Social Movements, Power Politics and Politicization of Buddhist Priests in Sri Lanka

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Abstract: The main objective of this paper is to explore how politics was crucially influenced on change of the spiritual behavior of the Maha Sanga (Bhikku) towards political practices in the pre and post-independence society in Sri Lanka. The trend of the politics in Sri Lankan society is becoming more complicity because Buddhism which is the main religion of the majority people of the Sri Lankan society have crucially impact on practice of the politics. Buddhism, it is very strongly called as a spiritual religion which has appeared for the people to emancipation from the bad secular social practices and beliefs. Further, since Buddha’s Parinibbana (attain to spiritual world) it has been maintained and sustained by the Maha Sanga (Bhikku) which are Buddha’s Dharma school. Therefore, Sanga community, they have strong ethical and spiritual objectives than secularized desires which base on Buddha’s teaching. Sri Lanka is one of the countries which have been practicing Theravada Buddhism as a spiritual religion by their Sanga Community. Therefore, Maha Sanga has strong spiritual objectives than secularizing their day to day social practices. There are nothing some evidence in Buddha’s teaching on Maha Sanga regarding political involvement on statehood or politics, yet there’re rapid trends and evidence have been shown in contemporary politics in Sri Lanka that is political involvement of the Sanga community regarding regimes change so far, Why? There are many scholars have done many research’s on Buddhism and politics in Sri Lanka but the difference between of those researches and this research, this research will try to find out the basic socio, economic and cultural factors which caused to motivated Sanga community regarding interfering practical politics in pre and Post-Independence politics. Discourse analysis which is one of the post structural methods of scientific inquiry in social science research will be applied as a major research method in this research. Therefore, previous discourses and arguments which have created by scholars will be critically re-interpreted and re-produced in this research. Further, final output of this research can be shown that during the period of pre and post-independence that state sponsorship and behavior of the rules has been impact on maha Sanga and their behavior regarding practical politics in Sri Lanka. Emphasized facts and ideas of this research will be opened new room and will empower to researchers who are interest to doing similar research in same research area.

Key words: Buddha’s teaching Maha Sanga, Secular practices, Spiritual Religion, Social Movements, Power Politics.

1. Introduction

Sri Lanka is one of the South Asian countries which have been following Theravada Buddhism for a long time period. As a spiritual religion, Buddhism, it has clearly expressed its practical originality which base on Buddha’s teaching and his philosophy. There are many arguments has been generated regarding practicing of Buddhism among the Buddhist monk in contemporary Sri Lankan social context. Buddhist priests who are followers of Buddha’s spiritual teaching thatthey are appearing for emancipation of people from the sinful secularized practices. Therefore, they have specific objectives to do for the society through their religious services. But, now days, many Buddhist monks has been engaged in practical power politics by under mind of the Buddha’s original principles. Therefore, it has been a most controversial discourse with regard secular practices of Maha Sanga on power politics. There are many research have been done by many local and international scholars regarding Buddhism and politics on various aspects. In this paper, mainly trying to critically examine, how Buddhism was changed from as a spiritual to secular religion by overcoming Buddha’s original teaching among the Buddhist monks. Also, in this paper, I’ll will examine, why these changers was happened in Buddhism towards secular practices and what factors caused to these kind of trends in the original Buddhist practices among the priest in Sri Lanka. There’re several changers were happened in different regimes in history. Also, many customs and rituals were affected on Buddhism and its practices among the maha Sanga. Specially, under the king domain period was brought major changers on Buddhism. Since, it has been established and practiced towards non-spiritual practices. One of the main facts was political sponsorship or state sponsorshiphad becomes a responsibility with regard establishing and sustaining of Buddhism under the king domain period which occurred more secular practices on Buddhism and their followers. Such influences...