



**This issue is dedicated to the memory of
Harry de Sayrah OAM MJF (1937 - 2023)**

**Past President of the Ceylon Society of Australia
(CSA)**

COVER STORY: ***Elephas Maximus Maximus: The Ceylon Elephant***
by Thiru Arumugam



Randoli Perahera, Kandy 2023



The Ceylanikaam
The Journal of the Ceylon Society of Australia

ISSN 1836-8646 Journal 104 Volume 26 Number 4 NOVEMBER 2023 Editor: Adam Raffel



The Ceylon Society of Australia

PRESIDENT

Pauline Gunewardene
Mobile: 0419 447 665
email: paulineg@ozemail.com.au

VICE-PRESIDENT

Dr Srilal Fernando

SECRETARY

Presenji Jayawickrema
Mobile: 0421 560 282
email: presenji@tpg.com.au

TREASURER & PUBLIC OFFICER

Deepak Pritamdas
Mobile: 0434 860 188
email: deepakps1@gmail.com

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER

Vacant

PUBLICATIONS OFFICER

Earlson Forbes
Mobile: 0411 150 851
email: earlfor@tpg.com.au

EDITOR

Adam Raffel
Mobile: 0407 530 139
email: adamraf2@tpg.com.au

SOCIAL CONVENOR

Amal Wahab
Mobile: 0411 888 182
email: awahab15555@gmail.com

EX-OFFICIO

Thiru Arumugam
Tel: (02) 8850 4798
email: thiru.aru@gmail.com

Kumar Rasiah

Mobile: 0411 401 690
email: nkumarr@optusnet.com

LIFE MEMBERS

Hugh Karunanayake
Mobile: 0448 998 024
email: karu@internode.net.au

Doug and Hyacinth Jones

Mobile: 0415 378 861
email: dougjay20@gmail.com

EDITORIAL SUB-COMMITTEE

Earlson Forbes
Thiru Arumugam
Hugh Karunanayake

MELBOURNE CHAPTER CONVENOR

Hemal Gurusinghe
Mobile: 0427 725 740
email: hemguru@hotmail.com

COLOMBO CHAPTER COMMITTEE

CONVENOR/LOCAL PRESIDENT

M. Asoka T. de Silva
Tel: +9411 2822933 Mobile: +94 765664311
email: desilvaasoka@yahoo.com

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT/TREASURER

M.D. Tony Saldin
Tel: +9411 2936402 (w) +9411 2931315 (h)
Fax: +9411 2936377 Mobile: +94 777363366
email: saldinclan@sltnet.lk

VICE PRESIDENTS

Somasiri Devendra
Tel: +9411 2737180 Mobile: +94 719092986
email: somasiridevendra1@gmail.com

Daya Wickramatunga

Tel: +9411 278 6783 (SL) / +61 2 6281 0414 (Aus)
Mobiles: +94 7731 74164 (SL) / +61 416 048 476 (Aus)
email: dashanwick@gmail.com

LOCAL SECRETARY

Avishka Mario Senewiratne
Tel: +94 766122345
Email : avishkamario@gmail.com

LOCAL ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Devishka Ranasinghe
Mobile: +94 7642 81044
Email: djeromer20@gmail.com

The Ceylankam

CONTENTS

• From the Editor	3	• WW II Prisoner from Karaitivu, Ceylon by ALLEN L (LOGAN) THURAIRATNAM	24
• Our Readers Write	4	• The pre-Christian Notice on Sri Lanka's Diplomatic Mission to Rome by M ASOKA T DE SILVA	26
• Portrait of Nimal Wickramanayake KC Unveiled in Victorian Bar Association Chambers by HUGH KARUNANAYAKE	4	• Pamankade: the Town that Vanished! by HUGH KARUNANAYAKE	28
• COVER STORY: <i>Elephas Maximus Maximus</i> : The Ceylon Elephant by THIRU ARUMUGAM	5	• APPRECIATIONS	
• Elitism and the <i>Language Act of 1956</i> by KATHRYN PEREIRA	10	HARRY DE SAYRAH OAM MJF.....	29
• Philippus Baldaeus: the Dutch Missionary who wrote of Ceylon by AVISHKA MARIO SENEWIRATNE and DR SRILAL FERNANDO	16	SRIKANTHA NADARAJAH	31
• Ignatius of Colombo: The Charmed Life of a Genius Priest by AVISHKA MARIO SENEWIRATNE	20	• Report of Sydney CSA Meeting held on 27 August 2023	32
		• CSA NOTICES	
		2023 Sydney AGM and Social	33
		Melbourne Chapter Meeting	34
		Announcements etc.	35

From the Editor

Dear Readers

It is with sadness that I have to report of the passing of CSA Past President Harry de Sayrah OAM on the 11th of September 2023. On behalf of the readers of *The Ceylankan* I wish to pass on our condolences to Harry's wife Imelda and the de Sayrah family during this time of grief. Harry was CSA President from 2011 to 2013 and served in the CSA Committee as Public Relations Officer from 2005 to 2010 and from 2014 to 2023. Personally, I found Harry friendly, helpful with a cheeky sense of humour. Doug and Hyacinth Jones have written a moving tribute to Harry, which appears on page 29 of this issue. I would like to dedicate this issue to the memory of Harry de Sayrah OAM MJF.

The CSA also lost Srikantha Nadarajah (Nada), another stalwart of the Society, who passed away on 19 August 2023. Nada served in the CSA Committee as Treasurer from 2005 to 2009 and as an Ex-Officio from 2011 to 2019. Nada was a regular contributor to *The Ceylankan*. I enjoyed my conversations with him on various topics on Sri Lankan history and culture. Nada was an interesting and erudite person. Rex Olegasegarem has written an appreciation of Nada that appears on page 31 of this issue. On behalf of the readers, I would like to pass on our condolences to Nada's family.

The cover story written by Thiru Arumugam on the Ceylon Elephant provides information and insight into the role of the gentle giant played in Sri Lanka's history and the challenges faced in conserving elephant habitat without coming into conflict with farmers.

Other articles of interest include a piece written by Kathryn Pereira, of the CSA Colombo Chapter, on the history of the *Language Act of 1956* and how it affected the education system in Sri Lanka since then. Also fascinating is the very moving piece by Logan Thurairatnam on his grandfather Kanthappar Kathiraveloo who worked in the Federated Malay States Railways and was captured by the Japanese in 1941 and subsequently freed by the Allies. Avishka Mario Senewiratne of the Colombo Chapter has contributed two interesting articles. The one on Philippus Baldaeus written with Dr Srilal Fernando (CSA Vice President) tells the story of the 17th century Dutch missionary who wrote about Ceylon. The other article Avishka has written is about Fr Ignatius Perera the Catholic priest and founder of the Catholic Choral Society of Colombo (of which my Uncle Earle de Fonseka was a member). Another fascinating article by M Asoka T De Silva (Colombo Chapter Local President and Convenor) is about a diplomatic mission to Rome by representatives of Sinhalese royalty 2000 years ago!

There are many more varied and fascinating articles covering different subjects for your perusal and enjoyment.

Happy reading!

ADAM RAFFEL

NOTE: As we were about to go to press we just heard the sad news that long term CSA member and UN diplomat Jehan Raheem passed away in New York on 25 October 2023. A full appreciation of his life will appear in the next issue of this journal. On behalf of the readers of *The Ceylankan* and the CSA we pass on our condolences to Mr Raheem's family.

Ceylon Society of Australia

The Ceylon Society of Australia (CSA) is a not-for-profit organisation, incorporated in Australia, with the objectives of studying, fostering and promoting interest in the historical and cultural heritage of Sri Lanka.

It is non-political and non-partisan, steering clear of controversial issues. It is a worldwide society of like-minded people, open to receiving and imparting new ideas. While Sydney is home to the parent body and Committee, looking after the overall affairs of the Society, the Melbourne Chapter looks after the meetings in Victoria, with the Colombo Chapter tending to the membership in Sri Lanka. Quarterly free meetings for Members are held in Sydney, Melbourne and Colombo, with guests welcome to attend. Meetings conclude with a Q&A session and a mini Social.

The annual calendar year subscription covers receipt of the Society's journal, "*The Ceylankan*", published quarterly and distributed to members worldwide. The articles published are authored by members. All opinions expressed are those of the individual writers and do not reflect those of the Editor or the CSA. Articles may be reproduced in other publications, but must be credited to this journal and carry suitable acknowledgment thereof.

The CSA, when meeting in Australia, acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land in which meetings are held and pays respects to First Nations Elders, past and present, as custodians of a rich cultural heritage.

Our Readers write

Hugh Karunanayake: An Intellectual as Versatile as Vibrant

Not many in Hugh's circles in Sydney and Melbourne will be aware that Hugh was one of those rare birds who secured an External degree from Peradeniya University in the 1960s. I did not know him then; but interacted with him when he was working for Save the Children Foundation in 1981 –one of the sabbatical years which had taken me to Colombo for a long spell where I 'indulged in' fieldwork at the shanty town in Kirulapona as one among several fields of inquiry. A key figure at the Save the Children Foundation then was Marina Wikramanayake (alas passed away) who had been a few years senior to me in the Department of History at Peradeniya in the 1960s; so the cooperation and interaction between myself, Hugh and Marina was lively and fulfilling.

Hugh and I did not stay in touch. But, aha, at some point in the 1980s or 1990s I discovered that he had moved to Sydney with his wife Tulsi and children. I visited Sydney relatively frequently in the 1980s and 1990s from my base (from 1977) in Adelaide. This meant free accommodation from such homely friends as Sri Kantha Nadarajah (alas recently deceased) and Michael Berman.

Always amiable and helpful, Hugh offered his home as a *pied de terre* on a couple of occasions. This is where I benefited from Tulsi's warmth as well as her cooking flair. Needless to say, the Ceylon Society in Sydney was one branch of this relationship. I attended one or two of its functions and may have presented a talk at some point (memories fade & collapse into one another).

The Ceylon Society in Sydney and that in Melbourne – after Hugh moved there to be close to his adult children – has benefited ENORMOUSLY from Hugh's presence, and versatility his productive versatility. Just flip through the magazine known as *The Ceylankan* in the last 30-40 years yes, many, many decades. Ask Dinoo Kelleghan, Doug Jones, Adam Raffel the diligent editors of that wide-ranging intellectual magazine over the years. Hugh has been one of its 'pillars'.

The word 'pillar' is framed in quotation marks for a good reason. Hugh has been more than a pillar. He has been one of its churning engines not only in writing, but in speaking, hosting and 'warming' interpersonal interaction.

So, we encourage Hugh to bat on beyond his century and to aim for the mark 110. *Wirklich Das!*

Michael Roberts
Adelaide, SA

Portrait of Nimal Wikramanayake KC Unveiled in Victorian Bar Association Chambers

by Hugh Karunanayake

A ceremony attended by many of the leading judges, silks, and lawyers of the Victorian Bar was held at the Bar Association's Peter O' Callaghan Gallery on 17 July 2023. It was presided over by the Chairperson of the Victorian Bar's Arts and Collection committee Siobhan Ryan KC who called upon retired County Court Judge Ross Howie KC to unveil the portrait of Nimal Wikramanayake KC. Judge Howie spoke at length on Nimal's legal career and the resolute manner in which he overcame obstacles on his way to the top of his profession. Nimal remains the only lawyer from an Asian background to be granted silk in Australia. He now enjoys the added distinction of being the only lawyer from an Asian background to have his portrait unveiled in the Bar Association Headquarters.

Nimal Wikramanayake KC comes from a family with a distinguished record in service in the law. His father the late EG Wikramanayake KC was a leading lawyer in Sri Lanka's Courts. His father's brother the late EB Wikramanayake KC was a Minister of Justice in the Sri Lanka Government and also well known for his legal acumen.

Nimal Wikramanayake in his response thanked the bar for the honour bestowed upon him and said that the unveiling of his portrait was a unique honour and was the proudest moment in his life. The unveiling was followed by a cocktail party.



Nimal and wife Anna Maria with Hugh Karunanayake at the unveiling ceremony



Ross Howie KC who unveiled the portrait



COVER STORY: *Elephas Maximus Maximus:* The Ceylon Elephant

by Thiru Arumugam



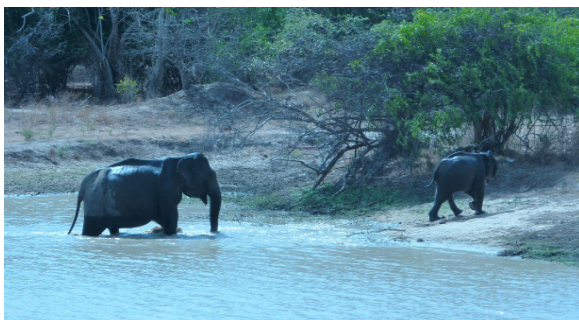
During the recent disposal of books held by this Society, one of the books which surfaced was titled *ALIYA: Stories of the Elephants of Sri Lanka*¹. It is a coffee table style book, published in 1995, co-authored by Melbournians, Teresa Cannon and Peter Davis. They went to Ceylon on holiday and were enamoured by the Ceylon Elephant and that led to their in-depth study of the Ceylon Elephant. The book has been a valuable source of information for this article. The flyleaf of the book has this handwritten inscription signed by the co-authors:

“To the Ceylon Society of Australia: May you grow big and strong like the elephants.

Teresa Cannon and Peter Davis”

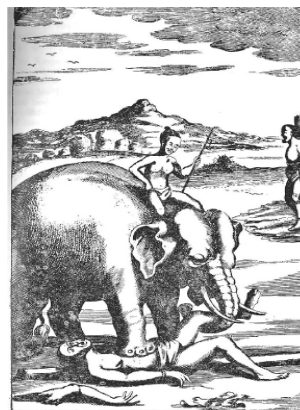
The Ceylon Elephant

Elephants consist of two basic types, the African elephant and the Asian elephant. Asian elephants are smaller than African elephants and have smaller ears and a more prominently shaped head. The Asian elephant has three distinct sub-species of which one is *Elephas maximus maximus*: the Ceylon elephant, and this sub-species is unique to Ceylon. The unique identity of the Ceylon elephant is: (1) Depigmentation and more accentuated pale markings on the head, trunk and ears; (2) Degree of tusklessness, only males have tusks and only about 10 percent have tusks, this is much less than other Asian elephants; and (3) Size – larger and more prominent foreheads than other Asian elephants² (Fig 1 See below).



Elephants have existed in Ceylon from time immemorial. For over 2000 years they have been used in wars, religious processions, harvesting timber from forests, clearing the jungle for coffee and tea plantations, and helping construct roads and railways, and even used as reluctant executioners in medieval times, a role which would have been difficult for this normally docile animal (Fig 2 see over). The *Mahavamsa* records how in the second century BC, Dutthagamani had an elephant named Kandula, and records Kandula's prowess in battle as follows³:

The city had three trenches, was guarded by a high wall, furnished with gates of wrought iron, difficult for enemies to destroy. Placing himself on his knees, and battering stones, mortar and bricks with his tusks did the elephant attack the gate of iron... Roaring like thunder he came, daring danger, and with his tusks pierced the panels of the gate and trampled the threshold with his feet; and with uproar the gate crashed to the ground together with the arches of the gate.



An Execution by an Elephant.

The adult Ceylon elephant weighs between three to five tons. It has a height between 2½ and 3½ metres and a similar length from eye to tail. The trunk is a combination of the nose and upper lip and is used to eat, drink, breathe and bathe. The trunk is used collect water or sand and shower it onto the body. The trunk has one finger and two nostrils. It is up to two metres in length, it can hold up to

eight litres of liquids and has a lifting capacity of 350 kg. An adult elephant can carry a load of 500 kilos on its back and using its trunk, legs and body mass it can reposition loads up to four tons⁴.

Only male Ceylon elephants have tusks and only tuskers are given the honour of carrying relics in religious processions. The tusks are actually extended teeth, with an average length of about two metres and an average weight under twenty kg each. They continue to grow during the lifetime of the elephant. They use the tusks to fight with other males and gore them, carry logs, and to dig. The tusks do not conduct electricity and so they are used to uproot electric fences so that the herd can safely pass through⁵.

In their large ear lobes, the veins are closest to the skin. Flapping their ear lobes cools the veins and reduces their body temperature. They can walk up to 50 km a day and run short distances at a speed of 30 km/hr. Their vision is limited to about 25 metres, but this is compensated by highly acute hearing and smell. They can distinguish other elephants by smell and detect low frequency infrasounds over a distance of five km. About two-thirds of elephant infrasounds are not audible to humans. Elephants remember other elephants, water-holes, feeding locations and traumatic episodes. They can hurl a stone or stick with remarkable accuracy over a distance of up to 40 metres⁶.

They do not have sweat glands and they use their trunk to spray water on themselves to act as a cool-

ant. They are good swimmers and need to have only the tip of their trunk above water to act as a snorkel. Adult elephants need to drink about 150 litres of water a day. They suck the water up their trunks and then squirt it into their mouths. Feeding occupies about 18 hours per day. An adult elephant consumes about 100 to 200 kilos a day, most of it is grass plus bark and leaves. They release up to 90 kilos of droppings a day⁷.

Male elephants, annually from the age of about 17 years, have a period of heightened sexual desire called '*musth*'. Secretion of a substance from the temporal gland between the eye and ear occurs and the elephant becomes aggressive. The time when a female may conceive last only from two to four days and occurs annually. Females choose the strongest and most virile males, thus ensuring survival of the herd. Females in oestrus make infrasounds which can be heard over four km. Consummation takes only a little over minute⁸.

Females achieve sexual maturity between the age of ten to twelve years. They can give birth to a calf every three or four years up to the age of fifty years. The gestation period is 22 months, this is the longest for any animal on earth. Birth weight is about 100 kilos. The newborn is supported by a 'nursing unit' in the herd and it suckles its mother or any other lactating female in the herd for up to two years. The average life span of an elephant is about 70 years⁹.

To control a tame elephant, a mahout should know the points of goading (*nila*) and possess the required tools including an ankus (goad) which is two metres long with a point and a hook at one end. This is used to prod the elephant at 85 sensitive points to make it do things like raise its head, lie down, kneel and become calm. About 30 words are also used to control the elephant such as '*daha*' (move forwards), '*hida*' (lie down) etc. When riding an elephant, the mahout uses his feet to direct it with a gentle nudge at the back of the elephant's ears¹⁰.

Elephants in religious events

Elephants are widely used in religious events and processions. A prime example is the Kandy Esala Perahera which occurs every year in July/August and in which scores of elephants participate in the processions. It is an eleven-day festival which invokes blessings for fertility, rain, good crops and health. Prominent in the procession is the Maligawa tusker which carries the holy relics in a gold domed casket (**Fig 3 see below**) and is flanked by two tuskers. A



cloth is spread on the ground before the tusker so that the soles of its feet never touch the ground.

The Diyawadana Nilame follows the sacred tusker on foot. The procession continues with more elephants, dancers, drummers, torch bearers and musicians. The Basnayaka Nilames, the custodians of Kandy's Devalas, follow in turn. First is the section honouring God Natha, followed by the procession honouring Vishnu, then the Kataragama procession and finally Goddess Pattini's procession. With a final parade round the perimeter of the old city, the procession returns to the Dalada Maligawa¹¹.

Recently the Diyawadana Nilame of the Sri Dalada Maligawa gave a word of warning¹². He said:

There are only 94 elephants that can parade along streets in perahera processions in the country, and more than 60 of them are over 50 or 60 years old ... As a result of not receiving tamed elephants, the elephant count will be limited to a maximum of 11 by the year 2040. Therefore, some procedure should be followed to provide tamed elephants to the elephant breeders to maintain the tamed elephant population ... There is no other country in the world using tamed elephants for perahera procession, so this has been a huge challenge for us.

Capture of wild elephants

In pre-colonial days wild elephants were captured by *Pannikers*, who are Muslims from the east coast who had a detailed knowledge of elephant behaviour. Their only tool was a seven-metre-long strong rope made from deer or buffalo hide with a noose at one end. They stalked the chosen elephant, and when it raised its hind leg, which it often does, they slipped the noose over the leg and quickly tied the other end to a strong tree. A day later, a mahout cautiously approached the tethered elephant and offered water. The following day, leaves are offered to the elephant. A few days later, mahouts on two tame elephants approach it and gently press its flanks, and the taming process continued¹³.

When the Portuguese arrived in Ceylon, they soon realised the value of the elephant. In India there was a great demand for elephants for use in wars (as battle tanks!), ceremonial festivals and as beasts of burden in construction work. The Ceylon elephant was particularly prized for use in warfare because it was larger than the Indian elephant. Indian traders came to Ceylon and bought elephants which were shipped to India. The Portuguese decided to muscle into this trade. In 1560 the King of Jaffna was required to give as tribute ten elephants a year to the Portuguese. Vanni chieftains were also required to give as tribute a certain number of elephants to the Portuguese every year and in return the Portuguese left the chieftains undisturbed.

The Portuguese soon realised that capturing elephants one by one would not meet the demand. They devised the '*kraal*' by which a whole herd of elephants could be captured in one go. The method was to build a triangular wooden fenced stockade near elephant herd feeding grounds in the jungle. Large diameter, four- or five-metre-long tree trunks were driven one metre vertically into the ground. Horizontal

beams were tied to these posts using coir fibre ropes. The fence was buttressed to withstand the impact of charging elephants. A narrow entrance was provided for the stockade with a gate that could be quickly securely closed.

A herd of elephants near the stockade was located and then started the process of driving the herd into the stockade. Hundreds of beaters with flares, tom-toms, poles and even muskets would shout and drive the herd into the narrow stockade entrance and quickly close the gate. After some time when the herd had quietened down, mahouts entered the stockade in pairs on tame elephants and one by one the wild elephants were tethered to trees within the stockade. After a few days the elephants were sold by auction, where in many cases the buyers exported them to India, and a few elephants were given to temples¹⁴. When the Dutch ruled Ceylon they refined the *kraal* system and continued capturing wild elephants, mainly for export to India at a good profit. The Dutch writer Valentijn included a sketch of a Ceylonese *kraal* in a book published by him in 1726 (**Fig 4 below**)¹⁵.



By the time the British took over, the wild elephant population had ballooned, and they were attacking cultivated crops. They were described as ‘vermin’ and the provincial Government Agents were authorised to pay people a bounty of ten shillings for every elephant tail. As a result, in the 1840s and 1850s over 6000 wild elephants were killed and the bounties paid by the Government. Samuel Baker wrote in 1855¹⁶:

The Government reward for the killing of elephants in Ceylon was formerly ten shillings per tail, it is now reduced to seven shillings in some districts ... Although the number of these animals is still so immense, they must nevertheless have been much reduced within the last twenty years. In those days the country was overrun with them and some idea of their numbers may be gathered from the fact that three first rate shots [hunters] in three days bagged one hundred and four elephants ... A native can now obtain a gun for thirty shillings; and with two shillings worth of ammunition, he starts on a hunting trip. Five elephants at a reward of seven shillings per tail, more than pay the prime cost of his gun.

In the nineteenth century there were many British ‘sportsmen’ who continued to cull wild elephants in Ceylon. Samuel Baker (1821-1893) mentioned above was an explorer and big game hunter who established an agricultural settlement in Moon Plains near Nuwara Eliya in 1846. In a three-week hunting expedition, he and some friends started from Minneriya and headed

south towards Bibile and Mahiyangana, killing more than 50 elephants. During his stay in Ceylon, which was about eight years, he killed hundreds of elephants.

Other Britishers who participated in the cull of elephants include Captain Philip Gallwey (1812-1894) of the 90th Regiment of Foot who is said to have killed between 700 to 1300 elephants and Major Thomas Skinner (1804-1877) who was Commissioner of Roads in Ceylon and is said to have killed between 700 to 1200 elephants.

The biggest elephant killer of them all was Major Thomas Williams Rogers (1804-1845). He was Assistant Government Agent and District Judge, Badulla and a Major in the Ceylon Rifle Regiment. He shot and killed over 1400 elephants (he lost count), including killing eleven elephants before breakfast one day and 104 elephants in a three-day period. On 7 June 1845 Rogers was on a hunting expedition, staying at the Haputale Rest House. Rain held up the start of the expedition and he went to the front verandah to check whether the rain had stopped. Out of the blues, there was a bolt of lightning which struck the metal spur of his riding boot and he died instantly. He was buried in the Nuwara Eliya Golf Course and a tombstone erected. The tombstone still exists, but it too has been struck by lightning and is cracked into two pieces.

There are many who claim that the death of Rogers was divine retribution for killing so many elephants, especially tuskers. The fact that it was Rogers’ spur that had harmed the wild animal and that it was his spur that was struck by lightning adds mystery and intrigue to the event. But the intrigue deepens. Mythology links elephants with rain. And Rogers was killed by that harbingers of rain – lightning!¹⁷

The last Elephant *Kraal* held in Ceylon

The writer of this article vividly remembers as a schoolboy the elephant *kraal* held in Ceylon on 9 August 1950. An incident which occurred during this *kraal* caused a media frenzy and discussions in Parliament which ultimately led to a ban on all future elephant *kraals* in Ceylon, so this was the last elephant *kraal* ever held in Ceylon.

Sir Francis Molamure (1888-1951) was educated at St Thomas College where he captained the cricket team in the Royal-Thomian match of 1903. He qualified as an Advocate and practised in Kegalle. In 1924 he was elected to the Legislative Council from Kegalle District. In 1931 he was elected to the first State Council where he was elected Speaker, defeating Sir Stewart Schneider, 35 votes to 18 votes. In the 1947 general election he was elected from the Balangoda electorate as the UNP candidate and he was elected as the first Speaker of the newly formed Parliament of Ceylon.

Molamure was the nephew of Maduwanwela Dissawe, who claimed to have inherited a 83,000 acre ‘*nindagama*’ or land grant in the Kolonne area in Sabaragamuwa Province from his father who in turn claimed that it was gifted by King Wimaladharmaśūrya II. The Dissawe lived in Maduwanwela Walawwa near Embilipitiya and this building at one

stage had 121 rooms and 21 inner courtyards (*meda midula*). It is now a museum. The Dissawe died in 1930 and in his will he named Molamure as one of the two trustees. Included in the land grant was the area around Panamure in the Ratnapura District. A site in the jungle surrounding Panamure, with a freshwater spring, was the location for eleven previous elephant kraals commencing in 1896. It was in this location that Molamure decided to hold an elephant *kraal* in 1950, and he was assisted by Dissawe Sam Elapata, who had an intimate knowledge of wild elephant behaviour.

The Panamure *kraal* has been described in detail by H I E Katugaha¹⁸. Large logs cut down from surrounding trees in the jungle were used to build the stockade, using tame elephants. This took about three months. When the stockade was ready, a nearby herd of wild elephants was located. About 600 beaters were used to guide the herd towards the stockade entrance. To avoid stressing the animals, no crackers, tom-toms or gunshots were used. The herd brought into the stockade consisted of 16 elephants and a couple of loners. After some time, expert noosers went in on tame elephants and started noosing the elephants and tying them to trees. Meanwhile, a young bull elephant which was not a tusker but did have a pair of tushes and was in a state of *musth*, started mating with two of the wild elephants in the stockade.

When the noosers went to noose the matriarch of the herd, the young bull elephant went berserk. It repeatedly charged the stockade trying to bring it down. He was noosed with one inch diameter wire ropes twice, but he snapped the ropes. Sam Elapata then brought his father's elephant 'Gunaya' but the young bull charged 'Gunaya' and floored him and started goring him with his tushes. The situation was now out of control. There was no question of releasing the young bull from the stockade because outside the stockade there were spectators and dignitaries including the Governor General, Lord Soulbury, who could have been charged by the young bull. Reluctantly, Molamure made the decision to have the young bull put down. Molamure's friend Kadirgamar was on his way back from a hunting expedition and had a powerful gun with him. He fired a single SG4 cartridge as the young bull charged trumpeting defiantly towards him. The bullet must have hit the brain because the elephant's hind legs gave way, and he rolled over. He was probably dead before he hit the ground (**Fig 5 below**).



There was pandemonium in the country when the news of the shooting got around. There was media frenzy, including the press and radio. The *Times* newspaper editorial stated that the spirit of the dead elephant called for mercy and the right of the elephant to roam the wilds, a free citizen of Lanka¹⁹. There were waves of sympathy for the brave young bull elephant which died defending the herd. Songs were composed praising the elephant. An immediate clamour started for a ban on the killing of elephants. This spread to Parliament and was taken up by the left-wing MP, Dr N M Perera, who was the Leader of the Opposition. Within five Parliamentary meetings, a total ban was passed on the capture and killing of elephants and the holding of elephant *kraals*. Ceylon has had its last elephant *kraal*.

Five months later, on 25 January 1951, Sir Francis Molamure was chairing a Parliamentary meeting as Speaker, when he suddenly collapsed. He was rushed to hospital but passed away a few hours later. Mr Dahanayake, former Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, was a Member of Parliament at the time of Sir Francis' death. Speaking from his home in Galle, at the age of 90, he recalled the details vividly:

Sir Francis rose slowly from his chair and then collapsed in a heap on the floor'. Others claimed that the Speaker fell to his knees in a manner identical to the last moments of the Panamure bull. When asked if Sir Francis' death was somehow connected with the shooting of the elephant, Mr Dahanayake replied 'Some say that. I wouldn't'.²⁰

Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC)

India is the only Asian country which has more wild elephants than Ceylon. Wild elephants have, historically, roamed all over Ceylon. In the 17th century, wild elephants were even found in Labugama which is quite close to Colombo. Estimates of the number of elephants during various times vary wildly and clearly some of them are way off the mark. It is generally accepted that there were about 19,000 wild elephants in Ceylon in 1800 and 12,000 in 1900, whereas today there are about 5000 wild elephants and about 250 tame elephants.

The wild elephant population in Ceylon has been decreasing by about six percent per year in recent times. Their ranging territories have been reduced by 15 percent since 1960 due to forest land being cleared for cultivation and other purposes. Elephant ranges now cover about 60 percent of Ceylon, but people are also resident in 70 percent of the elephant ranges. Due to loss of habitat, this has led to elephants feeding on cultivated land, leading to conflict with the cultivators. This has been called the Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC).

The Asian elephant has been declared an endangered species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Although the killing of elephants is banned in Ceylon, cultivators have been killing elephants. The causes of death include gunshot wounds, poisoning of waterholes, electrified traps and '*hakka patas*' which are bait balls with explosives which go off when chewed. In 2023, HEC caused the

death of 433 elephants and 145 humans were killed by enraged wounded elephants.

Clearly methods have to be devised so that elephants and humans can live amicably together without loss of life. The Department of Wildlife Conservation has adopted the following measures, amongst others, to achieve this aim: Establishing new National Parks and increasing the size of existing conservation areas; Establishing elephant corridors and preserving existing corridors so that herds can move from one habitat to the other without hindrance; Installing electric fences as barriers between elephant habitats and cultivated areas.

Electric fences consist of a fence of insulated wires connected to a pulsed direct current of about 7000 volts but with the current limited to about four milliamperes. When an elephant comes into contact with the live wires of an electric fence, it gets a nasty jolt, but it is not fatal because the current is very small. Already a few thousand kilometres of electric fences have been installed in Ceylon. But these fences serve little purpose because they are along administrative borders which the elephants do not recognise. It is estimated that 90 percent of the electric fences have elephants on both sides! Future fences will have to be installed to encircle cultivated areas.

Solutions to the problems must be found. Otherwise, the elephant population will in due course be reduced to those which remain in the national parks. As Malinda wrote in the 11 August 2023 issue of the *Daily News*:

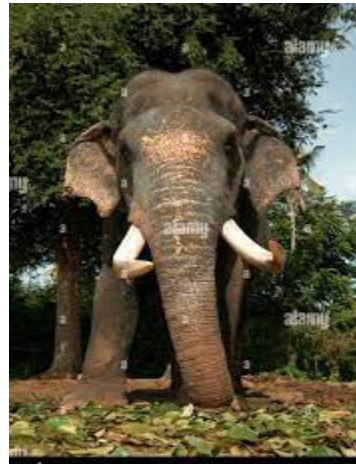
My worry is that we, as humans, while being quick to pin the 'problem' label on elephants, are loath to turn the mirror on ourselves, our species and the problem creatures and rogues among us ... That said, there is nothing to stop us from acknowledging that we are an invasive and destructive species. When an elephant damages crops or a house, we use the term 'rogue'. However, when we invade and annex the habitats of elephants we don't admit 'we are bloody rogues'. Instead, we say 'this is for development'.

Picture credits: Fig. 1, Thiru Arumugam; Fig. 2, Robert Knox; Fig. 3, 'Daily News' 26-08-2023; Fig. 4, Francois Valentijn; and Fig. 5, H I E Katugaha in *Gajah* 29 – 2008.

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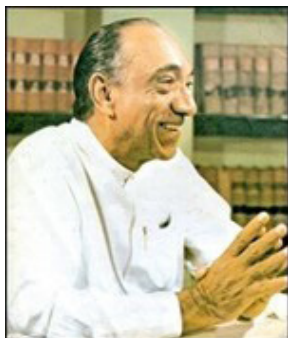


Elitism and the *Language Act of 1956*

by Kathryn Pereira*

Introduction

In June of 1956 the *Language Act* was passed declaring Sinhala as the official language of Sri Lanka. The declared intentions behind this Act were to establish Sinhala as the official language and 'reclaim' the country, returning it to its origins after a long period of colonisation. (Portuguese rule; Dutch rule: - 1658-1796; British rule: - 1796-1948) (*History of Sri Lanka*, n.d.)



The following are quotes on the reasons behind the establishment of the *Sinhala Only Act*.

J. R. Jayewardene stated in a speech to the State Council on the 24th of May 1944:

My motion seeks to displace English from the position which it has held for over 125 years as the official language of this country.

Though English has been the official language for so many years only 10% of a population of over 6 million speak and know that language. (Jayawardene, 1979, p. 12)

Former President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga stated in an interview with the *Daily Mirror*, that her father S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike had these intentions when passing the bill:

After eight years of Independence, the Sinhala people, who accounted for around 75% of the population, felt that they were being discriminated against, not by the Tamil or Muslim people but by the white rulers and they felt they needed to express their identity by regaining an important place for the Sinhala people. What better way to give people an identity than to elevate the status of their language? My father brought in Sinhala Only Bill to give country back its identity (CBK, 2016, p. para 2)

As mentioned initially the *Language Act* was meant to be a way of solving the present social conflicts. However, it became evident afterwards that the actual result was not the expected outcome. Instead of resolving the present conflicts of the time it only led to the creation of further conflicts by way of strengthening ethnic tensions as well as creating greater gaps within the education system. Regardless of whether or not the Act was directly instrumental in causing social conflict the fact remains that social conflicts did arise as a result of it; leading to social change. This social change has repercussions even on modern society hence the conclusion may be reached, that this is still a pertinent topic of sociological discussion.

- a) "elitism" and the beginnings of the ethnic conflict,
- b) the role of the *Language Act* in furthering the ethnic conflict,
- c) the repercussions on the education system

Elitism and The *Language Act of 1956*

Following is an extract of the *Official Language Act of 1956* sect 2;

"Official Language Act of 1956 (No. 33 of 1956) – Sect 2

Sinhala language to be the one official language

2. The Sinhala language shall be the one official language of Ceylon: Provided that where the Minister considers it impracticable to commence the use of only the Sinhala language for any official purpose immediately on the coming into force of this Act, the language or languages hitherto used for that purpose may be continued to be so used until the necessary change is effected as early as possible before the expiry of the 31st day of December, 1960, and, if such change cannot be effected by administrative order, regulations may be made under this Act to effect such change.

Regulations

3.(1) The Minister may make regulations in respect of all matters for which regulations are authorized by this Act to be made and generally for the purpose of giving effect to the principles and provisions of this Act.

(2) No regulation made under subsection (1) shall have effect until it is approved by the Senate and the House of Representatives and notification of such approval is published in the Gazette."

(*Official Language Act* (No. 33 of 1956), n.d.)

Up until the twentieth century Sri Lankan politics was dominated by an elitist system. With English as the official language only those whose first language was English or those who were wealthy enough to obtain an education in English were able to take up political positions. Added to this was the fact that the caste system played a major part in voting privileges with only the upper castes being allowed to vote. Constitutional reforms were brought in by the governors in an attempt to delegate more ruling power to Sri Lanka. However, this came with a catch as the governor's mantra was "divide and rule". The reforms they introduced encouraged ethnocentrism. This will be addressed in the theoretical discussion. Added to this were the ever-growing ethnic tensions that developed as a result of the slow removal of the elitist system. This is also discussed in the theoretical discussion.

Developing in the midst of all this was the Swabasha movement. A call for the use of national languages, Sinhalese and Tamil, instead of English in an attempt to create equal opportunities for the rest of the communities who only knew the vernacular languages and were thereby exempted from privileges the English-speaking communities had access to. The destruction of elitism in politics led to the Tamils losing their status as an important community. The Tamil leaders strived to retain this status of prominence, resulting in a growing mistrust between them and the Sinhalese.

The Swabasha movement quickly became the "Sinhala Only" movement leading to the *Language Act of 1956*. J.R. Jayewardene addressed the State

Council to propose the passing of this bill. His sentiment was that English be replaced with Sinhala as the official language, however he did express fears that if Tamil were to be given the same prominence as Sinhala it would somehow be detrimental to the Sinhalese language. (Jayawardene, 1979).



Leftist party leaders leaving parliament after the passing of the Language Act. (courtesy Avishka Mario Senewiratne)

In 1951, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike formed the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), after leaving the UNP on the grounds that there was little to no change in thinking compared to the time of the British rule. (Manor, 1989) Although his party's initial premise was that both Sinhala and Tamil were to be given equal standing, when the *Language Act* was passed in 1956 no provision was made for the Tamil language. This led to protests and rioting and a worsening of ethnic animosity. The *Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act* had little to no effect on the inequalities brought about by the *Language Act*, as will be further discussed. Conflicts arose amongst the labour forces as well as in the education system. During the premiership of Sirimavo Bandaranaike private schools were taken over in the attempt to create a "national system" within the Education Ministry. English mediums were also eventually abolished during the seventies in a final stand against elitism.

The Swabasha Movement



S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike addressing crowds for Sinhala Only, 1956. (Roberts, 2011)

The concept of Swabasha arose because of the prevailing elitist system of the time. The Sinhalese and Tamil communities felt this promotion of the local language would lead to a disablement of the English educated elite of society and bring about equality amongst all classes. (Perera, 2011) However especially after Independence this movement very quickly became

"Sinhala Only" as a result of the Sinhalese majority status.

In 1944 J.R. Jayewardene first proposed the *Language Act*. His desire to replace English stemmed from the fact that only 10% of the population of the time spoke English and as such only that minority received benefits, that the other communities who spoke vernacular languages, did not. This was the first of many attempts at defeating elitism. However, it must also be noted that J.R. later conceded that his initial plan had been to instate only Sinhalese as the official language as he said,

The great fear I had was that Sinhalese being a language spoken by only 3 million people in the whole world would suffer, or may be entirely lost in time to come, if Tamil is also placed on an equal footing with it in this country. (Jayawardene, 1979, pp. 15, 16).

It was this same sentiment that led S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike to also propose only Sinhalese as the official language. The Tamils, especially those of the North were relatively better educated in the English language than the Sinhalese. (This was a result of the missionaries having established schools mainly in the North and South-West.) Therefore, it stood to reason that before the *Language Act* was passed, Tamils had better job opportunities. Especially in government service. In response to this 'imbalance' the Sinhalese leaders pushed for the "Sinhala Only" movement.

Once the *Language Act of 1956* was passed, having no mention of the Tamil language, despite reassurances that it would be given equal ground, there was an onslaught of conflicts that arose. Decisions made by the government of the time only heightened the ethnic conflict. For one, it was declared that the leading teacher training college would be made available for Sinhalese teachers only. (Tambiah, 2017) Besides that, the Eksath Bhikkhu Peramuna was making further demands that all people educated in English or Tamil be prohibited from sitting for public exams till



Chelvanayakam at a satyagraha in 1956 (Roberts, 2011)

1967. All these new "reforms" that were brought in after the Act was passed, led to the minorities feeling threatened. The Tamils in retaliation, under the guidance of the Federal Party, planned a satyagraha in protest. These satyagrahas were initially peaceful. However, soon anti-Tamil mobs arrived on the scene, leading to physical skirmishes that led to the deaths of well over 100 Tamil protestors. (Tambiah, 2017).

In the face of these social conflicts the leader of the Federal Party, S.J.V. Chelvanayakam, and the Prime Minister, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike formed the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam pact. The Prime Minister maintained that the initial Act could not itself be changed but a provision may be added, giving the Tamil language equal parity. However, the condition placed was that Tamil would be made the official language only in the North and East, which were primarily Tamil speaking regions, and provisions would be made for non-Tamil speaking minorities present in those regions.

Following the implementation of the *Language Act* there was a surge in racial hatred. There were severe ethnic tensions amongst the Sinhalese and Tamils with goondas patrolling streets looking for opportunities to attack the Tamils. The Tamils began tarring over the “sri” letter on licence plates especially in Tamil dominated areas. This led to these goondas returning the favour in kind by tarring over the doors and signs of Tamil owned business and everything remotely related to the Tamils. The police having received orders not to intervene did not stop the destruction till it spread to bodily harm of Tamils. (Vittachi, 1958) Although S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike tried to uphold the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact, after intense pressure from other Sinhalese leaders, specifically the monks, he was forced to dissolve it. The result was utter chaos among the ethnicities. There was mass rioting in all areas of Sri Lanka right throughout the year of 1958 with Sinhalese and Tamil thugs alike setting fire to homes, destroying business and killing people. (Vittachi, 1958) In 1958 the *Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act* was passed. However, this did not appease the Tamils as they felt it was “too little, too late”. The fallout of the *Language Act* had already taken its toll. The Tamils then began their cry of a separate state. The irony of this situation was that in 1923 when S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike proposed the establishment of a federal government, apart from the Kandyan the rest of the communities were solidly against it. (Silva, 2019).

Conflicts within the labour forces arose when the government imposed further regulations after the passing of the *Language Act*. Government officials were denied bonuses and increments based on their proficiency in Sinhalese. Additionally, employees in the public sector that were employed after 1956 were expected to learn Sinhalese within a period of three years or forfeit their jobs. The government also placed Sinhalese public servants in areas of Tamil majority, instead of implementing the amendment regulations. Focusing on the employment of solely Sinhalese officials, the labour forces underwent a drastic change in terms of representation. The data is as follows: “In 1956, 30% of the Ceylon administrative service, 50% of the clerical service, 60% of engineers and doctors, and 40% of the armed forces were Tamil. By 1970 those numbers had plummeted to 5%, 5%, 10%, and 1%, respectively.” (Pradhan, 2021). A severe underrepresentation of the Tamil community.

The Tamils were not the only minority to suffer the consequences of the change of the official

language. The Burghers and Eurasians, whose mother tongue was English, suffered greatly. From 1956 Sri Lanka witnessed a gradual ‘exodus’ of Burghers and Eurasians who left the country due to the difficulties and inequalities the new government was imposing on them. This led to a shift in the dynamics of society, which brought about the rise of a new concept: language based Nationalism.

Nationalism and the *Language Act*

Upon gaining Independence, a new social phenomenon arose; the concept of Nationalism. In a strong desire to erase all things colonial the government made every effort to protect Sri Lankan Nationalism. As Sri Lankan politics developed into a Democratic state Sri Lankan Nationalism gradually became synonymous with Sinhalese Nationalism, as the Sinhalese vastly outnumbered all other ethnicities. (Silva, 2019). This social change however was strongly rejected by the minorities, namely the Tamil community who claimed they were a people of their own and had their own version of Nationalism. This form of nationalism revolved mainly around language, for both the Sinhalese and Tamils. They rooted their identity in their language. And as such the *Language Act* only served to cement these nationalistic feelings and the tensions between communities, when they declared Sinhala as the official language of the country based on the fact that the Sinhalese were the majority ethnic group. Simultaneously with the development of this linguistic nationalism was a religious form of nationalism. This manifested itself not only within the ethnic conflicts but also within the education system.

During the government of Former Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike (see below) there was a forceful takeover of private Christian schools. Buddhist schools had many grievances against the



coloniser’s private schools. It was a known fact that not only were private schools better equipped than public schools but also that Christian schools received 50% of government grants for private schools; far more than what Buddhist schools received. This practice was continued even after Independence. Sirimavo Bandaranaike’s takeover was an attempt to remove this inequality by taking all schools under the government’s wing to ensure fair treatment. Conflicts arose between the students and parents of these schools, who protested in front of the schools refusing admittance to government officials. The government put a

swift end to this by threatening the use of force if they did not leave the premises. The socialist parties also played a role in the abolishing of the English medium and takeover of private schools. They referred to English as the *kaduwa* (sword) (Wettewa, n.d.) that kept them separated from the English educated elite classes and from being able to share equal opportunities. Public sentiment was against the English language, viewing it as a symbol of the colonisers and their restrictions on the locals.

Education and the *Language Act*

Just as in the case of the ethnic conflict, once again it can be assumed that the root cause of the conflict in the education system was elitism. The previously missionary run private schools were known for having better facilities than public schools. It must be noted however that prior to Independence the number of vernacular-educated persons was considerably less than post-Independence. Particularly after 1953 there was a sudden surge of vernacularly educated students. The conflict lay in that, despite this increase, there were no careers or job opportunities available for them, the colonisers having made English a requirement in both public and private sectors. (Kearney, 1964) It was also extremely difficult at the time to be educated in English as those schools offering it were quite expensive and targeted the middle class and upwards. There was elitism in education. Education was considered a tool of the capitalists by Karl Marx (Thompson, 2015) by which they kept the proletariat classes “under control” and maintained “false consciousness”. This very statement seems to mirror the issue of the education system of that time.

However, as English language education was largely in the hands of private, mostly Christian, schools which were concentrated in the southwest and north and were expensive to attend, access to this education was markedly unequal on a regional, religious, and class basis. (Kearney, 1964, p. 127).

In 1931 C.W.W. Kannangara (see below) brought in



the initiative of Central Schools as an initial attempt to lessen the inequalities within the education system and ensure that rural areas had access to education of an equal standing to that of their elite urban counterparts. According to Rajiva Wijesinghe, (2021) J.R. Jayewardene’s motion in 1944 to replace English as the official language of the country led to an unravelling of Kannan-

gara’s work. With the emergence of this sentiment, rural areas no longer gave precedence to the learning of the English language, a language they associated with their oppressors. J.R. Jayewardene later amended his motion to include both national languages and only for primary education, however over time it extended

to secondary education with only science in English. These schools initially did also have English mediums for the English-speaking minorities but by the end of the seventies the English medium was abolished altogether by Sirimavo Bandaranaike’s government.

In an article for *The Island*, Professor O. A. Ileperuma of the University of Peradeniya highlights the difficulties students underwent after the abolishment of the English medium. (Ileperuma, 2022) He states how specifically the subject of science became harder to comprehend as scientific terms which had been moderately easy to comprehend in English as they were words used in daily language now were in Pali and Sanskrit which they were not familiar with. He also speaks on ethnic harmony being achieved through the use of English as a common language.

Education in the English medium has distinct advantages to enhance social harmony between Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim students when they sit in the same classroom. During the 1950s, Ananda College had Tamil and Muslim students who studied along with the Sinhala students. Although politicians talk about national harmony, the role of a common link language in the classroom has largely been ignored. (Ileperuma, 2022, p. para 3).

The abolishing of the English medium led to an immediate opposite effect of what J.R. Jayewardene and people like C.W.W. Kannangara had intended. Not only did it create further divisions amongst the ethnic communities, this time through language, but also the need for English could not be ignored. With public schools no longer offering education in this language nor teaching it at all, more private schools started re-emerging and the concept of International schools came about. These schools were usually once again better equipped than public schools and far more expensive than public schools. It is evident that J.R. Jayewardene and S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike wanted to put an end to the presence of elitism in Sri Lankan society and ensure equality for all. The initial purpose of the *Language Act* was to ‘take back’ the country from the effect of the colonisers. Initially these motions were deemed the answer to the elitist conflict. However, it only led to the emergence of a different type of elitism.



The emergence of International schools had as many advantages to society as it did disadvantages. International schools welcomed students from all ethnicities and religions. They created a region of multiculturalism with children from all ethnicities co-existing, something public schools, with their divisive

language-based mediums, failed to do. International schools also provided schools with foreign curriculums which were constantly being upgraded and were considered as being of a better standard altogether. English was a prerequisite for working in the private sector. Being educated in an International school meant these students now had access to better job opportunities within the private sector. They also were open to better educational opportunities. The downside to these schools however were that they charged rather high fees which were only payable by people of a certain economic level or class. Hence the re-emergence of elitism within society; in this instance class-based elitism. International schools closed the ethnic gap but widened the economic gap. Another factor was that despite its level of multiculturalism it has been argued that International schools with their foreign education systems did not focus on teaching their students to appreciate the culture of their own country. Therefore, there was a lack of 'nationalistic' sentiment amongst their students. International schools were now producing members of society that felt socially alienated from their own kind. There was also the fact that being an English based form of education and following foreign curriculums, there was very little emphasis placed on the learning of the national languages. Apart from the minority of Eurasians and Burghers, whose first language was English, the other students grew up not knowing their own mother tongue well. (Wettewa, n.d.).

In current times however, the sentiments revolving around International schools have changed drastically. There are now more options to choose from with many International schools charging more affordable fees thus making it accessible to lower economic classes. Scholarship initiatives are also present, as well as free education for children of teachers working in that particular school, once again creating easier access to a higher level of education previously only accessible to the elite. The conflict now lies in preconceived notions of those educated in local schools and the bias they have against International or private schools.

Yet another disadvantage to the removal of the English mediums, was that after J.R. Jayewardene came into power there was a subsequent change to the economic system to reduce the role of the public sector. The resulting conflict was that there were no longer enough job opportunities for graduates among the public sector and their lack of a knowledge of English meant they were unemployable in the private sector. Even in modern society this remains an issue as the private sector cannot operate without English. Even within the public sector there are many ministries that require a knowledge of English, specifically those that have international dealings. The conflict remained that those without a knowledge of the English language could not work in those fields. English is a universally accepted 'link' language that bridges different countries in communications. Even though provisions have been made under the *Language Act* to accommodate English as a link language in Sri Lanka, there is still inadequate education in the language leading to many

conflicts within society. One such incident is when 400 home schooled maids were declared unsuitable for employment in the USA because of their lack of proficiency in English. Goolbai Gunasekara writes in *The Island* to bemoan this fact. Included are a few relevant quotes from her article.

The 'average' Sri Lankan hasn't a hope of ever getting anywhere in the International arena because the schooling given to Sri Lankans is so substandard and out of date ... and in Sinhala or Tamil. (Tamil is at least spoken elsewhere but not Sinhala). In my unpopular opinion, it is the International Schools, Colombo's Private Schools and Foreign Universities (which produced Kanya) which have kept a tiny percentage of our students capable of keeping up with the world. (Gunasekara, 2022, p. para 3).

For once let us forget the word 'Elite' and try to bring ALL island schools up to the levels of the good private institutions in the country without bringing good schools down to government school levels (as was done in the past). (Gunasekara, 2022, p. para 5).

Let us not fool ourselves. Being able to read and write does not make us 90% literate as we proudly announce every so often. Our youngsters are not really EDUCATED. Those 400 nurses are 'educated' Sri Lankan style but cannot compete in an international arena. (Gunasekara, 2022, p. para 8).

Conclusion

Elitism is an ever-present social conflict regardless of the society or culture one belongs to. It ultimately boils down to the fact that inequalities are always present based on various factors. The *Language Act of 1956* was merely a tool, elitists used to maintain control over society. Through the passing of this Act many conflicts emerged within Sri Lankan society. These conflicts as usual only affected the proletariat classes and served to control them, the elite were not affected. The beginnings of the transfer of power in the 1920s saw the emergence of ethnic tensions. This was, as discussed, a result of the British employing 'divide and rule' tactics to ensure subjugation of their colonies. These ethnic tensions led to 'Nationalist' sentiments. From this the idea of Nationalism, the *Language Act* and the Swabasha movement came into being.

The discussions in this article highlight the effects the *Language Act* had on the education system, on the labour force and its role in causing the re-emergence of elitism, this time as a result of class and economic differences. Finally, the importance of the English language for international communications, and the impact a lack of an English education has on today's society, must be addressed.

Elitism is an issue that seems to have no current solution. One could argue that a change of mentality or attitude would help in resolving this social issue. One would have to refer to Marx's utopian state of communism to know what a society without elitism would be like. However, it does not seem to be a reality that can be realised anytime soon.

*** Kathryn Pereira - CSA Colombo Chapter - is an undergraduate at Aquinas College of Higher Studies, Department of Humanities.**

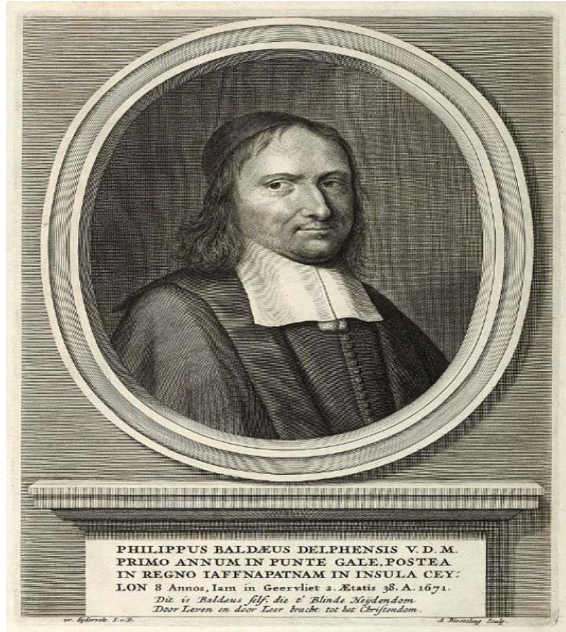
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Phillipus Baldaeus: the Dutch Missionary who wrote of Ceylon

by Avishka Mario Senewiratne and Dr. Srilal Fernando

A recent reading of the life and works of the Dutch Minister, Rev. Phillipus Baldaeus reveals a man who fits the phrase “je ne sais quoi”, a quality that cannot be described or named easily. His Magnum Opus, “*A True and Exact Description of the Most Celebrated East India Coasts of Malabar and Coromandel: As also the Great Island of Ceylon and the religion of the heathens.*” Published in 1672, this work is the first of



three great descriptions of Ceylon. The second one by the more famous Robert Knox deals with the interior of the island close to Kandy where he was incarcerated after being taken captive. A third book by Captain Ribeiro called *Ceilao* was an account of a soldier, of mainly the maritime areas under the Portuguese.

Baldaeus served as a Minister of the Dutch Reformed Church and accompanied the Dutch troops when they captured Jaffna from the Portuguese. He was there from 1658 to 1665 and recorded life in Jaffna, secular and religious buildings, lands, inhabitants, and their customs are replete with many drawings and maps. A detailed account of the capture and the ensuing military activity and events prior to and after are included in the book. This brief essay is an attempt to illustrate the life of Baldaeus and make a note of his monumental work on Ceylon.

Early Life

Baldaeus was born in 1632 in Delft, Holland. At the age of four, he lost both of his parents to the plague, within the span of just four days. His grandfather cared for Baldaeus till he too died four years later. The care passed onto a relative Robertus Junius, who had served in the overseas missions. It is possible that young Baldaeus was influenced by Robertus to serve in the Ministry. After completing his studies at the Universities of Groningen and Leiden, Baldaeus was

appointed a Minister of the Dutch Reformed Church at age 21. He married his cousin and embarked for Batavia as an employee of the Dutch East India Company (VOC). Unfortunately, his wife died three months after his arrival in Batavia in July 1655.

Missionary in Ceylon



Ryckloff van Goens Sr

After the capitulation of Colombo to the Dutch in May 1656, Baldaeus was ordered to serve in Ceylon. He married Elizabeth Tribolet on board the ship and arrived in Galle later that year. In both marriages, Baldaeus was childless. He stayed in Galle for one year mainly serving the needs of the Dutch troops and the community. In January 1658, the Dutch launched a campaign to oust the Portuguese from South India and Northern Ceylon, under the leadership of Ryckloff van Goens (Snr). Baldaeus accompanied the troops as Chaplain. The Sinhalese force led by Mudaliyar Don Manoel Andrado and his brother Don Louis Andrado joined the Dutch troops. They captured Tuticorin, and Mannar easily. On the June 21, 1658, Jaffna capitulated. The fleet sailed to Negapatam which surrendered without fighting.

Baldaeus was now appointed *Predikant* (Minister of the Dutch Reformed Church) of Jaffna. He had the difficult task of converting the Hindus and the many Catholics to the Dutch Reformed Church and managing the church's affairs. This task was challenging as the Portuguese had ruled the North for over 40 years and Roman Catholicism was widespread. Dutch possessions were owned by the Dutch East India Company, the VOC. Unlike the Catholic Church under the *Padroado*, the Dutch Reformed Church had to function under the VOC. Baldaeus, like the other *predikants* were appointed by the VOC. So

was another grade of clergy lower than the *predikants* who had to work in the parish and minister to the sick. Baldaeus had to deal with a large number of Catholics who had at one time had nearly forty priests ministering to them. All the Catholic churches and schools were vested in the Dutch Reformed Church.

Work in Jaffna

The *predikant* had a strong influence on the population. He could appoint schoolmasters. They could impose fines for nonattendance. The locals were required to attend. These fines were a source of income for the schools. They performed other functions such as recording births and marriages and keeping records of the Thōmbos. Baldaeus was astute and a hard worker. He acquired a knowledge of Tamil and Portuguese so that he could listen to and speak with locals in their own tongue. He also preached in these languages. Later, he compiled books in these languages so that native proponents and schoolmasters could address the masses widely. The first such book was “*The Principal Precepts of our Religion*”. Upon being approved by the Governor-General and Council of India as well as the Governor of Ceylon in 1659, this book was widely used in the Churches of Jaffna, Mannar, Galle, Negombo and Matara. He toiled by himself in these tasks for three years with only local assistants. Then two, Joannes A’ Breyl and Joannes Donker were appointed to assist him. Even with this help, the tasks were overwhelming as he had to preach three times on Sunday and once on weekdays, apart from his frequent visitations.

In 1661, Baldaeus again accompanied Ryckloff van Goens Sr. and his troops to take over Portuguese possessions on the Malabar coast. Wouter Schouten, a surgeon attached to the Dutch fleet, in his book “*Oost Indische Voyagin*”, records the presence of Baldaeus whom he refers to as “the pious *predikant*... a man faithful, zealous and unwearied in the work of the Lord”. Schouten also states that he visited and gave great comfort to the wounded. Hearing about the work of Baldaeus, Johan Maatsuycker, the Governor General of Netherlands India, wrote him a congratulatory letter. It is said that Baldaeus carried out his duties with extreme diligence.

After this brief interruption, he successfully continued his work in Jaffna. He reports the presence of over 15,000 children attending schools in Jaffna, over 62,000 Christians with many baptisms and marriages taking place. Nevertheless, these efforts were not totally fruitful as many would re-convert to their native faith of Hinduism or Catholicism. Seventy years later, the German traveller Johan Wolfgang Heydt commented the following on Baldaeus:

“I for my part have never seen any such great zeal among the local folk... In truth, Herr Baldaeus would wonder greatly should come today to these parts.”

By 1662, Baldaeus had learnt Sanskrit as well as studied Hinduism. All this he did to fathom the culture and traditions of the land he worked. Baldaeus truly loved the East, especially Ceylon. Baldaeus, though anti-Catholic, admired the methods of faith propagation by the Portuguese Catholic missionaries. He emulated

them as much as he could. However, with the lack of *predikants* and the lack of enthusiasm, the faith of the Dutch Reformed Church did not make a sound impact in Ceylon as the Catholics. However, Baldaeus’ translation of the Lord’s Prayer to the Tamil language, although guilty of a few errors, was remarkable as the first treatise printed in Europe of any Indian language.

Challenges with the VOC

With the passing of time, he was increasingly dissatisfied with the VOC for their miserly attitude to dispensing funds, and the failure to obtain more clergy to maintain and expand the work he was doing. Unlike the Catholic missionaries who considered the Portuguese regime a separate entity, working independently yet with their protection, the Dutch missionaries were under the VOC; and employed by them. Thus, their hands were tied. Baldaeus clamoured for change. The final straw was when the authority to inspect schools was removed from the *predikants* and handed over to lay officials. Thus, in 1665 Baldaeus applied to Batavia for release from his duties. As the Government of Ceylon was short of *predikants*, they requested Baldaeus to stay for another two years. However, he refused this request. As a result, Governor Ryckloff Van Goens Sr. was angered. He considered this refusal as an affront to the dignity and authority of the government and nearly alleged Baldaeus of financial misdeeds baselessly. Accordingly, Van Goens sent Baldaeus off in haste on the next ship to Europe. This was the inglorious end of the glorious mission in the East, of the zealous missionary, Philipus Baldaeus. He served over 10 years in the East, of which 9 was in Ceylon.

Back in Europe – the final phase



Portrait of Philipus Baldaeus and Gerrit Mossopotam, 1668

After spending three months in the Cape of Good Hope Baldaeus reached Holland in 1666. Little is known about his activities in the next two years, and it can be presumed that he was working on his book on the subject of his experience of the East. He may have settled in the Hague in the late 1660s. However, through the dedication of his book, it is known that he took part in a Thanksgiving service at the Hague to celebrate the victory of Admiral de Ruyter at Chatham.

In 1669 he was appointed *predikant* in a small town in Holland and remained there until his death three years later. The cause or date of the death of Baldaeus is not known for sure. It is predicted that he passed away either in 1671 or 1672.

Baldaeus' Tree

Baldaeus claims that the Church of Pariture was the finest in Point Pedro. The Dutch built a fort there which encompassed the Church and a certain tamarind tree. Baldaeus commented on it as follows: "The church was much decayed, but has been repaired of late. Just before the church stands a tall tamarind tree, under which, as it affords a very agreeable shadow in the heat of the day...". Nearly a century after Baldaeus left Ceylon, Fredrick Schwartz a Danish missionary, made an effort to track this tree, which the late revered preacher had preached his sermons. Later in 1906, a stone slab was set to commemorate this occasion.

Baldaeus Tree

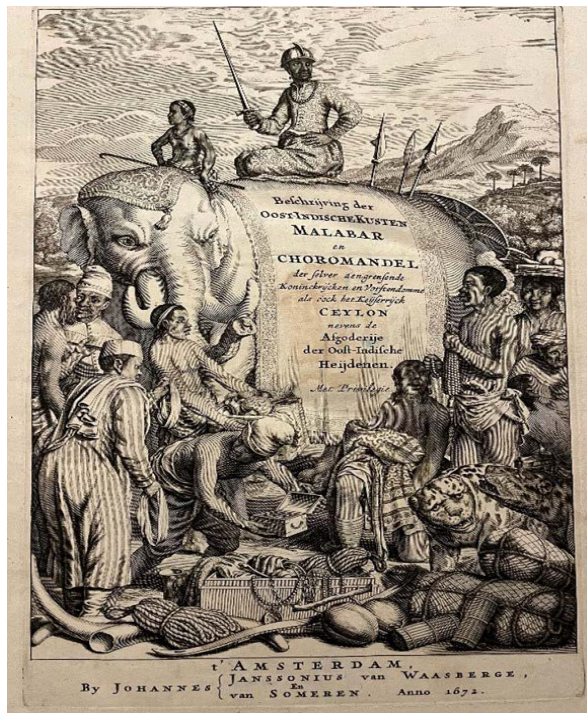
1658

Visited by Schwartz

5th September 1760

Though the slab still remains, the celebrated tree which had a circumference of approximately 15m at the base of the trunk and 22m at the crown, was blown over by a cyclone in 1952. The church there was demolished much earlier. However, a few fragments of the fort still linger.

The book



It is widely believed that Baldaeus spent his last few years writing this monumental work on the East, with a special emphasis on Ceylon. He was able to see this work being printed in 1671, a few months before his death at 39. The book printed in folio form is divided

into three sections:

- Detailed description of the East Indian coast or of Lagoon areas of Malabar and Coromandel (includes: "short guide to the time sophisticated language arts")
- Description of the great and famous island of Ceylon
- Abgottery of the East Indian heathen. A truthful and detailed description of the worship of the Hindus and Hindu idols.



The ship bottle of Cornelius de Witt, depicts his portrait. The book is dedicated to de Witt.

Each of these sections had a separate title page and pagination. The section on Ceylon counts to 240 pages, with 8 unnumbered pages (These pages were printed after the main section was printed but before the publishing). This section also includes 57 illustrated engravings and 11 double-page prints containing maps and views of the main cities of Ceylon. The book also contains the portraits of Baldaeus and General Gerard Hulft, engraved by the well-known artist Blooteling, based on portraits drawn by Syldervelt and Govaart Flinck.

With regard to the section on Ceylon, the first forty chapters are details of the events before 1656, which Baldaeus referred to from the Portuguese authors before his day. The first Chapter is a general description of the island, whereas chapters two to seven speak of the events of the arrival of the Portuguese to the Dutch visits in the early 17th century. The next 32 chapters speak of the arrival of the Dutch till its capture of the Coastal region in 1656. Many scholars have considered this section as important though it is guilty of certain inaccuracies. It is a great book of reference to the scholar and student of history as well as the general reader interested in the affairs of Ceylon. The last ten chapters illustrate Baldaeus' own observation and experience as a visitor of the island. His work as *Predikant* is highlighted in this aspect. These ten chapters are useful for understanding the workings of the common men and women in Jaffna, which are not re-

corded in other sources. Baldaeus however is faulty of his biases like any other author. Firstly, he is a Dutch Imperialist. Secondly, after all, he is a Minister of the Dutch Reformed Church and is highly biased toward his own faith and is in antipathy with the indigenous faiths. These facts are not ambiguous in his writings and even the average reader can notice them. Dr. P. J. Veth comments on Baldaeus as follows:

“The style of Baldaeus is not free from faults; his construction of sentences is often faulty, and his mode of expression is not always exact. But nevertheless, that style is deserving of high praise, when we contrast it with the manner of most of the writers of his time, at which our language even by the most able men, as a rule so badly written and disfigured by the use of so many useless foreign words.”

Nearly 250 years later, the eminent historian, Donald Ferguson critically analyzed this work in the *Ceylon Literary Register* of 1936. In order to understand the era of Baldaeus in a much a comprehensive way, Prof. K.W. Goonewardena's *The Foundation of Dutch Power in Ceylon 1638-1658* (1958) and Prof. Sinnappah Arasaratnam's *The Dutch Power in Ceylon 1658-1687* (1958) are essential reading material. Reading these monologues along with Baldaeus gives a better perspective on the period in question.

The Translations

The 1672 first version of Baldaeus' work was written and printed in Dutch. The publishers of this monumental work were Johannes Janssonius Van Waasberge and Johannes Van Someren in Amsterdam. The 'privilege' or copyright was signed by Johann de Witt and Herbert Van Beaumont dated March 18, 1669. The book was dedicated to Cornelius de Witt, a Dutch political and Naval commander. After the book was printed in Holland, a German version was printed by the same publishers in 1672 as well. On the title page of this version, it is stated that it was "Carefully translated". However, despite the assurance of the publishers, the translation was not a very accurate one, as the translator was ignorant of many oriental terms. It was using this German version that the first English translation by Churchill in England was produced. It went under one section of Churchill's *Collection of Voyages and Travels* (published by Churchill, Awnsham and John, 1703). However, as expected this translation made the obvious mistakes the German one made. In the later 19th century, Pieter Brohier translated certain portions of Baldaeus' work and published it in the form of a pamphlet. Later his great-grandson, Dr. R.L. Brohier republished this in the *Dutch Burgher Union Journal* from 1956 to 1959 as well an abridged version.

When S.D. Saparamadu of *Tisara Prakasakayo* and *Ceylon Historical Journal* fame contemplated publishing a sound translation of Baldaeus' text, Lyn Fonseka of the Colombo Museum Library informed him of another unpublished full translation by Pieter Brohier. Fortunately, the once-misplaced manuscript had been identified among several anonymously written papers in the library of the Royal Asiatic Society. These letters were donated to the

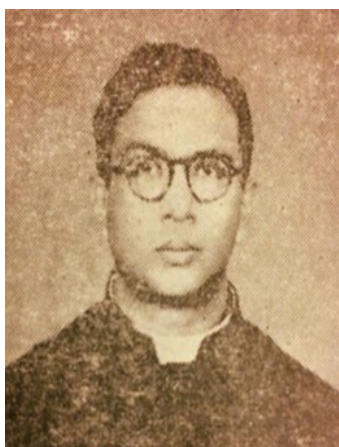
RAS by Advocate Weinman in 1897. Pieter Brohier who was born in 1792 and lived most of his life under the British had a sound knowledge of "High Dutch" as well as English. This paved the way for an excellent translation. However, Fr. S.G. Perera SJ, upon referring to the manuscript pointed out a few shortcomings. He recommended changing the style of the language as well as maintaining the original Dutch names of various places. Realising the importance of this unpublished manuscript, Saparamadu printed and published it for the first time in 1960. He made several changes as recommended by Fr. Perera and thus a new glossary was introduced by C. W. Nicholas pointing out the names and what they meant. This publication mooted under the able workmanship of S. D. Saparamadu is a phenomenal contribution to Sri Lankan history. Baldaeus' legacy was sealed!

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Ignatius of Colombo The Charmed Life of a Genius Priest

by Avishka Mario Senewiratne



Talent, passion and humility are virtues hard to emulate. Seldom are found who have all three. Fr. Ignatius Perera of revered memory, was one such individual born to this palm-fringed isle, Sri Lanka. Some remember him as the Radio priest. Some recall his prowess in training choirs as well as his concerts. But those who were

truly touched by his generosity were those who were deprived of hope when they dropped out of school not knowing what to do. For he clothed and fed them as well as educated them, giving them the life they deserved. When he suddenly passed away in January 1981, *The Catholic Messenger* mentioned the following about him:

“The fascinating personality of Fr. Ignatius should be the subject of serious study by those concerned with the training of pastors...Born into a family of musicians, and schooled in the classics, Fr. Ignatius became an engineer by option, because he had a knack for it, and saw the need for it.”

Though, whether the life of Fr. Ignatius was studied is doubtful, his memory has not faded from those who were inspired by his life and works. Born on October 30, 1915, in the coastal city of Periyamulla, in Negombo, dubbed ‘Little Rome’, Alphonsus Narcissus Ignatius Perera, was born to a family of musicians. His father was Louis Perera and his mother, Egistina Catherine Fernando. His elder brother, Francis would be a priest as well as a Choral Director. While receiving his early education at St. Mary’s College, Negombo, young Ignatius received the calling to be a Priest. His brother’s influence may also have had something to do with his decision. The superiors of young Ignatius such as the seminary Rector, Fr. Edmund Pieris OMI, sounded the brilliant academic record as well as his prowess for music to Fr. Maurice Le Goc OMI, the Rector of St. Joseph’s College at that time. Fr. Le Goc was highly impressed by Ignatius and immediately recruited him to St. Joseph’s. Young Ignatius was known to invent all sorts of creative things in his early days. The scientist priest (now forgotten), Fr. Gregory Goonawardena, played a big role in Ignatius’ early days. Upon completing his school education, Ignatius received the opportunity to study in Rome for his priesthood. The subsequent years in Europe would be a roller-coaster ride for the young man as war intertwined with his formation. However, the delay for the priesthood was one of the best things that would happen for Fr. Ignatius.

The colourful days in Rome

The young seminarian was an outstanding student and well-read in the classics. He mastered several Western languages and was well-conversant with the natives of Italy. Apart from his theological and philosophical studies, Ignatius read for an Honour’s Degree in Classics. Soon after, he got to experiment with two other skills he had not developed in Ceylon. It is unthinkable that a person could balance between sacred music and radio. Yet, this was the niche of young Ignatius, along with his passion for classics. It was through sheer hard work and self-study that he mastered electronics. He truly had a knack for it and doing repairs along with other work brought him great consolation in the Fascist-ruled country. However, there were instances where Ignatius spent too much on Radios and less on Classics. Such as flunking some of his exams! The young Seminarian’s prowess was well-known in the days to come. On one occasion just 10 minutes before the transmission, Vatican Radio broke down. During this time Giulio Marconi, son of Guglielmo Marconi, who was in charge of Vatican Radio rang young Ignatius to come and fix the issue. Within no time, the transmission was active and the radio worked as if brand new. It is also said that Ignatius was called multiple times by a certain priest called Fr. Giovanni Montini for repair work. This priest would later be Pope Paul VI. Another interesting anecdote of Ignatius was when he was in charge of the BTH Super 35mm Arc projector in the auditorium of Propaganda College. He found an ingenious way of modifying the projector motor feed. Thanks to Ignatius, those at Propaganda had the good fortune of watching 35mm feature films. A facility which many others did not have then. He was assisted in the projector room by a German priest and the future Rector of St Joseph’s College (SJC) and St Peter’s College (SPC), Fr. Mervyn Weerakkody. One day while Ignatius was running the projector, he had to urgently run to the washroom. That day the assistants were not present either. Unexpectedly, a fire broke out in the projection cubicle, damaging both the films and the projector. However, the hands of Ignatius were magical. He was able to rewind the burnt transformer and repair the projector. One day the Vatican grounds were full of aero-buffs who had come to fly their model planes. Ignatius found a way of hacking the frequencies of these model aircraft and directed the planes as he wishes, stronger than the controls of the innocent controllers on the grounds. There certainly was pandemonium in the Vatican on that eventful day!

After his formation ended, he amassed a lot of free time. This he used worthily by learning Sacred Music at the Academy of St. Cecelia. Again, through basic teaching and self-study, he also mastered this field. Ignatius surprised all by sitting for the Bachelor of Music Degree at the University of London. This

he succeeded with much ease. In Rome, he received one of the rare privileges of conducting the Choir of the Sistine Chapel. With the fall of Benito Mussolini in 1943, Italy was liberated. However, World War II continued for two more years. During these war-torn years, young Ignatius taught Classics to various troop groups. In the meantime, Ignatius ventured to do a Diploma from Faraday House (An electrical engineering College in the UK), to secure a steady qualification in Electronics. After a long period of gestation, Ignatius and his fellow seminary mates were ordained in Rome on March 19, 1944. He was 27. A year later, Fr. Ignatius was called back to Ceylon and the Archbishop of Colombo, Monseigneur. Masson gave his first appointment to serve his alma mater.

During this period, St. Joseph's College had been taken over by the Royal Navy, and the staff and students were located in various parts of the Western Province. Fr. Ignatius was sent to the Borella branch of SJC. Here he had a guide in the person of Fr. Peter Pillai, the Rector. The two of them got along with another contemporary, Fr. Justin Perera would be lifelong friends after the tough days in Borella. The College in Borella adjoining the Archbishop's House were temporary dwellings and were quite uncomfortable for the boys who had once been in Darley Road. Fr. Ignatius had a reputation that preceded him, for his impetus in what he had achieved in Rome was beyond the ordinary. Thus, his future students expected a certain stature and strict personality. What they saw when this simple priest, not taller than 5'4, rode a barless bicycle to Borella, raised their eyebrows. One of his first students, Peter Perera recalls his first memory of Fr. Ignatius as follows:

"He was an unassuming simple down-to-earth character, affable, youthful, completely approachable almost like one of the students. There was none of the aloofness and authoritarian manner of the teachers we were accustomed to."

Fr. Ignatius first started taking the Latin class, for this was his first forte. His teaching was contagious and those who resented the subject were enticed to it solely because of him. During the 45-minute period, only 15 minutes were spent on Latin declensions. The rest of the half-hour was to discuss any other subject the students questioned him and his extraordinary experiences in war-torn Europe. Despite this, his students were successful in their exams for he knew the art of imparting knowledge and making students learn in their own ways. Soon he was entrusted with the serious role of Choir master of the almost defunct St. Cecilia's Choir of SJC. Here is how the 1949 *Blue and White Magazine* illustrate the coming of Fr. Ignatius to the Choir:

"And then 1946 - our new birth, our new home with our new choirmaster. How am I to tell you of those first practices, those practices at which all sorts of strange fish turned up: fish that our little priest had to turn into singing fish? Many of those fish kept wondering what this man was doing to them. Was he trying to ruin them? Making them sing in parts - it may seem exaggerated but I'm sure there were boys - I among them - who did not catch on to the idea of singing while somebody near them seemed to prefer to sing his own composition.

Having patiently got each group - Sopranos, Altos, Tenors and Basses - to learn their parts, he found the whole lot lustily singing Soprano! Poor little priest! But in the midst of apparent failure, the messiah had to triumph. In about three months we found ourselves, to our own surprise, actually singing in parts! And that in four parts too!"

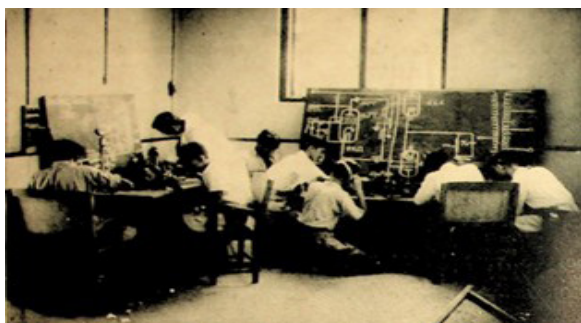
Fr. Ignatius' skill and experience in Rome came into good hands to revive the Josephian Choir. His methodical training and meaningful set of practices warranted success. Soon, the standards had risen to such a level that the students were able to sing over the National Broadcast of Radio Ceylon.

The feedback from the general public was overwhelming. The revived Josephian Choristers would now go on to take part in the music competition hosted by the Western Music Section of the Department of Education, and ultimately win it. The judge at this event was D'Hales of Trinity College of Music in London. He hailed the choir for their splendid performance and claimed they sang just as those in England. 'Handel's Requiem' conducted by Fr. Ignatius and performed by the Josephians is considered the greatest of the musical performances the College hosted at that



time. The Josephian Orchestra was established in the year 1947, consisting of 16 members (seven violinists, a bass player and a pianist). It was conducted by Fr. Ignatius Perera.

With World War II's end, most British forces stationed in Ceylon left for their country. The vehicles, weapons, radios and other war-purpose equipment were put up for sale as the forces had little use for them now. Fr. Ignatius, very keen bought a rifle, an army jeep as well as some radios. Whenever he had some, he would often drive in his new jeep to distant jungles in the areas away from Colombo. He had great pleasure in hunting birds and wild boar. On one of his visits to the jungles of Pottuwil, Fr. Ignatius rescued a mongoose and adopted it as his pet. The mongoose named 'Tikka' would be with Fr. Ignatius while he would work in the lab and at times when he would teach Latin in the class. The mongoose and the priest became a highlight of the College at that time. Upon the requests of his students, Fr. Ignatius started the Radio Lab of St. Joseph's College in 1947. The



Radio Lab of St Joseph's College

students were very curious about radios, their working and repairs. Soon the membership would reach about 30 or so. Fr. Ignatius taught them the theory of radio and soon made arrangements to let them repair radio sets and make amplifiers. Fr. Peter Pillai trusted this initiative. Soon the Radio Lab made their own amplifier and fixed it to the sound system of the Bonjean Hall. With unprecedented donors and sponsorships Fr. Ignatius' lab was well-equipped with state-of-the-art technology. No school or lab elsewhere was able to match its standard.

Fr. Ignatius Perera installed a private Intercom telephone system with 24 connections, linking various offices and buildings in St. Joseph's College. The standards maintained at the Radio Club were extremely high, and the services it rendered outside school were magnanimous. The Radio Club installed amplifiers that were manufactured at the College Lab in some of the popular churches on the island, such as St. Mary's Church, Bambalapitiya, All Saints' Church - Borella, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral - Chilaw and St. Mary's Church, Negombo, as was a large amplifier system of 180 Watts output for the church and camp of St. Anne's Shrine, Talawila. A giant 27,000 Watts transformer for a 3-phase electricity supply was also built under the guidance of Fr. Ignatius. For all his work in the lab, Fr. Ignatius had his very own *golaya* in the person of Aloysius, a young man who was starving in the streets, with his hopes down and his future shattered. Fr. Ignatius employed him and they would have a lifelong friendship. Ignatius and Aloysius were workaholics who slept mostly on the table of the lab. The 'equipment hospital' was messy strewn with damaged radios, clocks, refrigerators, toys, and gramophones. However, whatever was admitted to the lab, was restored by Fr. Ignatius. This is how Noel Crusz, a good friend of Ignatius illustrated the latter:

"Ignatius smoked 'Peacock' cigarettes end to end. His fingers were brown with nicotine. He had his tot of double-distilled Mendis special. He was generous to a fault, especially to those seeking advice on equipment, electronics, music or the classics."

Fr. Ignatius as mentioned was a brilliant teacher in whatever he taught. However, with all these talents what made him special and loved by all was his zeal to the Almighty and care for the needy. His devotion to the downtrodden made him a veritable angel for those who had once lost hope in life. Fr. Ignatius was a simple man who had a unique sense of humour. He was

childlike and lovable. Such traits are not that common in modern society. Chaplain Raja Pereira, a student of Fr. Ignatius relates an important story on the latter:

"One day, during class Father wrote on the board this equation: $V = I \times R$ and asked 'What is this, son?'. I was still fresh with our B1 class's Physics teacher Sir Eric Mendis' Electricity lectures and so I soon put up my hand and said 'Ohm's Law, Father'. Fr. Ignatius responded 'No sana boy this was God's Law which Ohm happened to discover'. It was from here that we learnt that one should put what God said at all times ahead of what man says."

In the early 1950s, Fr. Ignatius started the famous Catholic Choral Society consisting of young men and women from various parts of Colombo. Ruth Van Gramberg, my good friend living in Melbourne, wrote to me recently relating her experience in those endearing days of the Choral Society. She mentioned that they were regularly trained by the maestro and received many opportunities to perform at Radio Ceylon. She recalled how Fr. Perera would be invited to perform in public functions with the Choir. Once the choir had performed for Premier Sir John Kotelawala at his Kandawala Walauwa. On many occasions Fr. Ignatius paired with the like-minded mediagenic Fr. Noel Crusz. They partnered in several plays where Fr. Crusz wrote the screenplay and Fr. Ignatius directed the music. Those performances were attended by hundreds and sometimes in thousands. In 1956, the sound



editing for the feature film *Little Bike Lost*, directed by Fr. Noel Crusz was done by Fr. Ignatius and his students in the radio lab.

One of the greatest supporters of Fr. Perera was Mrs. Edith (J.L.M.) Fernando of Pegasus Hotel fame. She, through her son Lalin, had come to know him quite well and lobbied those in the Church to aid his good work. Edith Fernando had convinced Fr. Peter Pillai to recommend Fr. Ignatius for a USIS Scholarship in the USA. This move paved off well and Fr. Ignatius was allowed to travel to USA and Europe for his studies in 1960. One area he extensively studied was the new development in electromagnetism. Upon his return, Fr. Ignatius had plans to start a new radio lab. Archbishop Thomas Cooray supported this ideal wholeheartedly and made plans to form the lab in Kotahena, near the Cathedral. In 1962, after donations



Opening of the Radio Lab in Kotahena – 1962 Archbishop Cooray and Fr. Ignatius are seen here inspecting some equipment

from many of his friends, students, and especially the Philips Electric Company, the Radio Lab was ready. It was blessed and opened by the Archbishop. This multi-story building was to make men and not records. Fr. Perera was very keen on recruiting school dropouts who did not have any hope in academics. Vocational studies such as electronics came out to be a useful option.

Despite his high level of intelligence and ability to do multiple things, Fr. Ignatius Perera, was a simple, down-to-earth presbyter. His devotion to the poor and downtrodden was well known. It was customary for him to help anyone for nothing in turn. On one occasion, when Fr. Justin Perera was admitted to the open ward at the General Hospital. He noticed that one child in critical condition was being put on an iron lung (a mechanical ventilator). To make matters worse, the iron lung failed and those in the hospital were unable to fix it. While the child's life was ebbing away, Fr. Justin called Fr. Ignatius for help. It was 10 in the night and Ignatius was naturally up doing work in the lab. When answering the phone Ignatius said, "Justin, I have never seen an Iron Lung in all my life". Fr. Justin countered it by saying, "That does not matter one bit. You just come along". Within a few minutes, Fr. Ignatius arrived at the scene and in just a few moments he fixed the failed Iron Lung with just the help of nothing but a little strip of bamboo! Such was his interest in those in distress and his divine ability to fix things one deemed unfixable. Fr. Justin in his writings discusses while he was editor of the *Ceylon Catholic Messenger*, one of the printing machines of the Colombo Catholic Press had failed when an important publication was being printed. Again, Fr. Ignatius fixed the impossible, though printing machines were not his expertise. On another occasion, when a large foreign ship was docked in the Colombo Port, its radios failed. The government of Ceylon trusted none but this genius priest, who once again fixed the matter with relative ease. Stories of Fr. Ignatius can go on and on. This is what makes him legendary.

Towards the last years of his life, Fr. Ignatius failed in his sight and became very solitary. However, only a year before his death he had received a Doctorate from MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

with no Bachelor's or Master's Degree. Such was his recognition. Fr. Ignatius Perera passed away from a heart attack in his room in the Kotahena Lab premises on January 1981 aged 66. Many from various parts of the island came to pay their final homage to this much-loved and talented priest. President J.R. Jayawardena granted special permission to let Fr. Perera be interred on the premises of the Lab. Today a statue has been erected in memory of him and his yeoman contribution to the country. Whence cometh another?



WWII Prisoner from Karaitivu, Ceylon

by Allen L (Logan) Thurairatnam

Introduction



My grandfather, Kanthappar Kathiraveloo was working as traffic inspector in the Federated Malay States Railways in Kuala Lipis, Pahang when the Japanese landed in December 1941 north of Kuala Lipis.

Straightaway he was working the telephones at 3 am arranging trains to

evacuate railway employees. At that time, the trains going south were ambulance trains. They were filled with wounded soldiers covered in bloodied bandages. Trains going north carried war materials and troops.

When the British surrendered in 1942, he and his family of six were transferred to Singapore. There they stayed in British-built railway quarters with eight other railway families. This included the signal inspector and an engine driver. The Japanese special branch kept key railwaymen under surveillance.

Life was harsh, the Japanese sealed the radios with a flimsy tissue paper placed over the tuning dial. The dial was set to the Japanese broadcast station. If the seal was broken, the punishment was death.

Captured and Tortured

At his workplace, a colleague had concealed a radio in the ceiling so they could listen to foreign broadcasts and keep abreast of the war outside Malaya. Secret plans were hatched to help the British reclaim Singapore. During this time the engine driver who had a mistress decided to dump her. She in revenge reported them to the Japanese thus thwarting their secret plans. One morning in 1943, at 3 am, the Japanese soldiers armed with bayonet-attached rifles raided the housing quarters and arrested the railwaymen. He was in his 50's when he was arrested.

They were interrogated and tortured at the Central Police Station on South Bridge Road. Due to his injuries, he was sent to Tan Tock Seng Hospital. Thereafter he was interred at Outram Jail. His son K. Nadarajah who regularly visited him in prison states:

I was only 14 and was assigned the twice-daily task of delivering food cooked by my mother to him. Buses did not run regularly, and I was too impatient to wait for the trains so I would walk the three miles between my home in Spooner Road to the hospital each time. I could not recognise my father when I first visited him in the ward. He had become haggard with long, unkempt hair,

long messy beard and tattered clothes. He was so badly beaten he could hardly sit up. As he recovered, the Japanese took him back for interrogation and a court case ensued. He was sentenced to 20 years in jail because the Japanese judge said it was slower and more painful than cutting off his head. Upon Japan's surrender, my father was released though he suffered from amnesia because of all the beatings.



Mr K Nadarajah (see above) further states:

"They allowed us to visit him whenever he was warded (at the hospital). On my first trip, I couldn't recognise him. His hair had grown long, he had a beard and was much thinner. He was wearing the same clothes he had been taken in. These were in tatters."

After the surrender in September 1945,

"..... If the British had come three weeks later, my father could have died".

Outram Road Prison



The condition in the prison was of unspeakable horror. The inmates within the Outram jail were treated as criminals and not as prisoners of war. An Allied soldier recounts what he encountered on entering the prison:

"On entering Outram Road Jail I found the most terrible sights of dejected people with absolutely no will to live,

just slowly walking around. From the back you could see their reproductive organs hanging down between their legs – there was no flesh on them. It made sitting very hard. The hip bone would be pressing into bare skin. But you just had to sit and put up with the pain.

“Everything was done to order. No talking was allowed. When no order was given, you were silent and just stayed in the same position you were in when the last order was given. At nine o’clock at night you were sent back to your cell. There was a light on all night inside the cell, so that there was not a second of the twenty-four hours you were in darkness. And this went on, for me, for twenty-three months, including my period in Kuching. Twenty-three months in solitary.....”

Japanese Occupation

During the Japanese Occupation, half of the prison was used to hold military prisoners or prisoners- of-war, while the other half was for civilian prisoners. A total of 1,470 prisoners, mostly Chinese, died at the Outram Prison during the war – 141 were executed while the rest died of torture, starvation or diseases. Only 400 survived upon liberation in September 1945. Forty-three Japanese military men were tried for war crimes committed whilst they were in charge of the Outram Road jail.

The Heroine

K.Nadarajah goes onto say:

“In all these trials, I feel my mother suffered more because she had to endure all of this without the help of a husband. Eggs, meat and rice were scarce and could only be bought at the black market at exorbitant prices. But she made sure we got them so my father could have dinner every day. She didn't complain once and was a bastion for all of us children. But this took much out of her. In 1946 (the year after the Japanese surrender), she succumbed to gall bladder cancer at the age of 48.”

Return to Ceylon

Soon after the Japanese surrender the family returned to their home village of Karaitivu, Ceylon. They had endured much, and it was a great relief to be among relatives. My grandfather was just skin and bones. My grandmother had to tie a towel around his waist so that his trousers would hold up.

Even though the family returned to Ceylon, the British authorities paid a pension to the family until the boys turned 18 and the girls were married off.

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- 1 There is an error in the date. *The Straits Times* article says 1945.

[The family papers were lost during the war and the hasty return by ship to Ceylon after the Japanese surrender. This article is based on the recollections of Mr K Nadrajah the son who went back to Singapore and took up citizenship there. Mr Nadarajah’s oral account was part of ‘Surviving the Japanese occupation: War and its Legacies’ exhibition held in Singapore to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the fall of Singapore.]



Outram Road Prison

The pre-Christian era Notice on Sri Lanka's Diplomatic Mission to Rome

by M. Asoka. T. De Silva

Historical Backdrop

Many classical historians had conjectured that Taprobane was a continent and not an island, until the reign of Alexander the Great, Emperor of Macedonia.

Caius Plinius was known to have claimed that mariners who tried to make the voyage eastwards, could not sail by observing the positions of stars, because the North Pole was not visible. Hence such mariners had resorted to an ancient practice of carrying birds in their sailing boats, which they released at specific intervals in order to track the direction they pursued towards land.

Caius Plinius's biography indicates that he was born in Italy, and was a historian, naturalist, and nationalist. He completed his studies in Rome where he received education in literature, oratory, and law, as well as military training. He was the author of at least 75 books, and another 160 volumes of unpublished notebooks.

Pliny was known to have made the interesting comment that though Taprobane was so remote from the Roman Empire, it was also not free from vices of the Romans. The reference here was in relation to the greed of Romans for gold and silver (objects of cupidity), and variegated marbles, jewels and pearls. Pliny also appears to accept the contention that Taprobane, previously considered a continent, was first discovered by Onesicritus (one of the Naval Commanders of Alexander the Great) who confirmed that Taprobane was an island. Onesicritus had also claimed that the elephants seen by him in Taprobane were of a larger class than those of India (De Silva, 2013).

Incidentally, Onesicritus, the Naval Commander of Alexander the Great has been recognised as the first European to visit Ceylon.

Although this assertion would bestow credit on Onesicritus, Sir James Emerson Tennent's (1859) effort to get confirmatory evidence of this claim had not been successful.

Around 47 AD, a historically significant observation had been that despite strong monsoon winds blowing across the Indian Ocean, a seaman by the name of Hippalus, had made a daring voyage right across the Indian Ocean from the coast of Arabia to the western on India. Previously, fearing the dangers of the open sea, it had been the practice to sail by hugging the coast along the windings of the coast. This feat had helped Pliny in later years to gain more information about the Island of Ceylon.

Diplomatic Mission to the Sub-Continent of India

Twenty-five years after the death of Emperor Alexander, (336 – 323 BC) the succeeding Hellenic monarch, Seleucus Nicator, accredited Megasthenes as ambassador to the Mauryan Royal Court of Chandragupta in India.

Megasthenes was a Greek traveller, geographer, and ethnographer during the Hellenistic period and author of the work called "*Indica*".

Though Megasthenes had never known to have visited Ceylon, or for that matter, even travelled to any area south of the River Ganges, was able to collect many details of the interior of Ceylon. Megasthenes is also known to have claimed that Taprobane was separated from the mainland by a river, and that the inhabitants were called Palaigona, and that the country was more productive of gold and of larger pearls than India.

According to Tennent (1859), the term Palaigonoi, mentioned by Megasthenes for the Island's inhabitants, is a Greek derivation of Pali-Putra, the sons of Pali (De Silva, 2013).

Creation of A Greek Enclave in the Vicinity of Anuradhapura

In a significant comment, the *Mahavamsa*, describing the Island's contemporaneous reigning monarch Pandukabaya referring to the creation of among other structures, the setting apart of a conclave for a community called *Yonas*, believed to be a small population of Greeks, outside the West Gate of the capital city of Anuradhapura. This Greek community is believed to belong to the original settlers, who had made their way eastwards from their native cities in Greece in the company of Alexander the Great (De Silva, 2013).

In the meantime, recalling an event that facilitated links between Taprobane and the Roman Empire, Pliny describes how an emancipated slave (a reference to a revenue collector, according to Tennent (1859)) named Annius Plocamus, who had been swept away during a violent tempest into the Indian Ocean from the coast of Arabia, drifting for 15 days, and finally reaching the "Port of Hippuros" in the West coast of Taprobane.

This comment of Pliny though somewhat shrouded in mystery and duplicity, received recognition through "intelligence" information recorded by the Ambassadors who came from Taprobane during the reign of Emperor Claudius, that a Revenue Collector by the name of Annius Plocamus, who had been sent by the Exchequer of Customs (apparently for

collection of taxes) sailed along the coast of Casmânia, and in a space of 15 days reached a harbour in that country called “Hippurous”. He had found that the King of that country (Taprobane), very courteous, so as to accommodate and host him for six months. In the course of discussions with him about the Romans and about Caesar, various notes and reports had been collected, but his surprise was how justice was meted out in the Kingdom. He seems to have been moved by their desire to seek friendship with Rome, which made him to arrange the dispatch of four Ambassadors, of whom the leader was called “Rachias”. According to these envoys, it became clear to them that in Taprobane there were 500 cities, and that there was a harbour facing the south, which was conveniently located near the town of Palesimundum, which was the Capital City, where the Palace of the King was situated. The population comprised of 200,000 common citizens, and within the Island was a lake called *Magisba*, the circumference of which was 270 miles, and containing some islands that were fruitful (rich) in nothing but “Pasturage” (land allocated for pasture). Four rivers emanated from this lake, of which one river Palesimundum flowed past the city of the same name and entering the Harbour. While three other streams, of which the narrowest was five stadia in breadth, and the largest was 15 stadia, traversed northwards towards India.

Sir Emerson Tennent (1859) commenting on Pliny’s description, claims that the so-called Port of Hippuros where Plocamou was forced to land, is the modern harbour “Kudra-mali” in the North-West of Ceylon, near the pearl banks of Mannar. He was also of the view that the leader of the Diplomatic Mission to Rome was a person named “Rachia”, which was considered to mean “Raja”, rather than “Arachchi” as quoted by some other analysts.

Reciprocating Diplomacy Between Rome and Taprobane

The ambassadors from Taprobane, according to Pliny, while reciprocating diplomacy had given an account of the Island, which was either substantially erroneous, or rendered erroneous by the Roman Interpreters (translators). It had been claimed that these ambassadors had boasted of the existence of 500 cities, and that “Palesimundo” was the Capital where the Palace had accommodated the 200,000 inhabitants. These diplomats had also referred to the existence of a large lake called “Megisha”, which gave rise to two rivers, - one flowing by the Capital, and the other flowing northwards.

Tennent (1859) conjectures that the description might be a reference to Tissawewa in the vicinity of Anuradhapura and concludes that the truthfulness of Pliny’s account is shown by the deceptive surprise displayed by the Sinhalese envoys to their host’s reference to the “quarter in which the sun rose and set in Italy”. This comment and the resultant reaction shown by the guests may have been due to the fact that the sun in Ceylon passed over the head instead of hanging about the south as in Italy.

Finally, Pliny giving due credit to the more accurate descriptions of Onesicritus and Megasthenes, and taking a cue from the later work of two other geographers, Eratosthenes and Artemidoros, gives a more refined account of the position and dimensions of Ceylon, its cities, natural resources, as well as the ignorance of its inhabitants on navigation. Pliny apart from inferences drawn from other writers, had also collected information from the visitors from Ceylon, who had visited Rome during his own time (De Silva, 2013).

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Source: Dr Marco Galli, “Beyond Frontiers: Ancient Rome and the Eurasian Trade Networks: Examining interactions and the exchanges in the Eurasian networks during the first centuries of the Roman Empire” in *Brewminate* (Website: October 2018) <<https://brewminate.com/beyond-frontiers-ancient-rome-and-the-eurasian-trade-networks/>>

Pamankade: the Town that Vanished

by Hugh Karunanayake



High Street Wellawatte 1880

Pamankade was an old-world town that existed half way between Wellawatte and Kirillapona. It was connected by High Street, one of the oldest roads in Colombo, which was a mere narrow single carriageway that linked Pamankade Junction with Galle Road Wellawatte. Up to the 1920s High Street was a gravel road used by carts bringing in produce from the hinterland. I grew up first in Havelock Town and later in Pamankade proper. In the old days there was no public transport along High Street which meant no buses as taxis were not heard of then. Consequently, Pamankade was a veritable self-sufficient little town with its own grocery stores, fish market, butcher and toddy tavern.

The toddy tavern was closed down in the early 1940s following a “temperance poll”. People living in Pamankade rarely ventured to Wellawatte where the market had a bigger variety of produce and was a growing cosmopolitan town. Most of the residents of Pamankade in the 1940s and 50s were Sinhalese, Burghers and Tamils and a good proportion lived in rental housing. Most worked either in government service or in the old British mercantile houses in the Fort.

There were a handful of popular shops which catered to the basic grocery needs of the locals. There was Annachies shop which sold basic stuff like coconut and kerosene oil, rice, sugar, etc. Although there was electricity in the area many houses used kerosene for domestic lighting. The only other enterprises run by Tamil traders were the barber salon and adjoining it a “plantain” or banana boutique. There was also a shop called Ariya Sinhala Stores along Havelock Road which sold more sophisticated goods such as school requisites, newspapers, decorative stuff etc. For frozen foods such as sausages and bacon or lamb, one had to go to Cold Stores at Slave Island, or to Swastika Stores at the Galle Road end of High Street. The other prominent shop serving the middle class was at the Pamankade end of High Street run by a Bharatha shopkeeper called Aloysius Stores- this was more like a news agency and apart from *The Times*, *Daily News*, and *Observer* and their vernacular counterparts, also sold school books, pens, nibs and ink. Most of us carried a bottle of ink with a pen holder to school in those days. There were 2 small tea boutiques which really did not cater to the middle class and mainly served the labouring classes at a time where there were distinct class distinctions. Only the English speaking wore trousers, the others were either in sarong or in tweed cloth. If one wore trousers he was expected to speak or understand English. That unwritten code was strictly observed, woe be it to the trousered person

who could not speak English, and when discovered was the object of snide ridicule. All trousered folk were “mahattayas” or “gentlemen” in the eyes of the locals. The two boutiques one called the Sirisanda Hotel and the other merely Pamankade Hotel both of which catered mainly to the weary carters and bus travellers on the Colombo Kesbewa bus route who disembarked at Pamankade to proceed to Wellawatte, Kirillapona, and such places. Pamankade Hotel was run by twin brothers of the old world Sinhalese countenance replete with long hair tied in a bun or *konde*. They were referred to by the local English speaking folk as “*kondayas*”! The two apparently were temple drummers who came to play at a religious festival at the Dharmodaya Pirivena and were inveigled by a temple patron to buy a Galle Gymkhana Sweep ticket which turned out trumps for them. They did not return to their village but promptly bought a building in the junction which they ran for many years as the Pamankade Hotel. Opposite the hotel, which was open till midnight, lived the Joachim family whose family included a girl called Carmen. She was one of the few female cyclists seen in the area. One day when I was about 12 years of age, I was cycling along High Street just behind Carmen when she turned around and told me “small boys should not follow girls”! I was taken aback, looking shocked, and turned around and went home! Right in the centre of the town facing Pamankade Road was the fish auction room where fish were auctioned daily on weekdays and were bought by local fish vendors plying their door-to-door trade. The butcher was located in a stall at the end of High Street next door to a tailoring shop. I believe the shop was owned by Wilfred Peries, a produce broker for Mackwoods and father of the late Tony Peries. Next door to the Pamankade Hotel was a “Club” which had a full-size billiard table and also catered largely to the working class. The ‘club’ was housed in a cottage at 511 Havelock Road, a building owned by my grandfather and later by his descendants until road widening erased it from the face of the earth. The working class of Pamankade almost entirely were employed at the Wellawatte Spinning and Weaving Mills. In fact, the area was demographically a low to middle income area which was left oriented politically, with its Municipal Ward member being Doric de Souza, followed by Osmund Jayaratne and Ananda Premasinghe all Sama Samajists. Ethnically the area was an old Sinhala village with a high representation of Burghers. Tamils were rarely seen. These are some of my memories of a little town that has been almost completely obliterated by road expansion and by the transport revolution.

Arguably the first signs of modernisation appeared in the early 1950s with the introduction of a bus service from Kirillapona to Wellawatte. It was run by Ebert Silva Bus Co and traversed along Pamankade Road, then through High Street to Wellawatte. The service was later extended to Polhengoda. The bus fare was 5 cents which was low enough to encourage many living in Pamankade to venture to the more suburban town of Wellawatte which provided consumers with a wider choice where consumable products were concerned. Two factors appear to have contributed to the decline and later obliteration of Pamankade as a town. Firstly, the introduction of public transport, followed by road widening which completely obliterated the bazaar of the once thriving little town of Pamankade.

APPRECIATIONS

Harry de Sayrah OAM MJF

(16 June 1937 - 11 September 2023)



Harold Lancelot de Sayrah OAM - A Lion with a kind heart

My dear friend Harry de Sayrah's passing is indeed a sad time for me. Hyacinth and I have known Harry and Imelda from the time the de Sayrah family migrated to Australia in December 1988. Of course, Hyacinth and Imelda knew each other from their school days at Holy Family Convent, Bambalapitiya in Sri Lanka.

A feeling of mutual camaraderie seemed to ignite from the time we first met. We took an instant liking to each other. It must have been his friendly demeanour that seemed to draw us together. We mutually enjoyed each other's company, had many lunches and dinners as many couples do and became close friends.

He had a great sense of humour accompanied with bursts of laughter that drew him to those around him. I enjoyed his company immensely. At the CSA public meetings Harry and I usually sat together in the front row - we did the same on 27 August, the last meeting he attended before his passing.

Harry was deeply dedicated to his Alma Mater St Joseph's College in Colombo, Sri Lanka, greatly enthusiastic about his old school than anyone I have known. His involvement somehow centred around how best to meet the needs of the college and the present students. He was President of the Film and Drama Society and under directorship of Rev. Fr. Noel Crusz, he co-produced a film called *Little Bike Lost* in 1956, entirely on location in the school.

This dedication continued on as he followed up on the various projects he initiated even after his schooling days were completed.

On leaving school, Harry pursued the numerous activities, adding on many new ones as he moved on - he was business executive, philanthropist, Good Samaritan and friend to everybody.

Harry's generosity was prodigious and may even seem trivial on the surface at times. One story goes that he got to know about a lady who sold lamprais (a savoury Sri Lankan dish introduced by the Dutch Burgher community). He went over one day

to buy some of it for a for a family meal. He ended up buying a whole lot of them which he gave to a poor family he knew and even shared some of it from with the priest of his local church.

Early in his life Harry developed a fascination for horses, more especially race-horses. He was the youngest racehorse owner in Sri Lanka (Ceylon in those days) and he was only 18-years old when he received ownership of his first race horse gifted to him by his mother Charlotte de Sayrah.

One Melbourne Cup Day Harry was with us at the local RSL club for lunch and it so happened that we were preparing to place a bet on the big race. Not being a betting man, I sought Harry's advice. He simplified it so well making sure I will not lose any money, by bracketing a small amount as win and place on all 12 horses running. I won a few dollars more than my investment.

Lions Club member Malcolm de Costa invited Harry to join the Lions Club in Colombo in 1969. Harry went on to become the first elected President of the Lions Club of Kollupitiya and after their migration to Australia, he went on to become the 39th President of the Lions Club of Bankstown in Sydney. Later on, he was made Zone Chairman in the District Governor's Cabinet.

Harry became deeply involved with the International Eye Conservation Program run by the Lions Club. He single-handedly (and painstakingly) collected more than a million second-hand spectacles and ensured their distribution to the poor. For this magnificent enterprise, Harry was awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) at the Queen's Birthday Honours in June 2007; an honour he carried with dignity and pride.

Harry was also recipient of the prestigious Melvin Jones award for his yeoman services to the Lions Club International. In 2009, in recognition of his 40 years of continuous service as a Lions Club member, Harry was bestowed with the Milestone Chevron Award.

On his own, Harry initiated the opening of a hospital ward of eight beds at the Eye Hospital in Panadura, having persuaded the Lions Club in Sri Lanka of which he was a member to finance the project.

Harry was a member of the Ceylon Society of Australia (CSA) and was elected its President in 2011, a position he held till 2013. He was also Public Relations Officer from 2005 to 2010 and again from 2014 to the present date. He was also for many years a generous member of the Bellbirds Club in Sydney.

A devout Catholic, Harry was deeply involved for more than 20 years in ministerial activities at St Patrick's Cathedral in Sydney.

That was the Harry de Sayrah that we all got to know and love. No matter what, Harry will always be remembered for living his entire life in an exceptional way.

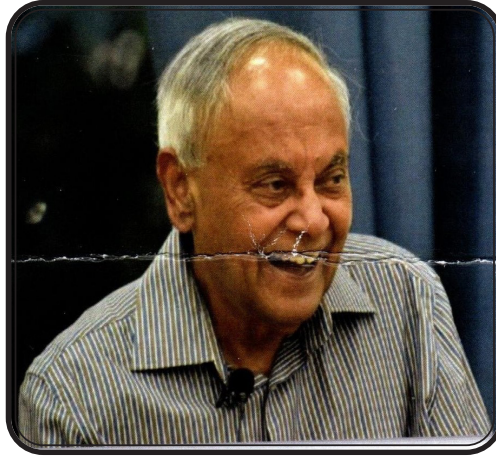
As the song goes: he did it his way!

Doug and Hyacinth Jones



Vanniyasingam Srikantha Nadarajah
“NADA” -

20 August 1939 - 19 August 2023



It was with much sadness I received the news of dear Nada passing away. This sad event was most unexpected as he was not ill at that time and unfortunately suffered a sudden cardiac arrest. Apart from being one of my dear friends for a long time, Nada was one of the more engaging persons one can encounter. When I last met him at the Ceylon Society of Australia function, he greeted me with his usual full-blown smile. I met him first at the Colombo Fort Tennis club as we both enjoyed the game of Tennis. Although both of us graduated from the then University of Ceylon (Peradeniya campus), we missed each other there as I completed my degree in the same year (March 1959), a few months before he entered. However, we did continue this experience later on as members of the Peradeniya University Alumni in NSW, Australia. As we compared notes with our respective time as undergraduates, especially in the sports field, I had won the 1500 and 5000 metres track events in Athletics in my last year and Nada was very impressed with my successor Senadeera winning the same event, 5000 metres in the following year after my departure from the University. Nada enjoying a friendly dissent said that had I continued I would have been beaten by Senadeera as his timing was better, this was true but by a small margin only. I disagreed stating that given closer competition I would have performed better, and the result could have been in my favour. The next day Nada phoned me to make sure that I had not been affected by his position. This was the gentleman in his character.

Nada's charming late wife, Sune was a good friend to my dear late wife Navaranjini, both being good musicians. As Sune was ailing Navaranjini and I visited her several times. Navaranjini sang one of Sune's favourite songs, “*Ave Maria*” and played the Piano at Sune's Funeral Service. When Navaranjini passed away, Nada would tell me “Sadly, we are both in the same boat”.

Nada and I had a common heritage as both my mother and his parents hailed from the same village in Jaffna – Cheddya Maddam in Araly. My ancestors were converted to Christianity while Nada's ancestors continued their Hindu heritage.

‘Nada’ was a long-standing member of CSA and a regular contributor to *The Ceylankan*. In fact, there is an article by him in the very last issue of the Journal (August 2023) recounting his life and times.

Nada was Treasurer of CSA from 2005 to 2009 and a Committee Member from 2011 to 2019. May Nada's soul rest in eternal peace.

Rex Olegasegarem

Obituary notices published
in *The Ceylankan*

All Obituary notices and Appreciations of Life recorded on these pages are restricted to deceased CSA members only. In keeping with that policy all notices are accompanied with a note indicating such membership status.

CSA Report of Sydney General Meeting Sunday 27 August 2023

The August meeting was held at the Pennant Hills Community Centre on a fine Sunday afternoon on the 27th, where the guest speaker was the new High Commissioner for Sri Lanka in Australia, Her Excellency Mrs Chitrangane Wagiswara. The topic of the talk was “*Sri Lanka - Road to Recovery: Challenges and Opportunities*” - of much interest to the Sri Lankan expatriate community.

Mrs Wagiswara outlined the current situation in the country, and talked on the measures Sri Lanka is taking to recover from the economic and political turmoil of last year. She dealt with the country’s forced default on debt repayments and the assistance being afforded by the international community, the multilateral and bilateral arrangements being negotiated, and the hope for the future.

The main steps projected were to revive the export sector, encourage tourism, invest in long term relevant infrastructure, and proactively seek foreign direct investment in Sri Lanka. She made the point that while it would take time for other measures to take effect, the incentives for growth in the tourism sector would be the quickest way to kickstart the economy with the boost to foreign dollar earnings now that the world is travelling again.

The challenges Mrs Wagiswara outlined were inflation, corruption in the state sector, income inequality and political volatility. She encouraged expatriates to visit the country of their origin, to contribute to its recovery by investing in enterprises where possible, and to lend their professional skills to foster growth and development in identified areas.

There was a lively and interesting Q&A session, and everyone enjoyed a delicious High Tea after.

The CSA and its members and guests were most appreciative of the time allocated by Her Excellency to make a special trip to Sydney to be our guest speaker on this very important topic, despite the many demands on her in this her first year in Australia.

Special thanks should go to our President Pauline Gunewardene who organised the function and to the CSA Committee members who ably assisted in making it a most successful occasion.

Here are some photos from the event.



Adam Raffel



CSA Meetings (Sydney)

Venue: Pennant Hills Community Centre Main Hall, Level 1, Ramsay Road, Pennant Hills (cnr Yarrara Rd, enter via Ramsay Rd for parking).

Please note: Events that go ahead will be held strictly in compliance with safety regulations as required.

Members - Your attendance at the AGM at 6.00 pm would be appreciated.

Members and Guests - Warmly welcomed to the Social at 6.30 pm and please get your tickets now!

The Ceylon Society of Australia



26th Annual General Meeting and Social

on Saturday 18th November 2023
at the Pennant Hills Community Centre
Ramsay Road, Pennant Hills, NSW 2120

6.00 – 6.30pm: AGM for Members
6.30 - 11.00pm: Social with Dinner for
Members & Guests

Tickets: \$60 per person
Drinks: BYO, and soft drinks provided
Dress: Smart Casual

Dinner, Dancing & Singalong
Music by Roger Menezes

Come and Enjoy!

For reservations and tickets contact:

Deepak Pritamdas	0434 860 188
Pauline Gunewardene	0419 447 665
Amal Wahab	0411 888 182

MELBOURNE CHAPTER
General Meeting
CEYLON SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA
MELBOURNE CHAPTER

will present an illustrated talk on

**“The Dutchman and the Tamil Maiden:
The Legacy of George de Niese - Artist & Musician”**
by Alan de Niese



George de Niese
Self-portrait 1944



Alan de Niese
Self-portrait 1972

Benjamin de Niese, great-great-great-grandfather of George de Niese, was born in Jaffna to a family who were among the first wave of Dutch settlers after the Dutch took Portugal's colony in 1658. George became a leading portrait artist in the first half of the twentieth century. He painted many dignitaries including Bishop's, College Rectors, and leading figures in the community. Landscape, sand, seascapes also featured among his vast output of paintings. His journey took him from Jaffna to Kandy and then to Colombo. While in Jaffna George married into the eminent Puvirajasinghe clan of the Singhe dynasty of Jaffnapattam who trace their origins back to Tamil royalty. By profession George worked as an art and music teacher at several schools. He was also an organist and composer. George was invited to design a crest and flag and compose an anthem for the branch of St Joseph's College that was to be named St. Peter's College, Colombo. The anthem, "Lend a Heart and Lend a Hand" was composed in 1926 to words by the South African-born staff member of St Joseph's College, T. L. Minor. He painted the portraits of the first Rector of St. Peter's, Rev. Fr. Maurice Le Goc as well as the first Principal, Rev. Fr. Nicholas Perera. With the assistance of his son, Terry, George painted the marvellous, huge scenic backdrops for the stage of the College Hall. The legacy of George de Niese continued across several generations. His children, grandchildren and grand nephew also became artists and musicians. George de Niese died in Colombo in 1954.

Alan de Niese is the grandson of George de Niese. Alan is an amateur artist. He continued the tradition of painting the portraits of St Peter's College Rectors set by George and Terry. He is a singer and lover of classical music and presents "Wednesday Night at the Opera" on Melbourne's classical music radio station, 3MBS FM. Alan worked in the superannuation and investment industry until his retirement.

Sunday, 12th November 2023, 5.00pm at ASHWOOD HALL-21a Electra Avenue, Ashwood
for enquiries contact Hemal 0427 725 740

Please Note: Hemal Gurusinghe will be stepping down as CSA Melbourne Chapter Convenor from the end of this year. On behalf of the CSA we thank him for his work and energy he brought to the role.

WANTED...YOUR LITERARY CONTRIBUTIONS

The Ceylankan is published quarterly and the Editor is on the look-out for your literary contributions. Be assured that your work will be given careful consideration with a view to publication at all times.

Original, previously unpublished, articles relating to the history, culture and heritage of Sri Lanka are sought, while any material of an anecdotal nature will also be considered provided they conform to the CSA's ideals of being non-racial, non-political, non-religious and non-controversial.

While every effort is made to print material that is relevant and correct, we do not take the responsibility for errors. The Editor would appreciate any inaccuracies being brought to his notice without delay.

To facilitate the design/layout of the publication, we request that your word processing / typing be unformatted. Where applicable, contributors are also requested to annotate bibliographical references for copyright reasons and to help further research and study by interested members.

MEMBERSHIP RATES

- **General Subscriptions for Australia:** \$35 per calendar year;
- **Pensioners' subscriptions:** \$25 per calendar year;
- **Sri Lanka:** Rs.3000 per calendar year;
- **Overseas members from USA/UK/Canada/Israel/Thailand and other countries:** \$50 per calendar year. If payment is not possible in Aust Dollars, please pay by Bank Draft or Bank Transfer in US Dollars or Pounds Sterling and add Aust \$10 to the Aust \$50 for bank charges due here for converting a foreign currency payment to Aust Dollars.

Payment Methods

1. Pay by cheque in favour of the Ceylon Society of Australia and post to Deepak Pritamdas, Treasurer, PO Box 489, Blacktown, NSW 2148, Australia.

2. Pay by Bank Transfer to:

Account Name: Ceylon Society of Australia

Bank Name: Commonwealth Bank of Australia

Bank BSB: 062 308

Account No: 10038725

Swift Code for overseas remittances: CTBAU2S

Reference: Payee Name

Note: Please email all payment details in confirmation to deepakpsl1@gmail.com

(Please Note: In Deepak's email address:- it is lower case L followed by the number 1)

Congratulations and a warm welcome to our New Members

- Dr Devika BRENDON, Colombo 3, Sri Lanka
- Mr Udul CHANDRASENA, Hokandara, Sri Lanka
- Ms Insiyah DAVOODBHOY, Colombo 4, Sri Lanka
- Mr Jini MASEFIELD, NSW, Australia
- Mr Sonny NAVARATNAM, NSW, Australia
- Ms Janani WIJEYERATNE, Colombo 8, Sri Lanka

Notice to Members - Contact Details

Could we please request all members to advise Treasurer Deepak Pritamdas - deepakpsl1@gmail.com - and Secretary Presenji Jayawickrema - presenji@tpg.com.au - of any changes to contact details for phone, email address and home address. We need to make certain our records are correct for mailing *The Ceylankan* as well as for getting in touch with members, and would appreciate your assistance. Thank you.

WE NEED SPEAKERS

The CSA welcomes professionals and others interested in speaking at our General Meetings. Meetings are held in Sydney, Melbourne and Colombo, quarterly in February, May and August.

If you know of anyone, please contact as relevant:

- CSA President Pauline Gunewardene

Mobile: +61 419 447 665

Email: paulineg@ozemail.com.au

- Melbourne Chapter Convenor Hemal Gurusinghe

Mobile: +61 427 725 740

Email: hemguru@hotmail.com

- Colombo Chapter Secretary Avishka Mario Senewiratne

Mobile: +94 7661 22345

Email: avishkamario@gmail.com

ADVERTISING IN *The Ceylankan*

For some time, CSA members and others have indicated an interest in advertising to promote their goods and services in the Journal. However, we have been maintaining the ideal of the founders of the CSA, that the Journal must not be made a means for commercial profit, but only as a vehicle for research, study and promotion of the rich heritage and culture of Ceylon/Sri Lanka.

However, due to the rising costs of delivery of the Journal to members worldwide, there has been a need to look for additional sources of revenue. The decision was therefore taken by the Committee to accommodate advertising and promotional material in the form of separate loose-leaf flyers to be inserted in copies of the Journal being sent out.

Suitable material, in keeping with the non-political, non-partisan aims and ideals of the CSA, will be considered. All such copy is to be submitted to the Editor for consideration.

Once accepted, the advertiser will need to supply the printed flyers in sufficient numbers for inclusion in that particular issue of the Journal.

The cost of inserting such flyers is \$500 per issue of the Journal, paid in advance.

Make a valuable
gift subscription to
a family member
or friend

**For just \$35, or \$50 if the nominee is resident
outside Australia**

Your nominee will have four quarterly issues
mailed to his/her home. Please contact the
Treasurer, Deepak Pritamdas
on 0434 860 188



Yala National Park



Elephant Kraal - image from Francois Valentijn,
"Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien", Vol. 5, Dordrecht, 1726