

## The Imprisonment of Saṅgharāja, Saranamkara

by

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While examining the Ola-leaf manuscripts of the Rājāvaliya, the writer came across an interesting account of the imprisonment of the Saṅgharāja Wālivita Saranamkara by Kirti Sri Rājasīgha, in the Rājāvaliya Ms. at the library of the Pravacanodaya Pirivena, Molligoda.<sup>1</sup> Since this is an incident of much historical and religious importance, and since the popular histories such as the Cūlavamsa<sup>2</sup>, the Saṅgharāja Sādhucariyāva<sup>3</sup>, the Saṅgarajavata<sup>4</sup>, and the Mandārapura Puvata<sup>5</sup> contain no information on this episode, it is proposed to give below, the relevant section extracted from this Ms. and the translation with a few comments about its contents.

Ven. Kotagama Vācissara Thera, in the Saranamkara Saṅgharāja Samaya<sup>6</sup>, has given an account of the imprisonment of the Saṅgharāja, after making an examination of the sources that were then available to him. His study had been confined mainly to three sources, namely, The Johnstone Manuscripts<sup>7</sup> (Jmss.), The Gātaberiya Sannasa<sup>8</sup> (Gs.), and The Sāsanāvātīrna Varnanāva<sup>9</sup> (Sv.). The information contained in the above-mentioned documents agrees in general with the contents of the Rājāvaliya (Rjv.) Ms. There are however some discrepancies with regard to certain details. Thus, the Rjv. Ms. so far unpublished, could be mentioned as the fourth source that speaks of the imprisonment of the Saṅgharāja.

Although this particular Ms. of the Rjv. is unique, it is not out of place here to make a few observations about the existing Mss. of the Rjv. in general. A large number of the Rjv. Mss. ends with the history of Ceylon up to the accession to the throne of Vimaladharmasūrya II, as found in the printed editions, but in some Mss. the history is continued further. In Mss. where

1. I am indebted to Pandit Labugama Lankananda Thera for making the Ms. available to me.
2. Culavamsa, ed. by Wilhelm Geiger, Vol. II, 1927, chs. XCIX and C.
3. සංඝරාජ සාධු වරියාව, චන්දිපිටගෙදර පියනන්ද සංස්කරණය, 1954.
4. සගරජවත, මඩුගල්ලේ සිඛාර්ථ සංස්කරණය, 1898.
5. මන්දරමිපුර පුවත, ලබුගම ලංකානන්ද සංස්කරණය, 1958.
6. සරණකර සංඝරාජ සමය, කොටගම වාචිස්සර, 1960.
7. The Ceylon Antiquary Vol. II part IV, April 1917, pp. 272-274. "The Johnstone Manuscripts: Relation of a Conspiracy against the King of Kandy in the year 1760, by C.A.G.
8. Report on the Kegalle District of the Province of Sabaragamuwa, H.C.P. Bell, 1904 p. 100. Getaberiya Sannasa.
9. ඉසනාවතීණ්වණ්නාව, සී. ඊ. ගොඩකුඹුරේ සංස්කරණය, 1956. (ආව.)

IMPRISONMENT OF SANGHARAJA

the history of Ceylon extends beyond Vimaladharmasūriya II, the authors have paid attention to the histories of certain parts of the country, to certain families, and sometimes to certain social or religious incidents<sup>10</sup>. The Rjv. Ms. referred to above records briefly the history of the Buddhist Church up to Sri Wikramarājasingha, with special reference to the period of Kīrti Sri Rājasingha.

The following is an extract from this Rjv. Ms. giving the account of the said imprisonment.

TEXT

“.....ශ්‍රී සංඝෝ ඛණ්ඩවා දසරාජ ධර්මයෙන් යෙදී වැඩ සිටින අවසානවට ඇමතියෝ සමහරක් කලාකරගන රජපුරුවන් මරන අදහසක් සිතාගන කීර්ති ශ්‍රී රජපුරුවන් මරා සියංදෙසෙ සිට මහනවෙලා ආ රාජකුමාරයාට රජපමුනුවාගන්ට ඕනැයි කියා මොඩ හින් කල්පනා කොට ඒ ඇමතියෝ විසින් බනක් කියන්ට මල්වත්තෙ පොයමළ විහාරෙ සරණා ආසන බඳවා බන ඇමිමට රජපුරුවන් වැඩමවාපු විට මරමු කියා මොඩ වෙටනා කර කිතුල් කිරි පුවක්කිරි වලවල්වල සාද මතුපිටින් කෙහෙල් පතුරු අතුරු උඩිං සළ වසා තිබා බන ඇහිල්ලට රජපුරුවන් වැඩමවන්ට ශලකල විට එවග ගලගොඩ දිසාව දකිමින් ගොස් ශලකල විට එවග රජපුරුවෝ හිතට ගෙන වදරා එම ශනේට පයිඩ යවා රටහනේ සේනාව දෙරහිටි ගමන් ගිය පයිඩ කාරයෝ විසින් පිටන් කරවා ඇවිත් සේනාව මහමළුවේ රැස් වු විට කඩු කසරාන කුවක්කු ලන්ඡ පටිසරාන නොයෙක් අලංකාර ආයුධ රටහනේ සේනාවටන් මුරපොලවල්—වල හිටිය හමුදාවටන් ලැබි මහසෙනග දැලේ පිරිවරා පෝය මළුවට වැඩමවා බැළුවිට රාජඅපරාධ කරන්ට කරපු කාරනා දන වදරා ආපසු පන්ත්‍රිප්—පුවට වැඩමවා රාජඅපරාධ කාරණං ගෙන්වා ඇහුන්බැළං කරවා වරද කාරයින් නියම කරවා ඇමතියංගෙන් ඇහුංබැළං කල විට පෙරන් රාජඅපරාධ කලඅය මැරුවාය කියා ශල කල විට වරද කාරයෝ කපාදමන්ට කියා රජු වදල විට උඩ ගමපහෙ අදිකාරං තිබෙන සමරක්කොඩි මහනිලමෙද මැටිහන්පොල දිසාවද මොලදමෙ බන්තනාරාලද කඩුවෙලරාලද යන මේ හතරදෙනා අම්පිටියේදී කපා දමුහ. සංසරජපුරුවෝ කෙහෙල්ඇල්ලේ හිරකලාහා. තිබ්බටුවාවේ මහනායක උන්නාන්තේ බන්තැන්තේ හිරකලාහා. උඩගංපහෙ මහඅදිකාරං ගලගොඩ දිසාවට ලැබුනාහා. නායක පදවිය මැදවල තෙරුන් වහන්සේට ලැබුනාහා. රටවල්වලින් රැස්වු මහසේනාවටන් ගංවලට යංව නෙදී මුර ජාම තර කරවා වාසල ඇතුලට වැඩවදලාහා. එරජ දසධර්මයෙන් රාජ්ජය කොට කළුරිය කලාහා.....”

TRANSLATION

Having glorified the Sāsana, while he (Kīrti Sri) was spending the time (living) in accordance with the Dasarāja Dharma, some of the ministers conspired to kill King Kīrti Sri, and enthrone the prince who returned after having become a monk from Siam. With these foolish thoughts, the ministers arranged a Bana preaching at the Uposatha hall of the Malvatu Vihara. With these foolish thoughts, they decorated the Vihara, prepared seats, and decided to kill the king, when he arrived to listen to the sermon. They fixed pikes made of Kitul and Arecanut (trunks) in pits (dug), and having spread barks of the Banana (tree) over them, and covering the surface with cloth, invited the

10. see: Sinhalese Literature, C.E. Godakumbara, ch. XII, Sec. 9.

king to come and listen to the Sermon. Observing this, the Galagoda disāwa informed the king, and the king, taking notice of this instantly sent messages to the people of the Hatrata. The messengers caused the armies to start off (instantly), from the very places where they were, and they assembled at the Mahamaluwa. To the people of the Hatrata, and to the armies stationed at the watch-places, were caused to be given swords, daggers, rifles, lances, javelins and various other ceremonial weapons. Accompanied by those armies on either side, the king arrived at the Uposatha Hall, and observing what had been done to kill him, (the king) returned to the octagon. Having called the traitors, and making enquiries, the king decided on the culprits. The king then asked for the views of the ministers, and on being informed that even in the past, conspirators against the king had been killed, (he) ordered that those guilty be beheaded. (Thus) the Udagampaha Adikāram Samarakkody Nilame, Mātihampola Disāva, Moladande Battanarāla and Kaduwelarāla were beheaded at Ampitiya. The Saṅgharāja was imprisoned at Kehellālla. Tibbotuvāve Mahanayaka was imprisoned at Bintenna. The Galagoda Disāve received the post of Udagampaha Mahādhikāram. Mādavela Terunnānse received the post of Chief (of the Saṅgha). The armies that arrived from the districts too were not allowed to return to their villages, but (they) were entrusted with guard duties. (Having done these) the King went to the palace. That king after having reigned in accordance with the Dasarāja Dharma, passed away.

#### REMARKS

This Rjv. account and the Jmss. agree that a conspiracy was made against the king in order to enthrone a Siamese prince, but the real cause is recorded only in Sv. According to the Sv. the king had not given up his heretical beliefs, for this had been evident from the fact that he continued to apply ash on his forehead in spite of repeated warning by the Saṅgha.<sup>11</sup>

Jmss. records that "The priests..... who came to Candy from Siam..... with the exception of a certain high priest called Oepally (Upāli), entered secretly into a conspiracy with the king of the priests of Candy called Welivitty (Wēlivita) and with the high priest Tibbotoorwe (Tibbotuwāwe), and some other priests, and also with the courtiers consisting of the Adigar Samarakkody, the Raterala of Yatinuwara Moladande, the Gajanake, the Mohandiram of the kings guard Kaddowelle Appoohamy and the Mohotiar Dundeniya and his son to put the prince of Siam upon the throne of Candy".<sup>12</sup> Sv. mentions the name of only Samarakkody Adikāram<sup>13</sup>, out of the ministers who were beheaded after the Conspiracy. While the Gs. speaks of only Moladanda Peraliya,<sup>14</sup> Rjv. Ms. gives the names of four ministers who had been beheaded at Ampitiya. They were Udagampaha Adikāram Samarakkody

11. කාව. 22 පිටුව.

12. Jmss. p. 273.

13. කාව 24 පිටුව.

14. Gs. p. 100; Fr. S. G. Perera speaks of The Moladande rebellion, but Saranamkara Saṅgharaja has not been associated with it. see: A History of Ceylon for Schools, part I, 1945, p. 172.

## IMPRISONMENT OF SANGHARAJA

Nilame, Mātihampola Disāva, Moladande Battanarāla and Kaduwelarāla. It is worthwhile to note that the place of execution, i.e. Ampitiya, is recorded only in the Rjv. Mss.

Sv. mentions that the Saṅgharāja was aware of the conspiracy but it clearly states that he had not been a party to it. Rjv. Ms. also indicates that only the ministers had played a leading role.

There are discrepancies in the sources on record even with regard to minor details. For instance, according to Jmss. and Sv. iron poles were fixed to the pit dug up, but the Raj. Ms. says that pikes of Kitul and Arecanut (trees) were fixed, and this appears to be the more authentic.

The records differ with regard to the party that gave the secret information to the king. According to Gs. it was Palkumbure Rājakarunā Vaidyatilaka Gopāla Mudaliya. Jmss. records that "after all these preparations were made the very evening one of the high priests Jatiewatte<sup>15</sup>, laid aside the priestly dress, and like a common man entered the palace of the king and informed the king in person that the plot will commence the following day about the afternoon"<sup>16</sup>. Sv. records that a Nilame from Pilimalavve<sup>17</sup> informed the king<sup>18</sup>. On the other hand Rjv. Ms. mentions Galagoda Disave as the informant. Since there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of the Gs. we have to conclude that Gopāla Mudaliya referred to, had been loyal to the king all throughout, and that he "performed services by giving information". But there is nothing to prevent others from performing similar services. There is unanimity in all sources about the fact that Samarakkody, Adikāram of Pallegampahe was one of the leaders of the conspiracy. Rjv. Ms. records that the post of Maha Adikāram of Udagampahe was given to Galagoda Disava. The foot-note No. 7 of the article referred to as Jmss<sup>19</sup>, supported by evidence from Laurie's Gazetteer<sup>20</sup> mentions that Galagoda was Adikāram of Udagampahe. In the light of these facts it becomes possible to accept the statement in the Rjv. Ms. that "The Galagoda Disāva received the post of Udagampahe Maha Adikāram.

Three documents, namely Jmss, Sv. and Rjv. Ms. all agree that Wēlivita Saranamkara Saṅgharāja and Tibbotuwāwe Mahānāyake were both imprisoned, but the place of imprisonment mentioned is not identical. Sv. does not mention a place at all. According to Jmss. "the aforesaid king of the priests and

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15. Yatawatte.

16. Jmss. p.273.

17. "පිලිමනලව්වේ නිලමේ කෙනෙක්"

18. ශාව. 23 පිටුව.

19. Jmss. p.273. ft. n. 7.

20. Lauries Gazetteer, Vol. I, p. 247.

the high priest Tibbotuwāwe were both banished; the former at Dumbara and the latter in the old court at Kurunegala<sup>21</sup>". On the other hand Rjv. Ms. records that the Saṅgharāja was imprisoned at Kehellālla, and Tibbotuwāwe Mahā Nāyake Unnāse in Bintāna.

The examination of the three documents published already, along with the Rjv. Ms. so far unpublished, inspite of the discrepancies with regard to details, and inspite of the silence observed in some of the histories, will lead us to conclude that the Saṅgharāja, Saranamkara Thera, and his companion Tibbotuwāwe Nāyake Thera had been punished with imprisonment. However it must be said that further information is required to settle the discrepancies that existed in regard to details.

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21. Jmss. p. 273.