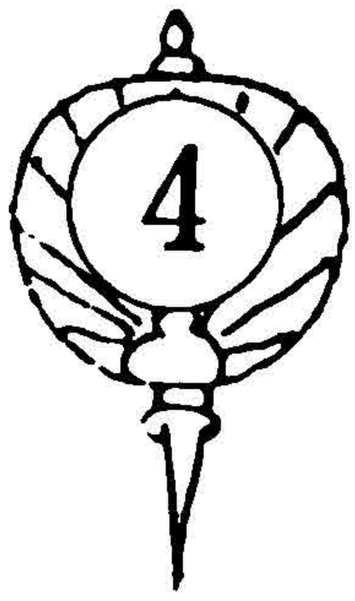
Sometime after the articles began to appear, Dhammadassi got the opportunity to go to Colombo, for the first time in his life. His guide was one Jayasena from Denipitiya, the then Head Master at Batemulla School, Imaduwa. Dhammadassi knew Jayasena well. Jayasena had established contact with a number of well-known people in Colombo, one of them being P. K. W. Siriwardhana, a leading bookseller at that time.

From temple to hermitage

While in Colombo, Dhammadassi told Jayasena that he wished to pay a visit to Piyadasa Sirisena, the Editor of the *Sinhala Jathiya*.

When Jayasena took Dhammadassi to *Sinhala Jathiya* office at Maradana, the young monk introduced himself to Sirisena as the author of the series on 'Monkhood'. The editor was surprised at this revelation. His comment was: "When I read those articles the impression I got was that Walpola Dhammadassi was an elderly Nayake Thera. The contents are very deep and thought-provoking.I can clearly see that you have a sound knowledge of the subject, in spite of your young age. Try and write more of that type of articles. You have a bright future as a writer".

Several years later, when Dhammadassi came to Dharmaduta Sabha in Colombo, he decided to publish those *Sinhala Jathiya* articles as a book. The Secretary of the Dharmaduta Sabha, who was also the owner of the Felix Press in Colombo, undertook to print and publish the book. However, at the proof stage, some of the higher-ups in the Sabha, who came to know of Dhammadassi's book, opposed the publication, thus causing a premature death to his first book.



OFF TO INDIA IN SEARCH OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Dhammadassi's most favourite brother was Hendrick de Silva Hettigoda, whom he addressed as Mahathun Ayiya. He was the most educated and most famous member of the family. His dress was partly European. In place of the trousers, he wore a white cloth. Besides that, his dress consisted of white shirt, white coat, coloured tie plus socks and shoes. With this costume, he was the cynosure of all eyes, wherever he went.

Hendrick de Silva Hettigoda had a good knowledge of Sinhala, Pali, Sanskrit and English. It was he who laid the foundation for Rahula Thera's excellent knowledge of English, by teaching him that language from a very early age.

Even while leading a secluded life in the forest hermitage, the *Sinhala Jathiya* paper was the main source of information from the outside world for Dhammadassi. Ven. Muttettuvegama Dharmeshwara, a Sri Lankan monk who lived and studied in Patna in India, used to contribute articles to that paper which

Dhammadassi read with much interest. In one article Dharmeshwara Thera had said that there were all the facilities available for Sri Lankan monks to stay there and pursue higher education at the Rashtriya Vidya Peetha in Patna. In fact, he had made an open invitation for young monks from Sri Lanka to come to Patna for higher education.

Dhammadassi was almost restless from the time he read the newspaper article. He was so attracted by Dharmeshwara Thera's invitation that he told Mahathun Ayiya to help him to go to India. Without any hesitation, the older brother consented to do the needful. Needless to say that the young novice was brimming with joy.

However, there was a big hurdle to overcome. Dhammadassi who lived on *pindapatha* had given up all monetary transactions. He even did not touch money. Mahathun Ayiya thought for a while and hit upon an arrangement for Dhammadassi to go to India without handling money.

There was a group of scouts going to Madras and the master of the group happened to be a relative of the Hettigoda family. So, Mahathun Ayiya discussed the matter with the scout master and gave him sufficient money to spend on Dhammadassi's behalf up to Madras. As the scout master was breaking journey at Madras, he was requested to purchase food items etc. for Dhammadassi's consumption on his way to Calcutta. In addition, a separate bag containing biscuits etc. was also given to Dhammadassi. Mahathun Ayiya had friends in Calcutta, and had written in advance, requesting them to meet Dhammadassi at the railway station and make arrangements for him to continue the last leg of his journey from Calcutta to Patna. And, the money for his expenses at Patna had already been sent to Dharmeshwara Thera.

Dhammadassi started his journey from the Maradana railway station on December 26, 1925. After reaching Patna, he met Dharmeshwara Thera with much hope. But, to the utter amazement of the young monk, Dharmeshwara Thera was behaving in an unexpected manner. He told Dhammadassi that it was no easy task to stay in Patna and pursue studies, and that he too was not in a position to help.

Dhammadassi felt that he was in trouble. But, he did not want to get into any argument with Dharmeshwara Thera and ask him as to why he deceived him by making an open invitation to come to Patna. His only request was to provide him with accommodation until he made arrangements for the next step.

While staying in Patna, Dhammadassi visited a number of important places in that historical city, including the ruins of the Asokarama. Dharmeshwara Thera gave some money for Dhammadassi's expenses. It was a part of the money sent by Mahathun Ayiya for Dhammadassi's expenses. At that stage Dhammadassi realised that it was impossible either to live in India or to get back to Sri Lanka without handling money.

After a very brief stay at Patna, Dhammadassi returned to Calcutta and stayed at the Maha Bodhi Society. From there, he wrote a letter to Mahathun Ayiya, informing him about the latest development and requesting him to send money to enable him to seek admission to some other educational institute.

While staying at the Maha Bodhi Society, Ven. Kolonnawe Pannasekhara, who too was staying there, got an attack of small pox. Without any fear for the deadly disease, Dhammadassi looked after the sick monk. But Pannasekhara Thera died and Dhammadassi himself contracted the disease. The

Secretary of the Maha Bodhi Society, Valisinha Devapriya, got a room in another building for Dhammadassi, and helped him a lot while he was in sick bed. However, Dhammadassi's condition was not very serious and he recovered soon.

By the time he recovered, Dhammadassi had received the money sent by Mahathun Ayiya and his next target was to get admission to Rabindranath Tagore's Santiniketan. Though he went to Santiniketan with new hopes, he was received there with much protest, for everybody there knew that he had come from Calcutta, where small pox had been rampant. The first to make an open protest was Udakendawala Saranankara Thera, who was a student there. He said: "Small pox in Calcutta. Small pox in Maha Bodhi. This monk who was a victim of the disease, has brought the germs to put all of us into trouble".

As his presence was not liked by anybody at Santiniketan, Dhammadassi was compelled to give up the hopes of Santiniketan dreams and return to Calcutta, after a few days.

Utterly disappointed and disheartened, Dhammadassi spent a few days at the Maha Bodhi Society, contemplating his fate and decided to return to Sri Lanka. He left Calcutta by train on February 16, 1926, and arrived in Colombo on February 20.

This unsuccessful Indian trip wasted about two months of Dhammadassi's life and a large sum of Mahathun Ayiya's hard-earned money.

However, these bitter experiences made Dhammadassi a more courageous man to face the future.

PARAGODA TO COLOMBO, AND DHAMMADASSI BECOMES RAHULA

After the abortive Indian trip Dhammadassi did not go to live in the forest hermitage. Instead, he tried to get used to the ordinary bhikkhu life at the Paragoda Temple. Yet, he was more or less a discontented man. His heart was now crying to go into the outside world, mingle with people who matter, and receive the highest possible education. So, he kept his eyes and ears focussed on the outside world.

One fine day, early in 1927, he noticed an advertisement calling for applications from young monks to join the Lanka Bauddha Dharmaduta Sabha at Rajagiriya near Colombo and serve as missionaries. Needless to say that Dhammadassi was one of the first to send in his application. A few weeks later, there was a written test and an interview at Ananda College in Colombo, at which Dhammadassi and Kudirippuwe Revatha Thera were placed first and second respectivaly. However, Revatha Thera had second thoughts and decided to continue as an indigenous medical practitioner, rather than joining the Dharmaduta Sabha. So, Dhammadassi left Paragoda

and came to Rajagiriya on the 4th of March 1927, and started the Buddhist missionary activities.

The Lanka Bauddha Dharmaduta Sabha was an organisation founded by the Ven. Heenatiyana Dhammaloka Thera. Its President was D.C. Senanayake, the elder brother of Sri Lanka's first Prime Minister, D. S. Senanayake. R. S. S. Gunawardene and M.D.A.Wijesinghe functioned as the Joint Secretaries.

Under the guidance of Dhammaloka Thera, Dhammadassi and other monks visited the slums and other areas in Colombo and its suburabs where the poorest of the poor lived. There, they delivered sermons based on the teachings of the Buddha and advised the people as to how they should solve their day to day problems. These missionary monks also visited the wards of the General Hospital in Colombo and attended to the neccessities of the patients. Some of the patients neither knew nor had the facilities to send even a letter to their relatives. The monks wrote the letters and posted them on behalf of the patients. In fact, it was these missionary monks who laid the foundation for today's Hospital Service, which is very successfully implemented under the guidance of Ven. Panwila Vipassi.

In the year 1928, Dhammadassi, who was then known as Walpola Dhammadassi Mahanaga, decided to change his name to Walpola Rahula.

"Because of my deep devotion to the Buddha, I decided to take the name of his son, Rahula," Ven. Rahula told me, explaining the reason for the change of name.

Before long, the activities of the Dharmaduta Sabha grew by leaps and bounds and expanded in a way unexpected even by its founder. To cope with the

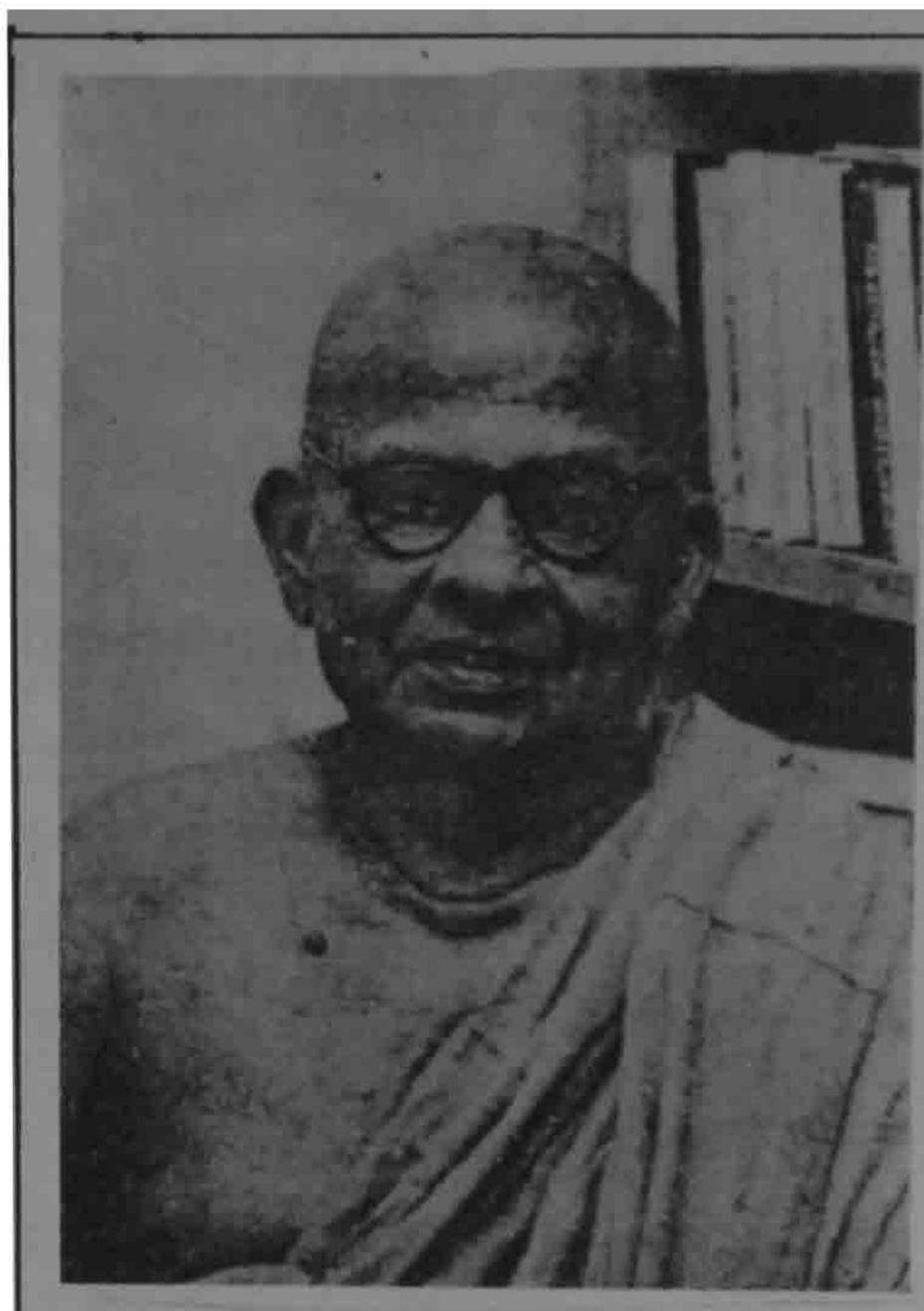
new situation D.C. Senanayake, President of the Sabha, constructed a new building at Kotte Road, Borella. When the building was completed Rahula Thera too moved into the new place, along with the other monks.

The rapid expansion of missionary work created big problems for Ven.Dhammaloka and other monks. Yet, they tried their best to cope with the new situation. Meanwhile, the great Buddhist revivalist, Anagarika Dharmapala, who was engaged in missionary work in India, passed away and the novices under his guadianship got stranded. It was suggested that Ven. Dhammaloka should proceed to India to look after the novices and continue the missionary work started by Dharmapala.

With the departure of Ven. Dhammaloka to India, the activities of the Dharmaduta Sabha came to a grinding halt. Yet, Rahula Thera remained at the same place and attended to his studies.

He went to Ven. Telwatte Sri Amarawansa, who lived in the nearby Gotami Vihara, once a week, to learn more Pali and Sanskrit. From the time of Ven. Dhammaloka, Ven. Rerukane Chandawimala Nayaka Thera, a leading authority on Abhidhamma, used to come to Borella from Horana once a week, to teach Abhidhamma to the young monks. This practice continued for some time, even after the Dharmaduta activetes were defunct, and Rahula Thera made the fullest use of that teaching too.

During his missionary work, Rahula Thera had to live for about one year at Nuwara Eliya, in the hills, to do missionary work there. During that period, he studied Pali further under the famous scholar monk Ven. Vidurupola Piyatissa Nayaka Thera, who lived in the Bambarakele Temple at Nuwara Eliya.



Heenatiyana Dhammaloka Thera

Rerukane Chandawimala Thera

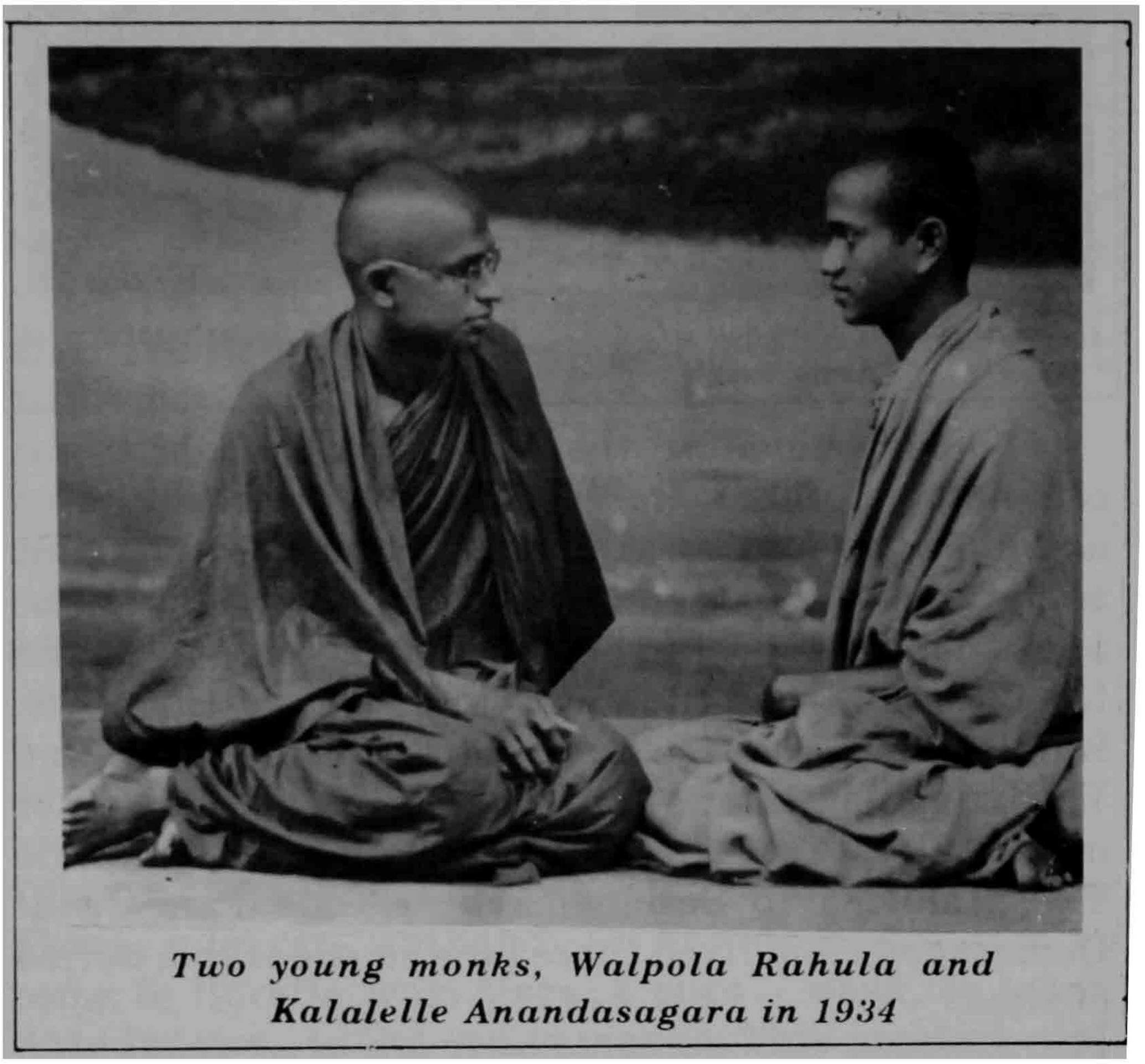
Some time after the Dharmaduta Sabha was completely defunct, Rahula Thera left that building and lived in a number of *avasas*, while continuing his self-studies. The Saugatavasaya at Slave Island was one such place. At that time Ven. Wekada Dheerananda was the monk in charge of the place. Kalalelle Anandasagara, S. Mahinda from Tibet and Yatihalagala Ratanajothi were some of the other monks who stayed there. From Slave Island, Rahula Thera shifted to Sailaramaya or Gale Pansala at Dematagoda and lived there for a considerable period of time.

The Buddha's words exhorting his disciples to go forth and work for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many had been echoing in Rahula Thera's ears, during his long study.

Rahula Thera, as a member of the Dharmaduta Movement, who strated preaching and explaining what the Buddha taught, by going from village to village, from house to house, and from temple to temple, in the twenties, had become a very popular preacher by the beginning of the thirtees. According

to his diary, he had delivered 250 sermons in the year 1927 alone.

In fact, Rahula Thera was a revolutionary even as a preacher. Normally, a monk would either recite a *gatha* from a Pali text and explain it or just relate something like a Jataka story as a sermon. But,



Two young monks, Walpola Rahula and Kalalelle Anandasagara in 1934

Rahula Thera was never satisfied with-that follow-the-herd attitude. He never left a place after delivering only one sermon. Instead, he stayed in that particular place for a whole week and went on preaching. He always tried to raise the intellectual standard of the listeners. So, on the first day he delivered a sermon, and then, devoted the second day to answer the listners' questions, arising out of the previous day's sermon. As a result, the listeners' response to Rahula Thera's sermons was excellent.

Once, Rahula Thera stayed in a temple at Eheliyagoda, for a whole week, and went on preaching to the villagers. During that week he visited a *Rodie Kuppayama*, a settement where the so-called outcast people lived, and accepted the alms offered by them. This created quite a uproar in the village. The chief monk of the temple was so annoyed, that he told the other monks that Rahula should not be given shelter in his temple any more, for the disgraceful thing he did. However, when Rahula Thera returned to the temple after creating history, the chief monk did not utter a single word against him. The *Rodiyas* were so moved by the kind act of the revolutionay monk, they pledged to abide by all the advice given by him. One was to refrain from alchohol. A number of drunkards prostrated near his feet and vowed not to drink toddy, thereafter.

Rahula Thera also started a fund to help the destitute people in the Eheliyagoda area, and many people volunteered to forego one meal a month and contribute the savings to the fund.

During the 1933-34 period, Rahula Thera, operating from Sailaramaya, Dematagoda, wrote a series of phamplets called *Satyodaya Patrika* and distributed the printed copies among the people. They were in question and answer form. Ruhula Thera gave answers and explainations to the questions said to have been asked by his listeners. When reading these pamphlets I am always reminded of the Penguin book which contains the questions asked by B. B. C.'s Woodrew Wyat from Lord Bertrand Russel and the answers given by the latter.

Ideas contained in the *Satyodaya Patrikas*, written by twenty-seven year old young Rahula, some fifty years ago, are not obsolete even today.

"You have taught us to think," was the candid

opinion expressed by the veteran poet and teacher G. H. Perera of Boralesgamuwa, who called on Rahula Thera after reading the *Satyodaya Patrikas* in the 'thirtees.

Satyodaya Patrikas are highly critical of some of the age-old practices followed in the name of Buddhism. For instance, Rahula Thera has criticised such practices as offering alms to Buddha statues, inviting deities to come and listen to sermons, offering *pirikara* or presents to preaching monks after a sermon and collecting contributions from the devotees, while the preaching is in progress, thus disturbing the attention of the genuine devotees. He has also vehemently attacked the caste system, prevailing among the Buddhist monks.

In 1992, S. Godage & Brothers, a leading Publishing House in Colombo, published all the *Satyodaya Patrikas* as a book called *Sathyodaya*. Prof. H. L. Seveviratne of the University of Virginia in the USA, has translated *Satyodaya* into English and the English version is expected to roll out of the press before long.

6

ASSOCIATION WITH LANKA GANDHI AND MEETING MAHATMA GANDHI FOR THE FIRST TIME

Walpola Rahula Thera, met Mahatma Gandhi, the great Indian leader, for the first time as far back as 1927 in Colombo. But, before coming to that I must introduce 'Lanka Gandhi', the number one disciple of Mahatma in Sri Lanka. Lanka Gandhi's real name was J. S. P. Jayawardhana or Steven Jayawardhana. Later, he was given the new name of Jayaramdas Jayawardhana by Mahatma Gandhi at Sabarmati Ashram in India.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the richest person who lived at Wellampitiya, in the Eastern border of the Colombo city, was J.S.P. Jaywardhana. Not because of a salary, but because of prestige, he joined the 'Ceylon Observer' as a sub-editor. From there, he shifted to the Ceylon Government Railway, as a staff officer.

Jayawardhana's life was a very luxurious one. His suits were tailored in London by the same tailor who made suits for the then Governor of Ceylon. He was a man famous for wining and dining. His home

was always full of friends who enjoyed his hospitality. Jayawardhana was married to a handsome young lady from a well-to-do family from Payiyagala, about 48 km. South of Colombo.

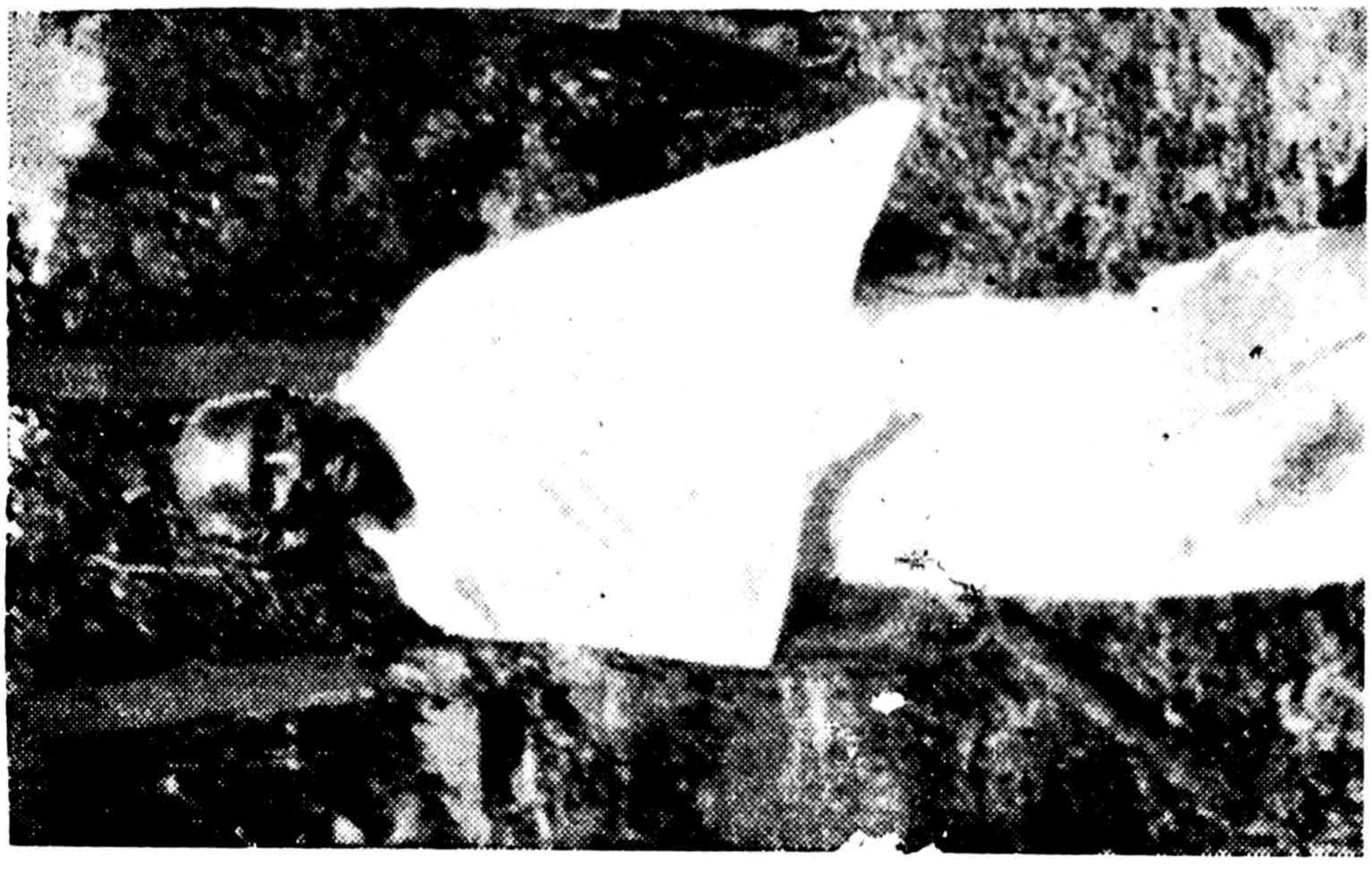
By the nineteen twenties, Mahatma Gandhi was the cynosure of all eyes, not only of the Asians but also of the Europeans, for he had intensified his campaign to win Swaraj or self rule for the Indians. In addition to the daily newspaper reports about Gandhi's activities, a number of books about Gandhi were selling like hot cakes in Colombo. Jayawardhana read all of them with great enthusiasm. As a result of constant reading about Gandhi, Jayawardhana became completely a changed man.

All of a sudden he became a vegetarian and a teetotaller. Then, he gave up the European costumes and started wearing the national dress. The dining and wining friends of Jayawardhana, who found that they had no place in the 'Wellampitiya Mansion', branded Jayawardhana as a man who had suddenly gone off his head, and drifted away.

However, Jayawardhana was not concerned about what his old friends or the villagers said, because he had already become a disciple of Gandhi. He decided to go to India to meet Gandhi and study his movement, and then to propagate it in Sri Lanka too.

By that time Mahatma Gandhi was living at Sabarmati Ashram which was popularly known as Satyagraha Ashram. To describe Sabarmati, I wish to quote a paragraph from Louis Fischer, the biographer of Mahatma Gandhi. Says Fischer:

Satyagraha Ashram was located first at Kochrab and then, permanently, at Sabarmati, across the Sabarmati river from the crowded city of Ahmedabad. There, rooted in the sand and soil and people of India,



Jayaramdas Jayawardhana
(Lanka Gandhi)

J. S. P. Jayawardhana

Gandhi grew to full stature. The ashram consisted of a group of low, whitewashed huts in a grove of spreading trees. Below the compound is the river in which women found their laundry on the flat stones and cows and buffaloes wade. All around, the scene is gently pastoral but nearby are twisted masses of closely packed slum dwellings huddling under the ugly smokestacks of the Ahmedabad textile factories whose owners financed the Ashram. Gandhi's room was about the size of a cell. Except for intervals in prison, Gandhi lived in that cell for sixteen years. Some of the most

Mahatma Gandhi with Jawaharlal Nehru

active leaders of the independence movement began their political careers at the feet of Mahatma at Sabarmati. The population of the settlement fluctuated from 30 at the start to 230 at its maximum. They tended and taught in the surrounding villages. An air of soft repose and tranquillity still hovered over the ashram when I visited it in 1948, a decade and half

after Gandhi had moved elsewhere. (Gandhi - His Life and Message for the World by Louis Fischer, New American Library, 1960, Page 55)

Jayawardhana, along with his wife and children, travelled all the way to India to meet Gandhi. He told Mahatma that he had come with his family to live there as Mahatma's disciples.

But, Gandhi had a sarcastic laugh and said: "You have taken a great leap," and asked Jaywardhana to get back to Sri Lanka with his family. He thought that Jayawardhana's overenthusiasm would wane in a few days' time and return home.

Yet, Jayawardhana was adamant and said: "I will not leave this place without studying your great movement". Saying so, he spent a whole shivery night under a tamarind tree with the family, covering their bodies with warm blankets.

On the following morning when Gandhi heard about Jayawardhana's adventure, he realised that the man was of genuine determination and asked his assistants to find a suitable room for the Jayawardhana family.

After making the family comfortable, Gandhi had a discussion with them. Finding that most of them had English names, Gandhi advised them to give them up and suggested new names. Accordingly, John Steven Perera Jayawardhana became Jayaramdas Jayawardhana while his wife Margaret became Mangaladevi. The eldest son Hermon was given the name Haridas.

After spending about six months at Sabarmati Ashram, Jayawardhana and his family learnt not only Gandhian philosophy, but also his crafts such as spinning and weaving.

On his return from India, Jayawardhana threw out all the luxury items in the Wellampitiya house and asked the passers-by to take them away. He retained only the utility items necessary for a simple life. Then, he converted the house into a full-fledged Gandhi Ashram and named it Udyoga Mandira. The ordinary people named him, Lanka Gandhi.

On hearing about Lanka Gandhi and his new movement, one of the first to go to Wellampitiya and cultivate a friendship was Walpola Rahula Thera who was staying at Dharmaduta Ashramaya at Rajagiriya. Two other youths who became close disciples of Lanka Gandhi, at the very beginning, were E.W. Adikaram from Wellampitiya and Bodhipala Waidyasekara who contested J. R. Jayewardene at Kelaniya in the General Elections in 1947, as the Samasamaja candidate.

One day Lanka Gandhi alias Jayaramdas Jayawardhana told Rahula Thera that he intended to start a newspaper in order to propagate his movement and to awaken the ordinary masses to fight for freedom from the British. With the help of Rahula Thera, Jayawardhana raised a fund and bought a small printing press. On the advice of Mahatma Gandhi, the press was named "Nawa Jeewana" while the paper was named *Nawa Jeewanaya*. Jayawardhana functioned as the editor while Rahula Thera and Adikaram assisted him. In the meantime, Jayawardhana entrusted Rahula Thera with the responsibility of teaching Pali, Sanskrit and Sinhala to his children.

The youngest son of Jayaramdas Jayawardhana, who runs the Subhadra Press at Wellampitiya, has clear memories of some of the incidents after his father became Lanka Gandhi.

According to him, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, on his way back from Oxford, after completing his educa-

tion, had broken journey in India to meet Mahatma Gandhi. Bandaranaike had told Gandhi that he wished to start a movement based on the Gandhian principles in Sri Lanka too, and requested for Gandhi's blessings.

"Jayaramdas Jayawardhana has started a similar movement in Ceylon. Please go to Wellampitiya and meet him. He will be able to help you," was Gandhi's advice.

A few days after returning home, Bandaranaike went to Wellampitiya to meet Jayawardhana. In the front yard of Udyoga Mandira a man clad only in a loincloth, was busy planting cotton seeds.

"How can I meet Mr. Jayaramdas Jayawardhana?" inquired Bandaranaike from the man.

"Please go in and be seated. He will come in a little while," said the man.

After taking a wash and wearing a white cloth, Jayawardhana appeared before Bandaranaike, and the latter was amazed to find that the man who had been in loincloth was Jayaramdas Jayawardhana.

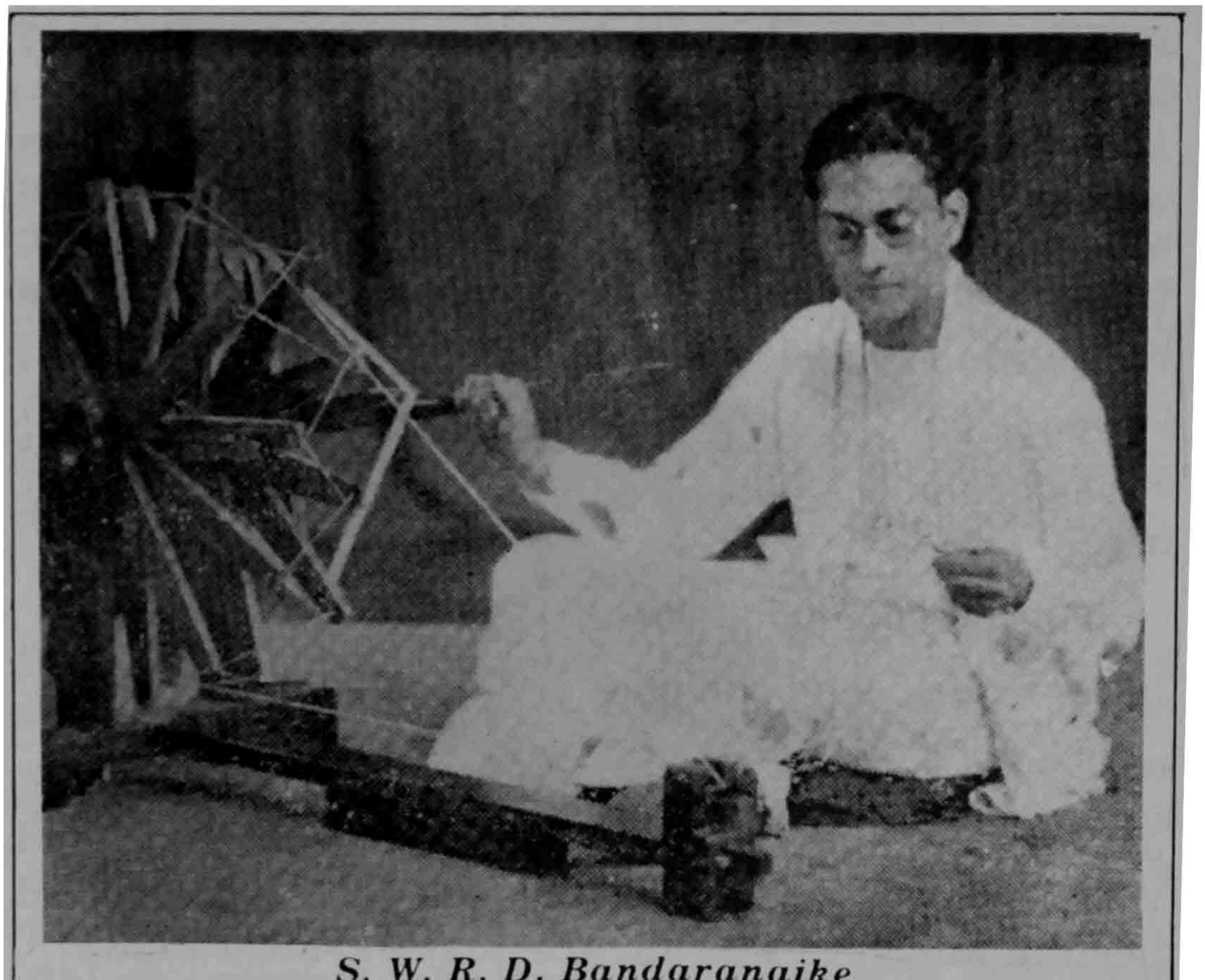
During the discussion, Bandaranaike asked many questions about Jayawardhana's movement, while the latter inquired as to what the young barrister was planning to do. At the end of the discussion Bandaranaike said that he had decided to become a follower of Lanka Gandhi.

After that the first thing Bandaranaike did was to discard all European costumes and to start wearing the national dress. All his luxury suits brought from England were burnt in a bonfire at Wellampitiya.

"Actually, some of those trousers and coats did

not burn well, because they were made out of very expensive woolen material", Jayawardhana used to tell, recalling that incident.

Bandaranaike learnt spinning and weaving at the feet of Lanka Gandhi, and propagated it in the Siyane Korale area. Though he was a very active and



S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike

loyal disciple of Lanka Gandhi for a considerable period of time, he was bitten by the political bug, and was itching to drift towards party politics. And, ultimately, he became a full time politician, without heeding the advice of Lanka Gandhi. (Incidentally, it is an irony of fate that the second son of Jayawardhana, namely, H. P. Jayawardhana, was found guilty of conspiring to assassinate Bandaranaike in later years and served a prison sentence.)

In 1927, Mahatma Gandhi decided to pay a visit to Sri Lanka. The intention of his visit was to explain to the Lankan people about India's struggle for free-

dom ánd to collect money for the movement. Arrangements were made to accommodate Gandhi and his party in a house at Rajagiriya, close to the present Impala Theatre. Its owner was a Hindu Tamil from Jaffna. While Gandhi was in Sri Lanka, Jayaramdas served as the master-in-attendance. Anybody who wished to see Gandhi had to get an appointment from Jayaramdas, first.

For the first time, Walpola Rahula Thera too got the opportunity of meeting Mahatma Gandhi on that occasion. The leader of his party to meet Gandhi was Ven. Heenatiyana Dhammaloka. Beside Rahula Thera, the other monks of the party were Talpawila Seelawansa, Kalalelle Anandasagara and Hindagala Seelaratana. They told Gandhi about national, social and religious activities they were doing in Sri Lanka, and Gandhi was much impressed. He praised their good work and gave his blessing for its future success.

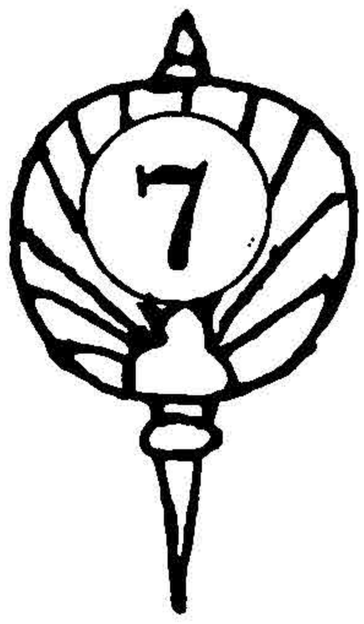
Jayaramdas Jayawardhana who was engaged in an immense service to Sri Lanka, as Lanka Gandhi, was shocked to hear the havoc caused by the malaria epidemic in the thritees. When hundreds of people were dying daily, Jayawardhana went to Kegalla area along with a band cf volunteers and did everything possible to save the lives. Opening of temporary hospitals helped to bring down the death rate.

Jayawardhana exchanged letters constantly with Gandhi about the epidemic situation in Sri Lanka. In one letter Gandhi had inquired about the necessary help, and Jayawardhana at once wrote back to say that the scarcity of doctors was the biggest problem. But, even before the letter reached Gandhi, Jayawardhana too became a victim to the deadly disease. All supporters appealed to him to go back to Wellapmpitiya and get necessary treatment.

"How can I go home and sleep in a bed, while

hundreds of innocent people are dying here daily?" asked Jayawardhana, and remained in Kegalla, while suffering from acute malaria of the brain.

Ultimately, on October 6, 1936, the name of Jayaramdas Jayawardhana, who was popularly known as Lanka Gandhi, was added to the malaria death-list at Kegalla. He was 49, then.



MEETING KRISHNAMURTI

Walpola Rahula Thera was one of the few Sri Lankans who had the opportunity of associating with Krishnamurti, very closely. He first met this world-renowned philosopher in 1934, in Colombo.

At that time, Dr. S. A. Wickramasinghe, the Communist Leader, was living in a house called "Anandagiri" at Maradana, close to Ananda Balika Vidyalaya. His wife, Doreen, was the Principal of that girls' school.

Krishnamurti was due in Sri Lanka in January, 1934. A group of local intellectuals had arranged a series of discussions with the philosopher at "Anandagiri", on January 22, 23 and 24. Rahula Thera too had received an invitation from Dr. Wickramasinghe.

Among those present at the opening session were Marxist Leaders like Philip Gunawardhane and Dr. N. M. Perera. There was also a devout Hindu by the name of K. Ramachandra, who was the Chief Ac-

countant of the Ceylon Government Railway, at that time.

When Krishnamurti made the oepning address explaining his philosophy, the first to criticise him was Philip Gunawardhane. He said Krishnamurti's philosophy was a misguided one which went against modern science.

Dr. N. M. Perera

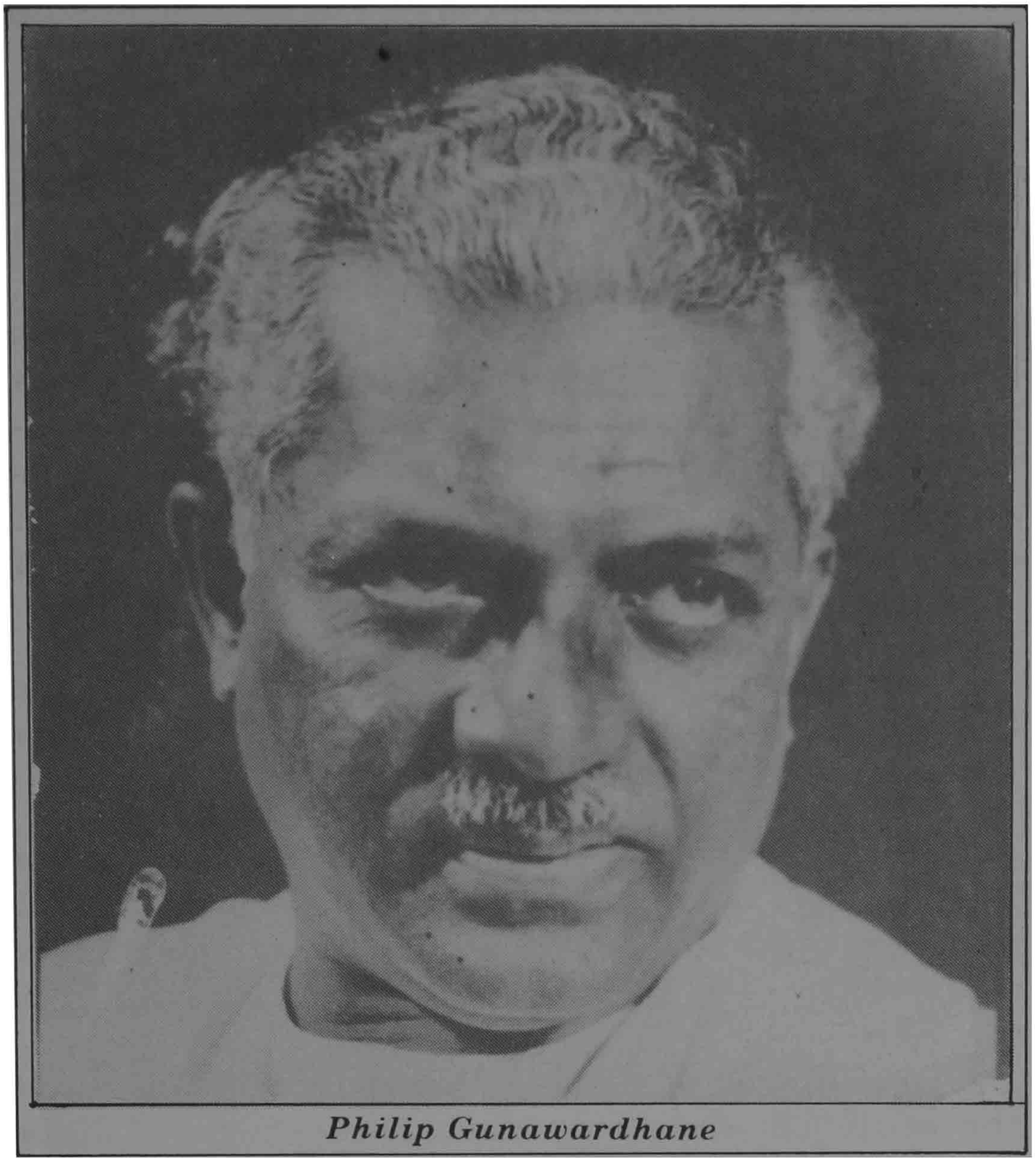
Dr. S. A. Wickramasinghe

In one place, Philip described Krishnamurti as 'unscientific'.

"All right, I am an idiot, and you are a scientific man," said Krishnamurti in his usual mild tone.

When Philip dominated the show on the second day too, the participants were rather disappointed. But, no one dared to utter a word against the roaring lion from Boralugoda. That evening, Philip went to meet Rahula Thera at his *avasa* at Dematagoda, and the latter told him that some of the participants were disappointed, for Philip was not allowing them to listen to Krishnamurti.

"How can I keep my mouth shut and listen to that fool of a philosopher?" asked Philip.



Philip Gunawardhane

On the third day too, Philip clashed with Krishnamurti. In one place he pointed his finger towards Krishnamurti and said: "You are a hypocrite"

Then, Ramachandra intervened and asked why create unneccessary problems and waste time.

Krishnamurti turned towards Ramachandra and said: "Let him satisfy himself".

At that stage, Philip got up and walked out of the room, burning with anger. Thereafter, Krishnamurti

resumed his talk, as if nothing had happened, and all the participants listened very attentively.

During the time Krishnamurti was staying in Sri Lanka, Rahula Thera got the opportunity to have private discussions with him. Incidentally, by that time, Rahula Thera was under fire by various people, for the views expressed in his *Satyodaya Patrikas*. He was branded a man who expressed ideas contrary to those of traditional Buddhists. One of the revolutionary ideas in *Satyodaya Patrikas* was that it was all wrong to do good deeds with the sole hope of collecting merit, and Rahula Thera asked Krishnamuthi for his views on that.

"It is an utterly selfish act to do good deeds for the purpose of collecting more and more merit," was Krishnamurti's reply.

As Krishnamurti was getting ready to leave the Island, Rahula Thera had one final discussion with him, and requested to write something to be kept as a souvenir.

"*Meditation of the heart is understanding*" was the sentence written by Krishnamurti for Rahula Thera.

Krishnmurti and Rahula, who came to know of each other for the first time in Colombo, in 1934, became intimate friends in later years. They met in the USA, France, England and other countries and discussed various philosophical matters.

Once at "Brockwood Park", England, Krishnamurti had a discussion with a number of other intellectuals, where Rahula Thera made the following observation: "All that you have written in your books is found in Buddhism. To those who know Buddhism, there is nothing new in what you say".

Rahula Thera with Krishnamurti in USA

"Why are you trying to compare all these?" asked Krishnamurti.

"I am not comparing."

"But, if you didn't know Buddhism, how could you have reacted?"

"That position does not exist"

"Yes, you are right," admitted Krishnamurti.

"You say that you haven't read anything about any religion or philosophy. If so, how do you react to those teachings?" was another question posed by Rahula Thera, to which Krishnamurti preferred to evade replying.

In 1983, at the Krishnamurti Foundation in Ojai in California, Rahula Thera had a heart to heart discussion with Krishnamurti, while seated together on his bed. During that discussion Rahula Thera asked the following question from Krishnamurti:

"In your opinion, who is the religious teacher who realized the truth?"

"No doubt, it was the Buddha. No other teacher can come near him," was the candid reply of Krishnamurti.

"It is a fact that Krishnamurti had the greatest faith in the Buddha. But, he never said so in public," maintains Rahula Thera.

The last discussion between Rahula Thera and Krishnamurti took place at "Brockwood Park" in England, a few months before the latter's ultimate departure from this world.

8

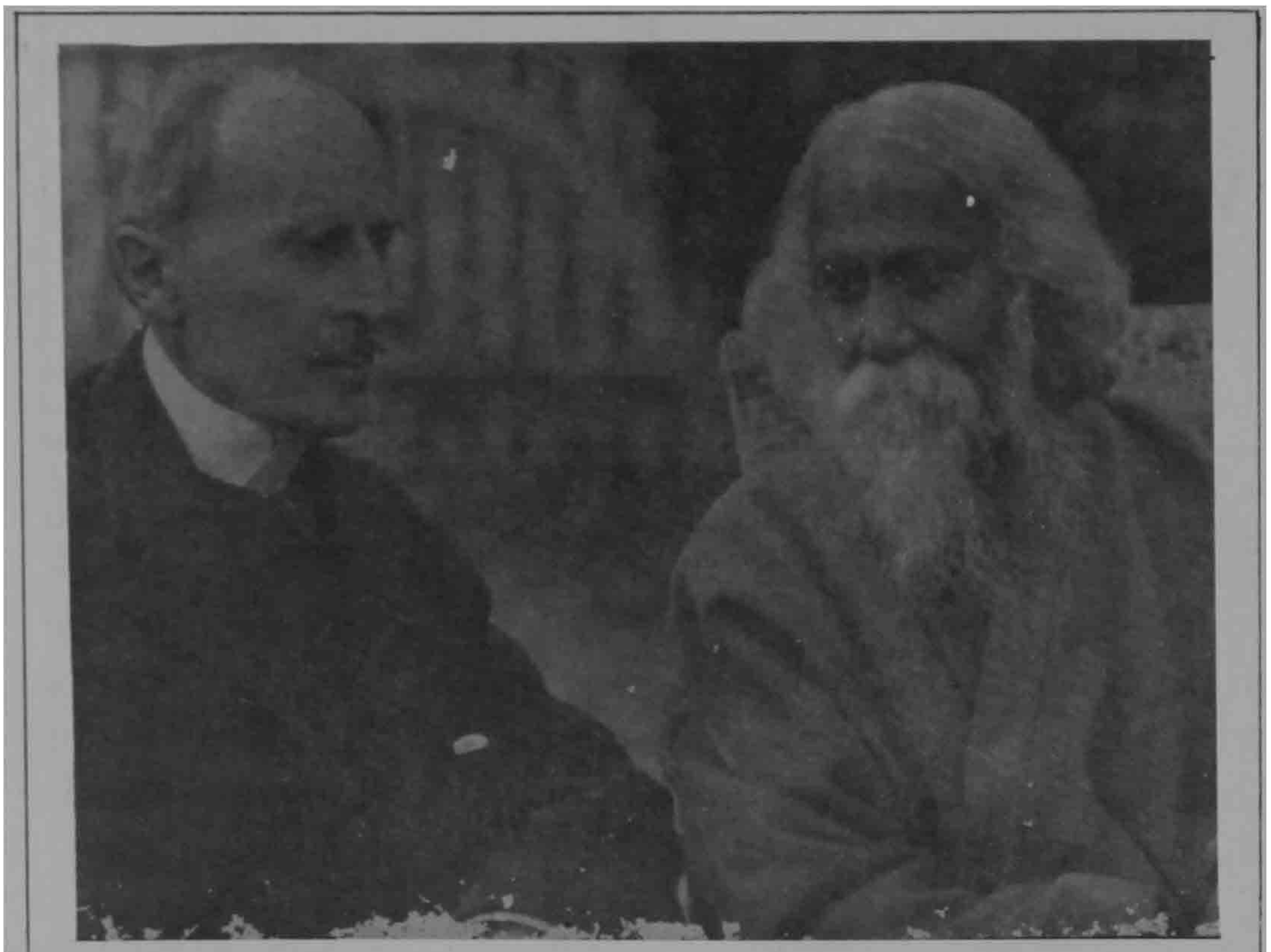
WITH RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND HIS PUPILS

In 1925, when Rahula Thera went to Santiniketan, he did not get a chance to meet and talk to Rabindranath Tagore, because he had to leave the place amidst the protests of some Sri Lankan monks who were there. Yet, Rahula Thera had discovered the great poet and his Santiniketan by constant reading and discussion.

Mahatma Gandhi is regarded as the greatest man born in India after the Buddha. Next to Gandhi is Rabindranath Tagore. Gandhi's biographer, Louis Fischer, who lived in India for several years and associated both Gandhi and Tagore, has this to say about the two unique men:

Tagore and Gandhi were the two outstanding Indians of the first half of the twentieth century. They revered one another. Tagore wept at seeing India "the eternal ragpicker at other people's dustbins," an emotion Gandhi shared, and he prayed, as did Mahatma, for "the magnificient harmony of all human races." They were nationalists yet internationalists, senti-

mentally inseparable, and soulmates to the end. But they were also deeply different and waged frequent verbal battles. Gandhi was frugal, Tagore prodigal; Gandhi the emaciated ascetic with shaven head and face, Tagore the large, white-maned, white bearded, rich aristocrat-intellectual with visage of classic beauty; Gandhi the rice field, Tagore the rose garden; Gandhi the general, Tagore the herald; Gandhi the



Rabindranath Tagore and French writer Romain Rolland, who won the Nobel prize for literature, in 1913 and 1915 respectively, having a pleasant chat in Switzerland

working arm, Tagore the singing voice. Gandhi sat, so to speak, in a market place crisscrossed by tens of millions of persons with their carts, cares, wares and thoughts, but he sat still and within him there was peace. He would have suffocated in an ivory tower or on an Olympian height, whereas Tagore said, "if I hear a song, my sitar can catch the melody, and I can join the chorus, for I am the singer. But in the mad clamour of the crowd, my voice is lost, and I become dizzy.... (Gandhi - His life and Message for the World

With Rabindranath Tagore....

by Louis Fishcher, New American Library, 1960, pp. 50, 51)

In May 1934, Rabindranath Tagore was sheduled to visit Sri Lanka. On making further inquiries, Rahula Thera learnt that Tagore was coming with a group of students on an invitation extended by Wilmot A. Perera of Horana, when the latter visited Santiniketan sometime earlier. In the meantime, Rahula Thera received a letter from his friend Kalalelle Anandasagara Thera, who was a student of Satiniketan at that time. In that letter, Anandasagara Thera said that one of his very good Indian friends, namely, Nandalal Bose, the famous artist, was accompanying Tagore, and Rahula Thera should meet him and do everything possible to make his stay in Sri Lanka a pleasant one.

Wilmot A. Perera was busy in making arrangements to accommodate Tagore and his party during their stay in Sri Lanka. When he met D. R. Wijewardene, the Proprietor of the Lake House Group of newspapers, the latter agreed to reserve one of his mother's houses on the sea beach at Kollupitiya. That was a house close to Galle Face Hotel, which housed the American Embassy in later years. Mrs. Doreen Wickramasinghe, Principal of Ananda Balika Vidyalaya, Maradana, took special interest and made arrangements for Santiniketan students to stay in her school building. In addition to these two places, Wilmot's bungalow at the Hegalla Estate, Horana, and his ancesstral home, "Swarnagiri" at Panandura, were kept reserved. It is of special significance that Tagore and the whole party, were easily accomodated in "Swarnagiri", for a number of days during the latter part of their stay. That huge mansion which comprises some thirty - odd rooms, is a part of Sri Sumangala Girls' School, Panadura, today.

On May 9, 1934, Rabindranath Tagore and his party of about forty, arrived at the Colombo Harbour on the s.s. Inchanga. Leader of the House, Sir D. B. Jayatillake, and Mayor of Colombo, W. L. Murphy, were at the jetty to welcome the Indian poet. Next to Tagore, the other most important person in the party was Nandalal Bose.

During the visit of Tagore, there were exhibitions of Santiniketan paintings and staging of the drama, "Shap Mochan" (Redemption). Tagore also recited his poems at the YMBA and the YMCA in Colombo and spoke in Colombo, Jaffna, Kandy, Horana and Panadura.

The main purpose of Tagore's visit was to lay the foundation stone for Wilmot A. Perera's new educational institute, a scale model of Santiniketan. On May 20, 1934, Tagore visited Horana, laid the foundation stone and named the new institute Sri Palee. (Sri - the Goddess of Beauty and Palee - where she reigns).

While Rabindranath Tagore was in Sri Lanka, Rahula Thera kept aside all other work, and moved with the poet and his pupils. He knew personally, not only Wilmot A. Perera, who invited Tagore, but also the others who played a leading role in making the visit a success, such as Dr. S. A. Wickramasinghe, D. B. Dhanapala, Dr. Gunapala Malalasekera, Dr. N. M. Perera and D. C. Wijewardene. They all helped Rahula Thera to be in close touch with Tagore.

When the renowned painter, Muddliyar A. C. G. S. Amarasekera, was doing a portrait of Tagore in oil paint, Rahula Thera was in conversation with the poet. "His voice was very mild. Sometimes, I felt like caressing his white beard, which looked like a heap of pure white cotton wool," reminisced Rahula Thera to me.

With Rabindranath Tagore....

When requested to write something as a souvenir, Tagore wrote the following sentence for Rahula Thera: *"We express the eternal in moments that are true."*

Rahula Thera hosted Nandalal Bose and his pupils to a lunch at Dr. E. W. Adikaram's residence at Nugegoda. It was all a vegetarian lunch. At the end of the lunch, Bose fumbled at his waist under the

Nandala Bose's painting for Rahula Thera

banian and pulled out a small brush, a phial of ink and a piece of paper. "I must present something to Rahulji as a souvenir," said the artist and began to paint something, then and there. The job was completed in a matter of mintues and Bose presented it to Rahula Thera, amidst the applause of the others present. The painting depicted the Buddha attending on a sick monk called Putigattatissa. Ruhula Thera was so pleased that he showed it to his friends with much pride. When D. B. Dhanapala saw it he got it published in a number of newspapers. That particular painting by Nandalal Bose, still adorns Rahula Thera's study.

By the time Tagore visited Sri Lanka, Rahula Thera had made an intimate friend in famous singer Hubert Rajapaksha. Hubert was a son of Mudaliyar Tudor Rajapaksha, who owned the famous Mansion, Maha Kappinna Walawwa at Balapitiya. Though the father sent Hubert to Oxford for higher education, he paid more attention to music and singing, neglecting university education. On his return from England, Hubert wanted to learn Sinhala from Rahula Thera. However, he was not a keen student and preferred to enjoy music.

Singing Hubert Rajapaksha, who lived a luxurious life in the mansion called "Gatherum" at Maradana, liked, loved and respected Rahula Thera a lot. He was a generous man with a large heart.

When the whole country was talking and praising music in Tagore's "Shap Mochan", Hubert was longing to meet those Santiniketan artistes. When he told about his wish, Rahula Thera invited a number of Shap Mochan artistes to "Gatherum". Hubert arranged a grand reception for them.

D. C. Wijewardene, the Trustee of the historic Kelaniya Temple, wanted to get Nandalal Bose to do

the murals in the newly constructed wing of the vihara. But, Bose said that he was not in a position to stay in Sri Lanka for such a long time. However, he volunteered to find a talented artist from Sri Lanka, who was capable of handling the job. So, during his spare time, Bose visited a number of viharas, in the company of D. B. Dhanapala, and had a close look at the murals. Ultimately, he discovered a genius, through the murals in a vihara in Negombo area. The insignificant artist who had painted those murals was one Soliyas Mendis.

After tracing Soliyas Mendis, D. C. Wijewardene sent him to India for a study tour, as suggested by Bose. During that tour Mendis studied the frescoes at famous Ajanta, Ellora and Bhag, and then, spent some time as a student of Bose, at Santiniketan.

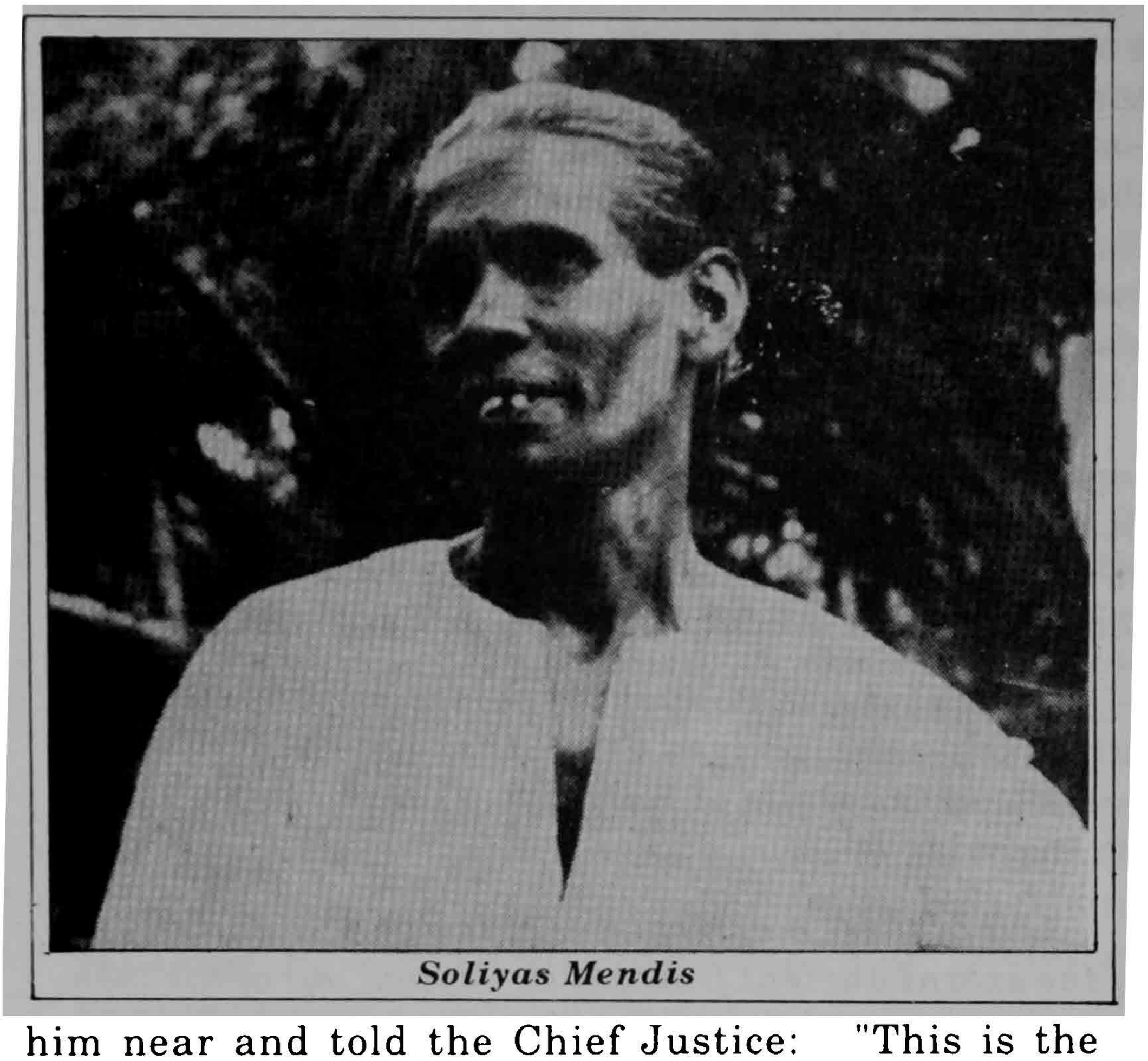
On his return, Soliyas Mendis created history by introducing the 'Soliyas Style' through the immortal murals on the walls of Kelaniya Vihara. Says D. B. Dhanapala:

Out of these masterpieces of the past in India, out of the extant ancient frescoes in Ceylon, out of his own imagination and out of the historical tradition of the Sinhalese, Soliyas Mendis re-created in modern Ceylon something of his own on the walls of Kelaniya Temple for nearly twenty years.

These pictures painted at Kelaniya may be considered the best work done in Ceylon since the Polonnaruwa period, if not Sigiriya. (Among those Present, D. B. Dhamapala, M. D. Gunasena & Co. Ltd., 1962, p. 182)

During the colonial days, a Chief Justice came to Kelaniya Temple to see Soliyas Mendis's murals. Those days monks with a good knowledge of English were rare, and Rahula Thera had to rise for such occasions and serve as guide and interpreter.

The Englishman was highly pleased over the murals, and Rahula Thera thought he would be much pleased to meet the unique creator. Mendis was standing a few yards away, and Rahula Thera called



Soliyas Mendis

him near and told the Chief Justice: "This is the great artist who created these murals". The Englishman had only one glance at the simple villager in sarong and banian and looked away, without uttering a single word about the artist.

Some time after that, Prof. B. M. Barua of Calcutta University, who was Rahula Thera's teacher, came to Vidyalankara Pirivena for a lecture. He visited Kelaniya Temple too. As usual, Rahula Thera served as the guide and interpreter. When it appeared that Barua was highly taken up with the murals, Rahula Thera asked: "Would you like to see the artist behind these creations?".

"Why not? Why not? If I get that opportunity, it will be one of the happiest moments in my life," replied Barua.

"This is the artist who painted these murals," said Rahula Thera and showed Soliyas Mendis.

Barua, as if in a trance, looked straight at Mendis' face for a few seconds and then stepped forward and embraced the simple rustic.

9

APPEARANCE OF THE BUDDHA AT KUSINARA

In 1934, when Rahula Thera was staying at Sailaramaya, Dematagoda, a group of devotees invited him to join them on a pilgrimage to India. Their main request was for him to explain to them the significance of various places in the land of the Buddha. As such, Rahula Thera had to do some home work before leaving for India. He re-read a number of books on the life of the Buddha, especially, the *Maha-Parinibbana Sutta,* to refresh his memories.

Leaving Sri Lanka, Rahula Thera and the party arrived in Benares in India on December 24, 1934, and spent two days there. During that time Rahula Thera went to Kasi Vidya Pitha and met the Sri Lankan monks, Narawila Dhammaratana, Bambarende Siri Seevali and Mapitigama Sangharakkhita, who were students there. Lal Bahadur, who succeeded Jawaharlal Nehru as the Prime Minister of India, was also a student of the Kasi Vidya Pitha at the time. Says Rahula Thera:

"His name was only Lal Bahadur and 'Shastri' was the degree he obtained from Kasi Vidya Pitha. It is not a surname. Saying Lal Bahadur Shastri is like saying Bambarende Siri Seevali Shastri or Narawila Dhammaratana Shastri."

At the Kasi Vidya Pitha, Rahula Thera got the rare opportunity of meeting and talking to the great scholar, Dr. Narendradeva, who was the Principal there.

Bambarende Siri Seevali Thera and Mapitigama Sangharakkhita Thera also joined Rahula Thera to go on the pilgrimage. On December 26, the party was due to visit Kusinara, where the Buddha passed away in the Sal grove of the Malla kings. It is said that the Buddha who foresaw the moment of his death, had asked his disciples to prepare a bed under the 'sal trees. There, he lay in the *Sinha Seyya* (lion's posture), and breathed his last.

After the cremation of the body, there arose a big dispute over the bodily relics of the Buddha. King Ajatasattu of Magadha, Lichchavis of Vesali, Sakyas of Kapilavatthu, Bulis of Allakappa, Koliyas of Ramagama, Mallas of Pava and a Brahmin from Vethadipa were the claimants to the relics. But, the Mallas of Kusinara maintained, that as the Buddha passed away and was cremated in their territory, there was no neccessity to give any portion of the remains to any other party.

Tension mounted and there was every possibility of the dispute leading to a war, when a Brahmin called Dona intervened. He said that it was not proper to quarrel over the remains of such a great teacher who taught forbearance to the world. Then, all the quarrelling parties said in one voice, that Dona should measure the relics into eight portions and hand them over to the eight parties.

Dona, who did an excellent job in settling the dispute, took only the empty measure he used to divide relics, and erected a stupa over it. (One story says that Dona stealthily hid a tooth relic in his head-dress, but, God Sakra took it away!) Moriyas of Pippalawana, who came late to claim a portion of the relics, took the charcoal from the pyre and built a stupa over them. That came to be known as the Angara Chethiya or the charcoal chethiya.

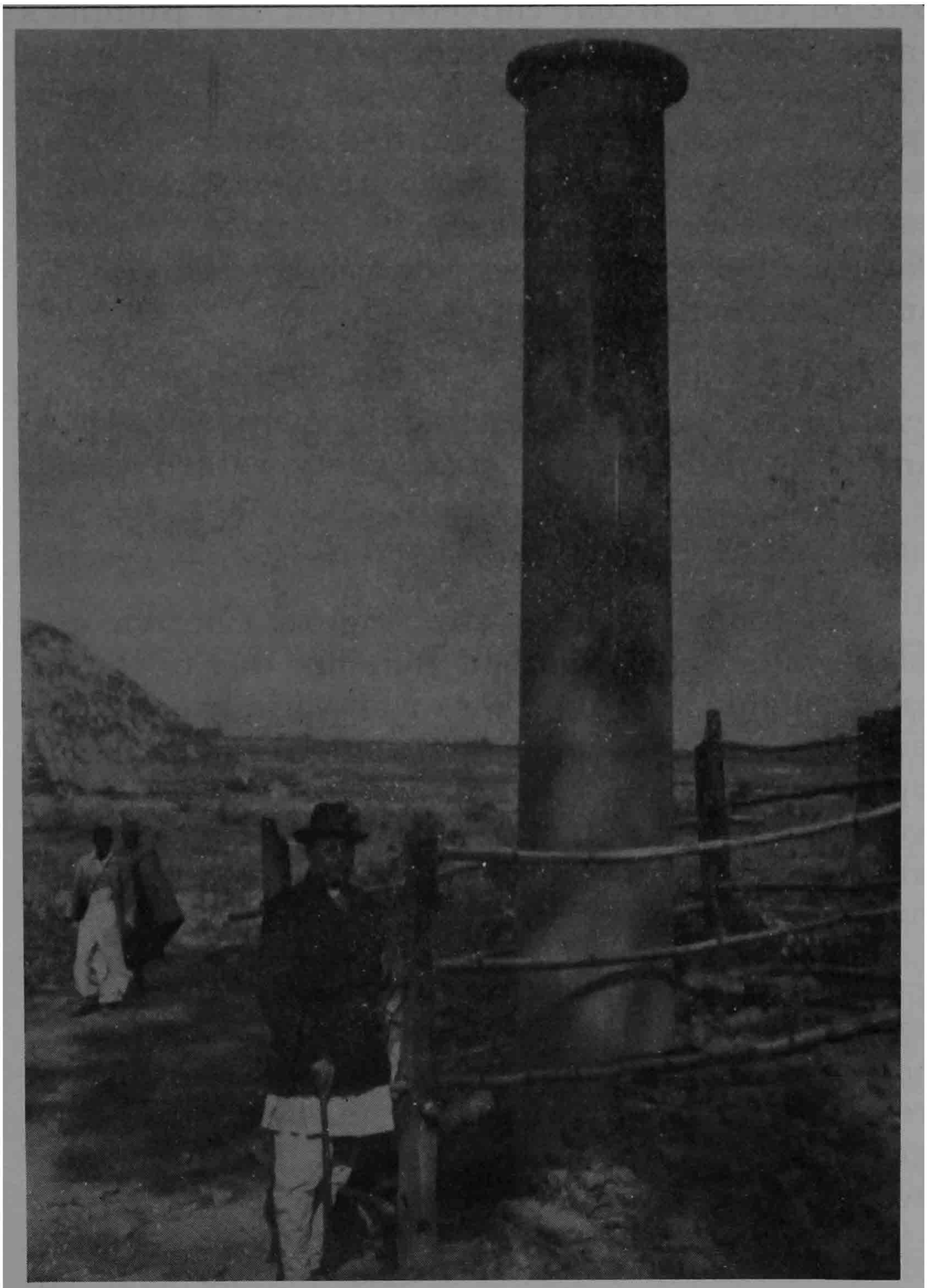
Commenting on Dona's action, Rahula Thera said that in Buddhist literature, Dona was the first person to use the term 'Our Buddha'. When requested to enlarge on it, Rahula Thera had this to say:

"In the Nineteen Seventies, A. K. Narayan, who was the Professor of History at the Wisconsin University in the USA, had inquired from Miss I. B. Horner, President of the Pali Text Society in London, whether there was the term, 'Our Buddha' found anywhere in the Tripitaka. Miss Horner in turn, sought my assistance, and I said that it was Brahmin Dona who used the term *Amhaka Buddho*, meaning, "Our Buddha' for the first time. The full stanza found in the *Maha-Parinibbana Sutta* is as follows:

Sunantu bhonto mama ekavakyam
Amhaka Buddho ahu khantivado
Nahi sadhuyam uttamapuggalassa
Sarirabhage siya sampaharo

That means: "Gracious Sirs, listen to a word from me. Forbearance was what our Buddha used to teach. It is unseemly that over the division of the remains of him, who was the best of beings, strife should arise."

In Kusinara, Rahula Thera was extremely pleased that he could go round the place where the Buddha



Asoka Pillar at Lumbini. When Rahula Thera photographed it, the then Commander-in-Chief of Nepal, who was on a visit, volunteered to pose for the picture.

passed away. He was brimming with love and devotion for the Enlightened One.

After visiting the Parinirvana Manchaka, the party had to walk across a field to go to Angara Chetiya. Though it was said that Angara Chetiya was

built on the charcoal collected from the Buddha's funeral pyre, there was no chetiya to be seen there by that time. Many years ago, when the chetiya collapsed due to neglect, devotees had started collecting plaster and earth to take away with them, presuming that they were the remnants of charcoal. As this practice went on for years, eventually, the site became a big and hollow pit.

As a result of seeing all these, Rahula Thera's devotion and respect to the Buddha increased a thousandfold. While the rest of the party walked ahead, he lagged behind. As a solitary walker, he was analysing the *Maha-Parinibbana Sutta*.

The field between the Angara Chetiya and Parinirvana Manchaka had gone dry due to the severe drought. Rahula Thera walked in the hot sun and came to the middle of the field. Then, there appeared the Buddha before him. The distance between the two was about ten yards. However, that particular Buddha was quite different from the Buddha he had visualised according to books.

"The Buddha who appeared before me was a person with a slim, tall and erect body. Contrary to the descriptions given in books, his hair was slightly grey. There was a walking-stick in one hand. Though aged, he was quite hale and hearty. The serenity of the figure was beyond description."

"What did you do on seeing the Buddha?" I asked.

"This is the Buddha, I concluded. Then, at once, I prostrated on the dry field and worshipped him. And, when I got up the Buddha had disappeared," said Rahula Thera, and remained silent for a few seconds and then added: "Because of the sheer joy in seeing the Buddha, I didn't eat anything for the whole day".

Arguing himself on the incident, Rahula Thera said: "How can the Buddha appear before me some two thousand-odd years after his death, is the question that one can raise here. But, as a result of boundless love and devotion to the Buddha, there is every possibility of a mental figure becoming a reality".

"Have you ever experienced such a miracle, before or after that?" I asked.

"No, never in my life. When I was living in forest hermitages, and, sometimes meditating in caves like Wessagiriya, I always wished and prayed for any deities to appear before me. But, I have never seen a deity, demon or a ghost. During the whole of my life I have seen only the Buddha," replied Rahula Thera.

In later years, while in conversation with Dr. Gunapala Malalasekera, Rahula Thera related this experience to him. But, Malalasekera did not take it seriously and said: "Most probably, it must have been a sun-stroke while walking in the hot sun".

However, Krishnmurti's reaction to the incident was quite different. He described it as a very rare and mysterious happening. "Many years ago, I also saw the Buddha. But, I can't remember the details now," he added.

A few days after returning from India, Rahula Thera went to Walpola to find out about the health of his aged mother and to transfer the merits of his pilgrimage to her. By that time, six years had passed since the death of his father. He had died on July 22, 1929, at the age of 81.

Incidentally, Rahula Thera has a vivid recollection of one particular event that took place shortly before his father's death. One day in 1929, when Rahula Thera had gone to Walpola from Colombo, Wadu Ayiya (one of his elder brothers), had taken the

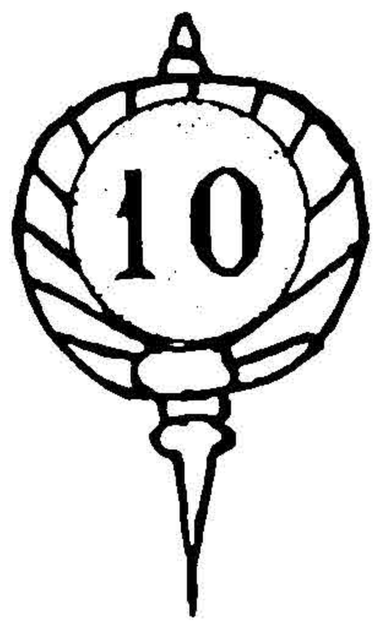
father to the front yard for dressing his wound. Seated on a low stool in the sun, the father was uprooting the grass around, while Wadu Ayiya attended to the wound. On seeing what the father was doing, Wadu Ayiya asked: "Father, you are not well. Why do you take the trouble to uproot grass?"

"Even if a king is certain that he is going to get defeated by the enemies tomorrow, does he give up governing his country today?" was the counter question posed by the father.

"This particular incident is still echoing in my mind because it sums up my father's philosophical attitude towards life." says Rahula Thera.

When going home, Rahula Thera took with him the camera too, which he used during the pilgrimage. Mahathun Ayiya (Hendrick de Silva Hettigoda) earlier had tried to take a photograph of the mother, but, she had refused to face the camera. But, when Rahula Thera asked: "Amma, shall I take a photo?" she consented and faced the camera wearing the cashmere saree brought by the son from India. That photograph is still in Rahula Thera's collection.

The mother died on April 19, 1939. She was 74, at the time.



A GRADUATE OF LONDON UNIVERSITY

Rahula Thera was very eager to improve his knowledge of English, and went to a number of teachers to learn that language. After learning it from J. E. Gunasekera, Principal of Maha Bodhi College in Colombo, for some time, he went to Captain D. S. Gunasekara for more English and J. G. Fernando for Mathematics. Both of them were teachers at Nalanda College, Colombo.

D. S. Gunasekara was not only a teacher but also the warden of the hostel at Nalanda. He was a member of the well-known Gunasekara family from Hanwella. His eldest sister was married to Don Jacolis Rupasinghe Gunawardhane, better known as Boralugoda Ralahamy. Accordingly, Boralugoda Ralahamy's two revolutionary sons - Philip and Robert - were D. S. Gunasekara's nephews.

Gunasekara took much interest in teaching English to Rahula Thera, and helped him in every possible way to continue his studies. He had a large coconut estate at Samanabedda, close to Hanwella. It was

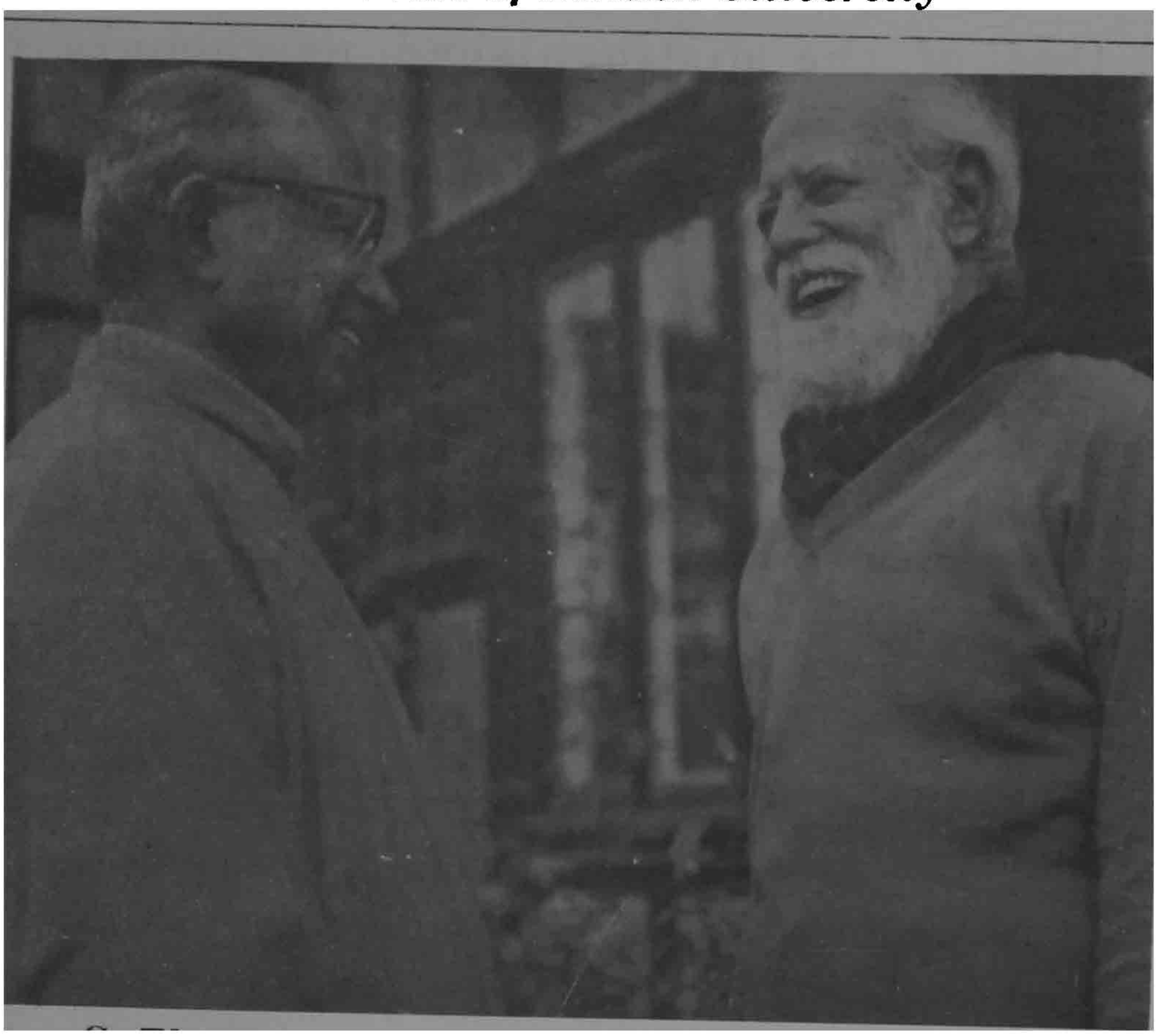
bordered by the Kelani Ganga on one side and the estate bungalow was on the bank of the river. As Gunasekara was a bachelor, he had settled a man from the area along with his wife and children, to look after the property. On holidays, when he went to the estate, he took Rahula Thera along with him. A quiet room was allocated fo: the young monk to go ahead with his studies. Almost every day, Rahula Thera enjoyed a dip in the river, before lunch.

Among the close associates of Gunasekara there were two teachers. One was N. P. Pillai from Kerala in India and the other was Saravanamuttu Thangarajah from Jaffna.

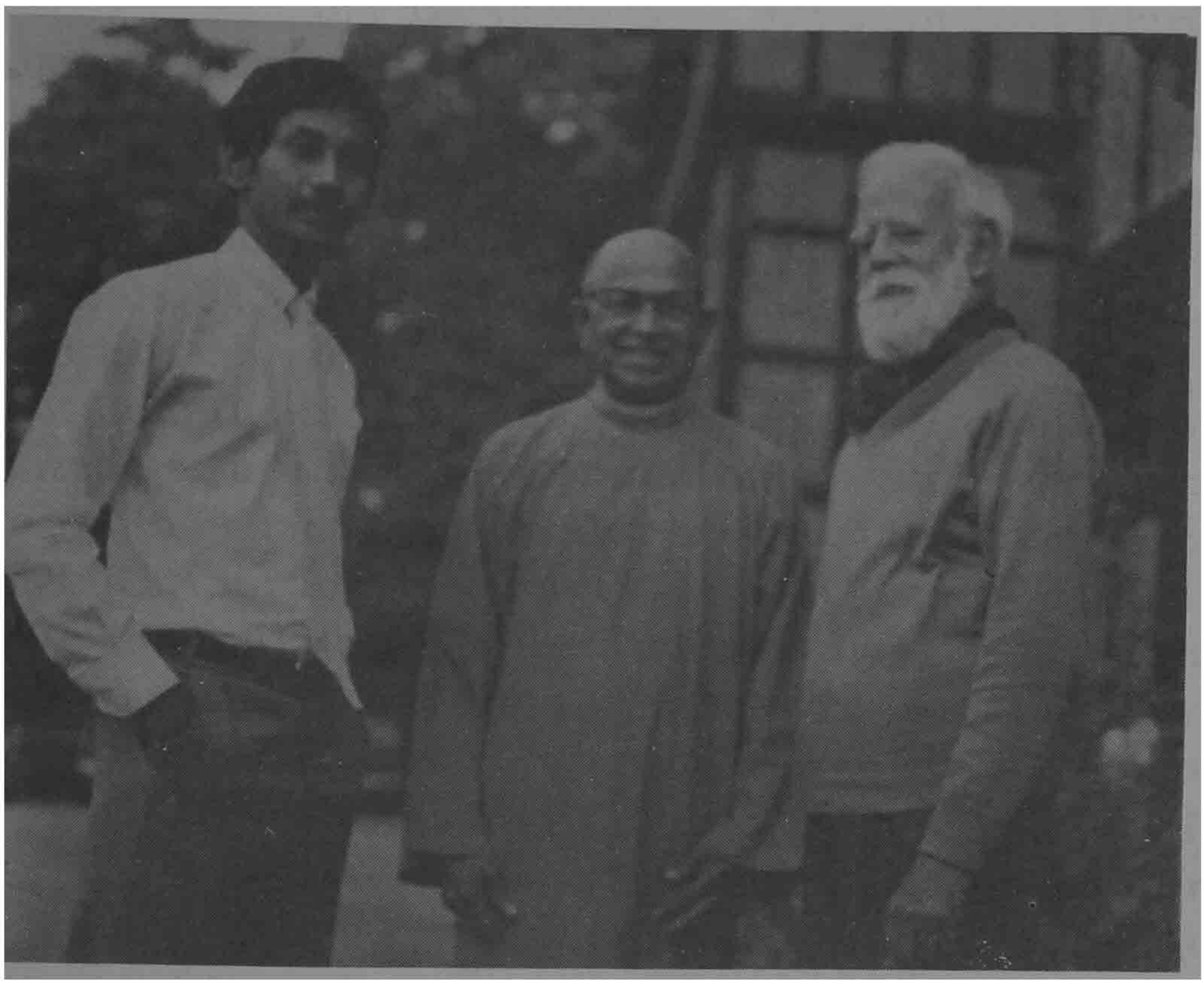
Thangarajah taught mathematics and science at St. Thomas' College, Mt. Lavinia, and, among his students were such famous personalities like Dudley Senanayake and C. P. de Silva. Very often, Mr. & Mrs. Pillai and Thangarajah (who was a bachelor at that time) were invited for lunches at Samanabedda bungalow. Likewise, Gunasekara, Thangarajah and Rahula Thera were invited for lunches at Pillai's residence in Colombo.

Thangarajah, a Hindu, was like an ascetic in his habits and Rahula Thera was highly taken up by his scholarship. In turn, Thangarajah too had an immense liking for Rahula Thera. Ultimately, the two of them became great friends, and Thangarajah invited Rahula Thera to come and stay with him in his rented house at Hunupitiya, Wattala. Thangarajah allocated a separate room for Rahula Thera and provided him with meals, books and other expenses. In addition, he taught the young monk subjects like mathematics and science, all free of charge. Some time later, when Thangarajah got an appointment as the teacher in Mathematics and Science at St. Joseph's College in Colombo, he rented a house at Udahamulla, Nugegoda, and went to live there along with Rahula Thera.

A Graduate of London University



S. Thangarajah and Rahula Thera in London



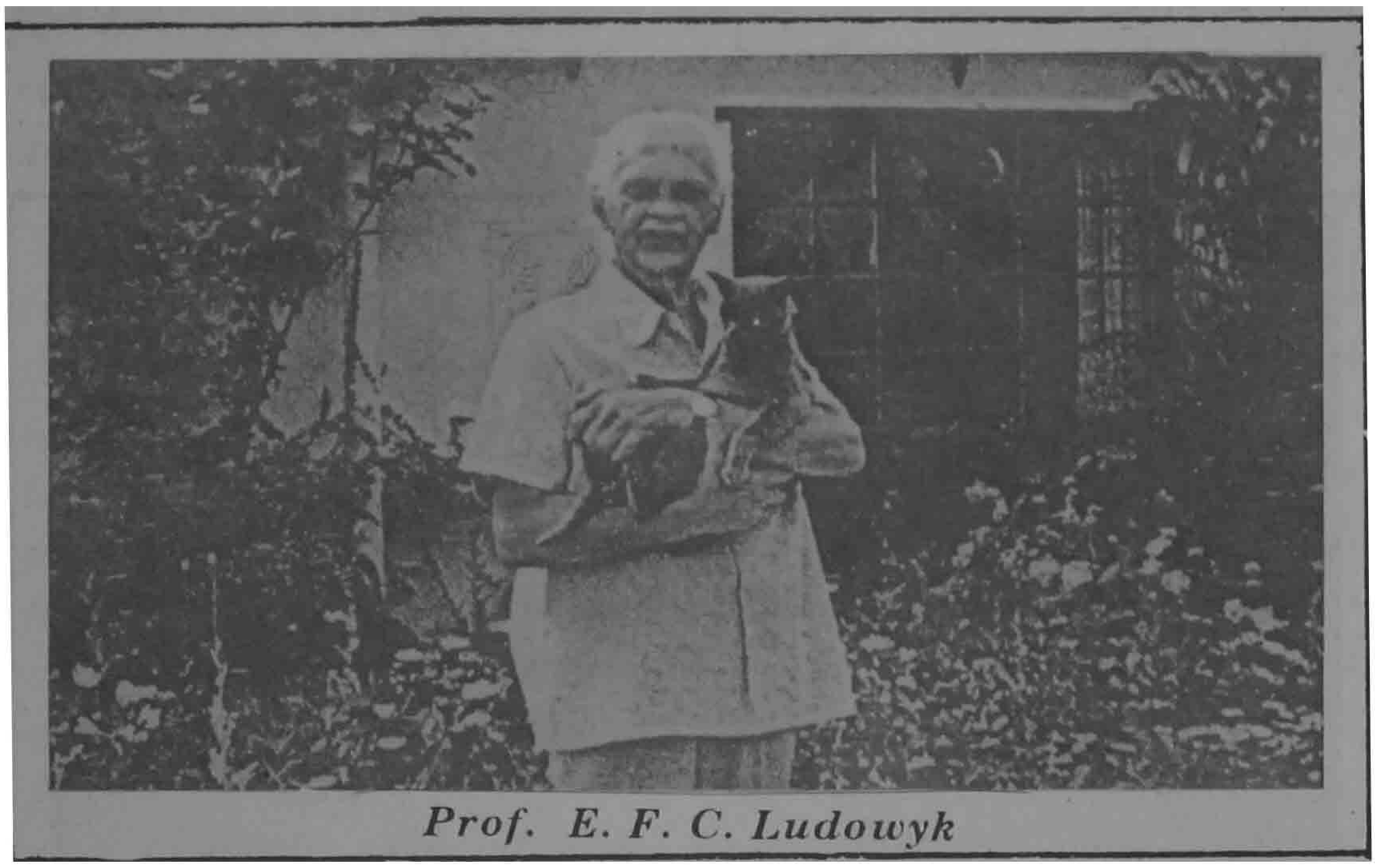
Thangarajah and his son, Kamala Kumaran with Rahula Thera in London.

One of the distinguished neighbours of Thangarajah and Rahula Thera at that time, happened to be Dr. E. F. C. Lodowyk, a burgher, who was a lecturer in English at the University College, Colombo. In later years, Dr. Lodowyk became the Professor in English Language and Literature. Rahula Thera had the opportunity of studying under him and cultivating a friendship. Prof. Ludowyk had vividly analysed the Thangarajah-Rahula connection in the following extract:

For close upon three years - just before and after the outbreak of World War II - I lived in the village of Navinna, within walking distance of the house Rahula shared with Thangarajah, then Lecturer in Mathematics at the Government Training College for teachers. Thanga still is the most unaffected and enthusiastic of liberal spirits. As a Tamil, he was much closer naturally to the mainstream of Indian culture than a large number of Sinhalese. The peculiar virtue of the Tamil strain in the heterogeneous culture of Ceylon has been its primal sympathy and identification with the Indian, and those sinewy qualities of self-help which would not have been out of place in the Christian Protestant ethic. That it was both natural and easy for Rahula and Thanga to be such close friends in a country bedevilled, as it still is, by acerbities of community and caste was not unusual, though it is worthy of note. In an island in which it was possible to be tone deaf to the complexity and variety of Indian culture, Rahula had a very sensitive ear for its harmonies. He remembered with satisfaction that one of the earliest translators of a Pali text into English was Sir Mutu Coomaraswamy, and reckoned Sir Mutu's son, Ananda, the most eminent citizen of the world colonial Ceylon produced. (Buddhist Studies in Honour of Walpola Rahula, Gordon Fraser, London / Vimamsa, Sri Lanka 1980, p. 135)

J. G. Fernando, another teacher of Rahula Thera,

won an 'Irish Sweep' and received Rs. 400,000/-. After getting the money he asked Rahula Thera whether he could be of any help to the young monk. Rahula Thera's request was to get down the Matriculation Course of lessons for him from the London University. And, when the lessons arrived, Rahula Thera went through them very carefully and decided to sit the Matriculation Examination.



Prof. E. F. C. Ludowyk

Both Thangarajah and Ludowyk helped Rahula Thera, without any reservation, to get ready for the examination. In addition to the two of them, Dr. A. P. de Zoysa too helped Rahula Thera by teaching him Logic, free of charge.

Rahula Thera burnt a lot of midnight oil and went to the examination hall at St. Joseph's College, Colombo. Vivienne Gunatilaka (later the firebrand politician Vivienne Goonewardene) happened to be the candidate in the seat in front of Rahula Thera. While answering the Sinhala paper, Vivienne turned back several times and looked at Rahula Thera, to indicate that the paper was too tough. Yet, she was found successful when the results came.

After getting through the Matriculation, Rahula

Thera entered the University College, Colombo, which was affiliated to the London University. When the newspapers went to town with the story that a Buddhist monk had entered the University College for the first time, some of the conservative Buddhists opposed and criticised the monk. However, the great Buddhist leader, Dr. Gunapala Malalasekera, who was a lecturer at the University College at that time, asked Rahula Thera to go ahead with his studies, without paying any heed to the critics.

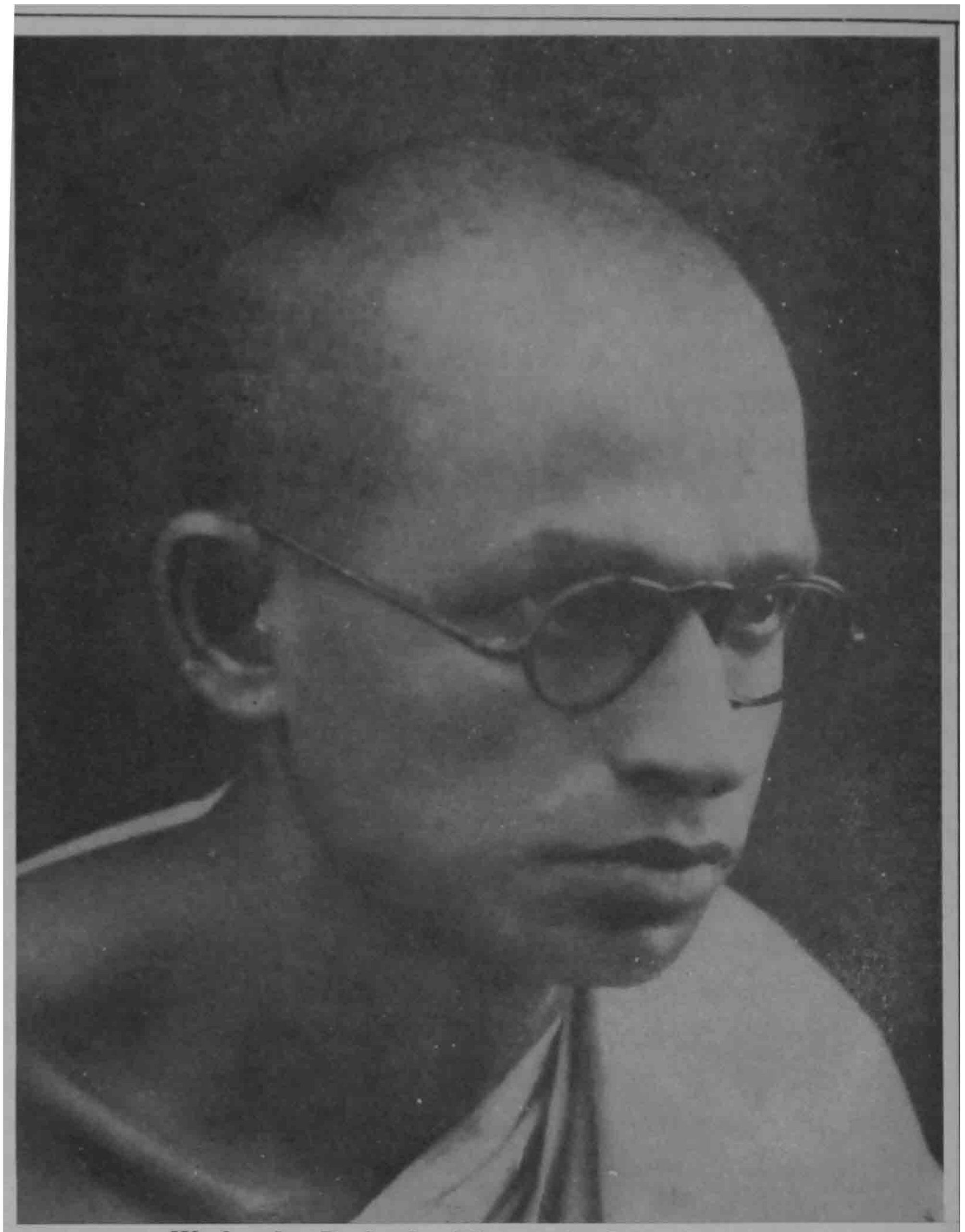
Prof. Gunapala Malalasekera

In order to describe Rahula Thera's life at the University College, I wish to quote Dr. Ludowyk once more:

Of the several memories I have of Rahula at University College the strongest is of his work in the student Malarial Relief Campaign. The greater part of the country was ravaged by a serious epidemic of malaria in 1936. A multiplicity of relief organisations worked at distributing state aid, collecting money for private aid etc. etc. The Union Society of University College had its own band of volunteers, into whose activities Rahula threw himself.

I remember one weekend of toiling up the deceptively easy slopes of the Kegalle District with a small group which included Rahula. It was not usual at that time for a bhikkhu to participate in such activities in the way any layman might have done. Rahula's presence, therefore, lent decorum to our group, though he refused to have himself set apart from the rest of us in any way. It was long past noon before we could call a halt. I recall how discreetly two ostentatiously strict Buddhists were separated from the rest of the party, so that Rahula could have something to eat without offending their susceptibilities. He never stood on ceremony; he neither expected it nor extended it. The human situation decided what was due. We had been performing some minimal services that day in fetching and carrying rice and sugar. Made the more acutely aware of the darker shades of the spectrum of poverty which was rural Ceylon, we need not have troubled with the niceties of rules.

As a student Rahula identified himself with everything in which he, as a bhikkhu, could share. I remember his contesting student elections and organising student meetings. He wanted equally keenly to know about various things from which as a bhikkhu he had been excluded. His reading of Chaucer and



Walpola Rahula Thera in his thirtees.

Shakespeare gave a new zest to his interest in character and in the human personality. It was impossible for him to go to the public performance of plays without shocking Buddhist devotees. I asked him to the dress rehearsals of the University Dramatic Society; an invitation he accepted with pleasure, sitting inconspicuously in a corner of the darkened auditorium. The questions with which he plied me later (similar to those he often raised with regard to English Litera-

ture) indicated the freshness of his approach, disarmingly unintellectualised and unexpectedly pointed.

Rahula's first degree was the old Indo-Aryan Honours degree of the University of London. Among the teachers closest and most helpful to him was Malalasekara, who had returned to Ceylon in the twenties after an extraordinarily successful career in London, one of the bright hopefuls of Mrs. Rhys Davids. He was amiable, full of good intentions, interested in the world of public affairs where his heart really lay. He realised Rahula's capabilities very quickly and was singularly generous in his references to his pupil's phenomenal knowledge of Pali. (I remember Malalasekara telling my wife, then a student of his at work on a thesis in Buddhist philosophy, that she should take any difficulties to Rahula: 'He'll be able to deal with them better.') Malalasekara went on to complete a career of distinction in public life: from President of the World Buddhist Fellowship to ambassadorial posts in Moscow, New York and London. (Buddhist Studies in Honour of Walpola Rahula, pp: 134, 135)

On completing the education at the University College, Colombo, Rahula Thera sat the degree examination and obtained an Honours Degree in Indo-Aryan Languages from the London University.

11

SAMASAMAJA PARTY, VIDYALANKARA PIRIVENA AND A FIGHT OVER BUDDHA'S RELICS

The friendship between Rahula Thera and D. S. Gunasekara was abiding. Whenever he got some spare time, Rahula Thera used to go to the Samanabedda bungalow and enjoy the life there. In fact, it was at Samanabedda he wrote most parts of *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, for which he received his Doctorate from the University of Ceylon.

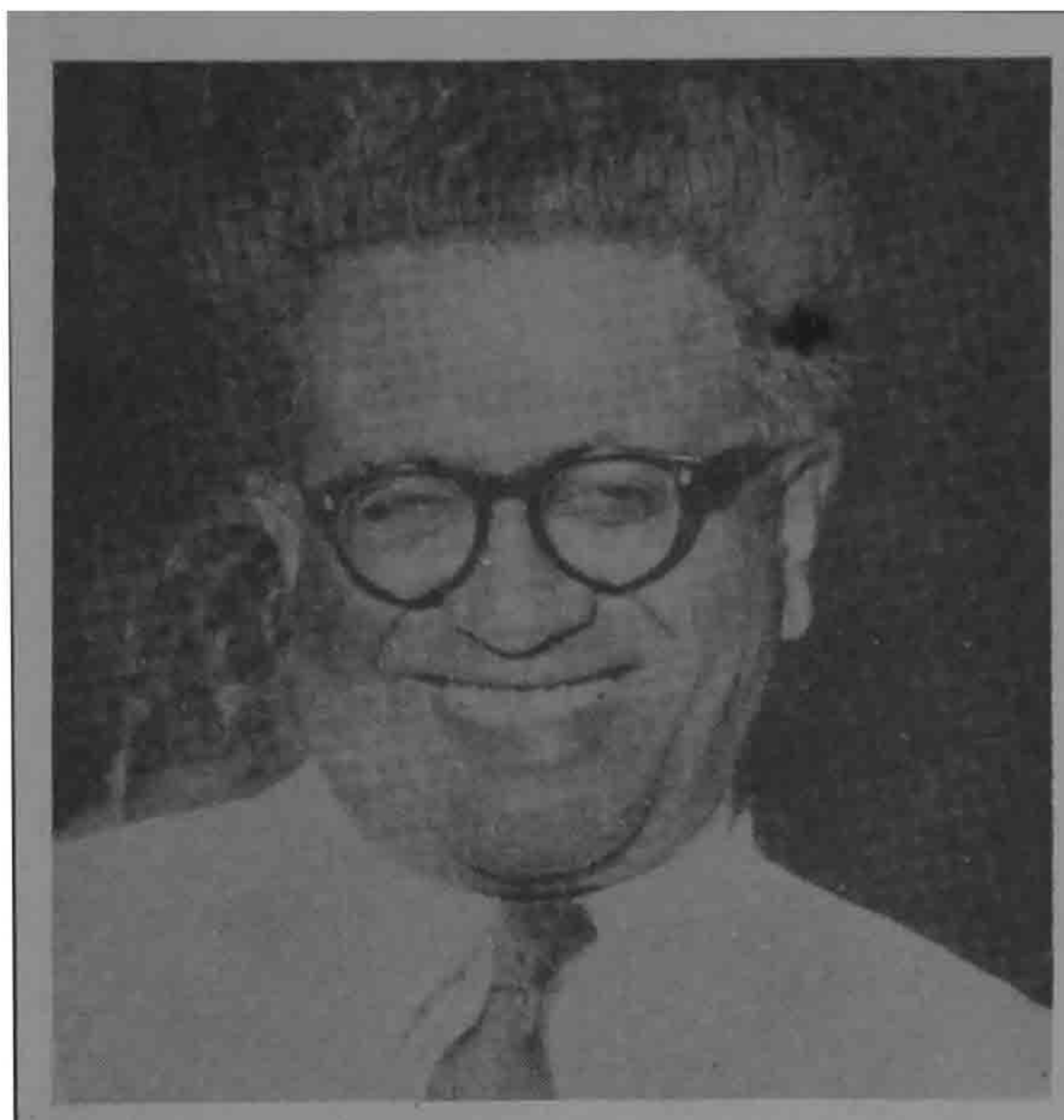
By the time Gunasekara and Rahula Thera came to know each other, Philip Gunawardhane was abroad. He went to the USA for his education in 1922, and returned to the Island in 1932, after spending full ten years in foreign countries. However, when Philip was abroad, Gunasekara had told Rahula Thera a lot about him (Philip).

"Philip is a very honest and brave young man, with a bright future," Gunasekara used to tell Rahula Thera.

Rahula Thera used to pay occasional visits to Philip's ancestral home at Boralugoda in the

company of Gunasekara. Thus he got the opportunity to know Philip's elder brother Harry and the younger brother Robert. However, when Philip returned from abroad, he and Rahula Thera came to know each other. In fact, from the very beginning, Philip liked and loved Rahula Thera and vice versa.

All that time, Rahula Thera had come to know of international problems, social and political problems, as well as of people's struggles only through the newspapers and books. But, Philip's vast wealth of knowledge and experience expanded Rahula Thera's.



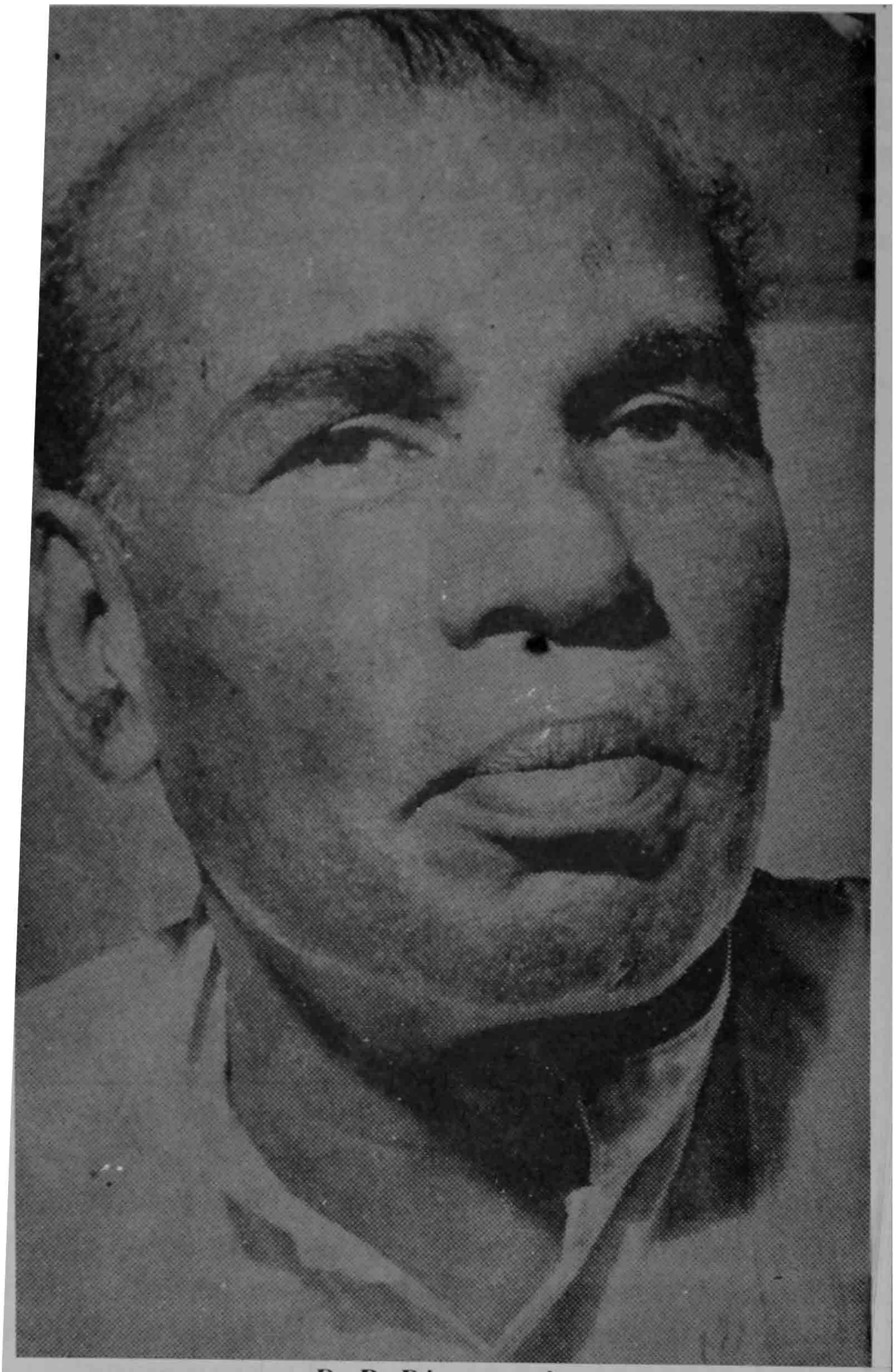
Dr. Colvin R. de Silva

Leslie Goonewardene

horizon. Rahula, the born revolutionary - born militant - began to drift towards the socialist camp faster.

By that time, almost all the militant youths who had returned to the Island after their education in foreign universities, were known to Rahula Thera. Among them were Colvin R. de Silva, N. M. Perera, Leslie Goonewardene and S. A. Wickramasinghe.

In the meantime, S. A. Wickramasinghe introduced another very important person to Rahula Thera. He was D. B. Dhanapala, the then Features Editor of the *Ceylon Daily News*, who was a revolutionary in



D. B. Dhanapala

his own field. In later years, Dahanapala became one of the closest friends of Rahula Thera.

By that time, the only political party in Sri Lanka was A. E. Goonesinha's Labour Party. As the leader

of the one and only political party, Goonesinha had become more or less the uncrowned king of the labour force in the country.

Under the circumstances, Philip and other revolutionary youths gave prominence to form their own political party to launch a campaign against imperialism. A number of meetings were held before the party was formed in 1935, and D. B. Dhanapala who attended one of those, has recorded his memoirs in the following manner:

I well remember one of the first meetings of the fathers of revolution at the house of the late Terence de Zylva at Borella in the thirties soon after Leslie Goonewardhane, Colvin R. de Silva and N. M. Perera had returned from abroad intent on setting the Thames on fire in this little Island. There were also Vernon Gunasekera, Roy de Mel, Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe and (curiously enough) Justin Kotelawala among those who gathered together. The strong man among these founding fathers was Philip. I found him rather a mild kind of man who liked to listen to you with as little comment as possible and, may be, a certain amount of impatience. Only the unruly head of hair indicated the unruly spirit within. (Among those Present by D. B. Dhanapala, M. D. Gunasena & Co. Ltd., 1962, pp. 108, 109)

Though various people suggested various names for the new party, they were all 'soviet sounding' and did not have any local bearing. Ultimately, the young revolutionaries decided to approach Rahula Thera to get a suitable name, and the latter gave the name Lanka Samasamaja Party, (meaning, Ceylon Equal Society Party). Says D. B. Dhanapala:

Soon after the Samasamaja Party (a name invented by Bhikku Walpola Rahula) was formed there was an open challenge from the then uncrowned King

of Labour, A. E. Goonesinha. At a meeting at Wellawatte we heard how hired thugs broke in and hit Philip on the head with a chair. Another man would have been rushed to hospital to come back to consciousness by slow degrees. But Philip was back again on the platform inside of fifteen minutes with a blood-stained bandage round his head and fire breathing out from his frothing mouth.

That was the kind of Boralugoda bravado and blood that helped to fertilize the roots of the new Party. (Among those Present by D.B.Dhanapala, Page 109)

"You must have been one of the founder members of the Lanka Samasamaja Party?" I asked Rahula Thera.

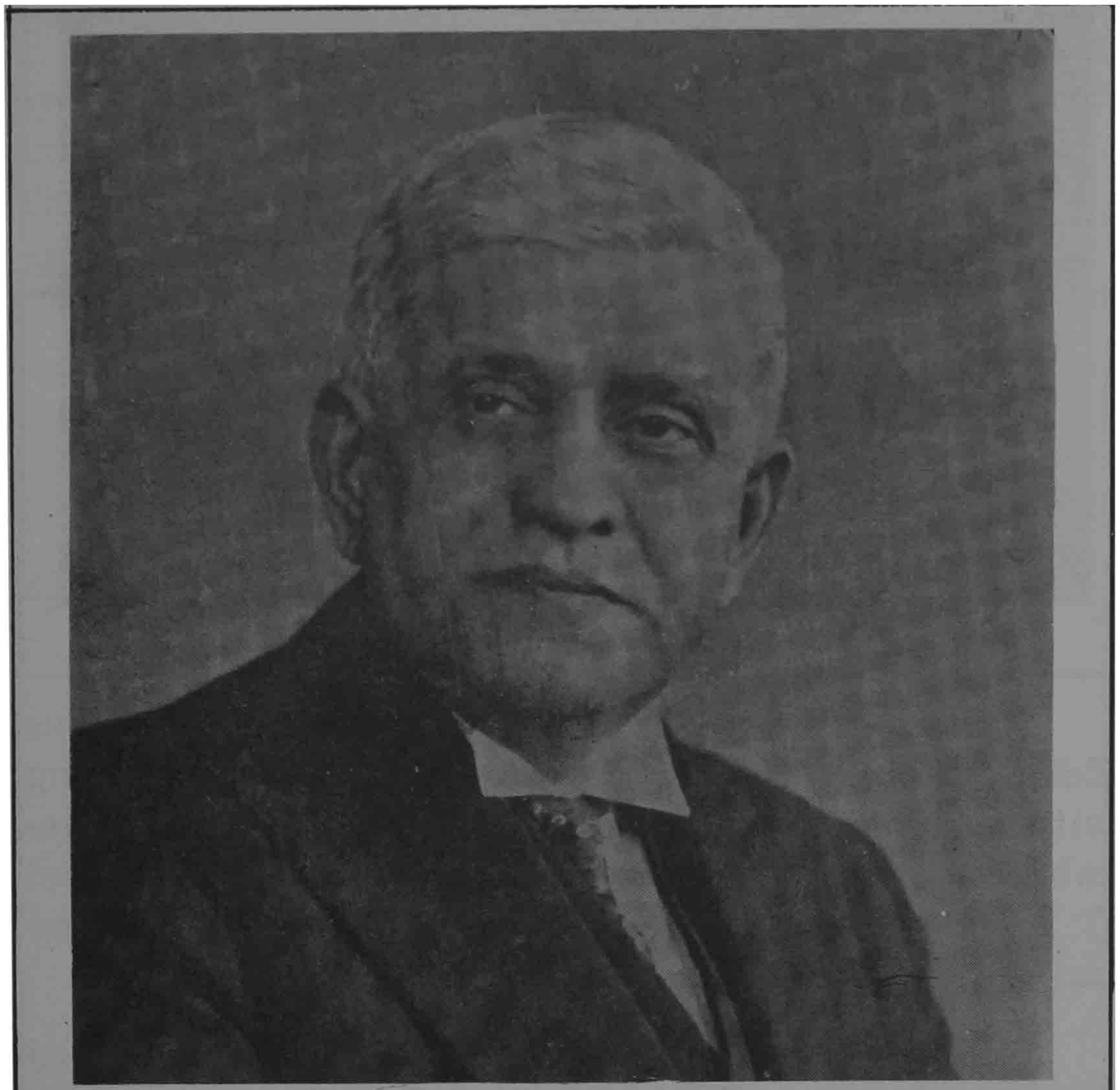
His reply: "I may have given the name to the new party. I also gave my fullest support to those young leaders. But, I was never a member of that party. Not only that. I have never joined any political party in the past, and will never do so in future too. As a liberal minded free thinker, I give my support where neccessary, and criticise when I don't agree."

Philip Gunawardhane and other Samasamaja leaders were closely associated with Vidyalankara Pirivena, Kelaniya, where a number of revolutionary young monks lived.

In addition to the marxists, there were 'capitalists' too among the lay stalwarts of Vidyalankara Pirivena. Sir D. B. Jayatilaka, D. S. Senanayake and Dr. Nicholas Attygalle were some of them, with whom Rahula Thera had very cordial relations.

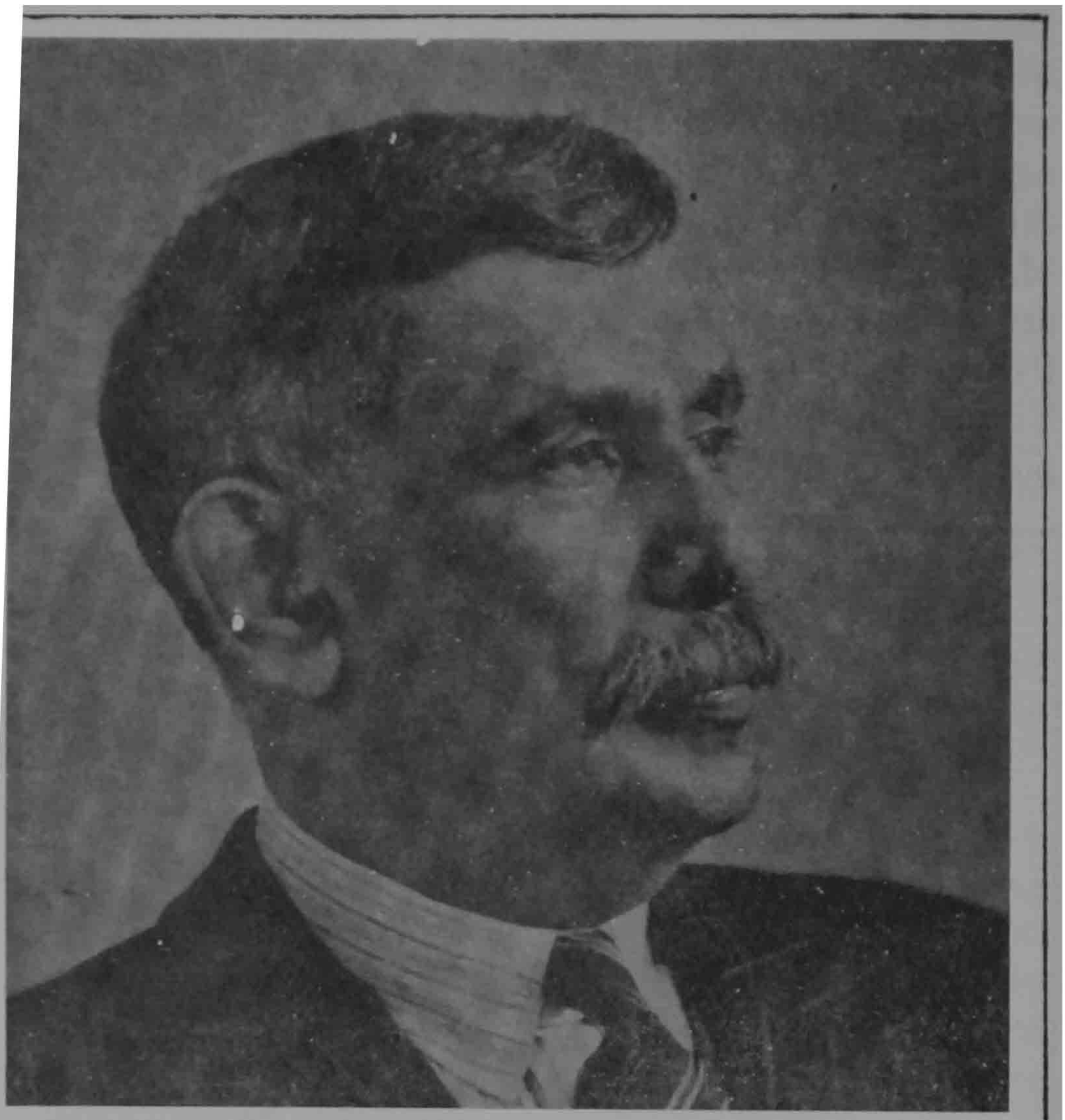
As there was no proper English school for the children of the Kelaniya area at that time, Sir D. B. Jayarilaka, President of the Vidyalankara Sabha, the governing body of the Pirivena, took the initiative

in establishing a new school. Not only he took the initiative, but also spent his time and money for the new school. The year 1938 saw the fiftieth death anniversary of the Ven. Ratmalane Sri Dharmaloka Maha Thera, who founded Vidyalankara Pirivena. In order to honour him, the new school started in the Pirivena premises, was named Dharmaloka Vidyalaya. However, as Jayatillaka was not in a position to devote his full time to the school, for he



Sir D. B. Jayatilaka

had many other duties as the Leader of the House, he was on the look out for a full time Principal. He had asked both Yakkaduwe Pragnarama Thera and Rahula Thera to help to find a suitable person for the post.



D. S. Senanayake

One fine day in 1939, D. B. Dhanapala, Features Editor of the *Daily News* who was eternally fighting with the Englishmen employed in his newspaper establishment, had a big row with an Englishman called G. K. Stewart, tendered his resignation and walked out of the Lake House.

When Rahula Thera heard that unemployed Dhanapala was confined to his home, he, along with Yakkaduwe Thera, went to meet Jayatillake.

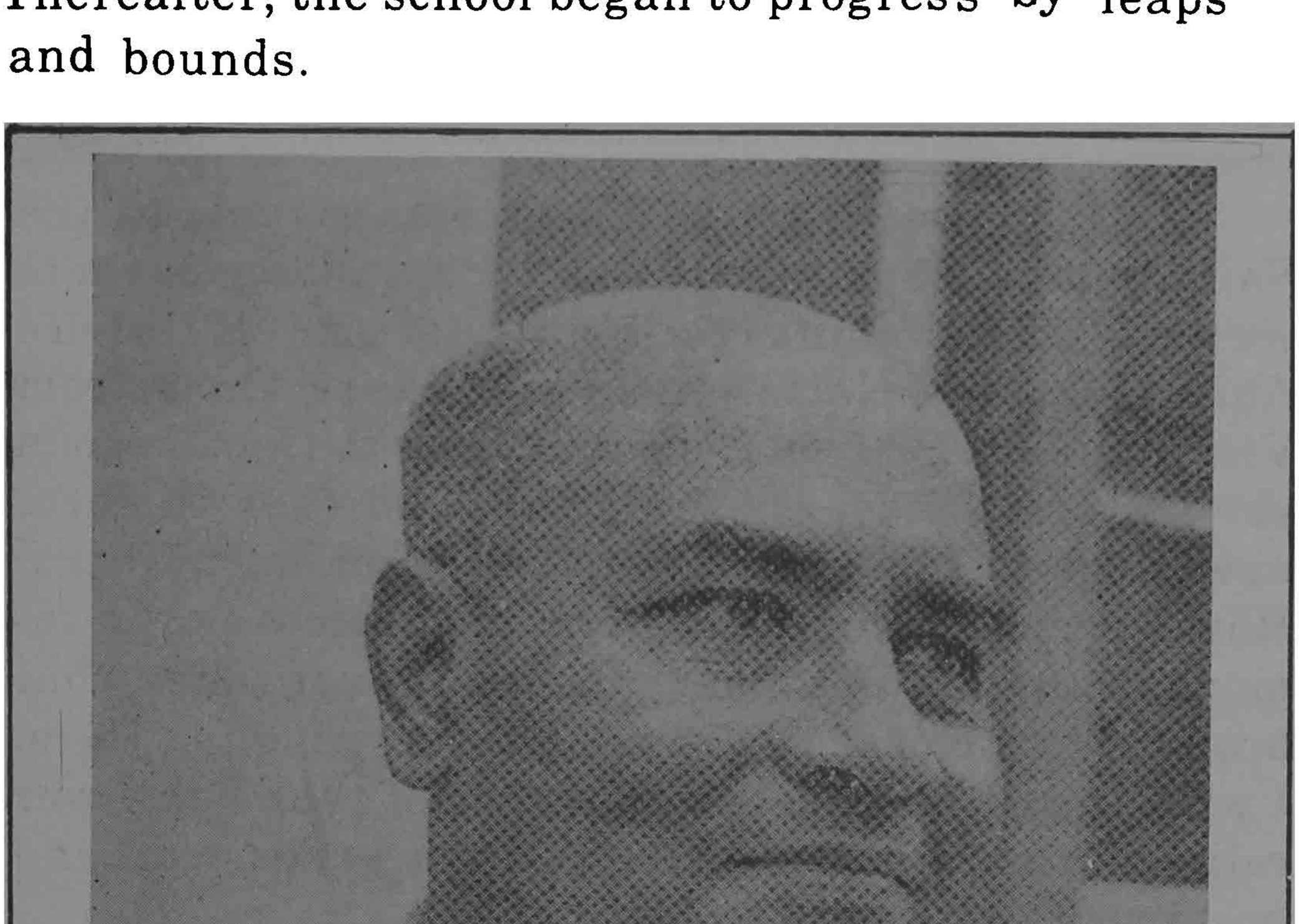
"I have found the ideal man to be the Principal of Dharmaloka Vidyalaya. D. B. Dhanapala has re signed from the Lake House and is wasting time at home. Let us try to persuade him to take over as the

Principal," suggested Rahula Thera to Jayatilaka.

"D. B. Dhanapala? I have read his newspaper articles. An excellent English writer. But, I don't know about his capabilities as a teacher," said Jayatilaka.

"Perhaps, he will prove to be a better teacher, than a writer. Let us entrust the job to him and see," suggested Rahula Thera.

A meeting between the two 'D B.s' was arranged by Rahula Thera, and after a discussion, Dhanapala assumed duties as the Principal in a few days'time. Thereafter, the school began to progress by leaps and bounds.



Sir Nicholas Attygalle

Walpola Rahula Thera with
Nattandiye Pannakara Thera

By that time, Rahula Thera was staying at the Sailaramaya, Dematagoda. His other colleagues there were Tibetan monk S. Mahinda and Kalalelle Anandasagara. Nattandiye Pannaskara Thera from Vidyalankara Pirivena, used to come to Dematagoda very often to meet these monks, and they in turn, used to go to Vidyalankara to see Pannakara Thera. However, according to Rahula Thera, it was the famous *Dathu Kolahalaya* or the 'fight over relics' that brought him closer to Vidyalankara Pirivena. Here, I wish to record in detail the story of that fight over relics, for the benefit of the present generation and posterity.

In the year 1849, British archaelogist Lt. General Maisey, along with his colleague, Sir Cunningham, excavated the site of the Bhilsa Stupa in India and found a casket containing relics. There was enough eveidence to prove that they were relics of the Buddha. Lt. Gerneral Maisey took the casket to England and kept it in his home as an exhibit. Even after his death, the casket was preserved by his descendants.

Ninety years passed and Lt. General Maisey's grand daughter, Winifred Burrows, became the proud possesser of the casket. She used to relate with much pride, the history behind the casket, to her friends, who in turn, suggested that the casket should be handed over to a Buddhist country, for it was not fair to keep such a precious and sacred item to the Buddhists, in a non-Buddhist home only as an exhibit. Madam Burrows decided to act accordingly.

It was the year 1939 and the Governor of Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) was Sir Andrew Caldecott. One of his sisters, namely, Madam Lone More, was living in England. Madam Burrows wrote a letter to Madam Lone More requesting to inquire from her Governor-brother whether he would like to accept the relics in her possession to be deposited in a Buddhist institute to enable the Buddhists to pay their veneration.

Madam Lone More, in turn, wrote a detailed letter to her brother Sir Andrew Caldecott. The latter, after reading the letter, wrote to Sir D. B. Jayatilaka, the then Leader of the House, requesting him to come to the Queen's House to have a discussion about the relics.

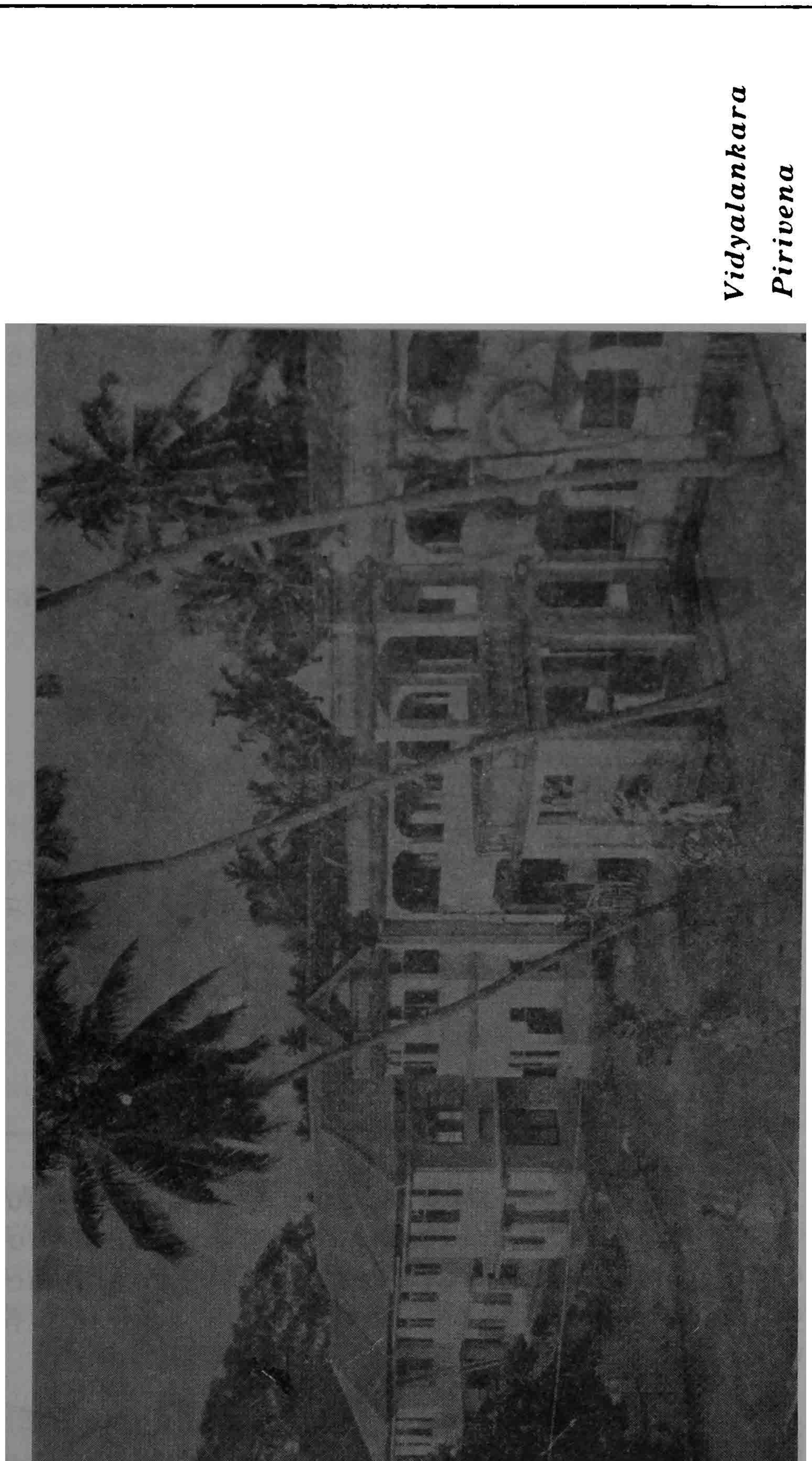
On July 15, 1939, Jayatilaka went to the Queen's House and met Governor Caldecott. After going through the documents sent by Madam Lone More, Jayatilaka was satisfied, beyond doubt, that the relics were genuine Buddha relics. Caldecott told Jayatilaka as it was the wish of Madam Burrows that the relics should be deposited in a place where the Buddhists could worship and pay their respects, and in no way should be made a source of earning money, he was glad to hand them over to Jayatilaka if the latter agreed to act strictly according to the wishes of Burrows. Jayatillake pointed out to Caldecott that he was the President of the Dayaka Sabha of Vidyalankara Pirivena, Peliyagoda, and had decided

to deposit the relics there and strictly adhere to the wishes of Burrows. Thereafter, Caldecott undertook to write back to Madam Burrows recommending the relics to be sent to Jayatilaka.

When the newspapers told the country that the Buddha relics coming from England were to be deposited at Vidyalankara Pirivena, a campaign against it was started by certain interested sections. The devotees of Kelaniya Raja Maha Vihara argued that Vidyalankara was only an educational institute and not a vihara or a place of worship. And, as such, they maintained, that the correct place to deposit the relics was Kelaniya Raja Maha Vihara, about one kilometer away, where hundreds of devotees flocked daily. D. R. Wijewardene, Proprietor of the Lake House Group of newspapers, who was a leading devotee of the Kelaniya Vihara, started an anti-Vidyalankara campaign through his newspapers and the fight over relics became a big sensation in the country.

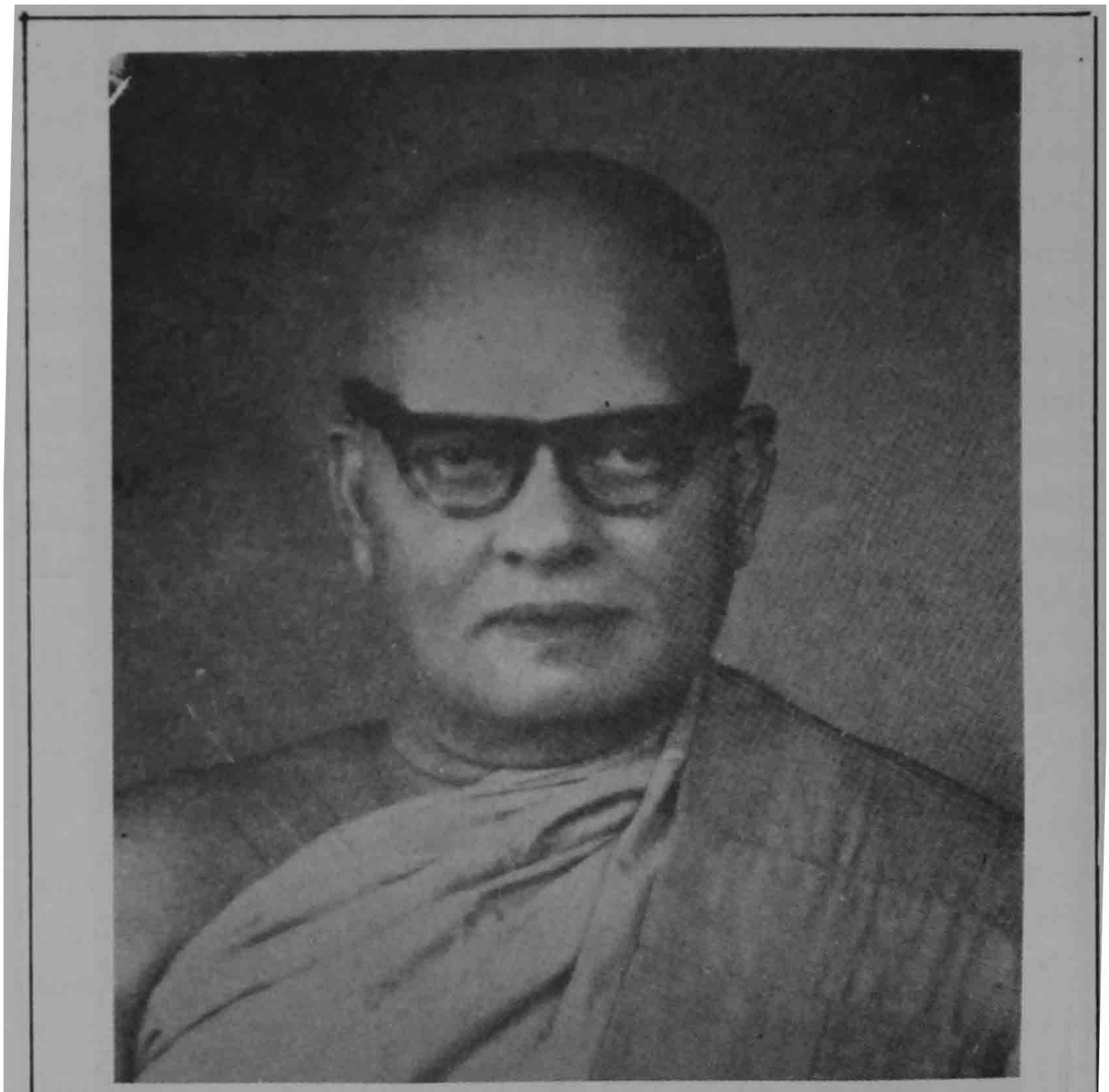
Ultimately, a public meeting over the 'relics issue' was to be held at Ananda College premises in Colombo. The organisers said that the purpose of the meeting was to get the public opinion regarding the proper place for depositing the relics. But, who were the organisers behind the meeting? Out of all the devotees of Kelaniya Temple the most active person was D. R. Wijewardene. Minister S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, an arch-enemy of Jayatilaka too was behind Wijewardene. In fact, he was billed to preside over the proposed meeting. Rumour-mongers said that Bandaranaike would dominate the meeting and pass a resolution in support of Kelaniya Temple.

Under the circumstances Vidayalankara Pirivena was in a helpless and pathetic position. But, Vidyalankara never accepted any defeat lying down. On hearing the latest development, Yakkaduwe



Vidyalankara Pirivena

Pragnarma Thera, who was the 'strongman' of the 'Vidyalankara Force', remained contemplationg for some time while chewing betel. Then, all of a sudden, he got up from the chair, spat over the low wall, and spoke to the other monks who were close by:



Yakkaduwe Pragnarama Thera

"The only person who can rise against this injustice and do justice to Vidyalakara is Walpola Rahula Thera. Without a moment's delay, I must go and meet that Thera," said Yakkaduwe Thera and left for Dematagoda.

At Sailaramaya, Dematagoda, Yakkaduwe Thera met Rahula Thera and explained the latest position regarding the 'fight over relics'. Without any hesita-

tion, Rahula Thera undertook to attend the meeting and do the needful.

On the day of the meeting, Rahula Thera went to Ananda College along with Yakkaduwe Pragnarama Thera and Kalalelle Anandasagara Thera. First he went round the place and did a quick survey. It was more or less a 'reconnaissance flight'. K. D. David, popularly known as 'Pavilion Mudalali', one of the staunch supporters of the Kelaniya Temple faction, was seen transporting more and more people to the meeting to exhibit their strength. At the same time the well-known editor Hemapala Munidasa also had mustered a considerable number of people in support of Vidyalankara. The meeting was an outdoor one and there was a stage erected for the speakers and other distinguised persons.

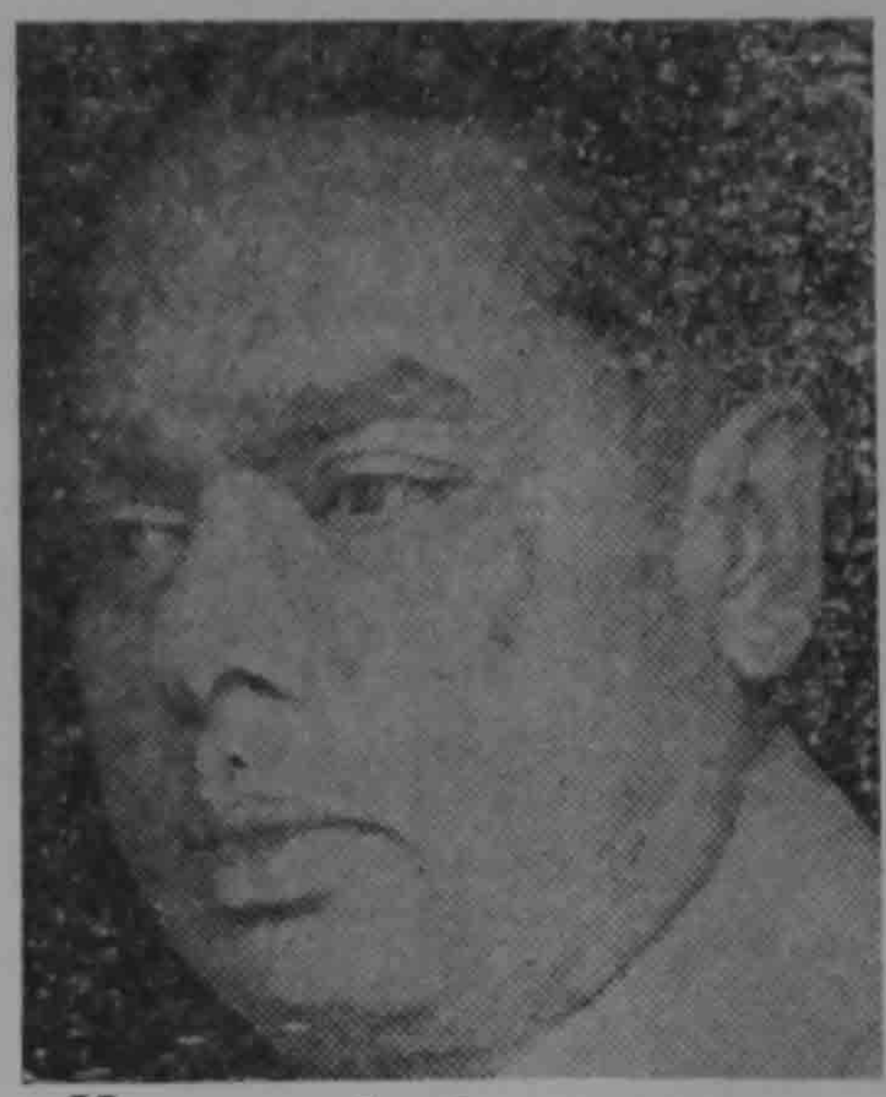
Making an announcement over the loudspeaker, K. D. David said the stage was a small one and requested only the Nayaka Theras to take seats there. Without waiting for any formalities, Rahula Thera, along with Kalalelle Thera, walked on to the stage and sat there. Yakkaduwe Thera preferred to be seated down.

"Why did you get on to the stage when you were not a Nayaka Thera?" was my pertinent question to which Rahula Thera answered as follows:

"Nobody was going to ask for the Act of Appointment as a Nayaka Thera. Besides that, there was no competent person to challange us. Even Mapitigama Sangharakkhita Thera of the Kelaniya Temple, who was not a Nayaka Thera, was also seated with us."

Immaculately dressed Bandaranaike, with a smiling face, arrived at the meeting a little late. He appeared to be enjoying in advance the defeat of his rival Jayatilaka in the 'fight over relics.'

D. R. Wijewardene



Hemapala Munidasa

The meeting started by observing *Pan Sil* and Bandaranaike began to make an unscheduled speech from the chair. What he said indirectly was that the Kelaniya Temple should be the custodian of the relics arriving from England. The audience well realised that Bandaranaike was making a pro-Kelaniya Temple speech and the people began to mutter various things, while the tension was mounting.

Bandaranaike could speak only for about two or three munutes, when Rahula Thera who was seated just next to him, got up and said: "Mister, you have been invited here to preside over the meeting, but, not to make a biassed speech."

Bandaranaike said: "But, Hamuduruwane, I also have the right to express my views in a few words."

"No, we can't allow you to speak like that. I warn you that you are not to utter a single word more," said Rahula Thera raising his voice and pointing his finger towards Bandaranaike.

And, then, the pandemonium started. Fierce words were hurled at Bandaranaike from all sides of the meeting.

"Shut your mouth and get down from the stage!"

"You came to preside over the meeting not because you respected relics, but because of your enmity with Sir Baron Jayatilaka!"

"You are a humbug. You are not a Buddhist!"

"You have become a Buddhist just to hoodwink the people!"

All kinds of anti-Bandaranaike slogans continued until Bandaranaike got down from the stage and walked away, thus bringing the meeting to an abrupt end. It was quite clear that the ringleader of the group that sabotaged the meeting was no less a person than Editor Hemapala Munidasa.

The organisers of the meeting were all flabbergasted as to what had happened. One person from the Kelaniya Temple faction raised his voice and asked: "Who is that monk who threatened Mr. Bandaranaike?"

"No, not to worry. He is one of our own colleagues," said Mapitigama Sangharakkhita Thera of Kelaniya Temple.

Having broken up the meeting, Rahula Thera, along with Yakkaduwe Thera and Kalalelle Thera, went to Jayatilake's bungalow at Slave Island to inform him about their victory.

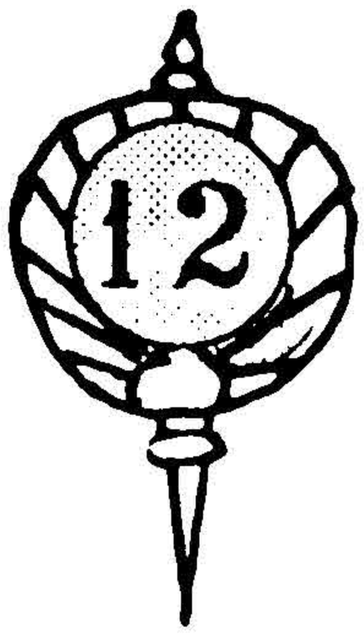
"Bandaranaike is very angry with me these days. Though we were seated together in the Cabinet Room for a long time today, he didn't even look at my face. But, I don't take these thing seriously," said Jayatilaka.

"I will never excuse that man for what he did," were the words uttered by the angry Bandaranaike

after the unsuccessful meeting over relics. But, he forgot all about it within a matter of a few days.

As a result of the fight over relics, Rahula Thera gained much publicity as a fighter and the defender of Vidyalankara Pirivena. He was much respected by all at Vidyalankara.

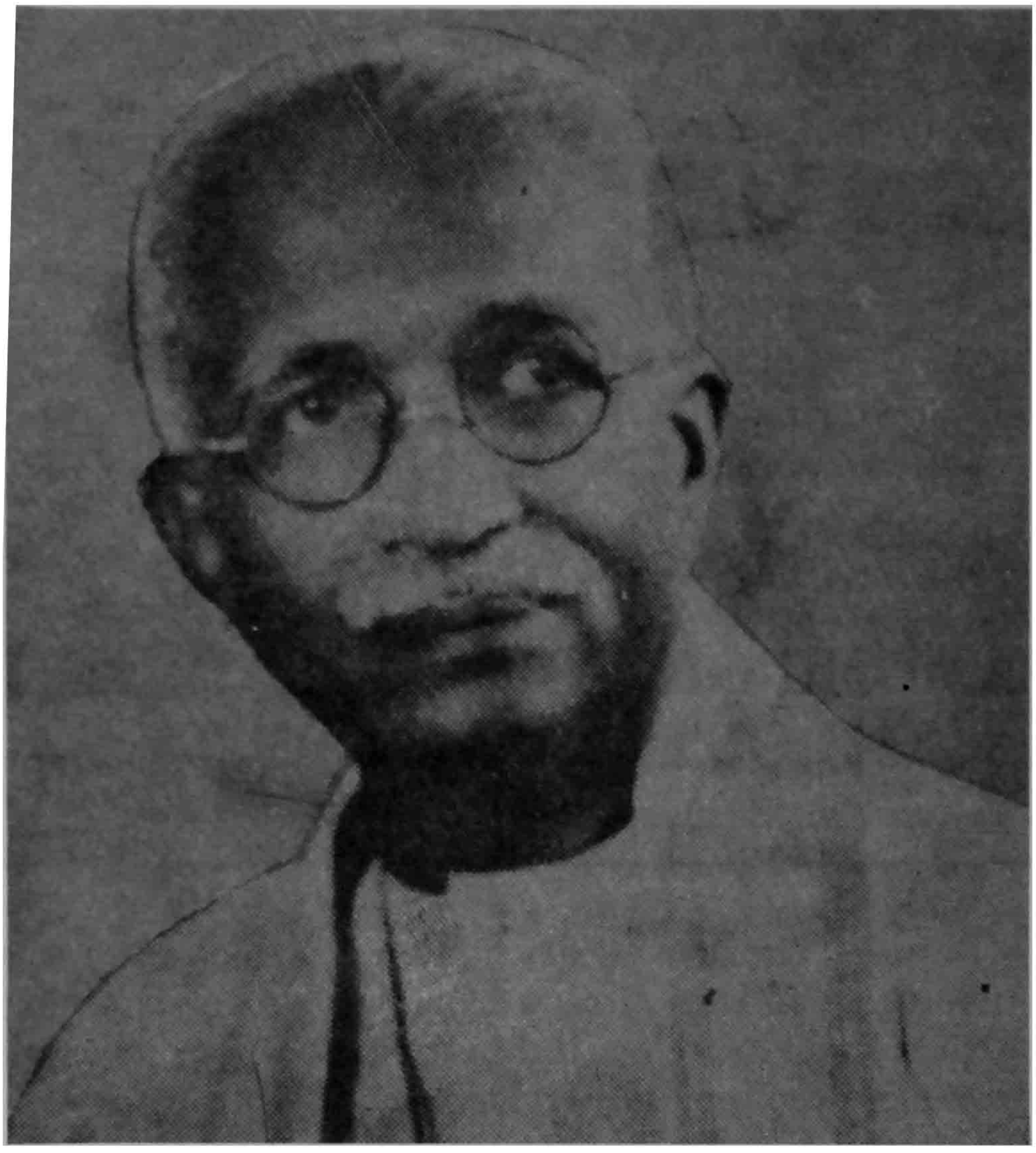
A few months after the historic fight, and when the opponents were licking their wounds, the Buddha relics from England arrived in Colombo. On April 7, 1940, the relics were taken from Colombo to Vidyalankara Piriven in a grand motorcade. Addressing the vast gathering at Vidyalankara premises, King's Councel, H. Sri Nissanka said: "The Buddha is the only person who can decide as to where his relics should be deposited. According to his wish, the relics have come all the way from England to stay at the correct place, namely, Vidyalankara Pirivena."



AMONG GREAT SCHOLARS AT CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY

Rahula Thera was always on the lookout for a chance to go to the outside world to gather the vast wealth of knowledge available there. In 1941 he came across a newspaper advertisement calling for applications for a scholarship to go to the Calcutta University and do research there. The advertisement was inserted by the Education Department.

When he made inquiries through reliable sources, Rahula Thera came to know that Education Minister, C.W.W. Kannangara had created that scholarship for one of his favourite Buddhist monks. He also learnt that the applications were called merely to hoodwink the public and get over the prescribed rules and regulations. Though a number of friends, who knew the intricacies of such scholarships, told Rahula Thera that he would never get that scholarship, he decided to 'give a fight' and sent in his application. Beside him, a number of assistant lecturers from the University College too had applied for the scholarship.



C. W. W. Kannangara

When Rahula Thera was called for the interview he found that Minister Kannangara was the chairman of the interview board, while Principal of the University College, Ivor Jennings, and the Director of Education (another Englishman) were the other members.

Before the interview, Kannangara had told some of his close associates that he would never give the scholarship to Rahula. When Rahula Thera heard the news, his determination was to confront Kannangara, without any hope for the scholarship.

As anticipated, Kannangara dominated the whole

show and fired questions at Rahula Thera with the sole hope of disqualifying him.

"Most of the Nayaka Theras are not in good terms with you?" asked Kannangara.

"I don't think anybody has any grudge against me. Even if the Nayaka Theras are not in good terms with me, that will not be a problem, because those monks are living here, while I will be going to study in distant Calcutta," was Rahula Thera's reply.

"If you fall ill in Calcutta what are you going to do?," was Kannangara's next question, for which Rahula Thera replied: "I am going to Calcutta not to fall ill, but, to study. Even if I fall ill, surely, there must be better qualified physicians, both Western and Eastern in Calcutta."

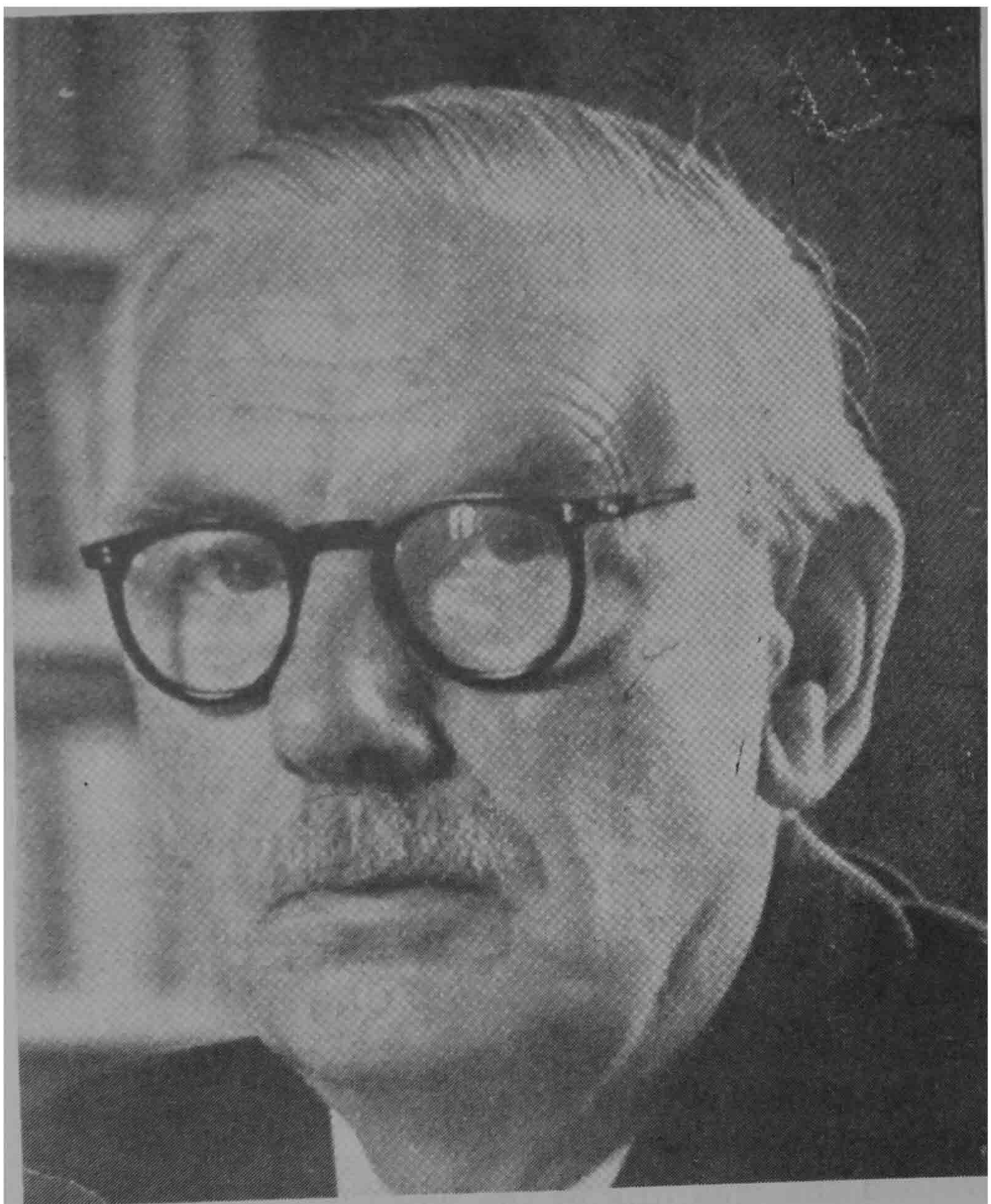
After firing a number of other questions, Kannangara realised that all his questions had boomeranged on him. He did not ask a single question pertaining to university education. At last, only Ivor Jennings asked a question about the education in Calcutta University. His question was what Rahula Thera intended to do in Calcutta, if he was awarded the scholarship.

In his reply Rahula Thera said that he intended to do a comprehensive research on Upanishad, and Jennings appeared to be much satisfied with the answer.

Shortly after the interview, Jennings telephoned Dr. Malalasekera and told him that out of all the applicants, Rahula Thera was the only one who understood the meaning of the word 'research' and as such they had decided to give the scholarship to him.

Before leaving for India, Rahula Thera travelled all the way to Kandy to see his Samasamaja friends, Philip, N. M., Colvin and Edmmd, who were incarcerated in the Bogambera Prison as political prisoners.

On October 22, 1941, Rahula Thera left for India by train from the Fort Railway Station in Colombo. Two of his close associates, namely, Yakkaduwa Pragnarama Thera and Kalalelle Anandasagara Thera



Sir Ivor Jennings

accompanied him upto Kurunegala Railway Station, wished him 'bon voyage', and returned to Kelaniya in the down train.

On arrival at the Calcutta Railway Station, Rahula Thera was received by Tennakoon Vimalananda, Asst. Secretary of India's Maha Bodhi Society and Richard Thenababu, who was studying in India. Thenababu was a classmate of Rahula Thera at the University College.

The monthly allowance paid to Rahula Thera by the Sri Lankan Government was Rs. 75. The value of the Sri Lankan rupee at that time was double the Indian rupee, and on hearing that Rahula Thera was getting such a big allowance, some of the Indian students were really surprised. In addition to the Government allowance, Mahatun Ayiya and friends like N. Q. Dias, used to send money to Rahula Thera, and as such he did not have any financial problems. He was able to get a good room in a building called Avenue Club situated at the Chittaranjan Avenue.

Within a very short time Rahula Thera got himself adapted to the new environment at Calcutta University. That affable person in yellow robes, became very popular among both students and teachers. One of the two teachers who took much interest in Rahula Thera was the world famous Sanskrit scholar Surendranath Das Guptha. The other was the equally famous Pali scholar B. M. Barua. Though Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, who later became the President of India, was also a teacher there, Rahula Thera did not have close contact with him. It was several years later the two of them came closer.

Professor Surendranath Das Guptha was so fond of Rahula Thera, that he used to invite the latter to his residence for lunch on holidays. On such occasions

Rahula Thera spent most of his time in the Professor's huge library.

In the meantime, Professor Barua introduced Rahula Thera to his friends as 'Rahula with a keen mind.' 'Though Rahula is a monk wearing yellow robes, I treat him as my own son,' Barua used to say.

Rahula Thera did his research at the Calcutta University with much enthusiasm and pleasure. But, within a short period of six months he had to wish good-bye to Calcutta and return to Sri Lanka, because of the war. With the capture of Burma by the Japanese in 1942, the work at Calcutta University came to a standstill.

Rahula Thera left Calcutta by train on April 3, 1942. In the evening of April 5, when he boarded the Colombo bound train from Madras, he heard the passengers talking about the Japanese air raid in Colombo that morning.

After two days of train ride, Rahula Thera arrived at the nearly deserted city of Colombo on April 7. From Colombo, he went to Vidyalankara Pirivena at Peliyagoda.

On the following day, the news of Philip Gunawardhane and other Samasamaja leaders escaping from the Bogambara Prison previous night, began to spread like wild fire.

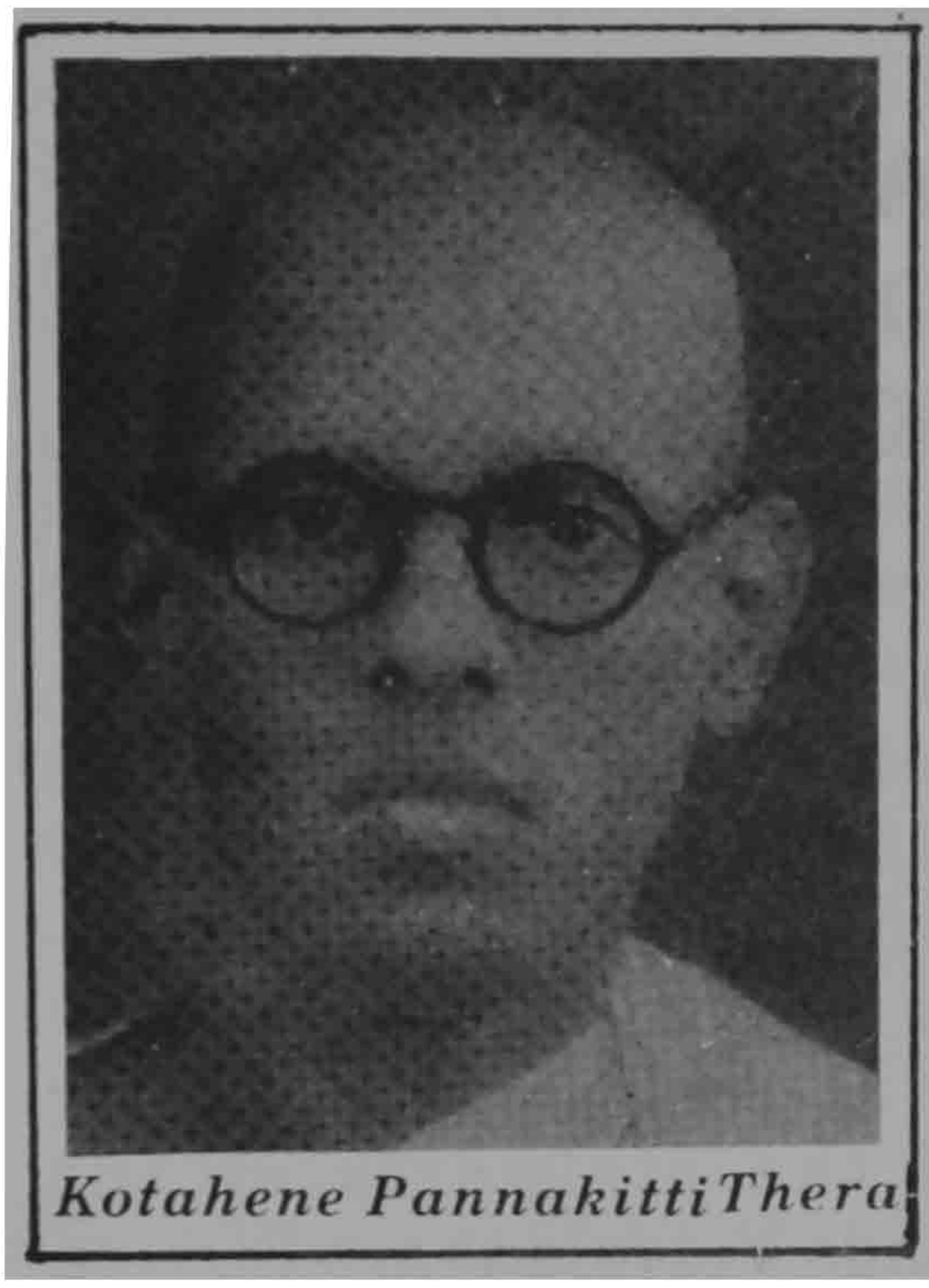
13

D. S. SENANAYAKE CLASHES WITH POLITICAL BHIKKHUS

The escalation of the second World War disrupted Rahula Thera's research in Calcutta, and on his return to Sri Lanka, in 1942, he sought temporary shelter at Vidyalankara Pirivana. But, that temporary shelter turned to be a permanent one when he was appointed a teacher at Vidyalankara. After that he became one of the stalwarts of the Vidyalankara Force, and made Vidyalankara Piriven his citadel of power for his national, religious, cultural and political struggles.

Sometime later, Kalalelle Anandasagara Thera too came to stay at Vidyalankara. Two other militant monks who were already there were Kotahene Pannakitti and Nattandiye Pannakara. Bambarende Siri Seevali Thera devoted most of his time for writing and not for fighting. However, Yakkaduwe Pragnarama Thera was the hard-core militant who gave the lead to the others at Vidyalankara. Yakkaduwe, the silent, was like embers under the ash.

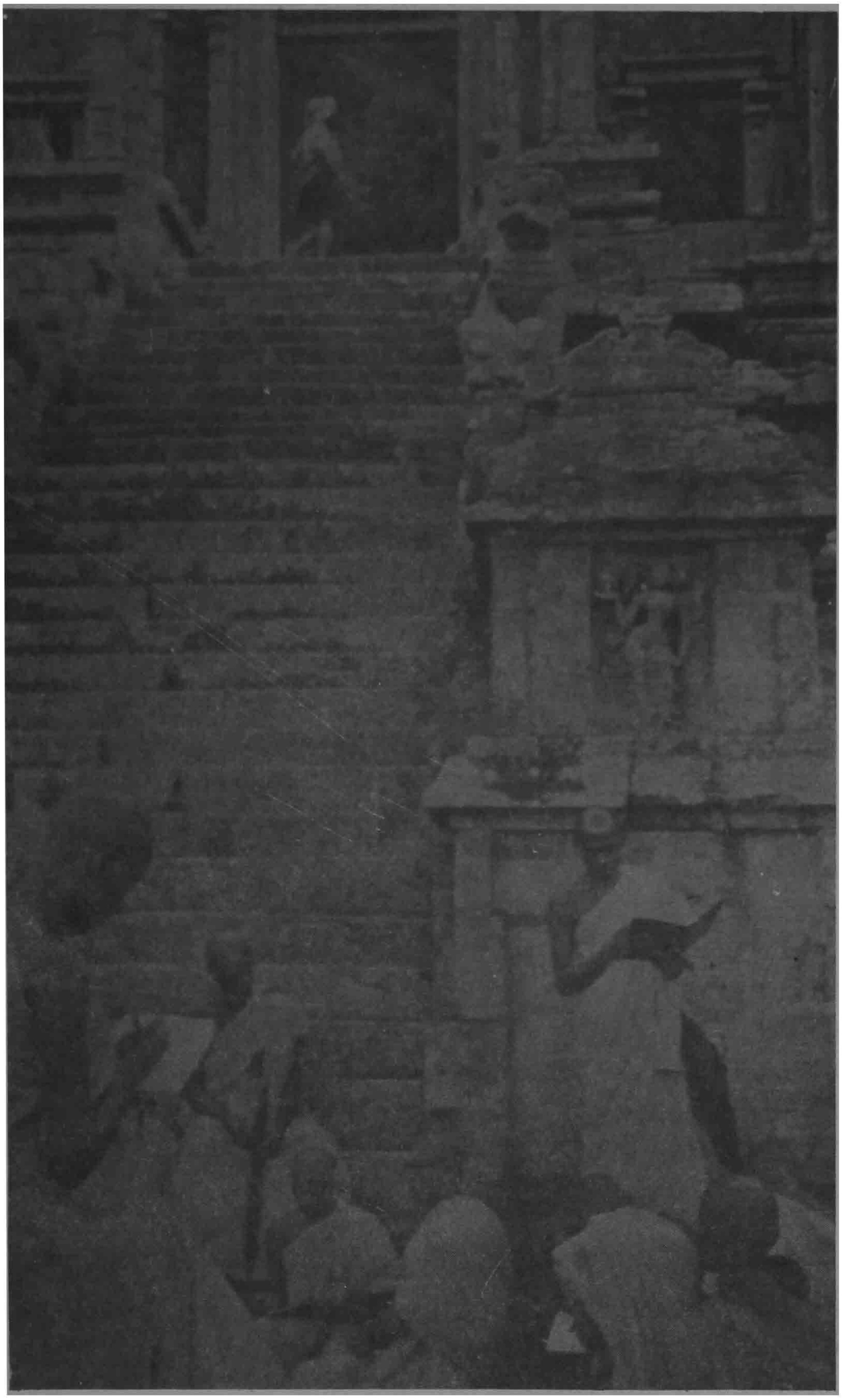
When Sir. D. B. Jayatilaka went to India as Ceylon's Representative there, D. S. Senanayake became the Leader of the House. Though Rahula Thera did not see eye to eye with Senanayake with regard to politics, he had cordial relations with the latter as a friend. Rahula Thera's elder brother, Hendrick de Silva Hettigoda, who came to know about the Rahula-Senanayake friendship, requested Rahula Thera to get down Senanayake to preside over a public meeting held at the Imaduwa School. It was an anti-crime propaganda meeting and Rahula Thera obliged.



Kotahene Pannakitti Thera

Bambarende Siri Seevali Thera

In the morning of the day of the meeting, Senanayake's car went to Peliyagoda and picked up Rahula Thera. On the way they stopped at the Bentota Rest House for lunch. Senanayake asked the Rest House Keeper to arrange a chair covered with a white cloth for the monk and a lower chair for him. The Rest House Keeper, after a frantic search for a few minutes, reported back to Senanayake that there were no lower chairs at the Rest House. Rahula Thera who was watching all this, spoke to Senanayake and said that it was neither Senanayake's home nor a temple,



Walpola Rahula Thera when he was a teacher at Vidyalankara, engaged in an archaeological survey with his students.

and as such, there was no harm in sitting on whatever chair available at the place. Thereafter, Senanayake apologised to Rahula Thera, and sat on the chair reluctantly. And, that was Senanayake, the unspoilt villager, whose respect for the Sangha was genuine.

When Senanayake arrived at the Imaduwa School, along with Rahula Thera, Paragoda Saddhananda Thera, the Chief Incumbent of the Paragoda Raja Maha Vihara, could not believe his eyes, for he never expected the *Kaunsale Lokka* or the chief of the State Council, to come to their humble meeting. So, in his welcome speech. Saddhananda Thera made use of the best of all adjectives and high-sounding words in his vocabulary, and praised Senanayake without any reservations.

When Senanayake got the turn for his speech, he said: "Can the sinners like us bear all this praise?" Then he bent down and worshipped Saddhananda Thera. He was not playing to the gallery, but expressing his true sentiments. That was genuine Senanayake.

I related this particular incident in detail to bring home to the reader the close relations that existed between Senanayake and Rahula Thera, because the next change in this saga will be how Rahula Thera became one of the leading opponents to Senanayake and his administration, and fought a heroic battle for the sake of the nation.

While working as a teacher at Vidyalankara, Rahula Thera was appointed the Secretary to the Vidyalankara Sabha too. And, that rejuvenated the activities of the Sabha.

One night in 1944, when the Second World War was raging, Rahula Thera was travelling in a car

from Colombo to Peliyagoda. The other occupants of the car were Yakkaduwe Sri Pragnarama Thera and Madowita Sri Gnanananda Thera, while H. M. Tissera was at the wheel. According to the military laws in force at that time, the headlamps had to be covered partially, and as a result , the driver could not see the road properly.

Close to the Victoria bridge at Peliyagoda, the car came to a head-on collision with a military truck, and summersaluted. The car was a total wreck and

Walpola Rahula Thera and
Yakkaduwe Pragnarama Thera

even the engine was in pieces. Fortunately, non of the occupants was injured. They crept out of the debris, all hale and hearty.

The sound of the crash was heard even as far as Kosgas Handiya and a large crowd of people, besides the police, gathered to the scene. Though the police

expected to pull out the 'dead bodies', to the utter amazement of all, there were no bodies in the debris.

"No one killed, Ah! It is better that this type of accidents do not occur," remarked Rahula Thera in lighter vain.

In the meantime, Yakkaduwa Thera, who as usual, began chewing betel by the side of the road, spoke to Rahula Thera and said: "Rahula Sthavira, do you know why we had a miraculous escape after such a serious accident? It is because we are billed to do a great service to the country in the future."

Though Yakkaduwe Thera was not an acclaimed futurist, the prediction made by him on the roadside on that fateful night, became a reality in the later years.

By the end of the first half of the forties, the condition of the common man in Sri Lanka was pathetic and the Vidyalankara bhikkhus looked at it very sympathetically. Besides a few capitalists, the rest of the population was a suppressed lot politically, economically and socially. Unrest was the order of the day for the common man. There was no place for the Sinhala language or Buddhism. The class diffenence was at its height and the gap between the haves and have nots had widened. In short, the life of the ordinary man was a miscerable one.

The Vidyalankara bhikkhus believed that they were neglecting their duty to the layman and the country, when they consumed the alms offered by the layman and lived a comfortable life inside the temples. So, they paid special attention to the plight of the country and went on discussing the problems of the ordinary man. They went to the State Council and

sat in the public galleries to watch what their representatives did inside that august assembly. At public meetings, they criticised the unfair actions by the administrators and blamed them for trying to become *Kalu Suddas* (black Englishmen) without paying any heed to the pathetic conditions of the ordinary masses.

The ordinary man was highly pleased over the speeches and actions by the bhikkhus and their popularity increased. The elite in power clearly saw that the educated and militant bhikkhus were becoming a great threat to their existence in time to come. D. S. Senanayake was one who realised this state of affairs well in advance and decided to nip it in the bud.

Senanayake launched his anti-bhikkhu campaign at a prize-giving ceremony held at Dharmaraja Vidyalaya, Matale, on January 13, 1946. In his speech, he vehemently attacked the bhikkhus who frequented the public galleries of the State Council, made public speeches and engaged in various other political activities.

In his speech Senanayake said: "I have noticed that some of the bhikkhus are bent on violating the vinaya rules set by the Buddha. It is all wrong for a bhikkhu to go to a lay person, however much high that person may be."

On January 17, both the *Dinamina* and the *Daily News* gave the highest prominence to Senanayake's speech. The headline of the *Daily News* report was "Minister's advice to the bhikkhus."

Senanayake had stirred up a hornets' nest. His speech annoyed not only the Vidyalankara bhikkhus and their colleagues, but also the general public who

were giving their fullest support to those bhikkhus. While the Vidyalankara bhikkhus were analysing and criticising Senanayake's speech, Rahula Thera booked a trunk call to Colombo and spoke to Senanayake:

"Mr. Minister, I am calling to find out whether I can meet you."

"Why not? Why not, Hamuduruwane? When can you come? I will send my car to Peliyagoda."

"But, how can I come like that?" said Rahula Thera without any excitement in his voice.

"Why, why is that?" asked surprised Senanayake from the other end.

"You are asking why. Can't you remember that you have said at a public meeting in Matale that a bhikkhu should not go to a layman however big the person may be?"

From there onwards, Rahula Thera gave a 'lecture' to Senanayake, without giving him a chance to utter a word. He blamed Senanayake for his mischievous speech and said that responsible leaders should never make such irresponsible statements. That was the beginning of the Rahula-Senanayake rift.

A few days later, on January 26, 1946, to be exact, addressing a public meeting held at Prince College, Kotahena, Rahula Thera made a scathing attack on Senanayake's statement. Two days later, on January 28, a distorted report of Rahula Thera's speech appeared in the *Dinamina*, along with a comment slandering Rahula Thera.

The open battle between the two camps started. The local capitalists, who were the slaves of the

imperialists, the majority of the English educated people, the people who did not like to see the downfall of the existing regime, the bhikkus who were in the grip of those in power and the anti-Buddhist elements, all rallied round their fortress - the Lake House - against Vidyalankara. The other camp, consisting of the downtrodden ordinary masses, a handful of English educated people who genuinely wanted to see a social, cultural and political renaissance in the country, and the progressive bhikkhus who supported the Vidyalankara line, made Vidyalankara Pirivena their fortress. It was an irony that the *Sinhala Bauddhaya*, the paper which claimed to be the custodian of the Sinhala Buddhist rights, too, got into Senanayake's fold and began to attack Vidyalankara mercilessly.

The newspapers branded political monks as *Kahakadayo* and described them as men in yellow robes. The papers told the public that the aim of those bhikkhus was to hoodwink the public and go to the State Council as members. They (the newspapers) further said that the political bhikkhus were all *dusseelas* or not virtuvous and asked the people to refrain from offering alms to those *dusseelas.*

The battle was raging from day to day and the situation was going from bad to worse. In order to reply to the critics and to explain to the country the path taken by Vidyalankara Pirivena, the teaching staff of the Pirivena decided to make a statement to the country. That statement issued on February 13, 1946, has gone into history as the famous 'Vidyalankara Declaration.' The full text of the Declaration is as follows:

The Buddha permitted bhikkhus to change minor rules of the Vinaya if they so desire. Nevertheless there is no historical evidence to show that the bhikkhus of the Theravada school have on any occasion actually changed the rules of the Vinaya. Likewise, we do not say that even now they should be changed.

But it has to be admitted that the political, economic and social conditions of today are different from those of the time of the Buddha, and that consequently the life of bhikkhus today is also different from that of the bhikkhus at that time.

In those days the ideal of monks generally was to realize nirvana in their very lifetime. In later times their ideal was to exert themselves to the best of their ability in activities beneficial to themselves and others with a view to realizing nirvana in a future life.

It is clearly seen that as a result of this very change, a great many other changes not known in the earlier days took place in the life of bhikkhus in later times.

The extent to which the life of monks today has undergone change can be clearly gauged when we take into consideration the prevailing conditions of life in temples, monasteries and pirivenas, the teaching and learning of Sinhala, Sanskrit and such other subjects, the present system of examinations, the editing and writing of books and journals, conferring and accepting nayakaships and such other titles, participation in various societies and being elected as officers in them. It has to be accepted, therefore, that, although the rules of the Vinaya have remained unaltered, the life of monks has undergone change and that this change is inevitable.

We believe that politics today embraces all fields of human activity directed towards the public weal.

D. S. Senanayake clashes with political bhikkhus

No one will dispute that the work for the promotion of the religion is the duty of the bhikkhu. It is clear that the welfare of the religion depends on the welfare of the people who profess that religion. History bears evidence to the fact that whenever the Sinhala nation - which was essentially a Buddhist nation - was prosperous, Buddhism also flourished. We, therefore, declare that it is nothing but fitting for bhikkhus to identify themselves with activities conducive to the welfare of our people - whether these activities be labelled politics or not - as long as they do not constitute an impediment to the religious life of a bhikkhu.

We cannot forget that from the earliest days the Sinhala monks, while leading the lives of bhikkhus, were in the forefront of movement for the progress of their nation, their country and their religion.

Even today bhikkhus by being engaged actively in education, rural reconstruction, anti-crime campaigns, relief work, temperance work, social work and such other activities, are taking part in politics, whether they are aware of it or not. We do not believe that it is wrong for bhikkhus to participate in these activities.

We believe that it is incumbent on the bhikkhu not only to further the efforts directed towards the welfare of the country, but also to oppose such measures as are detrimental to the common good. For example, if any effort is made to obstruct the system of free education, the great boon which has been recently conferred on our people, it is the paramount duty of the bhikkhu not only to oppose all such efforts but also to endeavor to make it a permanent blessing.

In ancient days, according to the records of history, the welfare of the nation and the welfare of the religion were regarded as synonymous terms by the laity as well as by the Sangha. The divorce of religion

from the nation was an idea introduced into the minds of the Sinhalese by invaders from the West, who belonged to an alien faith. It was a convenient instrument of astute policy to enable them to keep the people in subjugation in order to rule the country as they pleased.

It was in their own interests, and not for the welfare of the people, that these foreign invaders attempted to create a gulf between the bhikkhus and the laity - a policy which they implemented with diplomatic cunning. We should not follow their example, and should not attempt to withdraw bhikkhus from society. Such conduct would assuredly be a deplorable act of injustice, committed against our nation, our country and our religion.

Therefore, we publicly state that both our bhikkhus and our Buddhist leaders should avoid the pitfall of acting hastily, without deliberation and foresight, and should beware of doing a great disservice to our nation and to our religion.

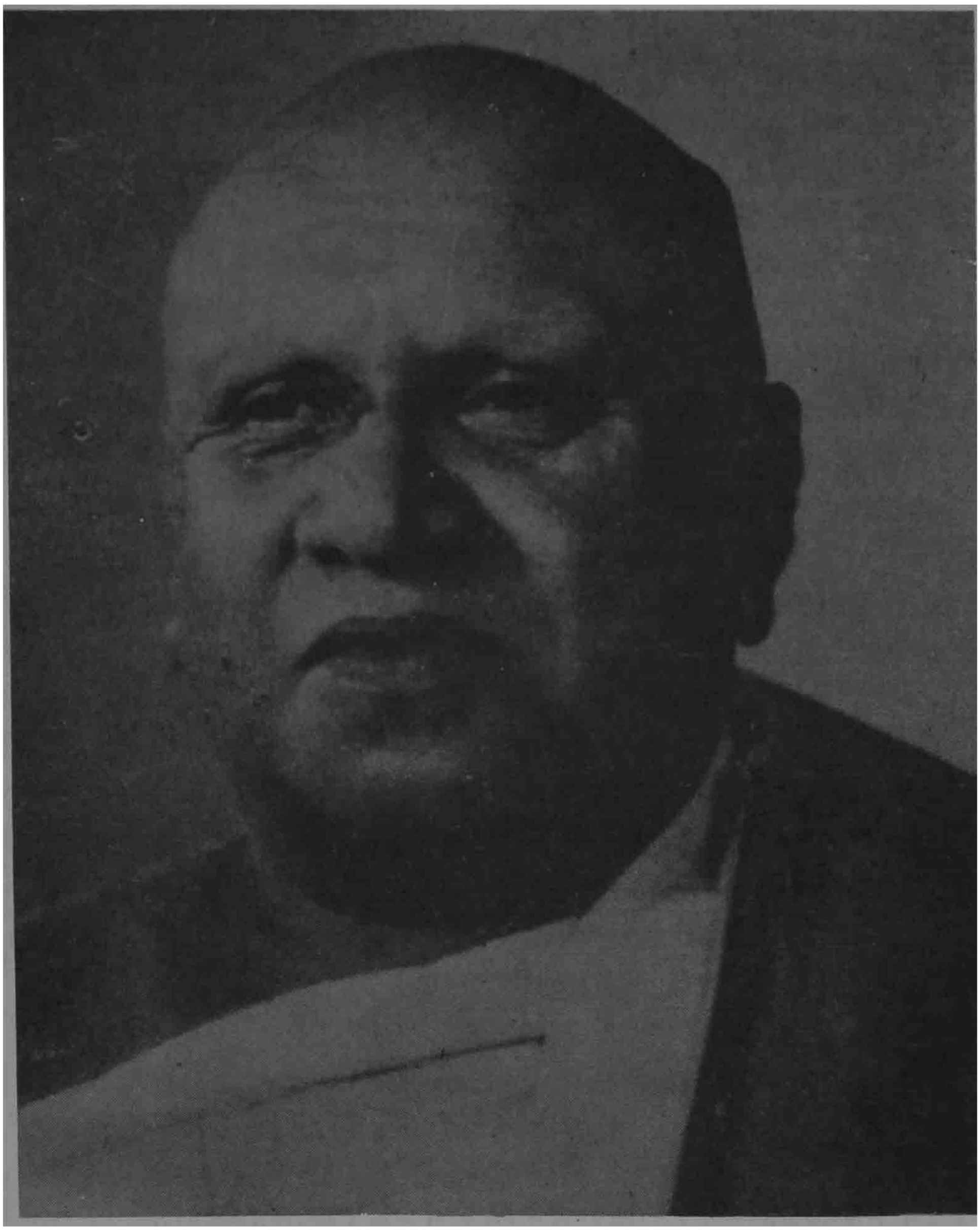
K. Pannasara
Principal, Vidyalankara Pirivena,
Tipitaka-Vagisvaracarya Upadhyaya,
Chief High Priest of the Colombo
And Chilaw Districts

February 13, 1946, Vidyalankara Pirivena

This declaration was unanimously approved by the teaching staff of Vidyalankara Pirivena, on February 13, 1946.

Though the declaration was issued under the signature of Kiriwattuduwe Nayaka Thera, the whole thing was written by Yakkaduwe Pragnarama Thera. The other bhikkhus who stood close to him to draft

the declaration and to plan the future strategy were Kotahene Pannakitti, Walpola Rahula, Kalalelle Anandasagara and Nattandiye Pannakara.



Kiriwattuduwe Sri Pragnasara Nayaka Thera

A weekly newspaper was launched to counter the malicious campaign carried out by the Lake House and other small-scale newspapers.

The new paper, named *Kalaya* (the Time), was inaugurated on March 14, 1946. Kotahene Pannakitti Thera was the Editor while D. B. Dhanapala was the

man behind. The leading contributors to the *Kalaya* were all bhikkhus such as Yakkaduwe Pragnarama, Polwatte Buddhadatta, Kotahene Pannakitti, Bambarende Siri Seevali, Narawila Dhammaratana, Hedipannala Pannaloka, Kalalelle Anandasagara and Modowita Sri Gnanananda. Every one worked free of charge as a national service. The *Kalaya* became very popular and the demand was so high, the pressmen had to do overtime to supply the copies ordered from all parts of the country.

The impact of the Vidyalanka Declaration was so great right round the country, that the vested interests headed by Senanayake, tried to get it withdrawn by means of threats and persuasions. When every effort failed, Senanayake told Dr. Nicholas Attygalle that he wished to discuss the contents of the declaration with the Executive Committee of the Vidyalankara Sabha. Dr. Attygalle, who was the President of the Sabha , convened a meeting of the Executive Committee, mainly due to two reasons. One was that Senanayake was a vice-President of the Sabha , and the other was Attygalle fervently hoped to bring together the warring factions and negotiate a settlement.

That historic meeting of the Executive Committee took place on the night of March 23, 1946, at Vidyalankara Pirivana. At first, Senanayake appealed to the bhikkhus to withdraw the Declaration, but, in vain. He went on speaking non-stop and at one point directed Rahula Thera, who was the Secretary, to record properly what he said, resulting in an exchange of words between Senanayake and Rahula Thera.

When all his strategies failed, Senanayake pulled out a copy of the constitution of the Vıuyalankara Sabha from his coat-pocket and did some legal argu-

ments. At one point he said: "This campaign has been started to ruin the Senanayake clan. But, I will not allow that to happen. Somehow or other I will safeguard my clan. But, I feel sorry that this campaign is going to ruin both the Buddha Sasana and Vidyalankara Pirivena."

Yakkaduwe Pragnarama Thera, who was silently watching the verbal fights all that time, cleared his mouth by spitting out betel saliva, and said:

"Mathithuma, you yourself say that you are going to safeguard the Senanayake clan. Then, there is nothing to worry about the safety of your clan. Then, our Maha Nayake Theras will leave no room for ruining the Buddha Sasana. So far as Vidyalankara Pirivana is concerned, we will look after it and protect it. So, this campaign is not going to harm any of the three parties you mentioned"

With those few words of Yakkaduwe Thera, the meeting came to an abrupt end. Senanayake who tried to tame the Vidyalanka bhikkhus for full five hours, from 7 p.m. to 12 midnight, failed in his attempt and left the place with a lot of anger.

Thereafter, the campaign against Vidyalankara was accelerated. J.R. Jayewardene, the then member of the State Council for Kelaniya, was also a stalwart in the anti-Vidyalankara campaign. Those in power ordered their lay followers not to offer alms to the Vidyalankara bhikkhus, for which some agreed with pleasure, while some others reluctantly obeyed the order because of the fear for reprisals. In spite of all the hardships that came on their way, the Vidyalankara bhikkhus stood firm, without the slightest change in their stand.

The next step by the Senanayake clique was to start a new campaign from Kelaniya Raja Maha

Vihara. The declared purpose of the campaign was to clean the Buddha Sasana. An organisation called the Kelaniya Sasana Sodhaka Mandalaya met at Kelaniya Raja Maha Vihara on March 31, 1946, and decided to get a bill passed in the State Council to empower the Maha Nayaka Theras either to disrobe the political bhikkhus or to fine or imprison them, or to give all those punishments where necessary.

Accordingly, the legal officers of the Government drafted a bill and sent it to Kandy for the approval of the Maha Nayaka Theras, before presenting it in the State Council. But, the Vidyalankara bhikkhus never paid any heed to these threats and campaigned against the so-called move to clean the Buddha Sasana. Ultimately, the draft of the bill remained locked up in the drawers of the Maha Nayaka Theras in Kandy, for several months without any decision, and died a natural death, without coming before the State Council in Colombo.

It was at this juncture that the Vidyalankara bhikkhus mustered all the bhikkhus in their favour and formed the Lanka Eksath Bhikshu Mandalaya or the United Bhikkhu Council.

Yakkaduwe Pragnarama Thera was unanimously elected as the Secretary. President was elected extempore at each meeting. The main objectives of the newly formed body were to fight against anti-bhikkhu elements, to get the Free Education Bill passed by the State Council, to face the forthcoming General Election and to launch a campaign to bring into power an independent, sovereign and socialist government in Sri Lanka.

The Lanka Eksath Bhikshu Mandalaya was inaugurated on May 21, 1946, at Vidyalankara

and the first propaganda meeting was held at the Colombo Town Hall on June 29, 1946. Rahula Thera was not only a chief organiser, but also was the chief speaker at that mass meeting.

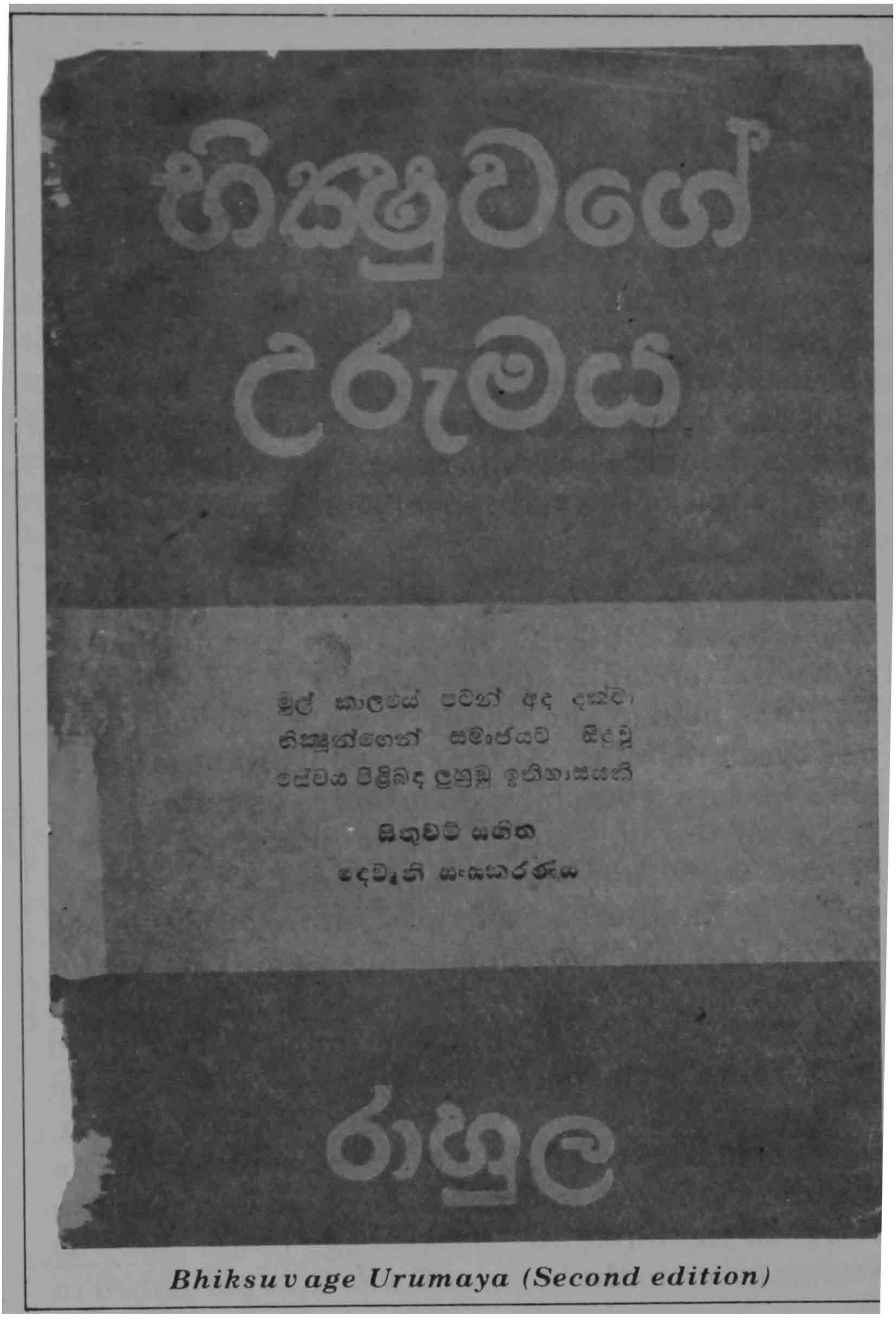
In spite of all these, the campaign against the political bhikkhus continued non-stop, in different guises. In that, J. R. Jayewardene played a leading role, sometimes, even surpassing Senanayake. He had reasons to do so because he had clearly realised that the new 'menace' launched from his electorate was growing in stature daily, and was going to become a big threat to his political future.

Amidst all the hostilities the public response to the campaign by the political bhikkhus was increasing by leaps and bounds. A large number of meetings was held in outstations to explain to the masses the true facts about the bhikkhu campaign. Rahula Thera played the role of the main speaker at almost all these meetings.

Before the Bhikshu Mandalaya was formed, a very well-attended public meeting , of both lay and clergy, was held at the Kandy Town Hall with Dr. A. P. de Zoysa presiding. At that meeting, Rahula Thera made a historic speech for 90 minutes explaining the heritage of the bhikkhu. The audience was highly taken up with that speech and there were several requests to Rahula Thera to publish that speech as a book. Yet, Rahula Thera did not have time to spare for such a thing. Nattandiye Pannakara Thera played the role of the persuader and continuously reminded Rahula Thera of the necessity of writing a book based on the Kandy speech. Ultimately, Rahula Thera, while continuing the fight against the anti-bhikkhu elements, managed to write a detailed book on the heritage of the bhikkhu. *Bhiksuvage Urumaya* was the name given to the book, and was first published in

June, 1946. It was sold out within a matter of three weeks.

Two years later, in April 1948, an illustrated second edition, with some improvements, was released and that too was sold out within a matter of months.



Bhiksuvage Urumaya (Second edition)

D. S. Senanayake clashes with political bhikkhus

Bhiksuvage Uruṃaya which is hailed by the public as a book that shook Sri Lanka, was out of print for nearly 44 years. Though there were many requests to come out with a third edition, Rahula Thera could not do so mainly due to the fact that he was engaged in research and teaching in Europe and America for over two decades. However, he was able to come out with that much awaited third edition in 1992.

So far as the struggle by the political bhikkhus was concerned, the release of the first edition of *Bhiksuvage Urumaya* in 1946, gave much impetus to the campaign by the bhikkus. The flood-gates were open, and even those bhikkhus who were sitting on the fence all that time, became direct participants of the struggle, after reading the book.

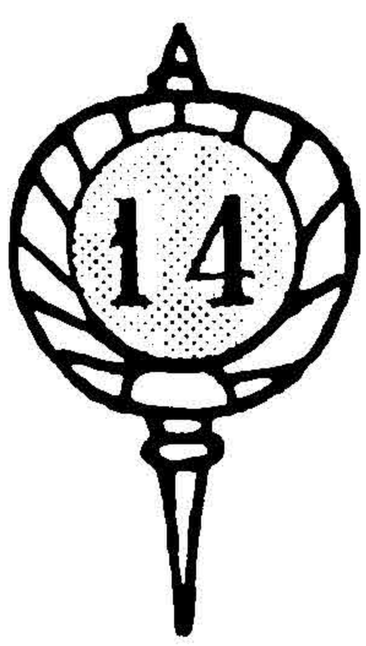
As the fight for the supremacy in the Vidyalankara Sabha prolonged, all the militant bhikkhus like Rahula, Pannakitti, Pannakara and Anandasagara resigned from the Sabha along with their revered mentor, Yakkaduwe Thera. Thereafter, the anti-bhikkhu elements, headed by J. R. Jayewardene, became all powerful in the Vidyalankara Sabha.

D. B. Dhanapala, the Principal of Dharmaloka Vidyalaya, was a close friend of both Yakkaduwe Thera and Rahula Thera, and gave his fullest support to the political bhikkhus in their just struggle. And, that resulted in a lot of hostilities and he found it impossible to continue as the Principal. When things went from bad to worse, he resigned in November 1946. Along with him, the whole staff of 33 teachers too resigned, leaving the school teacherless.

The parents and the past pupils of the school got together and held a protest meeting against the

Vidyalankara Sabha for messing up their children's education. When the meeting was in progress, some of the stalwarts of the Vidyalankara Sabha gate-crashed into the meeting and began to pose various questions. The past pupils, of whom 99 per cent were pro-Dhanapala and pro-political bhikkhus, stopped the meeting and went for the intruders. The Dharmaloka premises turned to be a battlefield and a large number of intruders was injured.

The anti-bhikkhu elements had well realised that they could not win the battle so long as that handful of militant monks, namely, Yakkaduwe Pragnarama, Kotahene Pannakitti, Walpola Rahula, Kalalelle Anandasagara and Nattandiye Pannakara master-minded all the strategies at Vidyalankara. So, a big conspiracy was hatched to oust those monks from the Pirivena and to get the place 'cleaned.' The anti-bhikkhu elements failed in that attempt too and those monks continued to sit on their saddles firmly challenging the enemies. The battle went on.



MEETING GANDHI WHILE FIGHTING FOR FREE EDUCATION

Minister of Education C. W. W. Kannangara presented a bill in the State Council in 1943, to introduce free education in the country. Years passed, but the bill was never taken up for discussion. The privileged class who were in power in the State Council, did not like the idea of giving free education to each and every child in this country and did everything possible to sabotage Kannangara's move.

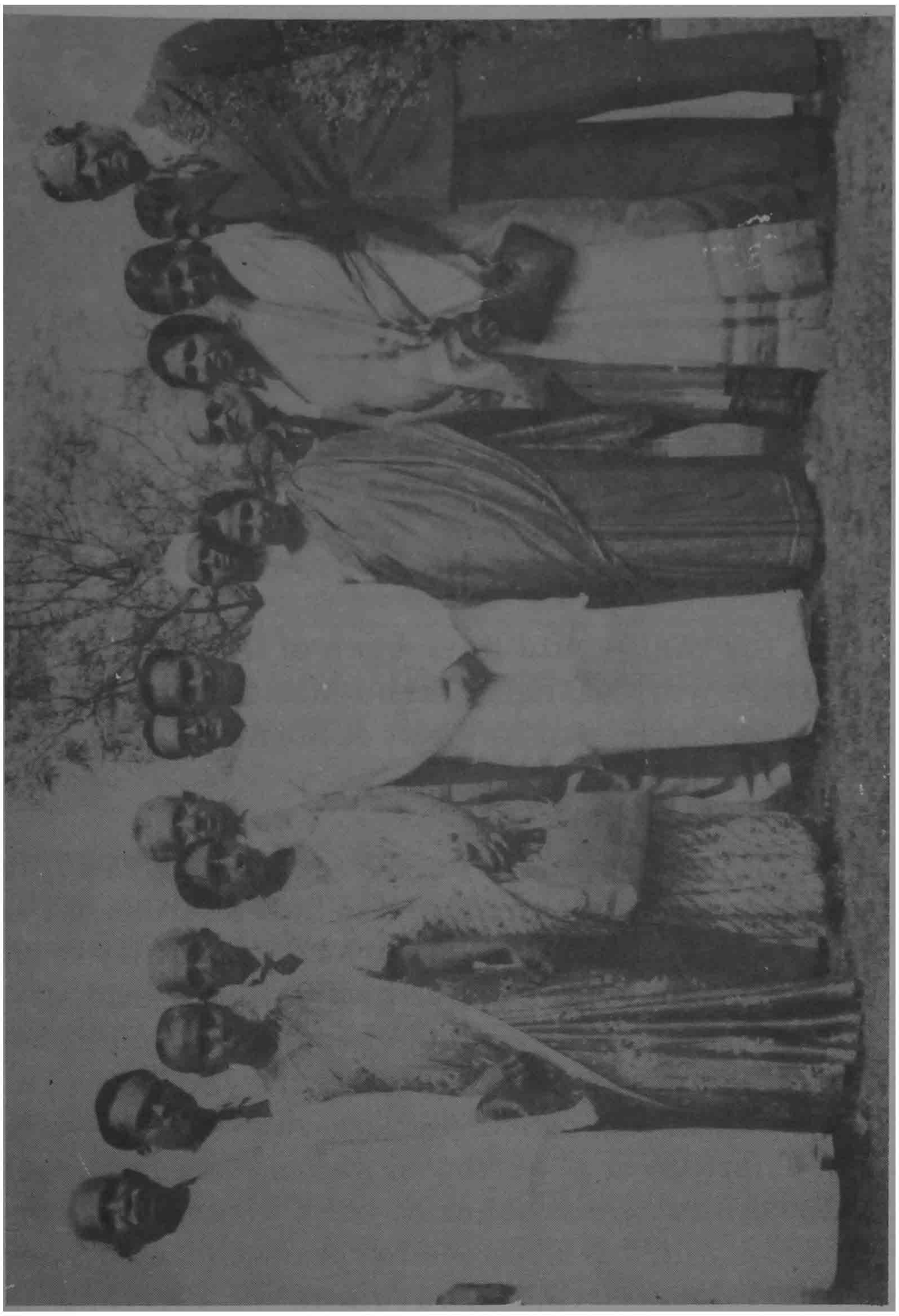
Though the political bhikkhus never saw eye to eye with Kannangara's politics, or his government, they clearly saw that he was doing a great service to the poor children of the country by introducing the free education. Therefore, the bhikkhus decided to give their fullest support to isolated Kannangara's noble task. Rahula Thera, who was born in a rural village and obtained his university degree with great difficulty; sincerely felt that it was his bounden duty to walk behind Kannangara and give him every possible support.

Ultimately, the Free Education Bill was sheduled to be taken up in the State Council on May 13, 1947, for the approval by the members. But, it was quite evident that all the forces against the free education were very active to prevent the bill becoming law.

The Eksath Bhikshu Mandalaya launched an islandwide campaign to force all the members of the State Council to vote in favour of the bill. A petition requesting all the members to vote for the bill was prepared, and the draft of that particular petition was written by Rahula Thera. A large number of copies of the petition was prepared and distributed islandwide. Public meetings were orgnised in all parts of the country to explain to the people the value of the free education and persuade them to sign the petition. Rahula Thera's diaries have very interesting records of how he went to address free education meetings in Colombo, Kandy, Kurunegala, Ratnapura, Galle etc. and how he was threatened with bodily harm in some of those places.

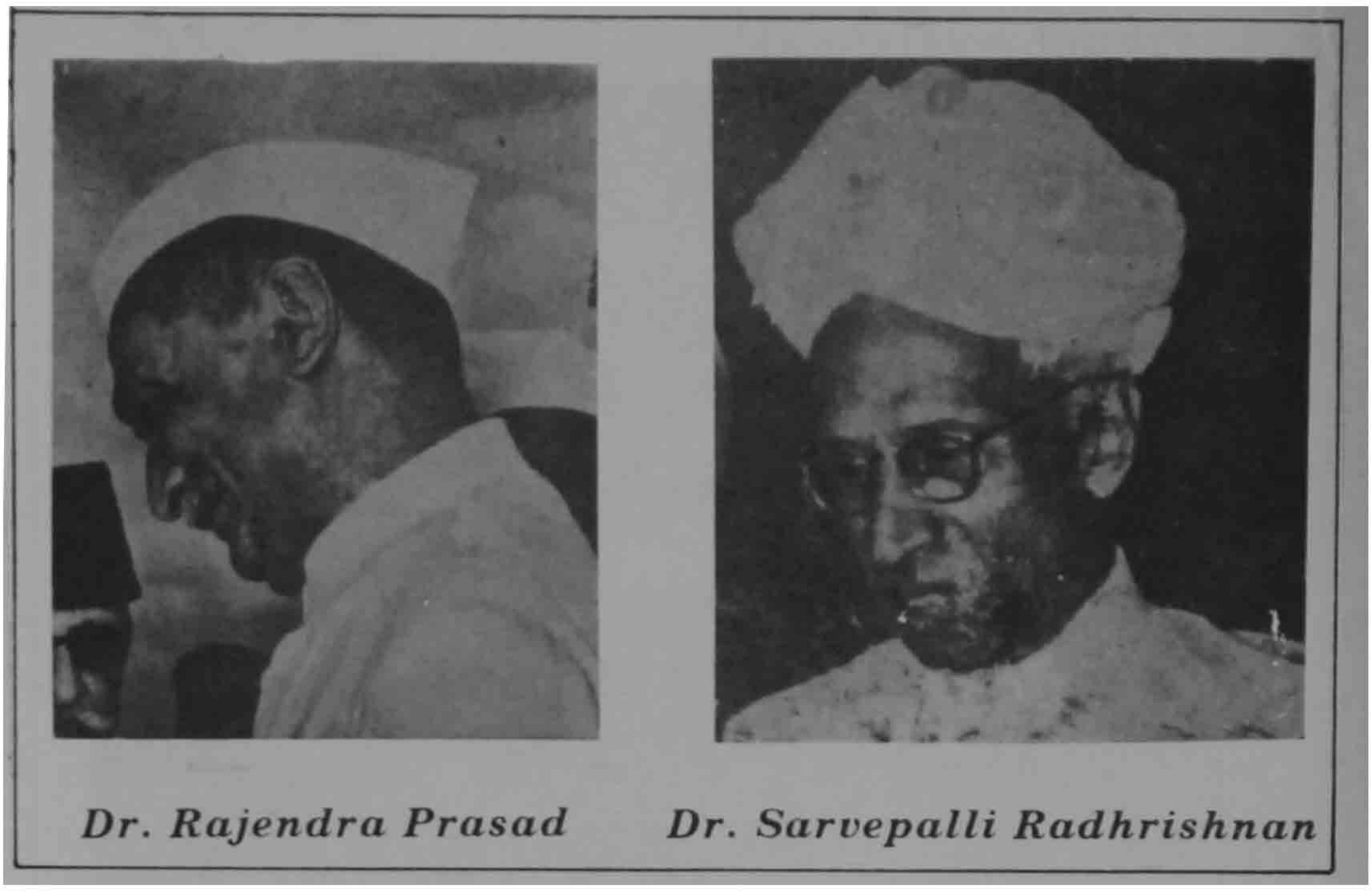
In addition to the meetings in the main towns, the members of the Bhikshus Mandalaya were requested to have smaller pocket meetings in their areas, to promote public opinion in favour of free education. The Vidyalankara strategists made use of even the Wesak time sermons in favour of the free education struggle. All the bhikkhus who delivered the Wesak sermons were requested to make special reference to the value of free education and to ask their devotees to do everything possible to make it a reality. The date fixed for returning the copies of the free education petition to Vidyalankara Piriven was April 30, 1947.

While the free education issue was reverberating throughout the country, a very important interna-



The delegation to the Inter Asian Relations Conference held in Delhi in 1947

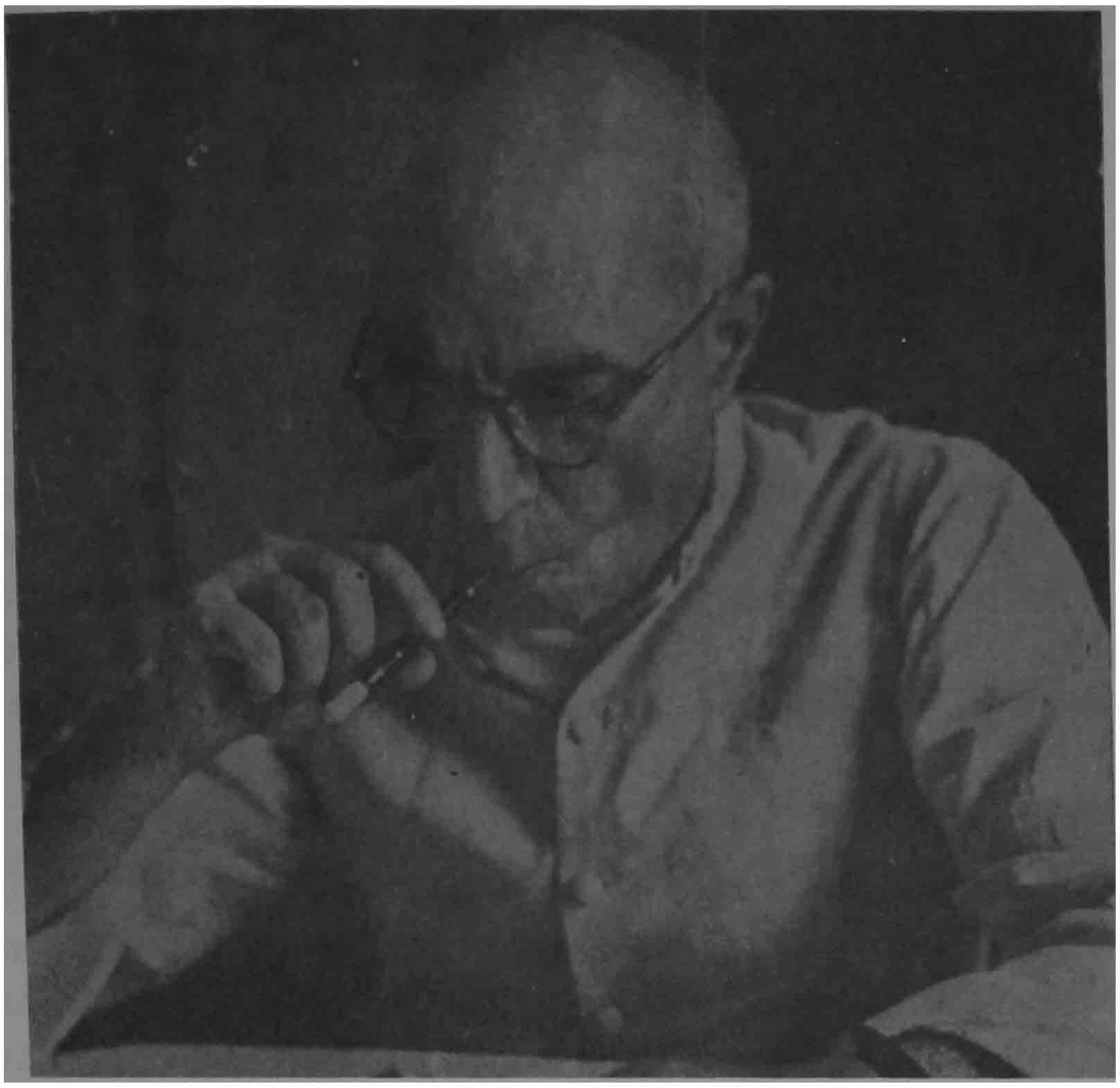
tional conference was cheduled to take place in India in the last week of March, 1947. It was known as the Inter Asian Relations Conference. The head of the Sri Lanka delegation was S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, and C. W. W. Kananangara was also a member. Rahula Thera decided to attend the conference as an observer in order to get first hand information about the delib-



Dr. Rajendra Prasad *Dr. Sarvepalli Radhrishnan*

erations, for that would have been of immense value to the future work of the Bhikshu Mandalaya. All his expenses for the trip to India were borne by his friend D. C. Wijewardene.

The conference was opened on March 23, 1947, in 'Purana Khila', which happened to be a fortress in the by-gone days. Rahula Thera got the opportunity to sit next to Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Dr. Rajendra Prasad, both of whom became presidents of the Republic of India in the later years. So far as Dr. Radhakrishnan was concerned, he was well known to Rahula Thera over a period of years. He first met Radhakrishnan as a teacher at the Calcutta University in 1942, and got a chance to renew that intimacy when the latter visited Vidyalankara Pirivena in



Jawaharlal Nehru

1945, as the chief guest at its Convocation ceremony. For Rahula Thera, it was a real pleasure and a privilege to sit next to Radhakrishnan.

Jawaharlal Nehru, who made the opening address, first spoke in Hindi for a few minutes, and then spoke in English. Bandaranaike too followed Nehru and spoke in Sinhala for a few minutes, before his English speech. Radhakrishnan after listening to Bandaranaike's Sinhala, whispered to Rahula Thera and said that he understood most of the Sinhala terms. Then, Rahula Thera whispered back to Radhakrishnan and said: "Bandaranaike's Sinhala is not very good. If a real Sinhala scholar spoke, you would have understood better, because we have ab-

sorbed a large number of Sanskrit words to the Sinhala language."

During the breaks, Kannangara made it a habit to approach Rahula Thera to have a chat with him. In fact, Rahula Thera had become one of the dearest friends to Kannangara for he was in the vanguard to fight for free education.

"Though Bandaranaike is trying to be a saint here by talking of things like giving the proper place to the common man and promoting the indigenous culture, you very well know that he is a declared enemy of my free education bill, which I have presented for the benefit of the poor children," Kannangara whispered to Rahula Thera.

"But, Mr. Minister, take it for granted that Bandaranaike too will be in favour of the bill at the time of voting. We have brought the whole country to such a position that they will not be able to walk freely on the roads if they vote against the bill," replied Rahula Thera.

"If not for you and your colleagues, I would have got stranded and lost the battle," sighed Kannangara.

"Don't get disheartened. The intention in noble and the victory is definite," assured Rahula Thera.

During the conference Rahula Thera got the opportunity to have private chats with Nehru and become intimate with him. Nehru was so taken up with Rahula Thera's schorarship and militancy, that he used to recommend to some of the Indians who visited Sri Lanka in later years, Rahula Thera as one of the most suitable persons to keep company with, while in Sri Lanka.

In Delhi, Ananda Kaushalyayana Thera, who knew Gandhi well, had arranged for Rahula Thera to meet the Mahatma when the latter came from Bihar. Kaushalyayana Thera, along with Jagadish Kashyapa and Rahula Sankrityayana, were the most brilliant Indian past pupils of Vidyalankara Pirivena. They were the pupils of Lunupokune Dhammananda Nayaka Thera, who adorned the Principal's chair from 1918 to 1945.

March 1947 was a very fateful period for India because of a number of reasons. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, who represented the Muslim majority at the London talks at the end of 1946, regarding the independence to India, had declared publicly that if a separate state for the Muslims was not declared it was impossible to stop civil war and riots.

That broke down the London talks.

On his return from London, Jawaharlal Nehru went in search of Mahatma Gandhi, who was going from village to village, trying to stop Hindu-Muslim killings. At Rampur, Nehru met Gandhi and announced the outcome of the London talks.

However, the All India Congress Committee went against the sound advice by Gandhi and made a decision which ultimately paved or quickened the division of India into two separate states.

Lord Mountbatten, the newly appointed Vicreoy to India, (who happened to be the last one), and his wife Edwina, arrived in New Delhi on March 22, 1947, the day prior to the opening of the Inter-Asian Relations Conference. Rahula Thera had reached New Delhi three days prior to that.

Hardly before twenty four hours had passed after the arrival of Mountbatten in New Delhi, Jinnah told

him that 'terrific dissasters' awaited India if no separate state was created for the Muslims.

Under the circumstances, Mountbatten made hasty arrangemants to bring Gandhi, who was in Bihar by that time, to New Delhi to have talks with Jinnah. To quicken the journey from Bihar to New Delhi, Mountbatten offered to send a plane for Gandhi, but, the latter informed that he preferred to travel by train, talking to ordinary people on the way.

As Gandhi had been continuously talking and pleading against the torturing and killing of the Muslims, the Hindus had branded him as a pro-Muslim man who defended the Muslims against the Hindus. In fact, Gandhi had received a telegram from a Hindu warning him not to condemn Hindus for what they had done.

On arrival in New Delhi, Gandhi stayed in a Hindu religious place called 'Valmiki Mandir'. It was quite a small building that belonged to the Panchama people. Rahula Thera, along with Ananda Kaushalyayana Thera, waited there to meet Gandhi as had been pre-arranged. But Gandhi returned from his meeting with the Viceroy quite late, and had no time to speak to anybody. As the appointed time for the prayers had already passed, he walked straight to the dais and sat there.

Gandhi started the prayers with *Namamyo ho ren ge kyo* (meaning: Obeisance to the Saddharmapundarika Sutra), which he had learnt from his close associate, Japanese Buddhist monk Nichidatsu Fuji. Beginning with that, Gandhi went ahead with Hindu devotional songs, Christian prayers and then began to read from the Muslim Koran.

Just then, a Hindu youth of about twenty years, jumped forward and shouted at Gandhi. He said:

"This is our Hindu temple. We can't allow you to read the Muslim Koran here."

"Why not? We must respect all the religions. This is something I do daily," said Gandhi in his usual meek vocie.

"No, we are against reading the Koran in a Hindu tempele," shouted the youth.

"If you are against, you can go out of this place," said Gandhi.

The word used by Gandhi for 'you' was *thum*. According to Gandhi's age and also according to the Hindu customs, Gandhi had every right to address the youth as *thum*. But the youth shouted back and said: "You go!" using the word *thum*, which he should not have used when addressing Gandhi.

Before the argument went any furthér, the police dragged away the shouting youth.

Perhaps, that may have been the first and the last time anybody called Mahatma Gandhi *thum*. Here, it must be recalled that even Nathuram Vinayak Godse, who killed Gandhi, spoke to the latter with due respect and saluted with *Namasthe* before firing those fatal shots.

Though the protesting youth was taken away by the police, Gandhi was hurt. Making a very sentimental speech in Hindi, he said: "I am isolated today. I am without people who listen to me and follow me. However, don't obstruct Jawaharlal Nehru's path as he is the only person who can shoulder the responsiblity of salvaging the nation."

After this interrupted prayer meeting, there were hush hush discussions in the crowd about a con-

spiracy by the hardcore Hindus to kill Gandhi, for they were all against his 'pro-Muslim stand

"That was the first time the people heard about a conspiracy to kill Gandhi. But I must say that all the historians and the other writers who wrote about Gandhi, seemed to have missed this very important event," Rahula Thera told me.

Finally, on January 30, 1948, when Gandhi was going for a prayer meeting a Hindu youth by the name of Nathuram Vinayak Godse fired three shots. *Hare Ram!* (Oh, God) murmured Gandhi and fell dead instantly.

When Rahula Thera heard the tragic news, he was so shocked and grieved that he fasted for a whole day. When a portion of Gandhi's ashes was brought to Sri Lanka on February 22, 1948, Rahula Thera went to Ratmalàna airport to receive it and later participated in a simple ceremony in front of Kalaniya Raja Maha Vihara, where the ashes were immersed in the Kelani river.

When Rahula Thera returned to Sri Lanka after his short visit to India, signatures to the Free Education petition had grown miles and miles in length. The public opinion in support of free education had gathered momentum and the members of the State Council who opposed it earlier were in a quandary. As Rahula Thera predicted to Kannangara in New Delhi, the situation in the country was such that the members would not have been able to walk freely on the roads if they voted against the Free Education Bill.

On the appointed day, namely, May 13, 1947, the miles-long petition was taken in a procession headed by the Vidyalankara bhikkhus to the State Council

and was handed over to W. Dhanayake, the then member for Bibile, who tabled it in the House.

Kotahene Pannakitti Thera was the Lobby Correspondent for the *Kalaya*, and some extracts from his report which appeared in the *Kalaya* of May 22, 1946, are as follows:

On the 13th of this month, not only the public galleries, but also the speaker's gallery, was fully packed with enthusiastic crowds long before the proceedings commenced. A special feature of the day was that a large number of bhikkhus were seated in the galleries. Among them were Maha Theras, Nayaka Theras and Heads of Pirivenas, who had come from distant places. However, the eyes of the Ministers and the members were focussed more on the progressive bhikkhus, who during the past few weeks fought a valiant battle to safeguard the free education, by explaining to the people that there was a move by the government to defer the Free Education Bill.

Though the bhikkhus in the galleries appeared to be a thorn in the eyes of the Leader of the House, it must be stated that it was because of an alleged promise given by him to the Archbishop that such a strong public opinion swept through the country. The bhikkhus realised that the time had come to protect the civilisation of Sri Lanka and the free education. It was all due to the Lake House newspapers which gave a wide publicity when the Catholics, through I. X. Pereira, presented a petition with 80,000 signatures against the free education, and then, due to the attitude of the Leader of the House, who made a very forceful, unsympathetic and unreasonable speech against the bill.

It was a praiseworthy step taken by the bhikkhus even at the last moment on behalf of the majority of the

people consisting of Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims. Indeed, it was a great service. Mr. I. X. Pereira's petition was a very insignificant one when compared with the miles-long petitions forwarded from Colombo and outstations under the auspices of the Bhikshu Mandalalya with the signatures of both males and females from all the religious faiths, namely, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Catholic. It was quite clear that the members approved the bill, on the second reading, when they saw for themselves the unity, the enthusiasm and the clamour of those who supportred it. However, the fact that the bill remains referred to the Committee 'A' is not in the best interest of the general public.

Mr. V. Nalliah, who condemned the malicious statement made by a group of Christian priests, to the effect that the victory was not too far, said that a strong public opinion was created because of the clamour of the progressive bhikkhus and the fact that even those Ministers and Members who opposed the bill earlier, voted in favour at the last moment, was a real victory for those bhikkhus. It is all wrong, said Mr. Nalliah, for the minority Catholics to act against the majority Buddhists and Hindus. Even in Europe, Catholic priests have opposed great national movements in those countries, Mr. Nalliah pointed out. He further said though it was the duty of the State Council to guarantee the safety of the people of every religous faith, a small minority should not be allowed to obstruct the progress of the majority.

Walpola Rahula Thera who analyses the movement of the political bhikkhus in the second edition of his celeberated book, *Bhiksuvage Urumamaya* has this to say:

The change brought about in Ceylon as a result of the upright course followed by the United Bhikkhu

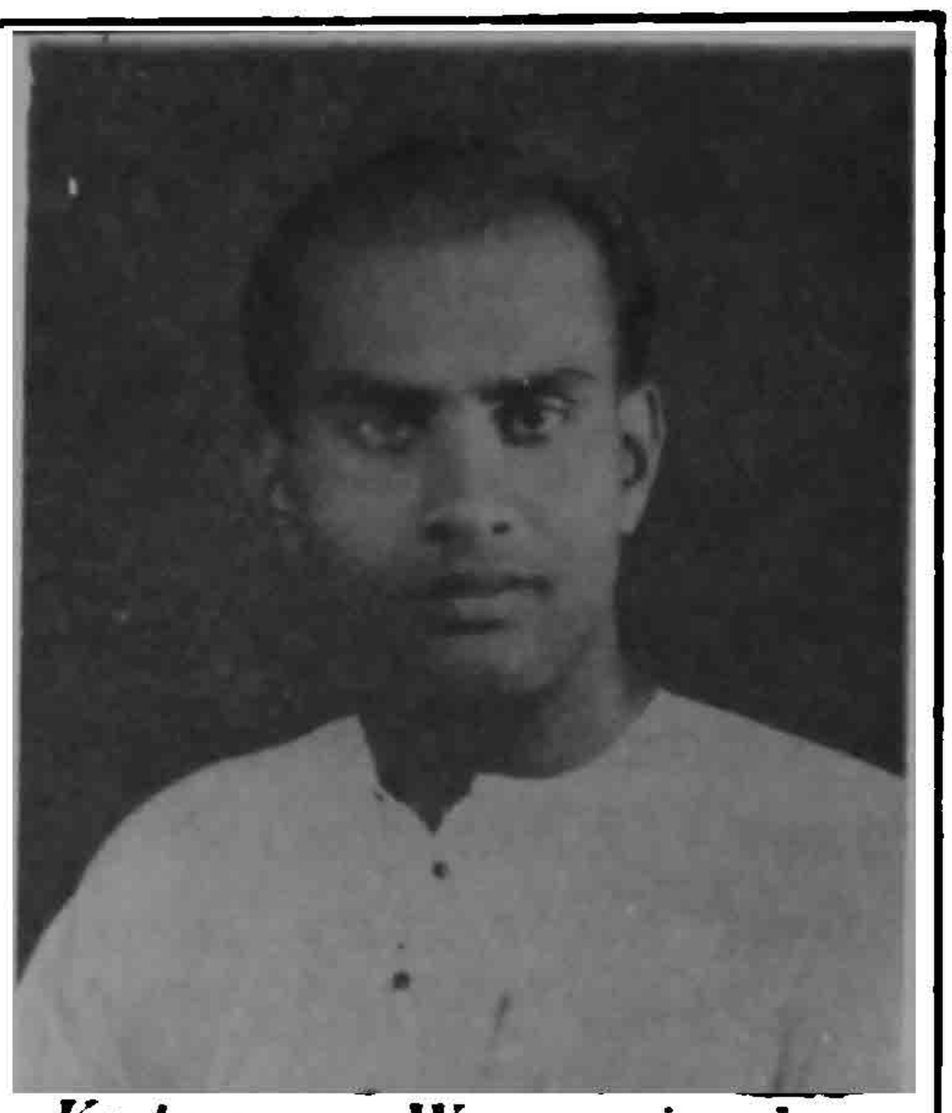
Council (Eksat Bhiksu Mandalaya) in the recent past is tremendous. It was certainly responsible for the great awakening of the bhikkhus and laymen regarding current religious, social, economic and political problems. Bhikkhus and laymen learned to speak the truth boldly, without fear, without servility to power and wealth. There was no other recent issue which evoked so much public enthusiasm.

The interest of this movement was not limited to Ceylon. Articles in newspapers and magazines of Asia and some of the European countries indicate the attention it received. The Hungarian Weekly, Jovendo, said the course of action adopted by the Buddhist monks in Ceylon should be taken as a lesson by the clergy in Europe.

As a result of this movement two important expressions with deep meaning and historical significance - "Bhikkhu Politics" and "Political Bhikkhus" - found their way into current Buddhist literature. "Bhikkhu Politics," as much as the grantha-dhura ("scholarship," literally "occupation of texts") may become a Buddhist tradition. Moreover, the "Sons of the Buddha" (i.e., bhikkhus) who keep away from crooked and dishonest practices, who have a pure character, who have received a higher education in keeping with the needs of the times, who will not bow down before wealth or power, and will work for the benefit of the common man, altruistic, bold, upright, and honest monks will be regarded as political Bhikkhus.

It is indeed gratifying to note that Mr. D. S. Senanayake and his followers, who primarily opposed the participation of bhikkhus in politics, seem to have of late realized their error and accepted our views and acted accordingly.

N. D. Kulasena Weerasinghe from Malewana in the Kalutara District, was one of the youths who gave his fullest support to the free education struggle during the height of the campaign. He was only 18 years old then, and now a retired man of 66 years, lives in Pilakatumulla in Nattandiya. The following are some of his reminiscences of the free education struggle, which I have extracted from a letter dated June 17, 1993, written by Weerasinghe to Rahula Thera:



Kulasena Weerasinghe

At the time when the Minister of Education C. W. W. Kannangara came out with his free education bill, there was no such party called the United National Party. You may well remember that D. S. Senanayake and his colleagues who were in the grip of the Catholic church and worked against the free education, formed the United National Party in the later years.

Even after the UNP was formed, the group headed by D. S. Senanayake went all out against the free education and Kannangara.

I can still remember that it was you, along with some other organisations, who gave the leadership to the struggle by holding islandwide meetings to explain to the people the value and the necessity of free education and getting lakhs and lakhs of people to sign the pro-free education petition. The service rendeted by such great men like Dr. Gunapala Malalasekera, L. H. Mettananda, N. Q. Dias and

Meeting Gandhi while fighting for free education

Dr. E.W. Adikaram in the struggle for free education was treamendous. It is very sad to note that the erosion of the free education is continuing.

During the free education struggle I gathered 18,000 signatures for that giant petition asking for free education and handed it over to you. For that, I got the assistance of a number of young students of my age at that time.

The militant students and the youths had also learnt the value of the free education from a book entitled "Nidahas Adhyapanaye Swarupaya" written and published by Dr. N. M. Perera about a year before the Free Education Bill was presented in the State Council.

On the day of the debate, we took that mammoth petition in a procession headed by W. Dahanayake, the then member for Bibile, to the State Council and got Mr. Dahanayake to present it in the Council. As I was a participant to almost all the stages of this drama, I still have clear memories of the whole thing.

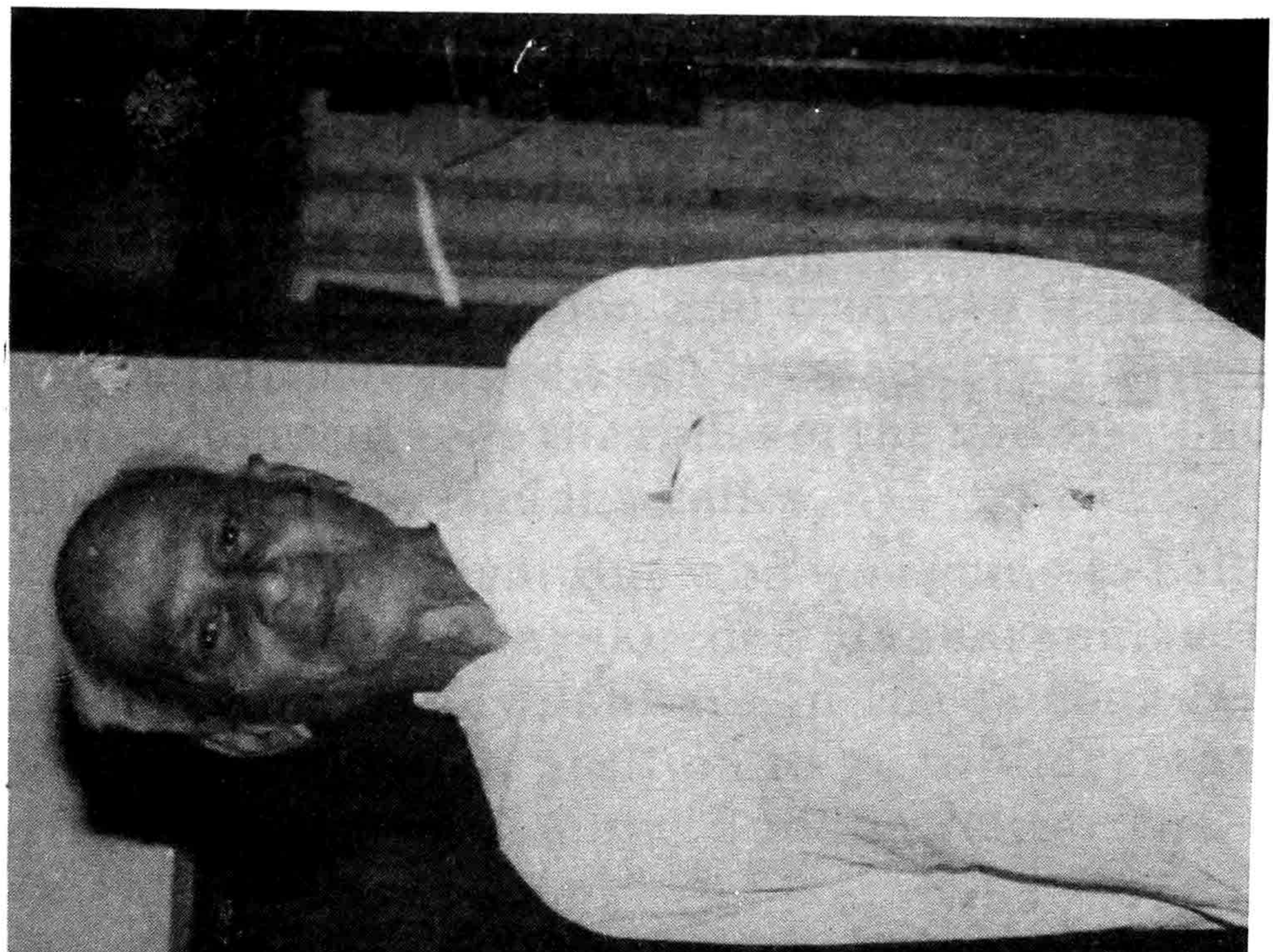
You, along with Kalalelle Anandasagara Thera, were seated in the gallery before the debate started and listened patiently till it was over. In the midst of the proceedings Kalalelle Thera went out several times to announce to the crowd outside as to what was happening inside the House. The crowd which consisted of students, youths, members of trade unions and representatives of various other organisations, who supported the free education, stood outside till the end exhibited their solidarity for a worthy national cause.

While tabling the free education petition in the House, Mr. Dahanayake warned that any member who opposed the Free Education Bill would not be able to

L. H. Mettananda

N. Q. Dias

Dr. E. W. Adikaram



Dr. Wijayanda Dahanayake

win the General Election which was due in 1947. He raised his voice and said that the majority in the country stood for free education and drew the attention of the members to the sea of heads which stretched from the House to the Gall face Green, all in favour of the free education.

All the members who well realised that the majority in the country supported the free education, voted for the bill and passed it without any division. Those Ministers and members who had opposed the bill from the very begining, had adopted a policy of kissing the hand that could not be chopped.

I am sending this detailed letter to you because you are the only living person today who can tell the world, with authority, the real history of free education in Sri Lanka, and to do away with all the misconceptions.

15

RAHULA THERA SETTLES ANOTHER DISPUTE OVER RELICS

During the height of the free education campaign the Sri Lankan Government received some relics of the Buddha's two chief disciples from India and an exposition of those relics was to be held at the National Museum in Colombo. The board of ministers, headed by D. S. Senananyake, discussed the arrangements about the exposion and proposed to bring the Buddha relics deposited at Vidyalankara Pirivena to the museum and keep the relics of the two disciples on either side of the Buddha relics.

An excellent idea! But who was going to bell the cat? Neither Senanayake nor Bandaranaike who worked against Vidyalankara in the famous *Dathu Kolahalaya* was in a position to go to Vidyalankara Pirivena to request for the Buddha relics. The only Minister in the whole Cabinet who was in a position to approach Vidyalankara was C. W. W. Kannangara. He had very cordial relations with Vidyalankara, especially with Rahula Thera, as a result of the free education struggle. Under the circumstances, Senanayake decided to send Kannangara

to Vidyalankara to request for the relics.

Though Kannangara agreed to go on the mission, he had his ulterior motives with regard to the whole problem. In his heart of hearts he was deadly against Senanayake and other ministers who were keeping his Free Education Bill in the cold storage for a number of years. He was all out to sabotage every move by the other ministers, if he could.

Kannangara went to Vidyalankara Pirivena, paid his respects to Principal, Kiriwattuduwe Pannasara Nayaka Thera, and announced the purpose of his visit. When looking around, Nayaka Thera clearly saw the signs of disapproval on the faces of all the militant bhikkhus. Then, the Nayaka Thera told Kannangara that he would convey his decision within a few days.

After the discussion, Kannangara did not leave the place immediately. Instead, he started a conversation with Rahula Thera and the two of them, amidst a pleasant chat, walked into Rahula Thera's room. As soon as Kannangara entered the room he looked around to ascertain whether anybody else was listening and said: "Hamuduruane, I came here just to convey Senanayake's message. But, I am all against giving the Buddha relics to them. What will happen if they make use of the state power and keep the relics with them. Don't part with the relics in your possession, at any cost".

When Kannangara left, all the bhikkhus gathered round the Nayaka Thera, and said in on evoice that the relics should not be sent to the museum for exposition there. Rahula Thera who was encouraged by what Kannangara said, and had decided on a certain course of action, remained silent listening to what the other bhukkhus had to say.

Rahula Thera settles another dispute over relics

Kiriwattuduwe Nayaka Thera, who was in a fix, said: "If we don't give the relics Mr. Senanayake will become more antagonised with us. I don't know what to do? "

And, then, Rahula Thera started talking: "I have a plan that would not antagonise anybody. We will inform Mr. Senanayake that we welcome the proposal to expose the relics of the disciples along with the relics of the Buddha. But, we must inform him that the Buddha does not go to the disciples. The correct position is for the disciples to come to the place where the Buddha is. Accordingly, we must request Mr. Senanayake to bring the relics of the two disciples here, to Vidyalankara Pirivena, and keep them on either side of the Buddha relics for the exposition. We also must inform him that Vidyalankara is ready to provide all necessary facilities for the exposition."

Rahula Thera's proposal, which was unanimously approved by all the Vidyalankara bhikkhus, was conveyed to Senanayake through Kannangara. There was no reaction from that side. The exposition of the relics of the two disciples took place at the Colombo Museum, sans the Buddha relics.

AN OPEN WARRANT FOR ARREST - BUT, HE ADDRESSED A PUBLIC MEETING IN COLOMBO

The general strike launched by the leftists, led by the Lanka Samasamaja Party in 1947, against the UNP government, was almost one hundred per cent success, if not for the workers at the South Western Bus Co. at Ratmalana, who did not come out on strike. Those workers' stand was that their boss, Cyril de Zoysa, treated them very humanely and gave them everything they wanted, and as such, there was no reason for them to resort to strike action.

But, the attitude of the trade union bosses was that the South Western Bus Co. workers also must come out to make the general strike a real success. Accordingly, early one fine morning, a team led by Philip Gunawardhane, went to Ratmalana to persuade the bus workers to join the strike. The other members of the team were Rahula Thera, Kalalelle Anandasagra Thera, Talpawila Seelawansa Thera, Nattandiye Pannakara Thera and one Indrapala, who was a member of the Dehiwela Urban Council at that time.

An open warrant for arrest - But he addressed....

Talpawila Seelawansa Thera

The team arrived at the depot just before the drivers were taking the buses out for the day's run. Philip, who was at the vanguard, spoke to the drivers and other workers at the main gate, and requested them to give their co-operation by joining the strike. But, the workers reiterated that there was no reason for them to go on strike. And, then, Philip told them that it was their bounden duty to join the strike, and express their solidarity with thousands of other workers on strike, so that the islandwide strike would be a real success.

However, the drivers who were not ready to act according to Philip's wish, started the engines and tried to pull out. Then, Philip, who was covering his head with a huge towel, as a protection against the dew, stood just in the middle of the exit, obstructing the drivers' way. As the drivers did not want to knock down Philip, the buses stopped near the gate, while the engines were idling. The Depot Manager went up to Philip and requested him not to obstruct the way, but, the latter was adamant. The next step by

the Depot Manager was to telephone Cyril de Zoysa, the Chairman of the bus company, and report the matter to him. Zoysa, who rushed to the scene, ordered the drivers to take the buses out without any further delay.

Obeying the order given by their big boss, the drivers raced their engines with big noise and tried to pull forward. But, the adamant Philip did not budge, and stood in the same posture.

Then, Cyril de Zoysa telephoned police, and the Inspector who headed the police party that arrived, went upto Philip and said that it was all wrong for him to obstruct the way of the drivers, when they were not in favour of the strike. After the kind request by the Inspector, Philip moved away and left the place along with the other colleagues.

Rahula Thera returned to Vidyalankara Pirivena, had a bath before lunch, and was about to have his afternoon siesta, when Robert Gunawardhane rushed in. On hearing that Robert had come, both Anandasagara Thera and Pannakara Thera too came to Rahula Thera's room.

"Warrants are out to arrest Philip, Indrapala and Rahula Hamuduruwo. You have to go underground. Hurry up!" said panting Robert.

"Why, they don't want to arrest us?" queried Anandasagara Thera.

"I think the police fellows have identified only these three," said Robert.

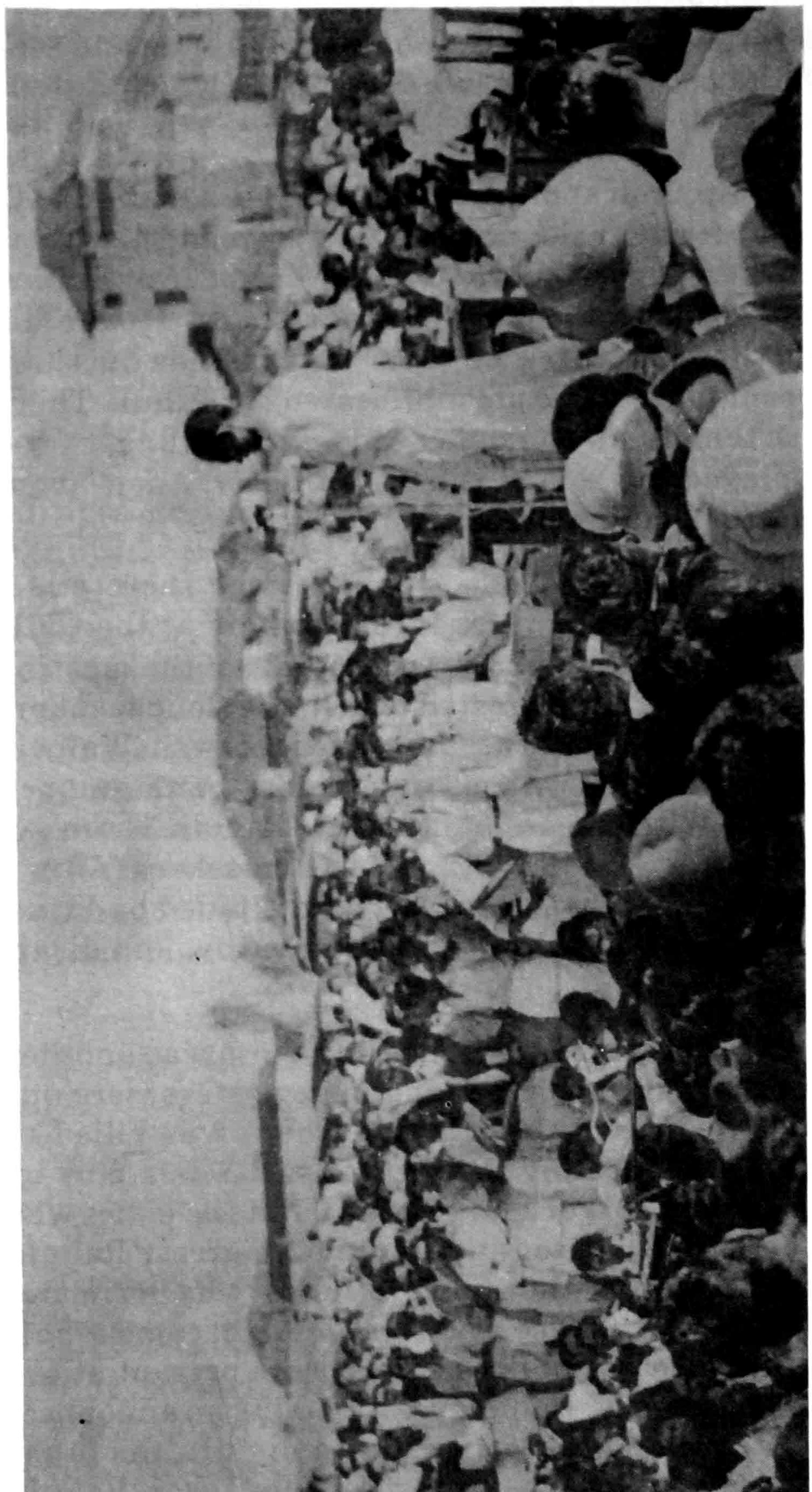
"But, Robert," said Rahula Thera, "if the warrants are out, it is below my dignity to hide. My principle is to go to the police station and tell them that I am Rahula Thera, and ask them to take me into custody".

"I agree with you. But why not the three of you go underground for some time and enjoy a hide and seek with the police," suggested Robert, for which Rahula Thera gave his consent.

Philip, Indrapala and Rahula Thera met at D. C. Wijewardene's residence at Kollupitiya and discussed their strategy. Prins Gunasekera and Robert Gunawardhane too were present there. It was decided that the three of them should hide in three different places. The place allocated for Rahula Thera was a temple at Hendela. Only Prins Gunasekera, who played the role of the co-ordinator, knew about the secret hidding places of all the three.

While Rahula Thera was in hiding there was a mass meeting in support of the strikers at the Galle Face Green in Colombo. In the middle of the meeting people were flabbergasted when the loudspeakers blared to say that the next speaker was Walpola Rahula Thera, for whose arrest there was an open warrant. With the announcement, Rahula Thera got on to the stage, along with Prins Gunasekera. After a hard-hitting speech, Rahula Thera, guided by Prins, got into a car, which was parked nearby, and disappeared.

A few days after that meeting there was another one in the Negombo area, and huge posters were put up all over to say that Rahula Thera was billed to address that meeting too. Actually, it was a ploy by the organisers to get a large crowd. But the police who took it serious waited in hundreds to arrest Rahula Thera. However, the police officers who were not familiar with the face of Raula Thera became a nuisance to the other bhikkhus who were present at the meeting. Then, W. Dahanayake, making an announcement, requested the police not to disturb the other bhikkhus, for he was going to hand over Rahula Thera to the police after he addressed the meeting.

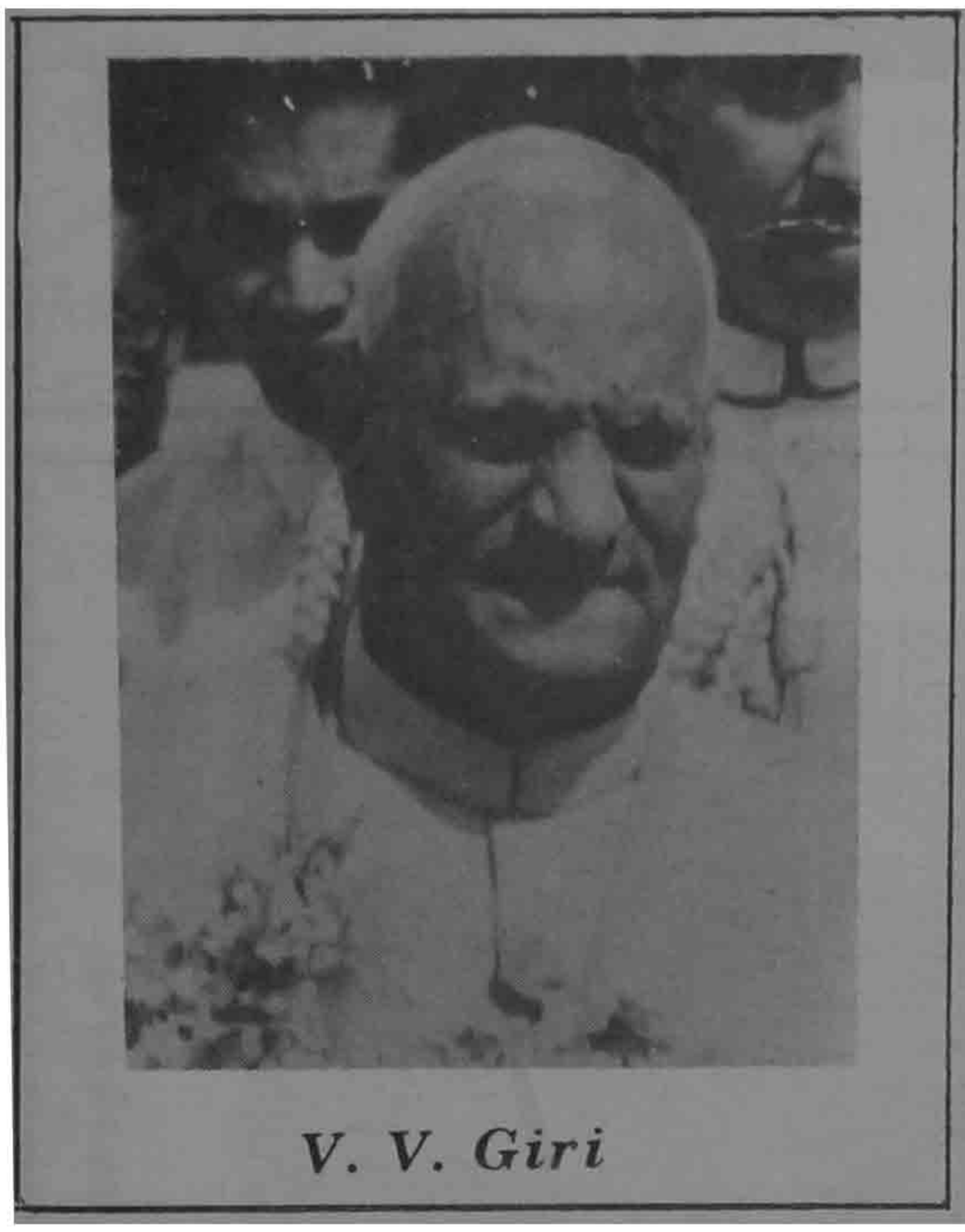


While an open warrant was out for his arrest Rahula Thera addressed a public meeting in Colombo

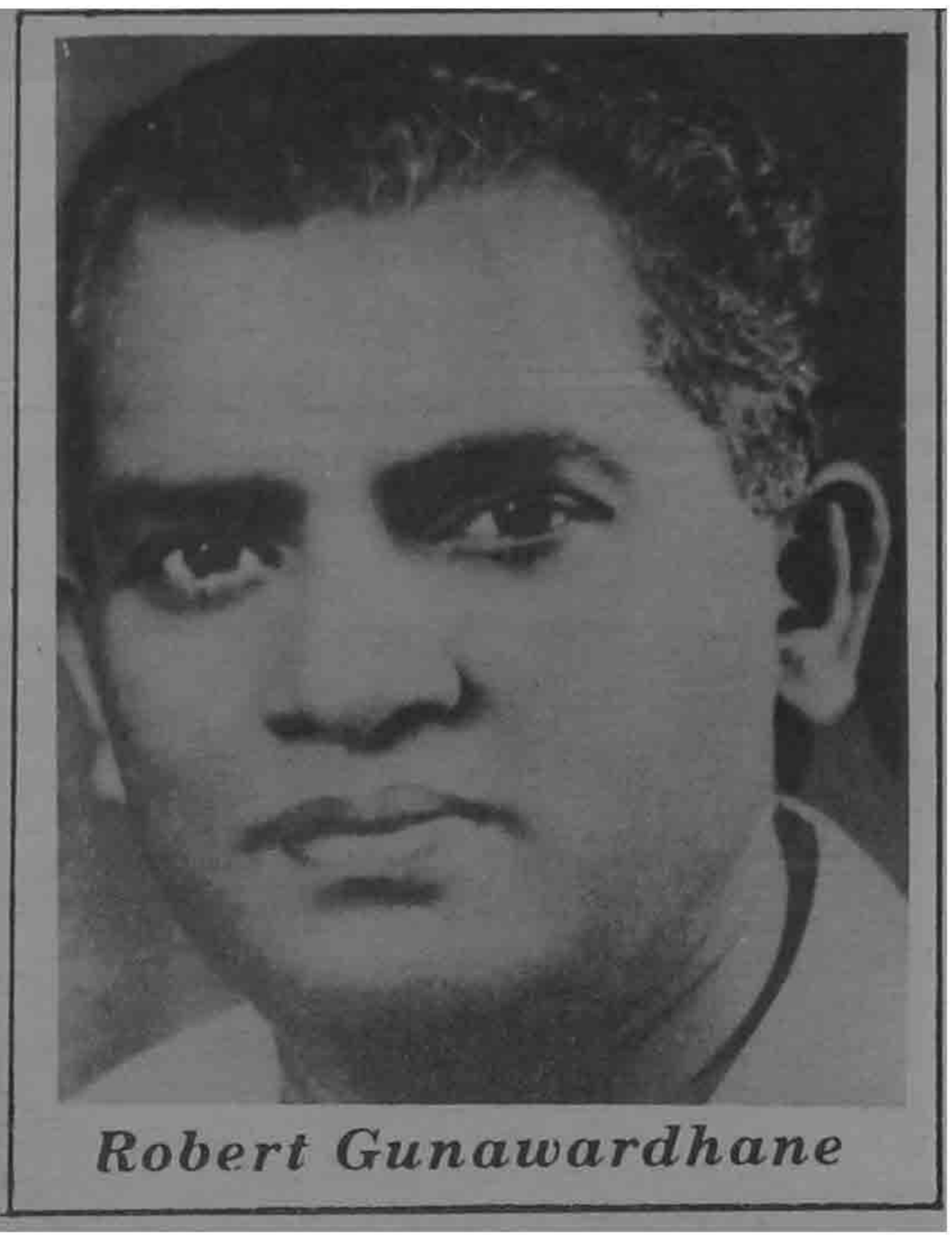
However, there was no Rahula Thera present till the end of the meeting and the police went away disappointed.

While Rahula Thera was in hiding, V. V. Giri was appointed the Indian envoy to Sri Lanka. At a reception in Colombo, Giri inquired from D. S. Senanayake and other ministers how he could meet Walpola Rahula Thera, for Jawaharlal Nehru had recommended Rahulji as a very learned man who was a close friend of India, and had asked him to get his advice before making important decisions.

But, Senanayake was in a fix for he could not divulge the real situation to Giri. "No problem. You will be able to meet him in a few days' time", said Senanayake and slipped the question.

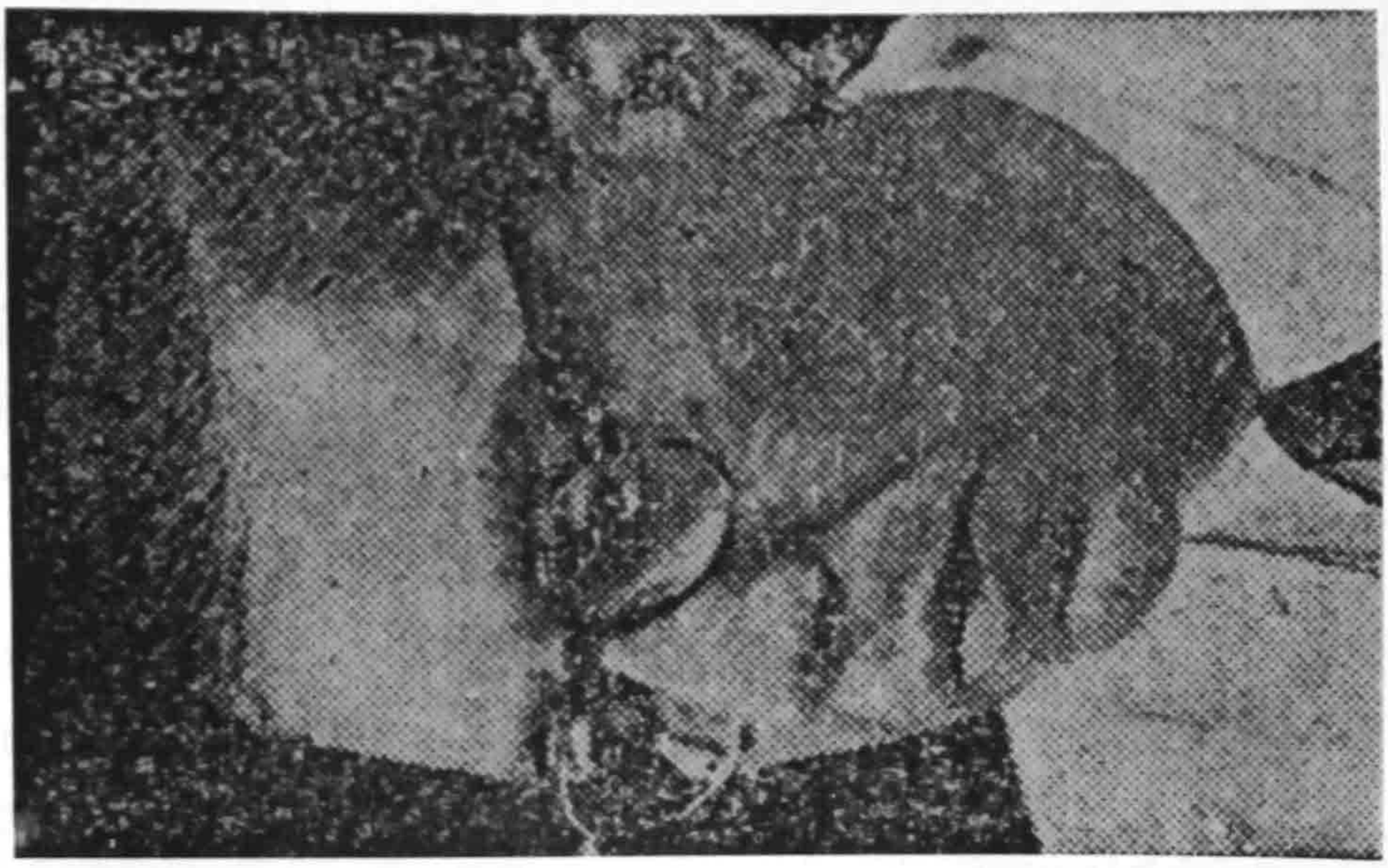


V. V. Giri



Robert Gunawardhane

Though the police raided various places, including Vidyalankara Pirivena, they could not trace Rahula Thera. Frustrated and humiliated, the police ultimately decided to play a trick to get the three hiding persons. A message was sent to Vidyalankara Pirivena asking the trio to come out and appear in



D.C. Wijewardene

Prins Gunasekera

courts, so that they would be able to go home on a small bail.

None of the three suspected the bona fide of the police proposal, and decided to appear in courts. So, they met at Philip's home at Thimbirigasyaya before leaving for courts.

"Thaththa, please bring me a chocolate when you come back," said Philip's small son, Indika when they were about to leave.

"Yes, Putha, I will bring a big one for you," said Philip and left.

But, when they appeared before the courts, what happened was quite contrary to their expectation. The police maintained that if those three dangerous persons were released on bail it would not be possible to maintain law and order, and moved them to be remanded for a few days. Accordingly, the court ordered Rahula Thera, Philip and Indrapala to be remanded at the Welikada jail.

When the longtimers at the jail heard the news, they had an 'emergency meeting' and decided to make hasty arrangements to welcome the 'three great men' who were due to spend a few days 'in our home as our guests'. They cleaned the annex allocated for the 'guests' by removing the cobwebs etc, and then weeding out the compound. On the other side, the prison authorities took extra precautionary steps because that notorious jail-breaker of Bogambara fame, namely, Philip, was returning to the jail after a few years.

The three prisoners were at liberty to get down their meals from outside. Accordingly, all the alms for Rahula Thera were provided by D. C. Wijewardene, while the meals for the other two were brought from their homes.

On Sundays, it was compulsory for all the prisoners to go to certain allocated places to observe their religions. There dawned a Sunday during the three days our three prisoners were at Welikada. However, instead of going to the allocated place, the three of them were seated outside having a pleasant chat. A young jail guard walked up to them, spoke in English and ordered them to go to the correct place.

"We are observing our religion, here," said Philip.

"No, no, you must go to the correct place", insisted the guard.

"Young man," shouted Philip, "you don't understand these things. We are in the process of observing our religion. Here is our priest".

The young guard walked away briskly, without getting involved any more with the roaring lion from Boralugoda:

On another day, a jailer walked up to Rahula Thera and said in lighter vain: "You seem to be enjoying this unscheduled holiday, very much".

"Yes, of course! You are right. This is a real holiday for me," said Rahula Thera to the jailer.

After spending three days in the prison they were released on bail. After that, Rahula Thera got the opportunity to meet V. V. Giri and cultivate a friendship with him.

It took some time for the case to come up in courts. The magistrate happened to be a relative of Philip Gunawardhane. The accused admitted the fact that they went to the South-Western Bus Co. on the day of the incident and talked to the workers, but denied that they forced them to go on strike.

the magistrate imposed a fine of Rs. 50 on each accused.*

"I have no money to pay the fine. I will go to jail," insisted Rahula Thera.

While Rahula Thera was determined to go to jail, the fine was paid by D. C. Wijewardene. When the Court Mudaliyar informed the magistrate about the payment the latter addressed Rahula Thera and said: "I am very sorry to disappoint you. You have lost your hopes of going to jail, because somebody has paid the fine. The court is not concerned as to who paid the fine, so long as it has been paid on your behalf. Now, please forget about going to jail and return to your temple".

Accordingly, Rahula Thera returned to Vidyalankara and continued his national struggle.

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* Author's note:

I pointed out to Rahula Thera that the Colombo Magistrate G. E. Amarasinghe, sentenced Philip Gunawardhane to three months rigorous imprisonment, by his judgement dated July 7, 1947. But, Rahula Thera insisted that there was a series of strikes in 1947, and Philip was not sentenced to prison consequent to the South-Western Bus Co. incident, for which Rahula Thera, Philip and Indrapala were charged.

ELECTION BATTLE OF 1947

A few months after winning the free education battle, the General Elections of 1947 arrived. It was the first general election to introduce the party system to Sri Lanka. However, the two main parties to contest were the newly formed United National Party and the Lanka Samasamaja Party, which was 12 years old then. All the political bhikkhus, led by Vidyalankara, rallied round the Samasamaja Party and the other leftist splinter groups. Out of all the UNP candidates, it was the firm determination of Vidyalankara to bring the downfall of D. S. Senanayake and J. R. Jayewardene, somehow or other.

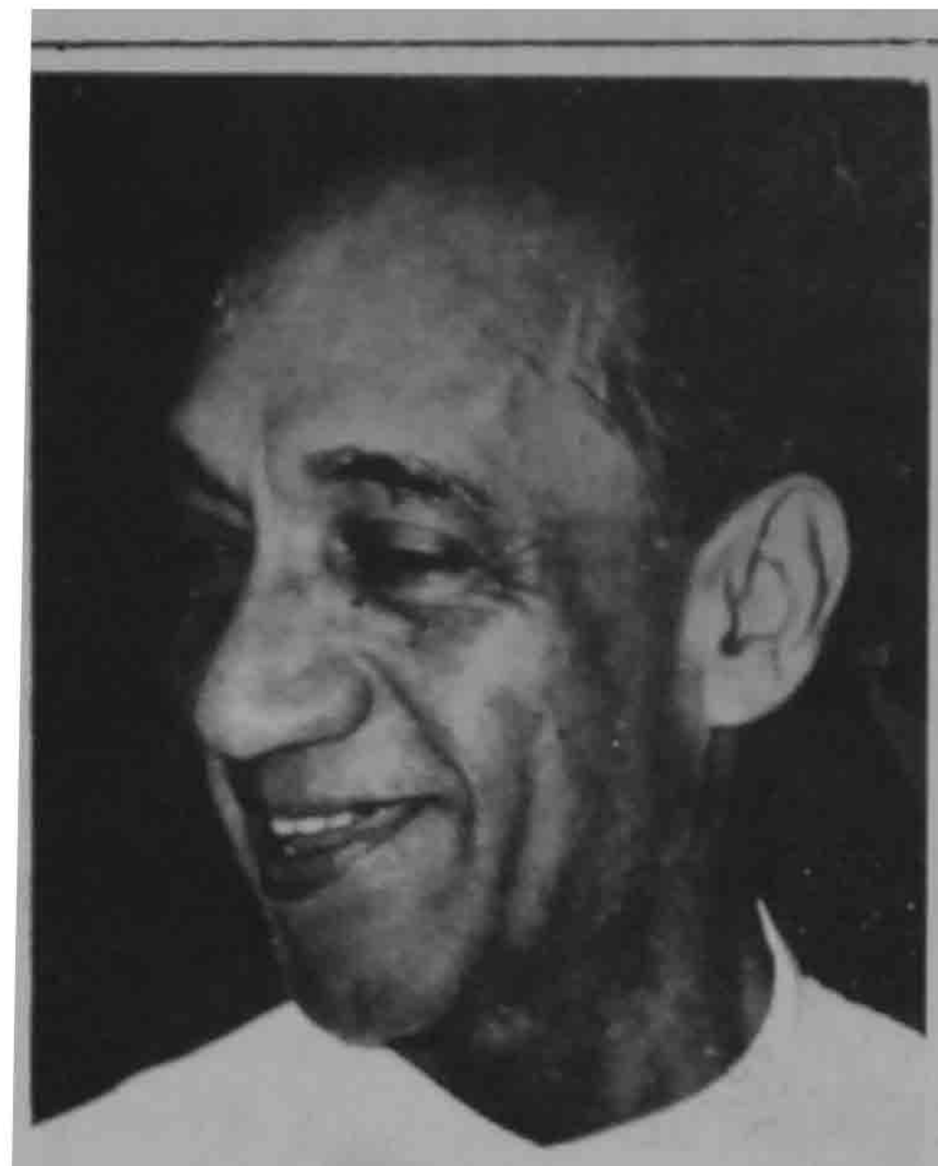
D. S. Senanayake contested the newly-created Mirigama electorate and his opponent was Edmund Samrakkody, a kinsman of the former.

At Kelaniya, J. R. Jayewardene was contested by Bodhipala Waidyasekera of the LSSP. People gath-

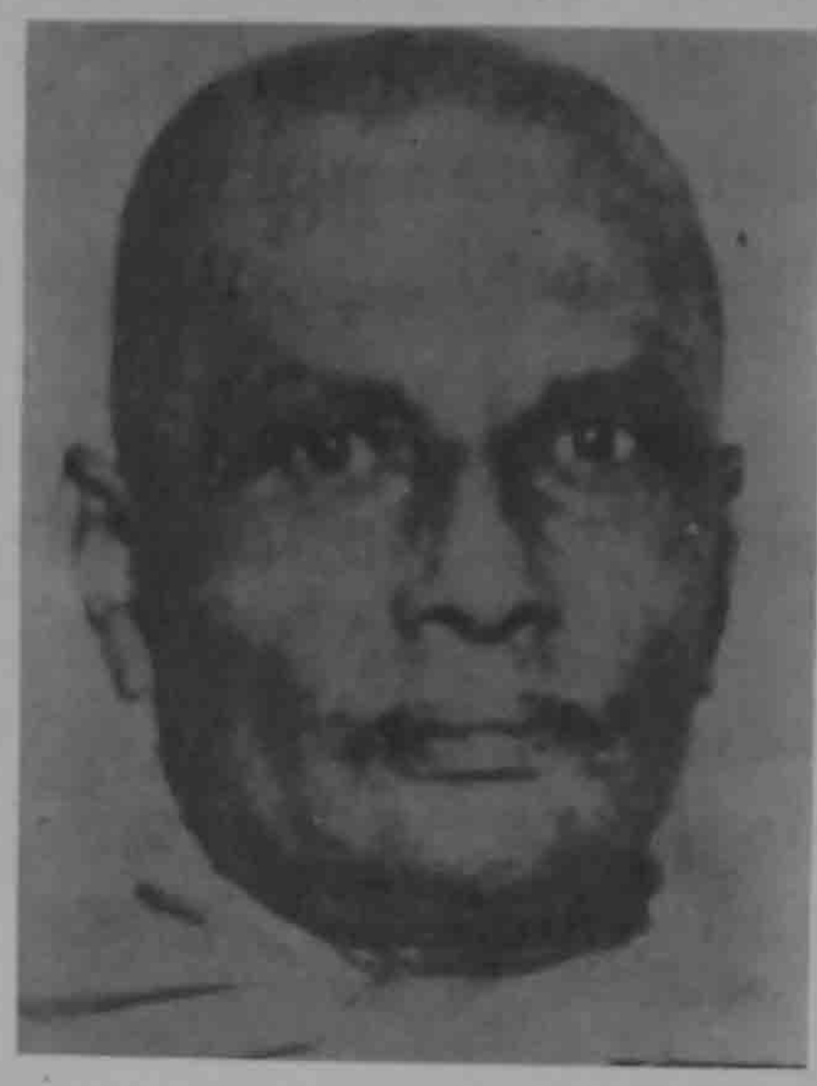
ered in thousands to listen to the forceful and hard-hitting speeches of such militant bhikkhus like Rahula, Pannakitti and Anandasagara. All the Sama Samaja meetings were fully packed.

Senanayake had well realised the power Rahula Thera was wielding at the election campaign against the UNP. The following grievance by Senanayake before Henpitagedara Gnanaseeha Thera, at the "Woodlands" in Colombo, clearly illustrates that. Says Senanayake:

I am contesting the newly-created Mirigama seat this time. Our Edmund Samarakkody is going to contest against me as the Samasamaja candidate. Rahula Thera of Vidyalankara Pirivena has got hold of the other bhikkhus and is trying to make Samarakkody win. The new Parliament will be headed by a Prime Minister. All our hopes will be shattered and everything will be in a mess if I get defeated. A peculiar thing has happened now. The majority of people in the Mirigama electorate are your loyal dayakayas. You very well know the villages like. Ganegoda, Bokalagama, Assenawatta and Galkanda, where there is a large population. At the moment these villagers are being fastly converted to the Samasamaja Party. Those bhikkhus are going from house to house telling the people that the time has come for them to raise their heads. They also ask the people to vote for Samarakkody en masse. It is quite clear that those villagers have acceded to the bhikkhus' request. So far as I am concerned, I don't have a single bhikkhu to work for me. Therefore, Hamuduruwane, you must come and stay at Balagalla for the next two months and help me. (Henpitagedara Sita Welikada Haraha, by Henpitagedara Gnanaseeha Thera, Sarvodaya Bhikkhu Training Institute for Community Leadership, Pathakada, 1982, pp. 51, 52).



J. R. Jayewardene



Henpitagedara Gnanaseeha Thera

Bodhipala Waidyasekera

Edmund Samarakkody

Gnanaseeha Thera said that he was very busy with the building of the Bhikkhu Training Institute at Pathakada and declined to accept the invitation. Then, Senanayake promised to build the institute at government expense, when he became the Prime Minister, and got Gnanaseeha Thera to do election work at Mirigama. However, when he became the Prime Minister, Senanayake went back on his own words, thus making Gnanaseeha Thera an arch enemy.

Election battle of 1947

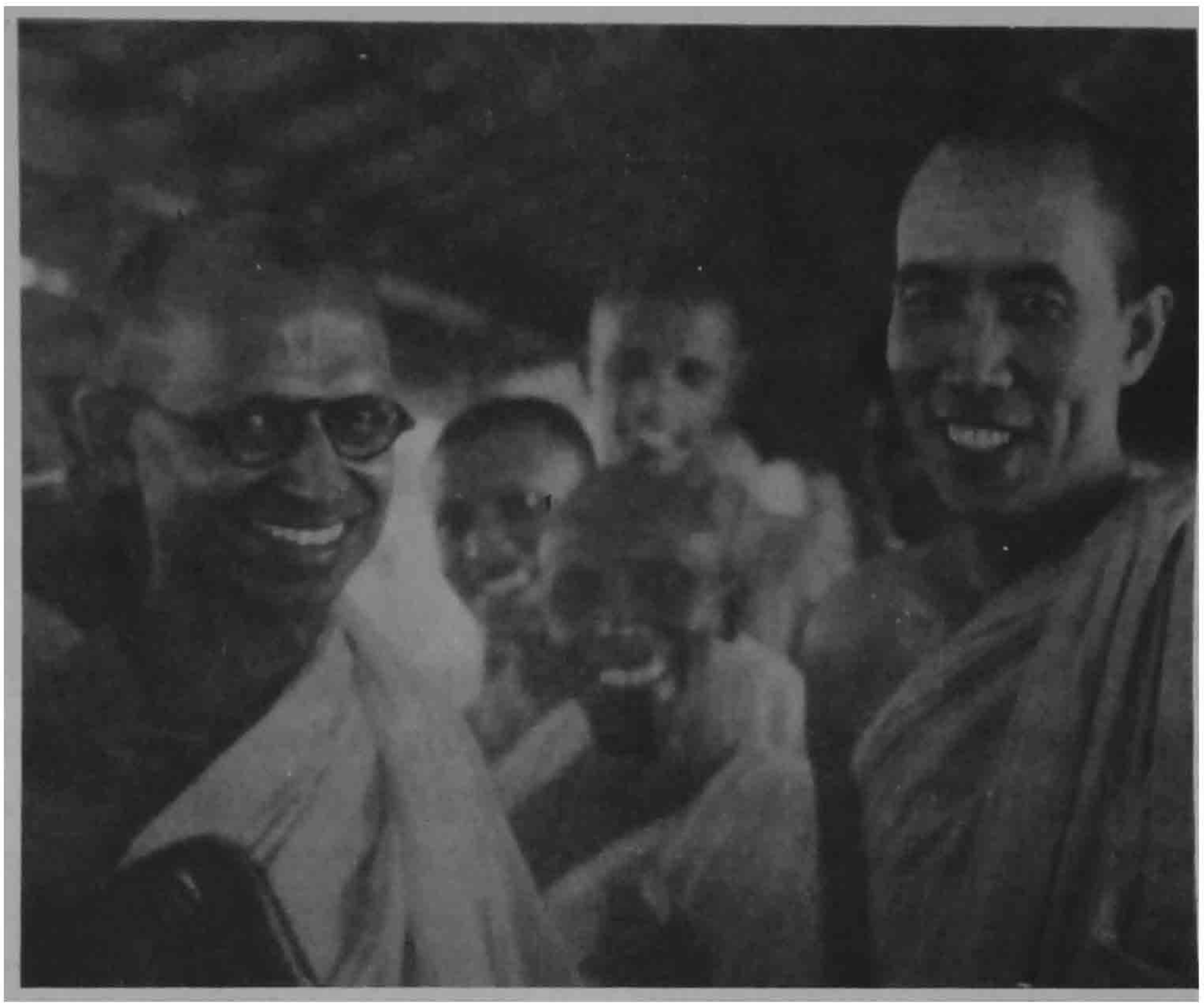
Amidst all sorts of threats, Rahula Thera continued to do election work all over the Island, devoting more time and energy against Senanayake at Mirigama, and Jayewardene at Kelaniya.

One afternoon in September, 1947, Rahula Thera along with Kalupahana Revatha Thera, were travelling in a car to address a Samasamaja meeting, close to Kelaniya Raja Maha Vihara.

At the Thorana junction, a group of men obstructed the road and stopped the car. They were fully drunk and found it difficult to stand erect. The group was led by a notorious thug called Aspa John. They pulled out the bhikkhus and assaulted them mercilessly. Their masters had instructed them, either to kill Rahula Thera, then and there, or to abduct him. But as a result of excessive drinking, the men forgot all that and went on assaulting the two bhikkhus, even after they fell unconscious. The neighbours, on hearing the cries, rushed to the scene and saw Aspa John pulling out his knife to stab Rahula Thera. Seeing the crowd rushing, Aspa John took to his heels, followed by his henchmen.

Rahula Thera, who was lying unconscious in the middle of road, got up when water was sprinkled on to his face and fanned. Prins Gunasekera, who was at Vidyalankara Pirivena, rushed to the Thorana junction as soon as he heard the news. Then, the crowd headed by Rahula Thera, began to walk towards the place of the meeting, when they came across a car with a fluttering elephant flag. It was the car of Sirisoma Ranasinghe, a UNP stalwart.

"Stop! Stop!!" shouted the crowd and blocked the way, when the trembling driver, the only soul inside, stopped the car. Then, somebody from the crowd shouted and gave the order to assault the driver and



Walpola Rahula Thera with Fa Fang Thera from China, who was staying at Vidyalankara Pirivena for some time. Nattandiye Pannakara Thera and Kalupahana Revatha Thera are also in the picture.

smash the car. Rahula Thera spoke with difficulty and said: "Don't! Don't!! If you have any love towards me, and if you really respect me, please don't do any harm to that car or the driver."

Then the crowd moved reluctantly, and the car passed. It was later heard that the driver of that particular car had cursed the men who assaulted Rahula Thera: "If not for him I would have been killed and the car smashed," he had said.

The precarious situation that the Vidyalankara bhikkhus were facing during the election campaign was amply described by Yakkaduwe Pragnarama Nayaka Thera in his book *Ape Gaman Maga*. The following are two relevant paragraphs from that book.

Election battle of 1947

I can still visualise how some respectable dayakayas stormed the temple, as soon as Pannakitti Thera returned after making a forceful speech at a meeting at Bomiriya, and tried to molest him after shouting: "Pull out that kannadi polanga!" (viper in spectacles.) Again, in another occasion, three carloads of men chased after our car, in which the bhikkhus who addressed a meeting against D. S. Senanayake were returning. They had vouched to kill all the bhikkhus in the car, but we had a miraculous escape due to the fearlessness of our driver, Punchi Banda, and also because the Nittambuwa police station was nearby. When Rahula Thera and Kalupahana Revatha Thera were going for a propaganda meeting against J. R. Jayewardene, drunken hired thugs assaulted those bikkhus, first while inside the car, and then after pulling out of the car until the two bhikkhus fell unconscious. They did all this like human devils and finally tried to stab Rahula Thera.

But they failed either to weaken or to tame our bhikkhus by any of these dastandly acts. We were treading our path until we felt that we were successful. The four heroic bhikkhus, namely Kotahene Pannakitti, Walpola Rahula, Kalalelle Anandasagara and Nattandiye Pannakara, who carried on our political struggle until victory, by facing all sorts of obstacles, but never getting disheartened, live in my mind even when I am unconscious. (Ape Gaman Maga, Yakkaduwe Pragnarama Nayaka Thera, 1970, pp. 115, 116).

Though the political bhikkhus could not defeat either Senanayake or Jayewardene, at the General Election, the results in general, were quiter satisfactory for the anti-UNP campaigners. Yakkaduwe Pragnarama Thera analysed the results as follows:

Though the membership of the LSSP and the CP in the State Council was limited to three until 1947,

that year's election saw the victory of 18 members from those two parties. After making use of the State power, in addition to other powers such as money, thuggery, and police, the UNP managed to get only 40 seats. The fact that a total of 40 leftist members were elected, after a valiant battle, is another victory for us, because it indicates the spread of socialism right round the country. (Ape Gaman, Maga p. 117).

For thirty odd years the general talk in the country was that it was J. R. Jayewardene who got the thugs to assault Rahula Thera, at the Thorana junction, during the election campaign in 1947. By 1981 Jayewardene was the President of Sri Lanka, and Rahula Thera had come quite closer to him, because he had been entrusted with the task of establishing the Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka.

A well attended meeting of bhikkhus, at the request of Rahula Thera, was held at Paramadhammachethiya Pirivena, Ratmalana, to get the views of the bhikkhus about the proposed university. Addressing the meeting, Labuduwe Siri Dhamma Thera, the Chief Incumbent of Rajopvanaramaya, Peradeniya, said: "Our Rahula Thera is now in J. R. Jayewardene's pocket. I don't know how this Thera keeps company with that man. He has forgotten the past. But, we have not forgotten how J. R. got hired thugs to pull Rahula Thera out of the car and assault him, until he fell uncouscious in the middle of the road, during the election campaign in 1947".

The then Prime Minister, Ranasinghe Premadasa, who heard about Siri Dhamma Thera's speech, suggested to Jayewardene that it was better if the later explained to Rahula Thera that he was in no way connected to the assault in 1947.

Accordingly, Jayewardene invited Rahula Thera to his Ward Place residence, and had a friendly chat.

"The Prime Minister told me that there is a talk to the effect that it was I who got the men to assault you in 1947. That is all wrong. Hamuḍuruwane, do you believe that I would have done such a foolish thing....." asked Jayewardene.

Without giving any more time for Jayewardene to speak, Rahula Thera started a sermon: "Mr. President, there is no use of talking about it now. It is a fact that some people assaulted me at the Thorana junction. I don't know who was responsible for that. Some say it was the work of Mr. J. R. Jayewardene. I don't know about that. However, the assaulting did take place, and there is no use of talking about it any more. Today, J. R. Jayewardene is the President of Sri Lanka, and Walpola Rahula is a perṣon of more international fame. President has no other country than this. But, I have got the whole world. *Svadese pujyate Raja, Vidvan sarvatra pujyate.* The king is honoured in his country. But the scholar is honoured all over the world. I must repeat that I am not aware as to who got the thugs to assault me at the Thorana junction. It has not done any harm to either of us. Therefore, Mr. President, let us forget about it."

Jayewardene, while scratching his chin, listened patiently to Rahula Thera's 'sermon', and then they changed the topic and began to discuss about the proposed Buddhist and Pali University.

A FOUNDING FATHER OF MIDDLE PATH POLITICS

When Sri Lanka gained independence in 1947, the United National Party was in power. It was formed by joining together of the Ceylon National Congress, the Sinhala Maha Sabha, the Muslim League and the Tamil Congress. The UNP had an extremely capitalist, imperialist and rightist leaning, and was guided by capitalist countries like England and America.

The opposition parites, namely the Bolshevik Leninist Party, the Lanka Samasamaja Party and the Communist Party, were extremely leftist Marxist organisations and were guided by Communist countries like Russia.

Many people did not like either extreme. Their wish and hope was to tread the middle path, without becoming slaves to any alien thinking.

Under the circumstances, it was quite obvious that a middle path political party was an urgent necessity for Sri Lanka. Even Bandaranaike, who formed his middle path Sri Lanka Freedom Party

in later years, remained a stalwart of the capitalist camp for a few years after independence.

A few months after the independence, a group of intellectuals were seriously considering the formation of a middle path political party . The following are some of those who frequently talked about the neccessity of such a party: Wilmot A. Perera, MP for Matugama, and a rich planter who founded Sri Palee Collge, Horana; I.M.R.A. Iriyagolla from Kuliyapititya, who was the MP for Dandagamuwa and was famous as an author and a writer; militant bhikkhu Walpola Rahula Thera, famous writer, auhor and orator, who was a teacher at Vidyalankara Pirivena; Talpawila Seelawansa Thera, another progressive militant bhikkhu; M.W.H. de Silva from Dodanduwa, who was an eminent lawyer; Walwin A. de Silva from Balapitiya, a retired Director of Education and the brother of Dr. Colvin R. de Silva; K. C. Nadarajah, MP for Bandarawela and well-known lawyer and D. C. Wijewardene, businessman-cum-writer and brother of the Lake House boss D.R. Wijewardena.

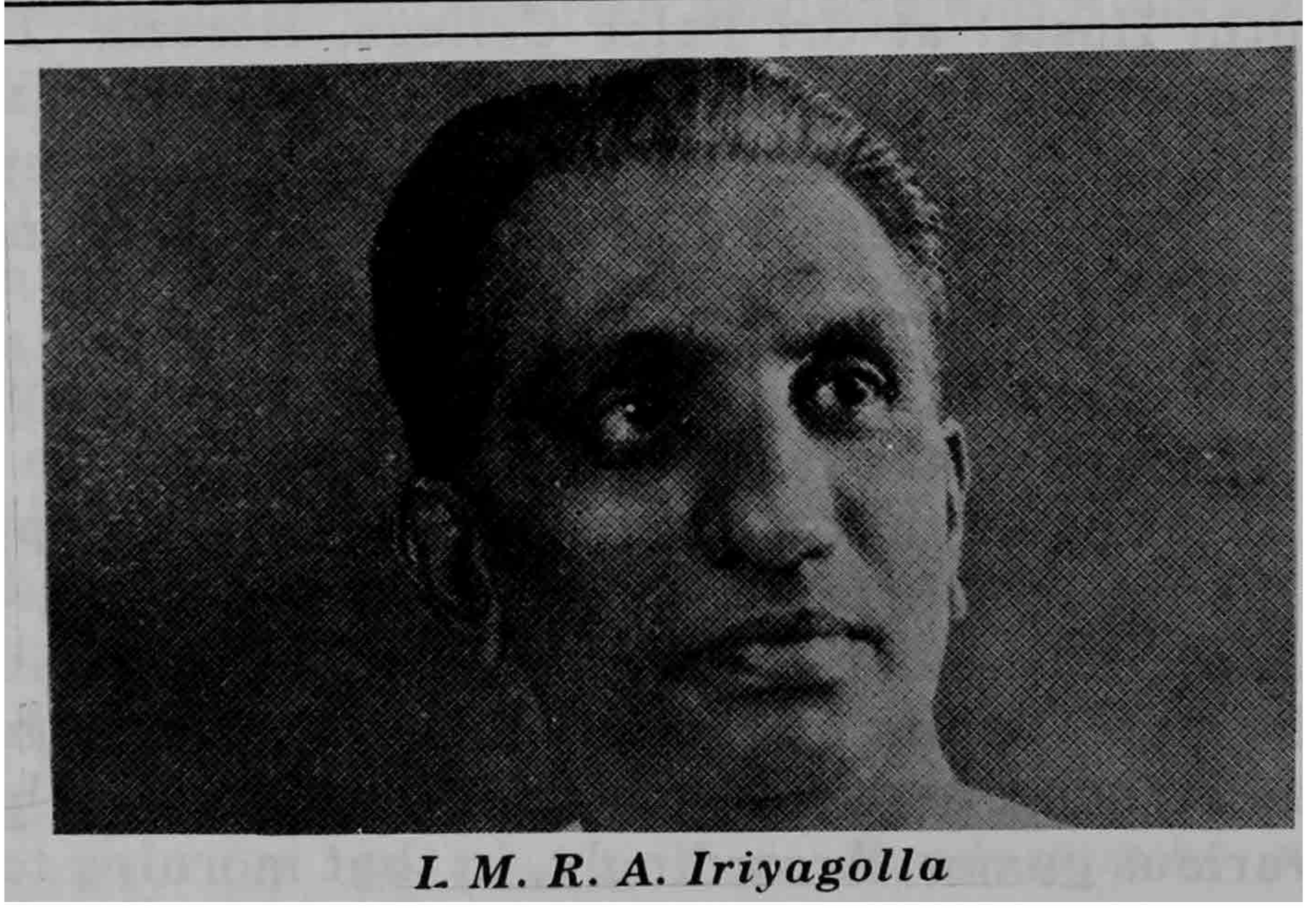
After several rounds of talks the inaugural meeting of the party was held at the dining hall of the Avanthi Hostel at Sri Palee College, Horana. The Avanthi stood at the top of the Kapukula, the sixty five acre rubber estate of Wilmot A. Perera. Excepting D.C. Wijewardene, almost all the persons named above, participated in the meeting.

The date was September 26, 1948. It was a Sunday. Though I was not aware of the importance of that meeting at that time, today, I feel very happy that I too was able to play a very very minor role on that historic occasion. I was a hosteller at the Avanthi at the time. In the morning on Sundays, the other hostellers used to go to the 'ground' at the foot of hill for various games. Accordingly, in that morning too, only two or three bookworms like me remained in the

hostel. Though I was not interested in what the visitors discussed, I played my minor role by giving them a glass of water etc. whenever they wanted.

The name given to the new party was Mahajana Peramuna. M.W.H. de Silva was elected the President while Walpola Rahula Thera and I.M.R.A. Iriyagolla were elected the Joint Secretaries. Wilmot A. Perera was the leader of the party's group in Parliament.

Wilmot A. Perera



I. M. R. A. Iriyagolla

Here, I wish to quote in full the manifesto of the Mahajana Peramuna. (Extracted form *Deshapalana Pracharaka Lipi*, written by Wilmot A.Perera, printed at the Vidyasekera Press, Horana, and published by P.J. Perera, on July 12, 1949.)

MAHAJANA PERAMUNA

The Aims

1. *To make Sri Lanka a fully independent sovereign state.*

2. *To promote a righteous, socialist form of government in keeping wiht the traditions and the culture of this country.*

3. *To make available to every citizen the five basic needs, namely, education, religion, health, housing and food.*

4. *To nationalise all the main income earning ventures, while giving a limited freedom to private ownership and private business.*

5. *To obtain the government power to implement the above aims.*

MAHAJANA PERAMUNA

The Basic Ideas and Principles.

When analysing the political situation in Sri Lanka today, one can see that there are two political camps having basic principles countrary to each other, and treading two extremist paths. The UNP, consisting of the National Congress, the Sinhala Maha Sabha, the Muslim League and the Tamil Congress, is following one extreme path. The Marxists, consisting of the

LSSP, CP and the Bolshevik Leninist Party, are following a path on the other extreme. The people have despised the UNP, presently in power, as a group that came into power by talking of the economic and social liberation of the common man, but in fact, working for the personal benefit of a few in power and their friends and relations. Though they talk of socialism now and then, their constant effort is to stabilize gross capitalism. It is very clear now that the course of action by the UNP is a highly corrupted one. A leader of the same party said recently that the people will have to face bloodshed and horrible revolutions, if that path is not changed. But, it is quite clear that this capitalist party dominated by conservative and reactionary policies, can never follow progressive and socialist policies. Besides that, it appears that this party is heading towards disaster, day by day, as a result of the people's contempt, and is ready to commit any dastardly crime to suppress various progressive and independent political movements emerging from all parts of the country, and to safeguard their dictatorship by unjust and unfair mathods.

The course of action followed by the Marxists, on the other hand, is quite contrary to that of the UNP. They talk of the economic and political rights of the farmers in general, and the workers in particular. They maintain that it is neccessay to have an economic and social revolution in order to liberate the masses. They also say that this revolution cannot be successful and long lasting without bloodshed.

While preaching about political rights and revolutions, the Marxists have become slaves of the foreign political organisations. Bred in international thinking, they don't appear to be recognising the value of developing local social and cultural activities. What is more, they don't accept religion as a neccessity for the society.

In spite of all that, a large number of people in the country are in favour of the Marxist parties, not because they are pleased with their activities, but because there is no other political party to support, though they hate the UNP.

The economic theories of the Marxist teachings are important. But to accept everything taught by Marx is not in keeping with a country which is blessed with a great religion and a great culture. Everybody must accept that a political, economic and social revolution is a must for this country today. According to the Marxists, it is impossible to do this revolution without bloodshed. But, we are fully opposed to that. The period that Marx wrote about the revolution, and the time that the Russian Revolution took place, are quite different to the modern day atmosphere. At that time, in any country in the world, there was no legal way to express free public opinion about any government in any country. But, today, in the countries including Sri Lanka, where there is universal suffrage, it is the people who decide the form of government they want. The World has advanced along a democratic path in such a speed that neither Marx nor Lenin ever imagined. It is unrealistic and not in keeping with the historical facts to say that a revolution like that of Russia should take place in a present day country like ours.

To save the country from the two extremes, to set up a righteous and socialist government in keeping with the culture of the Island, to safeguard the reiligious, social, economic, political and all the other rights of each and every citizen, we firmly believe that a new political organisation is essential today.

We firmly believe that it is quite possible to do a political, economic and social revolution to pave the way for a righteous and prosperous society by a democratically elected just and fair government, without

resorting to a bloody revolution.

While accepting that international co-operation is quite essential for us, we hereby state that we are not bound by any foreign political organisation or any foreign political doctrine.

As the religion is closely connected to the life, and is very essential for the well-being of the society, we believe that it must be given the proper place.

We also believe that a Dominion Status within the British Commonwealth is not the end of the struggle for freedom of Sri Lanka, and state that Lanka should be made a fully independent sovereign state.

In order to promote the economic and social status of the people, all the income-generating ventures should be nationalised.

As the governing of the country in a foreign language is an obstacle to the freedom and the day to day activities of the citizen, steps should be taken to do all the government work in Swabhasha.

The question of the foreigners should be solved in such a way that it would not jeopardize the progress and the security of our citizens.

The principles, the actions and the path the Mahajana Peramuna proposes to follow, in order to guarantee religious, social, economic and political rights for every citizen, in a just and fair manner, will be placed in detail before the country, in due course.

26.9.1948.

The above statement was first drafted by Rahula Thera, in his own handwriting.

The Mahajana Peramuna, launched on September 26, 1948, appears to have been quite active for a

number of years, according to the diaries of Rahula Thera. The following are some of the interesting diary-entries:

October 27,1948 - Discussion about the Mahajana Peramuna at the Kollupitiya residence of D. C. Wijewardene.

Novermber 4, 1948 - Discussion about the Mahajana Peramuna at D. C. Wijewardene's residence at Kollupitiya.

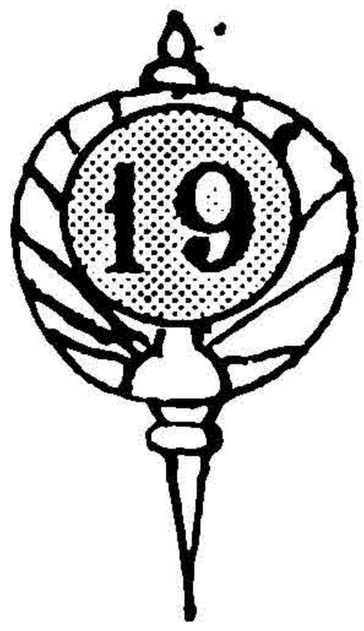
December 17, 1948 - Afternoon - The General Meeting of the Mahajana Peramuna, and later, the meeting of the Executive Commitee at Kumara Vidyalaya, Kotahena.

August 23, 1950 - Left the Colombo Harbour by "Multan" for England on the way to Paris.

And, now, let me come back to the Mahajana Peramuna, once again. The first middle path political party in Sri Lanka was the Mahajana Peramuna. The day it was inaugurated at Horana, was September 26, 1948. But today, September 26 is better known as the day on which S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, who did much to promote middle path politics, died as a result of an assasin's bullet. That happened exactly 11 years after the day on which the Mahajana Peramuna was inaugurated.

In July 1951, Bandaranaike, along with nine other MPs, crossed over to the opposition and formed his own Sri Lanka Freedom Party. When comparing the manifesto of the SLFP with that of the Mahajana Peramuna, it is quite obvious that the SLFP principles had been largely influenced by the Mahajana Peramuna manifesto. We also know that most of the founding fathers of the Mahajana Peramuna, joined hands with Bandaranaike, in the later years.

Rahula Thera was away in Paris when Bandaranaike founded his SLFP. Yet, undoubtedly, Rahula Thera is one of the pioneers in middle path politics in Sri Lanka.



A QUARTER CENTURY IN FRANCE

On returning to Sri Lanka from Calcutta University, after disrupting his education due to the escalation of the World War in 1942, Rahula Thera, amidst all political and social struggles, tried hard to obtain his Doctorate. By that time, Sri Lanka had a fully-fledged university called the University of Ceylon, with Sir Ivor Jennings as the Vice-Chancellor. On the advice of Dr. Gunapala Malalasekera, who was a professor at the new university, Rahula Thera wrote his thesis entitled *History of Buddhism in Ceylon,* for which he obtained a Doctorate, in 1950.

The year 1950 was a very significant one in the life of Walpola Rahula Thera, due to two reasons. He received his Doctorate in that year, and the door to the outside world, namely, to Sorbonne University in Paris, was opened in the same year.

By 1950, Dr. D. J. Wijeratne, one of the classmates of Rahula Thera, was in Paris on study leave. He very often spoke about the militant bhikkhu called Rahula, while in conversation with Professor Paul

Walpola Rahula Thera with D. J. Wijeratne and Prof. Hajime Nakamura from Japan, at a convocation of the Kelaniya University

Demieville. One day Wijeratne suggested to Demieville to get Rahula Thera to the Sorbonne, for which the latter agreed.

Prof. Demieville who arranged a three year scholarship for Rahula Thera to research on Mahayana Buddhism, especially about the works of Asanga, advised the French Foreign Ministry to invite Rahula Thera to the Sorbonne through the French Embassy in Sri Lanka. That was the first time any Sri Lankan was ever granted a scholarship by the French Government.

When the news was heard, the general opinion in Sri Lanka was that D.S. Senanayake's Government had very shrewdly arranged a scholarship to get rid of Rahula Thera, who was a menace and threat to the UNP government. Even the late President Premadasa used to express this view from public platforms in the nineties.

But, the truth was quite contrary to that. On hearing that Rahula Thera had got a scholarship to go to France, the stalwarts of the UNP got quite excited, and tried to stop it somehow or other. In fact, they used state power and tried to bring pressure on the French Ambassador to cancel the scholarship.

A few days before leaving for France, Rahula Thera went to the French Embassy to thank the Ambassador, and found the latter walking up and down in his office in a restless manner. On seeing Rahula Thera, the Ambassador said: "Come, come. I was waiting for you. I am in trouble. The whole government is against you. Are you a Communist?"

"No, I am not a Communist, but, anti-government," Rahula Thera replied.

"Now I understand. Anyone against the govern-

ment is a Communist. Even in France it is the same,' the Ambassador appeared to be a bit relaxed.

"Is there any problem?" queried Rahula Thera, without any excitement for he had anticipated this development.

"The whole government is against giving the scholarship to you. Malalasekera is the only person who supports you, and says that Rahula Thera is the only bhikkhu who can safeguard the prestige of Sri Lanka, in Paris," explained the Ambassador.

While the Ambassador and Rahula Thera were engaged in conversation, an urgent letter from a top man in the government, delivered through a special messenger, reached the Ambassador. He glanced through it, and then, read aloud so that Rahula Thera too could hear the contents.

Your Excellency,

If you have already given the scholarship to Rahula Thera, we don't suggest that you should cancel it now. But, he is a very dangerous man. Please warn your government to keep a vigilant eye on him.

The Ambassador (a jovial fellow!), who appeared to be not taking the letter seriously, left it aside, and wished Rahula Thera a bon voyage.

Besides those in power, there was another unique man who opposed Rahula Thera leaving the country. He was no less a person than D.B. Dhanapala, a close friend of Rahula Thera. Dhanapala, who was the Editor of the *Lankadipa* at that time, argued that the departure of Rahula Thera, a leading figure in the national struggle, to a foreign country, at a time a lot more had to be done to liberate the country from the yokes of the imperialists, was a great loss.

Rahula Thera, who left the Colombo harbour on August 23, 1950, on board s.s. Multan, received an air letter from Dhanapala, when the ship entered the Bombay harbour. Among other things in his letter, Dhanapala had this to say: *"Even the strongest among us could not resist the glamour of the West. But, I hope you will be happy among the white barbarians."*

After reading Dhanapala's letter, Rahula Thera had a hearty laugh, for he knew that it was typical of 'Dhane'.

When the Multan stopped over at Aden, Rahula Thera went ashore for a few hours of sightseeing. As he was walking along a busy street, a man who came running, worshipped him and asked, "Aren't you one of our Hamuduruwos from Sri Lanka?"

"Yes, you are right. Are you also from Sri Lanka?"

"Yes, Hamuduruwane, I am a Sinhalese from Galle."

When the man requested Rahula Thera just to drop in at his humble home for *gilanpasa* (refreshments) the latter consented.

After offering *gilanpasa* the man apologised to Rahula Thera for his inability to offer *Dahath* (a chew of betel) in that distant country. And then, explaining as to how he happened to live in Aden, the man said that several years ago he got involved in a murder case in Galle, and managed to escape to Aden as a stowaway. He was running his own barber saloon, which earned a very good income, the man added.

After leaving the Aden harbour, the first European city that Rahula Thera saw was Marseilles.His plan was to go to London by ship first, and then,

travel to Paris by train. So, at Marseilles,a friend who lived there, came on board Multan, took him ashore and went on sightseeing for a number of hours.

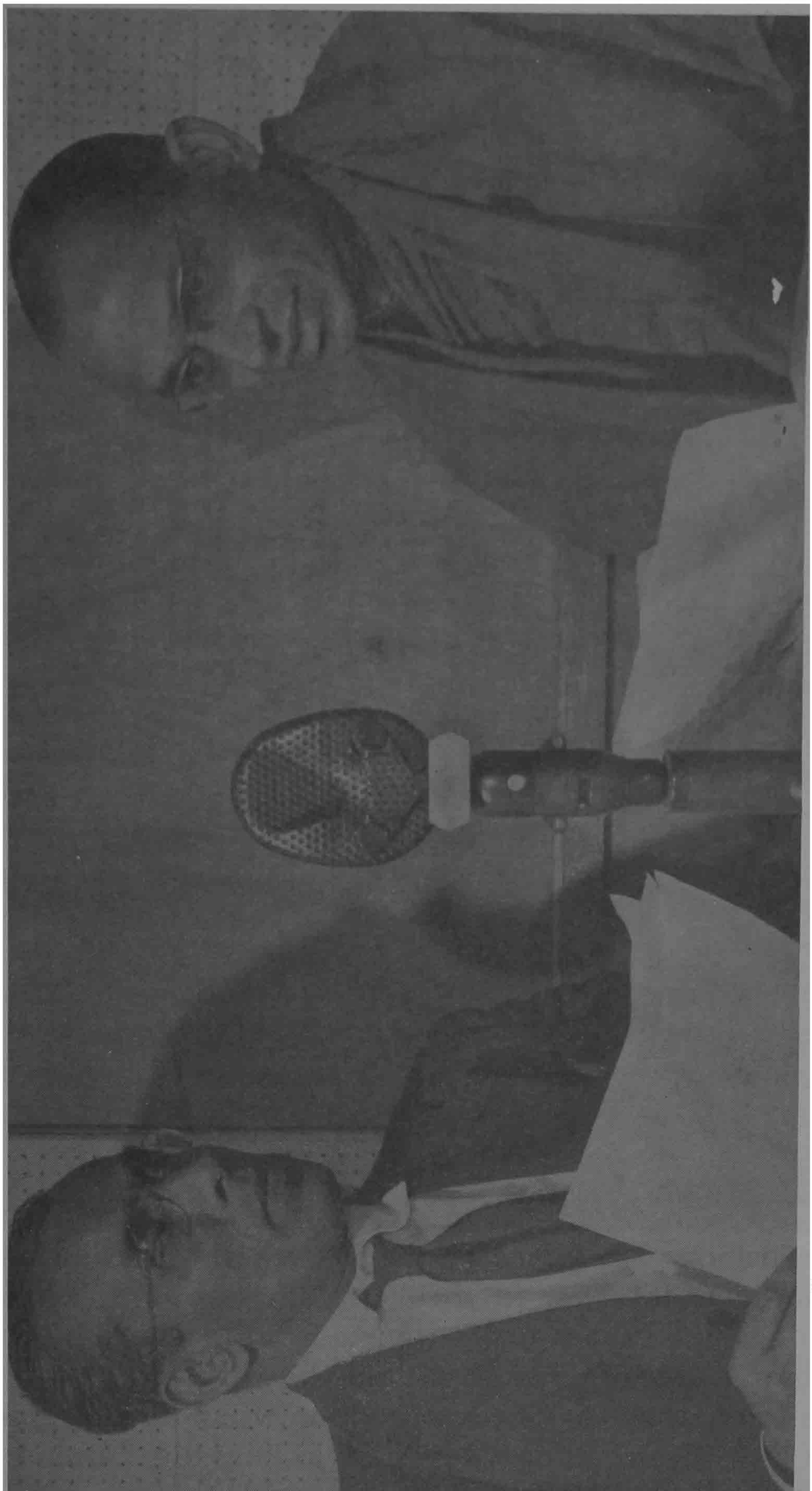
Ultimately, when the ship reached London, Tennakoon Vimalananda, who was doing research there, received Rahula Thera. After spending a few days with Vimalananda in London, Rahula Thera left for Paris by train.

In Paris Prof. Paul Demieville welcomed Rahula Thera, and inquired whether he preferred to stay in a hostel, or in a private house. Rahula Thera preferred a hostel. There were several hostels in the names of various countries, such as Swiss House, American House, etc., and Rahula Thera got the opportunity to stay in the "Swiss House."

After arranging the hostel facilities for Rahula Thera, Prof. Demieville took him on a sightseeing tour to familiarise the Sri Lankan bhikkhu with that large city.

Within one day, Rahula Thera realised that the French he had learnt in Colombo was not sufficient 'even to order a cup of coffee from a restaurant in Paris.' In fact, the French he learnt in Colombo, was quite different from the French spoken by the Parisians. So, the first thing was to learn French properly, and for that purpose, he went to Alliance Fransaise, a French language school.

Rahula Thera started the French course in September 1950, and within two months the winter came. Though he had to fight hard with the extremely cold weather and snow, Rahula Thera did not get discouraged. He attended the language classes daily and made it a point to speak in French to each and everyone he came across. Consequently, he was able to handle the French language in about eight months.



Rahula Thera with Prof. Tenkakoon Vimalananda in a B. B. C. studio

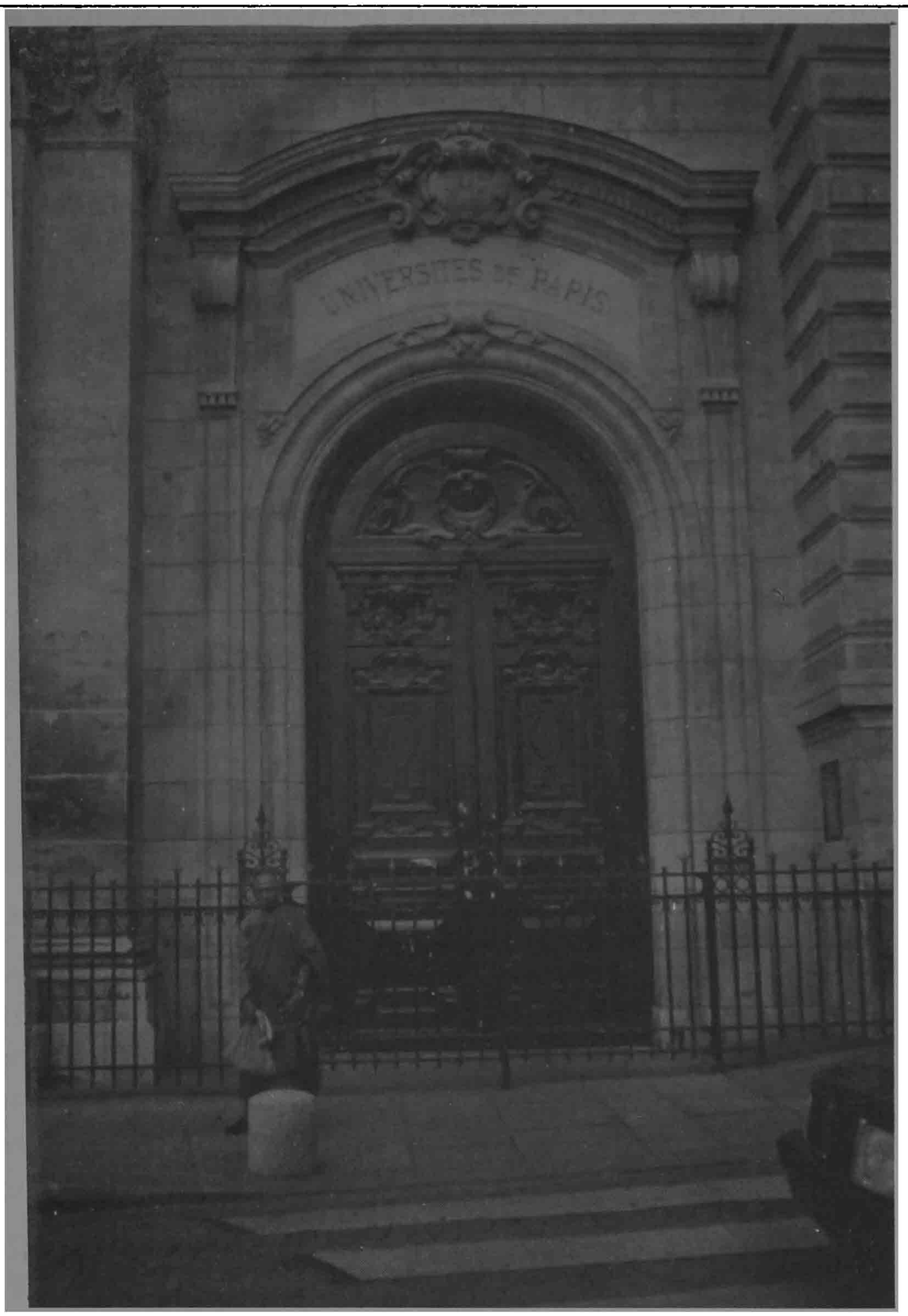
Besides Demieville, Rahula Thera worked with a number of other Professors at the Sorbonne. Louis Renou, Olivier Lacombe, Jean Filliozat, Marcelle Lalou and Andre Bareau were some of those professors.

The main task undertaken by Rahula Thera in Paris was the translation of the *Abhidharma-samuccaya* into French. It is a Mahayana philosophical work written in Sanskrit by the great scholar Asanga in the fourth century. Though it had been translated into Tibetan and Chinese, Rahula Thera was the first to translate it into a modern international language.

Writing a review about *Abhidharmasamuccaya* to *T'oung Pao,* Prof. J. W. de Jong had said: "The two glossaries, Sanskrit-French and French-Sanskrit, given at the end of Rahula Thera's translation could well form the basis of a dictionary of Buddhist terms in French."

After living in the "Swiss House" hostel for some years, Rahula Thera was thinking of finding a quiet and more independent apartment for his research and studies. And, when he found a new place and wanted to shift, he was helped a lot by Guy Coulon, who was a member of the Buddhist Society in Paris. There were two others who helped Rahula Thera, namely, an American lady called Miss Lounsberry and a French lady called Madam La Fouvante, who were President and Secretary respectively of the Buddhist Society

All the bookshelves and racks and desk and chairs necessary for Rahula Thera's library, and even the bed and other furniture, made out of very valuable timber, were presented to Rahula Thera by Guy Coulon. Rahula Thera valued that present so much, he took all those items to London when he was going to live there. And, when he was leaving London to settle down in Sri Lanka, he paid a large sum of



Rahula Thera near the main entrance of Sorbonne University

money for shipping them to Colombo, and is using them even today.

Prof. Jean Rosenberg, of Hungarian origin, and his wife Anna too did everything possible to make

Rahula Thera's life in Paris comfortable. Anna's sister Esther, who was a nurse in the University hospital, was entrusted with the task of watching the health of Rahula Thera. Prof. Demieville also introduced Rahula Thera to Prof. Etienne Lamotte, a Catholic priest from Belgium, who was an authority in Buddhist philosophy. In later years, Rahula Thera and Lamotte became close friends, and according to Lamotte's estimate, the greatest Buddhist scholar since Nagarjuna and Asanga is Walpola Rahula. (According to Wijayananda Dahanayaka, a former Prime

नमो बुद्धाय

[...] [...]

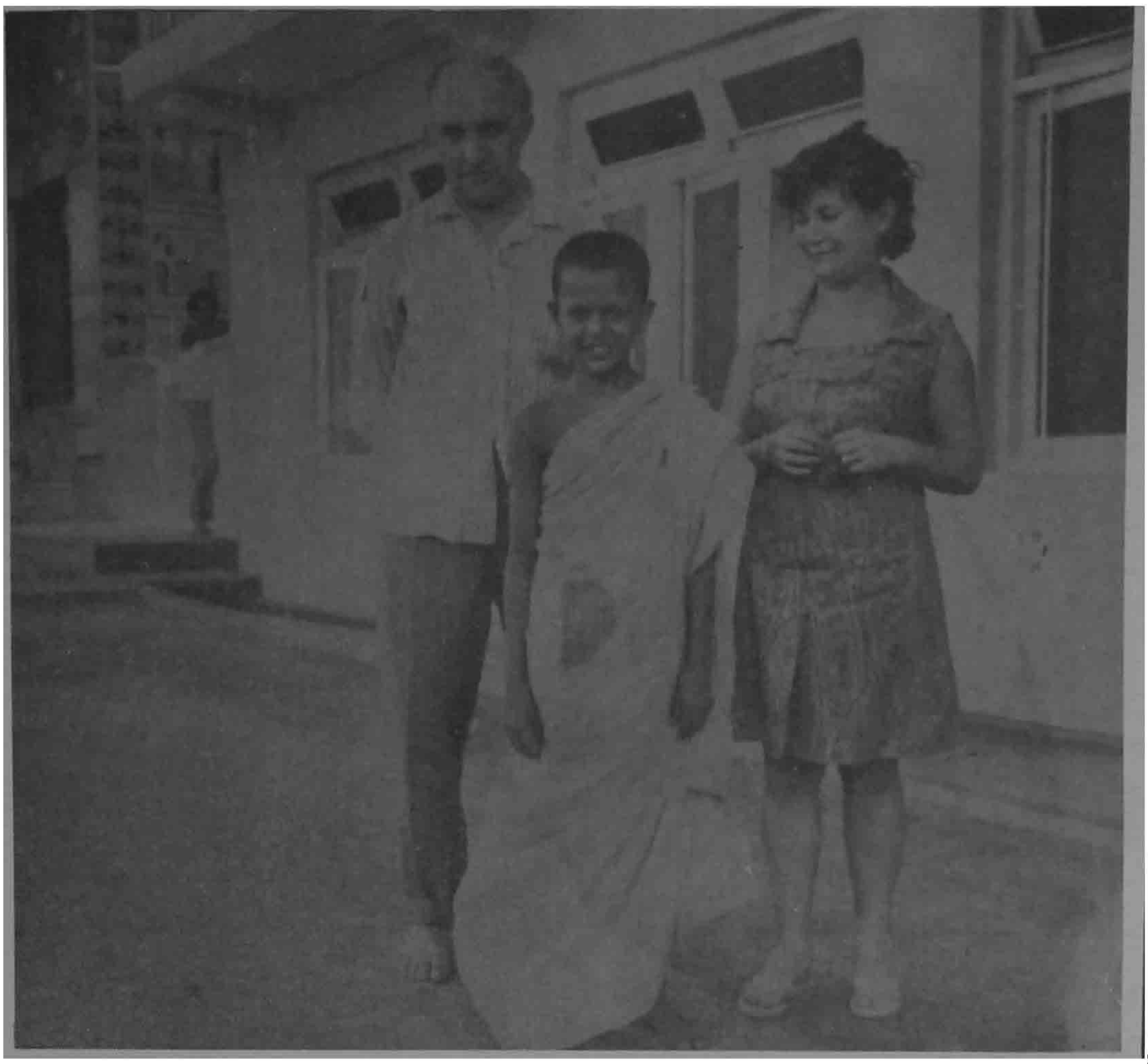
[...] विंशतिः संग्रहः सत्कायदृष्टयो लक्षणे ।
विंशतये कथमेषां दृष्टीनां सांकथ्यमेव च ॥
च तत्र कस्मादुपादानं लक्षणानां च लक्षणम् ।
अनुक्रमात्प्रहाणे च्याः समुदये ॥[1]

स्कन्धा धातव आयतनानि च कानि । कतिसंख्याः पञ्च । रूपस्कन्धो वेदनास्कन्धः संज्ञास्कन्धः संस्कारस्कन्धो विज्ञानस्कन्धश्च ॥ धातवोऽष्टादश । चक्षुर्धातू रूपधातुश्चक्षुर्विज्ञानधातुः श्रोत्रधातुः शब्दधातुः श्रोत्रविज्ञानधातुर्घ्राणधातुर्गन्धधातुर्घ्राणविज्ञानधातुर्जिह्वाधातुः रसधातुर्जिह्वाविज्ञानधातुः कायधातुः स्प्रष्टव्यधातुः कायविज्ञानधातुर्मनोधातुर्धर्मधातुर्मनोविज्ञानधातुश्च ॥ आयतनानि द्वादश । चक्षुरायतनं रूपायतनं श्रोत्रायतनं शब्दायतनं घ्राणायतनं गन्धायतनं जिह्वायतनं रसायतनं कायायतनं स्प्रष्टव्यायतनं मनआयतनं धर्मायतनं च ॥

किमुपादाय स्कन्धाः पञ्च च । पंचाकारान्मिथश्चोद्ग्राहनतामुपादाय । सपरिग्रहेहात्मवस्तु उपभोगात्मवस्तु अभिलाषात्मवस्तु [... 48a] सर्वधर्माधर्मामि-

१. चीनानुवादे 'अथ' नास्ति । प्रारम्भादेव योजनम् । भो० एतज्जानीत । मूले नासीदिति प्रतीयते । २. चीनानुवादे श्लोकद्वयमेव वर्तते । अतश्चत्वोऽनुरोधादेवमनूदितम् । आक्षरिकानुवादस्तु—कतमे विनिश्चयधर्माश्च प्रत्येकं तु चतुर्विधम् । त्रिधर्मः संग्रहः संप्रयोगः समन्वागमः । सत्यं धर्मश्च प्राप्तिश्च तथा सांकथ्यमेव च । कति कस्मादुपादानं लक्षणं व्यवस्थानमनुक्रमः । अर्थो दृष्टान्तो भेदश्च सर्वं ज्ञेयं समुच्चये ॥ तत्रापि लक्षणशब्दो मूलवस्तु (pen shih) इत्येवमनूदितः प्रतीयते । प्रथमसमुच्चयस्यान्ते लक्षणसमुच्चय इति दर्शनात् । भोटानुवादे तु सञ्चिप्तः प्रतीयतेऽयमंशः । तस्याक्षरिकानुवादस्तु "कति च किमर्थमुपादानं लक्षणानि । तस्य व्यवस्थानं च क्रमश्च अर्थश्च दृष्टान्तश्च । समुच्चय इत्येवमादयश्चानुभेदा (ज्ञेयाः) ।— संग्रहः संप्रयोगः—विनिश्चयस्यानुभेदः । सत्यं धर्मः प्राप्तिः सांकथ्यमिति विनिश्चयस्य भेदाः । संग्रहस्य एव सामान्येन संक्षेपः । ३. भो० उद्ग्रहणतादिति सर्वत्र किंशब्दं विना प्रत्येकमावर्तते ।

The original Abhidharmasamuccaya in Sanskrit



Mr. & Mrs. Guy Coulon from France, with a novice at the Weherahena Temple in Matara in 1967

Minister of Sri Lanka, the three great Buddhist scholars produced in Ruhuna or South Sri Lanka, are Totagamuwe Sri Rahula Thera, Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Thera and Walpola Sri Rahula Thera.)

Rahula Thera was a member of the Sri Lanka's delegation to the UNESCO General Conference held in Paris in 1958. The conference went on for a number of weeks and during that time, Rahula Thera got the opportunity to work together and cultivate a friendship with Monseigneur Angelo Roncalli, the Papal Nuncio in Paris, who later became Pope John xxiii.

During the conference, Rahula Thera attended a reception held at the Vatican Embassy in Paris. Among others present was Prof. Gunapala Malalasekera, the

Etienne Lamotte

then Sri Lankan Ambassador in Moscow. In the presence of all, Monseigneur Roncalli embraced Rahula Thera and exclaimed: "This is the real ambassador! No frontiers for him; no nationalities! This is Buddhist wisdom!"

Rahula Thera, who went to France in 1950, for a period of three years made it his base for 24 years for studying, researching and writing. During that period he came to Sri Lanka for the first time after 15 years, in 1965. That was for the specific purpose of receiving Higher Ordination. He was 58 years old then!

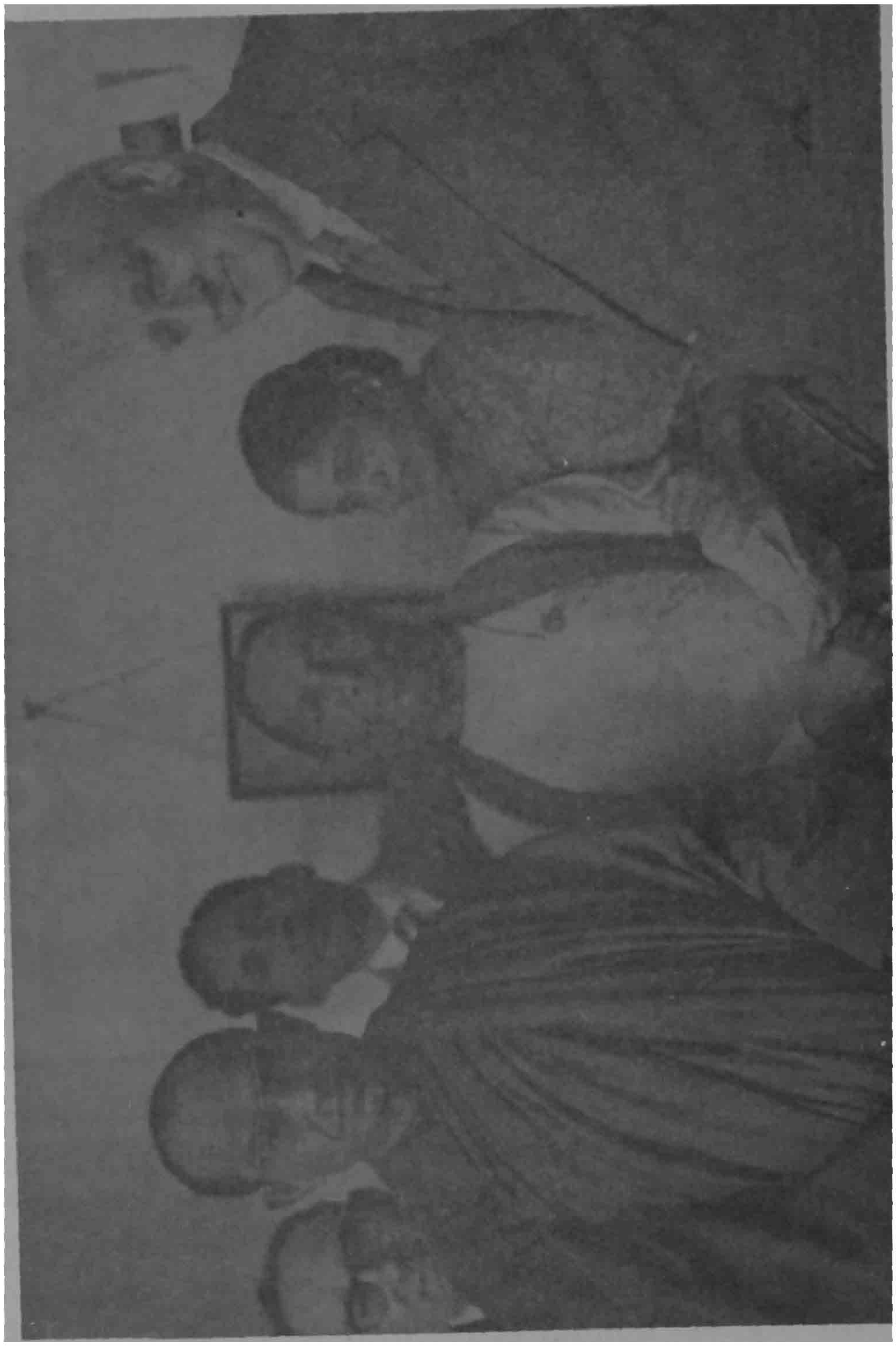
That unique Higher Ordination ceremony was held on November 3, 1965, at the Mangala Uposathagaraya at Raja Maha Vihara in Sri Jayawardhanpura Kotte, with the most venerable Molligoda Ariyawansa Maha Nayaka Thera, Principal of Pravachanodya Privena, as *Upadhyaya* and

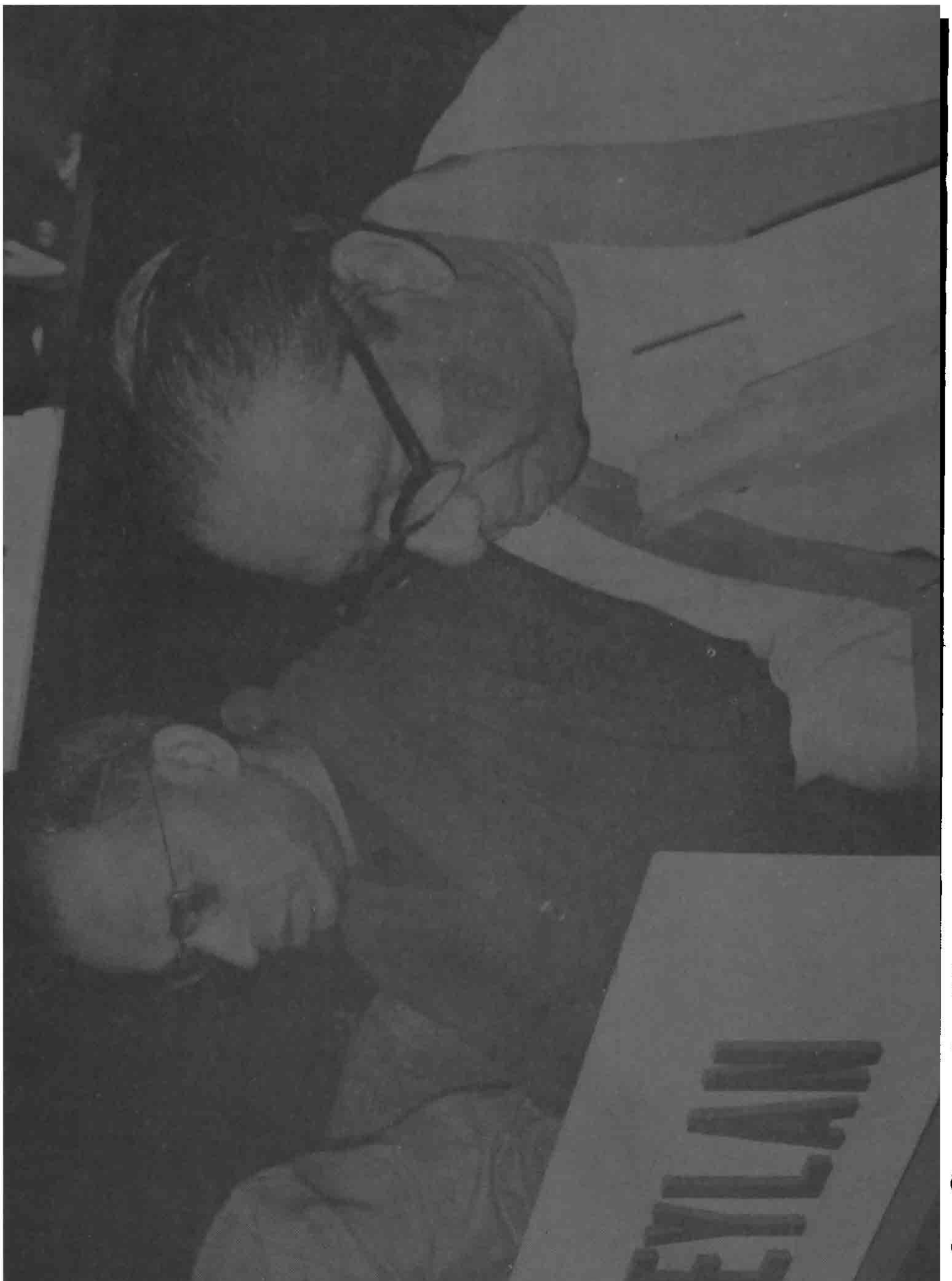
Rahula Thera with Prof. Jean Rosenberg. Mrs. Rosenberg and her sister Esther

Kiriwattuduwe Sri Pragnasara Nayaka Thera, Vice-Chancellor of Vidyalankara University, as the custodian.

At that occasion Rahula Thera was conferred with the highest honour of *Tripitakavagisvaracarya,*

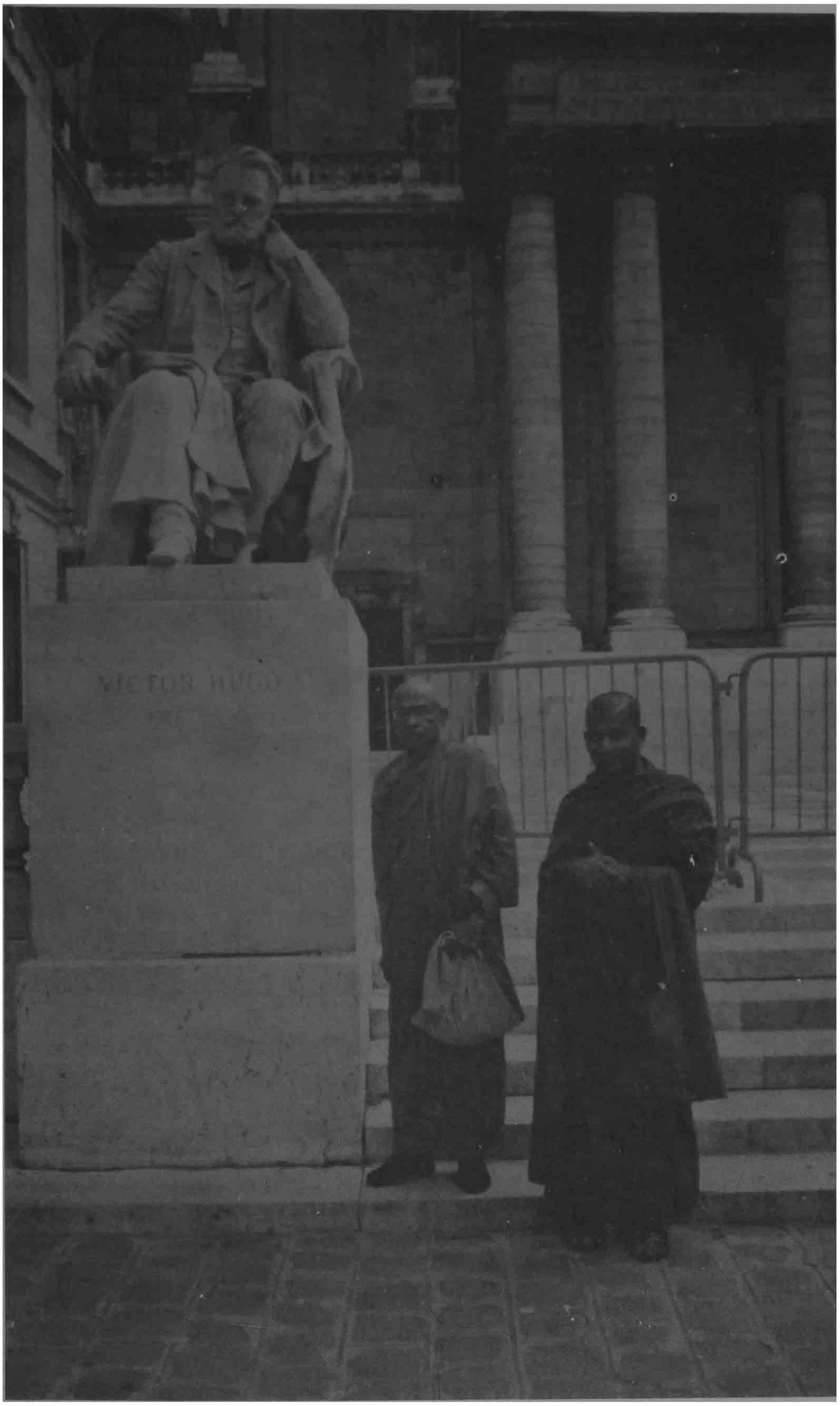
Rahula Thera with Prof. Gunapala Mulalasekera and Mrs. Mulalasekera in Paris in 1958. Prof. Paul Demieville and his pupil, Prof. Andre Bareau are also in the picture



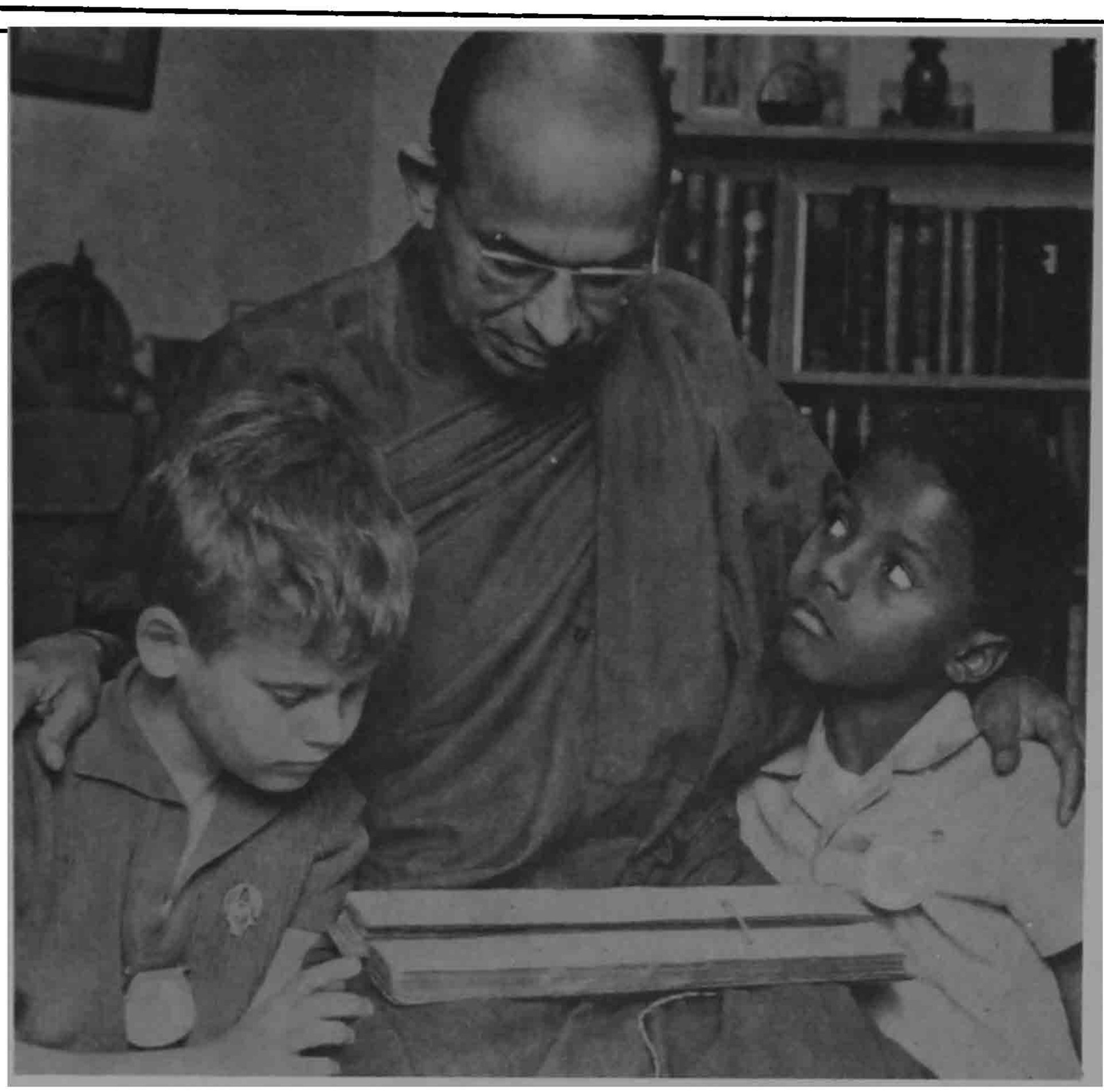


Rahula Thera with Prof. Gunapala Malalasekera and Jinadasa Sumarakkody at the UNESCO Conference in Paris

D. B. Dhanapala and Sagarika Palansuriya who attended the UNESCO Conference in Paris, in conversation with Rahula Thera outside the UNESCO Secretariat



Rahula Thera and Paravahera Chandaratana Thera at the foot of the statue of Victor Hugo in the Sorbonne University premises



Rahula Thera with Fred and Peter in Paris. 'Fred and Peter' is a book written by the famous German woman photograper, Marianne Sin Faltzer about a white boy and a black boy.

(Supreme Master of Buddhist Scriptures), with the qualification Sri (Gracious), by the Sri Kalyani Samagri Dharma Maha Sangha Sabha.

The next time Rahula Thera came to Sri Lanka was in 1966, to assume duties as the Vice-Chancellor of Vidyodaya University. In 1969 he resigned from that post, returned to his base in Paris and resumed researching and writing.

"The facilities available in Paris for research and writing were so excellent, and I didn't feel that I had spent over two decades there," Rahula Thera told me.

A REVOLUTION IN TEACHING BUDDHISM IN AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

One of the greatest services of the Ven. Walpola Rahula to Buddhism and the world community was his tenure as the Professor of Buddhism at Northwestern University in Evanston close to Chicago in the USA. The special significance of that service was the privilege he got to become the first incumbent of a chair established to honour a Christian bishop in a church-related university by Christians.

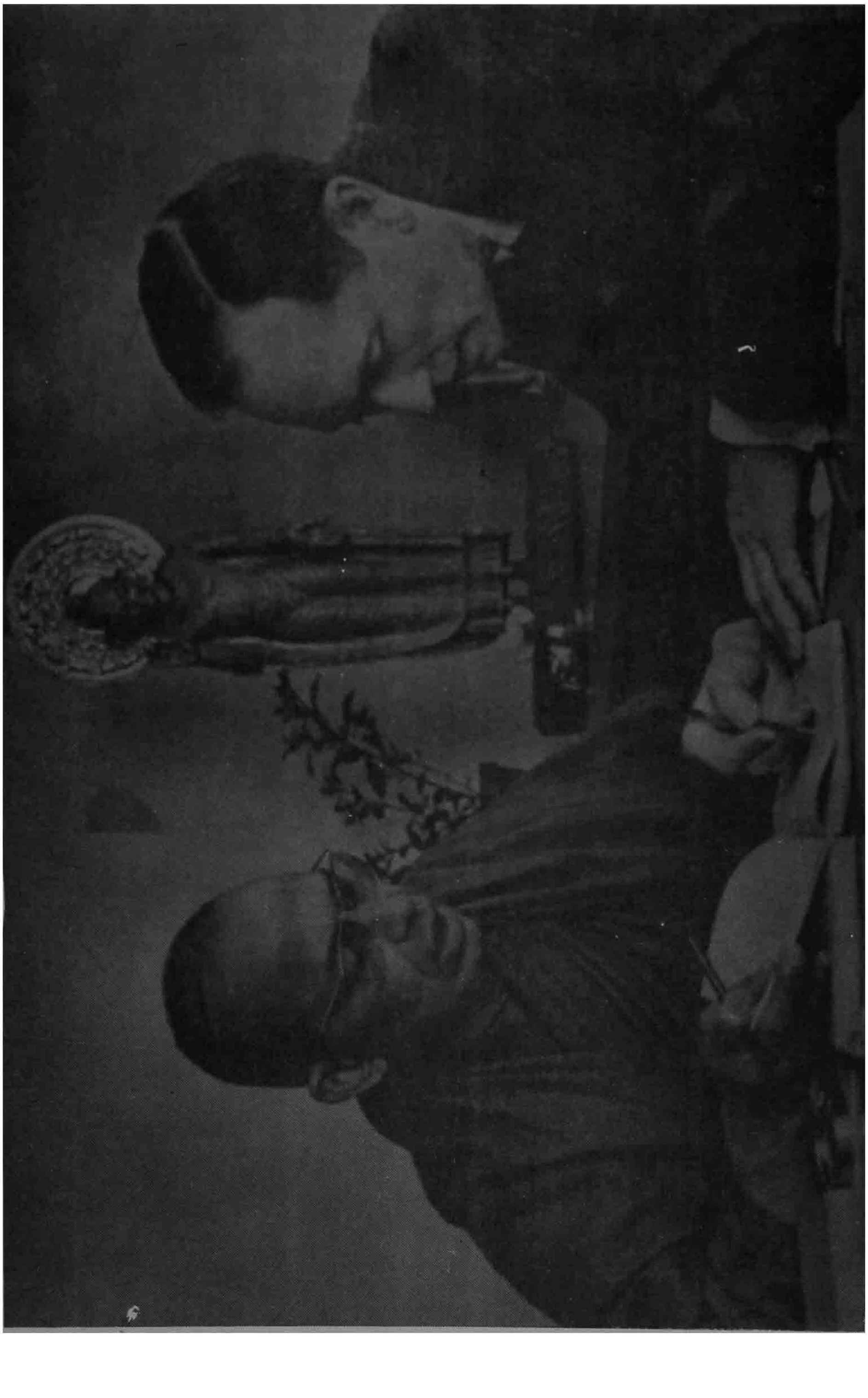
Dr. Edmund F. Perry, the then Chairman of the Department of History and Literature of Religions at Northwestern University, was the person who made a worldwide search and ultimately discovered Rahula Thera as the most suitable person to teach Buddhism in a university in the West. In an article to *Maha Bodhi Journal* (vol. 82, April-May 1974, pp. 145, 152) Dr. Perry described the Rahula Thera's mission in detail and I wish to quote extensively from his article in writing this chapter. Says Dr. Perry:

Who can responsibly teach Buddhism in the universities of the West? Surely every canon of scholarship

requires that we answer, "Only those persons who have an academically respectable knowledge of Buddhism." In a university certainly a person should abstain from teaching what he does not know to an advanced degree of competency. This canon, which we ordinarily take for granted, has not received consistently responsible observance among us who have taught Buddhism in the institutions of higher education in the Western world.

Once when we had heard a lecture by a well-known Asian Buddhist, a faculty colleague, an economist, said to me, "Why do you waste your time studying Buddhism for comparison with Christianity? I followed a course in Buddhism at - (he named one of America's most prestigious universities). I have heard lectures by monks and diplomats from Buddhist countries, but, as in tonight's lecture, I have never read or heard anything really profound from Buddhists. Have you found anything in Buddhism other than the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path?" I compounded this colleague's bewilderment when I replied, "I have not found even in the history of Christian thought anything more philosphically and psychologically profound than the Buddha's teaching concerning the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. I consider that Christian thought has not met, either in Greek philosophy, or, more recently, in Freudian psychology and Marxism, a more challenging and possibly a more compatible interpretation of existence than that which Buddhism presents. But Christian theologians and other thinkers in the Church have not yet undertaken the moral responsibility of understanding and conciliating with the Teachings of the Buddha and his followers." This conversation lodged in my consciousness and conscience, with the result that I determined to introduce, at least in American universities, a change in the teaching and learning of Buddhism.

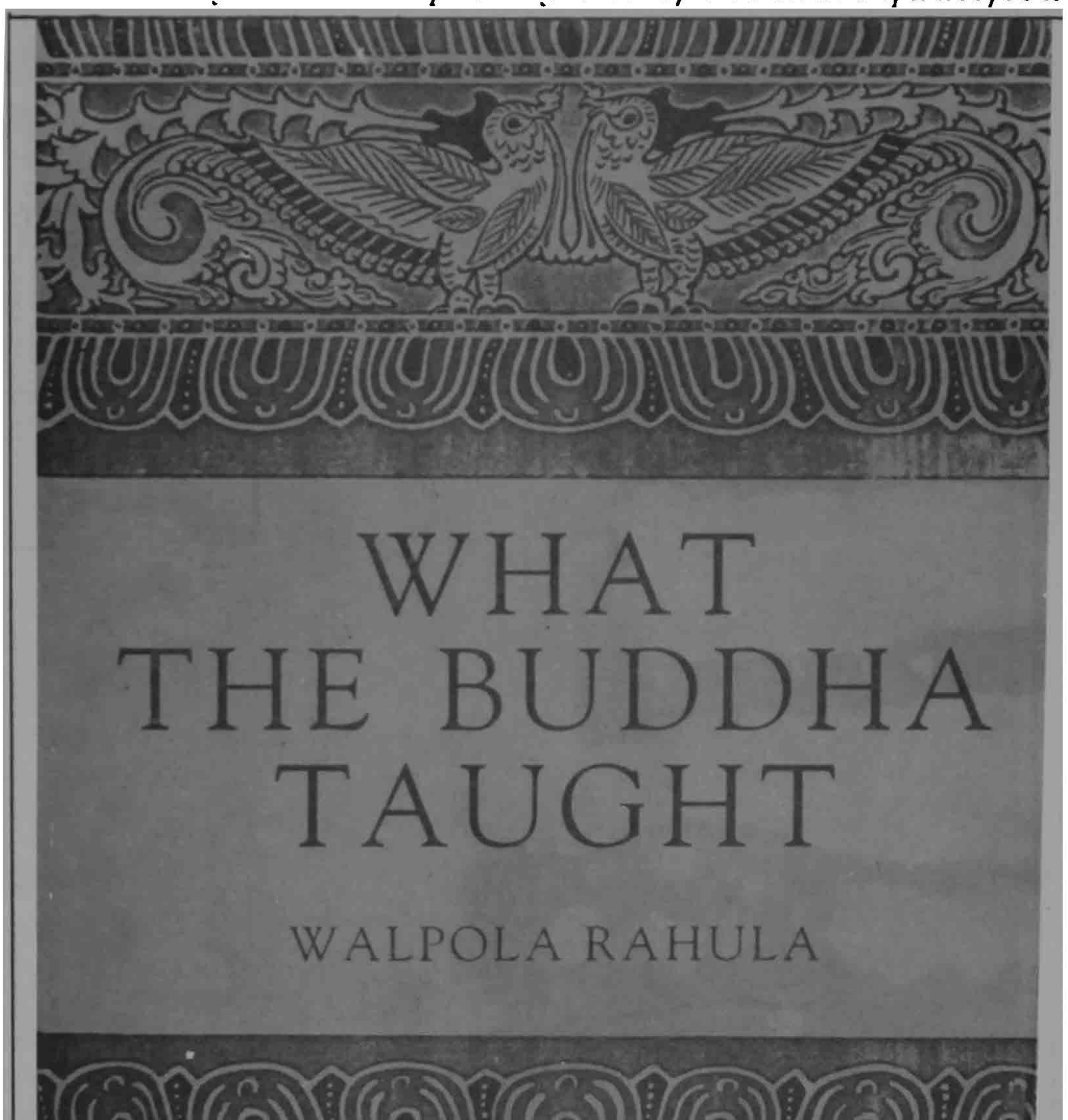
A revolution in teaching Buddhism in....



Annual Thera with Dr. Edmund F. Perry

In 1959 the Venerable Walpola Rahula had published in England his book, What the Buddha Taught. In a forword to this book, Professor Paul Demieville wrote:

"Here is an exposition of Buddhism conceived in a resolutely modern sprit by one of the most qualified



"What the Buddha Taught"

and enlightened representatives of that religion. The Rev. Dr. W. Rahula received the traditional training and education of a Buddhist monk in Ceylon, and held an eminent position in one of the leading monastic institutes (Pirivena) in that island, where the Law of the Buddha floruishes from the time of Asoka and has preserved its vitality up to this day....The book (What the Buddha Taught) is a luminous account, within reach of everybody, of the fundamental principles of the Buddhist doctrines, as they are found in the most ancient texts...Dr. Rahula, who possesses an incomparable knowledge of these texts, refers to them constantly and almost exclusively. Their authority is recognized unanimously by all the Buddhist schools, which were and are numerous, but none of which ever deviates from these texts, except with the intention of better interpreting the spirit beyond the letter."

This recommendation, for Rahula and his book, from one of the very few authoritative Western scholars of Buddhism, described exactly the person and qualifications needed for revolutionizing and giving integrity to academic Buddhist studies in the West: an enlightened representative of the Buddhist religion, trained in the traditional pirivena monastic education, cultured in the living tradition of a country preserving the religion's pristine vitality, possessing an incomparable knowledge of the sacred texts accepted by all schools of Buddhism, and having the earned and demonstrated credentials to communicate his knowledge to savants and beginners.

As a first step in changing the teaching and learning of Buddhism in American universities, I required my students to read Rahula's What the Buddha Taught. I also gave a copy to my concerned and respcted colleague who hitherto had perceived nothing profound in the Four Noble Truths. He commented to me after reading Rahula's book, "Rahula introduced me to a Buddhism I have never met before. You

are quite right-Christanity had better get acquainted with Buddhism and you are quite justified in directing your own career as a schoalr to the study of possible Buddhist-Christian relations." That colleague was Simeon E. Leland, the Dean who appointed me to Northwestern University. I explained to him my professional aspiration to give integrity and academic excellence to the study of Buddhism in American universities. He responded, "Let us teach Buddhism accurately at least to our own students."

With Dean Leland's encouragement I set about finding the most respected living Buddhist Scholar of Buddhism. Rahula's name was suggested recurrently. As I read and reread Demieville's Foreword, I became convinced that Rahula could raise the standard and change the character of Buddhist studies at Northwestern and in America. Almost without exception scholars acquainted with him personally told me that because "Dr. Rahula is a monk who will not likely accept a post in a Western university." But my advisors did not know how to measure my innocence nor the Venerable's courage and his insight into the far-reaching implications of such a project.

In 1964 it became possible for Dean Leland to offer the Venerable Dr. Rahula an appointment at Northwestern University as the first Bishop Charles Wesley Brashares Distinguished Visiting Professor of Religion. Bishop Brashares had served for twelve years as Bishop of the Chicago area of the Methodist Church, one of the most influential episocopates in Methodism. When the bishop retired, the Methodist Conference over which he had presided established at Northwestern a fund in his honour. The grace of Bishop Brashares and the magnaminity of the Methodists in the Chicago area sufficed to stifle any sectarian opposition to the appointment of a Buddhist as the first incumbent of a Chair established to honour a Christian bishop. Bhikkhu Rahula, having

satisfied himself by candid enquiry that his appointment would cause no embarrassment to the Methodists and that he would have unrestricted freedom to teach Buddhism in his accustomed ways, accepted the Brashares Distinguished Visiting Professorship for 1964-65.

Though Rahula Thera had lived in Paris for more than two decades, he never carried a visiting card with him. But, when he was busy making arrangements to go to Northwestern University, a friend in Paris advised him that a card would be of much use when living in the States. Rahula Thera agreed, got a card designed and left it on his table to be sent to the printer the next day.

On the following morning, Rahula Thera was amazed to see the designed card missing. He could not believe his eyes for no outsider entered his room, where everything was kept neatly in proper places. However, he searched all over the place, but, in vain. When he was contemplating about the mystery of the card, a French friend came to see him and the two of them made another futile search.

On the third day, to his utter amazement once again, Rahula Thera found the card on the table. He couldn't help laughing. Why? He strongly believed that hiding, and then replacing the card, was the work of the spirit of a dead friend who always watched his activities and had no doubt as to who that particular friend was.

On a subsequent day, Rahula Thera related this strange story to an American friend named Albert Fehring. Albert, who was a Catholic by birth, later embraced Buddhism and spent some time at the Ven. Nyanaponika's Udawattakele Hermitage, in Kandy, Sri Lanka. He strongly believed in mysterious acts of spirits and told Rahula Thera: "There is a friendly

spirit which is always looking after you. This is the work of that particular spirit. You never believed in visiting cards. And, when, you decided to get one printed, that spirit did not like the idea, and showed his disapproval by hiding the card. But, after a few days the card was replaced, allowing you to act according to your wish."

"Why did you laugh when you saw the card on the table after two days?" I asked Rahula Thera.

"Because I had already made the same conclusion as Dr. Fehring, and had identified the departed friend, whose spirit was responsible for the 'mischief'," he replied.

Rahula Thera strongly believes that the 'mischief maker'was his lifelong friend Kalalelle Anandasagara Thera, who later gave up his robes and took the lay name of Sagara Palansuriya. Both as a monk and as a layman, Sagara was very close to Rahula Thera, and, D.B. Dhanapala described him as the 'chief leutenant of Rahula Thera.'

When Sagara Palansuriya was a member of Parliament in Prime Minister Soloman Bandaranaike's government, he fell seriously ill and had to be flown to London for treatment. Rahula Thera rushed to London from Paris, and served almost as the 'bedside attendant' to Sagara. After recovering, Sagara went to Paris and spent a few days with Rahula Thera.

Some time after returnign to Sri Lanka, Sagara fell seriously ill once again, and when arrangements were being made to rush him to a London hospital, his repeated request was to inform Rahula Thera and get him down to London to stay at his bedside. However, Sagara passed away in Colombo, without getting time to go to London.

Nattandiye Pannakara Thera wrote a letter to

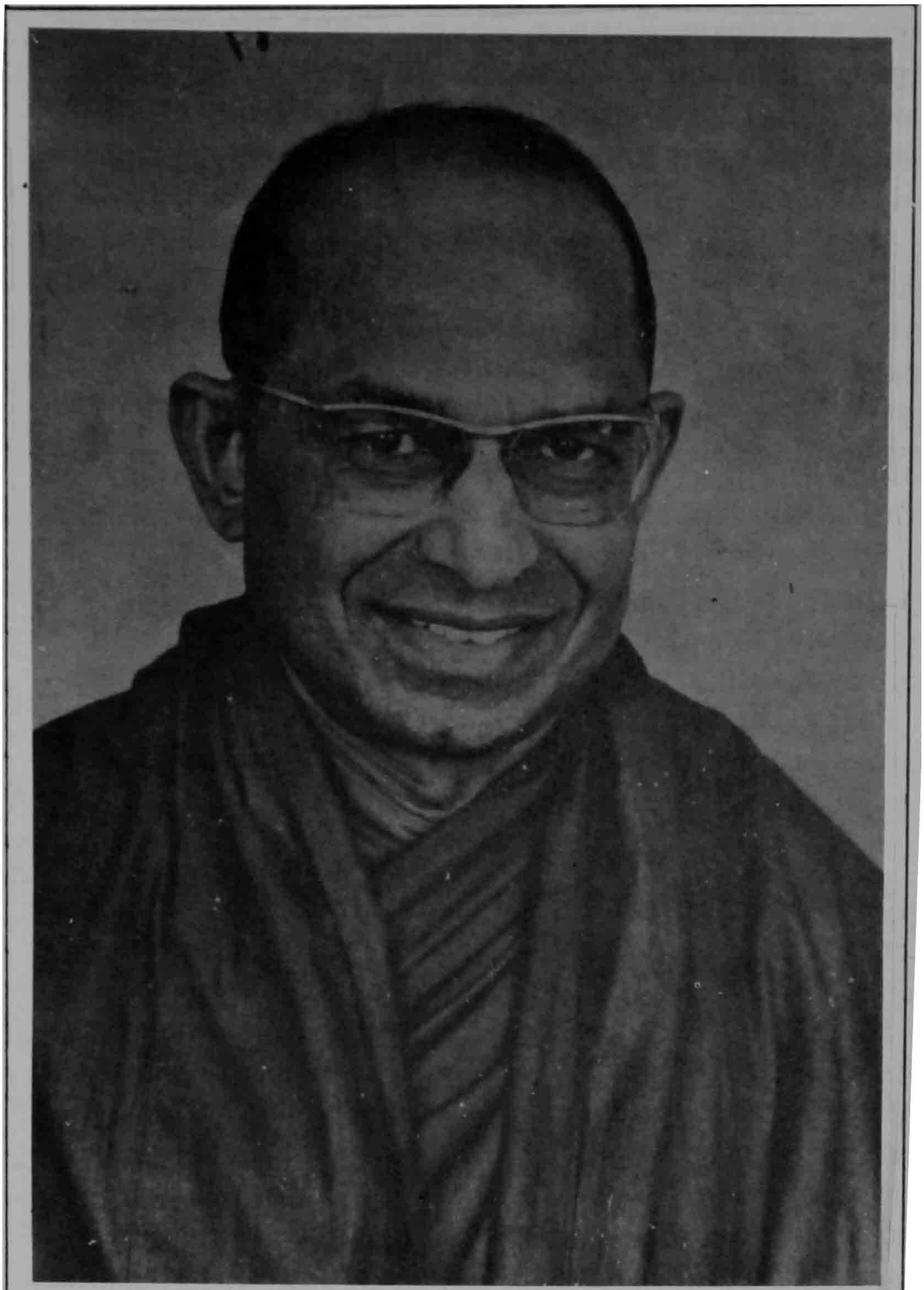
Paris to inform Rahula Thera about the death of Sagara Palansuriya. But, he never used the word 'died' in that letter. Yet, Rahula Thera clearly understood as to what had happened, after reading it.

"Soon after reading the letter, I begasn to cry and sob," said Rahula Thera. "Even when my father died, I never cried. But, the bond between Sagara and me was so strong, and I couldn't help crying. Accordingly, there was no doubt that it was Sagara who was responsible for the card incident in Paris."

Rahula Thera went to Northwestern University in September 1964 and started the revolution in teaching Buddhism in American univesities, thus becoming the first Buddhist monk ever to hold a professorship in a university in the West. Dr. Edmund F. Perry, the man behind that revolution, and an eye witness to the whole episode, has recorded his memoirs in the following manner:

The world took note of this innovation. Other universities deluged the Venerable with invitations to lecture on their campuses, offering handsome honoraria. Rahula resisted the temptation, usually replying to the effect that he came to America to teach Buddhism at Northwestern University and that he should not neglect the students who had enrolled in his classes. Only those who know Rahula well can understand the utter sincerity of his negative replies. He met all of his classes without fail and he held regular office hours to discuss individually with his students the difficulties they had in understanding a way of thought and conduct alien in so many respects to their knowledge and experience.

But the world took note in other ways. Professor Joseph Kitagawa writing in Encyclopaedia Britannica's Britannica Book of the Year 1965 (pp. 707-708), observed "the phenomenal growth of schol-



Rahula Thera during the Northwestern days

arly interest in oriental studies in U.S. colleges and universities...resulted in great appreciation of the art, culture, and philosphy of Buddhism: this interest was reflected in...the appointment of a Ceylonese monk, Walpola Rahula Thera, as the first Charles Wesley Brashares visiting professor, 1964-65, at Northwest-

ern University." Rahula's public inaugural lecture attracted an international and a multi-religions audience which overflowed the Alice Millar Chapel at Northwestern. Two Methodist bishops, including Bishop Brashares, and both the Ceylon Ambassador to the United Nations (Sir Senarat Gunawardhana) and the Ceylon Ambassador to the United States (M. F. de S. Jayaratne) stood in the receiving line with Dr. Rahula, Dean Leland, and other University officials. Other diplomats and hundreds of clergymen and laypersons of various religions joined students and faculty, filling the Chapel and adjoinning rooms, to hear a Buddhist monk lecture from a Christian pulpit. The Buddhist flag and the flag of Ceylon hung at full mast before the Chapel's pulpit from which Rahula gave his lecture, with the Christian and American flags masted before the lectern on the other side of the Chapel. This display of parity for the four flags symbolized the equality of status for Buddhism which Dean Leland and I intended to give Buddhism in our curriculum of studies in religions.

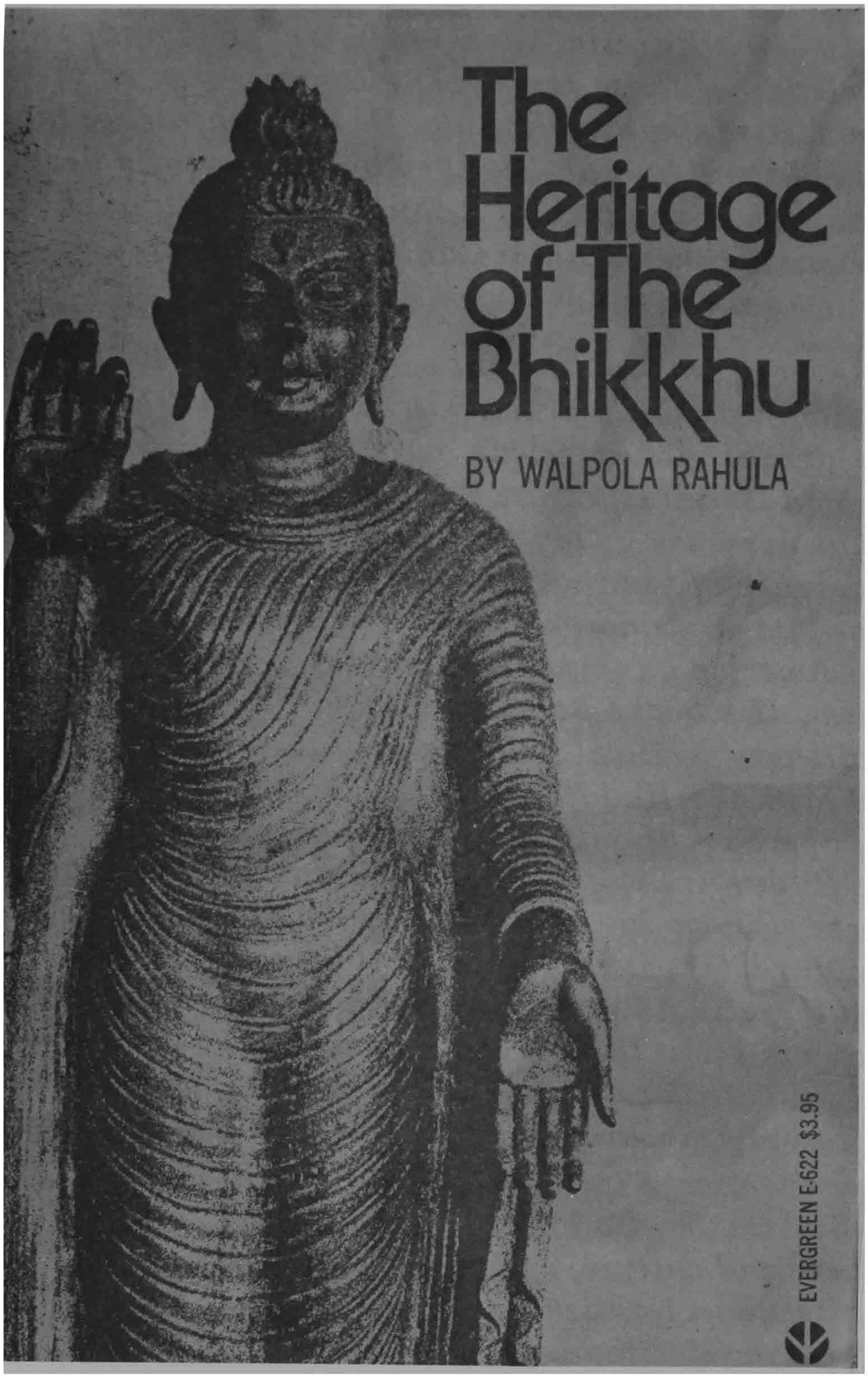
In this lecture Dr. Rahula reviewed as generously as the facts would allow the extent to which Western religions and scholars had attended to the contribution made by the Buddha and Buddhists to mankind's religious and intellectual heritage. The total effort in the past did not add up to anything impressive, notable as a few exceptions had been. He stated the case for religious and research inquiry into the Doctrine and intellectual and cultural histroy of Buddhism and expressed the hope that this unique undertaking at Northwestern would bear the fruit of a few young scholars who would have the patience and perseverance to learn Buddhism as a total religious tradition...its languages, its literature, its culture, and its Doctrine. He cautioned that this kind of learning would require many years of dedicated, specialized study, and that we should guard against enthusiasts

who want to display too quickly their little learning. The little learning of these enthusiasts may appear erudite only because its bearers can use unfamiliar phrases from the languages of the Buddhist tradition or because they have spent a few months in a Buddhst culture. Scholarship worthy of Buddhism and a university demands an entire career of specialisation, a phenomenon yet to appear in American study of Buddhism. Generalists, he maintained then and subsequently, cannot do full justice to the teaching or the research of Buddhism.

That inaugural lecture and that year's teaching disclosed to Rahula and me a program of revision of methods and meterials to be used in teaching Buddhism academically in the West. Rahula scrutinized the books in English on Buddhism and found most of them inadequate and often inaccurate. He studied the essays and articles written by American specialists in languages of Buddhism and frequently found their conclusions unwarranted and misleading. All this disappointed him for he had hoped to find at least a few pieces of scholarship on which he could draw for use with his students as he endeavoured to initiate tradition of specialized study of Buddhism. He joined me at learned societies where professors read papers on Buddhim and polite and gentle as he is but unrelentingly probing, he made people uncomfortable when, after carefully listening to their reading he would ask, "Excuse me, but where in the texts do you find the basis for your conclusion?" In the replies to this standard Rahula question I have heard offered everything from "I borrowed this from," to "there is no one text, but if one traces this idea through the Pali literature into the Sanskrit, he will see...." Rahula would press further asking, "Where do you find that in Pali or Sanskrit? I have never seen any such reference and I would like to see that if you can please show me where you found it". How painfully many have learned what

Professor Demieville wrote about Rahula in that Foreword: "Dr. Rahula...possesses an incomparable knowledge of these texts." The carelessness of these presons disappointed Rahula. He had confidence that many of them had ability they had never fully developed and disciplined. Rahula does not wish to embarrass other scholars unless they indulge in an intellectual sham.

American professional scholarship in Buddhsm has not improved markedly in these past ten years. In this decade no American wrote a single definitive work on Buddhism. But Rahula, merely by his occasional presence at learned society meetings and his leadership of seminars at other universities, has exemplified a standard and introduced a conscience into America's competitive market of books on Buddhism. His books have become paradigms by which publishers' critical readers evaluate other articles and books on Buddhism. In 1962 Grove Press issued in paperback the first American edition of his What the Buddha Taught. Since Rahula's coming to Northwestern in 1964-65, this book has become a standard text in numerous introductory courses in Buddhism in American colleges and universities. Even students use it to discredit superficial books on Buddhism that are required in courses in religion, philosophy, anthropology, and sociology.Rahula will have even more influence upon social science studies of Buddhism, Buddhists, and aspects of Buddhist society and culture, now that Grove Press in 1974 has published in English a translation of his Bhiksuvage Urumaya (Heritage of the Bhikkhu. New York: Grove Press, Inc). In this book Rahula describes the history and development of the bhikkhu's interrelations with and leadership roles in society. He narrates, in uncomplicated style and easy to understand vocabulary, the bhikkhu's response to his people's needs in the matters of spirit, economy, politics, health, education,



"The Heritage of the Bhikkhu"

and general welfare. Rahula has at the tip of his tongue and pen "an incomparable knowledge of Buddhism's history." Consequently he tells his story easily and accurately. He describes complicated and signifi-

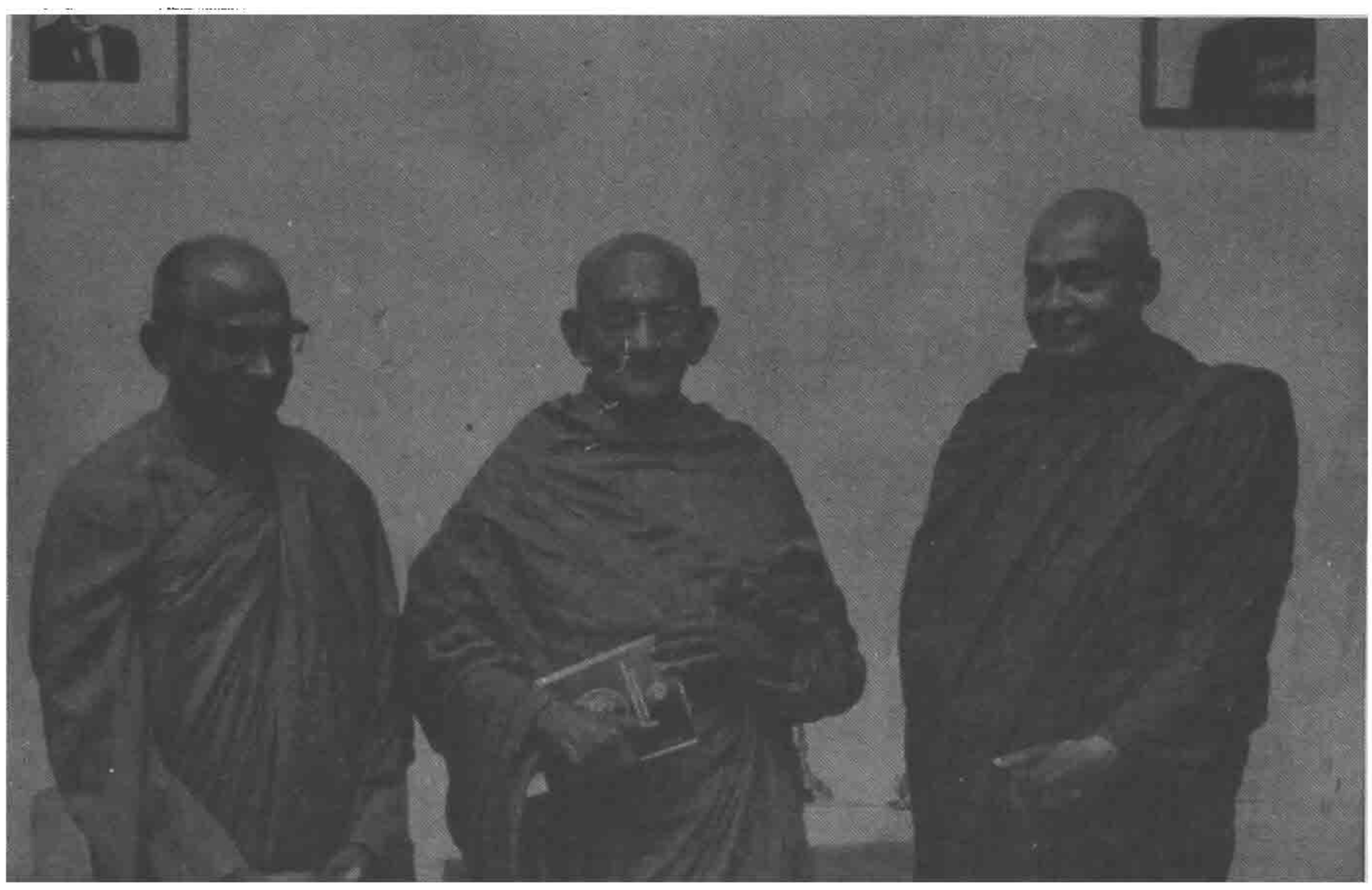
cant developments so simply, never making his narrative appear as a great piece of erudite scholarship. Rahula has written this book out of the "overflow" of his accumulated knowledge. For an American, such a book would require years of research. Yet, Heṛitatge of the Bhikkhu, written so easily with all the marks of Rahula's careful scholarship, has rendered ridiculous most studies of "Buddhism and society" made and published by European, British, and American researchers.

VICE-CHANCELLOR OF VIDYODAYA UNIVERSITY

According to the University Act in force by 1966, the two Vice-Chancellors of Vidyalankara and Vidyodaya universities had to be two Buddhist monks. At that time these two universities were better known as pirivena universities because both of them were pirivenas before the university status was conferred on them.

The Ven. Balangoda Ananda Maitreya Maha Nayake Thera, who was the Vice-Chancellor of Vidyodaya University in 1966, got fed up with the day to day administrative work and decided to resign. I.M.R.A. Iriyagolla, the Minister of Education, tried his best to persuade Ananda Maitreya Thera to continue as the Vice-Chancellor. But, when he found that the Maha Nayake Thera was adamant, Iriyagolla made a request to recommend a suitable monk for the post. Without any hesitation, Ananda Maitreya Thera said that the most suitable monk was Walpola Rahula who was at the Sorbonne at that time.

Minister Iriyagolla told his Prime Minister,



Rahula Thera with Aggamahapandita Balangoda Ananda Maitreya Maha Nayaka Thera and Dr. Hammalawa Saddhatissa Thera in London

Dudley Senanayake, about the proposal to appoint Rahula Thera to Vidyodaya and requested him to send a cable to Paris, inviting Rahula Thera to come to Sri Lanka and assume duties as the Vice-Chancellor of Vidyodaya University. As there was no response from Paris, Senanayake sent another cable, but in vain. Then, the Prime Minister made inquiries through the Sri Lankan Ambassador in Paris, Sir Lalith Rajapaksa, and learnt that Rahula Thera was ready to come if the country needed his services.

However, almost simultaniously there was another offer for Rahula Thera from an American University for a post there. The salary of that post was four times that of the Governor-General of Sri Lanka at that time. But, Rahula Thera decided that he should serve his motherland, unconcerned about the salary.

By the time Rahula Thera returned to Sri Lanka, the Ven. Kiriwattuduwe Pragnasara Nayake Thera, Vice-Chancellor of Vidyalankara University, had passed away, and the government thought that Rahula Thera was the best choice for Vidyalankara. But,

he refused the offer and insisted that the Vice-Chancellor of 'Vidyalankara should be the Ven. Yakkaduwe Pragnarama Nayake Thera, and nobody else. So, the government appointed, Yakkaduwe Thera to Vidyalankara, and Rahula Thera assumed duties as the Vice-Chancellor of Vidyodaya.

During the preceding period Vidyodaya University was in a chaotic situation as a result of the Minister of Education and various other officials interfering with the administration.

"In spite of all the problems, I assumed duties as the Vice-Chancellor with the firm determination to run it as an independent institute in keeping with university tradition," said Rahula Thera to me.

He added: "A university is an independent institute. Though the government grants money to run a university, neither the politicians nor the bureaucrats have the right to interfere with the administration. So, I did not allow any outsider to interfere with my work. I told them that I was the one and only authority responsible for the administration of the university. Though I was very strict with the students, I always defended them. I also had given a standing order to the police not to take any action against my students without informing me first."

Once, some students, who went against the word of the Vice-Chancellor, started a campaign and boycotted the classes, and Rahula Thera, expelled 300 of them at once. Governor-General William Gopallawa, who was the Chancellor, and Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake, stood by Rahula Thera, saying that it was the only way to maintain discipline.

The expelled students went before the courts against the Vice-Chancellor. Eminent legal luminary, H. W. Jayewardene, appeared for Rahula Thera,

who did not go before the courts. The judge who heard the case said that according to the University Act, the Vice-Chancellor had all the powers to take disciplinary actions and the court had no power to give any ruling against the V. C. The defeated students apologised to Rahula Thera, who re-instated all the expelled students.

During the stewardship of Rahula Thera, the well-known political fighter and orator, the late Dr. Kotagama Wachissara Thera, applied for a Professorship at Vidyodaya. When the application came before the Senate, a certain member objected, and said that Wachissara Thera, being a political monk, would bring all his politics into the campus, resulting in unnecessary troubles. Then Rahula Thera said: "If Wachissara Thera is unsuitable to be a Professor here, simply because he is political monk, I am the most unsuitable to be the Vice-Chancellor, because I am one of the pioneer political monks in this country."

That settled the problem and Wachissara Thera assumed duties as a Professor. Says Rahula Thera: "Wachissara never brought his politics into the campus. Instead, he did a very devoted and excellent service as a Professor."

Some time after Rahula Thera assumed duties as the Vice-Chacellor, he received an invitation from the Israeli government to visit that country. He accepted that invitation with much pleasure. When Rahula Thera was a young student, he had read the life-story of Jesus and was eagerly waiting to visit the places connected with that great man's life.

However, there was a problem with regard to the passport. There were various seals on Rahula Thera's passport to say that he had visited numerous countries in the world. But, the Israeli seal on the passport

was a taboo to enter Arabian countries. In order to overcome the problem, the Israeli government sent a special passport.

In Israel, Rahula Thera visited all the places connected to the life of Jesus Christ, such as the crib where Jesus was born, the place where the sermon on the mountain was delivered and the place of the crucifixion.

Rahula Thera's guide was a Muslim who had learnt by heart the descriptions about each and every place they visited. It appeared that he had no independent knowledge about the Christ or Christianity. Soon, Rahula Thera realised that the guide did not know the religious or historical significance of those scared places. In fact, he could not answer some of the question posed by Rahula Thera.

"Please do not take the trouble to give long descriptions to me," said Rahula Thera to the guide, "because I have a fair knowledge of the history and other details of these places. It is quite enough if you just tell me only the names of the places we are visiting."

Thereafter, the guide was compelled to cut down his long harangues, and that was a great consolation for Rahula Thera. At the end of the 'pilgrimage' Rahula Thera was so moved and remained silent for a few minutes, contemplating the life of that great man- Jesus Christ. "What a crime for them to crucify this great man?" muttered Rahula Thera at last.

In Israel Rahula Thera was surprised to see how the enterprising people of that country had converted a desert land into a vast greenery. He was more surprised to hear that the flowers and fruits grown on those lands were daily airfreighted to European countries such as Switzerland and England for sale.

During his visit to Israel, Rahula Thera was provided with an opportunity to meet the first Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion. Though Ben-Gurion was living in retirement at that time, police were still guarding his residence.

When he went to Ben-Gurion's residence, Rahula Thera anticipated to meet a mere politician. But, a few minutes after the two of them started a conversation, Rahula There discovered a great scholar in Ben-Gurion . There was a huge library in Ben-Gurion's residence, in which books on Buddhism had a prominent place. All the books published by the Pali Text Society in London were among them.

"I am keeping this vast collection of books not to exhibit, but to read. I have read each and every book in this library and re-read them occasionally," said Ben-Gurion.

While in conversation, Rahula Thera came to know that Ben-Gurion and the former Prime Minister of Burma, U Nu, were very good friend. It was Buddhism that had brought the two leaders together. Once, U Nu invited Bed-Gurion to come to Burma to practise Buddhist forms of mediation. After spending some time in Burma, Ben-Gurion returned to Israel and extended an invitation for U Nu to visit Israel.

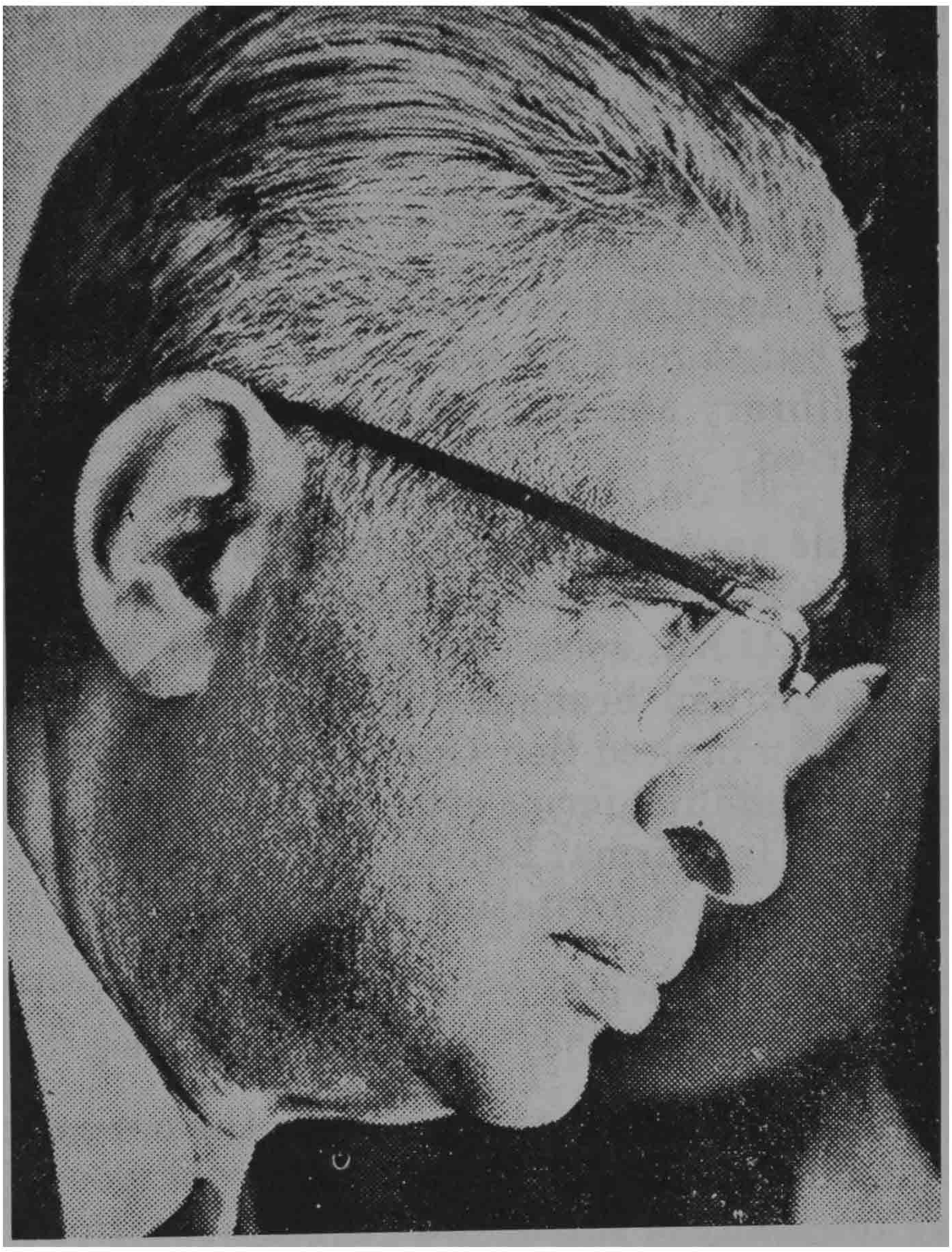
In Israel, Ben-Gurion explained to U Nu the amount of trouble they took to grow a tree.

"But, in our country it is quite the opposite. Our problem is how to reduce the number of trees, for we have too many of them," was U Nu's reaction.

Then, talking about water, Ben-Gurion said that water supply was one of the biggest problems for them, because they had to pump water from a distance of fifty miles across the deserts.

"Even there, our problem is quite different. Too much of water has become a nuisance to us in Burma," was U Nu's reply.

On his return to Sri Lanka, while in conversation with Dr. Malalasekera, Rahula Thera praised the great Buddhist scholar in Ben-Gurion and Malalasekera too agreed.



Dudley Senanayake

Almost from the very beginning, Minister of Education, Iriyagolla did not like Rahula Thera's straightforward and bold attitude as the Vice-Chan-

At a Buddhist religious ceremony held in memory of American black leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, at Vijayarama Temple, close to Vidyodaya University. Rahula Thera, with Dampe Ratanasara Thera, the then Chief Incumbent of Vijayarama Temple and Dr. Edmund F. Perry, who was a Visiting Professor at Vidyodaya.

cellor. But, he never came to a head-on collision with the great monk.

However, one fine day, Rahula Thera received a letter from Iriyagolla to say that the Sangha Raja of Thailand who was in Sri Lanka at that time, was due to visit Vidyodaya too and the Vice-Chancellor should make the necessary arrangements to receive him. The Minister had made his own decision without consulting the V.C., and Rahula Thera felt that the letter was more or less an order from the Minister. So, he decided not to carry out that 'order'. He instructed his secretary to write back to the Minister to inform

that the V.C. was not in a position to receive the Sangha Raja because he had pre-arranged another programme for that particular day.

On receiving the letter, the Minister asked his Secretary, M.J. Perera, to speak to Rahula Thera and persuade him to receive the Sangha Raja. But, M.J., the veteran civil servant, told the Minister that Rahula Thera would never change his decision and refused to speak to him.

However, Rahula Thera had to carry out his protest against the Minister in such a manner that it would not embarass the visiting Sangha Raja. So, he arranged a *shramadana* by the students to clean the university premises, and remained in the campus without going out. The Sangha Raja, while going round the campus, came to the place where Rahula Thera and the students were engaged in cleaning. Then, Rahula Thera received the Sangha Raja with due respect and expressed his regret for not being able to receive him in the proper manner, due to the wrong approach of the Minister. The Sangha Raja, in turn, was full of praise for Rahula Thera for his strict principles.

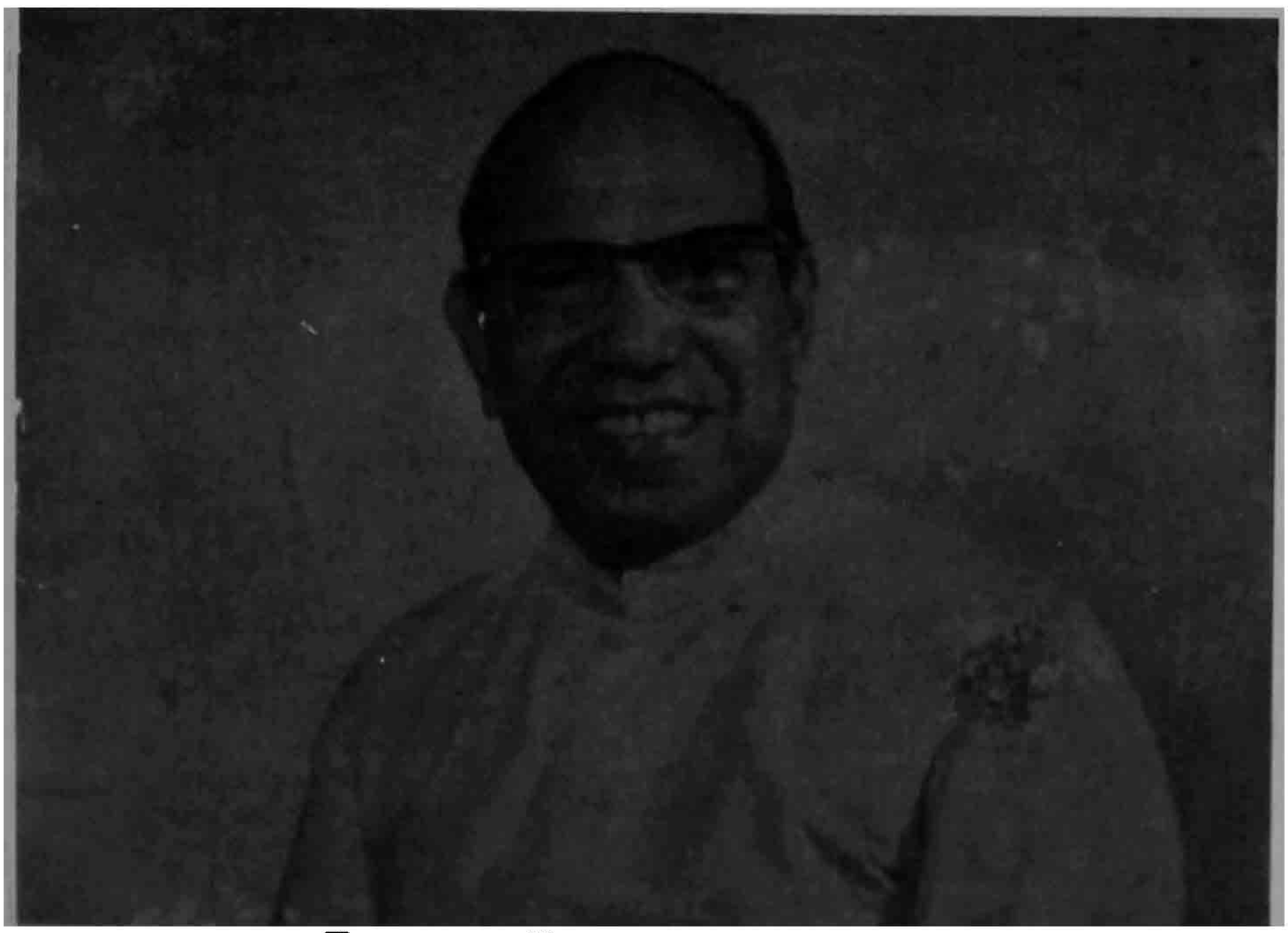
When Minister Iriyagolla clearly realised that Rahula Thera was not ready to dance to his tune, the clash between the two came to the surface. Besides the Minister, there were other interested parties who did not like Rahula Thera's autonomous administration and did everything possible to poison Iriyagolla's mind against Rahula Thera.

Says Rahula Thera: "By that time Iriyagolla had launched a campaign against the university teachers and other intellectuals and had made it a habit to insult and ridicule them from public platforms. I never condone with anybody insulting intellectuals.

In fact, I looked at Iriyagolla's mean statements with a lot of contempt."

While Rahula-Iriyagolla clash was going from bad to worse, there was a ceremony to open the Buddha Srawaka Dharma Pithaya at the ancient city of Anuradhapura. Minister Iriyagolla, as the chief guest, made use of that occasion to insult Rahula Thera with a scathing attack on the latter. Though Iriyagolla did not mention by name, it was quite obvious that the onslaught was aimed at Rahula Thera.

W.J. Fernando, who was the Government Agent, Kandy, at that time, while listening to the Minister's speech, whispered in the ear of Minister E.L. Senanayake, who was seated next, and said: "Iriyagolla bungled the whole show. It is definite that Rahula Hamuduruwo will resign and return to Paris."



Former Governor-General
William Gopallawa

As predicted by the G.A., Rahula Thera tendered his resignation from Vidyodaya within a matter of

a few days. Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake and Governor-General William Gopallawa, left no stone unturned to persuade Rahula Thera to change his decision, but in vain. As a last resort, the Governor-General went to the Vice-Chancellor's lodge personally and had a discussion with Rahula Thera for over one hour. But, Rahula Thera was adamant and never change his decision.

Some of the newspapers went to town with the editorials asking the government to get rid of Iriyagolla and keep Rahula Thera as the Vice-Chancellor, as the latter was more useful to the university and the country than the former.

Ultimately, Rahula Thera who came to serve as the Vice-Chancellor for a period of five years, resigned within three years and returned to his base in Paris, in 1969.

VISITING RUSSIA, EAST GERMANY AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Rahula Thera had an invitation to visit Russia, East Germany and Czechoslovakia, on his way back to Paris, after resigning from Vidyodaya University. When he boarded an Aeroflot plane from Katunayake on July 29, 1969, there was one more Sri Lankan in the first class, namely, the Communist Leader Pieter Keuneman. While flying, Keuneman told Rahula Thera that there were some more Moscow-bound Sri Lankans in the economy class, and the latter expressed his desire to have a word with them. Then, Keuneman went to the economy class along with Rahula Thera, and said in Sinhala: "This is Rahula Hamaduruwo, my Sinhala teacher." There were about a dozen Sri Lankans going to Moscow for various reasons, such as to get medical treatment, to enter universities and to attend political conferences. Among them, there was one Siriwardhana, whose father supplied meals to Thangarajah and Rahula Thera when they lived at Udahamulla in the thirties. All the Sri Lankans were very much pleased to see Rahula Thera coming to them to have a pleasant chat.

Rahula Thera reached Moscow on July 30, and on the same day met the Minister of Education, and had a discussion about the Soviet education. Then, he visited the Moscow State University, where Prof. Yuri Efrenov took the visiting dignitary round and explained everything in detail.

On August 1, the first thing Rahula Thera did was to go to the East German Embassy to obtain the neccessary documents to visit that country. From there, he went to the Lenin Library and spent serveral hours, trying to get an idea about that vast store of knowledge. From the Lenin Library, he visited the Palace of Pioneers where all information about the beginning of the revolution is stored.

At the Council of Religions, Rahula Thera was wondering as to why the Soviets who did not believe in religions, had a separate institute for religions. Without any hesitation, he posed the question to the Director of the institute. His reply was that it was the task of the Council of Religions to prevent any counter revolution, in the name of religions.

On the following day, Rahula Thera travelled by tube train to the Kremlin and spent the whole day there. So for as the tube trains were concerned, he was of the opinion that the tubes in Moscow were more neat and clean than those of London or Paris.

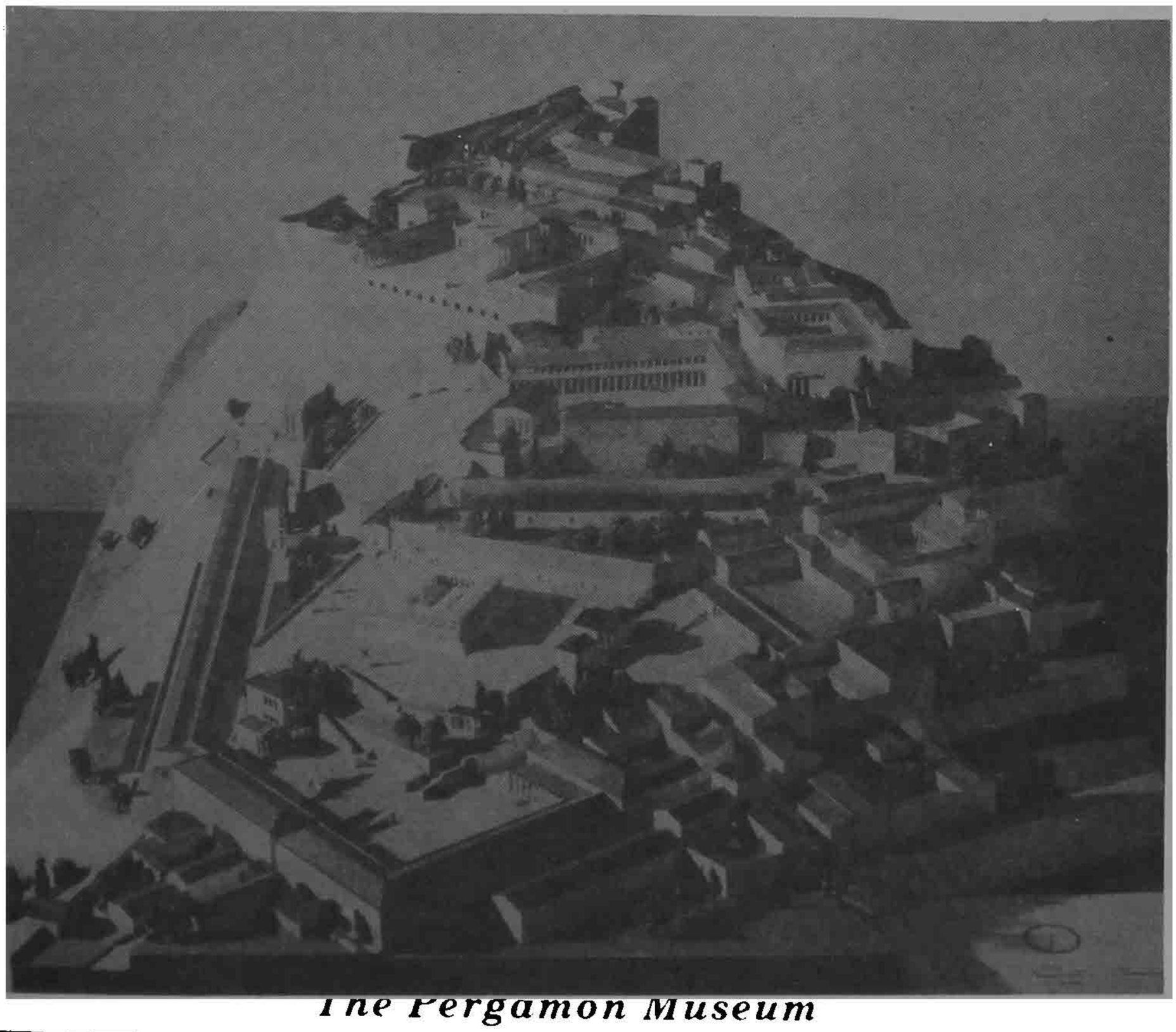
On August 3, Rahula Thera visited the outskirts of Moscow, where he saw a number of museums and other important places. He also got the opportunity to meet and talk to the ordinary people.

From Moscow, Rahula Thera had to travel to Leningrad, situated in the north-west. The train in which he travelled was classless and he was highly taken up by the cleanliness in it.

The train reached Leningrad the following morning and Rahula Thera visited various places of interest, before leaving for East Berlin by air the same afternoon.

The programme for August 5 and 6 was sightseeing and discussions with the intellectuals in East Berlin.

Out of all the places Rahula Thera saw in east Belin, special mention must be made of the Pergamon Museum. The Pergamon is one of the unique museums in the world, and is situated on a hillock about 300 meters in height, between two rivers. It has a history going back to the 7th century. At the beginning, it was known as the Pergamon Fortress, and converting it into a museum started in the year 1902. Twenty eight years later, in 1930, it was opened to the public as a museum.



The Pergamon Museum

However, when the Second World War started in 1939, the German authorities were so concerned about the safety of their unique museum and closed it to the public. When the bomb threats were increasing, all the figures, carvings etc. were removed in the form of slabs and were stored in underground bunkers. However, the Soviet authorities felt that even the bunkers were vulnerable, and took away the marble slabs to the Leningrad Hermitage, in the Soviet Union for safekeeping.

A number of years after the peace returned to Germany, the slabs were brought back to Berlin, and the Pergamon Museum was restored to its former glory. It was re-opened to the public in October, 1959. From that day onwards, millions of people from different parts of the world have visited the Pergamon.

After the Pergamon, Rahula Thera was due to visit the Ministry for People's Education. Dr. Arnold of the Ministry, came to the hotel, took Rahula Thera to the Ministry and showed round the place, explaining even minor details about the People's Education.

Rahula Thera devoted the whole morning of August 7 to see the Institute for South-east Asia. The Director of the institute, Prof. Hubert, was there to explain the working of the institute. And, in the afternoon, S. Vehovosky, Secretary of the South-east Asian Society, came and spoke to Rahula Thera more about the place.

On August 8, Rahula Thera, first visited the House of Teachers, and discussed matters relating to education and then went to the Ministry of Health, where Mrs. Kern answered every question regarding health in East Germany.

Another very important historic place Rahula Thera visited was the Cecilienhoff Palace, where the historic Potsdam Agreement was signed in 1945. At

the end of the Second World War, the Potsdam Conference was held in that palace in Potsdam. The conference went on from Septemeber 17 to August 1, 1945, and the participants were Prime Minister Winston Chuchill of Britain, President Harry S. Truman of the USA and President Joseph Stalin of the USSR. However, by the time the deliberations were over, Clemnet Attlee had become the Prime Minister defeating Churchill at the General Elections. So, the three signatories to the Potsdam Agreement were Attlee, Truman and Stalin. The three chairs occupied by the three leaders are still preserved in the Cecilienhoff Palace. However, a few chips from Stalin's chair have disappeared, because some American journalists had removed them to be kept as souvenirs.

The next place Rahula Thera visited was the Sans Souci Palace. Sans Souci is a French expression meaning 'trouble free' or 'free of sorrow and suffering'. It is equal to Sanskrit word "Asoka". This palace was built by French architects on a request made by the German Royalty. The visitors to the palace, before entering, have to reomove their shoes and wear smooth velvet shoes provided by the staff there. The reason for that is to prevent the slightest damage to the marble floor. Unfortunately, when Rahula Thera was walking inside the palace with velvet shoes he slipped and fell on the floor, resulting in a pain in the neck. He was rushed to a hospital, where the doctors exmained him very carefully and reported that there was no injury at all.

After the 'Trouble Free Palace', Rahula Thera went on a sightseeing tour of the city, which included a boat trip too.

In the morning of August 11, Rahula Thera had a better opportunity of studying the educational prob-

lems in Germany, at the Ministry of Higher and Special Education.

At the end of that visit, he left East Berlin in the afternoon, travelled south-west and reached the city of Halle. The stay in Halle was made more congenial, because he met one of his very old friends, namely, Prof. Heins Mode. As far back as the thirtees, when Rahula Thera was an undergraduate, Prof. Mode came to Sri Lanka and spent some time. It was through Prof. Ludowyk that Rahula Thera cultivated a friendship with Mode.

While in Sri Lanka, Prof. Mode and Rahula Thera exchanged ideas as to which country in the world created the first Buddha statue. Rahula Thera's view was that the first Buddha statue was created in Sri Lanka. Prof. Mode too agreed with that and the conclusion of the two was that the first Buddha statue was created in Sri Lanka and not in India. The two scholars also agreed that in the *Mahavamsa* there is a reference to a Buddha statue during the time of King Devanampiyatissa, and the reference had been made to it even in the stone inscriptions of the later years. Accordingly, both Rahula Thera and Prof. Mode came to the conclusion that the first Buddha statue in the world is nothing but the Maha Sala Pilimaya in Anuradhapura.

Though Rahula Thera and Prof. Mode met in Halle after a number of decades, the two of them had long discussions on variuos subjects.

From Halle, Rahula Thera's next itinerary was Leipzig, another major German city. Leipzig's Museum of Visual Arts was a place of special significance and Rahula Thera was shown round the place by its Director, Dr. Winkler.

Incidentally, the home of Prof. Mode too was in Lepzig, and Rahula Thera paid a visit to his place too.

After a friedly talk with Prof. Mode and Mrs. Mode. the three of them went on a sightseeing tour an' visited a number of places, including two important libraries.

From Leipzig, Rahula Thera went to Dresden, another major German city, close to the boarder with Czecholovakia. After arriving there on August 15, he posted a number of letters to his friends, including one to Philip Gunawar'hane of Sri Lanka. The whole afternoon of that day s devoted to going round the Gallery of New Mast s, where the works of the artists of the new ge eration are displayed.

"The Green Vault" was the name given to the treasury of the German kings, and Rahula Thera visited the 'Vault' in the morning of August 15. He devoted the whole afternoon to go round the Gallery of Old Masters, where the works of the artists of the old generation are displayed. There, the Director Dr. Meyer, himself served as the guide to the visiting scholar.

On the 16th, Rahula Thera visited the palace of an ancient German king on the banks of the Elbe river. After that visit, he took his lunch in the beautiful Elbe valley.

From Dresden he returned to East Berlin on the 17th, and left for Czechoslovakia, situated south of Germany, same evening. The aircraft carrying Rahula Thera, which took off from the Berlin Airport at 5.05 in the evening, touched down at the Prague Airport in 55 minutes time. Dr. Haban, whom Rahula Thera had met in Sri Lanka some times earlier, was there to welcome the guest.

While driving to the city from the airport, Dr. Haban was repeatedly expressing his strong objections to the Soviet domination prevailing in Czecho-

slovakia at that time. He said: "It is with great reluctance the Czech people live pressed under the iron boots of the Soviet adminstrators. Tomorrow is an anti-Soviet protest day in this country. Though our people cannot rise directly against the Soviet rulers, you will see how our people are going to protest silently, tomorrow."

As predicted by Dr. Haban, the whole of Czechoslovakia was completely paralised on the following day. No one worked anywhere. Yet, there were neither slogan-shoutings nor demonstrations. It was a unique kind of silent protest against the Soviet rulers.

On the second day, when the country returned to normal, Rahula Thera was able to go to the Oriental Institute and learn many things.

On August 20, he got the opportunity to visit a village ruined by Hitler's Nazi forces, in the most inhuman manner. The name of the village was Ligitse, where there had been a cocentration camp to torture and kill people. That village is still kept in the same old pathetic condition for posterity to get a glimpse of that miserable period in history.

After Ligitse, Rahula Thera spent a day in the National Art Gallery in Prague and left for Frankfurt in the evening of August 22. From the Frankfurt Airport he drove to Hanau, where he spent a few days with friends.

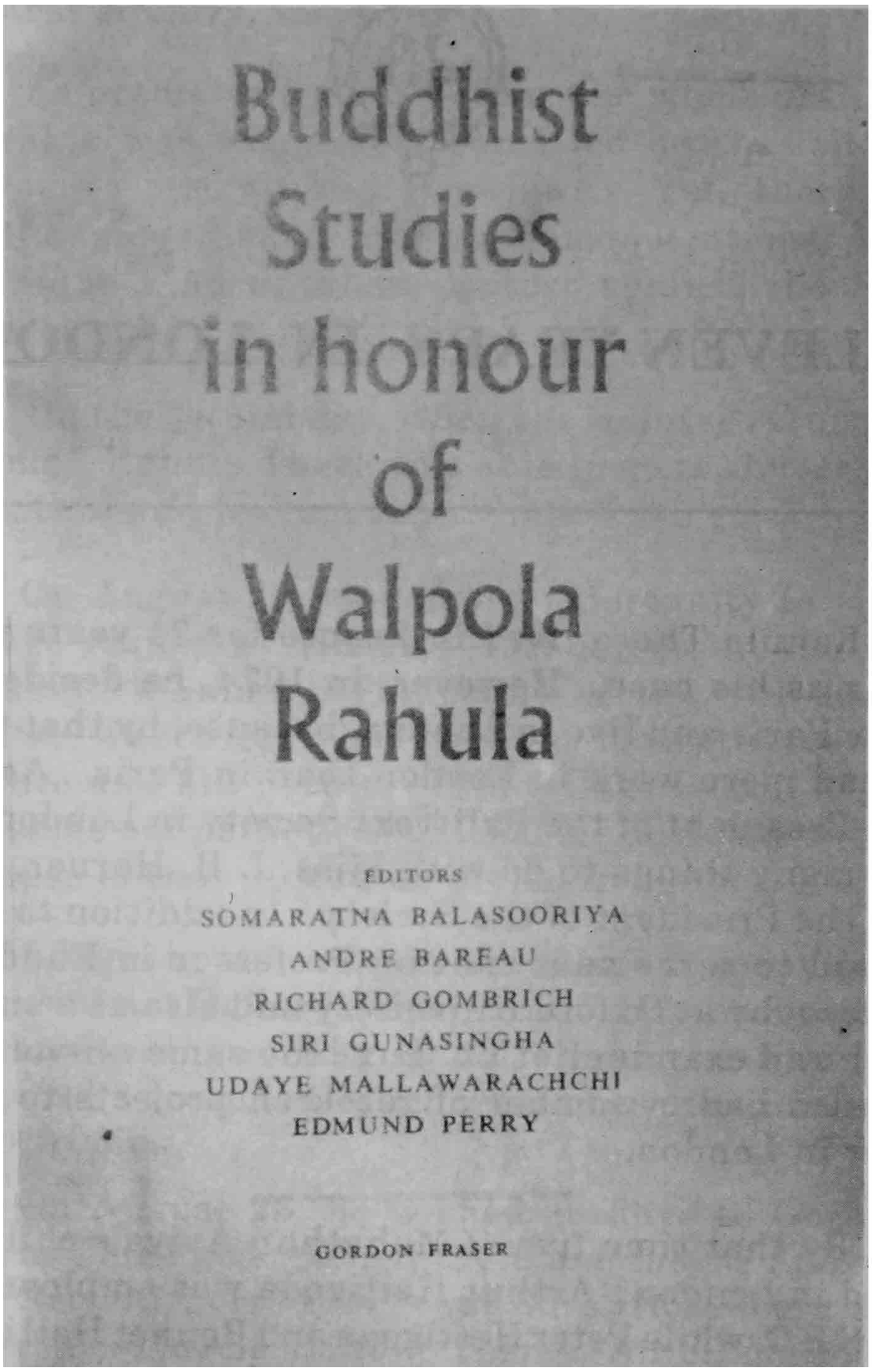
On August 26, he wished goodbye to Germany and left for Paris. When the plane touched down at the Orly Airport, Prof. and Mrs. Rosenberg were there to welcome Rahula Thera. An official of the French Foreign Ministry too was present there, as Rahula Thera was a distinguised resident of France.

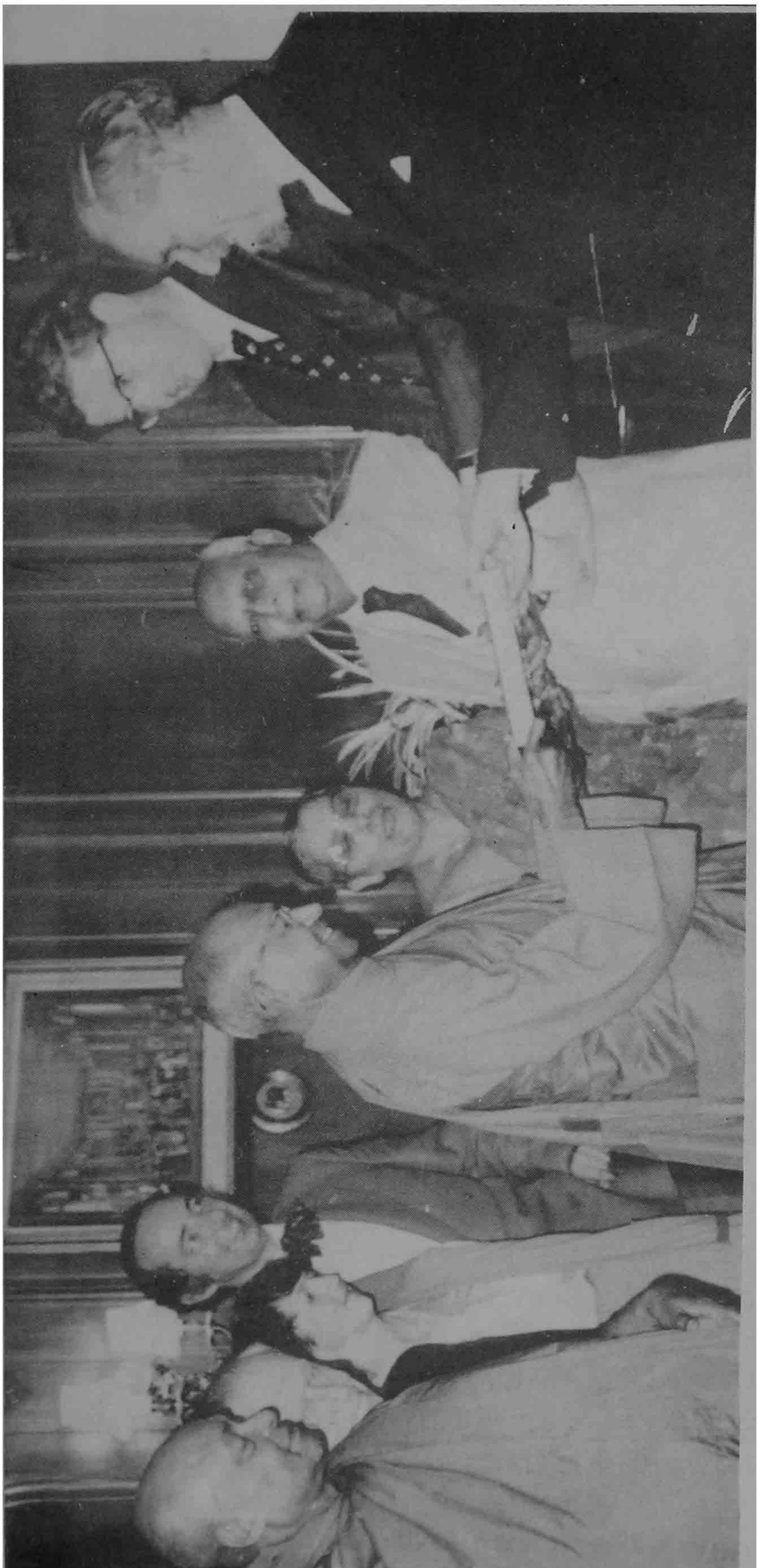
ELEVEN YEARS IN LONDON

Rahula Thera lived in France for 24 years with Paris as his base. However, in 1974, he decided to leave Paris and live in London, because, by that time he had more work in London than in Paris. As the vice-President of the Pali Text Society in London, he had many things to do with Miss. I. B. Horner, who was the President of the Society. In addition to that he had to serve as a visiting Professor in Buddhist Philosophy at Oxford University and also as a supervisor and examiner of Ph. D. of the same university. He also had a number of research projects to look after in London.

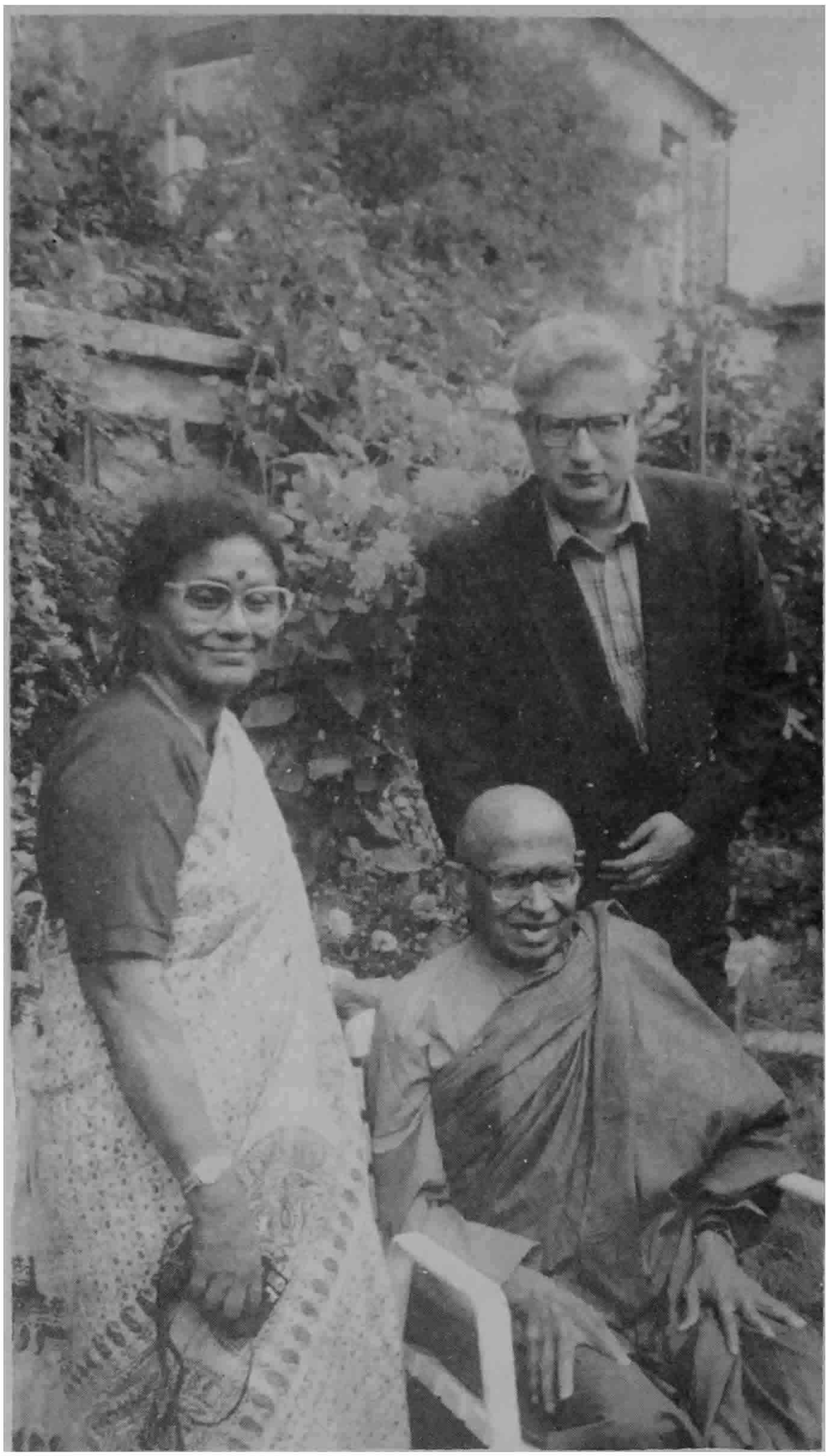
By that time five of Mahathun Ayiya's children lived in London. Arthur Hettigoda was employed by the B B C, while Peter Hettigoda and Bennet Hettigoda were accountants. Milton Hettogoda was the proprietor of the well-known London garage, Milton Motors. Padma Hettigoda was a well-to-do housewife.

Rahula Thera recalls with gratitude how all the five of them helped him to set up an *avasa* in London. In addition to them, Miss I. B. Horner, also helped Rahula Thera in cash and kind to start a new life in London.

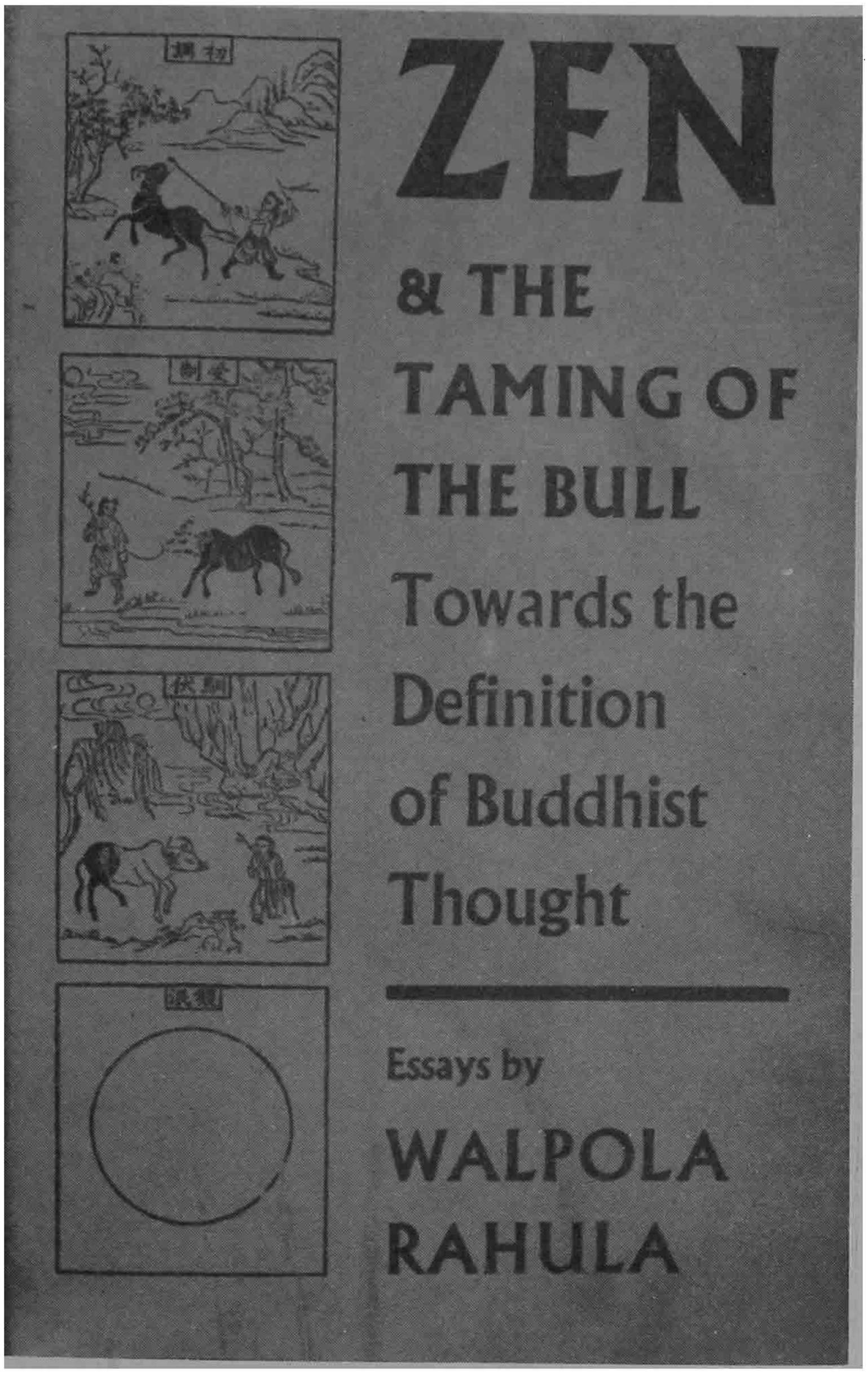




Prof. Richard Gombrich and Gordon Frazer presenting the first copy of "BuddhistStudies Honour of Walpola Rahula" to Rahula Thera in London. Noel Wimalasena, the then Sri Lankan High Commissioner in London is also in the picture



Rahula Thera with Prof. Richard Gombrich and Mrs. Gombrich

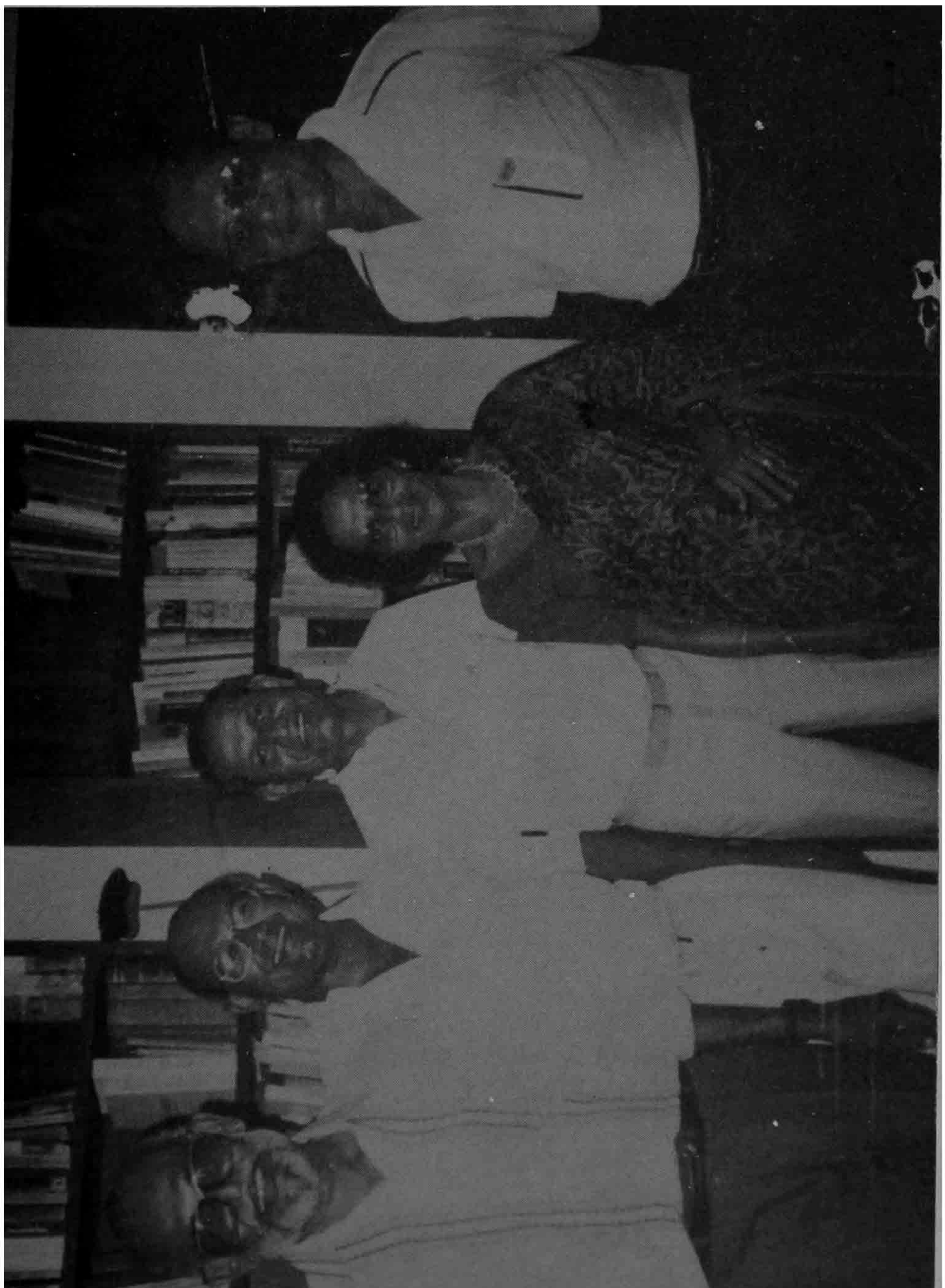


Zen and the Taming of the Bull

As a result of Miss Horner's association, Rahula Thera has become the proud owner of a unique item too. That is the Pali-English Dictionary used by Lord Robert Chalmers, who served as a Governor of Sri Lanka (then Ceylon). The new words and notes written with Chalmers' beautiful handwriting have added more value to this dictionary.

How this dictionary came into Rahula Thera's possession is also worth recording. When communal

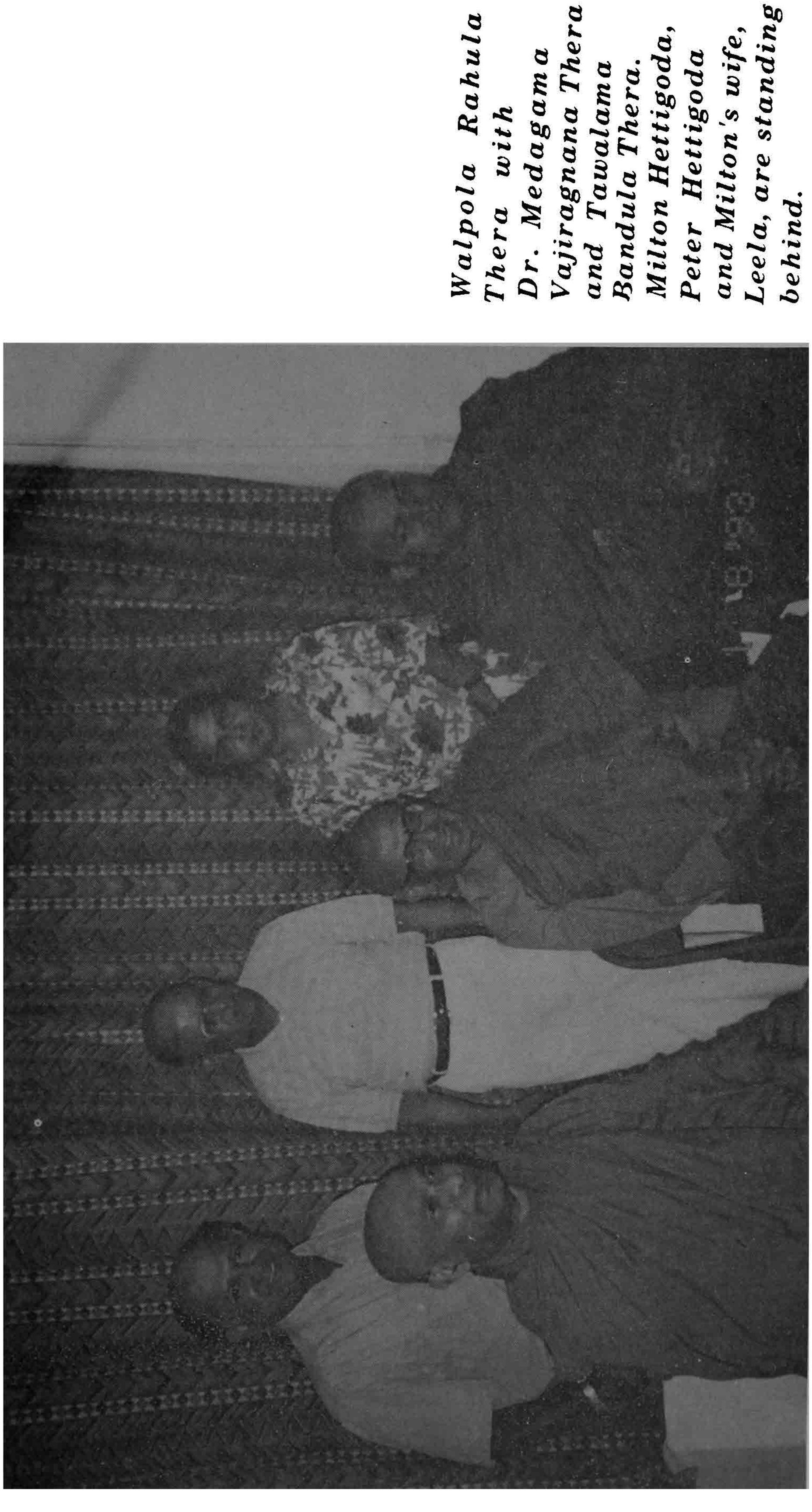
Rahula Thera with Miss I. B. Horner, President of Pali Text Society, London. Dr. Hammalawa Saddhatissa Thera and Kuruneg oda Piyatissa Thera are on either side



Hettigo, Bennet,
Jinadasa, Bennet,
Victor, Kusuma and
Hector

Arthur Hettigoda and his wife, Padma

Hettigoda sisters: Kusuma and Padma



Walpola Rahula Thera with Dr. Medagama Vajiragnana Thera and Tawalama Bandula Thera. Milton Hettigoda, Peter Hettigoda and Milton's wife, Leela, are standing behind.

Rahula Thera with Milton Hettiaratchy and his son Clarence in front of Milton's London residence,

Rahula Thera conducting a class on Buddhism at the London Vihara

riots between Sinhala and Muslim people erupted in Sri Lanka in 1915, Governor Chalmers proclaimed the martial law and committed a lot of atrocities against the Sinhala people. When the public clamour against Chalmers mounted, the British Government had to re-call him to London. Later, while serving as a professor at Cambridge University, he fell in love with miss Horner. Though Chalmers proposed to get married, Horner declined and preferred to continue as friends. As a result of that friendship a lot of valuable books from Chalmers' library passed into Horner's hands.

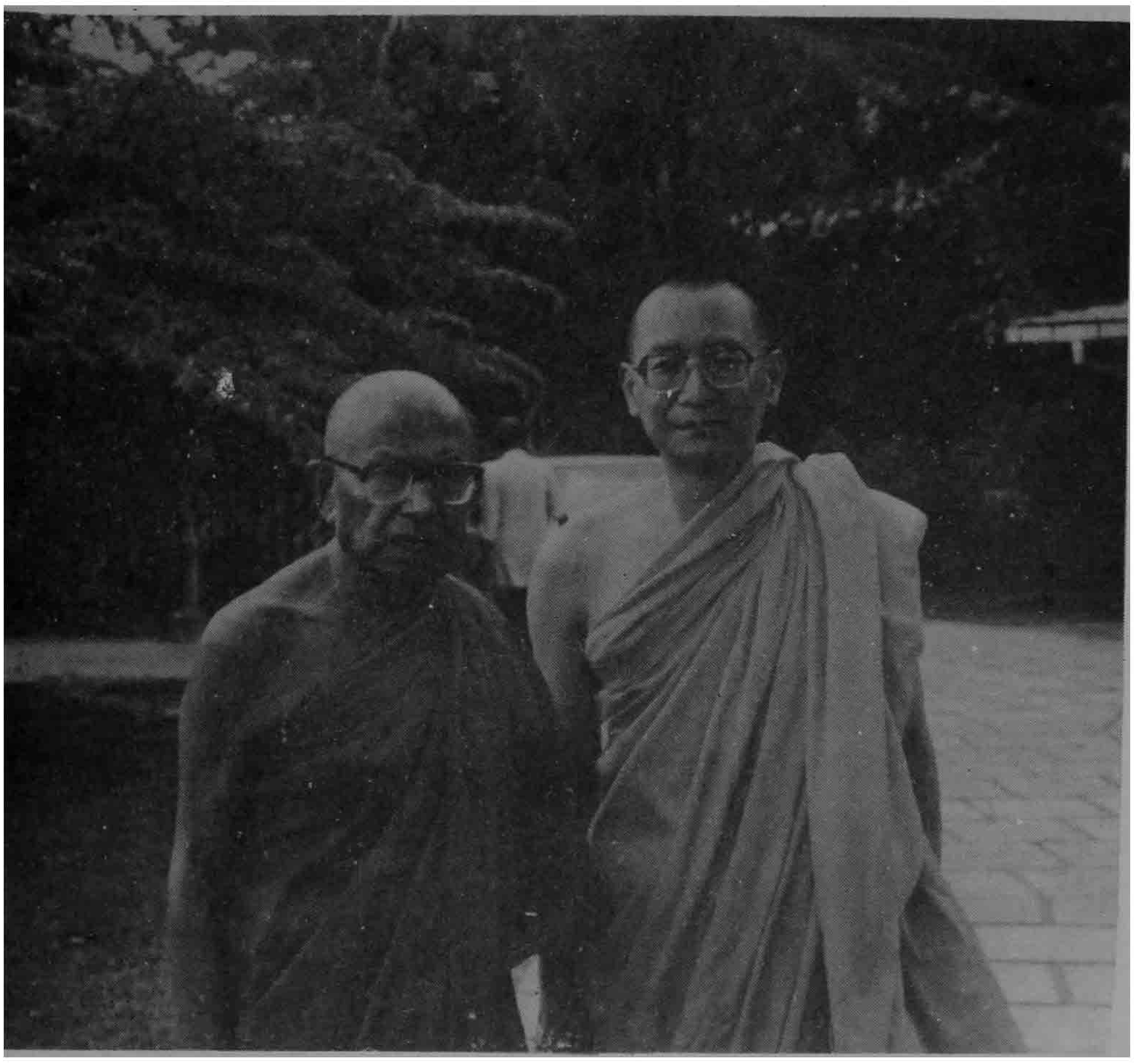
While in London, Rahula Thera sought the advice of Horner to buy a Pali-English dictionary. And, that resulted in Horner presenting Charmer's dictionary to Rahula Thera.

Rahula Thera lived in London for 11 years devoting his time for researching, reading, writing and teaching. One of his books published in London during that period was *Zen and the Taming of the Bull*.

VISITS TO JAPAN AND SIAM

In 1976, when Rahula Thera was living in London, he received an invitation from Japan for a visit to that country. As there was another invitation, almost simultanously, from the Minister of Religious Affairs in Siam (Thailand), Rahula Thera decided to visit both countries in one trip.

En route to Japan and Siam, Rahula Thera first came to Sri Lanka in September, 1976, and spent a few days in Colombo before leaving for the eastward trip. Leaving Colombo on September 19, he flew to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia and stayed with the Ven. Dr. Kirinde Dhammananda Nayaka Thera in his temple for three days. Rahula Thera resumed his journey on September 23 and reached Hong Kong at 4.30 the same afternoon. At the airport he was welcomed by Yuen Quing Thera, a Chinese monk living in Hong Kong. Yuen Quing Thera had been an ardent admirer of Rahula nera, Special mention must be made of his services to poster and promote Buddhism



Rahula Thera with Yuen Quing Thera

in Hong Kong. In recognition of his services, the Maha Nayaka Thera of the Asgiriya Chapter, the Ven. Paleepana Sri Chandananda had conferred the honorary title of *Sasanajoti* on Yuen Quing Thera.

During the three days Rahula Thera stayed in Hong Kong, he went to see Buddhist temples and other important places there.

On the night of September 26, he left Hong Kong and arrived in Tokyo the same night. After a few days rest at the Grand Hotel, Rahula Thera travelled to Kyoto, which was the old capital of Japan, before Tokyo. There, he stayed with an old friend, Prof. Taka Aki Miyano. Professor and Mrs. Miyano were much pleased to take the monk round the city to visit important places.

Rahula Thera in Kyoto, Japan, with Prof. Taka Aki Miyano, his French wife and two children

The Nara Park in Kyoto was a very beautiful place, where he took much interest in herds of deer running about. From the Nara Park, Rahula Thera visited an ancient Buddhist temple close by. The giant Buddha statue made out of wood was the main attraction there. Describing the size of the Buddha statue, Rahula Thera said that a man can easily creep through its nostrills.

In Kyoto, the main item in Rahula Thera's agenda was to deliver a lecture at the Othani University on October 8. The theme of the lecture was: "Thervada and Mahayana: Compared and Contrasted". The lecture in English was interpreted into Japanese by Prof. Nagasaki of the Othani University. The audience response was quite encouraging, and Rahula Thera had to answer a large number of questions at the end.

From Kyoto, Rahula Thera returned to Tokyo on October 9, and spent a number of days for sightseeing. One of the most interesting places was the historic Ninko.

Rahula Thera was sheduled to deliver a number lectures in Tokyo too. On October 12, he spoke, once again, on "Theravada and Mahayana: Compared and Contrasted" at the Taisho University. On the following day, on the invitation of Prof. Nara, Rahula Thera spoke on "Zen and Theravada Buddhism", at the Komashava University. The Japanese interpreter was Prof. Nara, and the one hour lecture was followed by a two-hour discussion.

On October 14, Rahula Thera was due to speak at the Eastern Institute, headed by Prof. Hajime Nakamura. As the topic, "Theravada and Mahayana: Compared and Contrasted", had become the talk of the town, Rahula Thera was requested to speak on

Rahula Thera with Prof. Hajime Nakamura at Kelaniya University after a convocation, where Nakamura was conferred with an honorary Doctorate.

Rahula Thera with Mr. & Mrs. Albert Edirisinghe and Prof. and Mrs. Hajime Nakamura

that. Prof. Nakamura acted as the Japanese interpreter.

Rahula Thera devoted the whole of October 15 to visit the world-famous giant bronze Buddha statue called Daibutsu at Kamakura, quite a distance away from the capital. On the following day he visited the temple of the High Priest of the Zen Sect in Tokyo, and had a pleasant discussion with the Zen Chief, Rev. Rempo.

There was nothing special on October 18, except participating in a religious ceremony at the Do Jo Temple.

Having completed the visit to Japan, Rahula Thera left Tokyo Airport on October 19 and reached Bangkok at 5.30 the same evening.

In Siam (Thailand), arrangements had been made for Rahula Thera to stay at the Wat Chakkavatti or the Chakkavatti Vihara. That was the monastery where the Sangha Raja-to-be lived.

There are two kings with equal status in Siam. One is the lay king who functions as the head of the State, while the other is the Sangha Raja or the king of the monks, who functions as the head of Buddhist affairs. Photographs of both kings are hung with equal status in government offices and other important places.

Rahula Thera considers it a rare privilege to meet the Sangha Raja (though for the second time after ten years), and exchange ideas.

After meeting the Sangha Raja, Rahula Thera first visited the Headquarters of the World Fellowship of Buddhists in Bangkok, and then, took time to worship at a number of important viharas in the city.

On October 22, he visited one of the most significant places for the Buddhists in Sri Lanka. It was the temple of Upali Maha Thera, who re-established the pure Higher Ordination in Sri Lanka during the reign of Keerthi Sri Rajasingha in Kandy.

According to the history of Buddhism, King Rajasingha, pleased with the venture of Valivita Pindapatika Saranankara Thera, to revive Buddhism, national pride and culture in the face of many difficulties and obstructions, sent ambassadors to Siam in 1750 to bring some bhikkhus to Sri Lanka. Upali Maha Thera, the head of the bhikkhus who came with the ambassadors, re-introduced the pure Higher Ordination and the king appointed Saranankara Thera as the Sangha Raja.

That was the beginning of the Siamese Sect and the Malwatta Chapter. The Siamese Sect is also

known as the Syamopali Nikaya, because it was established by 'Siyam Upali' or 'Upali from Siam'. The temple where Upali Maha Thera lived is situated in the city of Ayuthia in Thailaland. Actually, Ayuthia is a corrupted form of Ayodhya.

In Bangkok, Rahula Thera accidentally met Niyambepola Somananda Thera of the Malwatta Vihraya in Kandy, and the latter volunteered to accompany Rahula Thera, thus making the visit to Siam more interesting.

On completion of the visit, Rahula Thera paid a call on the Minister of Buddhist Religious Affairs in Thailanad to thank him for inviting him to that country and making the stay there quite comfortable. In the evening of October 22, Rahula Thera boarded a London-bound plane and left Bangkok.

FOUNDER OF BUDDHIST AND PALI UNIVERSITY

Both the Vidyalankara and the Vidyodaya Pirivenas were in their heydays by the forties and the fiftees. Even some of the professors of the only university at that time -University of Ceylon- used to go to the teachers of the above two pirivenas to sort out their problems with regard to Sinhala, Pali and Sanskrit. Besides, there were full time students from countries like India, Burma and Siam (Thailand) in those two Pirivenas, thus earning international reputation.

When the clamour to give the university status to Vidyalankara started during the Bandaranaike Government, which swept into power in 1956, there was another clamour that Vidyodaya too should be given the same status. Ultimately, the then Minister of Education, Wijayananda Dahanayaka, decided to confer university status on both the great seats of learning, in the year 1957.

According to the original Act, the Vice-Chancellors of these two Pirivena universities had to be bhikkhus. The intention of that clause was to continue the ancient Piriven tradition even as universities. Besides that, the two universities had no place for female students, in keeping with the Pirivena tradition.

The main intention of establishing the Pirivena universities was to introduce a new university system in keeping with the indigenous thinking as opposed to the one and only university at that time, namely, the Ceylon University at Peradeniya, which was more west-oriented. Actually, those who clamoured for the Pirivena universities expected the new institutets to give a challenge to the Peradeniya tradition.

But, what happened?

Excepting the two great scholar monks, the Ven. Kiriwattuduwe Sri Pragnasara and the Ven. Walivitiye Sorata, who became the first two Vice-Chancellors, and a few other learned monks, the rest of the staff were either the products of Peradeniya University or the sympathisers of that tradition. The attempt of the majority of them was not to create a Vidylankara or Vidyodaya tradition, but to create two other offsprings of Peradeniya. And, that became a reality without any resistance.

Dudley Senanayake Government, which came into power in 1965, adopted a new University Act, which encouraged this trend. According to the new Act, even the lay persons got the oportunity to become the V. C.s if they had the neccessary qualifications. Furthermore, the embargo on females was lifted and the girls began to enter the Pirivena universities.

Finally, the old names of the two universities

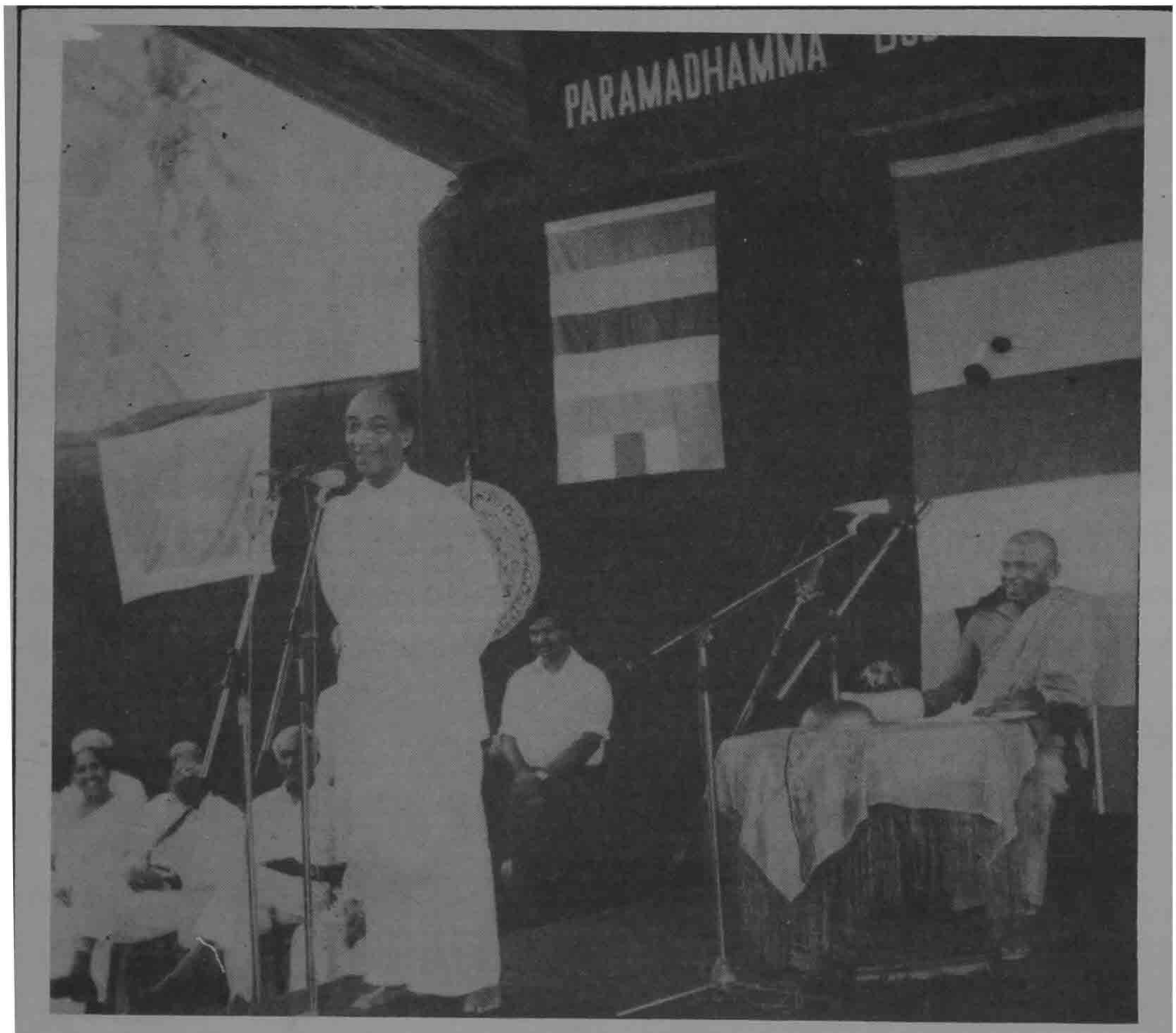
were also scrapped and Vidyalankara was re-named as the Kelaniya University, while Vidyodaya was re-named as the Sri Jayewardenepura University. Accordingly, the Pirivena universities too fell into the same old follow-the-herd path.

Learned monks who were contemplating the sad fate of the Pirivena universities began to pay serious attention to start a separate Buddhist university in Sri Lanka. Their aim was to obtain new land, put up new buildings and start completely a new university with the sole hope of producing educated and virtuous bhikkhus. In fact, some of the NayakaTheras had a series of discussions on the proposal, drafted a new Act, and placed it before President Jayewardene and Prime Minister Premadasa, in 1980.

The President and the Prime Minister went through the draft Act and decided to seek the advice of Walpola Rahula Thera, before proceeding further, because he was well versed in the university affaires in various parts of the world. Accordingly, all the details about the proposed university, along with the draft Act, were sent to London for Rahula Thera's perusal.

Rahula Thera went through the documents several times and came to the conclusion that the very foundation of the project was wrong. So, he wrote back to President Jayewardene saying that it would be impossible to obtain successful results by starting a new university for bhikkhus in a separate place, with the sole hope of producing educated and virtuous, good bhikkhus. "It cannot be done in completely a new sorrounding, away from pirivenas and monasteries. It is not only against the Buddhist practice, but also against the tradition. There had been both good and bad bhikkhus in the past; are amongst us today; and, will continue to be in the future. Even at

Jetavanarama, where the Buddha lived, there were both good and bad bhikkhus. In fact, there were worse bhikkhus than even the present day ones, at Jetawanarama those days. A Buddhist university should be started without isolating the bhikkhus from monasteries and pirivenas. The continuous contact with pirivenas and monasteries is a must for the young bhikkhus," added Rahula Thera.



President J. R. Jayewardene addressing a meeting at Parama Dhamma Buddhist Institute, which was presided over by Rahula Thera

The President and the Prime Minister agreed with Rahula Thera's advice and invited him to come to Sri Lanka and to undertake the launching of the new university. He accepted the invitation, came to Sri Lanka in 1981, and stayed at Parama Dhamma Chethiya Pirivena, Ratmalana. Mapalagama Vipulasara, the generous and friendly bhikkhu, who

is famous for his *Prasnayak Na* (No problem!) provided Rahula Thera with all the facilities according to his (Rahula Thera's) wish.

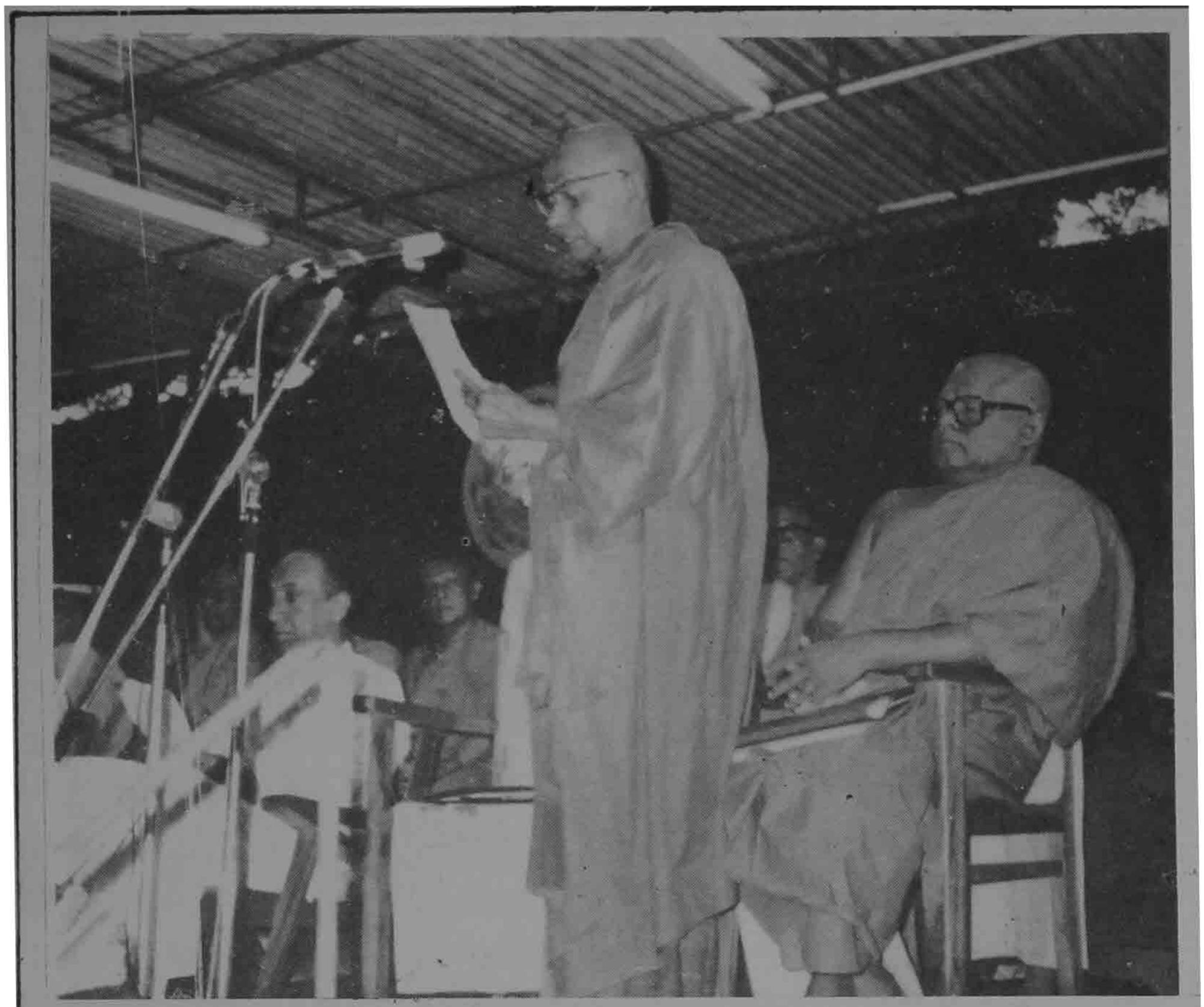
As the first step, Rahula Thera, along with Vipulasara Thera, visited important leading bhikkhus in various parts of the country, explained to them the new project, and sought their views. As the response was quite encouraging, those bhikkhus were invited for a meeting at Parama Dhamma Chethiya Pirivena at Ratmalana.

At that meeting, there were further discussions about the new university, and the participating bhikkhus signed a historic document giving their consent for establishing the Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka.

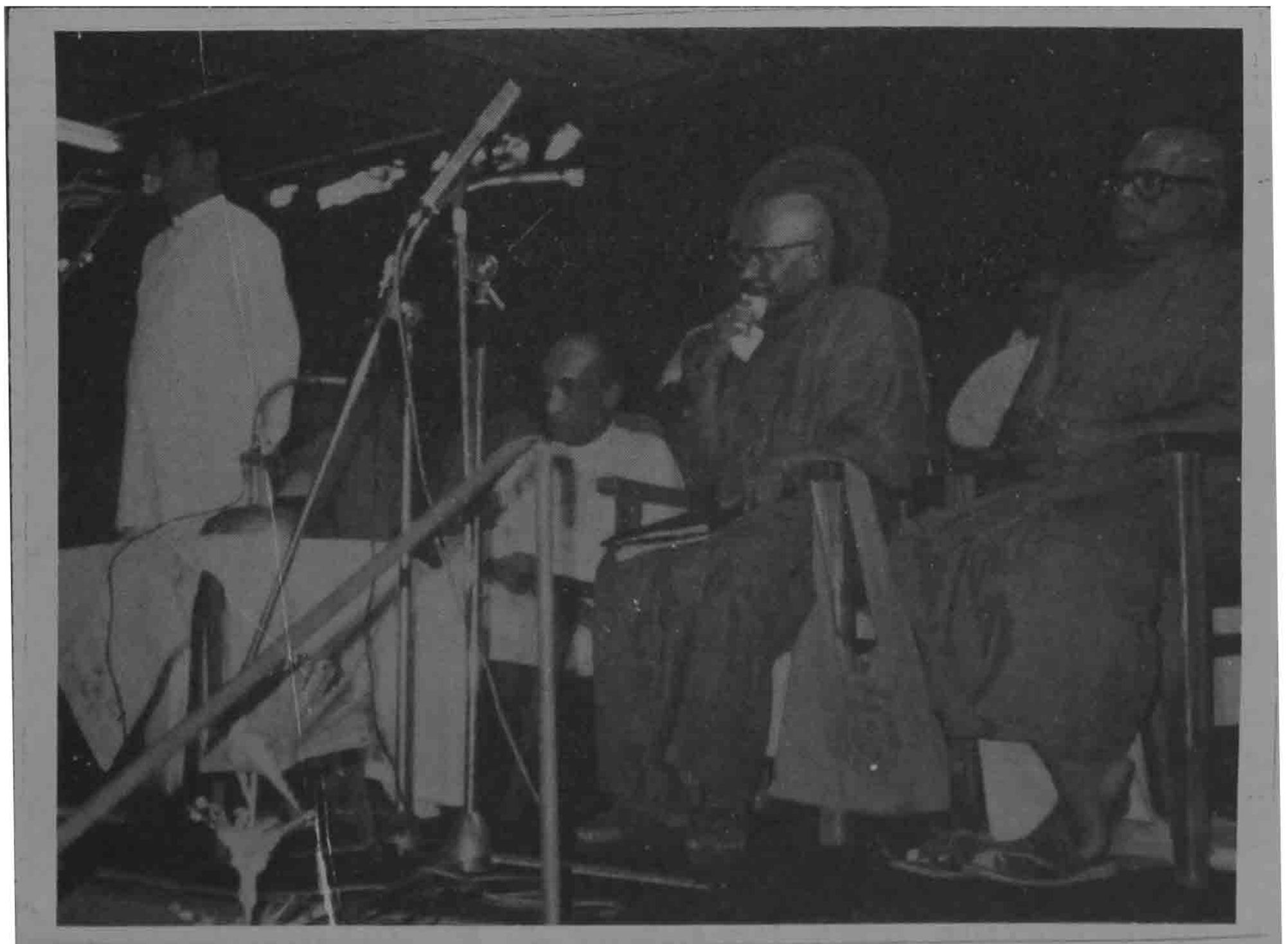
Then, came the question of drafting the Act for the new university. For that purpose, Rahula Thera took London University as the model and drafted the Act accordingly. The new Act, which was known as the Act No. 74 of 1981, was placed before the Parliament, by the then Prime Minister Premadasa, on November 25, 1981, and was unanimously approved.

According to the new Act, the headquarters of the university is in Colombo. Providing the neccessary funds, preparing the curriculums, holding examinations and convocations and other administrative matters are the main responsibilities of the headquarters. No teaching is done there. There are four pirivenas affiliated to the Colombo headquarters, where the teaching is done. They are Vidyodaya in Colombo, Vidyalankara in Kelaniya, Saddharmakara in Pinwatta and Saraswathie in Balagalla.

While looking out for a place in Colombo, suitable for the headquarters, Rahula Thera learnt that there was an ideal place at No. 214, Bauddhaloka Mawatha



Rahula Thera addressing the inaugural ceremony of Buddhist and Pali University.



Prime Minister Ranasinghe Premadasa addressing the inaugural ceremony of Buddhist and Pali University

known as the Mahopadhyaya. The first
Mahopadhyaya was the Maha Nayaka of the Ma
Chapter. Once in two years, this position goe
other three Maha Nayakas of Asgiriya, Ama
and Ramanna Chapters.

The first Mahopadhyaya or the Vice-cha
was the Ven. Dr. Kakkapalliye Anuruddha N
Thera. Rahula Thera continues only as an a

A new building complex for the Buddh
Pali University was opned in the same old site
late President Premadasa on June 11, 1992.

TO KETUMATI, ON THE BANKS OF DIYAWANNAWA

The Ven. Prof. Dr. Walpola Rahula was appointed the Chacellor of Kelaniya University in 1978, when he was living in London. Todate, he has continued to hold that position for a period of seventeen years.

In addition to that, the Sri Lanka's government entrusted to him in 1981, the responsibility of establishing the Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka. Under the circumstances, he decided to wish goodbye to London and settle down in Sri Lanka.

Somewhere at the beginning of the eightees, when the then Minister of Lands, Gamini Dissanayake, was in London, Rahula Thera indicated his wish to return to Sri Lanka and settle down.

"If you want to put up an *avasa* in Sri Lanka, the ideal place is Sri Jayawardhanapura Kotte, on the banks of the Diyawanna Oya," said Gamini Dissanayake, at once.

However, before he could do any planning with

regard to a place to reside, Rahula Thera was compelled to return to Sri Lanka, because the government had decided to launch the Buddhist and Pali University project, without delay.

Accordingly, when Rahula Thera returned to Sri Lanka at the beginning of 1981, it was the Ven. Mapalagama Vipulasara, Director of Parama Dhamma Chethiya Pirivena at Ratmalana, who volunteered to provide the accomodation and make him comfortable.

Mapalagama Vipulasara Thera

Gamini Dissanayake

Rahula Thera had frequent meetings with President Jayewardene, regarding the new university, and on one such occasion, he indicated to the President his wish to put up an *avasa* in a quiet place.

"Please give me a plan. I will get it built for you," said the President.

"Thank you very much for the offer. But, I am not prepared to accept it. However, if you make any contribution as a friend, I will not hesitate to accept it," was Rahula Thera's reply.

According to Rahula Thera, it was the first and last time President Jayewardene talked about Rahula Thera's new *avasa*.

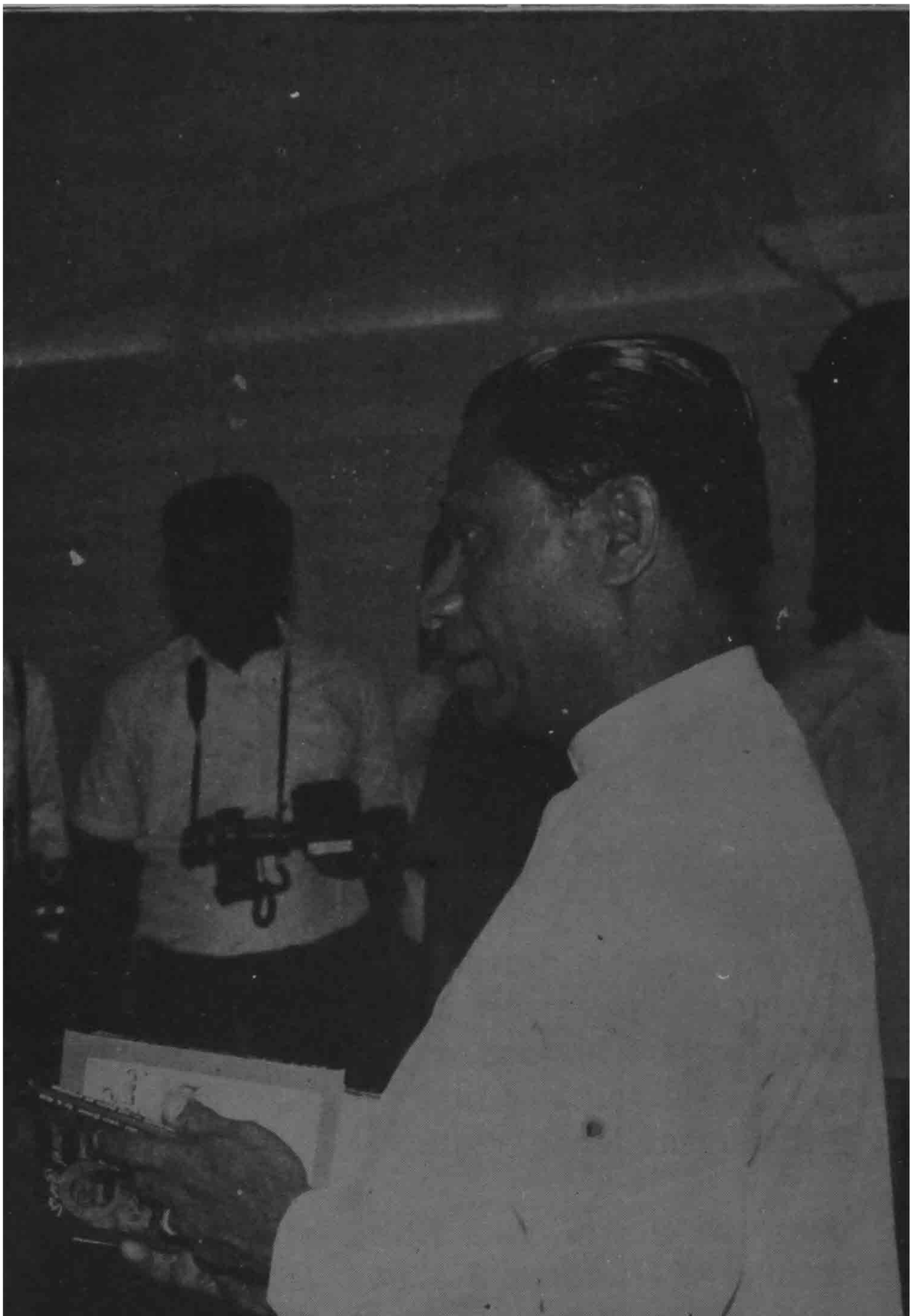
To begin with, a suitable land had to be found. Rhaula Thera, with much gratitude, says that it was Ranasinghe Premadasa, the then Prime Miniater, who helped in that. Premadasa entrusted the task of finding a plot of land to Dunstan Jayawardhane, who was the Chairman of the Urban Development Authority. Jayawardhane, in turn, asked one of his trusted officials, one P. Wadugedara, to go round with Rahula Thera and show him the available lands.

After inspecting a number of sites, Wadugedara took Rahula Thera to Kumbukgahaduwa in Kotte. Passing Ethul Kotte junction, one has to travel along the Parliament Road and turn right to reach this small island. At the far end of Kumbukgahaduwa, Wadugedara showed to Rahula Thera, a site, which was a marsh on the banks of the Diyawannawa, overlooking the Parliament complex. At the very first sight, Rahula Thera fell in love with the site and decided to put up his *avasa* there. A few days later, the land was given to him by the government on a ninety nine year lease.

After the marsh was filled with earth, on the instructions of Dunstan Jayawardhane, Lands Minister Gamini Dissanayake, made available the services of reputed architect, Navin Gooneratne, to draw the plan according to the wishes of Rahula Thera.

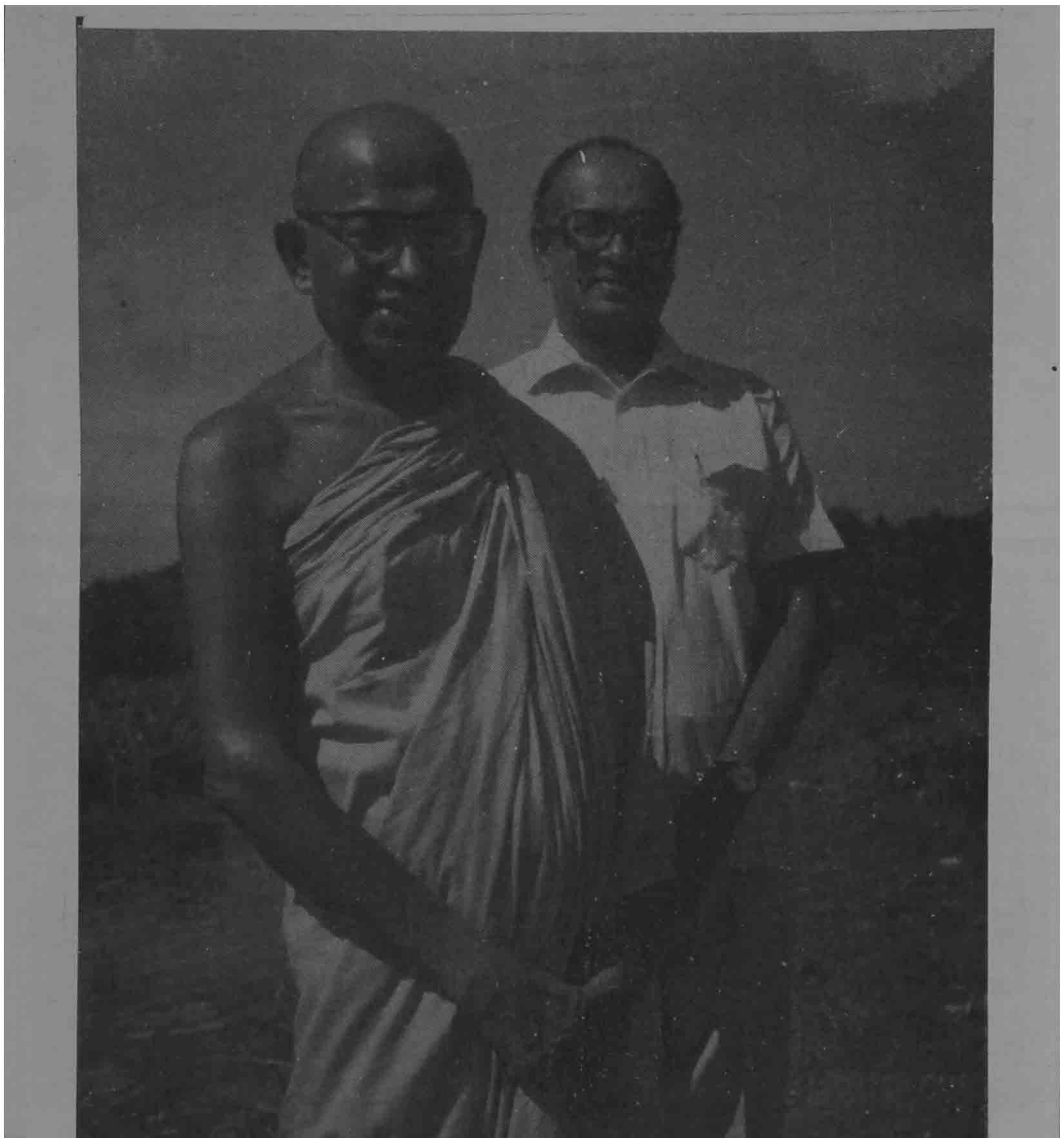
Victor Hettigoda, Chairman of the Hettigoda Industries, and a nephew of Rahula Thera, undertook to supervise the construction work.

H. K. Dharmadasa, (Navaloka Mudalali), Chairman of the Navaloka Group of Companies, laid the

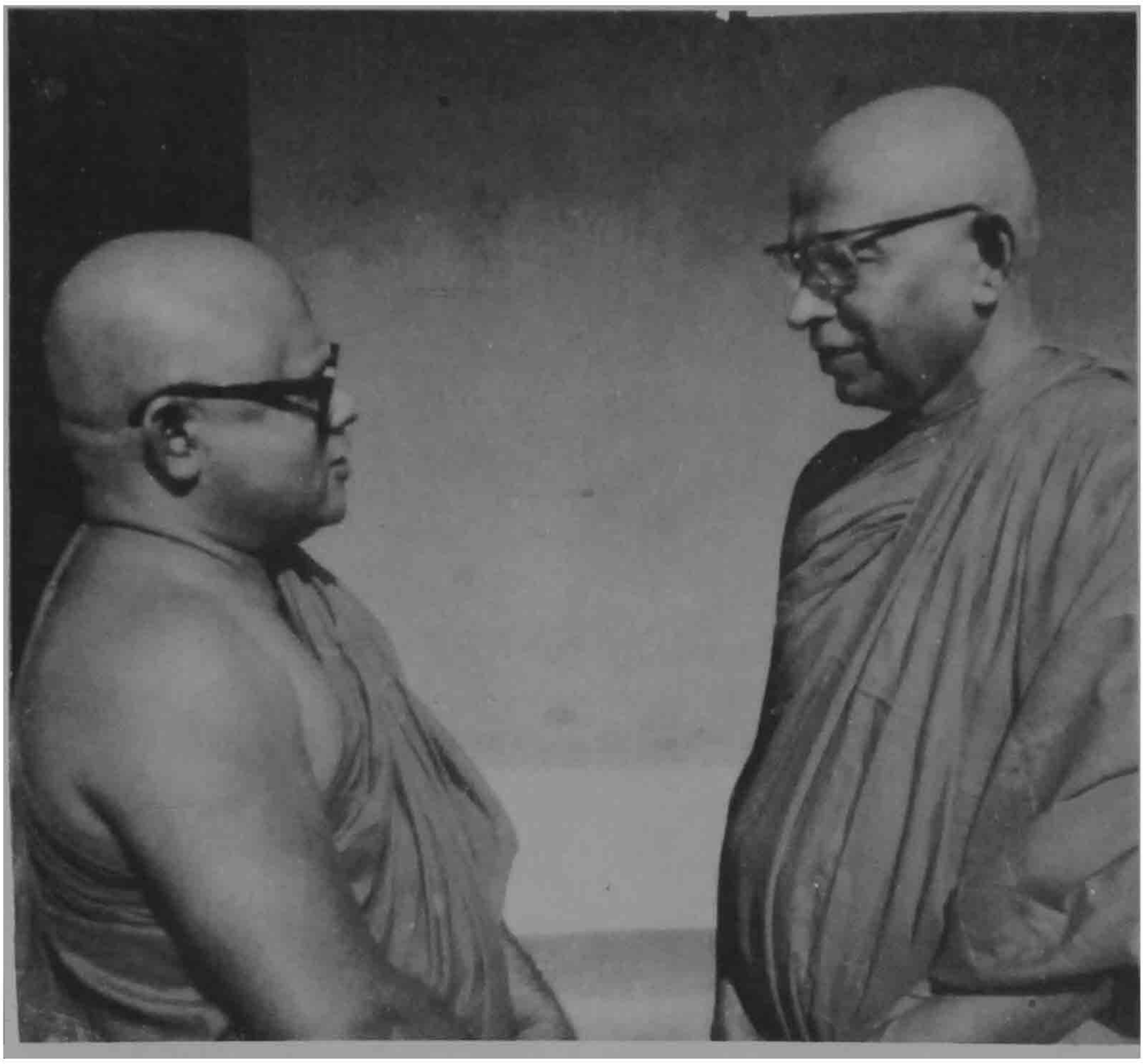


Ranasinghe Premadasa

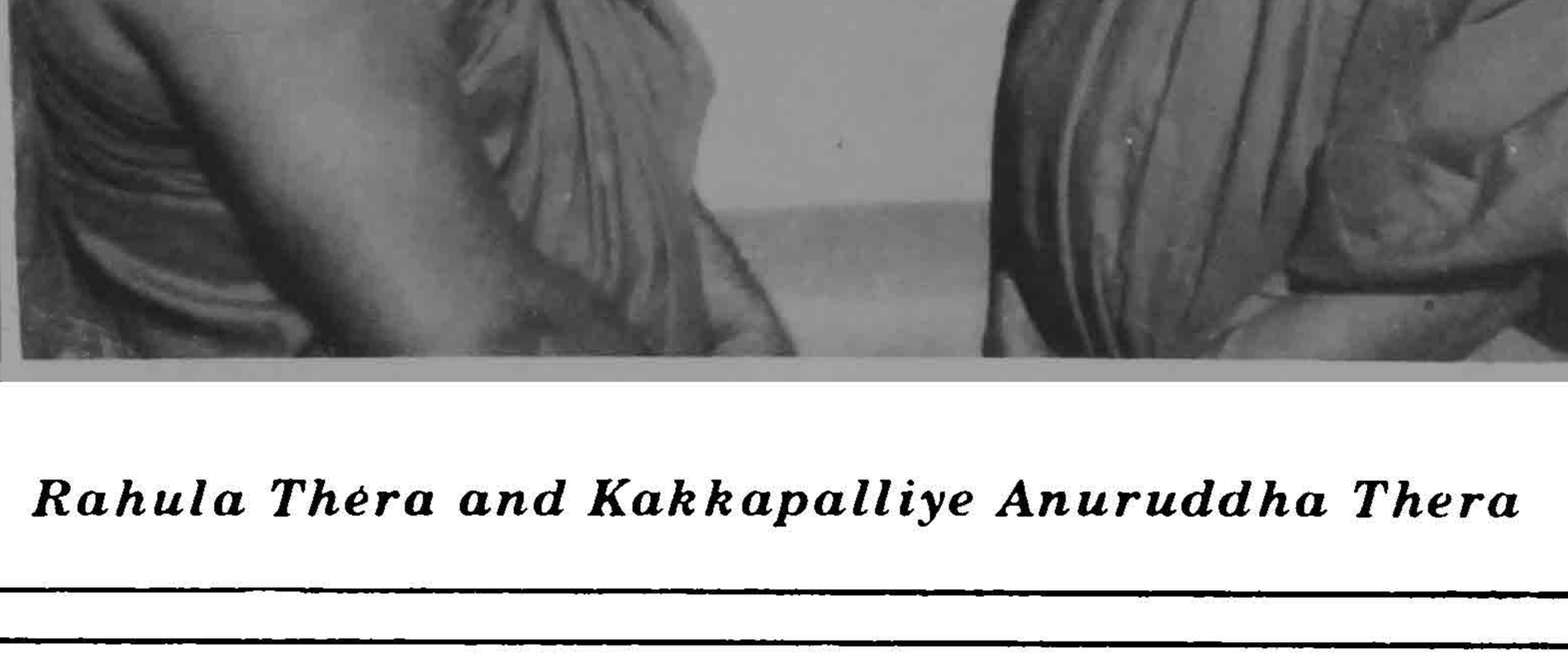
foundation stone at the auspicious time. He made, not only a financial contribution towards the cost, but also donated a part of the timber required. The balance timber was donated by Minister Gamini Dissanayake. Weerasinghe Mallimarachchi, another Minister, donated the full amount of bricks. The entire amount of tiles for the roof was a donation from the well-known Buddhist leader and businessman, Albert Edirisinghe. A number of others made contributions in cash and kind and the building was completed in no time.



Rahula Thera with Dunstan Jayawardhane



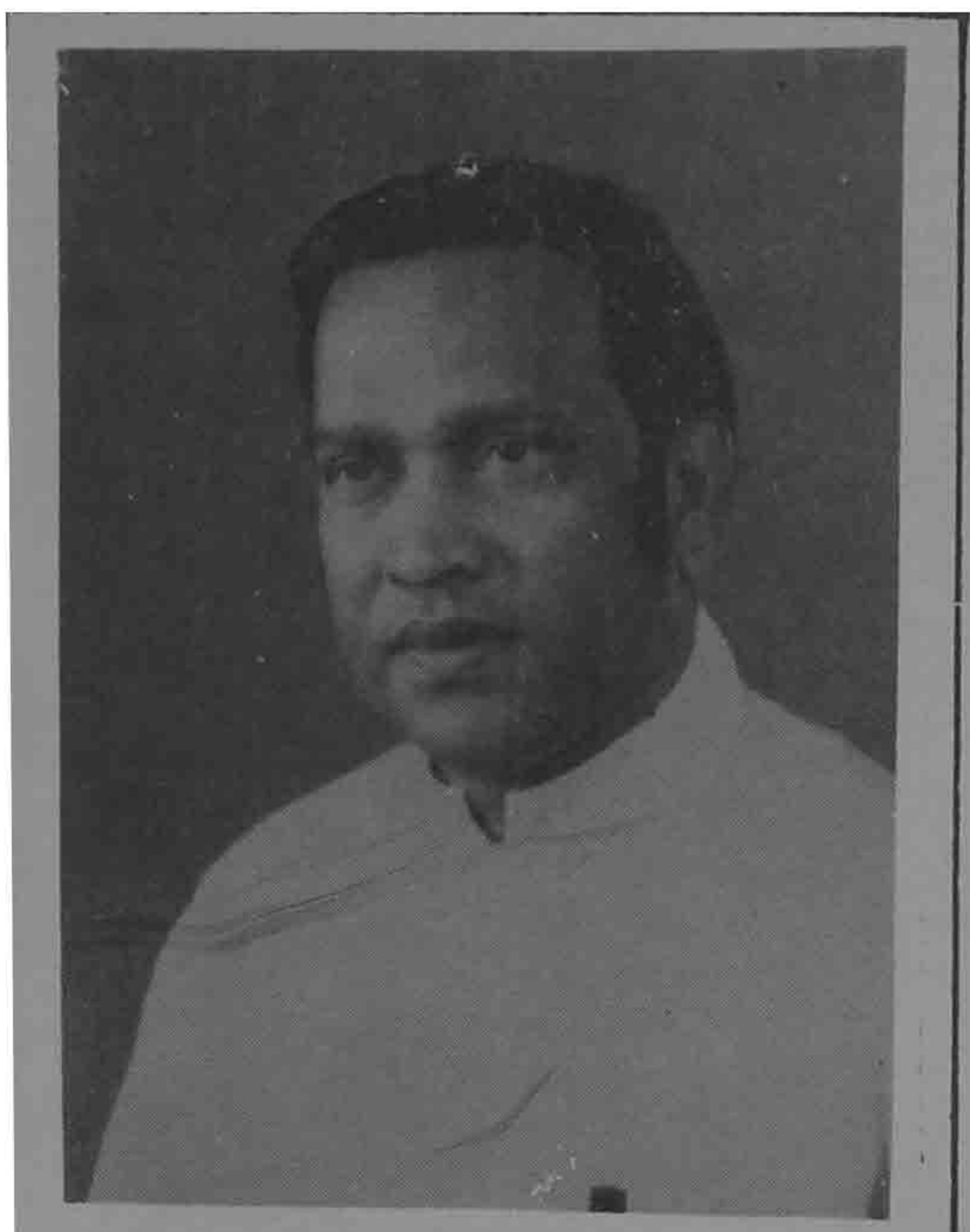
Rahula Thera and Kakkapalliye Anuruddha Thera



H. K. Dharmadasa (Navaloka Mudaiali) who laid the foundation stone for Ketumati, waiting with Rahula Thera, for the auspicious time.

At the end, Rahula Thera went to live in the new *avasa* on February 25, 1987. It is not a mere residence for a bhikkhu, but, a research institute devoted to Buddhist studies.

One day, when the Ven. Dr. Kakkapalliye Anuruddha, Senior Lecturer at Kelaniya University, visited the new *avasa*, Rahula Thera showed him round and said that the building had seven pinnacles.

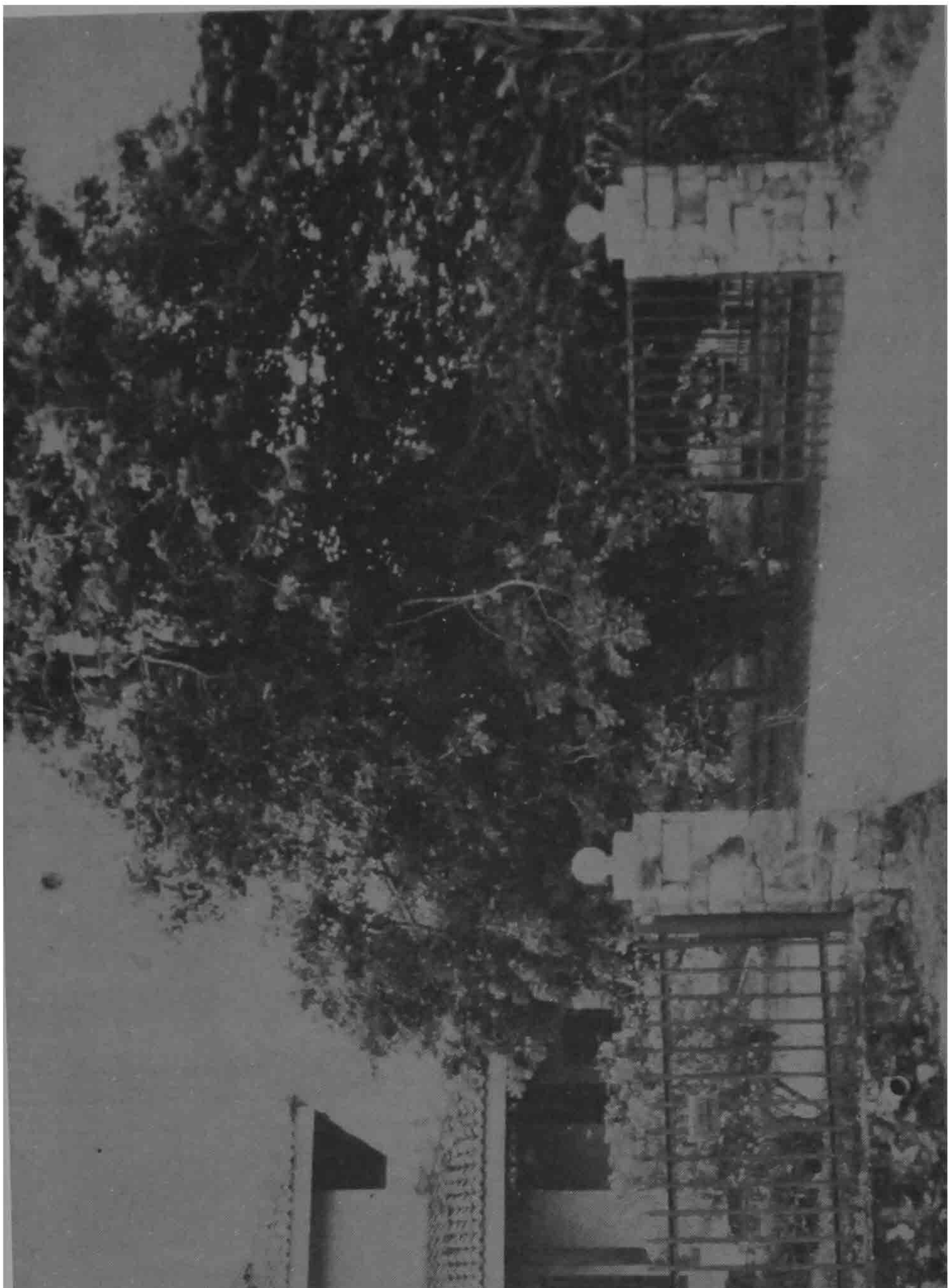


Weerasinghe Mallimarachchi

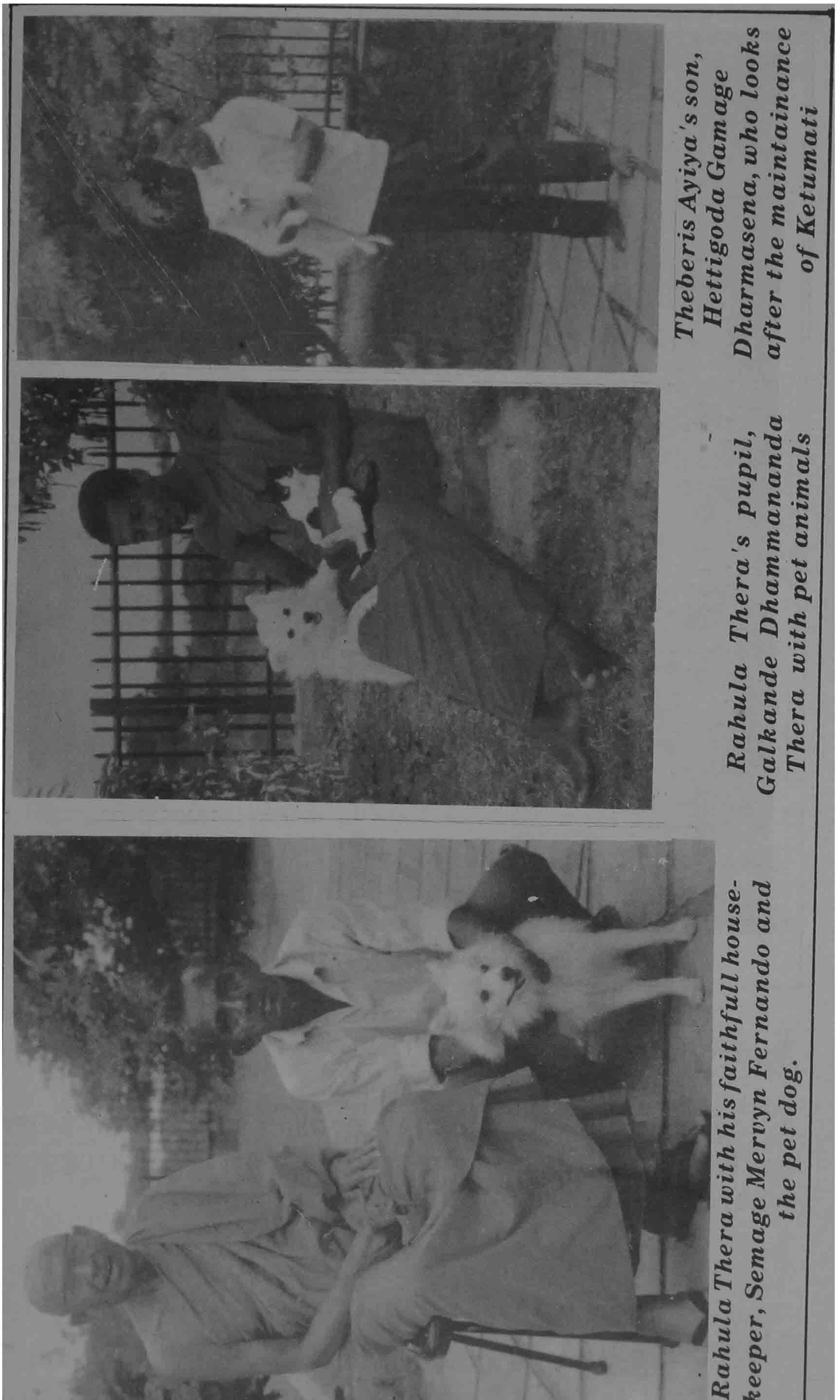
H. K. Dharmadasa

Albert Edirisinghe

Victor Hettigoda



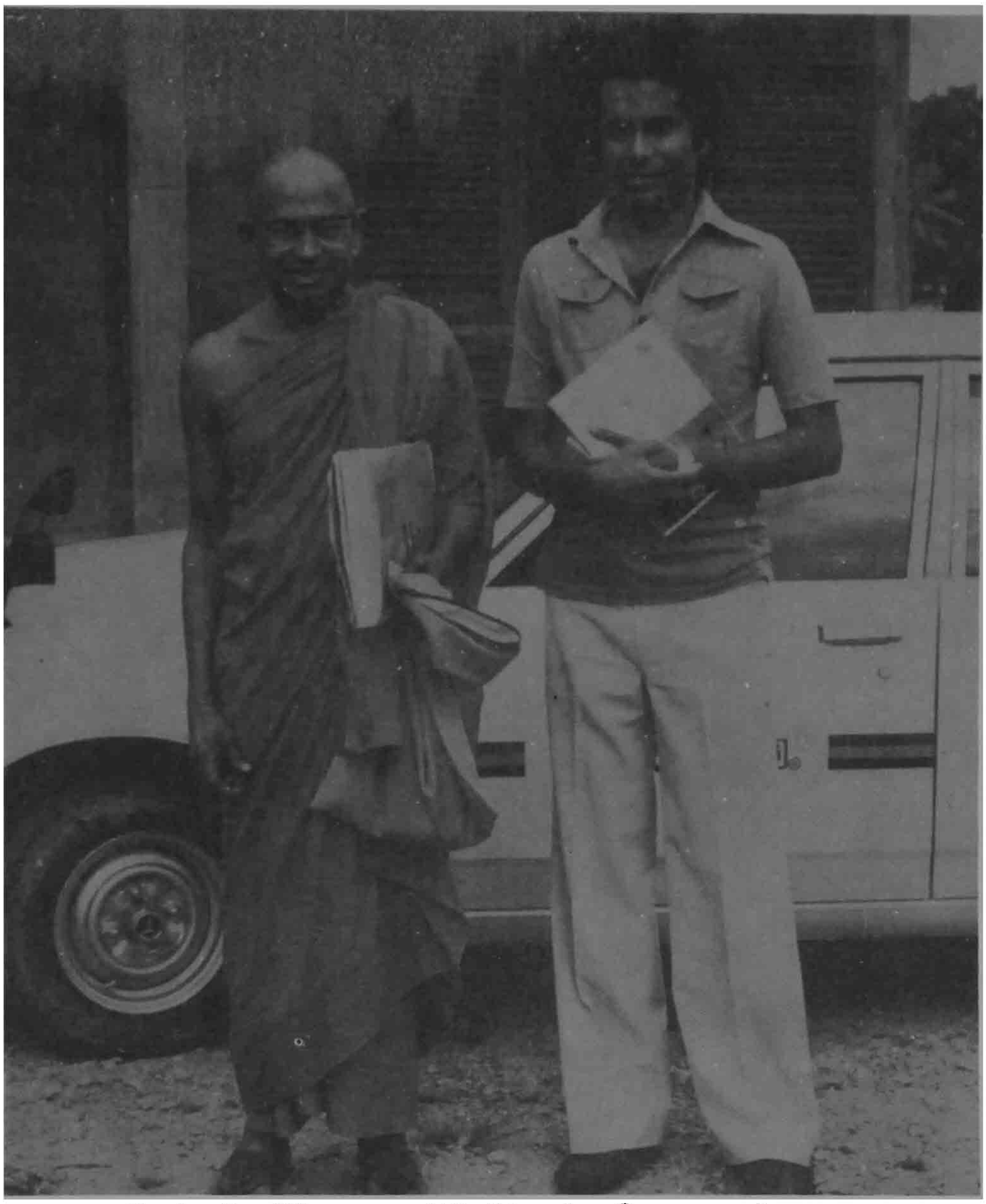
Ketumati



Theberis Ayiya's son, Hettigoda Gamage Dharmasena, who looks after the maintainance of Ketumati

Rahula Thera's pupil, Galkande Dhammanda Thera with pet animals

Rahula Thera with his faithfull house-keeper, Semage Mervyn Fernando and the pet dog.



Rahula Thera with Navin Gunaratne

"Then, the ideal name for this is Ketumati," said Anuruddha Thera.

From that day, the new *avasa* came to be known as "Ketumati". Incidentally, Ketumati is the kingdom where the Maitreya Buddha will be born.

The road leading to Ketumati from the Parliament Road, was later named, Bauddhayatana Mawatha.

CLARION CALL TO SAVE THE SINHALA RACE

The twenty third day of July 1983, was a fateful one for Sri Lanka. As a result of massacring 13 Sinhala soldiers in Jaffna, by the northern Tamil terrorists, Sinhala people came to the end of their six year long patience. Incited by the brutal killing, Sinhala people went on rampage, and killed Tamil people and destroyed their property in Colombo and other areas.

In order to look into the new situation and to bring about a lasting solution, the then President of Sri Lanka, J. R. Jayewardene, on the advice of the Government of India, summoned an All Party Conference from January 10 to 20 in 1984.

Only the political parties were invited for the conference. Of those, United National Party, Sri Lanka Freedom Party, Lanka Samasamaja Party, Communist Party and Mahajana Eksath Peramuna consisted of Sinhala majorities. Yet, they could not be classed as genuine Sinhala parties. The rest of the

invited parties, namely, Tamil United Liberation Front, Federal Party, Ceylon Tamil Congress, Thondaman's Workers' Congress and Azees' Workers' Congress, were fully-fledged Tamil parties, representing the Tamils.

The Sri Lanka Supreme Council of the Maha Sangha and other Buddhist representatives, pointed out to the President that the Round Table Conference convened to resolve a crisis between the Sinhala and Tamil people was not represented by a single Sinhala party, while five Tamil parties were represented. They stressed that it was a great injustice to the Sinhala people.

Heeding to the representations, the President made a new decision on the day before the conference. According to that decision, the Ven. Paleepana Sri Chandananda Maha Nayaka Thera, the Ven. Madihe Pannseeha Mahanayaka Thera, the Ven. Dr. Walpola Rahula Thera, and a number of other Buddhist representatives, were invited to participate in the conference. The President, who maintained the position that it was not proper to invite only the Buddhist representatives, extended invitations to the representatives of other religions too.

The Ven. Paleepana Sri Chandananda Maha Nayaka Thera was the leader of the delegation from the Supreme Council of the Maha Sangha, while Rahula Thera acted as the Secretary.

The Ven. Dr. Henpitagedara Gnanawasa Thera, the Ven. Talalle Dhammananda Maha Nayaka Thera, the Ven. Kotugoda Dhammawasa Nayaka Thera, the Ven. Medagama Vajiragnana Nayaka Thera and the Ven. Dr. Bellanwila Wimalaratana Thera, too participated in the conference intermittently. The Ven.

Paleepana Sri Chandananda Maha Nayaka Thera

Mapalagama Vipulasara Thera and the Ven. Diviyagaha Yasassi Thera, represented the All Ceylon Buddhist Conference.

On the very first day, the representatives of the Supreme Council of the Maha Sangha directly objected to the declaration presented for discussion, which consisted of 14 proposals. If the proposals were implemented, the peace of the country would be disturbed, and the majority race, namely, the Sinhalese, would face a great catastrophie in time to come, the bhikkhus pointed out.

When an agenda was to be adopted to begin the deliberations, the Ven. Paleepana Sri Chandananda Mahanayaka Thera emphasised that the Supreme Council of the Maha Sangha vehemently opposed the

Regional Councils. He also said that they rejected the 14 proposals included in the annexture A, with the intention of paving the way for those councils, and stressed that they would not allow to proceed an inch beyond the District Development Councils, already given.

The SLFP, the MEP and the other Buddhist representatives, endorsed the stand taken by the bhikkhus. But, the Tamil parties continued to speak in support of the 14 proposals.

Speaking on behalf of the UNP, Prime Minister Ranasinghe Premadasa, proposed three new items, outside the 14 proposals, as the agenda. They were:

1. To look into the grievances of, not only the Tamils, but also of all other communities;

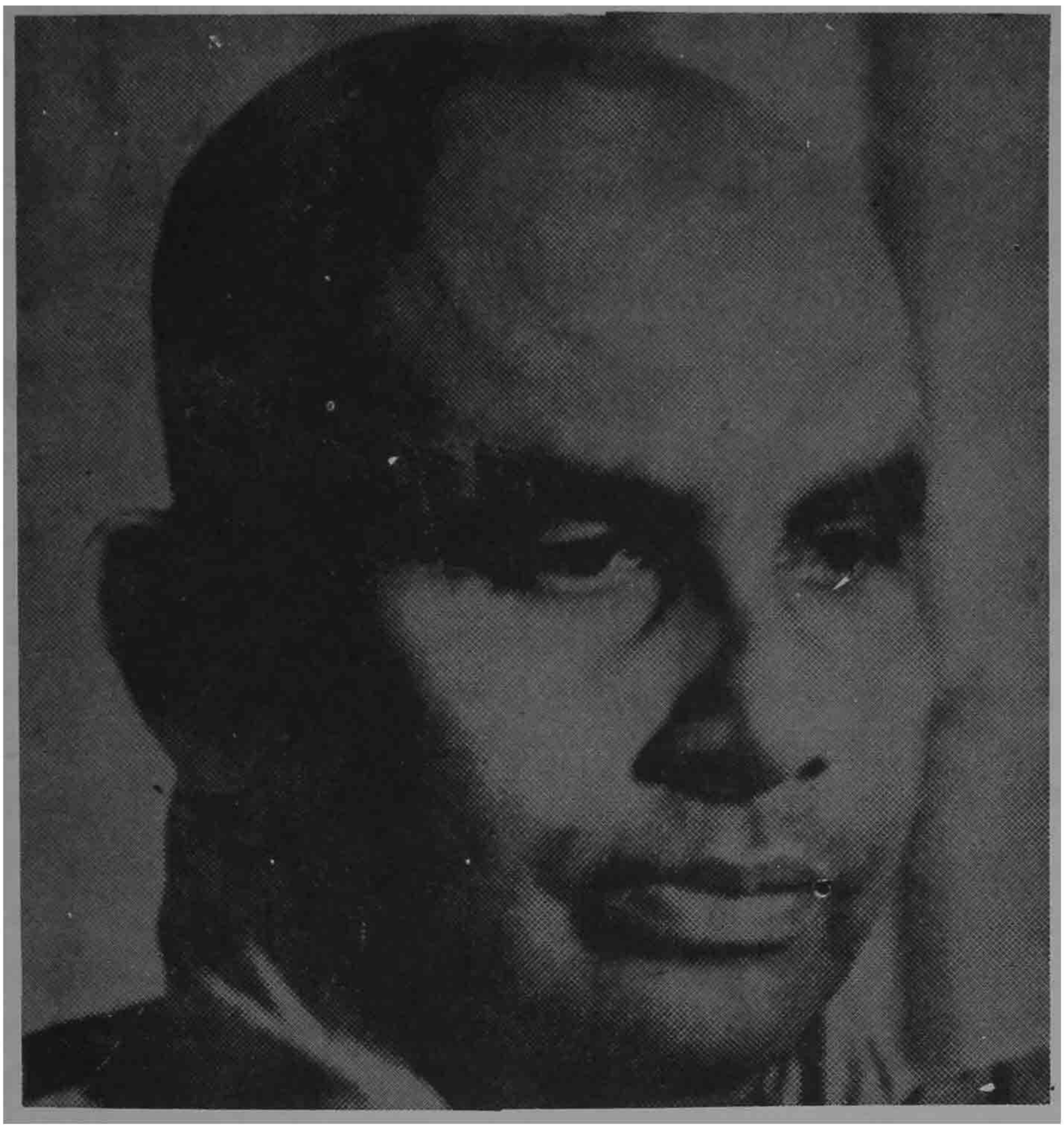
2. To consider the decentralization of administration;

3. To put an end to terrorism.

Though the Prime Minister proposed a new agenda, without the original 14 proposals, S. Thondaman placed before the conference another agenda, incorporating the same old 14 proposals.

A. Amirthalingam of the TULF, strongly protested against presenting the grievances of the other communities too, before a conference convened to discuss the grievances of the Tamils. However, ultimately, the agenda proposed by the Prime Minister was adopted.

When presenting the grievances, Ven. Madihe Pannaseeha Maha Nayaka Thera, very ably, placed the grivances of the Sinhala people in detail, before



Madihe Pannaseeha Maha Nayaka Thera

the conference, and suggested the solutions too. Those solutions were accepted by the UNP, the SLFP and the MEP.

While discussing the solutions, Rahula Thera, in a hard-hitting speech, stressed that the stand of the Supreme Council of the Maha Sangha rejecting the 14 proposals, not allowing to proceed even an inch beyond the DDCs already given and to give reasonable powers, had been accepted by more than 75 p.c. of the population, and as such, no power would be able to change them.

"The pain of mind among the Sinhala people is not a simple one. As a warning to all concerned, I say, that if you proceed with the integrated DDCs

there is going to be a catastrophe 23 times greater than the one on July 23," emphasised Rahula Thera.

Winding up the first session on March 2, Rahula Thera made a very forceful speech and said:

Mr. President,

On the 13th and the 15th of this month, we, very clearly pointed out that not only the Supreme Council of the Maha Sangha of Sri Lanka, representing the bhikkhus of the three sects, and lakhs of their followers, but also the ruling political party in this country, namely, the UNP, and then, the SLFP, the MEP and the Sri Lanka Buddhist Conference, were all opposed to Regional Councils, Pradesheeya Sabhas. The meaning of that is, that three-fourths of the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim population, are against the Regional Councils or the Pradesheeya Sabhas. This is a very important factor that must be given serious consideration. Then, there are the District Development Councils, which the UNP has proposed to name as the Rajya Sabhas. But, Rajya Sabha is too big a name for the DDCs. Therefore, the Supreme Council of the Maha Sangha proposes to name them the Upa-Rajya Sabhas. Then, it will be quite clear that these Sabhas are not of the national level, but enjoy a secondary place lower than that. We hope that the UNP will agree with us in this regard.

Still, there are some people in this conference who talk about a thing called, the 'Annexture A'. The three-fourths of the population of this country do not approve of it; they reject it. We have no responsibility regarding that document, which had been fabricated elsewhere. It is useless to talk about it over and over again.

Our country is a small island. But, we are a free

independent and sovereign state. We have no neccessity to discuss our internal problems with any foreign state, however big or powerful, they may be. When Mr. Jayewardene, the President of our small island, meets Mr. Reagan, the President of the most powerful country in the world, namely, the United States of America, the two of them are equals. Both are Presidents of two free, independent and sovereign republics. The only difference is that we still call President Jayewardene 'Your Excellency' or 'His Excellency'. It was a term used for the colonial Governors, and is not in keeping with the dignity of a President elected by the popular vote. The noble tradition in the great republics of the world is to address the President simply as: 'Mr. President'.

Similar to the other free, independent and sovereign republics in the world, we too have self-respect and prestige. No foreign power can frighten us.

Sangame me matam seyyo
Yam ce jive parajito

It is better to die in this battle, than to live defeatd, was the Buddha's challenge to Mara. Similarly, we too are ready to die with self-respect, rather than to live without it.

We will next discuss the powers that could be, and should be, given to the Upa-Rajya Sabhas, in a fair and reasonable manner, without any discrimination regarding race, creed or region.

Thank you.

All the three matters for which the Supreme Council of the Maha Sangha obiected, were not included in the official communique issued by Presi-

dent Jayewardene at the end of the first session of the All Party Conference. The threat by the Supreme Council of the Maha Sangha that they would not allow to proceed an inch beyond the District Development Councils, already given, had produced successful results.

There was a very shrewd plan to establish the 'Eelam'. It was to be implemented in a number of stages. The first was to create the DDCs. The second was to integrate all the DDCs in the North and establish an integrated DDC or a Regional Council for the north, followed by a similar one for the east. The third was to amalgamate the two Regional Councils and form a Regional Government, with Trincomalee as the capital. And, the ultimate goal was to proclaim it as an independent Eelam State.

The All Party Conference met from the beginning to the end of 1984. But, the delegates of the Supreme Council of the Maha Sangha did not attend the last two meetings. However, they were able to rise at the correct moment and to shatter the conspiracy to divide the country into two.

Special mention must be made of the clarion call made by the Ven. Paleepana Sri Chandananda Maha Nayaka Thera, the Ven. Madihe Pannaseeha Maha Nayaka Thera and the Ven. Dr. Walpola Rahula Thera, at that fateful hour.

While the All Party Conferęnce was in progress, President Jayeawrdene requested Rahula Thera to address the nation over the radio and the television, about the problem that faced the country. Rahula Thera spoke in both Sinhala and Englsih. The following is the text of his speech entitled: "The fight is against terrorism and not against the Tamil people".

Clarion call to save the Sinhala race

Almost all of you know, better than I do, what happened in July 1983 as a repercussion of the terrorist activities in the North - the tragedy this country experienced, loss of life and property, enormous suffering of the people. But few of you know the serious damage done internationally to the image of Sri Lanka because of those events. This country is known as Dharmadvipa, "Island of Righteousness," inheritor of an ancient, great Buddhist culture; a country where people are kind, generous, gentle and hospitable. Those unfortunate happenings of last July put a stain on that good reputation.

In foreign countries a partial and incorrect propaganda was carried on through the Press, Radio and Television against Sri Lanka. This propaganda created in people's minds a general impression that the Sinhalese, particularly the Sinhala Buddhists, were cruel, violent, savage, uncivilized. During that period I lived in Europe. So I know how widely this scandalous disrepute spread there.

But only after I came to Sri Lanka and studied the facts that I realized that propaganda against the Sinhalese, against the Sinhala Buddhists, was unjust. Many Sinhala people have protected and helped the Tamils in distress. Many Buddhist temples and other religious places not only gave them shelter but also fed them and guarded them.

But none of these things were reported in foreign countries. Only things that created bad impression were given publicity as sensational news. Ninety nine per cent (99%) of the Sinhala people were against those criminal deeds. They were committed undoubtedly by a few gangs of irresponsible unruly thugs.

However that disrepute is now gradually being forgotten, that stain is being effaced. But if anything

like the last July calamity occurs again, its evil effects will be several times more catastrophic. It is the duty of all patriotic people to see that such a situation never arises again.

At this juncture we can learn an excellent lesson from England. It is this: Just as the terrorists in the North are perpetrating criminal deeds against the Unitary State of Sri Lanka, the Irish terrorists in Northern Ireland are since several years carrying on a vigorous programme of violent and atrocious activities against British Government. The British army and the police are fighting the terrorists in Nothern Ireland. But the terrorists kill not only the soldiers and policemen, but also innocent Englishmen and women who are living in Northern Ireland. Those terrorists have even bombed some buildings in London causing damage to life and property.

Some of you may perhaps still remember Lord Louis Mountbatten. During the second World War he was the Commander-in-Chief of Southeast Asia and had his Headquarters at Peradeniya. After the victory, he served as the last Viceroy of India. A very close relative of the Queen, he was regarded as the father of the British royal family. He also was wantonly killed by the Irish terrorists. Even then the royal family or the English people did not do any harm to innocent Irish people. Criminals are punished, but no harm ıs done to innocent Irish people. That is the just and equitable policy of the British Government and the people.

There are millions of Irish men and women living in England. They are engaged in various occupations, trade and business, and hold important and not so important positions in public and private sectors. Because of the provocative criminal actions of Irish terrorists the English people would never get uncon-

trollably furious and would never harm innocent Irish people, physically or even verbally. During the last nine or ten years I have been living in England, spending greater part of the year there. So I know this quite well. This is a valuable lesson we can learn.

It is the duty of all right-thinking people to protest against and condemn terrorism. But it is criminal and foolish to insult, revile or harm innocent Tamils as a way of taking revenge on the terrorists. The fight is against terrorism and not against the Tamil people. The Sinhala people should understand this clearly and distinctly.

In this connection there is another fact that should not be forgotten. I know personally that there is a considerable number of Tamils who are against terrorism and against dividing the country. It is not right that they are keeping silent, whatever the reason may be. They should come forward boldly and sincerely, and should declare that they would do everything to safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of the Tamils, but they would oppose terrorism and any kind of partition of the country. With such a declaration they should form a non-political, independent organization. That will be to their credit and to their own interest. If such an organization comes into being, there is no doubt it will help, to a great extent, to bring about confidence, understanding, unity and peace between the two communities. Very earnestly I appeal to all my dear Tamil friends to create such an organization.

What the terrorists in the North are trying to do is not only to create an Eleam in the North and in the East, but to make the whole Island of Sri Lanka an Eelam, ultimately reducing it again to a colony of some foreign power. It is now evident that the terror-

ists carry on this fight not alone, but with the aid of some secret foreign organizations.

Now the terrorists are trying to create a situtation similar to that of last July. It is a trap. Their plan is to enrage the Sinhala people by their violent, criminal activities and create disorder and chaos in the country. Please be careful not to get caught in this trap. Don't be deceived and don't get agitated by false rumours and propaganda. On this occasion it is a national duty of all patriots to be patient and to maintain peace, law and order.

No country in the world is against the suppression of terrorism. Not even the Tamil people in this country. All people in the world, except the terrorists, are unanimous for suppressing terrorism. What they condemn is harming the innocent.

You know that the Government is now making an effort to eradicate terrorism. In order to make it a success there is something very important that our people can do. It is this: Whatever cruel, violent, ugly, inhuman crimes and atrocities are committed by the terrorists in Northern and Eastern Provinces, people in other areas should not get agitated and should not become furious. They should remain calm, should keep law and order, without doing any harm to innocent Tamils. Forget all political and other differences, and be united in this effort to defeat the common enemy. This is the greatest service you could and you should render at this moment for the good of the country, nation and religion.

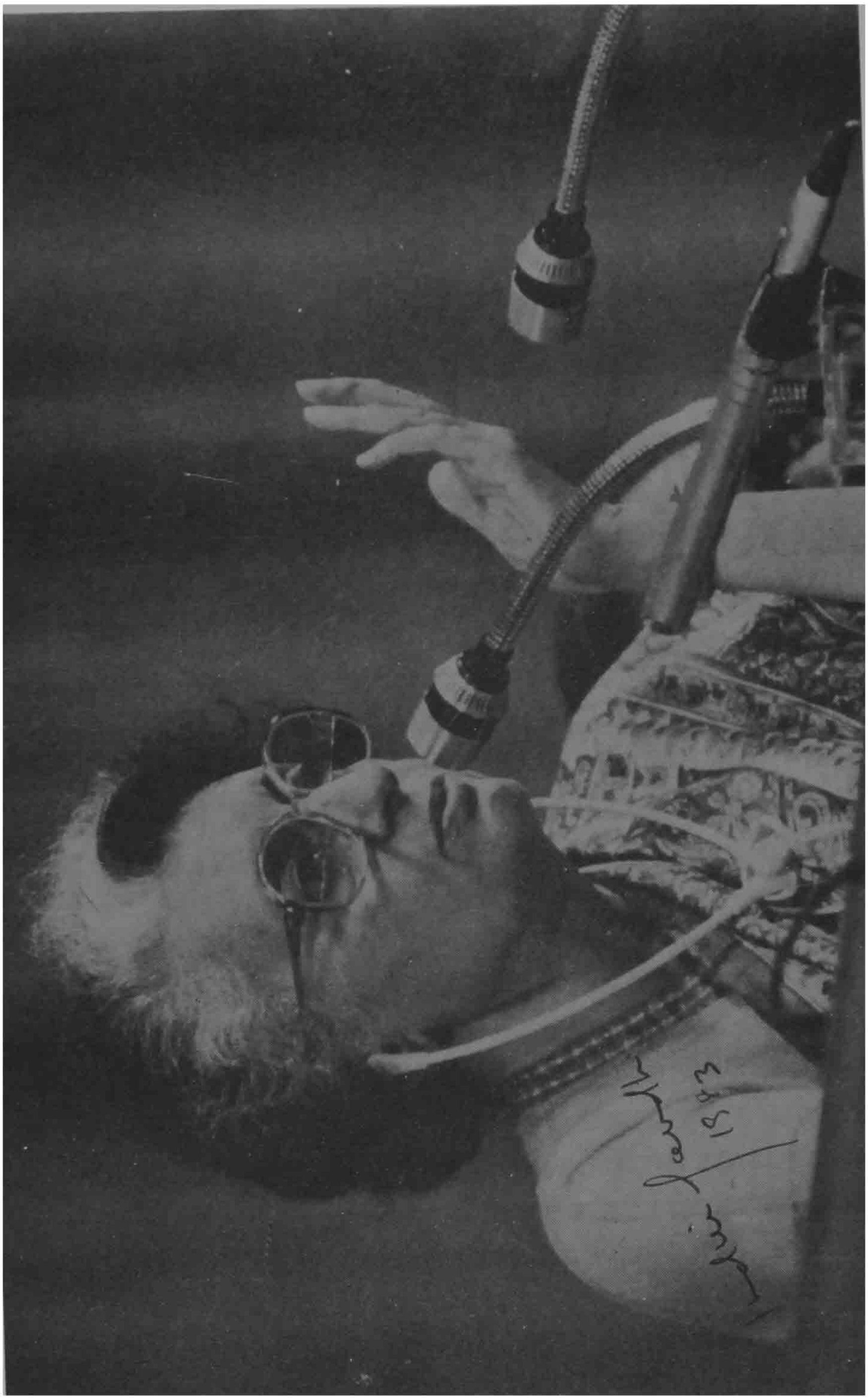
This is my appeal.

TALKING TO INDIRA GANDHI ABOUT TIGER-TERRORISTS

In October, 1984, an international conference was to be held in New Delhi, for which all the Asian countries were invited. It was called the International Conference on Buddhism and National Cultures.

The organisers had unanimously decided Dr. Walpola Rahula Thera, as a 'Must' for the conference. But, when the official invitation was sent to him, Rahula Thera's reaction was a firm 'No'. His stand was that he did not want to attend a conference in India, where the terrorists were trained to fight against the Sri Lanka's government.

Under the circumstances, the Indian Government authorities were compelled to make representations to both the President and the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, who in turn, appealed to Rahula Thera to attend the conference. He was also informed that arrangements were being made to meet Prime Minis-



Indira Gandhi

ter Indira Gandhi to discuss the terrorist problem with her.

Ultimately, Rahula Thera agreed to go to India. The Sri Lankan Government appointed W. J. Fernando, a retired senior civil servant, as the secretary to the monk, for the duration of his visit to India.

When Rahula Thera arrived at the New Delhi Airport on October 6, he was received by the government officials and the conference officials. A well-built Sikh police officer was there to act as the security officer to the monk. With him was a special guide too. Accompanied by the two of them, Rahula Thera and W. J. Fernando, drove from the airport, in a luxury car, to Asoka Hotel in New Delhi. Asoka is the largest hotel there and a senarate suite had been allocated for Rahula Thera and Fernando.

Rahula Thera addressed the conference on October 10. His subject was "The Influence of Buddhism on Sri Lanka's Culture".

A number of seminars, presided over by eminent professors from various countries, was held during the following two days. At one such seminar, presided over by Rahula Thera, W. J. fernando, who was seated in the audience, made a brilliant contribution on the subject under discussion. A surprised professor from the stage, turned towards Fernando and asked: "Professor, from which university are you?"

"No, I am not a professor. I am only Ven. Rahula's secretary," was Fernando's meek reply.

Rahula Thera made use of the opportunity and said: "See, how brilliant is my secretary. If the secreatary is of that brilliance, you can just imagine

about his boss." And, that made all laugh.

Rahula Thera, who devoted the whole morning of October 12, for the closing session of the conference, was scheduled to meet Prime Minister Indira Gandhi at 3.45 the same afternoon. Bernard Tillakaratne, the then High Commissioner for Sri Lanka in New Delhi, accompanied the monk to the Prime Minister's office. The Prime Minister's advisor on foreign affairs, Parthasarathi, too was present there. In fact, Parthasarathi, who was on a visit to the USA, had been asked to rush back to New Delhi because of the Rhula Thera's visit. Leaving, Parthasarathi, Tillakaratne and Fernando outside, only Rahula Thera was ushered into Indira Gandhi's room.

It must be stressed that the date was October 12, 1984. Indira Gandhi was destined to die 19 days later, as a result of repeated shots by one of her Sikh bodyguards.

As Rahula Thera entered Indira's room, he was shocked to see that brave and energetic woman in completely a changed and unusual mood. She appeared to be helpless and startled. There was not a trace of smile on her face. Though she welcomed the monk, her mind appeared to be roaming far, and far away.

After taking a seat, Rahula Thera presented the copies of some of his books to Indira Gandhi. She just turned the pages and put them aside. Though she was physically present there, mentally, she was somewhere else. She appeared to be engulfed by fear, suspense and unrest.

However, Rahula Thera discussed at length, with Indira Gandhi, the problem of Tamil separatists.

"To be very frank, this problem has become a real headache to me," said Indira.

"If it is a headache, why not get it cured?" queried Rahula Thera.

"Yes, certainly, it has to be cured. But, my biggest fear is that my political opponent, Karunanidi, would make capital out of my attempt to solve the problem," said Indira.

As the discussion continued, Indira Gandhi suggested to call Parthasarathi too, to clarify certain points. But, Rahula Thera said 'no' to the suggestion. "In that case, I will have to call Tillakaratne too. Then the whole thing will be official. Let us continue as a private and free exchange of ideas," Rahula Thera suggested.

Right through the discussion, which lasted over thirty minutes, the scared and fear-striken Indira Gandhi's face did not have even a suspicion of a smile. Rhaula Thera was more concerned about the pathetic plight of that great woman, rather than the matters they discussed.

Coming out of the Prime Minister's room, Rahula Thera joined Parthasarathi, Tillakaratne and Fernando. On the invitation of Parthasarathi, the three of them had tea in his office, while having further informal discussions.

Before leaving for Sri Lanka, Rahula Thera gave a small gift to his Sikh bodyguard.

"Your blessing is more important to me than a gift," said the police officer, prostrated and worshipped the monk. Rahula Thera, in turn, placed his hand on the officer's head and blessed him with a Pali stanza.

When Rahula Thera landed at Katunayaka Airport, the Indian High Commissioner Chatwal was present there to welcome him. Soon after reaching Colombo, Rahula Thera met both the President and the Prime Minister and briefed them on his discussions with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

SRI LANKA'S CONTRIBUTION FOR THE BUDDHIST REVIVAL IN CHINA

In 1986, Walpola Rahula Thera visited China, on an invitation extended to him by the Chinese Buddhist Association. He was accompanied by Mapalagama Vipulasara Thera, the Director of Parama Dhamma Chethiya Pirivena, Ratmalana.

Leaving Katunayaka Airport on April 26, Rahula Thera reached Peking on the 27th. Besides the representatives of the Chinese Buddhis Association, there were two other important persons to welcome Rahula Thera at the airport. One was the Ven. Chin Hiu, a very learned Buddhist monk in China, and the other was Prof. Deng Dian Chen, the foremost Sinhala scholar in China. Deng, who had spent several years in Sri Lanka, was a professor at the Foreign Languages Institute in Peking at that time. He was a reputed translator, who had translated some of the works of Rahula Thera. Besides, he also had translated some of the novels by W. A. Silva, T. B. Ilangaratne, Gunadasa Liyanage and K.Jayatilake..

It was a great pleasure for both Rahula and Vipulasara Theras to learn that Chin Hiu Thera and Deng were accompanying them right through the visit. While driving from the airport, Deng gave a short introduction about Buddhism in China, and said that the main difference between the Japanese Buddhist monk and the Chinese counterpart was that the former got married and lived a family life, while the latter led a celibate life. Criticising the Japanese way of monkhood, Deng cited the popular Sinhala saying, *Don nam Don, Siman nam Siman, Don Siman dekama be*, to bring home his point. Rahula Thera was really surprised to see the brilliant Sinhala scholar in Deng.

During the whole visit, Rahula Thera talked in Sinhala and made all his public speeches in Sinhala.

"When I go to a foreign country, I make my speeches either in English or in French. For the first time, I addressed foreigners in Sinhala while in China. I believe that Deng did an excellent job in interpreting my speeches into Chinese," said Rahula Thera.

Rahula Thera first visited the temple where the tomb of the great Chinese monk, Hiuen Tsiang stands. Hiuen Tsiang visited India in about 629 A. C. and lived there for 16 years, visiting almost all the Buddhist places of worship. It was said that Hiuen Tsiang wanted to visit Sri Lanka too. But, as a result of a political upheaval in Sri Lanka at that time, 300 learned bhikkhus had fled to India. While in conversation with those bhikkhus, Hiuen Tsiang learnt that almost all the important erudite Sri Lankan scholar monks were among them. So, the Chinese monk learnt a lot of things from those bhikkhus and gave up the idea of visiting Sri Lanka. At the end, he returned to China with a large collection of Buddhist books.

With the Chinese Buddhist representatives in China. (Left to right) Prof. Deng Dian Chen, Chi Hiu Thera, Rahula Thera and Mapalagama Vipulasara Thera.

Prof. Deng Dian Chen in conversation with Rahula Thera at Ketumati

In the afternoon, Rahula Thera visited Hsiang area to see the archaelogical sites and epigraphs. One of the unique creations he saw there, was the 2200 year-old tomb of a Chinese Emperor, in which the figures of soldiers and horses were carved. Rahula Thera described them as masterpieces.

The first Buddhist vihara in China had been built as far back as 68 A. C. Situated in the town of Lu Sung, it is known as Pei Matsu Temple. Rahula Thera was told that Pei Matsu meant white horse, and as such the English meaning was the White Horse Temple.

Rahula Thera, then visited the Lu Meng caves, which were almost similar to the Ajanta caves in India. Lu Meng caves meant the caves with the cobra doors.

On the next day, Rahula Thera crossed the bridge over the Yangtze river, built by Mao-Tse-tung and reached Nanking. There, he first visited a monastery for Buddhist nuns and participated in a religious ceremony, too.

Afterward, he visited the Sun Yat-sen Memorial. Sun Yat-sen was the founder of the Chinese nationalist party, Kuomintang, in 1891. In 1911, he organised the first Chinese revolution, drove away the imperialist Manchu Dynasty, and established a republic. He became the President of the New republic, and after his death in 1925, Chiang Kai-shek succeeded him as the President.

Rahula Thera, then visited the Lingu Monastery in Nanking where there is a stupa built enshrining the skull of Hiuen Tsiang Thera. Afterwards, he went to see a printing press, where they still use seal blocks. According to the seal block system, there is no

Rahula Thera presenting a Buddha statue to the President of Chinese Buddhist Association

composing of types involved. Instead, a full page is taken into a block and then printed. This system, which prevailed during the early days of printing in China, is still in use in many printing establishments.

From Nanking, Rahula Thera travelled to Shanghai, where he went round hundered year-old Yu Fochu Temple, and spent the night there. In Shanghai, he was also shown round another ancient temple, where a large number of books and Buddha statues are on display. There, Rahula Thera had a very pleasant surprise, when he came across a copy of *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, which was translated into Chinese by a monk called Yuwan San, some 400 years before. (It was Rahula Thera who translated *Abhidharmasamuccaya* from Sanskrit to French, which was published in Paris in 1971.) After a lecture

to the monks in the temple, Rahula Thera had his lunch and left for Peking.

On May 8, Rahula Thera, along with Mapalagama Vipulasara Thera, left Peking by air and reached Colombo on the following day.

As a result of Rahula Thera's visit to China, the Chinese Buddhists began to take much interest in propagating in China, the pure Theravada Buddhism, prevailing in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, the Chinese Buddhist Association made a request to Rahula Thera, to give a special training in Sri Lanka, to five Chinese Buddhist monks.

When Rahula Thera consented to the request, five Chinese Buddhist monks arrived in Sri Lanka in 1981. They were ordained according to the Theravada tradition by Rahula Thera, at Parama Dhamma Chethiya Pirivena, Ratmalana, and were given Pali Names. The training course for the Chinese monks included Pali, Theravada Buddhism and English.

Addressing the graduation ceremony of awarding certificates to those five monks, held at Parama Dhamma Chethiya Pirivena, on February 5, 1992, Walpola Rahula Thera, in his capacity as the President of the Parama Dhamma Buddhist Institute, said:

Friendly relations between China and Sri Lanka constitute a long history - a long history of many centuries connected mainly with Buddhism.

In early fifth century A. C., during the reign of Buddhadasa, a Chinese Buddhist monk named Fa Hien came to this Island as a pilgrim and spent several years here. He referred to this country as the Island of the Sinhala. During his sojourn here, he

visited and worshipped at many monasteries and collected a large number of Buddhist texts. He speaks in detail of learned and virtuous monks and devout lay people as well as of religious festivals and processions in the Island. Fa Hien's travel book, A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms, is a rich source of information to study the history of Buddhism in India and Sri Lanka during the fifth century A. C.

A landmark in the history of Sino-Lanka Buddhist relations was the introduction and establishment in China in the fifth century A. C., of the Order of Buddhist nuns (Bhikkhuni Sangha) by a group of Sinhala nuns (bhikkhunis).

It is known and recognized that the Order of Buddhist nuns established in China by the Sinhala bhikkhunis continues up to this day, not only in China, but also in Taiwan, Korea and several other Mahayana countries. It is sad that the Order of Nuns does not exist today in any of the five Theravada countries, namely, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, Cambodia and Laos. How and when it disappeared from these countries still remains a historical question without a definite answer.

If one wishes to reintroduce the Order of Nuns into Theravada countries, it is absolutely necessary to receive the genuine and authentic Ordination from an unbroken line of Buddhist nuns in China or some other country. Instead of taking such realistic and practical steps to attain the desired aim, it is futile to display in processions lay dasasil upasikas illegitimately clad in yellow, contrary to traditional Theravada teaching. It is impossible to establish the Order of Nuns by any Government or by an Act of Parliament. It can only be estalished by an unbroken line of authentic Order of Buddhist nuns.

Since the establishment of the Buddhist Order

Rahula Thera at the ceremony to present certificates to the Chinese monks

of Nuns in China in the fifth century A. C., Chinese Buddhist monks occasionally visited this country as pilgrims and collected Buddhist texts. These were not events of any historical significance.

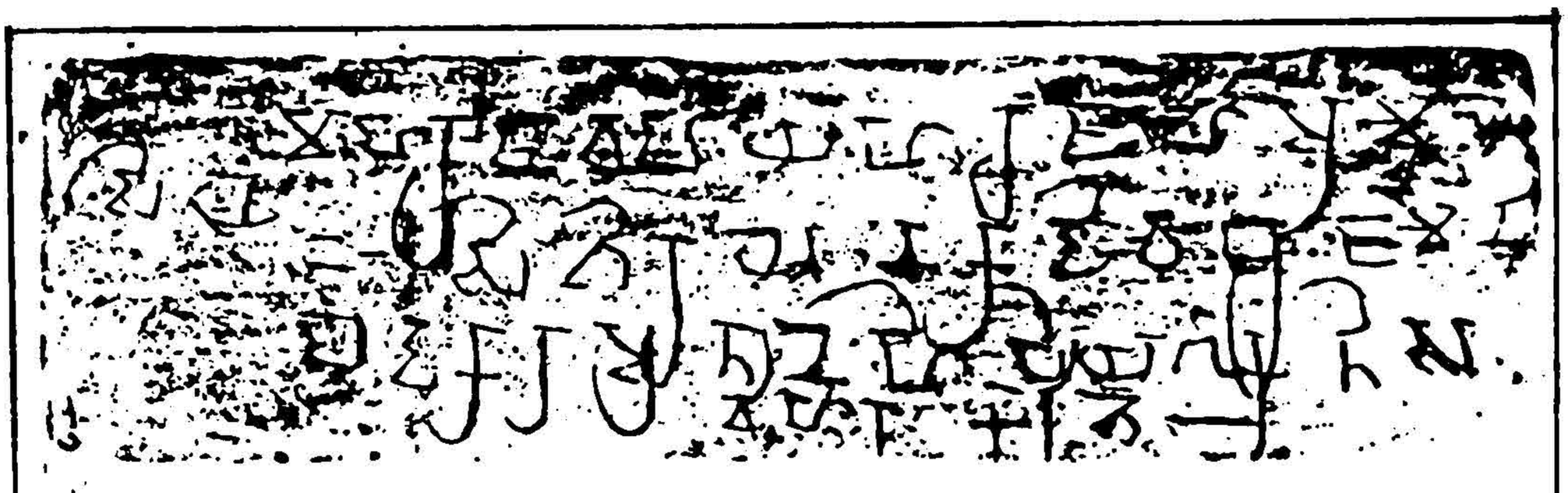
But this simple ceremony modestly celebrated here today is a landmark in Sino-Lanka Buddhist history. At the request of the Buddhist Association of China, five Chinese young Buddhist monks were invited to Sri Lanka, ordained anew and renamed according to Theravada tradition here at the Paramadhamma Chetiya Pirivena. They were taught Pali and English, Theravada theory and practice. As they have satisfactorily completed the five-year course of study at the Institute, today they will be awarded the Certificates of Graduation.

After the estalishment of the order of Bhikkhunis in the fifth century in China, this ceremony today in the twentieth century will remain another landmark. This is an event which should be recorded in gold in the annals of Sino-Lanka Buddhist relations. These five Buddhist monks will return to China and continue their study and research, and will publish works on Theravada-Mahayana studies for the benefit of posterity. Already a programme is planned in that direction.

PRESENTING VALLIPURAM GOLD PLATE TO THE NATION

To begin the story of the Vallipuram Gold Plate, we have to go back to nearly six decades. By the year 1936, Rahula Thera was living in a house at Udahamulla, Nugegoda. It was the house of his friend, S. Thangarajah, who had got it on rent. According to Rahula Thera, Thangarajah provided not only lodging, but also food and other requisites for the young monk, who was then an undergraduate at the University College in Colombo.

One day, Thangarajah, very confidentially, showed Rahula Thera a small gold plate on which some letters were inscribed. He told the monk that the trustee of the Vishnu Temple at Vallipuram village in the Vadamarachchi division at the northern end of the Jaffna peninsula, was one of his cousins. It was this cousin who had found the gold plate in the foundation of an old building. There had been a few more items with the gold plate, according to Thangarajah, who requested the monk to explain as to what was inscribed on the plate.



Vallipuram Gold Plate (actual size)

Rahula Thera tried to read the Brahmi inscription, but there were places he could not understand. So, he took the plate to his friend, Dr. Senarath Paranavithana, who was the Commissioner of Archaelogy at that time. Dr. Paranavithan read the whole thing very easily, as if he was reading a newspaper report:

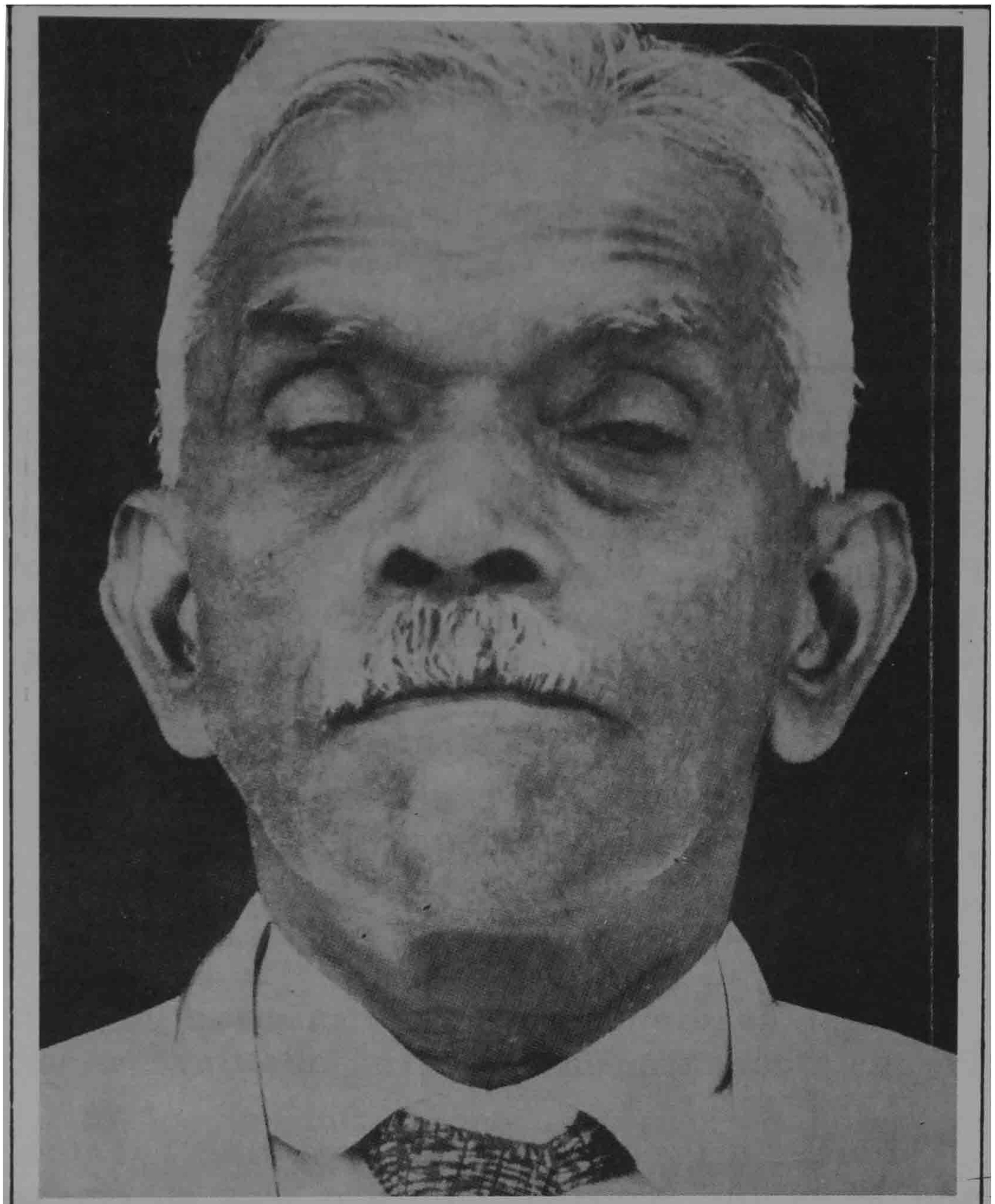
Siddha Maharaja Vahayaha rajehi amete
Isigirarye Nakadiva bujameni
Badakaraatanehi Piyaguka Tisa
vihara karite

After reading the Brahmi inscrioption, Dr. Paranavithana translated it in the following manner:

Hail! In the reign of the great king Vaha(ba) and when the Minister Isigiraya was governing Nakadiva, Piyaguka Tisa caused a vihara to be built at Badakaraatana.

As it was a unique historical inscription, Paranavithana requested Rahula Thera to leave it with him for a few days, to enable him to photograph it and write an article to the Epigraphia Zeylanica, for which the latter agreed.

After a few days, when Rahula Thera went to get back the gold plate, Paranavithana said that as it was the only gold plate found in Sri Lanka, he wished to



Dr. Senarath Paranavithana

buy it for the Department of Archaelogy. Rahula Thera undertook to discuss the matter with Thangarajah, and asked Paranavithana to let him know the amount of money that the Department was ready to pay Thangarajah. After that, the monk took the plate with him and handed it over to Thangarajah.

A few days later, Paranavithana informed Rahula Thera, that the Archaelogical Departement was ready to pay a sum of five hundred rupees for the plate.

When Thangarajah was told about Paranavithana's offer, he got infuriated for underestimating such a precious item, and sent it underground, without even telling Rahula Thera. All attempts by Paranavithana to trace the gold plate proved futile. However, he wrote a detailed article about the Vallipuram Gold Plate, and published it in the Epigraphia Zeylanica, Volume IV, along with a photograph of it. Quoted below are some portions from that historic article:

Vallipuram, a village in the Vadamaracci division of the Jaffna District, is one of the places in the Jaffna Peninsula, now densely peopled by Hindu Tamils, where have been found, remains of the Sinhalese Buddhist civilization which flourished in this extreme northern district of Ceylon during the earlier periods of its history, as it did in the rest of the island. The stretch of sandy waste between the village and the sea is said to be strewn with vestiges of ancient human habitations over an area about four miles in leangth and a mile in breadth, foundations of buildings, bricks, pottery, and coins being occasionally brought to light by the villagers digging here. A fine Buddha image of stone, in the Amaravati style, which was unearthed some years ago in the land close to the Visnu temple in the village, was brought to, and preserved in the Old Park at Jaffna till 1906, when it was presented by Governor Sir Henry Blake to the King of Siam.

The inscribed gold plate which forms the subject of the present paper is said to have been discovered, along with other minor antiquities, beneath the foundation of an ancient structure on the land belonging to the Visnu temple at this village in or about 1936. No information about the find has been given to the authorities as required by the Antiquities Ordinance and the present writer is indebted to the Rev. W. Rahula, an undergraduate at the Ceylon University College, Colombo, for the opportunity accorded him to

examine and photograph the gold plate and for such details as are now available about the discovery. The matter has now been placed before the proper authorities and it is hoped that this unique antiquity may ultimately find its way to a public collection. This is the first known example of a gold plate, bearing an inscription of such an early date as the second century, ever found in Ceylon.

The plate, which is very thin and is inscribed on one side only, measures 3 $^{9}/_{16}$ in. by 1 in. and weighs 69 $^{1}/_{2}$ grains. A margin about $^{1}/_{8}$ in. in breadth has been left on the left-hand side of the plate and within this area is inscribed the auspicious word Sidha in a line midway between the first and second lines of the inscription. The fourth line of six letters is compressed into the middle of the very narrow space available between the third line and the lower edge of the plate. A short horizontal stroke occurs at the end of the fourth line to mark the period.

The script is Brahmi of the second century after Christ and, on the whole, agrees with this alphabet which occurs in dozens of stone inscriptions of this period found in various parts of the island. Some letters on this plate, however, are of less monumental appearance and more cursive in character than the corresponding symbols found in stone incriptions, due no doubt to the difference in the material written upon.....

The language is old Sinhalese, conforming, in general, to the grammatical standards followed in other documents of the period.....

The incription is dated in the reign of King Vaha[ba] (Vasabha, circa (126-170 A. D.) and records the establishment of a vihara at a place called Badakara-atana by an individual named Piyaguka Tisa when the Minister Isigiraya was the governor of

Nakadiva (Nagadipa).

The king's name, written as "Vaha', is undoubtedly meant for 'Vahaba', for there was no other royal name in use in the first or second century A. D. which contained these two syllables.....

The minister Isigiraya and the personage named Piyaguka Tisa figuring in this document are not known from other sources. The former name has a somewhat outlandish appearnace about it, and it is not easy to take it as the Sinhalese form of any Sanskritic personal name known to us. The last two syllables remind us of the rayan or rayar with which many Tamil personal names, ancient and modern, end; but the possible Dravidian character of the element Isigi is not obvious. Piyaguka Tisa indicates a person named Tissa who was a native of Puyangu-[dipa]. If the alternative of taking this name as that of the vihara be adopted, it follows that the monastery was named after a person called Piyanguka Tissa who need not necessarily have been contemporary with the inscription. A thera named Tissa who lived in Piyangudipa figures in the story of Dutthagamani, as coming by air to receive alms from the king at a moment when the latter was in extreme adversity. It is clear from the narrative in the Mahavamsa that Tissa of Piyangudipa was considered to have been a religious teacher of great spiritual attainments and a vihara could conceivably have been named after him in later times.

Among the geographical names occurring in the record, Nakadiva is equivalent to P. Nagadipa, which is mentioned in the Mahavamsa in connexion with the second of the three supposed visits of the Buddha to Ceylon. Nagadipa also figures in the story of the introduction of Buddhism to the island and is occasionally mentioned in the chronicles up to the tenth century A. D. Though it was vaguely felt that Nagadipa

must have been somewhere in the north of Ceylon, there was considerable doubt about its exact identification till Dr. Paul E. Pieris, in a most important paper, entitled Nagadipa and Buddhist Remains in Jaffna, embodying the results of his archaeological researches in the Jaffna Peninsula, proposed the identification of Nagadipa with the Jaffna Peninsula. Dr. Pieris's principal authority for the identification was the Nampota, a comparatively late list of Buddhist shrines in Ceylon, which mentions certain sacred sites still identifiable with places in and around the Jaffna Peninsula, grouped together with the Naga Kovila in the Demala-pattanama (Tamil Port) which Dr. Pieris takes to be the modern town of Jaffna. In the discussion which followed the reading of the above mentioned paper, Mudaliyar C. Rasanayagam has referred to the evidence found in the Tamil poem Manimekalai supporting Dr. Pieris's identification of Nagadipa. This identification, though it was doubted by some when it was first suggested, has now found general acceptance. Whatever doubts one may have had about the identification are now set at rest by the present document which clearly proves that Nagadipa was the name by which the Jaffna Peninsula was known in ancient times.

The circumstances of the discovery of the plate leave us in no doubt that it was found where it was originally deposited in the second century. The inscription, in recording the foundation of the vihara, not only gives the name of the supreme ruler of the island at the time but also that of the local governor of Nagadipa. This last detail regarding the time of the foundation of the vihara has no significance if the shrine was not within the territorial divisison then known by the name of Nagadipa: And as the site of the religious foundation is within the Jaffna Peninsula, it follows that Nagadipa and the Jaffna Peninsula are identical.

This inscription also proves that Nagadipa was governed in the second century by a minister of the Anuradhapura king, that Sinhalese was the prevailing language, and that Buddhist shrines were then being built there. In such references as there are to the Nagadipa in the chronicles, as well as in other Pali writings of Ceylon, there is no indication that in early times this area differed, as it does to-day, from the rest of the island in the nationality of its inhabitants and their language and religion. In fact there are indications that the extreme north of the island played a very important part in the political, religious, and cultural history of the ancient Sinhalese people. This continued so right down to the end of the Polonnaruva period, though it is likely that the proportion of the Tamil element in the population was greater here than in the rest of the island and gradually went on increasing.

Badakara-atana, the place where the vihara was built, is evidently the ancient name of modern Vallipuram. Badakara would be equivalent to Pali Bhaddakara or Bhaddaghara and atana has been found in other place-names occurring in inscriptions of the early centuries of the Christian era; but no name corresponding to Badakara-atana can be found in the chronicles. Piyaguka in the name Piyaguka Tisa refers, most probably, to Piyangudipa, an island which is more than once referred to in the Mahavamisa. Piyangudipa is undoubtedly the Puvangu-divayina of the Nampota and other Sinhalese writings and it is probably to be identified with Pungudu-tivu, a small island to the south-west of Jaffna.

Rahula Thera never asked Thangarajah about the fate of the gold plate after Paranavithana's five hundred-rupee offer. Thangarajah too kept mum about the plate, when in conversation with the monk.

Time passed. Not one or two years, but, about 47

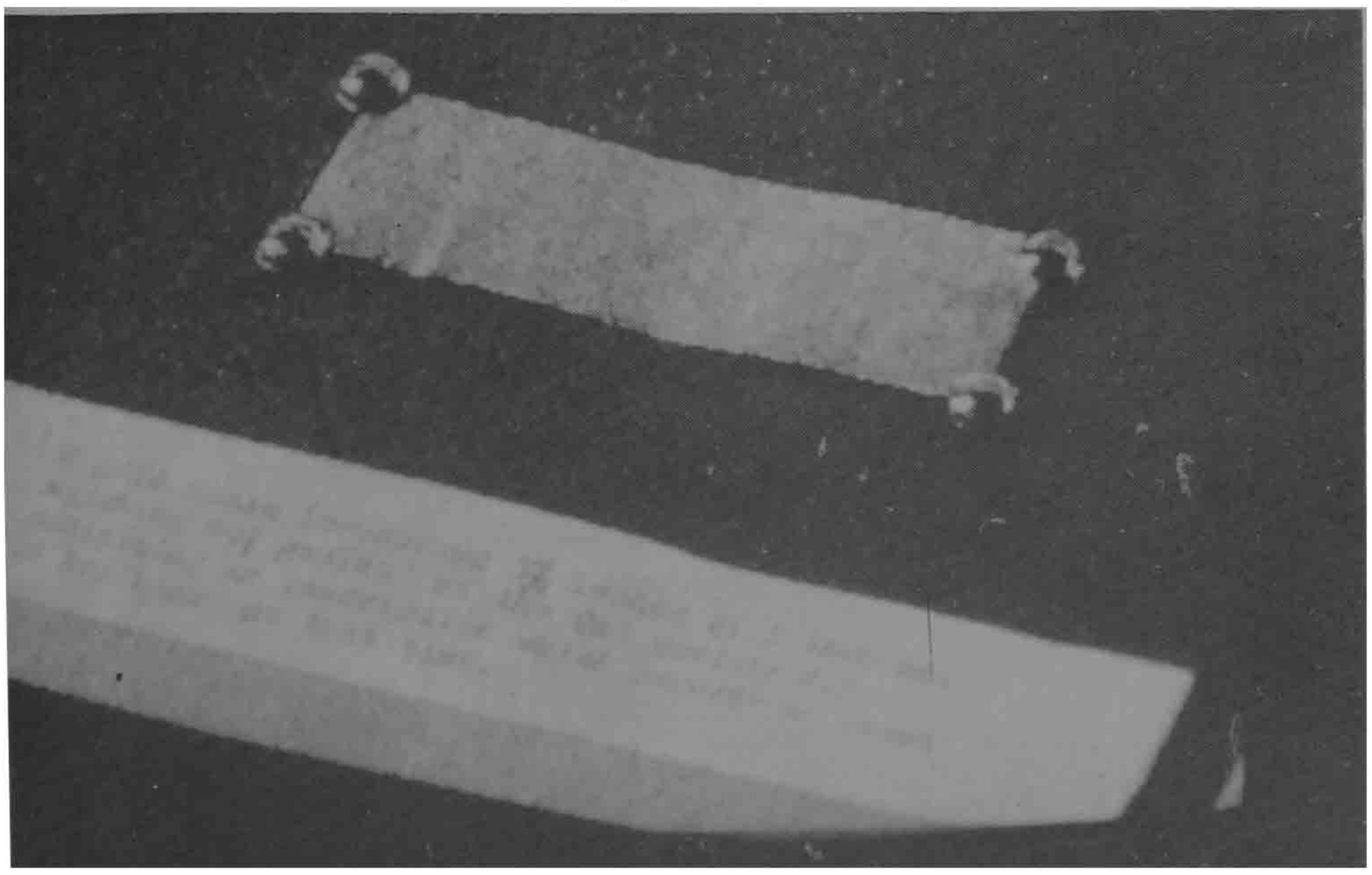
long years. Rahula Thera was living in Paris, while Thangarajah was employed in Brunei. They met each other very rarely. And, ultimately, Thangarajah died, without telling anything to Rahula Thera, about the gold plate.

In 1974, Rahula Thera left Paris and went to live in London. By that time, Thangarajah's youngest son, Kamala Kumaran, was also living in London. K. A. Somadsa, a former Librarian of Peradeniya University, who was appointed to a post in the British Museum, had cultivated a friendship with Kamala Kumaran. One day, while in conversation, Kamala Kumaran told Somadasa, that he was the proud owner of the Vallipuram Gold Plate. Somadasa, who knew the whole history behind the plate, suggested that he should hand it over to Rahula Thera. Kamala Kumaran agreed with Somadasa and handed over the precious gold plate to Rahula Thera, whom, the Thangarajah Family considered as a great friend and advisor. Rahula Thera, in turn, deposited it in a London bank.

After a few years, Rahula Thera decided to hand over the plate to the people of Sri Lanka. He informed about his wish to the then Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Ranasinghe Premadasa, and suggested to pay a reasonable amount of money to those who were the coustodians of the plate for number of decades. Prime Minister made available a reasonable grant for the purpose.

When leaving London, to settle down in Sri Lanka, Rahula Thera brought the gold plate and kept it with him for some time, until arrangements were finalised to hand it over to the Government officially. The ceremony to hand over the plate took place in Colombo, on February 3, 1991. Ranasinghe Premadasa, who had become the President of Sri Lanka by that time, received it on behalf of the Sri Lanka Govern-

Rahula Thera speaking at the ceremony to hand over the Vallipuram Gold Plate to President Ranasinghe Premadasa



Vallipuram Gold Plate on display at the National Museum

Ranjana Thangarajah in the centre. On her right are S. Thangarajah and Sagara Palansuriya while Mr. & Mrs. Wilmot A. Perera are on her left.

ment, and instructed the Director of the National Museum to make it a permanent exhibit.

It must be recalled that the trustee of the Vishnu Temple at Vallipuram, who discovered the gold plate first, gave it to Thangarajah to find out as to what was inscribed there. He thought that the Plate was a guide to the other valuables enshrined in the foundation. However, when he learnt that the inscription on the plate was not about more gold items, but something else, he allowed it to remain with his cousin, Thangarajah.

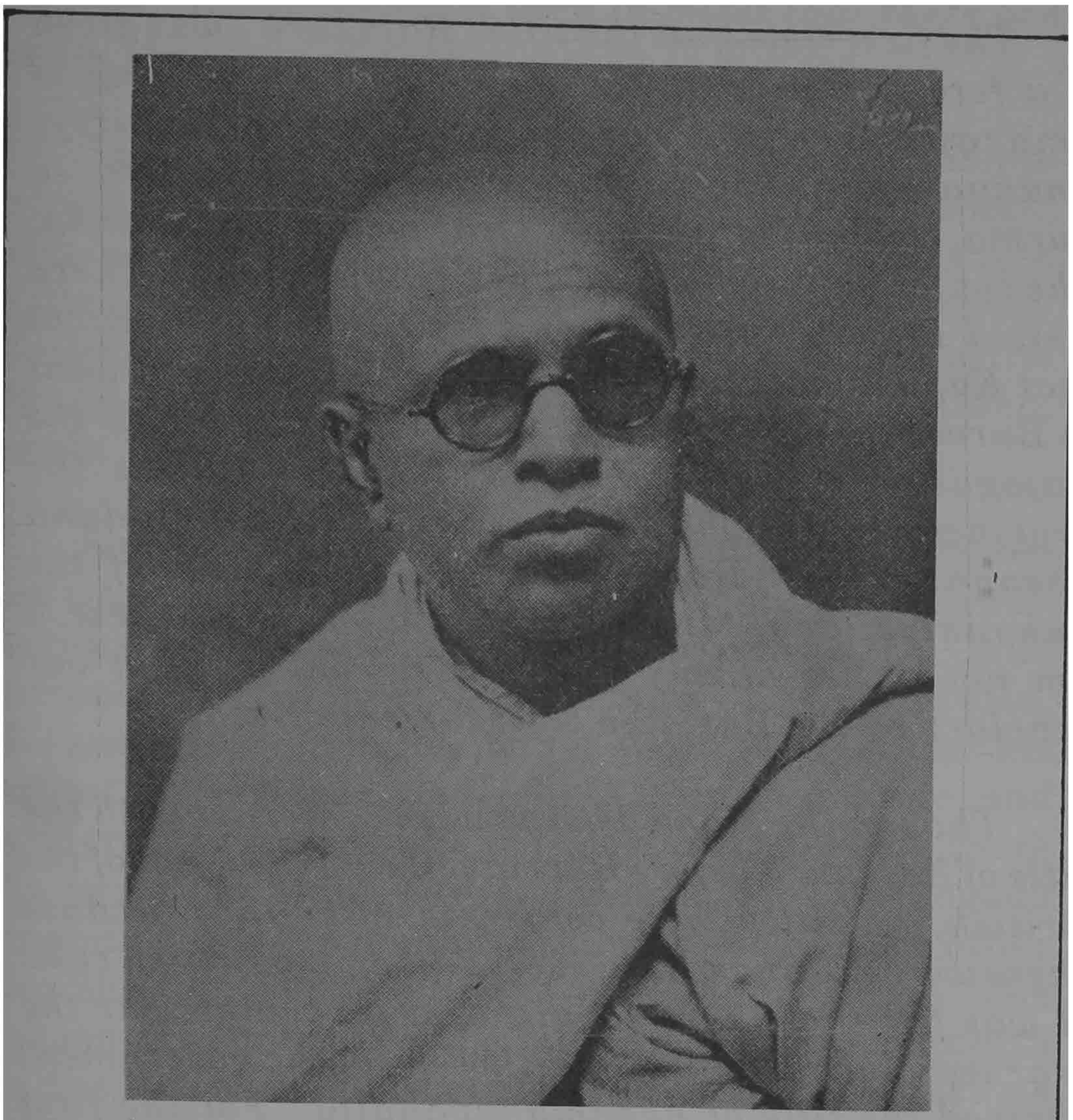
Thangarajah, before his death, had spoken to his wife, Ranjana, about the gold plate, and asked her to speak to his relatives in Jaffna to persuade them to hand over the other items found with the plate to Rahula Thera. Ranjana, who lived in Madras, then, left for Sri Lanka to fulfil her husband's wish. But, unfortunately, she got suddenly ill on the way, and died. Her daughter cremated the mother's body, brought the ashes to Colombo and deposited in the Borella General Cemetery.

Rahula Thera believes that if Ranjana Thangarajah was lucky enough to come to Sri Lanka alive, there would have been every possibility of his receiving at least a part of the other valuables found at Vallipuram, and he in turn, would have presented them to the Nation.

FROM BURMA: TITLE OF AGGAMAHAPANDITA WITH ROYAL HONOURS

Though the official name of the present day Burma is Myanmar, many still prefer to use the old name and call it Burma. 'Aggamahapandita' is the highest title conferred on the Buddhist cleric scholars by the Burmese Government. The first Buddhist monk from Sri Lanka to receive this prestigeous title from Burma was the Ven. Polwatte Buddhadatta Anunayake Thera of the Kalyanawansa Nikaya, who was the Chief Incumbent of the Aggarama Temple, Polwatta, Ambalangoda. Buddhadatta Thera, who was a world-renowned Pali scholar, lived in Burma for a number of years for his education, and, later, played a leading role in the Chattha Sangayana, held in Burma, in 1954. Accordingly, he was closely connected to Burma. In his autobiography, *Sri Buddhadatta Charithaya*, Buddhadatta Thera has explained the history and the importance of the title Aggamahapandita in the following manner:

801 years ago, in 1697 of the Buddhist era, the great Pali grammer book called, Saddaniti, was written by Aggamahapandita Aggawamsa Maha Thera,



Aggamahapandita Polwatte Buddhadatta Nayaka Thera

who lived in the city of Arimaddana. That Maha Thera was the nephew and pupil of the second Aggamahapandita, Arimaddana Thera. The second Aggamahapandita was the pupil of the first Aggamahapandita. That story of the lineage is clearly described at the end of the book, Saddaniti.

Accordingly, it is obvious that Aggawamsa Maha Thera, the author of the Saddaniti, was the third Aggamahapandita in Burma. After that, according to history, no Burmese king appears to have conferred the title of Aggamahapandita on any thera. Instead of Aggamahapandita the Burmese kings conferred the title of Rajaguru.

The first time that the title - Rajaguru - was given to a foreigner was 150 years ago, when the king of Amarapura conferred it on Ambagahapitiye Gnanawimala Thera, who went to Amarapura in Burma, and brought Higher Ordination to Sri Lanka. The conferment took place when Gnanawimala Thera visited Burma for the second time. It is also learnt that Kapugama Dhammakkhandha Thera, who went to Burma in about 1808, was also conferred with the Rajaguru title by a provincial king. It was the provincial king who conferred the title of Buddha Sasana Maha Sura Senapati on the Editor of the Lakminipahana, M. Dharmaratna. Besides these, I am not aware of any other titles conferred on our scholars by the Burmese Government or kings.

Though the Maha Theras were conferred with the title of Rajaguru before Burma fell into the hand of the British, no titles were conferred after that because there were no kings. However, during the British rule, it was felt that there should be a way to honour the learned Maha Theras, and therefore, the government revived the title of Aggamahapandita. For the first time after 750 years, the title of Aggamahapandita was conferred on Gnanadhaja Maha Thera, who was better known as Lethesiyado. He was the author of some two hundred odd books, and was famous as a very popular preacher. Afterwards, U Jatila Maha Thera, who lived in Rangoon, and Chakkhapala Thera, who passed away last year, were also conferred with this prestigious title. Besides that, I am not aware of any other recipient of the title of Aggamahapandita.

When Burma re-gained independence, the title of Aggamahapandita was revived. The foremost among the recipients on the very first occasion, under the new regime, was Abhidhaja Ratthaguru Revatha Maha Thera, who presided over the Sixth Sangayana. The number of recipients during the last six years is less

than six. Here, one must keep in mind that there are eighty thousand bhikkhus living in Burma.

Passing of examinations, is not a qualification to receive this title. A wide knowledge of the Tripitaka, virtuousness, being a popular teacher and the length of the virtuous bhikkhu life are the neccessary prerequisites. (Sri Buddhadatta Charithaya, Polwatte Buddhadatta Maha Thera, S. K. Chandratilaka, Anula Press, Colombo, 1954, pp. 151, 352.)

Another Maha Thera from Sri Lanka, on whom the title of Aggamahapandita was conferred, is Prof. Rerukane Chandawimala Maha Nayaka Thera, Chief Incumbent of Vinayalankararamaya, Pokunuwita, Horana. He lived in Burma for about ten years for his education, received his Higher Ordination there, and rendered a great service to that country. Then, there are two other Maha Theras. One is Prof. Balangoda Ananda Maitreya Maha Nayaka Thera, and the other was the late Tudawe Ariyavamsa Maha Thera. The reason for conferring the title of Aggamahapandita on the two of them was that they had close relations with Burma, and played a leading role in the Sixth Sangayana, held there.

But, Walpola Rahula Thera, had neither gone to Burma, nor had rendered any service to that country. Then, why did the Government of Burma decide to confer that prestigious title on such a bhikkhu? The answer is very simple. It was in recognition of his unique service to propagate Buddhism right round the world.

On January 2, 1991, the Burmese Ambassador in Sri Lanka, paid a call on Rahula Thera at his *avasa* - Ketumati - in Kotte. He informed the Thera that the Burmese Government had decided to confer the title of Aggamahapandita on him, and handed over the official invitation requesting him to attend the inves-

titure ceremony, which was due to be held in Rangoon, on February 27. The Minister of Home and Religious Affairs, Lt. General Phone Myint, had signed the letter. After a long discussion, Rahula Thera accepted the invitation.

Rahula Thera was also informed by the ambassador that two *kepakarus or kappiyakarakas* (attendants) could accompany him on the expense of the Burmese Government. Accordingly, he decided to take Dr. D. D. Ranasighe and Victor Hettigoda, as *Kepakarus*. Dr. Ranasinghe is a physician attached to Sri Jayawardhanapura Hospital, while Hettigoda is an Ayurvedic physician. In addition to Dr. Ranasinghe and Hettigoda, four others decided to join the party at their own expense. They were, Mr. & Mrs. Albert Edirisinghe and Mr. & Mrs. Lakshman Kinigama.

Rahula Thera and the party left Katunayaka airport by an Air Lanka plane in the night of February 25, 1991, and reached Bangkok the same night. They spent the night in Bangkok and resumed the journey on the following day after lunch. A special plane from Burma was standing by at the Bangkok airport to take the party to Rangoon. It was a short distance from Bangkok and the plane touched down at the Rangoon airport in no time.

The Rangoon airport and the approach road was decorated with the age-old decorations used to welcome the royalty in the ancient times. When the plane touched down and came to a halt on the tarmac, Lt. General Phone Myint, the Minister for Home and Religious Affairs, went on board the plane, worshipped and welcomed the great monk. All the arrangements to welcome Rahula Thera were similar for those of a visiting head of a State. He was conducted to the terminal building on the red carpet.

From Burma: Title of Aggamahapandita, with ...

GOVERNMENT OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
MINISTRY OF HOME AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

Ref: 530/6/Tha Tha Na-5

Dated: 6 December 1990

The Most Reverend
His Holiness Rev. Dr. Walpola Rahula
126. Buddhist Institute Avenue
Colombo.

May it please Your Holiness that the Government of the Union of Myanmar deems it an honour to confer the Religious Title of Aggamahapandita in recognition of Your Holiness' great learning and practicing the teachings of Lord Buddha excelling the knowledge in such field, thereby contributing to the purification, perpetuation and propagation of the Sasana.

The Government of the Union of Myanmar supplicates to Your Holiness that an Announcement in this regard would be made on 4 January 1991 and the ceremony for conferring the title would be held at Yangon on 27 February 1991.

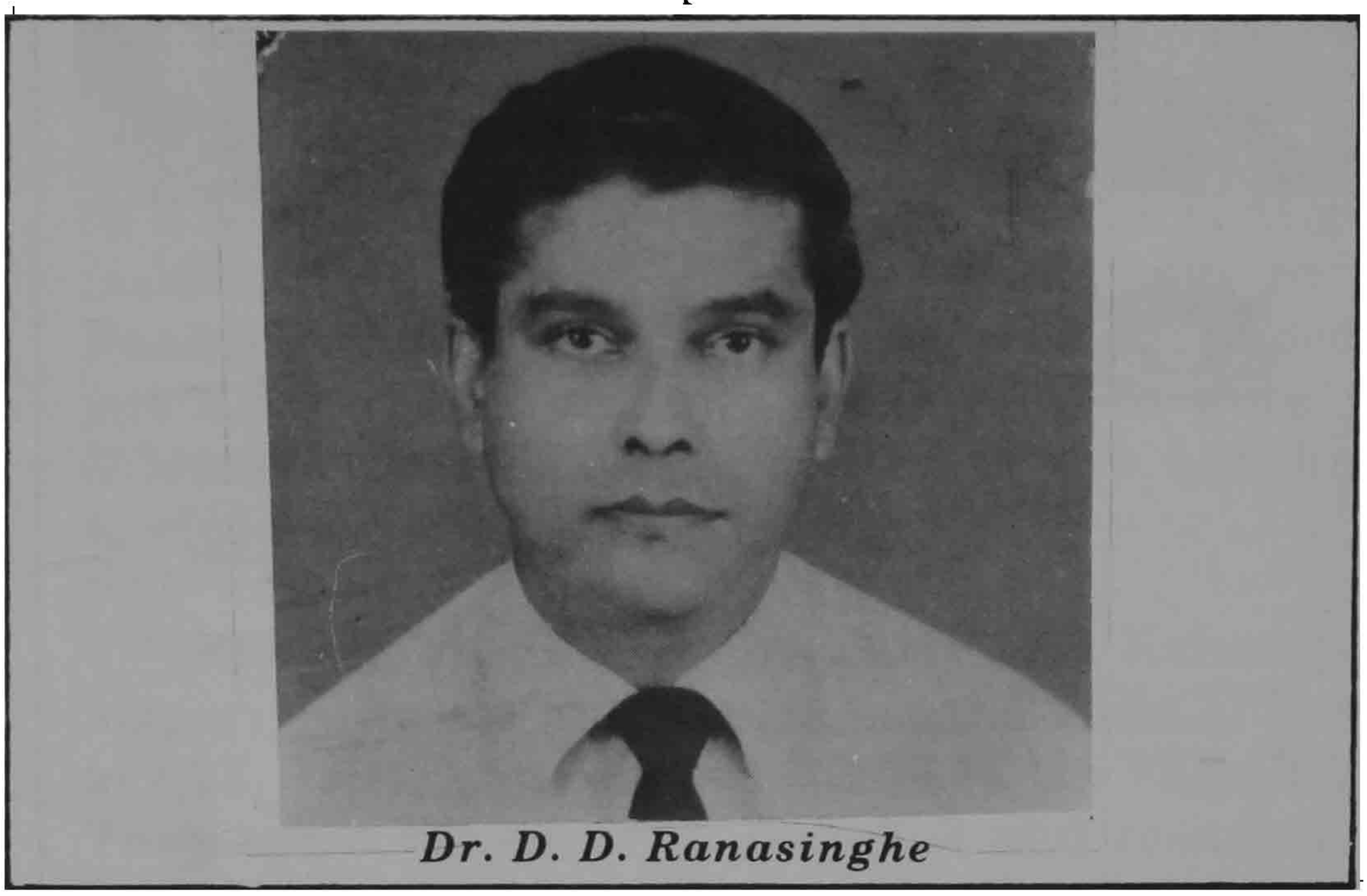
The Government of the Union of Myanmar further deems it an honour to offer the round-trip airtickets and all necessary arrangements for Your Holiness' stay in Yangon.

In supplication, herewith the observance of my unreserved respects and submission.

(Lt. Gen. Phone Myint)
Minister for Home and Religious Affairs
Government of the Union of Myanmar.

Lt. Gen. Phone Myint and his letter inviting Rahula Thera to Burma

At the top of the terminal building, the Buddhist flag and the national flag of Burma, were fluttering. Burma is a country with a Buddhist majority and a small per centage of Hindus and Muslims. It is no exaggeration to say that almost the whole of Burma was waiting eagerly to welcome Rahula Thera on that historic day. It is customary for the Burmese people to pay their highest respect and honour to Aggamahapanditas.



Dr. D. D. Ranasinghe

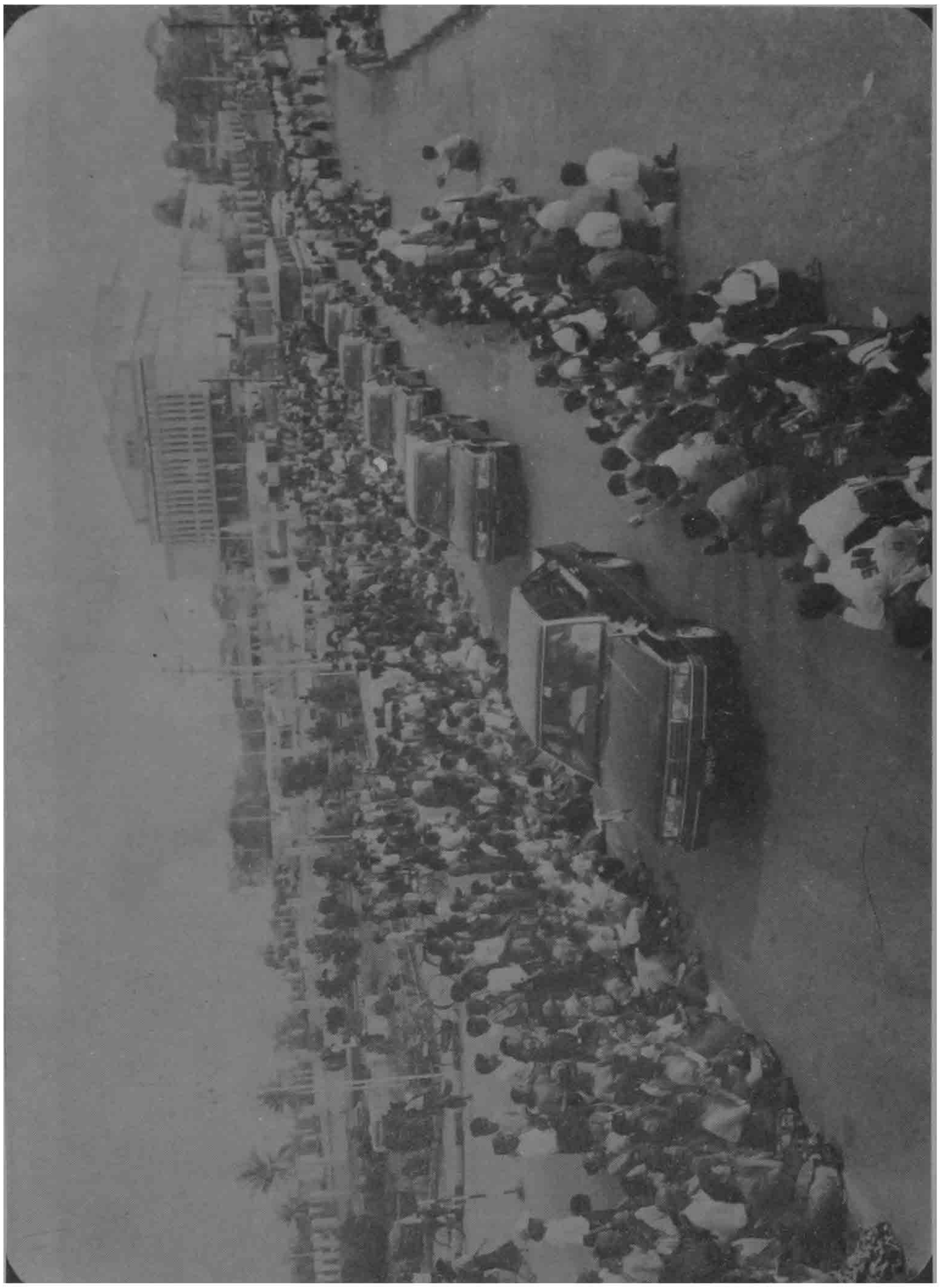
Besides the decorations, all the other customs and rituals to welcome Rahula Thera, were similar to those meant for the royalty, with age-old folk music in the background. Government Ministers, Chiefs of the security forces and the Buddhist leaders were all preset to welcome the visiting monk.

After a short welcome inside the terminal building, the procession to the Manohari Temple, where Rahula Thera was to stay, started. On either side of the four-mile route, from the airport to Manohari, were huge pandals and other traditional decorations.

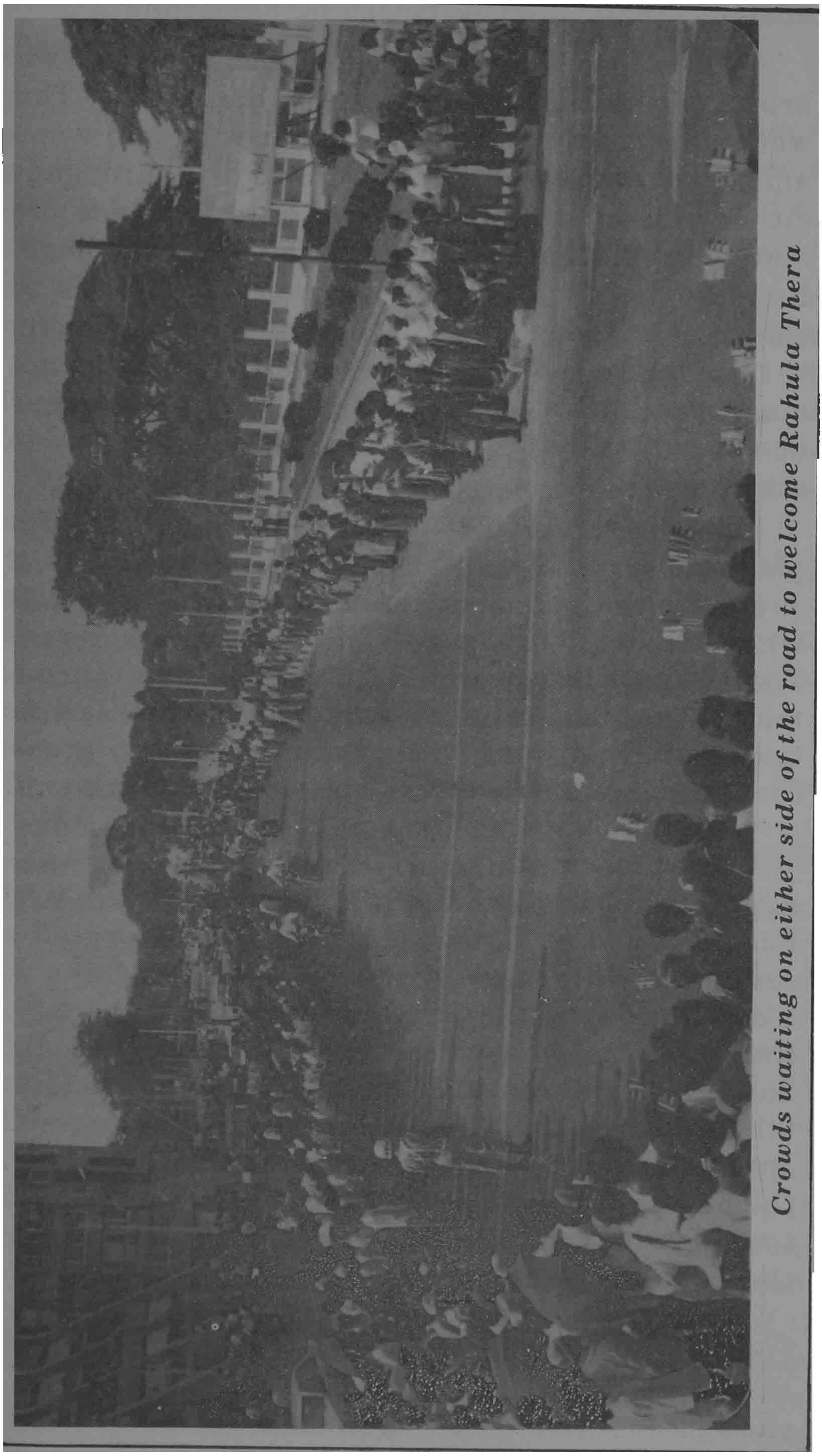
At the head of the procession was a beautifully decorated line of floats, in which all the occupants were dressed in the attires worn during the time of

From Burma: Title of Aggamahapandita, with ...

State officials receiving Rahula Thera at Rangoon Airport



The motorcade from Rangoon Airport



Crowds waiting on either side of the road to welcome Rahula Thera

ancient kings.

When observing *sil*, the devotees in Burma wear brown cloths, and not white as in Sri Lanka. There were thousands of such brown-clad men and women among the estimated 120,000 crowd that thronged on either side of the road. Barefooted devotees prostrated on the dusty ground and paid their homage to Rahula Thera. Though there were thousands and thousands of people waiting on either side of the road to have a glimpse of the great monk, there was not a single policeman to control the crowd. That clearly demonstrated how discipplined the Burmese people are.

Among those who waited at the Manohari Temple to welcome Rahula Thera was Prof. U Ko Ley, the Professor of Chemistry at the Mandalay University, who translated Rahula Thera's *What the Buddha Taught* into Burmese. By that time the Burmese translation had seen serveral editions. Rahula Thera tried to have a word with almost everybody present there, or at leat, to express his goodwill with a smile.

The ceremony to confer the title of Aggamahapandita on Rahula Thera took place in the Pasana Guha at Kabaaye, which was decorated according to the ancient traditions. Pasana Guha was a carbon copy of the Saptaparni Guha at the city of Rajagaha in Magadha, India, where the first Sangayana was held. In 1954, the then Prime Minister of Burma, U Nu, built the Pasana Guha for the specific purpose of holding the sixth Sangayana. At the beginning of the ceremony, *pan sil* was administered by the Ven. Bhadanta Sobhita, the patron of the Sangha Council of Burma.

The chief organiser, Phone Myint, who was also the Minister for Home and Religious Affairs, made the address of welcome. After that, Lt. General Khan

Munk, addressed the gathering and introduced Rahula Thera.

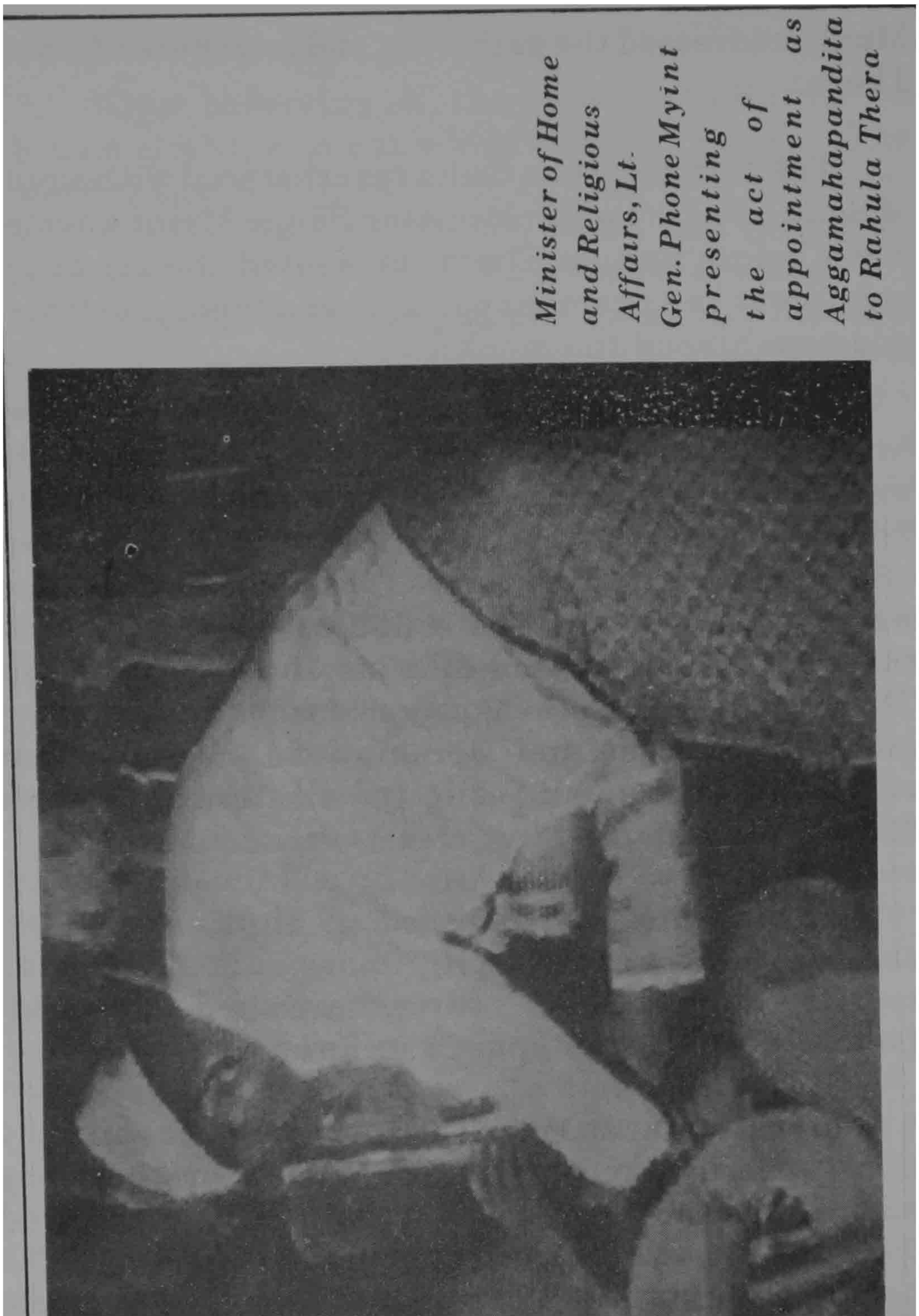
The entire Pasana Guha reverberated with sound of *Sadu! Sadu!!* when Minister Phone Myint kneeled down before Rahula Thera, presented the act of appointment as Aggamahapandita, and then, prostrated and worshipped the monk.

At the end of the ceremony, when Rahula Thera came out of the hall, thousands of other devotees who were waiting outside, paid their obeisance to the Thera with continuous *Sadu! Sadu!!* The devotees offered him with whatever was possible. Some women were seen removing the valuable gold ornaments they were wearing, and offering them to the Maha Thera, while some others dropped coins and currency notes at his feet and worshipped. The Burmese officials picked up and collected all those on Rahula Thera's behalf.

After the investiture ceremony, the Burmese Government had arranged a pilgrimage-cum-sightseeing tour for Rahula Thera. First, he visited the world-famous Shwe Dagon Pagoda in Rangoon.

It is the first stupa in the world, and was built by the Tapassu and Bhalluka merchant-brothers, by enshrining the *kesa dhathu* (hair relics), received from the Buddha himself, during his life tim. The height of the stupa is 326 feet and the golden pinnacle weighs 27 tons.

When Rahula Thera visited the Shwe Dagon Pagoda, he was received by the trustees of the temple and an *ata pirikara* was offered. After that, he went round and studied the place in detail. One of the special attractions there, was the 49-ton giant bell made out of mixed metal. It is considered a great fortune for any Buddhist to get a chance to chime that



Minister of Home Affairs and Religious Affairs, Lt. Gen. Phone Myint presenting the act of appointment as Aggamahapandita to Rahula Thera

အဂ္ဂမဟာပဏ္ဍိတဘဲ၀ံတော်

ဗိရုဏ်ဆွယ်ခေါ်ကျော်ကြား၊ ဂန္ဓရုပ်ဝေဟာရသို့၊ မဟာဒဿနရုဟဏ်၊ ပဒေသရဇ်ဘွဲ့ဝိသေသရာဇာရုဝါး၊ လင်္ကာ ပေသလ သီဟကာကမ စသော ဂုဏ်တို့ဖြင့် ပြည့်စုံတော်မူသော သီဟိုဠ်ကျောင်ဒိုင်ဦး၊ ကိုယ်တော်ဘုန်းတေဇာ

ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာသိုင်းကျော်ကြားတိုင်းရင်းသား

ဆရာတော်ဘဒ္ဒန္တရာဟုလာ

ဘုရင်ခြေတော်အား သာသနာတော်နှစ်-၂၃၀၄၊ ကောဇာသက္ကရာဇ် ၁၃၄၂-ခုနှစ်၊ ပြာသိုလပြည့်ကြော် ၅-ရက်၊ (၁၉၄၁-ခုနှစ်၊ ခန်နုဝါရီလ ၃-ရက်) သောကြာနေ့တွင် အဂ္ဂမဟာပဏ္ဍိတ ဘွဲ့တံဆိပ်တော်ကို ဆက်ကပ်ပူဇော်ခြင်းပါသည်။

၄၈၆

ဦးဥဒေါက် ပြည်ဝယ်ပိုစာအုပ် တည်ဆောက်ရေးအသင်း

Aggamahapandita: The act of appointment in Burmese

bell at least once in lifetime. Rahula Thera, chimed the bell, three times, and remained silent for a few seconds, as if in a trance.

From Shwe Dagon, Rahula Thera visited the Maha Vijaya Vihara, a recently built temple. In 1980, the Burmese Government built it for the sole purpose of uniting the bhikkhus, who were divided into various sects. Marble statues of all the Buddhas

of the present *kalpa* are the main attraction of that temple. In addition, there are gold carvings and paintings with a difference.

Botha Taun Maha Vihara, where there is a stupa built by enshrining the hair relics of the Buddha, was the next place Rahula Thera visited.

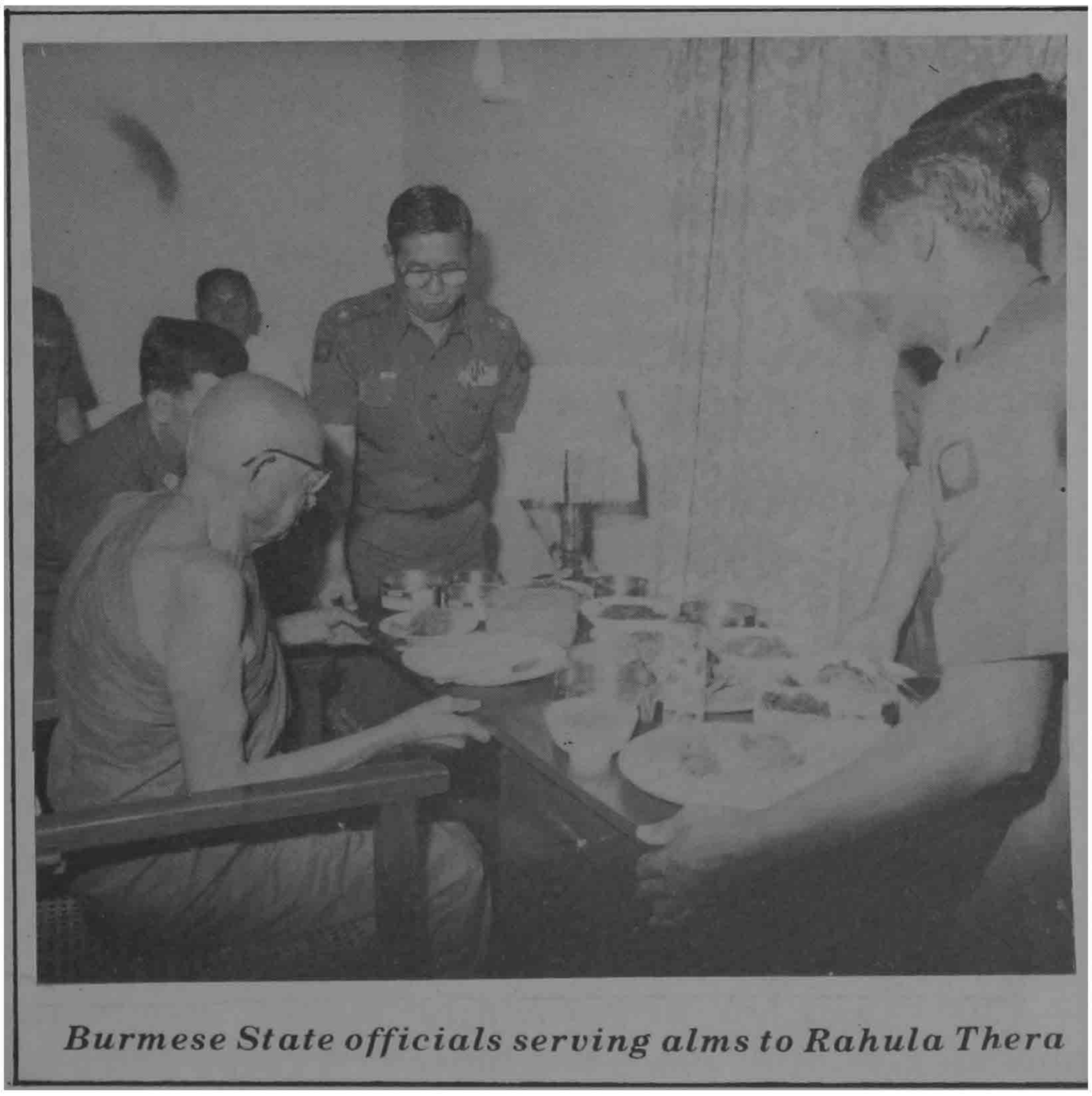
In the same afternoon, at the Jambudipa Hall, there was a meeting of scholars, where Rahula Thera answered many a complicated questions on Dhamma. Afterwards, he made a special lecture in English,

Special Watapatha for Aggamahapandita

which was interpreted into Burmese by an eminent Burmese scholar.

Pariyatti Sasana University in Rangoon is solely meant for Buddhist monks, and when Rahula Thera went there, he was comparing and contrasting that university with his own creation, namely, the Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka.

From Rangoon, Rahula Thera was due to visit the city of Pagan, some 400 miles away, on the Irrawaddy river valley. 16 sq. mile Pagan is a city contemporaneos with the Polonnaruwa period in Sri Lanka. At the beginning, there had been 4000 Buddhist monasteries there, but, only 2217 remain today.



Burmese State officials serving alms to Rahula Thera

From the Mingaladon Air Force base in Rangoon, Rahula Thera was flown by a special plane to Pagan. There, the first temple he visited was Shwe Sigon. The stupa there, is built by enshrining a replica of the tooth relic of the Buddha, presented by a Sri Lankan king, and a collar-bone of the Buddha. The other places of worship he visited in Pagan were Dhammasangi Stupa, Gachchapalin Stupa, Maha Bodhi Vihara, Ananda Vihara, Chulamani Vihara, and Sabbannu Vihara. In addition to those, he visited the Archaeological Museum too.

The next destination of the Air Force plane, carrying Rahula Thera, was Mandalay, the ancient capital of Burma. After welcoming at the airport, the Thera was conducted to the city in a beautifully decorated motorcade. The pandals on the way prominently displayed the Pali sentence: *Pujema Maha Thera Garavena*, meaning, "We welcome the Maha Thera with great respect". The time allocated for the motorcade to reach the city was 20 minutes, but, in fact, it took 3 1/2 hours. The reason was that the road was blocked by thousands of devotees who were trying to get a glimpse of the great monk and pay their obeisance to him by prostrating on the dusty road.

In Mandalay, Rahula Thera first visited the Shwe Kiming Vihara, built by the Burmese king who reigned from 1112 to 1167 A. D. The solid gold Buddha statue was the main attraction there. Then, he went to Kiyawuktaug Maha Vihara, where there are 729 marble plaques on which the complete Pali Tripitaka is carved. At each plaque, there is a miniature stupa.

From Mandalay Rahula Thera flew back to Rangoon and continued his pilgrimage.

Bogo was the next town he visited, where the ancient Kymoto Vihara is situated. A stupa had been

Mr. & Mrs. Edirisinghe
Albert Edirisinghe
and Mr. & Mrs.
Lakshman Kinigama
in front of Shwe
Dagon Pagoda

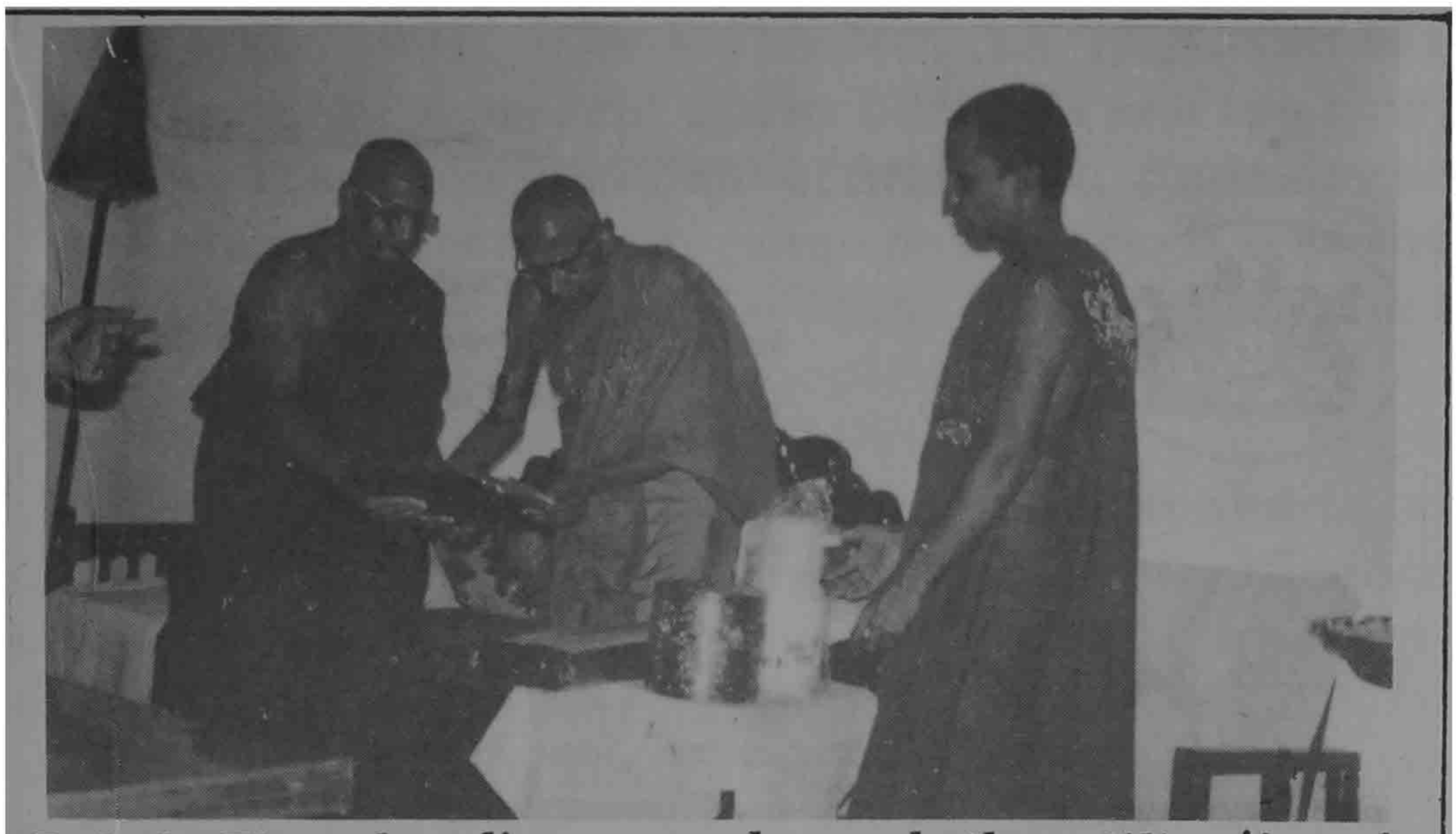
built there in 825 A. D., enshrining the hair relics of the Buddha and a replica of the tooth relic. The original height of the stupa was only 75 feet. But, the kings of the later periods, improved the stupa on a number of occasions, and its present height is 375 feet.

Mahasedi is another stupa Rahula Thera visited. A replica of the tooth relic of the Buddha, presented by a diplomatic mission from Sri Lanka that visited Burma in 1576, has been enshrined in it.

In 1476, there was a crisis among the bhikkhus in Burma, for there were no facilities to obtain Higher Ordination. At that juncture, a group of bhikkhus came to Sri Lanka and obtained Higher Ordination at the Kalyani Nadi Seema On their return journey, the Burmese bhikkhus took some sand from the Kelani River. Spreading that sand on the ground, a Seema Malaka was built over it, and today, it is known as Kalyani Sima Malaka. In close proximity to that is the Se Modo Vihara, built by King Dhammasedi. When Rahula Thera visited that temple, he was able to see an exhibition of ephigraphs and other items of archaelogical value.

Kya Khan Wyne Temple is also one of the ancient seats of learning in Burma. There are thousands of bhikkhus receiving their education at that institute, which is similar to a Pirivena in Sri Lanka. There was a large number of outside bhikkhus too, present there, to listen to the lecture delivered by Rahula Thera.

Rahula Thera spent ten days in Burma, and during that period, visited Buddhist places of worship, had Dhamma discussions with the scholars and delivered special lectures.



Rahula Thera handing over robes and other utility items to Kumbukkadaṇwaḷa Sri Dheerananda Nayaka Thera to be distributed among the small scale temples in the Polonnaruwa area.

Besides such items like robes and jewellery, the full amount of cash offered to him by the devotees was 93,300 Burmese *kyats*, which was about 681,317 in Sri Lankan rupees. Rahula Thera handed over all the valuable items and the cash to the Head of State, General Saw Maung, requesting him to make use of them for some kind of meritorious deed.

Out of the other items brought to Sri Lanka, the major portion of robes and other utility items were distributed among some 56 small scale temples in the Polonnaruwa area. The items suitable for *Dhathu Mandira* were handed over to Vidyalankara Pirivena and Bellanwila Temple.

Some time after Rahula Thera returned to Sri Lanka, the Burmese Head of State, in a letter said that his contributions were gifted to Maha Vijaya Vihara in Rangoon to be utilized for its welfare.

In order to appreciate the great services of Rahula Thera, a public meeting was held at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall in Colombo

Chairman
State Law and Order Restoration Council
Union of Myanmar

Dated.10th September ,1991
Yangon, Myanmar.

Venerable Badanta Rahula,

I, dagadaw Senior General Saw Maung sends you my profound respects. We all, in Myanmar wish you health and well being.

I presume that you have had a very successful trip to Korea in performance of the duties bestowed by the Ssana. For this meritions deed, allow us to call ' Sadhu ' three times in your name,O' Badanta. To see the Sasana flourish is our wish, and we also have endeavoured here to this end a great deal.

We in Myanmar are also very honoured to hear that you wish to be born in our country if you are to have another life.

We have always remembered the graciousness that you bestowed on us during your visit here. I would like to inform you that your donation to the Mahawizaya Chedi will be performed with a special ceremony in your name by Major Genearl Myo Nyunt. The ' Dahna ' shall be carried out such that you shall be remembered for this deed and 'Sahdu' called by all the people who come to the Pagoda.

With profound respects,

(Saw Maung)
Senior General
Union of Myanmar

Letter to Rahula Thera from Saw Maung, the Burmese Head of State

on July 23, 1991. The Maha Nayaka Theras of the three sects were present at the occasion and the chief guest was the then President of Sri Lanka, Ranasinghe Premadasa. According to some observers, it was the first time in the history of that hall such a vast gathering of bhikkhus was accomodated.

The conferment of the title Aggamahapandita on the Ven. Walpola Rahula is of special significance because of two reasons. One was, that he had rendered no service to Burma, but the Burmese authorities had taken into consideration his supreme service to the world as a whole. The other important reason was that it was the first time this prestigious title was conferred on a bhikkhu of the Siamese sect.

32

VISITING BOROBUDUR IN INDONESIA

By the year 1993. Walpola Rahula Thera had visited almost all the important Buddhist places of worship, or of historical value. But, one of the most important places he had missed was the Borobudur stupa in Java, Indonesia.

The Ven. Dr. Kirinde Dhammananda, the Chief Sanghanayaka of Malaysia, returned to sri Lanka in 1993, for a spell of short period of time. He was staying at the Buddhist Cultural Centre at Nedimalà, Dehiwala, run by Kirama Wimalajoti Thera. One day, when Rahula Thera visited the Centre, he had a pleasant chat with Dhammananda Thera. While in conversation, Rahula Thera inquired from Dhammananda Thera whether the latter could arrange a visit to Borobudur.

"Though Borobudur is in Malaysia's neighbouring country, Indonesia, I too have never visited that place. Let us go together. I will bear all the expenses," said Dhammananda Thera.

Three other bhikkhus, namely, Mapalagama Vipulasara, Kakkapalliye Anuruddha and Bellanwila Wimalaratana, who were there, expressed their desire to join the trip and Dhammananda Thera agreed to make all facilities for them too.

Borobudur is the largest Buddhist stupa in the world. It is on the top of a hill in the Kedu Valley, south of Jogjakarta in the Java island. This wonderful stupa was built in the 8th century by the kings of the Sailendra Dynasty, when Indonesia was a Buddhist country.

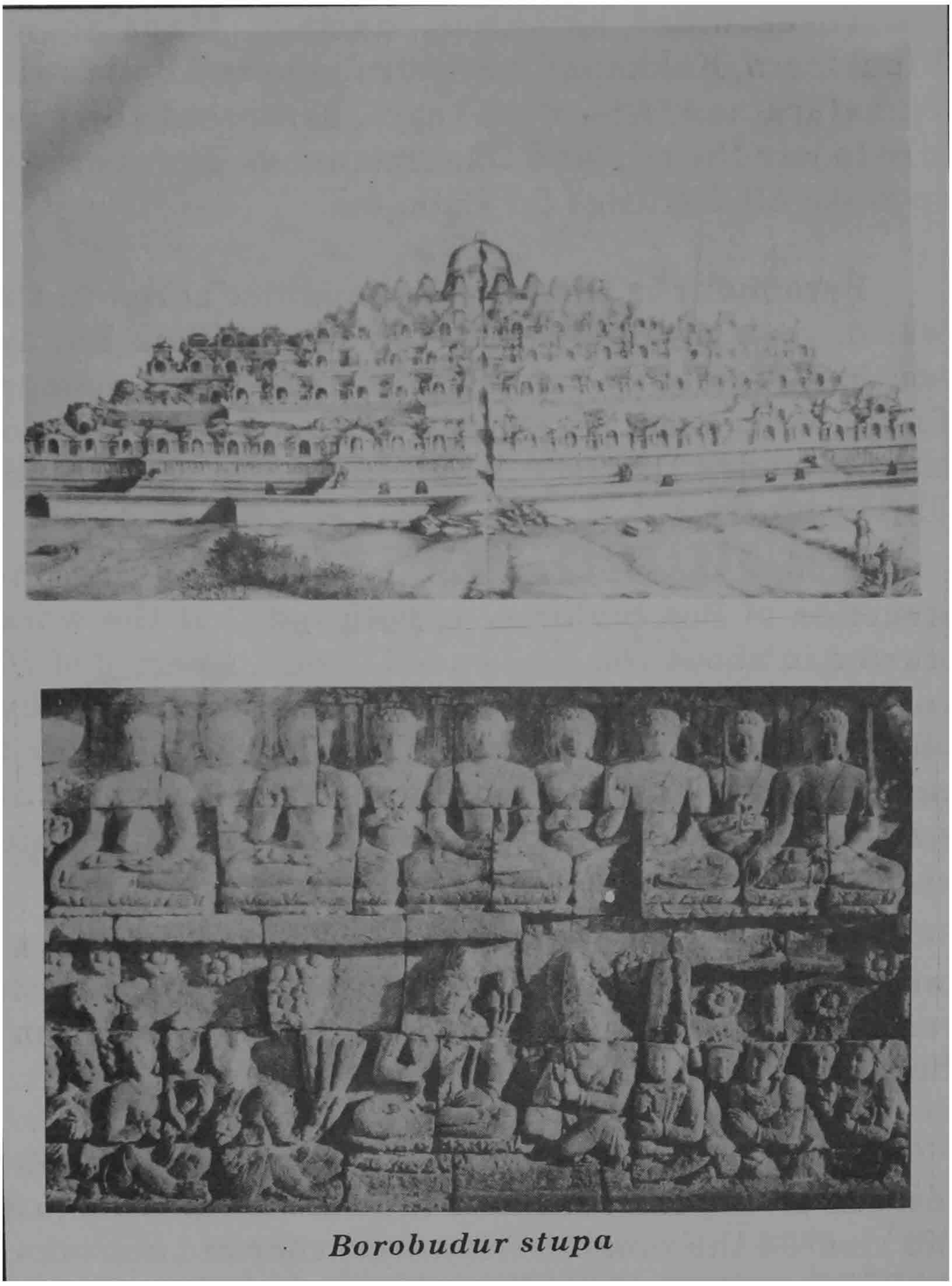
Though there is no clear history behind the construction of Borobudur, it is believed that the work started in about 760, and ended in 830, a period of 70 years. This wonderful work has been completed by placing together more than a million polished and carved stone slabs between one yard and four yards in size. All the stupas and statues there depict the life of the Buddha and Buddhist philosophy.

With the Buddhist civilization in Java dying a natural death in about 9th centuray, the glory that was Borobudur was neglected and disappered from the scene as a result of thick jungle growing over it.

The colonial rulers who came into power in Indonesia in later years, realised the value of Borobudur and cleared the jungles. However, they did not take much interest in renovating the place.

The Muslim rulers, who govern Indonesia today, realised the historical and religious value of Borobudur and decided to restore it to the former glory. As a result of a request made by the Indonesian Government, the UNESCO too joined the venture.

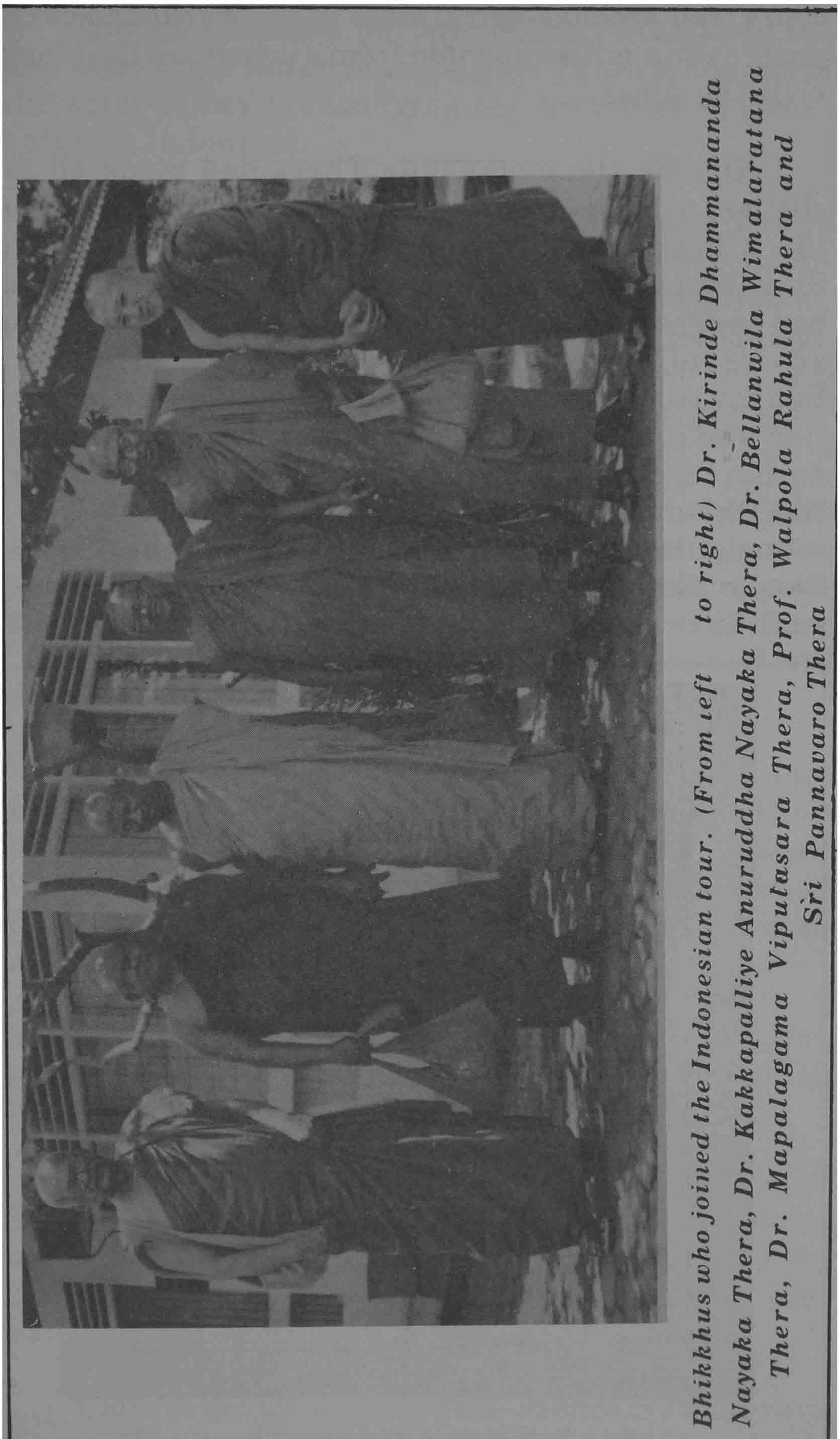
During the ten year rehabilitation period from 1973 to 1983, major part of Borobudur was closed to



Borobudur stupa

the public. The sum spent on rehabilitation was 25 million US Dollars. Out of this amount, 6.5 million US Dollars was received as foreign aid and the rest was spent by the Indonesian Government.

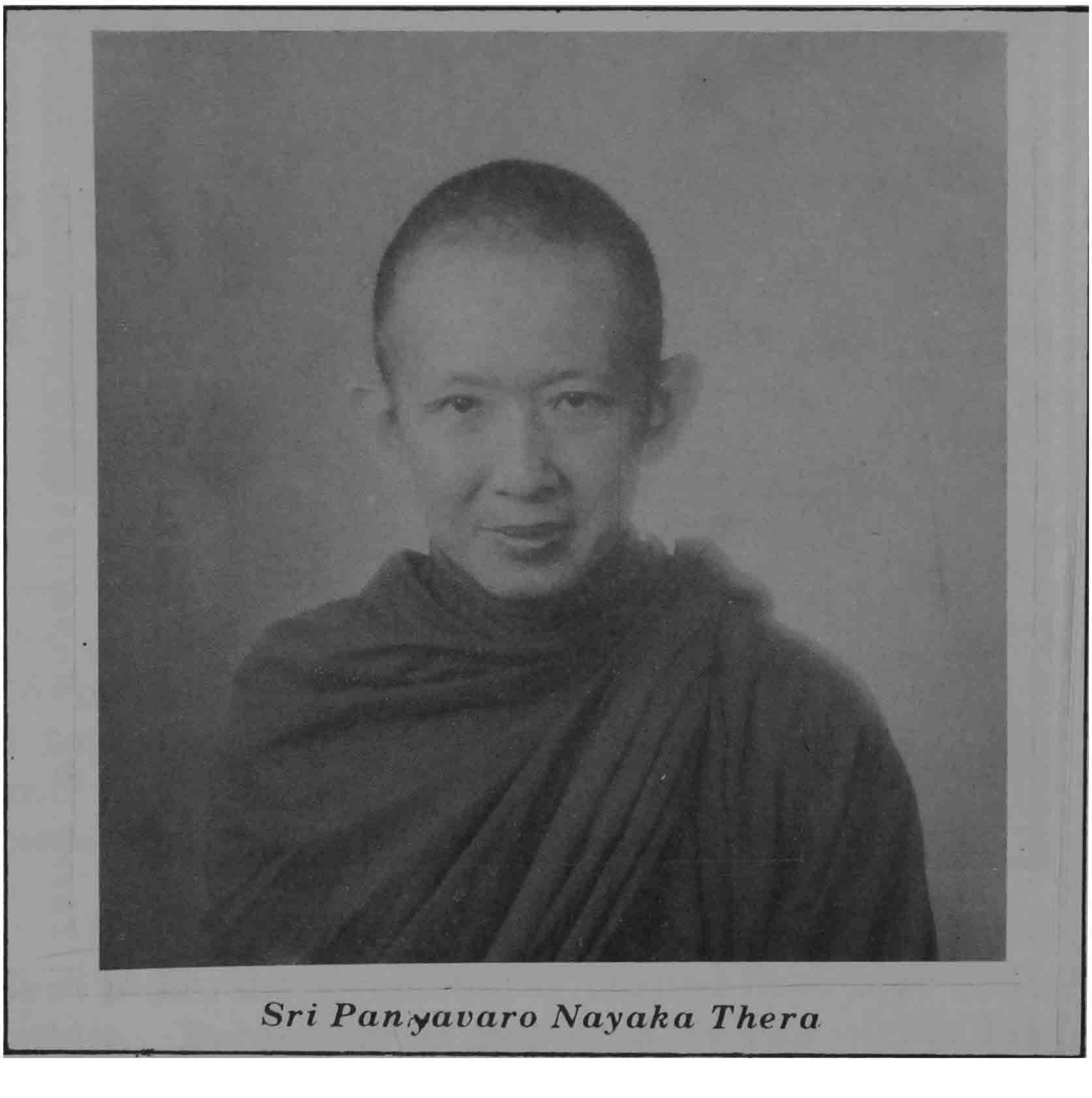
After the full rehabilitation, the Indonesian President Suhartho ceremonially opened Borbudur to the public. Borobudur is regarded as one of the best



Bhikkhus who joined the Indonesian tour. (From left to right) Dr. Kirinde Dhammananda Nayaka Thera, Dr. Kakkapalliye Anuruddha Nayaka Thera, Dr. Bellanwila Wimalatana Thera, Prof. Walpola Rahula Thera and Dr. Mapalagama Vipulasara Thera, Prof. Weragoda Sri Pannavaro Thera

conserved archaeological sites in the world and every year over a million people from all parts of the world visit the place.

Kirinde Dhammananda Thera had made all facilities, with his own expense, for Rahula Thera and the other three bhikkhus to fly from Colombo to Singapore. Beyond Singapore, all responsibilities had been undertaken by the Buddhists of Java, on the advice of the Maha Nayaka of Java, the Ven. Panyavaro who hails from Java, and had his education and ordination in Thailand. After Higher Ordination in Thailand he had returned to Java to start the Dhammacakka Vihara at Djakarta. On a request made by Kirinde Dhammananda Thera, Panyavaro Thera had undertaken to bear the responsibilities regarding Rahula Thera and the party.



Sri Panyavaro Nayaka Thera

Visiting Borobudur in Indonesia

Though the main purpose of the visit was to see and worship at Borobudur, Rahula Thera made use of the opportunity for studying the Buddhist re-awakening in Indonesia.

Though Indonesia had a Buddhist and Hindu civilization some centuries ago, today it is predominantly a Muslim country. However, besides Islam, the Indonesian Government has recognised Buddhism, Hinduism, Protestantism and Catholisism. Out of a population of 185 million, three per cent are Buddhists and Hindus.

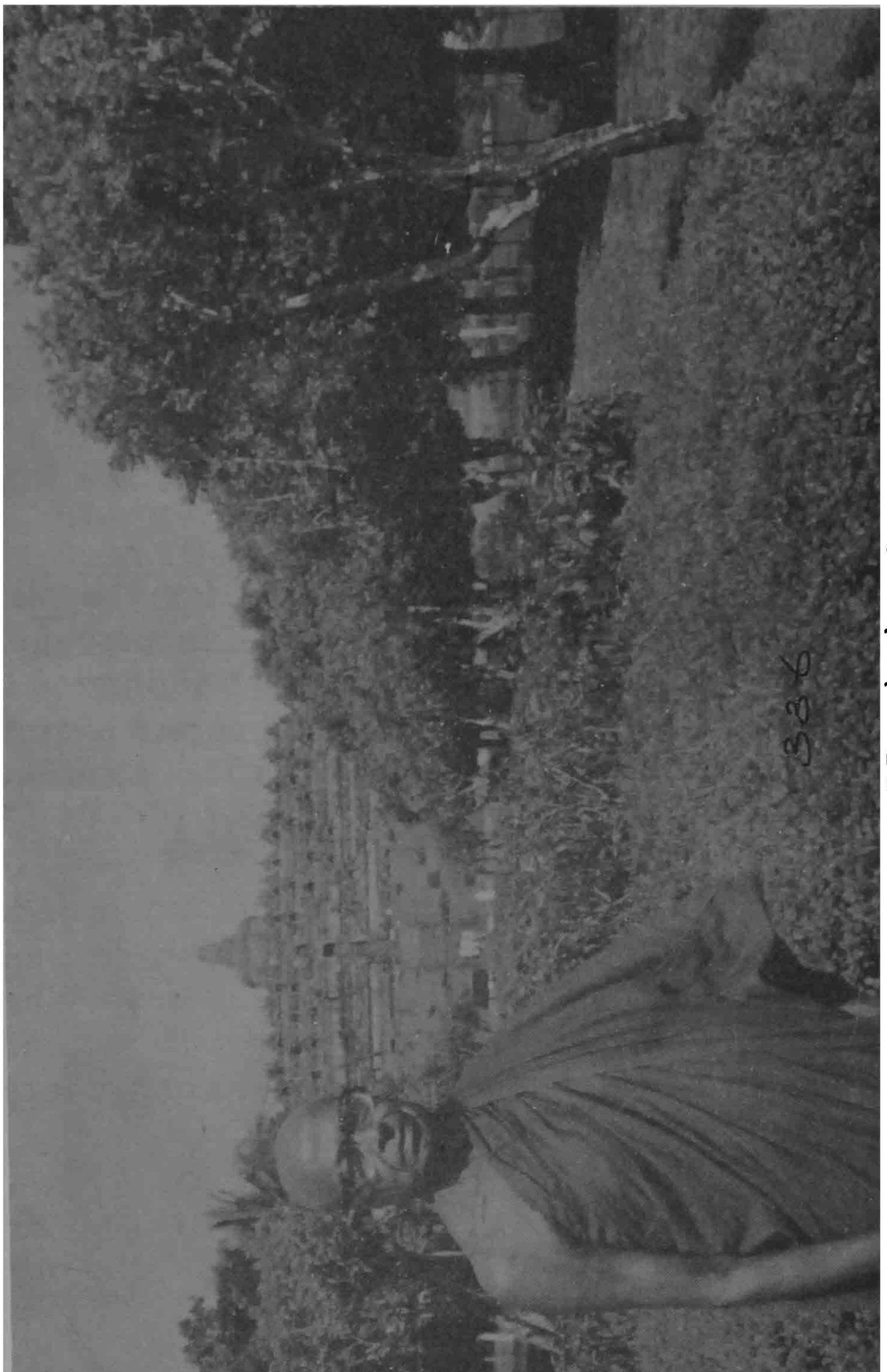
Rahula Thera has much praise for the Ven. Narada Maha Thera, who was the Chief Incumbent of the Vajiraramaya, Colombo, for his Buddhist missionary work in Indonesia for a long period of time: "Actually, the results of Narada Maha Thera's efforts are seen only today," says Rahula Thera.

The Wesak Poya day is a public holiday in Indonesia, and it is customary for President Suhartho and his ministers to visit Borobudur on that day. When invited for any Buddhist function, Suhartho attends it with much pleasure. Some time ago, he had planted a *Bo* sappling at a Budhhist temple.

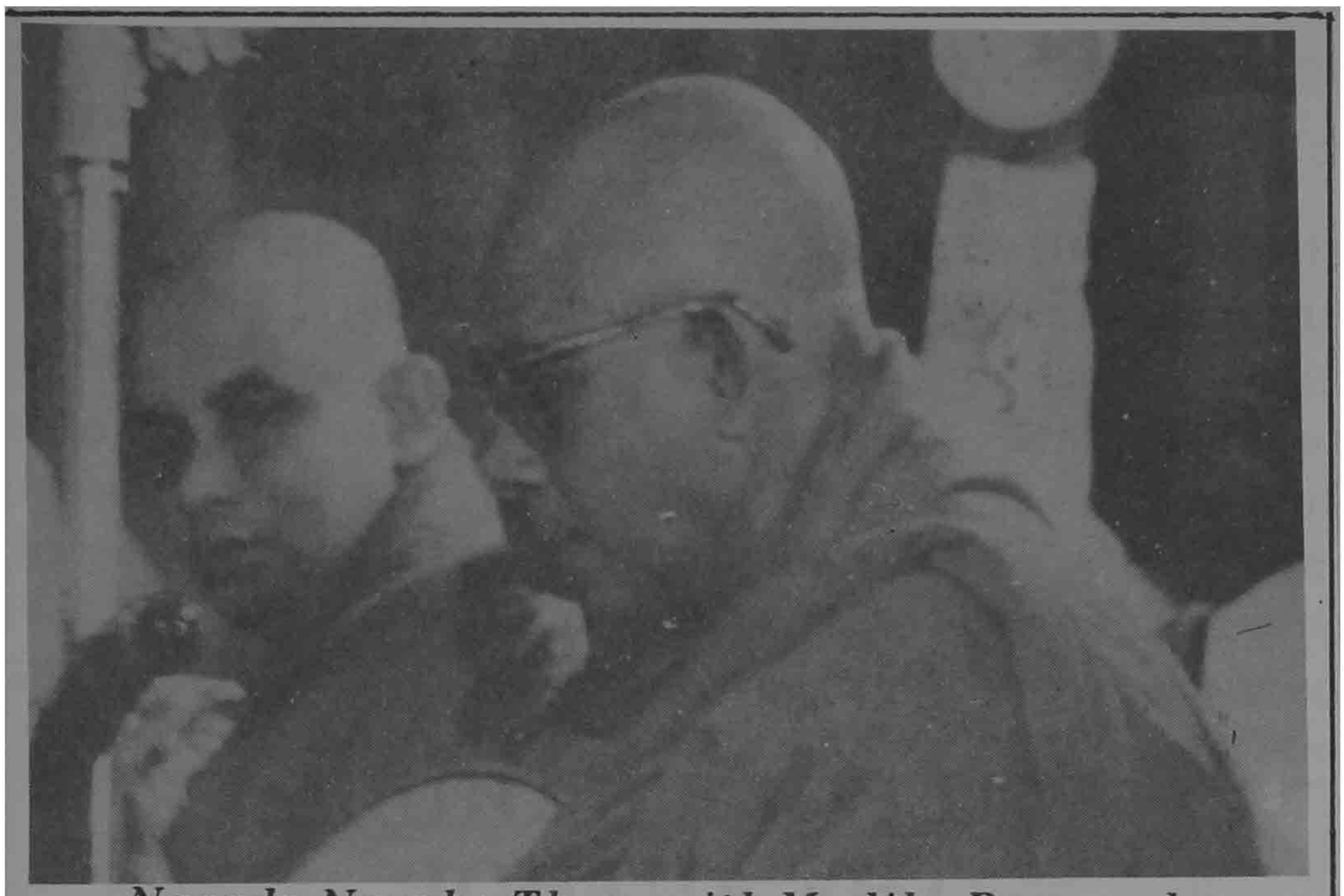
When Panynavaro Thera goes round for *pindapata*, it is not only the Buddhists who offer alms, but also the Muslims.

Says Rahula Thera: "Unlike most of the other Muslim countries, a great feature in the Indonesian culture is the religious tolerance. It may be due to the predominant Buddhist and Hindu culture that prevailed there during the early times."

Close to the Dhammacakka Vihara of Panyavaro Thera, there is an up-to-date library built in memory



Rahula Thera in front of Borobudur stupa



Narada Nayaka Thera with Madihe Pannseeha Maha Nayaka Thera

of Narada Maha Thera. While going round that library, Rahula Thera picked up a volume of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, turned to the letter B and showed the article on Buddha. All were delighted to see that the world authority who had written that article was no less a person than Walpola Rahula Thera.

According to Rahula Thera, Buddhism is resurging in Indonesia. Though Indonesia is economically sound, facilities for education - especially the Buddhist education - are not very satisfactory. Under the circumstances, he points out, that it is paramount on the part of Sri Lanka to provide facilities for a few novices from Indonesia to have their Buddhist education in Sri Lanka. Already four novices are in Sri Lanka for their education, two at the Bellanwila Temple and another two at Parama Dhamma Chethiya Pirivena, Ratmalana. Two more were to be admitted to Vidyalankara Pirivena, Kelaniya, according to Rahula Thera.

WALPOLA RAHULA: THE AUTHOR

Though I have made passing references to Rahula Thera's books in some of the previous chapters, I wish to devote a separate chapter on Walpola Rahaula, the author.

Rahula Thera wrote his first book in 1932, at the age of 25. That book, *Uttama Pujava*, was written as a result of a request made by two of his devotees. One day, A. D. Emaliyanu and M. Marshal, two members of the Sri Vaishakhotsawa Dana Society at Pamunuwa, came to see Rahula Thera at Sailaramaya, Dematagoda, and requested him to write a book to be printed for free distribution on the Wesak day of that year. Rahula Thera accepted the request and wrote a book criticising the wrong attitudes among the Buddhists. I am of the opinion that that book *Uttama Pujava* was the embryo of the *Satyodaya Patrikas*, which Rahula Thera wrote for free distribution in later years.

Uttama Pujava, was a small book, 5 1/2 inches by 4 1/2 inches in size. It consisted of 13 printed

pages, without the cover, and was printed at the Epa Printing Press, 279, Leyards Broadway, Colombo.

After the *Uttama Pujava* was out in 1932, Rahula Thera had tried his hand on another experiment in writing books, with *Satyodaya Patrika*. To a certain extent, *Satyodaya Patrikas* could be describesd as booklets. Like in the *Uttama Pujava*, the aim of the *Satyodaya Patrikas* was to criticise the worng concepts of the Buddhists, so that they would try to deviate from them. *Satyodaya Patrikas* were written in the question and answer form. Devotees ask ques-

වෙසක් දහම් පඬුර.

උත්තම පූජාව.

ගාල්ලේ පරගොඩ රාජමහාවිහාරාධිපති
ශ්‍රීමත් දීඝනාම
පඤ්ඤාසෙඛර මහාස්ථවිරයන්

වහන්සේගේ සුවච ශිෂ්‍ය
දෙමටගොඩ ශෛලාරාම වාසී
රාහුල සවාමීන් වහන්සේ
විසින් ලියන ලදී.

පමුණුවිල
ශ්‍රී වෛශාඛොත්සව දාන සමිතිය
මගින්
නොමිලයේ බෙදාදීම පිණිස
කොළඹ ලෙයාර්ඩ්ස්බ්‍රෝඩ්වේ
නො: 279 දරණ ඇපා මුද්‍රණාලයෙහි
අච්චුගස්වා ප්‍රසිද්ධ කරණ ලදී.

1932.

"Uttama Pujava"

සත්‍යෝදය පත්‍රිකා අඩංක 4.

භික්ෂූන්ගේ කුලභේදය.

(රහුල ස්වාමීන් වහන්සේ විසිනි.)

කුලභේදයට බුද්ධශාසනයෙහි කිසිත් අවසරයක් නැති බැව් ඉර හඳ මෙන් ප්‍රකට සත්‍යයකි. නො ගිණිය හැකි තරම් දීර්ඝකාල යක පටන් දඹදිව බල පැවැත් වූ කුලභෙදය බුදුරජාණන් වහන්සේ පයට පැගෙන දූවිලි තරම් වත් නො සැලකූ සේක. බ්‍රහ්මණ, ක්ෂත්‍රිය, වෛශ්‍ය, ශූද්‍ර සියල්ලන් මහණ කොට, කිසිත් වෙනසක් නැති ව එකට ජීවත් වන්නට, එකට කෑම්, පීම්, ඉඳුම්, හිටුම් කරන්නට සැලස් වූ සේක. රජගහ නුවර සුනීත නම් චණ්ඩාලයා (රොඩියා, පංචමයා) වැසිකිළි සහ කැළිකසළ ශුද්ධකරන්නෙක් විය. පිඬු සිහා වඩින බුදුරජාණන් වහන්සේට දිනක් ඔහු මුණ ගැසුණේය. **උන්වහන්සේ මේ අතිශයින් ම පහත්ය සි සම්මත චණ්ඩාලයා විහාරයට කැඳවා නෙන ගොස් මහණ කළ සේක. බුදධශාසන යෙහි විනය ධරයන්ගෙන් අග්‍රස්ථානයෙහි සිටි උපාලි ස්ථවිර යන් වහන්සේ කෙස් රැවුල් කපන පනික්කියෙක් විය.** සර්ව්ඥ ශාසනය පිහිටා තිබෙන බලසම්පන්න සන්ඝයන් ගෙන් එකක් නම් ජාතිභෙදය හෝ කුලභෙදය නැති කම් සි. ඉඩ ලැබුණු හැම අවස්ථාවක ම ශාස්තෘන් වහන්සේ කුලභෙදයට විරුද්ධ ව සටන් කළ සේක. උන්වහන්සේ ගේ ජීවිතයෙන් විශාල කොටසක් මේ වෙනුවෙන් ගත කරන ලදී. කුලභෙදයට විරුද්ධ ව පවත්වන ලද දෙශනාවෝ ත්‍රිපිටකයෙහි හැම තැන ම පාහේ දක්නා ලැබෙ ත්.

නමුත් ඒ ශාස්තෘන් වහන්සේ ගේ ශ්‍රාවක සංඝයා කැවියට අද ලක්දිව පෙනී සිටින **භික්ෂූන් අතර කුලභෙදය, ගිහින් අතර මෙන් ම, නැතහොත් ඊටත් වඩා බලසම්පන්න ව ක්‍රියා කරන බැව්** කියන්නට වීම සැබැවින් ම ඉතා කනගාටු දායක සිදුවීමකි. සියම්, අමර පුර, රාමඤ්ඤ යන නිකායේ ම කුලභෙදය පවත්නා වග අප්‍රතෙන් ඉහා ගන්නා ලද්දක් නො වේ. අමරපුර රාමඤ්ඤ දෙ නිකායෙහි චාරිත්‍රයක් හැරියට කුලභෙදය නැතත්, බොහෝ තැන්වල පන්සලක්, පාසා කුලභෙදය පවත්නා බැව් නො රහසකි. **කොළඹ නගරයේ අමරපුර නිකායට අයත් හැම පන්සලක් ම පාහේ විශෙෂයෙන් සම් කිසි කුලයක භික්ෂූන් වෙනුවෙන් ඒ කුලයට අයත් දායකයන් විසින් ම හොඳ නගන ලද්දකි. මෙය බොහෝ දෙන දන්නා සත්‍යයකි. එක එක කුලයට එක එක පන්සල බැගින් පැන නැගීමේ භයානක සිරිත දැන් හැම පළාත්**

A Satyodaya Patrika"

tions and Rahula Thera answers them. Some of the *Satyodaya Patrikas* contain only Rahula Thera's views, without any questions from the devotees.

Satyodaya Patrika No. 1 had been out in December 1933, and No. 7 in Septemeber, 1934. That

appears to have been the last in the series. All were printed with the contributions from the devotees for free distribution.

In 1992, all the *Satyodaya Patrikas* were published as a book by S. Godage & Brothers, Colombo. The title given to the new book was *Satyodaya* and

consists of 81 crown octavo size pages. It was an offset print by the Chatura Printers, Wellampitiya.

Dr. H. L. Seneviratne, Professor in Anthropology at Virginia University, USA, has translated *Satyodaya* into English, and was making arrangements to publish it in the USA, at the time of writing this book.

Rahula Thera published his next book in 1936, when he was staying at Hunupitiya, Wattala, with S. Tangarajah. The book had a long name: *Sinhala Bauddha Mahajanaya Wetha Nivedanayak*, meaning, "A Message to the Sinhala Buddhist Public." Though the aim of the book had been to commemorate the Ven. Mohottiwatte Gunananda of the Panadura Debate fame, Rahula Thera appears to have taken the liberty to criticise the Kandyan Convention and the colonial rulers of Sri Lanka.

As a matter of fact, that book was a speech prepared by Rahula Thera to be broadcast over the Radio Ceylon. In his introduction to the book, dated February 20, 1936, the author said:

This speech was written on a request made by the Secretary of the Gunananda Commemoration Society, Panandura, to be broadcast over the Radio Ceylon on the 13th of this month. However, unavoidable circumstances prevented the broadcast, and I sincerely apologise to the general public for that. Now, the same speech is coming out as a book, and I believe, that it will be of use to all the people in the country."

Sinhala Bauddha Mahajanaya Wetha Niwedanayak was A-5 in size and consisted of 10 pages. It was larger than *Uttama Purjava*, and was illustrated with a photograph of the author taken at the age of about 28. The book was printed by M. D. Gunasena & Co. Ltd, Colombo.

Bhiksuvage Urumaya was the next book written by Rahula Thera. First published in 1946, it can be classed as the first book by him in the true sense of the word 'book'. As I have already explained in chapter 13, the circumstances that led to the writing of *Bhiksuvage Urumaya*, I do not wish to repeat. However, there are a few more things that I have not mentioned in that chapter.

සිංහල සහ බෞද්ධ මහාජනයා වෙත

නිවේදනයක්.

රාහුල ස්වාමින්වහන්සේ විසිනි.

බෞද්ධ වාණිජවර මොහොට්ටිවත්තේ ගුණානන්ද ස්වාමීන් වහන්සේ ගේ ශ්‍රේෂ්ඨ නාම ය සිංහල බෞද්ධයන්ට ආගමික ජාතික සටන්හි දී ධෛර්‍ය දෙන දිව්‍යමන්ත්‍රයකි, නැතහොත් යුද්ධ ගීතයකි. බෞද්ධයන්ගේ බලය හීන ව පැවැති කාලයක, බෞද්ධයන්ගේ අහිමි වාසිතම් දිනිල ව පැවැති කාලයක, ඒ බලය අපට ආපසු ලබාදීම පිණිස, ඒ දයිතිවාසිතම් අප වෙතුවෙන් රැක දීම පිණිස උන්වහන්සේ ජීවිත පූජාවෙන් දිවා රෑ දෙක්හි සටන් කළ අයුරු ලක්දිව කවුරුන් හොඳින් දනිති. උන්වහන්සේගේ සටන ලක්-දිවට පමණක් සීමා වූවක් නොවීය. උන්වහන්සේගේ ව්‍යාපාරය නිසා බැහිර නොව එක් රටවල ශ්‍රේෂ්ඨ පණ්ඩිතයන් අතර බුදු ධර්ම සම්බන්ධයෙන් ප්‍රබෝධයක් ඇති විය. ලක්දිව බෞද්ධ පාඨ-ශාලාවන් පිහිටුවීම් ආදි නොව එක් අයුරින් බෞද්ධයන්ගේ දියුණුව ව අසනාථ උදුර සේවයක් කළ කර්නල් ඔල්කොට් තුමා මෙහි පැමිණියේ ගුණානන්ද සව මීන් වහන්සේගේ දේශනාවන් කිය-වීමෙන් පසුව ය. උන්වහන්සේ සටන් කළ දිගැන්හි ලක්දිව බෞද්ධයන්ගේ තත්වය ඉතා පහත් අඩියක පැවැ බැව් ඒ කාලයේ සිදුවූ අවාසනාවන්ත, කනගාටු දායක සිද්ධීන්ගෙන් අපට හොඳින් තේරුම් ගත හැක. අද අපට මෙ පමණවත් හිස ඔසවන්නට ලැබුණේ උන්වහන්සේ එදා ආගම සහ ජාතිය වෙනුවෙන් ආත්ම පරිත්‍යාගයෙන් කළ උදුර සේවය නිසා බැව් සිතන විට උන් වහන්සේ වෙනුවෙන් අප තුළ කටගන්නා කෘතඥභාවය ඇත් තෙන්ම සීමා රහිත ය. එහෙත් අපේ මේ සීමා රහිත කෘතඥ භාවය උන්වහන්සේට අපි කෙසේ ප්‍රකාශ කෙරෙමුද?

"Sinhala Bauddha Mahajanaya Wetha Nivedanayak"

Bhiksuvage Urumaya was a crown octavo size book, and the first edition was printed in 1946 by the Swasthika Press in Colombo. The second improved edition, with illustrations and an index, was printed

by the Lanka Putra Press, Colombo in 1948. It consisted of 163 pages. Both the first and the second editions were letter-press prints and were sold out in no time.

Many intellectuals have described *Bhiksuvage Urumaya* as a book that shook Sri Lanka. When the book was out for the first time, the Ven. Yakkaduwe Pragnarama Nayaka Thera, the live-wire behind the Vidyalankara Force said: "Rahula Thera, you need not write any more books hereafter. This *Bhiksuvage Urumaya* alone is quite enough to make you immortal."

Bhiksuvage Urumaya was out of print for 44 years from 1948, and at last, a third edition was published by S. Godage & Bros., Colombo, in 1992. It was an offset print by the Chathura Printers, Wellampitiya. In an introduction to the third edition, dated November 3, 1992, Rahula Thera said:

The first edition of Bhiksuvage Urumaya was published in 1946. It was sold out in three weeks. After that, a second edition with corrections and improvements, published in 1948, was also sold out with. in a very short period.

From 1950 to 1985 I lived in Europe and America and devoted my whole time for education and research, and as a result, had no time to think of a third edition. However, in the meantime, a full translation of Bhiksuwage Urumaya was published in 1974 by the Grove Press, New York, USA, under the title The Heritage of the Bhikkhu.

When I returned to Sri Lanka to settle down, a large number of people requested me to come out with a third edition of the book. Leading among them was the Ven. Kumbukkadawala Sri Dheerananada, the

Chief Adhikarana Sangha Nayaka of the Polonnaruwa area. Mr. Gunadasa Liyanage, who had read the book in the fifties, and knew its value, personally took special interest in making the third edition a reality, and persuaded S. Godage & Bros. to publish it.

I am very grateful to all of them for their sincere endeavour

The third edition of *Bhiksuwage Urumaya* was released at a simple ceremony at Vidyalankara Pirivena, Kelaniya, on December 30, 1992.

28 years after the first publication of *Bhiksuwage Urumaya*, an English translation under the title *The Heritage of the Bhikkhu* was published by the Grove Press, New York in 1974. In a preface to that book, Rahula Thera Said·

Since the book appeared in Sinhala in 1946 under the title Bhiksuvage Urumaya, several requests were made to me to publish it in English. But I could not find time to translate it. Dr. Edmund F. Perry, Professor and Chairman of the Department of History and Literature of Religions at Northwestern University, who came to know the book when he was Visiting Professor of Comparative Religion at Vidyodaya University in Ceylon, was interested in it and assigned its translation into English to Mr. K. P. G. Wijayasurendra as a part of his program as Visiting Scholar at Northwestern University (1969-1970). But for Dr. Perry's initiative, an English version of this book would perhaps never have seen the light of the day. I am deeply grateful to him therefore, not only for this, but also for kindly taking upon himself the burden of writing a foreword at my request.

I thank Mr. Wijayasurendra for his faithful translation.

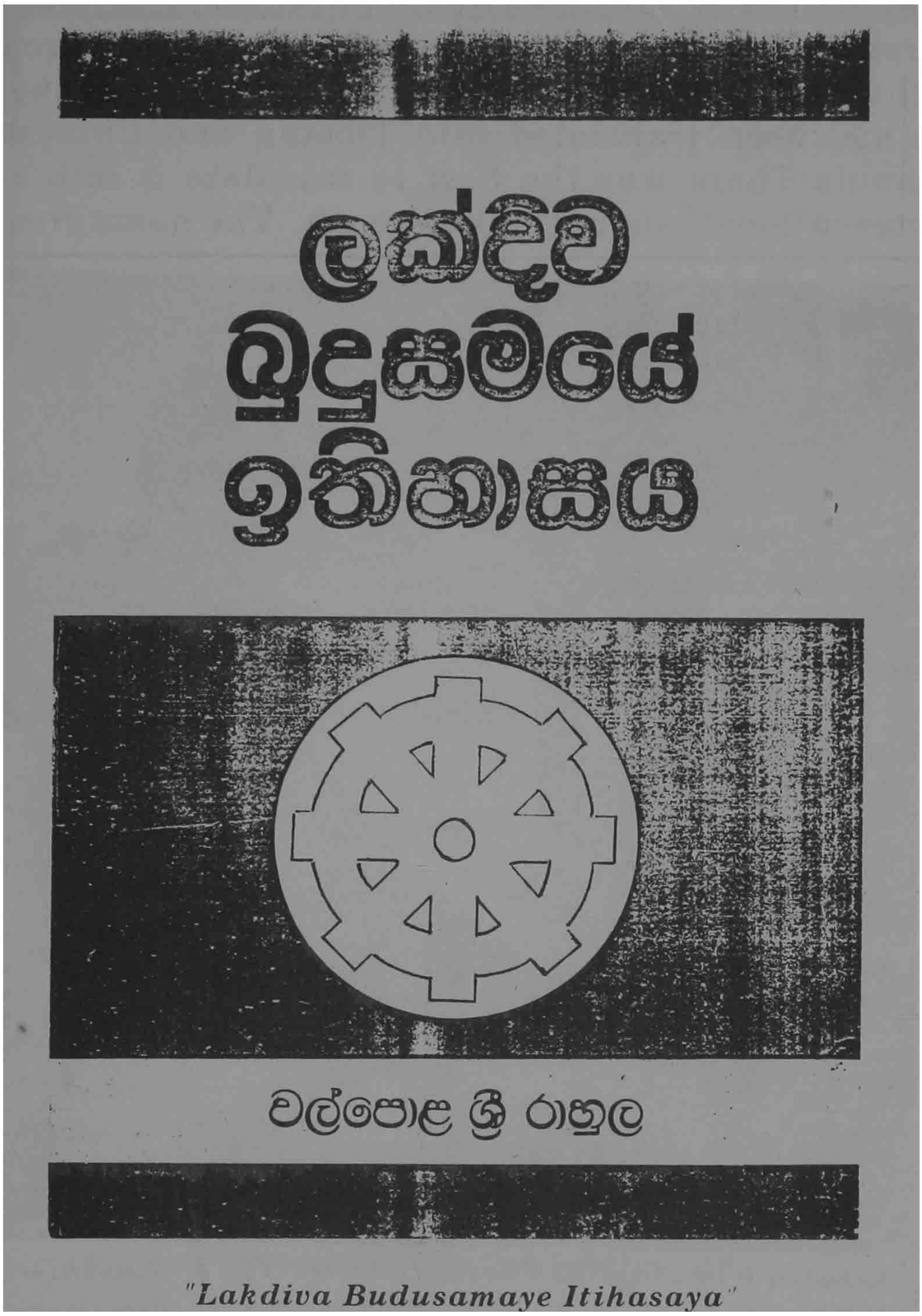
Walpola Rahula Thera's thesis for his doctorate from the University of Ceylon was *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*. It was written under the guidance of Professor Gunapala Malalasekera. M. D. Gunasena & Co. Ltd., Colombo, published it for the first time in 1956, and a second edition was out in 1966. The latest, or the third edition, was published by the Buddhist Cultural Centre, Nedimala, Dehiwala, in 1993.

History of Buddhism in Ceylon

Walpola Rahula

THE BUDDHIST CULTURAL CENTRE

"History of Buddhism in Ceylon"



"Lakdiva Budusamaye Itihasaya"

A Sinhala version of *History of Buddhism in Ceylon* was published by M. D. Gunasena & Co. Ltd. in 1962. By 1989, they had come out with seven reprints and the latest re-print was out in 1994. *Lakdiva Budusamaye Ithihasaya* is the name given to the Sinhala book and consists of 340 A 5 size pages.

While doing research at Sorbonne University,

Rahula Thera translated *Abhidharmasamuccaya* into French. It was a book written in Sanskrit by the great scholar-monk Asanga in the fourth century. Though it had been translated into Tibetan and Chinese, Rahula Thera was the first to translate it into an international language like French. The name given

Kirama Wimalajothi Thera, the Director of Buddhist Cultural Centre, who published the latest edition of "History of Buddhism in Ceylon" presenting the first copy to Rahula Thera.

to the French translation is *Le Compendium de la Super-Doctrine (Philosophie), Abhidharmasamuccaya* and was first published in Paris in 1971. Rahula Thera believes that this French translation is his greatest work. He took ten years to complete the

Walpola Rahula: The author

PUBLICATIONS
DE L'ÉCOLE FRANÇAISE D'EXTRÊME-ORIENT

VOLUME LXXVIII

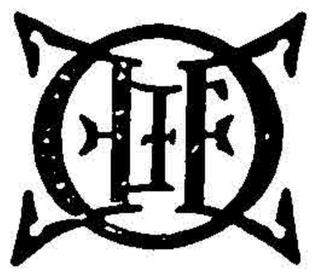
LE COMPENDIUM
DE LA SUPER-DOCTRINE (PHILOSOPHIE)
(ABHIDHARMASAMUCCAYA) D'ASAṄGA

Traduit et annoté

PAR

Walpola RAHULA

Deuxième Édition



ÉCOLE FRANÇAISE D'EXTRÊME-ORIENT
PARIS
1980

Dépositaire : Adrien-Maisonneuve, 11, rue Saint-Sulpice, PARIS (6e)

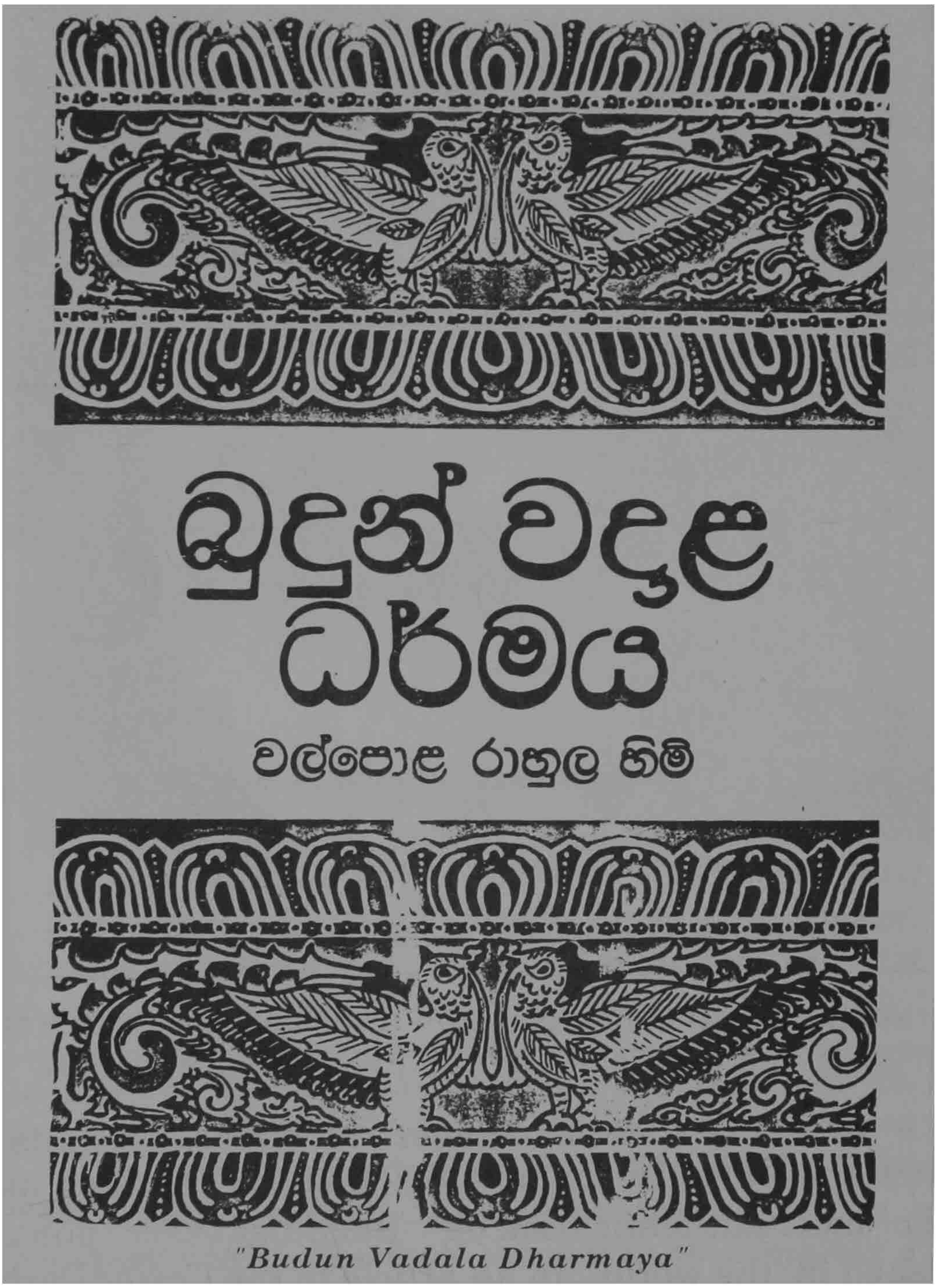
"Ābhidharmasamuccaya" - the French translation

translation. It consists of 236 A-4 size pages and was printed and published by the French Government.

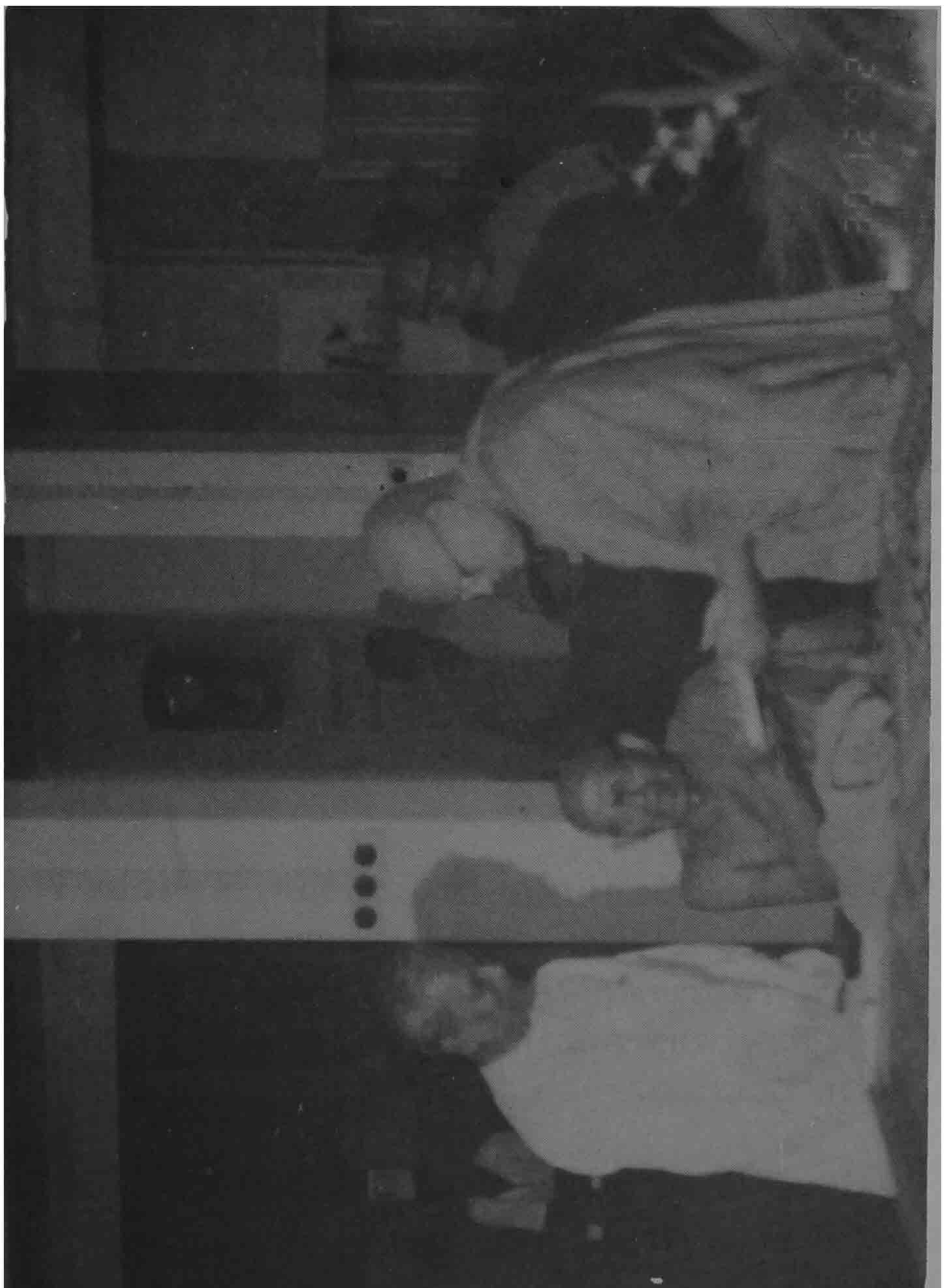
What the Buddha Taught by Walpola Rahula, first published in England in 1959, is regarded as the most authentic book on Buddhism ever published in the world. In an article to the *CeylonDaily*

News of October 5,1984,Rahula Thera has described how he was persuaded by Professor Ludowyk to write that book. Says Rahula Thera:

What the Buddha Taught was first published by the Gordon Fraser Gallery, London, in 1959, followed by eight re-prints in later years. In the USA it has seen more than twenty editions. In addition to those, What



A simple ceremony was held at Vidyalankara Pirivena on December 30, 1992, to launch the third edition of "Bhikshuvage Urumaya." Rahula Thera presented the first copy of the new edition to Welamitiyawe Kusaladhamma Nayaka Thera, the Parivenadhipathi (Principal) of Vidyalankara Pirivena. The publisher, S. Godage, is also in the picture.



the Buddha Taught has been published in several other languages including French, German, Spanish, Italian, Yugoslavian, Dutch, Chinese, Burmese, Korean, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Tamil and Sinhala.

Budun Vadala Dharmaya is the name given to the Sinhala translation of *What the Buddha Taught*, which was first published by M. D. Gunasena & Co. Ltd, in 1964. It has seen seven re-prints so far.

Harold Pieris, Press Secretary to the former President of Sri Lanka, once told me that there are publishers (especially in the Asian region), who put out piratical editions of this book because it has a big demand. When I drew Rahula Thera's attention to this problem, he reacted in the following manner:

"I too have received many complaints regarding this problem from various countries. But I have no time to stop that and don't want to do so. If a book, explaining properly, what the Buddha taught, reaches the world community, in whatever way, isn't it a service?"

In 1974, when the prestigious *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was revised, its editors invited Walpola Rahula Thera as the authority to write on the word, 'Buddha'.

In 1978, while living in London, Rahula Thera published a collection of his essays under the title *Zen and the Taming of the Bull*. That book, consisting of 160 pages, was published by the Gordon Fraser Gallery in London.

Besides these books, scores of learned articles on Buddhism, written by Rahula Thera, have appeared in various newspapers and magazines right round the world.

The Venerable Dr. Walpola Rahula in front of his ancestral home, Pingoda Maha Gedara, with the biographer, Gunadasa Liyanage

A CITIZEN OF THE WORLD

Walpola Rahula Thera, who was born eighty eight years ago, in that remote village of Walpola, on the banks of the Pollathu Oya in South Sri Lanka, started his long journey - on foot - from Walpola to close-by Paragoda Temple. From there, he came to Colombo and made Walpola Rahula a household name throughout the Island, by his oratory, scholarship and militancy. Then, he travelled to the Sorbonne in Paris, from where he became an internationally recognised scholar and the leading authority in the world on Buddhism and Buddhist Philosophy.

Though Walpola Rahula was born in Sri Lanka, and now, has made his permanent residence in Sri Lanka, he belongs to the whole world. He is a citizen of the world.

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