



## Religious Inclusion in the not-too-far Past, as Understood by Mahāgandhārum Sayadaw

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### Abstract

Many of the sermons by Buddhist monks in Burma today, if not all, include discourses which could be regarded as textbook examples of hate speech and hate mongering. Prominent scholar monks like Sitagu Sayadaw talk about justification of violence in the name of religion using the Sinhalese mythical history of King Dutthagāmani. Buddhist monks, being culturally and religiously influential and authoritative in a “law-of-status” society like Myanmar, means laypeople’s understanding of religious inclusion and tolerance could become very narrow. Was this always the case in modern Burma/Myanmar? In fact, Myanmar had an inclusive historical past, be it religiously or culturally; a time when people of different faiths could live a socially harmonious life with high religious tolerance. This article analyzes and discusses several discourses by one of the most eminent scholar monks of modern Burma, Janakābhivamsa (21 Feb 1900 - 27 Dec 1977), famously known as Mahāgandhārum Sayadaw. This article argues that in spite of being a strong nationalist monk, Janakābhivamsa’s quintessentially Buddhist sermons use the cosmic and moral understanding of Buddhism and prophecies about the future-Buddha to be inclusive of people of other faiths and teach a form of religious inclusion and tolerance.

### စာတမ်းအကျဉ်း

ယနေ့ မြန်မာပြည်/ဗမာပြည်တွင် ဘုန်းတော်ကြီးများဟောကြားသော တရားတော် အများစုနှင့် တရားစာအုပ်များတွင် အမုန်းစကား၊ အမုန်းတရားပွားများအောင်လှုံဆော်သည့် စကားလုံး အများ အပြား ပါဝင်နေတတ်ကြသည်။ သီတဂူဆရာတော်ကဲ့သို့ ထင်ပေါ်ကျော်

ကြားသည့် ပညာတတ် ဘုန်းတော်ကြီးများသည်ပင်လျှင် ဘာသာ အယူဝါဒကိုအကြောင်းပြုကာ အကြမ်းဖက်မှုကို ခွင့်ပြုသည့် စကားများအား မဟာဝံသကျမ်းလာ၊ သီဟိုဠ်ဒုဋ္ဌဂါမဏိမင်းအကြောင်း ပုံဒဏ္ဍာရီစကားကို ဥပမာပေးကာ ဟောပြောခဲ့ပါသည်။ ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာ ဘုန်းတော်ကြီးများသည် “law-of-status” လူ့အဖွဲ့အစည်း ဖြစ်သည့် (အရှိန်အဝါကြီးသူများ၏ နှုတ်ထွက်စကားများ ဥပဒေကဲ့သို့ ကြီးစိုးသည့်) မြန်မာပြည်တွင် ထုံးစံလေ့အားဖြင့်သာမက၊ ဘာသာရေး အရပါ ဩဇာအရှိန်အဝါကြီးမားသည်ဖြစ်ရာ ဒကာ၊ ဒကာမများ၏ ဘာသာအယူဝါဒဆိုင်ရာပါဝင်မှုနှင့် သည်းခံမှုသည် အလွန်ပင်ကျဉ်း မြောင်းလာဖွယ်ရာရှိပါတော့ သည်။ ခေတ်သစ်ဗမာ/မြန်မာ့သမိုင်း တွင်ကား ဤကဲ့သို့ အမြဲတစေ ကြုံတွေ့ခဲ့ရခြင်းမျိုးမဟုတ်ခဲ့ချေ။ မြန်မာနိုင်ငံတွင်ထုံးစံလေ့အားဖြင့် ဖြစ်စေ၊ ဘာသာယုံကြည်ကိုးကွယ်မှု အရဖြစ်စေအကျိုးဝင် ပါဝင်နိုင်မှု ရှိသော အတိတ်သမိုင်းများရှိခဲ့ ပါသည်။ ဆိုလိုသည်မှာ မတူညီသော ဘာသာအယူကိုး ကွယ်သူများသည် ဘာသာယုံကြည်မှုဆိုင်ရာတွင် သည်းခံမှု မြင့်မားပြီး လူမှုဘဝတွင်လည်း သမစိတ္တ ရှိရှိ နေနိုင်သည့် အချိန်များ ရှိခဲ့ဖူးပါသည်။ ယခုစာတမ်းတွင် မဟာဂန္ဓာရုံဆရာတော်ဟု ထင်ရှား ကျော်စောတော် မူသော ခေတ်သစ်ဗမာပြည်၏ အထင်ရှားဆုံး ပညာရှင်ရဟန်းပုဂ္ဂိုလ် တပါး ဖြစ်တော်မူ သည့် ဆရာတော် အရှင်ဇနကာဘိဝံသ (၂၁ ဖေဖော်ဝါရီ ၁၉၀၀-၂၇ ဒီဇင်ဘာ ၁၉၇၇) ဟောကြားတော် မူခဲ့သည့် တရားတော်အချို့ကို သုံးသပ်ဆွေးနွေးတင် ပြထားပါသည်။ ယခုစာတမ်း၏ ဆိုလိုရင်းမှာ အမျိုးသားရေးစိတ် ဓာတ် ထက်သန်သည့် ဘုန်းတော်ကြီးတစ်ပါး ဖြစ်လင့်ကစား မဟာဂန္ဓာရုံ ဆရာတော်၏ ဗုဒ္ဓဝါဒအတွင်းမှ မသွေဖီသည့် တရားတော်များသည် ဗုဒ္ဓဝါဒ၏ လောကတည်ပုံ၊ ကိုယ်ကျင့်သီလ ဆိုင်ရာ အယူအဆများနှင့်

နောင်ပွင့်တော်မူမည့် ဘုရားလောင်း အကြောင်း ဗျာဒိတ်စကားများကို အခြေခံပြီး အခြားဘာသာ အယူကိုးကွယ်သူများကိုပါ ပါဝင်စေကာ ဘာသာရေးဆိုင်ရာ ပါဝင်မှုနှင့် သည်းခံမှုပုံစံတစ်ခုကို သင်ကြားပြ သပေးခြင်းဖြစ်သည် ဟူ၍ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

## Introduction

As democratic transitions in Myanmar brought a certain degree of civil and political freedom, space for civil society, and freedom of expression,<sup>1</sup> a lot of sermons and discourses by monks were rife with what could be regarded as textbook examples of hate speech and hate mongering.<sup>2</sup> With the rise of the nationalist ‘Mabatha’ movement in 2012, which was, in fact, a network of existing groups,<sup>3</sup> the discourses and sermons of many monks are, to say the least, ‘not inclusive’. One of the characteristics of these discourses has been how Muslims, the target of criticisms, can be a danger to the existence and propagation of *Buddha sāsana*, an integral theme being used as a motive for major social and political movements in Myanmar since colonial times.<sup>4</sup> At one point, Wirathu of Mandalay Masoyein monastery said Muslims were ‘ungrateful dogs’, implying the moral obligations Muslims have to Buddhists as they are supposedly guests and not indigenous to Myanmar. With the outbreak of Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) attacks and subsequent clearance operations which reportedly targeted Muslims in Rakhine State, prominent scholar monks like Sitagu Sayadaw even talked about the justification of violence in the name of religion, using the mythical Sinhalese history of King Dutthagāmani. Buddhist

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<sup>1</sup> Holliday, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> For reproductions and more information, see Fuller, 2013; Freeman, 2017; Goldberg, 2017; Lawi Weng, 2014; Mratt Kyaw Thu, 2017; Htet Min Lwin, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Htet Min Lwin, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Turner, 2014.

monks being culturally and religiously influential and authoritative in a 'law-of-status' society like Myanmar,<sup>5</sup> the laypeople's understanding of religious inclusion and tolerance has become very narrow. Even state officials like the Union Minister for religious and cultural affairs publicly said hateful messages that Muslims would take over the country.<sup>6</sup>

This article concerns the question of religious inclusion or exclusion in the recent past in Myanmar. In the history of Myanmar, during the times of the kings, people of different faiths from Islam and Christianity served important roles at the Burmese court.<sup>7</sup> It was not that Burma/Myanmar always had crude racial and religious tensions among ethnic and faith communities. Very often, there were peaceful periods concerning different faiths. These became significant only during the colonial period due to the demographic changes caused by labor migration from the Indian subcontinent, the racial and religious tensions among communities were increased, resulting in riots.<sup>8</sup> Taking religion as a discursive category, i.e., what is regarded as a religion at a point of time depends on the interpretative discourses of that time, this article conjectures that there were perhaps inclusive elements in religious discourses of the past that have enabled majority Buddhists to live in religious and social harmony with people of other faiths. In other words, whether we take the hateful speeches and sermons of the Mabatha monks as triggers (causations/explanatory variables) or manifestations (results/response variable) for recent rises of racial and religious tensions, or both are at the same time-dependent and independent variables, this article takes the position that there might be inclusive elements in the discourses in the past for those peaceful days. By analyzing several discourses and related writings by Janakābhivamsa, one of the most eminent scholar monks of modern Burma, famously known as Mahāgandhārum Sayadaw, this article argues that despite being a strong nationalist monk,

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<sup>5</sup> Maung Maung Gyi, 1983.

<sup>6</sup> Coconuts Yangon, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Ba Shin, 1961.

<sup>8</sup> Thant Myint-U, 2017.

Janakābhivamsa's quintessential Buddhist sermons use the cosmological and moral understanding of Buddhism and prophecies about the future-Buddha, and thus preach a framework to be inclusive of people of other faiths and teach a form of religious inclusion and tolerance.

## Why We Need to Discuss the Discourses

Much has been wondered and written about how a religion such as Buddhism can be used to justify violence. In other words, how Buddhism has been betrayed and how things that are perceived to be not religious or that cannot be associated with religion can be said and done in the name of religions.<sup>9</sup> Abeysekara argues that this confusion arises from a failure to understand the discursive nature of religion.<sup>10</sup> In his sociological conceptualization, religion is, in fact, a *discursive* category, i.e., what is regarded/accepted as a religion at a period is actually the product of authoritative discourses. These discourses are produced, reproduced, modified, and shifted by people or institutions with religious influence. He argues religion should be understood as “historical concepts whose meanings shift, that is, the ways in which specific persons and practices are authorized, enabled, and indeed obliged to come into (central) view and fade from view, to appear and disappear, to become centered and decentered as Buddhism and non-Buddhism, religion and violence”.<sup>11</sup> Thus, it is a matter of competing discourses that have to respond to one another by modifying, shifting, and remaking or losing. Once discourses become authoritative, they form the mainstream understanding of religion.

This dynamic view of religion refutes the essentialist idea of religion as always peaceful, good, and non-violent. At the same time, it focuses on discourses as social realities rather than arguing over the doctrinal aspect(s) of Buddhism. This dynamic

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<sup>9</sup> See Gravers, 2015; Helbardt, Hellmann-Rajanayagam, and Korff, 2013; Kent, 2015; Tambiah, 1992; Weiberg-Sazmann, 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Abeysekara, 2001.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

view allows us to understand the fluidity of religion and appreciate the importance of discourses on religion in the public sphere. It sheds light on the important role of authoritative discourses which persist as the current interpretation/explanation of religion as such in the society vis-à-vis counter-discourses which debate, challenge, justify, and falsify those authoritative discourses. Hence, it paves the way to understanding the passage of periods of religion as different understandings over time. Looking at how discourses shift, we can observe the interdependent nature of discourses and society—how society impacts discourses and how discourses can have an impact on society. However, discourses take the lead as religious authority. This leads us to the important question: if ‘exclusive’ discourse can be framed within Buddhism, can ‘inclusive’ be framed within Buddhism as well in Burma/Myanmar?

There is one more reason why Buddhist discourses are an important category to examine for this article. Walton and Hayward have suggested counter-discourses/counter-narratives against the Mabatha in their study.<sup>12</sup> Their work researches Buddhist scriptural teachings and provides tentative suggestions on the idea of four Brahma *viharas* and how Buddhism can be inclusive. They argue that primarily due to monks’ general nature of reluctance to criticize fellow monks, especially senior ones, there is a lack of quick response to construct a counter-narrative within Theravada Buddhism. From the perspectives of the scriptures, they thus provide or construct a narrative within the eight-fold noble path, point out the need to test claims, and present the attitude of Asoka (among other suggestions) as possible counter-frames against the Mabatha movement (Walton and Hayward 2014). A significant gap is that unless what is in scriptures gets to the discourse level, it is hard to identify them as social realities: they remain in the books, not in the world of the day-to-day practice of Buddhists.

In other words, academics suggesting something to Buddhists is naturally very different from sermons by authoritative

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<sup>12</sup> Walton & Hayward, 2014.

leaders of the religion. Discourses delivered by monks are very powerful due to the unique nature of the delivery. Regarding the powerful nature of discourses, Walton and Jerryson (2016) suggested the cultural authority of the Buddhist monks gives them the moral right to legitimize their claims, use them to define the religion, and determine what the Buddha means through sermons.<sup>13</sup> As sermons can have different interpretations and thus different meanings—how they are put in the context for the laypersons, the cosmological understanding of what is happening, and what will happen, these different interpretations and levels of their authority have a significant impact on what is religion at a certain point of time, in other words, the prevailing discourse or the correct discourse(s). The very exercise of preaching sermons serves this purpose—the way monks recite the *Gathas* (Pali verses), the way they interact with the audience in an authoritative way, and the lack of critical reflection are all the more reasons how discourses can have a tremendous amount of influence on the audience.<sup>14</sup>

A thorough look at the discourses by the extreme nationalist Mabatha monks will reveal that they frame their extreme nationalist sermons within the Buddhist framework.<sup>15</sup> In other words, they have to assure the audience that what they have been preaching is in accord with the Buddha's teaching. This is what is different from the case in Sri Lanka, where Sri Lankan monks blatantly said the violence was not Buddhist but you had to put down Buddhist morality and ethics when the religion was in danger.<sup>16</sup> In contrast, monks in Myanmar still maintain the Theravada tradition; they still *have* to legitimize their frames anyway to be in accord with the Buddha's teaching. However, this does not necessarily mean that they are more Buddhist than the monks of Sri Lanka. Maybe they have to make it clear to the audience what they are teaching *is* in accord with Buddhism because otherwise, the audience might not believe and support the

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<sup>13</sup> Walton, M.J. & Jerryson, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> See O'Connor, 2015; Tannenbaum, 2015; Walton & Jerryson, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Htet Min Lwin, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> See Deegalle, 2003; Kent, 2015; International Crisis Group, 2013.



sermons. This has even got to the stage where Sitagu, the former vice-chair of the now renamed Mabatha movement, referred to Ven. Janakābhivamsa (whose discourses this article discusses) in one of his sermons to the military, and legitimized his teachings as in accord with the teachings of the senior Sayadaws within the tradition. This is advancing the master frame which used to be that “to protect race and religion is in accord with the Buddha’s teachings” to a level where it also frames that to protect race and religion is in accord with the Theravada tradition and respected senior monks within the Burmese order.<sup>17</sup> This is another reason to dig up the inclusive discourses of the past to counter such claims and to reclaim the way discourses have been framed and consequently resulted in narrow-minded and ruthlessly racist accounts.

To this end, this article explores the nature of inclusive discourses by one of the most preeminent scholar monks of the Buddhist clergy, Ven. Janakābhivamsa (Mahāgandhārum Sayadaw) of Amarapura. I also intend that if people understand that there used to exist this kind of inclusive interpretation, they will be able to reflect on the current hateful messages and be able to live in social and religious harmony. As the discourses are by Janakābhivamsa, a highly revered authority on Buddhism in Myanmar, and are quintessentially Buddhist, it will be easy for Buddhists to accept more than the multicultural discourses of the west and liberal democracy. What I am trying to explain here is an *organic* discourse(s) by Buddhist monks about religious inclusion. This is neither a suggestion nor explicitly mentioned in the scriptures, but what was said and argued at the discourse level.

### **Mahāgandhārum as Nationalist**

It is essential to understand that being a strong nationalist monk does not necessarily translate to being racist, xenophobic, and intolerant to other faiths and cultures. This section tries to show

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<sup>17</sup> Htet Min Lwin, 2018.

how Mahāgandhārum Sayadaw was a strong nationalist and yet this did not prevent him from being a tolerant and inclusive person. Looking at Mahāgandhārum’s writings and others’ opinions of him,<sup>18</sup> it is clear that he was a strong nationalist and reformist of the sāsana. His reformist ideas are quite similar to the 1902 State Sangha act and the preceding reformist ideas by King Mongkut and Wachirayan in Thailand, another Theravada Buddhist country.<sup>19</sup> Mahāgandhārum writes, “the reform of the sāsana should aim for the case that boys and girls of Buddhist faith can work for the benefits of race, religion, and sāsana and also be able to get Nirvana in the next life”.<sup>20</sup> He has been praised as ‘unique’<sup>21</sup> for his love of “race, religion and sāsana” as he wants his religion and sāsana to be perfect, and he desires that due to the sāsana and Buddhism the country and people will get a better life, a better socioeconomic situation.<sup>22</sup> Thanwaralin-kara, a strong, vocal critic against activities of the Mabatha movement, in his preface for the compilation of excerpts from Janakābhivamsa’s writings, further claims that out of the three most preeminent Sayadaws of his age, namely Mahāgandhārum, Mahāsi, and Mingun, Mahāgandhārum is the most outstanding for his love of country, race, and religion, as is evident in Mahāgandhārum’s prolific writings which are almost always centered on these themes. In his foreword to အနာဂတ်သာသနာရေး, he writes that it is pressing for Sayas (here Sayadaws) and lay persons to support and thus make the sāsana prosper as the country had gained independence.<sup>23</sup> In his sermon to the military in 1950s, he writes “the country should be able to rely on the military and the sāsana”.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, he

<sup>18</sup> See ဇနကာဘိဝံသာ အရှင်၊ ၂၀၀၀၊ ၂၀၀၃။ သံဝရာလင်္ကာရ၊ အရှင်၊ ၂၀၁၄။

<sup>19</sup> See Tiyanich (1997) for comparison.

<sup>20</sup> ဇနကာဘိဝံသာ အရှင်၊ ၂၀၀၃။

<sup>21</sup> သူမတူ။

<sup>22</sup> See ဇနကာဘိဝံသာ အရှင်၊ ၂၀၀၀။ ၂၀၁၇၊ ၆၂၅၊ ၂၀၀၃၊ ၁၊ ၃၅။

<sup>23</sup> ဇနကာဘိဝံသာ အရှင်၊ ၂၀၀၃။

<sup>24</sup> စစ်တပ်နှင့်သာသနာသည် နိုင်ငံတော်၏ အားထားရာ ဖြစ်ထိုက်ကြောင်း။

sees the propagation of the Buddha's sāsana as a uniting force and talks on how in the birth stories of the lives of the future-Buddha, he sacrificed for the race.<sup>25</sup> Yet the difference between Mahāgandhārum and today's extreme nationalist monks of the Mabatha movement (or those similar to them) is that the former had a multicultural mindset whereas the latter have a monocultural mindset, being called 'racists' and hatemongers.<sup>26</sup>

### **Mahāgandhārum's Writings**

The following discusses how Mahāgandhārum became a person with a multicultural mindset and how he frames inclusive discourses within an understanding of Buddhism.

### **Buddhānussati With Elements of Religious Inclusion**

Buddhānussati (recollection of the Buddha) is a kind of meditation practice that has its focus on awareness (annusati) or recollection on the exalted qualities of the Buddha. This has been a traditional practice in Myanmar<sup>27</sup> as it is in other Buddhist countries, especially those with a Theravada tradition. The Buddha himself talks about it in Anguttara Nikaya, Mahanama suttas 1 and 2<sup>28</sup> where he emphasizes that for those who recollect the noble qualities of the Tathāgata, his mind will not be obsessed "by lust, hatred, or delusion" and will be "simply straight, based on the Tathāgata" and thus connected with the Dhamma. This disciple should be called 'a noble disciple who dwells in balance amid an unbalanced population, who dwells unafflicted amid an afflicted population. As one who has entered the stream of the Dhamma, he develops the recollection of the Buddha'.<sup>29</sup> This

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<sup>25</sup> ဇနကာဘိဝံသာ၊ အရှင်၊ ၁၉၉၇။

<sup>26</sup> Htet Min Lwin, 2018.

<sup>27</sup> As outlined in ဇနကာဘိဝံသာ၊ အရှင်၊ ၂၀၀၀၊ ၁၇၅။

<sup>28</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2012b.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 1564–65, 1569.

meditation practice has a significant place in the Theravada tradition as one of the four protective meditation techniques for it prevents the practitioner from “listlessness and dissatisfaction”.<sup>30</sup>

Mahāgandhārum being an exceptionally devout Buddhist and coming from a tradition of meditators of buddhānussati,<sup>31</sup> he particularly emphasizes this particular type of meditation practice and writes/preaches extensively about buddhānussati; he wrote one dedicated book and several others with a significant emphasis on it. In the book entitled *Buddhānussati*, he incorporates elements of religious inclusion as he writes:

for someone who practices well and regularly the buddhānussati bhāvana, s/he starts to admire the Buddha so much that she also begins to admire his lives even before he becomes the Buddha in his final life. Moreover, the person forms an admiration for people who are like the Buddha-to-be, doing good for the benefit of many, not differentiating depending on any sect, or if s/he is a monk/recluse. If that person is a layperson, she can still admire his/her deeds without any differentiation on race and religion. Thus, I, as a thorough practitioner of the buddhānussati bhāvana, can form a deep admiration of Jesus Christ as he has taught compassionate love, sympathetic joy, truth, and tolerance, among others. So, I have excellent relations with the disciples of Jesus Christ.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2012a.

<sup>31</sup> Note that his mentor upajjhāya, the first Mahāgandhārum Sayadaw of the Sagaing Hills, also strongly emphasized this practice of the recollection of the Buddha (ဇနကာဘိဝံသ၊ အရှင်၊ ၂၀၀၀၊ ၁၃၇။)။

<sup>32</sup> In Burmese: “ဗုဒ္ဓါနုဿတိဘာဝနာကို ကောင်းစွာပွားများသော ပုဂ္ဂိုလ်သည် ဗုဒ္ဓမြတ်စွာကို ပါရမီဖြည့်စဉ်ကစ၍ ကြည်ညိုလှသောကြောင့် ဗုဒ္ဓမြတ်စွာ၏ နှစ်ခြင်းအခါကဲ့သို့ ပရဟိတဆောင်နေသော ပုဂ္ဂိုလ်များကို မြင်ကြားရသောအခါ ရဟန်းသံဃာဖြစ်လျှင် ဂိုဏ်းဂဏမရွေးဘဲ လေးစားသောစိတ်ဖြစ်နိုင်၏။ လူဝတ်ကြောင်ဖြစ်လျှင်လည်း အမျိုးဘာသာမရွေး ပုဂ္ဂိုလ်မရွေးဘဲ လေးစားကြည်ညိုနိုင်

This can also be related to another concept formulated by Sayadaw in his eminent treatise on the reform of Buddha sāsana (အနာဂတ်သာသနာရေး) where he writes:

It is scarce in the world that those people who act (exceptionally) for the good of the community, region, or country without any selfishness or self-regard, based on goodwill and good motivation. If ever there emerges one like that, s/he must surely be one of the future to-be(s), either the Buddha-to-be (*bodhisattva*) or *agga-sāvaka-to-be*, *mahā-sāvaka-to-be* or *pakati-sāvaka-to-be* or *paccekabuddha-to-be*.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, connecting these two concepts in comparable context, it can be inferred with certain confidence that the Sayadaw might see Jesus as one of those future ‘someones’<sup>34</sup> as will be shown in the following discussion. Here, it is fair to conclude that for the Sayadaw, people of other faiths who are doing meritorious deeds

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ပါသည်။ ထို့ကြောင့် မိမိသည် များစွာသော လူတို့အပေါ်၌ မေတ္တာတရား ကရုဏာတရား သစ္စာတရား ခန္တီတရားတို့ကို ပြန့်နှံ့အောင် သြဝါဒပေးနိုင်၍ မိမိကိုယ်ကို အနစ်နာခံသွားသော ခရစ်တော်ကို နစ်နစ်ကာကာ လေးစားသောကြောင့် ခရစ်တော်၏ သာဝကများနှင့် ဆက်ဆံရာ၌ လွန်စွာပြေပြစ်ပါသည်” (ဇနကာဘိဝံသ၊ အရှင်၊ ၂၀၀၀၊ ၁၇၈)။

<sup>33</sup> In Burmese: “လောက၌ စိတ်ရင်း စေတနာရင်းကောင်းကောင်းနှင့် (ကိုယ်ကျိုးမငဲ့ဘဲ) ရပ်ကျိုး ရွာကျိုး နယ်ကျိုး တိုင်းပြည်ကျိုးကို ဆောင်ရွက်သူတို့ကား အလွန်ရှား၏။ တစ်ယောက်တလေ ပေါ်လာလျှင် ထိုသူသည် (ဗုဒ္ဓအလောင်းတော်လား၊ အဂ္ဂသာဝက၊ မဟာသာဝကနှင့် ပကတိသာဝကအလောင်းတော်လား၊ ပစ္စေကဗုဒ္ဓါအလောင်းတော်လား) တစ်ပါးပါး၏ အလောင်းအလျာတော့ ဧကန် ဖြစ်ပါလိမ့်မည်...” (ဇနကာဘိဝံသ၊ အရှင်၊ ၂၀၀၃၊ ၁၂၁)။

<sup>34</sup> This is in turn proved by one of his writings where he mentions Jesus as a disciple of the Tibetan tradition of Buddhism (ဇနကာဘိဝံသ၊ အရှင် ၂၀၀၀၊ ၁၈၁-၁၉၇)။

are indeed the to-be of people who will get enlightenment in the future. This is how the Sayadaw can transcend beyond race and religion and be inclusive.

### **The Decline of Buddhism and People of Other Faiths**

A persistent discourse in Myanmar since the colonial era has been anxiety regarding the incursion of ‘modern’ or ‘western’ values and how these might affect the *sāsana*.<sup>35</sup> Mahāgandhārum also writes extensively about how modernity has a considerable impact on Buddha’s *sāsana*. His ideas on how to overcome these hurdles, however, are very different from today’s discourses. One of the tenets of exclusive discourses today is if people of other religions are enemies of the Buddha *sāsana*. For the Sayadaw, the decline of Buddhism will always be from ‘within,’ never from outside.<sup>36</sup> He sees the decrease in the number of students (lay students) in the monastery as the very basis for the decline of future *sāsana*. Certainly, he does not think the decline will be due to people of other faiths. If people of other faiths are doing their job very well, indeed their religion would and should prosper. He writes in the book “ဘာသာသွေး” (*The Blood/Spirit of the Religion*):

Preparing this book makes me think about people of other faiths. They have very high regard for their religion. Monks and nuns of other religions are content with ordinary meals and modest clothing and yet work hard for the propagation of their religions. Thus, their religions prosper and propagate more. ...we should be sad that now people have low regard for Buddhism. Thus, we should reform the religion with *badha-thwe* as a fundamental basis.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> As discussed by Turner, 2014; Walton and Hayward, 2014, p. 46.

<sup>36</sup> Mahasi also talks about this.

<sup>37</sup> ဇနကာဘိဝံသ၊ အရှင်၊၁၉၉၂။ ထိုသို့စီစဉ်သောအခါ ဘာသာခြားတို့ကို သွား၍ သတိရပါသည်။ အခြားတိုင်းသား အခြားဘာသာဝင်များသည် သူတို့၏ ဘာသာကို

Again, for him the spirit of religion means belief in Buddhism, efforts for dāna (donation), sila (morality) and bhāvana (the practice of good quality of mind),<sup>38</sup> efforts to honor the religion, critical positive thinking of things related to Buddhism, and a high regard and readiness to defend the religion. He also writes:

I try to observe the ways how nuns of other faiths live. They teach children. They seem to-be proficient in vocational things such as tailoring. Those who know medicine treat people. According to my knowledge, the way these senior nuns treat people is with great mettā (loving-kindness) and karunā (sympathy). Some even treat people with leprosy. Due to their mettā, karunā, people naturally have high regard and respect for them. They rely a lot upon them. The mettā and karunā also reflect/respond to them. Thus, they are bound to-be prosperous. Thus, the convent in Mandalay is full/crowded with people who would like to learn from them.<sup>39</sup>

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လွန်စွာအရေးပေးကြ၏။ ဘာသာခြားဘုန်းကြီး သီလရှင်ဆိုသူတို့သည် စားရရှိ  
ဝတ်ရရှိမှုဖြင့် ကျေနပ်ကြ၍ ဘာသာကြီးပွားရေးကို အလွန်ရွက်ဆောင်ကြ၏။ ထိုသို့  
ရွက်ဆောင်ကြသောကြောင့်လည်း သူတို့၏ တိုင်းပြည် သူတို့ဘာသာသည်  
တိုးတက်လျှင်တိုးတက်၊ မတိုးတက်လျှင် တည့်တံ၏။ မိမိတို့ ဘာသာမှာ ကမ္ဘာများစွာ  
လွန်သွားပါသော်လည်း ကြုံကြိုက်ဖို့ ခဲယဉ်းလှသော ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာဖြစ်၍ ကွယ်ဖို့  
မဆိုထားဘိ ယခုလို များစွာသော လူတို့၏ အထင်သေးခံနေခြင်းသည်ပင်  
ဝမ်းနည်းဖွယ် ကောင်းလှပါပြီ။ ထို့ကြောင့် ဘာသာရေးနှင့်စပ်သော သွေးကို အခြေခံ၍  
သာသနာပြုပြင်ရန် နည်းလမ်းကို စဉ်းစားသင့်သည်ဟု စိတ်ကူးမိပါသည်။

<sup>38</sup> I take translations of these Pali words from ဟုတ်စိန်၊ ဦး၊ ၁၉၅၄။

<sup>39</sup> ဇနကာဘိဝံသ၊ အရှင်၊ ၁၉၉၂။ ဘုန်းကြီးသည် ဘာသာခြား သီလရှင်များ၏  
အနေအထိုင် စသည်ကို အခွင့်သင့်တိုင်း သတိပြုပါသည်။ သူတို့သည် ကလေးတွေကို  
ပညာသင်ပေးကြ၏။ အပ်ချုပ်ခြင်းစသော လက်မှုပညာများကို တတ်ကျွမ်း၍  
သင်ပေးကြဟန်တူ၏။ ဆေးဘက်၌ ကျွမ်းကျင်သူတို့က ဆေးကုပေးကြ၏။  
ဘုန်းကြီးသိရသော သီလရှင်ဆရာမကြီး၏ ဆေးကုပုံမှာ အလွန် မေတ္တာ ကရုဏာပါ၏။

He also praises in another book how Christians are organized and disciplined:<sup>40</sup>

I must admit here that people of other faiths that Mahāgandhārum is mentioning are mostly Christians, and there is research suggesting why they have better socialization than Muslims in Myanmar.<sup>41</sup> Notwithstanding that fact, what I am trying to present here is, in essence, the way Mahāgandhārum frames the concept of inclusivity “within” quintessential Buddhism. In other words, how Buddhist understanding of the universe and the cosmos can also be inclusive in comparison to the current liberal discourse of multiculturalism, democracy, and human rights.<sup>42</sup>

### **Mahāgandhārum’s Experiences with People of Other Faiths**

One of the reasons why Mahāgandhārum teaches inclusive elements/discourses and his inclusive Buddhist outlook may be due to the socialization he had with people of other faiths since his young days. When he was living in Yangon, he was praised for his evening chantings of Buddhist sermons by people of other faiths, and he proudly mentions this in his book.<sup>43</sup> His encounters with U Pe Maung Tin, a Pali professor and later rector of

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တချို့ကား ကုဋ္ဌရောဂါသည်များကိုပင် ကုသပြုစုကြ၏။ သူတို့၏ မေတ္တာ ကရုဏာ အသက်ဝင်နေသော ဆေးကုမှုကြောင့် သူတို့ကို အားကိုးကြ၏။ မေတ္တာ ကရုဏာ အတုံ့ပြန်ကြ၏။ သူတို့ကား မကြီးပွားဘဲ မနေ၊ ဧကန်ကြီးပွားခွင့်ရှိပါပေသည်။ သီလရှင်ဆရာမကြီးတို့ အုပ်ချုပ်သော မန္တလေးကွန်ဗင့်ကျောင်းကား ကျောင်းသူအမျိုးသမီးကလေးများ (နေရာမရလောက်အောင်) ပြည့်လျှံ၍ နေပါတော့သည်။

<sup>40</sup> Seen here: ဇနကာဘိဝံသ၊ အရှင်၊ ၂၀၀၀၊ ၁၈၀။

<sup>41</sup> Kyaw Yin Hlaing, 2013.

<sup>42</sup> I am not saying the current discourse/NGO movement for inclusion and multiculturalism is of no use.

<sup>43</sup> ဇနကာဘိဝံသ၊ အရှင်၊ ၂၀၀၃။



University of Rangoon, resulted in mutual respect and profound admiration on each other. U Pe Maung Tin, a Christian by faith, had the translation of Visudhi Megga as his magnum opus, and it was claimed that U Pe Maung Tin happened to listen to Mahāgandhārum’s discourse on the first sermon and Anatalakana sutta and was incredibly impressed (တရားဦးစွာကြားကြား).

That was the reason U Pe Maung Tin came to see Mahāgandhārum for several long and engaging discussions on the Buddhist notion of non-self and the two became very close. By U Pe Maung Tin’s recommendation, an archbishop visited Mahāgandhārum, was profoundly impressed by the Sayadaw and said later he got a lot of satisfaction and joy out of the respect and attention the Mahāgandhārum provided. Another encounter with a Buddhist abbot from Korea was also one of the noted encounters. An encounter with a Hindu sadhu made the sadhu comment at a press conference how it was pleasant to meet with Janakābhivamsa.<sup>44</sup>

One thing to consider is that monks of the younger generations and today’s generation also have these kinds of encounters, if not more often, than what Mahāgandhārum experienced. But those who have extensive experience meeting with people of other faiths, and travel extensively cannot or do not incorporate the inclusive ideas (look at Sitagu, for example). For Mahāgandhārum, he had never traveled outside his country and yet showed his broad-mindedness based on Buddhist teachings. Perhaps it is his inclusive understanding of Buddhism which enabled him to become a person with a multicultural mindset.

## **Discourses of the Sayadaw**

### **The Idea/Concept of “Past Kamma”**

For Mahāgandhārum, the concept of “past kamma” (Sanskrit: karma) is an important one for he has broadened the classical

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<sup>44</sup> ဃောသီတာ၊ အရှင်၊ ၂၀၀၃။

understanding of past kamma in Buddhism to an extent where it is used as a concept for inclusiveness. In one of his sermons, he preached, “For me, I met those laypersons whom I met out of very few odds in this life. Therefore, I believe I must have met them before. Maybe you might think it is a bit strange of a thought. However, the way I see it is that when I meet them now, I will try to pay back my gratitude which I owed before (i.e., in previous lives)...For people with past connections, I have the responsibility to preach them well”<sup>45</sup> (၂၀၁၇, ၁၃၉). When Mahāgandhārum met a professor from England, his first words of greetings were, “I am pleased to-be informed that you would visit me. Though we meet each other only now, according to the Buddha’s teachings, we have met cordially in past lives. Thus, take it as we have been good friends since previous lives and **ask any question whatsoever without holding back**”.<sup>46</sup> Thus, his Buddhist teachings guided him to treat whomever he met—be it from different faiths, as cordially and friendly as possible, for he believed he had met them in past lives, consequently transcending from exclusivity to inclusivity.

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<sup>45</sup> In Burmese: “ဘုန်းကြီးကလေ၊ “ကြံကြံဖန်ဖန် ယခုတွေ့တဲ့ ဒကာ ဒကာမတွေဟာ ရှေးကတွေ့ပြီးသားဖြစ်ချင်ဖြစ်မယ်” လို့ တွေးတယ်။ တွေ့ပြီးသားဖြစ်လိုရှိရင်တော့ ရှေးတုန်းက မဆပ်ရသေးတဲ့ ကျေးဇူးတွေကို ဆပ်တာပေါ့လို့ ဘုန်းကြီးက လေ ကြံကြံဖန်ဖန်ပေါ့လေ။ ရှေးက တွေ့ပြီးသားတွေ ဖြစ်လိမ့်မယ်။ ဆွယ်တရား မဟောရဘူး-ဒီကျောင်းက။ ဘာပြုလို့တုန်း၊ ကံတွေကြောင့် တွေ့ပြီးသားတွေ ရောက်လာလိမ့်မယ်။ တွေ့ပြီးသားမဟုတ်တဲ့သူတွေကတော့ နေပါစေ၊ သူ့လမ်းနဲ့ သူ့သွား ပါစေ၊ တွေ့ပြီးသားသူတွေကို ဟောရတာကို မနည်းတာဝန်ကြီးတယ်။ ပြီးတော့ ဆွယ်တရားဟောပြီးတော့ ဘယ်သူဌေး လာအောင် ဘယ်သူမှ မကြောင့်ကြကြနဲ့၊ သူ့ဘာသာသူ ကံရှိတဲ့သူတွေ ရောက်လာလိမ့်မယ်။ ကိုယ့်ကံနဲ့ကိုယ် ရောက်လာ တဲ့အခါကျတော့ ဘုန်းကြီးမှာ တာဝန်တွေ သိပ်ကြီးတာပဲ။ ဒါကြောင့်မို့လို့ ကံပါပဲ၊ ရှေးကံပဲ”။

<sup>46</sup> Emphasis in original (ဇနကာဘိဝံသ၊ အရှင်၊ ၂၀၀၀၊ ၃၄၇-၃၅၅)။

## **Mettā (loving-kindness) and Mahāgandhārum**

Sayadaw Mahāgandhārum talks about myitta (Pali: *mettā* meaning loving-kindness), which is one of the four Brahmaviharas. Myitta has become a household word in Myanmar. Walton and Hayward, in their proposed counter-narratives to the discourses of Mabatha, mention the importance of the four Brahmaviharas.<sup>47</sup> As an integral part of the Buddha’s teaching, Buddhist monks almost always discuss *mettā* in their sermons, and yet it has *not* resulted or taken shape as a moral value toward inclusiveness. One common satirical joke on how the myitta of Buddhists excludes Muslims illustrates the multi-layered nature of anti-Muslim hatred in Myanmar. It says, “May all beings be happy, except crows and ka-la<sup>48</sup> because they have black skin”. Thus I emphasize in the following section how Mahāgandhārum frames an inclusive discourse on myitta, and relates it to the prophecy of enlightenment at the first sermon of the future-Buddha. I would like to emphasize again that these are not at the doctrinal level but at the discourse level. I argue that the way Sayadaw frames this is organic, his arguments and discourses originating from his understanding of Buddhism.

### **Discourses as Such: The First Sermon and People who Achieved Enlightenment**

In 1970, Mahāgandhārum delivered a sermon on myitta on the auspicious occasion of the centenary birthday celebrations of the ninth most supreme leader of the Shwegyin sect.<sup>49</sup> This is an

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<sup>47</sup> Walton & Hayward, 2014.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Ka-la’, also frequently spelled ‘kalar’, in contemporary expression is a derogatory term for Muslims whereas it did not have derogatory and insulting meaning in the past but was simply a term for foreign people from the west of Myanmar, including but not limited to people with origins from India, Persia, Arabia and Europe. For detailed discussion, see Thant Myint-U (2017).

<sup>49</sup> မာနိတသိရီ၊ ဥး နှင့် နန္ဒမာလာဘိဝံသ၊ ဥး၊ ၂၀၁၅။

important sermon for two reasons: Sangin Sayadaw (စံကင်းဆရာတော်) was one of the eldest monks alive in that period (100 years old at that occasion); and being the supreme leader of the much-respected Shwegyin sect,<sup>50</sup> he was one of the most influential monks in the history of the Myanmar sāsana. Thus, Mahāgandhārum delivered this sermon to an audience of hundreds if not thousands of monks, nuns, and laypersons who came to the celebration in Mandalay. While talking about myitta, Mahāgandhārum reminds the audience of the Buddhist concept of paramis, how people of collected paramis now exist in the world, and how people will get enlightenment (the prophecy of enlightenment) at the first sermon of the *Mettaya Buddha*. He was saying how Buddhists should practice loving-kindness meditation all the time, quoting the verses from *Karaniyametta sutta*.<sup>51</sup> In a powerful, influential, and convincing style of a traditional Buddhist sermon, he recited verses from the *karaniya mettā sutta* and explained them in vernacular.<sup>52</sup>

To emphasize the fact that his interpretation/frame/understanding of the concept is different and necessarily inclusive, different translations by different Pali scholars are first provided, followed by an analysis of Mahāgandhārum’s discourse. The original Pali verse is a short one:

*Etam satim adhittheyya  
Brahmam etam viharam idhamahu.*

This is translated into different versions by different translators:

And while he stands or walks or while he sits

<sup>50</sup> For more details see Than Tun (2019).

<sup>51</sup> For an English translation of *karaniya mettā sutta*, see Acharya Buddhakhita (1995). For explanations in Myanmar, my preference is ဝါသေဠာဘိဝံသာ၊ အရှင်၊ ၂၀၁၁။

<sup>52</sup> ဇနကာဘိဝံသာ၊ အရှင်၊ ၁၉၇၀/၁၃၃၂။

Or while he lies down, free from drowsiness,  
Let him resolve upon this mindfulness:  
This is Divine Abiding here, they say.<sup>53</sup>

Whether you are staying in one place or traveling, sitting  
down or in bed, in all your waking hours rest in this mind-  
fulness, which is known as like living in heaven right here  
and now!<sup>54</sup>

As you stand, walk, sit or lie,  
So long as you are awake,  
Pursue this awareness with your might:  
It is deemed the Divine State here.<sup>55</sup>

Standing, walking, sitting or reclining, as long as he is  
awake, let him develop this mindfulness. This, they say, is  
'Noble Living' here.<sup>56</sup>

Whether standing or walking, seated or lying down  
Free from drowsiness, One should sustain this recollection.  
This is said to-be the sublime abiding.<sup>57</sup>

Janakābhivamsa interprets this as:

*Idha*: in this world of saintly people living for collection of  
their paramis, *Etam viharam*: sustaining the practice of rec-  
ollection of loving-kindness whether standing or walking,  
sitting or lying down; this way of living is known as, *brah-*

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<sup>53</sup> Ñanamoli Thera, 1995.

<sup>54</sup> Ratnaprabha, 2014.

<sup>55</sup> Acharya Buddharakhita, 1995.

<sup>56</sup> Piyadassi Thera, 1999.

<sup>57</sup> The Amaravati Sangha, 2004.

*mam viharam*: abiding of the sublime, the divine like the arahants, like the *Brahma*, *ahu*: as is recognized by saintly peoples like the Buddhas.<sup>58</sup>

His interpretation is different as he translates or expands the word “idha” which simply means here that “in this world of saintly people living for collection of their paramis” and the word “Brahma, ahu” as “recognized by saintly peoples like the Buddhas”. This interpretation becomes a broad interpretation, unlike translations mentioned above, for by “idha” he aims to include people of other faith and connect this Buddhist sermon with the prophecy of enlightenment and by “ahu” his understanding of saintly persons transcends the limits of Buddhist saints.

Within Buddhist thought, people who achieve enlightenment have to fulfill parami to become fully enlightened in their final life.<sup>59</sup> The Pali canon elaborates on how long a person has to fulfill parami depending on which kind of enlightenment they wish to attain.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> In Burmese: “ဣဒ္ဓါ-သုတေတံကိုယ်စီ ပါရမီဖြင့် လှည့်လည်နေကြ ဤလောက၌၊ ဧတံ ဝိဟာရံ-သွား၊ ရပ်၊ ထိုင်၊ လျောင်း နေရာပြောင်းလည်း၊ စိတ်ကောင်းမသွေ ဤမေတ္တာဖြင့် နေခြင်းကို၊ ဗြဟ္မဝိဟာရံ- အရိယာနေ၊ ဗြဟ္မာနေသို့၊ စိတ်နေသန့်ရှင်း၊ ကောင်းမြတ်သောနေထိုင်ခြင်းဟူ၍၊ အာဟု-ဘုရားစသား၊ ပုဂ္ဂိုလ်များတို့၊ ဟောထားညီတူ၊ မိန့်မြွက်တော်မူကြလေကုန်ပြီ”.

<sup>59</sup> See the ten paramis (perfections) in Buddhism in the classical text “Buddhavamsa” translated by Morris (1882, p. 97). See also Bhikkhu Thanissaro (2010) and Acariya Dhammapala (2005) for contemporary interpretations on the ten paramis.

<sup>60</sup> There are five kinds of enlightened persons: the Perfectly Enlightened Ones or the All-seeing Buddha (the time for them to fulfill parami is four infinite number of great aeons or incalculables (*asaṅkhyeyyas*) and a hundred thousand great aeons (*mahākappas*), the Solitary-Buddhas or Paccekabuddhas (two incalculables and a hundred thousand great aeons), the Chief Disciples (*Agga-sāvakas*) - over one incalculable and a hundred thousand great aeons, the Great Disciples (*Mahā-sāvakas*) - over a hundred thousand great aeons, the ordinary disciples (*Pakati-sāvakas*) with over a hundred great aeons, or over a thousand great aeons (Ledi Sayadaw, n.d.).

In his sermon on mettā, Janakābhivamsa explains, “Do saintly people live like this (live with mettā meditation)? They, of course, do. They indeed do. All the Buddhas teach thus. Arahants teach thus. Saintly persons teach thus”.<sup>61</sup> And then he connects this with the prophecy saying:

We do not know how many people will get enlightenment at the first sermon of the future-Buddha. But we can make a guess; for the Gautama Buddha’s first sermon, it was 180 million who were enlightened. Only one human being was there. This is for the first sermon alone. With the Buddha’s sermons, a great number of people—humans, devas, and other deities, achieved enlightenment. (And for the future-Buddha) there will also be people who will become aggasāvakas, mahā-sāvakas, pakati-sāvakas and pacceka-Buddhas in this world, fulfilling paramis as this is the world of the future Mettaya Buddha already ... At this point, the combined population of five Theravada countries did not add up to 180 million. So we must ask, where are all those people now?<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> In Burmese: “အားလုံး အားလုံး မြတ်စွာဘုရားများလဲ ဟောတော်မူတာပဲ၊ အရိယာမထေရ်မြတ်ကြီးတွေလဲ ဟောတော်မူတာပဲ၊ အားလုံး အားလုံး သူတော်တွေလဲဟောတော်မူတာပဲ၊ ဒီလို နေလိုက်ကြသလားဆိုတော့ အိုး ဒီလိုနေလိုက်ကြတာ မနည်းဘူး!...” ဇနကာဘိဝံသာ၊ အရှင်၊ ၁၉၇၀/၁၃၃၂။

<sup>62</sup> In Burmese: “ဣ-သူတော်ကိုယ်စီ ပါရမီဖြင့် လှည့်လည်နေကြ ဤလောက၌၊ ပတ်ဝန်းကျင်ကလေးကို မကြည့်ပါနဲ့။ ကမ္ဘာကြီးဘယ်လောက်ကျယ်ဝန်းပြီးတော့ ဘယ်လောက်သူတော်ကောင်းတွေများမလဲဆိုတာ တွေးကြည့်စမ်း။ ဘုန်းကြီးက ပြောလေ့ရှိတယ်၊ တွေးလေ့ရှိတယ်၊ ဗုဒ္ဓမြတ်စွာပရိနိဗ္ဗာန်စံသွားပြီ။ အဂ္ဂသာဝကမဟာသာဝကနဲ့တကွ ဘုရားကျောင်းတကာ ကျောင်းအမတွေ အကုန်လုံးတရားရတဲ့သူတွေကြာ၊ ပရိနိဗ္ဗာန်စံတဲ့သူတွေ စံသွားကြပြီ။ ဟို ဘုန်းကြီးတို့ ကျေးတောမှာ သံဃာစင်ပေါ် လူကြီးလူကောင်းတွေထိုင်ပြီးတော့ စာစကား ပြောကြတယ်၊ ဘုန်းကြီးတို့အရပ်မှာ။ အဲဒီလူကြီးတွေ သေသွား တော့ ဒီသံဃာစင်ဟာ လပ်နေသလား၊ မလပ်ပေါင်။ နောက်ထပ်ဒီလိုလူကောင်းပေါ် လာပြန်တာပဲ။

စာစကားပြောကြပြန် တာပဲ။ ဒီလူတွေ ဆုံးသွားတော့ကော၊ မလပ်ပါဘူး နောက်ထပ်လာပြန်တာပဲ။ အဲသလိုပဲ ဘုရား ပရိနိဗ္ဗာန်စံသွားတော့၊ အရိ မေတ္တေယျဘုရားလောင်းက ပွင့်တော်မူမယ်လို့ အဆင်သင့်၊ အရိမေတ္တေယျမြတ်စွာ ဘုရားအလောင်းရဲ့ အဂ္ဂသာဝက၊ မဟာ သာဝက၊ အဂ္ဂသာဝိကာမ၊ မဟာသာဝိကာမတွေက ရဟန္တာဖြစ်ဖို့ရန် အဆင်သင့်။ ခုရှိပြီးပြီ။ ဘာပြုလို့ တုန်းဆိုတော့ လေး သင်္ချေနဲ့ကမ္ဘာတသိန်း ပါရမီဖြည့်ရတဲ့ပုဂ္ဂိုလ်တွေက ဒီကမ္ဘာရောက်၊ ဒီကမ္ဘာပွင့်ကြတော့မယ်။ သူတို့ ပါရမီဖြည့်လို့ရှိပြီ၊ နတ်မှာလား၊ ဗြဟ္မာမှာလား၊ လူမှာလား မပြောနိုင်ဘူး။ အဂ္ဂသာဝကတွေ တသင်္ချေနဲ့ကမ္ဘာတသိန်း ပါရမီဖြည့် ရမယ် သူတို့ ဒီကမ္ဘာရောက်နေပြီ။ အဂ္ဂသာဝကတွေ တသင်္ချေနဲ့ ကမ္ဘာတသိန်း ပါရမီဖြည့်ကြရတယ် သူတို့ဒီကမ္ဘာရောက်နေပြီ ပွင့်ကြ တော့မယ်။ သူတို့ တရားရကြတော့မယ်။ သူတို့ ရှိနေပြီ။ တခါ မဟာသာဝကတွေ၊ ကမ္ဘာတသိန်း ပါရမီဖြည့်ရတယ်။ ဘုရား ကျောင်းဒကာ ကျောင်းအမတွေ ကမ္ဘာတသိန်း ပါရမီဖြည့်ရမယ်။ သူတို့ရှိနေပီ။ ဒီကမ္ဘာရောက်နေကြပြီ။ အဆင်သင့်သူတို့ တရားရကြတော့မယ်။ ... ဘုန်းကြီးက ဒါတွေတွေ့ပီးတော့ အို ကိုယ့်ကိုယ်ကိုယ်ချည်း အထင်ကြီးမနေနဲ့။ ဘုရားအလောင်း တွေ ဒီလောကကြီးထဲရှိနေပီ။ အဂ္ဂသာဝက၊ မဟာသာဝကအလောင်းတွေ ပါရမီ ရင့်ပြီးပြီ။ မြတ်စွာဘုရားရဲ့နောက်တော်ပါ သာဝကတွေ အများကြီး ပါရမီရင့်ပြီးပြီ၊ ရှိနေကြပြီ။ ဗုဒ္ဓမြတ်စွာ တရားဦး ဓမ္မစကြာတရားဦး ဟောတော်မူတော့ကို ဆယ့်ရှစ်ကုဋေ ကျွတ်တမ်းဝင်တယ်။ ဆယ့်ရှစ်ကုဋေဆိုတဲ့ အရေအတွက်ဟာ ဗြဟ္မာချည်းတောင်ပြောတယ်။ ဘုန်းကြီးက နတ်တော့ ပါ၊ ပါလိမ့်ဦးမယ်။ လူကဖြင့် လူအရေအတွက်က ငါးပါးပဲ ပါတယ်။ အဲဒီငါးပါးထဲက တပါးပဲ ကျွတ်တမ်းဝင်တယ် ပထမတရားပွဲမှာ။ နို့ ကျန်တဲ့ ဆယ့်ရှစ်ကုဋေဟာ ဘယ်မှာလဲ နောက်တခါ အရိမေတ္တေယျမြတ်စွာဘုရားရဲ့ တရားပွဲမှာ ဆယ့်ရှစ်ကုဋေ အတိအကျ မဟုတ်ပေမဲ့ ဒီလို အများကြီး ကျွတ်တမ်းဝင်မယ်။ ဒါဖြင့် အဲဒီကျွတ်တမ်းဝင်မဲ့ အလောင်း အလျာတွေဟာ ဗမာတနိုင်ငံလုံး စုတောင် မပြည့်သေးဘူး။ ဟို ယိုးဒယားတို့၊ ကမ္ဘောဒီးယားတို့၊ လာအိုတို့၊ သီဟိုဠ်တို့ ဒီဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာထွန်းကားတဲ့ နိုင်ငံတွေစုတောင် ဆယ့်ရှစ်ကုဋေ မပြည့်သေးဘူး။ အဲတော့ တကယ့်သူတော်ကောင်းတွေ ဘယ်မှာလဲ။ ပေါ့ပေါ့ဆဆ တို့နေထိုက်သလား၊ အများကြီး ပေါ့ပေါ့ဆဆ နေထိုက်သလား။ ဟိုမှာ ပထမ တရားပွဲကျွတ်တမ်း ဝင်မှာ ဆယ့်ရှစ်ကုဋေ၊ ကျွတ်တမ်းဝင်သွားတာ၊ နောက်လဲ



By this, Janakābhivamsa openly says the current Theravada Buddhist population is not enough for the future prophecy, but as this is already the world of the future-Buddha,<sup>63</sup> those who will achieve enlightenment in the future must be somewhere either as human beings or as deities. He mentions this frequently in other books as well, emphasizing the number and thus saying many people must be fulfilling paramis in this world of five Buddhas ‘bhadrakalpa’.<sup>64</sup>

He also implies that people of other faiths may be included in the crowd who will get enlightenment at a later point of time, thus reminding the audience they should not be passive or disinterested about it. In one sermon, he also mentions, “myitta has been the discourse/sermon of the Buddhas, the arahants, and saints”. Again he did not differentiate saints by religion. Here I would like to draw attention to how he mentioned that Jesus Christ taught the discourse of myitta.

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ဒီလိုပေါ့ မတိမ်းမယိမ်းနေကြမှာပဲ။ အဲဒီသတ္တဝါတွေဟာ အခု အဆင်သင့်၊ ကျွတ်တမ်းဝင်ဖို့ရန် ဒီကမ္ဘာမှာ အဆင်သင့်ရှိနေကြပြီ။ ကျွတ်တမ်းဝင်ဖို့ရှိနေပြီ။ တို့ မေ့မေ့လျော့လျော့ ပေါ့ပေါ့ဆဆနဲ့ နေထိုက်သလား။ တို့တတွေ အမှတ်တမဲ့နဲ့ သွားလာ စားသောက်ပြီးတော့ ဟေးလားဝါးလားနဲ့ နေထိုက် သလား။ တို့တတွေဟာ သတိထားပြီးတော့ မနေထိုက်ပါဘူးလား။ အကယ်၍ ဆုများ ကြီးနေလို့မို့ အရိမေတ္တေယျဘုရား လက်ထက် မပါဘူးဆိုတာကတော့ ရှိပစေတော့။ ဆုလဲ မကြီးပါဘဲနဲ့ မပါရဘူးဆိုရလို့ရှိရင်တော့ဖြင့် အင်မတန် ဝမ်းနည်း စရာကောင်းမှာပဲ။ ... ကိုယ့်ကိုယ်ကိုယ် ပါရမီရှင်ဆိုရင်ဖြင့် နေရာတိုင်းမှာ အမှတ်တမဲ့ ပြုမနေစမ်းပါနဲ့၊ သတိနဲ့နေလိုက်စမ်း ပါ။ ကိုယ့်ဟာကိုယ် အခုတောင်မှ ပါရမီကို မရှိသေးဘူးဆိုရင်ဖြင့် ထိုင်ပြီးတော့ ငိုသာနေပါ။ ဘာမှ အသုံးမကျတော့ပါဘူး။ ... ဒီတော့အမှတ်တမဲ့နဲ့တော့ မနေစေချင်ပါဘူး...” ဇနကာဘိဝံသ၊ အရှင်၊ ၁၉၇၀/၁၃၃၂။

<sup>63</sup> This is the world of five buddhas and four buddhas have emerged. The future buddha will be the fifth one by the name of Metteyya Buddha, Buddhavamsa. For more details in Burmese, see စက္ကဝတ္တိသုတ်၊ ၂၀၁၁။ and in English, Bhikkhu Thanissaro (2002).

<sup>64</sup> See ဇနကာဘိဝံသ၊ အရှင်၊ ၂၀၀၁၊ ၆၃-၆၄။ ၂၀၀၆၊ ၃၆။ ၂၀၁၇၊ ၁၀၀။

This discourse is, in fact, an important concept where he tries to incorporate the inclusive angle into the Buddhist framework relating to the prophecy of the coming Buddha, the Mettaya. This can be connected to the discourse mentioned above again that those people who serve with goodwill and self-sacrifice must be the future-to-bes, and also the fact that he can form an excellent admiration of those people, regardless of race and religion. Thus he reminds his audience that as they cannot expect all of the people of five Theravada countries to get enlightenment, there must be a lot of good people waiting for the future in the outside world.

### **The Sermon at the Military Barracks**

Janakābhivamsa was invited to Mingaladon garrison in 1951 to give a talk to the military rank and file and their families. That sermon, renowned as ‘Siq-taq-táya-daw’ (စစ်တပ်တရားတော်, the sermon to the military), shows his values regarding the morality and integrity of military people and how they should respect other faiths.<sup>65</sup> Out of those teachings, I would like to show a few striking examples here.

In this sermon, Mahāgandhārum talks about Dutthagāmani as well, but his sermon, unlike the one by Sitagu in which he misquotes Mahāgandhārum,<sup>66</sup> does not at all mention the infamous comment by Sinhalese monks: “You killed only one and a half beings”.<sup>67</sup> Instead, he urges the rank and file to respect establishments and places of worship of other faiths as much as possible. He says, “Do not offend civilians with over-pride of being a soldier. When some bad monks did improper things, people tend to condemn ‘these monks, these monks’ - the same thing will happen if one soldier in uniform did terrible things”.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Htet Min Lwin, 2018.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> For background information, see: The Mahavamsa, 2007.

<sup>68</sup> “မည်သည့်ဘာသာဝင်မဆို ဆိုင်ရာ ဘာသာဝင်များ၏ အဆောက်အအုံများကိုလည်း စွမ်းနိုင်သမျှ လေးစားကြပါ”။

## Conclusion

This article tries to present a history of inclusive discourses which had their foundation in the understanding of Buddhism. This has been explored by analyzing sermons and different writings of Janakābhivamsa. I argue that Janakābhivamsa's two beliefs—that this world is full of people who will get enlightenment in the future-Buddha's time, exceeding the total number of Theravada Buddhists at that future point; and those good-natured people working for the benefits of the society and the community, regardless of race and religion, are those disciples-to-be of the Buddhas—make him a person with an inclusive mindset.

It cannot be said with numerical accuracy how many people in contemporary Burma/Myanmar have read or listened to his writings and discourses, but looking at the fact that these books are still available in the market and sell well, it looks like people still read these discourses, and that there still is a readership for inclusive discourses within the understanding of Buddhism. These sermons, discourses, and writings must have had a stronger impact when Sayadaw himself was alive, when Sayadaw himself delivered the sermons live to a Buddhist and occasionally non-Buddhist audience, between fifty and seventy years ago. The idea or concept of inclusiveness must have had an impact on those audiences. Hence, it will be fair to draw the inference that these inclusive discourses (and also the idea that the enemies of the *sāsana* are from within) could have been one of the contributing factors to the absence or relative lack of communal tensions and racial/religious hatred against people

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“ငါစစ်သားပဲဆိုတဲ့ မာနနှင့်အရပ်သူအရပ်သားကို မစော်ကားပါနှင့်၊ ဘုန်းကြီးတို့ သင်္ကန်းဝတ်တပါး မတော်မတရား လုပ်နေ တာကို မြင်လျှင် ဘုန်းကြီးတွေဟာ ဘုန်းကြီးတွေဟာ လို့ ဘုန်းကြီးကောင်းတွေပါ အကဲ့ရဲ့ခံရသလို ယူနီဖောင်းဝတ် စစ်သား တယောက် မကောင်းလျှင် အားလုံးပင် အကဲ့ရဲ့ ခံရပါလိမ့်မယ်”။

of other faiths. I would even go further to state that the prevailing discourses of those times were inclusive, and thus it is not surprising that the idea to protect *sāsana* had nothing to do with people of other religions. Of course, more work should be done to prove this broad claim.

To answer why Janakābhivamsa delivered these kinds of inclusive discourses, we can draw tentative conclusions that he was socialized to people of other religions, had contacts/encounters/exchanges with people of other religions although he grew up in a religiously and ethnically homogenous environment of Upper Burma and its monasteries. However, what is more important is how he understands the concept of inclusiveness within the Buddhist framework. Maybe this can be a starting point for people of the Buddhist faith, civil society, and advocates for social and religious inclusion to spread his quintessentially Buddhist ideas of inclusion for the future social and religious harmony in Myanmar. Researching and making these kinds of inclusive discourses publicly known is an attractive way to refute the hateful speeches and discourses that try to scapegoat religious minorities in the country for what some people think is the resentful situation Buddhism might have encountered throughout history in Myanmar. Janakābhivamsa's inclusive discourses pave the way for more inclusive discourses by Buddhist monks and society at large and for more research on similar inclusive discourses in history.

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ဃောသိတ၊ အရှင်။(၂၀၀၃)။ တစ်ဘဝသာသနာ  
 (စတုတ္ထအကြိမ်)။မဟာဂန္ဓာရုံစာပေ။  
 စက္ကဝတ္ထိသုတ်။(၂၀၁၁)။ပါထိကဝဂ်ပါဠိတော်မြန်မာပြန်၊ စာ ၄၉-  
 ၇၀။သာသနာရေးဦးစီးဌာန၊  
 ကမ္ဘာအေးစာပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။

နေကာဘိဝံသ၊ အရှင်။ (၁၉၇၀/၁၃၃၂) ။မေတ္တာဘာဝနာတရားတော်  
(MP3)။

<http://dhammadownload.com/MP3Library/MahagandaryoneSayadawAshinJanakavamsa/DVD-01/075-AshinJanakabhivamsa-MyitaBawanar.mp3>

နေကာဘိဝံသ၊

အရှင်။(၁၉၉၂)။ဘာသာသွေး(ပစ္စမအကြိမ်)။နယူးဘားမားအော့(ဖ်)  
ဆက်ပိဋက ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။

နေကာဘိဝံသ၊ အရှင်။(၁၉၉၇)

။ဘာသာရေးပြဿနာများအဖြေနှင့်စစ်တပ်တရားတော်။  
မဟာဂန္ဓာရုံစာပေ။

နေကာဘိဝံသ၊ အရှင်။ (၂၀၀၀က) ။တစ်ဘဝသံသရာ

(တတိယအကြိမ်)။ နယူးဘားမားအော့(ဖ်)ဆက်ပိဋကပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။

နေကာဘိဝံသ၊ အရှင်။(၂၀၀၁) ။ဗုဒ္ဓါနုဿတိဘာဝနာ (သတ္တမအကြိမ်)

။ နယူးဘားမားပိဋကပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။

နေကာဘိဝံသ၊ အရှင်။(၂၀၀၃)။အနာဂတ်သာသနာရေး

(ဒွါဒသမအကြိမ်)။ နယူးဘားမားအော့(ဖ်)ဆက်ပိဋကပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။

နေကာဘိဝံသ၊ အရှင်။(၂၀၀၆)

။ဓမ္မစကြာတရားတော်နှင့်အနတ္တလက္ခဏသုတ်တရားတော်  
(ပစ္စမအကြိမ်)။မဟာဂန္ဓာရုံစာပေ။

နေကာဘိဝံသ၊ အရှင်။(၂၀၁၇)။ကံဉာဏ်ဝီရိယပြည့်စုံမှု။ပါရမီစာပေ။

မာနိတသိရိ၊ ဥျး နှင့်

နန္ဒမာလာဘိဝံသ၊ ဥျး။ (၂၀၁၅)။ စံကင်းဆရာတော်ဂုရုပုတ္တိကထာ( တတိယအကြိမ်)။ ပဉ္စဂံစာပေ။

ဝါသေဋ္ဌဘိဝံသ၊ အရှင်။ (၂၀၁၁)။ ပရိတ်ကြီးနိဿယသစ် (နဝမအကြိမ်)။ မိခင်ဧရာဝတီ။

သံဝရာလင်္ကာရ၊ အရှင်။ (၂၀၁၄)။ အရှင်ဇနကာဘိဝံသ၏ဘာသာအမြင်၊ သာသနာအမြင်၊ (ဒုတိယအကြိမ်)။ လင်းလွန်းခင်စာပေတိုက်။

ဟုတ်စိန်၊ ဦး ။ (၁၉၅၄)။ ပါဠိ-မြန်မာအဘိဓာန်။  
ပြည်ထောင်စုမြန်မာနိုင်ငံတော်အစိုးရ  
စာပုံနှိပ်ရေးနှင့်စာရေးကိရိယာဌာန။