

THE SOCIO—CULTURAL BACKGROUND TO THE EVOLUTION OF VIDYODAYA AND VIDYALANKARA UNIVERSITIES

by

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I. From Pirivenas to Universities and back to Pirivenas

In 1873 was founded the Vidyodaya Pirivena at Maligakanda, Colombo by Venerable Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Nayaka Mahathera, the doyen of the scholar-monks who spearheaded the national and religious revival movement of the nineteenth century.¹ Thus was revived the system of educational institutions which the Buddhist Sangha had evolved for the advancement and dissemination of learning pertaining not only to the teachings of the Buddha but also to history, philosophy, literature and other subjects.² Two years later the Vidyalankara Pirivena was established in Peliyagoda, Kelaniya by Venerable Ratmalane Sri Dhammaloka Nayaka Mahathera. Both grew in stature and influence and, by the middle of the twentieth century, had reached the zenith of fame and recognition as the leading seats of oriental learning in Sri Lanka. They had also acquired a measure of international recognition, counting among their alumni a galaxy of distinguished scholars from all over the world.³ The Vidyodaya Pirivena under the guidance of Venerable Baddegama Sri Piyaratana Nayaka Mahathera and Venerable Weliwitiye Sri Sorata Nayaka Mahathera and the Vidyalankara Pirivena under the guidance of Venerable Kiriwattuduwe Pannasara Nayaka Mahathera and Venerable Yakkaduwe Sri Pannarama Nayaka Mahathera provided leadership to an expanding system of Pirivenas which sought to preserve and propagate the indigenous system of Buddhist education.⁴

Propelled, to no mean measure, by the national and Buddhist fervour generated by the celebration of 2,500 Buddha Jayanti in 1956 and complying with the emphasis laid on the national and religious heritage in the manifesto of the Mahajana Eksat Peramuna, a significant decision made by the government of Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike was to confer on these two premier seats of oriental learning University status.⁵ The draft bill which was introduced in Parliament in 1958, however, went beyond this decision and ended up by establishing two Universities named Vidyodaya University of Ceylon and Vidyalankara University of Ceylon. On 19 December 1958, with the assent of the Governor-General, the Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara University Act No. 45 of 1958 became law.

The Vidyodaya University was inaugurated on 18 February 1959 by the Governor-General in his capacity as the Chancellor of the University and the first lecture to the fourteen newly admitted undergraduates was delivered on the same day by the most Venerable Purijjala Sri Siddhartha Saranankara Mahanayaka Thera of the Malwatta Chapter. In June 1959, the Vidyalandara University was inaugurated by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the President of India.⁶

The Vidyodaya University acquired a block of land in Gangodawila and built a self-contained campus. Within a couple of years, the premises of the Pirivena at Maligakanda were vacated so that the Pirivena could function as an independent entity.⁷ The Vidyalandara University, on the contrary established its campus in the Pirivena premises in Peliyagoda, acquiring land in Dalugama for purposes of expansion. The Pirivena, itself, was moved to several sites in Dematagoda and Pannipitiya.

Both Universities flourished with visible signs of progress : e.g. buildings, libraries, publications, staff—both local and foreign, enrolments in a gradually expanding range of disciplines and research projects undertaken by both the staff and post-graduate students.⁸ The new Pirivena code enabled the more important Pirivenas in the Island to become affiliated colleges of the two Universities, which, by Act of Parliament, were empowered to hold external examinations and also to affiliate institutions. The two Universities, thus stood at the apex of a flourishing indigenous system of higher learning.

The reforms in higher education, which were implemented in 1966, changed the character of the Vidyodaya and the Vidyalandara Universities. The Higher Education Act of 1966 superseded the Act No. 45 of 1958 and these two Universities came into the common stream of higher education.

Three major changes were brought about by the new legislation : the specific objectives relating to the promotion of Buddhist and Sinhala Culture were deleted along with the bar on women students and the restriction of the post of vice-chancellor to a bhikkhu. Governed by the same laws and regulations as the Colombo and the Peradeniya Universities, they came under the guidance of the National Council of Higher Education. While thus converting the Vidyodaya and Vidyalandara Universities into secular seats of learning, the need for an institution of higher education specializing in Buddhist and Oriental studies and catering mainly for the Sangha was met by establishing at Anuradhapura the Buddhasravaka-Dharmapithaya.⁹

Higher education again figured prominently in the educational reforms of 1972. With the creation of the unitary University of Sri Lanka, the Vidyodaya and the Vidyalandara Universities became its campuses. The

redistribution of departments of study as well as the transfer of staff from one campus to another resulted in the transformation of the two Universities to a point that they were hardly recognizable as the successors of the "Buddhist Universities"¹⁰ of the 1950s.

With the new legislation of 1978, this departure from the original form was further accentuated. The restoration of the plurality of autonomous universities was accompanied by changes in nomenclature. The decision to give names according to the geographical location of the universities coincided with the shifting of the Parliament to Kotte and the revival of its classical name : Sri Jayewardenepura.¹¹ Thus, while the Vidyalkara campus became the University of Kelaniya, the Vidyodaya campus was renamed the University of Sri Jayewardenepura.

In the meantime, the premises of the Vidyalkara Pirivena which were acquired by the Vidyalkara University of Ceylon in early 1960s were restituted to the Pirivena. In exactly two decades, the two Pirivenas, so to say completed a full circle and had come back to where they were : in stature and standards, recognition and influence. They continue as venerable seats of Oriental learning exemplifying the best traditions of Sinhala Buddhist education. This, of course, was not achieved painlessly. As in all other changes in human efforts, it had been a process fraught with trials and tribulations and frustrations and achievements.

II. A Line of Investigation

The celebration in 1984 of the silver jubilee of the creation of the Vidyodaya and the Vidyalkara Universities is an appropriate occasion to take stock of the circumstances which, *first*, brought into existence these two unique institutions of higher learning and, *then*, influenced their rapid transformation in character, purpose and functioning. Has the entire process of evolving from Pirivenas to Universities and back to Pirivenas been an exercise in futility ? To what extent has this process been a necessary—even essential—phase in the development of Sri Lankan higher education ? Have any benefits of a lasting nature accrued either to the institutions or to the national system of higher education or both ? What lessons have the different parties concerned in it—governmental policy-makers, on one hand, and the managements of the two Pirivenas, on the other—learnt from their experiences ?

The purpose of this paper is to propose, rather than accomplish, a line of investigation which would show how the evolution of these two institutions was governed by a variety of socio-cultural forces; these forces conditioned and modified attitudes and aspirations of the people and, consequently, the policies of the government and the corresponding political and administrative decisions for implementation.

The questions for which answers need to be found are :

- What socio-cultural forces engendered the proposal to confer university status to the Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara Pirivenas ?
- What prompted the decision to change this proposal to one of establishing two Universities, named after the two Pirivenas ?
- What criteria and objectives underlied the reforms of 1966, 1972 and 1978 ? What factors influenced the gradual transformation of the character of these two Universities until they merged totally into the common fabric of higher educational institutions ?
- What does the future hold as regards the fulfilment of those socio-cultural needs and aspirations which the establishment of these two Universities was expected to meet twenty-five years ago ?

An investigation based on such questions is bound to make a significant contribution to an important chapter in the contemporary history of Sri Lankan education.

III. Some Less Known Facts

Though the founders of the two Pirivenas were pupils of the same teacher, namely Venerable Walane Sri Siddhartha Nayaka Mahathera of Paramadhammacetiya Vihara, Ratmalane, the two institutions forged their own scholastic traditions right from the beginning. Each had its own system of spelling in Sinhala as well as linguistic usages. Each showed partiality to certain texts and their editions when prescribing literary works in Sinhala, Pali and Sanskrit. The Vidyodaya Pirivena was generally conservative whether it be in matters of scholarship or of attitude to socio-cultural and political issues. It favoured in-depth mastery of traditional knowledge and scarcely embarked on experimentation or innovation. The Vidyalankara Pirivena, in contrast, displayed a more progressive attitude in all aspects. It experimented with modern literary forms, adopted new methods of instruction and promoted creativity in literature and art. It also participated in active political and social agitation, often risking the likelihood of being embroiled in controversy. The alumni of the two Pirivenas prided themselves in upholding their divergent traditions. Numerically as well as in influence they were well-balanced; but Vidyodaya had a slight advantage over the other on account of another significant difference between them.

The Vidyodaya Pirivena had sought and obtained a State grant-in-aid by 1878—that is, within five years of its establishment. The Vidyalankara

Pirivena decided to forego State assistance in order to preserve its autonomy. Sir Baron Jayatilaka, its most distinguished lay alumnus and supporter, upheld this decision even when he was in the government.

Assured of financial resources, Vidyodaya continued its placid role of preserving and promoting traditional scholarship. If it expressed a political viewpoint, it was in support of the government and in the late 1940s and early 1950s its identification with the ruling party was openly acknowledged. Around this period, Vidyalankara, on the other hand, had seen turbulent times. The controversy on the political role of the monk¹² had an adverse effect on the lay support it received. Two courses of action were taken: one to strengthen its role in traditional scholarship by undertaking the massive task of editing and translating the Tripitaka¹³ and the other to ally itself with the political parties coalescing to oppose the ruling party.

When government changed in 1956, the Vidyalankara Pirivena began to wield an enormous influence on educational and cultural policy. An idea, mooted very early in 1956-57, was to confer University status to the Vidyalankara Pirivena. It would have served the dual purpose of enhancing its prestige and of assuring it State support. But the proposal had a major flaw. Every argument in favour of conferring University status to the Vidyalankara Pirivena on account of the contribution to Oriental and Buddhist learning applied with equal or greater emphasis to the Vidyodaya Pirivena. Short of displaying blatant political partiality, Vidyalankara could not be singled out for special recognition. Hence the proposal was soon amended to include both Pirivenas. The Pirivenas were consulted and they offered their suggestions on the kind of legislation they preferred. Venerable Welivitiye Sri Sorata Nayaka Mahathera in collaboration with some members of his staff and Dr. Senerat Paranavitana prepared a comprehensive draft bill for the consideration of the Ministry of Education.¹⁴

While a simple bill conferring University status to the two Pirivenas, without any major modifications in administrative structures and procedures, was under preparation, the Ministry of Education had to find a quick solution to a grave educational problem which had developed slowly over a decade but had not received due attention. The children who started their schooling in 1947 in national languages on the basis of C. W. W. Kannangara reforms¹⁵ were in Grade XII or University Entrance Class in 1959. Of them, the Sinhala students were almost entirely monolingual and thus likely to be deprived of higher education unless the medium of instruction was changed. They had to be provided with courses in Sinhala at the University. Consultations with the University of Ceylon drew a blank. But the two Pirivenas expressed their willingness to face the challenge. This, of course, required the expansion of their facilities. If they were to be the Universities

catering for higher education in the Sinhala medium, they had to be given the powers and the wherewithal of a full-fledged University. Thus the idea of elevating the two Pirivenas to University status was substantially modified to one of founding two modern Universities with the Pirivenas as their base.

In choosing the final wording in the legislation, a peculiar legal problem of Vidyodaya had to be taken into consideration. A long drawn dispute over the incumbency of the Pirivena premises was in progress.¹⁶ A change in management as would be required for a University could not be brought about while the matter of incumbency was *sub judice*. The solution reached was to legislate for the establishment of two Universities named Vidyodaya University of Ceylon and Vidyalandara University of Ceylon. In the note on objectives attached to the Bill, it was stated that the purpose of the legislation was to grant University status to the two Pirivenas in recognition of their eminence as seats of higher learning and also to provide for higher education in Sinhala. But the legislation, itself, was silent on *elevating* the Pirivenas to Universities. As a result of this particular formulation, the Pirivenas continued to exist.¹⁷ Even while the legislation was being piloted through Parliament, a government decision was taken to grant special support to the two Pirivenas at the rate of Rs. 55,000 to Vidyodaya and Rs. 45,000 to Vidyalandara. The legal explanation was that only the uppermost classes of the Pirivenas were absorbed into the Universities while the other classes had to be maintained as before.

The two new Universities were generously supported by the government. In addition to financial support, the government also relaxed the regulations affecting after-hour work of public servants, this enabling the two Universities to enlist the services of competent lecturers from various governmental departments and institutions. The challenge of providing University courses in Sinhala was adequately met. Both Universities took special steps to produce reference material and a vast number of learned articles was written or translated.¹⁸ Facilities for teaching new disciplines were explored. Opportunities were provided for as many as 600 trainee teachers per year to obtain University qualifications. Within the first five years, both Universities were vibrant centres of scholastic activity. A significant index to the achievements of these Universities is that the older University fell in line with them as regards according Buddhist Studies a rightful place in the curriculum and starting courses in Sinhala.

The spirit of competition which had characterized the relations between the two Pirivenas persisted in the Universities. While serving as an invaluable self-regulating mechanism for the two new institutions, mutual review and criticism provided a healthy basis for evolving answers to pressing problems. Vidyodaya, far more often than the other, was at the receiving end of most

criticism specially as it was breaking new ground and embarked on a series of innovations. It expanded rapidly; developed a sizeable and attractive campus with requisite facilities including laboratories for science teaching; embarked on a large-scale publishing enterprise; moved on to courses like public and business administration; experimented with new forms of higher education and affiliated to itself a widespread network of University Pirivenas.¹⁹ Three decisions were specially criticized :

The first related to regulations which Vidyodaya formulated to recognize periods of study in the Pirivena and in training colleges as partial fulfilment of the minimum period of study for graduation.²⁰ The first batch of eleven graduates passed out in 1960 with several years of study in the upper classes of the Pirivena and one year in the University. The second was the provision that adult students could be admitted on the basis of their passing the University Entrance Examination, irrespective of the school examinations²¹—an innovation which has since been accepted universally as an essential feature of open learning systems. The last was the regulation that English²² and Sinhala/Buddhist Culture were compulsory subjects in all courses and a pass in them was mandatory for graduation²³.

The main charge was that Vidyodaya was fast eroding its image as a “Buddhist University” and evolving into a secular institution. The answer given by its authorities was that the urgent task of providing relevant and useful higher education in Sinhala to a clientele which represented the most disadvantaged sections of the population superseded other considerations. It is to the credit of the first Vice-Chancellor, Venerable Welivitiye Sri Sorata Nayaka Mahathera that the larger national interest was assigned a higher priority than preserving the traditional image of a Buddhist seat of learning²⁴. But the public opinion was not always in support of Vidyodaya, nor was the government.²⁵

The mid-1960s turned out to be a period of grave student unrest in all centres of higher education in Sri Lanka. Its causes were both economic and political. The spectre of the educated unemployed more than any other factors, generated frustration and bitterness²⁶. All Universities experienced ugly displays of indiscipline and even violence. When the Vice Chancellor’s Lodge was set on fire, Peradeniya lost invaluable art treasures bequeathed to it. In Vidyodaya, itself, two unfortunate incidents compelled the government authorities to consider sterner action. The first was an outbreak of violence between bhikkhu and lay students. The other was the disruption of the Convocation address of the Pro-Chancellor.

The legislation of 1966 was designed to meet the growing problems in University administration. The need for a co-ordinating and supervisory

body to oversee the expanding system of higher education was met by establishing the National Council of Higher Education. Maximization of the use of resources through streamlining the system and eliminating overlaps and duplications was assigned to it as a main task. The internal disunity resulting in bickerings and lack of co-operation was traceable to the process of electing the Vice-chancellor and, accordingly changes were made in the procedure. Similarly, provisions were made for government to act expeditiously when the administration in a University broke down. The advisability for such provisions under the prevailing conditions was further endorsed when the same measures were incorporated with minor modifications in the legislation of 1972. Even after the restoration of the principle of electing the vice-chancellor, some of these provisions persist in the legislation currently in force.

The final breakaway from the original form, as brought about by the change in nomenclature, resulted from two mutually related factors. The first was that both Universities were, in no way, distinguishable from the other Universities of the country (namely, Colombo, Peradeniya, Katubedde or Moratuwa and Jaffna). They had long ceased to be "Buddhist Universities." Specific provisions regarding the promotion of Sinhala and Buddhist culture no longer applied to them. Bhikkhus had no positions specially reserved for them. The Universities were co-educational. The preservation of the names Vidyodaya and Vidyalandara could only be urged on purely historical or rather sentimental—grounds. The second factor is the revival and progress evinced by the Vidyodaya and Vidyalandara Pirivenas over the two decades. They had not only regained their earlier stature and reputation in higher learning as well but, in the popular eyes, established a greater claim to these illustrious names than the two Universities.

IV. Deliberate Weakening of Buddhist Institutions

The transformation of the Vidyodaya and the Vidyalandara Universities has evoked comments from students of modern history and sociological developments of Sri Lanka even though, as far as the writer is aware, no detailed study of either this particular question or the general issue of national higher education has yet been undertaken. One such comment merits examination :

"Within a few years of the elevation of Vidyodaya and Vidyalandara Pirivenas to university status, monks lost control over these institutions and the two new universities came to have very little continuity with their past except in their names. It is thus clear that not merely non-Buddhist organizations have had to suffer a weakening of their strength

as a result of the ascendancy of traditionalist Buddhism (which in contrast to Protestant Buddhism excluded free and equal competition between different religious groups) in the years after independence”²⁷

The underlying assumptions in this comment are that the two institutions *suffered a weakening of their strength* and that such weakening was caused as a result of *the ascendancy of traditionalist Buddhism*.

The basis for these assumptions is a theory that Buddhism in Sri Lanka underwent a transformation from the nineteenth century to mid-twentieth century. Gananatha Obeyesekere coined the term “Protestant Buddhism”²⁸ to signify the developments of Buddhist institutions as a result of the national and Buddhist revival characterized by Buddhist-Christian controversies and the adoption of modern elements from Christian practices. Obeyesekere identifies three characteristics in these developments: namely protesting against Christianity, imitating Christian institutions and practises and laicisation.

The choice of the term “Traditionalist Buddhism” to reflect the condition of Buddhism or rather its socio-cultural appurtenances in the twentieth century Sri Lanka seems to be based on a further assumption that Buddhism has gone back to its older form—whatever form existed before the confrontation with Christianity began. But whether such Buddhism is to be characterized as one which “excluded free and equal competition between different religious groups”²⁹ is extremely doubtful. Even if this assumption is true for the developments in Buddhism in the mid-1950s, a question which is not very easy to answer does arise. The ascendancy of the so-called “traditionalist Buddhism” which is to have excluded free and equal competition between different religious groups, may be an adequate explanation for a phenomenon like the nationalization of schools and the consequent impact on the lay Buddhist organizations like the Buddhist Theosophical Society or the Mahabodhi Society. But how can it explain the assumed weakening of two of the most important Buddhist institutions, when the net result of the entire process is that the Pirivenas have *retained* their autonomy and stature?

In the light of the less known facts on the socio-cultural background to the evolution of the two Pirivenas—as outlined in this paper—several questions may be raised:

Was there actually a deliberate (or even an unintended) weakening of the two Pirivenas?

Was not the transformation of these institutions a response to changing educational needs of the country?

In the course of this transformation, what major contributions have these two institutions made to the development of education?

V. Contributions to the Development of Education

The comprehensive investigation proposed in this paper should concentrate not only on the processes of change which the two Pirivenas had gone through during the two decades of the Vidyodaya and the Vidyalandara Universities or Campuses but more importantly on the contribution their establishment and development made to the progress of education in Sri Lanka. This emphasis is urged because these institutions have played during this short period a very positive and far-reaching role which needs to be recognized. The main areas in which this contribution needs to be evaluated are as follows :

- (1) *The development of higher education in Sinhala* : The crisis of 1959 when the first batch of students in the "Sinhala" only stream would have been deprived of opportunities for higher education could not have been averted without the assistance of the two Pirivenas. One might argue that the State could have established one or more independent Universities in Sinhala just as Malaysia did under similar circumstances by creating Universiti Kebangsaan (National University) parallel to University of Malaya. But by drawing on the scholarly resources and experiences of the two Pirivenas and using their erudite scholar-monks to mobilize an hitherto under-utilized body of lay scholars from various walks of life, the Sri Lankan experience has turned out to be unique. It made the transformation of higher education in Sinhala medium far more effective than it could have otherwise been.
- (2) *According to Buddhist Studies their rightful place in higher education* : Years of agitation to bring Buddhist studies into the University had failed to produce any satisfactory results even though the university did give Oriental learning a prominent place. The first chairs of Buddhist studies were established in the Vidyodaya and the Vidyalandara Universities. Whatever barrier that seemed to have existed hitherto disappeared and the University of Sri Lanka followed suit. The steps taken to accord Buddhist Studies their rightful place culminated in the creation of the Post-graduate Institute for Pali and Buddhist Studies now attached to the University of Kelaniya.
- (3) *Democratization³⁰ of higher education* : The provision of higher education in Sinhala opened the doors of the University to a socially and economically underprivileged class of students who came predominantly from rural areas. The inauguration of the Vidyodaya University was hailed by the masses who, in the banners put across the streets, called it the "University of the Poor" (දුප්පතුවාගේ)

සරසවිය). Again, within years, the portals of the older University, too, were open to this class of students. Thus in a short time, a positive step had been taken to foster the democratization of higher education in the country.

- (4) *Production of instructional and reference material in Sinhala* : The Vidyodaya and the Vidyalandara Universities, as already mentioned, became active centres for the preparation and production of instructional and reference material in Sinhala. An experiment first tried out at Vidyodaya was particularly fruitful. The student body was drawn into this effort by promoting through subsidies the production of subject-wise student journals under the supervision of competent staff members. These journals carried both translations and original research articles.
- (5) *Creation of an Independent Buddhist University* : The establishment of the Buddha-sravaka Dharmapithaya at Anuradhapura, too, constitutes a significant contribution of the two universities to the amelioration of educational facilities for Buddhist monks. The affiliation of Pirivenas by the two Universities had given a fillip to higher education among the monks. The demand for a Buddhist University, organized and conducted on traditional lines, had been made for a long time. In fact, it was one of the unimplemented projects of the State programme for celebrating the 2500 Buddha Jayanti. The fear that monks receiving higher education would leave the Order and thus be removed from active religious functions had been a major constraint. The two Universities demonstrated the resilience of the Sangha in that, while some disrobed themselves in search of employment, the Sangha did retain the services of many monks, whose exposure to higher learning had only enhanced their usefulness to society.
- (6) *Gearing higher education to national needs* : Another contribution of the two Universities had been the demolition of the "ivory tower" isolation of the system of higher education in the country. University education became a centre of mass interest. The newly generated social demand for higher education created unprecedented problems, requiring State intervention as regards both supply and quality. Further the new clientele's approach to University education purely as a means of social elevation and improved employment opportunities prompted the exploration of hitherto untried courses of study. (e.g. Vidyodaya's experiment with a course in Modern Sinhala, geared to careers as translators and writers as well as its courses in

public and business administration; the teacher education programmes of both Universities, including the B.Ed. courses). Equally significant are the beginnings made in ushering in some elements of open learning systems.

A detailed study of these contributions, when made objectively highlighting not only the positive aspects but also the new problems which some steps had no doubt created, would be timely from two points of view : *first*, an assessment is overdue as to whether the socio-cultural needs and aspirations of the people which the two institutions were intended to cater for continue to remain unfulfilled. Some were concerned and apprehensive when the two Universities were mooted and finally established. Some were worried over the possible degeneration in the discipline of monks. Some others were anxious that the quality of higher education would be eroded. Others were equally disappointed and frustrated when the two Universities gradually lost their original character and got merged into the prevalent system of education. What prompted these diverse reactions? If the needs and aspirations of a sizeable section of the population remain unattended, what orientation in national policy is called for? *second*, there are many lessons to be learned from this experience. Among the positive experiences of special relevance is the manner in which these two institutions succeeded in mobilizing a wide variety of resources.

VI. Conclusion

In stressing the importance of investigating the socio-cultural background to the evolution of the Vidyodaya and the Vidyalankara Universities, the writer's main objective is to test his own hypothesis, which is as follows :—

The Vidyodaya and the Vidyalankara Universities came into existence to serve a pressing educational need for which no other solution was forthcoming at that time. Having served this purpose, they merged into the national system of higher education, which had been substantially transformed due to their own contributions. The two Pirivenas gave these Universities and, through them, the national system of higher education—their best in the form of scholarly traditions and the guidance of reputed scholar-monks. But the Pirivenas remained outside the process and thrived on their own. The trials and tribulations of the two Universities had no impact on the Pirivenas and their present status. If at all, the two Pirivenas, in particular, and the education of the Sangha, in general, benefitted.

If the contribution of the two Pirivenas to the entire system of higher education in Sri Lanka remains hitherto unrecognized, the reason for it is that the concern of scholars has been limited to the *externa* such as the nomenclature and administrative organization. Hence the plea for an in-depth study. It will not only be a fitting tribute to those who dedicated themselves to the establishment and the functioning of the two universities but also a source of valuable information on how the future educational policy could be oriented to serve the national and religious aspirations of the nation.

NOTES

1. For an account of the contribution of such scholar-monks of this period as Ven. Was-kaduwe Sri Subhuti, Ven. Weligama Sri Sumangala, Ven. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala, Ven. Dodanduwe Sri Piyaratana Tissa and Ven. Alutgama Sri Seelakkhandha see Ananda W. P. Guruge : *From the Living Fountains of Buddhism*, Department of National Archives, Colombo, 1983.
2. For information on the curriculum of traditional seats of learning catering for the Sangha, see U. D. Jayasekera : *Early History of Education*, Department of Cultural Affairs, Colombo, 1969 Chapter 9; Ananda W. P. Guruge : දබ්දිව පැරණි භද්දාපනය, පරමාර්ථය හා මූලධර්ම in සාධනා Vol. IV, Vidyalankara University, Kelaniya 1963-64 pp. 20-21; Ven. Kalukondayawe Sri Pannasekera Nayaka Maha Thera : *The Pirivenas in Education in Ceylon : A Centenary Volume*, Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, Colombo 1969 pp. 745-750.
3. Among the better known scholars are T. W. Rhys Davids, Dhammananda Kosambi, Satish Chandra Vidyabhushana connected with Vidyodaya and Rahul Sankrtyayan, Ven. Jagdish Kashyap and Ven. Ananda Kausalyayan connected with Vidyalankara.
4. Though there was no formal system of affiliating the Pirivenas located in various parts of the country to either of these main Pirivenas, almost all Pirivenas have been linked to them through loyalty postured by a line of alumni.
5. Referring to this decision the Governor-General Sir Oliver Goonetilleke at the Inauguration of Vidyodaya University of Ceylon stated, "The granting of University Status to the two principal Pirivenas of the Island is one of the most far-reaching achievements of the Government in the realm of Education. Minister Dahanayake will be remembered in the annals of this Island as the man who gave Oriental learning and its traditional seats the encouragement and support they needed to become an integral part of the educational set-up of modern Lanka. The Buddhist priesthood, who had in the past contributed so much to the cause of Oriental learning and culture, will now get the opportunity of widening their sphere of influence.
. The Vidyodaya University should fulfil our hopes in this direction because, as the oldest of the modern Pirivenas, it has preserved a very high standard of scholarship during the last eighty-six years" (18 Feb. 1959).
6. The main reason for inviting Dr. Rajendra Prasad was that he had spent some time in the Pirivena as a visiting student.
7. The Pirivena benefited from the two years that the University was conducted in Maligakanda in the form of additional buildings, fittings and furniture.
8. Among the several doctoral theses produced during the first couple of years are those of Dr. Uma Charan Jha (now the Head of the Philosophy Department of Ranchi University, Bihar, India) on Nibbana and Dhammapada and of Dr. Bhag Chand Jain Baskar (now Professor and Head of the Department of Pali and Prakrit, Nagpur University, Madhya Pradesh, India) on Jainism in Buddhist Literature (published in Nagpur)—both submitted to Vidyodaya University and of Dr. Nissanka Seneviratne on Sinhala Poetry, submitted to Vidyalankara University (published in Colombo).
9. Literally the name of this institution means "The Seat of Doctrine for the Disciples of the Buddha." The Act of Parliament, establishing it, provided for an administrative and supportive structure befitting the life and disciplinary procedures of the Sangha.
10. The term "*Buddhist Universities*" was invented by the Press, even though the legislation did not specify such a religious character. The term, however, was considered valid as the law reserved the post of Vice-chancellor for a Bhikkhu and also specified the promotion of Sinhala and Buddhist Culture as one of the objectives. An equally popular appellation was "*Pirivena Universities*."
11. If Vidyodaya was named strictly according to location, it would have been the University of Gangodawila or Nugegoda. Being located in the Kotte electorate, it was decided to name this University after the 15th-16th century designation of this capital of Sri Lanka : Sri Jayavardhanapura (ශ්‍රී ජයවර්ධන පුර) In the transliteration, the spelling adopted by the family of President J. R. Jayewardene has been preferred.

12. For a detailed account of the movement, reference may be made to the biography of Ven. Polwatte Buddhadasse Thera : ඉ බුද්ධදත්ත චරිතය, Colombo, 1954 and to the very informative analysis of the social role of the Buddhist monk in Ven. Walpola Sri Rahula Thera's චිත්තවිමල චරිතය, Colombo, 1946.
13. This recitation of the Tripitaka which was undertaken by the Vidyalankara Pirivena generated enormous public interest and resulted in the movement which ultimately led to the Buddha Jayanti project for the translation of Tripitaka into Sinhala. This massive enterprise is nearing completion as a programme of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs.
14. This draft bill served a very useful purpose in that it presented a series of technical terms in Sinhala for systems and procedures of higher education. Most of the terms, invented by Ven. Sorata, continue to be used. (e.g. සනාතන සභාව for the Senate; ප්‍රමුඛවෘත්තී for Professor).
15. So called as these reforms (among them the most important were those relating to the introduction of free education from kindergarten to the university and the establishment of Central Schools in rural areas) were formulated by a Committee chaired by Dr. C. W. W. Kannangara, then Minister of Education, in 1942.
16. The decision to hold the inauguration ceremony of the Vidyodaya Pirivena at the Independence Hall was made in deference to the protest made by the monk contesting the incumbency of the Pirivena premises.
17. For a contemporary account of this phenomenon, see Ven. Kalukondayawe Sri Pannasekera Nayaka Maha Thera's article (loc. cit.). In a series of satirical articles in දිනමිණ in 1963-64, the poet Raphael Tennakoon called it a strange form of surgery. The D. C. R. Goonewardene University Commission questioned the writer on the claim that the Pirivenas remained intact in spite of the creation of the two Universities. To the query whether such a phenomenon was logically conceivable, the writer quoted the Upanishadic dictum : "Pūrnāt purnam ādāya purnām evāvasisyate."
18. Apart from this publication, The Journal of the Vidyodaya University of Ceylon, the number of student journals produced by the two Universities reached to over a score in 1960-64.
19. The Pirivena Code of Dr. Wijayananda Dahanayake classified Pirivenas as Junior, Senior and University. The University Pirivenas were affiliated colleges of the Vidyodaya or the Vidyalankara Universities and prepared students for their external degree examinations.
20. The Vidyodaya University, in particular, enabled students of the Pirivena and the affiliated University Pirivenas to count recognized periods of study in them against the minimum of three years prescribed by the University Act for a degree. A similar stipulation enabled a trained teacher to count two years in a government training college as equivalent to the first year in the University, if a special entrance examination was passed. Vidyalankara University, on the contrary, delayed the conferment of a degree for trained teachers until the three year period had passed. The difference in interpretation of the relevant provisions of the act was a subject of protracted controversy and at one stage, was referred to the Attorney General, who ruled in favour of Vidyodaya University's interpretation.
21. Among the many beneficiaries of this innovation is Dr. C. H. Piyaratne, who was later admitted to the University of Michigan for graduate studies on the basis of the degree from Vidyodaya, and, for the last fifteen years, has served as the Regional Adviser in Health Education for South-East Asia of the World Health Organization.
22. The authorities of Vidyalankara University openly campaigned against the Vidyodaya University's policy of compulsory examinations in English. But when confronted with the benefits accruing to the students, a more conciliatory attitude was adopted, its Dean of Buddhist Studies referring to the importance of English in higher education as a "bitter truth" (අමිඞ්ඞි සත්‍යයක්).
23. This rule was promulgated as essential to the implementation of Section 5(a) of the Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara University Act, which stipulated "the promotion of Sinhala and Buddhist Culture." This course was given in both Sinhala and English and catered for both Buddhist and non-Buddhist students in undergraduate as well as graduate classes.

24. Ven. Welivitiye Sri Sorata Nayaka Thera of Vidyodaya and Ven. Yakkaduwe Sri Pannarama Nayaka Thera of Vidyalankara stand out as the most eminent scholar-monks of the two institutions during the period under discussion. A critical appraisal of their literary and scholarly services is another urgent task which needs to be highly recommended.
25. Among the various investigations conducted by the government was a very thorough review made by a Commission led by Mr. D. C. R. Goonewardene. Apart from expressing cautions on rapid development and expansion, the Commission did not question any of the major policies of either University. Its main recommendation was on the establishment of a University Grants Commission to ensure co-ordination and collaboration among the four Universities.
26. For a detailed account of the educational problems of the 1960, see the introduction to the White Paper presented in 1966 by Mr. I. M. R. A. Iriyagolle, then Minister of Education.
27. Sri Lanka : A Survey (edited by K. M. de Silva), University of Hawaii, Honolulu 1977 pp. 388-9.
28. G. Obeyesekere. *Religious Symbolism and Political Change in Ceylon* in *Modern Ceylon Studies* Vol. 1/1 (1970).
29. Ibid. "Protestant Buddhism" is an infelicitous term as it is misleading.
30. Democratization is defined as the process by which the socio-economic obstacles affecting access to education are progressively overcome so that the socio-economic distribution of the beneficiaries of education reflects the socio-economic distribution in society. A glaring anomaly has been that the rural poor who represent the vast majority in the country hardly had access to University education. The process of democratization of education began in Sri Lanka with the Kannangara reforms and has continued with encouraging results.