

The Lineage of Eḷāra, king of Anurādhapura and his possible relationship with the Āryan predecessors of the ruling house of Ceylon

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A chapter in the history of Ceylon has often been enigmatic to us and has provided avenue for further thinking on account of the availability of certain factors that would help to re-interpret this particular chapter wholly, to bring in a completely different picture. This is the chapter that deals with the saga of king Eḷāra who was ruling at Anurādhapura (Ceylon), from 205 B.C. to 161 B.C.¹ It is intended in this paper to sift and study this chapter in the light of the material made available to us by recent researches.

The earliest available data on king Eḷāra are the accounts in the two ancient chronicles of the Island, namely, the *Dīpavaṃsa* (*Dpv.*) and the *Mahāvaṃsa* (*Mhv.*). Having considered factors that are available outside the authority of these two chronicles and other historical treatises written in the past, we hesitate to accept king Eḷāra being identified with a Cola Tamil from south India. On the other hand we have a good case for Eḷāra as a non-Tamil, non-south Indian, but an Āryan north Indian who had come to Ceylon from a place of origin, if not the same, very much closer to that of his other Āryan predecessors Vijaya, Paṇḍuvāsudeva and others. King Eḷāra was subsequently branded by the mediaeval writers of Ceylon as an arch enemy of the Sinhala nation, whom king Duṭṭhagāmiṇī defeated in single combat that recalls Āryan chivalry.

At a time like this, when political animus manifests itself everywhere and has entered into such abstract fields of study like historical research, it is with restraint and care that we have to make such statements in contradiction of the accepted ideas and beliefs of the country that have come down through the ages.

¹ According to Geiger's chronology 145 to 101 B.C. See *Mahāvaṃsa* (*Mhv.*) Geiger's translation p. xxxviii. We have taken here the chronological list accepted by the *University History of Ceylon* (two volumes) ed. Paranavitana, Labrory, Natesan, and Nicholas Colombo 1959 (*UHC*)

We propose here a few possible theories, based on historical, topographical and linguistic analysis, both within and without the purview of the Ceylonese chronicles, that may render the identification of King Elāra with either the Colas or south Indian Tamils an improbability.

Mahāvamsa speaks of him as a Damiḷa of noble descent who came hither from the Cola country. He had overpowered king Asela and ruled for forty four years with even justice toward friend and foe, on occasions of disputes at law².

“ *Colaraṭṭhā idhāgamma rajjatham ujujātiko—Elāro nāma Damilo gahetvā selabhūpatim. Vassāni cattalisañca cattāri ca akārayi rajjam vohārassamye majjhatto mittasattusu* ”.³

The earlier chronicle, the *Dīpavamsa* is silent as to his descent when it speaks thus : “ *Elāro nāma nāmena Aselam hantvāna khattiyo-Catucattālisa vassāni rajjam dhammena kārayi* ”.⁴ But it calls him a khattiya (Skt. Kṣatriya), one belonging to the noblest of the four castes into which indo-Āryans were divided. Here too an Indo-Aryan rather than a Tamil-Dravidian trace of social division is not absent.

It is only in the *Mahāvamsa* that Elāra was identified for the first time with a Cola (or Tamil). This is not strange for at the time when the *Mahāvamsa* was compiled in the fifth century A.C., Dravidian influence was much felt in Ceylon especially in the religious field, as a rival factor to the orthodox Mahāvihāra bhikkhus. Hence, whoever came as a hostile power to Ceylon and especially when that hostility was directed towards Buddhism, the Mahāvihāra bias was not hesitant to brand those concerned as Dravidian Tamils (Cola or Pandya). Cola country or else the Tamil country was more famous for Mahāyānists and it was a Cola monk who spelled doom to the Mahāvihāra, a few centuries before Mahānāma wrote the *Mahāvamsa*. He was the famous Sangamitta thera who came to Ceylon from Kāveripattinam in South India in the third century A.C. This area along with other peripheral sites like Uracapura (Uraiyur), Kānyakubja, Nāgapattinam on the Kāveri river were famous Mahāyāna sites, as far as documentation is available in regard to early Buddhist antiquities of the post Christian centuries⁵.

Evidence is wanting however, to date the Colas as a ruling power in south India in such a distant past as claimed by references in certain so-called

² *Mhv.* Geiger's translation, p. 143.

³ *Mhv.* ed. Geiger, ch. xxi, 13, 14.

⁴ *Dipavamsa*, (*Dpv.*), 18, v.49.

⁵ A. Aiyappan and P. R. Sirinivasan, *Story of Buddhism with special reference to South India*, Madras Govt, 1960 ; C. Sivaramamurti, *South Indian Bronzes*, New Delhi 1963 ; P. R. Sirinivasan, *The Bulletin of the Madras Govt. Museum*, Vol. viii for 1963, new series.

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Sangam works. Before the Pallavas set up, for the first time in historical periods, imperial power in the Tamil districts in south India, there was the Pāndya ruling house in Madura. Both Pāndyas and Pallavas are now considered as belonging to an Āryan stock from north India (more probably from N. W. India), who had established themselves in the Tamil country.⁶ Although the Colas and the Keralas (Ceras) were mentioned in Asokan rock-edicts (R.E. II and XIII), there they were not given any significance as rulers or potentates but ethnic groups. The fact that Asoka did not even consider including these territories of Colas and Keralas as fields befitting his missionary activities is a good case against the establishment of an argument for the existence of powerful kingdoms in south India during the few centuries prior to the present era. Emperor Asoka who had sent his Buddhist missionaries to such far off places like Alisanda (Alexandria), Kāmboja, Kāśmīra, Himavat, Suvannabhūmi (Malasia) had not thought of sending a party to the regions of Colas and Keralaputas and Satiyaputas, before including Tambapaṇṇī (Ceylon) which is further south and cut off from the mainland. Here is an instance for one to hesitate as to why Asoka ignored these regions from his missionary pursuits. Were these south Indian territories devoid of something that would not have allowed Asoka to treat them equally with other kingdoms? It could not have been a linguistic barrier as Asoka's missionaries had reached regions that were totally ignorant of Māgadhbhāṣā. The only possibility is that these regions were still in their megalithic stage of development and were not ready to give a wholesome response to Maurya benefactions.

The doubtful antiquity of the Sangam period literature again makes a case for a non-existent Tamil imperial power in south India before the Christian era.⁷ Even if the antiquity of the Tamil imperial power is beyond doubt, that will be of no importance to prove an early Cola invasion of Ceylon in the pre-Christian centuries. None of the so-called Sangam period works mentions any such invasion of Ceylon and a successful Cola control of the Island for more than four decades, as is made to believe in the Eḷāra episode of the *Mahāvamsa*. Apart from not mentioning a Cola invasion the very name of Eḷāra too is not found in any of the Sangam period works, nay even as an ordinary man or a petty-ruler. It seems very unfair by Eḷāra (the ideal ruler even in the eyes of his very opponents, the Buddhist clergy of Mahāvihāra, Ceylon).

⁶ G. Coedes, *The Making of South-East Asia*, pp. 57, 237 n. 5; C.W. Nicholas and S. Parānavitana, *A Concise History of Ceylon*, Colombo 1961, pp. 58; M. B. Barua, *Ceylon Lectures*, Calcutta, 1945, pp. 46 f; *UHC*. I, i, p. 95.

⁷ *UHC*. I. i. p. 207. n. 7; C. W. Nicholas and S. Parānavitana, *op. cit.* pp. 56 f; For the chronology of the Sangam poets, see, K. Kanapathy Pillai, in the *University of Ceylon Review (UCR)*, Vol. II, pp. 29 f, according to whom the tradition of the three Sangams was recorded by one commentator named Nakkirar in the seventh century A.C. See further, *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, ed. C. H. Philipps, London 1991, p. 66; again P. N. Chakravarti, *Presidential Address to the Seventeenth (17) Session of the Indian History Congress*. December 1954.

for Sangam period Tamil poets not to make any allusion to him in their annals, This is yet another factor, that would stand for a case against an Eḷāra of Colas of south India. Also in the subsequent south Indian works, and in any of their inscriptions, this strange but memorable personage as depicted by Mahānama in the Mahāvamsa, was not given any place of importance. Some try however, to identify a certain insignificant character by the name of 'Elela-singam' found in one of the passages in an early Tamil epic, with the famous Eḷāra of Ceylon⁸. Except for a few parallel lines in the narrative of the mythical king Manu of north Indian Āryans, whom the later Colas have taken to be their ancestor Manu-Cola, there is nothing at all to observe any connection between the story of Eḷāra and Colas of south India. Besides it should not be forgotten that south India was still crawling in a megalithic stage of development, in the first few centuries before Christ.⁹

Had Eḷāra been a south Indian Cola and had Colas been so powerful as the literature of the Sangam period tends to show, Eḷāra would have easily taken the requisite measures to thwart any attempts by Rohana potentates to indulge in any prolonged preparations of war to challenge his supremacy or even assay to nip such attempts in the bud¹⁰. Even when such provocative attempts like grabbing away the best destrier from Eḷāra's stables, were undertaken at the instance of the Rohana ruler, there were no ready response to meet the challenge.

On the other hand, it took more than eight months for Eḷāra to seek and obtain reinforcements from India. It was when Vijitanagara fell that Eḷāra's commander-in-chief, Dīghajantuka, sent a message to his nephew Bhalluka to come hither¹¹. The seige and capture of Vijitanagara lasted for more than four months,¹² and having accomplished that Duṭṭhagāmiṇī tarried at Mahe-lanagara for four months¹³ and approaching Anurādhapura, he had enough time to build a tank and hold a water festival.¹⁴ Had Bhalluka been a resident

⁸ UHC. I. i. p. 207; S. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar, *Some Contributions of South India to Indian Culture*, Calcutta, 1942, p. 81; T. V. Mahalingam, *Kāñcīpuram in Early South Indian History*, Bombay, 1969, p. 48.

⁹ C. W. Nicholas and S. Paranavitana. loc. cit; see further, G. S. Mendis, in *Paranavitana Felicitation Volume*, ed. N. A. Jayawikrama, "The Vijaya Legend," p. 273.

¹⁰ Even when the Cola power was at its apogee in south India in the eleventh century, Colas having conquered Ceylon, failed to establish a ruler of their own to control the Sinhala kingdom. On the other hand, their control of the Island, while the Cola thalassocracy was still commanding the wide expanse of the Indian Ocean, reaching as far as the Śrī Vijaya empire (Malasia), dwindled and disappeared within a very short time.

¹¹ *Mhv.* xxv. 76.

¹² *Mhv.* xxv. 47.

¹³ *Mhv.* xxv. 49.

¹⁴ *Mhv.* xxv. 51 f.

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of the Cola country or any other south Indian state, such a long period would not have been taken by him to respond to this most urgent call of his uncle. This long and protracted delay on the part of Bhalluka is apparently due to the distance between Ceylon and his own country. If he had been a native of the Pāndya or, let us believe, even in the Cola country, he would not have taken such a long period of time to land in Ceylon, as is suggested above. This will be another instance for one to observe, that the ally of Eḷāra had not come from south India but from a region further north. We may suggest a place in the region of north-western part of India as a possible territory of Bhalluka's origin. His name 'Bhalluka' too bespeaks of a non-Tamil derivation. The Dravidian or Tamil equivalent of 'Bhalluka' would have been "Phalluka". Moreover this very name 'Bhalluka' tempts one to suggest a toponymous connection with the famous principality of Bactria, towards further north-west India, where the famous Buddhist site Bhalik lies. This locality is supposed to have obtained its name by its association with the proper noun 'Bhalluka', probably after a powerful community by that name¹⁵. It is also interesting to note here, the connection of two merchant guilds by the name of Trapussa and Vallika (Tapassu and Bhalluka), with the Girihaṇḍu dāgāba, a later Mahāyāna shrine in Ceylon.¹⁶ The Buddhist suttas too speak of a thera named Bhalluka whose birth place was Pokkharavatī, that is Puskalavatī (mod. Charsadda, in the former north-west frontier regions of India).¹⁷ It was customary during that time, to call people by their place of birth or residence, as for example, Mallarāja, Yavanarāja, Ujjanikarāja, Vidisādevī, Kālingadevī, Suppadevī, Dantakumāra, (from Dantapura?), Uruveḷa, Uruveḷā (fem.), Urubuddharakkhita.

In this connection, we would like to suggest, that the very name of Eḷāra (var. Eḷāla), too could be satisfactorily explained by such a toponymous analysis and the closest possible place name that could be taken for identification is Ḷāla (note that-ṭ, ḷ, ṛ, and even j are interchangeable in early Prākṛits), whence came Vijaya. Just as in the case of Vijaya, the name of Eḷāra too, could have been eponymous, to designate the person who hailed from Ḷāla. It is strange to observe, however, that in both cases the toponymous identity brings Eḷāra and Bhalluka both, very much closer to a place of origin in western or north-western India than a Tamil country in south India.

Duṭṭhagāmiṇī had taken up arms solely for the sake of preserving the faith, Buddhism, and not so much the nation, as certain mediaeval writers had remarked and some contemporary patriots do believe.¹⁸ This further rein-

¹⁵ see A. D. T. E. Perera, "Balkh," in *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, Vol. II, fascicle, 4, pp. 532; see further, S. Beal, *Chinese Accounts of India*, SI-YU-KI Indian edition, Calcutta, 1957, vol. I, pp. 108, 111, n. 162.

¹⁶ *Epigraphia Zeylanica (EZ)*, Vol. iv, pp. 155 f; refer also to *Vahlukas* (Vallikas), as warlike tribe in the Gujerat area, finally subjugated or destroyed by the Guptas (C. De Jatis, *Life in Eastern Asia etc.*, *Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (JCBRAS)*, vol. xxxii, no. 84 for 1931, pp. 59 ff; see also *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (JRAS)*, 1897 and *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum (CII)*, vol. iii.

¹⁷ G. P. Malalasekara ed. *The Dictionary of Pali Proper Nouns (DPPN)*.

¹⁸ *Mhv.* xxv. 2 f.

forces the argument that Eḷāra had not been considered as a rival of the nation, by the chroniclers or those who recorded these stories before them. He had ruled for more than forty-four years, having won over the people, and even the blood-relatives of his very opponent Duṭṭhagāmiṇī. Dīghābhaya, the step-brother of Duṭṭhagāmiṇī, who had been sent to Kacchaka ford by king Kākavaṇṇatissa to guard the frontier region, the buffer-zone between Eḷāra's domain and south Ceylon, during his war preparations, had ultimately gone over to Eḷāra's side. Even Dīghābhaya was called a 'Damila' in a derogatory sense by mediaeval Sinhala writers.¹⁹ Several other Sinhala noblemen had served under Eḷāra. One such was Mitta, an uncle of Nandimitta the chief-of-staff of Duṭṭhagāmiṇī's regiments.²⁰ This is sufficient proof of the fact that Eḷāra had won the support of the Sinhalese and had a powerful claim to the throne of Rajaraṭa (Anurādhapura), although south Ceylon had opposed him.

We read in the Chronicles that, after his death, Eḷāra's memory was revered for several centuries. The mausoleum of Elara, built by Dutthagāmiṇī was honoured by subsequent rulers of Ceylon and this tradition was kept alive even up to the last century. This would have been improbable and unsuitable had Eḷāra been a Tamil alien ruler, an usurper and an enemy of both the religion and the nation as well.

Again the legends and episodes connected with Eḷāra's character in the *Mahāvamsa*, for example, justice meted out to animals, offering his own life in expiation to unintended crimes,²¹ could all be traced back to a west-Asiatic origin, which factor, too rules out a possible south-Indian origin of Eḷāra and points to the fact that the legends connected with him in the *Mahāvamsa* were euhemerisms of the Ceylonese chronicler.²²

If Eḷāra's identity as a south-Indian Cola could not be established on the above grounds, it is left for us to find out how we could account for his relationship with Ceylon's history.

It has been presently held among scholarly circles that kingship in ancient Ceylon, in the centuries prior to the Christian era, was established by Āryan immigrants who came from north India and more especially from north-western parts of the mainland²³. The two conquerors, Sena and Guttaka, identified

¹⁹ *Mhv.* xxv, 12, 17 f; *Thūpavaṃsaya* ed. Ven. Welivitiye Dhammaratna, Colombo 1891, p. 135.

²⁰ *Mhv.* xxiii, v. 45 f.

²¹ *Mhv.* xxi, 15, 34.

²² *JRAS*, for 1913 p. 531 f; W. Geiger. *Dīpavaṃsa and Mahavaṃsa*, Colombo, 1908, p. 25 n; Weber, *Indische Studien*, iii, 363 n. and 368 n; Lidzbarscki, *Neukeramische Hundschriften*, ii, 353; K. Sumrock, *das Pferd als Klager*.

²³ *UHC*. I. i. pp. 82 ff; C. W. Nicholas and S. Paranavitana, *op. cit.* pp. 17 ff.

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as Tamils in the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvāṃsa*, too, are now supposed to have come from the Sind-Gujerat region in the western part of India²⁴. It is hardly doubtful that these Āryan colonists and conquerors had continued to preserve ties with their original homeland in the western or north-western parts of India or regions still further north. Locating a possible place of origin for Elara and his ally Bhalluka too in this part of the mainland in order to trace their possible lineage, is one of the main propositions in our discussion. The political disturbances in these regions, especially after the fall of the Achaemenid Empire and also after the deterioration of later Seleucid and Bactrian Greek power, had resulted in openings for hordes of war-like nomadic tribes from further northern parts of Asia. It is also recorded that internecine warfare between rival potentates had disturbed the political equilibrium in these regions in the period under review. And the aftermath of all these was the scene of ousted powers trying to seek in new pastures. This, in short, was part of the story of many tribes (viz. Yavanas, Mallas, Pandus, Helas, Simhas, Phallavas, Śakas, Yuechis, Kuśānas, Kāmbujas), in the north-western frontier regions, who later distributed and became denized among the countries further south and south-east and carved out kingdoms for themselves²⁵.

A similar history of colonisation could well be suggested for Vijaya and his successors in Ceylon²⁶. On this analysis it could be said that Eḷāra was not a stray Tamil usurper. Neither were his immediate foreign predecessors, Sena and Guttaka, nor was his ally, general Bhalluka. One could surmise

²⁴ C. W. Nicholas and S. Paranavitana, *op. cit.* p. 57.

²⁵ The north Indian origin of Pandus and Pallavas, as surmised by scholars is mentioned above. The Śātavāhana (Andhra), power of western India, originally from an Aryan homeland, was subsequently pushed eastwards to the Kṛṣṇa valley, after the inroads of Śakas from the north-western frontier regions. Groups of Yavanas and Mallas were supposed to have settled in Java and Sumatra. We get the Kāmbōja Empire of the pre-Anghkor Khemers in South-east Asia. Even the proto-Aryan Yaksas were supposed to have been descendents of the northern Yue-Chi (pre-Kuśāna) tribes. Although we have quoted these examples we do not vouch for the correctness of the instances mentioned as most of them have to be tested in more scientific analysis of historical research. (see G. Coedes, *op. cit.* pp. 57 ff; C. W. Nicholas and S. Paranavitana, *op. cit.* p. 58; see also, S. C. Paul. Pre-Vijayan legends and traditions pertaining to Ceylon, *JCBRAS*, 1928, vol. xxxi, pp. 263 ff; S. Paranavitana on Rājavāṃsapustaka and Yavanarājavṛttānta in *The Mahabodhi* (Journal), 1968 May-June; Id. A Greek prince who was a Buddhist Missionary, *The Mahabodhi*, Vol. 77, no. 45, April-May, 1969, pp. 122 f; Id. Newly discovered historical documents relating to Ceylon etc., *The Buddhist Yearly*, Halle, pp. 38f, for excerpts from a lost *Suvarṇapuravāṃsa*.

²⁶ It is not improbable to see coalition of Simhas and Helas to form a "Simhela" settlement in Tambapanni (Ceylon—Simhaladvipa) in those disturbed periods, although such a view could be very hypothetical (but see, S. Paranavitana, in *The Buddhist Yearly*, *op. cit.*, p. 38). The Parsi community of N. W. India, the descendents of the ancient Indo-Aryan Zoroastrian worshippers of Persia, do often add 'Singh', even today, to their name endings as if to recall an ancient tradition of being connected with an original 'Simha' tribe (for Simhas in N. W. India and their later diffusion in other regions, see *JCBRAS*, xxxi, p. 297).

that both Sena and Guttaka and Eḷāra too, had come hither as they had rightful claims, possibly blood-ties with the ruling families in the Rajaraṭa. It was these ties that had helped them to establish themselves without much opposition and win over a good majority of the people. The respect with which Eḷāra was treated even after his demise could be owing to these ties and not so much due to the semi-mythical stories woven round his character. In this context, calling Eḷāra an 'Ujūjātika' and a 'Khattiya' (Skt. Kṣatriya), could not be lightly taken.²⁷ The term 'Ujūjātika', Geiger translates as "of noble descent", having depended on the *Mahāvamsaṭīkā*, which explains the word thus:—*Ujūjātikoti saṭhamāyādi virahito ujusabhāvoti attho*.²⁸ There is still room for one to hesitate, as to its real purport. A suggestion that the verse could be a copist's error or a poetic attempt to insinuate a certain fact that was recorded in an earlier Sinhala Aṭuvā record, would not be unbecoming here. Ujūjātika could be taken to mean a descendent or a resident of 'Uju'. Uju as a clan name, or a place name, is difficult to be traced in Ceylon or South India. But we could find a possible identification of 'Uju' with 'Ūrja'—'Ūrjayat', an ancient locality in Gujerat mentioned by Rūdradharman, the Śaka Śatrapa, in his Junāgādh inscription. One may even refer to Ujjayinī, another famous stronghold of Śakas, close to western India (Greek. Ozene, Pāli. Ujjeni, present Ujjain).²⁹ Interesting nonetheless, it would be if further inquiry is available to establish that both Urjayat and Ūjjayinī have derived their names from a common source, and a possible association of these localities with an 'Uju' or 'Uru' or 'Urja' community. Here again the outcome is quite strange but very consoling as the probable locality takes us to the Gujerat—Sind area in the western part of India (cf. also-Urubuddharakkhita, Uruveḷa, Uruveḷā-fem. (as personal names). Seemingly, things beyond military strategem had gone to help Eḷāra to win over Dīghābhaya and other Sinhala chieftans and the possible blood-ties with the ruling families, as proposed by us become less untenable. The categorical declaration by Duṭṭhagāmiṇī that his was a struggle in defence of the religion (the Buddhist faith), without mentioning the nation, was cited above and worth recalling.

An identification of Eḷāra of *Mahāvamsa* fame with a ruling family of the same stock of early kings of Anurādhapura thus becomes a very close possibility. However, there is still lacuna in our thesis as to the cause of the great struggle engineered by Duṭṭhagāmiṇī and south Ceylon, to liberate Rajaraṭa from Eḷāra's domination. Here again an analysis of the religio-political structure of the period calls for attention.

²⁷ *Mhv.* xxi, 10-141; *Dpv.* 18, v. 49.

²⁸ *Mahāvamsaṭīkā* ed. G. P. Malalasekara, vol. ii, p. 425.

²⁹ *Epigraphia Indica (EI)*, xxiv, pt. v. January 1938; MaCrindle's *Ancient India*, ed. S. M. Sastri, Calcutta, 1927, pp. 38. H. G. Rawlinson in *Indian Historical Studies*, Calcutta, 1913, xxx p. 203, thinks that the Vajjians mentioned in Buddhist texts were Indo-Scythians and were of north-west Indian origin. The two tribes Vajjians and Urjas could be compared with our term 'Ujūjatika'.

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Prior to the influence of the Imperial court of Mauryas in India, Buddhism was not the accepted faith of the masses in Ceylon. There is more evidence for the prevalence of Jainism and Vedic religion in Ceylon than Buddhism.³⁰ The newly acquired faith of the ruling house of Ceylon, through the good offices of the Imperial Mauryas, would not have had the pleasant experience as depicted in the *Mahāvamsa*. Even at a subsequent date when a conqueror was on the scene, the defeated Buddhist monarch of the country was rebuked by a Nighanṭha (Jaina) monk with a blatant remark.³¹ This incident happened during the third recorded foreign invasion of the Island which took place when Vaṭṭhagāmiṇi was ruling at Anurādhapura. Two of the leaders of the invading army returned to the other shore having taken the queen-consort of the Sinhala monarch and the sacred 'Alms-Bowl' relic of the Buddha which was the Sinhala monarch's palladium. Strangely enough, archaeological excavations executed in the previous century had brought to light fragments of a supposed Alms-Bowl relic of the Buddha from a western Indian site known as Sopārā (ancient Suppāraka, mentioned in the *Mahāvamsa*), in the Gujerat province³². One is tempted to believe that the Alms-Bowl relic thus removed from Ceylon was subsequently enshrined in a stūpa in the Gujrat area, in which case we are again taken to the same provenance of early conquerors of the Island. In this context, one could even doubt as to the authenticity of the so-called Pāndya invasion of Ceylon in the reign of Vaṭṭhagāmiṇi (cir. 105-77 B.C.). In later mediaeval works, king Gajabāhu is reported to have gone to the Cola country in South India and brought back the Alms-Bowl relic, having successfully carried a punitive expedition in the Cola domain.³³ But the *Mahāvamsa* is silent as to such a feat by king Gajabāhu. The Nighanṭha who rebuked the defeated monarch would have thus expressed his welcome of the invaders thereby ridding himself of xenophobia. Barua unwittingly remarks that the Nighanṭha named Giri went to show that he was mentally in sympathy with the Tamil invader³⁴. Gujaret was, and even is at present, a strong Jaina pocket in India. It may also be possible that the so-called Pandya invasion too, in Vaṭṭhagāmiṇi's time, was engineered by a faction in the Gujerat-Sindh area

³⁰ S. C. Paul, *JCBRAS*, loc. cit; S. Paranavitana, *Pre-Buddhist religious Beliefs in Ceylon*, *JCBRAS*, vol. xxxi, No. 82, 1928, pp. 302—328 f.

³¹ *Mhv.* xxxiii, 49.

³² B. Indrajī, *Antiquarian Remains at Sopāra and Padana*, 1882, pp. 37 ff.

³³ C. W. Nicholas and S. Paranavitana, op.cit. pp. 79 f; *Rājāvaliya* ed. Mudaliyar B. Gunasekera, Colombo, 1926, pp. 33 f; *Rājaratnākaraya* ed. Simon de Silva, Colombo, 1917, p. 20.

³⁴ B. M. Barua, op. cit. p. 63.

who supported the Jaina religion and did not wish to see their faith being cast aside in the Island, by those who allied with Buddhism.³⁵

Coing back to Eāra episode, we see that the events that took place look as if the old-order was struggling to make a vehement bid to acquire power and prestige for itself. It was the same series of events, that took place in the mainland. The fall of the Maurya autocracy in India by about the same time, saw the rise of several independent states like those of the Sungas, Kānvas, Kāngas, Sakas, Sātavāhans (Āndhrās), who were either dependents or starapies of the Maurya overlords. Most if not all, of these uprisings, reflected at the initial stages as a challenge to the supremacy of the Buddhists under the Maurya rule. It was the Jaina religious faction that reaped most of the benefits and patronage of the newly set up monarchies. This Jaina supremacy, although it dwindled gradually, in the middle regions, continued to be an important and a powerful factor, for several centuries to come, especially in the western and the north-western regions. Thus a contest for power between the Maurya order and the Jaina parties, was the background to the political scene, mostly in these states in India during the period under review. In other words, it was the same contest between the two factions, one claiming to set up the old-order and the other the authority of the newly established powers. In Ceylon too these uprisings against the Buddhist royalty, marked as usurpations and foreign inroads in the *Mahāvamsa*, could well be a struggle by a powerful faction in the country to establish the status-quo. Thus Sena and Guttaka and Elāra had managed to rule uninterrupted for a considerable period preserving the old-order, until Duṭṭhagāmiṇi and the southern faction successfully established the power through the support of those who allied with the Mauryan order, or the newly established faith-Buddhism. Although *Mahāvamsa* had successfully depicted Tamil rule in this particular period of Ceylon's history, there are no vestiges of Tamil culture, religious or otherwise, that would support substantially a case for Tamil authority extended in the Island. The only exception, however, is the reference to the term 'Damedā', found in three early Brāhmi inscriptions. 'Damedā' is thought by certain scholars to be an equivalent of 'Drāviḍa'. Comparing

35 Interesting it would be to observe the remark by S. Paranavitana, in regard to the so-called Pandyan invasion of the fifth century A.C. when Mitsen was the ruler. Paranavitana says :—" From which country in south India these invaders came, is a matter of conjecture. Again in the case of the four Tamil kings whose parentage is known, the succession to the throne was dynastic. That is from father to son or elder brother to younger brother. It may be inferred therefore that they were not leaders of a band of free-booters, but members of a royal dynasty " (C. W. N. Cholas and S. Paranavitana, op. cit, p. 122) (see also. *EZ*, iv, pp. 133 f, ii, p. 218 ; *Ceylon Journal of Science*, sect. G. vol. ii, pp. 181 f). This patrilineal succession speaks of a non-Tamil custom. It is generally accepted that the Tamils or south Indians were accustomed to a matriarchal system.

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the word 'Dameḍa' found in few archaic Sinhala documents of the Indo-Aryan group with 'Drāviḍa' (or Damila-Tamil) of another linguistic group, probably Semitic, would be too far-fetched. We would like to suggest a derivative from the Indo-Aryan root 'Dam' (to control or tame) and to correspond 'Dameḍa, with Skt. and Pāli-dametar, dame, damita and also Sinhala-dama, damita,³⁶ (Greek, α-δαμικος, Lat. Domitus Domitor) and to give a meaning 'self-controlled', which would be more appropriate in qualifying a Buddhist monk or a house-holder as is found in the three inscriptions where 'Dameḍa' occurs. Even in the present day parlance of the Sinhalese, it is opportune to refer to a person as a 'dānta' especially when his self-controlled nature is emphasised. Also in a secondary sense, 'domesticated' (e.g. dampati-house-holder; cf. also Damyasārathi, as an epithet of the Buddha). Thus it is explicit that the word 'dameḍa' taken to mean self-controlled or well-mannered and used to qualify both a bhikḥu and a Buddhist house-holder as well, is very appropriate. Moreover the personal names, borne by those others in the so-called Tamil house holders' inscription and the other two inscriptions cited above, do not show any trace of Tamil origin. They are more close to Sinhala and the records too are in old Sinhala³⁷. If by calling themselves 'Dameḍa' the authors of the inscriptions wished to identify themselves with a particular ethnic group, one could argue, that the identification could have been more easily done by inditing their inscriptions in a Drāviḍa (Tamil) language instead of the early Sinhala language used by them. Even the Brāhmi script, employed in these inscriptions, is more close to the usual script used in the particular period by the Sinhalese, which has similarities with the western and the N.W. Indian Brāhmi of the period.

On the other hand, as has been observed above, the existence of Jaina or Vedic religious institutions in the Island is beyond doubt. The Abhayagiriya was, as such, a very powerful Nighanṭha establishment, the incumbent of which had cast on open rebuke at the fleeing monarch of the country when a foreigner was on the scene. Let us hope archaeological excavations at these possible Jaina sites in Ceylon would establish our thesis beforelong. There are also recorded evidences, confirming attempts by Sinhala kings to bring in non-Buddhist members of the Sinhala royal house to the Buddhist fold. These are incidences belonging to the period during which the clashes occurred between the Buddhist rulers of Rohana (south Ceylon) and the so-called usurpers of Rajarāṭa.³⁸ The references in the early texts too makes a case for the prevalence

³⁶ See— 'dam', 'damita', in the *Śrī Sumangala Śabdhaśaya*, ed. Ven. W. Sorata thera, Colombo 1956, pt. I. See also *UHC*, I, i, p. 95. see further, H. Ellawala, *Social History of Ceylon*, Cultural Affairs Dept. Ceylon, 1969, p. 46.

³⁷ S. Paranavitana, Tamil Householder's Terrace, Anuradhapura, *JCBRAS* vol. xxxv. 1940, no. 93, pp. 54 ff; *EZ.* vol. v. pt. 2 1963, pp. 242, 252.

³⁸ *JCBRAS*, vol. xxv, No. 93. for 1945, p. 60 f.

of Nighanṭha and Brahmanical religious cults in the Island, more than Dravidian or proto Dravidian cults³⁹. The subsequent struggles between the so-called Maurya and Lambhakarna dynasties for power, could also be a continuation of these pre-Christian religio-political contests for the capture of sovereignty. Inscriptional evidence is there to confirm the fact that the Lāmāni or Lambakarna were not the descendents of prince Bodhigupta (sent from the Maurya court to accompany the sacred Bodhi tree), but descendents of king Paṇḍukābhaya, the pre-Christian dynastic ruler of Ceylon and a scion of the early Aryan ruling house. Ergo our surmise that the Maurya-Lambakarna contests were at the beginning, an expression of a struggle for power between two royal houses that upheld, one the old-order and the other the Maurya order, is not without substantial evidence.

We may conclude our assay to trace the lineage of king Elāra to a family of one of the early Aryan rulers in Ceylon, thus making way for future scholars to analyse the suppositions, possibilities and plausibilities provided in our study, so that a better picture could be brought out, of those obscure but important chapters in the history of Ceylon.

³⁹ C. H. Collins, *Archaeology of Sabaragamuva*, *JCBRAS*, vol. xxxii, no. 85, 1932, pp. 184 ff.—for vestiges of early Jainism in the Sabaragamuva province.

⁴⁰ *EZ.* vol. iii, p. 224 note 6.