

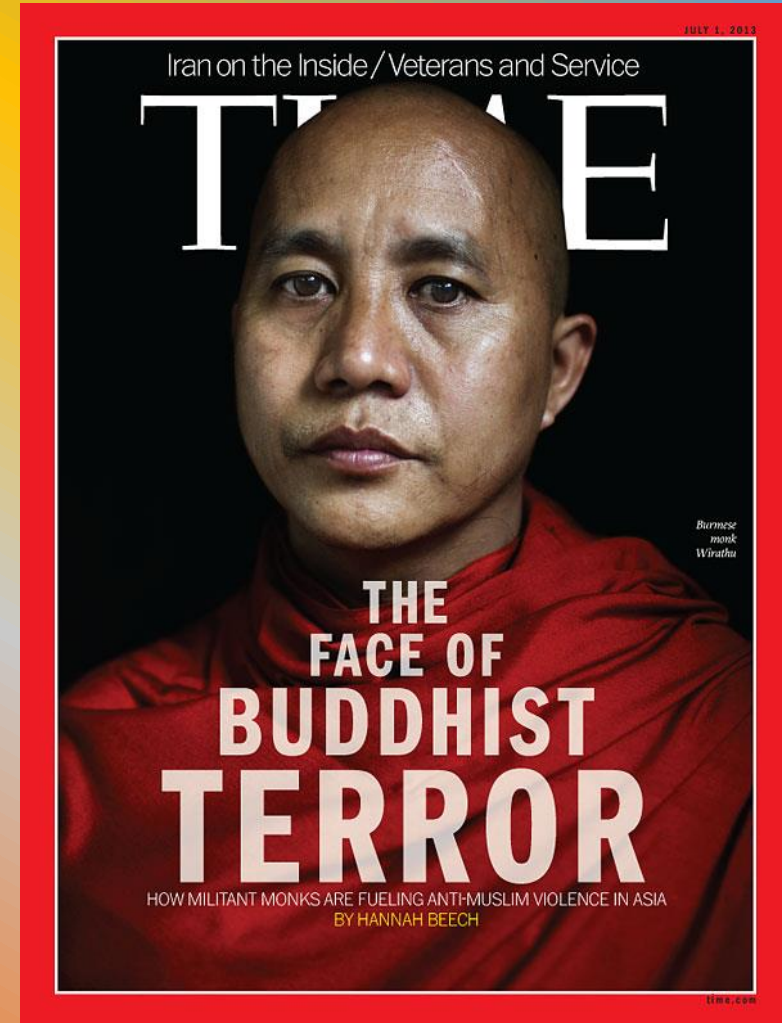


Political Buddhism & its oppressions

Speaker:

Hein Htet Kyaw (Abu Bakr)

- Spokesperson, Burmese Atheists
- Ex-Buddhist and Ex-Muslim
- Prepared for “atheist meet up presentation” hosted by **Atheist Society Melbourne.**





Political Buddhism & its threat against Secularism

- The imperialism of USA (against Soviet during cold war and its communism) leads these countries with Pan-Buddhism or political Buddhism.
 - Thailand
 - Myanmar (Burma)
 - Sri Lanka



Political Buddhism and Sri Lanka



Case studies

Sri Lanka

Conflict Stakeholders

Majority Buddhists

- Sinhalese

Majority Christians

- Tamils

Muslims

Reasons for Conflicts

- The rights of an independent state
- Sinhalese Ultrationalism

Discussed by Hein Htet Kyaw (Abu Bakr)

This bright, beautiful island was made into a Paradise by the Aryan Sinhalese before its destruction was brought about by the barbaric vandals. Its people did not know irreligion...

Christianity and polytheism are responsible for the vulgar practices of killing animals, stealing, prostitution, licentiousness, lying and drunkenness –

Anagarika Dharmapala
Father of Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalism, 1893



Case studies

Sri Lanka

Digging the Roots

Colonialism & Christianity

- The spread of colonial Christianity sparks the reactionary ultra nationalistic agenda of Sinhalese Buddhists.

Islamisation (Global Jihad & Caliphate Project)

- Afghanistan used to be Buddhists. ISIS destroyed Buddha statues and the incidents of Saint Sebastian Church.

Sinhalese Nationalism

- Go to Lanka, Protect Lanka, Sinhala race, Protect Buddhism 5000years (Mahavansa)

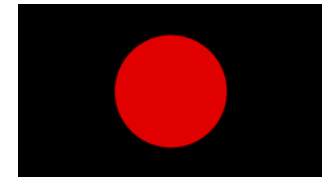
Digging the Roots

Racism

British favoured Tamils over majority Sinhala

Anti-Tamil Program 1958 & Tamil Exodus

- Sinhalese rioters led by Buddhism monks killed 1500 Tamils.
- Independent Tamil nation.
- Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (Tamil Tigers)
- Dravida Nadu (Dravidar Kazhagam)



Political Buddhism and Myanmar (Burma)



Case studies

Myanmar

Digging the Roots

Colonialism & Christianity

- The spread of colonial Christianity sparks
- Debates between Buddhism & Christianity

Xenophobia

- Colonial British India governed Myanmar under British-India.
- Anti-Indian (anti-Kalar) xenophobia
- Anti-Muslim racism & Anti-Rohingya racism.

Burmese Nationalism

- Protecting Theravada Buddhism.

Racism

- Burmese Chauvinism.

Religious Sectarianism

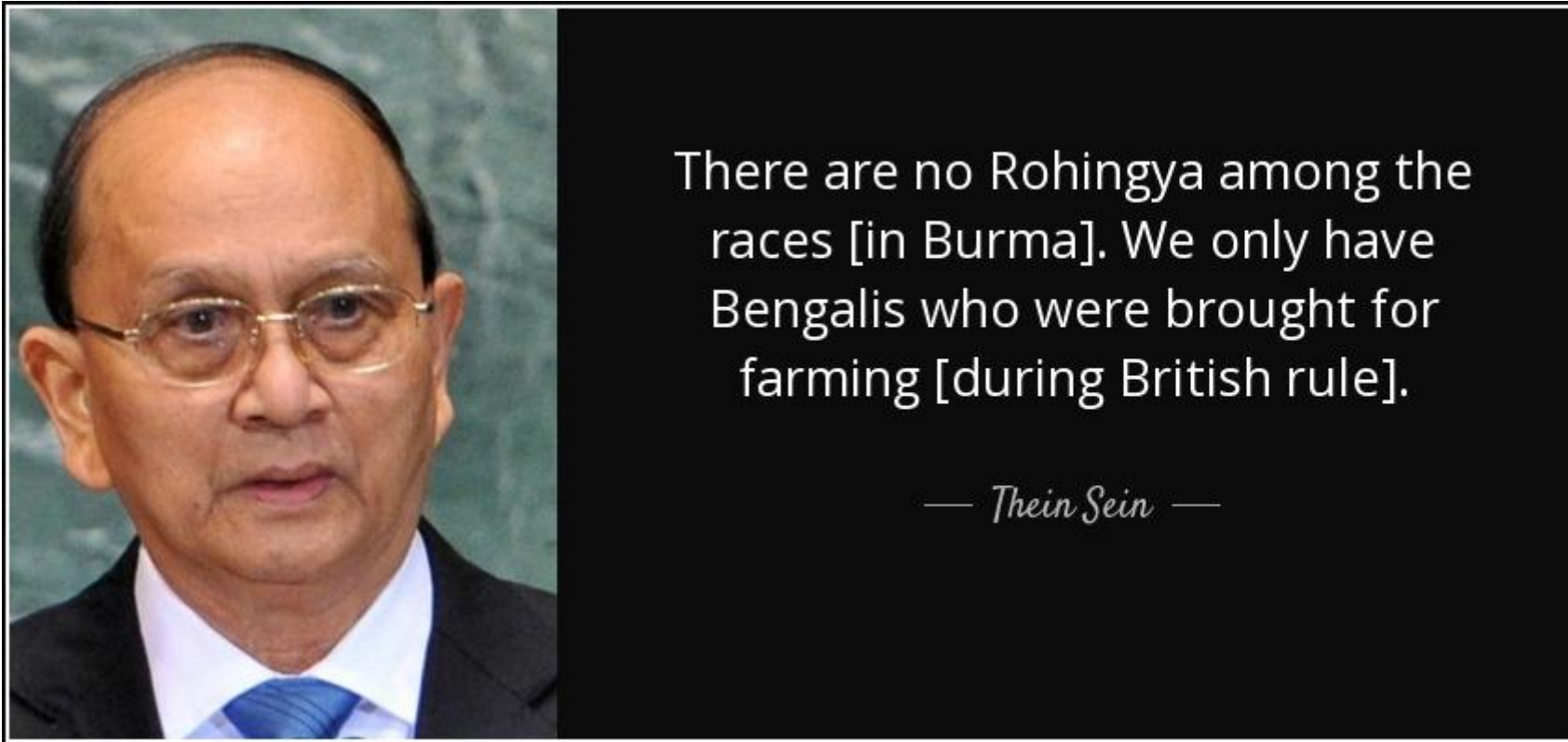
- Theravada Superiority Complex over Mahayana Buddhism and so on.

Segregation

- Sex, Race, Gender and Religion



Example of false claims and xenophobic remarks against Rohingya





Case studies on **Rohingya Exodus**

Understanding Rohingya's exodus

- 2012, Ma Thidar Htwe's case
- [Documentary on 969 movement](#)

Rohingya exodus

- Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army was founded in 2016.
- Rohingya Solidarity Organisation was founded in 1982.

Who are Rohingya anyways?

- “although a few Rohingya trace their ancestry to Muslims who lived in Arakan in the 15th and 16th centuries, most Rohingyas arrived with the British colonialists in the 19th and 20th centuries”
 - Andrew Selth, Professor, Griffith University

Refugee crisis of 1991–1992

- After Burmese military junta began persecuting the political opposition following Aung San Suu Kyi's victory in the 1990 election and the earlier 1988 Uprising, military operations targeting Muslims (who strongly favoured the pro-democracy movement) began in Arakan State.
- The Rohingya-led NDPHR (Democracy and Human Rights Party) political party was banned and its leaders were jailed. Suu Kyi herself was placed under house arrest by the junta led by General Than Shwe.



“

*Imagine if you have no identity,
no ethnicity, no country.
Nobody wants you.
This is how we feel today as Rohingya.
We are citizens of Myanmar,
we are Rohingya.*

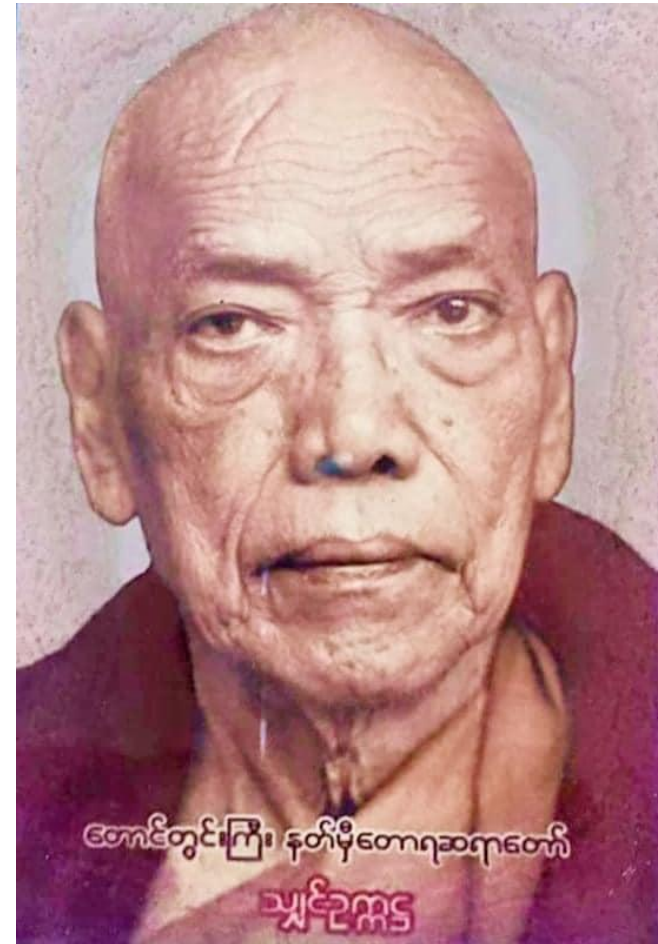
– Mohib Ullah,
Human rights defender

Political Buddhism and its Oppression in Burma Against Revivalist movements

Ashin U Malavara, a progressive monk with atheistic version of Buddhism was **forcefully dragged to mental asylum** and **was forced to sign the papers which claimed that he would never spread that kind of materialist Buddhism in order to get out of mental asylum.**

U Ang Maung, the Minister of Religious Affairs and Culture at the time, was responsible for it and never apologized for it.

The photo is the teacher of Ashin U Malavara, Shin Okkahta, who also faced imprisonment for his progressive Buddhism.





Political Buddhism and its Oppression in Burma Against Revivalist movements

Ashin Nyar Na has spent nearly **16 years in jail** for **unorthodox beliefs** that have angered the powerful supreme body representing Buddhist monks in Myanmar.

Reference:
<https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/the-monk-in-blue-robes/>





Political Buddhism and its Gendered Apartheid

After studying for several years in Sri Lanka, Ayya Saccavadi received her **Master's Degree in Buddhism at Kelaniya** in the year 2000.

In 2002 she **ordained** as a **sameneri (female novice)** in Sri Lanka.

In 2003, **she and Ayya Gunasari** became the first two **Burmese bhikkhunis** to receive the **dual higher ordination (bhikkhuni upasampada)** in Sri Lanka in the modern era.

When her father fell ill in 2005, she returned to her home country of Myanmar, where she was subsequently charged with “**impersonation of a Buddhist monk**” and **imprisoned until she agreed to leave the county and return to Sri Lanka.**

In 2007, she came to the United States and, after Ruth Denison's offering of women's monastic lodging at Samadhi House at Dhamma Dena Desert Vipassana Center; she took up residency with Ayya Gunasari Bhikkhuni and Thilashin Uttamatheri there.

Reference: <https://sujato.wordpress.com/2010/02/16/saccavadis-story/>



Western Buddhism and Political Correctness



Western Buddhism is inclusive.

Western Buddhism allows LGBTQ++ to attain monkhood.

Western Buddhism allows females to attain monkhood (Bikkhunihood).

Western Buddhism is progressive.

Western Buddhism focus on inclusive, compassion and wisdom.

Western Buddhism is secular and atheistic.

Western Buddhism is woke.

Western Buddhism is anti-racist.

Western Buddhism protests for social justice.





Western Buddhism synthesis both Theravada and Mahayana traditions of Buddhism.

Western Buddhism is politically correct and compatible with progressivism.

Western Buddhism has a lot of **transgender, queer and female Buddha beings.**

Western Buddhism is **not a religion** but more aligned itself as **philosophy and psychoanalytical tool.**

Western Buddhism **won't force you to convert.**

Western Buddhism **won't de-humanize you** for not practicing it.

Western Buddhism



Western Buddhism	Theravada Pali Cannon (through Burmese Theravada and Sri Lanka interpretation)
Western Buddhism allows LGBTQ++ to attain monkhood.	Burmese Theravada Buddhism doesn't allow LGBTQ++ to attain monkhood.
Western Buddhism allows females to attain monkhood (Bikkhunihood).	Burmese Theravada Buddhism doesn't allow females to attain monkhood (Bikkhunihood).
Western Buddhism is woke (support social justice movements) and secular.	Burmese Theravada Buddhism and Sri Lanka Theravada Buddhism are responsible for the genocides against Rohingya and Tamils.
Western Buddhism says LGBTQ++ can get enlightenment.	Burmese Theravada Buddhism says most LGBTQ++ members are so sexually active get enlightenment.

Disclaimer: I **don't agree** with the **interpretation** of **political Buddhism** at all. Yet, it doesn't mean I will simply ignore it. We need objective studies on how has the facts and who take the scripture objectively.



Western Buddhism	Theravada Pali Cannon (through Burmese Theravada and Sri Lanka interpretation)
Western Buddhism borrowed the elements of Mahayana on letting queers and female buddhas.	Burmese Theravada Buddhism explicitly said that only men can attain buddhahood.
Western Buddhism is more like a philosophy and can be merged into other religions.	Burmese Theravada Buddhism relies on state power to defend itself as a religion.
Western Buddhism is secular.	Burmese Theravada Buddhism and Sri Lanka Theravada Buddhism are Nationalistic.
Western Buddhism endorses social justice movements.	Burmese Theravada Buddhism says “You’re oppressed because you had done bad karmas in previous lives.”

Disclaimer: I **don’t agree** with the **interpretation** of **political Buddhism** at all. Yet, it doesn’t mean I will simply ignore it. We need objective studies on how has the facts and who take the scripture objectively.



What **Buddhism** represents the **orthodoxy and objective interpretation of Buddha's words?**

Western Buddhism or political Buddhism?

Reform or Revolution?

Do we reform Burmese Theravada Buddhism?

Or should we simply destroy it?

This choice depends on the question above.



Bhagat Singh

"If religion is separated from politics, then we can all come together in politics even if we belong to different religions."