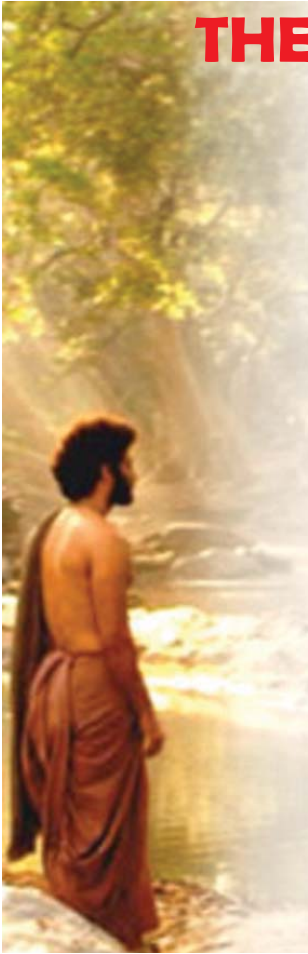


# THE FOURTH VISIT OF SIDDHARATHA



The first three were made during his lifetime, some five centuries ago. He did a number of deeds that benefitted his Sri Lankan followers. He expelled the group of people called Yakkhas from their traditional land in Bintenna. He settled a dispute between two princely brothers in Kelaniya, and left an imprint of his feet at the top of a mountain known as Samantha Kuta. All these places plus some others, eighteen in number, are the places venerated by Buddhists as those sanctified by the Buddha's visit. Only the rock cave where he is believed to have had his siesta after leaving his imprint on Samantha Kuta, has not been discovered so far.

This is just a preamble to the the most recent arrival of Siddhartha. In fact, it occurred only last year, 2013. It was, however, a celluloid version of the layman before his Enlightenment. the award - winning film by that name, came back to the island, with the laurels won in New Delhi.

According to reports, it was adjudged the best film among a large number of entries from so many countries, at an international competition, which under normal circumstances, the whole country, at least the cinema - loving people of the land, would have looked forward to.

The scene at the Bandaranaike International Airport was, however, not that encouraging. When the prize - winning Director and producer returned to the island with his trophy, along with the leading actor from India, none of the film lovers or authorities, who cry out about the culture and arts of the motherland, happened to be there to greet them,

Could it be some problem of communication, I wondered, but, I had to rule that out in view of the abundance of avenues now available for

communicating such an occurrence. My only regret was that neither the Department of Cultural Affairs or the Film Corporation was aive to the situation.

None of these acts or disregard for courtesies is in a way to be taken as serious breaches of responsibility or disrespect to the arts and artists in a land where politics and politicians take pride of place in any thing and everything.

No. there was at least a Buddhist monk there to greet the party on their arrival at Katunayake. He at least would have attached some importance to a film depicting the Young Siddhartha winning an award.

It is no wonder that one forgets niceties in certain situations, and act with calous disregard for simple practices and observations. Let us look at the big picture arising as a result of the award and its significance.

The leading actor in the film, an Indian national at that, had made an important statement for these national heroes to take note of. For him to say that, as soon as they landed at Katunayake, he would have been thinking of it for quite some time,

His message was simple. 'Take the message of the Buddha along with this film, to the world.'

Let us hope that those responsible for looking after the art or the industry of film making, heed this message given by a foreign national. At least that monk who was present at the air port would be able to pass on

that message for others to follow.

Will they ? is the question.

Apart from the usual disregard for such acts, I see another big hurdle for them to jump. Before telling the world to follow the vword of their teacher, the preachers themselves have to show some semblance of doing it themselves. That I think, is rather a difficult under the current situatin prevailing in the island.

To put it bluntly, put your house in order, before telling the world to do what your teacher



has taught you.

With the very teachers taking up arms against otherv religious institutions, such as churches and mosques, how can any Buddhist in that country tell others to follow the Buddha?

the Indian film star would have certainly picked up the essence of Buddhist teaching while playing that role, but he had not seen through the real men on the ground who have arrogated the power of taking the message to the masses, to themselves.

Things are not what they appear to be.

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