

Buddhism is the world's most fashionable religion. Men and women of the affluent West are seen seeking relief from their living anxieties, in Buddhist practices like meditation and Zen-craft. This trend goes along with an increasing decline in Christian Church attendances in these parts of the world.

The popularity of Buddhism in the West is observed across social strata. The intellectual types have abandoned creation theories and beliefs in a supervising God. They cannot make sense of the prevalence of evil, deprivation and acute injustice in the world on the assumption of the old dogma of a compassionate God. The more angst-ridden lower classes look to Buddhism with a different emphasis. Overall, the appeal of Buddhism in the West is not so much for the religion's metaphysics or its philosophy as defined by the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path nor to the religion's myriad rituals like worship of Bo trees, transference of merit and Pirithbut to the facets mentioned above. In the Buddhist portfolio of the West broader Indian practices like Yoga are also incorporated.

The sight of a monk in saffron robes walking elegantly with head downcast has optional appeal to the run down sense of spirituality in the West. Consequently in the West, Buddhism sells like skin care products and perfumes. The Age newspaper of May 26th this year carried an interesting story about fake monks who have entered the army of salespeople and who were seen in the streets of the busy Melbourne CBD. For the benefit of readers who have missed this story I reproduce it as follows: "Dodgy Buddhist monks wearing robes that hide tracksuit pants and runners are scamming Melbourne and visitors to the CBD, Consumer Affairs says. Consumer Affairs Victoria and the Buddhist Council of Victoria warned on Monday of common dressing as Buddhist monks and asking for money in exchange for prayer beads, amulets and spiritual guidebooks.

We admit there are thousands of genuine (Arya) monks in rural enclaves who live in humble purity. This majority are swamped by the high profile opportunists in Colombo power circles. The outside world would tend to identify Lankan Buddhism with the murky play of latter practitioners.

Swinburne University student Tara Siri, 21, said she was walking with friends down Spring Street last month when a "monk" approached them bowing his head and smiling, before pushing a plastic hologram picture of Buddha into her friend's hand and asking for cash. "First she was like 'Oh, I don't have any money' but then he kept smiling and handing her the picture. She got out her wallet and handed out \$2, but he wanted more. He really put the peer pressure on," Miss Siri said.

She also noticed the clothes underneath the smiling assassin's robes deviated from the traditional wear.

"He had ... tracksuit pants and sneakers on," Miss Siri said.

"They're taking advantage of people's first impressions. The reputation of Buddhist monks is really positive, you'd have no reason to doubt someone who would come and do that."

Greg Campbell, 46, sells The Big Issue on the corner of Exhibition and Bourke streets and has noticed gangs of monks harassing pedestrians towards Elizabeth and Swanston streets.

It's an area where charity collectors are hard to avoid and far from being annoyed about money that would otherwise go to reputable organisations like his own, Mr Campbell said he just feels sorry for the people who donate to them. "It embarrasses people, they feel they have to give money," he said.

Buddhist Council spokeswoman Susan Wirawan, who has also been approached, said the organisation has received numerous complaints in the past six months.

"Monks do go out on the road and look for alms, but usually they accept food. They don't



BUDDHISM FOR SALE

go out soliciting (money)," Ms Wirawan said. "They're not good practicing Buddhists. If they were they would understand the teaching of Buddha is quite against that; using your Buddhism to make profit."

A Consumer Affairs spokeswoman said they had received a number of complaints in the past six months and if people had doubts about a charity's legitimacy they should donate directly to organisations, rather than to people collecting on the street."

Readers would note how the Australian Government's supervising body-Consumer Affairs-

has heard expressions such as "Buddhagamavikunankanawa" The other day a notorious druggie was featured in a newspaper giving awards at a DahamPasala!

Within our MahaSanga itself there are rich and powerful monks that form a separate affluent class of their own. They acquire their wealth by selling Buddhism for political power. The upper class monks try and cultivate their public images to seem like the Buddha himself. They want to be apart from the ordinary rank and file and they give more distinctive and unique names for their abodes. One such monk resides not in a temple but in an "Asapuwa." These upper

classes of monks officiate at Danes and Banas of the rich, famous, and powerful men and women. They travel about in luxury cars to these venues and the show they put on makes ordinary laymen genuflect before these holies just at the sight of them. In other words, these elite monks have become status-lenders. Duty-free allowances are their right. As a young man, I once visited the prosperous late Buddharkhita Thero (who later died as a jailbird) and found to my amazement bottles of whisky and other rich liquors in his private chambers. This man openly slept with a woman Minister. Among this genre of fake monks there are those who have chosen parliamentary careers and enjoy massive perks and privileges. The ostensible reason for entering parliament is to "save Buddhism." The actual outcome is that they have become docile adjuncts of the powers that are. The late RevdGangodavila Soma became a phenomenon by marketing himself skilfully over Lankan media. He met with his untimely demise in an act of presenting for a Russian PhD a tiny book he had written long ago. A franchise chain of Buddhist monks are operative with temples in many countries. Dear reader, we admit there are thousands of genuine (Arya) monks in rural enclaves who live in humble purity. This majority are swamped by the high profile opportunists in Colombo power circles. The outside world would tend to identify Lankan Buddhism with the murky



play of latter practitioners.

As a final consideration I would say that all religions are up for sale. Society must build a critical audience that alone can apply a break to the marketing process and consumer abuse that one observes in the social practice of religions all over the world. If the reader understands this we would never be blamed for exposures of this sort.

has also been alerted.

Outside the West and in areas more native to Buddhism like Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka the religion is firmly established over centuries of indoctrination and socialization. To the vast majority of people in these countries the Buddhist religion is the "normal" lifestyle and it is unquestioned on that score. Theoretically and as exemplified in the Kalama Sutta Buddhism is the most tolerant of all religions and it has been without any record of violence to other faiths. Kalama Sutta invokes critical thinking and the scientific method in arriving at judgments. In practice it has been a different story. The indoctrination process has been linked to the limbic and emotional regions of the minds of followers so much so that anyone expressing opinions contrary to the socially accepted views is likely to meet with hostility in countries like Sri Lanka. A Salaman Rushdie on Buddhism is not likely to have his head hunted down; yet he could be put into a very difficult situation. Much before Salaman, we had the erudite Professor Tambiah who wrote a book captioned, "Buddhism Betrayed." That man is still being smeared. In these gory days of the BoduBalaSenawa and RavanaBalakaya competing established faiths are living on edge fearing the Buddhist Gestapo anytime and every time. The government does not want to be perceived as being hostile to the lawlessness of these blood hounds because government has to sell itself.

In this way, Buddhism is simply everywhere in Lanka. This means that any person, politician or product to be marketed will have to be at least consistent with the socially constructed version of the faith. A person, in other words, must market himself/herself along with the Buddhist ethos. This gives rise to fake monks of a different kind that wholesale and retail the Buddhist religion. In Sinhala language one

අපි ඔහුට තුන් වරක්ම අවවාද කළා - මහේල කියයි



අපේකා සිල්ව්වා

එංගලන්ත පිතිකරු ජෝස් බට්ලර් "මහේලා" ක්‍රමයට දවා ගත්තේ ඔහු අවවාද නොකරන දිගින් දිගටම තණතිල්ලේ සිය සීමා ඉරන් ඉදිරියට පැමිණා අයුතු වාසියක් ලබා ගැනීම හේතුවෙන් බව ශ්‍රී ලංකා ක්‍රිකට් කණ්ඩායමේ මහේල ජයවර්ධන ප්‍රකාශ කරයි.

අගතරුවාලා (3) එජ්ඩ්ටන් ක්‍රීඩාංගණයේ පැවැත්වුණු ශ්‍රී ලංකාව හා එංගලන්තය අතර තරගයේ 44 වැනි පන්දු වාරයේදී එංගලන්ත පිතිකරු ජෝස් බට්ලර් පන්දු යවන්නාගේ අත්තේ සීමා ඉර් ඉක්මවා යාම හේතුවෙන් සවිඵල සේනානායක විසින් කවුලේ බිද දමා ඔහු දවා ගනු ලැබීම ක්‍රිකට් ක්‍රීඩාවේ පීට් ඉණය බිඳ දැමූ ක්‍රියාවක් ලෙස එංගලන්ත නායකයා සහ ඇතැම් ක්‍රීඩා විචාරකයෝ විග්‍රහ කරති.

ඔහුට අගතරුවාලා තරගය ජය ගැනීමෙන් අනතුරුව පැවති මාසික හමුවට නායක අත්පලේ මැතිවිය වෙනුවෙන් සහභාගි වූ ජෝස්ට් ක්‍රීඩක මහේල ජයවර්ධන පැවසුවේ, තම කණ්ඩායම අදාල දවා ගැනීම සිදු කළේ ඉන් පෙර පන්දු වාරයේ පිතිකරුවා දෙවරක්ම අවවාද කිරීමෙන් අනතුරුව බවයි. ලෝඩ්ස් ක්‍රීඩාංගණයේ පැවති තරගයේදීද ජෝස් බට්ලර් මෙම වැරද්ද සිදු කළ බව ද මහේල

ජයවර්ධන පෙන්වා දුන්නේය. "අපිට ඒක කරන්න වුණේ, ඔහු ඒක ගැටලුවකට ගැටී තිබේ. අපි ලෝඩ්ස් ක්‍රීඩාංගණයේ පැවැත්වුණු තරගය ගත්තොත් බට්ලර් හා බොහෝම අවසන් පන්දු වාර දහයේ දකුණු දෙසට ඒවා විසි දෙකක්ම දිවිවා," යනුවෙන් ඔහු සඳහන් කළේය.

"අපි ගැමටම ක්‍රීඩා කරන්නේ ක්‍රීඩාවේ පීට් ඉණය රැක ගන්න විදිලට. ඔහුට අතින් කණ්ඩායම ඒක කරන්න නැතුව ක්‍රිකට් ක්‍රීඩාවේ නීතියට පිටත් ක්‍රීඩා කරන විට අපිට නීතිය ක්‍රියාත්මක කරන්න සිදු වෙනවා. ඒක සාධාරණයි කියලයි මට හිතන්නේ" මහේල ජයවර්ධන කීවේය.

ඔහුට එංගලන්ත කණ්ඩායම නායක ඇසිට්ට්ට් කුක් පවසන්නේ ශ්‍රී ලංකා කණ්ඩායම නායක ඇන්ජලෝ මැතිවිය මෙම දැව් යාම ප්‍රතික්ෂේප නොකිරීමට පිලිබදව තමන් අතීතය කණගාටු වන බවයි.

"මම මීට කලින් තරගයක මෙක වෙනවා දැකල හැක. ඔහු හරියටම ලකුණක් ලබාගන්න ඉදිරියට අවතරන් මට හිතාගන්න පුළුවන් මෙක හරයි කියලා. ඔහුට ඔහු මෙතෙක්දී ඉදිරියට ආවේ පොඩ් දුරක්," යනුවෙන් ද එංගලන්ත කණ්ඩායමේ නායකයා සඳහන් කළේය.

තරගය අවසානයේ ශ්‍රී ලංකා සහ එංගලන්ත නායකයන් අතර බර්නිබ්ස් විමර්ශන ඇතිව අතර ඇතැම් එංගලන්ත ක්‍රීඩා ලෝලීන් ශ්‍රී ලංකා නායකයාට හා සවිඵල සේනානායකට තම අප්‍රසාදය පළකරනු ද දක්නට ලැබිණ.

ඉන්දිය පිලේ නිරිප්‍ර නායකයකු වන විනෝ මහේලා විසින් 1947-48 තරගවාරයේදී ඕස්ට්‍රේලියානු පිතිකරුවාලා වන බිල් බ්‍රවුන් පන්දු යවන්නාගේ අත්තේදී දෙවරක්ම දවා ගැනීම හේතුවෙන් පන්දු යවන්නාගේ අත්තේදී පිතිකරුවාලා දවාගැනීම "මහේලා" ක්‍රමය ලෙසින් ප්‍රසිද්ධ වී තිබේ. අන්තර්ජාතික ක්‍රිකට් ඉතිහාසයේ මෙවන් දවාගැනීමක් සිදුවී ඇත්තේ අටවාරයක් පමණකි