

Paper 15

Inventing History. The Interpretation of the Concept of *dhammadīpa* by Sinhala-Buddha Ethnonationalists

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15.1 INTRODUCTION: SIṂHALA-BAUDDHA ETHNONATIONALISM

Sinhala-Buddha ethnonationalists expand the communalist ideology of one ethnīe, of the Sinhālas, to become the ideology of the Lankan state. This ideology leaves no space for an *īlavar* identity¹ to unfold on territory and in the con-

¹Today the word *īlam* with its derivation *īlavar* has been retrieved as an archaism from the pre-Pallava past over the imperial Colas as name for those who yearn for the reconstitution of an independent state of (Tamiḷ)īlam. *īlavar* today are opposed to Lankans who are political group of people yearning for a unitary or united state on the island. *īlam* here does of course not associate to its original meaning “toddy” and *īlavar* to “toddy-tappers” or to the present caste of *īlavar* in especially Keraḷam, but to “inhabitants of (Tamiḷ)īlam.” Furthermore, *īlam* refers here not to the whole island as formerly in pre-colonial periods, but to Tamiḷīlam only. Tamiḷīlam covers mainly the original Northern and Eastern provinces of the island.

The word *īla-v-ar* indicates the plural, but it can be used as an honorary form in the singular. It can also be used attributively. The word means lexically “people (person) of (Tamiḷ)īlam.” The word *īlam* was retrieved in the 1920s. It referred to a cultural area specific for the Tamiḷar in contrast to the area specific for the Sinhāla. Gradually there was a gliding of meaning from a cultural area to a political territory, to an independent Tamiḷ nation-state. This gliding reached its accomplishment in 1956 as a reaction of Tamiḷ leaders to the

consciousness of the peoples. It invents a past to

Sinhala-only program of the Ceylon Government. The word (tamiḷ)*īlam* was taken up by the Tamiḷ United Liberation Front (TULF) in its official program from 1976 and by the Tamiḷ militants. The frequently appearing motto on the Tamiḷ publications of the Liberation Tigers of Tamiḷ Ealam (LTTE) is

Pulikalīṅ tākam tamiḷīlattāyakam

“the task of the Tigers is (to win) the homeland Tamiḷīlam”

The word *tāyakam* means “motherland,” but in the international discourse it has taken the meaning of “homeland.” When the Thimbu resolution’s English “homeland” from 1985 had to be translated into Tamiḷ, “*tāyakam*” was chosen.

The present use of the word *īlavar* was popularized, but not monopolized, by the armed Tamiḷ group called Ealam Revolutionary Organizers of Students (EROS) in the 1980s and was used regularly before and during the Indian intervention in 1987. Its slogan in Tamiḷ was *nām īlavar, namatu moḷi tamiḷ, nam nāṭu īlam*, “we are *īlavar*, our language is Tamiḷ, our land is *īlam*.” EROS’ political wing was called *īlavar janānāyaka muṇṇaṇi*, “*īlavar* Democratic Front.”

The leading group among *īlavar* today is the LTTE. Since 1990 it has also comprised leading cadres of the former EROS. Even the *māvīvar*, “Great Heroes,” of the EROS are included in the martyrology of the LTTE. Today, the word *īlavar* is used as a self-designation by groups supportive of the aim of achieving Tamiḷīlam, as for example the group around the journal *īlavar kural*, “The Voice of the *īlavar*,” issued by *īlavar* in Canada.

fit its own present concept of Siṃhala-Bauddha identity. Its historical writing is ethnocentric; it synchronizes its present communalist interest with interests of the past. Its historical presentation is therefore also anachronistic; it projects contemporary racial/communalist concepts and values into the past. The present paper pinpoints these anachronisms and presents an alternative historical interpretation of the concept of *dharmadīpa*. The nature of anachronisms as ideological instruments in conflicts will be discussed.

It will be shown that the interpretation as *tatpuruṣa* of the word *dharmadīpa* as “island of the *dhamma* (for the Siṃhala race)” is quite recent. It was interpreted differently in the canon. It was interpreted as *bahuvrīhi* meaning “having the *dhamma* as lamp (island).” This meaning was unfit to be exploited by Lankan ethnonationalists in the ongoing conflict between Īlavar and Lankans. They wanted to have the meaning of “the island of the *dhamma*” and fell back of the classical spot for the word *dharmadīpa* in the *Mahāvamsa* 1, 84. The Anagārika Dharmapāla, being one of the foremost representatives of Siṃhala-Bauddha ethnonationalism, made a re-interpretation of the canonical concept and launched this *tatpuruṣa*-interpretation

The modern Īlavar have to face the military action and reaction of the Lankans. To be a Lankan is a recently forged and complex political identity comprising different political sub-identities. I focus here an extremist section that I name Siṃhala-Bauddha ethnonationalists. There is a Siṃhala-racial and a Bauddha-religious element in their self-image. They yearn for a unitary nation-state called “Śrī Laṃkā” based on the Siṃhala *jātiya*, “race.” Usually these Siṃhala-Bauddha ethnonationalists are very loud in their performance, which creates the impression that they are representative for all Lankans, especially as they speak on behalf of all of them. Common for Lankans is their blank denial of the factual break-up between Īlavar and Lankans.

inspired by the *Mahāvamsa* in the 1920s. He also reinterpreted the *Mahāvamsa* concept that was directed against a-Bauddhas into a concept that was directed against those who were neither Bauddhas nor Siṃhalas. It was made part of his anti-Tamil, anti-Muslim and anti-Western Siṃhala communalism that he had inflated into an Lankan ethnonationalism. Today, his interpretation is one of the key concepts of a religiously based Siṃhala-Bauddha ethnonationalism, that I focus in this paper.

The modern Siṃhala-Bauddha ethnonationalist translation of the word *dharmadīpa* is “island of the *dhamma*,” and it is implied that the island is Laṃkā. It excludes the possibility that the word is not *tatpuruṣa*, that it is *bahuvrīhi* and that *dīpa* means “lamp” (and not “island”). The excluded alternative translation would be “having the *dhamma* as (guiding) lamp.” It happens to be the authentic teaching of the Buddha. The climax of ethnonationalist thinking is attained when their concept is related to the Buddha’s to let it appear as a concept thought by the Buddha himself.

15.2 THE TRADITIONAL SEALING THEME

Religious people in many parts of the world practise paradigmatic historical writing. The *Tora*’s fundamental paradigm is the Covenant between Israel and God. This paradigm is repeated throughout history as parameter for evaluating the performance of Israel in terms of good and bad. One of the four paradigms made explicit in the insular chronicles is the *sāsanāgamam*, “coming of the *sāsana*,” resulting in the sealing of the soil as Bauddha soil. This paradigm or theme is reappearing throughout the history of precolonial Laṃkā – but not in the meaning that is ascribed to this theme by ethnonationalists.

The theme of the sealing of the island as Bauddha soil as given in pre-colonial sources, did not exclude Tamīlar who were Bauddhas. It excluded, of course, Tamīlar and non-Tamīlar who were not Bauddhas, not because they were not Siṃhala, but because they were not Bauddhas. There was a strong and sectarian, anti-“heretical” and jealous watchfulness by the insular tradition of the Mahāvihāra, but in these pre-colonial insular sources the island was never “sealed” as the island for the Siṃhalas as against claims from Tamīlar. It was sealed for the benefit of Bauddhas as against claims of non-Bauddhas. Still today there are some revivalists who hold the view that the base of the state’s unity is Bauddham, not *jātiya* (Sinhala *jātiya*, “caste,” “community”). They form one subgroup in the complex of identities labelled as Lankans.

This Bauddha exclusiveness did not imply aversion specifically against Tamīlar, but aversion against all, Tamīlar, Siṃhalas, Christians, Jews and Muslims who appear as anti-Bauddha. It so happened, however, that the later “mediaeval” *vaṃsa*-tradition depicted especially Tamīlar as anti-Bauddha because of their repeated destruction of Bauddha monuments and institutions during invasions. From that time on, Bauddham as state-ideology is mainly anti-anti-Bauddha, targeting the Tamīlar, but for specific Buddhist reasons. We have to make distinctions. To be anti-Tamiḷ today has a religious and a racial dimension, but in pre-colonial Īlam it had mainly the religious dimension (alongside with political, economic and social dimensions).

To base the unity of the island primarily on race-and-religion (Bauddham) is a specifically anti-Tamiḷ modernist view launched by ethnonationalists in the school of the Anagārika in the first half of the 20th century. They made a special re-interpretation of the sealing theme as

anti-Tamiḷ, where Tamiḷ was a racial category.

To sum up, the traditional sealing theme in the *vaṃsa*-literature focused Bauddham as uniting ideology of the island. It did not polarise between Siṃhalas as one *jātiya* and Tamīlar as another *jātiya*, but it polarised between Siṃhala Bauddhas and non-Bauddhas among which were Tamiḷ Caivas, (Tamiḷ) Jains, Mahāyānists, Jāvas and Mallas, etc. in pre-colonial Īlam. The *vaṃsa*-literature was not thinking in racial, but in exclusive and excluding religious categories. In this way we have to understand the classical spot of the *dharmadīpa*-concept in the *Mahāvāṃsa* 1, 48. When we today speak of the “*mahāvāṃsīc* mind-set” we usually think of anti-Tamiḷ racism, because we are preformatted by the thinking of modern ethnonationalists. The *Mahāvāṃsa*, however, did not think in racial terms but in sectarian terms. It thereby contradicted an Aśokan tradition of *samag(g)a*, “concord,” between the religious groups. It turned *samagga* into its counter-part by a manipulative re-interpretation of Aśoka’s concept of dharma. This is, however, a story not to be told here. Our sole concern here is that representatives of Bauddham in the *vaṃsa*-literature rejected Tamīlar on religious grounds, not on racial grounds.

To understand the modern interpretation of the *dharmadīpa* concept by ethnonationalists, we need one further ideological component. It is the *sīhaḷadīpa* concept. These three, the *dharmadīpa* concept, the sealing theme and the *sīhaḷadīpa* concept form semantic fields that were reinterpreted and connected with each other in the ideological laboratories of the Siṃhala-Bauddha ethnonationalists in the 20th century.

15.3 THE CONCEPT OF *dhammadīpa* IN THE
CANON (*Tipiṭaka*)

So, where do we find the word and concept *dhammadīpa* as a Buddhaword? It is in the *Tipiṭaka* and in sources commenting on the *Tipiṭaka*. Where the word appears, it is in a soteriological context and has to be translated in most cases as *bahuvrīhi* with “having the *dhamma* as lamp.” The concept *dhammadīpa* has in this dominating context not the least relation to any island. From the *Mahāvamsa* the word has been picked up, taken out of its context and completely reinterpreted by modern Sinhala-Bauddha ethnonationalists in the early 20th century. They again have projected this concept back into history, projected it into the *vamsa*-literature, and connected it with a new interpretation of the sealing theme of “the coming of the *sāsana* to the island.” The final move was to connect their racial interpretation of the *dhammadīpa* concept with the word of the Buddha. They made innocent Western and Eastern scholars wrongly believe that their interpretation is part of an “age-old” history.

Having this knowledge in mind, there is no indication that there was any historical consciousness about the island as *dhammadīpa* interpreted as the island for the Sinhala race in the main pre-colonial works reflecting a historical consciousness. This is of course not the same as to say that there was no “sealing theme.” Such a theme was there throughout, indeed, but it was not connected with a racial concept of *dhammadīpa*.

Let us now look at the canonical usage of the word *dhammadīpa* in the “Mahāparinibāna-sutta.” There, the dying Buddha is reported to have said that the disciples should not have any

other *saraṇa*, “refuge,” than the *dhamma*.² He also uses the term *atta*, “self,” in connection with *dīpa*: *atta-dīpa*, “having oneself as *dīpa*.” It is implied by the context that the monks should have themselves as *dīpa* – and not the dying or dead Buddha or anybody else. Furthermore, the Buddha introduces the concept of *dhammadīpa*, which here is not *tatpuruṣa*, “the *dīpa* of the *dhamma*,” but which is *bahuvrīhi*, “having the *dhamma* as *dīpa*.” So, we have four terms that are connected with each other in a semantic chain: *dhamma*, *dīpa*, *atta* and *saraṇa*. Connecting these, the Buddha is reported to have said to Ānanda:

*Tasmā t ih’ Ānanda attā-dīpā viharatha attā-saraṇā anañña-saraṇā, dhamma-dīpa dhamma-saraṇā anañña saraṇā.*³

“Therefore, Ānanda, dwell you (all), having yourselves as *dīpa*, having yourselves as refuge, having no other refuge, having the *dhamma* as *dīpa*, having the *dhamma* as refuge, having no other refuge.”

atta is of course here not “the soul,” but the logical counterpart of reference to somebody else than myself, to “the other,” who is made explicit in the text. The *atta* and the *dhammā* have common attributes, to be a *saraṇa* and to be a *dīpa*. It is implied that *dīpa* is a simile for *saraṇa*. The *dīpa* is not a physical island and is therefore of course not the island Tambapaṇṇi or Laṃkā (that are never mentioned in the Mahāparinibānasutta under these names or any other name).

The monks themselves should seek no other refuge than the *dhamma* that is their *dīpa-saraṇa*. If anything is a *dīpa* as *saraṇa*, it is

² *The Dīgha Nikāya [=D]*, Vol 2 London: PTS, 1982 (1903), p. 100–101.

³ *D*, Vol 2, p. 100. Vide also *D* 3, p. 58, 77 (Cakkavatti-Sīhanāda-Suttanta)

the *dhamma*. *dhammadīpa* refers to a state of mind when a person has the *dhamma* as *dīpa*. Those who have the *dhamma* as *dīpa-saraṇa* can be found anywhere in the world.

The concept of *dhammadīpa* in the canon has no connection to the sealing theme and the *sihaḷadīpa* concept. It stands completely apart and was reinterpreted by first the compiler of the *Mahāvamsa* and then by the present ethnonationalists.

15.4 THE ETHNONATIONALIST INTERPRETATION OF THE *dhammadīpa* CONCEPT

Let us look at a book by Ananda Wickremaratne. He is presented as professional historian at the University of Oxford in the Foreword of his book *Buddhism and Ethnicity in Sri Lanka. A Historical Analysis*, published in 1995 by the International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Kandy.⁴

The following two concepts are regarded by him as implications of his notion of the *dhammadīpa*: *homogeneity and centrality*⁵. The author modifies his statement by saying that he talks about permanent *claims* or about *visions* of the Sinhalese.⁶ He is aware that the political reality contradicts these claims. They are questioned by the establishment of a pluralistic society in which power has been geographically diminished.⁷ He adds that these two “strands,” the claims for centrality and homogeneity, and the reality of pluralism were never harmoniously fused. The Sinhalese acceptance of “other el-

ements” did however not mean an attenuation of the more traditional concerns of the *dhammadīpa*.⁸

This was published in 1995 when the armed struggle for Tamilīlam between Īlavar and Lankans had been going on for twelve years. We have to interpret Wickremaratne’s book as a contribution to the political debate in the 1980s and 1990s taking an anti-Īlavar stand for the unitary state in which Siṃhala Bauddham is monopolised. In this ideal state is racial-religious homogeneity and a feeling of uniqueness for the Siṃhals. We end up here in a politicised or better communalised concept of *dhammadīpa* interpreted as an expression of the ideal – but, alas, unfortunately not real – unitary (centralised) Bauddha state. This is the latest, but probably not the last stage of the politicisation of the concept of *dhammadīpa*.

Among monks, we also find an ethnonationalist interpretation of the concept of *dhammadīpa*. To the Bauddha monk Maḍihē Pañṇasiha, *mahānāyaka*, was ascribed on the occasion of his 86th birthday in 1996, the ambition of wanting to make Sri Lanka a *dhammadīpa* again.⁹ We have to identify his ideological background to understand this famous monk’s notions about *dhammadīpa*. His ideal of a man is the Anagārika Dharmapāla. One of the best known biographies in Siṃhala, *vīra carita*, [“the life of the hero”], about the Anāgarika Dharmapāla, was issued by this monk.¹⁰ There is a direct line of ideological dependency from the Anāgarika Dharmapāla to Maḍihē Pañṇasiha, who in this biography quotes

⁴A Wickremaratne, *Buddhism and Ethnicity in Sri Lanka. A Historical Analysis* (Delhi: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Vikas Publishing House, 1995).

⁵Ibid., 190.

⁶Ibid., 190.

⁷Ibid., p. 190.

⁸Ibid., 194.

⁹D B Kappagoda, “86th Birth Anniversary of Ven. Maḍihē Pannaseeha Thera,” *The Island*, Internet Edition, Features, Sunday, 26 June, 1996. [No pagination].

¹⁰*vīra carita. anugārika dharmapālatumā (gamgōdaviḷa: [no publisher], 1985).*

the key formula of Siṃhala-Bauddha ethnonationalism, coined by the Anāgarika Dharmapāla in Siṃhala:

*magē raṭa, magē jātiya, magē āgāma, magē bhāṣāva yana me mahā anargha ratna satarak mata tibē. mē ratana satara ārakṣā karagānīma magē yutukamaki*¹¹

“My country, my race, my religion, my language have become to me a group of four great invaluable jewels. It is my duty to make these jewels of four the protection.”

Here, not only religion, but also the country, the (Siṃhala) *jātiya*, and the (Siṃhala) language take the position of a *ratna*, “jewel,” i.e., the position of a concern in a cluster of ultimate concerns. The own *raṭa* is consecrated. The *āgama*, “religion,” i.e., the three jewels, the *buddha*, the *dhamma* and the *saṃgha*, have been included in a cluster of secular concerns of which “country” and “race” are of primary importance. The point is that all these elements are thought of implying each other in a semantic chain: country > race > religion > language. In clear language it means that an ideal Lankan is a Siṃhala by racial descent, is a Bauddha by creed and Siṃhala speaking by heritage. The island of this ideal islander is *dhammadīpa* – in the specific ethnonationalist interpretation, of course.

The President of Sri Lanka, Chandrika Kumarnatunga Bandaranayaka, also loves the concept of *dhammadīpa*. At Vesak 1997, the President participated actively in Vesak celebrations and made a speech that linked the present time through Vesak to the oldest Bauddha insular traditions.¹² The speech was printed in the Gov-

¹¹ *vīra carita* . . . , p. 22.

¹² Anon., “Let Us Win Back Our Fair Name as Dharmadeepa - President.” *The Daily News*, 21 May, 1997, Internet Edition: <http://www.lanka.net/lakehouse/1997/>

ernment paper *The Daily News*. The speech also gave also a glimpse into her personal Bauddha piety. It is what we call Dhammapada-Buddhism in combination with modernist influences. Dhammapada-Buddhism consists of non-controversial sentences of wisdom that can be accepted by all, including Hindus, Christians and Muslims. Her modernism consists here of presenting Bauddham as compatible with science and as a philosophy of life, but also with the modernist Siṃhala-Bauddha ethnonationalist doctrine of *dhammadīpa*. She thinks that this concept can solve “the national problem.” She repeated the common package of terms pertaining to ethnonationalism. She retold the story about the Siṃhalas descending from Vijaya – even elsewhere she demonstrates her conviction that “Prince Vijaya” is a historical figure – and she alluded to Duṭṭhagāmaṇi. He has become the most important anti-Tamiḷ icon in the 20th century. Her most remarkable contribution, however, is her promotion of the concept of the island as *dhammadīpa* that implies uniqueness and election of the island as Buddhist settlement, centralism of the state and homogeneity of the race, as we have seen above. It contradicts her elsewhere-promoted concept of devolution of power and ethnic-religious pluralism as promoted in her Draft Constitution from 1997. She also expressed her personality in a very personal translation of the word *dharmadeepa* (sic). *deepa* is “the country” and *dharma* is “righteousness.” So, she arrives at “the land of righteousness,” which gives her concept an Ásokan flavour. As expected on that day, she also counts the time in *buddhavarṣa*.

So, we find the *dhammadīpa* concept as political concept well diffused throughout the ranks

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of the Lankan Siṃhala-Bauddha society in the 1990s, last and not least on the top of the political hierarchy.

15.5 TYING UP LOOSE ENDS

We now come to the origin of the racial transformation of meaning of the canonical soteriological concept of *dhammadīpa* via the sectarian transformation of the *Mahāvamsa*. The Anagārika Dharmapāla (1864–1933), made use of the concept of the canonical word *dhammadīpa*. He, having Vivekānanda as model for political interpretations of soteriological terms, seems to be one of the first interpreters to make a racial use of this religious term. For him *dīpa* had only one reference, his physical island. He did not even consider the alternative meaning “lamp” or that the island was a simile for refuge. He also considered the word to be a *tatpuruṣa* compound meaning “the island of the *dhamma*.” So far he is in agreement with the *Mahāvamsa*. But he added to the religious Bauddha exclusiveness of the *Mahāvamsa* also his Siṃhala ethnonationalism. Finally, he made a complete reinterpretation of the same canonical text, of the Mahāparinibbānasutta, as I have quoted above. This reinterpretation fits into his ideology of martial Siṃhala-Bauddha ethnonationalism. Let us follow him step by step.

In 1928, he stated in an article in the *Maha Bodhi*, the journal of the Maha Bodhi Society founded by him 1891, that Ceylon helped the world long before the birth of Christianity. The children of Ceylon – Ceylon being the *dhammadīpa* – know best what is to be done. “It is the European followers of the Semitic barbarism that destroyed the aesthetic civilisation of the land of the *dhamma*.”¹³

¹³Anagarika Dharmapala, “The Unknown Co-founders

There is a precursor to this text passage from 1928. In a famous pamphlet called *A Message to the Young Men of Ceylon*, published first in 1922 in Kalkattā, he quoted the passage from the canon *attadīpa viharatha* [D 2, 100] about the *dhammadīpa*, but he applies the *dīpa* to his island in the time of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī “who rescued Buddhism and our nationalism from oblivion.”¹⁴ It is implied that the time of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī is similar to our own time that demands a fight against the colonials and the ethnic minorities having been classified as foreigners. His *dīpa* is the (ultimate) refuge from where the resistance against Tamilar and the British is mobilised. Further on, in direct connection with his canonical quotation in the same speech he says:

“We must learn to stand on our legs and not depend on the alien ...”¹⁵ “We must work systematically having before us the goal of self-Government and Home Rule ...”¹⁶ “We have lost the spirit of patriotic independence ...”¹⁷ “With Buddhism Ceylon shall yet become the beacon light of Religion to the World ...”¹⁸

It seems that the *attadīpa* mentioned by the Buddha is identified – not with man himself looking for salvation – but with the Anagārika’s Ceylon under colonial suppression. This reminds

of Buddhism,” *The Maha Bodhi* 36(1928), p. 70 [67–71]. Quoted after H Bechert, *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft in den Ländern des Theravāda-Buddhismus*, Band 1 (Göttingen: Universität Göttingen, 1988), p. 120 [Reprint from 1966]. Id., *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft in den Ländern des Theravāda-Buddhismus*, Band 3 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 19193), p. 103.

¹⁴See *Return to Righteousness. A Collection of Speeches, Essays and Letters of the Anagārika Dharmapala*, Edited by A Guruge (Colombo: The Government Press, 1965), p. 510.

¹⁵*Return to Righteousness ...*, p. 511.

¹⁶Loc. cit.

¹⁷Loc. cit.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 512.

strongly of Vivekānanda's interpretation of realising *ātman* as achieving self-rule for India. The Anagārika evidently made a political interpretation of the island of the *dhamma*, as the island to which the Siṃhalas should seek their refuge and make it independent from destructive foreign influence.

There is another point also. The Anagārika, by his quoting the Buddha's words, wanted to encourage the young men of Ceylon to internalise the idea about *dhammadīpa*. In his interpretation this idea is Siṃhala-Bauddha martial nationalism in the spirit of Duṭṭhagāmaṇi. This interpretation is an extreme form of parochialisation and communalisation of the Buddha's soteriological and universal concept of *dhammadīpa* in the Mahāparinibbānasuttanta. It is also a consecration of politics by connecting the expansion of Siṃhala communalism nation-wide with a high-status canonical Buddha-word.

Furthermore, the island was not only *dhammadīpa*; it was *sīhaḷadīpa* also, here in the ethnonationalist meaning "island of the Siṃhalas," excluding the Tamilar and the colonials. The Anagārika is also one of the first promoters of the word "Siṃhala Bauddham." He popularised the words and concept in 1906 in his journal *siṃhala bauddhyā*. In accordance with this concept, he stated in 1908 that "Buddhism was completely identified with the racial individuality of the people."¹⁹ This is one of his sayings that had tragic-fatal-consequences in the modern history of Ceylon-Lamkā. His connecting of *dhammadīpa* with *sīhaḷadīpa* made the physical island the ultimate refuge, and it was the ultimate refuge of the Siṃhalas-only, excluding all "foreign" elements. He even sharpened his exclusiveness to focus on the welfare of the Siṃhala

¹⁹Ibid., p. 489.

Bauddhas only. He stated explicitly that Lamkā belongs to the Buddhist Sinhalese – "and for the Tamils there is South India."²⁰

The racial antagonism that the word *dhammadīpa* has expressed and incited, has been based on an interpretation generated and launched by the Anāgarika Dharmapāla and his present followers. He has also influenced academics and even led his Īlavar adversaries to believe that the island from earliest times was classified and known as *dhammadīpa* – in his interpretation. Furthermore, by connecting his interpretation of the *dhammadīpa* concept with the Buddhaword, he gave it canonical status.

15.6 CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

1. The interpretative activities of the ethnonationalist ideology can be reconstructed and listed:
 - They combined Bauddha exclusiveness and Siṃhala racialism and arrived at the powerful metaphor of *siṃhala bauddham*.
 - They tried to bestow *siṃhala bauddham* with canonical status by relating their *dhammadīpa* concept to the canonical one.
2. There are evidently several kinds of Buddhisms, 1, 2, 3, etc. One of these is Siṃhala Bauddham which is a special version of political Buddhism. Christianity also has several "Christianities." One of them was German Christianity that was promoted by German-Christian ethnonationalists from

²⁰Quoted after K. N. O. Dharmadasa, *Language, Religion, and Ethnic Assertiveness. The Growth of Sinhalese Nationalism in Sri Lanka* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press), p. 165.

1933–1945 and that like Siṃhala Bauddham grew out of a nationalist revival movement. It is worthwhile to compare the two.²¹

3. The Buddha has connected himself with the following idea: Having the *dhamma* as guiding lamp is a necessary condition for attaining liberation from suffering, wherever in the world, not only in Laṃkā. The canonical concept of *dhammadīpa* as a Buddha-word is as a soteriological concept. It tells the world, including both Siṃhala and Tamīlar, that if man has the *dhamma* – and nothing else – as a guiding lamp, his mind will be liberated from ties to the world. *dhammadīpa* means “having the *dhamma* as a (guiding) lamp.” It refers to a mental state that potentially is universal. It refers originally not exclusively to a small island on the southern tip of India. It was meant as a universal human concept.
4. The concept of the *dhammadīpa* as the island of the *siṃhala-bauddha jātiya* was generated and seminized in flood of militant speeches, pamphlets and university publications. Their influence was evidently so strong that even Western scholars and Īlavar suspended historical-critical watchfulness. This successful ideological craftsmanship resulted in a shift of category from soteriology to politics. It also resulted in a shift of meaning from the Buddha’s “having the *dhamma* as lamp (in the individual search for liberation from suffering)” to the ethnonationalists’ “(Laṃkā as) island of the *dhamma* (for the Siṃhala race only).”
5. This craftsmanship, consisting of the application of calculated anachronisms and speculation, is not harmless. It is part of inciting racial hate against the Tamīlar and other peoples in the island. Racial hate may lead to pogroms and pogroms to genocide. Ideologists may not loot and massacre, but they make other people do it.
6. A confrontation of these ideologists with the authentic teaching of the Buddha about *dhammadīpa* or with the tolerant teaching of *samaga* of the Aśoka of the inscriptions might give them to think and reconsider their position. It is perfectly reasonable to say that the Buddha’s teaching about *dhammadīpa* will undermine the ethnonationalists’ teaching about *dhammadīpa*. The Buddha’s teaching about *dhammadīpa* is beyond both the sectarian Bauddha ideals of the *vaṃsa*-tradition and the racism of modern Siṃhala-Bauddha ethnonationalism. A subversive retrieving of his teachings about *dhammadīpa* and interpretation and application of it to modern conditions could eliminate at least *one* obstacle for establishing a future co-operation between Īlavar and Lankans on an equal basis.

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²¹For such a phenomenological comparison see P Schalk, “Twisted Cross: the Religious Nationalism of the German Christians,” *Studia Theologica* 52 (1998), pp.69–79.

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MAIN FIELDS OF RESEARCH OF PETER SCHALK

1. Ritual transmission of Buddhism through *pirit* and *baṇa* in Laṃkā.
2. The religions of Funan as state ideologies.
3. The history of Buddhism among Tamilar.
4. Religious expressions of social-economic conflicts in present South Asia.

SOME PUBLICATIONS BY PETER SCHALK CONCERNING ĪLAVAR AND LANKANS

1. “Concepts of Martyrdom and Resistance of the LTTE.” *Martyrdom and Political Resistance* Ed. Joyce Pettigrew. Centre of Asian Studies Amsterdam. Amsterdam: VU Press, 1997, pp. 61–82.
2. “Historisation of the Martial Ideology of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE).” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies (Australia)*, vol 20, no. 2, December 1997, pp. 1–32.
3. “‘Birds of Independence.’ On the Participation of Tamil Women in Armed Struggle.” *Lanka* 7 (1992), pp. 44–142.

4. “‘Unity’ and ‘Sovereignty.’ Key Concepts of Militant Buddhist Organisation in the Present Conflict in Sri Lanka.” *Temenos*, 24 (1988), pp. 55–87.
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