

**ALL BEINGS GATHERED HERE :  
COSMOLOGY AND RITUAL IN THE MAHĀ PIRIT POTA**

*By*

CAROL S. ANDERSON

*University of Chicago / University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka*

The central argument of this paper is that a close reading of the three major suttas in the Mahā Pirit Pota, the Mahāmagalam Sutta, the Ratana Sutta and the Karaniyametta Sutta, reveals a cosmological structure that enfolds all beings, from the lay person to the arahant and all bhutas, devas and other living beings, within the Buddha's cosmos. All beings worship the Buddha, and one of the ways in which these beings are related to humans is through a ritual exchange in which the offering to the deities is rewarded with metta, loving kindness, and diligent protection. This analysis is, in turn, used to critique two studies by Dr. Lily De Silva and Dr. Michael Ames. These two scholars limit their conception of Sinhalese Buddhism by excluding certain beings and certain rituals from their definitions of Buddhism.

The Mahā Pirit Pota, or the Catubhānavārapāli, has long been a popular subject for study in Theravada Buddhism. One need only glance at the list of works in the preface to Lily De Silva's monograph on the Paritta to realize this. My own interest in the Mahā Pirit Pota comes from the field of the history of religions and the topics of cosmology and ritual. I am thus eager to examine the three major suttas of the Pirit collection for insights into Sinhalese Buddhist cosmology and ritual practices. In the following pages I argue that there are discernable structures in the Mahāmagalam Sutta, the Ratana Sutta and the Karaniyametta Sutta that reveal something of the Buddhist cosmos and the place of ritual within that universe. These structures stand as correctives to the popular assumptions that lie behind the work of two well-known scholars of Theravada Buddhism, Lily De Silva and Michael Ames.

These two scholars are representative of the sort of work that has been done by both Sri Lankans and non-Sri Lankans in the past three decades. As such their work can be used to reflect upon the current assumptions made about Sinhalese Buddhism, ritual and magic. An analysis of these assumptions provides a starting point for understandings of the Mahā Pirit Pota. There are three sections in this paper. First, through a close reading of two well-known works by De Silva and Ames, I will argue that their conceptions of Buddhism do not adequately embrace the ritual exchanges between gods and humans found in the suttas of the Mahā Pirit. Secondly, I analyze the three suttas for the

shape of the cosmology embodied in the texts, and for the place and function of ritual. Finally, in the discussion of these findings I use the cosmology of the Mahā Pirit to reassess the contributions of De Silva and Ames.

### Conceptions of Sinhalese Buddhism

In her monograph on the Paritta ceremony, De Silva writes the following paragraph. This is the basis for my analysis of her images of Sinhalese Buddhism. Though long, the reader's patience should be rewarded by the richness of the content!

The common factor which runs through all these forms (of the Mahā Pirit ceremony) is the recitation of suttas from the Paritta text. . . . This is the indispensable feature in a paritta ceremony. Intelligent monks and laymen believe that paritta recited even by oneself, while reflecting on the meaning of the suttas, and conducting oneself according to the precepts of virtue is as effective as paritta recited with ceremonial paraphernalia, if not more so. Elements of current folk magical practices are absorbed into the paritta ceremony as external embellishments to satisfy the anxiety of the masses, who hope for magic to work at times of disaster. The efficacy of paritta nevertheless does not depend on the accompanying ritual. It is the practice among devoted Buddhists to recite one of the Suttas belonging to the Mahā Pirit group every day either individually or collectively together with members of the family, at evening meditation or at bed time.<sup>1</sup>

In this selection there are several oppositions that can be extracted. First, De Silva distinguishes between the recitation of the suttas alone by monks and laymen, and reflection upon the virtues, and the recitation "with ceremonial paraphernalia." Secondly she separates the intelligent monks and laity from the masses "who hope for magic at times of disaster." Finally, she sets individual apart from the masses; the paritta can be recited "by oneself" or within the family, but the ritual that accompanies the paritta is for the masses. This set of assumptions falls into this configuration:

recitation of texts and reflection on virtue, by intellectual monks and laymen alone or with the family	recitation of texts with ritual accompaniment to satisfy the anxiety of the masses who hope for magic.
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It requires little rhetorical analysis to see which of these models De Silva prefers; clearly she finds the value of the paritta ceremony to rest in the message of the suttas themselves. Intellect, individuals and texts *versus* anxiety, masses, magic and ritual.

Magic is a pitfall into which Buddhism slipped during the Kandyan period, according to De Silva. "There was," she writes, "a preoccupation with Brahmanical magical practices."<sup>2</sup> This comment enables us to look more closely

at her assumptions about ritual and magic. The following sentence is quite revealing: "[I]f ritualism and ceremonialism cannot be wiped off from society and if the need for them has to be accepted as a psychological and social phenomenon, it is better to have them with a Buddhist stamp and favour, rather than borrow them wholesale from another culture."<sup>3</sup> De Silva appears to see no place for ritual in an ideal religion. But if we must have ritual in Buddhism, she says, better to have a Buddhist ritual than magic. For this scholar, then, Buddhism is ideally the recitation and reflection upon texts by intelligent monks and laymen, and is largely a solitary endeavour. It is clearly set apart from the anxiety of the masses who desire magic in the Mahā Pirit ceremony.

Michael Ames, in his foundational article "Ritual Pretestations and the Structure of Sinhalese Pantheon," doesn't write about the paritta ceremony or the Mahā Pirit Pota. What he does do is provide a provocative structure for the understanding of Sinhalese Buddhism. He is an anthropologist and this paper was first presented at a conference on Theravada Buddhism at the University of Chicago in 1962. He argues, to begin with, for a return to the structural study of religion, for a treatment of the religious system as an independent social system like the family, political and economic systems. "This is what I call a structuralist approach to spirit beliefs," he writes. "Binary symbols are elusive; spirits cannot be seen; but ritual transactions can be counted and examined in this field."<sup>4</sup>

Ames does just that: counts ritual transactions. His basic distinction is between non-reciprocal and reciprocal transactions. The first category is comprised of the following actions: (1) venerating the Buddha (2) alms-giving; (3) preaching sermons; (4) transferring merit; (5) giving respect; and (6) giving assistance. As is evident from this list, non-reciprocal transactions are set apart from "... all others by the manifest intent to earn merit (*pina*) through one's own virtuous deeds."<sup>5</sup> The purpose of reciprocal transactions, on the other hand, is to "fulfill or terminate a contract or 'bargain' with alter."<sup>6</sup> Ames enumerates three basic units of reciprocal transactions: (1) pure offerings made to deviyas; (2) pure and polluted offerings given to planetary deities (*graha deviyas*) and (3) polluted offerings given to goblins (*yakas*). Non-reciprocal transactions are enacted between humans and Buddha while reciprocal transactions are exchanged between humans and gods and *yakas*. The first is done to earn merit through one's own actions, and the second is enacted in order to gain something from the deity or to avert trouble.

Ames' theoretical framework is Durkheimian, and thus he make the move to tie these two kinds of transactions to the categories of the sacred and profane. Of non-reciprocal transactions, he says: "This is giving with the intent of earning merit; it is therefore a meritorious, Buddhist or 'sacred' kind of transaction."<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, reciprocal exchanges are "propitiary magical, or 'profane' kinds of transactions."<sup>8</sup> The central methodological point for Ames is this:

But the fact that everyone, including the Sinhalese stresses this dichotomy in their religion seems to me to be coincident with Durkheim's contention that 'in all history of human thought there exist no other example of two categories of things so profoundly differentiated or so radically opposed to one another' as the contrast between sacred and profane.<sup>9</sup>

As an anthropologist Ames is naturally aware of the distinction between those 'outside' a given culture or religion and those 'inside'. In Sinhalese Buddhism he has found a point at which the categories of sacred and profane intersect with the Sinhalese notions of *lokottara saranagenima* and *laukika saranagenima*, that is 'taking refuge in the supramundane'—Buddhism—and 'taking refuge in the worldly'—magical-animism.<sup>10</sup> Thus transactions that lead to the acquisition of merit through offerings to the Buddha are Buddhist and sacred. Transactions that are designed to benefit both the human and the other being engaged in the exchange are profane, for they do not involve the supramundane realm of the Buddha.

Unlike De Silva, Ames's conceptions of "Buddhism" do not exclude ritual—he recognizes that non-reciprocal transactions are rituals just as reciprocal transactions. But like De Silva, he too sets Buddhism apart from the exchanges and bargains with gods and yakas. Buddhism is sacred and magic is profane—this is a classification which accords with De Silva's conceptions of Buddhism. Ames does not discuss the motivation for individual participation in rituals, and so we have nothing to compare with De Silva's notions of individualism *versus* mass behaviour, or rationalism *versus* emotion. Each scholar, however, sees a chasm between "Sinhalese Buddhism"—sacred, merit-oriented and involving transactions or reflections on the Buddha—and magic—profane, reciprocal exchanges between the gods or yakas and humans for one's own gain. The question I ask now is whether this characterization is adequate for an understanding of the Mahā Pirit Pota.

### **The Cosmos of the Mahā Pirit**

When we turn to the Mahā Pirit, a contradiction immediately springs to mind. The objective of this collection is, in De Silva's own words, "to ward off danger and assure protection and bless the sponsors." She continues: "As warding off danger and assuring protection, peace and well-being are the main objectives. Paritta can best be described as a prophylactic ceremony."<sup>11</sup> In the introduction to Lokuliyana's edition of the Mahā Pirit Pota, he cites E. J. Thomas on the nature of dharanis or spells:

'(Dhāraṇis or) Spells form an important part of popular Buddhism; but they have nothing in themselves peculiarly characteristic of Buddhism. They are a form of sympathetic magic, which consists in asserting (along with certain ritual actions) that a certain wished for event is taking place

and by the power of the word it is supposed that if every detail is properly performed the event does happen.' In the recital of the parittas too the listeners are not particularly expected to understand the words uttered. The mere power of the words wards off evil or brings good luck. Of course, in contrast to the dhāraṇīs which are lists of meaningless words, the parittas are meaningful.<sup>12</sup>

A set of meaningful texts designed to ward off all evil and assure protection that involves the gods and all beings—how can this, according to De Silva and Ames, be a Buddhist ceremony?

De Silva offers a thorough and detailed analysis of the Paritta ceremony, and it is to her work that I will now turn. De Silva's monograph is most useful for her analysis of the component items used in the ceremony. She weaves together, with the ease of familiarity, inscriptional, textual and other archeological evidence to examine the history and present meaning of this practice. This paper seeks only to examine her interpretation of the function of the Paritta ceremony; the complex historical questions do not fall within the scope of these pages. De Silva's analysis of the function of the Mahā Pirit rests in the human need for prayer and ritual. She writes :

Buddhism recognizes no omniscient all-mighty God who listens to man's prayers and whose good will can be evoked by prayer and ritual. But within the framework of Buddhism a substitute for prayer and ritual had to be evolved, if Buddhism was to respond to the religious sentiments of the populace; a substitute which was not contradictory from the philosophical standpoint of Buddhism. Besides other forms of popular worship such as the invocation of Hindu gods for help and favours; bodhipuja, etc., paritta is the most important ritual which evolved in response to this deep psychological demand. And indeed it satisfies all the psychological and social functions that prayer and ritual achieve in other religions. As demonstrated earlier, paritta is a prophylactic and benedictive ceremony. Its psychological function is to raise the efficiency and self-confidence of the individual to face a crisis, or carry through a project the success of which is not completely within his knowledge and capability.<sup>13</sup>

This is an argument that favours the psychological and social interpretation of religion over the philosophical or theological. The pirit ceremony fulfills social and psychological needs, but De Silva is not prepared to admit that it is a ceremony that rests at the very heart of Sinhalese Buddhism. For De Silva, the most significant function of the paritta is the moral influence it exerts on Buddhists, not in the ritual itself.

De Silva writes that the canonical texts and the content of the suttas are significant for "the profound meaning embodying ethical values and philosophical ideas."<sup>14</sup> This is consistent with her characterization of the ways in

which the paritta ceremony is practised by intelligent monks and laymen and by anxious masses. The lacuna in this study, however, is a detailed analysis of the very suttas themselves and the ways in which they “embody ethical values and philosophical ideas.” What are these teachings? De Silva gives brief summaries, but presumes that her audience shares her assumptions about the ethical understanding of Buddhism and thus fails to look more closely at the evidence of the suttas that laymen and monks recite and reflect upon.

The three major texts of the Mahā Pirit Pota are the Mahāmangalam Sutta, the Ratana Sutta and the Karaniyamettā Sutta. In the next few pages I will examine these texts for answers to these questions: What is taught? To whom is it taught? For what reasons are these things taught? These questions are asked in order to determine if the texts themselves provide any assistance to understand the apparent contradiction between these texts as “prophylactic” and De Silva’s and Ame’s interpretations of Sinhalese Buddhism. This analysis is a literary analysis; the authority of these Mahā Pirit texts lies in their canonicity and I make no argument for the date of the Khuddaka Nikāya in which they are found. The examination of each sutta follows, and then the discussion of the findings.

The Mahāmangalam Sutta is the first of these suttas. It is taught for both gods and humans—a deity comes to the Jetavana to ask the Buddha what the most auspicious is, for both gods and humans.

Bahū devā manussā ca  
Mangalāni acintayum  
Акаукнамānā sothhānam,  
Brūmi Mangalam uttamam.

Many gods and humans  
Have thought upon the auspicious,  
Eager for happiness;  
Tell us about the most auspicious.

The Buddha’s answer comes in the remaining eleven verses. The most auspicious range from “lay ethics,” as De Silva describes them, to the highest point of nibbāna. This list includes: having done pūja in a former life, maintaining suitable living quarters; discipline, well-spoken words, dāna, right livelihood, caring for relatives, faultless and blameless work—all of these teachings can be described loosely as “lay ethics.” There is also a series of lines concerning dhamma: watchfulness in dhamma, listening to dhamma at the proper time, and discussion of dhamma at the proper time. Austerity and following the brahmācariya, seeing the Four Noble Truths and realizing nibbāna and remaining steadfast in the world finish the verses in which the Buddha teaches the deity about the most auspicious. The final stanza explains why these teachings are important.

Etādisāni katvāna  
Sabbattham aparājita  
Sabbattha sothhim gacchanti, tam,  
Tesam mangalam uttaram ’ti.

Having done what is said above,  
undefeated everywhere  
In all places, they go to happiness,  
For these, that is the most auspicious.

The purpose for which the Buddha recited this sutta, then, is the attainment of happiness for both gods and humans through the most auspicious acts.

The Ratana Sutta is the second in the Mahā Pirit. While the Mahāmaṅgalam Sutta confined its audience to the Buddha, gods and humans, this sutta is addressed to “whatever beings are gathered here.” The Buddha opens the sutta :

Yānidha bhūtāni samāgatāni  
 Bhummāni vā yāniva antalikkhe  
 Sabb’eva bhūtā sumanā bhavantu;  
 Atho’pi sakkacca suṇantu bhāsitam.

Whatever beings are gathered here,  
 of the earth or of the air  
 May all these beings be happy,  
 now let them listen with care to what is said.

In this sutta the participants aren’t simply introduced, as in Mahāmangalam Sutta, but the precise set of relations between these beings is laid out in the next verse:

Tasmā hi bhūtā nisāmetha sabbe  
 Mettam karotha mānusiya pajāya  
 Divā ca ratto ca haranti ye balim;  
 Tasmā hi ne rakkhatha appamattā

Therefore, indeed, let all beings listen;  
 Have loving-kindness toward the human beings  
 who carry the sacrifice by day and by night  
 Therefore, indeed, protect them with diligence.

The beings to whom humans make offerings are to return the sacrifice with protection. Indeed, this entire sutta can be read as instructions to beings who are *not* human, for it is the beings who reply in the last stanzas: “Tathāgatam devamanussapūjitam/Buddham namassāma suvatthi hotu!” (The Buddha is worshipped by gods and humans; we worship the Buddha. May there be happiness!) The Dhamma and Sangha are revered in the following two verses. These beings, then, are brought into the fold of Buddhism through their praise of the Triple Gem.

The remaining verses extoll the virtues of the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha. Three verses are addressed to the Buddha as the jewel. The first sets the Tathāgata higher than any earthly or heavenly wealth. The second reverses the Buddha as the Noble One who taught the highest Dhamma, and the third verse describes the Buddha as “the Noble One, the Knower of what is Noble, the Giver of what is Noble, and the Taker of what is Noble.” The refrain for each of these verses is the standard line for the entire sutta:

Idam'pi Buddhē ratanam paṇitam  
Etena saccena suvatthi hotu!

This jewel in the Buddha is excellent,  
With this truth may there be happiness!

There are two verses in which the Dhamma is held up; the first describes that which the Buddha attained, namely, "whatever is extinction, dispassionate, immortal and excellent." The second focuses on concentration that is praised by the Buddha. Each of the Buddha and Sangha, then, have these jewels that warrant praise worship by all the beings gathered there.

There are seven verses devoted to the jewels of the Sangha. These are focussed on humans who have attained to various states. For example, "whatever eight praised by good people," "those who have attained, have plunged into immortality," the one who sees the Four Noble Truths and those who have become dispassionate. All of these humans are those who have attained at least to the level of stream-enterer (sotāpanna).<sup>15</sup> All of these people are jewels in the Sangha and are to be worshipped as the beings do in the final stanzas.

These are the teachings and the participants found in the Ratana Sutta, what now is the purpose for which they are taught? The unambiguous message is for the happiness of all beings, as the spirits reply "Suvatthi hotu!" But the other request is found in the second line, when the Buddha asks the beings to return the offerings or sacrifices of humans with diligent protection. And then by the end of the sutta, these beings are brought within the larger circle of those who worship the Buddha. The purpose seems to bring these beings into the company of those who revere the Buddha, but also to assure their protection for those mortals who depend upon them.

The last sutta of the Mahā Pirit is the Karaṇīyametta Sutta. In short, this sutta can be summarized as De Silva does—the necessity of metta for all creatures. The fourth and fifth verses describe the audience:

Ye keci pāṇabhūt'atthi  
Thasā vā thāvarā vā anavasesā  
Dighā vā yemahantā vā  
Majjhimā, rassakāṇukathulā

Ditthā vā yeva additthā  
Ye ca dūre vasanti avidūre  
Bhūtā vā sambhavesī vā  
Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā

Who are living beings  
Trembling, firm or any other  
Long in shape, or huge  
mid-sized, short, atom-sized or fat;



Seen or unseen  
 those who live far or near  
 Those who exist and who desire existence  
 May all beings be happy.

Unlike the Ratana Sutta, these beings are not asked to uphold their end of an exchange, instead, all beings are enjoined to develop an unlimited thought of loving-kindness toward all beings.

The stanzas can be separated into three sets; the first set which focuses on daily behaviour and actions, the second set which enumerates the beings addressed (see above), and the third that teach the need for loving-kindness. The first three stanzas are addressed to one "concerned with one's own welfare" (*atthakusalo*). Such a person should be upright (*ujū*), well-spoken or compliant (*suvaco*) and easily supported (*subharo*). Neither should this one engage in mean acts (*na ca khuddam samācare kiñci*). This attention on daily conduct is the content of this first set of verses. The second has to be dealt with above; "May all beings, of whatever size or shape, may these beings be happy!" paraphrases this message. The final set of five stanzas lay out instructions for cultivating metta: "do not wish misery on each other," "Just as a mother protects her own child, so too should beings develop the unlimited thought." The thought is to be developed with no obstacle, and at all times, standing, walking, sitting or lying down. The one who does this will not be born again. This sutta, then, is addressed to one who desires no rebirth in the future, and who is "athakusalo" or skilled in their own welfare. The way to this end is clearly the cultivation of metta toward all beings. And indeed, the sutta, like the Ratana and the Mahāmaṅgalaṃ, brings living beings within the fold of the Buddha's teachings on loving-kindness.

### **Sinhalese Buddhism, Cosmology and Ritual: Discussion**

After this brief summary and analysis of the three suttas of the Maha Pirit it is time to return to the questions posed at the outset. The argument of this paper is that these suttas provide a structure of the cosmology and ritual that checks the conceptions of Sinhalese Buddhism held by De Silva and Ames. What, then, is this structure?

The first component of the cosmology is the members, the participants in the cosmos. The Buddha reigns supreme, as seen from all the suttas, but perhaps less clearly in the Karaniyametta Sutta. He is the speaker in all three, the one who teaches the most auspicious, and the jewels and the importance of metta. Surrounding the Buddha are devas and humans in the Mahāmaṅgalaṃ Sutta, all beings "gathered here" in the Ratana Sutta and all beings who exist in the Karaniyametta Sutta. This is a fundamental point; no qualitative difference is made between humans and all existing beings (*pānabhūt'atthi*). In the Mahāmaṅgalaṃ Sutta the most auspicious are auspicious for gods and

humans. In the Karaṇīyametta Sutta all beings are to cultivate metta—all beings of whatever shape or spiritual attainment (thasā vā thāvarā vā anavasesā). And similarly the beings or spirits addressed in the Ratana Sutta are brought into the world of the Buddha as they worship the Triple Gem. Thus, the cosmos of the Mahā Pirit revolves around the Buddha, and all beings are taught, not simply humans or devas or other bhūtas, but “whoever are living beings.”

The second point is to look at the relationship between the different beings found in this cosmos of the Buddha. It has been shown above that the Buddha reigns supreme in this universe, and by the strength of his teachings he brings all existing beings within his reach. But the second stanza of the Ratana Sutta gives us further insight into the precise relations between “whatever beings are gathered here” and humans:

Tasmā hi, bhūtā nisāmetha sabbe  
mettam karotha mānusiya pajāya  
Divā ca ratto ca haranti ye balim;  
Tasmā hi, ne rakkhatha appamattā

Therefore, indeed, let all beings listen  
Have loving-kindness toward human beings,  
who carry the sacrifice by day and by night  
Therefore, indeed, protect them with diligence.

This verse enumerates nothing less than Ames’s reciprocal transaction, and indeed, the Buddha makes the request that the gods and beings fulfill their bargain with diligence! This sutta, like the Karaṇīyametta Sutta, brings the very set of profane exchanges that Ames excluded from his “sacred Buddhism” within the Buddhist cosmos. And as the sutta concludes, the beings seal that invitation with their worship of the Buddha:

Yānidha bhūtāni sāmagatāni,  
Bhummāni vā yāni’va antalikkhe,  
Tathāgataṃ devamanussapūjitaṃ  
Buddhaṃ namassāma suvatthi hotu !

Whatever beings gathered here,  
of the earth or of the air,  
The Tathāgata was worshipped by gods and humans,  
May we worship the Buddha, May there be happiness!

The last two verses are exact repetitions of this, save that the beings worship the Dhamma and the Sangha as well. All beings worship the Triple Gem, and in turn their protection of humans is enjoined by the Buddha.

The second verse of the Ratana Sutta requires closer examination, “Mettam karotha mānusiya pajāya / Divā ca ratto ca haranti ye balim”. *Bali* is a “religious offering, oblation” that is used in the Anguttara Nikāya as the *balipaṇca*,

the fivefold offering to kinsmen, guests, the dead, the king and the gods.<sup>17</sup> A *balikamma* is an “offering of food to bhūtas, devas and others.” Here seems to be clear evidence that, contrary to both De Silva and Ames, offerings to *bhūtas* and *deviyās* does fall within the sphere of Buddhism, at least in this Buddhist cosmos. This sutta does not condemn this practice, but rather grants it the sanction of asking the beings to return the offerings with metta and protection. This cosmos can be thought of as an umbrella, perhaps, with the Buddha casting his teachings over all beings and bringing them all into his universe.

This is evident too in the humans that are among the participants in this cosmos. “Humans” are not simply “human as a group,” but are humans with different degrees of attainment. For example, in the Mahāmaṅgala Sutta the teachings are directed toward the laity—blameless jobs supporting relations, having done pūjā in a previous birth. In the Karaṇīyametta Sutta, too, the verses are addressed to one who is “atthakusalo” (concerned with one’s own welfare). The instruction here, though, refer to one engaged in the monastic life.

Santussako ca subharo ca  
Appakicco ca sallahukavutti;  
Santindriyo ca nipako ca,  
Appagabbho kulesu ananugiddho.

Happy and supported with ease,  
of few duties and light livelihood,  
of calmed senses and wise,  
Not aggressive nor attached to families.

Thus “humans” include the laity, as well as those in the monastic life. In the Ratana Sutta this list of ‘kind’ of humans is extended, for the jewels in the saṅgha are various individuals who have reached at least the level of stream-enterer (sotāpanna), and also arahants.<sup>18</sup> Alongside all beings who exist, all kinds of humans at all levels of spiritual attainment are found in this cosmos. To return to the conceptions gleaned from De Silva no distinction is made between “intelligent monks and laymen” and “anxious masses wanting magic”—all are to practice the highest auspice and to worship the Triple Gem and to cultivate metta. And also for all the goal is the same; greater happiness and, in the Karaṇīyametta Sutta, never to be conceived in a womb again.

To conclude this argument, the circle must be completed. Beginning with the work of De Silva and Ames, it was seen that they both rejected “magic” and certain kinds of rituals from their understandings of Sinhalese Buddhism, in particular the reciprocal rituals. Though De Silva recognizes the gods and bhūtas in the Buddhist worldview (unlike Ames), she is still reluctant to realize that those deities and the exchanges they make with humans are central to the

cosmos found in the Mahā Pirit. In the last analysis, this contradiction between the popular conceptions of Sinhalese Buddhism and the "prophylactic" character of the Mahā Pirit is resolved within the pirit suttas themselves: all ritual, all beings—human and other—are brought into the Buddha's cosmos.

## NOTES

1. Lily de Silva, "Paritta: A Historical and Religious Study of the Buddhist Ceremony for Peace and Prosperity," *Spolia Zeylanica*, vol. 36, 1981, p. 31.
2. *ibid.*, p. 143.
3. *ibid.*
4. Michael M. Ames, "Ritual Presentations and the Structure of the Sinhalese Pantheon" in *Anthropological Studies in Theravada Buddhism* (eds., M. Nash, *et al.*), (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1962), p. 29.
5. *ibid.*, p. 32.
6. *ibid.*
7. *ibid.*, p. 34.
8. *ibid.*
9. *ibid.*, p. 37 and Emile Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. J. W. Swain (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1915), p. 38.
10. *ibid.*, p. 37.
11. De Silva, p. 5.
12. Lionel Lokuliyana, trans. *Catubhānavārapāli: The Text of the Four Recitals or Maha Pirit Pota: The Great Book of Protections* (Colombo: Mrs. H. M. Gunasekera Trust), p.v.
13. De Silva, p. 139.
14. *ibid.*, p. 143.
15. Ratana Sutta, vv. 6 - 11, 14.
16. Karaniyametta Sutta, vv. 6-10.
17. *Pāli-English Dictionary*, ed. Rhys-Davids, "bali", (London) Pali Text Society, 1986.
18. See page 94 above.