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## A Burkean analysis of Aung San Suu Kyi's leadership role in the political development of Burma

Jayshri H. Patel  
*University of Texas-Pan American*

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**A BURKEAN ANALYSIS OF AUNG SAN SUU KYI'S  
LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT  
OF BURMA**

**A Thesis**

**by**

**JAYSHRI H. PATEL**

**Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Texas-Pan American  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

**MASTER OF ARTS**

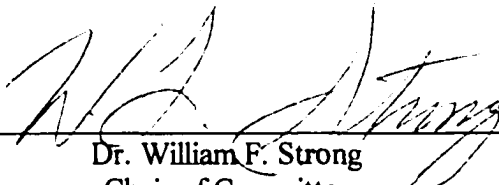
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LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT  
OF BURMA


A Thesis  
by  
JAYSHRI H. PATEL

Approved as to style and content by:




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Dr. William F. Strong  
Chair of Committee



---

Dr. George McLemore  
Committee Member



---

Dr. Ercan Nasif  
Committee Member

December 2000

## ABSTRACT

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The focus of this thesis is the historical and analytical role, influence and effect of Aung San, U Nu, and Ne Win in the struggle of independent post-war Burma between the philosophy of Buddhism and the aims of a Socialist welfare-state and its effect on Aung San Suu Kyi's struggle for democracy in present day Burma. There has not been any rhetorical analysis of Aung San Suu Kyi as of yet. Chapter 1 covers the political history of Burma in detail; it will cover the monarchy period, the British colonization, and the struggle for independence. Chapter 2 will concentrate on the cultural developments of India and Burma under colonial rule and Chapter 3 covers the historic role of Buddhism, as a religion, social structure, and resistance to secularism.

Chapter 4 consists of the analysis of Aung San's political ideologies and the examination of the influences he had during the struggle for independence, the present effects, and the foundations for the next era. Chapter 5 analyzes U Nu and Ne Win's role, religious influence and outcome of their leadership role in the political development of the nation. Chapter 6 will cover of Aung San Suu Kyi's political ideologies and her ability to lead the nation to their second independence.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The fight for freedom is a recurring theme throughout the world. The fight for human rights and the struggle to live in dignity will continue. There have been strong charismatic leaders who have taken a stance for the betterment of mankind. Gandhi's, "an eye for an eye leads to blindness by both parties" and Martin Luther King, Jr's, "not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character" phrases still apply to today's societal challenges (Wireman, p. 316). Gandhi's and King's philosophies and influences shaped non-violent actions during their struggle for freedom.

Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.

Non-violence and civil disobedience have evolved with time and circumstances. The term non-violence has become synonymous with Gandhi and King; it is an inherently normative concept (a norm that constitutes proper human behavior) (Hanigan, 1984). Non-violence is a greater force; the only force greater than violence is non-violence. It diffuses the opposition and allows people to rethink their actions and motives. Non-violence can be traced in religious literature and scriptures throughout the world. Gandhi's belief in non-violence and the search for "Truth" matured through his experiences in South Africa. His knowledge about various religions came about from his profession as a lawyer, which exposed him to Roman Catholics, Quakers and Protestants.



Through philosophical discussions he discovered imperfections with these beliefs, including Hinduism. However, there was one work that left a tenacious impression, Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* (Fischer, 1962). All leaders have a central influence that guides their principles to achieve their destiny. Gandhi's principles were deeply rooted in Hinduism, independent thinking, profound morality and truthfulness. What inspired Gandhi to free "750 million people from 400 years of domination by then the greatest empire on earth- [the] British Empire" (Arnelle, p. 15)?

When Gandhi was to travel to Pretoria, the capital of Transvaal to win a lawsuit, he needed to travel by train. He sat in first class waiting for departure when a man entered and was appalled to see a "colored" man. He returned with two officials and insisted the dark man must go to the van (third class) compartment. Gandhi resisted because he had a first class ticket. Still refusing, Gandhi was pushed out, and the train steamed away. He realized the experienced was "only a symptom of the deep disease of color prejudice" (Fischer, p.36). Thus the fight for freedom began and the struggle lasted 54 years.

The important thing in the application of non-violence is the situational context. Gandhi's view on violent revolution is that it "demands complete commitment to a method as well as to a cause. There is no halfway house in a revolutionary movement that has resolved on violence" (Power, p. 63). Violent revolution is not for those who want to keep their old moorings, spiritual or physical. Gandhi's goal was persuading large influential segments of the Indian population "...that the truth of India's history was to be found through interpreting it as a search for a nonviolent confrontation between man and man and man and state" (Power, p.63). This became a nationalist ideology that

permitted Indians to link their personal identity to a greater cause and develop a core of communal culture. The Gandhian ideology was a solution to the complexities and dilemmas of the Indian situation not because of the ideology's ambiguity, but because rigorous demands were made at all levels. Although it has been argued that Gandhi lacked political wisdom and political sagacity (which is still debatable), he understood the complex fabric of traditional Indian society. This understanding is the foundation to success of the modern phenomenon of the movement to political independence. Although he initiated the nationalist movement, the groundwork already existed; what he did was give the masses a sense of involvement in the nation's destiny (Power, 1971).

Martin Luther King, Jr. principles also lay in his religious foundation. King was influenced by Henry David Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" and Gandhi's concept of "Soul Force"- a nonviolent approach of "conquering through love" (Wireman, p.317). This ideology of "conquering through love" was not only used in the Civil Rights Movement, but in the Anti-War Movement during the Viet Nam era as well. Thus, America discovered India and India discovered America. Some of King's ideologies mirrored Gandhi's, and he did nothing to discourage those who believed Gandhi was his mentor-as Gandhi's portrait hung over King's desk. King's platform is a profound mix western and eastern ideal, and as an individual, his roots, his goals and his motivation were also influenced by his strong belief in Christianity. King was raised in a loving home where strength and encouragement was an influence he carried with him. King's papers, written while attending Boston University, show influences of personalist philosophy traced back to Borden Parker Browne, Edgar Brightman, Harold Dewulf, and

Albert Knudson. These papers also show the development of his interpretation of the Christian faith and his foundation on militant nonviolence.

Like Gandhi who believed there were some imperfections in Hinduism, King believed there are some imperfections in Christianity. The young King challenged Christianity by not accepting the bodily resurrection of Jesus. His skepticism reached its peak during his second year at Morehouse. His discontent resulted from "the fundamentalistic and unquestioning literal interpretation of the Bible to which he had been continuously exposed" (Hanigan, p.72-73). A course in Bible at Morehouse exposed him to modern criticism, and his doubts were overcome. There was one more hurdle of doubt he had to overcome. "That doubt was how he could love a race of people who hated him and had destroyed one of his closest childhood friendships" (Hanigan, p. 73). His anti-white feeling was dissipated when he became involved in an inter-racial organization. Soon King's main belief was the conviction that "all men, created alike in the image of God, are inseparably bound together" (Hanigan, p. 293). Gandhi and King had to search for truth from the roots to gain self-knowledge and clear any doubts about the path they have chosen.

Some believe that Gandhi and King were failures because both were assassinated, victims of violent acts (Hanigan, 1984). They were not failures, but rather pioneers of freedom. For Gandhi and King, the easy part was winning rights for their people; the hard part was and still is keeping internal unity from factions and other ethnicities. Who will be the next charismatic leader in the Twenty First century?

### Aung San Suu Kyi

Off in a distance, in Burma, there is one charismatic leader that has caught the world's attention. Aung San Suu Kyi is currently fighting for democracy against the militant rule in Burma. Aung San Suu Kyi is the daughter of Aung San, who was assassinated in 1947 when Suu Kyi was only two. Although Suu Kyi did not have the opportunity to get to know her father, she has studied his work and his character through her mother, close friends and history. The strong bond and admiration for her father's patriotic struggle created a deep sense of responsibility for the welfare of her country (Ashby, p. 285-286). Suu Kyi attended college in New Delhi, India where she was inspired by the teachings of Gandhi. In 1967 she left India to complete her studies at Oxford St. Hughs College in London. She also lived in Butan and Japan before settling in London with her husband, Michael Aris.

In March of 1988 Aung San Suu Kyi received a phone call: her mother had suffered a severe stroke. Aung San Suu Kyi made regular visits to Burma during the twenty-three year residence abroad, and now by her dying mother's bedside in Rangoon she was in the midst of political turmoil.

On July 23, 1988 Ne Win, in a televised address to the nation, resigned from his party (the Burma Socialist Program Party) after three decades of iron-fisted rule. Burma started a full-scale transfer from a dictatorship to a democratic nation. Millions of citizens peacefully combed the streets in every city and town throughout the country requesting "an interim civilian government, a democratic multiparty system with free and fair elections, and a restoration of basic civil liberties" (Clements, p. 17). As the demonstrations increased, Ne Win's loyal party sent out thousands of troops with orders

to kill. The result of this became known as the "Massacre of 8-88." On August 8, 1988 several thousand unarmed demonstrators were killed, others injured, and in the aftermath thousands were imprisoned. A new leader emerged in the darkness, as Aung San Suu Kyi, announced her decision to enter the struggle for democracy. Her decision was announced at a rally of 500,000 people in Rangoon. Aung San Suu Kyi's well supported campaign was implemented with Mahatma Gandhi's and Martin Luther King Jr.'s tactics of nonviolence and civil disobedience in the pursuit of democracy (Clements, 1997).

Aung San Suu Kyi happened to be in the right place, at the right time with the right background. The student protest, resignation of Ne Win and the reinstating of martial law are all circumstances that allowed Aung San Suu Kyi to gain the recruitment needed for the National League for Democracy (NLD) party. During her "revolution-of-the-spirit" campaign for democracy 1988-1989 she had overwhelming support, and her party, NLD, won a landslide victory in the 1990 elections. Since she was placed under house arrest, they did not consider her an official candidate, though the triumph of the NLD was vindication for Suu Kyi. In 1991, Aung San Suu Kyi released her most famous essay, "Freedom From Fear," which explains the necessity for individual transformation.

Aung San Suu Kyi gave speeches and answered questions at her front gate every Saturday and Sunday, and even though there was fear of being arrested by the military, people still came to hear her. There was a common undertaking and also a strong rapport that was developing between Aung San Suu Kyi and her supporters. Her gatherings inspired many to join the cause for democracy, and she also gave them a sense of belonging in a time where direction was needed. Aung San Suu Kyi's National League

for Democracy has given the people of Burma a collective feeling of enthusiasm and added vigor to the movement.

Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize. Unable to accept the award, her son spoke on her behalf. She was released from house arrest on July 10, 1995. Despite Aung San Suu Kyi's awards and great achievements there has been no critical analysis on her leadership. We have seen the achievements of many great leaders like Martin Luther King, Booker T. Washington, Gandhi and the like analyzed. The study of charismatic leaders has been largely limited to western idols and to men. Although there has been limited analysis of men from the east, even less is known of eastern women who remain in a shadow of the glamour of chaos.

She proved herself to be of a powerful orator when she spoke at a mass rally of 500,000 at Shwedagon Pagoda. She had several obstacles to overcome: (1) she stayed abroad most of her life, (2) married a foreigner and (3) she did not understand Burmese politics. She suppressed this doubt and built the people's trust by sharing knowledge she acquired over the years when she said, "I could not as my father's daughter remain indifferent to all that was going on" (Suu Kyi p. 193). There is a no record of any critical analysis of her leadership; therefore, there is a need to document and analyze leadership and her accomplishments benefiting mankind. It is well known that she has the knowledge and the political pabulum to lead the nation to independence. Aung San Suu Kyi is the thread that holds the pearls of the Burmese faith together.

Many underlying themes analytical literature deal with the power struggle between the ideologies of Buddhism and Socialism; however, within this context there are some areas of concentration that need further research.

Although there are progressive premises based on Burma's experience and struggle to stabilize socioeconomics from 1962 to 1988, the years after 1988 are not fully examined. The struggle for identity after the independence of Burma was an obstacle to economic and political growth; however, the identity crisis today is blanketed by military covert actions against the Burmese people. Lack of identity will be a continuing problem if Aung San Suu Kyi and other NLD (National League for Democracy) delegates do not carefully design a constitution and methods of its implementation into the realm of political ideology.

#### Statement of the Problem

This limited look at transitional society of Burma covers the history, culture and challenges of Burma. Many of the history books about Burma were published between 1950-1980 after it gained independence in 1947. These years are very important because Burma was going through a transition where the country was trying to establish workable programs based on their new constitution. During occupation of militant rules, Burma was isolated from the outside world. Only foreign investors were allowed while all others were discouraged to enter the country.

Kenneth Burke's theory on the pentad (act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose) and the theory of identification outline the motive and connection of Aung San Suu Kyi's leadership role. There are many aspects in the entirety of achieving a well-balanced country that require a critical analysis on Aung San Suu Kyi's leadership characteristics. Within the analysis there are three attributes that will be examined: (1) charisma, (2) prophecy and (3) pragmatism.

In her book, Freedom from Fear, she encompasses the origins of Burma with a good look at Burma's and India's intellectual life under colonialism. She also talks about her philosophies, objectives and the future of Burma. Particularly, in chapter 5, "In Quest of Democracy," she states, for more than a quarter-century Burma has been ruled under narrow authoritarianism in which the Burmese were pressed with injuring dogmatic ideologies which could have hampered foresight or political awareness of the Burmese people. However, the appetite for debate and objective analysis seemed to have been intensified. Members of the Buddhist sangha have led the Burmese on classical learning and encouraging ageless values of Buddhism. However, the impermissible effort to assimilate traditional values with contemporary visions passed through Burmese society with no manifestation. She continues to trace how dharma played a significant role in the political history of Burma. Most importantly, in the second part of the chapter she discusses the meaning of democracy and its significance to the Burmese people. In her book she has done an excellent job of taking traditional dogma and adapting it to modern political ideologies.

Unfortunately, Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD have not received global media attention to assist them in pressuring the government. However, Burma has received some media attention from the BBC and recent books have emerged. Aung San Suu Kyi has written other books entitled, The Voice of Hope and Letters from Burma. Letters from Burma, written between November 1995 and December 1996, is a collection of personal experiences with her family, and friends who have come to her compound to talk about their hardships. Some of the books written between 1990-1998, that concentrate on the issues of human rights and democracy, fail to discuss the implications



of the deeply rooted identity crises that has continued since Burma's independence.

Burma: Prospects for a Democratic Future by Robert I. Rotberg briefly touches upon the political values, conflicts, and culture. In a chapter on political culture he discusses three broad theses: (1) how colonial rule affected the Burmans and the non-Burmans, (2) how the outside world began to change the immutable political culture of Burma, and (3) how Burmans and non-Burmans express contemporary ideas, thus the reason why an overwhelming majority support leaders who oppose authoritarian dictatorship of the military.

Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. are leaders who have been examined through the political and social eyes, and since Aung San Suu Kyi falls into the same category, this study will not only concentrate on the political and social aspect, but the religious view also. We are fortunate enough to examine a leader whose background and situation will profoundly influence future leaders. Aung San Suu Kyi is the daughter of Aung San, who fought against the British and gained independence for Burma. Her mentors are great leaders (Gandhi, King, and her father), individuals who battled for the welfare of their countries. Her success may prove to be more detrimental because of the array of political ideologies that exist with the strong Buddhist beliefs of the Burmese can result in a civil war may erupt if this situation is not handled by the future leaders of Burma. Aung San Suu Kyi is in a very difficult position and her strategies need to be explored.

Due to the highly volatile situation in Burma, the course of history may change at any given time; however, there are traces of trends from historical events that suggest some predictable outcomes in Aung San Suu Kyi's current struggle. History will repeat

itself if the actions of Aung San Suu Kyi and her party, the National League for Democracy, do not take into account the Buddhist Burmese influence on political programs. Burma was the name of the country since the beginning and survived under colonial rule until it reached independence. “It took its name from the Burmans, the majority people of Burma and a people unrelated ethnically to most of the other peoples who came to be incorporated into modern Burma” (Rotberg, 1998, p. vii). In 1988 when the State Law and Order Restoration Council installed itself in power the decided to re-name the country to Myanmar. The National League of Democracy refused to accept Myanmar as the name of their country as the author also resists accepting Myanmar as the legal name. “Using Burma and not Myanmar also accords with the policy of the World Peace Foundation, the Harvard Institute for International Development, and the U.S. Department of State” (Rotberg, 1988, p. vii). Therefore Burma is used throughout the chapters.

### Outline of Proposal

The focus of this thesis is the historical and analytical role, influence and effect of Aung San, U Nu, and Ne Win in the struggle of independent post-war Burma between the philosophy of Buddhism and the aims of a Socialist welfare-state and its effect on Aung San Suu Kyi’s struggle for democracy in present day Burma. Chapter 1 covers the political history of Burma in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In detail it will cover the monarchy period, the British colonization, and the struggle for independence. This helps us better understand the effects and challenges Burma has and will face in the future. As chapter 1 sets the context in a political perspective, chapter 2 covers the cultural and social aspect. Chapter 2 will concentrate on the cultural developments of India and

Burma under colonial rule. In detail the chapter will cover the philosophy of the British administration, the comparison between India's and Burma's religious and literary developments, and the effects and results of a colonial rule.

Chapter 3 covers the historic role of Buddhism. Specifically, the chapter will cover Buddhism as a religion, social structure, and resistance to secularism, Buddhism in the monarchy, and lastly, the relationship between the coexistence of Buddhism and Marxism. There are several goals that will be achieved to better understand the rhetorical situation that Aung San Suu Kyi faces in the struggle for democracy. Chapter 4 consists of the analysis of Aung San's political ideologies and the examination of the influences he had during the struggle for independence, the present effects, and the foundations for the next era. Chapter 5 analyzes of U Nu and Ne Win's role, religious influence and outcome of their leadership role in the political development of the nation. Chapter 6 will cover the critical analysis of Aung San Suu Kyi's political ideologies and her ability to lead the nation to their second independence. Her shortcomings and accomplishments as a leader will be closely examined to predict the future of the nation.

## CHAPTER II

### POLITICAL HISTORY OF BURMA

This chapter is a compact view of the history of Burma starting from the monarchy period up to the take over by military coup. The chapter traces the presence and influence of Buddhism within the political structure. In order to comprehend the development of the political and social evolution of Burma, it is necessary to start with the history of Burma. It began with the Mons, from Central Asia, who settled in parts of Thailand by the Tenasserim river and on the Irrawaddy delta, from the period of 2500 to 1500 BC. There was strong Indian influence during the early civilization and the most important of these was religion. Hinduism and Buddhism were the primary influences in Burma. Hinduism is the body of beliefs and social practices, which is referred to as dharma. Buddhism developed late through the teachings of an Indian prince called Siddhartha born around 560 BC. The fundamental principle and philosophy of Buddhism is to free oneself from sufferings of existence; Buddha is considered the “Enlightened One.”

#### Monarchy

The Tibeto-Burmans from the north were the second group of people that migrated into Burma; today they are the largest ethnic group in the country. The Burmese believe their early Tibeto-Burman ancestors were the Pyus, the Kanyans and the

Theks. Out of the three, little is known about the Kanyans and the Theks; the Pyus left traces of a well-developed civilization. “Although the Pyus were Tibeto-Burman people of the Mongolian stock, their culture was very similar to that of India” (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 45). The Indians established their rule over Pyus; thus the earliest kings of Burma were predominantly Indian. Although it is not certain when the Pyus arrived in Burma, it is known that the city of Pagan was found around 850 AD. In the city of Pagan, which means glory and romance for the Burmese, Anawratha was the first king to rule over much of the country in 1044.

Anawratha did the most to promote Theravada Buddhism. Theravada Buddhism became the dominant religion after he defeated the Mon kingdom between 1054 and 1057. Among the prisoners from the Mon country were Theravadan monks and religious books. It was during this time the Burmese started developing a written language. “Making use of an Indian script, it shows many signs of the influence of the Mon language and of Pali, the language of the Buddhist religious texts” (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 47).

Anawratha gave shape to the nation by bringing three racial groups together under one rule, this included central and northern Tenasserim, northern Arakan, and some western Shan principalities. Not only did he shape the character of Burmese society by bringing them together, but he also strengthened the roots of Burmese culture by emphasizing Theravada Buddhism.

Sawlu, Anawratha's son succeeded him in 1077, reign lasted a very brief time, and the throne was passed on to Kyansittha. Kyansittha was the general under Anawratha's rule, and was known as the most romantic king in Burmese history. He,

too, promoted Buddhism and built the Ananda temple, the most famous Pagan monument. Alaungsithus, Kyansittha's grandson, ascended the throne. Unfortunately, he was not as strong as his predecessors. The quality of the monarchs declined in the thirteenth century and external forces took full advantage of this weakness. China defeated the Mongols, and the Shans to the east were gaining strength. The kingdom built by Anawratha quickly collapsed in 1287 when the Mongols attacked Pagan. By this time the Shans established rule in central Burma.

The Shans, a Thai group of people from Indo-China, make up the third main racial group in Burma. Their first kingdom was a successor of the Tagaung kings, Beinnaka, after the fall of the Pyu capital. During the thirteenth century, Thai people fled from Mongol control and settled in the eastern plateau of Burma, which is known as Thailand today. The Shans dominated central Burma for close to three centuries, between the end of the thirteenth century and the first quarter of the sixteenth century. There were three Shan prince's who ruled three kingdom; however, by the mid-fourteenth century, Ava remained as a royal capital. During Ava's reign, Burmese literature flourished and the greatest works in the language emerged. Some of the best works were poems written by Buddhist monks. Buddhism still remained the governing force in Burmese society.

The Mons overthrew Burmese rule, and after Thailand was forced to abandon Martaban as their capital, Pegu became their new capital in 1369. King Yazadhirit ruled Pagan from 1385 to 1423 and constantly dealt with the wars between the Mons and Ava, ruled by Minkhaung. The fighting between the two kingdoms diminished only after the deaths of Yazadhirit and Minkhaung.

The monarchies of the fifteenth century also popularized the cause of Theravada Buddhism. Queen Shin Saw Bu (1453-1472) and king Dhammazedi (1472-92) were both religiously devout. One of the most important occurrences during their reign was the Shwedagon pagoda. Shwedagon means “Golden Dagon.” The Shwedagon was built during the life of Buddha and contains sacred relics of Lord Buddha. “Stone inscriptions set up by Dhammazedi tell the story of how the pagoda was built up and embellished by successive monarchs of Pegu. The Shwedagon is a lasting memorial to the devotion of the Mons to the Buddhist faith” (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 50).” On a hill in Rangoon the Shwedagon still stands, and it is the most sacred and worshipped monument for the Burmese people.

Burma’s first contact with the West was made during the 15<sup>th</sup> century when Italian merchants traded with the Mons, but later the Portuguese played a bigger role. Old patterns of kingdoms fighting for supremacy had been diminishing by the time the Europeans arrived.

The Ava dynasty fell to the power of Toungoo (city 400 kilometres south of Ava), and in 1486 Minkyinyo took the throne. This period was known as the second unification of Burma (first was during Anawratha’s rule). Minkyinyo’s son Tabinshwethi succeeded the throne at the age of fourteen. Many of the wars during this period involved Portuguese, Thai and Arakanese soldiers who were paid to help the Burmese. About this time the introduction of European firearms emerged.

After the murder of Tabinshwethi at the age of 32, Bayinnaung took the responsibility of reuniting the Burmese. He brought the Shans and Mons together under one rule and Pegu became an economically strong trading center. The death of strong

and wise Bayinnaung resulted in the state becoming weaker. Lower Burma became a battlefield when the Thai's, Arakanese's, and the Portuguese started causing turmoil. Foreigners took the opportunity to try to establish control while two racial groups fought each other. These foreigners were not successful in establishing power. A new dynasty emerged after the year Ava was burnt down. Aung Zeya, in central Burma, once again brought the Shans and the Mons under one rule. Thus, the years from 1752 to 1760 became the third unification for Burma.

The Konbaung dynasty had ten kings and four capitals. The first few kings were considered strong warriors. The repeated pattern of neighboring kingdoms fighting for power soon ended with the Europeans.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the British all fought for trade rights and possessions in South-east Asia. During this time India came under domination and the era of colonial expansion began. The first Anglo-Burmese war broke out in 1824 over Manipur and Assam. Manipur, Arakan and Tanasserim also fell to the British due to the lack of well-trained military personnel and lack of well-kept equipment. Due to further instability, a second war broke out in 1852 and Lower Burma fell under British rule. Yet another war in 1885 led to the capture of the Thibaw, the last of the Burmese royal family. Burma at this point became part of the British Empire.

### British Colonization

British occupation and rule can be described as a packaged civilization. The British appropriately drew boundaries for practical administration purposes that are unchanged in the present day. The British developed Burma's natural resources, and the



economy prospered. In order to maintain the prosperity, skilled immigrants were brought in from China and India. This newly acquired wealth was passed to the immigrants and the British companies. The Burmese people did not exist in the grand scheme of things. At this time small pockets of nationalistic activities started to develop. To diffuse this uprising, the British brought in thousands of troops from India. Peace was easily achieved in the countryside and between racial groups.

### The Struggle for Freedom

Although Burma experienced economic tranquillity through the pacification policy, the Burmese never sanctioned foreign domination. The British trademark in foreign domination was to find a racial group they could easily influence and later turn them against other racial groups within the country. What the British did between Indians and Pakistanies could happen to Burmese and the guerrillas near the Thai border. During their occupation, the British did find a racial group they could work with. Christian Missionaries were successful in converting the Karens in southeast Burma (Suu Kyi, 1995).

Burmese nationalism began in the early 1920's, and the purpose of the movement was to preserve the Buddhist religion and traditional Burmese culture. The first association to respond to this political situation was the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA). This association, founded in 1906, organized the successful strike against the Rangoon University Act. In 1920, as the movement gained momentum, YMBA transformed into the General Council of Buddhist Association (GCBA) and by the late 1920's the association had three factions. As the movement gained strength the

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number of modern-educated youth increased, so did their political aspirations (Suu Kyi, 1995).

Rangoon University, during the 1930s, became the hub of nationalist activities. Many students who joined the Dohbama Asi-ayone (Dohbama means “We Burmese” and Asi-ayone means Association) became the nation’s leaders. The turning point for the Burmese independent movement was during the beginning of the Second World War in 1939. A group of thirty men secretly went to Japan to receive military training to defeat the British. These thirty soldiers became the “Thirty Comrades,” and they were the nucleus of the Burmese Independence Army. In 1941 the Burmese Independence Army with the Japanese, marched into Burma and defeated the British. Although Burma was declared an independent nation, the Burmese were faced with another foreign ruler, the Japanese. The Burmese held key positions in the government, but ultimate authority lay in the hands of the Japanese. The Burmese people experienced far more domination than when the British ruled. The Burmese had to live with disappearances, torture and forced labor.

### Independent Nation

Aung San was named commander-in-chief of the Burmese Army, which was still under the rule of the Japanese. He and the other nationalists organized a resistance movement against the Japanese. They went to their former ruler, the British, for assistance and the war ended in 1945. Since Burma did not want history to repeat itself and have the British as their ruler again, an organization called Ant-Fascist People’s Freedom League was led by Aung San who demanded independence. “The British insisted that the people along the frontiers of Burma (the Kachins from the north, the

Chins from the north-west and the Shans) should be allowed to decide their own future for themselves. They decided to co-operate with the Burmese in the movement for independence” (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 55). In 1948, the British handed Burma back and declared it an independent nation; unfortunately, a political rival assassinated Aung San and six of his ministers during a cabinet meeting. On January 4, 1948 Burma became an independent republic. The first Prime Minister of Burma, U Nu was the most senior member of the AFPFL. He faced large problems.

### Military Coup

U Nu was Prime Minister from the birth of the Union of Burma until 1962. In March 1962, General Ne Win seized power in a military coup. "Ne Win's new Revolutionary Council immediately suspended the constitution and sealed off the country from all outside scrutiny” (Clements, 1997, p. 57). He expelled foreign journalists, nationalized most industrial and economic institutions and established a police state based on fear and torture thus creating an isolationist policy which he claimed was the Burmese way to Socialism. In March of 1988 students protested on the streets of Rangoon demanding political change when forty-one students suffocated to death in a police van. During this time Aung San Suu Kyi, residing in Oxford, England with her husband and two sons, received a phone call that her mother had suffered a severe stroke. She had made regular visits to Burma during the twenty-three years of her residence abroad, but this time was different. Her dying mother's bedside in Rangoon, she was caught in the midst of political turmoil.

On July 23, 1988 Ne Win in a televised address to the nation resigned from his party (the Burma Socialist Program Party) after three decades of iron-fisted rule. Millions

of citizens peacefully combed the streets in every city and town throughout the country requesting "an interim civilian government, a democratic multiparty system with free and fair elections, and a restoration of basic civil liberties" (Clements, 1997, p. 58). As the demonstrations increased, Ne Win's loyal party sent out thousands of troops with orders to kill, and the result of this became known as the "Massacre of 8-8-88". On August 8, 1988 several thousand unarmed demonstrators were killed and injured, and in the aftermath thousands were imprisoned. A new leader emerged in the darkness; Aung San Suu Kyi announced her decision to enter the struggle for democracy. Her decision was announced at a rally of 500,000 people in Rangoon. Aung San Suu Kyi's well-supported campaign was implemented with Mahatma Gandhi's and Martin Luther King Jr.'s tactics of nonviolence and civil disobedience in the pursuit of democracy.

On September 18, 1988, Ne Win, working from behind the scenes, manipulated the army and martial law was reinstated. "He turned over the rule of Burma to a twenty-one member group of military commanders known as the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC)" (Clements, 1997, p. 58).

## CHAPTER III

### THE LITERARY AND RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT OF INDIA AND BURMA DURING COLONIZATION

Third world countries are abundant in natural resources but lack the administration to provide economic gain through these assets, and this often causes the country to fall into the hands of dictators. Europeans and especially the British have developed what is called a “package civilization.” Countries like India, Africa, and Burma, who have been subjected to British colonization, develop their economy, divide the country into ethnic territories, and hinder the growth of their nation.

#### The Philosophy of the British Administration

Both India and Burma were ruled by the same British administration for several decades. This chapter will concentrate on the literal and religious growth during their years under colonization. Thus lies the opportunity in exploring their salient characteristics that assist or hinder them during their nation building; we will be able to see how the identity of a nation is the key to economic success and political autonomy.

The British conquests of India versus the British conquest of Burma were under very different circumstances. The British conquest of India took several hundred years whereas Burma was conquered in three phases over a little more than half a century. The difference in the length of annexations between India and Burma affects the stability of

these countries to withstand the erosion of their cultural ethos. India had a longer period of adjustment, whereas Burma's annexation came suddenly and ended quickly. Unlike Burma's new experience with foreign invaders, India was subjected to many successful foreign invasions from the northwest.

Burma's earliest cultural influences came from India. Buddhism one of the strongest and sustaining influences is now such an "integral part of the Burmese ethos that it has become common to say: 'To be Burmese is to be Buddhist'" (Suu Kyi, 1997, p. 83). The Burmese are heavily rooted in the Buddhist faith, a philosophy that could meet any challenges of other religious faiths. The monarchies were responsible for creating this religious confidence; however, their administrations lacked direction, and they were unable to acquire the technical understanding of the Industrial Revolution in the west. The monarchies created a cocoon with an attitude of apathy towards developments of the outside world. It was not until after the third Anglo-Burmese War that the Burmese people had a rude awakening to a total political conquest followed by cultural servitude.

After the British settled in Burma, they "were undecided as to what they would do with their latest colonial acquisition, but by the beginning of 1886 the die was cast: 'Burma, so radically different from India, by force of circumstances became an appendage of the Indian empire'" (Suu Kyi, 1997, p. 86). The British assumed they were the first citizens of the world with the unequivocal right to mold the less fortunate. The indigenous cultures reacted variously and the "Muslim and Hindu civilizations of India, yielded but did not break, [and] treated the western culture as a transient phenomenon. The Burmese took no notice" (Morris, p. 337). "To yield without

breaking was an attitude, both pragmatic and philosophical, which the people of India had long adopted in their encounters with foreign conquerors” (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 86-87). Indians were better equipped to deal with the changes brought about by colonialism than the Burmese.

### India’s Religious Development

During the eighteenth century, ideas and attitudes were being imported from the west and posed a threat to the ideals of Hindu faith. It was this threat that sparked the Indian Renaissance, which shaped thinking and tactics during the years under colonial rule. Rammohun Roy, father of the Indian Renaissance, “wrote to a friend: ‘the present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interests. It is, I think, necessary that some changes should take place in their religion at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort’” (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 89). Roy’s most important contribution to the Indian Renaissance was the Brahmo Sabha movement which altered Hinduism based on the sacred scriptures of the Vedas and the Upanishads by incorporating some of the ethics of the Christian West. Hinduism allows this flexibility because it is not a religion, but rather a social philosophy. This allowed Hindus to face the onslaught of new forces without sacrificing individual character and to be able to fulfill the demands of a changing society. Many of Roy’s disciples were eager to find that balance between social, religious and political aspects of reform. Although the approach or tactic varied among these thinkers, the one thing that remained unanimous was to bring India into harmonious tread with modern developments without losing her identity (Suu Kyi, 1995).

The Upanishads, the sacred scriptures of India, date back to 800 B.C. and were a further development of the Indo-Aryan thought. The Indo-Aryans were a very prosperous and stable civilization with more innate forms of worship. The Upanishads are a mental adventure seeking truth, but it is not the same type of truth sought by, for example, physicists; however, there is an element of scientific method advocated by the Upanishads. The importance of the message in this book concentrates on self-realization, discovering the Absolute Self with lack of dogmatic rituals. There have been attempts to interpret the Upanishads by various philosophers and scholars, and the general disposition is the concept of the whole approach, to ease the differences that existed then. This leads to many fervid debates have created many interpretations that became the harness that molded the character of the people in India. It is said that since the emphasis was placed on individual perfection, the social outlook suffered. "There is nothing higher than the person," says the Upanishads. Society must be stabilized; thus, the quest for individual perfection was accentuated. The authors probably saw the need for individual self-realization rather than saving society as a whole.

The Upanishads are a philosophical approach rather than a religious one. The method of question and answer between a teacher and a student quenched the thirst of inquiring minds. This allowed them to explore the dimensions of self and the surroundings of their culture instead of the blind faith in dogmatic rituals and deities. "The Upanishad teachers and pupils dig into the 'Open Secret' of the universe, make this most ancient of the world's holy books still the modern and most satisfying" (Nehru, 1946, p. 80). The discovery of the soul is the central thesis of the book. What is the soul, how do you define it, and how does one reach the Absolute Soul? "As fire, though



one, entering the world takes a separate form according to whatever it burns, so does the inner Self within all things become different, according to whatever it enters, yet itself is without form” (Nehru, 1946, p. 81). This realization closes the gap that separated us from them and produced a sense of unity with humanity and nature—a unity entrenched with diversity. This individualistic approach produced a coalescence of feeling where the restraints of class and caste were overlooked. Although this was in theory only, it did leave a trail of tolerance and free thought with the desire to live and let live.

Throughout Indian history it was noted the Upanishad molded national character and minds through the lending ears of the Indian people. The root of Hindu thought as well as Buddhism can be found in the Upanishads. The Upanishad gives the people of India a path to follow so as to deal with changes around them and to be tolerant of beliefs other than their own. It also teaches them to avoid conflicts that have torn so many societies. It was this knowledge that held the social fabric together and consistently revived it when threatened.

The Upanishad did not promote to any particular masses thus creating an intellectual separation between the creative minority and the majority, and this led to some new movements in the area of materialistic philosophy, agnosticism, and atheism. Buddhism and Jainism, and Ramayana and Mahabharata (famous Sanskrit epics) had also emerged at this time. This movement attempted to bring new ways of thought in order to create a synthesis between rival creeds. Jainism and Buddhism are offshoots of the Vedic religion and no longer validate the authority of the Vedic religion. Their fundamental principles are nonviolence and the creation organizations of celibate priests and monks.

### Burma's Religious Development

The Buddhist era began when Buddha died at the age of eighty in 544 B.C. Buddha rejected traditional and popular religions, superstition, ceremonies, and priestcrafts. He also condemned any and all concepts that supported popular religions such as the metaphysical and theological outlook and supernatural dealings like miracles and revelations. His teachings laid in logic, reason, and in experience while emphasizing ethics. His method and approach was one of psychological analysis and the absence of a soul. Although Buddha did not reject the caste system, he did not recognize it either; however, his whole approach weakened the concept of a caste system. It was evident that in a caste-ridden system, foreign trade was not encouraged or permitted, yet for 1500 years after Buddha, foreign trade was developing between India and other neighboring borders. Buddhism has evolved into ceremonial, canon law, and so much verbiage, despite Buddha's warnings of metaphysical ideas and supernatural concepts. "Buddhist thinkers moved away from the agnostic attitude which Buddha had taken up in regard to the existence of the soul and denied it completely" (Nehru, 1946, p. 163). We can see how Buddhism has evolved throughout history and the effects and influences it left on the Burmese faith. The Buddhist faith has become passive and almost pessimistic, escaping from life's struggles.

The Burmese in comparison to the Indians were still rooted in their traditional ways, drawn in to the false sense of security by the military. One of the leading factors that ignited the thinkers during the renaissance in India was the works of orientalist such as William Jones and Max Mueller. Their translations from the ancient Sanskrit scripts allowed Indians who had learnt Sanskrit to become familiar with their own heritage. In

Burma there was no aspiration by the early British administration to encourage such scholastic undertaking or even to consider recognition of classical works. Burmese were not included in curriculum development at the Rangoon College, an affiliate body of the Calcutta University, although Pali was taught; Pali literature remained with the Buddhist canon.

Aung San Suu Kyi, in her famous book, Freedom From Fear, states that the prime reason for Burmese complacency was the absence from their society of the crippling inhibitions and harmful practices of Hinduism. Although this may prove to be true in a minor sense, there are many other factors to consider. 'To be Burmese is to be Buddhist'; it is part of their social structure. The Burmese attitudes toward foreign influences are consistent and resistant to any adaptation. Many of them believed that communism would destroy their culture, and to become like the West would be self-destructive. It is not so much the rigid caste system or class stratification that drove the Burmese to complacency, but rather their own limitations to grow economically. Buddhism is a religion not a social philosophy.

Another factor that limited Burmese growth is the skilled immigrant groups that were placed in jobs to help Burma's economy grow. Since the Burmese lacked the skills necessary, the British imported Indians and Chinese to fill the positions. The Burmese were not included in the economic success; they were living in their own country as foreigners this created animosity. Rather than awakening and better educating themselves, they let others take over their economy. This noninvolvement in trade is traced back to the Buddhist philosophy where foreign trade was not encouraged or permitted; thus, the Burmese have carried this concept with them today. Again, they

have not allowed themselves any flexibility in their beliefs, and this may impede them and the future generation. Another reason for their insipid attitude toward direct involvement in economics and politics is that during the monarchy the king took care of everything. The monarchical administration took care of all central administration and left the Burmese to live their lives. There were no interferences from the Burmese in political or economic affairs.

#### Education Under Colonial Rule

Arthur Phayre, Chief Commissioner of British Burma, wanted to establish one or more Central Schools in each district, so the Burmese would have an easier transition from traditional monastery schooling to a more modern or Westernized schooling. He hoped there would be an increased desire to learn English. Instruction would be given in Anglo-Vernacular; in other words, English would be the medium of instruction, but Burmese would not be neglected. The monastic schools would be left undisturbed. The Burmese saw this as a British attempt to civilize the natives. The British believed it was imperative to learn English which would help open other opportunities. Roy was educated in Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian and learned English only in his adult life. He knew that learning English, for practical reasons, would open intellectual doors and technical advancement to Indians (Suu Kyi, 1995). Aung San monastery schooling limited him to Pali, and he learned English in college because he knew it was the language of command.

“Burma like India is a land of many racial groups speaking many languages and dialects, but only Burmese could be claimed to have a ‘national’ character, and no other language could boast quite so extensive a body of literature” (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 97).

This is the reason why Burmese were unwilling to accept a vernacular education. The monasteries are their schools. It is where religion and education are taught and the textbooks used Burmese and Pali verses which are religious in context. This is analogous to Catholic schools in the United States where it is mandatory to attend mass at least once a week and Catholicism is taught as a subject. In a situation such as this there is no room for advancement or change. We can see how Indians throughout history adapt to the many languages, customs, castes, and religions within their own country as well as the ability to survive anywhere in the world. In Burma three-fourths of the population speak Burmese; that creates the national character, however, has resulted in a stubborn inflexibility.

#### Burma and India's Literary Development

In 1906 students at Rangoon College founded the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) inspired by the Young Men's Christian Association. The founding members grew up after the fall of Mandalay and received an English oriented system of education. These 'England-returned', as they were called by the traditional generation, were not easily accepted. Lower Burma received more English oriented education because that is where most of the immigrants stayed during the colonial years, whereas Upper Burma retained their culture and ethnic pride. Therefore, to successfully, revitalize the Burmese culture into a more modern phase, it was necessary to look to men of traditional learning in Upper Burma. And one such man who emerged through letters and politics was Thakin Kodaw Hmaing. Hmaing was a young apprentice during the annexation of Upper Burma and witnessed the last royal family being escorted to the boat

that took them to exile. This experience planted seeds of patriotism that grew into his literary works.

His writing was traditional in style and ranged from popular plays, newspaper articles, history, and poetry. The content expressed an awareness of contemporary economic, social and political developments. “The *Boh Diga*, written in 1913, expresses concern over the breakdown of the rural economy in Upper Burma and the increasing instances of Burmese women marrying foreigners which also Hmaing attributed to economic reasons” (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 114). By 1917 a resolution was passed by the YMBA condemning such marriages and the government was urged to prevent land from passing into foreign hands. Hmaing represented traditional learning and made the Burmese aware of the ills of colonial society where as the modern educated class represented some of the leaders of the early nationalist movements. In a lecture by May Oung, “The Modern Burman: His Life and Notions,” she states that the “new Burman” had not assimilated, but rather substituted them for the old ones. It is because of this gap between old and new, the educated class yielded to Burmese classics through such men as Hmaing. The assimilation between traditional and modern, Burmese and Western, was not achieved by the generation that didn’t translate new concepts into traditional notions or roll old contexts into modern ideas (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 115).

The Burmese compared Hmaing to Rabindranath Tagore, a great nationalist poet. Although Hmaing was born a decade later, Tagore was more modern in intellectual development. Tagore’s spiritual views were greatly influenced by the Upanishads, and his knowledge in English literature created an intellectual template for social philosophy.

Non-Bengalis in India recognized his unique depth after 1912 based on his ideas from the widely known verse of *Gitanjali*:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;  
 Where knowledge is free;  
 Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow  
 domestic walls;  
 Where words come out from the depth of truth;  
 Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;  
 Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary  
 desert sand of dead habit;  
 Where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever-widening thought and  
 action-  
 Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

The ideals of the Indian Renaissance were captured in this small verse. During Gandhi's revolt against the use of Western clothes and ideals, Tagore's popularity decreased.

There were two very distinct approaches to motivate the nationalists, and both were instrumental in influencing the masses. Both Tagore and Gandhi acted upon the situation and inspired the masses to take action. "Hmaing was closer to Tagore in being primarily a man of thought, however, closer to Gandhi in his political nationalism" (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 117). Hmaing's writings concentrated on current events in relation to nationalist developments, and the temper of the country can be felt through his writings. Hmaing's critical view of the current issues held the public's attention, but he could not give the Burmese nationalists the philosophy to guide them.

Some of the influences that shaped the language in Burma were the same influences that changed India: Western literature, printing technologies, and publication of newspapers. These changes encouraged literacy; however, it is difficult to know if the change can be attributed to the style of journalism or the influence of the English language. The early newspaper articles were inked in old conventions and often

interrupted when reporting dramatic love quarrels. According to Aung San Suu Kyi, English was more the potent: the writings of those Burmese who had learnt English showed earlier and more obvious signs of the modern idiom. The first Burmese novel, *Maung Yin Maung Ma Me Ma*, written by James Hla Gyaw in 1904 was not steeped in Buddhist thought. This novel was simplistic, unadorned writing, and the emphasis placed on content was limited to romance, not realism. Soon Gyan's drama was shelved as popular reading (Suu Kyi, 1995).

A few novels before the 1920s reflected the contemporary situation except for the works of U Latt. U Latt was part of the new wave of the educational curriculum that had a well-balanced mixture of old and new. His writings included classical Burmese literature as well as contemporary drama. U Latt was born and raised in Lower Burma, where Western education was most accepted, and he felt very intimate with the Burmese monarchy. His feeling of nostalgia for the past was a mere dislike of the colonial status rather than a true desire for old ideologies. There was no path to reevaluate the past nor a philosophy for the future. This led many of the Burmese to blindly follow old institutional ways without properly determining if these ideas would still work in the present. The Burma Research Society, founded in 1910 by J.S. Furnivall, an Englishman, inspired by *Journal of Siam Society*, was instrumental in affecting a reexamination of Burmese heritage in hopes to bring the Burmese and the Europeans together.

Oddly enough, an Englishman, Furnivall, and a Burman, May Oung who lectured on "The Modern Burman," were the initial thinkers to probe Burma's history. In 1916, during a stagnated period, Furnivall wrote:

We were looking for human Burma; that mysterious entity of which each individual Burman, and in a less degree every one living here, is on an



infinitesimal scale a manifestation and a representative, which is a norm subsuming all their individual activities, and which represents all that is vital and enduring in this country as we know it; the partnership, as Burke puts it, between the dead, the living and those yet to be born. We have carefully to set in order the foundations and the whole building brick by brick, but I for one firmly believe that if the Burma of the future is to be a lasting fabric, it must be built up on the old foundations (p. 119).

It can be seen here that an attempt was made to link the past, present, and future, but it did not blossom to its fullest potential. The finest Burmese scholars were attracted to The Burma Research Society, yet there were still boundaries to be broken between traditional education and contemporary education. They placed themselves in a cocoon, unable to think outside their world. “There were many highly intelligent men and women in Burma then as at any period; their failure to assimilate two different strains of intellectual tradition must be put down to psychological rather than cerebral factors” (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 120).

Ba Hpe once published an article (in the *Thuriya* newspaper, which he started in 1911) on how the Burmese spent over 10 million rupees a year to support religious institutions. Unfortunately, this article did not receive raving reviews, but rather he was insulted for the article's godless tone. Thereafter he was unable to keep his journalistic team together; Hpe went to Hmaing to recruit new writers. Only someone with a great degree of depth and knowledge of the Burmese culture and language could hope to reach the Burmese people. The modern educated felt they could change the accepted ideologies that had been passed down generation after generation.

Another noted Englishman who fell in love with Burma also noticed its renaissance fell short of its goals. He also noticed that during the monarchy there was no nobleness between the king and the villagers. The monarch had to recruit, from the

villages, ministers, who were not capable or knowledgeable of other countries or of other beliefs.

During the 1920's the preservation of Buddhism and Burmese culture took a political approach. This period began to take shape as scholars and their writings assimilated traditional ideologies with contemporary education, and language began to accommodate the growing trend. The two writers who initiated a modern style of writing were P. Monin and U Po Kya. The context of their literature contained short sentences, simple phrases, and limited use of Pali language. The Burmese language was included in curriculum, and in 1927 the first honor students graduated from Rangoon University. U Pe Maung Tin was the first Burmese to be appointed professor. Under his guidance Burmese studies were given the importance it deserved for many years, and with the cooperation of other scholars standards have increased. Among the various languages that were also included in the curriculum are old Burmese, Pyu (language of the Pyu, a proto-Burman ethnic group), Mon, and Pali (Suu Kyi, 1995). Those students who already acquired knowledge of Western literature and gained linguistic background now had a well-rounded intellectual vision.

During this period many of the best literary works emerged. Under the direction of professor Pe Maung Tin, students produced two volumes of *Khitsan Stories* and a volume of *Khitsan Poems*. "*Khitsan* means 'to test the age,' and the anthologies were published with the intention of seeing how the public would react to the modern approach" (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 127). These works represented the kaleidoscope of Burmese and Western literature into higher education. Three authors who contributed to the renaissance movement and represented the *Khitsan* approach were Theippan Maung

Wa, known for his short stories, and Zawgyi and Min Thu Wun who were known for their poetry. These stories and poems were widely read, but did not carry the weight needed to inspire the country in the spirit of the renaissance.

There seems to be a lack of momentum to sustain the renaissance movement. All three *Khitsan* writers developed their careers with the government. Theippan Maung Wa became an administrator, and the two poets became university professors. As servants of government they were unable to develop social and political ideologies, resulting in the lack of application of liberal education to the world of arts. The *Khitsan* writers were an isolated phenomenon. Nonetheless they represented the possibility of reaching the intellectual level in finding the balance between East and West.

Burma's inability to gain a literary movement was due to the lack of a religious movement. The factors that played a vital role in the lack of developing a national identity are (1) Burma was part of the Indian empire, (2) the British did not encourage native classics as well as the Burmese language, (3) scholars did not train disciples, and (4) there was a gap between historical interests and contemporary influence. When Burma was annexed, it became part of the Indian empire; they were not invaded by the British, but by the India as well as. There was no fundamental curriculum in the schools to learn about their heritage. Another hinge that tightens in the battle to gain a national identity was that the scholars who were able to etch the beginnings of a literary movement did not pass it to anyone to help sustain it or evolve. The rift between historical interests and contemporary influences was also experienced during the Indian Renaissance. Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the great Bengali novelist and writer, "noted the mutual unintelligibility in the preface to his own commentary on the *Gita* (bible). He

wrote: ‘the difficulty is that the educated people cannot easily understand the statements of the old pundits (priests), even these are translated from Sanskrit into Bengali. This is not their fault, it is a natural consequence of their education. The modes of European thought are so different from those of ancient Indian thought that a translation of the language is not enough to ensure comprehension, because it is not a translation of the ideas’” (Chaudhuri, 1979, p. 9-10). The Burmese scholars lacked vision and political ideologies that would help support the fusion of Burma’s history and contemporary influence that is vital to their identity and economic status.

## CHAPTER IV

### HISTORIC ROLE OF BUDDHISM

Buddhism played a vital role in state development, economic stability, and political autonomy. Buddhism, an integral part of a Burman life, can be traced from the monarchy to the present. To fully grasp this pulsating lifeline we must first understand the ideology of Buddhism, second its historical influence and third the struggle with identifying the self in the acculturation of this transitional society. We will be able to see the change that occurred throughout history and among the events that occurred the turning point for Buddhism was during Burmese revolution and the relationship between Sangha and state.

Buddha's fundamental principal applies to all and any caste concentrated on liberation from attachment to be able to achieve enlightenment and this released one from the burden of Impermanence. He pointed out that people of any caste suffer from wrong beliefs and wrong actions as well as reaping the rewards from right beliefs and right actions, the law of causality at its best. All castes could achieve Nirvana in this present life (Sarkisyanz, 1965).

In Buddhism only that in which all life merges is endless, not individual souls: their reality is denied both as individualities (in the sense of indivisibility) and as souls: the soul and the ego is conceived not as a permanent entity but as a function of all its innumerable components, a perennial process of flaring up and burning, of birth and rebirth in seconds just as in aeons (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 37).

The most important difference between Buddhism and Hinduism is the recognition of the individual soul.

### Hinduism

In Hinduism the individual soul does exist and upon death this soul (psyche) is disembodied. The individual soul has a separate existence and takes form in another body and the cycle of rebirth continues. Buddhism preaches that when one is attempting to reach Nirvana the cycle of rebirth ends, but does not explain how and in what context does rebirth continue. Although Buddhism's roots are derived from Hinduism and still carry similar traits, Buddhism left many blanks that are unfilled and are automatically filled in with Hinduism beliefs. The denial of an individual is the denial of the self and for the self to reborn again requires a carrier, the soul. In this pursuit of reaching Nirvana, in comparison to Hinduism, Buddha has eliminated steps in gradual liberation and has preached the path of salvation, Nirvana, by separating themselves from the materialistic world and their own self. This was clearly portrayed during the monarchy period; monks dressed in yellow robes, they were bareheaded, had a fan, and a parasol carried themselves with body of rules that regulated their behavior. The denial of the self was expressed in the way they dressed, behaved, and lived.

The Buddhist quest has been again and again described as selfish, ignoring its basic presupposition: the non-reality of the self. This Buddhist self-salvation can only be accomplished through realization that the self is an illusion; the allegedly egoistic Nirvana can only be sought through insight into the illusory nature of the ego! (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 39).

### Buddhism and the Monarchy

Burma's historical attributes are inter-linked with Buddhist traditions. Burmans adopted Buddhism as a *de facto* state religion of the Pagan dynasty during the eleventh

century AD, and since then it has assumed a prominent role in the state-society nexus with the sangha (Buddhist monks) creating insulation between the rulers and the masses. Since the introduction of Buddhism there have been records of historical sources (Maung Than, 1957, p. 1). "It is mainly to provide illustrations of the basic idea of Buddhism, the Impermanence of all Existence, the cyclical regularity and causality of endless change, that Burmese historiography was conceived" (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 2). Many of the past recordings served as didactic functions in illustrating the transitory nature of all things. Kings, robbers, and ministers were considered far from attachment to existence, to the overcoming of suffering and to the liberation from Impermanence (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 2). Buddhist doctrines of kings or scriptures written by monks characterized the traditional Burmese concept of history. Attachment was seen as suffering; however, to help overcome this suffering, works of merit were sought. Buddhist historiography judged rulers by their works of solemn merit and support of the Buddhist (Samgha) community of monks.

According to the Buddhist perspective, history evolves in a cyclical sequence. "To the beginning of the present World Age Buddhist tradition attributes a blissful state of perfect society before human beings had fallen into the Illusion of the Self and thereby lost their original perfection" (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 10). Legislation was meant to resolve these social imperfections by implementing the Burmese Code "of Manu," a code of regulative and punitive law. The Burmese Code "of Manu" became an original manual on ideal social order and the loss that occurs through human delusions. Early Buddhist scriptures (of the Theravada, Sarvastivada) and early Mahayana schools contain the necessary juridical conceptions of kingship for societal institution and a contract was

developed to help the Burmese with these imperfect human conditions. The Buddhist scriptures are “claims that sovereignty originates and returns to the people, that ‘kingship is essentially a contractual agreement between the People and the Ruler in which the welfare of the country and its people is the sacred trust’” (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 15).

This contract seemed to have worked in a political context, but obstructed the economical equality. In the pursuit of Nirvana in the Buddhist monastic (Sangha) community, sanctioned regulations obstructed economic equality: “If monks received gold or silver, it was to be used in common by their Sangha community” (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 25). Everything was considered property of Sangha, even items for monks’ personal use, and according to Gautama Buddha, Sangha property is nontransferable to individuals. The community’s property was only transferable to other monasteries. This created a whole universe where individual material gain was not in the way of enlightenment.

“The Burmese monarchy controlled foreign trade and maintained monopolies of the main natural products of the empire: teak, petrol-oil, precious stones, silver, amber, and cotton (before 1867), monopolies that were delegated or farmed out to private merchants” (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 54). Traditionally the notion of an ideal Buddhist king was to provide seeds and feed those who cultivate agricultural lands, to supply funds to those who trade, and to supply wages to those who serve the ruler (Sarkisyanz, 1965). It was the duty and responsibility of the king to ensure that his people’s needs were met. The Buddhist king provided food for the people every 6 months and even lent funds to debtors to clear their debts (for 3 years with no interest). In the event that the debtor could not replace the funds, the king pardoned the debt.



This economic comfort ensured livelihood for the king's subjects and allowed them time to meditate on the achievement of Nirvana and give offerings to the monks. No one was excluded; every person was entitled to this right, and for those who wanted to free themselves from materialistic productive activities, economic gains were guaranteed, and thus, an ideal welfare state was established. The kings of Burma were endowed by Buddhist traditions to provide alms to the Nirvana-seeking monks (Sarkisyanz, 1965). Buddha himself preached the Law of Impermanence only if his listeners were fed. "If I preach the Law if he is suffering from the pangs of hunger, he will not be able to comprehend it. As soon as the poor man's physical suffering became relieved, his mind became tranquil" (Sarkisyanz, 1965)." The Four Noble Truths were then taught: suffering, the cause of suffering, overcoming the cause of suffering, and finally, the method to overcome the cause of suffering.

Each Buddhist king created his own ideal utopia in order to gain merit as a provider to the masses, for a chance to attain enlightenment, and to give alms to the monks. "The stronger the king, the more likely he made his own choices; the stronger the Sangha the more likely they imposed their choices to the king" (Mendelson, 1975, p. 54). The most important factor in the strength and longevity of the Sangha community was the relationship between the ruler and the Sangha; if the king was weak, the Sangha with most seniority was assigned to guide the ruler. In the case of a stronger ruler, a monk was assigned as the king's teacher.

Buddhism did not prevent active military expansion, but Buddhism did prevent manipulating the destructive powers of nature that could have assured the success of expansion. Pre-modern Buddhism did not promote intellectual expansion, curiosity about

nature, and the empirical world. Gautama held his interests aloof from the arts and sciences because they did not help attain freedom from suffering. All intellectual focus centered on liberation from Impermanence. Through the socialization process the Burmese are taught to reject and distrust the objective and to seek the subjective. "From their Buddhism they learned that the physical world is in constant flux; all is transitory, all is sham and illusion. They are also taught to think of the outside world as evil and dangerous" (Pye, 1962, p. 201). The real world was created within oneself, and through meditation and contemplation it was possible to create significant causal relationships, which were the path to enlightenment and self-realization.

The Burmese were trained to distrust others in social relations; thus, their social communications suffered. "The consequence of social change and the weakening of old standards was difficult for Burmese to be confident that they are either interpreting correctly the feelings of others or communicating fully their own intentions" (Pye, 1962, p. 203).

Each person went their own way, tried to seek their own inner well-being and ignored all external realities. A dangerous side effect occurred if an individual did not become adept in meditation: "they did not develop a sense for the causal relationships in the subjective world and ended-up feeling as ends in themselves" (Pye, 1962, p. 201). Their view impacted their political behavior which created problems in building their nation; their perception and attitude of causal relationships are subjective and not objective, and this results in a lack of reality in social collectivizes. Ironically in a cultural context the west being individualistic and the east being collective, it was safe to say that Buddhist Burmese spirit was an individualistic character because they pursue

self-realization and bear no responsibility toward the community and society as a whole. “Their entire training on socialization was based on individualistic ideals and “not as elements in an intelligible system of relationships” (Pye, 1962, p.202).

The inability to recognize systematic relationships had obstructed economic development. There was no understanding or feeling on the importance of a sound economic development or the improvement of the nation since it was only individuals who can improve themselves. The lack of exploring nature consciously separates man from it, “affected by the pre-Buddhistic animism of Southeast Asia, militated against scientific observation of nature, and thereby delayed technological achievement” (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 98-99). Therefore, the Burmese Empire lacked science and the effectiveness of military strength. The soldiers were armed with knives instead of modern equipment such as guns. Management of artillery depended upon the crops of Christian descendants, mainly Portuguese and French during the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The Catholic College of Missionaries in Rangoon trained Burma’s engineers and pilots during the late eighteenth century (Sarkisyanz, 1965). Scientific articles and textbooks were limited and had to be translated from an English encyclopedia, and the lack of contacts made it difficult to attain continuous scientific and mathematics information. When the British took over Rangoon, there were more influxes of direct contacts overseas.

The British acquired Burma in three phases between the years of 1824-1885 and initially the Burmans accepted the new regime. The British Empire provided the economic development along the delta region of the Irrawaddy, development of rice lands and markets, advance communication developments and improvement of health

conditions. The Burmese were comfortable with this setup for about fifteen years and simply viewed this as a mere change in leadership. As law and order was established and grounds for economic stability planted, administration and maintenance required skills that the Burmese were ill prepared for. Thus, immigrants from neighboring countries, for example, immigrants from India and China, filled positions in business, government institutions and finance. The Burmese natives were excluded from government leadership and involvement. Unfortunately, the comfort that the Burmese felt was an illusion left from the monarchical period. When they realized the British and other immigrants had surpassed them in their country with no acknowledgment of their role, the British became the enemy.

#### Buddhist Burma and the British Empire

The conquest of Buddhist Burma by the British Empire agitated the balance that the Burmese were used to; state ideologies were no longer a part of their lives. Their shock only led them to further themselves from the acquisition by the British and no interest in comprehending the situation. Mandalay Palace was considered a cosmic symbol and a moral sanctuary, and when the British troops occupied the palace under the name Fort Dufferin, it was converted into a British club, "The Upper Burma Club" (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 106). Their palace of world order and social tranquillity came to a halt. The cosmic prototype of Burma's government of Buddhist kingship was no longer the center of their universe and Burma's society and culture was shaken by revolutionary transformations. As time progressed, monasteries were used as forts, tattooing places, publication centers and loot-safes and exploited the virtual immunity of monastic centers. (Mendelson, 1975).

The Wheel of Karma, the endless rebirths, was challenged thus losing its meaning in the realm of social hierarchy. The ideological shift caused a rift in the mythical cosmology of Nirvana to the realities of the human will power. “When the image of the universe became subjected to the critical powers of the human mind, the state was no longer seen as a reflection of a cosmic harmony” (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 108). The British government ignored Buddhist ethos and passed it as folk tradition. This idea of folk tradition about an ideal Buddhist state soon turned into a revolutionary spirit. Unfortunately, the attitude behind this revolutionary force was divided between the Buddhist rural majority and the Burmese bureaucratic minority enlightened by the English.

The Burmese bureaucratic elite were shaped by European cultural and linguistic standards which with Protestant missionaries in 1826. By the beginning of the twentieth century this process reached its peak when Burmese speech was redefined to the basics and refined for the rural class while Burmese literature disappeared among the educated class during the time when Burmese students studied in Europe in 1905-1907. By the end of the nineteenth century, attendance of Buddhist monasteries, which had given Burma a higher literacy rate than Britain in 1823 decreased (Sarkisyanz, 1965). “The education which the British brought to Burma was vitally important in shaping the present forms of Burmese nationalism. By bringing the students into contact with ideas and conditions outside of Burma, the University both broadened their outlook and broke into what has been described as their ‘extraordinary self-complacent and parochial form of nationalism’” (Trager, 1959, p. 18). Burmese students returning from the United Kingdom during the thirties introduced Marxist literature and Socialist writings.

Although Marxist philosophy attacked imperialism and capitalism and its explanation of colonialism, the Buddhist Burmese were not convinced by its canonist rejection of religion. The Burmese had little attraction to Communism unless reconciled with Buddhism. Thakin Soe studied Buddhist philosophy before he studied Marxist literature and this proved to be useful. He explained Marxist concepts with Buddhist philosophical terms. In order to explain a foreign ideology, a familiar approach must be taken, and the only established language found in Burma that explains Buddhist concepts is Pali.

### Buddhism and Contemporary Politics

During the beginning years of colonization many Buddhist associations and organizations were developed to preserve the Buddhist faith in a society influenced by contemporary activities. Among the associations created by means of social reform were Maha-Bodhi Association (1891), Ashoka Society (1902), and the Young Men's Buddhist Association (1902). The Young Men's Buddhist Association founded in Arakan (southwestern part of Burma) was an exact copy of Y.M.C.A. with student boarding. Although the topics were related to religious subjects, they had plans for reviving Burmese arts and literature. "As the objects of the Association were religious, in the context of the 'separation of Church and State' (and that non-interference which for British power in India proved to be the path of least resistance), it could not be suppressed by the colonial authorities" (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 129). Most of the discussions that took place were related to social or political issues. Buddhism had been the main criteria to Burman identity and reviving this identity meant rediscovering Burman identity. The Y.M.B.A. was the training ground for future nationalists like barristers and journalists; half of its members were government officials.

During the 1930s many political activist groups emerged from the Sangha followed by riots. Among the riots that broke out in the 1930s, Saya San Rebellion was the most influential movement. Saya San, an ex-monk, “conformed to the traditional Burmese political and religious pattern of revolts which sought to establish a new monarchy” (Pye, 1962, p. 259). Magicians, soothsayers, tattooers, and sellers of alternative healing products supported the movement, the army placed Saya San on a throne under a white umbrella, a symbol of royalty. This revolt was not motivated by economic grievances, but rather a “nativistic response against overwhelming impacts of an alien civilization that had been dissolving traditional society up, its economic foundations and challenging the traditional world conception of Burmese folk Buddhism” (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 161). This traditionalist revolt tried to preserve the only identity they were familiar with and restore social harmony. The revolt gained momentum and spread through twelve out of forty districts and took two Indian armies under the British command and one and half years to suppress the uprising. They convinced themselves they were invincible to modern weapons. “The movement clearly thrived on ignorance, superstition, and readiness to accept a mystical and magical view of the universe, to live on unreasoning and emotional expectations of political success—all the qualities the emerging Burmese politicians who wanted to be modern sought to reject” (Pye, 1962, p. 259). In the hopes that they could echo the ideal past, these peasants believed that kingship would rise again. Unfortunately, they were unable to withstand the colonial force. Saya San was captured and sentenced to death, the income from his book of Burmese medical lore financed the introduction of Karl Marx’s writings in Burma.

According to the British, those who were pro-Burmese as well as those who were hostile to the Burmese agreed that this movement was the apparition to the spirit of nationalism.

The 1936 Rangoon University student strike was considered an irresponsible boyish act of excitement rather than a movement and carried no weight in the spirit of nationalism. The young generation of *pongyis* (an ordained monk—a great honor and glory; a monk in charge of a monastery) had turned to politics and were a great political force. The danger to Burma lies both in Burma and religion itself; there has been less concentration on the latter. As it was found that each king had their own agenda and interests for the monasteries, the politicians had supported “his own” *pongyis* or association of *pongyis*.

Many *kyaungdaiks* (a larger complex of buildings than that represented by a single monastery) and many *kyaungs* (a single monastery) have become centers of political intrigue and even Pagodas (temple) themselves are used as platforms for political meetings and political propaganda. In the aftermath of unrest and indiscipline which the riots left behind, their influence is just as marked. We cannot too strongly say, as friends of Burma and of her Religion, that the danger to both from the degeneration of the *Sangha* which has set in is great (Mendelson, 1975, p. 213).

Many political monks appeared during the Japanese invasion, World War II, and the Thakin movement which finally led Burma to independence from Britain. Politicians like Ba Maw used monk presidents at political meetings. During the Thakin movement Sangha supporters were found in national organizations like, Dobama Asiayon and the All-Burma Youth League, but the agenda was carried out without Sangha attendance.

The developmental role between the Sangha and the state since Burma's independence starts from the take over by the coup d'état in 1962. Bogyoke (General) Aung San, on the eve of independence, envisioned a secular state with socialist ideals (Maung Than, 1988).



After his assassination the constitution adopted by the Union of Burma held on to their principles of justice, liberty, and equality for all citizens and “proclaimed that the state ‘recognizes the special position of Buddhism as the faith professed by the great majority of the citizens of the Union’ but acknowledged at the same time that ‘the State also recognizes Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Animism as some of the religions existing in the Union at the date of the coming into operation of this Constitution. It prohibited ‘the abuse of religion for political purposes’ and stipulated that ‘any act which is intended or is likely to promote feelings of hatred, enmity or discord between racial or religious communities or sects is contrary to this constitution and may be punishable by law (Maung Than, 1988).

Since Bogyoke Aung San’s involvement in nationalistic movements he had always expressed his ideals of a secular nation. His grave concern for the nation was not religious stability as so much as economic and political strength because he knew that without it Burma could not stand the forces of other technological nations.

U Nu’s government under the Union of Burma deviated from the constitution and amended it to establish Buddhism as the official religion of the state in August of 1961. The religious minority feared agendas biased towards Buddhism which had become quite prominent as the years progressed. Over the decade bitterness surfaced in debates on the issue of state religion, the strain took a toll on the political weave already threatened by factionalism and ethnic politics. It was for this reason the military intervened in 1962, introducing democracy to Burma. “On March 30, 1962, ‘The Burmese Way to Socialism’ was published and pronounced as the policy declaration of the state” (Maung Than, 1988, p. 28). This document spelt out the means, ends, and justification of the social revolution. The Revolutionary Council (General Ne Win was the Chairman) realized the importance of spiritual and material well being of the people; they concentrated more on material development, and religion was treated as an individual concern. In the document, “The Burmese Way to Socialism,” a section was dedicated to

religion, "Reorientation of Views," that discusses "attempts must be made by various correct methods to do away with bogus acts of charity and social work for vainglorious show, bogus piety and hypocritical religiosity, and so forth, as well as to foster and applaud *bona fide* belief and practice of personal morals as taught by ethics and traditions of *every religion* and culture" (Maung Than, 1988, p. 28). The Revolutionary Council did not ignore religion in the pursuit of economic and political development, but emphasized the individual right to practice any religion as long as the belief was not tainted with frivolous habits.

It was made clear on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 1964 that The Revolutionary Council would not accept support from the monks, as during the monarchy period. In the affairs of the state or in political activities monks were expected to stay aloof. Annual grants to the Buddha Sasana Council were cut off by the new government and eventually dissolved in 1962. Other religious institutions kept a low profile in the urban areas. Buddhists continued to support the sangha financially through means of personal savings. Although the sangha was no longer in the political equation, it still influenced the life-style of the Burmese. The Burmese tried to cope with the acculturation of secular socialist revolution; however, this transition lacked the bridge between spiritual attainment and material attainment and the significance to achieve this. This lack of synthesis created a rift between the Burmese and the British. The Burmese to this day had severe identity crises that hindered economic wealth and political autonomy.

The Sangha became a political organization, and the principal of separation of church and state became lip service. The strict restriction placed on monks' non-interference with political and state affairs had reversed, and the government was

interfering with religious affairs. The simplicity of the Buddhist organization had turned into a bureaucratic nightmare with divisions and committees. The distinction between church and state had not been implemented; thus, the struggle of identity continued.

“There does not seem to be a clear line between the sacred and the secular in Burmese life. Consequently, there is considerable uncertainty and even confusion over the place religion should occupy in social and public affairs” (Pye, 1962, p. 190). The process of modernization created difficult issues as to the role religion should play in Burmese life. The basic pattern of Burmese religious life follows the close relationship between personal and cultural identity. “Whenever challenged by foreign ideas and practices to the point of feeling uncomfortable and insecure, the impulse seems to be to seek reassurance by returning to and reasserting this religion-based sense of identity” (Pye, 1962, p. 193).

Another restriction placed on the Sangha was that no charity activities were permitted which caused lack of funds to operate on day-to-day basis. With Burma in an economic crisis and the state cutting funds for religious institutions, the Sangha had no financial growth other than personal savings. The state’s concern for the Sangha in a socialist Burma did not allow the Burmese to discover their identity within the societal and cultural realm. The Buddhist scriptures first controlled the Burmese identity and during the post-independence period the government controlled their identity. Not allowing the freedom to assimilate with contemporary conditions caused limited expansion materialistically and spiritually.

Many significant events took place during the 1930s, leading to Burma’s independence in 1947. During these years Bogyoke Aung San played an influential role

in the primary stages of the struggle for independence and prepared many documents to lead the nation to order and prosperity. He was a man of vision and of hope and understood the repercussions of an independent nation. Among the things that would have carried him to a successful operation were honesty, loyalty, and most of all his charismatic qualities.

## CHAPTER V

### INFLUENCE AND EFFECT OF AUNG SAN'S LEADERSHIP

To better acquaint us with Aung San and his place in Burma's history as a political leader we must examine his involvement in the nationalist movement, his political influence and philosophies and effect they left on his daughter, Aung San Suu Kyi, as well as future generations.

#### Aung San

At the age of eighteen Aung San was raw, untidy, shy and out of place with the cream of the Burmese youth. The first time he spoke publicly was after a debate that his brother participated in. He was in agreement that the monks should not participate in political activities. His philosophy and conviction was to not mix religion with politics. He spoke with a heavy accent English and was ill mannered which made his speech incomprehensible, but this did not intimidate him nor did it discourage him. He continued to interweave English with Pali words and phrases only to be greeted with insults. He recognized the importance of English and worked hard to improve his command of the language. Aung San achieved a proficiency in the language which is unusual people with up-country origins and monastery schooling (Suu Kyi, 1995).

Let Ya, Rashid, Thein Pe, Kyaw Nyein and Aung San became well-known political figures in the Burmese Independence Movement (BIM). By the academic year 1935-6 many young men including those mentioned above held major positions in the

Students' Union and Aung San was elected to the executive committee and also became editor of the union magazine. The strike of 1936 was triggered by an article titled "Hell Hound at Large" (Suu Kyi, 1995). It was a direct attack on university officials. This strike was a landmark in the political development, and it resulted in Aung San becoming a widely known student leader. By 1938 he had become the president of both the Rangoon University Students' Union as well as the "All Burma Students' Union." Aung San was a man of integrity, honesty and had the capacity to work which won him great admiration. He was without fault; however, he was often under criticism for being moody, untidy, having devastating fits of silence, and angular behavior.

In 1938, Aung San joined Dohbama Asi-ayone, the "We Burmese" Association. This organization was a result of the Indo-Burmese riots of 1930 and was made up young vigorous nationalists, a breed apart from the older politicians who were not bold or radical enough. These patriotic activists called themselves Thakin. Thakin means "master" and was used when addressing the British rulers. Later this organization split in two, and Aung San joined the majority and became the General Secretary of Dohbama Asi-ayone and later drafted its manifesto.

After the outbreak of the war in Europe during 1939, "seeing that, 'Colonialism's difficulty is Freedom's opportunity,' Aung San founded the 'Freedom Bloc'" (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 11). The 'Freedom Bloc' emerged as an alliance of Ba Maw's Sinyetha Party, We Burmese Association, Students and individual politicians. The message of the Freedom Bloc to the nation was that the people should support the British war only if they were promised independence. The administration in response arrested many nationalists, and a warrant for Aung San's arrest was issued; he disappeared in time.

Aung San found himself in a situation where taking up arms was no longer an option. Carrying out a guerrilla action required some outside assistance, so in 1940 Aung San and Yan Aung left to China in hopes of contacting the Chinese communists. Nothing happened during of two months; however, a Japanese agent approached and offered to assist them. This was not a new relationship by any means. The Japanese had already assisted the Freedom Bloc as well as other politicians. Despite unsettling feelings about accepting assistance from the Japanese, Aung San took the offer. The core group that trained under the Japanese army became known as the “Thirty Comrades,” which evolved into the Burmese Independence Army. Of the two highest ranks, one was given to Aung San. As Major General, he led the Japanese to believe he was following their rule; in reality, he was organizing an underground movement. They fought as allies, but Aung San knew trouble lie ahead. While in Bangkok, Aung San encouraged the nationalists in Burma to organize underground activity to fight the Japanese. Unfortunately, the Japanese took over, and most nationalists were arrested.

Aung San struggled to strengthen the army and tried to keep the party out of politics and from interfering with civil administration. This was inevitable since the core of the BIA was made up of politicians. When the commanding officer, Suzuki (a Japanese agent), left the BIA, it was renamed Burma Defense Army. During the period of resistance against the Japanese, racial strife erupted, disturbing the country’s internal balance. Aung San had always placed great importance on racial unity and relations in order to ensure oneness in the nation.

The “Blue Print for Burma,” which Aung San had drawn for Suzuki in 1940, discussed the need to bridge the major Burmese ethnicity with the hill tribes, Arakan and

Shan State. Throughout the latter part of 1943, Aung San, Than Tun and Ket Ya labored to bring about peace and understanding between the Karens and the Burmese. Their efforts were fruitful; the Karens learned to trust the Burmese leaders to the extent that a Karen battalion was added to the Burmese army (Suu Kyi, 1995). Another internal conflict that needed attention was the growing animosity between the communist party and the socialists of the Burma Revolutionary Party.

The leaders of the communist party were Soe, Than Tun, Ba Hein, Kyaw Nyein and Ba Swe, the later two were the most prominent and active socialists. Aung San worked very hard to bring these two sides together; however, their political differences seeped into the army, making resistance against the Japanese difficult. In August of 1944, Aung San arranged a meeting between Soe, Than Tun and Ba Hein to propose an anti-fascist organization and to draft a manifesto. Another meeting between the communist leaders and members of the Burma Revolutionary Party was arranged at which Aung San read the proclamation, entitled "Rise Up and Attack the Fascist Dacoits" which officially launched the Ant-Fascist Organization (AFO) (Suu Kyi, 1995).

On March 27, 1945 the resistance against the Japanese troops began with the help of the British, Burma successfully crushed the Japanese troops. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of June, a victory parade was held in Rangoon, and the Burmese Army marched alongside ally, units from the British Empire and other Allied forces. The AFO was expanded to include organizations and individuals representing a broad spectrum of social and political interests and renamed it Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL).

The British administration wanted to declare the AFPFL illegal and arrest Aung San as a traitor. In order to gain national stability, Aung San's first priority was to



resolve the future of the Burmese Army which had been renamed - Patriotic Burmese Forces (PBF). Aung San, who had captured the hearts of Burma, had to make a decision between staying in the military or joining the political arena. Although some of his colleagues thought he lacked qualities of a politician, particularly his social skills and political tactics, he decided to fight for independence on the political front. Despite his colleagues' criticisms, he turned out to be a strong and powerful political leader. In May of 1945, the British declared its future with Burma in form of a White Paper. The White Paper consisted of three years direct rule by the Governor, and in due course, elections and the restoration of a Burmese Council and Legislature. After several negotiations with the British, the Governor's Council was dissolved and in September of 1946, Aung San was made Deputy Chairman of the new Executive Council. Internal struggle continued to challenge the AFPFL. The communists continued to strengthen their own party while supporting the AFPFL. Personal differences and ideologies led to a split between the 'red' communists and the 'white' communists. Although the communists and the AFPFL parted, Aung San retained his attachment to Marxist socialism and to individuals within the Communist Party (Suu Kyi 1995).

In December 1946 conversation began to declare Burma a sovereign independent nation. The discussion resulted in the "Aung San-Attlee Agreement" mandating "immediate transfer, actual and legal, of responsibility for the government of Burma to a Burmese Government pending election of a constituent assembly and the framing of a new constitution" (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 31). After the "Aung San-Attlee Agreement" succeeded, Aung San transferred all power to the Ant-Fascist People's Freedom League government and spoke of leaving politics to devote himself to his family and writing once

independence had been achieved. “Aung San and almost his entire cabinet were murdered on July 19, 1947 by disguised assassins sent by U Saw, who in the twilight of colonial Burma, on the eve of the War, had been helped by the British Business Community to the Prime Ministership” (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 187). U Saw hoped to gain position by the assassination of his rivals and gain British assistance. U Saw was certain that Sir Hubert would call upon him to form a new government; instead, he was greeted by the police and sentenced to death.

### Political Ideologies

Aung San, the father of Burma’s independence, has influenced Burmese political thought since the end of the Second World War. He has become a political icon: his portrait stamped on coins and paper currency, mounted on government walls and in nearly every household. The date of his assassination, 19<sup>th</sup> July of 1947, commemorates a national holiday, and a park is named after him. There is no official biography written of Aung San, and there are no published collections of his writings, papers or speeches. It is not because the documents do not exist or are even difficult to find, “through the efforts of Col. Ba Than and his successors at the Burma Defense Services Historical Research Institute (BDSHRI) in Rangoon, much of what Aung San said and wrote has been stored in its air-conditioned archives” (Silverstein, 1993, p. 1). The BDSHRI remains open only to government officials and the government does nothing to encourage foreign scholars to use these resources. There is little hope that a clear picture of Aung San will emerge nor that his impact on the nationalist movement and subsequent period of independence be completely understood.

Dr. Maung Maung, a Burmese scholar, has attempted to interpret and relate the ideas of Aung San to post war Burman events during the beginning of the two critical years following the end of the Second World War.

It is hard to determine what people remember about him—"whether as a student leader in the 1936 university strike, a Major General in the Japanese-sponsored Burma Army during the Second World War, the leader of the postwar nationalist movement, or as the unifier of the diverse racial groups that joined together to form a truly nationwide political movement-is not clear" (Silverstein, 1993, p. 1). During the years, 1945-1947, Aung San's political career heightened; unfortunately, his assassination shortened his brilliant career. Aung San was a student of other nation building societies. His profound knowledge on political thoughts emerged in his speeches. He thus led Burma to freedom in a short amount of time; however, like most political activists, he was assassinated before he could implement his political platform. Aung San's approach to politics was neither systematic nor original. "For him, the term politics was all encompassing, 'politics means your everyday life. It is how you eat, sleep, work and live, with which politics is concerned'" (Silverstein, 1993, p. 5).

In the speeches examined there is a traceable growth marked in Aung San as a political leader. It is evident in his speeches that he had the ability to flex his political ideology to the current situation, always implemented his thoughts and always spoke the truth. He was truly a man of his people and knew what Burma needed to succeed as an independent nation.

#### Reconstruction of Cultural Territories

Aung San faced the restructuring of cultural territories during the period of decolonization. “After the period of ‘primary’ resistance, literally fighting against outside intrusion, there comes a period of secondary, that is, ideological resistance, when efforts are made to reconstitute a ‘shattered community, to save or restore the sense and fact of community against all the pressures of the colonial system,’ as Basil Davidson puts it” (Said, 1993, p. 209). Aung San’s famous document, *Blue Print for Burma*, etched the cornerstone for Burma. He outlines that to create a form of state the criteria is to build a united nation. “In concrete terms it means we must bridge all gulfs now existing through British machinations between the major Burmese race and the hill tribes, Arakan and Shan State, and unite these all into one nation under the same treatment, unlike the present time which divides our people into ‘backward’ and ‘administered’ sections” (Silverstein, 1993, p. 20).

According to Said, there are three reoccurring themes that emerge in decolonizing cultural resistance; one is the right to see the community’s history as a whole, second, resistance, and third nationalism. These three themes connect to restoring their national identity. To see the community’s history as a whole, create the stage for national unity and identity. For example, at the beginning of “*The Blue Print of Burma*,” Aung San discusses how a monarchy is not an ideal solution for modern Burma. He further explains that the history of Burma shows the weakness of this form of state because of the constant rivalry to claim kingship during a lifetime or death of king, and this frequently disrupted stability of the administration. History exhibits examples of Burma’s long line of emperors who could not uphold a strong and long leadership, unlike Japan where emperors have maintained an unbroken line since the beginning. He then goes on

to say that Burma needs a strong state as exemplified in Germany and Italy. “There shall be only one nation, one state, one party, one leader” (Sliverstein, 1993, p. 20). History encompasses the urn that holds the path to national identity.

Resistance, the second concept of decolonization, “is an alternative way of conceiving human history and how this reconception is based on breaking down the barriers between cultures” (Said, 1993, p. 216). Burma went through three major resistance, the first was when Burma fell to the British during the late 1800’s, second, when Burma fell to the Japanese and third when Burma fell to the British again. During these struggles uniting all the ethnic groups of Burma was a consistent priority for Aung San and was evident in various documents. One such document was the Defence of Burma, January 30, 1945; Aung San profiled the rights of the minorities for the future independent state of Burma, as follows:

They must be given proper place in the state. They must have their political, economic and social rights definitely defined and accorded. They must have employment. They must have their own rights of representation...They must have equal opportunity in all spheres of the state. There must be no racial or religious discrimination. Any books, songs, signs, symbols, names, etc., which foster such ideas must be officially banned. And we must carry out special uplift work amongst them so that they could be brought to our level and finally to the world level together with us (Silverstein, 1993, pp. 10-11).

Aung San also offered to let various ethnic groups to create their own Class Battalions in the Burma Army. He not only struggled with external forces, but internal turmoil as well. The imminent problems were the many internal factions that were created during the struggle for an independent nation.

The third concept of decolonization of cultural resistance is nationalism. Aung San linked his ideas on nationalism and national unity together.

In my view...every nation in the world must be free, not only externally but also internally. This is to say, every nation in the world being a conglomeration of races and religions should develop such nationalism as is compatible with the welfare of one and all, irrespective of race, religion or class or sex. That's my nationalism (Silverstein, 1993, p. 9).

Aung San defines nationalism not as different races living within a common territory, but sharing a common life, interests, the use of common language, and the growth of the feeling of a community creating oneness (Silverstein, 1993). Aung San's concept of nationalism evolved in form and content.

The two most significant events in Burma's political history were the civil war in 1948 and the military coup of 1962. The leadership and religious philosophy of U Nu and General Ne Win played a significant role in the rise of national identity crisis.

Aung San Suu Kyi's objectives for a democratic nation reflect her father's goal applied to the current challenges. In her first speech at a mass rally of half a million people, she referred to her father's political philosophies and how they applied to today's struggle. There are two goals that her father tried to achieve she continues to strives national unity and the separation of military and politics. In an interview with *The Times* by Karan Thapar, when asked about her father's historical involvement with the Burmese army and what role the army should play in a democratic nation, she states that the army should not interfere with politics. As rallies, protests and marches continue, you can see a sea full of pictures of General Aung San and of Aung San Suu Kyi with a glimmer of hope that Aung San Suu Kyi will finish what her father started.

## CHAPTER VI

### U NU AND NE WIN'S LEADERSHIP ROLE IN BURMA

Aung San's charismatic personality kept the factions of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League together in conjunction with the non-Burman ethnic groups. U Nu, who succeeded Aung San after his assassination, was faced with civil war. During U Nu's leadership he dealt with a kaleidoscope of ideologies within the context of Buddhism, Socialism, Communism, and Democracy. In a country where traditional Buddhist sociopolitical values had been altered by the British modernization there was desire to reach a unified identity which caused the factions to fight for their beliefs. In this chapter we will critically examine Prime Minister U Nu's and General Ne Win's leadership, religious influence, and the role they played during the development of the nation. This will help us better understand Burma's current political situation and future circumstances.

#### U Nu: Reconstruction of a War-Devastated Economy

The Thakins (masters) who steered Burma's independence primary agenda was the reconstruction and development of their war-devastated economy. Their ex-colonial economy resulted in debts and landlordism and most of all their exclusion from the market as tradesmen and workers while the Europeans and Asians held these positions.

U Nu's government found itself in the midst of social disarray and the economy on the verge of collapsing. "Under the impact of the colonial system, Burma's economy had become geared to the world markets for rice, making the collapse of her exports and the breakdown of the communication system during the Pacific War a catastrophe" (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 187). The isolation of many rice-producing areas from their overseas markets increased their economic dependence on their own resources result of colonial development that destroyed their self-sufficient economy.

This economic vacuum created a dependence on the war for employment for the entire generation. In 1948 the government appealed for internal demobilization, and disarmament was followed by uprisings led by Communists (Sarkisyanz, 1965). U Nu tried to reason with the Communists with arguments presented from Marx and Lenin- "that in Burma there was no basis for violent class struggle through armed revolt" (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 188). He did offer to let the Communists to participate in the government and implement their goals by peaceful democratic means. Thakin Soe had resigned as the leader of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League and Than Tun was expelled from the "Burma Communist Party." One after another they went into open rebellion dragging Burma to civil war.

Among the ethnic groups, the Karens were the most active in the civil war. The Karens were a non-Indianized tribal group probably related to the pre-Buddhist Burmans and suffered under the Burmese kings' rule and therefore sided with the British. The Communist rebellion and the Karen uprising placed an overpowering military, economic and social burden on Burma's newly formed independent state. This was a similar situation that India faced with Pakistan after their independence from the British. Both



countries, India and Burma, are still struggling with this ethnic turmoil today. Burma was wrapped in multiracial factions that affected the nation's future, and the country at one point was nearly taken over by Communists, mutineers, and Karens. "U Nu held out with determination to carry on with the struggle irrespective of success or failure, his steadfastness at the time saved Democracy in Burma" (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 188). On April 24, 1949 Mandalay was recaptured and by 1950 they reconquered all the bases from the Communists and the Karens. Burma's army (that preserved the independence from possible takeover by the Chinese) was under the command of General Ne Win, a comrade-in-arms of Aung San. By 1953 the Burma Communist Party was banned, though it still operated under another name.

Western governments were ready to write Burma off between the years of 1948-1950; however, in the midst of all of this turmoil democracy survived. According to Frank Trager the preservation of this democracy was credited to the following explanations: weakness within the insurgent movements, the leadership of Prime Minister Nu, the Buddhist revival; the stressful unity of the three leadership groups within the government-the politicians, the armed forces, and the bureaucracy, the four strengths of the government, and the building of a welfare state.

Of the following explanations in the survival of democracy there are two that have also contributed to the lack of political autonomy and economic status in building a welfare state cohesive with building a national identity, and they are the leadership of the Prime Minister Nu and the Buddhist revival. U Nu had no difficulty in winning three elections and retained popular support throughout the critical events during his decade in office. He confessed sins of omission and commission publicly and was pardoned for

them. He portrayed an image as the gatekeeper for the welfare of the individual and the nation which covered whatever lack of administrative capabilities he had. Prime Minister U Nu was described “as a man with a throne always attached to his bottom” (Trager, 1976, p. 122). The critical events were handled well publicly, but U Nu lacked foresight of the effects of these critical decisions in the future. As stated above, he lacked administrative skills to implement important programs that assisted the welfare of the state. The attitude of pleasing the general public became more important than achieving a progressive attitude. “Sensitivity for the unmodernized people’s longings, expressed in intuitive synthesis of imported revolutionary ideologies with deeply rooted Burmese lore, does account for much of U Nu’s charismatic standing in Burma’s politics” (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 217). He clearly understood what the Burmese aspired and convey such sensitivity. He bridged the gap between “the English educated Burmese elite and the traditionalist majority that has hardly been exposed to occidental political terminology” (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 217). We can clearly see how he implemented Buddhist revival programs into political reforms that ultimately gained a respectable position for U Nu as a political figure.

#### U Nu’s Influence of Buddhism

The Buddhist revival was intimately connected with U Nu. The renaissance of Burma’s Buddhist culture was evident in his role as devout Buddhist and as Prime Minister. U Nu captured Buddhist traditions with the help of his Socialist and AFPFL colleagues in the Cabinet and in Parliament who valued the historical importance of Buddhism. With the Western influence of various political and economical ideologies, the scientific and technological education did not seem to affect the Buddhist revival. In

the 1947 Constitution, it is stated that all religions are respected, and it was accorded that Buddhism held an elite position as a faith professed by the majority of the citizens in Burma (Trager, 1976). In September of 1961, the Constitution was amended to make Buddhism a state religion. To represent all religious matters, a Ministry of Religious Affairs was formed in 1950 as an addition to the Cabinet. The archetypal role of Sangha, which included programs and practices of traditional Burmese Buddhist education, had been disturbed since the annexation of the British since 1886 and was now being revived by the U Nu administration. “Members of the government would probably deny that they wished to employ the assets of Buddhism as a counterfoil to Communism and other competing ideologies, for it is not proper so to employ Buddhism, but their denials would be a mere formality” (Trager, 1976, p. 128). Their formality gave them temporary stability, but created pressured chaos for the future.

Their formality carried them to an approval to build the Kaba Aye, the World Peace Pagoda, which was initiated by Prime Minister U Nu. This undertaking played a significant role for those who have lived and know Burmese history. “Through the centuries, one of the first acts of a righteous Burmese king or ruler has been to fulfill his religious duty by building a pagoda” (Trager, 1976, p. 129). The Kaba Aye was completed in March of 1952 and the bond between church and state was rekindled.

According to U Nu, one important aspect of British rule that set the path for Burma was an opportunity to align with world developments without losing identity and tradition. Burma’s Constitution was originally drafted in English and later translated into Burmese. It was Aung San who wanted Burma’s Constitution “to be essentially Burmese in ideology and purport thoroughly adapted to suit Burma’s aspirations and Burmese

genius” (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 192). The political goals centered on Democracy and on Welfare State Socialism formulated from Occidental sources, however, accepted under the context of traditional Buddhist social ethos. The penetration of Anglization within Burma was far less marked than in Ceylon or even in India. In Burma, dependent on the traditionalist majority, unfamiliar Democratic and Socialist ideologies were explained in familiar Buddhist context.

Buddhism found its way into Western concepts of Democracy and Socialism; the Burmese public accepted its deep imprints. This acceptance left an impression on political folklore among the rural mass derived among Buddhist modernism from the acculturated elite. “U Ba Yin, at one time Burma’s minister of Education, wrote that Karl Marx must have ‘directly or indirectly been influenced...by Buddha’” (Sarkisyanz, 1965, pp. 192-193). He further stated, Europe could not comprehend this because their philosophy still lurks in the primary stage and has lost its old morality. U Ba Yin viewed Dictatorship and Democracy “as an alternative between the Dictatorship of God and the Democracy of Buddha” (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 193). The modern Buddhist in Ceylon influenced the Nationalist-Marxist political alliance, and their defensive reactions against imperial powers of Christendom had radical effects. These trends created theoretical expression through “Dhamma Vijaya” (Revolt in the Temple), which declared that the nations of the west are all “sick societies disintegrating under the impact of the advancing technology” (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 194). In the context of that “Revolt in the Temple,” Democracy was described as:

[a] leaf from the book of Buddhism, which has...been torn out and, while perhaps not misread, has certainly been half emptied of meaning by being divorced from its Buddhist context and thus has been made subservient to reactionary forces. The democracies today are obviously living on

spiritual capital; we mean clinging to the formal observances of Buddhism without possessing its inner dynamic. Marxism is a leaf taken from the book of Buddhism – a leaf torn out and misread (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 194).

### Coexistence of Buddhism and Marxism

The Buddhist social ethos was interpreted in a new light and claimed to be principled in the same manner as the Pali Canon. The impact of Western Europe on the political, cultural, and religious ideologies was more prominent than in India. However, Burma “developed the idea that the Buddhist message calls for a break with established business society that ‘is purely acquisitive..., the sickness of an acquisitive society,’ the competitive struggle for acquisition based on the ‘Self as the dominant factor’ with its material values, more radically than does any revolution” (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 195). The Burmese tried to fit Marxist ideology within their social ethos in hopes of achieving economic comfort; unfortunately, this did not fit in the whole scheme due to the many factions.

Hence, Buddhism not only aims at abolition of social classes, but also aims at the overcoming of “being.” “The socialist goal of economic welfare was thought to depend on the overcoming of the Illusion of the Self, on the other hand, the socialist state of economic welfare was to contribute to this Buddhism goal of meditation to overcome attachment” (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 196). Marxism was supposed to provide economic methodology for Buddhism.

In a speech before the Burmese Trade Union Congress in 1950 given by U Ba Swe, the leader of the Burmese Socialist Party, Minister of Defense and Prime Minister of Burma, he claimed that his understanding of Marxist ideology had strengthened his Buddhist convictions:

I come to be convinced of the exalted Buddhist law: I come to have a great veneration for the exalted Buddhist attributes. Together with this, and by means of a correct view and teaching and fulfilling the law of Buddhism, a person would also have no hardships to become studiously an adherent of Marxist ideology (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 196).

The Marxist-Buddhist alliance seems to compliment both theories: the Buddhist aim overcomes universal suffering and the Marxist aim overcomes economic suffering.

By the end of the war, Bogyoke Aung San's plight was the abolishment of landlordism and future land alienation. This was outlined in the 1947 Constitution, the Two-Year Plan and the Land Nationalization Act of 1948. Section 30 of the Constitution states the following:

The State is the ultimate owner of all lands. It may 'regulate, alter or abolish land tenures or resume possession of any land and distribute same for collective or cooperative farming or to agricultural tenants.' The Constitution promised to end all 'large land holdings' and to limit by law the 'maximum size of private land' (Trager, 1976, p. 151).

Outlining assistance against economic manipulation and social and economic policies were ideologies that encouraged the promotion of welfare of the nation and its people. The Land Nationalization Act of 1948 and the Two Year Plan were initially the first two acts that promised to fulfill welfare in the state. Thakin U in support of nationalization of land went to great lengths to point out the Buddhist implications. The Buddhist's argument against Land Nationalization Act was refuted by U Nu's speech attesting that the means of gaining property has a functional role in the means of attaining Nirvana, and class struggle has transpired through the inherent value of property. Thus, overcoming this illusion will elevate the obstacles and open the road to Nirvana through a perfect society (Sarkisyanz, 1965).

U Nu quoted from the Cakkavatti Sutta of the Digha Nikaya (prophecy attributed to Gautama Buddha) to illustrate the effects of economic desires that cause dissolution of society and moral and religious deterioration:

Thus if property is not given to those without property much misery is caused, when much misery results then theft of property...become rife. When there is theft on a huge scale, a large quantity of arms appear. When a large quantity of arms becomes available, a lot of murders take place. When there are a lot of murders, then there is much falsehood. When there is much falsehood then there is much slander...giving rise to much covetousness and malice, which in turn lead to the holding of wrong views. When wrong views are prevalent then there arise on a large scale these three breaches of moral conduct. When such offenses are very much in evidence, then the span of life of men diminishes. When the life-span of mankind is only ten years, there will be a war of weapons in which men will kill one another for a whole week, treating one another as game deer, and their hand hold sharp weapons with which they will slay their fellowmen. (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 213).

“Property,” he said, “is meant not to be saved, not for gains, nor for comfort. It is to be used by men to meet their needs in respect of clothing, food, and habitation in their journey towards Nirvana or Heaven” (Trager, 1976, p 151-152). This would end class warfare and strengthen their path to reach nirvana. In order gain the confidence of Buddhist Burma, such manipulation of Buddhist scripture was required. In order to initiate any progress towards nation building there needs to be a mental adjustment from a traditional attitude to a more modern attitude.

Material assistance was available to those who were not working for private profit. The evolution towards a socialist economy did not allow the profit motive to develop in basic industries. “Regardless of their education they continue to think of economic activity as little more than an attempt of people with excessive self-interest to cheat and exploit others” (Pye, 1962, p. 202). The result of this attitude can be traced back to free enterprise practices under British colonial rule, and they also inherited it

from the kings where private economic activities were controlled. The socialist limitations placed on private enterprise received no objection from the Burmese society since there was hardly a middle class that would have been affected by socialist legislation. Thus Socialism became the mainstream of Burmese nationalism.

#### U Nu's Economic Plan

In the years to follow U Nu tried to implement constitutional promises and socialist ideals. The State declared its right on agricultural land that was not owned or inherited by the cultivators themselves and held by Burmese citizens only. "The State was declared to be the ultimate owner of all land, with the right to resume possession or alter tenures with a view to redistribution. Large land-holdings were declared illegal... and private monopolistic organization was prohibited" (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 189). Land could not be transferred or sold except by rules prearranged in the law. Those individuals who worked the land were entitled to family rights on the land as long as they worked it and had family units that could inherit the land. Rent and revenue was paid directly to state or local agencies. The Burmese government, to a certain extent, had a hold on the problem of insecurity of tenure and of high rent and revenue. Small farmers once again had rights to accrument of land from its use.

Among the problems that persisted throughout the 1950's as in the adequate flow of agricultural credit with reasonable interest rates and the recovering of loans to cultivators. "In 1950, government had for a second time canceled cultivators' debts. Between that year and 1960, made credit available annually in amounts ranging from kyats 33.6 to 87.6 million (1 kyat = 21 cents U.S.), but still did not fully meet legitimate credit needs, which in some years amounted to approximately twice as much as it granted



in the highest year” (Trager, 1976, p. 152). The 1948 Two Year Plan for Burma states that the plan should be able to produce a fair share that passes to the common man. In this plan goals were laid out, and a comprehensive economic development plan was to be drafted. The founding fathers of the constitution were highly optimistic, and the results revealed the economic inexperience of its authors. The language used throughout the constitution shows the optimistic attitude. For example, they insisted that a specific project “shall be achieved” and/or “shall be set up.” Unfortunately, they did not realize that their projects would take longer due to the many challenges and obstacles for a war devastated country. A steel-rolling factory was to be set up; however, Burma had a few men who were educated or trained in the industrial and management field. Burma lacked engineers, architects, economists, and other technical fieldworkers.

The Burmese government started to refine policies as they gained experience and widened the opportunity for domestic and foreign private investments in industry, commerce, and mining (Trager, 1976). In a conference held in April of 1951 on Current Economic Problems, five British experts presented papers on economic development, and in 1952 a team of American engineers and economists presented a survey and plan for the national economy and worked out a two-year contract with government. At the Pyidawtha Conference of August 4-17, 1952, a preliminary report was presented on agriculture, education, health, housing, transportation and communication, labor-management, and public administration problems (Trager, 1976). As the complications of developing an economy became more apparent, the means of improving Burma’s economy and of nation building became a priority.

Industrialization became the motto during the early years of Pyidawtha and lower priority was given to agriculture. The socialist philosophy of the AFPFL leaders recognized the instability of Burma's economy and also took steps towards industrialization. "They believed that it would end the stigma of Burma's role as a colonial economy, a raw-materials economy with its heavy reliance on a few export items sold on wildly fluctuating world markets" (Trager, 1976, p. 154). Their target was to rapidly implement industrialization to help change the complexion of Burma's economy to achieve a healthier political and economical realm. At the 1952 Pyidawtha Conference more than 1,000 delegates participated, and it was agreed that the goals discussed should be achieved by 1960; hence, the Pyidawtha Eight-Year Plan was born.

The Pyidawtha Eight-Year Plan was supplemented with surveys, data, plans, reports, targets and other relevant information, which in the case of The Two-Year Plan lacked and required some reorganization. In the case of The Pyidawtha Eight-Year Plan, the struggles and obstacles were not necessarily because of inexperience and the lack of planning, but rather external forces such as the decline in foreign export prices and the weather. Among the internal obstacles were political interference and misadministration from foreign and domestic parties-of-interest. Burma again found herself in a tug-of-war. Just as Burma began to reach some stability, there was either faction groups or other interest groups ready to pull her down. A similar trend can be found in other Asian countries. Among them, Burma resembles India closely. The various ethnic groups created different ideologies, and to implement one ideology for nation building you need support by the community at large, education, and most importantly, a leader that can

carry this out. A lean leadership team enhanced with political and bureaucratic doldrums conducted the socio-economic reform.

Among the challenges discussed above there was one incident that finally drove the dagger deeper and cut the only support Burma had. “On January 29, 1958, U Nu declared that the Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League rejects Marxism as an ideology. Politically this demarcated the government’s ideology from that of the Communist insurgents; their differences – which preciously had been more marked in methods than in socialistic theory – were now to be drawn in philosophical content as well” (Sarkisyanz, 1965, p. 219). According to Sarkisyanz this was a shift of emphasis and terminology rather than a shift in ideological content: The Marxist philosophy of Materialism – though not without precedent in Indic intellectual tradition and in the classical Buddhist frame of reference – had never been accepted by u Nu. In theory it may be a shift in terminology, but to the general Burmese it was a shift in ideology. This shift caused another dilemma in trying to attain a main ideology acceptable to continue to build the nation. During the Buddhist revival U Nu negated Marxist materialism, and when he formally rejected Marxism, he did not reject Marxist economic theory. Although U Nu was able to establish a grand ideology during his early years in office, he became torn between the factions of Communism, Socialism, Buddhism, Marxism, and Fabianism. He was unable to build a relationship between ideology and his own personality, which one can emanate their personal sense of identity, a liaison for the Burmese to find their own collective identity (Pye, 1962). Thus he contributed to delays in the restoration of order in war-torn Burma.

U Nu's charismatic ability to cohesively keep the country in order fell short in fully implementing the administration of the socio-economic reforms. Thus, the country fell into the hands of General Ne Win. Third World countries particularly India, Burma, and Africa, who were subject to colonial rule, often struggled economically and politically to survive because of the religious influence in their day-to-day lives. The balance to keep religious based countries in accord with modern developments, and in the process not lose the very basis that keep humanity intact or their national identity, is a task that requires a visionary leader. Unfortunately, history shows us that such leaders become martyrs before finishing what they started. Often their most devout student or pupil lack the passion and fire that drove their mentors to such success.

During the summer of 1958 many Burmese feared physical violence would erupt due to the many conflicting factions. On August 15<sup>th</sup> some of the Communist rebels, especially those associated with the former People's Volunteer Organization, took advantage of the amnesty offers. Two thousand former PVO members formed a legal party called the People's Comrades Party (PCP) and contested the November election with an openly pro-Communist international and domestic program. As a result of this, public and private industries as well as commerce slowed down. "In addition, the drought and flood diminished the 1957 harvest and the 1958 export of rice, while lower world prices for other primary products, chiefly minerals, further impaired the economy. A general feeling of uneasiness prevailed in the economy and in the community, especially in Rangoon and Mandalay" (Trager, 1976, p. 178). The armed forces under the command of General Ne Win made it clear they would assist any government to keep law and order and would carry out duties, as policemen, during the elections. "General

Ne Win warned both AFPFL factions against the use of violence, cautioned Prime Minister U Nu against accepting parliamentary support from the Communists, and rejected all attempts at inducting any of the surrendering rebels into the armed forces” (Trager, 1976, p. 178). September 26<sup>th</sup>, Prime Minister U Nu resigned and turned the government over to General Ne Win.

#### General Ne Win: Caretaker

General Ne Win briefly took over the government from October 1958 to February 1960 in an attempt to rebuild the basic administrative framework of the state. During this take over General Ne Win became known as the “caretaker.” Elections were postponed to April 1959 and U Nu urged the General “to suppress ‘wrongs and acts of violence,’ to strive for the ‘prize of internal peace,’ to ensure ‘a free and fair election,’ and to maintain ‘the policy of strict and straightforward neutrality in foreign relations. Ne Win agreed” (Trager, 1976, p. 179). In a special session conducted on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1958 U Nu urged General Ne Win to become Prime Minister for a six-month period. “The General was elected Prime Minister by an uncontested vote” (Trager, 1976, p. 180). He appointed an all-civilian Cabinet with commitment to guard the conditions of democracy. He reorganized the Cabinet members, top-level civil servants of the various departments and ministries. And upon completion he stated his agenda: to uphold the Constitution and democratic principals, restore law and order; ensure free and fair elections within six months; lower the cost of living; and develop remedies for the economic chaos in Burma.

The military government of General Ne Win was a success; the financial and economic outlook was stable and promising. They eliminated “...corruption, inefficiency, and bureaucracy, and a record rice harvest paved the way for a favorable

trade balance. Furthermore, the government's policies were in line with those of the Four-Year Plan of 1956..."(Trager, 1976, p. 184). Ne Win was able to accomplish the basic policies listed in the Four-Year Plan in less than a year whereas the founding fathers and U Nu could not do it in four years. General Ne Win implemented policies, initiated economic activities and made it easy by eliminating bureaucratic obstacles. In February of 1959, General Ne Win resigned because his six months were up, and he was not able to ensure free and fair elections. The Constitution was temporarily amended to allow him to serve without being elected to the Parliament. In a joint session of the two houses the Constitutional Amendment Act 1959 was approved 304 to 29, General Ne Win was reinstated as Prime Minister. The general elections were to be held on February 6, 1960.

The long awaited elections were finally in order; 934 candidates were filed to fill the 250 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. U Nu was pictured in traditional Buddhist yellow background, which identified his Clean AFPFL party. The Clean AFPFL claimed two-thirds of the vote in a total of about 6 million.

When Parliament convened on April 1, 1960, the following distribution was on record: Clean AFPFL (renamed the Union League) with 159 seats, Stable AFPFL (retaining the AFPFL designation) with 41 seats, Arakanese National Unity Organization (ANUO) with 6 seats, Mon National Front with 3 seats, Chin National Organization with 3 seats, Kayah State 2 seats, and Shan State, independents, and others with 23 seats (Trager, 1976, pp. 186-187).

Among the groups elected, U Nu could easily count on the Mon, Chin, Kayah, and some Shan votes, and occasionally on the ANUO.

U Nu's campaign tactics won his election to office again. His devotion to Buddhism and the promise to make Buddhism a state religion gained the support he

needed from the Sangha. He spent forty-five days in a Buddhist retreat, and from this came lectures on the compatibility of non-Marxist socialism and Buddhism. He also had the support of General Aung San's wife Daw Khin Kyi who became the first woman ambassador to India.

General Ne Win and his colleagues paved the path for U Nu, "the gross domestic product stood at then all-time high of 113 per cent for 1959-60..., and rice exports reached an all-time postwar high of almost 2.1 million tons for 1959-60..., and the rise in cost of living followed the ending of the price controls, Burma seemed well set for the launching of the Second Four Year Plan in 1961" (Trager, 1976, p. 191). He continued to improve this tract successfully; however, he was not so successful politically. Among the factors that brought his crusade for democracy to an end were the division in his party, propagation of Buddhism as a state religion, the increase of seditious activity, and U Nu's unwillingness to use his popular appeal to remedy the situation and restore order.

#### Military Coup

By the end of October of 1961, the Union Party factions started to prepare for the conference to be held on January 27, 1962. There was a countrywide fight for control of the party; unfortunately, the split was more severe than the AFPFL split in 1958. The downfall of this situation was that no one knew where U Nu stood on this matter. By the end of the conference it was clear that he sided with the Thakin faction (the original freedom fighters in 1930s) which consisted of Minister Dr. E. Maung and his political secretary, U Ohn. "Almost as a last irrational gesture U Nu withdrew the remaining 15 per cent of the import business from the private sector, in apparent violation of his promise to involve the state less rather than more in the economy of the country. The

affected sector of the business community staged a three-day protest strike, shutting down their premises” (Trager, 1976, p. 197). His decision was a reflection of his state of mind. Various decisions that have been made since 1947, U Nu “follows” and “fronts” for strength resulted in the inability to lead. Among the things that stand out the most during his second regime were the bad advice he took from his closest colleagues, E. Maung and U Ohn and his Buddhist lifestyle. His political leadership was interrupted with his desire to achieve Buddhist integration as well as the “rapid succession of economic crises” (Lissak, 1976, p. 165) which led General Ne Win’s armed forces to stage a *coup d’ etat* in the early morning of March 2, 1962.

Prime Minister U Nu, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and other Shan leaders were arrested and kept in an army jail outside of Rangoon. The political parties, AFPFL and NUF were left alone. General Ne Win, in a brief address to public, stated that the armed forces had taken over the responsibility and the task of keeping the country’s safety owing to the greatly deteriorating conditions of the Union (Trager, 1976). He urged the people to carry on with their daily tasks, the government employees to continue with their duties, and especially the education institutions to continue with examinations. There was no mention of the Constitution or of any democratic stance; it was announced that the Revolutionary Council consisted of a chairman (General Ne Win) and sixteen high-ranking officers who would handle the various ministries. General Ne Win assumed the powers of president as well as “supreme legislative, executive and judicial justice and morality” (Trager, 1976, p. 199). He claimed to keep friendly relations with all nations as well as obeying the principals of the United Nations.



Reorganization of government structure was quickly implemented; General Ne Win dissolved both chambers of Parliament and the State Council. The State Council was replaced by one central military figure. Among the domestic policies implemented were restored importation, reinstated price control on household commodities, reduction of the salaries of former ministers and councilors, reinstatement of the practice of raising animals for meat, and abolishing Sabbath day leave (Trager, 1976). General Ne Win very cautiously handled the issue of state religion. He wanted "Freedom of religion that 'did not emphasize one religion at the expense of the other' (Trager, 1976). In order to gain the trust of the people, General Ne Win informed them of the military's intentions and how they were going to lead the revolution, based on their "new ideology . . . their blueprint. This ideology contained two documents- The Burmese Way to Socialism (BWS) and The System of Correlation of Man and His Environment (SCME)" published on April 30, 1962 (Silverstein, 1965, p. 81).

#### General Ne Win's Economic Plan

The Burmese Way to Socialism (BSW) "had a unified economic plan where commerce and industry would be nationalized and private enterprise eliminated, agriculture and the production of raw materials must be expanded and modernized, and real national unity among all the peoples of Burma must be achieved" (Silverstein, 1980, p. 717). Although there was no schedule, as in previous plans, it was evident that these domestic policies were to be effective immediately. The rapid transition to socialism started when the responsibilities of production, distribution, import, and export were taken over by the state. The central bank was also taken over by the state as well as the nation's financial affairs. Smaller banks were eventually taken over without disrupting

the economy. Newspaper and other small enterprises remained under private control; however they faced fierce competition from the government. “The rush to nationalize brought confusion, disruption, shortages, and discontent in its wake” (Silverstein, 1980, p. 718-719). Things that plagued U Nu’s first term started to emerge in General Ne Win’s second regime. Besides the monthly declining price index, General Ne Win’s problems were the overlapping heads of state corporations and boards; there was a lack of managerial talent.

Taking control from private business and having no plan to implement domestic policies or maintain the principals of socialism created a downhill trend for General Ne Win. Another repeated mistake was the military government tried to win a popularity contest. They spent a great deal of time and money to secure the confidence of the peasants and the workers. The government appropriated 700 million kyats for loans to farmers and gave high priority to land reclamation; however, the peasants and farmers were still wary of their intentions (Silverstein, 1965). While they were socializing the economy, the government also tried to achieve national unity. “On June 11, the Revolutionary Council...invited all groups in revolt, both political and ethnic, to come to Rangoon to discuss their grievances” (Silverstein, 1980, p. 720). Unfortunately, negotiations turned into mass rallies to gain support for individual groups and the military ended up arresting their leaders. This created a chain of student demonstrations.

By the end of the year jails were full again. The problem of national disunity worsened and was far from any solution. The military coup did not trust the educated elite or the former leaders which affected the progress of their domestic polices. “With no popular base and with a majority of the nation’s elite in jail or in hiding, the military is

more isolated than at any time in the past. As the government increases its use of force and terror, it becomes vulnerable to defections and divisions within its own ranks” (Silverstein, 1980, p. 721). There have been many reports filed on violations of human rights by the United Nations. There has been a great deal of torture, kidnapping and murder by the military coup. In order to safeguard socialist development, it was best described in the words of Aung San in the declaration, “people acquired a sense of oneness...and a will to live in unity through weal and woe that binds a people together and makes them a nation and their spirit a patriotism” (Trager, 1976, p. 200). This patriotic unity has been a goal since the independence of Burma.

The SCME ‘s ideology was based on three principles: change, revolution, and socialism. These principals were drawn from conflicting sources such as the Burmese Buddhist tradition, Marxism, socialism, humanism, and pragmatism. “The socialist democracy envisaged by the military thinkers ‘includes the unity of the will and initiative of the individual man and group on the one hand and the centralized guidance of society on the other’” (Silverstein, 1977, p. 81). According to the military thinkers, socialism is based on utopian goals. They claim that a socialist system is based on justice, that society is free from exploitation or oppression of man by man, no class threatens human welfare, and man’s physical well-being and happiness are assured (Silverstein, 1977). The SCME follows no particular school of socialist thought rather they blend traditional Burmese ideas with contemporary Western concepts. In comparison to BWS, SCME is far more theoretical whereas BWS had more practical objectives.

After seven years, in 1969, General Ne Win felt it was time to write a new constitution and criticized the original constitution saying it favored the private sector of

the economy, foreign firms, lawyers, and feudal leaders in the states (Silverstein, 1977). There was very little difference between the three versions of the constitution; all contained the same number of chapters and almost the same number of articles. In all three drafts it was made clear that the Revolutionary Council accomplished “its historic mission” by implementing The Burmese Way to Socialism and creating the Burma Socialist Program Party (Silverstein, 1965). This ensured that their programs continued into the future. By the power of the constitution, the Council of Ministers were in charge of planning the future of Burma which included economic planning, drawing up annual budgets, and reporting on the state of the nation. In comparison to the 1947 constitution, the “fundamental law emphasizes the collective role of the cabinet, rather than the importance of the prime minister” (Silverstein, 1965, pp. 128-29).

Twelve years after the military coup, on March 2, 1974, the second phase of military rule began. Ne Win transferred all powers from the Revolutionary Council to the national legislature and abolished the Revolutionary Council. “Of the twenty-nine members elected, eleven, or more than one-third, were carryovers from the now defunct Revolutionary Council. Ne Win was chosen chairman, and, under the constitution, automatically became president of the Socialist Republic as well; General San Yu became secretary and the legal successor to Ne Win” (Silverstein, 1977, p. 137). In a speech, Ne Win, discussed the difference between the two governments he headed. Under the new government, he claimed the People’s Assembly was the source of power which encouraged acting with self-reliance and independence. He also said there was no more time be wasted on inter-party strife and that the welfare of the people and the country was a priority.

The tribulations of the new government came from insurgents and the failures of the past military mal distribution, withholding of basic food necessities, insufficient management, and corruption among both civilian and military officials (Silverstein, 1977). Student riots and demonstrations, started in the mid 70's, plagued the new government. "The riots and the attempted coup...were storm warnings to the party leadership that something very basic was wrong with the system" (Silverstein, 1977, p. 144). The party called a special congress, in November 1976, where the secretary general, San Yu, admitted that the party program, created in 1974, was a failure and suggested that a new one be drawn up. He also acknowledged the inadequacy of the leaders and members within the party. "Given the respected failures in judgment, planning, and execution over the past decade and a half, the problem also finds its roots in the personnel who have been in command" (Silverstein, 1977, p. 146). As long as the power of important policy decisions were in the hands of Ne Win, San Yu, and other officials, new plans were just empty promises.

The AFPFL regime of 1947-1958 became the Burmese Way regime of Ne Win in 1962. Unlike the 'caretaker' regime of General Ne Win, this regime was aimed at developing a political order. However, this unification of a political order took a downfall when Ne Win was unable to create oneness. Prior to the coup of 1962, military involvement consisted of six phases that defined the "ideology of the defense services" (Lissak, 1976, p. 158). The first two phases were considered preideological. In the first phase the issues were independence and political freedom and involved the BIA (Burmese Independent Army) during 1941-43. The political and social character of the future independent nation was no concern at the time. The second phase occurred during

1944 when the Japanese took over independent Burma, and the ideology revolved around three important goals: political freedom, establishing a democratic state, and recognizing socialistic programs. National ideology went through a reevaluation during the third and fourth phase. “The third phase (1948-55) was defined by the military itself as a ‘period of ideological gestation’: and the fourth (1956-57) as a ‘period of thorough study and discussion of the ideology for the defense services’” (Lissak, 1976, p. 158). In the last two phases, ideas were consolidated and methods outlined. The army called the fifth phases the “first phase of ideological development” and the last phases were where the role of defense was formulated” (Lissak, 1976, p. 158).

The military’s claim in the fifth phase of the primary ideological development was a repetition of three prior documents: (1) the Burmese Declaration of Independence (2) the first address to parliament by the first president (3) the Constitution of the Union of Burma. The evolution of independent Burma had come full circle, and one thing remained the same; the struggle to implement democratic ideologies where socialism is the answer and capitalism is a sin. In the ongoing struggle of Burma’s economic and political state, the military had prioritized three objectives:

To establish a socialist economy, democracy is a prerequisite: for democracy to flourish, law and order is essential. Without peace and the rule of law, no country can be a democratic one. In an undemocratic country, a socialist economy can never be established-a totalitarian government will impose only a rigid economic system which will deny the right of private property (Lissak, 1976, p.159).

In this passage the role of the military was clearly defined. The citizens of Burma were again filled with ideologies that were never implemented. These objectives contradicted what was actually being implemented. The military created a rigid system of economy by taking away control from private business.

According to Lissak, the Burma turned to socialism in an emotional retreat from the abuses of colonialism and its capitalistic economy. The young elite did not develop a systematic framework on the nature of socialism and never evolved because of the hesitations regarding the relationship between Marxism and Buddhism. Among the various forms of socialism the one that came close to a middle point was a reflection of the British welfare state model during U Nu's term. The synthesis of the philosophies with the help of Buddhist terminology was a starting point. This ideological transformation reached its peak when Buddhism was named the state religion, and Burmese leadership weakened. Political factions increased, and the cultural and social identity affected the national framework and the sovereignty of the government (Lissak, 1976).

Since Burma's independence, U Nu and General Ne Win failed to recognize the one essential problem: lack of education. They both knew that Burma needed to be economically and politically united, but did not realize that to maintain this they needed educated Burmese. In order to achieve this, monastery schools should only teach those who wish to become monks. since the independence, we were able to trace Burma's viable plans for a strong economy, but it often failed due to a lack of educated Burmese to help sustain a modern economy.

Another problem that hindered Burma's stability was the extreme acts by U Nu and General Ne Win. U Nu's policies and political ideology revolved around strong Buddhist orientation whereas the military implemented antireligious policies. The country did not experience a smooth transition between what they were used to, a

religious socio-economy, to a more socialist economy. The inconsistencies of ideologies conflicted with their actions which caused a state chaos in the country.



## CHAPTER VII

### AUNG SAN SUU KYI'S CHARACTERISTICS AS A LEADER IN THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY

During Ne Win's regime, the nation experienced modern monarchy, and where the government handled all political and economic operations. A new era was born, and where past ideologies resurfaced with a leader to help guide them to freedom. Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of Aung San, was a product of this new era, molded to perfection. Her entrance into the second struggle for independence orchestrated a symbolic situation, and a glimmer of hope in the eyes of the Burmese ignited their hearts once again.

This chapter will cover Kenneth Burke's theory on the pentad (act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose) and the theory of identification outline the motive and connection of Aung San Suu Kyi's leadership role in Burma. On 26 August 1988, Aung San Suu Kyi delivered a speech at a mass rally of half a million people at the Shwedagon Pagoda, theatrically setting a rhetorical tone for the movement in relation to the pentad and the theory of identification. The pentad uncovers the intended motive and language in the speech that produced rhetorical implications. The lack of national unity, in most transitional societies, is a hindrance to political autonomy; therefore, Suu Kyi focused her speech on the importance of national unity to defeat the military coup. Suu Kyi brilliantly encapsulated the issues of the current situation in Burma without mentioning

the enemy and concentrated on the importance of unity. A critical analysis on her shortcomings and accomplishments as a leader will be analyzed as she continues to hold the pearls of the Burmese faith together.

Aung San Suu Kyi is the daughter of the renowned leader, Aung San, who led the country to independence in 1947. She resided in Oxford with her husband Michael Aries (a British scholar) and her two sons, Alexander and Kim. She visited her mother, who resides in Burma, on a regular basis during the twenty-three years lived abroad. In March of 1988, Aung San Suu Kyi's mother suffered a severe stroke. Suu Kyi was at her mother's bedside in Rangoon, and it was during this time a small group of Burmese students protested for a radical political change. In this incident forty-one wounded students suffocated to death in a police van which only invigorated the student movement and fermented its momentum.

On July 23, 1988 "Ne Win, in a televised address, announced his resignation from his party (the Burma Socialist Program Party) and called for a referendum on Burma's political future" (Clements, 1997, p. 16). When the party members declined to accept his resignation, the hopes of the Burmese for a quick transfer to democracy were shattered. Enraged by the outcome, millions of citizens marched peacefully in every city and town demanding an interim government, "a democratic multiparty system with free and fair elections, and a restoration of basic civil liberties" (Clement, 1997, p. 16). When the demonstrations gained momentum, the military commanders responded by sending out thousands of troops with orders to kill. "Many thousands of us knelt down in front of the soldiers," and "sang to them: 'We love you; you are our brothers; all we want is freedom; you are the people's army; come to our side'" (Clements, 1997, p.16). This

incited the “Massacre of 8-8-88,” and thousands of unarmed demonstrators were killed, hundreds injured, and thousands imprisoned. This Burmese bloodbath surpassed the annihilation of China’s Tiananmen Square.

“I could not as my father’s daughter remain indifferent to all that was going on. This national crisis could in fact be called the second struggle of independence,” said Aung San Suu Kyi at a mass rally near the symbolically religious Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon (Suu Kyi, 1995). This mass rally of half a million people was situated at a dangerously simple moment of hope. Aung San Suu Kyi found herself in the cusp of a ripened symbolic situation, a student protest, the resignation of Ne Win, and reinstatement of martial law. This speech at Shwedagon Pagoda symbolically created the ideal representation of a rhetorical combustion.

#### Kenneth Burke’s New Rhetoric: The Pentad

In the context of understanding the rhetorical system of Aung San Suu Kyi’s intimate relationship with Burma, a close look at Kenneth Burke’s contemporary rhetoric or better known as “New Rhetoric” should be examined. Burke was recognized as the foremost rhetorician in twentieth century Western thought; he constructed a rhetorical system which covered the areas of humanities and social and behavioral sciences. He encompasses a broad perspective of philosophers, poets, theologians, and social scientists, which he has woven into his theories. Among his theories, the pentad (act, agency, agent, scene, and purpose) and identification are essential to understanding the dynamics of the second struggle of independence.

Burke’s greatest contribution to literary criticism is the general problem of motivation in a literary strategy, not excluding the significance within the social sphere.

Although people's conduct has been explained through theories such as ethnological, sociological, historical, endocrinological, economic, and so on, Burke concludes that the assigning of motives is a "matter of appeal" (Golden, 1997). He further explains, that motive is not a fixed thing; one's conduct by using vocabulary of motives is a reflection of one's group. "We discern situational patterns by means of the particular vocabulary of the cultural group into which we are born. Motives are 'distinctly linguistic products'" (Golden, 1997, p. 185). Motive is better described as situation. There are three levels of motive: rhetorical, symbolic, and grammatical. The grammatical motive deals with the problem of "substance."

In a founded statement about motives, you must have some word that names the *act* (names what took place, in thought or deed), and...the *scene* (the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred); also you must indicate what person or kind of person (*agent*) performed the act, what means or instruments he used (*agency*), and the *purpose* (Golden, 1997, p. 186).

These five motives become in determining the problem of human motivation are known as the "pentad".

### Act

Within the pentad, act is what action has been taken, and in this case the act is the mass rally of half a million people at Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon in hopes of defying the military coup. The background of this act, the mass rally, is traced back to the resignation of Ne Win. The slight window of hope for a democratic multi-party election was ripped away when martial law was reinstated. Demonstrations broke out in every city and town, and as the movement gained momentum, the military thwarted the Burmese with orders to kill. This bloodbath is known as the Massacre of 8-8-88. The monumental incident prompted the seamless struggle for independence. Many Burmese

Buddhists believe that the Massacre of 8-88-88 had a prevailing religious and a political significance because of the Noble Eightfold Path to Nirvana and eight victories of Lord Buddha. The public rally was an official declaration of a national movement toward democracy.

### Scene

This rally takes place at a very symbolic location, the Shwedagon Pagoda, a holy place where Buddhists and monks gather for worship. Shwedagon means “Golden Dagon.” The Shwedagon was built during the life of Buddha and contains sacred relics of Lord Buddha. “Stone inscriptions set up by Dhammazedī tell the story of how the pagoda was built up and embellished by successive monarchs of Pegu. The Shwedagon is a lasting memorial to the devotion of the Mons to the Buddhist faith” (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 50). On a hill in Rangoon the Shwedagon still stands today, and it is the most sacred and worshipped monument of the Burmese people.

Throughout history we can see how Buddhism played a significant role in Burmese politics. Starting with the Buddhist monarchies to U Nu’s declaration of Buddhism as a state religion, Buddhism and its aura has been in the shadow of every major political force. However, during the struggle for independence from the British, Aung San made it very clear that religion and politics should be kept separate, and it was during this time that the influence of religion in politics was severely restricted. Now, Burma was at the brink of a second struggle for independence, and the prominent religious influence was prevalent at this mass rally near the Shwedagon Pagoda.

Although Suu Kyi’s speech does not have any religious undertones, the scene of the rally

does. Suu Kyi believes the hope of the people as well as the struggle ahead is rooted in Buddhism.

### Agent

Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of Aung San, decided to take the same stance as her father 40 years ago. She symbolically functions as a verbal and visual representation of her father's persona. It became facile for the Burmese to join the movement for an independent nation because they see Aung San in her, and at the same time she shares her father's creed of democracy. The Burmese believe that Suu Kyi has the perspicacity of Aung San's accomplishments which will lead them to freedom.

Aung San Suu Kyi knew there would be doubts about her qualifications, so she handled them in the beginning of the speech. Among those objections was her marriage to a foreigner, her residence abroad, and her political knowledge of Burma. She assured the Burmese that her marriage to a foreigner and her time abroad "...never interfered and will never interfere with or lessen my love and devotion for my country by any measure or degree" (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 193). The six years of house arrest without a trial or a charge, the loss of her husband, and the separation from her children has proven her devotion to the country. She explains that she knows too much about Burmese politics. "My family knows best how complicated and tricky Burmese politics can be and how much my father had to suffer on this account. That is why father said that once Burma's independence was gained he would not want to take part in the kind of power politics that would follow" (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 193). Suu Kyi wishes to stay away from this kind of politics, but will continue until Burma achieves independence for the second time. She

has taken the demeanor of her father, following his footsteps right into the hearts of the Burmese.

One of the many famous quotes by William Shakespeare suits the silhouette of Aung San Suu Kyi, “Be not afraid of greatness: some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon’em,” Twelfth Night (II, V, 156-159). She was born great because she carries her family’s political background, born into a family that has the political respect from past, present, and future Burmese generations, she has achieved greatness by leading the nation in the second struggle to freedom as her father did in the 1940s, and greatness has been thrust upon her because of the legacy her father’s accomplishments.

Aung San Suu Kyi comes from a family who has shaped Burma’s political history. “The people of Natmauk,” where Aung San was born, “had a tradition of service to the Burmese kings, and some of Aung San’s maternal forebears had achieved high positions in government” (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 4). His father, U Pha, had no success as a pleader (advocate) in spite of his brilliant scholastic record. U Min Yaung, Aung San’s uncle, led one of the earliest resistance groups against British rule until he was captured and beheaded (Suu Kyi, 1995). Aung San, the father of Burma, led the country to independence.

Suu Kyi has been grooming herself to reach the leadership position she holds today. In Delhi, where her mother was appointed as Burmese ambassador to India and Nepal, Suu Kyi studied politics at Delhi University. Between the years of 1964-1967 she received a BA in philosophy, politics, and economics from St. Hugh’s College and Oxford University. In 1969 through 1971 she became an Assistant Secretary for the

Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions at the United Nations in New York. By 1972 she was in Bhutan as a Research Officer for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the Kyoto University Suu Kyi was a visiting scholar for the Center of Southeast Asian Studies and in 1987 a Fellow for the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies in Simla. Her knowledge in the field of Asian politics, economics, and philosophy, and her intimate wisdom of the Burmese political history from her father's colleagues, has prepared her to achieve greatness. Recognized for her achievements, she bears many international awards: the Rafto Human Rights Prize in 1990, the 1990 Sakharov Prize (human rights prize of the European Parliament), and the 1991 Noble Peace Prize. Suu Kyi is uniquely qualified for this situation as she continues her father's legacy for the current and future generations. She carries the voice of hope through the words of her father's accomplishments.

During the unplanned visit to aid her ill mother, Burma became a permanent home for her. During this visit in 1988, a mass demonstration broke out and many were killed, Suu Kyi took advantage of this opportunity to use her political inheritance and her academic achievements, thrusting her to greatness.

### Agency

In the many speeches Aung San Suu Kyi delivered between 1988 and 1989, this is the only one she prepared text for. She used the massacre of many innocent people at the hands of the military as the means for the rally. Toward the beginning of her speech she claims, "it is the students who have paved the way to the present situation where it is possible to hold such a rally because the recent demonstrations have been spearheaded by the students and even more because they have shown their willingness to sacrifice their



lives” (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 192). Suu Kyi traveled to many cities delivering lectures and speeches; about the only other source of communication was radio.

Although the government did not fully control the press, the NLD activities received limited coverage. There was no underground newspaper reported, and television was not an option due to the lack of technology. Extreme political developments occur with little or no warning; “major changes can be long advertised but never occur. Even after the fact it is difficult, often impossible, to reconstruct with confidence the precise sequence of events, for, more often than not, key facts and considerations are never brought to light” (Pye, 1962, p. 129). During the weeks leading up to the take over of Ne Win’s regime, there were no hints in the newspaper that such a tense development might take place. It was announced on the radio, by U Nu in a statement summed up in one sentence that he was asking Ne Win to assume responsibilities of the government. This uncertainty between politicians and the public has influenced the Burmese to distrust the government. The communication process is often fragmented in most transitional societies; “instead of actions being based upon reliable and shared information, the margin for imagination is widened to the point that decisions and policies are likely to be guided more by fantasies than realities” (Pye, 1962, p. 128).

### Purpose

Aung San Suu Kyi covered five important areas in her speech when she announced her decision to enter the struggle for democracy: (1) why she decided to take this stance, (2) her father’s goals, (3) the student’s role in this movement, (4) the importance of national unity, and (5) the objective of this rally. She decided to take this

stance because, as her father's daughter, she could not remain indifferent to what was going on. Aung San Suu Kyi called this "national crisis the second struggle for independence" (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 193). During her speech she quoted her father's democratic creed:

We must make democracy the popular creed. We must try to build up a free Burma in accordance with such a creed. If we should fail to do this, our people are bound to suffer. If democracy should fail the world cannot stand back and just look on, and therefore Burma would one day, like Japan and Germany, be despised. Democracy is the only ideology which is consistent with freedom. It is also an ideology that promotes and strengthens peace. It is therefore the only ideology we should aim for (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 194).

She had assumed her father's role with his beliefs in attaining democracy. Another important ideology that Aung San Suu Kyi believed was her father's view of what the armed forces' role should be:

The armed forces are meant for this nation and this people, and it should be such a force having the honor and respect of the people. If instead the armed forces should come to be hated by the people, then the aims with which this army has been built up would have been in vain (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 195).

Those comrades who were part of the Burmese Army with Aung San, fighting for freedom in the 1930's and 40's, are now part of the military coup.

According to Burke, the central theme of the pentad is the "act." "The 'act', he suggests, is a terministic center from which... a whole universe of terms is derived. An 'act' takes place only when there is an 'agent' who operates in a 'scene' or situation, and employs an 'agency' or means in order to accomplish a particular 'purpose'" (Golden, 1997, p. 190). In order to examine the relationship between two parts of the pentad, we are developing what Burke calls "ratios." These ratios are used to explain and justify the acts. For example, determining the relationship between an "agent-act ratio" is an

attempt to discover “a man’s character and the character of his behavior”...where as  
 “‘scene-act ratio’ pertains to the relationship of an act to the situation in which it occurs”  
 (Golden, 1997, p. 190).

### Agency-Act

The relationship between two pentads in the case of Aung San Suu Kyi’s speech at Shwedagon Pagoda is agency-act. According to Aung San, of the many ideologies that have plagued the country with internal factions, democracy (agency) is the only ideology that the Burmese should aim for. In order to achieve democracy, free and fair elections with a multi-party system need to be established (act). The motivation behind the agency-act ratio occurred during a window of opportunity to endorse democracy. It happened when Ne Win resigned which resulted in the Massacre of 8-8-88. “This great struggle has arisen from the intense and deep desire of the people for a fully democratic parliamentary system of government” (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 194). In her speech Suu Kyi explains the urgency to think about the country’s future, “...think in advance of what should be done to bring about a firmly established Union; ...think of the country’s future” (Suu Kyi, 1995. p. 197). She continues by explaining what the country needs; Suu Kyi initiated questions of concern and later answers them.

We do not need to have a referendum. What we do need is a multi-party system. It should be introduced as quickly as possible by means of free and fair elections. Conditions necessary for the holding of free and fair elections should be created throughout the country. If the holding of free and fair elections requires an interim government, such a forerunner should be created (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 197).

Suu Kyi is leading her people to a democratic platform by establishing the need for democracy, questioning the concerns, and providing a solution, which justifies the act, leaving no room for doubt. The democratic platform in turn is the National League for

Democracy's groundwork which resulted in the landslide victory during the 1990 elections. She reiterates the NLD's platform by discussing the main objective which consists of not having a present form of government, nor an interim government, nor some other new government, but to have a government that brings about prosperous Union of Burma (Suu Kyi, 1995).

In the study of motivation from the analysis of drama, Burke's pentad "treats language and thought primarily as modes of action. Philosophy, like common sense, must think of human motivation dramatically, in terms of action and its ends. Language being essentially human, we should view human relations in terms of the linguistic instrument" (Golden, 1997, p. 186). Aung San Suu Kyi understood the thought process of the Buddhist Burmese and planned her speech accordingly. She categorically discussed the students who died for the cause, the reason for the assembly, her personal history, and justifies her qualifications to be the leader, shapes the democratic ideology for the Burmese, the students role in politics, established her NLD platform, and finally reiterates the need for national unity among racial groups. She spoke their language.

### Theory of Identification

Burke's theory of identification in relation to Aung San Suu Kyi's speech is further examined in the context of the second struggle of independence. The principle of Rhetoric according to Burke is derived from one source, persuasion, and this in turn "involves communication by the signs of consubstantiality, the appeal of identification" (Golden, 1997, p. 182). To persuade a man, identify your ways with his and by talking his language in speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude. and idea. Identification is

also related to the desire to identify themselves with a group. “They are thus not necessarily acted upon by a conscious external agent, but may act upon themselves to this end” (Golden, 1997, p. 182). The key concept of identification revolves around men being at odds with each other; in other words, there’s division. “If men were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity” (Golden, 1997, p. 182).

Aung San Suu Kyi’s entire speech at Shwedagon Pagoda can be summed up in one word, *unity*. In her speech she mentions the word “unity” approximately 17 times. The lack of national unity has been a plague for about four decades. The major and minor factions created the fuel that has kept the country divided. Among the major factions that existed were the Socialists, Marxists, Communists, and Buddhists, and there were many splits within the major factions. Aung San Suu Kyi stresses this theme of unity in hopes of curing the plague that has lasted for so long.

Throughout her speech the concept of unity takes on several forms. She starts by informing the people that “in this mass rally the people should be disciplined and united to demonstrate the very fact that they are a people who can be disciplined and united show their will to the whole world” (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 192). She says unity is necessary to achieve freedom and democracy. “We shall reach our goal of a strong and lasting union only if we are all able to go forward in unity” (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 195). University students played a significant role in the struggle for independence during the 1930’s and 40’s, and in the 1980’s university students again played an important role. The young educated elite with the power of knowledge had taken their stance on freedom in the second struggle for independence. Aung San Suu Kyi applauded their physical

courage for uniting at the forefront of a national movement. She advised the students to unify the several groups into one group. In her speech she states, “At this moment there are a number of student groups. I would like these groups to come together as a unified body” (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 196).

She concludes by explaining the importance of racial unity among the union states. She explains by stressing that a “majority of the people remain the Burmese. They should make the greatest efforts to live in this accord and amity and to achieve that much needed unity and friendship among national racial groups” (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 198). Suu Kyi talks about the importance of national racial groups uniting to defeat the military coup, and according to the Burkean theory, there must be division to achieve unity. There is a need to proclaim unity to keep the division between them and the military coup to achieve democracy. According to Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, a scholar and thinker, nationalism defined in terms of purely political or economic ends, and expressed mainly through political and economic struggle, is bound to become a divisive force in world affairs. “But if a nation’s pride in its own inheritance and its dreams of its own future based on recognition of fundamental principle of unity in diversity, nationalism can become a creative force bringing together men of sincerity, vision, and good will from the ends of the earth” (Naravane, p. 134).

The evolving concept of unity shows a strong connection to the past which the Burmese are able to identify with and relate to. Suu Kyi persuades and identifies with the audience by the use of stylistic identifications. By doing this, the audience is further persuaded by the speaker’s interest which was the development of the multi-party system and particularly her party, the NLD. Suu Kyi created a healthy rapport with the audience.

This rapport was strengthened by the constant reference of Aung San's goals, thoughts, and accomplishments. Her father, Aung San, today is the most highly respected political figure.

### Characteristics of a Leader

To attain a leadership position in a social movement, members will perceive this person to possess two or more of these three attributes: charisma, prophecy, and pragmatism (Stewart, 1994).

### Charisma

"A charismatic leader shows access to a higher source or divine inspiration"; they lead members to see the 'truth.' The charismatic leader tends to be a showperson with a sense of timing and the rhetorical skills necessary to articulate what 'others can as yet only feel, strive towards, and imagine but cannot put words or translate explicitly into action'" (Stewart, 1994, p. 96-97). In the pursuit of democracy she followed the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., using tactics of nonviolence and civil disobedience. Her charismatic characteristics are built around her political background, her father's leadership, and her book Freedom From Fear. "Her essential message of self-responsibility, rooted in Buddhism, developed into a high-minded political ideology that she calls Burma's 'revolution of the spirit'" (Clements, 1997, p. 15).

On September 18, 1988 retired Ne Win, commanding from behind the scenes, turned the country over to a twenty-one-member group of military commanders known as the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). Martial law was reinstated. Within three months 200 parties registered with the SLORC election committee

(Clements, 1997). The military harassed democratic supporters, and between 1989 and 1990 over a half million Burmese citizens were herded from urban centers to “satellite towns” plagued by diseases. Aung San Suu Kyi delivered over one hundred public speeches in Rangoon, Pegu, Magwe, Sagaing, and other surrounding cities. Among the addresses the most memorable was at Irrawaddy Delta, where an army unit was ordered to assassinate Aung San Suu Kyi. With the rifles pointed at her, she calmly and peacefully stood there and ordered the citizens to stay back. As the order to fire came closer, the army unit became nervous and unsure of what to do. An army major intervened and prevented her assassination. “The charismatic leader feels a duty, not merely an obligation or opportunity, to lead the movement and often exhibits exceptional heroism, bravery, and endurance to the point of martyrdom for the cause” (Stewart, 1994, p. 97). Such leaders, who have exemplified martyrdom for a cause, include Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and Aung San.

Gandhi is an excellent portrayal of a charismatic leader; his philosophy was based on satyagraha, which means “truth-force,” “a method of persuasion that used moral means to achieve moral ends” (Stewart, 1994, p. 97). He understood that showmanship is essential to gain not only international attention, but to identify with members when leading a mass movement. He garnished himself in simple sandals and a loincloth, which represented the daily attire of a male laborer in India. His fasts were a symbolic behavior that influenced British decisions, and he became a holy man for millions of Indians. Suu Kyi has displayed a profound showmanship when faced with an army ready to fire; she also, like Gandhi, dresses in traditional attire. The NLD and Suu Kyi adopted the peasant’s straw hat as its symbol during the 1990 election which sent a message that “like



the hat that protects the head of the wearer from the sun and rain, the NLD would cover and protect the people, if chosen to lead” (Rotberg, 1998, p. 28).

During her "revolution-of-the-spirit" campaign for democracy 1988-1989 she had overwhelming support, and her party, National League of Democracy (NLD), which was formed on September 18, 1988, won a landslide victory in the 1990 elections. Instead of transferring power to the newly elected party, the military started imprisoning many elected ministers of Parliament. Aung San Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest on July 20, of 1989 and therefore was not considered as an official candidate.

### Prophecy

The prophecy is the “ideology” of the movement. “The person may have written all or important segments of the movement’s doctrine, may be considered the most knowledgeable authority on the doctrine, or may be seen as nearest in spirit to the doctrine” (Stewart, 1994, p. 98). In 1991, Aung San Suu Kyi released her most famous essay, "Freedom From Fear," which explains the necessity for individual transformation to bring about real change.

In her essay “Freedom From Fear,” she starts off by saying, “It is not power that corrupts but fear.” The evidence of Buddhist thought is explicitly evident when Aung San Suu Kyi goes further and explains the four kinds of corruptions: *chanda-gati*, *dosa-gati*, *moha-gati*, and *bhaya-gati*. *Chanda-gati* is corruption induced by desire, deviation from the right path in pursuit of bribes or for the sake of those one loves; *dosa-gati* is taking the wrong path to spite those who one bears ill will; *moha-gati* is aberration due to ignorance; and the worst of the four is *bhaya-gati* is when corruption destroys all sense of right and wrong and lies at the root of the other three (Suu Kyi, 1995). Buddhism is an

essential ideology to the core of the movement as long as it does not interfere with the political and economic agenda for the country.

In this essay she sets the moral tone for the movement; she states the reason for the cause, who is behind it, what it will take to achieve freedom, and the importance of being fearless. The following statement explicitly states the reason for the movement and who is behind it:

Public dissatisfaction with economic hardships has been seen as the chief cause of the movement for democracy in Burma, sparked off by the student demonstrations of 1988. And because the students' protests articulated the frustrations of the people at large, the demonstrations quickly grew into a nationwide movement. Some of its keenest supporters were businesses who had developed the skills and the contacts necessary not only to survive but to prosper within the system (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 181).

She goes on to explain what it will take to achieve freedom and uses her father's words to do this: "Don't just depend on the courage and intrepidity of others. Each and every one of you must make sacrifices to become a hero possessed of courage and intrepidity. Then only shall we all be able to enjoy true freedom" (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 182). Suu Kyi does an excellent job of relating to her father's principle; this is very important because the people of Burma still have the highest regard for Aung San and consider him the father of Burma. She echoes her father's words to instill courage and hope for the Burmese. The need for change in attitudes and values will shape the course of the nation's development and is important to the revolution of the spirit.

Without a revolution of the spirit, the forces which produced the iniquities of the old order would continue to be operative, posing a constant threat to the process of reform and regeneration. It is not enough merely to call for freedom, democracy and human rights. There has to be a united determination to persevere in the struggle, to make sacrifices in the name of enduring truths, to resist the corrupting influences of desire, ill will, ignorance and fear (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 183).

Aung San Suu Kyi believes or feels the Burmese are afraid to take a stance on what they believe, but the reality of it is that they are fearless. The problem is they don't know how to achieve or preserve their freedom. The theme of "Freedom From Fear" was taken from Gandhi's movement. In her essay, she mentions that Gandhi was a political modernist, but found himself looking back to the philosophy of ancient India: "The greatest gift for an individual or a nation...was *abhaya*, fearlessness, not merely bodily courage but absence of fear from the mind" (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 184). Gandhi used ancient philosophies and the principles of *Gita* (bible of India) as his influence, but did not use religion as a part of his movement to freedom. Hinduism is not a religion; it is part of the social culture, dharma. He fought with equality and touched the emotions that held his people captivated for so long. She, like Gandhi, has identified with her members by underlining her movement with Buddhist ideals. To be a leader of such vast undertaking, you do not tell them what they need, but give them what they need, and they will respond.

A prophet alone has the ability to perceive the true nature of the urgent problem, its causes, and its solution. "Because the prophet is a person of vision, has a psychological commitment to principles, and perceives the writings of the movement to be sacred, he or she is unlikely to be a reconciler between movement factions or between movement and the established order" (Stewart, 1994, p. 98). Aung San Suu Kyi understands the urgent problems and their causes; however, she only discusses the solutions on the surface. There is mention that a united Burma is the only way to achieve freedom, but Suu Kyi lacks the foresight to resolve this historic problem, and there are no written documents that show goals and objectives. She repeats the words of her father's

goal, but lacks the ability to make the vision a reality. Aung San and Gandhi lived through oppressed times and experienced first hand the value of freedom; for Aung San Suu Kyi all her experiences have been textbooks and second hand knowledge. She lacks the scaffold of experience that elevate a leader to a greater understanding of the vision. Since 1988, Suu Kyi, has started to experience the Burmese politics and culture first hand. It will take her that much longer to achieve the vision needed for Burma.

### Pragmatism

Pragmatism is the skeleton that will determine legitimacy based on organizational expertise, efficiency, and tact (Stewart, 1994).

As a person who believes that the social movement must have a secure and stable foundation for growth, the pragmatic leader brings common sense and a healthy skepticism to the movement, seeks to reconcile diverse interests, desires 'communication' rather than 'excommunication,' and replaces unattainable goals with diffuse goals and a broader range of targets (Stewart, 1994, p. 99).

The Burmese are the most misguided citizens, and the only true leader that understood what the Burmese needed and who was taking them to the level of understanding in the importance of an independent country was Aung San. Aung San's objectives were separation of religion and state, the separation of military and state, and national unity.

Suu Kyi believes in the same objectives expect for one; she does not mention anything about the importance of separating religion and state. The NLD goal was to establish a multi-party system and to have fair and free elections. The NLD did win the election, but never was allowed to take office. Since the military has placed severe restrictions on her and her party, the use of external forces has proved beneficial. The United Nations is assisting with human rights issues and the United States and Europe are complying with her plea to stop investments in Burma. Besides the NLD and Suu Kyi's

goal to establish a multi-party system there is no manifesto stating the objectives for the movement. This will cripple the efforts of the movement. The principles and foundations of the movement have been laid out, but they lack organization.

Aung San Suu Kyi gave speeches and answered questions at her front gate every Saturday and Sunday, and even though there was fear of being arrested by the military, people still came to hear her. There was a common undertaking and also a strong rapport that was developing between Aung San Suu Kyi and her supporters. Her gatherings inspired many to join the cause for democracy, and she also gave them a sense of belonging in a time where direction was needed. Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy has given the people of Burma a collective feeling and has added enthusiasm and vigor to the movement.

Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize and unable to accept the award, her son spoke on her behalf. She was cited by the Nobel Committee as "one of the most extraordinary examples of civil courage in Asia in recent decades" (Leslie, p. 32). She established a health and education trust for the Burmese people with the \$1.3 million prize money. Aung San Suu Kyi received various prestigious international awards and presented a keynote address, in a smuggled videotape, to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995. Aung San Suu Kyi was released from house arrest on July 10, 1995.

Successful leaders are usually three-dimensional when they display all three attributes-charisma, prophecy, and pragmatism. Aung San Suu Kyi as rhetorical leader has the charisma; however, she weaker in prophecy and pragmatism. These three attributes are essential to maintain leadership because leaders are often confronted with

incarceration, threats, imprisonment, harassments, denial of access to the media, and exile. Handling diverse and conflicting roles is an important part in the maintenance of a movement.

During the six years she spent under house arrest she maintained a rigid routine. She would rise at 4:30 a.m., exercise and meditate; she spent the rest of the day reading biographies or autobiographies and listening to the radio. The only human contact she had was her maid. Her husband and children visited her if visas were granted to them. Scott Kraft, a journalist for the Los Angeles Times, in a rare interview with Aung San Suu Kyi, discovered that she spent most of her time in her two-story home even after eight months of her release. There were two appointed secretaries, one for foreign dignitaries and the other for fellow party members, who have guided thousands of visitors to meet her. In the process of trying to rebuild her party network, her weekdays were filled with appointments and on weekends she spoke and answered questions outside the gated compound. The government ignores Suu Kyi, 50; however, she remains the most-respected political figure in Burma.

It is ironic that the citizens of Burma see her as a political figure, while she wishes to remain aloof from politics. When Suu Kyi was released from house arrest and questioned about the progress in the pursuit of democracy, she claimed that the government thought the National League for Democracy was dead, but she assured us that NLD was far from dead. She referred to the landslide victory of 82% of the votes during the 1991 elections as the stronghold of the NLD; however, the communication between Suu Kyi and the NLD has lessened since her arrest. This lack of communication was an obstacle in keeping the democratic creed alive. Many of her colleagues were

incarcerated at the same time she was, and for that reason there was a lack of cohesiveness. The movement has evolved and Suu Kyi has handled the diverse oppositions and conflicting roles that have taken place. It is especially difficult for her since severe restrictions are placed on her by the military, the diversity of ethnic groups and the different political ideologies they carry.

Although she has handled conflicting roles, in one area of weakness she must learn to “use militant tactics to gain visibility for the movement but use moderate tactics to gain entry into decision-making centers” (Stewart, 1994, p. 102). When asked if she is taking a passive resistance strategy, she answered, “We don’t really believe that the way to bring about democracy is by encouraging popular uprisings. We believe that democracy will come through the strength of the political will of the people, expressed through political parties” (Kraft, 1999). The movement became passive due to her philosophy of non-aggressive uprisings. Her belief is that the will of the people will ultimately triumph, and democracy will be installed. If the people are not involved in the struggle to attain democracy, the will of the people is nothing more than a will. Suu Kyi’s goal is to have dialogue with the government and through this she believes will come results.

The government has consistently refused dialogue, and in order to create or force dialogue, Suu Kyi needs to get their attention. For example, in the case of India’s freedom movement, Gandhi needed to get the British government’s attention, so he and his people marched along the shore in protest of the most important commodity, salt. His people stood there as they got beaten with sticks, but never struck once, in the name of non-violence. The most important aspect of this salt march was that the people were part

of the struggle to gain their own independence. Gandhi motivated them and kept the fire of independence in their minds and hearts. “All the great progressive souls of the world have had to agitate at one time or another in their lives. Agitation is the soul of democracy. There can be no progress in a democracy without agitation” (Brown, 1970, p. 104).

Aung San Suu Kyi converted Gandhi’s non-violence into passive resistance thus her persona had changed from leader to protector. During house arrest she awoke her innate Buddhist principles and began to show traces of Buddhist ideas. Upon her release her first trip was to Thamanya hill, a famous place of pilgrimage, to receive blessing from a holy teacher, U Vinaya (*Hsayadaw*). At the end of the trip, Aung San Suu Kyi concluded that “some have questioned the appropriateness of talking about such matters as metta (loving-kindness) and thissa (truth) in the political context. But politics is about people and what we had seen in Thamanya proved that love and truth can move people more strongly than any form, of coercion” (Suu Kyi, 1995, p. 16). Suu Kyi needs to create a non-violent uprising to force dialogue with the government. She has become submissive, being polite to the government instead of applying pressure. It is in the nature of a Buddhist Burman to be passive and non-aggressive, attributes Suu Kyi has adopted. Her father, although religious, knew his religious faith was separate from his goals of attaining freedom from the British and maintaining an independent country.



## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

“Despite modern education, exposure to the world beyond Burma, and changes in thought and behavior, the political culture of the past is more acceptable than alternative values, beliefs, institutions and processes that originated abroad and were imposed by foreign rulers or advocated by indigenous elites who internalized them during the period of colonial rule or later, while living, studying, or working abroad” (Rotberg, 1998, p. 12). After the advent of colonial rule, ideas and values drawn from Buddhist and non-Buddhist sources reflected a change in the political culture. Many leaders were unable to bridge the gap between Burman and non-Burman ideologies; therefore, Burma’s political culture remains pluralistic and antagonistic. In the evolution of the political culture in Burma, there are three important events that have led to the struggle to find a balance between socio-religious life and a political identity: separation of religion from the state, the leadership role of Prime Minister U Nu, and the regime of General Ne Win.

#### Separation of Religion from the State

When the last king was exiled from Burma, the separation of state and religion was immediately implemented under the British rule. They governed not with Buddhist-based decrees, but rather with reason and law: “it drew its inspiration from Judeo-Christian ideas and values, as well as British customary laws” (Rotberg, 1998, p. 17).

Within the process of implementing administrative operations, the educational system was altered. The British started the change at the elementary level, and after the annexation of lower Burma and the Second Burmese War in 1852, the curriculum was expanded to other subjects such as arithmetic and geography. However, after the complete annexation of Burma the thathanabaing (head of the faith) ruled against the practice of Western style education in upper Burma. “Throughout British rule, traditional education continued in the rural area at the pongyi kyaungs (monasteries), which separated rural students from their urban counterparts. It also left them unprepared to move into the emerging modern sector of society and take jobs in the modern economy” (Rotberg, 1998, p. 18).

Many students ended up studying at the pongyi kyaungs while attending Western schools. The Western education curriculum was geared to prepare students for the changing economy and administration of Burma; however, the education was worse than what was offered at missionary schools. To help sustain Burma’s economy, the balance of power was shifted from Burmans to foreigners (Indians and Chinese), disturbing the political culture of Burma. Thus, the rift between the new Burman elite (educated by Western ideals) and Buddhist-Burman (entrenched in traditional ideals) grew deeper, and the effects are still being felt today. “In the years following World War I, the new Burman elite moved along two opposite paths: while those in the cities and large towns mobilized, the population for constitutionalism, liberal democracy, and independence, the rural population moved toward a return to the values and institutions of the precolonial period” (Rotberg, 1998, p. 19). The colonial rule initiated the diverse cultures of minorities, but deprived the youth of modern education and the ability to interact with

Burman contemporaries. After the independence of Burma many leaders were reluctant to trust their Burman counterparts. “Some sought the benefits of being part of a unified state while others were fearful of losing their identities, cultures, and sense of independence. Most were prisoners of their pasts and carried their fears of Burman domination into the present and future” (Rotberg, 1998, p. 21). Although stated in the constitution of Burma in 1943, that every Burmese National shall, within the limits of law and morality, enjoy freedom of religious belief and practice, the Burmese were unable to make the new political system work.

#### The Leadership Role of Prime Minister U Nu

Under the leadership of Prime Minister U Nu, educating the citizens on ideas and values of the emerging political culture from the West and the traditional Theravada Buddhism was a priority. Although he advocated blend of West and traditional ideas and values his speeches to the nation and writings were smeared with Theravada Buddhism teachings and religious parables. “He never hesitated to explain and expound on liberal democratic ideals and values as basic to a free and diverse society, and he never hesitated to defend the ethnic and cultural diversity of Burma as a strength of the nation” (Rotberg, 1998, p. 23). According to an economist in the United States, “whether or not the political leadership can correlate the traditional cultural values to the modern socialist environment in actual policy implementation is for the future to see” (Ling, 1979, p. 76). The lack of preparation with divided messages created internal conflicts within and outside his party which led to the military take over in 1960 and 1962. Ne Win applied precolonial political culture; therefore, they were more acceptable to the majority of the Burmese. The underlying consistent factors in the hindrance of political autonomy for

Burma are Buddhist ideas and values. There needs to be sufficient time and understanding to implement a specific ideology, and integrating a blend of Buddhism with Western ideals does not enhance a progressive political culture.

### The Regime of General Ne Win

Ne Win “closed the country to the outside world in order to solve its internal problems: ending disunity, restructuring the state, and making it strong and able to resist alien ideas and values from abroad, which it was argued, were destroying the unique culture and identity of the people and the land” (Rotberg, 1998, p. 24). The Ne Win regime was supported by a small council of handpicked people, which had an appearance of a kingship, but without moral sanction. Ne Win’s brief takeover brought Burma back to its feet with political stability, national unity, and a growing economy. When the rule was transferred back to U Nu within a year and a half, U Nu reversed all positive and progressive efforts of Ne Win’s regime. U Nu reinstated Buddhism as a state religion, and after spending forty-five days in a Buddhist retreat, his political lectures were on the compatibility of non-Marxist socialism and Buddhism. His inability to maintain a cohesive political structure led to a military coup again in 1962. In 1974, the military coup wrote a constitution that enabled its rule through a one-party system. “This blend of old authoritarian rule with the new constitutionally legalized dictatorship, distorted both the precolonial and liberal democratic ideas and values as the basis for the new political culture that it authored” (Rotberg, 1998, p. 24).

The military’s ideology revolved around Socialism, not Buddhism. The rulers believed they portrayed themselves as modern men who echoed the socialist ideas and values embraced by Europeans, Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans. The objective

set forth by military rulers was a united and strong Burma. They created a unitary state, the use of one language and developed a national culture based on Burman values and ideals. The implementation of this new political culture resulted in the following changes: “no rights to citizens without duties, citizens could take up any occupation ‘permitted by the state within the bounds of the socialist economy,’ they could use their own language and follow their own customs so long as there was ‘unity and solidarity of the national group, [and] security of the state and the social order’ was not undermined” (Rotberg, 1998, p. 25). Individuals were granted freedom of speech and publication as long as they did not contradict the interest of socialism. The Burmese did not accept the military’s attributes of allowing freedom with conditions. “The new political elite lacked the skills necessary to adapt Western forms to the Burmese situation, they had to contend with complicated internal struggles and with opposition of strong traditional elements in Burmese society” (Ling, 1979, p. 75).

Throughout history, Burma has struggled with deep-rooted Buddhist ideas and values. The repeated intervention of Buddhism during U Nu’s rule became an identity struggle for the Burmese. Efforts to unite religion and politics became a deterrent to the political and economic ideologies. Buddhism has an innate system of beliefs that creates aloofness to the day-to-day operations and administrations of the country. “Man, Buddhism teaches, is chained to the wheel of rebirth (samsara); existence is impermanent (anicca), substanceless (anatta), and filled with suffering (dukkha). Buddha taught that the believer can escape the wheel of rebirth by following the Eight-Fold Path” (Rotberg, 1998, p. 13). The Eight-Fold Path is a package to reach Nirvana. In this package the path to Nirvana ensues transcendental wisdom that consists of right understanding and

right thinking. The process starts "...at the beginning, the understanding of things was one which he had to accept on trust, as an indispensable preliminary; now it is an understanding of things which he has by direct perception. The truth that was formerly known by faith only, is now known itself as it is" (Ling, 1979, p. 35). The Burmese are trying to imitate Buddha's way of enlightenment by excluding oneself from the world; however, this method is nothing more than myth. Often disciples forget that Buddha achieved transcendental wisdom through experience. He allowed himself to experience the world, and through this experience came enlightenment where as contemporary Burmese Buddhists excluded the experience necessary to achieve Nirvana. During the monarchy period the Burmans took no interest in palace politics and avoided government contact, instead they concentrated on achieving Nirvana. Only the head monk served as an advisor to the king.

A watermark of Buddhist beliefs is reflected in the political culture. Many politicians recognize the need for industrialization, nationalization, and Burmanization, but when faced with conflicts between economic and social policies marked with materialistic attitudes Burma's Buddhist politicians immediately denounce them. These Buddhist Burmese politicians are aware of the pressure of Buddhist opinion behind them.

#### The Future of Aung San Suu Kyi

In the last two hundred years, Burma has been inflicted with Burman and Non-Burman political cultures. Burma has never experienced the fruits of a single political culture. The Burmese have responded to Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD call for democracy and freedom. These ideas date back to the political culture of nationalist leaders during the post-World War II period with the guiding force of the 1947

constitution. “When these democratic ideas were recalled in the summer of 1988, the people responded and called for their return as the basis of Burma’s polity” (Rotberg, 1998, p. 27). There are implications and dilemmas if a democratic regime succeeds.

Aung San Suu Kyi has the background to be a successful leader; however she needs a strong organizational skeleton, a plan, to further the movement. Without this the NLD party will faction into majority groups and the situation in Burma will revert back to historical events. It is vital that Suu Kyi creates a platform or a manifesto and follows through with actions that result in democracy. The Burmese need a vision for the future.

Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively, white, or Black, or Western, or Oriental. Yet just as human beings make their own history, they also make their own cultures and ethnic identities. No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness, as if that was all human life was about (Said, 1993, p. 336).

Aung San Suu Kyi wants all indigenous races to develop ideas and principles regarding democracy, stability, peace, unity, and solidarity of the indigenous peoples for the future constitution. These ideas are an extension of the 1947 constitution where state, legislative, and administrative bodies formed for minorities that were too small to have seats of their own (Rotberg, 1998). The lessons in history have shown us that this only works on paper, and the implementation national unity is a constant battle. The implications of a democratic future and its dilemmas are not being addressed by the NLD. The problem of ethnic war zones will not go away if a democratically-elected government were to take over. There has never been an instance where a “...post-colonial, multi-ethnic state has been able to democratize its political system at the same

time that it builds administrative, economic, and cultural linkages between geographically dispersed ethnic communities” (Rotberg, 1998, p. 62). Jawaharlal Nehru, first prime minister of India after independence, may have engineered the most successful case of this combined project.

For Burma to engineer this kind integration they need “tactics of consociationalism, such as providing for mutual veto in decision-making, education and mass media in other languages, and army, university, and/or bureaucracy recruitment and promotion practices that favor preciously excluded minorities” (Rotberg, 1998, p. 63). For this to work there has to be a ruling ethnic majority where there is no clear distinction of a majority group. This will be difficult for Burma since there is no cross-ethnic empathy (Rotberg, 1998). The future of Burma looks bleak until leaders develop an organizational framework to manage conflicts. Looking into the future of Burma it does not seem as though the military will lose its strength, but there are possibilities of the NLD splitting into factions.



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