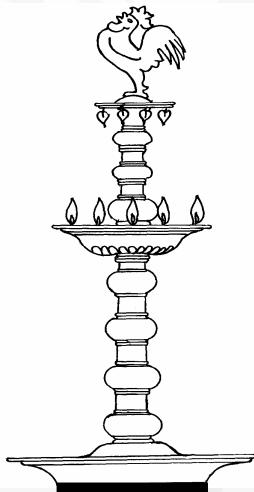


THE CEYLANKAN



10th Anniversary



Collectors Issue

Copyof 420

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EDITORIAL



要知道前面路，請求回來的那些

Chinese proverb

To know the road ahead, ask those coming back

Ten years ago, no one could know the road ahead for the fledgling Society, there was no one to ask. But now we can, and who better to ask than The Founder and his good lady. In the lead article in this issue they candidly describe every step of the way. They make it sound so easy, but we know better. All of us can dream, but only a handful can make those come true. The self effacing couple Hugh & Tulsi and their devoted friends have done just that. They have generously handed out a lot of bouquets to others in the process, but there is no denying the identity of the driving force and the glue that coalesced and moulded the Society to its present solid structure. Entirely organic in its growth, the Society is living testimony to the total absence of “ethnic divide” which unfortunately characterise some groups in Australia.

The Ceylankan, now considered the flagship of the Society has, from a “Newsletter” ten years ago, metamorphosed into a rigorous Journal. If history is defined as the collective memories of those who lived through it, then The Ceylankan can take its rightful place as an authentic record of contemporary times of the writers. Our children and grand children will be the main beneficiaries of these first hand accounts of the country of their fathers and forefathers. We have also gone beyond this pale in looking at colonial and medieval times. We have had writer/researchers report in these columns, and speakers deliver erudite lectures at our public meetings in Sydney, Melbourne and now in Colombo. To all these contributors to our knowledge base we say a big thank you. The contributors to this Journal deserve an additional accolade. Some of you are first time writers and have gone from strength to strength over the years. They are too numerous to mention by name, but all readers of this 10th Anniversary Collectors Issue will know who they are and join the Editorial team in offering our sincere thanks. In the past two issues we called for submissions for this Special Issue - and without exaggeration - we were inundated. So, it was not possible to publish them all. None will be rejected, they will all appear in future issues. Those that made it are based on brevity and diversity, to cater to the widest palate possible.

We hope you enjoy the fare as much as we enjoyed in bringing this special edition to you. Share it with like minded friends - bring knowledge and joy to them as well.



Hugh & Tulsi

From the Beginning...onwards

by Hugh & Tulsi Karunananayake

I

t all started with one man's interest in antiquarian picture postcards of Ceylon. In fact he owns over 15,000 pre 1920's picture postcards – a huge number for a single collector.

The seed which was later to become Ceylon Society of Australia was planted on a wintry evening ten years ago when Dr Chris Puttock (then working in Canberra as a botanist) and his wife Zena were on a weekend visit with us in Sydney. He raised the possibility of getting a group of people together with interest in the cultural heritage of Ceylon/Sri Lanka. Chris is an ardent 'cartophilist' confining his interest exclusively to the collection of antiquarian picture post cards on Ceylon.. Though born and raised in Australia, Chris, after a few visits to Sri Lanka was totally enamoured with the country and became an unmitigated "Ceylonophile".

Whenever there was an Antiques Exhibition or Fair in Sydney he would drive over from Canberra, grab us and go in pursuit of whatever was on offer. A drink and dinner usually followed these forays, to which we would invite a few friends with similar interests. On meeting them, Chris realised that there were a few others in this country besides the four of us, who were deeply interested in the heritage of Ceylon/Sri Lanka. There were those who collected antiquarian books on Ceylon, others collected art works by Sri Lankan artists, some interested in Genealogy, still others interested in various aspects of the country and its history. He suggested that we get together of an evening with these friends and discuss the feasibility of forming a regular group. The idea was to meet periodically, discuss matters of scholarly interest and at the same time develop an informal social network.

And so it was, that a Foundation Meeting was called in our home in Sydney on 30 August 1997 at which, Rohan Sourjah, Vama Vamadevan, David Goodrich, Chris Puttock, Helen Harrison, Charmaine Vamadevan and Tulsi Karunananayake were present. Dr M B Kappagoda, Dr Srilal Fernando (Melbourne) and Mike Udabage who were in at the beginning were present in spirit as physically they were committed elsewhere. All were keen on the idea of formalising this group into a Society or Association. Those present agreed to contact other like minded persons and to invite them for the next meeting. This was held the following month at the residence of Vama & Charmaine Vamadevan. All those who attended the foundation meeting including those who sent apologies were deemed foundation members. Similar meetings were held in the ensuing months in the homes of Rohan Sourjah, Dr M. B. Kappagoda and David Goodrich. Within six months, interest had grown rapidly and the time was ripe to hold a public meeting. This was held on 28 February 1998 attended by 31 persons. The Foundation Office Bearers were elected at this meeting. They were Hugh Karunananayake (President), Rohan Sourjah (Secretary), Vama Vamadevan (Treasurer) David Goodrich (Editor) Brian Parker (Public Relations) and Mike Udabage (Publications Officer). Chris Puttock took up an appointment in Hawaii at this time and was unfortunately not available for election to office. He continues to be a loyal member, still living and working in Hawaii.

David, who had a Ceylonese grandmother but had never been to Sri Lanka, put up his hand for the Editor's job. He pioneered this magnificently until his untimely death in December 2001. It was he who laid the literary pace and developed the image of ***The Ceylankan***. David was able to fulfil his great desire to visit Sri Lanka during the last year of his life.



Ceylon Jeweller (top)



Rodiya Girl (left)

Veddahs—
Aborigines of
Ceylon (bottom)

Some picture post-
cards issued in
Ceylon. Originals of
top and left are in
sepia while the
bottom one is in
B&W



The early formative years of the Society comprised the period during which its structure and image gradually developed to assume a more or less permanent profile. By the second meeting in 1998 we decided on the name of the Society after much deliberation and discussion. The decision to call it Ceylon Society of Australia rather than Sri Lanka Society of Australia was intentional. Most of us felt that if we called ourselves the Sri Lanka Society there would have been confusion with other active organisations with a similar name. Also, since we were more research and history oriented especially with much interest in the period of colonial rule in the island, the name Ceylon seemed more appropriate. We were however not about to jettison completely the nationalist title of Sri Lanka. David Goodrich suggested the brilliant combination of the words Ceylon and Sri Lanka to make it ***The Ceylankan***, the title of our quarterly journal which has been our standard bearer ever since.

In our early days we were short of funds to finance our activities and took a decision to charge membership fees. For the first couple of years at least, all the expenditure incurred in hiring the hall for meetings, and cost of production of the Journal was borne by a few dedicated members of the committee. The Society set itself targets which were 50 members at the end of the first year, 100 members at the end of the second year, etc all of which were attained and exceeded without much trouble mainly due to the interest and enthusiasm created by the Journal. The Journal was soon moving across interstate and international frontiers and members from other states as well as from overseas were enrolling in encouraging numbers.

The first 16 issues of ***The Ceylankan*** were produced by a team comprising David as Editor who organised all the articles and editorial and our son Sumal who had the software skills, which we did not, designed and laid out the multiple pieces of original document into print format. The first ten issues were in fact printed on my office photocopier with the paper supplied by the Society. With the expansion of membership we were soon able to afford the services of a commercial printer. David Goodrich in his farewell editorial in ***The Ceylankan*** of November 2001 summed up the Society's philosophy when he said that:

"It is important that we maintain the standard of non-confrontational, non-political, non-racial and non-sectarian outlook. Those principles must be maintained".

We have faithfully adhered to these principles and will no doubt

continue to do so.

The Committee of Management of the Society has over the years, included many eminent persons who have contributed immensely to the development of the Society. Tony Peries has steered the activities of the Society most admirably during the past three years as President. Other than the foundation members, we have Sumane Iyer who took on the key job of Editor in succession to the late David Goodrich and continues to do a remarkable job; Chris Piachaud, Gerard Velayuthen and Douglas Jones all of whom took up the mantle of Hon Secretary; Sumane Iyer, Rienzie Fonseka and Srikantha Nadarajah who functioned as Hon Treasurer, have all contributed immensely. The Committee itself had the privilege of valuable and distinguished service in various capacities, from Mike Udabage, Brian Parker, Dr Robert Sourjah, Dr Srilal Fernando, Chandra Senaratne, and Harry de Sayrah. In recent months, Sunil de Silva and Ron Murrell have joined the Committee. We also have had members who have contributed in many ways towards our activities by advice and counsel. Names that readily come to mind are those of Victor Melder, Joe Simpson from Canada, the late Kingsley Siebel, and Rodney St John.

Melbourne Chapter

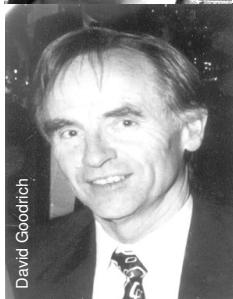
With the growing number of members in Victoria it was time to form a Melbourne Chapter which was inaugurated with a meeting held on 19 March 2000. Dr Srilal Fernando, current Vice President of the Society and Shelagh Goonewardene continue to be the convenors of the Melbourne Chapter, ably assisted by Hemal Gurusinghe, Dilhani



Chris Puttock



Rohan Sourjah



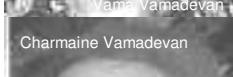
David Goodrich



Helen Harrison



Vama Vamadevan



Charmaine Vamadevan



Dr MB Kappagoda



Dr Srilal Fernando



Mike Udabage



Brian Parker

Kumbukkage and Victor Melder. The late Darnley de Souza and Rodney St John were stalwarts of the Melbourne Chapter during its early years. This Chapter continues to flourish, drawing members from the sizeable contingent of Sri Lankans resident in Melbourne.

Colombo Chapter

With around 30 members on our membership roll in Colombo, a Chapter was inaugurated in June 2007. Mike Udabage who lives partly in Sri Lanka was the prime mover. It has already held two public meetings. This Chapter has its own Office Bearers - Somasiri Devendra (President) Daya Wickrematunge (Hon Secretary) and Mike Udabage (Hon Treasurer). The opening of the Colombo Chapter heralds a significant watershed in the development of the Society's activities and we could reasonably expect other national chapters to be established in future years.

The Society was incorporated on 3 October 2001 and now has around 350 active members. Around two thirds are from Australia – with about 100 members from Sydney and Melbourne each and around 50 from the other states in Australia. The others are located in the UK, USA, Canada, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Austria, New Zealand, India, Israel, and Sri Lanka all aggregating to another 100 members.

On looking back over the work of the past decade, it is important to recognise the invaluable contributions from our many learned guest speakers too numerous to single out by name, who have given of their time and energy to share their scholarly works and experiences with us. Equally important are the many talented writers who have contributed such excellent articles for ***The Ceylankan*** which has made it a unique journal unsurpassed in quality among periodicals of its genre.

The Society has brought together kindred spirits from across the globe, people with diverse outlooks and philosophies on life, but all linked together by a common heritage. As we move towards our second decade, the Society can with justifiable pride, look back on ten years of active service which have been received with much enjoyment and gratitude by our members.

The germ of an idea originated by one man's interest in antiquarian post cards on Ceylon being the little acorn, found fertile ground and continued to grow to a robust Society of likeminded people in exploring and recording their immediate past.

Robert Knox in the Kandyan Kingdom And the various editions of Knox's *Ceylon*



by Dr Brendon Gooneratne

I

In 1681 Robert Knox published his book on Ceylon, the full title of which is

An Historical Relation of the Island Ceylon in the East- Indies Together with an Account of the Detaining in Captivity the Author and divers others Englishmen now Living there, and of the Author's Miraculous escape illustrated with Figures and a Map of the island by Robert Knox a Captive there near Twenty Years.

Knox's book was published in London, and printed by Richard Chiswell, Printer to the Royal Society, whose printing establishment seems to have been located conveniently near a public house, for its address is given as 'the Rose and Crown in St. Paul's Church-yard'. The year of publication was 1681. It consisted of 189 pp. + 3 pp., embellished with 17 Copper Plate engravings on 15 Plates, and a Folding Map. Substantial in size (a Folio volume of which the dimensions were 30 x 15 cms), it carried a message from the author in an 'Epistle Dedicatoria', dated March 18, 1681, which informed his readers:

"I have writ nothing but either what I am assured of by my own personal knowledge to be true, and wherein I have born (sic) a great and sad share, or what I have received from the Inhabitants themselves of such things as are commonly known to be true among them".

The portrait of Knox engraved by Richard White in 1695 for a projected second edition is sometimes found bound with copies of the first edition.

Robert Knox is considered by many to have been 'the most sympathetic and perceptive observer of traditional Sinhalese society at a time when its structure and form were still alive and pulsating'. His book was praised by Sir Christopher Wren for its 'great Truth and Integrity'.

Knox was born in London in 1641, the son of a seafaring Englishman, Captain Robert Knox, and a God-fearing and extraordinarily pious mother, Abigail Knox *née* Bonnell. He had an elder sister, Abigail, and a younger brother, James. At the age of 14 he went to sea for the first time on his father's new ship, the *Ann*, trading along the Indian coast. He returned to London in 1857 to find that his mother had died the previous year.

He had already taken to the sea as a calling, despite his father's early protestations, and the refitted *Ann*, under the English East India Company, sailed on 21 January 1658. On the conclusion of this trading venture in India which lasted over a year, the *Ann*, preparing to return, lost its main mast in a cyclone off the coast of South India at Masulipatam on 19 November 1659. Repairs could only be effected from the tall and strong trees on the east coast of Ceylon to which the *Ann* limped with difficulty. During their stay of between 3-4 months in Kottiyar Bay, Knox, together with his father and sixteen members of the crew, were taken prisoner by Tennekoon Dissawe representing the King of Kandy, the redoubtable King Rajasinha II. He was removed to Kandy in April 1660.

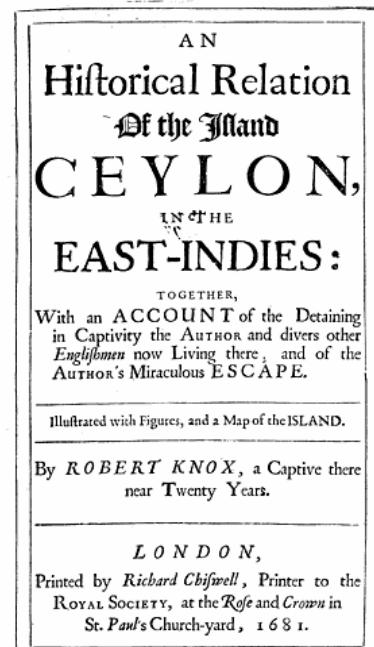
How Knox employed his time 'during a lonesome and dragging confinement of nineteen and a half years' is now, in the words of H.A.I. Goonetileke, Peradeniya's late and eminent librarian, a story of 'fortitude, reliance, exemplary self-discipline and resource'. His beloved father died on 9 February 1661 and Knox who was only twenty years old at the time remained on the island for another 18 years, living in 4 different villages close to Kandy before escaping from the last, Eladetta, on 22 September 1679. During his sojourn in the Kandyan Kingdom, he avoided any personal liaison with local women, and frowned on such liaisons by his fellow-captives. Obviously his entreaties fell on deaf ears, because most of his companions became involved with local women and continued to live with them even after Knox himself left Kandy. With Stephen Rutland, his companion, Knox arrived at the Dutch fort of Arippu on the north-western coast of Ceylon on 18 October 1679. He was taken from Colombo by the Dutch to Batavia arriving on 15 January 1680, and started his homeward voyage on the *Caesar*, arriving in England in September 1680, almost 23 years after he had left the country on that ill-fated expedition with his father.

He began to write his book on that voyage home from Batavia and gives the reasons for desiring to set down the record of his wondrous excursion into the interior landscape of Sinhalese society, as having been three: to give thanks to God for his deliverance from captivity, to inform his family and their friends of what had become of his father, and to exercise his writing hand since he had had no access to pen or paper during his 19-year sojourn in Ceylon.

This first and most renowned book on Ceylon in the English language was duly published in August 1681 and became an instant success in Knox's lifetime. Plans for a second edition were afoot a few years before Knox died on 19 June 1720 at the ripe old age of nearly 80.

His long and extraordinary captivity did not deter him at the age of 40 from undertaking at least five more voyages to the East in the service of the East India Company: 'showing the flag, commerce, slave trading, and congenial exploits of piracy and plunder were natural concomitants of the expansion of European dominance in Asia and Africa', as one writer has described such employment. It was significant and surprising that Knox participated in the slave trade, considering his own incarceration in Kandy for nearly 20 years.

He concluded his last voyage when he was 60 years of age and for the next twenty years till his death settled in Wimbledon writing and ruminating on a life over which he had no reason to



Title page from original English Edition 1681



Portrait of Robert Knox by Herbert White inserted in 1695



doubt the benign influence of his God. But his grand encounter with the Island of Ceylon and its people remained the high watermark of his career and imagination, and growing public interest in his book was to sustain him in his later years.

Knox stated in his autobiography:

My booke of Ceylon bath found such acceptance of this present generation that all the bookees that were printed are bought up & many more would have bin bought if were to be had.

He lived long enough to bask in the well-deserved popularity of his book, *'it being ye the onely thing will keepe my name in memory in ye world'*.

Knox's *Ceylon* was pirated in Europe. Various editions appeared in German in 1689, Dutch in 1692, French in 1693 – the last in Lyon and in Amsterdam within 13 years of the first English edition. They appeared in thick 4to, 8vo and even 12 mo editions in one and in 2 volumes. I have, in a lifetime of collecting Antiquarian Books on Ceylon, acquired all these editions including Sir James Emerson Tennent's own copy of the 1681 Folio edition, and even Philalethes's own copy, inscribed "To Mr. John Smith M.P. with Mr Fellowes's Kind Regards". The latter, incidentally confirmed the identity of the anonymous author of the *History of Ceylon* published in 1817. My wife and I wrote a joint article on this remarkable coincidence, published in the *Vidyodaya Journal of Arts, Science and Letters* in 1971, that proved beyond any doubt (of which there was quite a bit at the time) who the author was who wrote under the *nom-de-plume* 'Philalethes'. The book was a discovery among other books I had bought in an antiquarian book shop in London in 1967: having been acquainted with the controversy surrounding the authorship of the book, I was overjoyed at this chance discovery.

Knox's book appeared about the same time as John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which was a religious book. About the same time there also appeared Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. They both portrayed the strong line of Protestant thinking of the period. 'Knox's adventure was evidently right down Defoe's street of fiction, fuelled as his imagination was by exploits of travel in far-flung lands'. *Robinson Crusoe* was published in 1719, a year before Knox died, and *Captain Singleton* (in which Knox's tale was condensed, and the intrepid pirate even cast ashore on the island) in the following year. The debt of Defoe to Knox has been well described by E.F.C.Ludowyk and A.W.Secord.

It is fascinating to chart the sustained interest in Knox's work in his lifetime and after, and the continuing influence he was to have on writers after Defoe,

though in a different way altogether. Beginning with British designs on the island, and its eventual capture and complete subjugation in 1815, future overlords and later compatriots were introduced to a people and country little known, through the work of Knox, and relied for their information and insights on his memorable summation of the Sinhalese ethos and character and his equally impressive and living picture of their daily life and occupations.

Beginning with soldiers like Robert Percival in 1803, religious men like James Cordiner in 1807, scientists like John Davy in 1821 and missionaries like W.M.Harvard (also in 1821), the valuable work of Knox began to be pillaged in the attempt to furnish nineteenth-century readers of all sorts with delineations of the new jewel in the ever-expanding crown of Empire. The process continued throughout the century in later writings of authors like Jonathan Forbes (1841), Henry Marshall (1846), Charles Pridham(1849), H.C.Sirr(1850), Sir George Barrow(1857) and the imperious Sir James Emerson Tennent (1859). After 1817, authors were greatly assisted by the first English reprint of the complete text of Knox by 'Philalethes' (i.e. Rev. Robert Fellowes) in that year.

In 1900 Knox's long-lost manuscript autobiography was found in the Bodleian Library in Oxford and the inter-leaved copy of the book with Knox's additional notes for a second edition were later found in the British Museum Library in 1925. The first was edited in 1911 by James Ryan, a member of the Ceylon Civil Service, and published by James MacLehose and Sons in Glasgow. This edition, now exceedingly rare, survives as the only complete publication of the important Knox autobiography. The interleaved copy was finally worked on by J.H.O.Paulusz and appeared in print in 1989.

There is little doubt that the publication of the first edition of Knox's curious and remarkable book in 1681 with blessings of the Royal Society and the approbation of his employers, the East India Company, proved an immediate and popular success. The author, however, sailed away as Master of the *Tonquin Merchant* on a two-year voyage to the Far East, almost as soon as the book was published, with a copy of the first edition provided by his publisher, Richard Chiswell, in his personal luggage. On his return at the end of August 1683 he found himself famous. Among his readers had been King Charles II and a letter from his cousin James Bonnell to John Stryke dated 12 December 1683 refers to his interview with the King himself, a rare honour indeed.

I trust, I have done justice to this most remarkable book which remains one of the great source studies on 17th century Ceylon.

ΩΩΩΩΩΩΩ

Banda and the Road Roller

by Brian Parker



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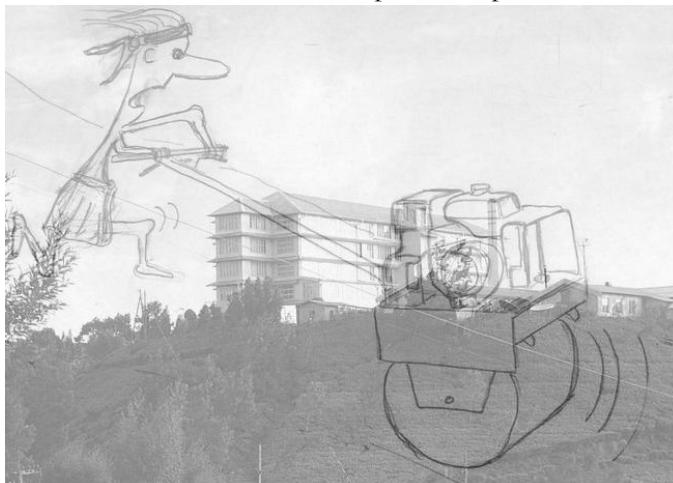
ural and indeed International myths have always circulated around plantations, everywhere.

There is the story of a Manager who when paying maternity benefits was presented with a case of twins, and as it was an unusual occurrence, he asked to speak to both the husband and the wife. When they appeared at the office, he asked the husband how he felt about being the father of twins but before he could answer, the wife chipped in saying that he would not know, as he was only the father of one of them!

When some estates started offering free contraception advice and devices there is a story told that a Superintendent asked one of his *Kanganies* (supervisor) what he thought about the new scheme. The man replied, taking a condom from his belt containing his chew of beetle leaf and tobacco. "Very good Dorai, it keeps it dry in the wet weather!"

Then the ubiquitous story of the old planter who took out his glass eye and left it on a rock, telling the labourers that it would report back to him on his return if they had been slacking and the wily labourer who covered it up with his turban. In my travels, I have been told of it happening in Ceylon, India, East Africa and Papua New Guinea. So too the one about urinating into the sherry bottle to teach a servant suspected of stealing the booze. There are many more such tales and like their urban counterparts, one will never trace the actual person involved as it is always..." a friend of my uncle..... or my wife's third cousin..."

However, there are a million small incidents that happen every day, perhaps unfunny and undramatic in themselves, but which all go to make the fabric of life richer. It is about one of these small incidents that I write. It did not happen to a friend's cousin, it happened to me.



On Verellapatna, we had a fair amount of sealed road so we had a vibrating Road Roller similar to the ones one sees between innings at a Test Match. The operator walks behind the roller holding a pair of 'handlebars' on which the brake, clutch and accelerator controls are fixed. A gear lever sticks out within easy reach, to engage the motor and operate the vibrating mechanism.

On the day in question we were lending the roller to a neighbouring estate and I always insisted that our operator, Banda went with it. Banda, who had an aptitude for things mechanical, was the head of the only Sinhalese family on the estate. Although not a trained mechanic, he was always to the fore when we were setting up a water pumping scheme or re-roofing the lines and of course operating the road roller. He was a very hard worker and thoroughly dependable.

When the roller was to be moved, it was taken to the top of a steep incline, near the factory, so that it could

then go down onto a ramp and into the leaf lorry at the bottom. On the morning in question, I was passing by and saw that everything was ready, the roller was at the top of the hill and the ramp up into the lorry was in position. I was told that Banda had run off to the garage to get a spare tin of fuel and while waiting for his return I picked up the

controls to see if everything was in working order. As it was on an incline Banda had left the machine in gear as well as leaving the brake on, unfortunately when I had finished my inspection, I had left the brake firmly on but had not put it back into gear.

Banda's method of getting the roller to the ramp was that he would not start it but would manoeuvre it, using the brake and clutch alternatively, until it was in position. Only then would he start it and guide it up the ramp. On his return Banda put down his bag of equipment and the spare can of fuel, he let off the brake believing that as it was in gear it would not budge. The roller, weighting perhaps half a ton and being on an incline, did what rollers are supposed to do – it rolled; down the hill and gathering pace as it did so. Poor Banda had bent down to pick up his gear and on straightening up saw that the roller was careering downhill towards the lorry.

only look on in horror as I realised that at that speed and weight, if it managed to mount the ramp, it would go straight through the lorry and out the other side, flattening the driver in the cab. Everybody started shouting at the same time and the driver, on looking back, quickly comprehended the situation, leapt out and headed for safety.

The fleet footed Banda set off after it and just about grabbed the handlebars when the roller was a few feet from the lorry. The safest course of action would have been to steer it into the drain beside the lorry and this is what he attempted. Unfortunately, he only had time to make a minor adjustment to its course and the roller mounted just one of the tracks of the ramp, hung there for a minute and then tipped over. As it did so, it threw the fearless operator, who had by now grabbed the controls, into the air somewhat like a rag doll and he landed heavily in the drain.

I thought that the poor man was dead but after what seemed like an age, he slowly got to his feet and started shouting, very angrily. Although I was fluent in Tamil, my Sinhalese was not of that standard, however I realised that Banda was asking who the £\$%>**%”@*) had taken the so and so roller out of gear. I had to admit that I was the culprit and had to take a severe dressing down from him. Again, I did not know the actual words but understood the sentiment.

I sent Banda off to the dispensary to be patched up and gave him one week's leave on full pay for his bravery. Thereafter, whenever I appeared at any work where Banda was in charge, he would give me a very stern look that said. 'Don't touch!'

ΩΩΩΩΩΩ



Dharmarajah Principal's bungalow known as "Ardnaree" at the time D H Lawrence occupied it, was my first home in Kandy. Its overgrown garden was a paradise of earthly delights for the four Devendra children.

Photo courtesy of Hemantha Arunasiri –Peradeniya

Quest for Shangri-La D H Lawrence from Kandy to Thirroul NSW

by Tissa Devendra



L

ake View Hill in Kandy, seventy years ago, was a delightful mix of scattered trees waist-deep in pungent 'maana' grass with a steep red gravel road and stony footpaths which led up to the sprawling garden and rambling old bungalow of the Principal of Dharmaraja College. It became our family's home when Dharmaraja's charismatic Principal Kularatne invited my father D. T. Devendra to join his teaching staff. The Kularatne family generously shared the house with us for many months. The airy old house had an open verandah with a glorious view of Kandy Lake glimmering blue in the sunshine or dimly reflecting street lamps and flaming processional torches in its inky depths at night.

The overgrown garden was a paradise of earthly delights for the four Devendra children. We woke to the chirping, twittering and trilling of birds that flew in and out of berry laden bushes and trees where they fed and nested. Once in a while a slim green snake slid through the grass or slithered up a tree raising goose-pimples on us Colombo-raised children. We rarely had the pleasure of tasting the fruit of the large mango tree which overspread the garden. Sadly, we moved on to other homes and other towns and this lovely old garden receded down the dim corridors of memory.

Many years passed. I was at the University reading for a degree in English when, with a thrill of recognition, I read D. H. Lawrence's wonderful poem 'Elephant' and realised that he too had lived in Kandy in the 1920s. As the critical scrutiny of literature was our aim at the time I never bothered to find out where Lawrence had lived in Kandy.

Decades passed. A few years ago I was in Kandy at a gathering of 'old boys' of Dharmaraja sharing reminiscences. I told the Principal Mr. Damunupola that my first home in Kandy had been the lovely old bungalow he was now fortunate enough to occupy. He gently smiled and said "Somebody even more eminent than you lived there some years earlier. Did you know that D. H. Lawrence lived there for a few months?" I was

amazed at the revelation and persuaded him to take me along to visit the home of my long ago childhood – now made more magical by the shade of D. H. Lawrence. I spent a few nostalgic hours walking the verandah overlooking the Lake and imagining myself in Lawrence's shoes mulling over his 'Elephant'. Some months ago I wrote a tribute to Kularatne's daughter Maya Senanayake where I spoke of the magical months our family had spent in the Dharmaraja Principal's Bungalow. My old friend W. Panditaratne had read this and, to my delightful surprise, sent me photocopies of the letters Lawrence had sent while living at "Ardnaree" Lake View Hill Estate – the earlier 'avatar' of the Principal's Bungalow.

There is a particular significance in this correspondence to the readers of "The Ceylankan". Lawrence left Kandy and went on to live, briefly once more, in Australia. I will now let the letters of this rather querulous genius speak for themselves.

Prelude

Lawrence came to Ceylon in 1922 at the invitation of his artist American friends Earl and Achshah Brewster who were already living in "Ardnaree" and studying Buddhism. Achshah gives a vivid description of the house and garden in her "Ceylon the Luxuriant". "Verandahs encircle the house: thickets and jungle encroach on the open compound.....We can see the mongoose climbing a jak tree, from the trunk of which depend fruits like green melons. Beautiful trees are alive with birds and little chipmunks, marked with the stripes of Siva's fingers. Termites raise mounds like models of Gothic cathedrals. The garden swarms with creatures, shrills with bird cries and insect hums, bursts with lush life, flowering, producing.....Life bears an inextinguishable flame in this land." Little wonder that Lawrence and Frieda sailed to Ceylon and went on to Kandy to live with the Brewsters in their Edenic retreat on 14 March 1922.

The Letters

The rather frail Lawrence, however, did not share the Brewsters' enthusiasm for "Ardnaree" and soon began to find the heat increasingly intolerable. On 25th March his letter to Catherine Carswell speaks of the Raja Perahera for the Prince of Wales he saw - which inspired his "Elephant" "We're in a nice spacious bungalow on the hill above Kandy in a sort of half jungle of a coconut palm estate- and cocoa – beautiful and such sweet scents; The Prince of Wales was here on Thursday – and looks worn out. The Perahera in the evening with a hundred elephants was lovely. I don't believe I shall ever work here."

Three short days later he writes to Mrs. A. L. Jenkins in Australia – already tiring of Kandy and the Buddhism so dear to his hosts, the Brewsters -- "Well here we've been for a fortnight – rather lovely to look at the place – but very hot and I don't feel at all myself. Don't think I care for the East. Shall try going up to Nuwara Eliya this week.....

I don't think we shall stop long – two or three months then come on. My mind turns towards Australia... I have a fancy for the apple-growing regions, south from Perth: have a great fancy to see apple trees in blossom and to be really "white". I feel absolutely dead off Buddhism, with Nibbana or Nirvana, Kama or Karma. They can have Buddha...Tell me if you think we should like W. Australia – if not we'll go straight to Sydney."

Lawrence was an indefatigable letter writer. His letter to Robert Pratt Barlow, written just two days after writing to Mrs. Jenkins shows, once again, both fascination with the Perahera elephants and dissatisfaction with the Buddhism he found in Ceylon –

"...We were at the Perahera here for the Prince of Wales. It was wonderful, gorgeous and barbaric with all the elephants and flames and devil dances in the night. One realises how barbaric the substratum of Buddhism is. I shrewdly suspect that high-flownness of Buddhism altogether exists mainly on paper; and that its denial of the soul makes it rather barren, even if philosophically etc., more perfect. In short, after a slight contact, I draw back and don't like it....."

Later on. in the same letter Lawrence , rather surprisingly, expresses ideas that can only be described as proto-fascist in their distaste towards Buddhism and Hinduism, as well as English working men ! --"...I rather think that the most living clue in life is in us Englishmen in England, and the great mistake we make is not uniting together in the strength of this real living clue – religious in the most vital sense-uniting together in England and so carrying this vital spark through. Because as far as we are concerned it is in danger of being quenched. I know it is a shirking of the issue to look to the Buddha or the Hindu, or to our own working men, for the impulse to carry through. It is in ourselves, or nowhere and this looking to the outer masses is only a betrayal....."

On 11 April he writes to Austin Harrison –
"...I've been in Ceylon a month and nearly sweated myself into a shadow. Still it is a wonderful place to see and experience. There seems to be a flaw in the atmosphere, and one sees a darkness, and through the darkness the days before the Flood, marshy with elephants mud-grey and buffaloes rising from the mud, and soft-boned voluptuous sort of people, like plants

under water, stirring in myriads.....

I think I shall go on to Australia at the end of the month..."

Lawrence writes to Catherine Carswell on 17 April – "We are sailing on at the end of the month to Australia – find Ceylon too hot and enervating, though it was lovely to look at it. The East is queer – how it seems to bleed one's energy and make one indifferent to everything! If I don't like Australia I shall go on to San Francisco..."

"Elephant" is foreshadowed in his last letter from "Ardnaree", on 30 April to Lady Cynthia Asquith, as also his disillusionment with life in Ceylon – "I didn't like Ceylon – at least I liked looking at it – but not to live in. The East is not for me – the sensuous spiritual voluptuousness, the curious sensitiveness of the naked people, their black bottomless, hopeless eyes – and the heads of buffaloes and elephants poking out of primeval mud – the queer noise of tall metallic palm trees *ach!* Altogether the tropics have something of the world before the flood – hot, dark mud and the life inherent in it makes me sick. But wonderful to have known. We saw the [Prince of Wales] at the [Perahera?] a lonely little glum white fish he was sitting up there at the Temple of the Tooth with his chin on his hands gazing blankly down on all the swirl of the East, like a sort of Narcissus waiting to commit black suicide. The Perahera was wonderful – midnight – huge elephants, great flares of coconut torches, princes like peg-tops swathed round and round with muslin – and then tom-toms and savage music and devil dances – phase after phase – and that lonely little white fish- up aloft –and the black eyes and the black bright sweating bodies of the naked dancers – and the clanging of great mud-born elephants roaring past – made an enormous impression on me – a glimpse into the world before the Flood. I can't quite get back into history. The soft, moist elephantine prehistoric has sort of swamped in over my known world – and one drifts.no more of my tirades- the sea seems so big – and the world of elephants and buffaloes seems such a vast twilight – and by sheer or mere proximity with the dark Singhalese one feels the vastness of the bloodstream, so dark and hot and from so far off. What does life in particular matter? Why should one care? Yet I don't believe in Buddha.....

We are going to Australia – Heaven knows why: because it will be cooler and the sea is wide. Ceylon steams heat and it isn't so much the heat as the chemical decomposition of one's blood by the ultra-violet rays of the sun. Don't know what we'll do in Australia – don't care....."

From "Elephant" –

"...best is the Perahera, at midnight, under the tropical stars with a pale little wisp of a Prince of Wales, diffident, up in a small pagoda on the temple side.

And white people in evening dress buzzing and crowding the stand upon the grass below and opposite:

And at last the Perahera procession, flambeaux aloft in the tropical night, of blazing cocoa-nut,
Naked dark men beneath,

And the huge frontal of three great elephants stepping forth to the tom-tom's beat, in the torch-light,
Slowly sailing in glorious apparel through the flame-light....."

And so the Lawrences bade farewell to "Ardnaree" and Ceylon.

Lawrence's first letter to Curtis Brown, dated 25 May, from Darlington, West Australia already signals disillusionment - "It's queer here: wonderful sky and sun and air – new and clean and untouched - and endless hoary "bush" with no people – all feels strange and empty and *unready*. I suppose it will have its day, this place. But its day won't be our day. One feels like the errant dead, or as the as- yet- unborn. And there is a queer pre-primeval ghost over everything...."

It was, therefore, inevitable that in a few short weeks the Lawrences moved on again from West Australia to Thirroul N.S.W from where he wrote, in characteristically acid mode, to Mrs A. L. Jenkins on 28 May - "Well we are in a little house to ourselves on the edge of the cliff some 40 miles south of Sydney. It's a weird place – with coal mines near. I believe I wished I stayed in Darlington. In fact I am sure I do. Australia goes from bad to worse in my eyes. Sydney and the harbour are quite one of the sights of the world.. But the quality of life is absolutely too much, or too little for me. Talk about crude, raw and self-satisfied..... I'm sure every Australian...seems silently to proclaim "There's nothing better than me on earth".....and not always silently. I've got a bitter burning nostalgia for Europe, for Sicily, for old civilisation and for real human understanding....God, how I hate new countries..."

Sadly disillusioned that tranquillity had eluded him in both Ceylon and Australia, Lawrence sailed away from Australia in July 1922 – voyaging onwards, ever hopeful... "If only, most lovely of all, I yield myself and am borrowed by the fine, fine wind that takes its course through the chaos of the world".

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The Elephant

D H Lawrence

The elephant, the huge old beast,
is slow to mate;
he finds a female, they show no haste
they wait

for the sympathy in their vast shy hearts
slowly, slowly to rouse
as they loiter along the river-beds
and drink and browse

and dash in panic through the brake
of forest with the herd,
and sleep in massive silence, and wake
together, without a word

So slowly the great hot elephant hearts
grow full of desire,
and the great beasts mate in secret at last,
hiding their fire

Oldest they are and the wisest of beasts
so they know at last
how to wait for the loneliest of feasts
for the full repast

They do not snatch, they do not tear;
their massive blood
moves as the moon-tides, near, more near
till they touch in flood.

by erika dias

Happiness

when you capture happiness
thinking has stopped
when thinking starts
happiness has left

Blankness

eyes closed see blankness
eyes opened see blankness
continue wherever, whenever
suddenly strike on wholesomeness
wellbeing of body and mind
ask not for more

Fix That Smile

joy and bliss is in that smile
light up your face with a smile
fix that smile in your eyes
joy and bliss will come to stay

Peace Is Space

it is here, there, everywhere
look! and there it is, in and out
see! and there it is,
'stillness and silence'
of this space

when the inner you is empty
of words and thoughts, man-made,
imperfect
you deeply relax
anger, hatred, envy and greed has left
nothing else to hold but that
precious 'stillness and silence'
then see! the inner is also that
anxiety and fear will leave
mountain solid you are
like lion cubs



Erika Dias

Erika Dias was born in Sri Lanka in the village of Pelene, Weligama, the village of her forefathers. She is married and has two sons who live in Sydney. She moved to Thailand with her husband who was a Professor at the Asian Institute of Technology in Bangkok and lived there for 18 years. In 1995 she returned to Sri Lanka. She has published several books of poetry and writes extensively on spiritual and environmental issues, and also writes poems for children. [see page 23 Bookshop & Web Resources] Her books are sold in many countries, including one translated into French. Two of her poetry books from the "Wisdom Gift" publication series are accompanied by paintings of Pierre Wittmann, a Swiss painter. Some of her poetry is included in the school syllabus in the US. Other than poetry, a booklet on spiritual writing "Meditation: Many Methods Through Watching the Mind", was published in 1997.

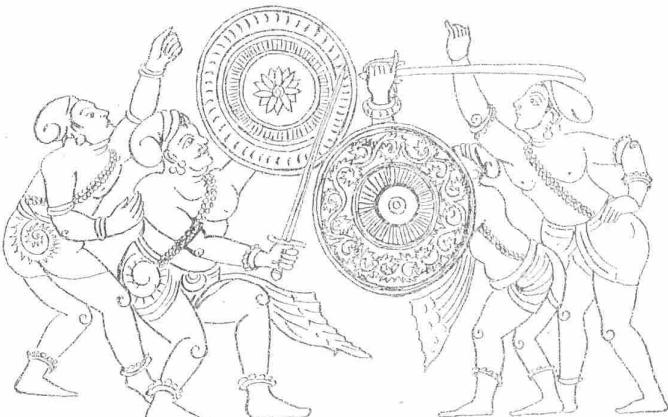
She received many awards for her poetry from Thailand, Australia, and the USA: her latest award being the prestigious 'Outstanding Woman In Buddhism' award from the UN presented on the UN International Women's Day, on March 4, 2004 from the UN ESCAP in Bangkok

Our First Ever Woman Dissave

by S.Pathiraritana



Long before Sirimavo Bandaranaike brought fame to this country and surprise to the machismos of the West by being the first woman in the world to be elected a Prime Minister, there was a woman from Kegalla who was appointed by the King of Kandy to be the first ever woman Dissave in this land. H.C.P.Bell in his Kegalle Report (p. 50) tells the story, which he says is based on local history:



Sinhala Gladiators (note the two umpires on either side of them)

"In former times there were two rival families, skilled fighters with sword and shield - the one called Sudhaliye *harambakaarayo*, the other Maruvalliye *harambakaarayo*. They were also styled *Panikkirala*. It was customary for the men of these two gladiatorial families to be matched to fight in the presence of the king - a spectaculum known as *Angamay-kotaagannava*."

These rival families were not like the Montagues and the Capulets in Romeo and Juliet. And the king of Kandy was not getting them to settle their private quarrels in physical combat. They were really two professional gladiatorial schools like in the Mallawa-desa (Kerala?) with whose gladiatorial skills we had some inter connections.

In Edanduwaawa, a little village in Kegalla district functioned the Maruvalliye School of gladiators. One day the king sent word to the head of the school to send a representative to the court to fight a member of the Sudhaliye School. The chief who accepted it decided to go himself to do the fighting. But before he

went he told his wife, who was pregnant, in case the fight ends with his death, then the child born whether girl or boy should be taught the hereditary arts of fighting. With that he went to his death.

When the child was born it was, as the story has it, a girl. The mother brought up the child and one day when some traders from Mallawa-desa came to the village they came to the *wallawa* (mansion) of the late Maruvalliye chief where the school for sword fighting was held and sought lodging for the night. On their being invited to stay the night they got to learn about the girl and her father's wish. They offered to take the child to Mallawa-desa where she could be trained in the hereditary arts of fighting.

In Kerala, the girl was looked after by a family of gladiators where she became accomplished in the art of fencing. On her return to the island she went to the court of the king disguised as a man and told the king that she was willing to fight anybody from the Sudhaliya School with sword and buckler. The girl having been taught to fight in a deeper and larger pit than the ones in Lanka entered the pit. Such combats were usually fought to the end and before long the Sudhaliya *harambakaaraya* was sabred to death.

The Maruvalliye *harambakaaraya* now reappeared before the king but this time in female dress. The astonished king then inquired from her, her background. Having learnt the full story the king was so pleased with her bravery that he presented her with the usual royal gifts - five elephants, much land and many other gifts. The most honoured gift, however, was her appointment as the Dissave of the Hatara Korale. Bell adds this little note to this story, "From that time it is said, the term Disamahatmaya was applied to the Dissave and (nowadays) to the Ratemahatmaya in lieu of the former name Disaralahami."

The woman Dissave's skill in swordsmanship or rather, I should be saying swords-womanship, aroused my curiosity about a neglected aspect of our history - combative sports. I found that the information we could gather from our books about combative sports is rather scarce. John Davy's observations at the tail end of the Sinhala monarchy heartened me in my search. This is what Davy found:

"Formerly, the kings of Ceylon delighted in games and sports: in seeing feats of horsemanship performed: in witnessing gladiatorial exhibitions, and the fights of animals, as of bulls, rams and elephants: but particularly, during the last reign, such diversions were discontinued."

In other words a blight fell on the country with the coming of British intrigue. Next I found a short but excellent little brochure with the name - **Some Sinhala Combative, Field and Aquatic Sports and Games by P.E.P. Deraniyagala**, Director of the National Museums, Ceylon, which included all the items of sport mentioned by Davy. It was a brief but useful introduction redeeming some of the shortcomings in the history of this subject.

Deraniyagala who was himself a pugilist once, had participated in this combative sport in which he shone. He won his colours from Cambridge where he astonished boxing audiences with his ring craft which once floored a more powerful opponent to win the light weight championship of the Oxford-Cambridge boxing encounter. Later, his interest in boxing tailed off when he turned to the less bloody and more philosophical sport of Ju Jitsu where you are taught how to turn weakness into strength, a typical Far Eastern concept.

Deraniyagala gives us some examples of our swordsmanship, which have not been too publicised. He tells us of how King Rajasingha II entered the fortified Portuguese fort in Colombo in disguise "and left by night after slicing with his sword a young palmyrah palm which remained erect although in horizontal slices. When the Portuguese saw it next morning they had no doubt as to the identity of their visitor."



Gladiators and dogs fight a leopard

The story of how a woman became a Dissave narrated earlier appears in a variant version in Kerala. Our swordsmanship was well known in Kerala so much so, according to M.D.Raghavan, who worked at the Colombo Museum for a time, drew the attention of Deraniyagala to a Kerala ballad which describes how fencing masters from Ceylon were imported to Kerala. There is a similarity to this story recorded by Bell regarding an event that took place in Kerala. There, a dispute between two families resulted in a duel in which the winner of the duel was treacherously stabbed by a relative. "Mortally wounded, Aromer (the dying swordsman) hands his blood stained *kachcha* (kind of sabre) to his pregnant sister and requests her to instruct her unborn child to avenge him. Her son later challenged this



A Wrestler and a fighting Ram exercising (note the shorn body of the latter)

relative and kills him."

Another instance of the skill of our swordsmen referred to by Deraniyagala is Ratwatte Dissave's achievement with the sword. When Sri Wickrama Rajasingha was riding his horse on his morning canter, the Dissave who was riding behind had tossed an arecanut (betel nut) into the air and sliced it twice which deed was acclaimed by the spectators. But the acclaim of the by-standers was such that it aroused the jealousy of the King.

"The last display of Sinhala swordsmanship," writes Deraniyagala, "was a contest in the fields of Kandy about five years after British occupation. It is said that Galagoda Ratay Mahatmaya, a noted deaf swordsman, was challenged by an English Captain. The two met in the Hevavissa fields in Paatha Hewaheta. Galagoda in loin cloth with sword and shield, the Englishman in shirt, trousers and sword. Before commencing, Galagoda drew two cross lines in the sand and standing where they intersected defied his rival to shift from this position.

"Although the Englishman's sword flashed all over Galaboda's sword and shield, the latter would not give ground. Then in his turn Galagoda exclaiming "Englishman on guard" attacked and after a few passes, left the mortified officer grasping a bladeless hilt. The Beravayas who were watching the fight raced home for their magul (celebratory) drums and played a triumphant march to celebrate this victory."

The information about other sports that Deraniyagala has gathered is from paintings on cloth he has found in the Ratnapura District and in the Devale at Hanguranketa. Some of the tracings he has made of these paintings, which are reproduced here, are really beautiful. They reveal not as he once did the strength of his fighting fists but the refinement of his artistic fingers and a very sharp eye to display the born painter that he was.

Somewhat similar to the Roman spectacles staged in their amphitheatres are the fights that were staged, as Davy observed, between rams, bulls, elephants, and between man and beast. Were the fights staged between man and beast inspired by what our Ambassadors to the court of Emperor Claudius saw at the Roman amphitheatres? There is evidence that the subjects of diplomatic conversation took that turn. As Deraniyagala points out, quoting Pliny, the Ambassadors were describing the elephants of Ceylon and the nature of their work in captivity. They would also have described how the elephants were caught and how the kraals that were constructed to trap them were made.

As for the use of the word kraal, Deraniyagala sug-

gests that this has been derived from the Sinhala word *gaala*, which is the one used to describe an enclosure for animals. A word, which the Portuguese in turn seem to have borrowed, but that, however, is not the impression the Shorter Oxford Dictionary gives.

A more important thing the Ambassadors told the Roman court, according to Pliny, was that the elephant in captivity sometimes played the role of executioner. More particularly when a king was found remiss in his duties and condemned to death - "a magnificent hunt for elephants and leopards was organised for him, he knew what was expected of him and met his end facing them."

Illustrations adapted from Some Sinhala Comparative, Field and Aquatic Sports and Games by P E P Deraniyagala his tracings of the Dheva Angam Cloth of Maha Devale -Hanguranketa 16th Century

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President's Message



This year being the third & final of my term as President, I am both proud & happy that 2007 sees the tenth anniversary of our existence. We have achieved a great deal: our quarterly meetings are lively occasions marked by the quality of the speakers, the interesting question & answer sessions that follow & of course, the concluding "social" which is so much enjoyed by those attending. Our Melbourne chapter continues to flourish, its meetings largely following the pattern set in Sydney & this year is particularly enhanced by the formation of a Colombo chapter which has made a most promising start. Our crowning glory has to be the quarterly journal *The Ceylankan* which has been widely praised for the quality of its content, which is disseminated globally, attracting immense interest to judge by the variety of feedback received.

The Society has provided a focus for the Sri Lankan "diaspora" in Australia and it is my pleasure to commend the progress of the past decade as also to wish it even more success and wider recognition in years to come.

Tony Peries

Flight of The Double Sunrise

by Capt. Elmo Jayewardene

D

il my boss, said “this is one more wild goose chase,” when she reluctantly agreed to accompany me to the southern fringe of Sri Lanka, in search of Justin and his memories of aeroplanes that flew to break records. It was a time in the forties, the story happened so many years ago. The meat of the matter lay in Koggala, the little hamlet nestled between the palm fringed sea and the bucolic Koggala Lake, two hours drive from Colombo. That’s where I headed this time to chase wild geese.

We stayed a night in Galle, at The Light House Hotel, service par excellence, pampered and petalled with food fit for gods. In the morning we drove south, along the Matara road, looking for the turn off to Ahangama where Katuluwa Walauwa is - that’s where Justin held fort. Justin’s family had been the Lords of Katuluwa for centuries, the usual father to son and grandson heritage, the change of role could be traced back to the Portuguese times when the vice royal in Goa gifted this land to Justin’s ancestors. Well, that’s another story I’ll come back to it some other day. As for now, it is long forgotten aeroplanes and Koggala Lake and what Justin remembered to tell me to tell the world.

On one side as we drove was the sea, cobalt blue with white foam crested waves, rushing and gushing to break on the granite boulders that stood like sentinels. On the other side we passed the Koggala airfield where I had landed “Tiger-moths” in my fledgling days as a sky tramp. Years before this small airstrip came, the lake had been a hallmark in aviation history. There were grand ancient aviators who took-off and landed from Koggala Lake. Most of them are now dead and buried, and so are their aeroplanes, all scuttled at sea after the war. Only one replica is embalmed in a museum in New Zealand. What is left of the story now are scant reminders, scratches of aviation history that pop up now and then when clowns like me shuttle back down memory lane chasing moonbeams to bring forgotten fairy tales to light.



The boat was a ramshackle relic that had seen better days, the engine coughed and cried as we crawled our way across the Koggala Lake under the scorching noonday sun. Justin directed the boatman and did finger pointing navigation whilst rattling to us the forgotten sagas of the lake. “That’s where they made Gam Peraliya,” he announced with glee, showing us a house where they filmed Lester James’ immortalized movie. “That’s Madol Duuwa,” the island lay to windward, green and silent in its pastoral beauty, known well among school children who read Martin Wickremasinghe’s literary classic. Diagonally opposite Madol Duuwa was the little airfield I mentioned before, located on one corner of the lake, the black serpent like tarred runway dividing the lush green and a national flag fluttering from a tall white mast advertising the Air Force ownership. Far away on the North side was Madin Duuwa, now renamed Bird Island to give a touristic twang to benefit the dollar donors. The Koggala Lake lay in its vast splendour, sleepy and silent, as beautiful as it has ever been.

The boat sputtered to pass a small island of rocks, “This is where the windsock was,” Justin explained. We rounded the rocks and faced the longest stretch of the lake extending beyond two miles. “This is where they started the takeoff run,” said Justin who as a thirteen year old kid had seen them all. “We spent our holidays in the Bird Island and watched the aeroplanes take off,” he drew from memory and gave his eyewitness testimony. “They raced on the water a long distance and lifted off and climbed away, barely skimming the tree-line at the far end,” Justin reminisced.

I stood on the boat and stared. This here then was the water runway of the Koggala Lake. The exact place where some Captain synchronised his gyros, tested controls, pushed his thrust levers and revved his engines to go. I’ve done the same a thousand times in a thousand runways. But that is nothing. This would have been all so different. The sheer romanticism alone was something the pilot in me could barely imagine in my wildest dreams. What are modern heavy jets and neon lighted runways? This here was the “real-deal,” the incomparable beauty of flight transformed into reality by men who dared to buck the odds and perhaps became half birds themselves in the execution of their indomitable task. The water here was where they took off in their cumbersome seaplane on its long journey from Koggala

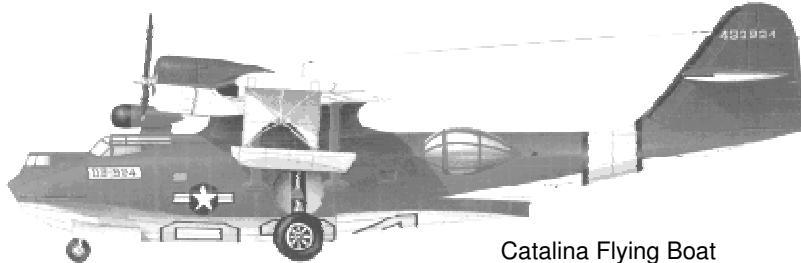
Lake to Swan River Perth, on the West Australian coast. 28 hours of non-stop flying on a Catalina Flying boat, flown by Qantas Imperial Airways pilots, the longest leg of Qantas' link flight between London and Sydney, in the war torn years of the forties. The flight was so long that the passengers saw the sun rise twice whilst being strapped to their seats. That is how the name "flight of the double sunrise," came about and entered Koggala to the record books in the world of aeroplanes.

Justin remembers everything, event and detail of a forgotten saga. "It was war time," he recalled. "My father was the Mudaliyar, the highest local official for the Koggala area in the British Colonial administration. The orders came from his superiors: all the villagers residing within a radius of five miles from the Koggala Lake were ordered to evacuate their homes and leave within 24 hours," Justin detailed.

No one could protest. This was "Rule Britannia," time. Justin's father was to see that no one remained in the vicinity of the Koggala Lake. By noon the next day no one remained. The lake went silent; the fishermen packed their measly mote and went away to the unknown. Justin's father was allowed to remain; he was the big boss representing his bigger white bosses. It was just to make sure no one returned.

That's when the Royal Air Force came to take over the Koggala Lake, to demarcate the water runway, fix the windsock and prepare it to accept the long flying seaplanes.

It was 1942; the Japanese were occupying the Malayan peninsula. The Qantas Imperial flight, London to Sydney, had lost its refuelling point of



Catalina Flying Boat

Singapore between Calcutta and Perth. The flight had to be kept, the link maintained at any cost. An alternate route had to be found. Sri Lanka was the best bet and that too if possible the southern-most tip to take maximum advantage to minimise the distance to the Australian coast.

Hence the mapmakers took their protractors and their slide rules out and made their calculations, Koggala to Perth – long and dangerous, but possible; that's when Justin's father got his orders to evacuate the fishermen.



QANTAS Catalina Memorial

During World War II vital refuelling bases were lost on the Empire route from Australia to England via Singapore. To keep communications open for two years commencing on June 29 1943 QANTAS Empire Airways operated the world's longest regular non-stop service - Perth to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) a distance of 3513 miles (5832 kilometres). The initial services were operated by Catalina Flying Boats which flew into and out of Perth from this point on the Swan River. Known as the "Flight of Double Sunrise" these missions were flown in complete radio silence and without any radio navigation aids. The story of the Indian Ocean Services is one of triumph over adversity and of highest standards of aviation endeavour.

than 30 hours, the longest being an astounding 32 hours and 9 minutes. This is the longest non-stop regular passenger flight ever attempted.

The first flight came from Perth and landed in Koggala on the 30th of June 1943 under the

command of Captain Russell Tapp. The last flight was on 18th July 1945. The aeroplanes carried 3 passengers and 69 kg of mail. 271 crossings were made carrying 648 passengers; each passenger was given a certificate illustrating their membership to "The Rare and Secret Order of the Double Sunrise". In all its two years of operation, the star named Catalinas flew the Indian Ocean facing every possible aviation hazard. Yet they had the unequalled proud record of ending the enormous episode without a single mishap or accident.

In aviation terms it was a phenomenal feat of absolute skill and meticulous preparation performed by pure professionals who obviously knew what they were doing.

Out there to Swan River, that's where our wild goose chase next took us. The memories of these unique flights are better kept on the Australian shore. There is a plaque inserted in a granite boulder, placed there by Qantas, on the east bank of the river, (see page 17) in loving memory of their historic flights flown during the war years. People stop by, grandfathers pointing fingers and explaining to grandsons what they knew or heard about the long record breaking aeroplanes that took off and headed to a little known lake in an unknown place called Koggala.

As to our end, there is no written evidence for the interested to read nor plaques inserted to granite to stand beside and take photographs. The Grandfathers here are dead and the Grandsons may have no interest. Years have rolled and time has reduced the once renowned water airfield from magical to the mundane. Only the fishermen are there, in their dugout canoes baiting their fish, and they know nothing of star named aeroplanes that landed and took off on their beloved lake.

But then what are Qantas plaques on granite boulders compared to Justin?

The expert sits there at Katuluwa Walauwa, his ancestral home from where his father ruled the hamlet. Here is the verbal evidence, honest and accurate, Justin's unvarnished sentiments recited by recall, exactly as it happened. Stories of Bird Island and how he stood and watched the cumbersome Catalinas skim the water in their two mile run to lift off, clearing the trees by whiskers as they made their way over the ocean to the far away Swan River in Perth.

The memories are all there, very much intact, to be

described in fine detail. Maybe to answer a question or two, maybe to re-live a moment or a few, about a time when Koggala Lake entered aviation history as part participant of the record-breaking flights of the double sunrise.

ΩΩΩΩΩΩ

Elmo Jayawardena retired as Instructor Captain with Singapore Airlines on their 747 fleet. He won the Gratiaen Award for his book "Sam's Story" and the State Literary Award for his 850 page saga of colonialism "The Last Kingdom of Sinhalay". He is also the Founder/President of AFLAC International, a humanitarian organisation working to help the poor in Sri Lanka.

Spotted Deer

by June Colin-Thomé

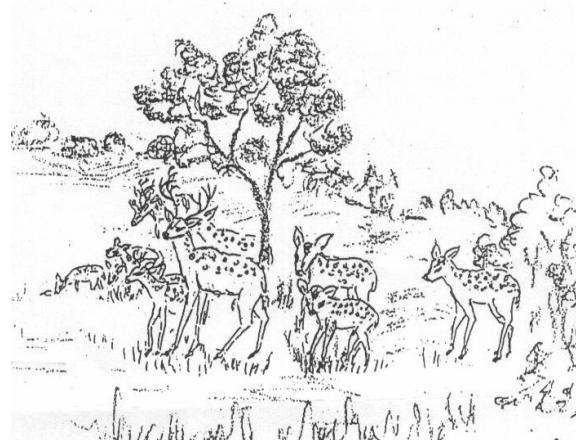


Spotted deer, timid, shy,
With delicate hoof and limpid eye
Hesitant, nervous, tense, tight
Ready to spring and flee in fright

Slowly emerging through bushes and trees
They move to the water in twos and threes
Does and yearlings drink, then glance
The stag keeps watch in noble stance

Evenly balanced on handsome head
His elegant antlers gracefully spread
He listens and waits, alert and still;
Till every deer has drunk its fill

A faint dry crackle,
a step on stone
In a flurry of leaps and bounds
they're gone!



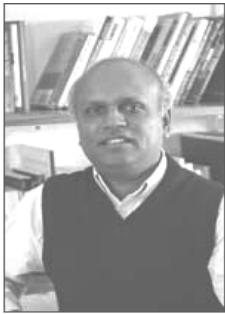
Life, People and Society

by Dr Siri Gamage

I

n the second series of articles, I would like to articulate my observations about life, society and behaviour of people in the two main places of my residence in Sri Lanka: Ethpitiya, Walasmulla (1951-1968) and Peradeniya (1968-1986). Comparison is between life in a remote hamlet with that of an area near a metropolis. The ability to move between the two places offered considerable personal strength during my growing up years because Ethpitiya was an outlying remote area in the Mulkirigala electorate, Hambantota district whereas Peradeniya was close to the provincial capital, Kandy and University of Peradeniya –the premier seat of higher learning. During part of my undergraduate years (1968-1972), I took up residence in a boarding house in Hindagala – a couple of kilometres from Peradeniya campus. Hindagala residents considered it as a village.

Living in Hindagala and Peradeniya campus offered certain privileges in comparison to the life at Ethpitiya. Whereas at Ethpitiya there was no tap water, electricity, or telephones at the time, in Peradeniya these were taken for granted. In the Halls of Residence there were telephones for internal communication, tap water and electricity. At Hindagala boarding house, there was no electricity or telephones but there was tap water derived from a water stream that flowed from the hill behind. The house was located within Roslyn Hill tea estate, a moderate sized tea plantation with a factory. The house itself was located next to a hill being part of the range of well-known Hantana Hills. The stream carried pristine, pure and cold water all year round, even the hot months during which it was most welcome. Lighting in the house was by kerosene oil lamps some of which had more fancy polished brass oil container. At Ethpitiya also there were similar methods of lighting complemented by Petromax lamps, which provided higher illumination similar to electric bulbs. It used a glowing phosphorescent mantle providing high luminosity and once every two hours or so one had to pressurise the oil reservoir of the lamp to keep it going. During occasions such as weddings or funerals, several of these lamps were used to illuminate the houses and the compounds. These were also status symbols. At that time, ownership of a Petromax lamp or two, a transistor radio, a Humber or Raleigh bicycle etc made a difference to one's standing in the village. For men, the form of dress –



whether shirt & trouser or national dress dictated one's social standing.

There were differences between Hindagala villagers who worked in the tea estate and those workers at Ethpitiya-Walasmulla area. For example, at Hindagala, behind our boarding house was the extended family of Banda. He was a simple man similar to those Kandyan characters

one can find in some fiction, wearing a sarong and a banian (singlet) or a shirt, who used to walk up to the tea factory. He would follow the women and young girls and boys who walked to work in single file like a row of ants. In time I noticed he was finding this uphill walk difficult - age was catching up. His was a cash poor family but owned the piece of land where their house was located. The workers were almost like bonded labour to the tea estate. My friends and I used to sit on the front steps of the boarding house relaxing after a day's study and observe Banda returning from work. He and his family members had to pass through the compound in front of the boarding house to get to their own house. The distinctive fragrance of fresh tea emanated from his person as he passed by. I could see his head and body covered with tea particles. Obviously he was going to clean up after going home rather than bothering to change clothes at the factory. Very often I could hear Banda screaming in the mornings or evenings probably a result of some disagreement in the family surely over some trivial issue. His daughter sometimes helped in the kitchen at the boarding house, she cooked hoppers or string hoppers. In comparison to the working families like Banda's in Hindagala, I felt those in Ethpitiya and surroundings were more liberated or progressive. For one thing, they used to read newspapers, listen to the radio and were more politically aware.

Use of firewood at the two places was also different. Whereas at Hindagala, the village folk used to climb the hill, cut medium size trees and gather wood for drying, at Ethpitiya the village folk used various parts of a coconut tree for the same purpose. Coconut shells were particularly useful in lighting and maintaining the fire. Villagers hopped fences of private land freely to collect branches of coconut leaves, sometimes coconuts as well, and *Kolapu* (empty shell of the coconut flowers) without seeking permission of the landowner. The landowners in many cases tolerated this. The villagers were allowed to clean up the land collecting fallen debris for fuel but had to leave part of the collection for use by the property owner. This seemed a fair deal; the villagers got free fuel whilst the land owner got free labour.

The University provided work opportunities to the

Hindagala villagers. Such work involved cutting grass by using sickles or a swinging steel blade. Some worked in Halls of Residence as cleaners, and in University bungalows as gardeners. Any such work in the University was considered as a valuable opportunity by the village folk because it not only provided some income but also respectability as an employee of an institution. The young workers would ride their bicycles to work, indicating modest wealth. No such institutional work, however menial was available to the villagers at Ethpitiya at the time but some worked the land belonging to land owners –in particular *Karawa* (a caste) families from Weliamuna or Walasmulla.

Weliamuna is a beautiful name. I don't think there is another place name in Sri Lanka like it. It literally means "the sandy paddy field". *Amuna* was used in those days to refer to a measure of paddy land totalling 64 *kurinis*. A *Kurini* was a round shaped wooden container used to measure paddy. Outer surface of a *Kurini* was handcrafted with decorative lines. It could hold a couple of kilograms of paddy. When a *Kurini* load of seed paddy was broadcast in an area in the field, that area covered is considered traditionally as equivalent to a *kuriniya* in land size.

Some people from Ethpitiya, Yahalmulla etc. used to work in the land belonging to Weliamuna families. On their way to work and back they would stop by our shop to exchange yarns and share village gossip. Subject matter varied from gossip about parties held, or about the marriage of girls or their absence, or various financial transactions, kindness of the female head or the haughtiness of the male head of house. The western style of living displayed in the employer's home was also



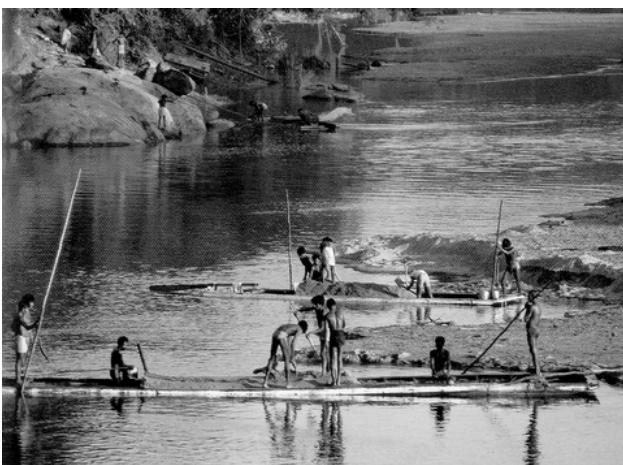
An Aluminium "kuruniya", 64 of these added up to an "Amuna" used as a measure of land

dissected at length. Topics included dancing, music, food, cooking, drinking alcohol, visitors from the towns.

Other *Karawa* families at Weliamuna included Vidane Mahattaya, who used to live opposite the Jayasuriya home and wore his hair in a knot, Heen Mahattaya the undertaker – (*minee petti saapuna*) or Gandara Mahattaya and his wife Gandara Nona, who ran the hotel at Muduna, near the hospital. People from Ethpitiya and surroundings observed that some of these *Karawa* families as being aloof because of differences in wealth, life style, as well as caste. The social distance between the *Karawa* people and the *Vahumpura* (another caste) people was quite palpable. It translated into some unpleasant behavioural habits. However, some of these *Karawa* families were close to the *Vahumpuras*. In particular, Heen Mahattaya and Gandara Mahattaya-both brothers were very close to *Vahumpuras* and likewise the *Vahumpuras* who had anything to do with them had only praise.

Vidane Mahattaya's visits to our shop, ostensibly to buy cigars was mainly to join in the village gossip and exchange of news. On warm days he would dispense with the singlet and wear only a striped white sarong. This was quite acceptable in village life. Although of a higher caste, he chose to sit on the low level *bankuwa* (a stool) reserved for lower caste people and/or the working village folk. There was a couple of chairs for such people considered respectable as they were landlords yet Vidane Mahattaya used to sit comfortably on the *bankuwa* perhaps to show affinity with the *Vahumpura* people. He would enjoy a cup of tea which my father sometimes offered free to people from Weliamuna as a gesture of goodwill. Heen Mahattaya was considered a friend of the people as he led a simple life. He would provide the coffin, wreaths (made of artificial flowers), a carpet, and other paraphernalia like ceremonial oil lamps to the bereaved family, on rent. Cost was never an issue, it would be discussed and settled post event. In the beginning he did not own a hearse so would transport the coffins on a roof rack of his car. He also visited the bereaved families to tend to their needs. He was a regular visitor during important events such as weddings and puberty ceremonies at homes of *Vahumpura* people. His house was open to people of the village as well. He was a soft-spoken, unassuming, simple man who interacted with the people as one of them. He either wore a national dress or a sarong with shirt. Often he could be seen walking around the villages or paddy fields. Yahalmulla people such as Bira Mama and Saundiris who was also a mason worked some of his paddy land. Each day he would ride his bicycle from his Weliamuna home to the shop in Muduna. There was a story circulating that Heen Mahattaya used to walk around the hospital wards twice a day checking on terminally ill patients so as to be ready to supply coffins and his services. Some youngsters used this to poke fun at him whenever he came around.

Gandara Mahattya's wife, Gandara Nona also was a regular visitor in the village who mingled with women folk. She got a lot of help from women in cooking, garden work and for milling paddy. Before the motorised mills came into use it was done manually in a *rangediya* with a *mola* (mortar and pestle). She always had a smile on her face and was a very pleasant and affable person. Probably she enjoyed the company of village women. Even to this day whenever my sister or I visit their shop they always welcome us well and offer tea and cakes from Muduna bakery located near the hospital. Vidane Mahattaya's son moved to Colombo and had commercial dealings with several families who dredged for building sand from Kirama Oya upstream from the bridge. Those families still continue that practice. David Sinno is the key person engaged in this enterprise along with his sister Lansina who runs a



Manual sand dredging in progress

Photo courtesy:
Tim Page- "Sri Lanka" 1984 Thames & Hudson -London.

shop in the village these days. I do not have current information about his children who moved to Colombo. Saundiris Baas Unnahe, the village mason, was close to them and when he had to go for an eye operation he was a guest in their house in Colombo for a week or so.

Between Ethpitiya and Walasmulla there was another Jayasuriya popularly called Jayasuriya Mahattaya or Mudalali. He was a successful entrepreneur who set up a trade in supply of agricultural services including tractors for hire. He would sell groceries on credit to the village folk; offer assistance as needed for weddings, funerals, agricultural work in paddy fields etc. A Karawa person with small beginnings, he accumulated substantial wealth in time to come including land, tractors, and shops in Walasmulla town. He had a people friendly manner as well as hot temper when things got tough. As his children did not develop much in terms of education or vocational skills he had to bear sub-

stantial burdens in managing the wealth and business. His attempts to educate his children in the city failed. One of his daughters eloped with the Vahumpura tractor driver who was a poor man. They were not welcome in Jayasuriya household for many years but later on they started to visit and work for the father. Two sons are managing shops and a daughter has married another businessman from Beliatta. He was suffering from blood pressure and depression and one day took his own life.

It was similar to the time when Heen Mahattaya suffered a mysterious illness, which happened after laying the foundation to his new house. Believing bad astrological advice regarding the timing caused this illness, the family decided to destroy the original foundations. Unfortunately that did not help to save his life.

The point of writing all these details about the labour relations in Ethpitiya between Vahumpura workers, village folk and the Karawa landlords was to highlight the fact that there were two types of relationships; some Karawa families developed close links based on trust and mutual respect with their workers and benefited from a better deal, some families still maintained the master-servant relationship, drawing ridicule and criticism from the workers. It was evident from the teashop chatter that they were not as satisfied as the previous category. Social distance was reflected more in the latter category. This was similar to the type of relations that Banda and his family in Hindagala had with the Sinhalese owners and managers of the tea estate and factory. I will deal with these issues in the next part.

ΩΩΩΩΩΩΩ

This article is a sequel to a series that Dr Gamage wrote for past issues of The Cey-lankan. Readers interested are referred to: Journals # 30 through 35. Subject to availability these past issues may be purchased. See advert panel on p 47 for details. Ed.

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The “Sripada” on Samanalakanda

by Jeanne Jayasinghe



T

here is a beautiful story about the discovery of Sripada, (footprint of Buddha) on the peak of Samanalakanda (popularly known as Adam's Peak) which like all legends, is part history and part myth.

King Nissankamalla was the ruler of Lanka and his kingdom was situated in Polonnaruwa. He had a beautiful pleasure garden full of flowers of different varieties. He had gardeners to care for the garden and at night watchmen were posted to ensure no one stole plants or flowers.

One day, however, the gardeners complained to the king that someone had picked flowers from the garden. The King was annoyed and questioned the watchers but no one had seen an intruder in the night, or had they heard a sound. A search did not reveal any clues as to how the intruders had entered or left. It was the perfect crime, no suspects and no clues.

The watchers were asked to keep a vigilant look out but despite all their efforts and even though their numbers were increased, flowers kept on disappearing from the garden. Obviously, whoever was picking the flowers knew how to escape the vigilance of the watchers. So in the time honoured manner, the king sent out an “*anda bere*” – the town crier – to find a volunteer who would be willing to sacrifice a night of sleep to find out who was picking flowers from the royal pleasure park. A rich reward was offered to whoever was successful in tracking down the culprit who dared to steal flowers from the king’s pleasure park.

In one of the towns there lived a poor man who struggled to meet his daily needs. He was a hard working man but for him existence was a struggle. When he heard the drum he listened to the message that was read out by the town crier.

“Valuable flowers are being stolen from the king’s royal pleasure park every night. Whosoever can catch the thief will be richly rewarded by the king himself. If anyone is interested please stop the

“*anda bere*” and accompany the man to the palace at once” was the message that he cried out.

The poor man thought to himself, if I can get the rich reward that the king is offering, life will be a little more bearable for me. I can sacrifice a night’s sleep, even two nights, if it means not having to struggle like this. So he walked up to the town crier and stopped the drum beat saying: “I volunteer to catch the thief.” He accompanied the drummer back to the palace.

That night, after a good meal, the poor man hid himself in the garden close to where flowers had been picked most often. Having hidden himself, he began his long vigil. Fighting sleep and insect attacks he tried in various ways to keep himself awake. The darkest hours of the night passed without incident. The stars in the night sky looked like tiny diamonds. The stillness of the night scared him with thoughts of ghosts and other creatures that might harm him, but remembering the “*Ithi pi so*” gatha (Buddhist stanza invoking protection) helped him to fight his fears.



Aerial view of Samanalakanda showing the long climb to the shrine on the peak

Little by little the darkness lightened and in the false dawn, just before first light, he thought he saw a movement near him. He wiped his eyes to clear them and looked in the direction of where he had seen rather than saw the movement. Slowly his eyes focussed on a female figure that was hovering near a plant full of flowers. Then he saw a second and a third female figure near the tree. One was standing on the grass and was busy picking the flowers hanging down low. The other two were on either side of the plant picking plants that were growing in profusion in the middle and top of the tree.

He soon identified the female figures; these were *devas* – female deities who must have descended from one of the heavenly realms. Clad in rich raiment their bodies glowed with a shimmering light. Around their shoulders each one had a shawl. The man remembered having heard that a *deva* could not get back to their heavenly abode if they did not have the shawl. So treading lightly he moved in closer to the figure standing on the ground and quickly plucked the shawl from around her shoulders.

With a cry she spun around to see who had done this. The other two *devas* vanished no sooner they heard her cry out. Seeing the man standing there deferentially, she imperiously demanded the return of her shawl. The man smiled but still deferential, shook his head in refusal. She then begged him to let her return whence she came. He then replied: “Your honour, I shall give this shawl back to you after I have taken you to the king. He is seriously displeased at the loss of his flowers and he wants to see who dared to pick flowers from his royal pleasure garden. Please come with me now to the king.”

The heavenly maiden begged, pleaded and then in the manner of all maidens, began to cry – asking for the return of her shawl and to be allowed to leave. The man was adamant – the thought of the rich reward made it easier to disregard those tears and beseeching looks on her beautiful face.

Seeing that the man was moved neither by her tears nor by her pleading, the *deva* agreed to go with him to meet the king. Upon arrival at the palace, the man requested the night watchman to send a message to the king that the thief had been caught. The king was curious as to why the man had not waited until morning to bring the thief to him. He went to his throne room and ordered the

(Continued on page 24)

BOOKSHOP AND WEB RESOURCES BOOKS/MAPS/COLLECTIBLES

This column is a regular feature for the benefit of members who publish works, and others who wish the Society to sell material on their behalf. No charges apply to members but donations will be gratefully received. Others pay a handling charge. Please e-mail the editor if you wish to take up this offer.

Blossoms of Wisdom on Peace and Environment – by *Erika Dias*. This is an anthology of 123 poems, illustrated with 39 colour photographs. Hard cover with dust jacket ISBN: 955-599-403-X; 133 pp.; Published: April 2005; US\$ 30.00. Available from Wisdom Gift Publications, email: hideva@slt.net.lk

Also by Erika Dias

A Wisdom Gift, (Jointly with Pierre Wittmann), Amarin Printing Group Co., Ltd., Bangkok, Thailand; December 1993 (book of poems), First Edition - December 1991, Third Edition - December 1993; ISBN 974 887 1681; Price US\$10.00

Oneness In Duality, (Jointly with Pierre Wittmann), Amarin Printing Group Co., Ltd., Bangkok, Thailand; November 1993 (book of poems); ISBN 974 8361608; Price US\$10.00

Presents de Sagesse (French translation of ‘A Wisdom Gift’, book of poems; jointly with Pierre Wittmann); Contact Pierre Wittmann pierrewittmann@wanadoo.fr

Meditation: Many Methods Through Watching the Mind, First Edition - 1997, Third Edition; Sarvodaya Vishva Lekha Publishers, Ratmalana, Sri Lanka; May 2003; ISBN 955-599-320-2; Price US\$6.00

Fully Awakened: or Sleep-Walking? Sarvodaya Vishva Lekha Publishers, Ratmalana, Sri Lanka; November 2002; ISBN 955-599-300-9; Price US\$8.00

Books by S Muthiah: Contact author

smuthiah.mes@gmail.com OR ‘Vijay Gardens’, 2-F Vijayaraghava Lane, Vijayaraghavachari Road, T. Nagar, Chennai – 600 017, India.

Indo Lankans, 320pp, East West Books (Madras) Pvt 125 by airmail, A\$ 200 courier.

The Chettiar Heritage (English) 288pp –The Chettiar Heritage, Chennai. A\$ 100, by airmail, A 225 courier.

Tamil—subsidiised, A\$ 75 by airmail, A\$200 courier.

Madras that is Chennai, 260pp, Ranpar Publishers, Chennai. A\$60 by airmail, A\$ 100 courier.

Betwixt Isles : The Story of the Kandyan Prisoners in Mauritius. By Raja Bandaranayake. Vijitha Yapa Publications. 2006. ISBN 10 955-1266-41-2. Hard cover 360 pp US\$ 12 + p&h, www.vijithayapa.com

man and the thief to be brought there immediately. The courtiers quickly brought the two into the king's presence.

The king was surprised to see this beautiful woman dressed in rich raiment who was accompanying the man. She carried a basket of flowers in her hand and was obviously the thief. Courteously asking her to take a seat, he asked the man who this was and why he had brought her to see the king. The man explained how had had come to capture this *deva* and showed the king the shawl taken from the maiden.

Now the king was even more puzzled – why were heavenly maidens stealing flowers from his royal pleasure garden? Didn't they have flowers in their own realm? He requested the maiden to explain her actions to him.

At first the *deva* refused saying it was a secret that had been guarded from men for many years but the king was also adamant and kept on questioning her. Finally she said I will show you why we were picking flowers.

Rewarding the man as promised, the king gathered a large retinue of courtiers, his queen and her maidens, guards and palanquin bearers and to set out on the journey. Asking the king and his retinue to follow the trail of flower petals she would strew on the ground the maiden flew ahead. As fast as such a large number of people could move, they followed the trail of petals. Along the way people from towns and villages joined the group and brought food with them, which they all shared – not wanting to delay on the way with having to cook meals.

Soon the procession came to Nuwara Eliya. Here, at the foot of the mountain known as Samanalakanda (Butterfly Mountain) was a village. These villagers had received news that the king was arriving with a large retinue of people and was preceded by a heavenly maiden who was taking him on this journey.

The villagers organised a meal for the whole retinue and as they would not be able to accommodate everyone in one hall, decided to make it an al fresco meal. Selecting a large field – a *pitiya* – they prepared seating for everyone and served the meal to the king and his followers in this field. At the end of the meal, the king thanked the villagers and bestowed on the field and the village the name – Sangraha pitiya. Today that village still exists and is known as Hangarapitiya.

After the meal they continued on their journey. The maiden now began to fly up the mountain, still dropping petals to show the path. Little by little they climbed right to the top and there she revealed the secret that had been guarded by the *deras* until that day.

It was the footprint of the Buddha etched into the rock at the top of Samanalakanda.

ΩΩΩΩΩΩ

The First Tea Statistics?

H K Rutherford who with David Reid opened out a 100 acre field at Maria-watte wrote this letter dated 12th January 1885 to the editor of Times of Ceylon:



Sir,

One hundred acres of tea were planted 4 feet x 4 feet in 1879, which distance apart gives 2,722 trees to the acre. At the present time there are fully 10 per cent vacancies, so that the actual number of trees to the acre is about 2,450.

In 1882– 50 acres were manured with cattle manure
In 1883 - 15 acres were manured with cattle manure

In 1884 - 40 acres were manured with cattle manure between August and November.

The manuring for 1884 cannot be taken as having affected the yield for 1884...

The yearly yields from the original 100 acres at Mariawatte have been:

First plucking began - October 1881

Year	Per acre	Rainfall inches
1880	9 lbs	-
1881	136	113.82
1882	312	117.11
1883	550	92.77
1884	1,092	82.72

H K Rutherford

Source: Some Pioneers of the Tea Industry
Sir Thomas L Villiers

Imagining Modernity:

The architecture of
Valentine Gunasekara

by Anoma Pieris



S

Sri Lankan architecture has long been equated to the style used for resort hotels, a style synonymous with Sri Lankan identity. Against such a well-established tradition the work of a lone modernist architect, who refused to reproduce the feudal past or the colonial gaze to the orient—is unlikely to hold credence. His work, moreover, is a reflection of his clientèle. Whereas many of his contemporaries built for wealthy urbanites, Gunasekara built for a new middle class who grew in numbers during the 1960s and early 70s. He shared with them a particular dream of modernity and ethnic harmony. The aesthetic that Gunasekara preferred was modernism, the architecture of a new material – concrete – with its attendant promise of efficient, systemic and labour-saving construction. All these factors would eventually contribute to Gunasekara's marginalisation.

The work of modernist architects post-independence needs to be contextualised within a wider landscape comprised of Asian modernists such as William Lim and the Malayan Architects Co-partnership in Singapore and Malaysia, Van Mollyvan in Cambodia, Leandro Locsin in the Philippines and Charles Correa in India. Their work demonstrated that by the 1960s and 70s, modernism had some of its most innovative sites outside Europe and America in tropical environments such as Brazil, India, Sri Lanka and in Japan. In fact, we can proudly claim that far from being an imitation of the West, Asia produced an equivalent and aesthetically daring modernism, which expressed her own postcolonial ambitions.

The most grandiose examples of modernism were used to define a secular nationalism more appropriate to ethnically diverse nation-states that were taking shape in former colonies. Chandigarh, the capital of Punjab, designed by Le Corbusier on

the invitation of Jawaharlal Nehru, is one such example. Its Brutalist aesthetic and utopian plan would subsequently be identified as a symptom of a failed aesthetic that had no relevance to its users. Such failures coloured the reception of modernism in general and even the most place-sensitive projects were dismissed as inappropriate. Modernism however had much more to offer than its secular aesthetic. It came with an interest in social agendas, in systematised construction and prefabricated materials that hoped to democratise the profession. It also introduced passive heating and cooling devices that initiated an interest in environmental issues.

Valentine Kumarasiri Gunasekara was born in Colombo, Ceylon, on 31 January 1931, to a close-knit Catholic family. His father passed away when he was two and a half years old and he was brought up by his mother and older siblings. He attended Royal College Colombo, captaining the cricket team in 1950. Eager to study architecture



Valentine Gunasekara

Gunasekara apprenticed at Edward Reid and Begg (ER& B) for Rs. 3,500, then 'a princely sum' from June 1950 to 1951 and worked under James Nilgiriya on details of building foundations, space-planning, etc., for colonial-style bungalows. His ultimate objective was to study at the Architectural Association in London.

There were many Ceylonese architects studying at the AA at that time. Minette de Silva had attended it from 1945 to 1947 as the first woman architect from Asia to study there. Roland Silva (former Director General of Archaeology) was in the same batch as Gunasekara, followed a year later by Geoffrey Bawa and Shelton Wijeyratne. Lala Adithiya, Nihal Amerasinghe, Christopher de Saram and Yvette Kahavita were several years his junior.

It was at the AA that Gunasekara first conceptualised his design philosophy under the Tropical Program in Architecture run by Maxwell Fry. Fry and Jane Drew would later build the Lionel Wendt Complex in Colombo. On his return from England, Gunasekara married Ranee Jayamanne and took up residence in Rajagiriya. In 1965 he designed a pavilion for Samuel and Sons in the Colombo Industrial Exhibition with Jayati Weerakoon, initiating a partnership of architect and

engineer, which lasted throughout his career.

During this time Gunasekara continued to work for ER&B as a partner with Geoffrey Bawa and James Nilgiriya. ER&B was located on Prince Street in Colombo Fort, and later at Alfred House Gardens. Both Bawa and Gunasekara initially practiced within the tenets of the Tropical Program in a modernism designed for the tropics. Their paths were to soon diverge.

In 1965 Gunasekara won a Rockefeller grant and spent the following year touring the US, meeting personally with such architects as Louis Kahn, Kevin Roche, Charles Eames, Richard Neutra, Paul Rudolph and Philip Johnson. In American modernism he sensed the spatial freedom that had broken out of the Victorian 'box.' He had greatly admired Eero Saarinen (by then deceased), his mastery of concrete and particularly his use of models to develop and refine his architectural concepts. Gunasekara spent six months working in Saarinen's office by then under Kevin Roche before returning to Ceylon in 1967. Among the key works built by this office were the TWA terminal at the JFK Airport in New York and the Jefferson Memorial Arch at St Louis.

From among the American modernists, Gunasekara was particularly inspired by Richard Neutra who had developed a style of California modernism in a climate that was closer to that of Sri Lanka. He was eager to create an equivalent but climatically and culturally appropriate Sri Lankan modernism following Neutra's landscape-centred tradition. In it he saw an effort to mould new technologies into an aesthetic that resonated with a specific geography, as a definitive break with a colonial past. For Gunasekara, the undulating softness of the tropical geography and interweaving of strong curvaceous forms and spaces in the ancient cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa would be parallel sources of inspiration.

Although Gunasekara returned to rejoin ER&B it soon became very clear that Bawa and he had radically different architectural ideologies. Bawa chose to revert to a tried and tested vernacular aesthetic while Gunasekara continued to experiment with concrete. He broke away in 1969 and left ER&B to set up office at Milagiriya Avenue. Emulating the work practice observed in Saarinen's office. Gunasekara began to design using models, an approach quite alien to Sri Lankans. Christopher de Saram joined Gunasekara on his return from the AA and was his partner on several projects from 1969 - 1974. De Saram later joined the University of Moratuwa. The engineer in this partnership, Jayati Weerakoon,



Tangalle Bay Hotel - Tangalle



Plywoods Corporation - Colombo



The Jesuit Chapel - Colombo

who had worked on several major infrastructure projects, recollects that without exception clients were under severe budgetary pressures, due to several factors. The socialist import-substitution policies of the government had led to rising costs of building due to the scarcity of imported materials from the West. He recalls that low-strength mild steel imported from India was used for reinforcement and the industry struggled against the poor quality of available materials. Yet Gunasekara's best known buildings do justice to his

technological daring. They are the Jesuit Chapel, Bambalapitiya, the Plywood Corporation, Bauddhaloka Mawatha and the Tangalle Bay Hotel, the latter a familiar icon on the route down south to Yala. These buildings used systemic construction methods and innovative engineering that were new to the architecture profession. They were executed by village contractors-Baas Unneheys(artisans).

Among Gunasekara's most cherished projects are two small chapel buildings in Horana and Tewatte in which he re-evaluated the act of congregation, the meaning of worship and the ideal of community. His architecture is also an effort at refusing the pomposity of colonial religious institutions and developing an alternative style of worship suited to modern life. These ideals are revisited in designs for private residences, where Gunasekara anticipates changes to a nuclear family, the role of the educated woman and the active life of children. Among them are the Illangakoon House in Rosmead Place, the Elapata House in Ratnapura, the Arsecularatne House in Kandy, the Obeysekere House in Trincomalee and the Wignaraja House in Horton Place. The central location of the kitchen and the playful interconnectivity of play spaces are typical of Gunasekara's designs, as is the roof terrace where his clients might enjoy sunset and moon rise. Fiercely critical of the idea of a value free architecture, Gunasekara's search is for a secular form that can communicate the values most important to the development of the human spirit, in his interpretation: faith, family, community and personal integrity. However, the lack of a recognisable ethno-cultural imprint invited much criticism.

Against the resurgence of the vernacular, Gunasekara's emphasis on the tectonic possibilities of new materials was lost in a tide of nostalgia that was welling up within the profession. For many architects the choice of the vernacular effectively disguised the negative effects of the tropical climate where humidity accelerated the decay of materials. It could also conceal the problems of poor workmanship in a profession that depended on poorly paid informal labourers. Moreover, the scale and additive nature of the vernacular favoured the artistic skill of the architect underplaying the role of the engineer. Gunasekara refused to abide by these choices, determined to contribute to the progress of the industry by experimenting with new materials.

There is yet another very personal journey that

underwrites this history, that of an architect without independent wealth or political connections, who struggled to realise his dreams in a forbidding economic context. His story parallels those of numerous Sri Lankan middle-class families who sought to maintain a reasonable lifestyle, educate their children and survive economically and culturally during a period of extreme political unrest. Short spells of work abroad (in Nigeria in the case of Gunasekara) numerous competition proposals and struggles over the small coterie of work available to practitioners were the lot of architects in the late 1960s and early 1970s. They were perhaps the most difficult years in the history of the profession.

In 1987 Gunasekara migrated to the USA, treading the path taken by many diasporic families who, without substantial properties or private wealth, and only their skills to rely on, felt they had no future in the country. They took with them the dream of modernity, the promise of vitality, and the secular values essential to appropriate economic growth.

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Summary from Anoma Pieris, Imagining Modernity: The Architecture of Valentine Gunasekara, co-published by Stamford Lake (Pvt) Ltd and The Social Scientists Association, Sri Lanka, 2007, and distributed by Lakehousebookshop.com

Gems from the past - the advert is from
Fergusons Directory of 1884

PAYMENT OF INTEREST

The late Mr. Felix R. Dias District Judge of Kandy who never accepted a plaint without reading it, had a plaint presented to him for acceptance. He noticed the following prayer:— Wherefore the plaintiff prays for judgment against the defendant for the said sum of Rs. . . . together with interest thereon at the rate of 12% per annum etc.

The following order was made:—

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Dutch Canals in Sri Lanka

by Vama Vamadevan



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merson Tenant in his book (Ceylon – 1859, Pg 431) touches on the inclusion of canal diggers among the artisans in the entourage of Bharatha, half-brother of Rama, when the former set out to search for him and Sita in South India, in the days of The Ramayana. The Tamils had a system of water control for irrigating rice fields and words such as anicut (Tamil: annai-katttu) came into English usage because of the age old tradition of building tanks, canals and dams in Tamilnadu. Canal building therefore was not unknown to Sri Lanka. That was ancient history or allegory depending on the readers' beliefs, but what of our own colonial history? I would like to look at the Dutch period on the subject of canal building in Ceylon.

The Dutch in Holland developed extensive inland waterways by connecting rivers with canals to help move produce and people and hence gain economic progress. Because the country is two to 15 feet below sea level, they (The Hollander), had experience of land reclamation by draining swamps through canals as in the Zuider Zee. They were the world's best in building canals and dykes and after arriving in Ceylon developed commerce by improving communications and building canals in the Dutch controlled Maritime Provinces.

Ceylon's rivers like the Mahaveli and Kelani Ganga are unsuited to navigation in their upper reaches which are beset with rapids and cascading flows but at the river mouths the waters spread and the ensuing sluggishness was exploited by the Dutch for canal building, linking lagoons and the lakes with river delta arms. Lagoons and lakes at Puttalam, Mundel, Chilaw, Negombo, Beira, Bolgoda and Koggala facilitated the practice. Canals, where time is not of the essence, provide the cheapest mode of transport.

The main trade item the Dutch wished to transport from the interior to the port was cinnamon and therefore they built canals south of Colombo

from Nedimala and Kalutara to Kotte. The system planned in 1740 was completed only around 1771 and runs East of Dehiwela by the western border of Kalubowila then via Kotte to Negombo. Branch extensions provided sea outlets at Dehiwela and Wellawatte, with road crossings and bridges over the canals. The system linked Kalutara to Negombo: the canal connecting Negombo to the Kelani Ganga at Mutwal being circuitous but navigable. It had the dual objective of draining the Muthurajawela swamp and the low lying areas of Kotte but increasing salinity of the swamp became a major problem.

Later, the British opened a second canal here at a projected cost of Sterling Pounds 7000 and employing 148,000 labourers. This stretch is called the Hamilton Canal. It was shorter than the Dutch canal to reach Negombo and it started for the second time in 1824. This was broader than the Dutch canal and could hold a higher volume of water.

It is necessary to dwell on the Muthurajawela swamp because it impacted on the construction of canals during the Portuguese, Dutch and even the British eras. Muthurajawela was once a rich rice producing area. The Portuguese linked a canal from Negombo lake to the Kelani river which resulted in salt water flowing into Muthurajawela and ruining the paddy fields. This was a mistake. The Dutch during their reign completed the canal though the salinity remained. It was Gavin Hamilton, Agent of Revenue and Commerce in the British administration who tried in 1802 to improve Muthurajawela swamp by building another canal to the east. He did not finish the scheme.

Hamilton's scheme was to link the Dutch canals by a series of parallel ones in order to make the swamp cultivable. Salinity still remained and some villagers even tried to make salt illegally, thus the Hamilton canal earned the epithet 'Hamilton's folly' and in Sinhala 'moda ela' meaning 'foolish canal'.

Governor North wanted to construct a canal from Negombo due north, so as to link the canal system from Kalutara all the way to Marawila. Finally, from the Deduru Oya a system was built taking advantage of the succession of lagoons linking them with the long and wide lake or gob which entered the sea north of Kalpitiya. The canal system made use of the chain of small stretches of rivers connecting them by short canals to reach Puttalam.

The Dutch canal system ended in the south in the vicinity of Point de Galle. There the Dutch used the canals to bring down superior quality timber from the forests in the interior. The timber was used in Ceylon for cabinet making and for export to Holland. The Maha Modera canal in the Galle district was also expected to relieve flooding in the neighbouring low-lying basin.

Thus, the network of canals was accomplished by connecting navigable parts of rivers to lagoons along the coast. The boats used on these canals were the flat-bottomed Pada boats and Brohier states they were introduced to Ceylon by the Dutch who called them '*Cattapanel*' or Pada boats. Because the canals at their shallowest were about five feet deep, the flat-bottomed Pada boats were ideally suited to navigate them. These boats are covered with thatched roofs in the form of huts and occupied by the Sinhalese owner and family. Later during British times it was common practice to have two couches at the back to accommodate Englishmen bent on sight seeing.

During British times canal rides were called 'Water Gipsying'. The Pada boats were converted into house-boats by raising the thatched roofs, matting the deck and lining the interior with white calico and dividing it into sections. Each had beds, chairs, tables with writing and sketching materials, hanging trays, pockets, bags, books, sun umbrella and butterfly nets. Visitors arrived at Mutwal river or Kelani Ganga and boarded the boathouse, they entered the canal and proceeded to Negombo, crossing the mouth of the Maha-oya and into the Gin-oya and onto the canal that linked the Gin-oya to Lily lake and to Lunu Oya. Connecting to a canal that led to the mouth of the Deduru Oya was an option.

Though it was the Dutch who started building canals, they only completed some of them. The British who followed them appreciated the uses of the canal system developed by the Dutch and within seven years of taking control of Colombo (i.e. 1802) they completed the Hamilton canal. Not only did they complete some of the canals left by the Dutch, they built more. Because the Dutch used timber on the sides instead of masonry, they did not last but the British effected improvements. During British times the navigable canal system increased from 120 miles to 170.

The early development of the South West coastal strips of Ceylon as population centres was in no small measure due to the Dutch canals.

Name of Canal	Length in Miles
Toppu to Andiapone Lake	42
Boat canal Jaffna Lake	40.2
Andiapone Lake to Puttalam	18
Colombo to Bolgoda	16
Colombo to Pamunugama	9
Old Hendala Canal	7.2
Bolgoda to Galpotta	7
Negombo to Kammal	5
Ja-Ela Canal	3
Canal to Nachchikali salt pan	2
Talpitiya Flood outlet	1.82
Kirilapone Canal	1.25

They provided water communication facilities, cheap transport for goods, bulk haulage for agricultural produce and water transport for floating down timber.

It was the main artery for transport of produce from the interior to the ports. This coastal strip had Dutch Forts in Kalutara, Colombo and Negombo to provide security for canal traffic and these played a vital role in the defence structure.

Around 1880 canal traffic was quite heavy. In Kalutara district on the riverbanks at Morogama and Balabatota coffee was unloaded at low tide and reloaded. For security reasons at the entrance to the canals at Delgoda a sergeant and three constables were on duty. The boats on the canals were numbered and the name of the *kachcheri* they were registered at was displayed on either side of the boats. The Police kept a record of boats passing checkpoints.

The importance of canals as a means of communications can be gauged by the fact that early missionaries travelling from Colombo to Jaffna used them to take up postings. They had to disembark from the steamers at the port of Colombo and take Pada boats on the canals from Colombo up to Kalpitiya and then travel by sea via Mannar to Jaffna. This scenario is well described by Sir William Twynam where he describes travel from Colombo to Jaffna to his post in the *kachcheri*.

"...in December 1845 I started from Colombo for Puttalam, my first station was near the 'bridge-of-boats'. I went down the canal to Negombo and

Chilaw in a Pada boat. From Chilaw I went to Puttalam in a Double-canoe. The journey from Colombo to Chilaw occupied five days and from Chilaw to Puttalam 36 hours (ie: 1 ½ days.)”

From Puttalam the rest of the journey to Jaffna was by sea.

In 1949, a rough survey made of canal traffic showed about 600 Pada boats transported about 9000 tons of goods and employed 4000 people. The biggest problem was the silting. When the canals silted, the Pada boats were laboriously poled and towed, thus the canal banks had towpaths in the shallow stretches. These towpaths were used not only at times of silt build up but also at low tide and when boats were weighed down by heavy loads.

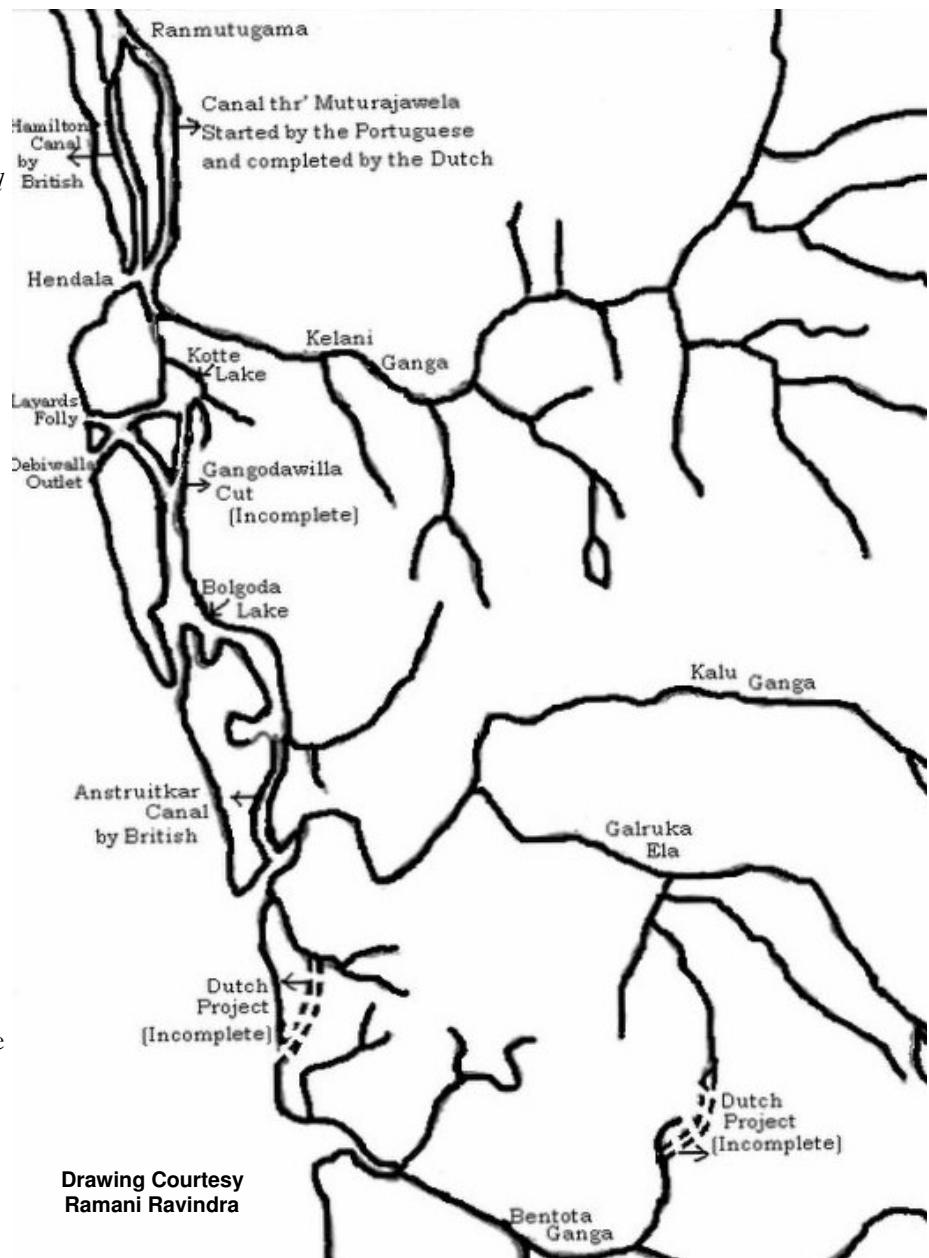
The Dutch attempted canal building even in remote Jaffna. Some of the disused lanes that constantly flood during the northeast monsoon rains are attempted canals abandoned by the Dutch. The low lagoon that bifurcates the peninsula was used for canal transport. In Matara, another Dutch stronghold, they attempted the Nupa and Talagahagoda canals to counter the problem of floods.

The Dutch legacy was an integrated network of canals with Colombo as the centre linking the natural waters of the Kalu Ganga, Bolgoda Lake, Beira Lake, and Kelani Ganga linking it to Negombo through Dandugam Oya. As Codrington puts it,

“....the principal monuments that stand out of the Dutch rule for nearly 150 years are the Roman-Dutch Law, the Forts and the numerous canals intersecting the country between Negombo and Kalutara”

When the canals fell into disuse they became a health hazard, a breeding ground for mosquitoes, and spread malaria and still worse elephantiasis (filaria). Salvinia (*salvinia molesta*), introduced from Africa during World War II as a camouflage, heightened problems, to overcome which the government has spent significant amount of money.

The Sri Lanka Reclamation & Development Corporation (SLRDC) is working on projects to restore some of the Dutch canals. Some are being widened and the towpaths cleared and made wider. The growth of



tourism has given impetus to hotels to develop parts of the canals in the vicinity of the hotels for water sports. The efforts of the SLRDC and the interests of the tourist industry might lead to the restoration of the canals sooner than later.

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Peradeniya University

Its History and Vintage years

by Srikantha Nadarajah



Peradeniya University was originally part of the University of Ceylon, which is the oldest and largest university in Sri Lanka and indubitably one of the most beautiful universities in the world. Establishment of Peradeniya University was the outcome of growth of English education in colonial times from late nineteenth century, and increasing demand for higher education, resulting in formation of University College in 1921; which was approved by University of London to prepare students for Arts and Science degrees. Until 1938, the University College is reported to have produced the highest number of graduates from London University outside the United Kingdom. The colonial government started the process of locating a site for the university from about 1926 and after much deliberation identified a salubrious site in Peradeniya in a beautiful valley between the banks of the Mahaweli Ganga and the Hantane mountain range.

The prime mover in establishment of Peradeniya University was Sir Ivor Jennings, an authority on Constitutional Law, who was appointed Principal of University College in 1941 and first Vice Chancellor, University of Ceylon in 1942. The latter was established 1 July 1942 with amalgamation of Ceylon University College and Medical College.

Peradeniya University was designed on the model of Cambridge University in England and buildings were constructed on the lines of ancient Kandyan architecture, under supervision of Sir Patrick Abercrombie and Clifford Holliday. Shirley De Alwis, the chief architect did the planning and layout. Transfer of students to Peradeniya from Colombo commenced in 1949 and was completed by October 1952, which marked the formal establishment of the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya. It was formally opened by the Queen & Duke of Edinburgh in 1954.

In order to meet the increasing demands for higher education the intake was progressively increased despite limited availability of residential facilities. Rapid expansion of students and staff at Peradeniya was due to increased demand for higher education generated by in-



roduction of free education from about 1945 as well as introduction of Sinhala and Tamil streams in the early sixties. Student population increased from 2210 in 1951 to over 10,500 in 2002 which included 8100 undergraduates and 2420 graduate students.

Vintage years

While there were outstanding scholars and professionals in the early part of the twentieth century, it would be fair to say that the '40s and '50s were arguably the high watermark of English education in Ceylon. The level of English education at the time was considered by many Sri Lankans to be the highest in the British Commonwealth. It was my privilege to be part of the undergraduate community in Peradeniya from the late '50s.



The Arts Faculty

The late '50s and early '60s was a period of outstanding personalities both in the teaching staff as well as students of the Campus, some of whom are still in the forefront of the country's affairs. There were outstanding lecturers and students in most departments but with decline in English education and advent of higher studies in Sinhala and Tamil, some of them found greener pastures overseas, including Australia.

Most notable among the lecturers of that period were Drs. Sirima Kiribamune, Lakshman Perera and Kingsley De Silva - Ceylon History, Dr Arasaratnam - European History, Prof. Paranavitana - Archaeology, Dr H A De S Gunasekera - Economics, Drs van den Driesen and Rajaratnam - Economic History, Prof. E.F.C Ludowyke, Prof. Hector Passé, Dr Ashley Halpe and Dr Doric De Souza - English, Dr George Thambiahpillai - Climatology, Dr Vitharne - Geology, Prof. Ediriweera Sarachchandra and Dr Siri Gunasinghe - Sinhalese, Prof. Kanapathipillai and Dr Vithyanandan - Tamil, Prof. W S Karunaratne - Pali and Buddhist Civilization, Prof. S J Thambiah and Dr Gananath Obeysekera - Sociology, Dr K N Jayatillake - Philosophy. Prof. Nadaraja, head of the Law faculty and a world authority on Roman Dutch Law, Drs Rajah Gunesekera and Ranjith Amerasinghe were the leading lecturers in law. Overall, teaching in the univer-

sity at the time was at a very high standard, probably the best in South Asia and could be compared favourably with major universities in US, London University, Oxford and Cambridge in UK. In fact papers in the final examinations were referred to London University for moderation.

Among the outstanding students and high achievers of my time were Dr Michael Roberts (Assoc. Prof. Anthropology, University of Adelaide) who obtained a first class in History and was also an outstanding sportsman, securing colours in five sports, which was a rare achievement for which he received the Rhodes scholarship. Prof .Yasmine Gooneratne (Prof. English Literature – Macquarie University Sydney) obtained a first class in English, both Dunstan Forbes and Paskaralingam secured first class in General Degrees in earlier years, which were rare achievements. Tissa Fernando and Gamini Fernando obtained first class in Sociology and Economics, Kithsiri Malalgoda obtained first class in Sociology in '64, J B Dissanayake (Prof. of Sinhala University of Peradeniya) got a first class in Sinhalese and Gerald Peiris obtained a first class in Geography in '61. In the Law Faculty, Wickrema Weerasooria,(Assoc. Prof. at Monash University Canberra) Mark Cooray and Savithri Gunasekera (nee Ellapola) obtained first class in '61, and Mark Fernando (Judge of the Supreme Court, Sri Lanka) obtained a first class in '62 with a record average mark.

Among other high achievers of those years that come to mind are, S R De Silva, an authority on industrial law in Sri Lanka. D B Nihalsinghe in the Sinhala film industry and TV broadcasting in Malaysia. Jayantha Dhanapala a diplomat at the United Nations. Prof. Kailasapathy the first Vice Chancellor, University of Jaffna. There were several others, too numerous to mention, who obtained doctorates and played important roles in public and private sectors and in academia.

In addition to a high standard of English education, Peradeniya was also the focal point in revival of Sinhala culture, with formation of the Sinhala Gurukula group spearheaded by Prof. Sarachchandra, Dr Sri Gunasinghe and Prof. W.S Karunaratne. There were also outstanding dramatists like Namel Weeramuni who started the Apey Kattiya group and Simon Nawagathegama in the Sinhala theatre. It is interesting to note that the zenith of Sinhala culture was realised before the advent of higher education in the Sinhala medium. High standard of English at the time was also reflected in the English theatre with out-

standing dramatists like Ernest MacIntyre, Shelagh Goonewardene and Dunstan Taylor. It was also time for fusion of English and Sinhala culture with Dr Sarachchandra benefiting from advice of Prof. Ludowyke in introduction of stylized drama in Sinhala theatre.

Notable sportsmen of that time included D T M Senerath, for long distance running including the cross country run, Neville Puvimanasinghe who held the track record for hundred meters for several years, Lal De Alwis - swimming and athletics, Trevor Rosemale-Cocque - swimming, Rex Olegasgarem - tennis and athletics, late Anton Rambukpotta - soccer and cricket, Dingo Dharmapala - athletics and badminton, Sivalingam - badminton, Malsiri Kurukulasuriya - cricket and athletics, D H De Silva and Merril Guneratne - cricket, Alfie David rugby, Anton Alfred - table tennis, Daham Wimalasena, Lalith Weeratunge , John Koch and Ranjan Almeida -tennis. Among women were Rosemary Moonamale & Nilmini de Alwis in athletics, Shanthi De Silva in basketball and tennis.

The great benefit derived from living in Peradeniya Campus as a residential university, was the opportunity to interact with people from various parts of the country from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds. We all had the advantage of being able to speak in English as a common language, although many were more conversant in Sinhala or Tamil. Majority of students were from provincial schools, and some of them performed very well in studies and sports. It gave those of us who came from urban backgrounds like Colombo and Kandy, an insight into the society in other parts of the country.

Another experience and opportunity in the Campus was the prospect of mingling with the opposite sex, which was also encouraged by the teaching



staff. However, a large majority of students did not make use of this opportunity, which also reflected the society at large where there was a tendency for segregation of sexes. There were several romances, but most of them did not last the period of three to four years of undergraduate studies.

In terms of entertainment, there were regular films shown at the Arts Theatre on a weekly basis which were of good quality and outside the commercial network, such as the Satyajit Ray Trilogy and numerous documentaries. The English Dramatic Society presented several short plays. Sinhala theatre came of age with introduction of stylized dramas such as *Maname* and *Singhabahu* by Dr Sarachchandra. There were also classical music concerts given by visiting artistes from time to time. There were also several social and cultural associations, but the level of interest shown was not impressive. Despite all such facilities and opportunities, apathy and boredom among the student population was quite palpable. This was perhaps due to an artificial atmosphere and lack of contact with the outside world on a regular basis.

Politics was another popular pastime with several politicians visiting the Campus from time to time to give talks at the Arts Theatre. Frequent speakers were Dr Colvin R De Silva, Mr Tissa Wijeyratne, Dr N M Perera and Mr Dudley Senanayake. We were living in turbulent times in Sri Lankan politics, which saw a transformation of society from a neo colonial one to the onset of Sinhala nationalism and Marxist socialism. The university campus was a fertile breeding ground for such sentiments, which were articulated by visiting politicians and those contesting Hall and Union Council elections. It also resulted in some degree of polarisation of students into two camps of Left and Right of the political divide. At that time there was very little friction between Sinhala and Tamil students, especially as a common language, English, was a unifying factor.

There is a point of view that the first generation of Peradeniya graduates could have contributed more towards social cohesion in the country and averted the polarisation in society between the north and south brought about by the ethnic problem. However, despite the benefits of good English education, as the breeding ground for radical politicians, Peradeniya contributed more towards accelerating such divisions in society than helping to solve problems that have remained unresolved for several decades.

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BOOK REVIEW



The Seeing Eye – short stories.
Ransiri Menike Silva. Kandy Books 2005

Ransiri Menike Silva's anthology of short stories is an interesting and well compiled addition to the bounty of recent publications in creative writing authored by Sri Lankan writers. One reviewer of the book describes her stories as "perceptive and piquant" and which "touch the heart and the funnybone". Her simplicity of style and facile expression places the reader in a sort of comfort zone which instantly helps strike rapport with the author. Although she employs diverse strategies of narration in her stories, the first person narration she employs in stories such as the "The Barber Shop" "Change of Heart" and a "Relative of Sorts" strikes an intimate base which draws the reader's mind close to the author's intent in the story. Ransiri impresses one as an astute observer of the life around her with a remarkable capacity to delve into the thought processes of the characters she created. The various scenarios compiled with sincerity but with uncomplicated storylines and spiced with much fidelity to detail, tend to give the reader a feeling that much of the content is more autobiographical than creative. Whether such is the case would perhaps be a matter privy only to the author. If on the other hand the ideas, the emotions, and the underlying philosophy behind each story was the product of a creative mind, then all credit to the author for her very descriptive and perceptive writing.

Many of the stories seem to be set against a backdrop of society in mid twentieth century Ceylon, and captures with vivid detail the social institutions, the folkways and the mores of the period. This anthology, the author's first publication compiled as a housewife and mother of three teenagers is a fascinating compilation and portends well for short story enthusiasts as well as others new to the genre. It should also be a pleasant attraction to nostalgia buffs who like to be transported to times past in Sri Lanka. A good read all round.

Hugh Karunanayake

Book Review cont on p 49

SYNOPSIS OF MEETINGS

Colombo Chapter – 25th August 2007

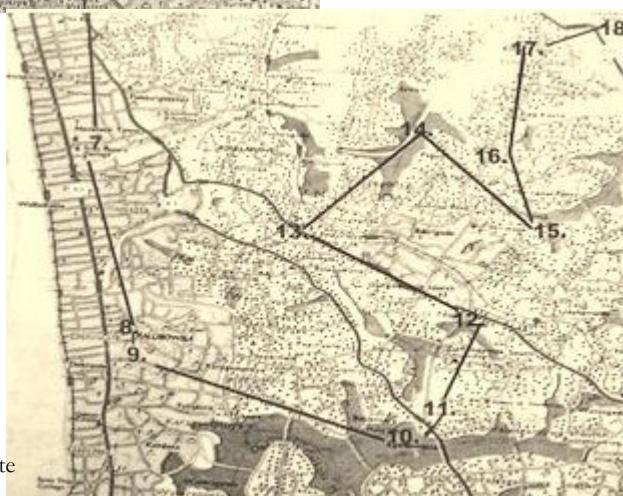
The President introduced the speakers for the day, **Fred Medis** and **Anandalal Nanayakkara** as those belonging to the great tradition of polymaths who had graced the country's antiquarian scene since the 19th Century.

Fred Medis, a leading member of innumerable societies. His major interests are History, Numismatics, Comparative Religion, Art, Philately and Toponymy..

Anandalal Nanayakkara, is an Attorney-at-Law who had been awarded a Hubert H.Humphrey Fellowship at the University of Washington, Seattle, USA. His non-professional interests are Herpetology and Ancient Arms and Armour.



1. Harbour
2. Maradana—Suduwellia
3. Demetagoda
4. Ibbanwela
5. Mapane (Galle Face)
6. Kollupitiya
7. Milagiriya
8. Devol-Wela (Dehiwala)
9. Karagmpitiya
10. Bellanwila
11. Pepiliyana
12. Gangodavila
13. Nugegoda
14. Pagoda
15. Mirihana
16. Pita Kotte
17. Etul Kotte
18. Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte



Mr. Fred Medis: “Parangiya Kotte giya para”

The speaker traced the route along which the King's party conducted the Portuguese in 1505. Legend has it that the route was circuitous and chosen purely to confuse the visitors. However, he suggested that, while this failed as a subterfuge, the route was, in fact, largely dictated by the terrain and topography at the time and the desire to prevent the visitors getting a clear view of the terrain. He painted a vivid picture of a Colombo which was surrounded by “a vast swamp interspersed with rank jungle....a horrid mess of stagnant slimy water”. The route followed the higher lands – Maradana, Dematogoda, Ibbanwela – eastwards, and back again westwards to follow the shoreline from Slave Island and Kollupitiya to Dehiwela and thence inland, via Karagampitiya, Pepiliyana, Gam Sabha Handiya, Pepili-

yana and Maharagama.

At no point were the visitors given a glimpse Kotte and its environs, although they would certainly have heard the sea on this leg of the route. After these detours the party reached Nuwegoda, - “a howling wilderness in which elephants were ‘caught’”(Valentijn) - and thence through Pagoda to Pita Kotte, Etul Kotte and Kotte itself, “where the

King graces the Lion-throne like Vishnu himself’. He traced the route, from point to point, on a Survey Dept. map as the story unfolded. The Portuguese had, however, mapped their own strategy by insisting on camping at sundown (when they could get their bearings from the stars) and firing ships' cannon at fixed intervals (for getting a directional fix on their ships) and thus had a fair idea of their meanderings. The speaker made many fascinating forays into subjects such as : why the Portuguese were called ‘Parangis’; the meanings of several place names; evidence of an elephant corridor from Colombo inland; the politics within the Kotte kingdom; the location of military check-points; the seasonal flooding of the lands around Borella; the routes taken by the ‘paruwās’; etc. He concluded with a plea for more information to complete this fascinating study.

Mr. Anandalal Nanayakkara:

“The Kastane sword of Sri Lanka”

The speaker drew from scarce sources on the development of this sword which, in typical form, is one having a single edged, slightly curved blade, for one-handed use; with a lion head *pommel* with *quillons* and knuckle guard, ending in *Makara* or *Serapendiya* heads. As elsewhere, the earliest blade forms here were ‘leaf



Kastane Sword

shaped’. By the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa periods, they were straight bladed and heavy; more suited for heavy blows than for dexterity and sword play, affording limited parrying capability. Defense was by shield or nimble body movements. At Vijithapura, Dighajantu leaped into the air with his sword intending to cleave in two Suranimila together with his shield. (ref Mahavamsa). Heavy swords (*calachurro*) continued in use during the Portuguese period and after.

The equestrian cultures of the Middle Eastern region developed the light, curved single – edged sword for single handed slashing from horseback. This sword, the *Turko-Mongol Saber*, influenced the development of many forms including the Indian *Talwar* (*Tulwar*), the Persian *Shamshir* and the European *Saber*. It appears that this influence spread to Sri Lanka, influencing the development of the *Kastane* sword in which the primary influence is the Persian *Shamshir*, while the hilt shows some influence from the Indian *Talwar*. The straight bladed sword with a *Kastane* Hilt in the Sendai Musuem, Japan and the portrait of Col. Alexander Popham on horseback with a *Kastane* sword (presently hanging in the War Gallery of the Royal Armouries Museum, Leeds) indicates that, by the early 17th century, the *Kastane* had travelled far afield.

Sinhala narrative war poems (*Hatan kari*) indicate that the *Kastane* was an actual battle weapon. However, with the changing nature of warfare – particularly with the advent of firearms – the sword lost its importance in battle, but it continued well into the 19th Century as a personal side arm. In later times its ceremonial function overshadowed and finally ex-

cluded its military use. Consequently, the blade became qualitatively inferior while the hilt became increasingly ornate. Thus the late 19th century and 20th century *Kastane* are bereft of battle capability, with badly cast blades loosely fitted to an ornate hilt with silver and gold filigree work highlighted by precious stones. Thus the traditional sword smith’s skill almost disappeared, and the jewellery maker usurped his place in the manufacture of *Kastane* swords.

Daya Wickramatunga

Melbourne 15 July 2007

The Chairman, Dr. Srilal Fernando introduced the speaker Mr. Mannie Candappa, an eminent journalist, editor, and author who presented “*A Life In The Round*” by Mr. Hilary Abeyratne (Former Vice Principal of Trinity College , Kandy). The book is a compilation which tells the inspiring story of Dr. Kamalika Abeyratne, a most remarkable woman.

Mr. Candappa started by saying that every once in a very long while, there appears on our sad planet a person whose life so brightens our existence that its shining example transcends many lifetimes, and the late Desamanya Dr. Kamalika Abeyratne epitomized that. Hers was a complex character deeply endowed with humanity and an indomitable spirit which enabled her to be emotionally involved in suffering, but clinically detached for diagnosis and treatment. Indeed, her mind could rise to explore more effective treatments. As a practicing paediatrician she volunteered to work in malarial areas.

The many battles in her life she faced courageously, taking joy and sorrow in her stride, typifying “By Love Serve”. She was at home with wealth and power, truly able to “walk with kings yet keep the common touch”.

Born in June 1934 to a wealthy family descended from royalty, and third out of four children, Kamalika’s early school years were erratic but finally led to a brilliant career.

In November 1995 she was gravely injured during a car accident and admitted to hospital where she was given blood transfusions, one of which was contaminated with HIV. On 11th June 2004, she passed away, grossly humiliated by the nature of her infection though fortified by strong Buddhist beliefs. During her final tribulations, her attempts to eradicate the stigma of HIV/AIDS and obtain free treatment for all thus afflicted , were crowned with success. Posthumously, Kamalika was honoured with the highest tribute of “Desamanya”.

Paediatric Surgeon, Dr Michael Abeyratne and Kamalika were by all accounts a perfect match although she was a diminutive lass while he a rough rugger player. His devotion to Kamalika during her illness is the most moving aspect of this book.

Her treatment necessitated enormous financial outlays and Michael faced much uninformed criticism. Despite this, his life was dappled with happiness and their children continue to bring honour to the parents. Mr. Hilary Abeyratne approached this tribute to Kamalika with erudition .

Hilary, brother of Michael was domiciled in Australia and had limited contact with the family in Sri Lanka. The book pieces together elaborate strands of a many faceted life. Mr. Candappa summed up with his gratitude to Hilary Abeyratne for writing the book.

Kamalika was inclined to express herself in poetry in moments of deep emotion, as when her daughter, Aruni died.

*The loss of a much loved child is deep sorrow
The grief sodden hours are grey with loss
Knowing that she will never return
Remembering the happy hours
The promise unfulfilled and lost."*

A poem about Aruni was recited by Mrs. Shelagh Goonewardene. Mr. Errol Fernando, a former student of Hilary, together with Nadine (Mr. Abeyratne's grand-daughter) presented Hilary's script on the launch of his book in Sri Lanka. Photos of the launch were displayed. Mr. Abeyratne conveyed his thanks to Srilal, Shelagh, Mannie and the audience. Copies of "A Life In The Round" were available for purchase. A vibrant question and answer session preceded the raffle, drawn by Nadine and won by Mrs. Malini Wimalaratne.

Dilhani Kumbukkage

Facts of Life...

Parents move a ten year old boy to a Catholic School known for its results in maths. He was there only a week when he returned A + grade from having a consistent D – in the old school. Parents were surprised at the turn of events and asked him how he improved so fast. His explanation was very simple.

Said he “ these guys are serious about math. I went to the Chapel the second day and there is this guy nailed to a PLUS sign!!”

Rosalind and her kind Servants in Burgher households

by Paul van Reyk



I

In 2006 I was preparing a paper for a conference based on the handwritten cookbook of my grandmother, Ada de la Harpe. Looking through the recipes in Ada's book, I realised that missing from it were recipes for most of what I actually ate during an ordinary day in Sri Lanka. Where were the recipes for the pol sambols, mallungs, fish curries, vegetable curries, stringhoppers, pittu and the hundred other dishes that I consumed with such pleasure so regularly? What I had ignored, was the truth of the production of food for the Burgher table.

The truth about cooking in Burgher households is that it was, and still is, the servants who mainly shopped, cooked and served our meals. Where would my school curry lunches have been without Rosalind to cook them and Appuhamy to bring them to me, riding his bicycle with Tiffin containers on the luggage rack? Yet in so many memoirs and fictions I have read by Burghers or middle class Sinhalese, the servants in the households are only glimpsed in passing, seldom the cen-



Typical “lunch boys” with Tiffin carriers hanging off their luggage rack

tre of the story; useful for an anecdote, a bit of ‘colour’ or humour, often at their expense. Given that most of the servants themselves were not highly literate, it’s not surprising that I have yet to see anything written by servants themselves.

Halfway through writing my paper I abandoned my grandmother’s story and began to write what I could of the servants’ stories. To do this I spoke with my parents, aunts and uncles, and Anne-Marie Kellar, a Burgher living in Sri Lanka.

In my families' households cooks were as likely to be men as women; Rosalind and Appuhamy are the two cooks I remember. My uncle Anton had at different times, a Tamil woman, and a Sinhalese man, Nonis; Anne-Marie Kellar remembers her grandmother's cook Jane (a Sinhalese woman) and also a Tamil man.

They came in all ages. Rosalind was in her mid-thirties when she became my ayah. Nonis was about 16 years old when he began working for Anton, and the ayah Anton employed to look after his first child was 60, a Tamil woman who came looking for work she could not find in her village. Anne-Marie Kellar describes cooks in her families' households as being 'very young'. Some-



The author's brother Chris, in ayah's arms, aunt and neighbour on either side

times they could be very young indeed.

I recall one man; he had a little girl (about 9-10 years old). He was told by a family up the street that we had a new baby and could possibly use the girl. The girl was neatly dressed and was carrying a bundle of clothes. We employed her. Premawathie slept on a mat in the children's room. It was usual to protect young female servants from prowling males! ...*Anton van Reyk*

They came into Colombo looking for work from villages either at the borders of the city or in remoter rural areas. My mother doesn't recall any of our servants making regular visits back to whatever their families were in their home villages; at the most, they returned there for short stays during the Sinhala New Year. Often, they stayed in service most of their lives. They moved between households when circumstances changed for the Burgher family. When we left Sri Lanka, Rosalind was employed by my uncle for a short time. When Anton migrated, Nonis went to Anton's brother, and Gundadasa, his brother, to Anton's his sister-in-law. They moved between generations of the one family.

'My grandmother's cook, Jane, came to work for us when my dad got married to my mum. She was already trained by nanna, and knew exactly what daddy liked to eat!! Nanna made sure of that!'... *Anne-Marie Kellar*

'One of our ayahs had a daughter who worked with her for us. The daughter was quite good looking & learnt English while with us. She left to be a nanny with some well-to-do- family & married a Sinhalese gentleman'

Marie van Reyk

Anton recalls that Premawathie returned to her village when she was 'grown up'. (puberty) That seemed to be the usual trend of events especially if they were very young girls. She went back to her village and we never saw her again. My cousin Patsy Alvis recalled that 'Women usually left in their mid twenties to marry having worked for ten years or so & accumulated a small sum of money. And then if the marriage didn't work out they went back to the relative security of a roof, meals & a monthly wage.'

Method of recruitment of servants varied. They may have come door-knocking independently, or been brought as Premawathie was. More often, though, they were recommended by someone else in the family, were 'handed down' through the family, recommended by other Burghers, or on some rare occasions by the other servants. My aunt Marie said 'They were the answer to a Housewife's Prayer. When a young lady was to be married, her mother and mother-in-law looked out for a cook woman for her. Some were recommended by family and friends.'

Whatever the recruitment process there was a fairly standard interview conducted by the Burgher householder.

"The cook was selected after an interview during which they had to give an account of what they could cook, especially for the dinner menu and they would rattle of a litany of all their accomplishments, e.g. beef steak, stew, pot roast, roll cutlets (or rissoles as they are commonly known here), chops etc.'.. *Odille Balthazar*

My father remembers the potential cook as having to state they could cook "istu, istek, and cutliss" (stew, steak and cutlets). Where did they learn their cooking? The Sinhala and Tamil recipes they generally brought with them from their homes. Cooking the "istu, istek, cutliss" and other European dishes were learned either from the Burgher householder or from other cooks in Burgher households.

Practice varied between families, but it was generally true that the cooks would take the entire responsibility for breakfasts and lunches, while dinner – the nominally European style meal - would be either prepared by the Burgher householder or by the cook under her supervision, and the Burgher householder would reserve cooking specialties for herself, with the Christmas Cake and the Breudher being the most sacrosanct in this regard.

Of course, the revered Christmas cake and Breudher were never made by anyone else! My maternal grandma did much more cooking than my paternal nanna. Granny had her specials. Jewel like marzipans which were laid out to "bake" in the sun, and looked too good to eat! Then she made her famous trotter stew-- heavenly! Then there were her Turkish Delight, Marshmallows, Chocolate Fudge, etc.

The cooks, along with the other servants, had accommodation and meals as part of their package, may have had their bedding provided (camp cots or mats usually) and had their medical expenses met. Some received gifts of clothing on birthdays or Christmas. They were paid varying amounts. When Nonis started work for Anton at 16 years old, he was paid Rs 40 a month. My mother thinks she paid Rosalind Rs 30 a month. Both of them said this really just 'spending money' as most of their material needs were met.

"Salaries of course varied with the times, but were usually not very much. These people were so very poor and had next to nothing in their villages, so it was a privilege to work in our homes and live comfortable lives. They were paid monthly, and were given holidays usually for the Sinhala New Year, when they went

home having spent a lot of their earnings on new coloured cotton fabrics for the women's "cloths" and jackets and also on men's sarongs. They would return from their villages with a box full of Sinhala sweetmeats!"

Anne Marie Kellar

Most of the servants were not literate in English, though many were literate in their own language. Rosalind would write up the daily accounts of her spending in Sinhala and read them in Sinhala to my mother. In the room she shared with Appuhamy there were always Sinhala newspapers and magazines. Nonis was taught to read and write in English by Anton, but that appears to have been rare.

But let me not paint too rosy a picture of the relationships between householder and servant. Anton said 'Some servants were illiterate, and treated more like slaves'. Patsy Alvis was equally forthright 'Did you really believe in a democratic society in SL that treated servants in any other way than vassals? That is extreme I know but to this day that is how a servant is considered in some homes out of the towns & cities. In some Burgher homes they were generally treated reasonably well & ate what was cooked for the family but I know of others who had a pot of inferior rice for the servants & the dogs!'

But where the relationships were strong and supportive, when it came to partings, both sides experienced a sense of loss. Rosalind's story has an unhappy ending. When my granny died, Rosalind had a nervous breakdown, so strong was her love for granny. She went back to her village to rest and recover. My brother Chris says that there she had a 'devil dance'

(exorcism) done over her. She returned to us and worked for us until we migrated at the end of 1962. One of my last memories of that day is of Rosalind throwing herself at my mother's feet crying distressingly and asking to be taken with us. Even had we wanted to do that, it would have been impossible under the White Australia Policy which existed at the time. Mum can't remember what happened to Rosalind after this. My maiden aunts and my paternal grandmother moved into our house and brought their own servants with them. Mum thinks Rosalind worked for my uncle across the street for a while. Chris says he recalls that she moved through two or three positions and then returned to her village.

ΩΩΩΩΩΩΩ

Medieval Hindu Temples and Bronze Sculptures of Polonnaruwa



by Thiru Arumugam

T

he Chola dynasty held sway continuously in South India from the 9th to the 13th centuries reaching its zenith in the reigns of Rajaraja I (985AD to 1016AD) and his son Rajendra I (1012AD to 1044AD), who expanded their empire to stretch from Kanyakumari, the southern-most tip of India, up to the Deccan Plateau.

The Cholas were great temple builders and built Hindu temples to exhibit their domination, as well as serve their religious needs. The Cholas built the 66 metre high majestic *Brihadeeswarar* (Great Lord Sivan) temple in Thanjavur and the *Gangaikonda Choleswarar* (Chola Ganges Conqueror's Sivan) temple was built by them in the 11th century. These temples were the tallest buildings in India for several centuries.

During the Chola occupation of Polonnaruwa in the 11th century AD, they constructed several small Hindu temples. In the 19th century, British archaeologists re-discovered and excavated the ruins of 16 Hindu temples in Polonnaruwa, which include Siva, Vishnu, Ganesha and Kali temples, either in isolation or in groups of two or three. The Temples, built of stone or brick or a mixture of the two materials were in the Chola style of temple architecture of the 11th and 12th centuries, but some are in 13th century Pandyan style. This would indicate that some of these Hindu temples were built under the patronage of Sinhala royalty after the departure of the Cholas.

In most of the temples the brickwork has collapsed, leaving only the stone structures such as pillars, pavements and doorways. The seven temples of Siva are the largest temples. Siva Devale No. 2 is in a remarkable

state of preservation. Describing this temple, the first Sri Lankan Archaeological Commissioner, S. Paranavita, has stated that: "It is still preserved, and is the best example of Dravidian architecture to be seen anywhere in the Island." (*Sinhalayo*, Colombo, 1970, p.47).

Siva Devale No. 2 is constructed of granite and limestone. The sanctum and the antechamber have survived intact, while the rest has collapsed and their remains have totally disappeared. The outer walls of the *garbagraha* (main sanctum) are about 6 metres square. The *vimanam* (sanctum turret) rises to a *sthoopi* (octagonal dome) over 9 metres high. The *lingam* (symbol of Siva) and its pedestal were assembled in the sanctum. The *avudaiyar* (base) of the *lingam* is 70 cm square and the *rudra pakam* (vertical shaft) rises about 45 cm. (Full details are in Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, Annual Report (ASCAR) 1906 pp 18-20).

There are five inscriptions on the walls of the temple. One of these is partially legible and confirms that the temple was established during the reign of Rajendra I (1012-1044) and was named after his mother as *Vanavan Maderi Iyaram* (Great Queen Vanavan's Sivan temple). Another inscription in Grantha Tamil characters is almost legible. It describes how the temple officials and those that perform the sacred worship after them in this place

"having agreed to burn a perpetual lamp (*tirumanta vilakku*) till the sun and the moon endure, received five kasu and one lamp stand".



11th century Siva Devale No.2, Polonnaruwa

In 1950, a group of local Hindu residents sought an interview with the Hon. Minister D. S. Senanayake and the Archaeological Commissioner and obtained permission to re-use this temple as a place of worship. The temple was re-consecrated and pujas were performed regularly for a few years, and this must surely make this nearly 1000 year old temple the oldest existing Hindu temple in Sri Lanka. The Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, Annual Report of 1910-11 (page 40) states that "...this Saivite shrine, thus saved from further dilapidation, is the sole example existing in the Island of a medieval temple of the Hindu cult, virtually complete." The existing temples in much older sites such as Muneeswaram, Thiruketheeswaram, Koneswaram etc. are of more recent construction, the original temples there having been destroyed by the Portuguese in the 16th and 17th centu-

ries. In the Jaffna District alone the Portuguese destroyed over 500 temples, but the temples of Polonnaruva were not affected because the Portuguese were mainly in the maritime areas.

The art of bronze sculpture in South India reached its zenith during medieval Chola rule. Several bronze images were excavated at the Hindu temples of Polonnaruva. These bronzes are up to the standards of any Chola bronzes found in India and include finds by Archaeological Commissioner H. C. P. Bell of more than twenty bronzes, mainly in 1907, at the Siva Devale Nos. 1, 4 and 5, Archaeological Commissioner C. E. Godakumbare's finds at the Siva Devale No. 5 in 1960 and the finds in 1975 at Vishnu Devale No. 4. Six bronzes were also unearthed at a Kali Kovil during the Cultural Triangle excavations. The bronzes include the Hindu gods Siva in his various manifestations but mainly as Nataraja; Parvati, Uma, Ganesa, and the *Nayanmar* or canonized saints of Siva.

The technique of bronze casting used was as follows. The alloy used consisted mainly of copper, with small quantities of brass and white lead. The process employed in casting the images is the 'lost wax' method (O C Gangoly, *South Indian Bronzes*, Calcutta 1915, pp 29-32). The image to be cast was first modelled in beeswax. It could be a solid model, or modelled over a heatproof former if a hollow image is to be made. If the proposed bronze is that of a deity, the dimensions, proportions, pose, ornaments, *mudras* (hand gestures) and *bhavas* (states of being) are defined in the *Shilpa Sastras* (ancient texts on architecture and arts).



Religious ceremonies in Siva Devale No. 2 in 1950 after 650 years of disuse

The *Dhyana Slokas* (contemplative verses) as mentioned in the *Shilpa* texts are meditated upon by the sculptor, so that the image of the deity fills the artist's mind. It is because of this need to comply with the *Sastras* when sculpting a deity that, for example, all Nataraja sculptures are similar in pose and general proportions and differ only in details.

The wax image is then coated in layers of fine clay, using earth from termite hills. The image is then baked in an oven using cow dung cakes as fuel. This causes the wax to melt and run out. The molten bronze alloy is then poured into the mould. After it has set, the mould is broken and the finishing touches made to the bronze image. This includes removing blemishes, adding finer details like ornaments and polishing the image. The whole process can take several months for a large image.

In this process the wax mould is destroyed. Therefore every image cast is an original, unique image.

This process of bronze casting has continued virtually unchanged over a thousand years, and *sthapathis* (bronze casters) using this process can be seen at work in their workshops in Swamimalai, near Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu, making bronze images for use in temples. Swamimalai was the ancient home of Chola *sthapathis* and many of today's artisans claim to be descended from several generations of *sthapathis*. There is a Government regulation that they are not allowed to make exact replicas of antique bronzes, this follows the theft of bronzes from temples, in particular the case of the Sivapuram Temple Nataraja bronze sculpture. In 1965 Douglas Barrett, Keeper of Oriental Antiquities in the British Museum visited India to collect material for his forthcoming book on Early



Parvati 12th century, 51 cm high excavated at Siva Devale No. 5 in 1907



Nataraja 12th century, 90 cm high excavated at Siva Devale No.1 in 1907

Chola Bronzes. He went to Sivapuram, near Thanjavur, to see the 10th century Chola era Nataraja bronze in the temple. He was not satisfied with what he saw and suspected that it was a replica. The following month he saw a Nataraja in the private home of an art dealer in Chennai and suspected that this was the original Sivapuram Nataraja. He mentioned this in his book, and the Indian Government started investigating the matter.

The bronze had been excavated in the temple premises in 1951 and as it had been buried for several hundred years it was tarnished. It was sent to a *sthapathi* for restoration. He is supposed to have surreptitiously made a replica and given it to the temple and sold the original to an art dealer. The original had passed through several intermediaries and was finally purchased by Norton Simon in USA for a million dollars in 1973 for the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena, California which has a fine collection of South Asian art. The Indian Government threatened legal action and after long negotiations it was agreed that it could be exhibited in US Museums for ten years and then returned to India in 1986. This bronze was recently valued at US\$100 million, while this valuation may be optimistic, it does indicate the order of value of the beautiful Polonnaruwa bronzes now in the Colombo and Polonnaruwa Museums.

The most unusual of the bronzes in the Polonnaruwa Museum is the bronze of *Karaikkal Ammaiyan* (revered Mother from Karaikkal) excavated at Siva Devale No. 5 in 1960. She was a beautiful lady who lived in the 6th century AD in the east coast of India. After her marriage she was abandoned by her husband who feared that she had supernatural powers. She prayed to Siva to divest her of her physical beauty and she was turned into an emaciated hag and became a life-long devotee of Siva. She was later canonised as one of the 63 *Nayanmars* or Saints of Siva. Because she was a mortal, a *sthapathi* making a bronze image of her was not tied down by the rules of the *Sastras* but can allow his imagination free reign; therefore all images of her in her emaciated form are totally different. The stunning Polonnaruwa bronze of her can hold its own in any museum of modern art. Archaeological Commissioner C.E. Godakumbura has described this bronze as the best example of this subject in the world.

The medieval Hindu temples and bronze sculptures of Polonnaruwa are a significant and important chapter in the history of art and architecture of Sri Lanka. To quote Prof. Anuradha Seneviratna (*Polonnaruwa: Medieval Capital of Sri Lanka*, Colombo, 1998, p.13): “With Buddhist and Hindu shrines on the same

grounds embracing a common architectural tradition, and royal palaces once occupied by both Sinhala-Buddhist and Tamil-Hindu kings surrounded by large reservoirs shaded by primeval forests, Polonnaruwa was a city that symbolised the unity and integrity of the island as well as the religious and ethnic harmony which prevailed in medieval Sri Lanka”.

All photographs courtesy of the author and his father...Ed

ΩΩΩΩΩΩΩ

Recipe Corner



Marshmallow Pudding

What you need

1 cup caster sugar
1 ½ dessertspoon gelatine
7 egg whites
1 cup hot water
3 to 4 food colourings
3 tsps almond essence

What you do

Dissolve gelatine in 1 cup boiling water and leave to cool (not in fridge). Beat egg whites until stiff and then add caster sugar and gelatine alternately, little at a time, until mixture becomes very thick. Divide mixture into smaller bowls and add desired colour into each bowl. Add layers of coloured mixture into a large bowl alternating the colours. Cool in fridge preferably overnight and serve with custard.

Optional - Once pudding is set - chop up some brandied prunes (adding a few drops of almond and vanilla essences) and mix with some crystallized ginger (chopped finely) and spread over the top.

What you don't

Eat the whole thing yourself, its gorgeous, so share it.

Contributed by Tee Kay

Cheese...milk's leap towards Immortality

Clifton Fadiman (1904-1999)
American critic, Show Host



An Appreciation

Darnley Stanislaus de Souza (1930-2007) Staunch Friend and Contributor to the Society

Darnley was born in Colombo, the third and only surviving son of his parents, Dina and Linda de Souza. He attended St Joseph's College, and was clearly influenced from an early age by the ideals and values he imbibed there.

At St Joseph's he proved an accomplished athlete taking part in several events at athletic meets which included long-jump, hop-step-and-a-jump and running for the school team in the relays. At the Annual Public Schools' Meet, Darnley was a member of the relay team which won the Sir John Tarbat trophy in the year he participated. The relays climaxed the meets and I remember the electric atmosphere when they were run and the tremendous massed cheering from the schools from the very start of the two relays. Later on in life Darnley wrote an article, one of several on various subjects, titled "Reminiscences of a Josephian Athlete 1946-1949." He later played Hockey at the top level in Sri Lanka with the Old Joes and cricket with the Nondescript Cricket Club. Playing Rugger for the Army and Combined Services, gave him the most pleasure.

Darnley studied for three years at Aquinas College where he did Part I of the London University Economics degree. In June 1957 he joined the regular force of the Ceylon Army and had a three-and-a-half month training period with the British Army. Returning home he was posted to the Sinha Regiment and spent three years at the Army Training Centre, two years as Staff Captain in Brigade Headquarters at Panagoda, and retired as a Major in the same regiment having decided to migrate to Australia with his wife Lyn and daughter Michelle. Son Michael was born in Melbourne.

He joined the Commonwealth Public Service in 1968. His twenty four year career was spent entirely in the Melbourne office of the Australian Bureau of Statistics, retiring in a senior management position.

Darnley had a strong social conscience which led him into community service and was a founder member of the radio station of Whitehorse, Boorondara. He was active as a member of the Box Hill chapter of Oxfam Community Aid Abroad for over ten years. He was a member of a Refugee Support Group based around the Christian

churches in the Camberwell area.

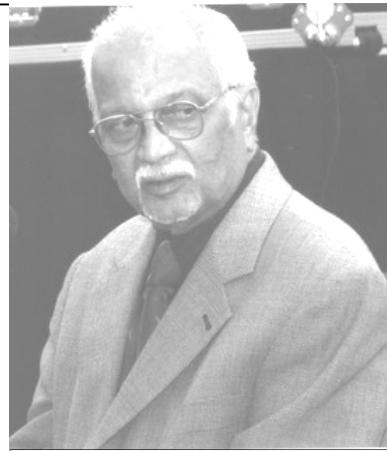
With this record, it was natural that Darnley would become a founder member of the Melbourne Chapter of the Ceylon Society of Australia . He showed a keen interest in the planning of every meeting as he was both

methodical and precise in everything he did. I remember accompanying him on a search for the best hall in a convenient area to hold our meetings. Darnley made the final choice, the Holy Redeemer Church Hall where all our events take place. He took charge of the responsibility of booking the hall and collecting the keys which had to be returned immediately after the meeting. Darnley was also a regular contributor to The Ceylankan for he enjoyed writing.

We will miss his jovial presence, his considered advice and his active participation in all the work of the Melbourne Chapter. Our deepest sympathies go to his wife Lyn and children Michelle, Michael and their children.

May Darnley rest in peace.

Shelagh Goonewardene



Darnley de Souza 1930-2007

My Portfolio of Characters

Darnley de Souza's last contribution to The Ceylankan



he most notable was the itinerant book vendor of my youth. He was an Indian who spoke a colloquial English well, unlike the other vendors who came to our door. These spoke Sinhala and sometimes also Tamil; with the Chinese cloth vendor using a smattering of English in his singular accent. The Indian was immaculately dressed in a white sarong and a long sleeved shirt, also white, with a pair of sandals on his feet, epitomising the superior genre of merchandise on offer. He could discuss with you the contents of his

books and even make recommendations to suit your taste. In all, making a very favourable impression on my naive tender years. I must confess, though, that carrying this load of literature on his head somewhat tarnished that image.

My next was the most endearing. She was Sophie, the servant with my aunt's family. I do not think that she was much older than us children and we saw her as a gentle, caring elder sister. She always had a beaming smile in a round placid face and that combined with a short buxom figure made her an attractive personality. She cooked and then also fed us, getting us to sit in a row and feeding us rice 'goollies' (balls) in turn. She could understand and speak English, but her shyness was a barrier to using it. But that did not stop her in her girlish manner attempting to promote a romance between me and one of my cousins. She left the family to get married after many years of service. She visited the family irregularly and when her daughter got married they helped to organise the reception at Ceylinco House. One of the highlights of my wedding was to see her, to my great and delightful surprise, among the guests. She still had that aura of shyness around her, and it was even more evident when I greeted her with a kiss on both cheeks. It was so sad when her husband was murdered for the wages he was taking home for his workers. They farmed in the Anuradhapura area.

The most patient was my Sinhala tutor: a humble, small, dignified man dressed neatly in a sarong, long sleeved shirt buttoned at the collar, coat and sandals. His hair was tied in a *konde* (knot) under that distinctive tortoiseshell comb. He had the look of a scholar and that he was. My time for the lesson was in the evening on two days a week. I could see him coming, invariably when I was in the middle of a game with the neighbourhood gang. Naturally, I refused to go willingly and the servant boy had to be sent to summon me. When at most times the servant boy was also a part of the game, it was my mother who impatiently descended on me. He took it all with courtly aplomb. His doppelganger appeared on occasions treading this same route. Alas, the doppelganger was a flasher.

The one who was the most out of place was our French parish priest. He took the place of Fr. Anthony Jayemanne the builder of All Saints Church. He was a tall man with a permanent frown on his face and displayed little patience - even less with us altar boys whose existence he hardly acknowledged. His favourite expression at a minor misdemeanour was "Oh La, La, La, my poor boy". You knew it was serious when it was a "Sapristi" that came your way. His impatience saw him asking the husband at marriage ceremonies whether he would take "so and so" for his lawful wife. Then turning to the wife asking her also whether she would take her partner to be her lawful wife. Even at that young age I realised the

potential this evidence had to dissolve a marriage, but could not find any takers who shared my confidence. As an altar boy I was notoriously clumsy and this had not passed his notice. At a Christmas Midnight Mass he and the altar boys had to genuflect facing the altar and he then proceeded to climb the steps to the altar. He tried once and fell back on his knees. He tried again and yet again and to his chagrin the same force was holding him back. That was me with my right foot firmly planted on the edge of his cassock. When this was finally sorted out, he turned to me and asked "Started already"?

The most irascible was the coconut plucker. We had at least 20 coconut trees in our garden and one day out of the blue this pretty rough looking character turned up. My mother and grandmother almost fell at his feet in grateful thanksgiving. Coconut plucking was not a service advertised in the "Ceylon Daily News" or one that was commonly sought after in Borella. He was bare bodied with a minimum '*amude*' (span cloth) around his waist and a wicked looking knife sticking out of it. He had a matt of grey hair covering his body and a pair of slightly bowed legs; the shape a legacy of his vocation. He became a regular and I think he became quite aware of our dependence on him. He and my grandmother went through the ritual bargaining battles; the sallies becoming quite heated at times. I would keep a fearful eye on his knife and a protective one on my grandmother. But the bargaining always had a happy ending. With my anxieties laid to rest I had a great game gathering the plucked coconuts into a storeroom.



The most paternal was a sergeant in my Regiment. All his subordinates were "Putha" to him and so he was affectionately and universally known as "Putha Silva". He was, in uniform a large ponderous figure but his manner belied the usual belligerence sergeants tried to affect. The bespectacled face always had a benign countenance and this was allied to an affable personality. He was a bachelor, not by choice but because he felt he could only contemplate matrimony when he had found suitable husbands for his two younger sisters. His fruitless search was a well known legend in the Regiment and he was not averse to sharing his problem with anyone prepared to listen. They were still of marriageable age when he very pointedly and succinctly exposed the nub of his difficulties to me: "Sir", he told me, "the trouble is my sisters are girls". **No one could have put it better.**

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Editor's note:

On 28th August 2007 Darnley emailed me:

Hi Sumane - attached is something that has been in genesis for some time now. I hope you find it useful.

Rgds- Darnley

Attached to that email was the article you have just finished reading. It was the last one he sent me. There are two more awaiting publication but sent earlier. He would send me such good prose and sit back patiently until published. His offers were in the same vein—"I hope it is good enough for 'The Ceylankan'" or "If you do not find it suitable please dump it, no hard feelings" etc. The good news is I never had to reject any of his contributions. Sometime ago he had also sent me some diary extracts of Sir Earle Page concerning the defence of Ceylon in WWII, for reproduction in this Journal. I demurred on the subject pleading copyright issues. I did not hear from him for a while. And then one day I get in the post, Darnley's letter enclosing written authorisation from Sir Page's son for us to go ahead and publish his memoirs in so far as it related to Sri Lanka. That's how tenacious he was to share something he had unearthed and knew would interest other members.

I never had the chance of meeting Darnley, but felt I knew him well. We had interesting dialogues over emails and I wish to share a small sample of them with you.

> -----Original Message-----

> From: Darnley
[mailto:leynard@optusnet.com.au]
> Sent: Tuesday, 3 July 2007 1:42 PM
> To: Iyer Sumane
> Subject: Article
>
> Sorry Sumane but here attached is a up-to-date version of the same
> article that has been fine-tuned by my wife. I know it is going to come at a bad time for you- in the throes of putting together another fine
> Journal.
> Rgds- Darnley
>

>Sumane Iyer wrote:

> So, the boss had her say? It must be all the better for her touch. No
> problems Darnley I had saved it for another issue. This one going out
> 1st August is almost done. Many thanks again. Keep them rolling.
> Warm regards to the lady
> Sumane

Sumane - you also seem to have the silken tongue. The wife is very pleased with your compliments and reciprocates your warm wishes. No, I did not expect it to even be considered for the August issue. By the way, has the Society still got problems with publishing the Page article?

Rgds- Darnley

The encouragement I received over the production of this Anniversary Issue was tremendous. He copy typed nearly 3000 words when I pled lack of time to reproduce the Earle Page article... He even crafted two "Editors notes" to accompany it. That is real help, not mere words.

Hi Sumane - attached is the copy of the typed Chapter

(1) Note I have taken the liberty of putting two 'Editor's notes, one at the top and the other at the bottom . They are there at your discretion. You may think the last one needs amplifying and if that is so let me know.

(2) The layout of the Chapter is as close as I thought to what it is in the book . You should be able to check it against the photocopy I sent you .

(3) I sent you 2 versions of Page's bio . If you want any help there let me know

Trust this is satisfactory. You must be hard at work on the 10th Anniv. publication . That should be quite a challenge. All the best with it.

Rgds- Darnley

And if one thinks they were just pleasantries, guess again. Even before sighting the finished product he ordered an extra copy of the Anniversary Issue for himself and ordered another as a gift to a friend. To me that is a vote of confidence.

As the Editor, I have suffered a personal loss for I will never have such dialogues again, nor will I be getting genuine encouragement and the gentle push in the right direction to get it right. The Editorial team joins me in this farewell, Darnley, and I promise, our members will read the Page article very shortly.

Nibbāna (Sanskrit: Nirvāna)

The ultimate goal - the cessation of suffering, the unconditioned liberation from the round of birth and death...

Gift recipients of this Special Anniversary issue- Journal # 40 of The Ceylankan awarded by members

P D Kelly - Kenmore, QLD

John Ferguson - London, UK

C R E Pierce - Kent, UK

Mrs T Ryder Runton - Hampshire, UK

Anne Sutherland Fraser - Florida, USA

Jeanette Fitzsimmons - Picola, VIC

Geraldine Smallcombe -Strathmore, VIC

Andrea Joachim - Vancouver, Canada

Anne Rode - Ontario, Canada

Tamara Mills - South Yarra, VIC

Prof Angelo Rodrigo -Heidelberg Heights, VIC

M E van den Driesen - Malvern East, VIC

Phillip Sansoni - Faden, ACT

Percy Rathnanather - Essex, UK

Sean da Silva - Wattle Grove, NSW

Rienzie Rupesinghe - Monash, ACT

Roger Forster - Doncaster East, VIC

Daisy Perera - Colombo 5, Sri Lanka

Nanda Wanasurendra - Colombo 3, Sri Lanka

Kevin Forster - Doncaster East, VIC

Wimala Aiyadurai - Marsfield, NSW

Brian Christerene Lau - Woodbine, NSW

Vathani Visvalingam - Carindale, QLD

K Arichandran - Maryland, USA

Ms P Paidapatty - New York, USA

Mrs M Parameswaran - Auburn, NSW

C Ganeshanraju - West Pennant Hills, NSW

Dr M Gunasingham - South Strathfield, NSW

Swini & Michael Osuri - Gaithersburg, USA

Melanie Huysmans - North Dandenong, VIC

Chandra & Chitra Krishnaratna - Ontario, Canada

Dr Jega & Therese Krishnaratna - Mt Lavinia, Sri Lanka

Daya Gonsalkorale - Rajagiriya, Sri Lanka

Bala Namasivayam - Clayton, VIC

Sujatha Jayasundera - Kurunegala, Sri Lanka

Earnest MacIntyre - Ryde, NSW

L S D Pieris - Colombo 5, Sri Lanka



Ranjith Withana - Colombo, 5 Sri Lanka

V R Baghirathan - Wiltshire, UK

V Fernando - Carseldine, QLD

E De La Zilwa - Brighton, QLD

Tissa Devendra - Colombo 5, Sri Lanka

S Sandrasagara - Paddington, NSW

A CORDIAL WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS



Joy & Priyanthie Perera

Eastwood, NSW

June & George Colin-Thomé

Panania, NSW

Cecil & Rita Dharmaratne

Sandringham, NSW

Martin Pieris & Sue Scott

Pennant Hills, NSW

..who have joined since publication of Journal # 39

...we also welcome following gift subscription
recipients of four issues of ***The Ceylankan***
awarded by a member.

Rev & Mrs Jacob Coulton

Quakers Hill, NSW

WINTER MORNING

by Shelagh Goonewardene

The day is a sullen child
With tears ever threatening to fall
I sit snug in my comfort clothes
Swathed and content in gentle warmth
Listening to a folk song plaintive and pure
“A long time ago”.
Like all folk songs it speaks of the simple acts
of living and loving
Stirring memories of loved ones who are no more
The continuing gifts of fathers, mothers
and a score of others
Always in our hearts
I sip sweetened tea from my home country
And then, ready to face my tasks and daily duty
I begin a day which may also bring surprising
beauty...

The Genesis of Airmail Service in Ceylon (1928-1938)

by Dr Srilal Fernando

T

he latter half of the nineteenth century saw a rapid development of sea mail services to cater for the ever growing need of the colonies. This continued into the first part of the twentieth century. In the 20s and 30s the golden era of steamship travel, sea mail still continued as the preferred mode for carriage of mail to and from Ceylon. Thereafter, developments in aviation provided a more rapid medium for the transfer of mail.

It is interesting to note that the first carriage of mail by air occurred in India. Sir Walter Wyndham R.N. was invited by the Government of India to show airplanes at an exhibition in Allahabad. Wyndham was approached by the clergyman in charge of the Holy Trinity Church, Allahabad, to carry mail as a fund raiser for a church project. The Post Master General approved the idea and on the 20th February, 1911 the first consignment of letters was flown by the pilot, a Frenchman Mons Pecquet from Allahabad to Aligah, across the Ganges. A surcharge of 6 annas was made and a special postmark was applied. When Wyndham returned to England he set about organising an Airmail Service in the United Kingdom. The first ever Airmail Service in England was on the 9th September, 1911 which coincided with the coronation of King George V.

In Ceylon a pigeon post was commenced on the 24th September, 1850 by the *Ceylon Observer* from Galle to Colombo. Steam ships called in at the port of Galle bringing the London newspapers. Commercial & Political news was printed on flimsies and attached to the leg of the pigeon. These were received in Colombo in time for publication in the newspapers.

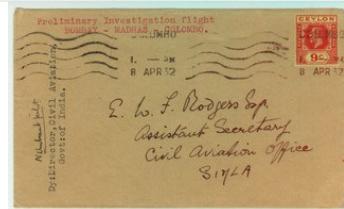
The earliest Airmail services to and from Ceylon made use of the connections with overseas airways. Mail was carried by sea mail to various ports to connect with the respective Air Service. In 1928 letters were sent to Fremantle in Australia to connect with the Perth to Derby and the Charleville to Camooweal air routes. A special prepaid letter rate was applied in addition to a 3d per half ounce special air fee collected on delivery. Letters to the US connected with the New York to San Francisco and New York to Dallas air routes. In 1929 letters to Central Europe and South America were accepted connecting to the service provided by Air France. The main route however was to London. Imperial Airways had established an air route from Marseilles to London in the summer.



The first civil aeroplane to land in Ceylon. A Puss Moth, flown by Mr. Nevil Vincent, accompanied by Mr. Zubair Caffoor, on the racecourse, after flying from Manelapam, South India.

By courtesy "Times of Ceylon."

In the winter, mail reaching Marseilles was sent by air to Paris and then to London by rail. This route was in operation for a very short time and collectors consider covers carried on this route as a rarity.

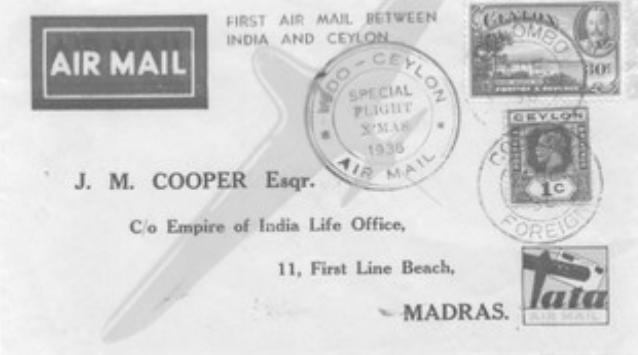


In April, 1929 Imperial Airways established the London-Karachi route. Mail from Ceylon utilised this service with the first acceptance being on 22nd June, 1929. The mail reached Karachi by sea and from there onto the United Kingdom. However letters reached their destination in 14½ days, a saving of only 1½ days over the sea route.

In 1932 Tata Sons of India obtained a licence to extend the service from Karachi to Madras (now Chennai). Tata Sons Ltd became Tata Airlines the forerunner of Air India. Thus another faster service for airmail from Ceylon was available. Two rates were in force one for the slower service by which air mail letters were conveyed by rail and sea to Karachi and thence by air, and the more rapid method to Madras by ferry and rail and thence by air. This service continued till 1936 after which all air mails were sent to Madras for onward connections.

Connections with other services also developed. On 14th March, 1931 a mail service was in operation to Medan to connect with the Dutch East Indies Service operated by K.N.I.L.M.* An airmail fee of 20 cents per half ounce was charged. Only 14 letters were sent on the 1st day of this mail service. Imperial Airways inaugurated a service to East Africa. A connection between Karachi and Cairo and then to Mwanza enabled letters from Ceylon to be connected with this service from May, 1931 onwards.

Meanwhile flying as a sport and activity was gaining ground all over the world resulting in the establishment of Aero Clubs. In Ceylon the first attempts were to promote flying by means of sea planes and the



headquarters of the first Aero Club was to be at Negombo using the lagoon as a landing place. This initial effort did not bear fruit but the idea was followed up and by 1931 the Aero Club was well established with the Governor General as the Patron.

In 1931 a firm of motor dealers in Colombo organised a flying gymkhana using the racecourse as the landing ground. A "Puss Moth" plane chartered from Tata & Sons of Bombay with Neville Vintcent as the pilot accompanied by Mr Zubair Caffoor flew in from Manepalam, South India. Mr Vintcent flew back to Bombay on the 6th May, 1931 carrying with him a special edition of the "Times of Ceylon" marked First Airmail Edition. Only 25 newspapers were thought to have been carried. He left Colombo at 6.00am, after refuelling and breakfast at Bangalore he reached Bombay at 5.00 pm a journey of eleven hours. This was an incredible feat as the usual sea mail route took 4 days to Bombay. The idea of an airmail service to Ceylon received a boost.

In April, 1932, Tata Airways commissioned a survey flight and this was carried out by Mr Vintcent. A few letters were carried on this flight and only 4 are known to collectors. The cover is endorsed "Preliminary Investigation Flight" in red and carries Mr Vintcent's signature and designation "Dy: Director Civil Aviation Government of India". It is postmarked 8th April, 1932.

One major obstacle to the extension of the Karachi to Madras Service to Colombo was the lack of an aerodrome. Discussions took place over a suitable site and in 1934 the State Council passed a resolution to construct an aerodrome on the site at Ratmalana. This site consisted of two hundred and forty acres of land planted with rubber and coconut which was acquired, cleared and levelled.

In 1936 Tata arranged for a special flight from Madras to Colombo to carry the Christmas mail. Connection with the Imperial Airways flight to and from London enabled Christmas mail from the UK to reach Ceylon. Two special flights in each direction were made between Madras, Trichinopoly, and Colombo.

Mails left the UK on December 16th via Imperial Airways to connect with the special flight leaving Madras on the 23rd December, 1936.

A delay occurred in the transit of the English mail and the special flight left Madras carrying only the Indian mail. The return flight left Colombo at 8.00 am on the 24th December and by the time it reached Madras the UK mail had arrived. A second special flight took off landing in Colombo in the evening of 24th December. The second return flight to Madras carried no mail. The return mail reached England on the 2nd January.

Tata & Company issued a special cover for the occasion, coloured blue carrying an imprinted Indian Etiquette and an airplane silhouette. A circular cachet was applied to all mail carried on these flights while the rectangular cachet with first "Special Airmail INDIA-CEYLON DECEMBER 1936" inscribed was applied only to the Indian Mails of December 23rd.

Airmail services rapidly advanced to cover most parts of the globe. The Empire Air Mail Scheme formed a major part of this network covering the British Empire. On 28th February, 1938 Stage 2 of this service was inaugurated coinciding with the opening of the All-Air

Service from Colombo. From Ceylon to England in 4½ days and reply from the UK in 10 days was possible. This was of great benefit for the commercial establishments. This more efficient service allowed a reduction of 30 cents from the cost previously of the combined sea and air route. Most of the mail dispatched on February 28th bore a slogan postmark "Empire Air Mail – Every Day is Mail Day".

This was how the fascinating story of the Airmail Service in Ceylon evolved.

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* Koninklijke Nederlandsch-Indische Luchtvaart Maatschappij

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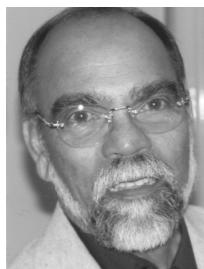
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To Australia

Meeting of like minds and kindred spirits Some personal thoughts

by Douglas Jones



W

hat happened to the *Paranacat karaya*, *Malu karaya* and the *Kathurumuwath karaya*? Vama Vamadevan lamented, recollecting those itinerant tradesmen who plied their wares & services from house to house in Colombo in the early 40s and 50s. And what about the *Borukakul karaya*, I mused reading his piece in *The Ceylankan* (J36). As a child I sought refuge under the bed as this cross-dresser on six-foot high stilts and small umbrella that barely shaded his drably painted face strutted outside our home. The frilly, gaudy mini-skirt swirled as he pirouetted on the sandy front yard. Later as a schoolboy, a mean streak replaced childhood fears, and I was one of those who pelted stones and other nasty missiles at the hapless street entertainer whenever we encountered him.



Vama has been contributing to the Journal for many years and his writings are not confined to colourful pieces of day-to-day happenings. Some of the most fascinating work coming from the pen of this former DIG of the Ceylon Police relate to his memorable experiences in the Force, like “Oh! To be a Policeman” (J35) presented with a touch of fondness and lots of humour.

This was prompted by the two-part “Oh! To be an Engine Driver” by that doyen Victor Melder (J32 & J33) which brought back my boyhood passion for trains that, sadly never found fruition.

Indeed, *The Ceylankan* (or the Journal, as it is fondly known) now up to its 40th issue, is the repository of some unforgettable writings tracing the history, culture, life and times of Colonial & Medieval Ceylon. The authors of various professions and persuasions have long and painstakingly researched and compiled scholarly articles – some of them personal memoirs – that shed light into the darkest corners of Sri Lankan origins. Many of them are amateur writers, yet their work makes for compelling reading.

The Journal is a fountain of knowledge, often an inspiration to would-be researchers and writers. Whether one’s interest is in military history, archaeology, street lore, life in the village or country, the story of tea and the planters, business and commerce, cricket, historic homes and architecture, music in the early days, coins, genealogy to any subject that turns one on as long as it relates the Colonial & Medieval Ceylon – it can be found in this remarkable publication.

A fine band of contributors, including *The Rambler* and *The Raconteurs* whose anonymity does not hide facile pens, Drs Yasmine & Brendon Gooneratne, S. Pathiravitana, Sergei De Silva-Ranasinghe, Tissa and Somasiri Devendra to name but a few of recent times have lifted the bar in terms of content. Two issues ago, we had Neville Jayaweera share absorbing recollections of his days as GA Jaffna. (Maybe a follow-up of his times as the Director-General of Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation would be most welcome at some future date).

My association with CSA

My friend Harry de Sayrah talked me into joining the Society in December 2003 and invited Hyacinth and myself to the AGM and Christmas dinner. For one reason or another thereafter, we attended society meetings only sporadically. The Journal kept on arriving faithfully in my letterbox every third month. Perusing the informative fare that packed the periodical from cover to beige cover, I began to feel tinges of regret.

Then prior to the 2005 AGM, Harry convinced me again, this time to take up the position of Secretary going vacant. He can be a persuasive fellow at times. A glutton for punishment, I reluctantly agreed. This made attendance at meetings almost mandatory.

Soon I became immersed in the ethos and activities of the Society, increasingly ruing the fact that, in all these past years, I had bypassed the yellow brick road to the riches of the history of my birthplace. I had taken the country’s heritage for granted from my younger days - a lost opportunity almost irredeemable now in my dotage. There was still some hope, it seemed, for those of my ilk.

To those visionaries in whose minds the idea of the Society germinated, who then had the courage to give flesh and blood to the idea, I owe much gratitude. If not for the CSA and its dynamic people

and activities, I would continue to languish in the penury of ignorance of the heritage Sri Lanka had to offer.

As an adjunct to the Journal, well-publicised quarterly public meetings take place when erudite people from various professions are invited and generously share their expertise on a specific topic threading history and growth of Sri Lanka. Some of these scholars are non Sri Lankan-born like the Canadian Dr Ian Smith, an Associate Professor of Language & Linguistics in the University of Toronto in Canada. He recently provided an elucidating discourse on **Ceylon-Portuguese – A Linguistic Legacy of Lanka's First European Colonisers** and evoked spontaneous *déjà vu* responses from a rapt audience.

Then there was architect, author and lecturer Dr Anoma Peries who revealed, in her fascinating talk **Saramayata Kalisama (Trouser Under the Cloth)** how the westernised urban elite found a compromise in their desire to embrace both colonial social structure with the indigenous at the same time by wearing the hybrid garment of a trouser wrapped in a short cloth during the late Colonial period of 1815-1948. Here was a group with a distinct social status whom some of us failed to recognise, perhaps in ignorance or naivety, or both and even looked upon with amusement.

Of course, Merryl J.Fernando's intimate delineation of the growth, spanning 35 years, of his beloved Dilmah Tea enterprise, was an illuminating experience. The Sydney chapter recorded its highest attendance at a public meeting that night.

Dr Rajpal K. de Silva's discourse on the **Dutch Forts of Sri Lanka**, Assistant Professor Dr Ranjith Dayaratne on the **Architecture of Geoffrey Bawa – A Poetry of Place**; Professor Raja Bandaranayaka on **Ehelapola Maha Nilame** are just a few of the talks addressed to members and the public that expand our knowledge and opened vistas hitherto unknown to many of us.

A decade of memorable activity has been reached. If the past is any indication, rest assured, there will be numerous more enchanting evenings of topical discourse planned for the years ahead and those indomitable contributors to the Journal will provide richer literary nourishment for our intellects to feast on.

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Book Review continued from p 33

Kandy Fights the Portuguese: A Military History of Kandyan Resistance by C. Gaston Perera, Colombo: Vijitha Yapa Publications, 2007, 388 p.

Gaston Perera's new book is a fine addition to the numerous works on the history of Sri Lanka in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The author, well known for his two historical novels, *The Rebel of Kandy* and *The Sons of the Rebel* has clearly devoted a great deal of time and energy in reading the primary and secondary sources for the period. The book advances our knowledge and understanding of the political and economic developments as well as the military history of the period.

As the *Foreword* by K. W. Goonewardane points out there was a period up to the 1970s when Sri Lankan historians including Tikiri Abeyasinghe, Miguel Gunatilleke, W. L. A. Don Peter, Edmund Pieris and others, including myself produced a number of books and articles that illustrated the complex relationships between the Portuguese and the peoples of Sri Lanka. Since then, apart from the writings of Martin Queré, Mendis Rohanadheera and Risiman Amerasinghe and the valuable document collections edited by Vito Perniola, there has been little of note. The second volume of the *University History of Sri Lanka* published by the University of Peradeniya in 1996 (in which I have several chapters) is mostly a restatement of existing knowledge. On the other hand, there has been a revival of interest in Sri Lankan history of this period by scholars in Europe. Jorge Flores's *Os Portugueses e o Mar de Ceilão, 1498-1543: Trato, Diplomacia e Guerra* (1998) and his collection of documents, *Olbos de Rei* (2001) have led the way but Alan Strathern, Zoltán Biedermann, Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya and Kenneth Jackson have provided valuable insights. A couple of Sri Lankans in exile, Michael Roberts (*Sinhala Consciousness in the Kandyan Period 1590s to 1815*, Vijitha Yapa 2004) and Channa Wickremasekera (*Kandy at War*, Vijitha Yapa 2004) have helped to clarify various issues. It is in the context of this literature that we need to evaluate Gaston Perera's book.

The first thing that will strike you about the book is its readability. The author's narrative flows easily and for me, it was difficult to put the book down. It is not easy for a novelist to make the transition to being a historian but Gaston Perera has been meticulous in his work. Every statement is supported by evidence and while the author points out that his lack of fluency in Portuguese has been a limitation, most of the material he needs has been accurately translated into English. In terms of a sustained investigation of the military history of Kandyan resistance, this is now the key book to read.

Then again, like most new military historians, Gaston Perera places military encounters within a socio-economic and political context. This book is not just about battles but about people, their lives and ideals. On the other hand, more than half the book is an analysis of battles and strategy and the author illustrates his analyses with maps while quoting from time to time from contemporary sources. He

(Continued on page 50)

(Continued from page 49)

is excellent in delineating the causes of war and in charting the course of each conflict.

If I had a word of criticism it would simply be that Gaston Perera does not extend his analysis to the wider consequences of military conflicts of the time. For instance, Sanjay Subrahmanyam in writing on the conflicts in South India in the eighteenth century linked them to the formation of the 'modern state' in that region. Did constant warfare make the ruler of Kandy (Rajasinha II) more powerful vis-à-vis the nobles and did this affect the political structure of the Kandyan state? Was the lessening of military conflict with the ascendancy of the Dutch connected with a strengthening of local autonomy? It is true that evidence to judge this is hard to find. Certainly, Gaston Perera's work has laid the foundations upon which more difficult questions can be raised, if not answered. I also would have preferred if the book has an index.

Gaston Perera's book provides a comprehensive look at the weapons, armour and training of the soldiers of the period. His analyses of famous battles, including those of Danture, Ambatenna, Randeniwela and Gannoruwa are excellent. He has provided us with a glossary to explain unfamiliar terms. In sum, this is an excellent publication to follow on the quincentennial of the first arrival of the Portuguese in Sri Lanka in 1506. It is a book that is well worth purchasing.

Prof Chandra R. de Silva

ΩΩΩΩΩΩΩ

REMINDER MEMBERSHIP DUES

2007 calendar year subscriptions are now overdue and 2008 will be due soon. Australian members, may send personal cheque/MO in favour of the Ceylon Society of Australia to Srikantha Nadarajah 50A -The Esplanade - Thornleigh NSW 2120, or arrange direct payment to the Society's account BSB 062-308 Acc# 1003 8725 at Commonwealth Bank. Overseas members are kindly reminded to send their remittances by Bank Draft in Australian currency or pay by using SWIFT Code CTBAAU2S. Personal cheques in foreign currency cannot be accepted. Those making direct payment to Bank are requested to inform the Treasurer by email where possible. Sri Lankan resident members have the option of paying in Rupees to local Treasurer. Please see contact details in adjacent panel.

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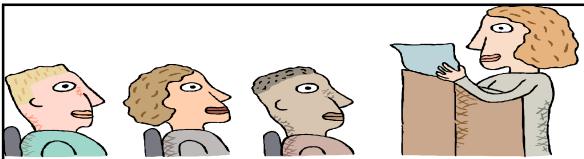
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NEXT SYDNEY MEETING

Saturday 1st December 2007

6.30 p. m.
AGM followed by

Dinner & Social to
celebrate the 10th
Anniversary of CSA

Thornleigh Community Centre
Cnr Pennant Hills Road & Phyllis Avenue
Thornleigh NSW 2120

Book your dinner reservations now with
Srikantha Nadarajah
Ph: 02 9980 1701
Or E-mail: vsnadarajah@bigpond.com

NEXT MELBOURNE MEETING

TBA

Venue: Holy Redeemer Church Hall
Cnr of York Street and Mont Albert Road

NEXT COLOMBO MEETING

Saturday 1st December at 5.30 pm

Dr. Nalin Perera

Will speak on

**Indigenous medical systems of Sri
Lanka: Ayurveda and Sinhala Vedakam**

Venue: Lions Club of Nugegoda
No.2 School Lane - Nawala - Rajagiriya.

Contact: Somasiri - 2737180
Mike - 0775412420 Daya - 2786783

How to become a member of the Ceylon Society of Australia

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E-mail: vsnadarajah@bigpond.com
and request an application form

Sri Lanka residents may contact Mike Udabage
Mob: 0775 412 420 - mike_udabage@itechne.com
329/124 Lake Road - Dehiwala
Ph: 273 1914

In search of speakers

The committee would welcome nominations of knowledgeable and academic persons to speak at our regular meetings, in Sydney, Melbourne and Colombo. You may have friends, relations who live in or visit Australia./Sri Lanka Our calendar for the year is - April/May, September/October and November/December. Dates can be arranged to suit availability of eminent speakers. Please contact :

In Sydney -President :Tony Peries
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In Melbourne - Vice President Srilal Fernando
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Where applicable, contributors are requested to annotate bibliographical references to facilitate further research & study by interested members.

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Advertisement from 1930's in Silumina—premier Sinhalese Newspaper. Sent in by member Sergei de Silva Ranasinghe.

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