

1. Einen Bildungsfonds einzurichten, um bedürftigen Dasasil mātās (Frauen, die wie Nonnen leben, zehn Regeln einhalten und nicht offiziell zum Saṅgha gehören) eine Ausbildung zu gewähren.
2. Unterricht in Pāli, Dharma, Englisch, Vinaya und in den weltlichen Fächern ebenso zu ermöglichen wie eine Schulung in Meditation, Gesundheitsvorsorge, Gemeinschaftsleben und monastischem Leben; Bereitstellung einer Bibliothek und Kursen in buddhistischer Sozialethik.
3. Einrichtung eines Fonds, um im ganzen Land Institute für die klösterliche Erziehung und Ausbildung zu gründen.
4. Möglichkeiten für einen Informationsaustausch mit buddhistischen Frauen in anderen Ländern zu schaffen; das schließt ein, daß sie sich dafür einsetzen, buddhistischen Nonnen und Laienfrauen, die aus anderen Ländern zum Studieren oder zu Pilgerreisen nach Sri Lanka kommen, willkommen zu heißen und aufzunehmen.
5. Die Sorge um die Bedürfnisse und Interessen buddhistischer Frauen in Sri Lanka, besonders der benachteiligten Dasasil mātās.

Gabriele Küstermann

**Buddhism and Christianity:
Interactions between East and West**
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No one would have expected that the seminar on *Buddhism and Christianity* would assume such relevance to the current Sri Lankan situation. In 1993, a public discussion in Buddhist and concerned Christian circles has arisen in Sri Lanka about the methods of conversion adopted by evangelical Christian groups. Such groups, probably financed by American sponsors, are accused of making use of "unethical conversion methods", i.e. converting by pressure, sometimes by force. Such strategies of conversion and their underlying attitudes have reminded many Sinhalese of the country's earlier encounter with Christian missionaries. Hence, in many of the discussions following the four sessions, the ethical and political implications of evangelical activities were referred to.

The seminar was organised by the German Cultural Institute (Goethe Institute), Colombo. It took place at the well-known Institute for Fundamental Studies, Kandy, which together with the Cultural Institute and the Centre for Society and Religion had invited eight speakers from Germany and Sri Lanka. The focus of the symposium was to highlight the difficulties which a religion faces while being transplanted into a foreign culture.

The symposium started with two lectures on the Buddhist - Christian encounter in 19th century Ceylon. Elisabeth Harris, who recently obtained her Ph.D. from the University of Kelaniya (near Colombo), illustrated in detail that Christian missionaries were in no way prepared or interested in taking notice of the Buddhist and Hindu setting in the country. She characterized the Christian attitude as "exclusive", being dominated by an arrogant missionary strategy of "no compromise with Buddhism". Gananath Obeyesekere (University of Princeton) gave a vivid talk on "Two Faces of Colonel Olcott". Initially a dedicated adherent of Theosophy, Olcott (1832-1907) became increasingly more attracted to Buddhism during his time in Ceylon from 1880 onwards. Olcott not only influenced the Buddhist revival around the turn of the century, but he himself became 'purged' of his theosophical background through his contact with distinguished Buddhist monks. Deepening this point, Obeyesekere convincingly argued that Olcott provoked an "epistemic break" within the Buddhist religion while devaluing all devotional forms of popular religion and at the same time creating a westernized and rationalized Buddhism, mainly through his *Buddhist Catechism* (1881). This picture of Buddhism neglected whole parts of the Buddhist religion and canon.

Just as Christianity had been and still is - to a large extent - alien in Sri Lanka, so is Buddhism in Germany and Europe. The dissemination of Buddhism in Europe was the topic of the second session. Martin Baumann (University of Hannover) illustrated historical and contemporary developments of Buddhism in European countries. Most remarkable is the rapid increase of Buddhist centres and institutions since the mid-seventies. As an instance of adaptation, Baumann selected the rationalistic interpretation of Buddhist teaching from among the variety of different traditions and schools present in Europe. In line with Obeyesekere's designation of the Buddhist revival in South Asia around 1900 as "Protestant Buddhism", he characterized rationalistic interpretations in Germany likewise. Aspects such as the overriding importance attached to scripture, a devaluation of religious objects, an enhanced im-

portance of the laity combined with a protest *against* the dominant religion seem to justify the provocative characterisation, as Obeyesekere himself affirmed. The second paper, presented by Detlef Kantowsky (University of Konstanz), outlined particular organisational processes of the adaptation of Buddhism in Germany during the 1980's. In addition to topics relevant to the development of a European Buddhism - such as lay participation, female spirituality, social involvement and ecology -, Kantowsky rightfully pointed out that Buddhism in Germany (and in Europe generally) lacks the interest of the ruling or economically influential classes. Such a support has, however, been a vital prerequisite for the spread of Buddhism in Asia throughout history. The presentations provided the Sri Lankans present with a helpful, contrasting picture of the processes involved when a religion spreads and has to indigenize in a foreign culture.

This topic was the focal point of session three, i.e. the indigenization of Christianity in Sri Lanka. Reverend Tissa Balasuriya, the director of the Centre of Society and Religion, outlined his concept of a socio-political Christian theology in South Asia. He argued for a "de-culturation" of the teaching of Jesus, i.e. a return to Jesus' assumed "original" message, in order to develop a Sri Lankan Christianity within the Buddhist environment. This "re-culturation" would amount to a "Buddhaization" of Christianity - an approach Christians in Sri Lanka had been unwilling even to think about a century ago. Likewise, Reverend Mervyn Fernando, who was invited at short notice to replace Reverend Aloysius Pieris who was indisposed, opted for an open and mutually informed dialogue between Christians and Buddhists. Fernando emphasized the need for an "empathetic dialogue". Partners should not only stress similarities but should also have an interreligious encounter by entering into the other's cognitive position.

The concluding session aimed at outlining a hermeneutical framework of religions in contact with one another as well as religious responses in the present-day secularized world. Michael von Brück (University of Munich) discussed aspects of Christian theology in an interreligious dialogue situation. According to him, the dialogue partners could not only provide mutual enrichment, but could also act as a mirror of each other: they could provide both a critical correction and an existential deepening. This aspect was dealt with by the seminar's concluding speaker, Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi. In an admirable presentation, the American-born Theravâda Buddhist, who has lived in Sri Lanka for more than a decade caring for the 92 year old Nyânaponika, elaborated

the principal tasks of a socially and politically aware religion. In the discussion following, Sri Lankan Buddhists self-critically affirmed that Buddhism, in contrast to Christianity, lacks a social gospel and a competence in socio-political affairs. This again raised the problematic issue of "unethical conversions" by evangelical groups (operating not only in Sri Lanka, but in Brasil, Singapore and Europe). The evangelical missionary effect seems to be, according to the seminar's participants, to depolitize social conflicts and to individualize all religious beliefs and religions. Thus, the emancipatory and liberating potential of religions is ignored. This in turn threw up the question with regard to what extent Buddhists and Christians themselves have engendered situations with a low degree of social commitment.

The 45 seminar participants included Christian theologians and lay men as well as members of the Theravâda *saṅgha* (although only one Sri Lankan and three non-Asian monks attended) and lay Buddhists. It was mutually agreed that the symposium was a success and a promising start. The idea of a follow-up was brought forward in the concluding discussion. The papers and summaries of the discussions will most probably be published.

The excellent preparation and organisation by the director of the German Cultural Institute, Ulrich Everding, helped to bring about a stimulating atmosphere. There was an openness on both sides to learn from each other's worldview - an empathetic attitude which Sri Lanka and other multireligious societies are desperately in need of.

Martin Baumann