The Imprisonment of Sangharāja, Saranaṁkara

by

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While examining the Ola-leaf manuscripts of the Rājāvāliya, the writer came across an interesting account of the imprisonment of the Saṅgharāja Wālivita Saranamkara by Kirti Sri Rājasingha, in the Rājāvāliya Ms. at the library of the Pravacanodaya Pirivena, Molligoda. Since this is an incident of much historical and religious importance, and since the popular histories such as the Cūlavamsa, the Saṅgharāja Śādhucarīyāva, the Saṅgharajavata, and the Mandārampura Puvata contain no information on this episode, it is proposed to give below, the relevant section extracted from this Ms. and the translation with a few comments about its contents.

Ven. Kotagama Vācissara Thera, in the Saranamkara Saṅgharāja Samaya, has given an account of the imprisonment of the Saṅgharāja, after making an examination of the sources that were then available to him. His study had been confined mainly to three sources, namely, The Johnstone Manuscripts (Jmss.), The Gātaberiya Sannasa (Gs.), and The Sāsanavatirna Varnanāva (Sv.). The information contained in the above-mentioned documents agrees in general with the contents of the Rājāvāliya (Rjv.) Ms. There are however some discrepancies with regard to certain details. Thus, the Rjv. Ms. so far unpublished, could be mentioned as the fourth source that speaks of the imprisonment of the Saṅgharāja.

Although this particular Ms. of the Rjv. is unique, it is not out of place here to make a few observations about the existing Mss. of the Rjv. in general. A large number of the Rjv. Mss. ends with the history of Ceylon up to the accession to the throne of Vimaladharma Sūrya II, as found in the printed editions, but in some Mss. the history is continued further. In Mss. where
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the history of Ceylon extends beyond Vimaladharma Sūrya II, the authors have paid attention to the histories of certain parts of the country, to certain families, and sometimes to certain social or religious incidents. The Rjv. Ms. referred to above records briefly the history of the Buddhist Church up to Sri Wikramarajasingha, with special reference to the period of Kirti Sri Rajasingha.

The following is an extract from this Rjv. Ms. giving the account of the said imprisonment.

TEXT

"............while he (Kirti Sri) was spending the time (living) in accordance with the Dasarāja Dharma. some of the ministers conspired to kill King Kirti Sri. and enthrone the prince who returned after having become a monk from Siam. With these foolish thoughts. the ministers arranged a Bana preaching at the Uposatha hall of the Malvatu Vihara. With these foolish thoughts. they decorated the Vihara. prepared seats. and decided to kill the king. when he arrived to listen to the sermon. They fixed pikes made of Kitul and Arecaanut (trunks) in pits (dug). and having spread barks of the Banana (tree) over them. and covering the surface with cloth. invited the

TRANSLATION

Having glorified the Sāsana. while he (Kirti Sri) was spending the time (living) in accordance with the Dasarāja Dharma, some of the ministers conspired to kill King Kirti Sri, and enthrone the prince who returned after having become a monk from Siam. With these foolish thoughts. the ministers arranged a Bana preaching at the Uposatha hall of the Malvatu Vihara. With these foolish thoughts. they decorated the Vihara. prepared seats. and decided to kill the king. when he arrived to listen to the sermon. They fixed pikes made of Kitul and Arecaanut (trunks) in pits (dug). and having spread barks of the Banana (tree) over them. and covering the surface with cloth. invited the
king to come and listen to the Sermon. Observing this, the Galagoda disawa informed the king, and the king, taking notice of this instantly sent messages to the people of the Hatrata. The messengers caused the armies to start off (instantly), from the very places where they were, and they assembled at the Mahamaluwa. To the people of the Hatrata, and to the armies stationed at the watch-places, were caused to be given swords, daggers, rifles, lances, javelins and various other ceremonial weapons. Accompanied by those armies on either side, the king arrived at the Uposatha Hall, and observing what had been done to kill him, (the king) returned to the octagon. Having called the traitors, and making enquiries, the king decided on the culprits. The king then asked for the views of the ministers, and on being informed that even in the past, conspirators against the king had been killed, (he) ordered that those guilty be beheaded. (Thus) the Udagampa Adikaram Samarakkody Nilame, Mäthihampola Disa, Moladande Battanarala and Kaduwelarala were beheaded at Ampitiya. The Sangharaja was imprisoned at Kehellalla. Tlibbotuwe Mahanayaka was imprisoned at Bintenna. The Galagoda Disa received the post of Udagampahe Mahadhikaram. Mädavella Terunniasė received the post of Chief (of the Sangha). The armies that arrived from the districts too were not allowed to return to their villages, but (they) were entrusted with guard duties. (Having done these) the King went to the palace. That king after having reigned in accordance with the Dasa-raja Dharma, passed away.

REMARKS

This Rjv. account and the Jmss. agree that a conspiracy was made against the king in order to enthrone a Siamese prince, but the real cause is recorded only in Sv. According to the Sv. the king had not given up his heretical beliefs, for this had been evident from the fact that he continued to apply ash on his forehead in spite of repeated warning by the Sangha.11

Jmss. records that “The priests............ who came to Candy from Siam........ with the exception of a certain high priest called Oepally (Upāli), entered secretly into a conspiracy with the king of the priests of Candy called Welivitty (Welivita) and wish the high priest Tibbotoorwe (Tibbotuwawe), and some other priests, and also with the courtiers consisting of the Adigar Samarakkody, the Raterala of Yatimuwar Molaandane, the Gajanake, the Mohandiram of the kings guard Kaddowelle Appoohamy and the Mohotiar Dundeniya and his son to put the prince of Siam upon the throne of Candy”.12 Sv. mentions the name of only Samarakkody Adikaram13, out of the ministers who were beheaded after the Conspiracy. While the Gs. speaks of only Moladanda Peraliya,14 Rjv. Ms. gives the names of four ministers who had been beheaded at Ampitiya. They were Udagampa Adikaram Samarakkody

11. शं. 22 छो।
13. शं 24 छो।
14. Gs. p. 100; Fr. S. G. Perera speaks of The Moladanda rebellion, but Saranamkara Sangharaja has not been associated with it. see: A History of Ceylon for Schools, part 1, 1945, p. 172.
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Nilame, Māthihampola Disāva, Moladande Batamaria and Kaduwelara. It is worthwhile to note that the place of execution, i.e. Ampitiya, is recorded only in the Rjv. Mss.

Sv. mentions that the Saṅgharāja was aware of the conspiracy but it clearly states that he had not been a party to it. Rjv. Ms. also indicates that only the ministers had played a leading role.

There are discrepancies in the sources on record even with regard to minor details. For instance, according to Jmss. and Sv. iron poles were fixed to the pit dug up, but the Rjv. Ms. says that pikes of Kitul and Areca nut (trees) were fixed, and this appears to be the more authentic.

The records differ with regard to the party that gave the secret information to the king. According to Gs. it was Palkumbure Rājākarunā Val-diyatilaka Gopāla Mudaliya. Jmss. records that “after all these preparations were made the very evening one of the high priests Jatlewatte laid aside the priestly dress, and like a common man entered the palace of the king and informed the king in person that the plot will commence the following day about the afternoon”. Sv. records that a Nilame from Pilloentalavve informed the king. On the other hand Rjv. Ms. mentions Galagoda Disava as the informant. Since there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of the Gs. we have to conclude that Gopāla Mudaliya referred to, had been loyal to the king all throughout, and that he “performed services by giving information”. But there is nothing to prevent others from performing similar services. There is unanimity in all sources about the fact that Samarakkody, Adikāram of Pallegampahe was one of the leaders of the conspiracy. Rjv. Ms. records that the post of Maha Adikāram of Udagampahe was given to Galagoda Disava. The foot-note No. 7 of the article referred to as Jmss, supported by evidence from Laurie’s Gazetteer mentions that Galagoda was Adikāram of Udagampahe. In the light of these facts it becomes possible to accept the statement in the Rjv. Ms. that “The Galagoda Disāva received the post of Udagampahe Maha Adikāram.

Three documents, namely Jmss, Sv. and Rjv. Ms. all agree that Welivita Saranamkara Saṅgharāja and Tībbotuwāwe Mahānāyake were both imprisoned, but the place of imprisonment mentioned is not identical. Sv. does not mention a place at all. According to Jmss. “the aforesaid king of the priests and

15. Yatawatte.
17. "ආගේ ආරමුණ නොදනයන්"
18. මො. 23 කුල.
the high priest Tibbotuwäwe were both banished; the former at Dumbara and the latter in the old court at Kurunegala. On the other hand Rjv. Ms. records that the Saṅgharāja was imprisoned at Kehellāla, and Tibbotuwäwe Mahā Nāyake Unnāne in Bintānna.

The examination of the three documents published already, along with the Rjv. Ms. so far unpublished, inspite of the discrepancies with regard to details, and inspite of the silence observed in some of the histories, will lead us to conclude that the Saṅgharāja, Saranamkara Thera, and his companion Tibbotuwäwe Nāyake Thera had been punished with imprisonment. However it must be said that further information is required to settle the discrepancies that existed in regard to details.