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Canada

Dhamma Education:
The Transmission and Reconfiguration of
the Sri Lankan Buddhist Tradition in Toronto

By

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Abstract

This research documents the transition of a religious tradition from a foreign-born generation to a new generation who call Canada home. It examines how first-generation Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto transmit their Buddhist tradition to their Canadian children, how the latter receive what is passed on to them, and what happens within the tradition through the process of transmission and reception. These issues are of paramount concern not only for Buddhist communities in North America but also for other immigrant and refugee groups undergoing the process of resettlement. Working with two Sri Lankan temples in Toronto, the Toronto Mahavihara and the West End Buddhist Centre, the author analyzes a system of formal Buddhist religious education (Dhamma Education) in order to document the methods and effects of transmission of Buddhism from the first- to the second-generation Buddhists. The study considers the origin and development of Dhamma Education in the colonial, postcolonial, and diasporic contexts, and analyzes Dhamma Education curriculum and textbooks—*The Buddhist Catechism*, *Daham Pasela*, and *Teaching Buddhism to Children* in the respective periods—to discern the continuities and discontinuities of Buddhism across time and space. The study also analyzes data from two survey questionnaires and information from over 60 interviews conducted by the author to identify how both generations understand, define, and practice Buddhism, as well as their perceptions of each other's understandings.

Drawing on theoretical insights from Talal Asad, this study conceptualizes Sri Lankan Buddhism in Toronto as a “discursive tradition” that relates to its past and future through its present. Such conceptualization facilitates identification of the community's

impulses to maintain the coherence and viability of their tradition in Toronto. The author contends that Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto simultaneously reflect on and deflect from their religious tradition in Sri Lanka to redefine themselves as Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto; in this redefining process, their minority status, the Canadian multicultural discourse, popular perception of Buddhism, religious and cultural diversity in Toronto, and the individualistic North American culture play active roles.

The research demonstrates that Theravada Buddhism shapes the ethos of Sri Lankan Buddhists, but the latter reinterpret the former to reflect culturally diverse Toronto. In this process, they highlight a Buddhism promoting peaceful co-existence, mutual respect, and social harmony. The author explains how these emphases echo Canadian multicultural discourse and reflect Sri Lankan Buddhists' minority status in Toronto. These overtones also fortify a stereotypical perception of Buddhism being a "peaceful, harmonious religion." This positive image of Buddhism appeals to the second generation, who intensify the individualistic aspects in it. The findings illustrate that both generations negotiate the Buddhist tradition by integrating collective and individualistic cultural aspects. They add an egalitarian mode of interaction to the hierarchically defined monk-laity, parent-children relationships; they increase contemplative and humanitarian practices; and, they prefer a geo-religious (Sri Lankan Buddhist) identity to a previously popular ethno-religious (Sinhalese Buddhist) identity. Both identities are, however, overshadowed by a general Buddhist identity. The analysis of the second generation's Buddhist practices in Toronto remind us that their Buddhism is not a foreign religion, but a Canadian one, the roots of which extend back to Sri Lanka.

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Notes of Translation and Transliteration

Throughout this dissertation, the italicized words refer to technical terms related to the topics under discussion. They are either in the classical Pali language or in one of the vernacular languages such as Sinhala, Lao, or Bangla depending on the context.

Combining transliterations of these languages leads to inconsistency; as such, I avoid using diacritics to avert confusion.

Chapter One

Introduction

An emerging religious need of a diasporic Buddhist community

It was a Sunday afternoon. I arrived at the Rick Hansen Secondary School to have a first-hand experience of the Sri Lankan Buddhists' most-demanded temple service: Sunday Dhamma school. Parents were rushing along the corridor to the assembly hall accompanying their children. A few female Dhamma teachers were helping a group of students arrange candles, incense, flowers, and beverages to be offered to the Buddha. Other teachers, parents, and students formed a line standing side-by-side facing the stage where a Buddha icon was temporarily placed on a table covered with a white cloth. The teachers were in white dress, students were in white T-shirts with the Dhamma School logo, and parents were in casual clothes. Holding a microphone in between his joined palms, the principal monk started to chant the virtues of the Buddha in the Pali language. All others joined him intoning the Pali chanting. The students who arranged the *puja* formed a line one after another, each holding one of the *puja* items in both hands with devotion and care. Everyone in the assembly hall touched the *puja* items and then their foreheads. One after another all *puja* items were respectfully placed on the table in front of the icon. All bowed to the Buddha. They then took refuge in the Triple Gem and observed the Five Precepts in Pali by repeating after the monk. Then all including the monk chanted together the virtues of the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha again and recited the Pali verses referring to the *puja* items. Afterward, one of the senior students came forward, took the microphone, and recited the ten promises of Dhamma school students. All other students took the oath by repeating after the senior student. Then the monk shared the words of wisdom for the day. At the end, students and teachers went to their own classrooms for an hour and a half period. While the students were leaving, the parents circled around a monk in the assembly hall to learn and discuss the teachings of the Buddha.

The preceding vignette of my research observation captures a moment (March 2009) of the weekly Dhamma education in the Sri Lankan Buddhist community. The scene relates to an issue that concerns many Buddhists in the diaspora:¹ the transmission of the Buddhist tradition to the successive generations. As Victor Sogen Hori observes,

Ethnic Buddhists are not concerned with converting Westerners. Their interest in Westernizing Buddhism is limited to preserving their own ethnic culture and

¹The terms "diaspora" and "resettlement" in this study are used to refer to those who migrated to North America since the mid-1960s. I use them to highlight the broader implications of this study.

identity in North America. ‘How will we transmit our culture to our children...?’ is perhaps the most important issue in every ethnic community.” (1994: 50)

Hori implies that the act of preserving an ethno-specific Buddhist culture in the West itself entails a process of “Westernizing”—albeit a reluctant one. In other words, as the Buddhist tradition is transmitted from the first generation to the second generation in the diaspora, it undergoes cultural changes that are willingly or unwillingly accepted, or forcefully resisted, by both generations. The cultural changes can be troubling to the parent generation as Buddhist parents across ethnic boundaries share uncertainty about the future of their respective traditions (McLellan 1999, 2009; Smith-Hefner 1999; Cadge 2005; Suh 2004). They are concerned about the transmission of the Buddhist tradition to their children born and/or raised in the West. They are worried about how their religious identity and values will be transmitted to their children. They face the challenge of how to preserve their inherited cultural values while accommodating their current situation. At times, the desire to preserve is in tension with the pressure to accommodate.

The tension between preservation and accommodation is, perhaps, nowhere more explicit than in the process of education. According to Peter Hershock (2006),

Education serves both conservative and creative ends. On one hand, education serves to transmit historically embedded patterns of understanding and practice. Or, put somewhat differently, it conserves the particular traditions through which peoples shape their often complex and distinctive identities. On the other hand, education provides resources and insights relevant to adaptively responding to changing circumstances. In practice, *education both transmits and transforms understanding and practice.* ([emphasis added] 173)

As education transmits knowledge, understanding, and practices of one generation to the next, it also transforms the tradition to suit the audience and their ambient culture.

Education simultaneously holds both the conservative and creative impulses of the

transmitters and receivers. A study of the educational endeavours therefore offers an important vantage point to discern what is happening between first- and second-generation Buddhists. For these reasons, I have chosen to focus my research on the understanding and practice of Dhamma education—how it is conducted, what it entails, the materials used, its history, and the participants in it. Members of the Sri Lankan Buddhist community in Toronto have been my research partners in this endeavour, allowing me to do this case study.

Why Toronto-based Sri Lankan Buddhists?

I have chosen to work with the Sri Lankan Buddhist community in Toronto, Canada, for several reasons. First, Buddhists in Sri Lanka have pioneered a formal Buddhist religious education program for children since the late 19th century (Bartholomeusz 1994; Bond 1988; Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988; Prothero 1996). As an outcome of that historical experience, almost all Sri Lankan temples in North America provide weekly or bi-weekly Buddhist religious education for Buddhist children and youth. Likewise, the Toronto-based Sri Lankan Buddhists have developed a system of formal religious education and claim to have “the largest Dhamma School in North America” (Wijesundara 2008: 16). Therefore, the Sri Lankan Buddhist community in Toronto offers the possibility for an in-depth case study on formal Buddhist education.

Second, Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto are among the early Theravada Buddhists to have settled in post-WWII Canada. In July 1978, they established the first Theravada Buddhist temple in Canada. Historically, they make up a vibrant Buddhist

presence in Toronto with significant contributions. Nevertheless, they remain relatively under researched (McLellan 1999, 2009; Boisvert 2005; Matthews 2006; and Harding, Hori, and Soucy 2010). My work seeks to further knowledge of the community. Finally, Sri Lankan Buddhism, specifically the late 19th- and early 20th-century Buddhist revival and its ramifications in Sri Lanka as well as in the diaspora, has engaged my particular interest. My familiarity with the Sri Lankan culture and history (about which more will be said below) enabled me to undertake this research project.

Research Location, Questions, and Terms Defined

I conducted my research at the two earliest Sri Lankan Buddhist temples in Toronto, namely the Toronto Mahavihara in Scarborough and the West End Buddhist Centre in Mississauga. I gathered information from the Buddhist practitioners who associate with these temples. For this research, I identify them either as “the first generation” (the parent generation) or as “the second generation.” The former refers to those who migrated to Canada as adults, and in the time of fieldwork (2008-2009), they were aged thirty or over. Monks, lay Dhamma teachers, and the parents of students of Dhamma schools make up this group.

“The second generation” refers to those who were born in Canada or migrated to Canada accompanied their parents prior to age thirteen. In the time of research, they belonged to the sixteen to thirty years age category. In my research sample there were a few youth who could be classified as 1.5 generation (those who were born in Sri Lanka

and came to Canada during their adolescence, when they were between 13 to 16);² however, they were not sufficient enough in number³ to treat them as a separate category. As such, I classified them in the second generation.

An Overview of Research Participants:				
	First Generation (Age between 30-70)		Second Generation (Age between 16-30)	
Surveys	96	Male: 57	65	Male: 28
		Female: 39		Female: 37
Interviews (individual and group)	25 (7 of them are Dhamma Teachers)	Male: 15 (4 monks included)	25 (6 of them are Dhamma teachers)	Male: 11
		Female: 10		Female: 4

Buddhist religious education—here after referred to as Dhamma education⁴—at the two temples is the focus of this research. In the context of Sri Lankan Buddhism, “Dhamma education” denotes formal Buddhist religious education designed for children and youth. From the very beginning, Dhamma education in Sri Lanka has developed in two streams: Buddhist education in public schools and the weekly Sunday Dhamma schools at the local Buddhist temples. With occasional reference to the former, this study concentrates on the tradition of Sunday Dhamma schools at the two temples in Toronto. I trace the roots of Dhamma education in Toronto back to Sri Lanka. I look at how Buddhist identity has been conceptualized across time and space, and the continuities and discontinuities within it.

² In relation to the second-generation, 1.5 generation speak and understand the Sinhala language with less difficulty. They are more appreciative of the Sinhala culture, and they expressed that they would like to go back to Sri Lanka to contribute to the country.

³ For example, only 8 of 116 youths who contributed to the survey belong to 1.5 generation. More about my research methodology will be presented in the section of “research methods” in this chapter.

⁴ Buddhist religious education for laity in Sri Lankan Buddhism is known as “Dhamma education.”

My main concern is how a religious tradition is transmitted from one generation to the next in a new cultural setting, and what happens to the tradition in that process of transmission. In pursuit of this concern, I probe how Buddhist immigrants from Sri Lanka in Toronto have (re)constructed their Buddhist tradition and transmitted it to the next generation, and how the successive generation has received it. In that intergenerational negotiation, I examine what has been retained, altered, left out, and added to the Buddhist tradition. In doing this, I identify multiple discourses in the (re)construction of Buddhist personhood (identity) in Sri Lankan Buddhism. I explain how they are formed, understood, and incorporated by living Buddhists. By discussing the cross-cultural adaptation strategies and rationalities underlying such conceptions, I lay out the coherence and transformation of the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition in Toronto.

According to Talal Asad (2003), “religion consists not only of particular ideas, attitudes, and practices, but of followers. To discover how these followers instantiate, repeat, alter, adapt, argue over, and diversify them (to trace their tradition) must surely be a major task” (194). Here, the task at hand is to clarify the Sri Lankan Buddhists’ dialogue with their Buddhist tradition in a new socio-cultural context, i.e., Toronto. Accordingly, my research focus has been how the first- and second-generation Buddhists in Toronto perceive, practice, and personify (embody) the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition.

Theoretical Frameworks

How I perceive or conceptualize the Buddhist tradition I study determines what I investigate, how I explain what I find, and what conclusions I arrive at this research.

Here I prefer the term “the Buddhist tradition” to “Buddhism,” as the latter refers to what is found in the Buddhist canonical texts, while the former denotes to the historical reality of a particular Buddhist community. Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1991) argues that “the term ‘religion’ is confusing, unnecessary, and distorting” as it implies that a religion is a static and reified system (50). “Tradition,” on other hand, denotes the process of lived religion.

While conducting field research for this study, I encountered numerous Buddhist practitioners who were perplexed—even offended—by my research interest. I explained to them that “I am interested in investigating how Buddhism is being transformed as it is passed on from the first generation to the next in Toronto.” They were offended with my assumption that somehow Buddhism is being transformed or altered in Toronto. A few of them responded to me with a rhetorical question: “how come Buddhism changes?” It took me a few such responses to understand what they meant. For most faithful Buddhists, the term “Buddhism” is a generic term that refers to what the Buddha taught. For that reason, they believe that the “essence” of Buddhism never changes, especially as one of the six primordial characteristics identifies what the Buddha taught as “timeless” (*akaliko*).

As illustrated by these reactions, the term “Buddhism,” similar to “religion,” obscures what social scientific studies on Buddhist communities intend to illuminate. Insofar as the term is seen to refer to essentialized Buddhist teachings, it eclipses the diversity of individual and collective expressions and experiences of Buddhists. Thus, it wipes out the historical particularities of living Buddhists. It also increases misunderstanding between the researcher and the researched as both understand the term

“Buddhism” differently. For example, unlike the researched, the researcher prioritizes contextualization of what the Buddha taught in its socio-cultural setting. For those reasons, I replaced “Buddhism” with “the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition.” The latter term is used by Sri Lankan Buddhists to identify their religious system.

The preferred phrase “Buddhist tradition” also echoes the theoretical insights that I have drawn from Alasdair MacIntyre and Talal Asad. I turn to those sources next to clarify my approach. In the section that follows my discussion of MacIntyre ([1981] 2007) and Asad (1986), I will explain how I have drawn on their insights in my case study.

In his discussion on discursive traditions, Talal Asad talks about what constitutes a tradition, what its functions are, and how and why it does what it does. His original thought is particularly salient in his explanation of the roles of a discursive tradition, as he draws upon the discussion of his predecessor Alasdair MacIntyre on what constitutes a tradition. In his third edition of *After Virtue*, MacIntyre ([1981] 2007) argues that a “living tradition...is an historically extended, socially embodied argument...” (222). For MacIntyre, a living tradition is a moral argument that descends from the past in the form of practice or practices. Institution is “the bearer of a tradition,” and practices are the means in which tradition manifests. Aligning with MacIntyre, Asad (1986) defines what a tradition is:

A tradition consists essentially of discourses that seek to instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice that, precisely because it is established, has a history. These discourses conceptually relate to *a past* (when the practice was instituted, and from which the knowledge of its point and proper performance has been transmitted) and *a future* (how the point of that practice can best be secured in the short or long term, or why it should be modified or abandoned), through *a present* (how it is linked to other practices, institutions, and social conditions). ([emphasis in original] 14)

Here, Asad provides a detailed and cohesive definition of a tradition. Similar to MacIntyre, Asad argues that the discourses of a tradition do not emerge out of nowhere; instead, they stem from a particular past and orient toward an envisioned future through a vibrant present. He also identifies institution and practices as the integral parts of a tradition. Asad underlines the power of the present as he qualifies that a tradition *conceptually* relates to its past and future *through* its present. A tradition reflects on its past and projects into its future through current realities that—according to Asad—are the other existing practices outside that tradition, institutional setting, and social conditions. This reminds us that it is the present conditions, more than the past and future, which shape a tradition. Imagination of the past and expectations of the future hold the power to shape a tradition, but the materialization of that power ultimately depends on the present social realities. In other words, it is not the past or future but the present that determines the fate of a tradition. Talal Asad’s definition of “tradition” denotes a web of connections across time and space that shape a religion. He also underscores the role of religious practitioners as active agents who constantly converse, argue, and wrestle with the contents of their religion in the context of current socio-political realities. The triadic connections among practitioners, the foundational teachings of their religion, and the contemporary social conditions are often dialogical, vibrant, and animated. According to Asad, religion constituted of such connections is a “discursive tradition” (1986: 14).

Asad's "Discursive Tradition"

The adjective "discursive" relates to a set of complex and dynamic relationships between a tradition, its followers, and socio-political conditions. Asad argues that the discourses that constitute a tradition establish adherence to a particular practice by emphasizing its *correct form* and *purpose*. Asad implies that one could get the form of a given practice wrong, and s/he could perform that practice for wrong reasons. Doing right practice and for right reasons are simultaneously important. The discourses of a tradition help practitioners get it "right." In other words, a religious tradition itself exercises a sense of agency over its adherents by emphasizing the "right" method and purpose of a given religious practice. Asad further extrapolates that "a discursive tradition...connects variously with the formation of moral selves, the manipulation of populations (or resistance to it), and the production of appropriate knowledges" (1986: 7).

Here, Asad identifies three specific actions that a discursive tradition performs. First, a discursive tradition imprints certain dispositions onto its adherents through which it constructs moral agents. Second, it motivates and mobilizes its followers in certain times, while at other times the power of the discursive tradition is less forceful. Third, through a discursive tradition "appropriate" knowledge is defined and created, and in doing is distinguished from "inappropriate" knowledge. These three functions relate to the cognitive, affective, and behavioural impacts a discursive tradition has on its practitioners. In other words, religion, as a discursive tradition, shapes how its practitioners perceive, feel, and behave.

As adherents incorporate the aspects of tradition in their lives, they also become active agents. They select certain aspects of the tradition while leaving others aside. They prioritize some beliefs while ignoring others. They appropriate certain practices to make them viable in changing circumstances. The acts of selection, appropriation, and/or indifference animate adherents' agency within the tradition. Asad contends that practitioners continuously argue and struggle in deciding what belongs and what does not belong to their tradition (1986: 14-15). They debate on the "*apt performance*" of the current instituted practices in relation to the founding principles of their tradition, their collective history, and the present realities. The arguments and debates represent the vitality of the tradition. Such debate occurs because a tradition consists of internal arguments and its own rationality. Debates facilitate practitioners not only in the maintenance of the cohesion of their tradition across all time and space, but also in making the tradition viable in a particular time and space.

Asad also uses the term "discursive" to highlight the contextual formation of a tradition. He contends that adherents relate to their religious tradition according to the "discursive structures" of a particular time and space which condition the limitations and possibilities of people's lives (1986: 10). This means practitioners alone do not determine what a tradition looks like. The ambient socio-political system is also at work in shaping a tradition. According to Asad (1993), historical conditions like social and political economies shape how people exercise their agencies, i.e., motives, perspectives, behaviour, and utterances. In other words, socio-political and economic systems stimulate practitioners to respond to the foundational teachings and practices in certain ways. They sometimes condition practitioners to perceive, practice, and embody

their tradition in a particular manner. Thus, the historical realities of a particular time and place also shape a discursive tradition.

The underlying principle that animates a discursive tradition is power. According to Asad, it is the exercise of power that enables a discursive tradition to construct moral agents, to manipulate its followers, and to produce appropriate knowledge. The orthodoxy (doctrine) and orthopraxy (ritual) are simultaneously important for a discursive tradition. They can cause perceptual, affective, and behavioural changes in the lives of practitioners, simply because they are closely tied with power. Expanding the conventional understanding of the term “orthodoxy,” Asad argues that “orthodoxy is not a mere body of opinion but a distinctive relation—a relationship of power” (1986: 15). The same definition applies to orthopraxy. In other words, the authority or assertiveness of orthodox beliefs and practices manifest through a specific relationship with power.

Later on, Asad elaborates that religious practitioners exercise “the power to regulate, uphold, require, or adjust *correct* practices, and to condemn, exclude, undermine or replace *incorrect* ones” (Asad 1986: 15). Power does not always make things happen but it also stops things from happening—as such, power and resistance go hand in hand. Tradition-defining practices simultaneously employ power to execute and to resist forces that tend to oppose them. Asad concludes that “power and resistance are ...intrinsic to the development and exercise of any traditional practice” (1986: 16). Similarly, power and resistance are also closely tied to the production of knowledge. A discursive tradition informs the construction of knowledge through its advocacy of some discourses while resisting others. In brief, a discursive tradition constructs and

manipulates practice and knowledge in order to instruct correct forms and purposes. The success and failure of these objectives are partly determined by the degrees of power involved.

Theoretical Insight Employed in the Research

A set of interconnected insights can be drawn from Asad's discussion on "discursive tradition" as I apply them to the analysis of the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition in Toronto. First, a discursive tradition is comprised of a set of discourses that include and relate to the tradition's past, present, and future. Therefore, Asad suggests that it is worth considering the social contexts of a religious tradition as "overlapping spaces and times," which reveal the converging nature of religion (1986: 11). I find this suggestion instructive, as religion in the diaspora demonstrates—perhaps at an optimal level—that spaces and times do overlap. In fact, diasporic consciousness is often characterized as translocative and transtemporal (Tweed 1997), which forges similar social connections.

Accordingly, I perceive Buddhism in the diaspora within a web of connections across times and spaces. This research approach reveals the breadth and depth of the temporal and spatial connections of the living Buddhist tradition. For example, I demonstrate in chapter two that the Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto form their community within triadic spatial connections between Sri Lanka, Canada, and other diasporic locations. In chapters three and four, I also notice triadic temporal connections as Buddhists reflect their past and envision the future of their tradition through contemporary practices of Dhamma education. As spaces and times overlap in religious

practices, we discern cross-cultural convergences where the first and second generations culturally negotiate the Buddhist tradition, as seen in chapter five.

Second, according to Asad, the discourses—specifically those that relate to the founding principles of the tradition—instruct the faithful in what the *right form and purpose* of an institutional practice is. This observation underscores how a religious tradition like Buddhism holds a sense of agency that claims the formation of Buddhists. With this insight, I enquire how a Buddhist institutional practice like Dhamma education strives to achieve its goal: the moral formation of young Buddhists. Who is the Buddhist child? How is s/he expected to behave? What makes a person Buddhist? Though these are questions I entertain throughout my dissertation, the third chapter in particular is where I take up this discussion. There I argue that Dhamma education combines two sets of discourses (spiritual and contingent) to define who the Buddhist child is. The spiritual discourse derived from a set of Buddhist virtues has persisted across historical times and space, although it has been variously interpreted and internalized according to the changing political and social circumstances.

Third, the term “discursive tradition” highlights the agency of adherents in a religious tradition. Asad argues that religious practitioners aspire to maintain the *coherence of tradition* within the current social structures by reflecting the past and foreseeing the future of the tradition. Accordingly, I consider Buddhists as agents who simultaneously strive to make the Buddhist tradition viable in changing social circumstances *and* to maintain the integrity of the tradition. I employ this insight in the context of transmission and reception of the Buddhist tradition. I ask what first-generation Sri Lankan Buddhists would like to pass on to their children, and how

second-generation Buddhists receive what is taught to them. A shift in discourse is noticeable (third chapter); a previously less known interpretation is emerging (fourth chapter); egalitarian roles are appropriated in tandem with traditional hierarchical roles (fifth chapter); and an other-oriented practice is reintroduced to benefit oneself (sixth chapter). All these are part and parcel of the so-called “intelligent adaption” of the first generation. In the context of the second generation, I observe that an abstract but intense mode of being Buddhist is emerging (fifth chapter), which challenges the paradigm of the “two Buddhisms” (Prebish 1993; Numrich 2003) in North America.

Finally, Asad also refers to the agency of socio-political systems in shaping religious traditions. Later on, he develops this aspect saying that “people are never only active agents and subjects in their own history” (1993: 4). Asad specifically emphasizes that socio-political and economic structures and systems hold “a mode of human agency (‘real people doing real things’), one that conditions other people’s lives” (1993: 6). Keeping this insight in mind, in chapter three I analyze the three stages of Dhamma education in the colonial, post-colonial, and diasporic setting. Dhamma education evolved to be truly an institutional practice (as an integral service of almost all Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka) in the post-colonial setting when Buddhists became the majority, not only in number but also in political power. I also query in chapters three and four, whether the confrontational discourses of so-called “Protestant Buddhism” in Sri Lanka and the “harmonious” multicultural discourse of the *Teaching Buddhism to Children* curriculum in Toronto relate to the majority and minority status respectively. In general, as I analyze the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition in Toronto, I discern a negotiation among three centres of power: the agency of thinking Buddhist subjects that includes the first

and second generations, the integrity and rationality of Theravada Buddhism, and the pressure of being a minority group in the Canadian multicultural social setting. This thesis is an attempt to understand and explain the effects and ramifications of the aforementioned negotiations.

Research Methods⁵

The perception of Buddhism as a discursive tradition warrants a comprehensive research method. Asad suggests a researcher of a discursive tradition should “seek to understand the historical conditions that *enable* the production and maintenance of specific discursive traditions, or their transformation—and the efforts of practitioners to *achieve* coherence” ([emphasis added] Asad 1986: 17). Asad reminds us that the researcher’s job is to understand, analyze, and explain how agencies of religious practitioners are exercised and materialized in a particular socio-cultural system. With that in mind, I launched a research project that entails components of historical, comparative, and ethnographical methods.

Being a historical religion, Buddhism emphasizes the importance of its history. As a part of a discursive tradition, Dhamma education embodies historically extended discourses that authorize what Buddhism is, how to be Buddhists, and what being Buddhist means in a particular time and context in history. Dhamma education is a collective practice that relates to a distinct history of Sri Lankan Buddhism. As such,

⁵The research focus, data collection, and data analysis of this study strongly resonate with the research methodological tradition of ethnography (Creswell 1998: 65). However, they also bear some characteristics of two other research methodological traditions namely phenomenology and case study (Creswell 1998: 65). For example, this study describes, analyses, and explains the experience of being Buddhist (phenomenology) of a cultural group (ethnography) through an in-depth analysis of Dhamma schools and education (a case study).

from an historical perspective, in chapter three I locate the origin of formal Buddhist education for laity in late 19th-century British Ceylon, and discuss its different phases in the 20th-century Sri Lanka. I examine the Buddhist catechistic literature and identify the emergence and submergence of Buddhist discourses within the Buddhist Sunday school setting. This enables me to discern the continuity (spiritual discourse) and discontinuity (contingent discourses) in Dhamma education. Moreover, based on archival studies, in chapter two I explore the history of the Sri Lankan Buddhists Toronto, specifically how they evolved as a Buddhist community.

Second, in a comparative approach, I discuss the similar and contrasting contents of Dhamma education, specifically how *Teaching Buddhism to Children* in Toronto simultaneously resonates with and differs from its counterparts in Sri Lanka, namely *The Buddhist Catechism* and *Daham Pasela*. In chapter three, I comment on how Dhamma schools in Toronto differ from their counterparts in Sri Lanka, and in chapter six I show how the second-generation Buddhists approach the Buddhist tradition differently than their parent generation. There are also noticeable differences in transmission strategies in both locations—Sri Lanka and Toronto. Unlike in Sri Lanka, the Buddhists in Toronto tend to “quarantine” Buddhism from ethnic particularities specifically those which have historically compromised the Buddhist integrity as found in the Pali canon. Moreover, relationships based on an egalitarian friendship model are emerging in parallel to a hierarchical interaction between monks and laity, parents and children.⁶ Likewise, in chapter five, I distinguish the collective identity of the first

⁶ It is not that egalitarian relationships are replacing the hierarchical interaction; rather, both are in place in a parallel relationship.

generation from the individual-oriented Buddhist identity of the second generation. I highlight the similarities and differences in the ways that the first and second generations perceive, practice, and personify the Buddhist tradition.

Third, in order to analyze and discern what plays which roles in the shaping of the Buddhist tradition in Toronto, I employed a comprehensive ethnographic method that includes four components: observation of participation, two separate surveys (one for each generation), focus group interviews, and in-depth audio-taped interviews. Initially, I started field research with participant observation; however, not only did I observe the roles and deeds of others but also mine. My monastic and academic roles forced me to see my own inescapable religious role as a monk within the community. This shift from participant observation to observation of participation echoes J. Shawn Landres' (2002) argument that "the ethnographer *is* 'the field'—and quite literally. That is, ethnographers do not just *represent* and *define* 'the field'; they *become* it" (105). I will discuss how I *became* the field while *being in* the field in the next section. For now, let me provide a quantified description of the other aspects of my ethnographic method.

Electronic versions of two surveys in English were sent out to the first- and second-generation Buddhists via the two temples' email lists. For those uncomfortable with an electronic format, printed copies of the surveys were made available at the temples and some of which were also distributed at community gatherings. The surveys were geared toward a comprehensive understanding of Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhist beliefs and practices, and the various religious adaptations that are taking place among the first and second generations. They were intended to explain cross cultural and intergenerational transmission and changes within the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition. I

organized them into the following sections: general demographic information about the participants, their religious beliefs and practices, their perception and involvement with Buddhist religious education, their encounter with the other forms of Buddhism, their migration experience, and their cross-cultural and multicultural issues.

In creating the questionnaires, I referred to ethnographic studies on the Buddhist tradition in modern Sri Lanka (Bond 1988; Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988; Abeysekara 2002) in order to quantify which aspects (social, political, ritualized, and contemplative interpretations) of the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition are emphasized and passed on to the second generation in Toronto. I also referred to the “two Buddhisms” classifications of Buddhists in North America (Prebish 1993; Numrich 2003) to verify whether the categories are justifiable or applicable to Sri Lankan Buddhists, specifically the second generation, in Toronto. The survey results as seen in chapter six, indicate that social service and meditation-oriented practices have increased, and Buddhist rituals such as *puja*, *dana*, *pirit* etc. have sustained, but with some modifications, while the ethno-political interpretation of Buddhism has decreased in Toronto. Such selective adaptations alone challenge the two Buddhisms categorization. Perhaps more importantly, the second generation’s reception of the Buddhist tradition in fact not only complicates the categories, but also undermines the (Asian vs. Western) cultural assumptions implied in ethnic-convert categories.

I interviewed over 60 Buddhists including monks, parents, and youth. However, I used data only from 50 individuals.⁷ Participation was, of course, voluntary. I made

⁷ The interviews that were left out were either pre-arranged by community leaders and/or their contents did not reflect the topic under study.

public announcements, but also directly requested and recruited interviewees at temple events. Referrals from temple leaders and interviewees also facilitated the recruitment process. Through mutual agreements, I arranged interviews either at public places like temples and community centres, or at private places, such as homes. Many were individual interviews; however, I also conducted a few focus group interviews. The following template describes data collection methods.

An overview of collection of the data			
Research methods	Details #1	Details #2	Data used
Participant observation	Since Fall 2005 Buddhist services	Children and Youth-oriented programs (DE)	D. education and Youth perception
Surveys (on-line and manual)	Started: 341; Completed: 161 (47%)	Average response to questions: 75	The relevant data
Individual interviews	51 interviews	Average length: 55 minutes	30 individual interviews
Group interviews	12 interviews	Average length: 1 ½ hours	8 group interviews (20 individuals)

In reflection of my fieldwork experience, I realized that by virtue of my status as a Buddhist monk in the field itself illustrates, animates, and displays the discursive nature of the Buddhist tradition. Being intimately connected to the tradition in question conditions and requires a distinct mode of being in the field.

Being in the Field *and* Being the Field

In the following section, I discuss how my decision to be in the field in my ordinary state, that is, in the monastic robes of a Theravada monk, compelled me to negotiate and navigate two distinct roles and duties, those of an ethnographer who is

also a Buddhist monk. In these negotiations and navigations, I myself have gained a new identity as a *monastic ethnographer*. The ethnographic strategy that I used reflects Landres' (2002) phrase "Being (in) the field." The new identity and strategy in the field demonstrates a discursive relationship not only between the researcher and the researched, but also between two scholarly traditions (Buddhist monastic scholarship and ethnography) that I happened to represent.

Born in Bangladesh, at an early age I travelled to Sri Lanka where I studied Buddhism in the stream of textual studies up to the Master's level. In 2002, I joined the Lao as well as the Sri Lankan Buddhist communities in the Kitchener-Waterloo area to serve them as a monk while pursuing my higher studies in Buddhism. However, ethnically I belong neither to the Lao nor to the Sinhalese ethnicities. This privileges me to move across ethnic boundaries and observe ethno-religious dynamics in these Buddhist communities across Southern Ontario. I have observed that Lao and Sri Lankan Buddhists significantly differ from each other in their socialization of children into Buddhism, although both communities are Theravada Buddhists. The former tends to employ only informal religious education (i.e., rituals, temporary ordination for various reasons etc.) while the latter emphasizes formal (i.e., Sunday Dhamma schools) along with informal religious education. This outstanding difference between the Lao and Sri Lankan Buddhist communities inspired me to explore the transmission of the Buddhist tradition in the diaspora within the discipline of the social scientific study of religion, including the conducting of fieldwork.

Being a monk in the field has shaped a set of distinct relationships with each of the three groups I interviewed. Initially, I thought that I would be able to maintain a

detached researcher status in the field simply because I was not an ethnic Sinhalese. My familiarity with Sinhalese culture and being fluent in Sinhala—the ethnic language of the research community—qualified me to embark on the ethnographic research. But, ironically, these competencies themselves challenged me to keep the classical arm’s length distance in the field. With the monks, I felt a binding, intimate, and warm monastic brotherhood, which made me feel like an extremely close insider in the field. Prior to my fieldwork, I decided to guard myself against the common pitfall of an insider ethnographer: the tendency to ignore small yet significant details in the field. Yet, I found it relatively difficult to convince the monks to take my research seriously. Some monks were reluctant to be interviewed, not simply because it looked odd, but also because they assumed that I already knew everything about the community. When I approached the monks for formal interviews, I received comments like “you know all about it, and there is nothing new to explain to you.”

With the first-generation Buddhists, I experienced a typical monk-devotee relationship with a sense of spiritual hierarchy and reservation. In the eyes of the Theravada Buddhist laity, a monk is a field of merit, a religious guide/instructor, and an example of the Buddhist way of life. These normative roles preconditioned how I was perceived by the first-generation Buddhists. In their eyes, I remained first and foremost a monk in the field. Some research participants revealed that they considered their contributions to the research a gesture of meritorious deeds, as they provided interviews and convinced others to participate in the research. In one specific case, a woman voluntarily arranged a group interview for me at her home. Yet, I also found that the ready participation of the first generation did not necessarily mean honest responses. I

suspected that sometimes they exaggerated their religious commitments to avoid disappointing me, and some shared certain information cautiously. To reduce such distortions and to maintain transference between me and the interviewees, I constantly reminded them to be honest. I emphasized that the value of their contribution to the research depend on accurate responses. I even called up their normative religious commitment to speak nothing but truth! I insisted that they consider me a graduate student who was not there to judge them, but to study their everyday religious life. These strategies served temporarily, and they were more effective in the context of the second generation.

My interaction with youth participants was a more or less typical researcher-researched relationship. I found it relatively easy to convince youth to give honest responses. Initially, almost all informants, specifically those who were persuaded by their parents, expressed uncertainty and bewilderment about the interview. Phrases such as “I am here not to judge you, the provided information will be confidential,” and “your contribution to the research will depend on honest responses” noticeably eased them. These phrases effectively shifted youths’ perception of me as a monk to a graduate student. My impression was that the majority of second-generation Buddhists in the field perceived me as a graduate student who happened to be a monk. Not only were they honest but they were also outspoken, even critical about some of their parents’ religious practices and cultural habits. Perhaps their preconception of a monk was not as rigid as that of their parents. In fact, many of them were university students, something that must have helped them relate to me as a graduate student. Moreover, their North American cultural upbringing normalized the researcher-researched

interaction. In some cases, I had to interview female interviewees in their parents' presence, yet, even such circumstances, they shared honest responses, expressed unmediated opinions, and made critical observations and remarks about Buddhist beliefs and practices. Some admitted that they enjoyed being interviewed. Some of them also mentioned that they often felt their opinions about Buddhism were taken for granted and even unheard. For them, the interviews became the means to express their views and frustrations about some of the religious services they found boring. They appreciated the chance to have their voices heard and even suggested a few recommendations in regards to religious services at the temples.

How I perceive myself is equally important as how I am perceived by my sources. I cannot hide but must reconcile my explicit monastic *and* academic identities. Here I repeat J. K. Gibson-Graham's assertion "I am a unique ensemble of contradictory and shifting subjectivities" (1994: 219). I call myself a "*monastic ethnographer*" because I simultaneously wear both hats and perform both roles. These distinct roles presuppose different even opposing expectations and duties. The Pali Canon emphasizes teaching/leading a Buddhist way of life is the primary monastic duty. For example, the *Singalowada Sutta*, a Pali discourse in the Digha Nikaya (Walshe 1996: 468),⁸ instructs monks to do the following: to prevent laity from doing evil, to exhort laity to do good, to preach to laity what they have not heard, to correct laity when they are wrong, and to show laity the path to happiness and salvation.

This normative role of teaching, or rather preaching, is consistent throughout Theravada Buddhist history. The virtue of being a monk in the field has challenged and

⁸ This discourse is also referred to as DN 31 (Pali Text Society)

disrupted the classical monk-lay relationship. My role as an ethnographer in the field reversed the presumed flow of information from monk to the laity. Rather than me providing the information, I was seeking out information from the laity. At times, people in the Sri Lankan Buddhist community found this discourse shift disconcerting.

My identity as a monastic ethnographer derives from how I did what I had been expected to do in the field. Gillian Rose says researcher, researched, and research evolve in a triangle relationship where they construct each other's identities. She further asserts that the researcher is positioned "by what she *uncertainly* performs" ([emphasis added] 1997: 316). As I navigated the uncharted terrain of a researcher and of a monk, I stumbled and walked across the boundaries of a monk and an ethnographer. For example, I requested that the monastic leadership keep me free from the religious services at the temple until I had finished conducting interviews. The request sounded untraditional and I was reminded that it contradicted with monastic propriety. I explained to the monks that my dual roles (being both monastic and ethnographer simultaneously) might compromise my ability to elicit honest responses from the laity. It was hard to sell this idea, and the leadership remained unconvinced. I agreed to join other monks only at the collective services such as chanting and alms-giving where I could keep a low profile.

I insisted on abstaining from preaching duties; however, such negotiations did not last for long. In times of need, I was compelled to give Dhamma talks. There was simply no way around it. I felt a moral obligation to meet the requests of the faithful Buddhists. In fact, my constant presence in the community has increased the expectation of my service to the community. On one specific occasion, I was assigned to give a talk

without being consulted beforehand. This was highly confounding; whereas I had intended to sit in on the service as an observer, now I was expected to give talks, functioning in a monastic capacity. The invitations came from the first generation to address the second generation. Rather than just giving a monologue sermon, I consulted the inviters (the parents) on what they wanted me talk about.⁹ At the same time, prior to the talks, I also asked the second-generation audience about their opinions on the topics that the first generation wanted me to talk about. At the end, I not only performed a monastic job (teaching/preaching Buddhism), but I also engaged in the academic job (learning about the parents-children interactions and the role of monks and Buddhism in it).

Similarly, my position of monastic ethnographer required me to describe, analyze, and explain not only what others did in the field but what I did in the field. In other words, *I am in the field* and *I am the field*. This happens as I navigate the duties and negotiate the roles of the two positions I simultaneously hold. To give an example, a couple in their early fifties whom I had previously interviewed had generously arranged for me to interview their daughter. When I arrived at their home for the interview, the father greeted me with a bow. He led me to a chair covered with a customary white cloth in the living room with another chair, a couch, and a footstool. As I sat, a young woman in her early twenties came and prostrated herself before me (symbolizing monk-lay spiritual hierarchy in Theravada Buddhism) and sat on the carpet leaning on the couch.

⁹ In almost all cases, parents wanted me to talk about the importance of parents-children relationship, respect for parents and grandparents, the association of good friends, and importance of the excellence in education. In fact I have noticed that these same issues are the recurring themes of English Dhamma talks in the community.

Immediately concerned by this, I asked her to sit on the couch. Her father also insisted that she should sit on the couch, but, being modest, she refused the offer (generally Sri Lankan Buddhists hardly ever sit on chairs in the presence of monks).

Then I switched my seat so that I would not have to sit on the appointed (monastic!) chair. Gesturing toward the chair with white cloth, I said to the interviewee,

The chair with white cloth is for a monk; I am not here to play a *preacher's role* but a *researcher's role*. Please consider me a researcher. I am looking for *honest* responses. I am not here to *judge* you but to *seek* valuable information from you about your perspectives and practices related to Buddhism. The value of this research depends on the *candid* responses from informants like you. (Interview notes, 2008)

I also asked the interviewee if she would sit on the footstool to make it convenient for the interview which she did. Such spatial shift was symbolically powerful to highlight my researcher's role and to make the interviewee feel relaxed and free to share her opinions with me. However, it did not stop the interviewee from considering me a monk as well. Several times during the interview, the young woman asked for my opinions on certain things. I let her know that I would be happy to answer her questions after the interview, as I did not want to muddy the waters by switching into my monastic mode during the interview and possibly biasing her testimony. When the interview was done, I returned to the chair with white cloth and offered answers to her questions. It was also her parents' wish that I would explain certain issues about which their daughter was curious.

The preceding fieldwork experience illustrates that ethnographic research techniques are improvised as much as they are pre-planned. I believe that improvisation in the field is not only required but also desirable, because, as Karen McCarthy Brown

(2001) asserts, “ethnographic research, whatever it is, is a form of human relationship” (12). In this regard, my experience indicates that ethnographic research on religion is also a form of social and religious relationship where roles are involved and navigated. Duties are assigned, and they are negotiated. These navigations and negotiations (in other words, improvisations) enabled me to overcome the impasse derived from opposing norms and assumptions related to my monastic and ethnographic positions. If I had indiscriminately yielded to the subjects’ demands, there was a great likelihood this would have undermined the integrity of the data. Yet, if I was too intent on being an ethnographer, I ran the risk of losing their co-operation, or worse, their goodwill. The paradox of my dual identity required me to come up with an innovative ethnographic strategy: *Being in the field* and *being the field*. Although I, as an ethnographer, orchestrated the strategy in the field, it was the research community’s perceptions and expectations of me as a monk that significantly shaped the experience confirming the ethnographic reality. As Josephides remarks “how [we] do fieldwork....really depends on the local people.” She also suggests “we have to construct our theories of how to do fieldwork *in the field*” ([emphasis in original] 1997: 32). Like all research positions, my position as a monastic ethnographer entails pros and cons.

The Pros and Cons of Being a Monastic Ethnographer

My monastic identity gave me privileged access to the research community and created a sort of “halo effect” that made for easy access to the information that I sought out. Healthy and trustworthy human relations, as Karen McCarthy Brown argues, are the bases for successful ethnographies. I benefitted tremendously from my personal

connections with many of the community leaders, and warm relations with the Sri Lankan Buddhist laity. The monks graciously approved my research proposal with no reservations. They provided every possible support: introducing me to potential research participants, distributing surveys, arranging interviews at the temple, and sharing research materials with me. This warm rapport eased the recruitment of interviewees and data collection from non-monastic participants. The laity's respect for the monastic institution and my role within it secured the community's cooperation and confidence.

Being a monk in the field also had a number of practical limitations. In terms of temple attendees, I have been relatively less successful in recruiting youth who hardly ever come to the temple. In this context, my monastic identity seemed to work against my intention to capture a comprehensive picture of the community. I am not certain of the reasons, though my guess is that they might have felt uncomfortable talking to me, but it is also possible that they were either too busy or disinterested. I also noticed that my robes had a penchant for stopping gossip in its tracks. If I were a lay insider, I would probably have had better access to more mundane chitchat which might have given me a more realistic picture of the community. Leaving aside community politics and ethnic tension in my research and concentrating on Dhamma education, I wonder how much relevant information I missed by not having access to informal conversation behind the scenes.

The positive responses I received from the community no doubt were also due in part to the nature of my research topic. Overall, I felt that my research topic appealed to Sri Lankan Buddhists, and many participants thanked me for doing research on the topic. For example, a first-generation father applauded "you are doing a service to us

and to Buddhism by doing the research on Buddhism and youth, and *you can write a book on Buddhism for youth afterwards.*” The fact that he emphasizes a book on Buddhism *for* youth rather than a book *about* Buddhist youth relates to general Buddhist sentiments what constitutes Buddhist studies. In fact, in the field I observed that some participants praised and admired my research project while others silently questioned and even ridiculed and belittled it. Interestingly, negative responses derive from the infamous reputation of ethnographic research on Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Those who admired my project hinted that ethnography is a means to serve the purpose of normative Buddhist scholarship that is *on* rather than *about* Buddhism. Thus, both the praise and criticism of ethnographic study of Buddhism ultimately relate to what the majority Sri Lankan Buddhists refer to as Buddhist studies.

What is Buddhist Studies?

For the majority of Buddhists, the term “Buddhist studies” exclusively refers to the study of Buddhist texts either from a critical and objective perspective and/or a perspective of normative truth claims. The *Pali Tipitaka* is the center of Theravada Buddhism and the study of them is highly revered. Sinhalese monasticism holds a good reputation for Buddhist textual studies (*Ganthadhura*) in the Theravada Buddhist world. Ethnography is not only new but also less appreciated.

Those who knew about previous ethnographic studies of Buddhism shared their ambivalence about it, perhaps due to the critical and analytical nature of it. The ethnographic study of Buddhism in Sri Lanka (Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988) has revealed the syncretistic nature of Buddhism, namely how Buddhists believe in spirit

religion and practice deity worship. This revelation has challenged the self-perception of Sinhalese Buddhists as being the practitioners, protectors, and defenders of “original” Theravada Buddhist canon. The ethnographic genre has also been critical about some highly cherished institutions, like Sinhalese monasticism and religious figures like Anagarika Dharmapala (Seneviratne 1999; Tambiah 1992). Premakumara De Silva argues that the anthropology of “Sinhala Buddhism” perpetuates essentialist assumptions about “authentic Buddhism” and “continues to address the historical and essentialist questions of who are Buddhists and who are not” (De Silva 2006: 165). The judgmental tone of these types of ethnographies has made the genre unpopular among Sri Lankan Buddhists. Susantha Goonatilake, who analyzed the research of four ethnographers,¹⁰ comments that, “post-colonial anthropology appears worse than anything colonial anthropology wrought, and, in fact, worse than the colonial writings of the 19th and early 20th centuries on Sri Lanka” (Goonatilake 2001: xiii). Given this, it is not surprising that I found that many Sri Lankan Buddhists are suspicious of ethnography of Buddhism.

The suspicion and criticism about ethnography could have contributed to the lack of monastic interest in ethnography. The objectives of ethnography—the pursuit of truth, bringing silent voices to the fore, and empowering the powerless—also relate to those of textual studies. Perhaps what hinders monastic participation in ethnography is the ethnographic research method: seeking the information from the Buddhist laity.

Research informants are not inanimate but “interactive texts” (Rose 1997: 316) who

¹⁰ Susantha Goonatilake (2001) criticizes Sri Lanka based anthropological studies conducted by the following anthropologists: Richard Gombrich (Oxford), Gananath Obeyesekere (Princeton), Bruce Kapferer (London), and S.J. Tambiah (Harvard).

respond with agency. The agency in ethnography is often shared between the ethnographer and her research contributors. In this sense, the ethnographic quest to gain knowledge about Buddhist beliefs, practices, attitudes, and religious organizations from his or her research respondents, directly contradicts the monk's traditional role as the teacher of Buddhism. Within this context, being a monastic ethnographer is an anomaly.

However, I believe that what made it possible for me, as a monk, to embark on the current ethnography is the research topic itself—Dhamma education—which is intimately connected to the traditional monastic role. In other words, I would not have received the same outpouring of support and cooperation from the research community if I had chosen to study a topic that is not traditionally related to monasticism.¹¹ Thus, both my choice of research topic (Dhamma education) and my research strategy (being in the field and being the field) themselves derive from the discursive relationships in the field. Myself, as the researcher, and fellow Buddhists as the research contributors are all fellow practitioners and active agents in the field. In this way, the current research on Buddhist education conducted by a monastic ethnographer itself is the product of internal arguments of a discursive tradition. Therefore, it sounds familiar yet strange; it relates to the Buddhist tradition, yet it does not quite fit in the monastic scholarly tradition. Perhaps what is more important is that the research method itself embodies what it aspires to explain: the internal arguments about the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition in the diaspora. I leave the judgment of the method for those who are interested

¹¹ In fact, initially I thought that I would research on inter-religious identity of children who grow up with inter-religious socialization. Later on I realized that as a monk I would miss the cooperation from the community on that topic. Consequently, I switched to the Dhamma education and the transmission of the tradition.

in my research findings; however, I can assure the reader that the method itself attempts to accord with the advice the Buddha gave to a monk: be like a bee which collects only honey without harming the flower, its colour, and scent.¹² Yet, I also recognize that my presence as a monastic-ethnographer did undoubtedly have its own impact on the discursive traditions of the community and the people who were willing to work with me.

Main Argument and an Overview of Chapters

I observe that the impulses and strategies of the transmission and reconfiguration of the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition in Toronto have been derived from late 19th- and early 20th-century Sri Lankan practice. They, however, are tested, reconfigured, and appropriated to suit the local multicultural, multireligious, and secularly-oriented social setting in Toronto. The Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto are in dialogue not only with their Buddhist tradition but also with the social realities in Toronto as they transmit Buddhist knowledge, values, and understanding to the next generation. The transmission is both transtemporal (not just from one generation to the next, but involving both) and translocative (not just from Sri Lanka to Toronto, but likewise drawing on both locations as well as others) (Tweed 1997: 94). Nevertheless, it is neither disruptive (as implied in binaries such as traditional vs. modern Buddhism) nor lineal (as expressed in adjectives such as “traditional,” “modern,” and “global” Buddhism), instead it is dialogical. Accordingly, I contend that Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto simultaneously reflect on

¹² An analogy related to lay-monk relation in Buddhism. Dhammapada verse # 49 (Pali Text Society).

and deflect from their religious tradition in Sri Lanka to redefine who they are and how they practice Buddhism. In this process, their minority status, the Canadian multicultural discourse, popular perceptions of Buddhism, religious and cultural diversity in Toronto, and the individualistic North American culture also play active roles. I lay out this argument in the chapters two through six.

The next chapter focuses on how the Torontonians Sri Lankan Buddhist community has evolved from a handful of families in the 1960s with no religious institution to a religious community with four independently run Buddhist temples. Here, I will discuss three main aspects: (a) a transition from a national solidarity to an ethnic commonality, and then to a religious solidarity; (b) a diasporic consciousness rooted in Toronto but connected to Sri Lanka and Washington D.C.; and (c) a religious institutional development in three stages, namely sharing, establishing, and multiplying Buddhist resources. I emphasize the importance of Buddhist temples in the diaspora, not only as a place to congregate and practice Buddhism but also to concretize Buddhist presence in multicultural and multireligious Toronto.

Chapter Three highlights the importance of Dhamma education as an institutional practice in Sri Lankan Buddhism. I introduce it as a tradition-defining practice because it intimately relates to the contents (what constitutes the tradition) and the purpose (formation of Buddhists) of the tradition. I locate the origin of Dhamma education in the colonial period, I relate its development as an institutional practice to Buddhism's dominant status with post-colonial power, and finally, I refer to Dhamma education in Toronto as a transplanted practice that reflects the minority status of Buddhism in Toronto. Across these historical periods, a spiritual discourse composed of

abstract Buddhist thought has persisted; however, the contingent discourses have interpreted the spiritual discourse in relation to changing social realities. This reality highlights the agency or power of a socio-political system in shaping the Buddhist tradition.

Chapter Four on “intelligent adaptation” examines the agency of the first-generation Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto. The phrase itself indicates that the Sri Lankan Buddhists perceive themselves as “active agents,” who justify what they do with their tradition in Toronto. As I contextualize the phrase in the manual of Dhamma education where it has been used, I note that the phrase relates both to leaving out certain aspects of Sri Lankan Buddhism and redefining others in the context of Toronto. I focus on the latter and argue that Sri Lankan Buddhists redefine certain Buddhist concepts and practices to include diverse religious and secular sentiments prevalent in Toronto. This “inclusive interpretation” speaks about a few things including a minority religion’s response to the multicultural, multireligious, yet secularly-oriented society in Toronto.

Chapter Five focuses on the intergenerational dynamics, specifically how the second-generation Buddhists of Sri Lankan background receive, interpret, and practice the Buddhist tradition that is passed on to them. In that chapter, I define the second-generation Buddhists as “active recipients” who reclaim the inherited tradition with a sense of agency. I conceptualize the dynamics as a cultural negotiation. Consequently, Buddhism as practiced by the second generation is a culturally negotiated tradition in which new modes of relations (friendship models) and new perceptions of Buddhism (Buddhism as a way of life) develop in parallel to the existing hierarchical relations and

religious perception of Buddhism. What we see is a cross-cultural integration that challenges the assumptions embedded in the so-called two Buddhisms categories in North America.

Chapter Six concentrates on temporary ordination in Toronto in reference to the same practice in Colombo and Kuala Lumpur. It is a Theravada practice that is absent in the repertoire of the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition, but in recent times, a few monastic leaders, influenced by diasporic experience, have introduced the practice to the tradition as a means of Buddhist education for laity. Thus temporary ordination stands for the importance of prolonged subjective experience in the formation of Buddhist agents, an aspect that is less emphasized in Dhamma education. I also discuss the practice as an example that illustrates the nature of Buddhism in the diaspora, which includes Buddhist communal interaction, cultural integration and appropriation, and diasporic influence on Buddhism in the country of origin. Finally, in the conclusion I highlight the themes that run throughout dissertation. I also discuss the contributions and future directions of research on the second-generation Buddhists and Dhamma education to be found in the current study.

Chapter Two

The Formation of the Sri Lankan Buddhist community in Toronto

Introduction

This chapter focuses on how Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto evolved from a small cluster of immigrant families with no temple to a stable religious community with four vibrant Buddhist centers. It discusses the history of Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto, including their arrival in Toronto, their interaction with others, their formation as a religious community, and the establishment of Sri Lankan Buddhist temples. Currently, four Buddhist centres serve roughly 3500 Sri Lankan Buddhist families in the Greater Toronto Area. Their membership also extends to some Sri Lankan Buddhists who live in other small cities in Southern Ontario. All four temples serve the same Sri Lankan Buddhist community, although some of them extend their service to others who are interested in Theravada Buddhism. The two temples that are the focus of this study, the Toronto Mahavihara and the Mississauga West End Buddhist Centre, regularly accommodate the religious needs of Indian and Bangladeshi Buddhists respectively. This particular openness of Sri Lankan temples is also reflected in a smaller Sri Lankan Buddhist group in the Guelph, Cambridge, and Kitchener-Waterloo region that gathers at a regular basis at a Laotian Buddhist temple in Kitchener, Ontario. The difference is that the Sri Lankan Buddhists at the Laotian temple receive religious services that are given or accommodated by the Laotian Buddhist community. The dynamics of sharing and receiving religious services at all three places—the Toronto Mahavihara, the West End Buddhist Centre, and the Laotian Temple in Kitchener—resemble the earliest stage of the formation of the Theravada Buddhist community in the diaspora.

Referring to the role of religion in community formation, Raymond Brady Williams (1988) argues that “religions [in the diaspora] are significant both in the regrouping of immigrants and in the negotiation of identities and new relationships both among the immigrants themselves ...and between these and other ethnic and religious groups” (278). Accordingly, Buddhism has been the communal glue that groups and regroups the Buddhists from Sri Lanka in Toronto. Moreover, it has become a catalyst to reconstruct individual and group identity, and it continues to foster relationships with others, including those who are not Sri Lankan yet interested in Buddhism. Buddhist centres are the hubs of Buddhist practices; however, expressions of Buddhism are not necessarily confined to temples. I argue that religious centers not only demonstrate the dynamics of a religious community but also indicate the organizational transformation of a religious tradition within a new location. I suggest that the history of Sri Lankan Buddhist temples in Toronto relates to a general pattern of community development among Theravada Asian Buddhists in resettlement. The pattern is comprised of three stages of institutional progression, namely sharing, establishing, and multiplying Buddhist resources. Here, the term “Buddhist resources” refers to anything that is essential to form a vibrant Buddhist community including monks, temples, Buddhist artefacts, and sufficient religious membership.

I organize this chapter in the following steps. A discussion of the Sri Lankan immigration to Canada, particularly to Ontario, is explained in terms of the socio-political situations in Sri Lanka and Canada that resulted in the migration. The data from the Canadian immigration statistics not only correlate with the incidents in Sri Lanka that drove people out of the country, but they also help us understand the community

dynamics that grouped and regrouped the Sri Lankan immigrants in Toronto. Then I lay out three stages of Sri Lankan Buddhist community formation in Toronto. In this particular section, I highlight the growth of community, the tension between cultural maintenance and accommodation, and the shift in religious needs as driving forces in the community development. In the final section of the chapter, I relate Sri Lankan Buddhists' activities in Toronto to the recent history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Such historical analysis would help us understand the impulses and reasons behind distinct adaptive and transmission mechanisms of Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto. In other words, Buddhism in the diaspora diversely reflects pre-migration experiences of the respective Buddhist community (McLellan 1999; 2008). Therefore, a historical explanation is warranted to explain why a particular Buddhist community differs from other fellow Buddhist communities.

Sri Lankans' Migration to Canada

For variety of reasons, Sri Lankans (then Ceylonese) started to migrate to Canada in 1948 (Chadrsekhar 1986: 22; Boisvert 2005: 74). Their migration to Canada has been intimately connected to the events in both countries. Sri Lankans coming to Canada fall into three categories, namely students, immigrants, and refugees. In the early 1950s, there were a few students on Commonwealth scholarships at Canadian universities. Many of them eventually settled in Canada, a pattern of migration that has not been uncommon to the present.

The 1956 religio-cultural revival in post-colonial Sri Lanka eventually introduced Sinhala as the official language. This prompted many of the English-

educated Sri Lankans to leave the country. During this time, Sri Lanka also experienced rapid growth in population, urbanization, and internal migration. Travelling abroad to learn and explore foreign countries also became popular to improve social status, specifically for those with money and an English education. Although European countries were popular destinations for many, there were 180 Sri Lankans in Canada before the 1967 liberalization of Canadian immigration. A majority (138 or 77%) of them were in Ontario, a trend that continues today. The 1966 Canadian immigration statistics categorise them according to their ethnic background:

Country of Citizenship	Total	Ethnic Origin	
Ceylon	180	117	Ceylonese (Sinhalese?)
		10	English
		29	East Indian (Tamil?)
		5	The Netherlands
		5	Portuguese
		1	German
		1	Italian
		1	Syrian
		11	Others

(Source: Citizenship and Immigration Statistics)¹³

The above ethnic composition demonstrates not only diverse ethnicities of Ceylon's citizenship, but the use of "Ceylonese" to refer to a particular ethnicity—apparently the Sinhalese—is interesting in light of the Tamils' accusation that post-colonial Ceylon was only for the Sinhalese. In addition, the ethnic designations also

¹³ The data on Canadian immigration statistics derive from its web site: <http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/202/301/immigration_statistics-ef/index.html>. Only data from 1966 to 1996 are available. I assume that the migration trend in 1996 continues even now as the pulling and pushing factors of Sri Lankan migration to Canada have not changed that much, except with the 2009 military defeat of LTTE. Even then the refugee flow has not stopped. Recently (October 2009 and August 2010) two ships arrived in Vancouver with hundreds of Tamil refugee claimants from Sri Lanka.

indicate the complexities and confusion between national versus ethnic identities (i.e., Tamils as East Indian with Ceylon citizenship) in the formation of modern state. Although ethnicity later played a huge role (as a selection criterion) in the Sri Lankan migration to Canada, the immigration statistics ceased to designate immigrants according to their ethnic affiliation as Canada adapted a racially neutral immigration policy in 1967.

As a part of the 1967 merit-based Canadian immigration policy, the Canadian government marketed the future prospects of Canada especially to young people in Sri Lanka. In English newspapers in Sri Lanka, “Canada was portrayed as a ‘land of opportunity’ that welcomed the increasing number of underemployed or unemployed but educated Sri Lankan youth” (Abrahams and Steven 1990: 31). Thus, Sri Lanka’s introduction of Sinhala as the official language in 1958 and Canada’s liberalization of immigration policy in 1967 encouraged English-speaking Sri Lankans to migrate to Canada. In the next 17 years (1967-1983), Sri Lankans in Canada experienced a moderate but significant growth in number every year.

Years	From Sri Lanka	From Britain	From other countries	To Canada	To Ontario in approx. %
1967 to 1970	500	107	73	680	416 (61%)
1971 to 1974	1356	192	122	1670	1169 (70%)
1975 to 1978	884	166	202	1252	820 (65.5%)
1979 to 1983	852	220	112	1184	698 (59%)
Total	3592	1194	Twice migrants	Total 4786	3103 (65%)

(Source: Citizenship and Immigration Statistics)

Although many of the migrants came directly from Sri Lanka, it is noticeable that nearly a quarter of them came to Canada as twice migrants via other countries, including Britain. Sixty five percent of total Sri Lankan immigrants settled in Ontario.

As individual points such as education, professional skills, and English and/or French proficiency were the criteria for acceptance, Sri Lankan immigrants up until 1983 were more or less homogenous in terms of a social class—Western educated, English speaking, and urbanized population. This social homogeneity hindered religious and ethnic divergence and fostered a common Ceylonese or Sri Lankan identity.

It was a secularly oriented common alliance of interest, solidarity, and tradition that tied the first wave of Sri Lankans together in Toronto. These pioneers founded the “Ceylonese Recreational Club” in 1968 with a secular theme to events such as cricket and cultural dances. For these families the “basement was the pivotal place for community get-to-gather...they called it ‘basement parties’” (Chandrasekera 2008: 217). The basement parties reflected closely-knit communal belongingness. As Ceylon became Sri Lanka in 1972, the club was renamed the “Canada Sri Lanka Association of Toronto.” It maintained a secular cultural focus with an emphasis on promoting a common Sri Lankan-Canadian identity through summer camping, cricket and tennis matches, and annual Sinhala-Hindu New Year celebrations (Chandrasekera 2008: 217). It was their new Canadian experience and shared Sri Lankan heritage as mediated through English that bound them together. The introduction of multiculturalism in the 1970s in Ontario also set the secular cultural tone of the association which allowed it to foster a sense of community among the ethnically (Burgher, Sinhalese, Tamil) and religiously (Christian, Buddhist, and Hindu) diverse Sri Lankan immigrants.

However, this sense of Sri Lankan community in Toronto was increasingly compromised as the Sinhalese-Tamil tension accelerated in Sri Lanka. The 1983 ethnic riots led many Tamil-speaking Sri Lankans to flee Sri Lanka and take refuge in various

Western countries, including Canada. The Canada immigration statistics report that in 1984 alone 1,086 people (immigrants and refugee claimants) from Sri Lanka came to Canada. These four-digit numbers of Sri Lankan immigrants to Canada have continued annually and even multiplied in the subsequent years. Since 1985, immigrants have been classified according to the types of visa granted to them.

Years	Refugee	Independent	Family/Assisted Relatives	Other ¹⁴	To Canada	To Ontario in approx. %
1985-1988	1193	4122	3870	18	9203	5386 (58.5%)
1989-1992	13,602	1675	9666	47	24,990	19,952 (80%)
1993-1996	14,499	1190	15,055	107	30,851	26,193 (85%)
Total	29,294	6987	18,591	172	65,044	51,531 (80%)

(Source: Citizenship and Immigration Statistics)

With this wave of mass migration, the social homogeneity—the elite class unit—was undermined and diverse social strata were added to the Sri Lankan immigrants in Toronto. The “independent” and “other” categories added new vitality to the existing social elite class by diversifying it, but the huge influxes of refugees and so-called family/assisted relatives have outnumbered the elite class. The latter came from traditional villages, and they were less fluent in English and less familiar with urban life style. This was the case particularly with the refugees, who were predominantly Tamil. Tamil refugees were quite different from the earlier Tamil immigrants. These social differences (based on education, life-style, and language), Chandrasekere observes,

¹⁴ “Other” refers to four immigrant categories: self employed, entrepreneurs, investors, and live-in-caregivers.

created a communication gap between the Tamil old-timers and Tamil new-comers (2008: 223). This gap was wider particularly between Sinhalese immigrants and Tamil refugees, because the latter's harsh experience in Sri Lanka made them suspicious of the Sinhalese in Toronto. As such, they sought out separate Tamil organizations to help them integrate into the Canadian society and to support Tamils in Sri Lanka. In subsequent periods, numerous Tamil organizations have come into being with cultural, religious, and political orientations. With this development, the earliest association—the Canada Sri Lanka Association of Toronto—has suffered from the lack of Tamil participation and membership.

Stories of the Tamil exodus have to some extent overshadowed the similar stories of the Sinhalese diaspora. Economic hardship and political uncertainties in post-colonial Sri Lanka sent many Sinhalese to Canada. Sri Lanka experienced two civil unrests: the Sinhala-Tamil ethnic tension and youth unrest influenced by communist ideologies. Interestingly, both link to the 1958 official language policy. The policy made Tamils suspicious of the political power of the Sinhalese majority, which eventually perpetuated a civil war. On the other hand, the policy was also a “Pandora's box” because of its accompanying hopes of modern success. The universalization of education from the primary level to university graduation, along with making Sinhala the language of instruction, raised “peasant ambitions for white-collar and professional jobs for their children through education” (Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988: 10). The number of candidates waiting for university education sharply increased. To accommodate them, the state introduced a number of new universities in the 1960s.

Unfortunately, however, the university programs did not match the social and economic needs of the time.

Consequently, many of the university graduates were unemployed and frustrated with the political system, and they directly and indirectly associated with the 1971 and 1989 youth unrest led by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), a revolutionary youth movement influenced by Marxist ideologies. The 1990 *Report of the Presidential Commission on Youth* blames the quality of university education for the youth unrest. Commenting on this particular issue, Bruce Matthews (1995) suggests that “the expected benefits of university education in Sri Lanka do not often appear to be realized in terms of employment.” He also thinks that university education in Sri Lanka has been underfunded, a factor to be blamed for so-called “brain drain,” which refers to the migration of educated people to other countries for better lives and career opportunities (84, 91).

Echoing these factors, many respondents of this current study identified the political crises in Sri Lanka, as well as the educational and economic opportunities in Canada, as the decisive factors in their migration. The 1983 Sinhala-Tamil ethnic conflict and the 1989 clash between the Sri Lankan government and the JVP had an adverse effect on the quality of life in Sri Lanka. Following the Tamil exodus, many Sinhalese left Sri Lanka for personal security and better opportunities. Some of them ended up being in Toronto as “refugee claimants” (Chandrasekere 2008: 228). The 1971 Canadian multicultural policy, which eventually became a law in 1988, attracted many Sri Lankans to consider Canada as their migration destination. In addition, their family ties and friendships with earlier Sri Lankan migrants to Canada prompted them to

resettle in Toronto. With the later wave of migration, a mild class tension between newcomers and old-timers emerged, which eventually shaped the formation of the community.

Most Sinhalese in Toronto are immigrants. The majority of them met minimum requirements of education, language proficiency, and professional credentials to migrate to Canada as skilled workers. It is a highly educated immigrant group with college (21.5%), university (32%), and graduate (32%) degrees. Prior to migration, they lived in major Sri Lankan cities like Colombo, Kandy, Galle, and Matara. These personal qualifications and background factors smoothed their acculturation process into Canadian society. The resulting sense of community further provided psychological and social supports for them to succeed in resettlement.

The term community implies a common alliance of interest, solidarity, and tradition (Williams 1988: 10). It is through community organizations and institutions that the common alliances of interests, solidarity, and tradition flourish and manifest. Communal institutions and people's affiliation to them are the concrete symbols that ground the presence of a community. From that perspective, social (religious and non-religious) institutions are significant landmarks in the process of community formation. At the same time, they also reflect a set of community dynamics such as leadership, membership, and politics. Therefore, I will discuss the formation of the Sri Lankan Buddhist community in Toronto with an emphasis on Buddhist institutions. Bankston and Hidalgo (2008) argue that temples in the diaspora provide "moral and social order to adherents that [enable] them to conceptualize their relations to other individual adherents and to their national groups" (70). The focus on Buddhist institution also

captures the Torontonians Sri Lankan Buddhists' emphasis on religion (Buddhism) to differentiate themselves from other Buddhists as well as other Sri Lankans. Their self-identification as "Sri Lankan Buddhist" rather than "Sinhalese Buddhist" helps them to claim their Sri Lankan identity overshadowed by the bigger presence of Sri Lankan Tamils in Toronto.

Sharing Buddhist Resources

During the 1960s and 1970s, Buddhism received unprecedented public attention due to the counter-cultural movement. Buddhism, specifically Zen, was presented in alignment with counter-cultural values such as "individualism, spontaneity, and intuition" (Seager 2002: 110). Zen *roshis*, Tibetan *lamas*, and Theravada *bhikkhus* routinely travelled across major cities in North America. They related Buddhism to personal experience and non-violence, two particular counter-cultural themes of the time. On the other hand, Tibetan refugees (since 1972) and Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian refugees in the late 1970s resettled in many metropolitan cities in North America, where they formed their own ethnic communities (McLellan 1999). Within this religio-cultural setting, early Sri Lankan Buddhists began forming their religious community.

Early Sri Lankan Buddhist immigrants in Toronto relied on other co-religionists to meet their religious needs. By early 1970s, there were a good number of Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto, Ontario and Montreal, Quebec. They occasionally visited Chinese temples in the neighbourhood, but being Theravada Buddhists, they found the Mahayana services in the Chinese language incomprehensible (Chandrasekera 2008:

226). In the Theravada Buddhist tradition, monks are considered to be “the field of merit,” (*punnakkhetta*) who play irreplaceable roles in merit-making rituals, a set of common practices for lay Buddhists. By the mid-1970s, Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto performed merit-making rituals with visiting monks from Sri Lanka and Washington D.C. Alloy Perera, a research respondent who came to Canada in the late 1960s, revealed that he performed *dana* (feeding the monks) and *pirith* rituals (listening to the Pali chanting for blessings) led by Ven. Piyadassi Thera, when, in fact, Piyadassi Thera visited Toronto and Montreal upon invitations from Vietnamese Buddhists.¹⁵

More reliable Buddhist aspirations and supports came from the Sri Lankan Buddhists in Washington D.C. The relatively short distance between Toronto and Washington D.C. enabled the Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto to share Buddhist resources from Washington. The Washington Buddhist Vihara established in 1966 by Sri Lankan Buddhists was the first ever Theravada Buddhist temple in North America (Numrich 1996: xxi). Monks from Washington D. C. occasionally visited Toronto Buddhists and encouraged them to establish a Buddhist temple, a symbol of a strong Buddhist community. Ven. Dickwela Piyananda Thera, the head of the Washington Buddhist Vihara, stated that “since 1974 we have had the great aspiration of establishing a Theravada Buddhist Vihara in Toronto” (*Toronto Buddhist* 1979 May: 2). This aspiration was materialized by a group of eight Sri Lankan Buddhists led by Ven. Dickwela Piyananda Thera. They formed the Toronto Mahavihara Society which eventually purchased a building that was consecrated as Toronto Mahavihara in 1978.

¹⁵ Ven. Piyadassi Thera, as also known as the travelling missionary monk, belonged to the Bambalapitiya Vajirarama Monastic tradition in Sri Lanka that had strong links with Vietnamese Theravada Buddhists in 1960s.

The early formation of a Sri Lankan Buddhist community in Toronto underlines the “triadic relationship” that contributes to the social formation of a diasporic community. Steven Vertovec theorizes that a diasporic community evolves within a web of social connections that link three distinct places: the country of current residence, the country of origin, and other countries where co-ethnic groups live (2000: 144). As noted earlier, the Sinhala-Tamil ethnic tension in Sri Lanka disrupted the Sinhala-Tamil unity among the early immigrants from Sri Lanka. This development signifies the effects of the country of origin in shaping the formation of diasporic communities. Meanwhile, the emergence of a Torontonians Sri Lankan Buddhist community with support from the co-religionists in Washington D.C. highlights the ties between co-ethnic communities that are globally dispersed. These triadic connections between Toronto, Sri Lanka, and Washington have continued to shape and foster how Buddhism is perceived and practiced in Toronto.

This initial phase of community formation could be identified as *sharing Buddhist resources*. Sri Lankan Buddhist immigrants were pioneers in the formation of a joined Buddhist organization (the Toronto Buddhist Federation) and shared Buddhist events like Vesak, the celebration of life of the Buddha (McLellan 1999: 31; Hori and McLellan 2010: 381; Shiu 2010: 94). They also shared religious/spiritual capital like monks with their counterparts in Washington D.C. They also occasionally shared the nearest Buddhist temples—in this case the Chinese temples in Toronto. Similar patterns took place in Ottawa. In 1981, *The Toronto Buddhist* reported “the Sri Lankan Buddhists in Ottawa now have a shrine room in the premises of the Vietnamese

Buddhist temple in that city and they participate in regular weekly religious observances” (*Toronto Buddhist* May 1981: 3).

This sharing of Buddhist temple space and monks relates to an important contemporary phenomenon within the Theravada Buddhist communities across North America (Bankston and Hindalgo 2008: 6; McLellan 2009: 91). That is, Asian Theravada Buddhists congregate at the nearest temple as long as it caters to their sectarian form of Theravada Buddhist practices. This particular phenomenon is quite noticeable with Sri Lankan Buddhists in Southern Ontario. Sri Lankan Buddhists not only share their temples with other Theravada Buddhists of differing ethnic backgrounds, but they also congregate at other Theravada temples as long as it caters to the Sri Lankan form of Buddhism.

Sharing Buddhist temples can resemble “parallel congregations” (Numrich 1996). However, this term obscures as much as it explains the phenomenon. What it explains is the co-existence of two or more religious groups who are inclined toward distinct religious services. What is obscured in the term is the unparallel power-sharing at a sacred place, specifically where two or more ethnic groups congregate. For example, Indian and Bangladeshi Buddhists receive Buddhist services from the Toronto Mahavihara and the West End Buddhist Centre respectively; however, they do not hold any position on the temples’ board of directors. Similarly, Sri Lankan Buddhists living in Guelph, Cambridge, and Kitchener-Waterloo congregate at the Laotian Buddhist Temple in Kitchener, but they too are excluded from the decision-making body of the temple.

In each of these cases, temple leaderships offer Buddhist services in respective ethnic forms by accommodating monks who are ethnically different from themselves. In fact, it is the presence of co-ethnic monks that attract Theravada Buddhists to the temples that are established by different ethnic groups. The respective Sri Lankan temples in Toronto accommodate monks of Indian and Bangladeshi origin. Similarly, the Laotian temple in Kitchener sponsored a monk who is familiar with the Sri Lankan Buddhist culture. These cases exemplify how the religious services are made parallel, but this is not reflected in the human agency and institutional power-sharing. In the cases of decision-making, the dynamics between the ethnic community who established the temple and those others who joined the temple often resemble the majority-minority relationship. A member of such minority community reported:

We always feel that we are foreigners there [at the temple]. We feel that we are not wanted there, and we are not part of them. At every big function, we are participating and we are fortunate to contribute to the temples..., but they [the people in power] do not acknowledge our contributions. I think it is not a good manner. (Personal interview, 2008)

In fact, it is this sense of marginalization that often intensifies the need for “our own temple,” and it pushes an ethnic community to move from this pace of community formation, i.e., sharing religious resources, to the next phase when a separate sacred place is established.

The transition from sharing religious resources to establishing a sacred place is often determined by community membership. Williams argues that the “size and length of residence” often dictate “the shape of the religious groups” (1988: 41). In discussing Hindu immigrants, Williams states that within a smaller community, religious orientation is more “ecumenical.” As the community gets larger, it tends to “splinter into

regional and sectarian groups” (47). He also observes that in the early stage of resettlement, the immigrants are concerned about the economic and social stability of individual families, but as they live longer within the same region they tend to focus on the infrastructural establishment of the community, such as building religious institutions and programs related to the transmission of tradition to the future generation.

I would add that as the community dwells longer and grows stronger in a particular location its expectations of the existing institution become more complex and diverse. I will discuss the implication and impact of this particular development later in this chapter. The transition from sharing religious resources to establishing a sacred place derives from the increase in membership. Such a move could also be motivated by a desire to gain better and particular recognition and representation in multicultural Toronto (McLellan 2006: 100), where places of worship as cultural centres symbolize tangible and concrete presence of the community. However, the move depends on “the degrees of types of social capital in a given group” (McLellan and White 2005: 237). It also requires greater economic commitment, as religious followers move from being inconsistent members to committed members. This particular shift has a greater implication on the formation and transformation of Buddhist communities in the diaspora. It is the gradual increase of Sri Lankan Buddhists that enabled them to establish the Toronto Mahavihara.

Establishing the Toronto Mahavihara (1978)

The Toronto Mahavihara, inaugurated on July the 16th in 1978, was the first Theravada Buddhist temple in Canada. The name “Mahavihara” itself symbolically

invokes the introduction of Theravada tradition to a new location, for it refers to the first Buddhist monastery founded by the Arahata Mahinda who introduced Buddhism to Sri Lanka in the 3rd century BCE. This invocation suggests another historic religious transmission to a new land. Ven. Dikwela Piyananda, the founding abbot of the temple, wished “May the Toronto Mahavihara be able to serve Canada in the same noble way the Anuradhapura Mahavihara ...served Sri Lanka” (*Toronto Buddhist* 1979 May: 3). This historical reference is symbolic of the introduction of Buddhism to the West, as it differs from the pattern of the introduction of Buddhism to many Asian countries including Sri Lanka.

Arahata Mahinda preached Buddhism first to the king of ancient Sri Lanka—King Devanampiyatissa—and his royal families and then his subjects. Similarly, Buddhism was introduced first to the elite of royal court in China. In contrast, “Buddhist teachings and practices [in the West]” argue Baumann and Prebish “have not been introduced from the top down, but commenced their diffusion from below, often championed by economically disadvantaged people” (2002: 3). Here, Baumann and Prebish’s unspecified reference to Buddhists in the West as “economically disadvantaged people” is debatable.¹⁶ However, they refer to an important feature of Buddhism in the West: people’s initiatives and collective administrative power at the Buddhist institutions in the West, which is known as congregational polity. This initiative and administrative power from below—plural and democratic—often determines the formation of a

¹⁶ Please see Coleman (2001) and McLellan (1999) for the socio-economic conditions of Buddhists with Caucasian and Asian origin respectively.

Buddhist community, as expressed through establishing Buddhist temples in North America.

In establishing temples, Buddhist leaders confront a set of hurdles that could be categorized as economic, bureaucratic, and communal. Buddhist temples in the diaspora do not have the financial security that they enjoy in traditional Buddhist countries. Unlike many Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka, temples in the diaspora do not own property or receive state funds.¹⁷ Instead, they depend on membership and public donations. This has changed the Buddhist traditional practice of *Dana* (voluntary contribution). Now many Sri Lankan temples in North America rely on their pledged membership fees, which are tax exempt. *Dana* relates to sporadic and spontaneous generosity of the faithful, where pledged membership is also voluntary but more carefully calculated.

Unlike *Dana*, membership fees are more predictable and reliable. To some extent, stable memberships are systematized to establish Buddhist temples, and a certain amount of membership count is a prerequisite to secure mortgage from a financial institution to build temples. This practice further compels Buddhist organization to change family membership to individual membership in order to meet the required membership goals. From the very beginning, the Toronto Mahavihara has reached out to Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike. The founders assured that the temple is open to “all sects of Buddhism and friends of Buddhism without any discrimination of colour, creed or nationality” (*Toronto Buddhist* 1979 May: 2-3). This openness derives from the

¹⁷ However, in late 1980s, the Toronto Mahavihara received a small annual grant (approximately Cdn \$ 700.00) from the Buddhist Affairs Department of Sri Lankan Ministry of Culture (*Toronto Buddhist* 1987 November: 5).

inclusive nature of Buddha's teachings at the philosophical level, but it also closely ties to the Buddhist mission and its search for financial support for the costly maintenance of Buddhist temples (*Toronto Buddhist* 1986 (August): 2).

Bureaucratic requirements often hinder the process of establishing a temple. According to zoning restrictions prescribed by the respective municipal authority, a place of worship is a public place that is allowed in industrial or commercial zones. A Theravada Buddhist temple is not simply a place of worship; instead, it is also, as the Pali term "*vihara*" suggests, a dwelling place for monks. Traditionally, monastic residences and shrines are located on the same premises. To meet both traditional and municipal zoning restrictions, temples can only be built at an area which is residential as well as commercial. Such sites are not that common in municipal zoning.

Traditionally, temples and villages are intimately connected, reflecting the symbiotic relationship between monks and lay Buddhists. Monks rely on the lay community for material support, while lay people consult monastics for spiritual guidance. Many temples in Theravada countries are located within walking distance of villages, so that monks can go seeking alms on daily basis, although this practice is rarely seen in contemporary Sri Lanka. In the diaspora, it has nearly become a pattern for a temple to begin in a residential area where many of its members reside, before it moves to a more permanent location. Temples in residential areas often receive complaints from neighbours due to community gatherings, specifically during weekends. In rare cases, tensions with neighbours have resulted in legal battles (White 2006; McLellan and White 2005).

Both temples of this study—the Toronto Mahavihara and the West End Buddhist Centre—were at smaller locations before they moved to their current facilities. The West End Buddhist Centre is currently located at Cormack Crescent, Mississauga, and is now in the middle of moving to a bigger location with more facilities to accommodate its growing congregation. Moreover, the locations of temples are also determined by the residence of congregation members, who often move due to change of jobs or in children's schools. Overcoming these economic, bureaucratic, and communal hurdles, Sri Lankan Buddhists continue to establish temples in Toronto. Temples in Toronto are not only smaller than their counterparts in Sri Lanka, but they also lack the outdoor atmosphere of a typical Buddhist temple in Sri Lanka. Interviewees often nostalgically pointed out that they missed the sand floor and soothing breeze under *Bodhi* tree and the sight of relic-bearing white *stupas*, two of three salient components of a Buddhist temple in Sri Lanka. The third component, a shrine room/hall, is now the focal point of Buddhist temples in the diaspora.

In 1978, the Toronto Mahavihara was started as the first Theravada temple in Canada. It was the only Sri Lankan temple in Toronto, until at the end of 1992, when a split within the community led to the establishment of the second Sri Lankan temple in Toronto, the West End Buddhist Centre. Within the community, many believe that the split was caused by a disagreement between monastic and lay leaders over the issue of who oversaw the administration of the Toronto Mahavihara. Chandrasekere implies that a class tension between old-timers and newcomers caused the split (2008: 229). In fact, the split derived from multiple causes. In addition to the preceding causes, I argue that the 1992 split erupted from a tension between the needs of maintenance versus

accommodation of Buddhist tradition that prevailed from the very beginning of the community formation.

From its inception, the Toronto Mahavihara aspired to serve three groups: Sri Lankan expatriates, Buddhist sympathizers of Caucasian origin, and other Buddhists, specifically Theravadins with diverse ethnic backgrounds. As the Mahavihara was the first public centre related to the people from Sri Lanka, it also received support from many Sinhalese Christians in Toronto who felt ethnic ties to the temple that they lacked within the mainstream Christian congregations in which they participated (Chandrasekera 2008: 226). Reflecting the common Sri Lankan ties fostered at the temple, a member of the temple's board of directors recalled that the temple had served as the "cultural centre for Sri Lankans of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds in this adopted land" (*Toronto Buddhist* 1986: 10). For specifically Sri Lankan Buddhists, the Toronto Mahavihara conducted Buddhist rituals and festivals as they did in Sri Lanka. The rhetorical stance of openness to "all sects of Buddhism and friends of Buddhism" was often not reflected in the actual Buddhist services at the Toronto Mahavihara, simply because, as Williams rightly points out "people are not 'religious-in-general,' but 'religious-in-particular'" (1988: 280).

Furthermore, some of the statements in the *Toronto Buddhist*, the newsletter of Toronto Mahavihara, indicate a growing tension between Sri Lankan Buddhists and non-Sri Lankan Buddhists throughout 1980s. The Toronto Mahavihara actively reached out to Buddhist enthusiasts. One of its pamphlets "Mahavihara School of Buddhist Studies" declared "We are happy to announce that the Toronto Mahavihara Society which was hitherto catering mainly to Sri Lankan Buddhist population, has opened a

school of Buddhist studies, in order to extend its services even to the non-Buddhist Canadian public.” It further listed twelve courses on various topics related to Buddhism.

Two of the courses were “Buddhism in Sri Lanka” and “Buddhism for Westerners.”¹⁸ One can discern a cultural tension built in the descriptions of these courses themselves. The description of “Buddhism for Westerners” says “Those who are interested in learning to really live the Buddhist life in its *pristine purity, avoiding the cultural trappings* that come with it, will profit greatly from this course.” On the other hand, the details of “Buddhism in Sri Lanka” describes “Those who do not wish to study Buddhism as a dead theory, as a withdrawal from life or as an escape into a trance, but as *a way of living, and solving problems in life*, would find this course very enlightening.” The details of both courses provide contrasting views of what Sri Lankan Buddhism is. On the one hand, it suggests that the way Buddhism is practiced by Sri Lankan Buddhists, specifically their cultural aspects, compromise the “pristine purity” of Buddhism. On the other hand, it appreciates Sri Lankan traditions as an example of the vibrant aspects of Buddhism that address problems in life. The descriptions also demonstrate the mutual perceptions of Caucasian Buddhists and Asian Buddhists, in this case Sri Lankan Buddhists. They also could be read as an indication of growing cultural tensions at the Toronto Mahavihara, which was catering to what Numrich (1996) calls “parallel congregations.”

Since 1981 and onwards, the Sri Lankan Buddhist community in Toronto experienced a heightened commitment to Sinhalese Buddhist culture. Reflecting this

¹⁸ In 1980, a pamphlet entitled “Mahavihara School of Buddhist Studies” announced 12 courses with 7 staff members who were monks and lay people of Sinhalese and Caucasian origin.

trend, the *Toronto Buddhist* dedicated its editorial to “The identity crisis and the role of the Vihara” (1981 May: 3). It observed that “Sri Lankans are making steady progress towards establishing their identity as a distinct ethnic group in the country’s multicultural milieu.” The editorial related this trend to the psychological needs of children within the community and argued that the temple could play both roles, as a place of worship and the “cultural haven” for the community. It also suggested that the temple could become a centre for socio-cultural activities so that the community could find “a truer identity.” These observations and suggestions confirm that as children enter into the scene the community tends to become more culturally conservative in the transmission of its cultural identity to the future generation.

The aforementioned enthusiasm for Sinhalese Buddhist culture apparently tempered the temple’s initial commitment to and aspiration for inclusive membership. A statement entitled “Thinking out aloud” by the secretary of the Toronto Mahavihara reminded Sri Lankan Buddhists that

We cannot *impose* our cultural values, our rules, or the generally accepted norms of our community on those from a different cultural background....We are bound to have persons brought up in the Judeo-Christian tradition stepping into the Sri Lankan Buddhist world that exists within the temple...we must not attempt to *prejudge* these friends in the Dhamma and say things that may hurt the feelings of others on mere conjecture. ([emphasis added] *Toronto Buddhist* 1986 May: 10)

The mid-1980s was the peak moment for the Toronto Mahavihara in terms of reaching out and offering Buddhist services to its three types of audience identified earlier. The above plea from the temple’s authority hints that there was a growing cultural uneasiness between Sri Lankan Buddhists and non-Sri Lankan Buddhists, specifically Caucasians. This particular tension might have derived simply from assumed temple

etiquettes within the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition. However, the editor of the subsequent issues of the newsletter pointed out a related concern, namely the tension between cultural maintenance vs. cultural adaptation. He suggested,

The Sri Lankan Buddhist, or any ethnic Buddhist for that matter, if he is really interested in propagating the Dhamma in the West, should be prepared to accept this [cultural] change....If Buddhism is to be established in the West, it has to be able to survive within the Western cultural environment through adaptation. Adaptation is a basic and necessary principle for survival, even in the biological sphere. So it is in the psychological, sociological and religious sphere. (*Toronto Buddhist* 1986 August: 2)

The debate on cultural adaptation and transformation in the context of the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition closely ties to the lives of monks.

Since the 1960s, Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka have been a compelling theme for social scientists in search of Buddhist identity and change in the modern Sri Lankan context. Ananda Wickremaratne contends that these works more often than not conceptualize contemporary monasticism in relation to the dichotomy between “tradition and modernization.” He asserts, instead, that the issue relates to a different sort of dichotomy: “It rests on a clash between two views. The lay view of what the Sangha ought to be and must necessarily be in terms of role fulfillment and the Sangha’s own perception of their role and their relations with the laity” (1995: 262). These views are shaped by the individual as well as the collective (therefore cultural) experience, and they are certainly diversified even further when more than one ethnic community shares the same place.

In the context of “parallel congregations,” it is the monks who go in between the groups and play the role of cultural brokers. Bhante Punjabi was the head monk of the Toronto Mahavihara during the 1980s and early 1990s. He is highly respected in the

community but is also known to be, as a respondent put, “a non-conventional monk...in his erudition, analysis, and explanation.” This particular characteristic made him popular among Buddhist enthusiasts from Caucasian backgrounds, but it also attracted criticism from “conservative” lay Buddhists who wanted the monks to be, in the words of a respondent, “the paragon of virtues.”

The general reference to the need for cultural adaptation increasingly became more specific in the *Toronto Buddhist*. For example, the 1992 Vesak (May) volume of the newsletter published “Sangha in the West...Adaptation and Change: how far can one go?” a speech made by the well-known Sri Lankan scholar monk Dr. Venerable Walpola Rahula at the London Buddhist Vihara England in 1974. In it, Ven. Rahula generally argues that monks are paramount for the establishment of Buddhism in the West. For the survival of monks in the West, he contends

We must understand and face the reality that *bhikkhus* living in the West cannot follow the way of life as practiced in Buddhist countries in Asia. Certain changes and modifications should be made to suit the social and economic conditions in the West, and this is quite in keeping with the tradition of Buddhist history....Certain practices will have to be abandoned, such as the observance of *vassa* retreat which has no relevance and no sense in the West. In the Buddhist monasteries in Asia there are lay attendants to look after the needs of monks. In the West conditions are quite different. The Buddhist monk himself has to go buying provisions in the market. So he has to handle money. To go about in a market in [a] yellow robe is no respect for the robe, and it is an exotic, strange sight simply attracting the curious attention of the people. On such occasions, and also in ordinary travelling, there is nothing wrong if *bhikkhus* wear ordinary civil clothes, according to the custom in the West. (*Toronto Buddhist* 1992 Vesak (May): 10)

A research respondent recalled that this particular article stirred up the community.

Some people found the contents of the article to be controversial, and they expressed that adoption of such changes may eventually endanger Theravada Buddhist identity.

Nevertheless, Bhante Punnaji previously shared views very similar to those expressed in

Ven. Rahula's address (See Sugunasiri 2008: 101).¹⁹ He said that such modifications would face serious objections not necessarily from monastic authority in Sri Lanka but from the Torontonians Sri Lankan Buddhists. In 1984-85, he predicted that "they might threaten to...withdraw support" (Sugunasiri 2008: 101).

At the Toronto Mahavihara committee meeting in the end of 1992, the tensions between cultural maintenance and accommodation conflagrated out of control. The lay authority of the temple took the side of cultural maintenance, resulting in the monks (including the head monk) leaving the temple. Such a voluntary or forced parting of monks is not that uncommon in the diasporic context (Numrich 2004), but they are unheard of in Sri Lanka because (head) monks in Sri Lanka, unlike their counterparts in the diaspora, enjoy the unchallenged legal authority of the residing temples.²⁰ The board of directors or trustees owns the legal authority of the temples in Toronto, with monks sharing a smaller percentage of it. Within a few days of the monks' leaving the Toronto Mahavihara, a handful of "liberal" lay Buddhists flocked together with the monks and formed another Buddhist society which eventually established the second Buddhist temple in Toronto known, as the "West End Buddhist Centre" at the western edge of the Greater Toronto Area.

Based on a similar split within the Sinhalese Buddhist community in Los Angeles in 1980, David Numrich (2004) identifies "three key areas of tension:" home country related Nikaya rivalry, leadership struggle between "pioneers" and

¹⁹ An account of authors' transcribed interviews conducted during 1984-85 with a few early Buddhist leaders in Toronto, including Bhante Punnaji.

²⁰ In Sri Lanka, temple property is considered as an inherited property in the teacher-disciple generational lines (*guru-sishya sampradaya*). The first disciple often inherits it. In case of no student, the related monastic fraternity (*nikaya*) claims the property.

“newcomers,” and lay-monastic disagreement over the institutional authority of Buddhist temples (306-307). In fact, it is the third of Numrich’s points, namely lay-monastic tension about maintenance and accommodation of the Buddhist tradition, which caused the split in Toronto. Janet McLellan also observes similar splits within the Vietnamese Buddhist community (1999: 114). The split was further rationalized by the growth in the number of Sri Lankan Buddhists. Mississauga was strategically chosen for the new temple; as a new suburb, it attracted many residents. During the early 1990s, many Sinhalese new comers and old-timers alike moved to Mississauga. They were motivated primarily by better job opportunities but their move was also triggered by increasing violence in Scarborough, an area heavily populated by Tamils.

The monks who left the Toronto Mahavihara in 1992 subsequently defined their approach to the Buddhist tradition in Toronto as “intelligent adaptation” (for a detailed discussion on this term, please see the fourth chapter). The term, among other things, refers to equal sharing of institutional authority between monks and laity, and providing Buddhist services conducive to a contemporary cultural setting. Both means allowed the West End Buddhist Centre to establish its institutional identity as distinguished from the Toronto Mahavihara. The institutional authority of the West End Buddhist Centre rests with a board of trustees comprised of two monks and two laypersons. Numrich identifies two models of temple polity: “congregational” vs. “episcopal”. The former emphasizes lay control, while the latter highlights monastic authority in the management of the temple (2004: 313). The West End Buddhist Centre’s board of trustees is a combination of the two models of temple polity, which allowed the resident monks to adjust how they conduct Buddhist services for the community.

For a decade or so after the split, operating vehicles and an involvement in social service have distinguished monks associated with the West End Buddhist Centre from their counterparts at the Toronto Mahavihara. From the very beginning, the West End Buddhist Centre has been offering social services, such as soup kitchens for the homeless, cultural entertaining for senior citizens at the surrounding senior homes, and assisting new immigrants, including helping them find new employment. The head monk is well known within the community for his sincere commitments in driving people to and from the airport and accommodating new immigrants at the temple's annexed building. The motto of the temple has been "where friendships begin and never end." With this added social dimension, the West End Buddhist Centre developed during its formative years a distinct institutional identity. Currently, there is nothing, except how the institutional authority is shared, that distinguishes the two temples from one another. All the temple services are more or less the same, and the antagonism followed by the split has since dissipated. Both temples share resources, including monks and lay membership. This reconciliation begs the question whether the split or branching off of another temple from the existing one could be conceptualized as "schism" at all.

David Numrich defines the term "schism" as referring to the "[f]actions within a religious body [that] disagree and eventually divide over *sacred understandings or practices*" (2004: 312, [emphasis added]). He describes the branching out of one Sri Lankan temple from another in Los Angeles in both interpretations and practices, two leading characteristics of schism. For example, Numrich says that the schism invoked "Theravada Buddhist texts, tenets, and traditions" (307) and a "different model of

temple polity” (313). At the same time, he recalls that in Buddhism “schism” often refers to the divisions of Buddhists triggered on the basis of certain practices rather than upon Buddhist dogmatic standpoints. I argue that even this limited meaning of the term “schism” in the Theravada context often refers to *vinaya karma*,²¹ the ecclesiastical procedures segregated along the lines of Buddhist fraternity—*nikaya*. The criteria upon which Numrich justifies the use of “schism” are rather what Ananda Abeysekara (2002) calls “particular shifting debates” (80) or “contingent conjunctures of debates” (107) with “their own agendas, their own stakes, and their own programs” (93). Therefore, they are not schismatic sacred understandings or practices, as we notice in Toronto that the initial antagonism gradually reconciled and distinguishing factors faded away within a few years of the split. The split resulted in an active Buddhist institution in that sense, the split itself is rather a “healthy” sign of a growing immigrant community that often multiplies Buddhist religious economies.

Multiplying Buddhist Resources

Religious economy, according to Rodney Stark and Roger Finke (2000), refers to “all of the religious activity going on in any society” (35). They justify the use of term “economy” in the context of religion because religious systems reflect components of secular market economy. They further explain “Religious economies consist of a market of current and potential followers (demand), a set of organizations (suppliers) seeking to serve that market, and the religious doctrines and practices (products) offered by the

²¹ It is indeed a sacred practice conducted within clearly marked boundaries (*sima*) where only Buddhist monastic Sangha participate.

various organizations” (2000: 36). All of the foregoing components of Buddhist religious economies within the Sri Lankan Buddhist community in Toronto have been multiplied after a certain period of time.

The Toronto Mahavihara was established in 1978; after 14 years, the West End Buddhist Centre branched out in 1992. Once again after 14 years, two more new temples branched out from the preceding temples in 2006. They are the Mahameunawa in Markham and the Buddhist Mission Centre in Brampton. The former is a part of a new Buddhist movement started in Sri Lanka in 1999, which has more than forty centres in Sri Lanka and abroad, including the United States, England, Germany, Australia, and India (Mahamewna Asapuwa). It concentrates on meditation and emphasizes the realization of Buddhist spiritual achievement in this life. The Brampton Buddhist Mission Centre focuses on social and education services in Sri Lanka to differentiate itself from other Sri Lankan temples in Toronto (*Living Buddhism*).

My data indicates that Sri Lankan Buddhists (both generations) have developed heightened interest in meditation and social service. The latest two temples in the community highlight those two aspects, and they cater to Sri Lankan Buddhists. The 14 year cycle is perhaps not a pattern, as such, but it illustrates the ramifications of unmet needs in a growing community; the cycle indicates an approximate period at which serious revision of the services and objectives of temples in the diaspora may be required. While the latter two temples are not part of this study, many of my research respondents look at these ramifications as “community responses” to the growth of the community, which implies greater demand for Buddhist services.

A set of merit making rituals (*pinkam*) are the center of religious lives of Theravada Buddhists. All the rituals done in contemporary Sri Lanka are also done in Toronto, but at smaller scale and in different forms. Here, I focus on only communal rituals in which monks and laypeople participate together. They could be further arranged according to their frequency or how often they are performed. *Danapinkam*, feeding the monks, is performed on the daily basis, and is in fact the medium of symbiotic relationship between monks and laypeople. Monks rely on laypeople for material well-being, while laypeople depend on monks to maintain spiritual guidance and aspiration. Interestingly, both parties participate in this ritual a sense of duty as well as a moral practice. A Sri Lankan monk says

The laymen who provide the meals are not just doing it as [only] a kind of duty or something...It is a part of their religious practice and they gain merit by offering food to monk. And the monks accepting that food and eating the food is also part of the service. (Sugunasiri 2008: 97)

In fact, there are three aspects to this practice: *Buddhapuja* (offering to the Buddha), *Sanghapuja* (offering to monks), and *Pindeema* (sharing the merits). Through the first two, the donors accumulate *pin* (merit) and in the last part, the merit is shared with deceased relatives. Here, the monks also share their blessings with the donors.

The ritual of feeding monks has two categories which themselves are closely tied to temple membership. *Salaka dana* refers to the monthly commitment of a family to feed the resident monks on one day of every month. This frequently takes place on weekdays, as weekends are booked for the second type of the ritual, *Sanghika dana*—feeding a group of monks (traditionally at least four)—that is often arranged at the donor's home and dedicated to specific reasons, such as marking the anniversary of a

death, a birthday celebration, a housewarming, etc. The ritual in both forms has gone through some adaptations in Toronto. In contrast to Sri Lanka, donors cannot offer *Salakadana* in the morning as they go to work. Instead, they come to the temple with food in the eve their assigned day. For *Sanghikadana*, monks often drive to the donor's home. This is in contrast to what happens in Sri Lanka, where monks are given rides to and from the donor's home. Some weekends, more than one such ritual need to be performed, and in such cases, monks are divided and the ritual is done with insufficient monks. Within the community, it is a privilege to be a donor of *Salakadana*, a practice often enjoyed by the founding members of the particular temple. It symbolizes a greater commitment, which makes the donor a member of the inner circle of temple membership.

The introduction of a new temple opens up new opportunities for a greater commitment. *Sanghikadana* is open to anyone, even to members of peripheral communities such as Bangladeshi and Indian Buddhists who loosely associate with the Sri Lankan temples in Toronto. The volume of invitations for weekend or public holiday *Sanghikadana* is high, and one has to book the date months in advance. The invitation is accepted on the basis of first come first served; however, assigned donors of *Salakadana* on weekends are given preference.

In addition to *danapinkam*, monks are also invited for evening *pirith* (protective) chanting, for which people come to the temple or monks go to a devotee's home. In Toronto, whole-night *pirith*, a common communal ritual in Sri Lanka, is rarely done due to the lack of monks. The chanting is done to invoke blessing for a variety of individuals, including expectant mothers and their unborn children, the sick, birthday

celebrators, those who are about to undertake special tasks, like overseas travelling, new jobs, examinations, and new married life. Marriage is a civil ceremony, and, as in Sri Lanka, monks in Toronto do not participate in actual wedding ceremonies and conduct marriages only in rare cases. However, in Toronto the bride and bridegroom more often come to the temple prior to or after marriage ceremonies. This trend is perhaps due to religion's role in weddings within mainstream religious culture and the increasing number of inter-religious marriages that are taking place among the children of Buddhist immigrants. As the community grows, more and more funeral services are being conducted, even for loved ones who pass away in Sri Lanka.

There are a set of weekly, monthly, and yearly programs that take place in all temples. Dhamma school for children is quite popular (the next chapter will discuss Dhamma education in detail). Seniors within the community often look forward to the monthly higher precept observation, which is known as *poya* service within the community. In Sri Lanka, every full-moon day is a public holiday, and Buddhists, specifically elderly people, spend the whole day at the temple engaging in various religious activities: listening to sermons, meditation, chanting, etc. In Toronto, all temples arrange the service on weekends closer to the actual full-moon day of the lunar calendar. Some people participate in more than one such program, indicating multiple memberships. Two specific *poya* services, Vesak and Poson, hold more significance within the community. Vesak marks the birth, enlightenment, and *Parinibbana* (experience of the final *Nibbana* or the passing away of the Buddha), while Poson marks the official introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka. These programs attract people of all ages and the programs are richer than other *poya* services.

New Year celebrations on the 1st of January and the 13th of April (Sinhalese New Year) are annual programs centred at the temples. On the 1st of January, being a public secular holiday, more people come to the temples to receive blessings for the New Year. The annual *kathina* ceremony in October marks the end of Buddhist rain retreat, *vassa* (July-September), and it is a time of offering robes and other gifts to the resident monks. It is a time of spiritual joy expressed in a public procession. In Sri Lanka, the *kathina* robe is taken around the village, but here in Toronto it is ceremoniously taken around the temple.

The above mentioned Buddhist services are common features of Sri Lankan Buddhism. When temples are multiplied, the availability of monks—service providers—in Toronto is also increased. Given the symbiotic monk-lay relationships, the religious commitments of both parties are intensified. However, the incoming resources—donations of all forms—are more or less shared or divided between the temples and monks, as the Toronto-based Sri Lankan Buddhist community remains the central service receivers. The multiplication of temples has prompted a sense of greater commitment, creativity, and even competitiveness between the temples to better serve the Buddhist community.²² To do so often becomes a question of survival, as temples in Toronto completely rely on lay membership for their economic security.

The West End Buddhist Centre has been quite proactive and innovative in serving the community. During weekdays, it welcomes individual groups such as school

²² In words of market language (Finke and Smith 2001), clients, suppliers, and products are multiplied; however, the niche has remained more or less the same. In such scenarios, market monopoly is undermined and clients share multiple options. This prompts a sense of competition, creativity, and commitment from the suppliers' side to better serve the consumers.

children and professionals (teachers and nurses), who come to the temple to be informed on Buddhist teachings and meditation technique. People from multiethnic backgrounds come individually or with family members for counselling and spiritual advice. In some cases, upon invitation, monks go to schools and universities to give talks on Buddhism. The annual “back to school pujas” (two separate events for school and university students) are held to bless students for the new academic year, illustrating the innovative ways of the first generation to engage the second generation in the Buddhist tradition. The temple also holds a few educational programs, such as introduction to Pali, *Sutta* classes, and meditation practice. In fact, this innovative approach also was undertaken at the Toronto Mahavihara during the 1980s under some of the monks who are currently residing at the West End Buddhist Centre. With these services, the West End Buddhist Centre seems to have a greater membership with multiple ethnicities.

The recently (2006) introduced temples highlight contemplative orientations, which has been identified as the most inspiring issue within the community. The survey conducted for this study indicates that ninety-six percent of the first-generation Sri Lankan Buddhists are interested in meditation. Some people stated that most of the times they attend either the Toronto Mahavihara or the West End Buddhist Centre they do not feel much different than at being at social gatherings. If this is so, the recent introduction of new temples could be understood as attempts to meet the needs that were left unmet. This also indicates that as the community grows, its religious and spiritual needs also become diverse. For example, elderly people are not overtly interested in certain programs that are designed for young families with children. Similarly, rigorous

contemplative practices do not attract young parents as they cannot leave their children behind.

What is noticeable, though, is a heightened interest in contemplative practices across all ages, i.e., youth, middle age, and the elderly. Two particular reasons could be identified behind this trend. First, the wide-spread public perception of Buddhism in the West that prioritizes meditation at the cost of other Buddhist practices such as rituals, inter-personal duties, and, more importantly, voluntary commitment toward the betterment of a particular community, i.e., serving as a member of temple's board of directors, teaching as a Dhamma teacher at temple's Dhamma School, or volunteering at the local temple. A second, and perhaps more convincing reason for the trend, is a cultural one. I suggest that the culture of individualism favours contemplative practices, which embody individualistic expression of religiosity. Here, it suffices to note that the increased interests in contemplative practices have added a new temple to the community, which represents the forest-dwelling monasticism in the Theravada Buddhist tradition.

Currently, many Sri Lankan Buddhists hold membership in more than one temple in Toronto. They go to one temple for a better Dhamma education for their children; they attend another temple for intensive meditation practices; and the same people contribute to social welfare programs organized by the third temple. At the same time, many invite monks from more than one temple for a *Sanghikadana* in their homes. Individuals' multiple memberships indicate an important factor in the formation of Sri Lankan Buddhist communities in Toronto: voluntary membership is the initiative and

sustaining power of a religious community. As it is the main source of income, Buddhist temples are more obliged than ever before to meet the needs of individual members.

Membership is unreliable not simply because it is voluntary but also because it is closely tied to individual preference. As personal interests change, so do the voluntary memberships. Personal interests are also plural. The challenge for the Buddhist temple in the diaspora is to keep up with changing and plural interests of its members. It cannot satisfy everyone, which prompts branching out. Being one of many temples eager to serve the same community, the Buddhist temple then tends to choose a specific concentration or specialization, while still providing basic needs. The specialization helps not only to particularize or differentiate one temple from other temples, but also to remain relevant to the community, which guarantees a shared membership. Multiple memberships also indicate the presence of multiple dimensions of Sri Lankan Buddhism in Toronto.

Suppressed Aspects of Sri Lankan Buddhism in Toronto

George Bond (1988; 2004) identifies multiple Buddhist responses to modernity in 20th-century Sri Lanka. He, influenced by Robert Bellah, analyzes and categorizes them as reformed vs. neotraditional Buddhism. These varying interpretations in Sri Lankan Buddhism, Bond argues, derive from two distinct yet overlapping sources, or what he calls the “actual or effective canon.” He argues that “[t]he Chronicles [*Mahavamsa* and *Dipawamsa*] constituted the effective canon of neotraditional Buddhism and the Pali Canon has been the canon for Buddhists who have taken a reformist perspective” (2004: 238). Neotraditionalists regard “the Chronicles as the

extension of the [Pali] Canon and Commentaries” (238) while reformists “chose to follow the Pali Canon in its ‘pure’ form, that is, without taking it in the context of the commentarial tradition or having mediated by monastic tradition” (246-47). Sinhalese Buddhist interpretations of these two types of canons are influenced but not determined by Western scholars’ impressions and interpretations of the Buddhist canons during the mid 19th century. On the one hand, neotraditionalists concentrate on the “imagined” past of the Chronicles, and they have constructed Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism, which, according to Bond, “contributed to the ethnic conflict” (236). On the other hand, reformers seek to apply Pali Buddhism in the present and future, and offer “the hope of calming ethnic tensions” (236). They highlight *Vipassana* (insight) meditation, Buddhism-science dialogue, and Buddhism for social development.

Both the foregoing neotraditional and reformist interpretations and related practices are well placed within the Sri Lankan Buddhist community in Toronto. However, it is the reformist interpretation and practices that are prevalent. Perhaps Sri Lankan Buddhism in the diaspora, specifically in Toronto, does not have a conducive enough socio-political environment to fully manifest its neotraditional wing. For example, the neotraditional rhetoric of symbiotic relation between Theravada Buddhism, Sri Lanka, Sinhala people, and language does not enjoy the socio-political clout in Toronto that it enjoys elsewhere. Instead, the reformist rhetoric of Buddhism being a “scientific” religion, and its emphasis on spiritual salvation through individual contemplative practices, are quite admired by Buddhist enthusiasts in the West. Sri Lankan Buddhist temples in Toronto overtly promote the reformist interpretations. They, with that agenda, not only suppress neotraditional sentiment of the Sinhala

Buddhist nationalism, but they also do not cater to certain religious practices of what scholars call “Little Tradition” that were expressed within the Buddhist tradition in Sri Lanka.

During 1970s and 1980s, religious practices of Theravada societies were theorized along the lines of a “Great Tradition” and the “Little Tradition” (Redfield 1956). The former refers to the Pali canon-based Theravada tradition and the latter refers to the indigenous religion, including beliefs in spirits, animism, and local deities. Gananath Obeyesekere and Richard Gombrich (1988) theorize that Sinhala religion, the religious tradition of the Sinhalese people, is comprised of Theravada Buddhism, which promises other-worldly salvation, and spirit religion, which addresses the worldly concerns of the people. Describing the co-existence, or rather the syncretism of these two in Sinhala religion, they say

When one does something virtuous (*pina*), such as feeding monks, one invites the gods to empathize in the merit....The idea – which goes as far back as the Pali Canon – is that in gratitude to the doer for calling their attention to his good deed the local deities will protect and help him. This is the main doctrinal link between Buddhism and the spirit religion. (18)

The above-mentioned doctrinal link between Buddhism and spirit religion eventually took a concrete form. Institutional forms of spirit religion, i.e., shrine (*devale*), priest of deities (*kapurala*), and rituals (*devapuja*) were accommodated within the premises of many Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka. The deity shrines (*devale*), a popular point of devotion, are typically situated on either one of or on both sides of the Buddha’s shrine in many of the Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka.

Unlike most of the temples in Sri Lanka, the temples in Toronto do not facilitate spirit religion, except in sharing merit with the deities and ancestors, a practice that itself

is considered as Buddhist due to canonical recommendation. In fact, sharing merit (*pindeema*) is one of ten meritorious deeds prescribed for a Buddhist way of life. The data show that the majority of the Buddhist practitioners (70%) do not expect the temples to accommodate deity worship (*devapuja*). They believe that it has nothing to do with Buddhism. The absence of the spirit religious practices at the temples under study could be understood as a reformed practice adjudicated by a textual interpretation. At the same time, it is also a particular discourse derived from a reformed monastic tradition.

The Vajirarama monastic tradition in Colombo, Sri Lanka, was the one that popularized the assertion that *devapuja* contradicts the teaching of self-reliance in Buddhism. The Vajirarama monastery, its affiliate the Maharagama Bhikkhu Training Centre (Vajiranana Dharamayatanaya), and the latter's branches in Sri Lanka and abroad, do not accommodate *devapuja* in the temple premises. The absence of *devale* stands out as a defining characteristic of Vajirarama temple tradition. The Vajirarama tradition also has had a significant legacy in Sri Lankan Buddhism in North America. Madihe Pannaseeha Mahanayaka Thero, a leading monastic figure in the Vajirarama tradition, founded the Washington Buddhist Vihara in 1966 (Cadge 2005: 25). He also had significant influence in establishing the Toronto Mahavihara, as he served as the patron of it and visited it a few times. In addition many of the monks at the two temples represented in this study were trained at the Maharagama Bhikkhu Training Centre, founded by the Mahanayaka Thero. Thus, the absence of *devapuja* at Toronto Buddhist Centres could be understood as a discourse of a particular monastic tradition.

The absence of *devapuja* in the temple service does not necessarily mean that Sri Lankan Buddhists do not participate in or perform the ritual. Twenty-nine percent of the research respondents somewhat agree that deity worship is a part of Buddhism, and twenty-three percent of them believe that Hindu gods like Vishnu and Kataragama can, in fact, intervene in their everyday lives. A few of the first generation respondents revealed that on their visits to Sri Lanka they go to Kataragama, a popular destination for divine favours, even as they worship the Buddhist sites in Anuradhapura and Kandy. Moreover, in my field research, I have been informed that those who felt the need for divine intervention in everyday life have sought out Hindu temples in Toronto, as well as the St. Joseph's Oratory in Montreal. It is obvious that Hindu deity-oriented religious impulses are still alive among the Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto. They are not endorsed by Buddhist institutions as they have been in Sri Lanka, so they are channelled and expressed in non-Buddhist institutions, as I indicated above. The reconfiguration of this particular religiosity by some of the Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto relates to the context-sensitive religious impulses that continue to reconfigure the Buddhist tradition in the diasporic setting.

Conclusion

I have started with a brief description of migration history of Sri Lankans to Canada, specifically in Ontario. Their migration patterns contributed to the formation and evolution of the Sri Lankan community in Toronto, from a secular association to ethnic orientation, and then to religious institutions. Then I discussed three phases of the community formation of the Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto, along the lines of the

origin and development of Buddhist temples—the communal sacred place. A sense of community is not necessarily preconditioned by a specific place; nevertheless, a sacred place like a temple is a concrete symbol of the multiple resources that go into the formation of a religious community, i.e., commonly shared tradition, human resources, and their sense of commitment.

Each phase, i.e., sharing, establishing, and multiplying Buddhist resources, is comprised of two evolving positions. Sharing Buddhist resources relates to the co-existence of two or more ethnic religious groups, or what Numrich calls “parallel congregations.” Unlike “parallel congregations,” however, the term “sharing Buddhist resources” implies unparallel or disproportionate human agencies involved within the co-existence of religious groups. Unparallel human agencies are often expressed as feeling of majority and minority, or founding and joining groups. The founding group becomes the *sharers* and the joining group becomes the *receivers* of what is being shared, including temple facilities, monks, and services. From the receivers’ standpoint, this becomes an evolving phase of community formation. However, I name this phase as sharing rather than receiving because the receivers are not totally free riders—they are, rather, unparallel or unequal contributors. Two positions expressed in the second phase are the temporary and more stable establishment. Both temples in this study demonstrate that they underwent the process of location and relocation. The third phase is also comprised of two positions expressed in institutional relation: antagonism and reconciliation. The West End Buddhist Centre’s branching out from the Toronto Mahavihara in 1992 resulted in uneasiness between two temples, but underlying forces were not schismatic enough to keep the two temples apart. As I discussed above, the

branching out rather multiplied Buddhist resources; as such, I name it the phase of multiplication.

All three phases are closely tied to three forms of memberships: peripheral, central, and multiple. As a joining group attached to an already existing religious community, Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto prior to 1978 were rather peripheral members to neighbouring Mahayana Buddhist temples. Similarly, the contemporary Indian Buddhists at the Toronto Mahavihara, Bangladeshi Buddhists at the West End Buddhist Centre, and Sri Lankan Buddhists at the Kitchener Laotian Buddhist Temple only peripherally participate to the services provided by the respective founding communities. As long as the joining group remains smaller, and, more importantly, if the temple leadership creatively meets their religious needs, the impulses or momentum for establishing a new ethnic temple remain elusive. In all three contemporary cases of sharing Buddhist resources, the founding communities accommodate monks related to the joining groups. The growth of co-ethnic groups often leads to the second phase. At this stage, the members become decision makers, and with it they make greater commitments toward the establishment and maintenance of the temple.

With further growth of co-ethnic groups, new dividing impulses, such as new leadership or new orientations, start to emerge, which eventually lead to the third phase: the multiplying religious resources. Temples, monks, and services are multiplied. Where more than one temple serves the same ethnic community, temples tend to develop a specific concentration in particular services, such as Dhamma education, contemplative practices, and social services, in addition to the common basic services it provides. This move serves the particular temple as a means of distinguishing itself from others and of

keeping its relevance to the community. This multiplies individual memberships, as people go to more than one temple for “better” services.

Complete reliance on membership itself distinguishes Buddhism in the diaspora from its counterpart in Sri Lanka. In the diaspora, temples depend on donations from its members, and monks have to share institutional power with the lay community. Both temples in this study indicate two systems of temple polity. The Toronto Mahavihara is congregational where lay people exercise greater power in temple administration. The West End Buddhist Centre has managed to share the power between monks and laity equally. Both, however, differ from the temple polity in Sri Lanka, which could be labelled as an episcopal system, where monks hold the sole legal authority. In relation to Sri Lanka, another noticeable difference is that Buddhism in Toronto overwhelmingly represents a reformist interpretation which submerges both neotraditional Buddhism, as well as the spirit religion of the Sinhalese religious system. The submergence or suppression of these aspects is quite explicit in Sunday Dhamma schools and Dhamma education which is the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Dhamma Education and the Formation of Buddhist Moral Agents

Introduction

Dhamma education is an integral part of Sri Lankan Buddhism in Sri Lanka as well as in the diaspora. This chapter explores three historically situated impulses that inform Dhamma education. Being an institutional practice, Dhamma education relates to the identity and function of the Buddhist tradition, two important aspects of a discursive tradition (Asad 1986: 7, 14). In other words, Dhamma education demonstrates that Sri Lankan Buddhism is a moral argument that seeks to construct Buddhist moral agents by inculcating Buddhist knowledge, developing Buddhist attitudes, and cultivating cultural and moral skills. To achieve these educational objectives, Dhamma education espouses a religious discourse, which I call “Buddhist spiritual discourse,” found in some of the early teachings of the Buddha. With an analysis of three educational manuals that represent three stages of Dhamma education in modern times—the colonial, the postcolonial, and the diaspora—I demonstrate that Buddhist spiritual discourse is overshadowed by a set of contingent discourses that address the social, political, and cultural needs of living Buddhists in a particular matrix. As the needs have changed over time, the discourses too have altered.

The shift in discourse demonstrates the pervasive power of the socio-political system on human agency. Dhamma education in modern times has advocated the three contingent discourses side-by-side with Buddhist spiritual discourse, the generic discourse of Dhamma education. I argue that Dhamma education in Toronto promotes a multicultural discourse along with its spiritual discourse, and in so doing it replaces its

predecessors' contingent discourses influenced by Buddhist nationalism and Christian evangelism in Sri Lanka.

In the context of Sri Lankan Buddhism, “Dhamma education” denotes formal Buddhist religious education designed for children and youth. From its inception in the late 19th century, it has developed in two streams: Buddhist education in public schools and the weekly Sunday Dhamma schools at the local Buddhist temples. My research refers to both. However, it mainly concentrates on the tradition of Sunday Dhamma schools in Toronto in relation to its counterpart in Sri Lanka. As such, I limit my analysis to the representative published materials used in Buddhist Sunday schools. I have selected three for my analysis: Henry Olcott’s *The Buddhist Catechism* (1881), representing the Buddhist moral agency advocated at the origin of Dhamma education; the textbook series *Daham Pasela* (1993) for Sunday Dhamma schools in Sri Lanka, representing contemporary moral agency in Sri Lanka; and Swarna Chandrasekera’s *Teaching Buddhism to Children* (2001), a manual that depicts a new type of Buddhist moral agency in the Canadian context. The underlying goal of these books is the formation of an ideal of Buddhist child, as understood by the authors of these books. The following concept of the Buddhist child captures the multiple facets of the ideal that the Buddhist educationists advocate.

The *Daham Pasela* includes a lesson entitled “I am a Buddhist Child” (Hemasara 1992: 97). It invokes the ideal demeanour of a Buddhist child in the first-person language. The lesson can be classified along three important aspects of the ideal: physical comportment, embodied virtues, and the preferred character traits of a Buddhist child. The lesson explains how a Buddhist child looks, in that s/he does not admire

fancy dress and hair style; instead, s/he appreciates the simplicity and cleanliness in traditional dress. S/he keeps herself or himself clean, combed, and dressed in clean clothes. Then the lesson emphasizes that a Buddhist child develops ideal virtues (efficiency, skilfulness, non-violence, peacefulness, respect, gratitude, contentment, and emotional stability) as his or her guiding principles. In terms of behaviour, the lesson exhorts the Buddhist child to uphold the customs of nation. S/he is respectful, grateful, and obedient to parents, teachers, and elders. S/he is kind to animals, sympathetic to others, and helps the needy. S/he keeps himself or herself composed at the vicissitudes of life and develops the physical, verbal, and mental disciplines. S/he learns Buddhism correctly, performs the basic Buddhist rituals regularly, and lives by the Five Precepts daily. S/he has a deep conviction in the Triple Gem, so that s/he is not misled by others. S/he does not give up and betray Buddhism for material gains and mundane benefits; instead, s/he admires and adores Buddhism more than anything else in his or her life. This lesson is a good example of what Dhamma education intends to achieve.

The definition of the “Buddhist Child” encapsulates three distinct discourses derived from three different sources. First, it draws upon Buddhist concepts like the skilful one (*kusala*), and the virtuous person (*satpurusa*) of the Pali canon. The *Metta Sutta*, a discourse in *Suttanipata*,²³ instructs that the “the skilful one” cultivates the following character traits: personal confidence, honesty, straightforwardness, obedience to elders and teachers, gentleness, humility, peacefulness, contentment, simplicity, skilfulness, prudence, satisfaction, appreciation and morality. Skilful ones develop these virtues to awaken themselves spiritually (*Santam padam* which means *Nibbana*) to

²³ This discourse is also referred to as Sn 1.8 (Pali Text Society)

Buddhism. For that reason, I name the agenda to instil the character traits of the skilful one as *Buddhist spiritual discourse*. In fact, a few lessons on the *Metta Sutta* in *Daham Pasela* encourage students to improve the virtues in order to be successful in spiritual and mundane pursuits (Mahalekam 1992: 117).

Second, the “Buddhist Child” encompasses the concept of what I refer to as the “anti-evangelical young Buddhist,” which permeated earlier revivalists’ writings, including Olcott’s *The Buddhist Catechism*. The anti-evangelical Buddhist learns Buddhism and bears its knowledge in a way that makes them capable of defending their Buddhist beliefs, practices, and religious institutions. I call the manipulation of Buddhist knowledge to debate the polemics of other religions the *Buddhist anti-evangelical discourse*. Like *The Buddhist Catechism*, the *Daham Pasela* also explains Buddhism by juxtaposing it with Christian missionaries’ polemical attacks on Buddhism (Assaji 1993: 132-149). Third, the definition of the “Buddhist Child” also embraces Dharmapala’s concept of patriotic “young men of Ceylon,” who are supposed to rejoice in indigenous identity and reject foreign identity. Their main duty is not only to love the Sinhala language, land, nation, and Buddhism, but also to protect and defend them from foreign enemies. I label this “*Buddhist nationalist discourse*.”

The aforementioned discourses are Buddhist because they emerged within Buddhist history. Each of the Dhamma educational manuals contains all three discourses above, albeit to different degrees. In the remainder of this chapter, I demonstrate how one particular discourse comes to the fore to meet the practical needs of the time while submerging the other discourses. To do this, I will first describe Dhamma education in Toronto along with a brief historical backdrop of the practice in Sri Lanka. What we see

in Toronto is an abridged version of a current institutional practice in Sri Lanka, which has a century-long history. With the creative integration of aspects from its history and locality, Dhamma education in Toronto demonstrates how an established practice is transplanted to a new cultural setting.

Second, I will analyze three books that represent three historical periods of Dhamma education and discuss what kind(s) of Buddhist moral agency they promote. In this section, I discuss how Chandrasekera's *Teaching Buddhism to Children*, the teaching manual used in Toronto, strives to construct Buddhist moral agents. I argue that the manual embodies a multicultural discourse with a Buddhist spiritual discourse as it claims "a complete formation [of] children...as Buddhists and as good citizens of this great Canadian nation of ours" (2001: 6). In so doing, the manual distances itself from the anti-evangelical and Buddhist nationalistic discourses of its predecessors, *The Buddhist Catechism* and the *Daham Pasela*. Third, I will identify multiple agencies involved in the formation of moral agents, and I insist that the Buddhist discourses were fashioned by Buddhist educationists as much as they were conditioned and influenced by the socio-political and cultural systems at the time of their construction. Finally, I suggest that the emphasis on integrative knowledge of the Dhamma distinguishes Dhamma education from other types of education, specifically the content-oriented education. Integrative knowledge underscores the importance of practice in which the goal of Dhamma education, character transformation, could be realized.

Dhamma Education in Sri Lankan Buddhism

At present, there are three Dhamma schools within the Sri Lankan Buddhist community in Toronto. This research, however, concentrates on the two earliest Dhamma schools, namely the Toronto Mahavihara Dhamma School in Scarborough started, in 1978, and the West End Dhamma School in Mississauga, started in 1992.²⁴ Both Dhamma schools represent Sri Lankan Buddhists' emphasis on formal Buddhist education, as seen in Sri Lanka and in the diaspora. Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto claim that they have "the largest Dhamma School in North America" (Wijesundara 2008: 16; Attygalle 2009: 8). But in comparison to Maharagama Sri Vijiragnana Dhamma School, the largest one in Sri Lanka, the Dhamma schools in Toronto are simply miniatures.

	Toronto Mahavihara Dhamma School			West End Dhamma School			Maharagama Sri Vijiragnana Dhamma School ²⁵		
Teachers (including Supply and Assistant Teacher)	Monk	Male	Female	Monk	Male	Female	Monk	Male	Female
	2	6	17	2	6	22	10	52	188
	Total 25			Total 30			Total 250		
Students	Over 135			Over 300			Over 6000		
Grades	11 (including junior and senior kindergarten)			5 identified with names of flowers in Sinhala (a grade is divided into few classes i.e., Sal A, B, C, D)			12 (including kindergarten and Dharmacharya)		
School Calendar	27 Sundays (3-5 p.m.)			27 Sundays (3-5 p.m.)			43 Sundays (7a.m.-12 noon)		

²⁴ The third school "Mihindu Dhamma School" in Brampton was introduced in 2007.

²⁵ I collected the information of the Maharagama Sri Vajiragnana Dhamma School through a visit in December 2008.

Religious Observance	Once a year (only for the Vesak)	Once a year (only for the Vesak)	Once a month (every full-moon day)
Internal Management	-Temple Committee -Teaching Staff -Parents' Association -Student Leaders	-Temple Committee -Teaching Staff -Parents' Association -Student Leaders	-Temple Committee -Teaching Staff -Parents' Association -Student Leaders
External Management	Not available	Not available	-YMBA -Ministry of Rel. Affairs -Sasanarakshaka Manadalaya

Dhamma schools highlight the role of Buddhist laity, particularly the contribution of women, to the inter-generational transmission of Buddhist tradition and the moral education of children. Many Dhamma schools in Sri Lanka are located at local temples, and the head monks or their assistants lead them. But in many cases, voluntary lay teachers comprise the whole staff, except the principal of the Dhamma school. The concentration of monastic leadership and temple locations also persist in Dhamma schools in the diaspora, but only where temples and monks are available. In places where no institutional Buddhism is present, the absence of temples and monks does not stop Sri Lankans from conducting Dhamma schools. I interviewed a few individuals who learned and taught Buddhism in Dhamma schools in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates, where neither monks nor temples were available. Similarly, lay Buddhists in Guelph and London, Ontario, have initiated Dhamma classes with no temples and monks. These incidents in the diaspora amplify the roles of laity in Dhamma education. This, in fact, is a modern manifestation of the older generation's moral obligation, as emphasized in the Buddhist tradition.

Chandrasekera recalls that in pre-modern times the moral development of children took place "through the agency of the ubiquitous grandmothers and parents

who for almost twenty five millennia [sic] had served as the true messengers and instructors of the Buddha Dhamma to the young ones from their infancy, side by side with the *Maha Sangha* (the monks)” (2001: 3). Here, Chandrasekera emphasizes the crucial roles of parents, specifically of mothers and grandmothers, in passing on Buddhist knowledge and practices to the successive generations. She refers to them as “true messengers and instructors” of Buddhism, a traditional epithet for monks in the Theravada tradition. This traditional female role has been harnessed and systematized in the modern Dhamma school system. Women’s roles are not confined to homes, but extended to public places like temples, where women disproportionately represent Dhamma school staff. As in Sri Lanka, over seventy percent of Dhamma teachers in Toronto are female. This fact confirms a common phenomenon in the South Asian diaspora where “women are the primary conservators and transmitters of the South Asian family’s religious heritage” (Pearson 2004: 427). Thus, the Dhamma school system embodies the advanced status of Buddhist laity in Sri Lankan Buddhism, particularly the female role as educator and transmitter of the Buddhist tradition.

Teachers perceive their involvement in Dhamma education in variety of ways.

One young teacher explains:

Teaching Buddhism is like *growing a seed*. What I try to do is if I can place a seed of Buddhism in their [students’] hearts; they may not use it now, but in ten or twenty years when they have life problems they can go back to the teachings. At the Dhamma school *I am propagating the Buddhasasana*.... This is a chance to spread the Dhamma, which is what the Buddha wanted to do. The idea that I am doing something somewhat similar to what the Gautama Buddha did really got my interest up. It really inspired me. I am spreading Buddhism. My original intention was to do *a service to the community*. Meanwhile, *I am also working hard to perfect myself in my morality and in my action*. ([emphasis added] Personal interview 2008,)

This testimony highlights how Dhamma teachers perceive themselves and the specific type of commitment and pressure they experience as they teach Dhamma. This young teacher does not expect her students to immediately practice what she teaches. However, she hopes that the Dhamma knowledge will be available and helpful when the students face problems later in their lives. She perceives herself as a Dhamma cultivator, who implants the seeds of goodness in the fertile ground.

Many Dhamma teachers, across time and space, share this perception. For example, a contemporary Dhamma teacher in the New York City public school system reveals that “No matter what, the important thing is that we plant seeds” (Doobinin 2008: 116). A Dhamma teacher in the 1950s also expressed a similar sentiment: “When we impart Buddhism to the children, we sow the Dhamma seed upon a field green with hope and rich in sap” (Chau 1958: xxii). Similarly, the Dhamma teachers I interviewed stated that they experience tremendous joy and satisfaction in teaching Dhamma, and they are spiritually rewarded when they see children at a tender age grow with Dhamma influence and experience. The young teacher in the preceding statement invokes a sense of religious calling. For her, teaching Dhamma is a noble endeavour, which the Buddha himself pursued, appreciated, and encouraged his followers to do. It is celebrated as a giving of Dhamma that excels all other giving (*Dhammadana Sabbadanam Jinati*). She implies that she simply follows the Buddha and his instruction as she teaches Dhamma. Here, we notice that lay Dhamma teachers internalize a monastic religious calling. This sense of duty motivates her to sacrifice her time and energy. Some teachers devote their whole Sunday afternoon, as they commute from long distances for Dhamma school.

They also consider their commitment as a service to the community and to the wider society, as they believe Dhamma schools help to produce good citizens.

As the young teacher expresses, teaching Dhamma demands spiritual commitment. Many admitted that they experience a sense of moral imperative for their own self-development as they teach Dhamma. A middle-aged female Dhamma teacher states that “People have high expectations. They expect more than who I am. I take extra precaution about what I say and do.” Similarly, another says, “Parents acknowledge and respect what we do and look at us differently...sometimes they look up to us [for moral guidance]. What students learn in Buddhism, they expect us to follow them.” A teacher and author of a Dhamma school book states that teaching Dhamma is “one of the most wonderful and challenging opportunities in life” (Knight 2008: introduction).²⁶ It is wonderful because children add playfulness, enthusiasm, and beautiful personalities and expressions to learning and teaching Dhamma. She continues that teaching Dhamma becomes most challenging simply because it requires one’s commitment and dedication to the moral principles that are being taught. In other words, a Dhamma teacher is expected to embody what s/he teaches.

This qualification itself is recommended by the Buddha himself: “Let one first establish oneself in what is proper, and then instruct others” (Narada 1993: 144). This sense of ethical expectation and commitment not only distinguishes teaching Dhamma from other forms of teaching, but also often determines the success or failure of the noble effort. One Dhamma teacher warns that “what we want to impart to the children, we need first to set an example.” The failure to be a good example often leads to the loss

²⁶ Knight’s *Morals in the Life Story of the Buddha* lacks page numbers.

of confidence, not only in the teacher but also in the Dhamma. He continues “if [students] find out that their [teacher] pays merely a lip-service to the Dharma, they may lose their confidence, and their love may turn to disappointment and to dislike, and then education becomes meaningless to them” (Chau 1958: xv). Such a high expectation of moral commitment makes teaching Dhamma an extraordinary voluntary service.

The Dhamma schools in Toronto emulate their counterparts in Sri Lanka. Like in Sri Lanka, they start with a worship that includes taking refuge in the Triple Gem, observation of the Five Precepts, chanting of the virtues of the Triple Gem, a short loving kindness meditation, the students’ pledge, and a short sermon. Classes on Buddhism follow the worship. These salient aspects of a typical Dhamma school continue from the very first formal Dhamma school in 1895 (Susila Himi 1995: 21). In contrast to their counterparts in Sri Lanka, however, the Dhamma schools in Toronto experience a dearth of resources, facilities, and official recognition, and it affects the quality of education they provide. For example, to become a Dhamma teacher at Maharagama Dhamma School in Sri Lanka, one has to be either a trained school teacher or a trained Dhamma teacher with the Dharmacharya certificate, the highest examination related to Dhamma education. Although some of the Dhamma teachers in Toronto have the same credentials, many of them have joined the teaching staff after a short training as teaching assistants. They represent an average pattern of teachers’ qualifications in the diaspora, as well as in Sri Lanka, except in special cases like Maharagama Siri Vajiragnana Dhamma School.

In comparison, several differences stand out. First, the worship and classes are shortened in Toronto. The 2005 booklet on Dhamma school management in Sri Lanka

allocates one full hour for worship, and it recommends four classes with a short refreshment break in the middle (*Daham Pasal Kalamanakaranaya*: 24). In Toronto, the worship lasts only thirty minutes followed by either a long class with a refreshment break at the end or two short classes with a small refreshment break in between. The second difference is that Dhamma students in Toronto, unlike their counterparts in Sri Lanka, do not sing Dhamma school songs and national anthems on regular school days. The West End Dhamma School did launch an anthem in 2008, but it is sung only in its annual Dhamma School Day. The third, and perhaps more substantial, difference is that no external agencies oversee and assist the Dhamma schools in Toronto. Certain governmental and non-governmental institutions—the Young Members’ Buddhist Association (YMBA), the Sasarakshaka Mandalaya, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs—oversee and assist Dhamma schools in Sri Lanka. They officially register Dhamma schools, distribute textbooks, provide allowances, and arrange nation-wide Dhamma examinations and competitions. These overseeing measures have standardized and accredited Dhamma education in Sri Lanka.

The Dhamma schools in Toronto enjoy neither governmental allowances nor non-governmental assistance. On the one hand, one could interpret this difference in management as the loss of privileges Sri Lankan Buddhists had enjoyed in Sri Lanka as they became a minority religious community. The coordinated efforts and public recognition of Dhamma education are diluted in the diaspora. On the other hand, the absence of external supervision and assistance perhaps enables Buddhists in Toronto to enjoy a sense of independence and freedom in their vision and mission. For example, Buddhist educators in Toronto differentiate themselves from their counterparts in Sri

Lanka in their conceptualization of Buddhist moral agency. As I will demonstrate later in this chapter, they differ from each other on what it means to be a Buddhist in the differing contexts.

A comparison of Dhamma schools in Sri Lanka and Toronto informs us that the practices and strategies of a religious tradition in the diaspora are rooted in the particular history of the community. However, it does not mean that the tradition is static. As the emblem of the West End Dhamma School illustrates, history legitimates practices in the diaspora while the current local conditions and concerns shape them. The emblem includes a maple leaf with a white swan holding an ola leaf book in its beak. The swan is collaged into the maple leaf. The ola leaf reads the Dhamma School's motto "*Sacitta Pariyodapanam*," (purification of one's own mind) in Sinhala scripts. All of them are placed on a half-opened book. The 2008 *Dhamma School* magazine explains,

Maple leaf symbolizes Canada....Ola leaf book symbolizes Buddha Dhamma or Buddhist Doctrine....the swan symbolizes the student who learns the Dhamma. Swan is also a reflection of purity. It is capable of separating the 'good' from the 'bad', a quality that a good citizen should develop. The emblem promotes the idea that the person who learns Buddhism will eventually become a good citizen in Canada and will lead a fruitful life. (Dhamma School 2008: 3)

The emblem and its interpretation capture the historical and local impulses of Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto. It skilfully collages the traditional symbols of swan and ola leaf with the local symbol, the maple leaf. Students wear white T-shirts marked with this emblem as the uniform of West End Dhamma School when they come to learn Dhamma. Perhaps what is more important is the underlying assertion of the emblem: learning Buddhism makes one a good citizen of Canada. I will discuss the basis of this assertion in the next section of this chapter, as I discuss the formation of moral agents. Here, it is sufficient to suggest that the emblem of Dhamma school itself demonstrates

how an institutional practice in the diaspora incorporates the local concerns while being rooted in the history.

The History of Dhamma Education in Sri Lanka

In the late 19th Century, Dhamma education emerged in Sri Lanka as a creative response to centuries-long systematic injustice ingrained in education. The Portuguese, Dutch, and English—three Western colonizers of the late medieval and modern period—ruled the island for nearly five hundred years, from 1506 to 1948. Each brought their form of Christianity and reinforced it with their educational system. They used religion and education to establish and then maintain their control over the indigenous population. They destroyed the temple-centred traditional education system; with it monks lost the privileged status as educators. Churches became the centers of education, and Christian clergy became the agents of education. Colonization and Christianization went hand in hand, as each lent support to the others' political and religious causes, and public education was an effective way to materialize both. Thus, education meant not only colonization but also Christianization. Referring to religious and political forces in public education, Kitsiri Malalgoda (1976) says,

The dissemination of these [political] influences and the teachings of the principles of Christianity were the primary aims of education, a task which was performed by the clergy. Instruction in schools was primarily religious, and elementary education was necessarily geared to serve the interests of conversion. (30)

By the end of the 19th century, missionary societies felt an unprecedented freedom in establishing their monopoly in education, and the period between 1870 and 1890 was “the golden age of the missions in Ceylon” (Jayaweera 1968: 165). Yet, Buddhists too

felt the need for their own schools, and the first Buddhist school was founded in 1869 by Piyaratana Thero (Karunadasa 2004). Buddhist schools, however, lacked the rudimentary resources such as finance, institutional infrastructure, teachers, and teaching materials. They also faced political and legal hurdles. For instance, the British introduced so-called “three-mile-rule” to prohibit founding new schools within a distance of three miles from the existing school (Corea 1969: 156). Jayaweera states that by 1880, there were 805 Christian missionary schools, and 24 “private aided” Hindu schools, while there were only 4 Buddhist schools and 1 Muslim school (1968: 163). However, by the end of the 19th century, Buddhists had succeeded in establishing numerous Buddhist schools.

The mass movement of Buddhist education was intensified by the 1880 arrival of Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, an American civil war veteran and Theosophist, who was impressed by the Buddhist victory over the Christians in the 1873 Panadura Debate. Oppressed as they were, indigenous Buddhists warmly welcomed Olcott and the religious and national aspirations he provided. Ananda Guruge states, “Christian-dominated English education had convinced Buddhists that, if any headway could be made in winning for the Buddhists their rightful place in society, it was achievable only through a well-knit system of Buddhist Schools” (1965: xxxii). However they lacked modern organizational skills to counter the well-orchestrated and state-funded Christian education. Being an “organizational genius,” Olcott provided what was most needed, and he proceeded in organizing Buddhists for a Western style Buddhist education. He established the Buddhist Theosophical Society and a National Education Fund to assist Buddhist public schools (Prothero 1996: 99). He mobilized Buddhist monks and laity

for that cause. He imitated Christian educational institutions and employed Christian missionary tactics to raise money for Buddhist schools. With his organizational skills, the Buddhist education campaign met with immediate success. There were only four Buddhist schools by the time Olcott arrived in Ceylon in 1880, but in subsequent years that number increased rapidly to hundreds, and thousands of Buddhist students enrolled for education.

After a few initial efforts, systematic Dhamma schools supplemented Buddhist education in public school during the end of 19th century. Indigenous sources confirm that C. Don Bastian, a local artist, established the first ever Buddhist Sunday school in 1872 (Nanakirti Himi 2008: 3). Nearly a decade later, in February 1881, Olcott also initiated his first Dhamma school in Colombo. These efforts were experimental. Unlike Buddhist public schools, they did not succeed, as they lacked the rudimentary resources, such as dedicated trained teachers, effective educational materials, and organizational infrastructure. After nearly a quarter of a century after the first effort, Sri Vijayananda Dhamma School in Galle finally made its groundbreaking start on the 3rd August 1895 as the Buddhist Theosophical Society assisted in organizational skills, financial support, and effective leadership. This time it was better equipped with Olcott's *The Buddhist Catechism* and energized Buddhists to curb Christian influences by imitating their weekly Sunday schools. This particular school continues even today, and it is considered to be the first Dhamma school in Sri Lanka (Susila Himi 1995: 15).

A few organizations take the credit for establishing Dhamma education as an institutional practice in Sri Lanka. YMBA standardized Dhamma education by introducing Dhamma examinations for students and teachers alike. It conducted the first

ever Dhamma examination classified according to grades for students in 1920, in which 27 Dhamma schools and 374 students participated. Similarly, in 1926, YMBA introduced Dharmacharya examination, but only 12 teachers from one particular Dhamma school participated (Pannasiha M. N. Thera 1995: 4; Susila Himi 1995: 23). In 1931, the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress aspired to establish a Dhamma school in every village, but it was the Buddha Sasana Commission and its Dhamma School Syndicate, a government appointed committee in 1957, which carried out that aspiration (Pannasiha M. N. Thera 1995: 5; Nanakirti Himi 2008: 5). Madihe Pannasiha Maha Nayaka Thera (1995), the chairperson of the Dhamma School Syndicate established in 1957, recalls that “in 1957...172,349 students appeared for the Dhamma examination” (4). He also reports that “by the end of ten years [1968], the number of students...rose up to nine hundred thousand” (5). However, Susila Himi (1995) records that 427, 678 students affiliated to 3427 Dhamma schools sat for the 1968 Dhamma examination (1995: 23). Despite the disparity in number of students, both writers highlight the institutionalization of Dhamma school during the 1957-1968 period.

In 1981, the ministry of education took over the responsibility of conducting the Dhamma School Final Examination and the Dharmacharya Examination. This systemization assured the public recognition and accreditation of Dhamma education. Those who passed the examinations received credits recognized in the university entrance and teaching positions in schools (Nanakirti Himi 2008: 7). In recent years, the Department of Buddhist Affairs has taken the responsibility of conducting Dhamma School Grade Examinations from its founding agent YMBA. According to the Buddhist

Affair's Department,²⁷ by December 2008 nearly ten thousand (9093) Dhamma schools are in service across Sri Lanka. Over 109 thousand (109,725) volunteer Dhamma teachers serve, and nearly 1.8 million (1,796,270) students learn Buddhism in Dhamma schools.

This history of Dhamma schools in Sri Lanka illustrates how Dhamma education has developed from a modest start to a fully grown institutional practice. In this development, non-governmental associations played vital roles in colonial Sri Lanka. YMBA's examinations set an internal structure and standardized Dhamma education. The All Ceylon Buddhist Congress strived but met with less success in mobilizing and implementing those standards throughout Sri Lanka. We notice that under the state's assistance, Dhamma education became an institutional practice with public recognition and importance. Dhamma schools proliferated during the 1950s and 1960s, and they are loosely institutionalized through official registration, annual examinations, nation-wide Dhamma school competitions, and accreditation.

From the very beginning, Sunday Dhamma schools evolved as an important part of temple service to the local community. Dhamma schools reconfigured a close connection between the village and the local temple, which had been jeopardized with the introduction of church-controlled Western education. Despite lay Buddhist initiation and leadership, the local monastic leadership holds the executive power of many Dhamma schools. Currently, almost every Buddhist temple (except some of the forest hermitages) in Sri Lanka runs a Dhamma school. This trend is also prevalent in the diaspora. For example, three of four temples in Toronto administer Dhamma schools.

²⁷ I collected the pertinent information in December 2008.

The fourth temple, which inclines to the forest monastic tradition, offers meditation sessions for children and youth instead of formal Dhamma schools.

In the past, Olcott's *The Buddhist Catechism* was used in Dhamma schools, as well as in Buddhist public schools. Similarly, Buddhist education in Dhamma schools continues to complement its counterpart in public school. For example, the textbook of the final grade of Dhamma school correspond to the tenth grade's Buddhism textbook in public schools. However, teachers and students alike differentiate Buddhism taught in Dhamma schools from its counterpart in public schools. In December 2008,²⁸ I observed that students in Sri Lanka across all grades indicated that they study Buddhism in public schools merely as a subject, while the Buddhism they learn at Dhamma schools is more practice-driven. For them, the latter emphasizes the integration and inculcation of Buddhism in everyday lives. In other words, Dhamma schools concentrate more on the formation of moral agents.

Formation of Moral Agents

Buddhist education envisions the formation of moral agents. School buildings and voluntary associations facilitate this process, but the task ultimately depends on the discourses and derivative practices employed in education. As mentioned earlier, two types of discourses—spiritual and contingent—are noticeable. The spiritual discourse and the pertinent practises related to it continue across time and space, but the contingent discourses that derive from and respond to the ambient socio-cultural settings

²⁸ I visited a few Dhamma schools and had an opportunity to address students' assembly.

have changed over time. To illustrate this, I analyze published materials that are/were used in Dhamma schools in Sri Lanka and Toronto.

Teaching Buddhism to Children

Teaching Buddhism to Children is an essential part of passing Buddhist knowledge and values on to the second-generation Buddhists in Toronto. Swarna Chandrasekera, in consultation with monastic and lay leadership, prepared a complete guide for Dhamma teachers. In the introductory chapters, she lays out the basics of teaching Dhamma. She highlights the Buddha's role as a teacher along with his teaching techniques and experiences with children. She invokes the significance of *Jataka* stories and story-telling as a method of imparting Buddhist knowledge and practices. A list of relevant scriptures in the Pali canon and a redefined glossary of Pali terms are provided for teachers' reference. Chandrasekera identifies three learning objectives of Dhamma education: gaining knowledge of Buddhism, developing certain skills by applying what is learned in everyday life, and cultivating attitudes so that students embody desirable values. She also standardizes teaching Dhamma with a list of qualifications a Dhamma teacher should possess, and a ninety minute lesson plan, along with practical advice on lesson preparation and presentation. Two evaluation sheets are included; one is for students and the other is for teachers. Then, she presents the core of the book: a curriculum of Buddhism for the weekly West End Dhamma School.

Chandrasekera classifies the curriculum into five grades by arranging the contents according to age categories. Each stage contains twenty three lessons. The author recommends one lesson for two Sundays and eleven lessons for the entire year,

which means a student is expected to spend two years at one grade. Thus, if a student enrolls at step one s/he would take ten years to graduate from the West End Dhamma School. This lengthy Buddhist religious educational program is designed for students aged between 3-18 years old. Chandrasekera's *Teaching Buddhism to Children* embodies the art of teaching Dhamma to children, and it encapsulates many aspects of the Sri Lankan Theravada tradition. Most importantly, it provides a Buddhist discourse to nourish a new generation of Buddhists in the Canadian cultural setting.

Chandrasekera delves into the Pali scriptures and describes a teaching method that is consistent with the aim of teaching Dhamma. The goal of teaching Dhamma is “to present a rational and coherent synthesis” of the Buddha’s teaching so that students develop morality and values that make sense in the modern context. Then she explains,

We begin by instructing and establishing the students in ...the theoretical aspects of Buddha’s entire [!] Teaching (*Pariyatti*) to help them achieve that experiential understanding (*pativedha*) of the Buddha dhamma which can only come about through individual practice [*patipatti*]. (Chandrasekera 2001: 6)

Although the claim to instruct the “Buddha’s entire teaching” is unrealistic, the preceding quotation invokes a sequential development of one’s spirituality in Buddhism. One first studies (*Pariyatti*) what the Buddha taught, then practices (*Patipatti*) them so that s/he gains experiential understanding (*Pativedha*) of the Dhamma. By relating individual spiritual development to teaching Dhamma, Chandrasekera evokes a Buddhist perspective of religious education, which highlights the involvement of co-agency, the importance of practice, and the emphasis on experiential understanding. In Dhamma education, both teachers and students are co-agents. Dhamma teachers present

knowledge of Buddhism to students, but students must practice what they have learned to gain experiential insight.

Chandrasekera contends that the Buddha employed the method of “*Anupubba Desana*” or teaching Dhamma in progressive steps for “a gradual (trans) formation of the character of the listener” (2001: 7). In fact, she arranges the curriculum in a particular manner so that students advance in progressive steps, though the progression is more spiral than linear. First, she briefly introduces a concept or practice, and then in the next step, she comes to the same issue with new information. For example, at step one she introduces what *Vesak* is (28), in step two she explains why Buddhists celebrate *Vesak* (33), and then in step three, she illustrates how a Buddhist celebrates *Vesak* (37). A similar pattern is used in illustrating the life story of the Buddha, which runs through step one to four. In terms of teaching techniques, storytelling is predominantly recommended with morals related to the everyday lives of the students.

Chandrasekera’s text also educates students about many aspects of Theravada Buddhism, including concepts, principles, norms, values and practices. Sometimes they are arranged as answering what, why, and how questions. In lower grades, concepts like karma are introduced casually such as “If you give love you get love” (34). In higher grades, the term is philosophically introduced along with a story of a monk who lost his eyes as a result of intentionally blinding someone else in one of his previous lives (43). In the final grade, a complete lesson is dedicated to the concept along with 12 classifications of karma (51). To embody the teachings, students memorize Pali chants, such as the three refuges, the five precepts, the salutation to the Triple Gem, and the discourse on loving-kindness. Instructions about how to perform certain practices are

provided. For example, the steps to develop mindfulness on breath and to cultivate loving kindness (*Metta*) for oneself and others are laid out in the book. Above all, what is emphasized is how people behave when the teachings are fully practiced and embodied in characters. For that, Chandrasekera discusses in detail the life of the Buddha, Jataka stories, and spiritual biographies of monastic and lay Sangha in details.

All of these aspects of the Theravada tradition (concepts, stories, and practices) are included more or less in all grades, but the proportions and levels of sophistication differ. The first two grades are more about relationships, and they emphasize the appreciation of goodness in oneself, parents, teachers, friends, and others. Grade three refers to sacred Buddhist sites in Sri Lanka, and it includes many spiritual biographies of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen of the Buddha's time. In grade four, numerous celebrated virtues and values are introduced along with some stories. In grade five, Buddhist philosophical concepts are explained with an emphasis on meditation. A few lessons are dedicated to Buddhist history, other religions, and Canadian culture. All of the lessons, regardless of grade, end with meditation or chanting. The concepts, stories, and practices in the book are presented in a way that reflects the Canadian context.

Chandrasekera, therefore, suggests that her book contributes to the formation of Buddhists as well as to good Canadian citizens. She claims that her book fulfills a

noble responsibility of imparting an education as well as a *complete formation* to children so that they will be better equipped intellectually, morally and emotionally to tackle today's hurdles and face tomorrow's challenges *as Buddhists* and *as good citizens* of this great *Canadian nation of ours*.
([emphasis added] Chandrasekera 2001: 6)

Thus, *Teaching Buddhism to Children* advocates a moral agency that is simultaneously Buddhist as well as Canadian. It conceptualizes a Buddhist moral agent within a web of

relationships. Particularly, three types of relationships stand out in the book: how one relates to one's own Buddhist heritage, to others (parents, friends etc.), and to the wider Canadian society (other Buddhists and non-Buddhists).

Teaching Buddhism to Children advocates a Theravada Buddhist identity. Two lessons entitled "I am a Buddhist" define Buddhist identity in the first person language, in which they clearly lay out what makes a person Buddhist. They emphasize taking refuge in the Triple Gem. "*Buddham Saranam gacchami* (I take refuge in the Buddha)" (Chandrasekera 2001: 26) and "Obeisance to the Triple Gem (*Ti-sarana*)" (36). They relate the observance of the Five Precepts to Buddhist identity, and students commit to memory the relevant Pali chanting. The worship (praising the virtues of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha), rituals (offering flowers to the Buddha), and "habits" (implying that all the above practices need be turned into habits) are highlighted, and the implication is that they play significant roles in forming a religious identity. In a typical Sunday Dhamma school, teachers, students, and parents take refuge in the Triple Gem and observe the Five Precepts in Pali. They bow to the Buddha and offer flowers and other items to him. All these *actions* illustrate the traditional way to establish a Buddhist identity, preferably a life-long one. For example, the textbook used for the lessons reads, "As long as I live, I adore the Buddha. I follow the Dhamma. I respect the Sangha" (Nanayakkara 1993: 35). The memorization of Pali chanting and its use of in liturgy solidify a particularly Theravada Buddhist identity.

Moreover, a more particularized Theravada identity derives as Chandrasekera describes Buddhist sacred places. The lessons on "The Vihara (Monastery)" give a Sri Lankan flavour of Theravada Buddhism (Chandrasekera 2001 26, 36). They highlight

“*Pagoda, Bodhi Tree, Shrine Room, [and] Monks*” as the integral parts of the Sri Lankan Buddhist temple (26). The monks’ presence is crucial to make a Theravada temple, as the Pali term “*vihara*” for temple itself means the residence. The others are honoured as symbolic presences of the Buddha. The Bodhi tree, under which the Buddha is believed to have realized awakening, stands out as a distinguishing feature of a Sri Lankan Buddhist temple. The temples in Toronto manage to maintain *Bodhi* plants indoors. This signifies a sense of completeness of the temple. It also reminds students that *Bodhipuja*, honouring of a *Bodhi* tree as a symbol of the Buddha, is a central practice in Sri Lankan Buddhism, though the practice has diminished in the diaspora.²⁹ Moreover, in these lessons, Chandrasekera introduces several Buddhist places of worship with great historical significance: *Swarnamali Maha Thupa* and *Samadhi Buddha Statue* in Anuradhapura (36). With these references, Chandrasekera underscores a Sri Lankan but not Sinhala Buddhist identity. The difference is that the former is geographically located, while the latter is ethnically defined.

Chandrasekera places a great deal of emphasis on how a Buddhist child relates to parents and friends. The first generation worry that the North American individualistic culture may diminish the Sinhala Buddhist cultural emphasis on honouring, respecting, and more importantly taking care of parents at their old age. A father brags, “In the Sinhalese culture we are attached to our parents; my parents were attached to their parents. We do not send our parents to senior homes when they are old. We look after our parents and they look after our kids. We stay together. Whatever property you have,

²⁹ In March 2010, I have witnessed a rare but intact *Bodhipuja* performed by a recently arrived monk.

you give it to your kids.” He finds that this sense of intergenerational bonding is missing in the North American culture, and he worries that his children would be affected by it. Perhaps, that is one of the biggest concerns of the parents’ generation who grew up in a collective culture and raise their children in an individualistic culture. A female youth comments that “parental expectations are keeping up with culture, taking care of parents when they become older. My mom worries that I am not going to take care of them and putting them in a senior home when they get older.” This particular statement captures the first-generation’s anxiety about having their children grow up in a new cultural setting. If parental anxiety related to their old age is a future concern, their more immediate concern is the peer-influence on their children. They are vigilant about with whom their children associate, and what kind of influences they bring in. Parents expect Dhamma education to make the younger generation understand the importance of parents and elders, and how much influence friends have in one’s life.

Correspondingly, Chandrasekera highlights the parents-children hierarchical values in numerous lessons: “I Love My Parents (Honour your parents), Respect and Listen to the Elders” (26), and “My Precious Parents” (37). A Dhamma teacher claims that Dhamma school shapes “a generation who respect elders, specifically parents and teachers.” Students in lower grades commit to memory two specific Pali verses. The first verse is dedicated to father.³⁰

³⁰ The verse dedicated to father is translated as bellow in an assigned textbook:
“You brought me up with loving care
Introducing me to important people everywhere
You have wonderful qualities, which are so rare
To me, you have always been very fair
So my dear father, I kiss your feet and say:
‘To displease you, I’ll never dare’” (Nanayakkara (Step two) 1993: 52).

The second verse is dedicated to mother.³¹ Students are encouraged and expected to bow at the feet of the parents before going to bed. Students annually perform this ritual by bowing at the feet of their parents at Dhamma school held on the Sunday closest to the traditional Sinhala New Year in April. Besides, Chandrasekera warns students that “Peer group, friends can influence you favourably or unfavourably” (37), and to choose friends wisely. Many youth reveal that the issues related to friendship and dating often cause disagreement with their parents. Reflecting on these concerns, Chandrasekera dedicates a few lessons to cultural tensions (41, 46). She lays out a Buddhist emphasis on mutual duties in the children-parents relationship and advises Dhamma students to maintain “respect for parents and elders in the family” (41). She also puts the Buddhist concepts of “good” and “bad” friends in the context of Canadian culture (46). The discussion on who a Buddhist is and how s/he relates to parents invokes numerous classical Buddhist ideals: the prospective Buddha (*Bodhisatta*) with ten progressive practices (*dasa paramita*) (36), the good person (*Sat purusa*) with sense of gratitude (34), and the devoted and duty-bound male and female householders (*Upasaka* and *Upasika*) (52). These ideals comprise the spiritual discourse of Dhamma education.

³¹ The verse dedicated to mother says,
 “For ten long months you bore me
 Risking your own life;
 Fed me, nursed me, showering with love
 Throughout day and night.
 You were always behind me,
 Never letting me out of your sight.
 You taught me more than anyone else
 What really is proper and right.
 So my dear mother,
 Loving kissing your feet, I say:
 ‘As before, please show me the way’” (Nanayakkara (Step two) 1993: 53).

Chandrasekera employs the preceding classical Buddhist ideals to construct Buddhist moral agents in the Canadian context. As she intends to mold Dhamma students as Buddhists as well as good Canadian citizens (Chandrasekera 2001: 6), we notice that the Buddhist discourse coalesces with the Canadian multicultural discourse. The latter encourages Canadians to recognize, respect, and relish the cultural norms, values, practices, and goodness of oneself as well as of others who are religiously, culturally, and ethnically different. One of the learning objectives in *Teaching Buddhism to Children* reveals that

Students will develop and demonstrate respect for other religions so that they can appreciate Buddhist values they may observe among their non-Buddhist peers...[so that they] will develop skills in living and sharing in a multicultural/multireligious milieu.” (Chandrasekera 2001: 15)

Chandrasekera implies that as students learn and practice Buddhism, they will develop the ability to care for and respect Buddhism, as well as other religions. In other words, her book not only teaches what Buddhist values are, but it also facilitates the students to recognize and appreciate those values in others who are religiously and ethnically different. In fact, this multicultural and multireligious value has been emphasized from the very beginning of Dhamma education in Toronto. For example, referring to Buddhist education in Toronto, K. S. Gunaratne, a Sri Lankan Buddhist leader in the mid-eighties, emphasized that

When we attempt to enlighten the child with regard to ideas and beliefs gathered by him during his association with children of other faiths, we should take the precaution not to speak in a manner derogatory of other religions. *We should advise the child to respect all religions, even though they are different from his own.* ([emphasis added] Gunaratne 1986: 11-12)

Although, the preceding sentiment of religious harmony cannot be generalized, it indicates the formation of discourse before it secured its place in Dhamma education

curriculum. If the retention of Buddhist identity and the transmission of Buddhist tradition are related to Buddhist discourse, the promotion of social harmony and peaceful co-existence are intimately connected to a multicultural discourse.

Although multiculturalism is a subordinate discourse, it permeates different levels of the curriculum. In lower grades, it surfaces as the morals of stories that are told in classes. The moral of the *Swarna Hansa Jataka* says “Live, let live and help live.” It is a story where the *Bodhisattva* (the Buddha in one of his previous lives) was born as a swan with golden feathers and helped a poor family. He gave a feather to the family every day, and the family met their everyday needs by selling the feather. One day, the greedy head of the family caught the swan and plucked out all the feathers. As the feathers were plucked out against the swan’s will, they ceased to be golden. The moral of the story could be read as the virtues of contentment and gratitude, but instead, the lesson highlights the importance of peaceful co-existence, which was further fortified by insisting that “We are not living alone. Others are important. We should care for them; sharing through exchange, cooperation and team work” (Chandrasekera 2001: 32). Seen from this perspective, this teaching reinforces the spirit of multiculturalism as much as that of Buddhism.

In higher grades, multicultural discourse is overtly developed in full lessons, i.e., “The Value of Buddhism in Canadian Life and Cultural Conflicts” (41), and “Relevance of Buddhism in Canadian Life” (46). These lessons contextualize Buddhism in Toronto. They provide a Buddhist perspective of certain virtues related to social ethics, such as responsibility, honesty, concern for others, expression of love and care. Chandrasekera encourages students “to respond rationally instead of reacting emotionally and

irresponsibly” (46). She also relates Buddhism to “fair exchange and trustworthy relationships with others” and highlights “charity, social service, and...making a contribution to society” (46). These concepts remind students that Buddhism can help them enrich their social life in multicultural Canada. They are the conceptual tools to integrate young Buddhists with the wider Canadian society. They promote multicultural themes and values such as mutual respect, sympathetic understanding, and peaceful co-existence. Doing so, Buddhism and multiculturalism coalesce. I discuss the implication and impact of this coalescence on Buddhism in my next chapter on “intelligent adaption.” Here, I suggest that the multicultural discourse is the emerging contingent discourse of Dhamma education in Toronto. In order to highlight how Dhamma education differs from its counterpart in Sri Lanka, I now turn to Dhamma educational materials used in Sri Lanka.

The Buddhist Catechism

From the outset, Henry Steel Olcott’s *The Buddhist Catechism* (1881) was a small book with a big plan. Olcott designs it as a Buddhist educational manual to facilitate imparting Buddhist knowledge to children. Olcott himself expresses, “[t]he unpretending aim in view is to give so succinct and yet comprehensive a digest of Buddhistic history, ethics and philosophy as to enable beginners to understand and appreciate the noble ideal taught by the Buddha” (Olcott 1881: ix). It contains 381 questions and answers along with a few additional footnotes and an appendix. It effectively transmits information about the Buddhist tradition to young Buddhists. Olcott reminds the reader that “the work contains the essence of some 15,000 pages of

Buddhist teachings” (1881: xv). He divides the book into five sections: the life of the Buddha, the Dharma or doctrine, the Sangha, the rise and spread of Buddhism, and Buddhism and science. The appendix contains fourteen propositions about Buddhist common beliefs, which Olcott thought could foster a Buddhist unity. The titles of the contents and how they are arranged suggest that book intends to educate about the past, present, and future of the Buddhist tradition. It promises to teach about the people, philosophy, and geography of the Buddhist tradition, along with its present challenges and future prospects.

The Buddhist Catechism presents a religious discourse with multiple agendas. It embodies layers of meanings so that it invokes multiple readings. I argue that *The Buddhist Catechism* puts forward at least three agendas. First, it offers a critical observation of the Buddhist tradition, followed by a new interpretation with a new voice of authority. Second, the book formulates Buddhist rhetoric to train young Buddhists to counter Christian missionaries’ portrayal of Buddhism. Finally, it is also a call for Buddhist unity whose ripples continued to be felt in subsequent generations.

The Buddhist Catechism is an effective educational manual, simply because it simultaneously constructs and deconstructs Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Olcott discards some of the prevailing understanding of Buddhist concepts that he thinks incongruous with early scriptures of the Theravada tradition. For example, he states that

[t]here is in Ceylon a popular misconception that the attainment of Arhantship is now impossible....The Buddha taught quite the contrary idea. In the *Digha Nikaya* he said: ‘Hear, Subbhadra! The World will never be without Arhats if the ascetics (Bhikkhus) in my congregations *well and truly keep my precepts.*’” ([emphasis in original] 64-65)

Then, correcting the misconception, Olcott emphasizes that “[t]he nirvanic state can be attained while one is living on this earth” (81). Similarly, Olcott’s definition of the “Sangha” invokes only the spiritual meaning of the term, which allowed him to include laymen and laywomen to the Sangha. He neither actively disputes (perhaps, he would have thought it might jeopardize monastic approval of the book) nor acknowledges the tradition’s exclusive reference to monastics (45). This interpretation has far reaching influence in shaping the direction of the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition in the modern times (see Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988; Bond 1988). Like many orientalist of the time, Olcott constantly prioritizes Buddhist scriptures over and against a living tradition, and he authorizes only those that seem congruous with the Pali scriptures. Olcott’s interpretation of Buddhism is dubbed as “Protestant Buddhism” (Obeyesekere 1970) and “Creole Faith” (Prothero 1996), because it interpreted Buddhism along the lines of the principles of Protestant Christianity.

Olcott arranges the contents of his book as if he is in a debate on Buddhism with Christian missionaries. He counters and then corrects their erroneous portrayal of the Buddha and his teachings. Christian missionaries delved into Buddhist scriptures “to prove the supremacy of Christianity and powerlessness of Buddhism in addressing the contemporary issues (Guruge 1993: 23). They castrated the Buddha, manipulated his teachings, discredited Buddhist practices, and humiliated Buddhist followers. For example, Robert Spence Hardy, a Methodist missionary, writes in his 1874 *Christianity and Buddhism Compared*, “Sakya Muni of modern Buddhism is a creature of the imagination alone....so that the comparison [between Jesus Christ and Gotama Buddha]

is really between history and legend” (in Harris 2006: 68). Correcting such portrayal of the Buddha as a mythical figure, Olcott assures us:

101. Q. *What convincing proof have we that the Buddha, formerly Prince Siddhartha, was a historical personage?*
A. His existence is apparently as clearly proved as that of any other character of ancient history. (27 [italics in original])

In order to convince the reader that Buddha was a historical person, he then lays out eight types of proofs, including archaeological, inscriptional, and sociological references to the Buddha (27-29). Furthermore, Thomas Moscrop, a Methodist missionary teacher writes that, “Buddhism...is too pessimistic, too cold, too antagonistic to the constitution of human nature to take the world captive” (in Harris 2006: 104). Contrasting these views, Olcott argues that the essence of Buddhism is justice, self-culture, and universal love (53-4). He defines the Buddhist path as “the preserving practice of an all-embracing altruism in conduct, development of intelligence, wisdom in thought, and destruction of desire for the lower personal pleasures” (130). This positive reorientation of the Buddhist tradition not only curbed Christian missionary attacks on Buddhism, but also trained young Buddhists to defend their religious tradition against Christian polemics.

Missionaries also accused Buddhism of being idolatrous, superstitious, and irrelevant to the world. At the Panadura Debate, both Christians and Buddhists sought out science as an “ideal weapon” to prove the supremacy of their religion over their rivals. Buddhists felt the need to claim science for themselves (Lopez 2008: 32). By adding a section on “Buddhism and Science” in *The Buddhist Catechism*, Olcott addresses that need. He relates Buddha to a great scientist and his teaching to scientific discovery. He insists that “The Buddha...gave it [Buddhism] out as the statement of

eternal truths, which his predecessors had taught like himself” (109). Referring to the previous lives of the Buddha, Olcott draws in Darwin’s theory of evolution to reconcile the apparent inconsistency between Buddhist theories of rebirth and not-soul. He contends “everything that I have found in Buddhism accords with the theory of a gradual evolution of the perfected man, namely, a Buddha, through numberless natal experiences” (75). Similarly, he also defines Buddhism not as a religion but as a “moral philosophy” (111). This statement not only distinguishes Buddhism from other religions (especially Christianity), but it also underscores Buddhism’s potential to advocate the freedom of thought and tolerance in the modern context.

The point of the present discussion is not the accuracy or inaccuracy of Olcott’s discourse on Buddhism, per se. Rather, it is to show the efficacy of discourse in meeting the Buddhist needs of the late 19th century, and to illustrate the formation of Buddhist moral agents was motivated to defend Buddhism against Christian evangelism. Olcott’s dedication and determination in uplifting the lives of the Buddhists also made Buddhists receptive to his discourse. His portrayal of Buddhism in *The Buddhist Catechism* is debate-oriented. His tone and style of presentation evoke the urgency to defend the Buddhist tradition. He presents his arguments in a style of a debate. For example,

195. Q. *What does the Buddha call himself?*
A. He says that he and the other Buddhas are only “preachers”...
196. Q. *Where is this said?*
A. In the Dhammapada, Chapter 20. (63)

The texture, tone, and style of *The Buddhist Catechism* are polemical. As young Buddhists memorize the questions and answers of the book, they have gained Buddhist knowledge, developed attitudes, and cultivated skills that enabled them to counter and

curb Christian missionaries' evangelical discourse on the Buddhist tradition. Olcott's *Buddhist Catechism* provided knowledge of Buddhism that is debate-oriented, so it prioritized an attitude that was polemical, and it promoted skills that were geared towards defending the Buddhist tradition.

In defence of Buddhism, *The Buddhist Catechism* advocates another agenda, namely Buddhist unity. Olcott outlines fourteen propositions, which he introduces as core Buddhist beliefs of Northern (Mahayana) and Southern (Theravada) Buddhists. In the propositions, he includes some core teachings of the Buddha, such as the Four Noble Truths, Karma, and Nirvana. He interprets these concepts in quasi-scientific terms, such as “natural truths,” “a natural causation” and “highest state of peace” (128-132). Among the practices, he mentions only meditation and the Five Precepts, which are general enough to be accepted by all the Buddhist traditions. It was the first ever endeavour geared towards a sense of Buddhist commonality in modern times. Olcott celebrates the achievement as “the whole world can now be said to have united to the extent at least of these Fourteen Propositions” (128). He felt that Buddhist unity was a timely need to respond to the challenges Buddhists faced.

The legacy of Olcott's Buddhist unity manifested at a more organizational level in Sri Lanka. Anagarika Dharmapala, influenced by Olcott, founded the Mahabodhi Society in 1891, and he raised money from Buddhists in Asia and Buddhist admirers in the West to reclaim Bodhgaya from Hindus (Guruge 1993: 71). The 20th century Buddhist leaders in Sri Lanka embodied the spirit of Buddhist unity of *The Buddhist Catechism*, which makes sense as many of them were educated in Buddhist schools started by Olcott. The organizations Olcott founded, such as the Buddhist Theosophical

Society and the Young Members Buddhist Association, molded many new national leaders. Unity for Buddhist causes was the aim of the leaders who spread their message nationally and internationally through a new set of organizations. In December 1919, Sir D.B. Jayatilaka started the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress, which has functioned as an umbrella organization to connect the local and regional Buddhist organizations.

Jayatilaka was “a kingpin in the Buddhist Educational Movement” (Guruge 1993: 76), and his Buddhist Congress systematized Buddhist education (Athukorala 1986: 2). In 1950, Gunapala Malalasekera, an eloquent orator and writer, founded the World Fellowship of Buddhists and put the issue of Buddhist unity in the international spotlight. The discourse galvanized international Buddhist communities from the East and West to work together for Buddhist causes.

The three agendas (to transform the existing Buddhism, to construct a Buddhist rhetoric, and to unite the Buddhist world) of *The Buddhist Catechism* discussed above constructed and disseminated a new Buddhist knowledge. Olcott’s interpretation of Buddhism encouraged many Sri Lankan Buddhists to see Buddhism as a philosophy or scientific religion. His Buddhist rhetoric convinced young Buddhists that, like monks, they too should learn, teach, and practice Buddhism seriously if they intend to propagate Buddhism and/or realize its ultimate spiritual goals. All three agendas were intended to meet the urgent need of Buddhists in the late 19th and 20th century, namely to counter and curb the Christian evangelical zeal. I contend that they were different aspects of the same anti-evangelical Buddhist discourse that emerged in Olcott’s book. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, this particular discourse has dominated Dhamma education

in Sri Lanka. However, in the second half of the century it yielded to another one: the Sinhala Buddhist discourse.

Sinhala Buddhist discourse asserts a symbiotic relationship between Buddhism, Sinhala ethnicity (nationality), the Sinhala language, and Sri Lanka. Although Olcott's *The Buddhist Catechism*³² left out the Sinhala nationalistic discourse, it was already in place during the late 19th century Buddhist revival. Anagarika Dharmapala, one of the indigenous Buddhist revival leaders, consistently evoked this discourse in his public speeches and writing. In his "Message to the young men of Ceylon," he urges them "to act as patriots ... for the preservation of our nation, our literature, our land, and our most glorious religion whose source our forefathers drank deep for nearly seventy generations" (Dharmapala 1922: 501). From early on, Dhamma school students were encouraged to sing a poem of aspiration³³ that invokes the Sinhala Buddhist discourse. However, the colonial socio-political system was not conducive to the mobilization of this discourse, nor was the Dhamma school sufficiently systemized to do so. Bond notices that the majority of Buddhist lay leaders rallied to Dharmapala to revive Buddhism and Sinhala identity, but they did not share the latter's zeal to blend them (1988: 64). However, Dharmapala's Buddhist nationalism eventually gained momentum and flourished in independent Sri Lanka.

In the 1950s, postcolonial Sri Lanka experienced an unprecedented political enthusiasm that demanded a new national identity to set it apart from its colonial past.

³² Olcott refers to the *Mahavamsa's* report of the King Vijaya's arrival in the island as an evidence of historical presence of the Buddha. *Mahavamsa* says King Vijaya arrived in the island on the day of the Buddha's *parinibbana*.

³³ It says in Sinhala: "*Budu Sasuna Bebalewa, Sinhala Jatiya Diyunu veva*" (May Buddhism shine, and may the Sinhala race/ethnicity progress).

The 1956 Buddha Jayanti, the celebration of the 2,500th anniversary of the Buddha's *parinibbana*, was a defining moment in post-colonial Sri Lanka because it provided an element of religious zeal to mold that identity. The 1956 report of the Buddhist Committee of Enquiry recommended what that identity should be and how it should be constructed. The report argued that the "restoration of Buddhism to its rightful place" would provide indigenous national identity along with prosperity to the new nation (Bond 1988: 76).

Dharmapala's Sinhala Buddhist discourse was resurrected as the most viable means to construct a new identity for the newly independent nation, and education was recognized as one of the main ways to instil that Buddhist national identity. After 1956, Dhamma schools, like all other education sectors from primary school to national universities, worked toward the creation of an integrated national religious identity (Guruge 1993: 293). During late 1950s and 60s, the number of Dhamma schools increased dramatically and Dhamma education was systemized, especially with the introduction of a set of textbooks entitled "*Daham Pasela*" (which means Dhamma School). The textbooks have been modified and republished in the subsequent decades, and I have used the latest version available.

The *Daham Pasela*

The textbooks *Daham Pasela*, from grade one to ten, convey a wealth of Buddhist knowledge and teachings. Each grade contains a specially designed textbook of progressive complexity in their explanations of Buddhist concepts, principles, norms, values, and practises. The curriculum of the *Daham Pasela* can be classified as follows:

spiritual biographies (Buddha, immediate disciples, and later practitioners), basic Buddhist teaching (including Abhidharma), meditation, Buddhist rituals (chanting and customs), history of Buddhism, and Pali. The final Dhamma School Examination at the end of grade ten marks the pinnacle of Dhamma education for many. It entails four topics: the biography of the Buddha (including biographies of practitioners), Buddhism and Pali, history of Buddhism, and Buddhist culture. The first three topics are consistent with reminiscent of the first four chapters of Olcott's *The Buddhist Catechism*, but nevertheless the texture, tone, and mode of presentation of them differ significantly.

The *Daham Pasela* remains faithful to the Theravada tradition, including its more modern interpretation that emerged during the late 19th- and early 20th-century revival. It counters the modernist tendency towards reductionism. The life of the Buddha, along with his extraordinary actions in his previous lives, evokes devotion and inspiration not only for spiritual achievements but also for social welfare. The Buddha is presented not just as a historical figure, but also as an object of devotion and a model to emulate. Referring to different aspects of the life of the Buddha, students are encouraged to be efficient and dedicated in their education. They are reminded about various morals, such as patience, humility, self-sacrifice, truthfulness, etc. (Assaji 1993: 32-35).

Similarly, eminent monastic and lay disciples of the Buddha are honoured to invoke faith, confidence, and commitment to the Buddha and his teachings. Their spiritual attainments are celebrated, and their devotion, discipline, and determination in spiritual practices are to be emulated. The mode of presentation of these biographies reinforces the traditional storytelling teaching technique. Nearly half of the content of each grade is dedicated to spiritual biographies highlighting the importance of emulation in Dhamma

education. As a part of the tradition, Abhidharma teachings too have secured some lessons in the curriculum. Learning the Pali language and memorizing the Pali discourses are also parts of the *Daham Pasela* curriculum. The former represents lay Buddhists' interests in reading the Pali scriptures in modern Buddhism, while the latter reflects Buddhists' belief in the healing power of Pali chanting.

Thus, the *Daham Pasela* incorporates both modern and pre-modern interpretations. Similar to Olcott's *The Buddhist Catechism*, the *Daham Pasela* confirms that *Nibbana*, the Buddhist ultimate goal, can be attainable in this very life (Assaji 1993: 88). However, it resists modernist spiritual universalism which argues that "laypersons have at least as good, or perhaps better, chances to attain the goal [Nibbana] in this life" (Bond 1988: 36). Instead, the *Daham Pasela* insists that both monastics and laypersons follow the same Middle Path. Nevertheless, monastic life is more socially conducive for the pursuit of *Nibbana*, as it expedites spiritual aspiration, while lay life entails more distractions, which therefore, hinder the spiritual zeal of lay practitioners. The lesson also insists that if laypersons emulate the monastic life style, laity can accelerate their chances for enlightenment (Mahalekam 1991: 6). The preceding explanation suggests that, in effect, the lay-monastic distinctions serve as social symbols. Neo-traditional Buddhists neither dispute nor confirm laypersons' capacity of achieving *Nibbana*; but they do reinstate spiritual hierarchy (symbolized by monasticism) that was flattened in modernist interpretation of Buddhism. Bond (1988) argues that, it is, in fact, the perception and interpretation of Buddhist goals and means that distinguish neo-traditional Buddhism from its predecessor in the late 19th- and 20th-century Buddhist revival (34). By refreshing age-old beliefs and practices, and combining them with the

development of the Buddhist revival, neo-traditionalists have diversified the Buddhist tradition.

Unlike *The Buddhist Catechism*, the *Daham Pasela* includes Buddhist culture, the vibrant aspects of the Buddhist tradition, along with its history. It variously invokes Sinhala Buddhist discourse side by side with the Buddhist spiritual discourse to construct Buddhist moral agents. It delves into the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka along with special references to numerous historical figures in modern and ancient Sri Lanka. Thus, the *Daham Pasela* differentiates itself from its predecessor *The Buddhist Catechism* in defining the means and goals of Dhamma education. If instilling an identity or formation of Buddhist character is the goal of Dhamma education, the content compiled under Buddhist culture provides ingredients to construct that identity. The emphasis on diverse customs, rituals, and ceremonies signifies the importance of doing (performance) in instilling Buddhist identity. Ananda Guruge (1993) observes that teaching Buddhism in independent Sri Lanka was motivated to mold a cultural identity (293). In this agenda, Seneviratne Mahalekam's *Buddhist Culture*³⁴ is emblematic. It classifies the subject under three themes (Buddhist customs, Buddhist artistic expression in Sri Lanka, and world Buddhist culture), which serve the formation of moral agents in three ways. The customs, rituals, and practices illustrate Buddhist decorum. The historical information of various artistic expressions generates cultural pride, devotion, and dignity associated with indigenous identity. The section of world Buddhist culture puts the indigenous identity on the Buddhist world stage.

³⁴ Here I refer to "*Bauddha Sanskrutiya*" which simply means "Buddhist Culture." It is one of the four text books recommended for the final examination of Dhamma School.

The *Daham Pasela* celebrates the heroic actions of ancient and modern personalities, emphasizing that they are worth emulating. In fact, Sri Lankan history mentioned in the *Daham Pasela* highlights a particular past that could be identified as “native authoritative discourse” (Scott 1994: xviii). It sanctifies the *Mahavamsa*’s reports of the Buddha’s visits to the island, and it highlights Buddhist kings’ royal services for Buddhist causes. King Dutugemunu (161-137 BCE) and King Mahaparakramabahu (1153-1186 CE) receive special attention for their immense devotion and dedication for the development of Buddhism, as well as for their patriotic and heroic actions in defending Sinhala nation and Buddhism (Assaji 1993: 83-88). In addition, the *Daham Pasela* pays more attention to more recent Buddhist national heroes in the late 19th- and 20th-century Buddhist revival.

Mahalekam (1992: 27-65) and Mahathantrige (1993: 49-59) dedicate numerous lessons on the following national heroes: Hikkaduwa Sri Sumangala Thero, Ratmalane Sri Dhammaloka Thero, Migettuwatte Sri Gunananda Thero, Variyapola Sumangala Thero, Anagarika Dharmapala, and Henry Olcott. The contribution of these figures to Buddhist education, Buddhist institution, and organization are highlighted. Their conviction and courage in defending Buddhism against Christian evangelism are celebrated. At the end of the lessons on some of these biographies, students are encouraged and reminded that it is their duties to contribute to the well-being of the country by supporting the Sinhala language and Buddhism. This patriotic encouragement, in fact, echoes the essence of Dharmapala’s 1922 “Message to the young men of Ceylon.” Anagarika Dharmapala, more than anybody else, has become a powerful figure through this Sinhala-Buddhist discourse. Guruge observes that “hardly

any Sinhala Buddhist young man or woman enters the cares and concerns of adult life without being reminded that precisely a hundred years ago young Dharmapala...set for them an example which they might proudly and profitably emulate” (1993: 246).

Buddhist national heroes are the means by which Buddhist nationalist discourse permeates in the *Daham Pasela*.

The discourse is also symbolically expressed in the Dhamma school dress code. Dhamma schools recommend “*Arya Sinhala*” national dress (which is white sarong and white collarless shirt) for boys and “*Lama Sariya*” (which is white blouse and white cloth with a frill around the neck and waist) for girls. The dress symbolizes Buddhist values of purity and simplicity, as well as nationalism. Similarly, the first inside cover page of every *Daham Pasela* textbook displays the national anthem of Sri Lanka followed by the Dhamma school anthem. This illustrates the perceived intimate connection between Buddhism and Sri Lankan nationality. Moreover, one of the five guiding principles of a prominent Dhamma school in Sri Lanka says that it trains students “to develop correct attitudes for building a generation of religious, patriotic and national minded children” (Warusawithana 2007: i). Similarly, Madihe Pannasiha Mahanayaka Thera, the first chairperson of the Dhamma School Syndicate, which systematized and popularized Dhamma education in 1950s and 1960s, later recalled that one of the main aims was/is to “[b]ring up a new generation of children awakened to a new religious consciousness, glowing with a spirit of patriotism, stirred up with a deep sense of nationalism and enlivened with the commitment of their own language [Sinhala]” (1995: 5). Thus, Dhamma educators in independent Sri Lanka have incorporated the Buddhist nationalistic discourse as they responded to a postcolonial

nation's call for a distinct identity. This signifies the irresistible power of the social-political system.

Socio-cultural Influence in Dhamma Education

In the preceding analysis of three Dhamma education manuals, I have identified one generic discourse (Buddhist spiritual) and three contingent discourses (anti-evangelical, Buddhist nationalist, and Buddhist multicultural). To some extent, all three Dhamma educational manuals contain the discourses, albeit in different degrees. While the generic discourse permeates through two historical and two geographical dimensions of Dhamma education, the three contingent discourses reflect the ambient socio-political reality of a particular time. To meet the historical needs of the time, one of three contingent discourses has come to the foreground, while the others are marginalized. For instance, *The Buddhist Catechism* of the colonial period promotes the Buddhist anti-evangelical discourse, while the *Daham Pasela* of postcolonial Sri Lanka privileges the Buddhist nationalistic discourse. Meanwhile, in the context of multicultural Toronto, *Teaching Buddhism to Children* prioritizes the Buddhist multicultural discourse.

I assert that all the contingent discourses are Buddhist because they coalesce with the generic Buddhist spiritual discourse to form Buddhist moral agents. They have contingently derived from the ambient socio-cultural situations, but they have carefully interpreted the spiritual discourse derived from Buddhist principles, as found in the Pali canon, to meet the socio-cultural needs of living Buddhists. In other words, they contextualized what being Buddhists means in differing historical times and spaces.

Buddhist educators are the authors of the discourses, but they have not been sole agents of the discourses.

According to Asad, the term agent/agency refers to presence of power or authority in decision making and effective execution of that decision (1993: 16). He contends that social structures and systems hold agency, and they can do real things similar to human activities. He further explains,

The system [modernization]...relates to a mode of human agency ('real people doing real things'), one that conditions other people's lives. The immediate objective of *this* agency, however, is not to cause individual actors to behave in one way rather than another. It is to change aggregate human conditions....Its systematicity lies, therefore, in probabilities, not causalities. (Asad 1993:7)

Here, Asad asserts that socio-political and cultural systems have agency in their power to condition human agents. He also doubles the concept of agency. What distinguishes the effect of social structures and systems from the agency of human beings is that the former is more abstract and pervasive so that one can hardly escape from it. It does not directly force individuals to act in certain ways, but it does condition where human agency is constrained or at least obliged to comply with the social structures. Social structures and systems can limit the effectiveness of human agency and autonomy. Asad concludes that "[p]eople are never only active agents and subjects in their own history" (1993: 4). People are also submissive agents who function not only as representatives but also as objects of the power of social structures and systems.

In that sense, agencies involved in Dhamma education go beyond Buddhist educators. As the term "contingent" implies, the discourses have relied on or been influenced by the socio-political system of the particular time. As part of Buddhist discursive tradition, the discourses are "traversed by positions constituted by varying

social projects and social uses” (Scott 1994: 175). The anti-evangelical discourse was a response to Christian evangelicalism in colonial Sri Lanka. The Buddhist nationalistic discourse has emerged under postcolonial nationalism. The Buddhist multicultural discourse responds to a multicultural society. As three distinct socio-political systems have made the conditions under which the contingent discourses emerged, I argue that they have been co-agents of the discourses. They have not caused them but they have conditioned them. In other words, the existing socio-political systems of the time have conditioned Buddhist educators to conceptualize Buddhist moral agency differently.

As we compare and contrast the contingent discourses, we can discern different sets of pressure and expectations of young Buddhists. The anti-evangelical discourse denotes that young Buddhists in British colonial Sri Lanka were expected to learn and defend the Buddhist tradition. Buddhism was presented to them as a universal philosophy that transcends ethnic and national boundaries. Thus, Buddhist unity was the subtext of *The Buddhist Catechism*. In postcolonial Sri Lanka, Buddhism has become a cultural heritage that contributes to the identity construction of people in a postcolonial nation. The *Daham Pasela* contextualizes Buddhism in Sri Lankan history and blends it with the Sinhalese ethnic culture. The Buddhist nationalist discourse urges young Buddhists to be patriotic who love Buddhism, country, and the Sinhala language and ethnicity. This Sinhalese Buddhist nationalistic discourse has been blamed as one of the contributing factors for the Sinhala-Tamil conflict in Sri Lanka (Tambiah 1992; Seneviratne 1999; Bond 2004). This discourse gradually disintegrates in Toronto, where the second-generation Sri Lankan Buddhists tend to take the Sinhala language and ethnicity at their symbolic values, and their loyalty is shared if not divided by two

nations (Sri Lanka and Canada). *Teaching Buddhism to Children* talks relatively less about the celebrated connections³⁵ between Buddhism and Sri Lanka. Instead, it emphasizes the purported multicultural values found in Buddhist teachings. This Buddhist multicultural discourse facilitates cultural integration by encouraging young Buddhists to uphold multicultural values, while keeping a strong sense of Buddhist identity.

The shift from the Buddhist nationalist discourse to the Buddhist multicultural discourse signifies the reconfiguration of the Sri Lankan Buddhism in Toronto. As discussed earlier, the former's vision is to form patriotic Sri Lankan Buddhists, while the objective of the latter is to form good Canadian citizens (Chandrasekera 2001: 6). Both discourses invoke two distinct notions of nation. The Buddhist nationalist discourse refers to nationhood in which place or locality, ethnicity, language, and religion are salient aspects.³⁶ The island of Sri Lanka was where Buddhism was introduced to its inhabitants (the Sinhala people?), and the Sinhala language along with Pali has been instrumental in forming a distinct form of Theravada Buddhism (Mahinda 1997: 218). From this historical perspective, for many Buddhists in Sri Lanka the Sinhala ethnicity as an organic group of people, Sri Lanka as place or locality, and the Sinhala language as a medium of expression are very important in their conceptualization of the Buddhist tradition. The history of this particular discourse is a bone of contention (Gunawardana 1979, 1984, 1990; Dharmadasa 1992), but it

³⁵ The indigenous accounts of the Buddha's three visits to Sri Lanka stand out with great significance in this regard.

³⁶ This relates to ethno-religious nationalism as opposed to civic nationalism.

flourished in independent Sri Lanka with a sense of postcolonial enthusiasm (Bond 1988; 2004).

On the other hand, the Buddhist multicultural discourse refers to Canada as a multicultural nation, in which the emphasis is placed on a state that embraces multiple ethnicities. Pierre Elliott Trudeau's multicultural policy envisioned "a polyethnic state" (Kent 2008: 143). It also implies nation as an idea of place. Within this inclusive nationhood, immigrants and their descendents are encouraged to maintain their past identities. Chandrasekera's *Teaching Buddhism to Children*, in fact, encourages its audience to maintain a Sri Lankan Buddhist identity. Its Buddhist multicultural discourse highlights the importance of Sri Lanka (not of the Sinhala ethnicity and language noticed in its predecessor) in the formation of young Buddhists in Toronto.

Dhamma Education for Transforming Buddhists

As noted earlier, Dhamma educators assert that Dhamma education forms Buddhist characters within a coherent connection of learning, practicing, and individually experiencing the Buddha's teachings. Accordingly, Dhamma students become Buddhist moral agents as they learn, practice, and experience the Dhamma. This triadic connection could be dialogical as much as lineal or progressive, as the Dhamma teachers suggested earlier. Obviously, Dhamma students learn a great deal about Buddhism. The amount of Buddhist knowledge a Dhamma school graduate acquires may go well beyond a *layman's* standard. They do not, however, practice, and certainly do not experience, everything they learn.

Contrary to its claim of complete character development through cognitive, affective, and behavioural emphases, Dhamma education prioritizes cognitive formation. It emphasizes accumulation of Dhamma knowledge more than the integration of Dhamma. Dhamma examinations, if we consider them indicative of what is emphasized in classrooms, suggest that Dhamma education disseminates factual knowledge about the Buddhist tradition. Teachers often ask “what, who, when, where, and which” questions to evaluate and measure students’ grasp of Buddhism. Students are evaluated on the basis of how much they know about the Buddha, his teachings, and Buddhist history and culture. Integrative questions like “how, why, and in what way” are entertained to a lesser extent. Reflecting on his time at Dhamma school, a father laments that “we have memorized only some addresses related to the life of the Buddha.” He sounds like he is exaggerating, but he insinuates that Buddhism is taught more or less like any other school subject from a historical point of view.

Perhaps this tendency derives from the initial impulses of Dhamma education, as expressed in debate-oriented, anti-evangelical discourse of *The Buddhist Catechism*. In it, Buddhism is defined as a science and a philosophy. This definition underscores a detached, objective, and intellectual mastery of Buddhism, rather than subjective, ritualized, and emotional commitment to Buddhism. A cognitive mode of Buddhist religiosity has been prioritized to the extent that the emotional understanding or affective approach to Buddhism is glossed over. Gombrich and Obeyesekere (1988) observe that “[t]o be on the path to *nirvana* is no longer to be prey to any human emotion” (Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988: 251). This priority persists and pervades

Dhamma education, as knowledge-based examinations have been used to systematize the practice and to measure its effects.

Annual Dhamma examinations are used to evaluate the performance of students, but also that of the Dhamma schools themselves. A leading Dhamma school brags about its consecutive reception of “The Venerable Dr. Labuduwe SiriDhamma Nayaka Thera Commutation Shield.... It is awarded to the Dhamma School which secures *the first place for best results*, presenting the *largest number of candidates* for...the grade tests held among the Island’s entire dhamma schools” (Maharagama Siri Vajiragnana Daham Pasela [emphasis added]). Thus, cognitive knowledge of Buddhism has dominated the modern formation of moral agency. This has overshadowed the equilibrium of the cognitive, affective, and behavioural inclinations in the formation of Buddhist agents expressed in pre-modern Buddhist literature in Sri Lanka.

Stephen Berkwitz (2004) argues that the *vamsas*—the Buddhist historical narratives in Sri Lanka—not only claim truth about the past, but they also make their audience moral agents “by acting upon the ways people think, feel, and act so that they may transform themselves” (293). The *vamsas*, specifically the *Sinhala Thupavamsa*, narrate the actions of past agents in such a way that they convince their audience that the past agents made it possible for current Buddhists to gain worldly and otherworldly benefit (265). In other words, the audience of the *Sinhala Thupavamsa* enjoys this life and the life after death partly because of the good actions performed by previous Buddhists. Such narratives compel the audience not only to feel joy but to also to be grateful to and dependent on the Buddhist agents of the past. They also make the audience obliged to reciprocate with their own devotional acts. Berkwitz notes “the

feelings of gratitude and dependence create obligation for a person to act and, as a result, contribute to the construction of moral agents who engage in devotional acts” (269). Such formation, according to Berkwitz, is a “devotional subjectivity” (294). The *Sinhala Thupavamsa* reminds us of two important issues related to the formation of Buddhist moral agents. First, it demonstrates the importance of a coherent connection between knowledge, emotion, and practice in fashioning the cognitive, affective, and behavioural components of moral agents. Second, it illustrates how knowledge, specifically historical learning, has been harnessed for the purpose of moral formation of Buddhists in premodern Sri Lanka.

Knowledge plays an integral role in character formation. However, I would suggest simply knowing (knowledge for the sake of knowing) hardly contributes to the formation of moral agents. It is not all knowledge, but a specific type of knowledge—I call it *integrative knowledge* of Buddhism—that induces practices in which Dhamma students evolve to be Buddhist moral agents. In other words, knowing or learning about Buddhism—education *about* Buddhism—does not necessarily make one a Buddhist. It is teaching and learning how to successfully integrate Buddhism into one’s life—education *for* becoming Buddhists—that contributes to Buddhist moral agency. The former concentrates on the mastery over content, while the latter emphasizes the purpose of teaching and learning Buddhism. The *Sinhala Thupavamsa* exemplifies integrative knowledge of the past “to transform ordinary devotees into ‘virtuous persons,’” but modern historiography, Berkwitz (2004) complains, has overshadowed the constructive ethical power of the *vamsas* with its emphasis on the importance of historical truth (287). I suggest that it is the modern historiographical emphasis on

historical facts that contributes to the prioritization of factual knowledge over integrative knowledge in Dhamma education.

Although factual knowledge (expressed in who, whom, where, which, and what questions) dominates Dhamma education, integrative knowledge (expressed in how question) of the Buddhist tradition appears in higher classes. For example, the *Daham Pasela* requires grade ten pupils in Sri Lanka to engage with the teachings and to integrate Buddhist principles in their lives. Subsequently, the 2007 Young Members Buddhist Association examination for Dhamma school students in Sri Lanka asks students to extract leadership qualities from the Buddha's biography that they can emulate in their lives (YMBA examination 2007). Likewise, the same year the General Certificate of Education (Ord. Level) Examination (GCEE) on Buddhism for public school students asks, "Bring out the ideals that could be drawn from the life of the Buddha for the purpose of moulding student-life" (GCEE, Buddhism II 2007). Similarly, the 2006 grade ten examination on Buddhism for public school students demonstrates integrative knowledge of Buddhism. It asks students to "[e]xplain how the cultivation of the Four Sublime Abodes contribute to the general well being of the individual and the society" and to "[s]how how the doctrine of dependent origination could be used to analyze and solve modern social problems" (GCEE, Buddhism II 2006). These two questions appear in exactly the same form in the same year on the Dhamma school examination conducted by the Young Members Buddhist Association. This simultaneous appearance of the same questions in the same year in examinations related to two different education systems indicates that public and Dhamma schools in Sri Lanka echo each other in their methods for teaching Buddhism. Similarly, it reminds

us that not only Dhamma schools but also public schools in Sri Lanka contribute to the formation of Buddhist moral agents.

In contrast, Dhamma education in Toronto functions with no external support. The two Dhamma schools in this study receive no financial and educational assistance from any agencies in and/or outside Canada. The Dhamma teachers, former Dhamma students, and the parents of current students report that Dhamma schools provide students with moral guidance and good social values. In doing so, Dhamma education makes them aware of the negative influences in mainstream youth culture, such as drug addiction, alcohol consumption, gang affiliation, violence, premature sex, etc. The first generation complains that many older teens, who are most in need of the guidance found in Dhamma education, drop out of their Dhamma schools. Average completion rates remains below thirty-five percent. I notice that the number of students gradually shrinks as the grade increases. At the time of my fieldwork (2008-09), only thirty two students (ages 15-17) were registered in the final grade of both Dhamma schools combined. The first generation believes that a form of accreditation of the Dhamma school program (similar to heritage language program)³⁷ would improve the attendance of older teens. The suggestion sounds reasonable, given that religion, much like an ethnic language, is a salient aspect of ethnic identity. However, the secular overtone of public education in Ontario makes it unlikely that the ministry would view religion and ethnic language in

³⁷ Currently, if an ethnic community can arrange to have a qualified language teacher and can convince 20-25 high school students to take the class, the school board pays the teacher. In this context, students earn a high school credit for studying their ethnic language.

an equal footing. Within such socio-cultural context, the formation of Buddhist moral agents in Toronto has been an individual and communal responsibility.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion illustrates the origin and development of Dhamma education as an institutional practice in Sri Lankan Buddhism. I observed that Dhamma education began as a sporadic practice to address the need of living Buddhists in Sri Lanka. It took more than a half century to evolve as an institutional practice. Among other things, governmental and non-governmental sponsorship facilitated this development. Despite the absence of such assistance, the practice continues to be an integral part of Sri Lankan Buddhism in the diaspora. I suggest that Dhamma education persists, even where rudimentary resources like monks and temples are not available, simply because it is an institutional practice whose role in the transmission of the tradition is strongly felt in the diaspora. In other words, the status of it as an institutional practice, and a heightened need for it, are two essential conditions for a religious practice to persist and sustain in the diaspora.

Second, I demonstrated that Dhamma education maintains multiple discourses with multiple agendas. It has simultaneously been motivated by religious, political, and cultural agendas,³⁸ but in each case it has coupled with spiritual discourse to enable Buddhist moral agents “to tackle today’s hurdles and face tomorrow’s challenges” (Chandrasekera 2001: 6). In other words, it has never been maintained merely for the

³⁸ Perhaps, these diverse agendas could be identified in religious education of other religions too.

spiritual formation of young Buddhists, alone. This reminds us that religion is not only spiritual but also contains cultural and political dimensions at times, as living practitioners look to religion to meet their spiritual, cultural, and even political needs. This makes a condition in which discursive interactions take place between the foundational teachings (concepts and practices alike), the practitioners, and their urgent needs derived from the contemporary socio-political situations. The spiritual discourse makes Dhamma education a legitimate Buddhist practice across time and space, while the changing contingent discourses make the practice viable and useful for contemporary Buddhists.

Finally, I contended that Dhamma education blends both types of discourses (spiritual and contingent) to define variously what being Buddhists means in different times and places. It transmits both factual as well as integrative knowledge of the Dhamma, even though, the former tends to dominate the practice since the inception of Dhamma education in the late 19th century in Sri Lanka. Perhaps, the transmission of integrative knowledge of Buddhist teachings to students deserves more attention in Dhamma education to achieve its goal—the transformation of young Buddhists. Dhamma educationists engage in constant dialogue with the foundational teachings within the socio-political system. However, they alone do not control the outcome of the dialogue. As the shift in contingent discourses demonstrates, the contemporary socio-political and cultural systems also exercise considerable affect in shaping the tradition. This systemic efficacy does not undermine human agency, but does inform the conditions where it unfolds. How Sri Lankan Buddhists exercise their agency in the

context of the multicultural, multireligious, yet secularly oriented Canadian setting is the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter Four

“Intelligent Adaptation”: A Buddhist Response to the Canadian multicultural Society

Introduction

We define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us. (Charles Taylor 1992: 32-33)

In the context of Dhamma education, the monks at the West End Buddhist Centre proclaim that “[m]ulti-cultural, multi-religious and cosmopolitan societies bring in their train, unforeseen situations which call for tailor made solutions. Intelligent adaptation at times is not only desirable, but also necessary” (Chandrasekera 2001: 1). The monks suggest that the Canadian social setting demands a novel response, and their response to the demand is to adapt to the Canadian society intelligently. One could argue that the term “intelligent adaptation” sounds self-congratulatory on the part of the Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto, specifically in their accommodation of Buddhist concepts and practices. I suggest that the term also signifies the first generation’s agency in redefining the Buddhist tradition, which in effect defines who the Sri Lankan Buddhists are in the Canadian multicultural setting.

Nevertheless, neither the monks who use the term nor the author of the book *Teaching Buddhism to Children*, where “intelligent adaptation” is introduced, define the term. In a broader sense, it could refer to many recurring themes in Buddhism in Toronto, namely (a) institutional modification (temple construction), (b) organizational adaptation (democratic temple administration), (c) practical appropriation (the changes in monastic dress, food, and transportation), and (d) cultural interpretation of the

Buddhist teachings. The context of the phrase resonates with the last theme. As I read the term in the context of Dhamma education, I contend that the term “intelligent adaptation” refers to an *inclusive interpretation* of Buddhist concepts and practices, which incorporates both the religious and secular sentiments in Toronto. I characterize the interpretation as to be inclusive for several reasons. The interpretation takes into account the Judeo-Christian emphasis on believing in the divine; it incorporates the non-Theravada concept of the Buddha; and, it also capitalizes on the prevalent “secular” language of the public domain, with an emphasis on the contemporary culture of subjective wellbeing.

I recognize that one of the core aspects of the inclusive interpretation is the discourse of harmony. Harmony is neither a construction of Bhante Punnaji, who resurrects it, nor a social construction of North America. Later in this chapter, we will see that harmony appears as a primordial virtue of the Buddha’s teaching in the Pali canon. However, I maintain that we cannot ignore the socio-cultural context in which this definition emerges. I contend that inclusive interpretation is a Buddhist response to a multicultural society, which discursively refurbishes the resources of the Buddhist tradition with a new emphasis on social and cultural harmony in a pluralistic society. I lay out my argument under three sections.

First, I identify inclusive interpretation as a part of intelligent adaption. In this section, I analyze the teaching manual and examine four types of inclusivity: interdisciplinary, religious, secular, and membership inclusivities. Second, I discuss what kind of portrayal of Buddhism has emerged from the inclusive interpretation in which the existing positive image of Buddhism being a peaceful religion emphasizing

harmony is reinforced. In addition, I examine how this image is constructed. Both the content of the image and hermeneutic approach employed in such interpretations derive from the Pali canon itself, but I suggest that the multi-religious yet secularly oriented social atmosphere in Toronto significantly contributes to redefine Buddhism as an essentially harmonious religion. Finally, I delineate what the inclusive interpretation represents. In this section, I underline several implications, showing that the interpretation displays a cultural configuration of Buddhism in Toronto, that it represents a minority religion's response to the dominant culture, and that it also demonstrates a participatory role of a religion in a secular society.

Inclusive Interpretation as an “Intelligent Adaptation”

Reinterpreting key Buddhist terms is an integral part of the “intelligent adaptation” of the Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto. The credit for redefining Buddhist terminology goes to Bhante Punjabi. The monastic leadership in the community emphasizes that “we are not impervious to the demands of the ‘religio-cultural’ diversity we see around us. It is indeed the environment in which our children will have to grow up” (Chandrasekera 2001: 2). This suggests that the multicultural and multi-religious environment in Toronto demands that the monks formulate a new set of responses, and one of their responses is the reinterpretation of main Buddhist concepts and practices.³⁹ One could technically argue that the reinterpreted Buddhism is for a multicultural

³⁹ I assume that Sri Lankan Buddhists in other resettlement areas (such as Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, London (UK)) also have endeavoured to reflect on their respective ambient society. A future comparative study on them would illustrate multiple reconfigurations of a religious tradition.

society in general. However, as the title of the book *Teaching Buddhism to Children* suggests, its more specific audience is “the children of the [Sri Lankan Buddhist] community” (2). In the context of Dhamma education for a new generation, the redefined Buddhist terms speak loudly about what practitioners do with the tradition in the process of transmission.

As reinterpreters filter or screen the tradition for the purpose of transmission, they may introduce new aspects to the tradition and modify and/or excise certain existing elements of the tradition. In order to justify these actions, the existing elements are scrutinized and evaluated in relation to the contemporary social values and cultural norms. For example, Chandrasekera suggests that reinterpretation is motivated “to avoid repeating many *misconceptions* and *misinterpretations* that had found their way into the terminology of Buddhism over the years, often conveying *erroneous* and *un-Buddhist connotations*” ([emphasis added] 2001: 4). She observes that the existing Buddhist tradition contains certain “misconceptions” and “misinterpretations,” which had infiltrated the tradition and diminished the “correct” Buddhist understanding. She implies that the purpose of the reinterpretations provided in her book is to shed light on the earliest form of the Buddha’s teachings. This is the same strategy—going back to the foundational sources to challenge the later interpretations—used by the 19th- and 20th-century revivalists in Sri Lanka.

The current reinterpretation marginalizes certain aspects of Sri Lankan Buddhism. The monks in the community insist that “we should muster both sincerity and the courage of our convictions to even discard without regrets, those arcane, regressive customs and practices that are incompatible with the dhamma and are a

hindrance to our practice” (2). What constitutes the so-called “arcane, regressive customs and practices” remain unexplained. Nevertheless, under their monastic leadership, Buddhist temples in Toronto do not encourage certain Sri Lankan religious discourses (Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism) and practices (deity worship) as they transmit Buddhism to the second generation. On the other hand, some of the widespread understandings of modern Buddhism in the West are also challenged in *Teaching Buddhism to Children*, which I will touch upon more, later in the chapter. As I analyze the redefined concepts and practices in *Teaching Buddhism to Children*, I find inclusivity is the underlying theme in the reinterpreted Buddhism. As noted above, I find four types of inclusivity present: interdisciplinary, religious, secular, and membership inclusivities.

Interdisciplinary Inclusivity

What I mean by interdisciplinary inclusivity is that the manual includes definitions of the Buddha that represent different disciplines, modes of enquiry, and perspectives. For example, Buddha is defined as “A Super Human Being (*Uttari Manussa*),” and his miraculous walk on seven lotuses immediately after his birth is explained as “Seven lotuses symbolize the seven constitutions of awakening (*Sapta Bojjhanga*)” (2001: 46). This definition combines both humanist and faith-inspiring accounts of the Buddha. During the late 19th century, both Christian missionaries like Robert Spence Hardy and orientalist like Thomas William Rhys Davids depicted the Buddha simply as a human being. Hardy argued that Buddhism, as an ethical system with no gods’ intervention, exemplifies the inadequacy of European Enlightenment

thought. Rhys Davids also compared the Buddha to Enlightenment philosophers, but he did so to underline that Enlightenment thought was not necessarily anti-religion. For him Buddhism was, in his own words, “a mirror which allowed Christians to see themselves more clearly” (cited in Snodgrass 2007: 192).

In other words, Rhys Davids used a humanist portrayal of the Buddha to advocate, to use Judith Snodgrass’s expression, “the post-Enlightenment secularized Protestant Christianity” (2007: 192) in alignment with the Enlightenment philosophy. Thus, Hardy’s humanist portrayal of the Buddha was a condemnation of not only Buddhism but also of secularized Enlightenment thought, while Rhys Davids’ humanist project was an approval of the Buddha in order to minimize Christian animosity toward Enlightenment philosophy. In the end, both positive and negative humanist portrayals of the Buddha were part of the “contest over the future of Christianity in an age of science” (Snodgrass 2007: 193).

This humanist portrayal of the Buddha, even the positive one, excluded the insider’s understanding of the Buddha as an incomparable teacher, the model of Buddhist teachings (the dhamma), and the model for the Buddhist faithful (the sangha). For example, Rhys Davids rejected faith-evoking names, i.e., Siddhartha (the one who has accomplished his aim) and Sakyamuni (the sage of the Sakyas). He used the title “Buddha” only to comparatively illustrate how Jesus became Christ in Christianity. On the other hand, Rhys Davids favoured the family name Gautama or Gotama to denote the historical credibility derived from archaeological discoveries (Snodgrass 2007: 191).

The humanists’ emphasis on history, archaeology, and texts in defining the Buddha, and their comparison of Gotama to European philosophers, took a new toll in

the subsequent indigenous Buddhist discourses. Modern Buddhist interpreters perceived Buddhism to be a philosophy, and thus compatible with science. Therefore, they argued that Buddhism surpasses all other world religions, including Christianity. However, they were not satisfied with bare humanist and scientific representations of the Buddha. Instead, they used historical and archaeological evidence, along with extra-canonical textual accounts, to construct a sacred biography of the Buddha. Snodgrass (2007) contends “they [Asian Buddhist modernists] tended not to discard the miraculous in the way that Rhys Davids had done, but to interpret it symbolically...” (199). In other words, modern Buddhist interpreters pushed the scientifically articulated humanist discourse to a new level, along with tradition-based, faith-inspiring accounts of the Buddha. As evidenced by the definition of the Buddha as “A Super Human Being,” this trend continues in the diaspora with a new emphasis: experience.

In a lesson designed for youth aged between thirteen and fifteen, Chandrasekera (2001) explains that the Buddha is “with the Super Human Experiences (*Uttari Manussa Dhamma*)” and the Dhamma is “The Buddha’s Experience (*Sila, Samadhi, Panna, Vimutti and Nibbana*)” (41). Here, she does two things. First, she reiterates the philosophical claim that the Buddha was experientialist, which means everything he taught was based on his own experience. The second is more of an implication: that one should understand the Dhamma through one’s own experience. This experiential discourse is not new. What is new, though, is to whom it is addressed. This discourse

has rarely been used for general practitioners, let alone for a younger audience⁴⁰ (whose experience is considered to be relatively less reliable in understanding Dhamma).

Only in recent times has the self-experience approach to Buddhism become popular. Its popularization in the manual may indicate an intergenerational shift from collectivism to individualism in understanding and practicing Buddhism. After all, the manual intends to teach Buddhism to a generation influenced by an increasing trend towards “turn[ing] inward” in the culture. Peter Berger (1979) theorizes that the forces of modernization have eroded or undermined “plausibility structures,” which create a sense of a coherent, stable social order with “a very high degree of objectivity.” The need for a stable social order is more pressing than ever. Nevertheless, individuals cannot rely solely on the outside world, such as society and culture (due to diverse, often contradictory interpretations), so must turn to themselves to construct a sense of coherence. Berger explains,

If answers are not provided objectively by...society, [one] is compelled to turn inward, toward [one's] own subjectivity, to dredge up from there whatever certainties [one] can manage....[I]t should not be surprising that modern Western culture has been marked by an ever-increasing attention to subjectivity. (20-21)

This subjective turn informs the above-discussed experiential approach to Buddhism. It also has provided a condition where the dialogue between Buddhist meditation and Western psychology and psychotherapy has flourished.⁴¹ Reflecting on this development, the manual defines the Buddha to be “the supreme psychotherapist and healer of all times.” This particular definition of the Buddha is followed by a Pali

⁴⁰ Interestingly the Pali term *bala* (immature) is used to refer to children as well as to those spiritually less developed.

⁴¹ The relationship between Buddhism and Western psychology was first established by Carl Jung (Meckel and Moor 1992), and Walpula Rahula (Rahula 1956).

phrase: “*Anuttaro bhisakko sallakatto*” (Chandrasekera 2001: 46). Although the phrase refers to the Buddha as incomparable healer, the reinterpreters’ definition of the Buddha as the supreme psychotherapist captures the mood of ongoing dialogue between Buddhism and Western psychology and psychotherapy.

Donald Lopez (2008) suggests that “research on meditation has sought to calculate the psychological and neurological effects of Buddhist meditation....The claim here is that Buddhist meditation works” (207). The experiential and psychologically oriented definitions of the Buddha are apt examples of the influence of wider culture in shaping and popularizing a less trodden mode of enquiry in Buddhism. The incorporation of this discourse in the manual illustrates the agency of Sri Lankan Buddhists as they respond to the cultural trend. The emphasis on experience in understanding what the Buddha taught demonstrates the integrity of the Buddhist tradition. These factors—tradition’s integrity, practitioners’ agency and culture’s influence—combine together give a new shape to a religious tradition. In this process, the previous discourses are not left out. Instead, as the manual’s interdisciplinary inclusivity indicates, they are selectively incorporated.

Religious Inclusivity

Religious inclusivity refers to the consideration and inclusion of the sentiments of other religious traditions. *Teaching Buddhism to Children* pays attention to non-Theravada Buddhist and non-Buddhist aspects as it reinterprets who Buddha is. For instance, it says “Buddha is a great teacher (*Sattadevamanussanam* [sic]),” followed by another definition “Buddha [is] the Saviour of the worlds (*Loka Natha*)” (2001: 46). The

former establishes the Theravada emphasis on the historical Buddha and his role as a teacher, which implies that one has to rely on oneself for spiritual attainment. The latter definition is more associated with non-Theravada Buddhism, for example, the Pure Land Buddhist tradition emphasizes the reliance on the “other power” (*takiri*) of Amitabha Buddha for spiritual salvation. In general, it also mildly expresses the Mahayana and Vajrayana belief in the intervention of celestial Buddhas and Boddhisattvas in one’s spiritual path. Theravada devotional literature, too, would provide countless references to “the Saviour of the worlds.” Here, however, the connotation is different. The phrase invokes a this-worldly interpretation. For example, *Teaching Buddhism to Children* offers the definition:

Buddha [is] seen as a competent social worker like any in modern times; he used effective Social work methods in helping people: Buddha as [a] case worker (Kisa Gotami), Buddha as a group worker (started with five monks), Buddha as a community worker (resolved community conflict over the use of river water).
(46)

In this context, “the Saviour of the worlds” does not mean a spiritual sense. Rather, the Buddha is compared to “a competent social worker” with three related functions. Interestingly, unlike other definitions in the book, these this-worldly definitions of the Buddha lack Pali equivalents. Instead, they are supported by anecdotes from the life story of the Buddha, which themselves indicate the Buddha’s intervention in incidents of spiritual, social, and even political nature. In this particular definition, the interpreters in Toronto have been thoughtful, skilful, and innovative in redefining a concept of the Buddha that is intimately associated with non-Theravada Buddhism. They have been careful not to jeopardize the Theravada integrity by capturing the community

enthusiasm and inspiration in socially engaged Buddhism.⁴² Indeed, the “social worker” role of the Buddha was invoked in a lesson designed for senior high school students who have to do voluntary community service for their graduation.

Similarly, the teaching manual also addresses non-Buddhist religious views, specifically the concept of god(s). It challenges previous interpretations of Buddhism, specifically the description of Buddhism as a nontheistic or god(s)-free religion. In the late 19th century, Buddhism was portrayed as atheist and agnostic. This portrayal was carefully crafted for two paradoxical reasons. Christian polemical missionaries like Barthelemy St. Hilaire argued that “In the whole of Buddhism there is not a trace of God” (in Snodgrass 2009: 35). This portrayal of godless Buddhism was intended to highlight the “striking contrast” between Buddhism and Christianity, and to show the superiority of Christianity over Buddhism. However, others described Buddhism as god(s)-free religion with a secular agenda. Judith Snodgrass (2009) states “the free thinkers and humanists who, like Rhys Davids, saw Buddhism as proof of the possibility of an ethical system that did not depend on an interventionist god” (35). In these Christian and secular agendas, the complexity of living Buddhism was deliberately left out.

Teaching Buddhism to Children reverses the godless presentation of Buddhism. It diversifies the concept of god, and it redefines the concept from humanistic and polytheistic perspectives, while alluding to a theistic concept of God, as well. It presents

⁴² The Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto and their children alike are highly interested and engaged in social services like sponsoring education for the poor children, shelter for the Tsunami destitute, and soup kitchen for the homeless.

the Buddha as someone who personified that concept. One lesson, “Buddhism and World Religions,” states

There are three concepts of God (*Deva*) in Buddhism.

1. God by Convention (*Sammuti Deva*)
2. God by Birth (*Uppatti Deva*)
3. God by Purity of Mind (*Visuddhi Deva*)

All Spiritually Perfect Saints (*Arhants*) and Awake Ones (Buddhas) are Gods by Purity of Mind. **They are also called God Become (*Brahma Bhuto*).**

Gods by Birth are celestial beings who live in celestial spheres or heavens. The term, Gods by convention, refers to the deification of natural phenomena and of ordinary human beings. ([emphasis in bold is added] 2001:53)

This multi-layered concept of god accomplishes a few things. First, it simultaneously refers to a humanistic as well as polytheistic concept of the divine. Thus, it demonstrates the breadth and depth of the Buddhist treatment of the topic. By so doing in a lesson entitled “Buddhism and World Religions,” the manual acknowledges and respects the beliefs in god(s) found in other religions. Second, the three concepts are laid out in a progressive sequence by ranking them. The Buddha and his awakened disciples, the pinnacles of Theravada spiritual attainment, are said to be the gods become (or arisen) through the purification of the mind. They are ranked higher than the celestial beings, who belong to the second concept—god by birth. For example, the manual explains elsewhere that “The Buddha as seen in Buddhism is greater than *gods* because He has risen beyond, not only human weaknesses, but also the weaknesses of the gods” (2001: 46). This explains that the Buddha is on the top in the Buddhist spiritual ladder, and he belongs to the highest category in the three-fold concept of god. Finally, in the definition, the Buddha and his awakened followers are referred to as “God Become (*Brahma*⁴³ *Bhuto*)” in a singular form, which echoes the West’s theistic concept of God.

⁴³ Notice the word *Brahma* echoes the creator God in the Hindu tradition.

The Buddhist pinnacle, the Buddha is compared to the ultimate focus of theistic religions, God. The term “God Become” captures the Buddhist emphasis on spiritual attainment that distinguishes the Buddhist concept from that of other religions. It highlights that one becomes god through spiritual attainment.

The Buddha and his followers are interpreted as those who realized the highest concept of god. This interpretation does not undermine but, rather, intensifies the importance of human agency, the integrity of Buddhism. In a follow-up interview, Bhante Punnaji explains,

Buddhism is humanistic, it is anthropocentric. It says man created god in his own image. God is a human concept. It is a concept of perfection: perfect in knowledge, perfect in power and perfect in goodness. In that sense, God is a person who is perfect in everything....God is the ideal of religion. The person who realizes the ideal, he is called the Buddha. (Personal interview, 2009)

The preceding explanation echoes the Judeo-Christian concept of God in its emphasis on perfection. At the same time, it highlights a Buddhist emphasis on human agency by reversing the theistic discourse: instead of God creating humans in His image, here we have humans creating God. Or better yet, humans who have that potential. Bhante Punnaji defines Buddhism neither as theistic nor as atheistic, but as a humanistic religion where a humanistic concept of god remains the ideal. He explains that the Buddha is someone who realized that ideal. Importantly, his use of the present tense, “the person who realizes the ideal...is called the Buddha” locates that possibility in the present. These sentiments take Buddhism out of a past—of another place and another time—to highlight its relevance for this time and this place. Thus, the teaching manual suggests that Buddhism stands out from other religions not only in its breath of the

concept of god(s) but also in its efficacy in becoming god(s) or realizing the ideals of religions. Likewise, secular sentiments are also incorporated in the curriculum.

Secular Inclusivity

In search of the genealogy of the secular and secularism, Talal Asad argues that the concepts originated at two different historical moments and that they eventually became interdependent in their support of each other. He suggests that the secular “brings together certain behaviors, knowledges, and sensibilities in modern life” (2003: 25). The early modern religio-political and economic atmosphere in Europe, specifically Catholic-Protestant hostility, contributed to secularism’s evolution as a political and governmental doctrine (191). With this political clout, the secular eventually became a powerful worldview with distinct perspectives on nature and society.

Commenting on its impact on religious worldviews, Asad says,

the complex medieval Christian universe, with its interlinked times...and hierarchy of spaces...is broken down by the modern doctrine of secularism into a duality: a world of self-authenticating things in which we *really* live as social beings and a religious world that exists only in our imagination. (2003: 194)

According to Asad, secularism divides this universe into two—the real and the imaginary. It prioritizes the real. Humanity is the center of the secular doctrine, which prioritizes human agency more than anything else. Humans are autonomous beings. It is the humans, not the divine, who are capable of defining what is good and evil and conducting themselves accordingly. They are, therefore, responsible individually as well as collectively for the actions they perform. This secular discourse of human agency, in fact, reverberates with Bhante Punnaji’s Buddhist discourse of human agency. The

above-mentioned Buddhist concept “God Become,” and the “humanistic” definition of Buddhism that derives from it, seeks to express the similarity between Buddhist and secular views on human agency.

Teaching Buddhism to Children takes the secular atmosphere of Toronto into consideration as it interprets Buddhist ethics. For example, it redefines the Five Precepts, the basic Buddhist moral guidelines, as follows:

The Five Restraints (*Panca Sila*) are the beginning of goodness. Goodness is the beginning of peace and happiness....If you neglect moral restraint, you will be injuring or harming both yourself as well as others. Moral restraint should be based on *consideration for others as well as oneself*. It is based on Universal Goodwill (*Metta*), and not on the belief in *punishment* and *reward* ([emphasis added] 2001:47).

Here, a secular discourse overrides a religious one. Certainly, the context and the Pali words maintain that the Five Precepts constitute Buddhist moral behaviour. Nonetheless, the preceding definition describes the Five Precepts as secular ethics, as opposed to religious ones. The difference is that the former prioritizes a this-worldly orientation. Its rationality is based on ordinary, commonsensical, and verifiable principles. What is verifiable by human faculties constitute the parameters of secular ethics. In contrast, religious ethics are not confined to the verifiable parameters, and, rather, transcend this worldly concentration. Noticeably, the other-worldly rationality of religious ethics distinguishes itself from its secular counterpart. The term “Universal Goodwill” in the above quotation invokes a transcendent principle; however, it is not necessarily referred to as an other-worldly goal. The implication is that one should follow the Five Precepts not simply because they are prescribed by the Buddha and/or they have other-worldly benefits, such as pleasant births, but they are socially conducive for a peaceful and happy society. In other words, the Five Precepts are reworked as interpersonal ethics.

This definition overshadows any religious necessity or urgency for strict commitment to the precepts. Instead, it leaves room for the practitioners' creative engagement with the precepts. It highlights social responsibility and benevolence based on this-worldly rationality and self-judgment. The preceding definition emphasizes that one should follow the Five Precepts because they derive from a universal truth, and "not on the belief in punishment and reward." Here, like secular worldviews, external authority is deferred, while human authority is centralized. The definition locates agency in the individual self and encourages it to realize a transcendental goal: "Universal Goodwill." In so doing, the definition distinguishes the Five Precepts from other ethical systems that are based on divine punishment and rewards.

In the context of religious pluralism, the emphasis serves to establish a nontheistic identity for Theravada Buddhism. At the same time, it also indicates the influence of secular worldviews on Buddhism. Consequently, the manual minimizes the other-worldly religious language of Buddhism. For instance, the multi-layered Buddhist heavens and hells are mentioned nowhere in the teaching manual, and the references to religious concepts like *kamma* and rebirth are followed by scientific sentiments. In a lesson on the concept of rebirth, a phrase noting "case-studies of rebirth from Sri Lanka and other countries" is added. This implies that the concepts of *kamma* and rebirth are not merely religious concepts. They are, rather, explanations of what is happening in the society; therefore, the concepts could be and should be taught with reference to the accounts of rebirth.

However, one may wonder if this secular emphasis also underestimates a religious discourse of Buddhist ethics that entails the power of other-worldly

motivations in ethical teaching, a technique the Buddha had used specifically in teaching the laity. In the discourses on conventional Buddhist morality, such as the Five Precepts and *kamma*, the Buddha repeatedly emphasizes the consequences of moral and immoral behaviour with specific reference to lives after death. For example in the *Anguttara*

Nikaya the Buddha instructs:

There is a person who destroys life...takes what is not given to him,...conducts himself wrongly in matters of sex,...[and] who is a liar....As to that tainted failure in living ...issues in suffering, results in suffering – it is due to that very failure in living that with the breakup of the body, after death, beings are reborn in the plane of misery, in a bad destination, in the lower world, in hell.⁴⁴ (Thera and Bodhi 1999: 265-267)

When we compare the Sri Lankan-Canadian reinterpretation of the Five Precepts with its canonical counterpart, what we notice is a shift in emphasis. That is, a this-worldly interpretation supersedes an other-worldly interpretation. Certainly, both interpretations highlight different motivations and foster different commitments. Here, I do not evaluate the later interpretation over and against that canonical reference. Rather, the comparison highlights how secular sensibilities are included in the re-interpretation of the Five Precepts in Toronto.

Membership Inclusivity

Inclusivity in the curriculum also extends to the reinterpretation of membership in the Buddhist community. The presence of a multi-ethnic Buddhist demographic in Toronto provides an opportunity to form a multi-ethnic Buddhist congregation. This is a future possibility rather than a current reality, but the Sri Lankan Buddhist temples studied indicate which conditions may encourage or inhibit such a future Buddhist

⁴⁴ This particular reference is also cited as AN X. 206 (Pali Text Society).

institutional development. The use of English for services and the suppression of ethnic discourse seem to draw multi-ethnic Buddhist participants. For example, the West End Dhamma School teaches Buddhism to students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Its 2009 Dhamma School Day celebration displayed the Indian and Bangladeshi flags side by side with the Sri Lankan and Canadian flags. It is not unusual to see a multiethnic audience attending Buddhist talks, meditation sessions, and *sutta* classes conducted in English. This sense of ethnic inclusivity is, however, less visible and less consistent in terms of temple administration and executive membership.

But at the conceptual level, gender neutrality and social equality are increasingly becoming prominent in defining Buddhist membership. For example, the curriculum defines the term “*Sangha*” broadly as “the community of followers of the Buddha consisting of monks (*Bhikkhu*), nuns (*Bhikkhuni*), laymen (*Upasaka*), lay women (*Upasika*)” (2001: 41). Here, the term implies that neither the practitioners’ gender differentiation, nor their institutional monastic-laity distinction determines the membership of the *Sangha*, but, rather, it is based upon their spiritual attainments and aspirations. Nonetheless, the inclusive definition is followed by a more qualified distinction: “Monks and nuns comprise the sanctified fold of the *Sangha*,” implying that laymen and laywomen belong to a non-sanctified or secular fold of the *Sangha* (2001: 41). The latter definition marks the institutional monks-laity boundaries within the Buddhist community. Both perspectives, however, obscure everyday understanding and applications of the term. Data from my surveys of the community indicate that the majority of both generations (56% of each) use the term “*Sangha*” to refer to male and female monastics only. Moreover, the gender exclusive use of the term (to refer to only

monks) significantly has decreased among the second generation. Only nine percent of the second generation, in comparison to nineteen percent of their parents, say that only monks belong to the Sangha.

The important issue here is that there is a conceptual/philosophical effort made to move away from gender-biased and patriarchal Theravada discourse to a more generalized or inclusive Buddhist discourse. The simple inclusion of the broader definition in the teaching manual itself signifies a perceptual change taking place within the community. It is possibly responding to the gender neutral and social egalitarian values of the North American culture.⁴⁵ This trend is nowhere as explicit as in the lesson on “Buddha’s Attitude to Women” (2001: 51). The lesson quotes a few direct statements of the Buddha from some of his earliest discourses, where the intellectual ability, spiritual achievement, and wisdom of female disciples were recognized and praised. It emphasizes gender equality as a core value within Buddhism. It says “equality is one of the basic values enunciated in the teachings of the Buddha.” It then goes on to illustrate this assertion with an example: “The psychic wonders Gotami [the step mother of the Buddha] displayed were *equal* to that of Ven. Maha Moggallana, the Master of Psychic Powers” ([emphasis added] 2001: 51). In other words, Gotami and Maha Moggallana were equal in their spiritual attainments.

The suggestion that there is equality between Buddhist monks and nuns is debatable. However, the attempt reflects a shift in attitude about female gender within the Sri Lankan monastic tradition. Women in Sri Lanka have strived to revive the lost

⁴⁵ It is also noteworthy that in the circles of convert Buddhists in the West, the term *Sangha* is widely used to refer to Buddhists in general.

Bhikkhuni order since the late 19th century (Bartholomeusz 1994); but their triumphs were materialized only in 1996, with the support and encouragement of the Sakyadhita International Association of Buddhist Women (Tsomo 2009: 155, 160). The essence of the lesson in the teaching manual is that gender has nothing to do with the Buddhist spiritual path, as the lesson ends with a rhetorical question: “in ones [sic] journey to *Nibbana*, how can a woman’s sex be a hindrance[?]” (2001: 51). Once again, we witness a symbolic effort to bring forward a Buddhist inclusive discourse, along with an emphasis on gender equality. With these new emphases, the curriculum defines what Buddhism is.

Re-defining Buddhism from a Buddhist Hermeneutic Perspective

The above-mentioned examples of numerous forms of inclusivity (interdisciplinary, religious, secular, and membership) broaden the existing definition of inclusivism. In search of a Buddhist inclusivism, Kristin Kiblinger (2005) defines the term “inclusivism” as “a theoretical, conscious approach to others.” She argues,

a view will qualify as inclusivistic if it self-consciously recognizes a provisional, subordinate, or supplementary place within the home religious system for *some element(s) from one or more alien traditions*...Inclusivism is a stance teaching that the thing to do in response to aliens and their religious systems is *to learn about them and listen carefully to them* with the hope of finding common ground and/or new resources *for the home group’s use*. ([emphasis added] 9)

This definition of inclusivism highlights what religious practitioners do with the religions of “the other” to make them fit for their own use. However, it overlooks what practitioners do with their own tradition as they encounter “the other.” The analysis of Buddhist concepts and practices found in *Teaching Buddhism to Children* suggests that one can reflexively turn to one’s own tradition with a sense of inclusivity. Within this

reflexive inclusivity, practitioners not only gaze at religions of the other they also scrutinize their own tradition. For example, the teaching manual emphasizes the three concepts of god(s) and creates a religious common ground. The secular interpretation of the Five Precepts serves to find a common ground with the secular. The membership inclusivity echoes the gender equality of the ambient culture. In so doing, reflexive inclusivity not only integrates Buddhists and Buddhism into the mainstream culture, but it also incorporates the religious and secular “other” into Buddhism. Above all, however, it redefines what Buddhism is.

The teaching manual reiterates a few nuanced characteristics of modern Buddhism. It claims that Buddhism is good for many (if not all), and it promotes harmony and supports common social values. It describes “Buddhism as a Way to Common Weal and Happiness (*Bahujana hitaya, Bahujana sukhaya*)” (Chandrasekera 2001: 46). The underlying assumption is that Buddhism is not restricted to only those who call themselves Buddhists. Rather, it contributes to the wellbeing and happiness of the many. This particular definition is, in fact, the core argument in the inclusive interpretation that explains Buddhism for Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike. In this broader scope, a Buddhist universalism supersedes a Buddhist particularism.

For example, the Buddhist concept of “*Saddha*” is broadly defined as “Appreciation and worship of Goodness and Truth.” (2001: 47). The term *saddha* is traditionally understood as having confidence and conviction in the Buddha and his teaching, which propel the person to engage in ethical and moral practices (Saddhatissa 1978: 137). Accordingly, the person with *saddha* reveres the Buddha and practices ethical and moral principles prescribed by the Buddha. However, the broader definition

of the term also assumes a broader expectation. It argues that if we have *saddha*, “We are drawn towards the goal of perfection in goodness and truth” (47). The unspecified goodness and truth contextually refer to Buddhism. However, they also imply that Buddhism is all about goodness and truth, and that Buddhists appreciate goodness and truth with no discrimination.

Similarly, the concept of the Buddha is interpreted beyond Buddhism: “The Buddha is *the State of Spiritual Perfection* that human beings conceive, and ultimately do attain through the practice of *religion*. ([emphasis added] 2001: 46). Here, Buddha is not a person but an abstract and impersonalized spiritual goal. This abstract and impersonalized definition emphasizes human potentiality in achieving the goal, and it broadens the means to do so. The definition implies that one can attain the spiritual perfection represented by the Buddha not only in Buddhism, but also “through the practice of religion.” Thus, it respects and even legitimates the spiritual quests found in non-Buddhist religions. This is also a good example of reflexive inclusivism, which, as opposed to Kiblinger’s (2005) “inclusivism,” redefines a central concept within the tradition for the use of the religious other. The definition also associates “harmony,” a celebrated virtue in the curriculum.

The teaching manual associates the virtue of harmony with Buddhism. It does so by reintroducing the recently overlooked concept of god(s) in Buddhism, as well as by replacing the self-assertive adjective “right” with “harmonious.” This multilayered Buddhist concept of god(s) redefines Buddhism by undermining the widespread Western perspective of Buddhism as a gods-free religion. It centralizes the concept of god(s) in Buddhism. By so doing, the manual minimizes possible tensions with the local

theistic religious culture that could result from the concept of Buddhism as being nontheistic or worse atheistic. Bhante Punjabi asserts that “it’s incorrect to say that Buddhists are atheists, because *when you say that Buddhists are atheists you are saying that Buddhists are bad people...* therefore I say Buddhists are neither theistic nor atheistic.... Buddhists don’t believe in a creator but they believe in gods” (personal interview 2009).

The preceding testimony, perhaps, reveals Buddhism’s ideal, the “middle way,” in dealing with its ambient religious “other,” which is treading in between two extremes: fierce confrontation or traceless assimilation with the ambient non-Buddhist culture. Both options could be detrimental for a minority religion’s survival. The broadly defined Buddhist concept of god(s) tends to avoid both extremes, and it maintains Buddhist integrity. So doing, it suggests that Buddhism is a religion of harmony—a claim that follows from the reinterpretation of the core teaching related to Buddhist way of life.

The *Ariya Atthangika Magga* is translated as “The Supernormal Eightfold Way” along with the following eight components (2001: 50)

1. Harmonious Perspective (*Samma Ditthi*)
2. Harmonious Visualization (of goal) (*Samma Samkappa*)
3. Harmonious Speech (*Samma Vaca*)
4. Harmonious Action (*Samma Kammanta*)
5. Harmonious Lifestyle (*Samma Ajiva*)
6. Harmonious Practice (*Samma Vayama*)
7. Harmonious Attention (*Samma Sati*)
8. Harmonious Equilibrium (*Samma Samadhi*)

Here, the term *samma* is translated as *harmonious* instead of *right*, the common English translation. The word *right* carries a spiritual arrogance along with a hegemonic truth claim. That is, if one says Buddhist livelihood or perspective is right, it implies that

other life styles or other perspectives are wrong. It carries a self-asserting assumption and other-denying rhetoric, which may induce religious intolerance and inter-personal tension. It may also impede interreligious enquiry, respect, and understanding.

From a broader perspective, the term “harmonious” embodies the comprehensive meaning of the “Middle Path”, a synonym for the Eightfold Path. Generally, the term “Middle Path” envisions a life of balance that transcends two extremes of living, namely extreme sensual gratification and self-torture or self-denial. I find the term “harmonious” to be sensitive to the pluralistic society of Toronto. It endorses a Buddhist way of life in a pluralistic society but does not necessarily nullify other ways of life. This context-sensitive interpretation begs the question of the authenticity of interpretation under discussion. For that, I will turn to the criteria in the Theravada Buddhism that legitimate appropriation and interpretation of the tradition.

A Buddhist Hermeneutic Perspective

The reinterpretation of Buddhist concepts and practices as found in *Teaching Buddhism to Children* draws upon the interpretative criteria found in the Pali canon. The *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*⁴⁶ (Walshe 1995: 255) lays out how to assess the authority and authenticity of interpretations. This Pali *Sutta* instructs that the authority of *sutta* (doctrinal discourses) and *vinaya* (disciplinary collections) surpasses all individual and communal authorities. In this particular *Sutta*, the Buddha states that one may claim that “this is the Dhamma, this is the discipline, this is the Master’s teachings,” and s/he could justify the claims, saying that they heard them from “the Lord’s own lips... a community

⁴⁶ This Pali discourse is referred as to DN 16 (Pali Text Society).

of elders and distinguished teachers...many elders who are learned, bearers of the tradition...[or] one elder who is learned” (Walshe 1995: 255). The Buddha instructs monks that such claims should be compared to and scrutinized side by side with the Buddha’s doctrine and discipline. The claims should be accepted as “the words of the Buddha” if only they accord with the doctrine and discipline. If the claims contradict or do not conform to the doctrine and discipline, the monks should conclude that “[a]ssuredly this is not the word of the Buddha” (1995: 225). Here, the authority of doctrinal and disciplinary guidelines is equal to the authority of the Buddha himself.

Similarly, the *Sutta* also situates a formally constituted community, a group of several and one single learned senior monk in alignment with the Buddha himself, as the supreme authority in the Buddhist tradition. This in fact shapes the traditional understanding of who holds the authority in interpreting the words of the Buddha, and it explains how to assess the authenticity of interpretation given. The sequence of criteria mentioned in the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta* recalls that, after the Buddha, the Sangha holds the highest authority, followed by a few senior learned monks. A single senior learned monk holds the least authority, even though, he remains authoritative within the tradition. Regardless of who authorizes the interpretation, the Pali *sutta* indicates that the authenticity of the interpretation ultimately depends on its accordance with doctrinal discourses (*sutta*) and disciplinary collection (*vinaya*).

As I noted above, Bhante Punnaji, the most senior learned monk within the Sri Lankan Buddhist community in Toronto, bears the responsibility to reinterpret the terms under discussion. The personal authority involved is well aligned with the traditional criteria, though it is the least authoritative voice identified in the discourse. However,

Bhante Punnaji's interpretation does accord with the early Pali doctrinal discourse (*sutta*), the supreme authority in the Theravada Buddhism. Here, I would like to discuss Bhante Punnaji's interpretation of the Pali adjective "*samma*" of the Eight-fold Path as "harmonious." The Eight-fold Path or the Fourth Noble Truth represents the overall Buddhist way of life.

By adopting the term "harmonious" as an adjective to describe the Buddhist perspective (i.e., harmonious Perspective), Buddhist lifestyle (i.e., harmonious Lifestyle) and other components of the Eight-fold Path, Bhante Punnaji invokes a positive sentiment of Buddhism. One may argue that the term "harmonious" captures the popular Western imagination of Buddhism being a religion of peace, of non-violence, and of non-confrontation (Shiu 2010: 108). However, this interpretation derives from the *Madhupindika Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikaya*,⁴⁷ one of the early middle-length doctrinal discourses in the Pali Canon. In this particular discourse, answering the questions "What does the recluse [the Buddha] assert, what does he proclaim?" the Buddha utters:

Friend, I assert and proclaim such [a teaching] that one does not quarrel with anyone in the world with its gods, its Maras, and its Brahmas, in this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its princes and its people; such [a teaching] that perceptions no more underlie that brahmin who abides detached from sensual pleasures, without perplexity, shorn of worry, free from craving for any kind of being (Nanamoli and Bodhi1995: 201).

The Buddha's reply illustrates that what the Buddha taught promotes external and internal harmony. The words like "gods" "princes" and "people" imply that the Buddha's teaching advocates harmony at religious, political, and social levels. In the second section of the answer, the Buddha highlights that his teaching also brings harmony at psychological and spiritual levels. This internal harmony derives from the

⁴⁷ This Pali discourse is referred to as MN 18 (Pali Text Society).

detachment of sensual pleasure, mental worries, and latent craving. Elucidating his choice of the term “harmonious” to replace the more commonly used term “right” for the Pali term “*samma*,” Bhante Punnaji states,

Samma has nothing to do with right or wrong. It refers to harmony. It is the opposite of conflict....The Buddha was looking at the same world with a different way; that is a harmonious perspective. If you look at it [the world] in a harmonious way, you will not come with conflict with anyone in the world, and you won't come into conflict with reality. When I use the word “harmonious perspective,” what it means is that you are not in conflict with not only with reality, but also with other religions and other people and even with yourself. (Personal interview, 2009)

What we see here is a definition of Buddhism: Buddhism is a particular perspective that brings harmony into diverse relationships as one relates to oneself, to fellow humans, to nature and, in sum, brief to the internal, social, and natural realities in the world. The discourse of harmony is one of the core aspects of the inclusive interpretation, and according to Bhante Punnaji it derives from the Pali canon. This canonical definition of Buddhism re-surfaces in a Buddhist educational curriculum guide to teach Buddhism to those who are born and/or raised in multicultural and multi-religious Toronto.

Moreover, the reinterpretation of Buddhist terms and practices under discussion is understood as a response to “the demands of the ‘religio-cultural’ diversity” in Toronto (Chandrasekera 2001: 2). By connecting their reinterpretation to the Pali canon, Bhante Punnaji and others in the community claim that they are in accordance with their “original” teachings of the Buddha. This stance gives them liberty and legitimacy to undertake “intelligent adaptation,” which means making Buddhism viable to new location while maintaining its integrity. Thus, “intelligent adaption” epitomizes the agency of Sri Lankan Buddhists living in Toronto in shaping the Buddhist tradition for

transmission to their Canadian-born children. It also relates to a set of implications related to Buddhism within Asian Buddhist immigrants in North America.

First Implication: Cultural Reconfiguration of Buddhism

Inclusive interpretation exemplifies, albeit in a micro yet significant form, the cultural configuration of Buddhism in contemporary North America. Reinterpretation of Buddhist concepts and practices is the leading trend in this process, which makes Buddhism what Alasdair MacIntyre (2000) calls a “tradition of enquiry” (x). He says a tradition of enquiry is rooted in historical conditions, as shaped by the beliefs, institutions, texts, and practices of a particular community. As the founding context, time, and place change, the tradition and its adherents face an “epistemological crisis,” which requires intellectual as well as practical response. As “the inhabitants of a particular community” respond to the particular epistemological crisis, traditional beliefs are reformulated and practices are remade. MacIntyre says such change in tradition takes place not only for intellectual reasons, but also for practical concerns such as human relations with fellow beings, with wider society, and with nature in general (2000: 209). If the tradition represents a culture that is significantly different from the ambient and dominant culture, then it undergoes a cultural reconfiguration.

David McMahan (2008) identifies two specific ways in which Buddhism as a tradition reconfigures itself in its dialogue with the culture of the Western society. He contends

I underline the fact that a tradition that is introduced into a new cultural context...must re-create itself in terms of the prevalent intellectual discourse, as well as the tacit background understanding of a society. The former are

important especially for a tradition that, like Buddhism, has appealed mostly to educated cultural elites in the West and has therefore had to make a distinctive intellectual case for itself. But perhaps more important for success is that the tradition be able to engage with a culture's lived world. (15)

The pertinent inclusive interpretation relates to Sri Lankan Buddhists' "tacit background understanding" of Canadian society. The lived world in Toronto is comprised of religious diversity, secular sensibilities, and the public policies of multiculturalism. The inclusive interpretation engages with religious (both non-Theravada and non-Buddhist) sentiments, and the concept of the Buddha is variously explained so that not only diverse Buddhists but also non-Buddhists can relate. Secular ethics are acknowledged and validated by aligning them with basic Buddhist ethical principles. Perhaps more importantly, the reinterpreted Buddhism advocates and embodies the celebrated virtue of harmony in Canadian multiculturalism. The prescribed Buddhist way of life—the Eight Fold Path—is explained as a harmonious way of living that neither threatens nor disturbs diverse (religious and secular) ways of living. In so doing, the reinterpreters make Buddhism a highly viable tradition for a multicultural society.

The reinterpretation of Buddhist concepts and practices in Toronto is a repetition of an old Buddhist response that has taken place in other times and places, and continues to take place. It echoes the late 19th and early 20th-century Buddhist revivalists, who, among other things, reinterpreted Buddhism to reflect on salient modern values: rationalism, science, human agency, and this-worldly spirituality. For instance, the revivalists argued that *Nibbana*, the ideal goal of Buddhism, was achievable within this life and encouraged the seeking of *Nibbana* here and now. An understanding of *kamma* (*karma* in Sanskrit) as predestination was replaced with a positive and active

connotation as the “greatest awareness of human responsibility and human freedom” (Smith 1968: 213). *Kamma* was conceived as a significant way in which one’s intentional actions affect this life. Therefore, one can transform it with one’s wilful action. Similarly, interpreters in Toronto have delved into the foundational teachings—the early Pali discourses in the *Sutta Pitaka*—to reinterpret the key Buddhist terms and practices. They continue their predecessors’ legacy, but with their own purpose.

Obeyesekere (2006) argues that from early on Buddhism was presented to the West in ways that would be favourable to the anti-theistic orientation of the 19th century Western intellectuals (71). It has persisted in shaping the Western perception of Buddhism as a god(s)-free religion to the present day. In the earlier discussion, I noted that Buddhists in Toronto resist the atheistic portrayal of Buddhism by juxtaposing the Buddhist concept of gods/deities with the theistic concept of God. They harmonize Buddhism with the dominant theistic religious culture, but at the same time, they also maintain the integrity of Theravada Buddhism by emphasizing self-reliance, an individualistic cultural appeal in Buddhism. Tweed (1992) insists that Buddhism was initially introduced to North America in accordance with the Victorian cultural values such of individualism, activism, and optimism (xxiii). In alignment with this intellectual history of Buddhism, Sri Lankan Buddhists exercise their sense of agency by selectively incorporating the legacy of Buddhist history in modern times. The inclusive interpretation discussed above stands for “a shared interpretative discourse,” an important aspect in intergenerational transmission of the Buddhist tradition (McLellan 2009: 165). The new nuances and emphases embedded in inclusive interpretation are conditioned by new socio-cultural and political realities, specifically the minority status.

Second Implication: The Minority Status

The role of religion partly depends on the social status of its adherents. Fenggang Yang and Helen Rose Ebaugh (2001) argue that “the dynamics, strategies, and achievements of...immigrant religious groups are strongly influenced by their religious status” (376). In other words, immigrant religious groups behave differently depending on their status of minority or majority. These social realities also sometimes frame two opposing religio-political agendas of immigrant religious groups. For example, Prema Kurien (2007) notes that “American supporters of Hindutva demand a Hindu state in India which would deny Indian minority groups many of the basic rights that Hindu Indians enjoy in the United States” (160). I suggest that minority status also propels (if not compels) immigrant religious groups to differentiate themselves from “unpopular” aspects of their religion. For instance, the Sri Lankan Buddhists⁴⁸ in Toronto rarely associate with, publicly espouse the religious majority discourse, often known as the “Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalism.”⁴⁹ In my fieldwork, I have noticed that they had strategically avoided the issue in two ways. First, they squarely categorize the related civil war in north and east Sri Lanka as a government’s fight against terrorism, or as “purely” an ethnic tension. With this strategy, they seem to evade any incongruous relationship between the Buddhist virtue of nonviolence and the violence associated with the majority discourse. Secondly, they also downplay the discourse as irrelevant in the Canadian context.

⁴⁸ A comparison between Sri Lankan Buddhist and Indian Hindu immigrants would be interesting as they resemble each other in their socio-economic and religio-political status. Like in India, religion in Sri Lanka is highly politicized. Similar to Hindus in India, Buddhists in Sri Lanka also enjoy the majority status. However, both groups are minorities in the diaspora.

⁴⁹ The discussion of this issue often associates with the decades-long Sinhala-Tamil civil war in Sri Lanka.

Although Sinhala nationalistic sentiment is noticeable within the community, Buddhist temples in Toronto rarely advocate Sinhala nationalism. Particularly, religious leadership actively downplays the sentiment. These tactics reveal the pressures on a minority religious group, which makes them acutely conscious of their social image in the wider society. Unlike the majority, the minority cannot afford to take for granted what others think about them and their relationship with the “other.” In fact, Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto are not only a religious minority but also an ethnic minority in relation to the Tamils in Toronto, who are a minority in Sri Lanka. This reversed double minority status echoes Sharon Suh’s (2004) observation of “a perceived double psychological burden” experienced by Korean Buddhists in defining and locating themselves in Los Angeles (167). Being an ethnic and religious minority—specifically in the presence of a larger co-national group, yet with different ethnic, religious, and political loyalties i.e., Sri Lankan Tamils in Toronto—makes Sri Lankan Buddhists more sensitive and cautious in their relations with the majority discourse of Sri Lanka. The Toronto Mahavihara in Scarborough suffered from suspicious arson attacks in 2009,⁵⁰ while the Sri Lankan government armed forces were about to bring the final military defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The other Sri Lankan temples in Toronto were also on high security alert. Even in these situations, the Sinhalese Buddhist nationalistic discourse remained dormant.⁵¹

⁵⁰No suspects were arrested for the incidents; however, the media reports as well as many Sinhalese in Toronto related the cases to the civil war in Sri Lanka.

⁵¹ I wonder how Buddhists would have responded to the incidents, if it had happened in Sri Lanka, specifically in the Buddhist populated areas.

In the context of a minority, the non-confrontational discourse expressed in the inclusive interpretation supplants its predecessor, the self-asserting discourse of “Protestant Buddhism.” Gananath Obeyesekere (1970) argues that Buddhist revivalists in Sri Lanka interpreted Buddhism in accordance with Protestant Christian norms, principles, and rhetoric. They did so, Obeyesekere explains, to protest against Christianity and the British colonial power. Even sympathetic readers of the 19th century Buddhist discourses in Sri Lanka suggest that, although revivalists are not directly responsible for the later developed Sinhala-Tamil ethnic violence, revivalists’ antagonistic perception of “the other” (the British and Christian evangelists) took a new form, i.e., the Tamil in the post-colonial Sri Lanka (Harris 2006). This colonial and postcolonial confrontational discourse has been reversed in Toronto. Buddhist agents interpret Buddhism in a way that the Buddhist and non-Buddhist “other” could relate. Certainly, this shift in discourse has derived from the changes in time, geography, and society, but perhaps the status of minority also contributes to the non-confrontational interpretation. It not only shapes our understandings of what Buddhism is in a minority context, but also displays the constructive role of a religion in a religiously diverse and secularly oriented society.

Third Implication: Participatory Role of Buddhism in a Secular World

In a modern, cosmopolitan pluralistic society, secularism seems to override other worldviews, including the religious ones. John Biles and Humera Ibrahim (2005) argue that in the contemporary Canadian public discourses, such as immigration and multiculturalism, religion is referred to with extreme caution. They identify a few

reasons for such caution, including the “fear that religion is inherently intolerant and therefore a threat to the ‘Canadian diversity model’ itself” (166). This fear derives from early modern Christian denominational rivalry. It is perpetuated by secularism to separate religion from politics, by legitimating itself as a political and governmental doctrine. Talal Asad contends that secularism not only separates religion from politics, but it also “presupposes new concepts of ‘religion,’ ‘ethics,’ and ‘politics,’ and new imperatives associated with them” (2001: 2). In other words, secularism as a political doctrine dictates where religion should be, and that is in the private sphere—the privatization of religion. Likewise, secularism also assumes that religion needs to tone down its exclusive, self-assertive, and other-denying aspects if the latter wishes to play a role in the wider society. Accordingly, secularism and the secular atmosphere in Toronto have contributed to the emergence of the inclusive interpretation of Buddhism. One could put the argument the other way around: Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto have positively responded (exercising their agency) to the pluralistic, yet secularly oriented society of Toronto with an inclusive interpretation of Buddhism. Their inclusiveness shapes how Sri Lankan Buddhists respond to the ongoing debate on funding parochial religious schools in the province of Ontario. This case in point delineates the implications of inclusive interpretation within its own context—religion and education.

A brief history of religion and education in Ontario is warranted to grasp what inclusive interpretation stands for in the context of a multicultural and multi-religious society like Canada. From the very beginning, public education in Canada evolved as a part of Christian missions by Anglican, Catholic, and Protestant denominations. By the mid-19th century, schools in Ontario evolved into two parallel systems. Public schools

were Anglican and Protestant, and separate schools were mainly Roman Catholic.

Section 93 in *The British North American Act (1867)* guaranteed public funding for both public and separate schools as an essential step in the federation of Canada (Johns 1985: 96). During the 1960s, however, the provisions for confessional Christian religious education in Ontario public schools were challenged by the emergence of secularism as a viable worldview. At the same time, the increase of religious diversity through immigration in the 1970s and 1980s also caused a change in teaching religion in public schools.

In response to the preceding social trends, the public school board in Ontario has implemented some changes in teaching religion. Under Keiller Mackay's recommendation in 1966, confessional religious education was replaced with a more religiously neutral moral and values education. In 1971, a course on world religions was introduced. The 1982 adoption of *The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* brought further changes in teaching religion in public schools. Religion-based moral education contradicts individual freedom of conscience and religion as guaranteed in the charter. Accordingly, in 1991 the Ministry of Education in Ontario adapted a policy that refers only to "education about religion" that allows instruction and study of religion, but not indoctrination and practice of religion.⁵² Consequently, religion has become just another secular subject in public schools, but the secular turn had no impact on the constitutional right of Catholic schools in receiving public funds. This pseudo-

⁵² For a detailed account of teaching religion in Ontario's public schools, please see "Education about religion in Ontario Public Elementary Schools" (Choquette, Vachon, and Wideman). It is available at the official website of Ontario Ministry of Education at <<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curricul/religion/religioe.html>> accessed on May 10, 2010.

secularization of public education has been challenged by minority religious communities in Toronto, as they demand public funds to maintain their own religious schools.⁵³

Minorities' demands for parochial schools represent one end of the spectrum of religious response to secularized public education. The other end is the call for equal and better representation of all religions in public schools. Generally, Buddhists in Ontario fall into the latter end. They neither have established Buddhist schools, nor have they lobbied for public funding for independent religious schools.⁵⁴ As such, Bruce Matthews, in relation to Buddhism in Canada, states that "it is fair to conclude that Buddhism is a religion free of dogmatic fundamentalism, esoteric restrictions or unusual demands for parochial schooling" (Matthews 2006: xxi). Buddhists do, however, ask for better representation of all religions in public school curricula. Lois Sweet (1997) notes that, in the mid-1990s fifty Buddhist temples in Toronto lobbied the World Interfaith Education Association of Ontario for better representations of all religions in public schools (251). These observations show the Buddhist reluctance to accept religiously segregated schools, even though they do not explain the reasons behind the Buddhist

⁵³ David Seljak (2005) reports that there are 32 Jewish day schools, 31 Muslim schools, and some Sikh schools in the province of Ontario (185). Certain Jewish and Muslim groups with independent religious schools argue that their charter rights are undermined by the fact that their community schools receive no public funds, while Catholic schools do. For this reason, they have taken legal actions against the Ontario's provincial government, but they have been less successful in their demand for equal right in education (Zine 2008: 38).

⁵⁴ The Shambhala School in Halifax, Nova Scotia, is the only day school in Canada established by a Buddhist community, in 1993. It denies an exclusive connection to Buddhism, rather it identifies as "a non-religious school that believes all students possess natural intelligence and curiosity as well as a desire to belong to a harmonious community" (Shambhala School) available at <<http://www.shambhalaschool.org/about.html>> accessed on May 01, 2010.

response. They also tend to give the impression that Buddhists in Toronto share a general consensus on this issue, which might not be the case.

I observe that Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto alone fall into three categories, namely those who support, oppose or remain undecided on the issue of parochial schools. Many Sri Lankan Buddhists tend to favour the idea of a Buddhist day school. Seventy percent of them say yes to the survey question: "If you have a choice, would you send your child(ren) to a Buddhist day school similar to a Catholic school?" Similarly, a group interview with ten parents provides the same expression (7 yes, 1 no, and 2 undecided). However, as the discussion unfolded, many of them withdrew their support for Buddhist day schools for economic, social, and philosophical reasons. Many cannot and/or do not want to bear additional high costs for their children's basic education while they pay taxes for public education.

Many Dhamma teachers and some parents oppose parochial day schools for social reasons. They insist that a parochial school system is socially detrimental. They believe that, in the long run, it would threaten the social and religious harmony of a multicultural society by segregating younger generations on religious lines. A 50 year-old father of two children says that "What I feel is that when multi-religious and multicultural people fall into one category they start respecting more [each other]...it makes the ground to co-exist; the public school is a better choice." The underlying assumption is that parochial schools would segregate Buddhist children and hinder their integration into mainstream society. Expressing her opinion about the absence of Buddhist day schools, a middle-aged mother and Dhamma teacher says that "actually, I do not mind that because I do not need it; if we come to this country ...we need our

children move with [the] wider culture...we do not [want] lock them [up]." Some also refer to the cultural disparity among the contemporary Buddhists in Toronto as a reason not to have a Buddhist day school. Linguistic and ethno-cultural diversity among Buddhists in Toronto often overshadow a shared religious philosophy, and thereby obstruct the formation of a collective Buddhist identity (McLellan 1999: 209). Without an effective Buddhist co-religiosity in Toronto, the implementation of Buddhist schools is unlikely.

A few respondents highlight that Buddhism differs from other religions; as such, they argue that there is no need for Buddhist day schools. One father states that "since Buddhism is not a religion, but it is a way of life, we should not fall into that category [of those who demand for parochial religious day schools]." This reluctance derives from a philosophical or epistemological conceptualization. Buddhist leaders with whom I spoke find the Western education system scarcely contradicts their religious and educational values. The above-discussed financial, socio-cultural, and epistemological reasons explain the absence of independent Buddhist schools in Ontario.⁵⁵ These reasons, I would say, justify the Buddhist reluctance for parochial schools. At the same time, the inclusive interpretation of Buddhism goes with a Buddhist call for better representation of all religions in public schools. Perhaps, more importantly, it suggests how a religion could or should be taught in the multicultural and multi-religious social setting.

⁵⁵ Paul Numrich (2009) identifies the same three reasons for the absence of parochial schools among the Japanese-American Buddhists, the earliest established Buddhist community in North America (198-199).

Conclusion

I have contended that “intelligent adaptation” captures the agency of the first-generation Buddhists. Specifically, the monks redefine the tradition in the Canadian multicultural and multi-religious context by omitting certain aspects of Sri Lankan Buddhism while reinterpreting certain concepts and practices within the tradition. The contents of *Teaching Buddhism to Children* demonstrate an inclusive hermeneutic effort to reflect socio-religious diversity of Toronto. As such, I call the effort an “inclusive interpretation.” I have illustrated how reinterpreted Buddhist concepts and practises echo Buddhist, non-Buddhist (theistic), and secular sentiments. Thus, inclusive interpretation demonstrates “an integration strategy” (Grant 2007) of the Toronto-based Sri Lankan Buddhists, who wish to “participate fully as citizens of their new country” (92). The Buddhism that emerges in the inclusive interpretation is a religion of harmony that acknowledges and respects the religious and secular “other.”

As discussed above, the source of this positive image lies within one of the earliest Pali discourses (the *Madhupindika Sutta*).⁵⁶ It means that the inclusive interpretation neither originates in Toronto, nor is it an invention of the monks in Toronto. Not being original, however, does not diminish the agency of contemporary interpreters. Rather, the textual inspiration (if not reliance) in fact legitimates their agency. None of these issues, however, eclipse the importance of enquiring why now and in Toronto the harmonious discourse comes to the fore. As I discussed earlier, the inclusive interpretation signifies a cultural configuration and participatory role of a minority religion. Buddhism, being a religion in the diaspora, is shaped by its minority

⁵⁶ This Pali discourse is referred to as MN 18 (Pali Text Society).

status, the multicultural and multi-religious (yet secular) social background of Toronto, which are all contributing and conditioning (but not determining) factors for the inclusive interpretation to emerge.

The act of omission is also an integral part of “intelligent adaption.” Particularly, the Sinhalese Buddhist nationalistic discourse has been excised in Toronto. In addition to the discourse’s irrelevance to the Canadian context, the Western preconception of Buddhism may also contribute to the omission. For example, Phra Kantipalo, a Theravada monk of Western origin, vividly notes that “[t]he nationalist mixture in Asian Buddhism is unattractive to Westerners, much of it being merely exotic while some features of it are repulsive and actually anti-Buddhist” (Khantipalo 1990: 30). If this is the case, the Western perception of Buddhism also partly shapes the emerging Buddhism in Toronto. Then the question is does the positive image of Buddhism as a religion of harmony, as implied in the inclusive interpretation, also relate to the Western perception of Buddhism. The connection seems to be too obvious to miss.

Referring to public projection of Buddhism in the West, Henry Shiu (2010) observes that “[a]lmost always Buddhism is depicted as gentle, non-violent, ‘nice,’ so much so that there is a danger that an overly positive stereotype is being created” (108). This positive image could be a double-edge sword for two reasons. First, it can impose a certain mode of being Buddhist or Buddhist identity that may obscure and control the real life experience of living Buddhists. For example, McLellan and White (2005) observe that some residents in the Caledon area in Toronto resisted the Wat Lao Veluwanaram on the basis of their “popular notions of Buddhist practice” (244). Second, the positive image represents a significant power of religion in a secular world,

where diverse religions compete with each other to attract new adherents. The first generation's "intelligent adaption" in its total spectra—the omission, addition, and reinterpretation—exemplifies how Sri Lankan Buddhists have capitalized the positive image of Buddhism to define who they are.

Referring to identity construction in the private sphere, Charles Taylor observes that "[w]e define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us" (1992: 32-33). Taylor defines the term "significant others" as "others who matter to us" (32). Questions such as who matters to us and why they matter are worth exploring because they make us understand the intricacies of individual and group identity formation. At the same time, the questions may lead us to various, even contradictory answers. However, the causal connections between them may convince us of the existence of power sharing. In other words, defining our identity with or against our significant others often results in certain complements and consequences respectively. The outcomes manifest in binary forms, namely approval or condemnation, consideration or indifference, exclusion or inclusion, marginalization or integration, etc. These corresponding actions embody the vibrant yet volatile struggle over recognition.

If we can extend Taylor's insight into the dialogical principle of the identity formation to the public sphere, we may decipher how immigrant religious groups also reconstruct their communal identities through redefinition of their religious traditions, because religion has become a salient individual and group identity marker in resettlement (Williams 1988; McLellan 1999; Kurien 2007). If the process of identity formation is truly dialogical, the wider society or the majority also undergoes an identity

change. However, the positive and negative outcomes within the dialogical process matter more to the minorities than the majorities. Accordingly, the positive image—Buddhism as religion of harmony—expressed in the inclusive interpretation encapsulates the first generation’s response to “the demands of the ‘religio-cultural’ diversity” in Toronto (Chandrasekera 2001: 2). In other words, the image of harmony resonates with what the majority “significant others” (whose opinions do matter) expect a minority religion to be. It also meets the internal standards found in the Pali canon. In bringing this image to the centre, the first-generation Sri Lankan Buddhists exercise their agency to facilitate the transmission of the Buddhist tradition to the second generation, but we will see in the next chapter that the latter, too, become Buddhist agents in their own terms as they receive the inherited Buddhist tradition.

Chapter Five

A Culturally Negotiated Buddhist Tradition

Introduction

The Sigala Sutta in the *Dighanikaya*⁵⁷ prescribes that it is a parental obligation to restrain their children from the evil (*papanivarenti*) and establish them in the good (*kalyanenivesenti*). The same Pali discourse suggests that a good child promises that “I will keep up the family tradition” (*kulavamsamthapessami*) (Walshe 1996: 468). Although the term “family tradition” does not specify a religious tradition, one can argue that in the context of parental duties related to good and evil, the term refers to religious tradition. At least that is how it has been interpreted within the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition. This scriptural reference explicitly authorizes the intergenerational transmission of the inherited (Buddhist) tradition. Sri Lankan Buddhists (monks, Dhamma teachers, parents, and grand parents alike) invoke this discourse repeatedly. As such, the transmission of the Buddhist tradition marks one of the significant aspects of intergenerational dynamics in Sri Lankan Buddhism in Sri Lanka as well as in the diaspora.

Paul David Numrich (1996), who studied Buddhists from Sri Lanka in Los Angeles, discerns an important trend within Sri Lankan Buddhism in the diaspora. He observes that “Dharma Vijaya’s [the Sri Lankan Buddhist temple in Los Angeles] leaders made a comprehensive programming decision to divorce Sinhalese culture from Buddhist religion” (102), and “Sinhalese parents there do not...stress the inculcation of Sinhalese cultural identity in America” (107). He interprets the leaders’ decision and parental concern as an “ethnic isolation” (107). He concludes that “this divorce has not

⁵⁷ This Pali discourse is referred to as DN 31 (Pali Text Society).

been fully successful” (102), nor has it facilitated the transmission. Instead, the decision, Numrich argues, impedes the transmission of the Buddhist tradition to the second generation (97). Numrich’s observation of Sri Lankan Buddhists’ conceptual separation is in fact an important one, as it relates to a wider trend within the Sri Lankan Buddhists in the diaspora.

I notice that Toronto’s Sri Lankan Buddhists also tend—it is a tendency more than a decision—to differentiate Buddhism, which they call Dhamma, from culture. This tendency has a long history within Buddhism in Sri Lanka, where it facilitated the attempt to particularize Buddhist tradition. For example, a caste-free monastic tradition, reintroduced from Thailand and Burma during the 18th and 19th centuries respectively, took a new form as a caste-oriented tradition with the influence of the Sinhalese ethnic culture. In contrast, the Buddhist reformism in the late 19th and early 20th century in Sri Lanka separated Buddhist abstract concepts from their ambient culture and interpreted them along with modern universal values: freedom of thought, individual rights, and social equality. With this historical backdrop, the discourse that Buddhism is something different from culture plays a different role in Toronto, where it becomes a yardstick in the intergenerational transmission of the Buddhist tradition.

I draw upon Numrich’s observation of Sri Lankan Buddhists’ tendency to separate Buddhism from culture, but I do not entirely agree with his interpretation of it and the conclusion he draws. I suggest that Sri Lankan Buddhists’ tendency to distinguish Buddhism from the Sinhalese ethnic culture is a part and parcel of the ongoing cultural negotiation between the first- and second-generation Buddhists rather than an “ethnic isolation.” This tendency becomes a strategy as the first-generation

Buddhists are motivated to pass at least their religion (if not Sinhalese ethnic culture) on to their children. To measure the effectiveness of this strategy is a subjective goal—depending on how one looks at it—as a task for the faithful Sri Lankan Buddhists themselves. Here, I contend that Sri Lankan Buddhists’ tendency to separate Buddhism from culture becomes a transmitting strategy which determines what aspects of the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition is transmitted to the second generation. To elucidate this issue, I discuss the roles of both generations in Toronto, and I conclude that what has been transmitted from the first- to the second-generation in Toronto is a culturally negotiated Buddhist tradition.

I divide this chapter into two main parts, with subheadings in each. Part one concentrates on the process of negotiation, while the second half of the chapter discusses the outcome of negotiation. I begin with a brief explanation of what I mean by cultural negotiation. With reference to Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto, I argue that a cultural negotiation is underway in three steps: intergenerational culture criticism, Buddhism-ethnic culture separation, and cross-cultural integration. These aspects of cultural negotiation speak loudly about the agency of the first generation in the process of transmission of the tradition.

Upon conclusion of that discussion, I then delineate the multiple layers of agency shared by the first and second generations. Here, I discuss how the Buddhist emphasis on self-agency has played out in Buddhism in North America, and how Sri Lankan Buddhists understand it in the process of transmission. I also explain how both generations’ agencies are materialized in multicultural, multireligious yet secularly oriented Toronto.

The second half of the chapter highlights what constitutes culturally negotiated Buddhism. I argue that the culturally negotiated Buddhist tradition is dominated by a modern Buddhist discourse, i.e., Buddhism as a way of life. This particular discourse invokes the varying cultural connotations of both generations, and it downplays neo-traditional Buddhist discourse, which emphasizes metaphysical beliefs, practices, and motivations. More importantly, the emergent discourse also favours a secular mode of being Buddhist that manifests in three spectra: developing, re-claiming, and generalized Buddhist identities.

PART I: The Process of Negotiation

Cultural Negotiation

I use the term *cultural negotiation* to refer to a dialogical relationship on the basis of cultures between the first- and second-generation Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto. It is dialogic at two levels, interpersonal as well as intercultural. The two cultures in question are the Sinhalese ethnic culture of the first generation and the North American culture of their descendents who are born and/or raised in Toronto. Generally, the former orients toward collectivism, in which group concerns, values, and communal expectations are prioritized, while the latter centres on individualism, which prioritizes personal interest, feeling, and reason as the driving forces (Triandis 1995). The process of cultural negotiation is comprised of the following components: (1) critical perspectives on both cultures as expressed by both the first and second generations; (2) Sri Lankan Buddhists' tendency to separate Buddhism from ethnic culture; and (3) their conscious and unconscious integration of both cultures. The quantitative and qualitative

data collected from the Sri Lankan Buddhist community in Toronto document these aspects of cultural negotiation.

Intergenerational Culture Criticisms

The first generation finds a lot of good things in the ambient dominant culture in Toronto. Some of them went so far to say that “it is here [Canada] real Buddhism is practiced; people practice Buddhism even though they are not Buddhists. In principle, there are more Buddhists here than in Sri Lanka; there are more Buddhist values here than in Sri Lanka.” The Buddhist values and principles they find expressed in the ambient culture in Toronto include social ethics, such as equality, mutual respect, fairness, human and animal rights, and so forth. The preceding statements could be read as the immigrants’ justification of leaving their country of origin, as well as their appreciation of their country of current residence and its culture. But, though the Sri Lankan Buddhists appreciate the things they consider to be positive in the surrounding culture, they are also acutely aware of the less-positive side of the culture, which become significant concerns in raising their children in Toronto.

The first generation complains about the influence of individualism in the lives of their children. Many of them consider themselves to be liberal, and, as such, they are less concerned with the individualistic ideology that one is capable of knowing or deciding what is good and bad for oneself in leading a good life. But they believe such a liberal outlook should be gradually incorporated into one’s life as s/he matures with age, knowledge, and understanding. They conceptually understand the importance of individual independence, but this understanding is not culturally materialized. They

prefer their sons and daughters to live under their moral guidance, and they would like to contribute to their children's lifelong decisions in areas such as higher education, career choices, interpersonal relationships, and marriage.

Parental interventions (or moral guidance, as the first generation understand it) in youths' lives trigger intergenerational misunderstanding and cross-cultural criticism. Parents justify their behaviour as "tough love" for the betterment of their offspring. Many youth understand that, but some believe that the parental pressure is also motivated to increase the family fame, to maintain reputation within the community, and to maintain the social face through the achievements of the children. Referring to his parents, one university undergraduate student notes that "parents are very much concerned about social perception of their children...they are very influenced by social perception and stereotypes within the community." In fact, people in the community talk a lot about the emerging generation, and they sometimes evaluate and judge the parents on the basis of children's behaviours and achievements. A young female interviewee observes:

When I go to the socio-cultural events, I notice people are talking nonsense. To sit in between and hear all of it, it is so frustrating...since I was born and grew up here my mentality is different and I get frustrated. I don't like the narrow-mindedness of people who are making judgment on others. There are a lot of judgments on others...It is the gossiping about things in the older community that really bothers me. It seems that parents are so curious about what else's child is doing, but first they should have to see what their child is doing.
(Personal interview, 2009)

The young woman describes her parents' generation as being judgmental, narrow-minded, and intrusive. Other second-generation research respondents echo this description of the first generation. They sometimes find their parents sometimes to be conservative, controlling, and stereotypical. Youth relate these characteristics to their

parents' culture as much as personal traits.⁵⁸ Similar characterization of parents and their culture by immigrant youth is also noted elsewhere (Smith-Hefner 1999; Ong 2003; Zhou 2006). The preceding testimony also indicates youth's depreciation of parental cultural traits, and they often express their frustration in front of the parents and elders.

Parents complain that the expressiveness of the North American culture is increasingly influencing the hierarchical parents-children relationship in the Sinhalese culture. I notice that many of the first-generation respondents, with almost a sense of nostalgia, refer to how obedient they were to their parents, teachers, and elders. They say that such celebrated virtues are missing in the second generation due to opposing cultural values in North America. One young woman who migrated to Canada as an adolescent compares both cultures:

There are a lot of conflicts between the Sinhalese culture and the North American culture. We were growing up in a culture where you are supposed to respect at all times anybody who is older than you. Sometimes it is not always possible to do. Sometimes, you do not agree with the view of the older person, but you are not supposed to go against them. In our culture you are supposed to act like you agree with them. But then in the North American culture, if you do not agree with something you just speak up and stand up. You don't have to agree with everything.... I remember when I was small growing up I was known one of the quietest person, for sure studious but very quiet. In Sri Lanka that was good. It is good thing to be a quiet student. But here it is not. Here in North America you are supposed to raise your hand up, and you are supposed to ask questions. (Personal interview, 2009)

Raising a voice against one's parents, teachers, and elders is considered a sign of disrespect in the Sinhalese culture. Specifically, talking back to parents is understood as the loss of sacredness associated with parenthood.

⁵⁸Unlike tensions between other generations, the tensions between the first and second generations are often interpreted as the influence of the dominant culture of each generation.

In the Sinhalese Buddhist culture, a religious language is often invoked in the respect paid to parents, who are referred to as *gedara budun* (Buddhas at home). The parent-children relationship is defined by children's veneration of and obedience to the parents and performing mutual duties. However, the Buddhist parents I interviewed complain that children in North America are better informed about their rights than their mutual duties. They are influenced by social egalitarianism rather than vertical relationships. A middle-aged mother says "they [children] do not want any lecture from us." Parents associate such youth rebellion to the North American popular culture, characterized by self-indulgence and the lack of religious underpinnings. As such, they perceive that their children are often victimized by materialism, as well as by secular worldviews. This makes the immigrant parents more worried and scared, because they believed that all the sacrifices they have made and the hardships they have been through in resettlement were for a better future of their children. To minimize these legitimate fears and worries, immigrant parents with teenage children seek out co-ethnic organizations and institutions, which tend to become "mediating grounds" between the ethnic and wider cultures (Zhou 2006: 328).

Separation of Buddhism from Ethnic Culture

In the context of Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto, Buddhist temples play significant roles in facilitating both generations' navigation through the two different cultures. They have adopted a two-fold strategy, namely the rejection of the academic label "Sinhala Buddhism" and teaching Buddhism in English to the second generation.

The history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka invokes a symbiotic relationship between Buddhism, the Sinhalese people, and the Sinhala language. Since 1970s, the term *Sinhalese Buddhism* has figured in the titles of many books and articles about Buddhism in Sri Lanka (Bechert 1978; Norman 1978; Reynolds 1972; Saram 1976; Southwold 1983). Defining the term, Deegalle Mahinda (1997) states that “Sinhala Buddhism has two meanings—Buddhism in the Sinhala language and Buddhism practiced by the Sinhala people” (218). Thus, it is a particular form of Buddhism derived from its relation to the Sinhala ethnicity and the Sinhala language. The term, similar to other terms like Buddhism and Hinduism, is a creation of academics.

However, unlike its counterparts, it has been facing continuous resistance from Buddhist practitioners in Sri Lanka, as well as in Toronto. For example, commenting on the Sinhala-Tamil ethnic tension in Sri Lanka, William McGowan wrote an article entitled “Buddhist backlash hobbles Sri Lanka” in the *Globe and Mail* on 27th August 1987. He linked the violence to Sinhala Buddhism, calling it “more fetish than philosophy, more ideology than religion, Sinhala Buddhism is less a path of piety than a way of ostentatiously displaying tribal solidarity.” Commenting on McGowan’s article, the editor of *Toronto Buddhist* wrote that

He [Mc Gowan] is so ignorant as to think that there is a special variety of Buddhism, namely Sinhala Buddhism. He should have known that Buddhism in Sri Lanka is Theravada prevalent also in India and in South-east Asia. There is, therefore, no special branch of Buddhism named Sinhala Buddhism. The writer displays gross ignorance of even the basics of Buddhism (*Toronto Buddhist* vol. ix, no 4.1987).

Similarly, Buddhists from Sri Lanka in Toronto prefer to identify themselves as “Sri Lankan Buddhists” rather than “Sinhalese Buddhists,”⁵⁹ the term coined by Anagarika Dharmapala in the 19th century that carries an ethno-religious political sentiment (Obeyesekere 1975: 251). The outright rejection of an ethno-religious term and the preference for geo-specific, over ethno-specific, self-identity signify Toronto’s Sri Lankan Buddhists’ aspiration to separate Buddhism from ethnic culture. This aspiration manifests in a concrete form during the process of transmission of the Buddhist tradition to the successive generation.

After a few experiments, Sri Lankan Buddhist leaders in Toronto have decided to educate their children in Buddhism in English. The decision has not been free of resistance, and there are a small number of parents who argue that Buddhism should be taught in Sinhala. However, this number is increasingly shrinking, due to many practical reasons, including the lack of the second generation’s knowledge in the Sinhala language. Dharmadasa, a Dhamma school teacher explains,

The first thing I was wondering was that, is it the right thing to teach Dhamma in English to Sri Lankan students who mostly belong to Sinhalese families. When I have discussed this matter with other friends, their explanation was that the children cannot speak in Sinhalese and that’s why we have to teach Buddhism in English. I was in a denial state initially....*My belief was that we should make attempts to teach Dhamma in Sinhalese [then] it is not only the Dhamma we are providing to them, but we are also providing their mother tongue to them.* But then I understand that it would be practically difficult to make them understand Buddhism....*I find that some of our parents, speak in English at home, so that the children are exposed to English culture at home....*So I could understand that the explanation that is given to me by my friends and others that it is difficult to teach Buddhism in Sinhalese to the students who do not understand Sinhalese. *So*

⁵⁹ The terms “Sinhalese/Sinhala Buddhism” and “Sinhalese Buddhist” establish connection between the Sinhalese ethnicity and Buddhism. Buddhists in Sri Lanka may identify themselves as Sinhalese Buddhists, but they hardly use “Sinhala/Sinhalese Buddhism” to refer to the Buddhism they practice. The underlying assumption is that Buddhism has not changed due to the connection.

if you try to teach Dhamma to them in Sinhalese, they would understand neither Dhamma nor the language. (Personal interview, 2009 [emphasis added]).

The preceding interviewee alludes to a few important issues related to the salience of Sinhala language in the context of Dhamma education. First, he refers to a dilemma of how to separate Buddhism from ethnic culture. With his reference to the importance of a mother tongue—a key feature of a culture—in the context of Dhamma education, he invokes the relationship between Buddhism, Sinhalese culture, and language. At the same time, he also implies that what has been taught in the Dhamma school, as the name itself suggests, is nothing but “Dhamma,” a term that is traditionally used to refer to the Buddha’s knowledge and wisdom that transcends specific ethnic and cultural boundaries.

Secondly, Dharmadasa refers to Sinhalese parents’ use of English to communicate with their children. Chandrasekera (2008) observes that only sixty-six percent of Sinhalese parents in Toronto are committed to teaching Sinhala language to their children (179), and they generally converse with their children in English (172). Thus, Sinhalese descendants hardly speak in Sinhala, and, even if their parents communicate in Sinhala, they tend to respond in English. What prevents them from speaking in Sinhala is their “funny” accent that often amuses the first generation. A young woman explains, “I can speak in Sinhalese, but I don’t. I can communicate with my friends, and I do. But at home I don’t. I can understand it perfectly fine. I guess I am shy with my accent. I do not have a Sri Lankan accent, I have a very Canadianized accent. When I talk in Sinhalese, it sounds very funny.”

The Sinhala knowledge of the second generation varies and it is contingent upon by the commitment of their parents which, which is expressed in numerous ways, such as a strict rule of “Sinhala only at home,” the regular visits and the presence of grandparents in Toronto, the second generation’s long visits to Sri Lanka, regular attendance to the heritage language program funded by the regional school board, and reversed migration to Sri Lanka to expose children to the Sinhalese culture. All these sacrifices involve extra costs, commitments, and compromises only a few can afford. I notice that a few, in fact, have made one or more of the above sacrifices to pass their language and culture to the second generation. Above all, the second generation resist their parents’ pressure to learn Sinhala by highlighting the lack of pragmatic application of Sinhala in their everyday life, such as school, entertainment youth culture (TV, music, internet, etc.), and even with their peers, many of whom come from non-Sinhalese ethnic background.

Third, Dharmadasa explains that the choice of English as the medium to teach Buddhism to children was made for practical reasons. Although both English and Sinhala languages are interchangeably used in Buddhist services where both generations participate, English has become a preferred medium in the context of Buddhism. As a prominent member of the community says, "there are a lot of people in our community who surprisingly think that they have heard *a really good sermon* if it is only delivered in English." The survey data also indicate that both generations prefer English to Sinhala. What is more surprising is the thirty percent gap between the first generation’s emphasis on the importance of English (83%) and their emphasis on Sinhala (only 53%). Understandably, this gap increases to forty-five percent in the context of the

second generation. The results are shown below, specifically in the “very important” column of the table.

Please rate how important the following material sources of Buddhist knowledge or inspiration are to you:				
	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	Not Applicable
Published materials on Buddhism in Sinhala	53.5% (f/g) 24% (s/g)	39.5% (f/g) 31.5% (s/g)	6% (f/g) 28.5% (s/g)	1% (f/g) 16% (s/g)
Published materials on Buddhism in English	84% (f/g) 70% (s/g)	12% (f/g) 25% (s/g)	3% (f/g) 3% (s/g)	1% (f/g) 3% (s/g)

Moreover, both generations relate temples to religious identity rather than ethnic identity, and say they come to the temple to maintain religious identity, not ethnic identity. Here, I cite two of seven choices⁶⁰ given in a survey question to highlight the noticeable difference between ethnic and religious inclinations within the community.

Please identify three of your main reasons for going to the temple		
	To maintain ethnic identity	To maintain Buddhist identity
First reason	0.8% (f/g)	6.6% (f/g)
	5.3% (s/g)	12% (s/g)
Second reason	2.6% (f/g)	11.4% (f/g)
	6.7% (s/g)	13.3% (s/g)
Third reason	5.7% (f/g)	18% (f/g)
	13.5% (s/g)	15% (s/g)

Similarly, among the existing temple services, the preservation of ethnic identity/language and cultural events are relatively less expected and less favoured. Sri Lankan Buddhists’ preference of English to Sinhala, relating temples to religious identity than ethnic identity, and their diminished enthusiasm for ethnicity-oriented

⁶⁰ The other choices that were provided in the question are “to maintain/renew social connections, to gain merits, to be a better person, to visit the monks, [and] to learn/practice Buddhism.” Both generations mostly related temple to “to learn/practice Buddhism.”

temple services correlate to their tendency to distinguish ethnicity from Buddhism. Their separation of Buddhism from ethnic culture, I suggest, plays out in two ways. First, ethnicity indicators, like the Sinhala language and music, are not passed on to the second generation as much as religion/Buddhism associated aspects, such as the basic Pali chanting and other Buddhist practices. Second, more importantly the distinction encourages and enables Sri Lankan Buddhists to integrate Buddhism into the North American culture.

Being Friends: a Cross-cultural Integration

As discussed earlier, North American social egalitarian values clash with the hierarchical values of the Sinhalese culture. Nevertheless, in Toronto an integration of these values is noticeable within Buddhist practices, specifically in the context of the monk-laity relationship, as well as in the parent-children interaction. In traditional Sinhalese society, these relationships are layered with social and religious connotations. For example, parents are not simply progenitors, but are also called creators, gods, and even the two Buddhas at home who deserve veneration, hospitality, and respect from their children. On the other hand, monks are considered to be spiritually superior to laity, though they are bound with social obligations and responsibilities, such as providing leadership in social issues. Monks are expected to take action whenever the Buddhist public, nation, and country are under threat from internal and external influences.⁶¹ What we notice in Toronto is that parents and monks juxtapose the

⁶¹ Asanga Thilakeratne (2006) interprets monks' involvement in the Sinhalese-Tamil problem as a calling to the social and national obligation.

religious and social connotations expressed in their roles, and they maintain hierarchical relations in the religious context while integrating egalitarian values in the social context.

Many Buddhist parents whom I interviewed state that they are becoming more like friends with their children. In the Sinhalese culture, the parent-children relationship significantly differs from that of between friends, as the former is vertical while the latter is horizontal. These contrasting relationships are marked not only by how individuals behave in relation to each other, but also by the topics and issues they discuss with each other. In Sinhalese Buddhist culture, sex and drugs are taboo topics for discussion between parents and children. However, these topics are increasingly becoming discussion issues between Sri Lankan Buddhist parents and their children in Toronto. One father of a teenage boy and of a pre-teen girl in Toronto compares his experience with his son to his experience he had with his father in Sri Lanka. He says,

As children we had a lot of respect. We would not even communicate with our parents often. That was due to respect, it was more hierarchical. We would do whatever is asked to do. We would not question. We had a huge gap. But *here we are like friends*. We discuss things. I should say that there are good things that I have brought from Sri Lanka, and there are good things I have learned from this culture as well. *One of the good things is that we ask even a nine-years-old child that 'you have right to ask and to question,' so that we can discuss anything....And, it is that the constant communication here [Toronto] that I lacked with my father [in Sri Lanka]*. There was no need for that because...we had the societal bond. We had the relatives, the whole village knew each other. Therefore there is no way to go into the wrong path like getting to drugs and so on. Here those chances are in abundance, smoking, drugs, underage sex....The world is open in this part of the world, if you want to go wrong path and there are immense opportunities. Due to that I always felt that I need to have constant discussion with them [children] and tell them what is right and what is wrong not just *to order* them but *to guide* them. I would definitely like to have that conversation...I have asked my teenage son that "you can ask anything you want. I would explain all to you." I have made that shift because of that fear or risks of not having constant communication with children would misguide them. (Personal interview, 2009 [emphasis added])

The father explains that he made the shift from a hierarchical value to an egalitarian value to provide effective parental guidance to his children. He remains authoritative but not authoritarian, and to describe this switch he invokes hierarchical (i.e., order) and less hierarchical (i.e., guide) languages. He integrates himself into individualistic values, such as children's right to ask and question. He believes that such a cultural shift is necessitated by the expressiveness of the North American culture, as well as by the absence of extended family and close-knit community in Toronto.

Nevertheless, not all parents have made the cultural shift discussed above. Some try to maintain a hierarchical parents-children relationship, and they lament that teens in the community are losing touch with Sinhalese culture because parents are not strict enough in raising them. A Dhamma teacher criticizes the trend and says "the teens are too westernized. In a way, a lot of things have to do with the parents...I notice that the parents are not parents anymore. They are trying to be friends." While parents try to be friends with their children in order to keep the channel of communication open, they also try to maintain the religious connotation and practices related to parenthood. In this regard, the parents heavily rely on temple services like Dhamma schools, where teachers often emphasize the Buddhist perspective on the parent-children relationship. They encourage Dhamma students to be grateful to their parents and respect them by bowing at their feet. I have seen parents summoned—especially during the Sinhalese New Year—at the Dhamma schools, where students kneel down and bow in front of their parents as Buddhists do in front of Buddha statues. Similarly, monks highlight the parent-children reciprocity in their talks during the memorial services (*pinkam*) dedicated to departed parents or grandparents. Thus we witness that North American

social egalitarian and Buddhist hierarchical values are integrated in the parent-children relationship. This cross-cultural integration is perhaps more noticeable in the context of monk-laity interaction.

In the Theravada Buddhist tradition, lay people greet monks with bows, which are reciprocated with silent or expressed blessing, but never with a similar bow. This symbolizes the religious hierarchy between them. This sense of hierarchy shapes other everyday interactions, such as addressing, giving and taking, sitting, and conversing between them. These vertical interactions are still firmly in place within the Toronto's Sri Lankan Buddhist community. However, one can also discern that the North American egalitarian values are encroaching into the monk-laity relationship.

Once again, we notice that the language of friendliness is visibly present in the interactions between monks and laity. The motto of the one of the temples under study reads "where friendships begin and never end...." Traditionally, the concept of friendship has been prevalent between laity to laity and monastics to monastics, but it is hardly invoked in the context of the monk-laity relationship. Even in the rare instances it does appear, it is more of a religious or spiritual friendship (*kalyanamittata*). Answering to an interview question, "In comparison to Sri Lanka, what has been changed in Toronto?" people repeatedly referred to ways in which they relate to the monks in Toronto. They find the monks are more approachable, understanding, open, and friendly compared to their counterparts in Sri Lanka. A middle-aged woman expresses, "I find the priests [monks] here are friendly with us ...*we talk to them like our friends*. I feel very comfortable and feel very much at ease sitting face to face to discuss things with

monks." The interviewee says that she did not feel the same in Sri Lanka because "priests [monks] in Sri Lanka are elevated."

Similarly, another informant suggests that the openness, expressiveness, and social equality of the North American culture are affecting Buddhism in Toronto. She says that "you can go and sit down and talk to the monks, and they won't look down upon you. *You feel that you are treated as equals.*" These testimonies refer to monks' conscious or unconscious integration of social egalitarian values in their interactions with the laity. For example, it is very common that when people visit the temples in Toronto, the resident monks, as a gesture of hospitality, serve the visitors with Sri Lankan tea and snacks. I have also seen many occasions in which monks gave rides, as a friendly gesture, to temple visitors who rely on public transportation. These services are unthinkable from fully ordained monks in Sri Lanka, but monks in Toronto voluntarily provide these services to the laity. The monks treat the laity as their personal visitors.

One could argue that these adaptations are conditioned by the absence of temple boys (*abbittaya*) in Toronto, but I suggest that they also symbolize the monks' adaptation of social egalitarianism in their interaction with the laity. These adaptations, however, do not compromise the traditional hierarchical monk-laity relationship. Even a blunt observer would notice that the first thing that a Sri Lankan Buddhist (first and second generation alike) does upon their arrival to the temple is to honour the monk (sometimes even before the Buddha) with a bow. The following survey data indicate that the appeal for the top-to-bottom monk-laity relationship is decreased in the context of the second generation, but the majority of both generations still find it relevant in Toronto.

What do you think about the hierarchically defined lay and monastic roles within the North American context?					
	Highly relevant	Relevant	Somewhat relevant	Irrelevant	Not applicable
First Gen.	29%	34%	20.5%	12%	4.5%
Second Gen.	21.5%	25%	23%	16%	14.5%

Perhaps as a response to the egalitarian social setting, the monk-laity hierarchy is diminished in social interactions, but it is still well maintained in the religious context. This echoes the cross-cultural integration in the parents-children relationship discussed above.

The underlying principle that made the cross-cultural integration possible is the Sri Lankan Buddhists' conceptual separation between Buddhism and culture. A middle-aged mother of two youth says,

As parents [who are] bringing Buddhism from the Eastern part of the world to the Western part of the world, we also grab Western values. Having said that, are we practicing Buddhism totally the same way we practiced Buddhism in Sri Lanka? I'd say no! *The practices are different, but has the essence changed? Or has the Dhamma changed? No!* In a different cultural setting we adapt to that cultural situation, and we practice Dhamma. One can say it is a modified way; maybe it is a modified way. Through that modification what we do is not anything other than Dhamma. (Personal interview, 2009)

The preceding testimony relates to an important aspect of the psyche of the faithful. Although social scientists tend to conceptualize religion as (or even to reduce it to) an expression of psychological, social, and cultural processes, the faithful have a different understanding. The interviewee, perhaps due to migration experience, is quite sophisticated in separating Buddhism from culture. She understands perfectly that religious practices are culturally bound, but, for her, there is something more than culture—there is what she calls the Dhamma. Dhamma, for her, is the “essence” of Buddhism and it does not change. She simultaneously locates Buddhism within as well

as outside of history. Understanding the Buddhist tradition this way itself validates novel Buddhist practices, justifies the cross-cultural integration, and determines the inter-generational transmission. Moreover, the first-generation's cultural negotiation speaks loudly about their agency.

Multiple Facets of Agency

The process of transmission of the Buddhist tradition is a dynamic project where multiple agents or agencies are at play. Here, I use the word “agency” to refer to power or authority in decision making and in the effective execution of decisions. The first-generation Buddhists, as transmitters, are very important agents who decide what aspects of the Buddhist tradition should be transmitted, to whom, and how. Yet, the second-generation Buddhists are not merely passive receivers. They themselves are creative agents in interpreting Buddhist teachings and practices. These transmitters, receivers, and the Buddhist tradition in between them are conditioned and constrained within a diasporic context, namely Toronto.

The First Generation as Transmitters

Parents have become the primary transmitters of the Buddhist tradition in Toronto. The first-generation respondents revealed that their religious socialization was more of a “cumulative project.” Whatever they learned at public and Dhamma schools in Sri Lanka was fortified in the family setting, at the community level, and in the wider culture. Therefore, their religious mentors came from a variety of walks of life and through multiple relations with monks, school teachers, parents, grandparents, extended

family members, community members, and so and so forth. Within this wider support system, parents were not necessarily the primary religiously influential figures.

Parents in Toronto lament that these multi-faceted cultural enforcements are not only missing in Toronto, but sometimes their children become confused with contradictory or opposing cultural messages. Many parents feel overwhelmed, specifically in the absence of grandparents, with the sense of responsibility in transmitting Buddhist and Sinhalese cultural values to their children. Ninety percent of the first generation, and sixty-eight percent of the second generation, report that parents and grandparents are as “extremely responsible” for passing the Buddhist tradition to the future generation. When it comes to who are actually influential in leading a Buddhist way of life for the second generation, parents play the most influential role.

How influential are the following people in terms of understanding and living a Buddhist way of life? (Second generation’s responses)						
	Extremely Influential	Influential	Somewhat Influential	Not Influential	Not Influential at all	Not Applicable
Grand-Parents	15.5%	33%	24.5%	11%	2.0%	14%
Parents	69%	13.5%	11.5%	6%	0%	0%

More than seventy percent of the second generation lives in a nuclear family setting, which means the important role of grandparents in passing religious tradition on to the future generation is noticeably absent in the diasporic context.

Furthermore, the second generation also lacks peer support in developing and maintaining their religious identity. The co-religious bond existent among the first generation has significantly decreased in the context of the second generation.

How influential are the friends in terms of understanding and living a Buddhist way of life?						
	Extremely	Influential	Somewhat	Not	Not Influential	Not

	Influential		Influential	Influential	at all	Applicable
F/Gen.	7.5%	18.5%	44.5%	7.5%	15%	7%
S/Gen.	2.5%	5.5%	21%	24%	13%	34%

A majority of the second-generation Buddhists say that it is important to have friends who are Buddhists and Sinhalese, but that ethnic and/or religious identities are not determining factors in friendship. For example, eighty two percent of youth respondents disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: “I consider religion a decisive factor when choosing friends.” In fact, many youth interviewees have friends who come from multireligious and multiethnic backgrounds.

After parents, monks have been identified as the second most responsible, as well as influential, figures in the process of transmitting the tradition. This implies that the community understands that the transmission of the Buddhist tradition is first and foremost a family matter, and religious professionals are there to facilitate the process. Parents often accompany children to the temple and encourage them to participate in arranging the offerings to the Buddha (*Buddhapuja*) and then ceremonially bringing them to the altar. At religious services at home, such as food offering (*dana*) and protective chanting (*pirith*), younger people are encouraged to take active roles in serving food to the monks. The presence of young people often requires an explanation of the service along with Buddhist teaching in English.

Parents often ask the monks in advance for English services. The monks at both temples looked at in this study can communicate in English, but only a few of them give talks in English. If one compares and contrasts the sermons in English with those in Sinhala, one can find noticeable differences in content, emphasis, and nuances. Sinhala sermons often invoke Sinhalese cultural values, such as taking care of elderly parents,

being grateful to them, and performing religious duties. One also hears these concerns in sermons in English, but often more emphasis is placed on meditation, emotional balance, self-control, and temperance. Self-experience-based anecdotes are more prevalent in English Buddhist talks than in those given in the Sinhala language, as these in fact appeal to youth audience. Referring to Ajahn Brahm—a monk of English background who is regularly invited by the community to give Dhamma talks—one Buddhist youth says “I like him. He is so direct, he does not go around, he is straight to the point....He relates back to his life experiences. It shows that he is learning from them, and you try to apply your experience to it.”

English speaking monks within the community sometimes become intermediaries between Sri Lankan Buddhist parents and their descendents in Toronto. Pressing concerns for parents are their children’s excellence in education, association with “unworthy” companions, peer pressure to engage in substance abuse, and premature sex. In addition to their own advice and guidance to their children, Buddhist parents sometimes consider the monks as their allies to get across the parental concerns to their teen aged sons and daughters. They send their children to monks for moral guidance on these issues. In addition, they come to the temple or invite monks to their homes on specific occasions of children’s lives, such as birthdays, university entrance, and prior to their weddings. Sometimes, monks are directly or indirectly requested to provide their children with a Buddhist perspective on pressing concerns. For example, I witnessed that after numerous *danapinkam*, rituals of offering food to the monks, Bhikkhu Saranapala gives talks on the importance of higher education and Buddhist

virtues⁶² relevant to achieving success in life. He is, in fact well known to the youth within the community and is often consulted for a Buddhist perspective on these pressing issues.

At the 2008 youth forum, Ajahn Brahm addressed issues related to typical youth lifestyle: sex, drugs, education, and relationships. Young people asked questions about Buddhist perspectives on abortion, homosexuality, karma, and relationships with individuals from different cultures and faiths. Ajahn Brahm reminded the Buddhist parents to “respect your kids,” and, in the context of marriages for their children, he also asked the parents to “think for the happiness of your child, but not for your status.” These examples highlight the importance of English speaking monks within the community. A prominent lay practitioner emphasizes,

The people whom we are catering today are dying generation. They would die and what the younger people do? The new generation will not follow hundred percent all the Buddhist tradition and the rituals that were followed by their parents in Sri Lanka and here in Canada. So that we do not need monks who cannot speak in English; who cannot communicate in English. We need monks who can not only deliver sermons in English but who would think [in English], who would able to reflect and convey Dhamma to our children in a manner that they will preserve certain aspects of both cultures suitable to this time and area as well as inculcate the knowledge of Dhamma to them [children]". (Personal interview, 2009)

The preceding statement alludes to a crucial point in transmitting the integrity of the Theravada Buddhist tradition: the presence of able monks who can meet the needs of the Buddhists who are born and raised in North America.⁶³ In addition, it also highlights the first generation’s emphasis on English, illustrating their agency in passing the Buddhist

⁶² One particular verse in the *Dhammapada* (Dhp. 24 (Pali Text Society)) is repeatedly mentioned. It says, to succeed in life, one has to be diligent, mindful, well-disciplined, considerate of oneself and others, spiritual/religious and perseverant.

⁶³ As the name Theravada (the way of senior monks) suggests that monastic presence is very important in establishing the Buddhist tradition.

tradition to the second generation. In this transmission process, the second generation also functions as active agents.

The Second Generation and Their Agency

The concept of self-agency, in the context of religion, means freedom of thought in practicing or in not practicing religion(s). Buddhist scriptures celebrate individual freedom, and they invite (*ehi passika* or come and see) but do not seek to impose Buddhism on people. They promote self-reliance in spiritual development. Specifically in the Theravada tradition, the Buddha's role as a spiritual teacher (*akkhataro*) is emphasized more than any other role. Buddhist monastics are encouraged to spread the words of the Buddha, but not doing so is not a violation of monastic rules. Laypeople are instructed to practice Buddhist teachings in everyday living, but proselytization is not a part of the Buddhist calling. Any Buddhist history would demonstrate how this Buddhist discourse of self-agency has been understood, embraced, and played out in different degrees. In the long Buddhist history, this discourse has, perhaps, not met a culture as individualist as that in North America.

The North American individualistic culture perfectly embodies the discourse of Buddhist self-agency. However, it has become a double-edged sword in establishing Buddhist communities across North America. Wendy Cadge (2005) identifies that "the 'come and see' attitude and flexibility in teachings and practices" as one of the adaptive strategies employed by both Asian and non-Asian Theravada Buddhists. She says that the strategy contributes to the growth of organization, as it "favors loosely bounded organizations that enable a range of people to be involved in different ways" (196).

Similarly, first-generation Korean Buddhists in Los Angeles have used the Buddhist self-agency discourse to combat Korean Christian pressure and to construct their Buddhist identity in resettlement. They, according to Sharon Suh (2004), negotiate their identity and develop their self-esteem in relation to their views on “the other”—the Korean Christians in Los Angeles. They perceive themselves to be “more authentic Koreans and better Americans” by associating Buddhist virtues of self-reliance, independence to “the cardinal virtues of American culture itself – independence, self-rule, and democratic values” (203).

However, this effective use of the discourse by the first-generation Buddhists has played out differently in the context of the second generation within the Korean Buddhist community in Los Angeles. Suh argues that the “emphasis on Buddhist karma and self-agency has had the unintended consequences of an increasing Christianization of many second-generation Buddhist children” (170). She suggests that the discourse of self-agency has become an ineffective means, or even an obstacle, in transmitting their Buddhist tradition to their successive generations. Korean Buddhists’ beliefs in karma and self-agency have undermined their parental endeavour in transmitting their Buddhist tradition to their children. In other words, the agency of children has overridden the parental agency and authority.

We see a different story in how the Buddhist discourse of self-agency has played out within the Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto and their process of transmitting the Buddhist tradition. Sri Lankan Buddhists are well aware of the discourse, and they in fact often employ it to define Buddhism as a philosophy to distinguish Buddhism from other religions. They, however, rarely invoke the discourse of self-agency in the context

of the religious identity of their children. The following data highlight that the first generation ranks the self-agency of the second generation as the third in importance, followed by the agency of parents and monks.

How responsible do you hold each of the following for passing the Buddhist tradition on to the future generation? (First generation's responses)					
	Extremely responsible	Responsible	Somewhat responsible	Not responsible	Not responsible at all
Parents	90%	8%	2%	0%	0%
Monks	83%	12%	5%	0%	0%
Dharma students themselves	64%	26.5%	7.5%	2%	0%

In relation to the transmission of Buddhist tradition, the first-generation Sri Lankan Buddhists hold their children relatively less responsible. There is no doubt that they recognize children's agency, but they place it under the guidance of the greater agency of parents and monks. The following template clarifies more nuances of the first-generation's understanding of the roles of parents and children in the transmitting process.

Please respond to the following statements:				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Youth may follow any religion they want	3.5%	35.5%	42%	19.0%
Youth should follow their parents' religion as it is	11.5%	39.5%	39.5%	9.5%
Parents should not impose, but educate their religion to youth	53%	34.1%	12%	1%

More than sixty percent of the first generation rejects the self-agency of the second generation when it comes to religion. They are almost equally divided on young people changing their religion. This attitude implies that many parents acknowledge that their religion needs some modification to suit the needs of their youth. Moreover, nearly ninety percent of the parent generation recognize themselves as educators, rather than

imposers, of religious worldviews and practices for their offspring. This means youth are seen as more or less students with their own agency.

Many young people agree with this parental perception of themselves. For instance, ninety-five percent of youth believe that parents should educate them in Buddhism, and the majority of them consider their parents are “more Buddhist” than themselves. The young people’s self-acceptance of a subordinate position in religion does not mean that they deny their agency in it, however. In fact, they embrace their self-agency. For example, seventy percent of youth agree or strongly agree that “youth may follow any religion they want.” Even if we credit the North American individualism and youth rebelliousness for the preceding sentiment, we cannot ignore the agency of the second generation. This youth agency is a subordinate one, but it is critical in shaping the emergent Buddhist tradition.

The second generation exercises their agency at different levels. Youth’s perception of their parents’ Buddhism delineates multiple tensions, namely, traditional vs. modern Buddhist ideals, individual vs. collective values, and participatory vs. subjective practices. The majority of youth in this research pay less attention to the ways their parents practice Buddhism, although they feel they differ significantly from their parents in perception and practice of Buddhism. A few members of the second generation are quite vocal in criticizing how Buddhism is practiced by the first generation. One of the underlying criticisms of the first generation is that they are “traditional” Buddhists. A young man states,

My parents...are not very devoted Buddhists. They, you might call them common sense, traditional Sinhalese Buddhists. They go to the temple for social function. They may have a *dana* [ritual of offering food to the monks] at our house once a

year or so. Other than that they are very worldly people. They believe in the worldly values. And in fact they believe that money is the root of happiness and that is the primary goal of life, to attain money, to have family etc....I tried really, really hard to get them meditate or little toward spirituality and move away their minds from money and materialism, but I find it I am hitting a brick wall. (Personal interview, 2009)

This statement echoes a Theravada perspective about who lay Buddhists are. In the traditional Theravada Buddhism, the lay life relates to the *samsara* (the cycle of life, death, and rebirth), while the monastic life symbolizes renunciation of the *samsara*. In this distinction, the laity are worldly people, and their success is measured based on wealth, fame, prosperity, and power. The abundance of these things is celebrated, as long as they are accompanied by religious duty, which is often interpreted as supporting the Buddhist institution, the sangha, monastery, pilgrimage sites, sponsoring Buddhist festivals, etc. The happiness derived from these worldly gains, is itself known as “*gihī sukha*” or household happiness. This traditional justification of worldly life is increasingly being ignored, as the lay meditation movements have blurred the traditional monk-laity distinction. The youth’s frustration over his failure to encourage his parents to meditate invokes the generational tension between traditional vs. modern lay Buddhists and their ideals.

The second generation’s criticism of their parents’ Buddhism also refers to a tension between two types of religious expressions: participatory vs. subjective religious practices. Participatory religious expressions characterize active participation in collective religious practices, in which an individual practitioner is one of many participants. The participatory practitioners share a common goal and participate as a collective in order to achieve that goal. In contrast, subjective religious expressions

highlight individual experience and meaning. As experiences are subjectively interpreted, the meanings derived from them are also individually determined.

Buddhist youth favour the subjective religious expression, which, in effect, contradicts the first generation's participatory expression of being Buddhist. A young woman laments, "Honestly, I don't think they [parents] understand deeply what their religion is. They know that there is Buddhism, and they follow it. They go to the temple and they pray. But there is no individual understanding and deeper understanding of what it is. I think it is just because you are born into it rather than trying to figure it out what it is." She correlates individual understanding to deeper understanding, so she believes that her parents follow Buddhism without knowing the meanings. The underlying assumption is that one should know the meaning first and then follow it, and meaning should lead to practice, not the other way around. A similar trend is noticed with the second-generation Buddhists within the Cambodian community in Ontario (McLellan 2009).

The second generation's comments on the first generation's religiosity often carry an individualistic judgment on collective religious expression. Ronald Grimes (2000) argues that "[i]ndividualism is not merely a belief in the value of individuals; it sets individual and community in opposition and then ranks individuality higher" (115). Such hierarchical evaluation is apparent in the following statement of one seventeen-year-old girl, who says,

My father is a Buddhist obviously, but he is not into Buddhism or is not actually trying to understand it. He comes to the temple and helps out. He thinks that if he has *pin* [merit] he is good. *I wish he learns actual Buddhism a bit more...he is more in building the temple. I think he should stop it [building temple] and actually attain something in his life...My father looks for pin [merit] or pin veda*

[meritorious deeds], but I look for applicability of Buddhism in everyday life...I tried my dad to be *more Buddhist* but it didn't work. (Personal interview, 2009)

The interviewee implies that her father is a nominal Buddhist, while she is an applied or practical Buddhist. She does relate that building the temple or working for the collective does benefit her father's Buddhist identity, but she downplays such collective religiosity as not being part of "actual" Buddhism. She does not see how building a temple has anything to do with self-cultivation, although one could argue that it perfectly connects to altruism, a celebrated Buddhist virtue. For her, "actual" Buddhism means individualistic practices, such as self-cultivation through meditation and moral precept observation. These opinions cannot be generalized, nevertheless, they could be instrumental in understanding the way many second-generation Buddhists distinguish themselves from their parent generation to construct their Buddhist identity. They also demonstrate how the second generation exercises their agency over and against that of their parents. In the following section, we will see how the agencies of both generations are conditioned and influenced by the Buddhist diversity in Toronto.

The Influence of Buddhist Diversity on a Particular Buddhist Tradition

Relocation in a new cultural setting itself comes with its own obstacles and opportunities, prospects and perils embedded in the new set of social realities. For example, Buddhist diversity in Toronto provides a social context for a particular type of Buddhist experience that could be called "Buddhist communal encounter," which is derived from the diasporic context. Paul Numrich (1999) identifies two types of interactions among Buddhist communities across North America. Inter-Buddhist refers

to religious interaction between Buddhists who belong to different denominations, while intra-Buddhist refers to interaction between Buddhists who share the same denominational beliefs and practices. McLellan (1999) refers to these interactions in Toronto. Buddhists are not new to inter- and intra-Buddhist encounters or interactions. The history of any Buddhist tradition would provide countless evidences of such interactions, though they were more or less confined to individuals or small groups of people, such as missionaries, Buddhist students, and delegations.

Unlike in the past, the contemporary encounters in the diaspora in a communal form manifest in interactions among Buddhist traditions that are vibrant and intact. In Toronto, diverse Buddhist communities follow their own respective Buddhist traditions side-by-side. Janet McLellan's seminal work (1999) illustrates ethno-religious characteristics with five Asian Buddhist communities (Japanese, Tibetan, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Chinese) in Toronto. Kay Koppedrayar and Mavis Fenn (2006) document the presence of Buddhism in the forms of Buddhist centers, communities, and free-floating ideas and symbols across the province of Ontario. Others (White 2010; Campbell 2010; and Verchery 2010) also add to the literature on Buddhism in Toronto with their work on Lao, Zen, and Chinese (Fo Guan Shan) Buddhism respectively. Such a rich and vibrant presence of Buddhist diversity in Toronto juxtaposes one particular Buddhist identity over and against the other Buddhist identities. In such interactions "knowledges about what constitutes the self...are produced in relation to, [and are] measured against the other...persons, practices and institutions" (Abeysekara 2002: 20).

Underneath the multiple manifestations of Buddhism in the forms of diverse ethnicities, nationalities, and traditions, one can see certain abstract commonness, such

as the three foundations of the Buddhist tradition (the Buddha, Dhamma/Dharma and Sangha), however they are variedly understood. In fact, this sense of commonness implies a loosely defined Buddhist identity. Buddhists in Toronto, and in other major metropolitan cities in the West for that matter, could be better described as a minority religious community of communities. This social reality poses a new set of challenges, including the transmission of a particular form of Buddhism. For example, Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto, in comparison to those in Sri Lanka, are less exposed to Buddhism. The little exposure they have is often diffused, inconsistent, and incoherent due to the vibrant presence of multi-ethnic Buddhists in Toronto.

Both generations indicate that they have encountered various non-Sri Lankan forms of Buddhism through a verity of means. They have identified that books, the internet, and public media are major means through which they have encountered Tibetan, Zen, East Asian, and non-sectarian Buddhism. However, when it comes to more tangible means of encounters, such as temple visits and meeting with Buddhist teachers, non-Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhism scores high, reflecting the participation of Burmese and Bangladeshi Theravada monks in religious services within the community. Moreover both temples in this study occasionally organize Buddhist public talks and meditation retreats led by Caucasian Theravada monks like Ajan Brahm, Ajan Viradhammo and others from the Thai forest tradition. Under these circumstances, Buddhist practices within the community remain more or less intact as Theravada.

However, the influence of non-Theravada Buddhism on Sri Lankan Buddhists is also discernible in their Buddhist knowledge and worldviews. A highly educated, middle-aged couple whom I interviewed together expressed how they were fascinated

with the Mahayana concept of “Buddhanature.” In response to my interview question “what do you think about other forms of Buddhism,” the husband said,

Buddhism as a whole has the same essence. It is like ‘the same cake with different icing’ [the wife:] I don't think that there is anything wrong with any kind of Buddhism. However, I like the Mahayana concept of Buddhanature more than anything else in Theravada, to be honest with you. We have to give credit to other people. We have a thing in Theravada doctrine that we always look down upon others which I just don't like... [the husband:] I find that Buddhanature is very interesting concept...I think everyone has enlightenment within. Enlightenment is covered by all the defilements.... Everybody has it. It is the potential to be enlightened. [the wife:] It is like blooming of the lotus; that is how I look at Buddhanature. Just little by little, eventually it blossoms as a little flower. (Personal interview 2009)

The preceding testimony relates to a few important aspects associated with the inter- and intra-Buddhist encounters. First, as people are exposed to other forms of Buddhism, a non-sectarian appreciation of Buddhism is replacing the historical self-assertive sectarian rhetoric. In fact, this trend is more noticeable at the conceptual level than at the practical level. Although Sri Lankan Buddhists appreciate Mahayana and Vajrayana concepts, they rarely participate in Mahayana and/or Vajrayana temples or seek out non-Theravada monks for spiritual guidance and merit-making ceremonies. In brief, Sri Lankan Buddhists remain Theravada by practice, despite their exposure to non-Theravada Buddhism.

Second, the eclecticism at the conceptual level across Buddhist traditions is justified based on a sense of an “essentialized” form of Buddhist teachings, which, for the Buddhist faithful, transcend any particular ethnicity and culture. The language of self-experience and self-empowerment also seems to favour the trend. Finally, for some, this cross-tradition appeal to Buddhist teachings seem to contribute to a more

ambivalent commitment to the inherited Buddhist tradition. The data indicate that encounters with the “Buddhist other” have overall positive impacts on both generations:

Contact with other forms of Buddhism has:			
	Yes	No	Not sure
Increased my belief in my inherited Buddhism	68.5% (f/g)	19% (f/g)	12.5% (f/g)
	46.5% (s/g)	24% (s/g)	29.5% (s/g)
Expanded my Buddhist knowledge	71.5% (f/g)	13.5% (f/g)	15% (f/g)
	77.5% (s/g)	12% (s/g)	10.5% (s/g)
Made me critical of my inherited Buddhism	30% (f/g)	52.5% (f/g)	17.5% (f/g)
	31% (s/g)	47% (s/g)	22% (s/g)

The data also suggest that over thirty percent of both generations believe that inter- and intra- Buddhist encounters made them critical of the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition.

Due to the fascination with popular concepts and practices associated with Buddhism in North America, such as Buddhahood and being vegetarian, some find faults with their inherited Buddhism. The following statement of a Buddhist youth indicates the influence of the popular misconception that all Buddhist monks are vegetarians. She says,

It bothers me that how monks in Sri Lanka are not supposed to eat meat; the whole vegetarian thing. I know that even for us it is better if you can be vegetarian even though there is no rule such like that. But when you become a monk you are agreeing that you become strict on what you follow, right? It is a personal freedom that is also allowed by the Buddha, right? *But if you are a monk you should follow it [be vegetarian] instead of ignoring it.* If you are lay people like us, you are free to eat whatever you like, right? (Persona interview, 2009)

Being vegetarian is more of a personal choice than a monastic vow in Theravada monasticism. Traditionally, it is believed that the Buddha himself rejected a monk’s request to make vegetarianism an obligation for monks, because monks, out of humility, should rely on whatever food is offered to them. A strict vegetarian rule may exclude the non-vegetarian laity from participating in the food offering as monks go for morning

alms around (*pindapata*), as the assumption is that the laity offers to the monks a small portion of the food that is already made for their everyday consumption. This Theravada understanding or identity seems to be obscured in the above comment, which has been influenced by a stereotypical perception about Buddhist monks. This indicates the challenge of transmitting a particular form of Buddhism in the diaspora shared by numerous Buddhist traditions. Nevertheless, the diaspora—with the presence of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Buddhist presence—also provides an opportunity to each Buddhist denomination to go beyond a particular ethnic or national Buddhist audience. The English medium facilitates the reaching out to Buddhists from multiple ethnicities and cultures with a common denominational (i.e., Theravada) interpretation, understanding, and practices of the Buddha's teachings.

Buddhist services in English within the Sri Lankan community in Toronto have attracted Theravada Buddhists from multiple ethnic backgrounds. People from multiple-cultures including Euro-Canadian, Sinhalese, Bangladeshi, Vietnamese, Singapore-Chinese, and other cultures gather for Theravada Buddhist teachings and practices. An English language-oriented group is visibly present. In this circle, the concerns for ethnic-specific cultural presentations are not entertained. However, as the temples are locus of this interaction and Buddhist monks lead this particular group, a Theravada religious culture is slowly emerging within this group. For example, some of the Buddhist practitioners from non-traditional Theravada backgrounds greet the monks with bows and offer non-vegetarian meals to the monks. This particular sub-group regularly meets for Pali *sutta* studies and mindfulness meditation led by Bhikkhu Saranapala. The less-ethnic cultural tone of this particular group seems to appeal to the

second-generation Buddhists, and some of them regularly participate in the Dhamma discussion and meditation practice.

For instance, *The 'Secret' to Happiness*, a community publication to mark the 2008 Ajahn Brahm's visit to Toronto, indicates the Buddhist interests of the English-oriented practitioners. The booklet includes a few news articles related to Buddhist meditation from well-known magazines and newspapers such as *Maclean's Magazine*, *Scientific American*, and the *New York Times*. They are preceded by two articles written by two community members. Dr. Piyal Walpola, a physician and a prominent lay practitioner, highlights, among other things, the importance of Buddhist meditation in physical and spiritual well-being. He highlights a few popular terms related to Buddhist meditation practices such as "the science of mind," "the ultimate psychotherapy of the mind," and "mindfulness-based cognitive therapy." Referring to health-related experiments on Buddhist meditation, Walpola stresses "[p]revious studies have shown that mindfulness meditation interventions can help improve psychological functioning, better sleep, reduce stress levels, enhance coping skills, and well-being in cancer patients" (2008: 4). Walpola's article invokes a familiar discourse of Buddhism and science, a signature Buddhist rhetoric embedded in the modern Sri Lankan Buddhist history (Lopez 2008). Perhaps more importantly, Walpola also reflects the benefits of Buddhist meditation in personal health and well-being, a popular trend in Buddhism in the West.

The second article entitled "Mindfulness: Key to Getting Rid of Stress" is written by Bhikkhu Saranapala, a Buddhist monk who conducts many of English services in the community. The monk positively acknowledges the trend, but balances

the view with a traditional Buddhist criticism. He says, “[a]lthough mindfulness practice could bestow all these great benefits and positive experiences, the goal of mindfulness taught by the Buddha twenty five centuries ago, it must be emphasized, is not an attempt to find a temporary panacea but to offer a total and a permanent solution to the age of old problem of human condition, suffering” (Saranapala 2008: 5). Reading these two articles together, one can discern how a diasporic community wrestles with the application of their religious tradition in a new context without losing the integrity of the tradition. These concerns at this crossroad have wider implications in the transmission of the tradition to the second generation within the community, as the ambient social, religious, and cultural conditions have become contributing factors in shaping the Buddhist knowledge and understanding of the second generation. It is within this cultural system that the culturally negotiated Buddhist tradition is emerging, and I analyze it in the second part of the chapter, which is divided in the following sections: Buddhism is a way of life, decline of neo-traditional Buddhism, and spectrum of Buddhist identity.

PART II: The Outcome of Negotiation

Buddhism is a Way of Life

Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto prefer the “Buddhism as a way of life” interpretation to other existing interpretations in Sri Lankan Buddhism, i.e., Buddhism is a religion, a philosophy, a spirituality, and an ethical system. They are increasingly replacing a popular rhetoric, namely “Buddhism is a philosophy,” that was popularized by Olcott’s *Buddhist Catechism*. In order to combat the 19th-century Christian

missionary propaganda that Buddhism is an outdated religion, Olcott argued that Buddhism accords with science. As Olcott succeeded in his effort, he also juxtaposed and rejected any pre-modern religious expression of the Buddhist tradition. What Olcott had rejected was later reintroduced to the tradition by the neo-traditional Buddhists during the mid-1950s in postcolonial Sri Lanka (Bond 2004). However, Olcott’s scientific rhetoric has persisted with traditional Buddhist beliefs and practices, making the Buddhist tradition a paradox: a philosophy (science) with religious beliefs and practices, such as belief in life after death and doing benevolent works or good karmas. Within this dialogical historical backdrop, the data below indicate that the term “Buddhism is a way of life” is increasingly becoming a popular discourse within the first- and second-generation Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto.

<i>Classifications of perceptions</i> ⁶⁴	What is Buddhism to you? Please mark ONLY one of the following: Buddhism is:		
	Options available	First Generation	Second Generation
<i>[Pre-modern Theravada]</i>	A religion with rituals, metaphysical beliefs and practices	5%	6%
<i>[Modern Theravada]</i>	A philosophy without dogmas	17%	19%
	A way of life that claims to reduce suffering	55%	34.5%
<i>[Popular Western]</i>	A moral/ethical system	5%	15.5%
	A spirituality without restrictive beliefs and required practices	18%	25%

For both generations, the “Buddhism is a way of life” discourse has been the first preference, followed by the spirituality discourse and then the philosophy discourse. Unlike the spirituality discourse, the way of life discourse maintains the integrity of the Buddhist tradition with clearly laid out worldviews and a systematic practice. It also

⁶⁴ This column in *italics* was not included in the survey. I use the terms in this column to analyze, distinguish, and clarify the aspects that are transmitted, left out, and modified.

enables the reconciliation of the apparent contradiction between religious and scientific principles embedded in the philosophical discourse. Thus, the discourse of Buddhism as a way of life encapsulates the religious, philosophical, and practical aspects of the Buddhist tradition, and perhaps, this broader scope or inclusivity made the discourse attractive in a diasporic context. In addition, it also captures the postmodern imagination of cultural relativism as well as individualist religious expression. At least three underlying principles seem at work in the discourse. First, a way of life is culturally shaped, and, therefore, Buddhism needs to be culturally adapted. Second, Buddhism emphasizes practices more than anything else. Finally, in the context of an individualistic society, one is entitled to incorporate Buddhist teachings and practices as s/he wishes.

In a multicultural, multi-religious, and individualistic social setting like Toronto, it is not surprising how the discourse of Buddhism as a way of life is overriding other existing discourses about the Buddhist tradition. The following statement encapsulates a few important features of the discourse. One 27 year-old interviewee explains:

Buddhism is a religion that I grew up in. I almost think it is a way of life. When I was growing up, as a kid, it was more of rituals like offering flowers, lighting up candles and you know chanting things like that. Then as I grow up probably after I came to Canada I really got more into Buddhism. I engaged more in meditation and how Buddhism can be used in life. Then I started reading more about Buddhism, and what Buddhism was all about and realized that it's much more than a religion. It really does teach you how to live your life. I think different parts of Buddhism really could be incorporated into your life. (Personal interview, 2009)

This particular interviewee clearly distinguishes *Buddhism as a way of life* from *Buddhism as a religion*, and she indicates where each comes into play in her life. For her, religion contains rituals, such as the veneration of the Buddha (*Buddhapuja*), while

a way of life consists of meditation. She relates Buddhism as a religion to her childhood experience with Buddhism. As she grows up, she developed interests in what she calls a deeper side of Buddhism, i.e. meditation, which she names as Buddhism as a way of life. It is also worth noticing that she refers to not only stages of life (from childhood to adulthood) but also to geographical change (from Sri Lanka to Canada) that accompanied the perceptual shift about Buddhism.

The interpretation of Buddhism as a way of life echoes—in content as well as in purpose—the discourse of Buddhism as a philosophy. From the late 19th-century Buddhist reformism onwards, Sri Lankan Buddhists have used the philosophical discourse to highlight the freedom of thought in Buddhist teachings. They have argued that Buddhism is scientific, so that it is not second to any religion, including Christianity. The discourse also has been used to distinguish—if not elevate—Buddhism from other religions. Similar tone, text, and purpose are discernable in the following arguments related to Buddhism as a way of life. Answering to an interview question “what does Buddhism mean to you?,” an undergraduate university student says,

Buddhism as I think of it is *a way of life* for me, like with friends who are not Buddhists there are many *rules that are imposed* upon them to follow. But when I compare them to Buddhism, I feel like *rules are not imposed*. They [five precepts] are more like my morals which tell me if you want to know the right path do the right things. They are more kind of morals to me...*Buddhism gives you a lot of freedom; it does not impose you; it lets you to create your own opinions about it.* (Personal interview, 2009)

The interviewee distinguishes Buddhism as a way of life from other religions. She contrasts the concept of religion to a way of life. For her, religion imposes rules and regulations on people, while a way of life gives a lot of space so that people can make their own choices and decisions. The word “impose” presupposes hierarchy, authority,

and external power. By saying that religion imposes rules upon people, she refers to the hierarchy, authority, and power involved in religion. It is implied that under religion people are not free enough to do what they want or wish, as their lives are structured by the rules of the religion rather than personal choice and freedom. The interviewee uses the term “a way of life” to highlight a sense of personal freedom and individual choice in leading one’s life. Her response also emphasizes ethnic guidance. She highlights that Buddhism as a “way of life” appreciates one’s freedom and choice, as it does not impose but guides, and it does not control but gives space to develop a personal opinion about things.

The term “a way of life” is loaded with cultural connotations. When both generations define Buddhism as a way of life, they refer to two distinct cultural expressions of Buddhist teachings. As I analyze how the first- and second-generation Sri Lankan Buddhists use the phrase, I contend that the first generation’s Buddhist religiosity is a more or less “cultural convention” in comparison to the second generation’s “individual conviction” approach to Buddhism.⁶⁵ The former means that the first generation relates to Buddhism collectively, while the latter emphasizes that the second generation looks for individually convincing meaning before they commit themselves to Buddhist practices. For the first generation, the term includes living a life that conforms to collective norms and practices, supporting collective causes, and participating in collective practices. One middle-aged father articulates,

I have been participating in temple development project, giving *dana*, listening to *bana* [sermon] like that. Other than that I am not doing much like *poya day*

⁶⁵ I develop these terms from Samuel H. Reimer’s (2006) terms “social convention” and “personal conviction” respectively (56).

[full-moon-day] observation and meditation. I am hoping to do them when I am retired...now I respect elders and maintain whatever Buddhist values like non-violence, *dana*, [offering food to the monks] *puja* [rituals] and assisting the elders and other things. *We maintain a Buddhist way of life*. We also respect all other religions. (Personal interview, 2009)

The preceding statement denotes that, for the first generation, a Buddhist way of life is to engage in duty-bound Buddhist activities, which are often collectively performed.

However, the following testimony of one youth invokes a different connotation of the phrase “Buddhism is a way of life.” He articulates,

Buddhism is a way of life something we do every day. It is all about finding inner peace in your-self, being independent and having your own sense of thought what is right or wrong. It is not reaching out to God or anything, but it is all about yourself. You are for yourself whatever you do right or wrong. It is for your-self. (Personal interview, 2009)

Phrases like “finding inner peace in yourself,” “being independent” and “it’s all about yourself,” loudly speak about Buddhist spiritual individualism, a popular Buddhist discourse in North America. It is interesting that very recently some argue that Buddhism is also a way of life for Euro-American Buddhists.⁶⁶ In the context of North American culture, the way of life is often defined by an ethic of individualism. It implies that one is entitled to lead a life according to his or her preference, needs, rights, and choices. Freedom to choose and practice is more compatible with the perception of Buddhism as a way of life, rather than Buddhism as a religion. As noted above, when youth define Buddhism to be a way of life they relate to the sense of personal choice and freedom found in Buddhism. They highlight some of the teachings of the Buddha that are compatible with the North American cultural values, such as being independent, being autonomous, taking control of one’s life, and a sense of personal freedom.

⁶⁶ Gary Storhoff and John Whalen-Bridge (2010) entitle their edited book as *American Buddhism as a way of life*.

As we compare and contrast both generations' discourse of Buddhism as a way of life, we notice that the second generation picks up the discourse from their parents' generation, but they interpret it within the North American cultural setting. In this intergenerational transmission, the phrase "Buddhism is a way of life" exemplifies Charles Hallisey's (1995) observation that Theravada Buddhism is not only a "translocal tradition with a long and self-consciously distinct history but...[also] a tradition dependent on local conditions for the production of meaning" (51). In this process, however, we notice that the neo-traditional Buddhist discourse of the 1950s in Sri Lanka is increasingly dissipating in Toronto.

Decline of Neo-traditional Buddhism

In this section, I argue that the second generation's interpretation of Buddhism as a way of life carries on the spiritual and social aspirations of the reformed Buddhist tradition, even while less favouring the metaphysical beliefs and ethno-nationalistic sentiment of neo-traditional Buddhism. For that I will compare and contrast both generations' perceptions of the Buddha, their Buddhist aspirations and practices, and their Buddhist ethics and identities.

Traditionally, the conception of the Buddha has been a classical denominator in identifying the Theravada-Mahayana distinction. In addition to its denominational currency, the concept has also played a crucial role in mapping the historical development from the pre-modern to the modern period, cultural negotiations between Eastern and Western interpretations, and disciplinary navigation between intellectual and devotional perspectives. The diaspora is the meeting ground of all these

denominational, historical, cultural, and disciplinary encounters, and I use the concept of Buddha to analyze the transmission of the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition from the first to the second generation. The following template indicates that both generations first and foremost consider the Buddha to be a historical figure with emphasis on his teaching role in the way to enlightenment or cessation of suffering. However, the second generation (78%) is more inclined to the reformed interpretation than their parents (69%).

<i>Not part of the Survey</i> ⁶⁷	Who/what is the Buddha to you? Please mark only ONE of the following:		
	Answer Options	First Generation	Second Generation
<i>[Reformed Theravada]</i>	Buddha was no more no less than a human being who taught how to end suffering	42%	35%
	Buddha was a spiritual teacher who came to reveal the way to enlightenment	27%	43%
<i>[Neo-traditional Theravada]</i>	Buddha is/was a supreme being with miraculous power and extraordinary virtues who teaches the path to Nirvana	26%	9.5%
<i>[Non-Theravada]</i>	Buddha is a divine being who can help humans	2%	1.5%
	Buddha is/was a manifestation of the universal moral and spiritual force that governs the order of the universe and can intervene in everyday life	3%	11%

The survey data also indicate that the second generation differs in the neo-traditional interpretation, in which the Buddha is perceived to be a supreme being with miraculous power and extraordinary virtues. In this particular context, a sixteen percent decrease is noticeable in relation to the second generation. It is also noteworthy that the non-Theravada conception of the Buddha is the least preferred. However, the second generation scores higher than their parents, and this reflects the second generation's exposure to non-Theravada Buddhism.

⁶⁷ This column in *italics* was not included in the survey. I use the terms in this column to analyze, distinguish and clarify the aspects that are transmitted, left out, and modified.

In the context of Buddhist aspirations, the second generation tends to favour this-worldly oriented social beneficial goals rather than a this-worldly or other-worldly religious goal. In contrast, many of the first generation leads a Buddhist way of life for better future rebirths and eventual realization of nirvana, a classical aspect that characterizes neo-traditional Buddhism. This aspiration decreases significantly in the context of the second generation, as the following data suggest.

<i>Not part of the survey</i> ⁶⁸	What is your Buddhist or religious goal in this very life? Please mark only ONE of the following:	First Generation	Second Generation
	Answer Options		
<i>[Neo-traditional]</i>	To have a better life after death and eventually attain nirvanaya	31%	17.5%
<i>[Modern]</i>	To serve humanity and other being to reduce suffering	29.5%	48.5%
	To provide a good life for my family	26%	28.5%
	To become enlightened in this very life	13.5%	5.5%

Even within the modern discourse, engagement in the society and family with Buddhist morals and virtues is related to Buddhist goals. Socially engaged Buddhism, more specifically sponsoring and supporting humanitarian projects, has been attractive to both generations. Although humanitarian efforts within the community could be characterized as “ad hoc identity-based engagement” (Kniss and Numrich 2007), they also take institutionalized forms that reach out beneficiaries beyond ethnic and religious boundaries. Both temples in this study have set up humanitarian and educational projects in Toronto and in Sri Lanka. The Buddhist Youths’ Soup Kitchen organized by the West End Buddhist Centre at the Catholic Good Sheppard Centre Downtown Toronto has been a popular community service program for the last decade. More

⁶⁸ This column in *italics* was not included in the survey. I use the terms in this column to analyze, distinguish and clarify the aspects that are transmitted, left out, and modified.

recently, the Buddhist Centre also launched a senior citizen program, providing social and spiritual support. The cultural group in the community sometimes goes to the senior homes in the region and entertains the residents with cultural dance and music.

The tsunami on the 26th of December 2004 in Sri Lanka heightened the humanitarian sentiments within the community. The community made significant contributions to post-tsunami rehabilitation projects by sending basic essentials like clothes, dry food, medicine, and other goods. The temples collected monetary donations and constructed homes for the tsunami victims. Even before the 2004 tsunami, monks and lay alike have been sponsoring school education for the poor and needy students in rural Sri Lanka, but these efforts were more organized after the tsunami. For example, the Toronto Mahavihara Scholarship Foundation was established in 2007 to support the children in the tsunami affected area. The Tsunami Orphan Children's Program is another educational/humanitarian project popular within the community. Its management assures the community that "their hard earned money, however small or big, has gone to work and delivered a modern hostel building for an orphanage for Sri Lanka's tsunami-stricken, homeless children; a home and a roof over their heads worthy of the great virtue of man's humanity to man following the highest ideals of *metta!*" (*Living Buddhism* 2008: 18). In addition to supporting these more organized projects, both generations variously engage in social and voluntary services in Toronto, as well as in Sri Lanka, specifically during their regular visits to Sri Lanka. They participate in these activities with a sense of cultivating Buddhist virtues like *metta* (loving-kindness), *karuna* (compassion), *dana* (generosity) and *paroopakara* (helping others).

However, a generational difference is noticeable in terms of what motivate the first and second generations in serving others. A young woman says that "when they [parents] are doing something they just do it in order to get good karma, whereas I would think of it as being nicer to the person, right? That is the main way how I differ from them." Once again, we see that neo-traditional discourse and explicit religious motivation are in decline in relation to the second generation. The following survey data also confirm that.

How important are the following Buddhist activities to you?					
	Extremely Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Not Important at all
To accumulate good karmas for life after death	64% (f/g) 35% (s/g)	24% (f/g) 46% (s/g)	6% (f/g) 15% (s/g)	4% (f/g) 4% (s/g)	2% (f/g) 0% (s/g)
To purify my mind for enlightenment	72% (f/g) 42% (s/g)	24% (f/g) 28% (s/g)	2% (f/g) 23% (s/g)	2% (f/g) 5% (s/g)	0% (f/g) 2% (s/g)

Furthermore, the second generation's decline in appeal to the neo-traditional Buddhist discourse is also noticeable in the ways they relate to the Buddhist source of authority. According to the following template, the traditional authority of monks and the Buddhist scriptures significantly drop, while self-authority increases in relation to the second generation.

When faced with questions about your Buddhist practice or belief you:						
	Agree		Somewhat agree		Disagree	
	1 st gen.	2 nd gen.	1 st gen.	2 nd gen.	1 st gen.	2 nd gen.
Consult Buddhist monks and nuns	91%	77%	9%	13%	00%	10%
Reflect on self-experience	58.5%	65%	31.5%	27%	10%	8%
Refer to Buddhist texts	87.5%	57%	11.5%	25.5%	1%	17.5%

Although traditional authority decreases across the generations, the authority of religious personnel remains to be the first priority for both generations.

Similarly, both generations' interest in existing Buddhist practices also indicate the decline of neo-traditional aspects of Buddhism—beliefs in heavens and hells and domestic and temple rituals—in comparison to the Buddhist practices, such as intellectual discussion and contemplative practices popularized by Buddhist reformism.

		Please identify what aspects of Buddhism you find interesting:					
<i>Not part of the survey</i> ⁶⁹		Interesting		Somewhat interesting		Not interesting	
		1 st gen.	2 nd gen.	1 st gen.	2 nd Gen.	1 st gen.	2 nd gen
<i>[Neo-traditional]</i>	Buddhist metaphysical beliefs (i.e., heavens and hells)	43%	75.5%	27%	17%	30%	7.5%
	Buddhist rituals (i.e., Buddhapuja, Sanghika dana etc.)	69.5%	50%	23.5%	33%	7%	17%
<i>[Reformed]</i>	Contemplative Practices (i.e., meditation)	96%	84.5%	3%	9.5%	1%	6%
	Philosophical issues (i.e., sutra study, dhamma talks)	92%	85.5%	7%	12.5%	1%	2%

The preceding data indicate that the first generation favours the reformed Buddhist discourse as well. This trend persists in relation to the second generation, except the beliefs in heavens and hells. For example, over seventy-five percent of the second generation confirms that Buddhist metaphysical beliefs in heavens and hells are “interesting” while only forty-three percent of the parent generation say so.

Moreover, the majority (58%) of the first generation thinks that Buddhist interpretation of heavens and hells are “irrelevant” in the context of North America. This correlate to the contents of *Teaching Buddhism to Children*, where there is not a single reference to the Buddhist concept of heavens and hell. Such language of irrelevance

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results in some of the second generation thinking that Buddhism is devoid of perspectives of heavens and hells. For example, one seventeen-year-old participant expresses, “Buddhist emphasis on no heaven and hell things and no God concept are fascinating...The concept of no-I [no-self] kind of concept, I find it [no-self concept] fascinating because no other religions believe in it.” For this particular youth, Buddhism is free from the religious concepts of heaven and hell. It is obvious that this perception derives from eagerness to distinguish Buddhism from theistic religions, an application of the discourse Buddhism as a philosophy. With this sharp contrast, what is suppressed is the religious component of Buddhism along with Buddhist perspective of heaven and hell. Theravada Buddhism does not lack references to heavens and hells, although Buddhist perspective on them is quite different from theistic concepts of heaven and hell.

Despite the first generation’s lack of interest in this particular aspect of the Buddhist tradition, as noted earlier, seventy-five percent of youth do express an interest, and—perhaps due to the influences of the ambient Judeo-Christian culture—nearly half (47.5%) of the second generation consider the belief in heavens and hells are relevant in the context of North America. This intergenerational divergence relates, if nothing else, to the interplay between multiple agencies of the first and second generation, as well as to the subtle yet influential effects from the ambient cultural system. These factors, in fact, shape the religious identity of the second generation.

Spectrum of Buddhist identity

All of the youth research respondents identify themselves as Buddhists, but to various degrees. Many of them are quite happy with their Buddhist identities and a few of them are quite proud of their Buddhist heritage. Quite surprisingly, some youth find themselves more serious about Buddhist practices than their parents. One of my questions related to Buddhist identity was “What does it mean being Buddhist to you?” Respondents came up with various answers. As I analyze the answers, I find three trends in which the youth relate to the Buddhist tradition. Here, I name them as developing Buddhists, re-claiming Buddhists, and generalized Buddhists.

Developing Buddhists

Like many identities, religious identity is under constant construction. The following statement of one youth captures both the transiency of the identity and multiple forces involved in its construction. Answering the interview question “how would you religiously identify yourself?,” one young adult says,

I think I am a developing Buddhist in this society. I know the structure or teaching of the Buddha, it is only now that I am learning to apply them in my life. Now I am trying more to integrate Buddhism into my life. For example, if I get angry, I am realizing that there is no point in holding onto certain things. I believe that I am a Buddhist, but I am not a dedicated Buddhist. I am learning to understand what Buddhism means to me as opposed to what others tell me to do. ([Emphasis added] personal interview, 2009)

The interviewee relates the fleeing nature of her religious identity to multiple *loci*: the ambient society, the “others,” and the self. The “others” refers to the first generation, who often instructs the second generation on what Buddhism is and what Buddhists should do. The respondent clearly states that the second generation does not

indiscriminately receive what is told to them. Instead, they contextualize Buddhist knowledge and practices within the ambient North American society.

Moreover, the statement also reflects the stage of life—early twenties—when individual urges towards independence are in a full swing. The term “developing Buddhist” captures the ongoing process in which youth tend to develop an individual identity that is distinguishable from that of others, in this case the first generation. The interviewee also juxtaposes the identity of a developing Buddhist with that of a dedicated Buddhist. The implied distinction between them is that the latter strives toward an integrated religious goal with a specific lifestyle, while the former learns to incorporate a Buddhist perspective in secular life. Explaining the developing Buddhist identity, the interviewee states, “it is just learning to understand life in a way that day by day things are starting to come your way. Learning to deal with situations in life, I learn stuff from Buddhism and try to apply them to the situations and how to maintain calm and things like that.” The language of learning and progression toward a better commitment are embedded in the “developing Buddhist” identity.

The phrase also implies the youth’s self-cautionary sentiment that derives from youthful idealism, as well as self-claimed identity. A mother of two teens states that “what they learn in Buddhism they expect us to follow.” When these idealistic expectations are not met, due to the inconsistency between what they learn at the Dhamma schools and what their parents practice, youth tend to criticize the parents. For example, a youth comments, “they [the parents] go to the temple a lot; they may meditate a lot; they can preach to us; but, they can be hypocritical about how they do things.” This is also a cultural criticism, as the inconsistency between beliefs and

practices is less tolerated in an individualistic society, as religious identity is considered as “individual choice,” rather than a collective decision.

Individual choice carries individual responsibility. Thus youth who find themselves inconsistent with Buddhist teachings hesitate to claim Buddhist identity. One female interviewee shares her reluctance, “sometimes I would like to call myself Buddhist but sometimes I feel I do not deserve it. You can say you are a Buddhist...but words really do not mean anything.” When I asked, “If someone asks you what is your religion?,” she replied, “I might call myself Buddhist, but I would rather call I am seeking truth. When you say you are a Buddhist, it means you are already somewhere in your spiritual goal which I am not.” The respondent perceives that being Buddhist is a spiritual identity rather than a religious or social identity, and, as such, it should accompany the inner-transformation indicated in Buddhist teachings. This echoes the North American popular perception of Buddhism as a form of spirituality more than anything else. In fact twenty-five percent of the second generation has identified Buddhism to be “a spirituality without restrictive beliefs and required practices.” This demography relates to one extreme—perhaps an elusive one—of the Buddhist spectrum. In contrast, a more concrete and confident group of young Buddhists represent the other extreme, those who self-consciously re-claim Buddhist identity.

Reclaiming Buddhists

Simply being born to Buddhist parents does not satisfy some youth. Although they are influenced by their childhood socialization into Buddhism at home as well at the temple, many of them have reclaimed their Buddhist identity in their own

independent studies and committed practices. Perhaps a religiously diverse culture made them conscious about being Buddhists. On the basis of their own Buddhist learning and practices, they construct Buddhist identity. Referring to a confident statement “I am a Buddhist!,” a young man says

I am answering this way not because my parents told me, but because I have put many hours and years of struggling efforts to build up my Buddhist identity. And spiritually, that would be disgraceful, dishonourable, and disrespectful to all my efforts to say that I don't know who I am or whatever. So *I honestly say that I am a Buddhist* not because I have tag that says I am a Buddhist, but when I look at my heart, all the experiences tell me that I have walked a Buddhist path and *I consciously walked through that path and I have invested my own time and energy into it.* ([Emphasis added] personal interview, 2009)

The interviewee adamantly refuses to identify with a born-Buddhist identity. It is his practice he highlights, rather than inheritance and beliefs in Buddhism, although the latter are also part of his Buddhist identity. He represents a minority, yet part of an increasing group of young Buddhists who reclaim their inherited Buddhist identity through their practice, or in the words of one person, "living as much as possible according to the Dhamma, according to what Buddha taught us like the Five Precepts and the Noble Eight-fold Path." For them, Buddhist identity is not merely a birthright, but a conscious adult choice that is often distinguished from the cultural Buddhist identity of the first generation.

These “re-claimed Buddhists,” like their parents, kneel down in front of the Buddha stature, respect monks with bows, and take part in Buddhists rituals. They look for meaning in these practices and enquire how they relate or apply to overall Buddhist ways of living. The following statement of one young man captures the youth’s

integration of the intellectual, contemplative, and devotional aspects of the Buddhist tradition in their own terms. He says,

I don't think that I would ever be interested in the ceremonial aspects of Buddhism, or the cultural aspects of Buddhism. I think they are catalysts. When we are in situations where our minds are going into unskillful path, they act like catalysts. They remind us where we are right now. They are external phenomena to click our mind...I believe that every person at any moment of time can lose their mindfulness. I think meditators like myself even who are sure of themselves, can completely forget themselves saying that these kinds of ceremonials are not for them, and they can completely isolate themselves from ceremonial sides and find themselves gone...only to realize that they have completely gone to a wrong direction. I think the ceremonial aspects or the show and dance aspects of Buddhism are good to ground us. They bring us to ground zero; they remind the basic lines. Until the enlightenment, we need the rituals. (Personal interview, 2009)

The interviewee simultaneously appreciates and depreciates the communal aspects of his inherited Buddhist tradition. He identifies himself as a serious meditation practitioner who is less interested in collective expressions of Buddhism. Despite this means of identity, he neither rejects nor devalues the ceremonial or cultural aspects of Buddhism. Instead, he finds them instrumental in order “to ground” him in contemplative practices that lead to the ultimate goal of Buddhism, namely spiritual awakening. This creative integration of rituals and meditation reminds us of the inadequacy of “two Buddhisms” framework in capturing the Buddhist religiosity of the second generation in North America. He also alludes to a youthful perspective about what a ritual should be. He implies that a ritual should not be an end itself. Rather, it is a means to an end—the establishment of mindfulness. Within this perspective, the rituals that are related to only meditation are appreciated, although one could argue that any ritual could be used to be mindful or engaged here and now.

The heightened interest in meditation of this particular group distinguishes them from their parents. A young woman says "my parents hardly do meditate. I am very interested in meditation...but sometimes I do get frustrated after a while, because I do not get the level of peacefulness I guess or I get distracted. But it is definitely something that I want to do." Similarly, another interviewee reveals that "I notice a lot of youth are getting interested in meditation. If it is done in an interesting way; like last summer, I went to a meditation that was done in a park something like that youth find it interesting, because it is no longer inside a building and [it is] spending time in fresh air." The preceding statement renews an ancient Buddhist discourse that related meditation to nature and established the connection between forest monks (*aranyawasi*) and meditation (*vipassanadhura*). Yet, this time the discourse is not confined to monks. Instead, it extends beyond monk-lay status, as well as young-old age gap. With this development, a discourse shift is pending. The village-dweller (*gamawasi*) or town-dweller (*nagarawasi*) tradition—a popular form of Buddhist community in collective culture—seems to lose its popularity in Toronto. Referring to one of two temples in this study, one youth complains,

It [temple] has become a sort of social gathering place. Sometimes people are in fund raising events, then, it becomes a money issue. When people turn into those things, then the temple becomes a gossip place. Then you know it is taking out the focus of religion. That's something I don't like. I wish the parents come there [temples] for the purpose it meant to be. They should make the use of opportunity. (Personal interview, 2009)

The informant criticizes the way many first generation use the temple. She expresses to not only intergenerational criticism of how Buddhism is practiced, but also to an intercultural definition of what religion is. For the interviewee, the focus or intended purpose of religion—Buddhism—is to enhance one's individual character. Other things,

like meeting friends or fundraising, are more rooted in secular or cultural things. Similarly, a first-year undergraduate suggests that "I think a temple should be a religious place not a social gathering place. We should have a Sri Lankan or Sinhalese community/cultural centre separate from the temple for non-religious or social gatherings." This indicates that the first generation's conceptual separation between Buddhism and the Sinhalese ethnic culture has not been as materialized or practical as they wished. However, that tendency intensifies in the context of the second generation, the majority of whom favour a generalized Buddhist identity over an ethno-specific Buddhist identity such as "Sinhalese Buddhist."

Simply Being Buddhists

In between these two ends—developing and re-claiming Buddhists—the majority of youth participants recognize their Buddhist heritage and go beyond it. Here, at least two trends are noticeable. First, a smaller number of youth do not limit themselves to Buddhism, but, instead, they explore other religions or spiritual traditions out of their religious and spiritual temperament. For example, one university graduate expresses, "I just explore all possibilities of faith systems...while keeping Buddhism as my primary reactor." The second trend is extending the Theravada denominational identity to a general Buddhist identity. As a female participant says, "I would say I am a Theravada Buddhist because of my family background, but I would strongly relate to Buddhism in general." Understandably, both generations favour the inter-Buddhist rather than inter-religious exploration. However, there is a significant generational gap on how they perceive these possibilities.

Please respond to the following statements:					
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Youth may follow any religion they want	1 st Gen.	3%	36%	42%	19%
	2 nd Gen.	22%	48%	24%	6%
Youth can selectively choose Buddhist traditions to follow	1 st Gen.	24%	46%	27%	3%
	2 nd Gen.	22%	65%	11%	2%

Well over majority (70%) of the second generation are open to inter-religious exploration, while, in contrast, the majority (61%) of the first generation disfavour the trend. For the latter, it is a concern as youth sometimes feel peer-pressure in religious conversion. One seventeen-year-old girl complains,

I have many Hindu, Christian friends. Actually, one of my Christian friends lives up to God and talks about God a lot. She tells me that ‘you should give yourself up to God.’ But I just try not to say anything. I don't say anything because I do not want to offend her. Then I do not want to explain my situation that I don't believe in God just again not to offend her....(Personal interview, 2009)

A few youth mentioned that some of their friends have abandoned Buddhism and/or converted to other religions, though this trend is minimal. Sometimes, Buddhist parents who think that Catholic schools have better discipline have “baptized” their children to admit them to a Roman Catholic school.

As noted above, both generations are very positive toward inter-Buddhist explorations. For example, seventy percent of the first generation and eighty-seven percent of the second generation favour the trend. This trend has generalized the way both generations self-identify with Buddhism. For example, the following data indicates a generalization or normalization of Buddhist identity.

How would you religiously identify yourself?		
Answer Options	First Generation	Second Generation
A Buddhist	40.5%	71.5%
A Sinhalese Buddhist	33%	15%

A Theravada Buddhist	26.5%	13.5%
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Both generations prefer to identify themselves as simply being Buddhists, followed by an ethno-specific (Sinhalese) Buddhist identity and a sectarian (Theravada) Buddhist identity. These self-identification rates may vary according to a particular context. However, they allude to how others—including non-Buddhists and non-Sri Lankan Buddhists—perceive the informants. In a multireligious and multiethnic society, Buddhism is generalized. Wherever particularity is concerned, it is the ethno-particularity, rather than denominational particularity, that is highlighted. In a secular social setting, ethnicity rather than religious denomination is prioritized. Even the academically abused term “ethnic Buddhist” presupposes the link between ethnicity and Buddhism, rather than denominational identity. However, as I have discussed in the first and third chapters, Buddhists from Sri Lanka in search of particular identity highlight their connection to location (Sri Lanka) rather than to ethnicity (Sinhala/Sinhalese). The intergenerational (over 30%) increase of non-specific Buddhist identity and the double-digit decrease in both ethnically and denominationally particularized identities indicate the generalization of Buddhist identity. One would imagine a particularized identity to become heightened in a pluralistic society to differentiate oneself from others, in this case non-Sinhalese Buddhists. However, the data show that there is a sharp decrease (more than 50%) in particularized identification amongst the second generation in comparison to their parents.

Sri Lankan Buddhist youth—regardless of their identifications as developing, reclaiming or general Buddhists—demonstrate, albeit to different degrees, a common pattern in constructing their Buddhist identity. This pattern could be called a “secular

mode of being Buddhist,” but this does not mean they have rejected religious beliefs and practices found in the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition. They do take refuge in the Triple Gem, observe the Five Precepts in the Pali language, and respect the Buddha and monks with bows. However, they do not consciously relate to these Buddhist cultural practices in the construction of Buddhist identity. Instead, they highlight how they individually incorporate the Buddhist worldviews, values, and practices in everyday lives. The following statements of a few young people demonstrate a secular mode of being Buddhist.

Being Buddhist means having patience; like in grocery you do not rush and push everyone to get your things done. You can be Buddhist everywhere. It does not take that much to be a Buddhist. Being friendly, being good to others, helping others, respecting others and having good attitudes are all about being Buddhist.

Being Buddhist is taking things as they come. A lot of friends tell me that oh, you are calm and relaxed all the time even with stress of exams and family life.

I do not think too much about the future and past; Buddhism taught me living in the present. I have read different Buddhist books...listened to *bana* [sermon] of different *hamudurowo* [monks] and practiced meditation. All of them one way another helped me to live a simple life in the present.

To me, being Buddhist means being a better person, knowing how to handle situations, doing what you can do for the humanity, putting other people in front of you and not forgetting yourself and having a good balance [between affluence and poverty and the well being of oneself and others]. (Personal interviews, 2009)

These statements indicate that, for many youth, being Buddhist means *being good* and *doing good*. One can discern that a Buddhist definition of “goodness” is expressed in these testimonies, but how that goodness is put into practice does not necessarily invoke a conventional way of being religious or a religiously being Buddhist. This mode of being Buddhist embodies the discourse of Buddhism as a way of life.

Conclusion

As we analyze the process of transmission, the roles of both generations, and the Buddhist knowledge and practices that have been transmitted to and received by the second generation, we see a negotiation among multiple agencies/agents. Here, I find Talal Asad's discussion on subjectivity and agency illuminating. Asad distinguishes *agent/agency* from *subject/subjectivity*. He argues that "*agent* and *subject* (where the former is the principle of effectivity and the latter of consciousness) do not belong to the same theoretical universe and should not, therefore, be coupled" (1993: 16). Here, Asad implies two things: first, simply *being conscious* or self-aware does not necessarily mean *being effective*, and, second, there are certain *unconscious* social aspects which can function effectively under which human agencies are conditioned and constrained. In other words, social structures and cultural systems can do real things similar to human activities.

Accordingly, the culturally negotiated Buddhist tradition is a product of not only the first and second generations, but also of the North American cultural system as well as the legacy of Sri Lankan history. It demonstrates human agency, as well as the efficacy of cultural systems. The following statement of a young woman at her early twenties captures the dynamics of agencies:

I guess our *thoughts* and *the way we believe also change because we are exposed to other religions' and no religion* [secular] *values and cultures*. Basically, what we have learnt as kids about Buddhism from our parents and being in *the Dhamma school* we try to hold on them with us ([Emphasis added] personal interview, 2009)

She refers to the first generation and their exercise of agency in setting up the project of transmission of the Buddhist tradition: Dhamma school. She also refers to the second

generation and how they become active agents in facing the challenges in Toronto. More importantly, she highlights the effectiveness of ambient culture (both religious and secular) in shaping her mode of being. Within these negotiations, what we see is that neo-traditional discourse has dissipated while modern discourse with new nuances, i.e. Buddhism as a way of life has come to the fore. Discourses' coming to the centre and dissipating from the centre are not confined to the diaspora, i.e. Toronto, as they represent the latest expression of the historical pattern of innovation and re-interpretation of the Theravada Buddhist tradition to make itself practical to a new time and space. It is not surprising, then, to see that the emergent mode of being Buddhist has a secular overtone.

In the chapter three, we noted that the first generation emphasize a Sri Lankan Buddhist identity that is expressed in taking refuge in the Triple Gem, observation of the Five Precepts, and performance of certain rituals. Such religious identity is not replaced by the secular mode of being Buddhist. Rather, a new perspective and flavour are added to the Buddhist tradition. The language of integration of Buddhist principles in everyday life seems to be prevalent as much as the expression of Buddhist identity in ritualistic performance. It is not that one is better than the other, but, rather, they are different in expression. The former has a more individual focus, while the latter has a more communal concentration. In the next chapter, we will see, once again how individual focus comes to the fore in a practice that is traditionally intended to strengthen collective values and ties.

Chapter Six

Temporary Ordination as a Buddhist Education for Laity

Introduction

In the preceding chapters, I have laid out three stages of Dhamma education in the colonial, postcolonial, and diasporic (Toronto) contexts. Depending on the socio-political contexts, Dhamma education has variously interpreted who a Buddhist is. But, it has maintained a more or less catechist formation of Buddhist identity, initiated by Henry Steel Olcott's *The Buddhist Catechism*. In other words, Dhamma education has prioritized cognitive knowledge of the Buddhist tradition throughout its history. In this chapter, I will discuss impulses within Sri Lankan Buddhism that highlight the importance of subjective formation or experiential knowledge in the formation of Buddhist laity. I explore the practice of temporary ordination as a means of Buddhist education for laity. Under experimentation in Sri Lanka, it is a practice that seeks to complement the existing Dhamma education, the inspiration of which comes from Sri Lankan Buddhists in the diaspora. Both temporary ordination and Dhamma education echo each other in their objectives, which is character transformation of the novice/student.

“Temporary ordination” refers to the entering into a monastic life with the intention of going back to lay life, and it is distinguishable from the classical “ordination for life.” In Asia, as well as in the West, Bangladeshi, Burmese, Cambodian, Laotian, and Thai Buddhists practice temporary ordination. They believe that ordination, either with its temporary or lifelong commitment, brings benefit for oneself and others. However, temporary ordination is mostly performed for the benefit of living and/or

deceased relatives. It takes different names depending on an ordinand's intention. For example, in the Lao Buddhist tradition, ordination (*Buat*) is known as *Buat Chua* (in the sense of rite of passage), *Buat Na Phai* (at the funeral service of a close relative), *Buat Uththis* (in memorial service), and *Buat Keaba* (in the sense of individual dedication for a fulfilled wish). Ordination is considered a means of merit-making for particular loved ones (parents, grandparents and ancestors), and it is performed only by male descendants at special times, i.e. funerals, memorial services, and/or ritually fertile times, such as the Buddhist rain retreat (July-September).

The concept of temporary ordination is new to Sri Lankan Buddhists, as it is not in the repertoire of traditional Sri Lankan Buddhism. Nonetheless, they believe that “ordination [with lifelong commitment] of one's son or daughter [is] the surest route to a heavenly birth” (Crosby 2005: 166), and it is beneficial to four successive generations of the ordinand's family to realize *nirvana* (Wickremeratne 2006: 201). Following several sporadic attempts made by a few monastic leaders in Sri Lanka, the Venerable Kirama Vimalajoti, the founder and director of the Buddhist Cultural Centre, has undertaken a systematic effort to popularize temporary ordination for two weeks throughout Sri Lanka. He established a separate institution—the Dekanduwela Meditation Centre—at Horana, a suburb approximately 20-25 km away from the capital Colombo. Temporary ordination has become a regular program at selected locations under the advocacy and financial sponsorship of the Buddhist Cultural Centre in Colombo.

Temporary ordination as introduced to Sri Lanka focuses solely on self-cultivation. It is not associated with merit-making rituals. It is not performed for the sake of loved ones, a common altruistic intention of temporary ordination in Southeast Asia.

Instead, temporary ordination has been introduced as a means of character transformation, along with another similar program which could be described as “quasi-nun ordination” for female aspirants. The Buddhist Cultural Centre claims that “it helps...people (men and women) lead a simple life for 14 days and learn Buddhism, meditation and live like a monk for two weeks” (Buddhist Cultural Centre).

The aforementioned temporary ordination in Sri Lanka resembles the novitiate program of the Sri Lankan Buddhist diaspora in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The late Venerable K. Sri Dhammananda, a well-known Sri Lankan monk who served the Sri Lankan Buddhist diaspora in Kuala Lumpur, implemented a novitiate program in 1976 in which multi-ethnic Theravada Buddhists, including the Sinhalese, took part. Similarly, for the last decade or so the West End Buddhist Centre has conducted temporary ordinations for Bangladeshi Buddhists in Toronto. These events, specifically one in July 2007, attracted a significant number of Sri Lankan Buddhists.

As I analyze temporary ordination in three locations, namely Colombo, Kuala Lumpur, and Toronto, I argue that temporary ordination in the context of Sri Lankan Buddhism functions as education for laity. It emphasizes self-enhancement and personal development rather than the procurement of merit for others. It highlights benefit for oneself instead of benefit of others. This emphasis on self-cultivation not only facilitates the transmission of Buddhist tradition to the successive generation, but it also emphasizes the importance of experiential knowledge in the formation of the Buddhist laity. The saga of temporary ordination for character transformation in three locations also demonstrates Steven Vertovec’s (2000) observation of the triadic connections of religion associated with the diaspora.

This chapter unfolds in three sections. First, I highlight the interpretation of temporary ordination as a means of Buddhist education for laity in Toronto. This educational emphasis in the diaspora, I argue, makes temporary ordination an embodied practice—a practice that optimizes the body of the ordinand to induce dispositions and in so doing it highlights the role of experiential knowledge in character formation. Thus, temporary ordination broadens the idea of Buddhist education, taking it from its initial catechist formation to a new experiential level. Second, I compare and contrast temporary ordination to the practice of ordination for life. Here, I contend that the absence of temporary ordination in the repertoire of traditional Sri Lankan Buddhism is a distinct characteristic of that form of Theravada Buddhism, and which is challenged by diasporic experience. Finally, I delineate the introduction of temporary ordination to Sri Lanka as an illustration of a diasporic religion's contribution to its country of origin. This makes us understand that the connections between religion in the diaspora and its counterpart in the country of origin are at least bidirectional. Certainly, Buddhism in Sri Lanka influences Sri Lankan Buddhism in the diaspora, but at the same time, as the account of temporary ordination illustrates, the latter also induces changes in the former.

Monastic Education for Laity

Bhikkhu Saranapala, a Bangladesh-born and Sri Lanka-trained monk, confirmed that since 1995 the monks at the West End Buddhist Centre in Toronto have periodically conducted temporary ordinations of young men of Bangladeshi ethnic background. I take up the 2007 event for discussion, as it is distinguishable from its counterparts in Bangladesh in several ways. Temporary ordination (*probajja*) in Bangladesh is usually

sponsored by a family often in conjunction with memorial services dedicated to family members. In contrast, the 2007 ordination was sponsored by a group of families with a sense of Buddhist cultural education—an informal means to inculcate Buddhist cultural values in the successive generation. The invitation card of the event introduced the practice “as a training for life, and an important step in the formation of youths.” In a follow-up interview, Bhikkhu Saranapala explained that “it was a monastic education given to lay people. It was also a moral and cultural education they [the ordinands] received.” The definition of temporary ordination as a monastic education for lay people derives from the Sri Lankan context. Bhikkhu Saranapala explains, “in Bangladesh there is no such specific training [for temporary novices], but here I follow the kind of Sri Lankan monastic way of training novice monks.” This educational emphasis convinced ordinands and their parents to participate in the practice.

Temporary Ordination as an Embodied Practice

Temporary ordination demonstrates a character transformation or making of a moral agent. At the 2007 ordination, seven Bangladeshi young men with shaved heads gave up ordinary dress and donned yellow robes, and observed the Ten Precepts. Their lay names were replaced with monastic names. These practices illustrate that virtues like obedience, self-discipline, simplicity, humility, and letting go make a Buddhist moral agent. These virtues need to be translated into dispositions—“tendencies, capacities, propensities, skills, habits, liabilities, proneness” (Asad 1993: 33)—in order for character transformation to take place. According to Talal Asad, the authoritative discourse involved in a practice induces virtues as dispositions into one’s character (36).

It is here that the monastic training which follows the temporary ordination becomes so important.

For seven days after the ordination, the novices observed the Ten Precepts and underwent monastic training with a daily routine from five o'clock in the morning to ten o'clock at night. The training includes memorization, reading, meditation, and ritualized practices, such as group chanting, doing chores, graciously accepting what is offered, and taking food with mindfulness. Monastic training starts with action that implies both doing (*sirith*) and avoidance (*virith*). It prevents the ordinands from doing things that go contrary to Buddhist virtues. The ordinands emulated their monastic preceptor, teacher, and other senior monks in handling their bodily actions. Justin McDaniel (2008) argues that “[a] central aspect of a monk’s education is to learn to imitate the ‘look’ of a monk. Physical and aesthetic awareness and discipline are complementary to textual study, memorization, ritual specificity, and concentration” (12). Similarly, Jeffrey Samuels (2004) observes that “[a]ction, in short, functioned to mold the bodies and minds of the novices” (966), and he theorizes the Sri Lankan monastic training as an “action-oriented pedagogy” (962).

More importantly, it is not just action but *mindful action*—derived from the Pali Canonical recommendation of the contemplation of the body (*kayanupassana*)—that is emphasized in monastic training. Mindful action corresponds to the observation of “outward behaviors (e.g., bodily acts, social demeanor) with inward dispositions (e.g., emotional states, thoughts, intensions)” (Mahmood, 2005: 136). It is through mindful repetition of “virtue-embedded-practices,” such as the alms round (*pindapatha*) and triple bow (*vandana*) to the Buddha and senior monks, that penetrate the interiority

(mental resistance, arrogance, pride) of the ordinand. The emphasis on the ordinand's body to transform character makes temporary ordination an embodied practice.

According to Saba Mahmood (2005), "an embodied practice is an entire conceptualization of *the role the body plays in the making of the self*, one in which the outward behavior of the body constitutes both the potentiality and the means through which interiority is realized" (159, emphasis added). Monastic training illustrates that it uses the trainee's body as an effective tool to carry out the disciplinary actions, but the training aims to not only bodily but also spiritually transform. Reflecting on monastic training, one young former ordinand said,

I guess, after the experience, I became more disciplined. First of all, we trained our bodies by waking up early and having not much food, and we did chores and physical activities...we also disciplined our minds with meditation and prayers. With these practices my discipline grew. (Personal interview 2009)

The preceding testimony also invokes Pierre Hadot's concept of spiritual exercises. Hadot (2002) argues that spiritual exercises are "practices which could be physical, as in dietary regimes, or discursive, as in dialogue and meditation, or intuitive, as in contemplation, but which were all intended to effect a modification and transformation in the subject who practiced them (6)." The seven-day-long monastic training did include all aspects—physical, discursive, and intuitive—of spiritual exercises.

The ordinands memorized the Pali version of the Five Precepts, the verses on veneration of the Triple Gem, and the Loving Kindness Discourse. Being the language of scripture and liturgy, Pali is intimately connected to the Theravada Buddhist tradition. It is one of the common threads that bind all sub-traditions of Theravada Buddhism. As Hoffman and Mahinda's (1996) book title suggests, *Pali Buddhism* means Theravada

Buddhism. In the tradition, Pali is known as a language of chanting, and its group intoning is particularly celebrated. Chanting Pali in a group (*gana sajjhayana*) not only vocalizes the Theravada tradition but also forges a community. It expresses the devotional as well as communal aspects of Theravada Buddhism. Retention of Pali chanting is part and parcel of the retention of Theravada Buddhist identity.

The surveys conducted for this research indicate a dramatic decline in intergenerational appreciation for Pali chanting. For example, sixty-eight percent of the first generation expressed that they appreciate Pali chanting a great deal, but only thirty-two percent of the second generation felt the same way. Further, the phonetic disparity between the Pali⁷⁰ and Western languages, in this case English, and the dominance of Western cultural individualism increasingly challenge the transmission of Pali chanting to the successive generations. But temporary monastic training required the ordinands to learn intoning and memorizing the basic Pali chanting. The parents of ordinands were impressed by the synchronized chanting their sons did from memory after the monastic training. In this case, the chanting of Pali by heart is understood not only as a tangible symbol of intergenerational transmission of the tradition, but also as an embodiment of the tradition. Furthermore, the ordinands also read and discussed certain parts of the Venerable Walpola Rahula's (1959) *What the Buddha Taught* and the Venerable Narada's⁷¹ (1964) *The Buddha and His Teachings*. Thus, temporary ordination in Toronto has become a means to transmit the Buddhist tradition to the second generation. In it two distinctive cultures are integrated.

⁷⁰ A temporary ordinand once referred to Pali as "tongue twisting" language.

⁷¹ He is well-known with his personal name. He did not use his village name before his personal name, a common pattern in identification of Sri Lankan monks.

Temporary Ordination as a Culturally Integrated Practice

In the context of religion, rituals in general refer to the symbolic bodily actions of religious practitioners. They are an integral part of the Buddhist tradition practiced by the first generation. They are performed individually and collectively at home and/or in the temple. Ritual is the first religious thing with which Buddhist children are acquainted, and, ironically, it is also the first aspect of religion that children tend to question and then resist if they receive unconvincing answers, or, worse, if their questions are left unanswered or ignored. Subsequently, ritual becomes a point of difference between how the first and second generations approach Buddhism. In an interview, one Buddhist youth said, "I guess I practice Buddhism differently than my parents. They are more into actual rituals and stuff like that." Young Buddhists are not anti-ritualistic; instead, they look for meanings in the rituals prior to enacting them. A young woman confirms that "our generation does not want [to] blindly follow, right?"

Referring to Pali chanting, a young man suggested that "Bhante [the monastic teacher] should have emphasized more meanings in *sutta* chanting." These are the same *suttas* many first-generation Buddhists often chant from memory but barely investigate for meanings. The young man's suggestion indicates the tendency of young people to look for meaning as they perform the religious practices. What most effectively convinces them of the worth of a ritual is a meaning that resonates with a sense of personal and interpersonal wellbeing. Referring to the change in his attitude toward Buddhist rituals, a teen insisted that "all I can say is that if you understand what you are doing, and how it benefits to you and everyone else it's much easier doing it. Before that

understanding was not there, and now [after temporary ordination] I have a better understanding of the religious activities.”

The second generation’s tendency to emphasize the meanings and reasons behind Buddhist practices prior to actually doing them often distinguishes them from the generation of their parents. The survey data indicate that eighty percent of the youth respondents believe that they look for more meaning than do their parents. This generational disparity expressed in religious impulses, I suggest, derives from two different forms of cultural upbringing, broadly defined by collectivism and individualism. It also denotes two distinct quests for meaning. Young Buddhists born and/or raised in North America tend to search for meaning internally. Their inclination to inner subjective states often differentiates them from their parents.

The perception of temporary ordination as a form of religious education for laity enables both generations to integrate the aspects of both collective and individualistic cultures. For the first generation, cultural and moral education means teaching practices (veneration and taking care of elders, sharing with others what one has), values (gratitude, social responsibility) and attitudes (humility, perception of oneself in relation to family and community) that derive from their collective culture. The monastic training the ordinands received for seven days highlighted those collective cultural norms and personal traits. The ordinands immersed themselves into collective cultural practices and disciplines, but the ordinands’ reflections and testimonies reveal that they also internalized temporary ordination and monastic training more in an individualistic sense, i.e. inner-experience, self-enhancement, and personal development. Explaining the benefit of his time as novice at the temple, an ordinand said,

I guess I have got in touch with *my spiritual self*...the spiritual experience and getting in touch with *my inner self* was the most valuable thing I gained from the monastic life. And, more importantly, I gained values, good habits, and my perspectives of Buddhism, and *how Buddhism explains the roles of parents, children, monk, and teachers*. (Personal interview 2009, emphasis added)

The preceding testimony indicates that the ordinand related to temporary ordination from both individualistic and collective cultural perspectives, though it is the individualistic expression that is more explicit. In Victor Hori's (1994) words, the testimony speaks loudly to the value of "self-understanding" and "self-realization" of Western Buddhists and less about the "self-examination" that is crucial to Eastern Buddhists. For Hori, both expressions "arise from two different notions of the person, the person as autonomous individual and the person as nexus of social relations" (48-49). In fact, the second-generation Buddhists embody both notions of personhood, and their cross-cultural integration of Buddhist traditions questions our understanding of Buddhism in North America, which has been conceptualized along the line of "two Buddhisms" (Prebish 1993; Numrich 2003).

Educational emphasis placed on temporary ordination has more or less marginalized the interpersonal discourse of the practice of filial piety. In Theravada societies and communities in Asia, temporary ordination is undertaken not only to confirm one's belongingness to the Buddhist community, but also to express familial gratitude to parents and ancestors. A couple of parents of ordinands disclosed that their sons will be re-ordained in Bangladesh simply because all their close relatives are there. If the idea of temporary ordination for the benefit of others was not completely

forgotten,⁷² it was at least dormant, as the intention and discourse of personal growth and character transformation dominated the 2007 temporary ordination in Toronto. From this perspective, the temporary ordination at the Sri Lankan temple differs from the same practice performed by Southeast Asian Theravada Buddhists in Ontario. Similar to Penny Van Esterik's (1992) study of Lao Buddhism in Toronto, Janet McLellan (2009) in her study of Cambodian refugees in Ontario observes that "part of their [ordinands'] wish was to 'pay back' their parents who had done so much for them" (100).

This shift in emphasis from other-benefit to self-benefit observed with temporary ordination at the Sri Lankan temple resonates with Ronald Grimes' observations on cross-cultural re-appropriation of aboriginal initiation. Grimes (2000) complains that "among many disaffiliated North Americans of European descent... initiation does not require solidarity with the ancestors or increased social responsibility; it is rather a means of personal growth and self-enhancement" (112). This trend is noticeable with temporary ordination in Toronto for cultural and geographical reasons, as migration has disrupted the ties with ancestors and extended family.

The interpretation of temporary ordination as a form of religious education in the diaspora enables the practitioners to tackle new challenges: cross-cultural tension, intergenerational misunderstanding, and the transmission of Buddhist tradition.

First-generation parents often want their children to follow the religious practices as they do, but when the second generation asks for the deeper meanings of the practices

⁷² Like after every merit-making ceremony, the parents poured water symbolizing sharing merit with their ancestors.

the parents often become helpless. Relating to the effects of ordination on ordinands, a father revealed,

In terms of religious practices, now they go with rhythm. They used to resist with why they have to do this and that. I used to answer them like *you have to do this and that, and that is our tradition and culture*. That is how I answered them because I didn't have a clear answer to satisfy them. (Personal interview 2009, emphasis in original)

This confession of a father of two teenage ordinands alludes to the intergenerational difference in internalizing Buddhism. The first generation's responses of this nature do not convince the second generation, but, instead, increase misunderstanding on religious matters between them. The father implied that his sons had participated in the rites and rituals prior to the ordination, but he had noticed that after the ordination they are more engaged or more receptive to their parents' religious tradition.

The father's observation is confirmed by the following statement of one of his sons:

I guess before we were forced to do, right? We didn't really understand why we do certain things...when we were forced to do it, we would do it but we won't be that happy. But after the [monastic] experience, we are accepting more...we say this is our culture. (Personal interview, 2009)

The preceding statement echoes a significant trend of what Paul Bramadat (2005) calls "the creative reclamation of South Asian cultural and religious traditions" in Toronto (5). It also reminds us that it is the self-experiential practices like temporary ordination that facilitate the second generation in embracing their parental religious tradition, not just as an inheritance but more as an individual choice. Similarly, Cynthia Mahmood (2005) observes that *amritdhari* ("baptized") young Canadian Sikhs internalize the Sikh identity "as a conscious and deliberate adult decision" (53). Another Buddhist ordinand admitted that "I always thought that my parents were pushing me to do what I did not

want to do. But then after the monastic experience, I came to realize that they are doing this for my sake. They would never want me do bad things for me.” Fascinated with such positive changes in behaviour and attitudes of her sons, a mother suggested that temporary ordination should be performed not only once in a life time, but should be repeated every few years.

The reflections on temporary ordination of both ordinands and parents alike allude to the difference between rituals, or rites in general, on the one hand, and rites of passage on the other. According to Grimes (2000), rituals and rites of passage are two different things with distinct functions. He explains,

Ritual practices such as daily meditation and weekly worship are responses to recurring needs. These rites move but do not transform. By contrast, when effective rites of passage are enacted, they carry us from here to there in such a way that we are unable to return to square one. To enact any kind of rite is to *perform*, but to enact a rite of passage is also to *transform*. (7)

To limit rituals to the performance of the action with no transformative effects on the performer, and to say that ritual practice like meditation does not transform the meditator, are both debatable. For example, the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition does not necessarily rely on rites of passage to discipline and train lay Buddhists. Instead, it employs a variety of means, such as precept observation, meditation, giving, and worship—all of them, according to Grimes are rituals—to gradually transform its adherents. Perhaps, Grimes overplays the distinction between rituals in general and rites of passage. Nevertheless, Grimes’ distinction is still important, as it highlights the concentrated efficacy of rites of passage, such as temporary ordination, in transforming character, an overlooked practice among Sri Lankan lay Buddhists.

Introduction of Temporary Ordination to Sri Lankan Buddhism

I suggest the practice of temporary ordination sets Sri Lankan Buddhism apart from the other Theravada Buddhist traditions. Talal Asad (1986) contends that an established practice intimately relates to the identity of a tradition (14). Similarly, I suggest that the absence of a common established practice, available in other co-traditions, also constitutes the identity of a particular tradition. Richard Gombrich (1984) argues that temporary ordination is a “distinct institution” in the Thai Buddhist tradition, and it has been unknown in Sri Lanka (45). The 2007 temporary ordination in Toronto introduces the practice as “a popular religious exercise in Buddhist traditions of Thailand, Burma, Laos, Cambodia and Bangladesh.” The omission of Sri Lanka in the list of Theravada societies implies that the institution of temporary ordination differentiates Sri Lankan Buddhism from the other Theravada Buddhist traditions.

The absence of temporary ordination within Sri Lankan Buddhism is often understood as the continuation of the tradition from the Buddha’s time. Gombrich (1984) observes that “Sinhalese Buddhism has preserved what seems to have been the position in ancient times: one must enter the Order with the intention of doing so for life” (45). In the Pali Canon, the term *pabbajja* literally means going forth from household life to homelessness with the implied intention of experiencing *Nibbana*. This ideal goal of monasticism is still maintained. Ordinands, including the temporary ones in Toronto, symbolically ask for ordination “to end all suffering and to realize *nibbana*”.⁷³ Although the concept and practice of *pabbajja* in the Pali Canon echoed the ideal of

⁷³ Although one hardly believes that *nibbana* is realizable within a short period of ordination, it is a common belief that every religious action contributes to and it is often dedicated to the realization of the supreme goal in the course of many lives to come.

sansyasin (renouncer), the fourth stage of life in Brahmanism, *pabbajja* has never been considered “an irrevocable step” (Gombrich 1984: 41). In the Pali canon, evidence of voluntarily disrobing or leaving monastic life behind is lacking, but that possibility was recognized. For instance, the Venerable Malunkyaputta demanded from the Buddha direct answers to ten speculations, and he challenged the Buddha: if the Buddha “does not declare these to me, then I will abandon the training and return to the low life” (Nanamoli 1995: 533).⁷⁴

The Pali commentator Buddhaghosa referred to the practice of repeat ordinations in his *Samanthapasadika*, a Vinaya commentary written in the fifth century CE in Sri Lanka. Emphasizing the need of parental consent, specifically with respect to a minor’s ordination, the Venerable Buddhaghosa says, “a boy is granted permission by his parents, but after his ordination he leaves the order again. Even if he is ordained and leaves a hundred times, his parents must be consulted again each time before he is ordained” (in Crosby 2005: 161). This indicates that repeat ordination was possibly in practice in Sri Lanka in the time of Buddhaghosa. The historical accounts of Sri Lanka also sporadically make reference to certain individuals who withdrew from the monastic life. Referring to Buddhist nationalism, Walpola Rahula (1956: 80) notes that “Bhikkhus were encouraged even to leave their robes and join the army for the sake of religion and the nation.” In modern Sri Lanka, disrobing is not uncommon, but it is rarely disclosed in public. It is true that those who disrobed, whose number is not insignificant, had entered monasticism with the conviction and expectation that they would remain monks for the rest of their lives. It means that temporary ordination never evolved as an

⁷⁴ This refers to the Culamalunkya Sutta in the *Majjhima Nikaya* (MN 63 (Pali Text Society)).

institutional practice in Sri Lanka, and its absence is a distinct feature of Sri Lankan Buddhism. This defining feature, however, is recently challenged by the introduction of temporary ordination to Sri Lanka.

In 1982, the Colombo Hunupitiya Gangaramaya, a well-known Buddhist temple with political clout, conducted a publicized temporary ordination (Gombrich 1984). In more recent years, a systematic effort has been undertaken by the Buddhist Cultural Centre to familiarize temporary ordination in Sri Lanka. The Cultural Centre dedicated a separate institution—the Dekanduwela Meditation Centre—for the practice, and it announced that “we would like to establish at least 20 such centers for promoting temporary ordinations” (Anonymous 2004: 11).

These initiatives of temporary ordination in Sri Lanka have attracted both praise and criticism. The main recurring objections are that temporary ordination may trivialize ordination and its aspiration, and it may induce the loss of distinction between monks and laity. However, those who support the practice argue that temporary ordination “would make for closer relations between the Sangha and the laity” (Gombrich 1984: 50). Bhante Punnaaji, a highly respected Sinhalese monk in Toronto, echoes both the pros and cons of temporary ordination. He says,

During the time of the Buddha, there was not such a thing what is called temporary ordination. There is not real benefit, but there is a benefit in the sense...every layman becomes a monk so he has experienced the difficulties of being a monk. Those who do not have experienced monastic life they do not know how difficult it is. In a way it is good to have the temporary ordination because it gives much appreciation of monastic life. (Personal interview, 2009)

He believes that the practice would encourage better attitudes or a more sympathetic understanding of the monastic life among the laity. Nevertheless, Gombrich interprets the 1982 effort to introduce temporary ordination in Sri Lanka in terms of tension

between monks and laity, and conservatism and modernism. For him “it is a clerical counter-attack against modern lay Protestant Buddhism, and in particular against the meditation centre,” and he further asserts that “I see it, rather, as a conservative move” (1984: 60). Considered another way, the practice challenges the tradition-defining discourse that seeks to “instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice” (Asad 1986: 14), which is that ordination is for one’s entire life, not for a short period of time, and it is for the realization of Nibbana. This discourse shapes Sri Lankan Buddhists’ assumptions, expectations and responses toward Buddhist monkhood.

Monastic initiation in Sri Lanka is a carefully screened process. Whether a boy is worthy of ordination also depends on his horoscope (*kendare*), which is defined by the configuration of the planets at the time of his birth. Since birth is believed to be karmically determined, the horoscope is interpreted as footprints of one’s karma associated with previous lives. Generally, Buddhists in Sri Lanka believe that past karma conditions (for some it even determines) the present life. Accordingly, an astrologist reads the horoscope and predicts whether the boy would make an acceptable monk. The horoscope is examined for monastic tendency (*mahana yoga*) which is more or less expressed in the form of “absence of stars in four critical position[s] where they ought to be” (*hatarapalu kendara*) for worldly life (Wickremeratne, 2006: 202). A person with such a horoscope is considered an ideal candidate for initiation, and he is taken to the temple, where he will eventually be given the initiation after the necessary training. The practice of examination of one’s horoscope prior to ordination relates to two assumptions. First, it reinforces the Buddhist understanding that monastic life does

not correspond to lay life, that they are two distinct paths. Second, it also indicates a general assumption held by Sri Lankan Buddhists that monasticism is not for everyone, but only for those with inherent monastic dispositions from previous lives (*sasara purudda*). Accordingly, for many Sri Lankan Buddhists, monks are born as much as they are made.

The discourse of ordination as a lifelong commitment has made initiation an entry into a religious vocation. The candidate becomes a temple attendant (*abiththaya*) and has to undergo monastic training for a few weeks, months, or even a year. He is trained in Buddhist knowledge, attitudes, and values. The training as *abiththaya* also seeks to verify the candidates' commitment to monasticism, and, in fact, during this stage some leave the training. As in other Theravada societies, ordination with no prior monastic training is unheard of in Sri Lanka. It is also not associated with commemoration of deceased relatives, although it is believed to be karmically beneficial to the families of the ordinand.

Horoscope reading and training prior to ordination increases not only the ordinand's conviction in monastic life but also to the laity's expectation that those who enter the order would remain as monks for the rest of their lives. With that personal conviction and communal expectation, novice (*samanera*) monks, in general, attract relatively more respect from the laity in Sri Lanka than their counterparts in other Theravada countries, where temporary ordination is widely practiced and *samaneras* and *bhikkhus* are treated unequally in public ceremonies. For instance, the laity in Sri Lanka pays equal respect to *samaneras* and *bhikkhus*, and they allot equal shares of offerings to both, which is rare in other Theravada countries where the status of

samanera is often related to temporary ordination. *Samanera* ordination, not being readily available in Sri Lanka, entails greater wonder and enchantment than in other Theravada countries.

Unlike in Thailand, Burma, Laos, and Cambodia, leaving the monastic order in Sri Lanka is associated with social stigma, and being an ex-monk attracts social disgrace. Swarna Wickremeratne (2006) explains the reason behind the social response:

The lay attitude of veneration to monks is a tacit recognition of the rigors of monkhood. Correspondingly a monk who leaves the order tends to be stigmatized....It is interesting that in both Burma and Thailand relinquishing the robes does not carry the same sense of muted censure, because of the widespread tradition of temporary ordination in those countries. (182)

An interviewee in Toronto recalls that ex-monks are traditionally compared to shards of pottery (*walankatu*), which belong neither to pottery nor to the earth, implying that ex-monks fit neither in monastic nor lay lives. Social disgrace associated with leaving monasticism derives from a combination of factors: belief in astrological pre-dispositions, pre-ordination practices, the communal expectation and honour toward monkhood, and the absence of temporary ordination. All these factors strengthen the traditional discourse that defines ordination as an initiation into a religious vocation available only to a select few “chosen” individuals with lifelong commitments.

To maintain the distinction between temporary ordination and ordination with lifelong commitment, additional measures are undertaken in Sri Lanka. Gombrich (1984) observes,

The most striking requirement, however, is a letter of consent to disrobe after 14 days. Should he [the ordinand] find after 14 days that he would like to stay in the Sangha for longer, Gangarama [the temple which organized the temporary ordination] cannot help: *he must disrobe and then apply to another temple for re-ordination.* ([emphasis added] 48)

The letter of consent to disrobe preauthorizes the temporary ordinand's obligatory exit from monasticism. Temporary ordination is distinguished from the ordination for permanent monastic membership, as the former trains the ordinand for lay life, while the latter initiates the ordinand into monastic membership. Temporary ordinands eventually return to lay society, while permanent ordinands progressively claim permanent membership in the monastic community. Thus, temporary ordination does not overlap with that of permanent commitment.

The advocates of temporary ordination in Sri Lanka emphasize the efficacy of the practice as Buddhist education. They recommend temporary ordination as an embodied practice geared toward the ordinand's character transformation. The Buddhist Cultural Centre, which sponsors and popularizes the practice, hopes that "if this attempt [the introduction of temporary ordination] is successful we can expect to reap the benefits—that is producing exemplary citizens, bringing down crime, violence, hatred and jealousy, and...producing citizens full of loving kindness, whom all Sri Lankans can be proud of" (Anonymous 2004: 11). This emphasis of character transformation has overshadowed the ancestral veneration associated with the practice in its traditional form. With the shift in focus, temporary ordination has been first experimented within the diaspora then transported to Sri Lanka.

Diasporic Influence in the Country of Origin

The urge to introduce temporary ordination to Sri Lanka derives from the Sri Lankan Buddhist diaspora in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The Venerable Nanissara, who took initiative in the 1982 temporary ordination in Colombo, says that "he was inspired

to introduce temporary ordination to Sri Lanka by the Venerable K. Sri Dhammananda, incumbent of the monastery in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia)” (Gombrich, 1984: 47).

Similarly, the Venerable Kirama Vimalajoti, the founder and director of the Buddhist Cultural Centre, expressed that he is influenced by his mentor—the Venerable K. Sri Dhammananda, who also served as the religious advisor of the centre until his recent death.⁷⁵

From 1952 until his death in 2006, the Venerable K. Sri Dhammananda served the Buddhist Mahavihara (initially known as the Brickfield Buddhist Temple) in Kuala Lumpur, which was founded by the Sri Lankan Buddhist diaspora in 1894 (Buddhist Mahavihara Malaysia). His service was not limited to the Sinhalese community. He reached out to other Buddhists, representing Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana traditions (The Late Ven. Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda). Within this context, he initiated the first temporary ordination in December 1976. As his online biography explains,

The objective of the novitiate programme is to provide the Malaysian Buddhists an opportunity to experience life as a monk. It has since become an annual affair where the Novitiate programme runs for about two weeks during the end-of-year school holidays....Lady devotees are also encouraged to join in the annual programme by observing the 10 precepts of a lay disciple. (The Late Ven. Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda)

These programs are conducted during school holidays, so that school students could take part in a type of complementary education. Female aspirants are also accommodated, not by extending novicehood to them but by popularizing a lay-oriented version of the Ten Precepts. The Buddhist Cultural Centre promotes the same program in Sri Lanka.

⁷⁵ A personal conversation with Ven. Kirama Vimalajoti on December 6, 2008 at the Buddhist Cultural Centre Dehiwala, Sri Lanka.

This influence and inspiration from a diasporic location to the country of origin makes us re-think our conceptualization of the connections between the two localities. The connections between a diasporic community and its country of origin have never been a one-way process. The flows of people, ideas, commodities, influence, and cultural practices have not been confined between a particular diasporic community and its country of origin, but, rather, they have also extended to co-ethnic communities who are globally dispersed (Vertovec 2000). Diasporic communities do not always receive, but also give or send things, ideas, and even practices to their countries of origin. Their constant monetary and material gifts and donations to their countries of origin are widely known. Many expatriates simultaneously participate in the politics of their countries of origin and their current residence. For instance, Indian Muslims and Hindus in the diaspora regularly influence the politics in India (Kurien 2001, 2007).

Although many scholars (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2002; Lavitt 2007; McLellan 1999) note the transnational connections of religion, only a few (Kurien 2007; Froystad 2009) demonstrate how exactly religions in the diaspora shape the religious landscape in the country of origin. For example, Kathinka Froystad (2009) illustrates that Swami Yogananda's Kriya Yoga, an exported religious practice, has returned to its country of origin, India, with a set of new features added to it. She names this phenomenon as "return globalization." Froystad argues "the return globalization of Kriya Yoga involved a double mutation rather than a rollback of the changes brought about by its first export" (292). Similarly, the saga of temporary ordination in relation to Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition demonstrates *diasporic initiatives* not only in experimenting with a religious practice that was not part of the original tradition, but also in transporting it to the

country of origin. It illustrates that “once global channels are open, the flow of religious phenomena—symbols, ideas, practices, moods, motivations—is at least bidirectional, more likely multi-directional” (Csordas 2009: 3-4).

Conclusion

I have discussed how temporary ordination in Toronto, Colombo, and Kuala Lumpur has been interpreted as a form of Buddhist education to transform characters. This interpretation, I argued, has transformed temporary ordination—a merit-making ceremony dedicated to loved ones—to be an embodied practice that seeks to transform characters by transmitting knowledge, changing attitudes, and instilling values. Such interpretation has a few implications and ramifications.

First, the interpretation indicates the individualist cultural influence on the Buddhist tradition, not only in Toronto but also in Kuala Lumpur and Colombo. As we noted with the Bangladeshi young ordinands in Toronto, the argument that temporary ordination helps better understand oneself encouraged the ordinands to participate in the practice. They also articulated the benefit of the practice in terms of subjective well-being and inner transformation. Second, temporary ordination as a Buddhist education for laity encourages Sri Lankan Buddhists to consider the practice. I have suggested that absence of temporary ordination in the repertoire of traditional Sri Lankan Buddhism stands out as a distinct identifier of the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition. This distinct characteristic has been challenged by impulses within the tradition to integrate temporary ordination into Sri Lankan Buddhism. Interestingly, the impulses derive from the Sri Lankan Buddhist diaspora in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Perhaps more importantly, the advocacy of temporary ordination for character transformation within Sri Lankan Buddhism broadens the concept of Dhamma education. Those who support the implementation of the practice in Sri Lankan Buddhism argue that temporary ordination enables the participants to practice (*patipatti*) and then experience (*pativedha*) what they intellectually learn (*pariyatti*). We have noted the same argument in Dhamma education (Chandrasekera 2001: 6), which somehow falls short, perhaps due to the legacy of Olcott's *The Buddhist Catechism*. We have observed that factual knowledge of the Buddhist tradition overwhelms Dhamma education. Formation of Buddhist identity more or less stops at the first step of the above-mentioned three stage Buddhist educational scheme.⁷⁶ The Sri Lankan Buddhist diaspora in Kuala Lumpur has appropriated temporary ordination as an extension of Buddhist religious education for laity since 1976. They also added a quasi-nun ordination to offer the opportunity to female aspirants. In Colombo, temporary ordination is, however, still under experimentation and consideration, and has already attracted criticisms and compliments. Both advocates and opponents invite revisions of the century-long Dhamma education and its objectives, as the advocates of temporary ordination argue for the implementation of the practice as an extension of the existing Dhamma education.

The Bangladeshi Buddhists in Toronto, in association with Sri Lankan Buddhism, have appropriated temporary ordination as a means of character transformation. Many Sri Lankan Buddhists have been amused with the practice, but a

⁷⁶ The Dhamma teachers' equation of Dhamma education to planting Dhamma seeds captures the scope of Dhamma education.

few of them, in fact, have expressed interest. For instance, one young male interviewee who had completed the Dhamma education program in Toronto said, "I asked my mom whether I can become a temporary monk this summer. She was completely against it. She fears that within that week I would lose the interest in leading a lay life." The mother's fear relates to the power of character transformation associated with the practice. The interviewee's interest in the practice of temporary ordination signifies a Dhamma student's longing for the character transformation associated with Dhamma education.

If nothing else, the interviewee's interest indicates a search for a week-long subjective experience that is not available in the existing Dhamma education in Toronto. Whether the interest would be materialized in a monastic/ordained form remains to be seen. If it happens, it may be coupled with a quasi female ordination as we noticed in Kuala Lumpur and Colombo, where temporary ordination has been implemented as an extension of current gender inclusive Dhamma education. In that scenario, not only Dhamma education but temporary ordination in Toronto also will be extended with the inclusion of female aspirants, as it did happen in Kuala Lumpur and Colombo. The Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition in Toronto can firmly maintain Dhamma education in its initial non-ordained form. But it cannot afford to confine itself to Dhamma education's initial catechist formation to achieve its goal of "complete character transformation," partly because it is serving a new generation heavily influenced by "the massive subjective turn of modern culture" (Heelas and Woodhead: 2005). The aforementioned quest of the youth for a prolonged subjective experience, itself, is one of the causes and

effects of the transmission and reconfiguration of Sri Lankan Buddhism that study attempted to document.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

As I reflect on the structure of this research and revisit the major findings, I consider how this research contributes to our understanding of religion among the post-1967 immigrants in Canada, Buddhist studies in general, and the study of Sri Lankan Buddhism in particular. This is a micro study that examines religious phenomenon of the Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto. Nonetheless, I suggest that the implications of this study extend not only to the study of other sub-traditions of Buddhism, but also to the study of religion in resettlement since the mid-1960s.

The way in which I set up the research, and the research approach I developed for this study carry broader implications in studying religious communities in the diaspora, particularly those who migrated to North America after the mid-1960s. In the field of ethnography, the researcher is expected to observe, analyze, and explain the nature of research locality. The term locality in a globalized world does not refer only to a spatial concentration, but to “relational and contextual” locations beyond boundaries (Appadurai 2006: 178). With that in mind, I extended my Toronto-based research to Sri Lanka, as Sri Lankans in Toronto—similar to many immigrant communities—maintain lively connections with their country of origin. Therefore, the religion of immigrant communities is perhaps better studied not only in their historical contexts, but also in relation to their concurrent socio-political settings. Lately, others also have observed the necessity of setting up research on Buddhism in Canada in relation to their respective Asian countries (Hori 2010: 36). The simultaneous observation in both locations

(Toronto and Colombo) enabled me to discern many important aspects of Sri Lankan Buddhism in Toronto.

I have laid out the progressive stages of Sri Lankan Buddhist community formation in Toronto. The acceleration of the Sinhala-Tamil tension in Sri Lanka during the 1970s influenced a secularly-oriented community (Ceylonese Recreational Club) to evolve in ethnic and religious lines. The Tamil-speaking Sri Lankans in Toronto highlighted Tamil ethnicity to raise awareness of the ethnic tension in Sri Lanka. However, the majority Sinhalese-speaking Sri Lankans in Toronto underlined their Buddhist heritage to distance themselves from the ethnic tensions in Sri Lanka. In this context, we notice that Buddhists from Sri Lanka embraced a geo-religious (Sri Lankan Buddhist) identity to replace their earlier ethno-religious (Sinhalese Buddhist) identity. This shift itself perhaps was inspired by the inclusive nationalism operative in both locations, Canada and Sri Lanka. More importantly, the two distinct identity developments among the immigrants from Sri Lanka highlight how identities in resettlement are formed in relation to their countries of origin, as well as of residence.

The reconstruction of Buddhist temples has been one of the significant ways in which Buddhist immigrants in North America redefine who they are (Numrich 1996; McLellan 1999; Padgett 2002; Bankston and Hidalgo 2008; White 2010). My analysis of Sri Lankan Buddhist temples in Toronto indicates a pattern in how religious institutions in the resettlement evolve: sharing, establishing, and multiplying of Buddhist institutions. These three phases reflect a steady growth of the Sri Lankan Buddhist community in Toronto. They demonstrate the community's social capital (McLellan 2006) in harnessing the Buddhist resources available in and beyond the Sri

Lankan community. Local connections among fellow Buddhists and a transnational nexus with co-ethnic Buddhists (Sri Lankan Buddhists in Washington D.C., other diasporic locations, and in Sri Lanka) play significant roles in sharing, establishing, and multiplying Buddhist institutions.

The aforementioned institutional development demonstrates three distinct community dynamics that relate to the pattern in the formation of Buddhist community identity in resettlement. The sharing phase highlights reaching out and connecting with other fellow Buddhists. In this stage, a common Buddhist identity (either a pan-Buddhist or a pan-Theravada) is emphasized. The second phase, the establishing of a religious institution, increases individual and group commitments and responsibilities. What drives Buddhists in this stage is their particularized ethnicity- or/and nationality-based identity. McLellan (2006) relates this stage to the politics of identity and representation in multicultural Toronto. Finally, the multiplication of temples increases Buddhist religiosity, but it also divides resources, the access to which temples must compete with each other for. This stage demonstrates the multiplicity of a particularized Buddhist identity. For example, the 2007 introduction of the Toronto Mahameunawa (Asapuwa), a temple affiliated to the Sri Lankan forest-dwelling monastic tradition, added a new dimension to Sri Lankan Buddhism in Toronto, which was hitherto represented only by the village- or town-dwelling monistic tradition. The impact and implications of the new addition perhaps deserve future research, as the Mahameunawa differs from other

temples in administration as well as in services.⁷⁷ Sri Lankan Buddhist institution development in Toronto indicates that community dynamics (tension between preservation and accommodation, shifting needs of followers according to the stages of individual life) are key factors for the growth of a diasporic religion as much as the continuing immigration from the country of origin.

With institutional development as a backdrop, this study focused on an institutional practice, namely Dhamma education in Sri Lankan Buddhism. This study examined Dhamma education and its mission of forming Buddhist moral agency in Toronto in the context of its century-long history in Sri Lankan Buddhism. I illustrated that different emphases came to the fore in different times to define what Buddhist identity is or how to be a Buddhist. For example, defending abstract Buddhist principles against non-Buddhist rhetoric was a part and parcel of being a Buddhist in colonial Sri Lanka. Although, this aspect of Buddhist identity was carried over in Dhamma education, the Sinhalese Buddhist nationalistic sentiment has dominated the formation of Buddhist identity in postcolonial Sri Lanka. Both sentiments are, however, downplayed in Toronto, while Buddhist identity has been conceptualized along with multicultural principles and values. My analysis of curriculum and textbooks of Dhamma education in three historical periods has demonstrated that the Buddhist spiritual discourse has been contextualized by the contingent discourses of the time. In other words, Buddhist identity has been conceptualized and understood according to the ambient socio-cultural and political situations. This reminds us that religion evolves in

⁷⁷ Unlike other temples, Mahameunawa is a part of globalized Buddhist movements with centralized administrative power in Sri Lanka. Within a decade, the Mahameunawa (Asapuwa) (started in 1999) expanded vigorously in and outside Sri Lanka.

conjunction with other cultural forces, such as politics, economics, education, etc.

Formation of religious identity has never been merely a spiritual, religious endeavor, but it has also been a social, cultural, and even political project.

The history of Dhamma education demonstrates how a religious practice becomes institutionalized. By imitating Christian Sunday schools, Dhamma education was introduced to Sri Lankan Buddhism in the late 19th century. However, it took more than a half century to become a significant aspect of Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka. Political patronage in the late 1950s enabled Dhamma education to evolve as an institutional practice. The postcolonial Sri Lankan government provided financial, organizational, and educational resources to make Dhamma education available in every temple in Sri Lanka, and Dhamma education was also extended to public schools. Throughout postcolonial Sri Lanka, the issue of Dhamma education has been capitalized by Buddhist practitioners, as well as by politicians to legitimize political power. This political sentiment is negligible in Toronto. This development demonstrates how the symbiotic relationship between Buddhism and politics in pre-colonial Sri Lanka has played out in the modern context. More importantly, it reminds us that the status of religious majority instigates politicization of religion.

Being an institutional practice in Sri Lankan Buddhism, Dhamma education has secured its prominence in resettlement. Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto and in other resettlements have transplanted the practice. It has become the most sought out temple service, partly because of its focus on intergenerational transmission of Buddhism. With the absence of extended family in resettlement, the first-generation Sri Lankan Buddhists depend on Dhamma education as a primary, and at times sole, means of

transmission of Buddhism to their children. Its importance is felt more than ever. Even in smaller cities, like Guelph and London, Ontario, where no Sri Lankan temples are available, Dhamma classes are conducted by lay teachers. Such developments relate not only to lay Buddhists' initiatives in forming Buddhist communities in resettlement, but it also refers to the importance of Dhamma education in Sri Lankan Buddhism. Pre-migration experiences and the migration process shape how Buddhists in Toronto recreate and redefine their religious traditions (McLellan 1999, 2008). Similarly, as the transplantation of Dhamma schools indicates, the ways Asian Buddhists pass on their tradition to their children are also closely related to the Buddhism that they have practiced before migration. In other words, Toronto-based Sri Lankan Buddhists' urgency and enthusiasm in Dhamma education derive from their own formation of Buddhist identity in the context of Dhamma education in Sri Lanka.

This research's analysis of Buddhist education in Sri Lankan Buddhism in Toronto suggests that the transnational connections of recent immigrants, however, do not hinder or prevent them from putting down roots in the immediate location, in this case Toronto. Sri Lankan Buddhists' reinterpretation of Buddhist concepts and practices increase our understanding of the extent of adaptation of Buddhism in Canada. In addition to adaptation in temple administration and in religious and cultural practices (McLellan 1999, 2009; Matthew 2006; Harding, Hori and Soucy 2010), this study has evidenced that a conceptual or doctrinal adaptation is also underway within recent immigrant Buddhists. A new interpretation is emerging in which Buddhist concepts and practices are reinterpreted inclusively. Interpreters have argued that the emergence of

Canadian-born Buddhists and the ambient religious and cultural diversity in Toronto necessitate such interpretation.

The preceding justification and rationale for the new interpretation suggest that Buddhism in Canada is not a foreign religion any more. Buddhism has found its roots in Canada, and it caters to Canadian-born followers. As the analysis of Dhamma education manual in Toronto illustrates, the participants in Dhamma education (educationists, teachers, and students alike) perceive that learning and practicing Buddhism makes good Canadian citizens. They argue being Buddhist means, among other things, upholding key Canadian values, namely peaceful coexistence, appreciation of cultural diversity, and respect for secular and religious views and lifestyles. Do such assertions make Buddhism Canadian? Perhaps not or at least that is not the intention of those who establish the correlation between Buddhism and Canadian values. Instead, the reinterpretation rather demonstrates how the pervasive discourse of multiculturalism in Toronto propels Buddhists to highlight the aspects of their religious tradition that correspond to the law of the land where they live. In doing so, Sri Lankan Buddhists in fact embrace and strengthen the Canadian identity.

The underlying message of inclusive interpretation discloses the discursive nature of the Buddhist tradition. Sri Lankan Buddhists define their interpretation of the Buddhist tradition as “intelligent adaption.” The phrase itself captures the psyche of immigrant groups: all adaptations are “intelligent” in the eyes of practitioners, who expect nothing but a desirable outcome from their adaptations. The peaceful image of Buddhism that emerges in the interpretation simultaneously captures the popular perception of Buddhism in North America, as well as the expectations of a minority

religion that seeks acceptance, cooperation, and active participation in a society that is religiously diverse yet secularly defined.⁷⁸ Such representation suggests that the agency of Sri Lankan Buddhists is in full swing in defining who they are, what they believe, and how they practice their religion.

The aforementioned discursive formation of Sri Lankan Buddhists in Canada takes place in the context of being a minority group, which is a socio-political position whose impact on the Buddhist tradition is yet to be documented. The underlying question is does a religion, Theravada Buddhism in this context, function differently when it is a minority tradition? Or, do minority and majority statuses condition a religion to respond differently? My analysis of the Dhamma education manual *Teaching Buddhism to Children* in Toronto in relation to its counterpart *Daham Pasela* in Sri Lanka suggests yes. The latter's Buddhist nationalistic discourse has advocated a patriotic sentiment by (re)establishing connections between Buddhism and other identity markers, namely Sri Lanka, Sinhala ethnicity, and the Sinhala language. With regained status of majority, not only in number but also in political power, Buddhists educators in the postcolonial period perhaps thought that Buddhism gained "its rightful place"⁷⁹ to advocate the connections.

Research data indicate that Buddhist educators in Toronto ignore the rhetoric related to Buddhism's connections to the Sinhala ethnicity and language. They, however, have maintained the connection between Sri Lanka and the Buddhism that

⁷⁸ Here I refer to political and popular definition of Canada as a multicultural, rather than multireligious or Christian country.

⁷⁹ "Let us restore Buddhism to its rightful place" was the motto of Buddhist leaders in the post-colonial period (cf. Bond 1988: 76).

they practice. They have replaced the exclusivity of the Buddhist nationalist discourse with an inclusive interpretation of Buddhist concepts and practices. Their inclusive interpretation enables them to establish connections with Canada by identifying multicultural themes and values in the Buddha's teachings. What is noteworthy is that Buddhist inclusivity replaces the ethnic and linguistic exclusive discourse of the Dhamma education of the postcolonial Sri Lanka. Among other things, Buddhism's universalistic aspiration, Toronto-based Sri Lankan Buddhists' minority status, and the Canadian multicultural discourse contribute to the emergence of inclusive Buddhist discourse in Toronto.

Similar to the inclusive interpretation of Buddhist concepts and practices, the first generations' negotiation of the Buddhist tradition with their Canadian-born children represents a cultural reproduction. I identified several intricacies and strategies in that process. Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto conceptually separate abstract Buddhist thoughts, what they call Dhamma, from the Sinhalese ethnic culture. Although religious studies scholars argue that Buddhism, like all religions, is culturally bound (Hori 2010: 23), the Sri Lankan Buddhists tend to seek a conceptual separation of Buddhism from history and culture. Similar trends are noted elsewhere, but it has been accused of being "ethnic isolation" (Numrich 1996). However, I perceive the trend as a strategy for cultural negotiation.

Their tendency itself has become a catalyst in reconfiguration of the Buddhist tradition according to the ambient norms, values, and lifestyles in Toronto. This does not mean that Buddhism practiced by the Sri Lankans in Toronto is an abstract, universal, free-floating form of Buddhism. Rather, their perception of Buddhism as such

encourages them to incorporate certain aspects of the North American Culture in their Buddhist practices. The Dhamma/culture distinction also refers to the recurring tension between universalistic claims of Buddhist teachings and particularized interpretations derived from geo-cultural locations. Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto have minimized the tension by negotiating and collaborating values and practices related to collective Buddhist culture and individualistic North American culture. This is not surprising, as cross-cultural negotiation is taking place in a multicultural social environment. My observation of this particular issue illustrates that the Sri Lankan Buddhists do not replace one culture with another, but they hybridize their religious tradition by integrating and developing hierarchical (parent-children, monk-laity) and egalitarian (friendship models) means of interactions in parallel.

This study has identified a set of factors that made such cultural negotiation possible. The Sri Lankan Buddhist minority in Toronto is a highly educated community. A majority of them had lived in major cities in Sri Lanka prior to their migration to Toronto. Education and pre-migration urban lifestyles facilitated their integration into the Canadian society. The Buddhist tradition that they have brought to Toronto had already incorporated modern discourses, therefore it has complemented cosmopolitan lifestyle. Moreover, the impact of multicultural discourse and minority status in a pluralistic society on the recent immigrants cannot be underestimated. They too have pressured Sri Lankan Buddhists, as this study has illustrated, to perceive and practice their religious tradition in certain ways. Thus, culturally negotiated Buddhism recalls the Buddhist philosophical teaching that observes how an effect is not the result of a single cause, but it manifests through multiple causes and conditions.

From this perspective, the reconfiguration of Sri Lankan Buddhism in Toronto represents the latest ramification of the Buddhism/modernity dialogue that began more than a century ago in Colombo. Toronto-based Sri Lankan Buddhists are privileged to be able to draw upon the historical experience of two social changes in Sri Lanka as they strive to ground their Buddhist tradition in Toronto. The first one—the Buddhist revivalism of the late 19th and early 20th century—dived into the earliest Pali *sutta* texts by overlooking the Pali commentaries and vernacular literature. The second one—mid 20th-century postcolonial Buddhist nationalism—selectively revived certain aspects of premodern Buddhism for a postcolonial political agenda.

As I have demonstrated, Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto resonate more with reformation, as the socio-political structures (Buddhism being a minority religion, the presence of bigger Tamil community, and popular perception of Buddhism being an apolitical and harmonious religion) in Toronto do not support the Sinhala Buddhist nationalist discourse. They increasingly incline to, in Gombrich and Obeyesekere's (1988) words, "modern Buddhism" more than "traditional Buddhism." This does *not* mean that the Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto have completely embraced modern interpretations of Buddhism at the cost of premodern aspects of the Buddhist tradition. Rather, they have developed increasing appetite and appreciation for the aspects (meditation, study of the canon, humanitarianism) that are associated with Buddhist modernism, and the socio-economic structures in Toronto sustain those aspirations.

Sri Lankan Buddhists' cultural negotiation of the Buddhist tradition reflects what David McMahan (2008) calls "*indigenous modernity*—one that selectively incorporated distinctly modern western discourses into indigenous discourse to form a unique hybrid

that refused full assimilation to western philosophical, social, and praxiological formations” (112-113). This reminds us that Asian Buddhist immigrants in the West strongly represent a Buddhist demographic who have revisited their respective Buddhist tradition with modern sentiments and perspectives.

With an in-depth focus on Dhamma education, this study has illustrated how the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition has been dialogically formed and reformed in a diasporic context, Toronto. Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto neither isolate themselves from nor solely depend on Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Rather, they legitimate their religious tradition through connections across times and spaces. They reflect on their past, project their future, and interpret those reflections and projections in the context of present conditions.

My analysis indicates that Dhamma education, like any aspect of a religious tradition, is a product of numerous influencing factors and actors. The objectives, motives, contents, practices, and outcomes of Dhamma education have been conditioned and influenced, not only by human agents like living Buddhists but also by historical conditions and socio-political structures, such as living in colonial, postcolonial, and diasporic contexts with minority/majority status. In between these human agency and socio-political conditions and constraints, Buddhism’s rationality and efficacy are tested; its meanings are contextualized and reinterpreted; and, its integrity and identity are accommodated and maintained. This study reminds us that the continuities and discontinuities of a religious tradition derive from an intense negotiation between its practitioners and their ambient socio-cultural system. The Buddhist tradition in the

diaspora that evolves within the discursive activities is neither exactly the same as, nor completely different from, its counterpart in respective countries, in this case Sri Lanka.

By studying Buddhism in resettlement with an analysis of Buddhist education for laity, this research contributes to Buddhist studies in multiple ways. First, it emphasizes the importance of religious education for laity in the study of Buddhism in general, more specifically in the Theravada Buddhist tradition. Although there are numerous scholarly works on monastic education in Theravada Buddhism (McDaniel 2008, Samuels 2004, Blackburn 2001), there is no single study dedicated to Buddhist education for laity. With heightened influence of lay Buddhists specifically in resettlement, the formation of lay Buddhist identity perhaps deserves more scholarly attention.

Moreover, with the emergence of the second-generation Buddhists, religious socialization, intergenerational interaction, and the transmission of Buddhist beliefs and practices are increasingly becoming important issues in many Buddhist communities across North America. With an in-depth look at those issues in the Sri Lankan Buddhist community in Toronto, this study extends our understanding of Buddhism in Canada by recognizing Sri Lankan Buddhists' pioneering role in the development of Theravada Buddhist education for laity and their contribution to Canada. The specific details of this study shed light on the intergenerational dynamics within recent immigrants to North America and the role of formal religious education in it.

In relation to the transmission of the Buddhist tradition, the first generation is concerned about the lack of wide-spread Buddhist cultural immersion that they had in Sri Lanka. They are anxious about the influence of secular worldviews, materialism,

peer-pressure, abuse of drugs and premature sex, and non-Buddhist cultural influence on their children. They are, however, very confident that the intellectual rigor of Buddhist philosophy and the applicability of Buddhist practices will anchor their children in the Buddhist tradition. This belief, in fact, determines to what extent which aspects of their religious tradition they deem worthy of passing on to the second generation. Moreover, some parents complain that in individualistic culture, taking care of the needs of elderly parents is not emphasized as much as in their Buddhist culture. Under the influence of individualistic cultural imperatives in Toronto, they worry that their children might lose obligatory and emotional commitments to elderly parents. All these concerns drive the first-generation Buddhists to accompany, or in some cases drag, their children to weekly Dhamma schools with the hope that Dhamma education will somehow enable them to cope with the challenges mentioned above. These relate to immigrant parents' anxieties and concerns in regard to raising children in a less-familiar social and cultural environment. Immigrant religious institutions are expected to help the second generation navigate the cross-cultural terrains.

For the second generation, Dhamma education equips them with Buddhist knowledge that enables them to construct a positive self-image. For many, Dhamma knowledge remains dormant, as Dhamma teachers call "the seeds of Dhamma;" nevertheless, it propels young Buddhists to claim a positive image of Buddhism. The data derived from the second generation indicate that Buddhist youth with strong Buddhist knowledge tend to capitalize on the popular image of Buddhism in the West more than those who lack the knowledge. Peter Beyer (2006) observes that Canadian Buddhist youth from Chinese and Southeast Asian cultural backgrounds lack

fundamental knowledge of Buddhism and they hardly relate to Buddhist identity (93). Beyer relates this lack of identification to ineffective socialization of the Canadian-born Buddhists (96). Perhaps, a future comparative study of Buddhist youth across recent Buddhist immigrant communities will shed more light on this issue. My research indicates that Sri Lankan Buddhist youth in Toronto are fairly knowledgeable about Buddhism, and that Dhamma education, with its century-long history, contributes to this positive outcome.

However, mistaken religious identity is one of the concerning issues for Sri Lankan Buddhist youth in Toronto. A majority of youth in this study expressed frustration about being misidentified with being Hindus or Muslims, and they complain that many in Toronto often relate South Asian identity with Hinduism or Islam, while Buddhist identity is often related to East Asia. Even then, Sri Lankan Buddhist identity is overshadowed by relatively bigger Sri Lankan Tamil Hindu presence in Toronto. All these issues relate one way or another to self image (individual and communal) of a religious minority within a minority religion. Although these concerns are specific to Sri Lankan Buddhist youth in Toronto, they refer to the importance of religion in individual and communal identity formation for the South Asian second generation in Canada (Tran, Kaddatz, and Allard: 2005).

For both generations, Dhamma education facilitates a cross-cultural interpretation of Buddhism. It brings together not only two generations but also two distinct cultures, and it mediates Buddhism between them. It provides a venue where Buddhism is not only transmitted but also reconfigured. As noted earlier, the second generation does not passively receive what is passed on to them. Instead, they

sometimes question, challenge, and demand new interpretation of the tradition itself. Janet McLellan (2010) observes that Cambodian Buddhists in Ontario lack an interpretative discourse, which jeopardizes the transmission of the tradition to their second generation (165). In contrast, Dhamma schools in the context of the Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto have created an educational atmosphere where tradition is challenged, tested, and culturally appropriated.

This study suggests that Dhamma education is a salient feature of Sri Lankan Buddhism, which simultaneously denotes what Sri Lankan Buddhism is and who Sri Lankan Buddhists are. To study Buddhism, to understand what the Buddha taught, to know how the Buddhist tradition has historically unfolded, and to memorize the basic tenets and Pali chanting are not only the duty of monks, but they are also part and parcel of being lay Buddhists in Sri Lankan Buddhism. Dhamma schools are religious institutions where knowledge-oriented Buddhist identity is nourished, tested, strengthened, and passed on to the successive generations. The need for subjective experience is underscored by experimenting with temporary ordination as a Buddhist education for laity. With the loss of supplementary means of transmission (the absence of grandparents, Buddhist education in public school) in Toronto, Dhamma schools share an unprecedented responsibility in passing on the Buddhist tradition to the successive generation. As we noted with inclusive interpretation, they have also become the means where cross-cultural adaptations are introduced, and intergenerational understandings of Buddhism are shared. Therefore, similar to their parent generation, the second-generation Sri Lankan Buddhists are active agents in their own right. They bring in a critical assessment of the first generation's Buddhist beliefs and practices.

Thus, this study suggests that transmission refers to continuity but not uniformity of the Buddhist tradition.

Finally, I have identified a few noticeable features of reconfigurations of the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition in Toronto. A geo-religious identity (Sri Lankan Buddhist) supersedes an ethno-religious identity (Sinhalese Buddhist), and a variety of reasons seem to trigger this shift. Doctrinally, the shift enables Sri Lankan Buddhists to attract followers from a multi-ethnic background, while maintaining the authenticity of the tradition with Sri Lanka. Sociologically, the shift also signifies the post-independent Sri Lankan nationhood. The island of Sri Lanka was where Buddhism was introduced, and, as such, it plays a very important role in the conceptualization of Buddhist identity by people from Sri Lanka, specifically in the context of the politics of identity and representation in multicultural Toronto. Perhaps, a more convincing reason is political. With the shift from ethnicity to nationality, Sri Lankan Buddhists divert or even avoid the attention of the Sinhala-Tamil ethnic strife in Sri Lanka. In doing so, they quarantine Buddhism from violence and conform to the popular image of Buddhism as a peaceful religion. All these multiple motivations beneath the shift denote the discursive formation of Sri Lankan Buddhist identity.

Another undergoing reconfiguration in Toronto is that Sri Lankan Buddhism in Toronto distances itself from what interpreters call “un-Buddhist” elements that were added to Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Deity shrines, a popular attraction and a source of temple revenue in Sri Lanka, are not available within the temple premises in Toronto. No deity worship is performed publicly. The absence of these so-called un-Buddhist aspects signifies the prominence of a modern interpretation of Buddhism in Toronto. If

the geographical distance was used to justify the omission of aspects associated with Buddhism in Sri Lanka, the difference in the ambient culture was cited to justify for new addition and reinterpretation. The inclusive interpretation of Buddhist concepts and practices in Toronto was rationalized as the necessity to cope with the new ambient culture, as well as to serve better the new generation born and/or raised in it. This reconfiguration of Buddhism relates to Theravada Buddhism's receptivity to local culture.

The final and perhaps a more important reconfiguration of Buddhism is derived from intergenerational negotiation. Based on dominant cultural influences in both generations, I have identified the first generation's Buddhist religiosity as "cultural convention" in comparison to the second generation's "individual conviction" approach to Buddhism. The former means that the first generation relates to Buddhism collectively, while the latter emphasizes that the second generation look for individually convincing meaning before they commit themselves for Buddhist practices. However, we also noticed that both generations have adapted cross-cultural interpretations and practices that combine both collective and individualistic cultural expressions of Buddhism. After all, this study has been an account of cross-cultural reconfiguration of a Buddhist tradition in the process Buddhism's transmission from the first generation to the next in the context of multicultural Toronto.

Appendix One (First-Generation Buddhists)

1. Research Information and Your Consent

1. This study centres in and around the first generation Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto. To qualify for this research, you MUST be aged of 30+, and participant at LEAST occasionally at the services organized by the Sri Lankan temples in Toronto.

Are you qualified for this research?

Yes

No

2. I have read the information letter and understood my rights as a research participant and consent to use the data provided.

Yes, and wish to continue

I do not wish to continue

2. General Information

3. Gender/ Sex:

male

female

Other (please specify)

4. Please circle your age category:

30-36

49-54

67-72

37-42

55-60

73+

43-48

61-66

5. What is your marital status?

Single

Married

Divorced

Widower/widow

Dating
someone

Common Law

Appendix One (First-Generation Buddhists)

6. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Have not finished high school
- High school graduation
- College degree
- University graduate
- Some graduate work
- Masters
- PhD

Other (please specify)

7. What is your occupation?

- Unemployed
- Professional (e.g., teacher, lawyer, etc.)
- Business
- Stay at home parent
- Trades person (e.g., electrician, plumber etc.)
- Service industry
- Monastics
- Self employed
- Student
- Manufacturing
- Civil servant

Other (please specify)

8. What is your family composition?

- Nuclear (parents+children)
- Extended with 2 generations (parents, uncle/aunt, children)
- Extended with 3 generations (grandparents, parents, children)
- Not applicable

9. Do children or young adult live at your household? If yes, please identify their age ranges below by marking categories as many as needed.

- 0-6
- 7-12
- 13-18
- 19-24

3. Buddhism in Your Life

10. How would you religiously identify yourself?

- A Buddhist
- A Theravada Buddhist
- A Sinhalese Buddhist

Other (please specify)

11. To be Sinhalese means to be a Buddhist.

- Agree
- Strongly agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Appendix One (First-Generation Buddhists)

12. Which are you?

Monastic

Upasaka

Upasika

Lay supporter

Other (please specify)

13. What is your Buddhist or religious goal in this very life? Please mark only ONE of the following:

To provide a good life for my family

To become enlightened in this very life

To serve humanity and other beings to reduce suffering

To have a better life after death and eventually attain nirvanaya

Other (please specify)

14. What is your spouse's religion?

Buddhism

Christianity

Hinduism

Islam

Judaism

Other (please specify)

15. How often do you go to the temple?

Once a week

A few times a month

Less than once a year

Twice a week

A few times a year

Once a month

Once a year

16. Please identify three of your main reasons for going to the temple. Please mark only ONE choice per row:

	To maintain/renew social connections	To gain merits	To be a better person	To visit the monks	To maintain ethnic identity	To learn/practice Buddhism	To maintain Buddhist identity
First choice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Second choice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Third choice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

Appendix One (First-Generation Buddhists)

17. Please indicate how much you like the following temple activities:

	Like most	Like	Like somewhat	Don't like	Don't like at all
Poya Day service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weekly meditation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weekly sutra studies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dharma education/Daham pasela	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dharma discussion for the parents of Dharma students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Monks' home visit (acceptance dana)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pirit chanting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social support (soup kitchen)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social networking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Private counseling with monks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Preservation of ethnic identity and language	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

18. Please list your top three favourite Buddhist activities.

One

Two

Three

19. What else can the temple do for you?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> Celebration of youth's educational achievement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Summer camps for children and youth | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth leadership workshop |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organizing cultural educational trip to Sri Lanka for youth | <input type="checkbox"/> Fund raising for the needy and poor |

Other (please specify)

20. Do you believe that one has to be a monk to realize Nirvanaya?

- Yes
 No
 Not sure

Appendix One (First-Generation Buddhists)

21. Which of the following spiritual forces or beings who, you believe, can intervene in your every day life. Please tick all that apply.

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creator God | <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhist saints (Rahatan Wahanse) | <input type="checkbox"/> Deceased relatives (Malagiya Neayo) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sai Baba | <input type="checkbox"/> The Gaothama Buddha | <input type="checkbox"/> Gods (i.e., Vishnu, Kataragama) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boddhisattva (i.e., Maithree) | <input type="checkbox"/> Ista devata (personal deity) | |

22. Worshipping gods is a part of Buddhism.

- Strongly agree
 Agree
 Somewhat agree
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree

23. The following personal challenges increased your Buddhist faith:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Emotional challenges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Loneliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parenthood	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Migration from Sri Lanka	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Life crises (death of loved one)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal trouble	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

24. How important are the following Buddhist activities to you?

	Extremely important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	Not important at all
To accumulate good karmas for life after death	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To purify my mind for enlightenment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To give material supports to Buddhism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To support the needy and poor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To defend Buddhism against non-Buddhist influences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To model good virtues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

4. Dhamma Education

Appendix One (First-Generation Buddhists)

25. Identify relevant boxes related to your participation in Dhamma education. Please tick all that apply.

- I currently teach at Dhamma school in Toronto
 I have taught at Dhamma school in Sri Lanka
 I have never been to Dhamma school
 I have learned Buddhism at Dhamma school
 I have learned Buddhism at public school

26. Did or does Dhamma School meet your expectations in terms of the following:

	Yes	Somewhat	No
My moral and spiritual development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Become a better citizen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strengthening Buddhist identity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Philosophical understanding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Insight into religious truths	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friendship with other fellows	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>		

27. Please explain to what extent Dhamma School has influenced in your:

	Greatly influenced	influenced	Somewhat influenced	Not influenced	Not influenced at all
Moral behaviour	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Buddhist knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Buddhist identity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Better citizen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sense of self	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

28. What do you think is/was missing in Dhamma education?

One

Two

Three

5. Encounter with Other Buddhist Tradition(s)

Appendix One (First-Generation Buddhists)

29. If you have been exposed to other types of Buddhism, please identify how:

	Through books and internet	Educational setting	Friendship	Relationship	Dhamma School	Visit to temple	Meeting with Buddhist teachers	Public media
East Asian Buddhist traditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Zen Buddhism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tibetan Buddhism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-Sinhalese Theravada Buddhism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-sectarian Buddhism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify)

30. Contact with other forms of Buddhism has:

	Yes	No	Not sure
Increased my belief in my inherited Buddhism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expanded my Buddhist knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inspired me to know more about my inherited Buddhism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Made me critical of my inherited Buddhism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not made any change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

31. How responsible do you hold each of the following for passing the Buddhist tradition on to the future generation?

	Extremely responsible	Responsible	Somewhat responsible	Not responsible	Not responsible at all
School teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Monks/nuns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents/grandparents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lay dharma teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Government	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The dharma students themselves	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

Appendix One (First-Generation Buddhists)

32. Please identify what aspects of Buddhism you find interesting?

	Very interesting	Interesting	Somewhat interesting	Not interesting	Not interesting at all
Buddhist metaphysical beliefs (i.e., heavens and hells)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Buddhist rituals (i.e., Buddhapuja, Sanghika dana etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Buddhist ethics (5 and 8 precepts)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
contemplative practices (i.e., meditation)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social services (i.e., soup kitchen)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Philosophical issues (i.e., sutra study, dharma talks)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>				

33. If you have a choice, would you send your child(ren) to a Buddhist Day School similar to a Catholic School?

- Yes No

34. How effective are the following ways to pass Buddhist tradition on to the next generation?

	Highly effective	Effective	Somewhat effective	Not effective	Not effective at all
Separate Buddhist schools	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Buddhist practices at home and at the temple	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sunday Dhamma schools	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Let the children decide themselves	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

35. What is Buddhism to you? Please mark ONLY one of the following:

Buddhism is:

- A way of life that claims to reduce suffering
- A moral/ethical system
- A religion with rituals, metaphysical beliefs, and practices
- A philosophy without dogmas
- A spirituality without restrictive beliefs and required practices

Other (please specify)

Appendix One (First-Generation Buddhists)

36. Who/what is the Buddha to you? Please mark only ONE of the following:

- Buddha was no more no less than a human being who taught how to end suffering
- Buddha is/was a supreme being with miraculous power and extraordinary virtues who teaches the path to Nirvana
- Buddha is/was a manifestation of the universal moral and spiritual force that governs order of the universe and can intervene in everyday life
- Buddha was spiritual teacher who came to reveal the way to Enlightenment
- Buddha is a divine being who can help humans

Other (please specify)

37. What does "Sangha" mean to you? Please mark only ONE.

- The order of monks only
- Buddhist monks and nuns
- The monastic and lay followers of the Buddha
- The community

Other (please specify)

38. Do children related to you go to Dhamma School?

- Your child(ren)
 Your grand children
 Cousins/Nephews/Nice
 None

39. As parents and elders, to what extent do you expect the following from the Dhamma School?

	Greatly expected	Expected	Somewhat expected	Not expected	Not expected at all
Moral and spiritual development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Better citizen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transmission of Sinhalese Buddhist identity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowledge of Buddhism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Socialization of children among Buddhist peers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

Appendix One (First-Generation Buddhists)

40. Please rate how important the following material sources of Buddhist knowledge or inspiration are to you:

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	N/A
Published materials on Buddhism in Sinhala	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Published materials on Buddhism in English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Published materials on Buddhism in other languages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Multimedia (TV, films)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Internet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Courses on Buddhism (school, college, university)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

41. How influential are the following people in terms of understanding and living a Buddhist way of life?

	Extremely influential	Influential	Somewhat influential	Not influential	Not influential at all	N/A
Parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grandparents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Monks/nuns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dhamma teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

42. When faced with a question about your Buddhist practice or belief you:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Consult lay Buddhist who knows/practices Buddhism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Refer to Buddhist texts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visit Buddhist internet sites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consult Buddhist monks or nuns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Look for the interpretation in tradition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reflect on self-experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Talk to friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discuss with family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix One (First-Generation Buddhists)

6. Migration and Cross-cultural Issues

43. From where did you migrate to Canada?

- Directly from Sri Lanka
 Migrated from other country

44. When did you migrate to Canada or the USA?

- Pre-1966
 1967-1983
 1984-1993
 1994-2004
 2005-Present

45. Please explain how much the following reasons motivated you to migrate to North America:

	Very decisive	Decisive	Somewhat decisive	Not decisive
Political reasons/crises in Sri Lanka	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Economic opportunity in N.America	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Higher education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Better life for your family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

46. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your migration decision?

- Extremely dissatisfied
 Dissatisfied
 Somewhat satisfied
 Satisfied
 Extremely satisfied

47. Please identify how challenging are the issues mentioned below.

	Extremely challenging	Challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not challenging	Not challenging at all
Maintenance of North American living standard	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Passing on ethnic and religio-cultural identity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To practice and uphold Buddhist values	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Raising children with religio-cultural values	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To maintain family and community ties	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

Appendix One (First-Generation Buddhists)

48. Please identify to what extent the following Buddhist cultural values are being compromised or enhanced.

	Extremely compromised	Compromised	Extremely enhanced	Enhanced	Neither compromised nor enhanced
Family and communal consensus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Collective accountability and responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Simple and moderate life style	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Age and spiritual hierarchy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Self reliance and self responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Buddhist contemplative practices (meditation)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Buddhist doctrines (i.e., impermanence etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Buddhist ritualistic practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

49. Are the following values affecting your Sinhalese cultural values?

	Compromising	Not compromising	Enhancing	Not enhancing	Not affective at all
Personal freedom and preference	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Concern with material well-being	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interest in other religions and cultures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gender and social equality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Educational opportunity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

Appendix One (First-Generation Buddhists)

50. What do you think about the following Buddhist beliefs and practices in relation to religious life in North America?

	Highly relevant	Relevant	Needs motivation to make relevant	Irrelevant	N/A
marriage rituals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Offering material needs to the monks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Belief in heaven and hell	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Beliefs in karma	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Living according to the 5 precepts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pali chanting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sitting on the floor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meditation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Education about other Buddhist traditions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Chairs or pews for temple service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

51. What do you think about the following roles and organizations within the North American context?

	Highly relevant	Relevant	Somewhat relevant	Irrelevant	N/A
Hierarchically defined lay and monastic roles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lay preachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Order of nuns (Bhikkhuni)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Temporary ordination for a few days/weeks to develop Buddhist knowledge and understanding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Multi-ethnic Buddhist organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

52. How important is it that your child(ren) gets married to

	Very important	Important	Somewhat important
Buddhist	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sri Lankan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Theravada Buddhist	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix One (First-Generation Buddhists)

53. Please respond to the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Parents should not impose, but educate the youth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Youth can selectively choose what Buddhist traditions to follow	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Youth should follow their parents' religion as it is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Youth may follow any religion they want	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents should not intervene in youth religiosity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Thank you

Thank you very much for your kind consideration and participation in this research!

Appendix Two (Second-Generation Buddhists)

1. This study centres in and around the Sri Lankan Buddhist community in Toronto. To qualify for this research, you MUST be between the age of 16-30, and participant at LEAST occasionally at the services organized by the Sri Lankan temples in Toronto.

Are you qualified for this research?

Yes

No

2. I have read the information letter and understood my rights as a research participant and consent to use the data provided.

Yes, and wish to continue

I do not wish to continue

3. Gender/ Sex:

male

female

4. What is your age range?

16-19

20-24

25-30

5. What is your relationship status?

Single

Dating someone

Married

Divorced

Common Law

6. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Have not finished high school

Some graduate work

Completed high school

Masters

College degree

PhD

University graduate

Other (please specify)

Appendix Two (Second-Generation Buddhists)

7. What is your occupation?

Student

Manufacturing

Trades person (e.g., electrician, plumber etc.)

Self-employed

Service industry

Professional (e.g., teacher, lawyer, etc.)

Civil servant

Business

Unemployed

Stay at home parent

Monastic

Other (please specify)

8. What is your family composition?

Nuclear (parents+children)

Extended with 2 generations (parents, uncle/aunt, children)

Extended with 3 generations (grandparents, parents, children)

Not applicable

9. When asked, how do you present your religious identity? Please tick one:

A Buddhist

A Theravada Buddhist

A Sinhalese Buddhist

Other (please specify)

10. To be Sinhalese means to be Buddhist.

Strongly agree

Agree

Somewhat agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

11. Which are you?

Monastic

Upasaka

Upasika

Lay supporter

Other (please specify)

12. What is Buddhism to you? Please mark ONLY one of the following:

Buddhism is:

A spirituality without restrictive beliefs and required practices

A way of life that claims to reduce suffering

A philosophy without dogmas

A religion with rituals, metaphysical beliefs, and required practices

A moral/ethical system

Other (please specify)

Appendix Two (Second-Generation Buddhists)

13. What is your Buddhist/religious goal in this very life? Please mark only ONE of the following:

- To provide a good life for my family
- To become enlightened in this very life
- To serve humanity and other beings to reduce suffering
- To have a better life after death and eventually attain nirvanaya

Other (please specify)

14. I consider religion a decisive factor when choosing friends:

- Strongly agree Agree Somewhat agree Disagree Strongly disagree

15. If in a relationship, what is your girl/boy friend's /partner's /spouse's religion?

- Theravada Buddhism Mahayana Buddhism Other Buddhism Christianity Hinduism Islam Judaism

Other (please specify)

16. How often do you go to the temple?

- Once a week A few times a month Less than once a year
- Twice a week A few times a year
- Once a month Once a year

17. Please identify three of your main reasons for going to the temple. Please mark only ONE choice per row.

	To see friends	To please parents/family obligation	To gain merit	To be a better person	To maintain ethnic identity	To learn/ practice Buddhism	To maintain a Buddhist identity
First reason	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Second reason	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Third reason	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix Two (Second-Generation Buddhists)

18. Please indicate how much you like the following temple activities:

	I really like it	I like it	I like it somewhat	I do not like it	I strongly dislike it
Poya Day service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weekly meditation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weekly Sutra studies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dharma education/Daham pasela	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Monks' home visit (acceptance dana)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pirit chanting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social support (soup kitchen)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social networking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Private counseling with monks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Preservation of ethnic identity and language	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

19. Please list your top three favourite Buddhist activities.

One

Two

Three

20. What else can the temple do for you?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> Celebration of youth's educational achievement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Summer camps for youth | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth leadership workshop |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organizing cultural educational trip to Sri Lanka for youth | <input type="checkbox"/> Fund raising for the poor and needy |

Other (please specify)

21. Do you believe that one has to be a monk to realize Nirvanaya?

- Yes
 No
 Not sure

22. Which of the following spiritual forces or beings who, you believe, can intervene in your every day life? Please tick all that apply.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gods (i.e., Vishnu, Kataragama) | <input type="checkbox"/> The Gauthama Buddha | <input type="checkbox"/> Bodhisattva (i.e., Maithree) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deceased relatives (Malagiya Neayo) | <input type="checkbox"/> Ista devata (personal deity) | <input type="checkbox"/> Creator God |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhist saints (Rahatan Wahanse) | <input type="checkbox"/> Sai Baba | |

Appendix Two (Second-Generation Buddhists)

23. Worshipping gods is a part of Buddhism.

Strongly agree
 Agree
 Somewhat agree
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree

24. The following personal challenges increased your Buddhist faith:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Emotional challenges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Life crises (death of loved one)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Loneliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Migration from Sri Lanka	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parenthood	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal trouble	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

25. How important are the following Buddhist activities to you?

	Extremely important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	Not important at all
To accumulate good karmas for life after death	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To purify my mind for enlightenment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To give material supports to Buddhism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To support the needy and poor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To defend Buddhism against non-Buddhist influences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To model good virtues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

26. Have you been in contact with any of the forms of Buddhism listed below? If so, please share how it happened.

	Through books and internet	Education setting	Friendship	Relationship	Dhamma school	Visits to temples	Meeting with Buddhist teachers	Public media
East Asian Buddhist traditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tibetan Buddhism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Zen Buddhism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-Sinhalese Theravada Buddhism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-sectarian Buddhism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify)

Appendix Two (Second-Generation Buddhists)

27. Contact with other forms of Buddhism has:

	Yes	No	Not sure
Increased my belief in my inherited Buddhism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expanded my knowledge of Buddhism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not make any change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inspired me to know more about my inherited Buddhism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Made me critical of my inherited Buddhism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

28. Please rate how important the following material sources of Buddhist knowledge and inspiration are to you:

	Very important	somewhat important	not important	N/A
Published materials on Buddhism in Sinhala	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Published materials on Buddhism in English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Published materials on Buddhism in other languages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Multimedia (TV, films etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Internet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Courses on Buddhism (school, college, university)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

29. How influential are the following people in terms of understanding and living a Buddhist way of life?

	Extremely influential	Influential	Somewhat influential	Not influential	Not Influential all all	N/A
Parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grandparents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Monks/nuns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dhamma teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

30. Do you go or have you been to Dhamma School?

- Yes, I have been or go to Dhamma School in Toronto
 Yes, I have been to Dhamma School in Sri Lanka
 I have never been to Dhamma School

Appendix Two (Second-Generation Buddhists)

31. Did or does Dhamma School meet your expectations in terms of the following:

	yes	somewhat	no
My moral and spiritual development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Become a better citizen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strengthening Buddhist identity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Philosophical understanding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Insight into religious truths	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friendship with other Buddhists	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

32. Please explain to what extent Dhamma School has influenced you in your:

	Greatly influenced	influenced	Somewhat influenced	Not influenced	Not influenced at all
Moral behaviour	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Buddhist knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Buddhist identity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Better citizen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sense of self	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

33. What do you think is missing in Dhamma education?

One

Two

Three

34. Which are you?

Born in Canada or the USA

Migrated to Canada or the USA before age of 13

35. Is it important for you to have friends who are:

	Extremely important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	Not important at all
Buddhist	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sinhalese	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
South Asian	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix Two (Second-Generation Buddhists)

36. Please explain whether the issues mentioned below are challenging.

	Extremely challenging	Challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not challenging	Not challenging at all
To have friends who share your ethnic and religious backgrounds	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To practice and uphold Buddhist values	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To relate to my parents' cultural values and practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To get accurate Buddhist knowledge and interpretation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

37. Relative to your parents' Buddhism, you do:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
Place greater emphasis on meditation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Engage in other forms of Buddhism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tend to separate Buddhism from culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emphasize meanings over beliefs and practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prefer individualistic practices instead of communal ones	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Think Buddhism governs your parents' lives more than yours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have more egalitarian (gender, spiritual, age) values than them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consider yourself more Buddhist than your parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emphasize Buddhist identity over Sinhalese ethnic identity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More interested in Buddhist philosophy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tend to be less concerned with required Buddhist practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Place more emphasis on ritual	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix Two (Second-Generation Buddhists)

38. To what extent do you and your parents agree on the following issues?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure/no opinion
Personal freedom and independence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social equality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gender equality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Concern for material well-being	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interest in learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relationship with friends and dating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interest in other religions and cultures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emphasis on tradition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Compassion or concerns for others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

39. What do you think about the following Buddhist beliefs and practices in relation to religious life in North America?

	Highly relevant	Relevant	Needs modification to make relevant	Irrelevant	N/A
Marriage rituals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Caring for the monks' material needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Belief in heaven and hell	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Belief in Karma	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Living according to the 5 precepts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pali chanting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sitting on the floor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meditation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Education about other Buddhist traditions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Chairs or pews for the temple service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

Appendix Two (Second-Generation Buddhists)

40. What do you think about the following roles and organizations within the North American context?

	Highly relevant	Relevant	Somewhat relevant	Irrelevant	N/A
Hierarchically defined lay and monastic roles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lay preachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Order of nuns (Bhikkhuni)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Temporary ordination for a few days/weeks to develop Buddhist knowledge and understanding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Multi-ethnic Buddhist organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

41. How important for you is it to marry a:

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important
Buddhist	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sri Lankan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Theravada Buddhist	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

42. Please respond to the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Parents should not impose but educate the youth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents should not intervene in youth religiosity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Youth can selectively follow all Buddhist traditions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Youth may follow any religion they want	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Youth should follow parents' religion as it is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thank you very much for your kind consideration and participation in this research!

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