



# The Ceylanikaum

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## From the Editor...

**W**e commence this issue on a sad note, necessarily, because the CSA has lost one of its stalwart and founding members in Shelagh Goonewardene, who lost a long and courageous battle with cancer. She was a brave woman, who faced all of life's varied challenges that came her way with much exemplary simplicity and common sense, never letting any of them come in the way of her obligations as a devoted wife and loving mother. She also gave of her best pursuing her cultural interests in journalism, writing and more profoundly, in her involvement in theatre and drama - especially in Sri Lankan theatre and drama. She acquired a deep understanding of the role of theatre in the scheme of things and shared that knowledge generously with the rest of the world.

As Convenor of the CSA's Melbourne Chapter, Shelagh's contribution was immeasurable. She was always on hand to ensure the Chapter functioned smoothly, held regular meetings, even taking on the role of speaker of the day whenever she could. Such was the calibre of this fine lady.

The August issue of the journal will be dedicated to the life of Shelagh with many of her former colleagues, university contemporaries and friends paying her well deserved tribute within its pages. If any of you readers knew her and would like to write a few words, I will endeavour to include as many of your tributes as space would permit.

*Requiescat in pace, Shelagh.*

In this issue we are privileged to publish Shelagh's article on Post-colonial Politics and History as Dramatised in the Theatre. Here, with her deep understanding of the genre, she analyses the influence of theatre and drama in the socio-political climate as it impacts on life everyday.

While Thiru Arumugam continues his story on the inspiring life of Dr Mary Rutnam, Hugh Karunanayake compliments his previous essay on the Early Years of Motoring in Sri Lanka, with a look at the glamour and romance of the Golden Years of Motoring that followed in Sri Lanka.

Former planter and CSA member Jayantha Jayawadene recalls the many roles (both good and detrimental) elephants played in the plantations of Ceylon.

Tony Peries stirs up some nostalgia among all of us as he delves into his early school days, growing up from a kindergarten youngster at a girls' school stepping up the rungs into the realm of the boys' school.

Our back cover features the artistry of notable photographer and past President of CSA's Colombo Chapter, Chulie de Silva as she works up an appetite on discovering the colours of Sri Lankan food she's prepared - a delectable feast, to say the least! Dilhani Kumbukkage has paraphrased the Dr Srilal Fernando talk on Australian Donald Friend's world of painting and Donald's friendship with the Bawas of Colombo.

To be able to fill leisure intelligently is the last product of civilisation, and at present very few people have reached this level.

— Bertrand Russell (*Conquest of Happiness* 1930).

## About the Ceylon Society of Australia

The CSA is a non-profit organisation, incorporated in Australia. Its main objectives are to foster, promote and develop interest in the cultural heritage of Sri Lanka, especially the post-medieval period when this country was first exposed to, what we now call, globalisation. Apart from publishing the journal - **The Ceylankan** which has attracted much international appreciation - the Society holds meetings quarterly in Sydney, Melbourne and Colombo. Most importantly, it is non-political and non-partisan and studiously steers clear of political and similar controversial issues. CSA is not a formal, high profile Society but rather, a gathering of like-minded people, open to receiving and imparting new ideas, who greatly

enjoy a quarterly meeting in reasonably modest and intimate surroundings. While Sydney is home to the parent body and looks after the needs of the society in all of NSW and the ACT, the Melbourne Chapter covers members and others residing in and visitors to Victoria; the Colombo Chapter caters to CSA members in and passing through Sri Lanka, and the Sri Lankan public! Members of the public with an interest in the study of Sri Lankan history, culture and heritage - the young members of the public are especially welcome! - are invited to attend. Admission to these meetings is free, while donations to defray expenses are much appreciated.



## Our Readers Write

### *Fascinating pioneer*

I read Thiru Arumugam's article on Dr Mary Rutnam (J61 February 2013) with the greatest interest as it gives us a deep insight into the background of a fascinating pioneer and her husband.

Dr Rutnam was a very early promoter of Family Planning and I doubt it is generally known that her son, Walter, a founder director of Richard Pieris & Co. successfully manufactured condoms in the early 1950s though I do not know whether she put the idea to him. Walter was a pioneer industrialist whose vast contribution to the economy of the time is barely remembered. Even as early as the end of the 1940s, the firm was making a wide range of rubber goods such as car floor mats, bushes, table mats, wall ornaments and balloons. Condoms are but a step up from balloons although they are obviously made to pharmaceutical standards. Public opinion at the time was strongly against the manufacture of this product which has now been made in Sri Lanka for over a decade by a foreign firm in partnership with Hayleys Ltd. The country could have benefited if condom making was started as a wholly local venture back in that era.

Walter was a very brilliant man who graduated from Antioch College in Ohio and Washington University in Missouri. He was the driving force behind many of Richard Pieris & Co's rubber manufacturing ventures. He was too a championship standard tennis player and President of the Ceylon Lawn Tennis Association and of the Otter Aquatic Club. The big membership of the latter club today are probably unaware that Walter was the KEY figure behind the building of the pool and clubhouse at Bullers Road and one who made a significant financial contribution toward the venture. I was on the committee of the club for a few years, back then.

Having worked at Richard Pieris & Co for just under two years (1950-52) in departments under Walter's supervision, I am personally aware of his importance to industry and sport at the time—it was an honour and privilege to have known him.

TONY PERIES (Winston Hills).

### *Recollections of Duncan White*

In the February issue 2013 an appreciation of Prof. Blaze by Ged de Saram who I believe is Willie and John's father, both very much alive. I know them both very well. However, I would like to make a correction regards Duncan White. Duncan and I trained for the 1948 Olympics at the Mount Mary railway grounds, coached by B. Little of the Colombo University. Duncan won a SILVER medal in the 400 meter hurdles and not a bronze. I remember this very well. I would thank you to add a note in the next issue. I

pass my copy to other Sri Lankans in Canada who appreciate it very much. Thanks for your input on Mary Rutnam. Well Done.

RALPH WIJESINGHE (Canada)

*Note: We stand corrected. Duncan White won a silver medal, coming second to the world record holder, Roy Cochran of USA. Duncan went on to win a gold medal at the Empire Games (now called Commonwealth Games) in Auckland in 1950.*

### *Adler addendum*

In a follow-up to Hugh Karunanayake's article about early motoring in Ceylon in 'The Ceylankan' Journal 60, Somasiri Devendra wrote in Journal 61 about an Adler car owned by his family. For the non-automotively-inclined to whom the name 'Adler' may ring a bell (pardon the pun, for reasons to follow soon!) the Adler company was famous throughout the world, including Ceylon, as a maker of typewriters. From 1900 to 1939 – interrupted only by World War I – Adler also built a range of high-quality motor cars.

In his final sentence, Somasiri speculated that "there must have been very few of this make (in Ceylon)". Actually, according to the 1930 Automobile Association of Ceylon (AAC) Handbook, at December 31, 1930 there was a total of 21 Adler vehicles registered in Ceylon. Numerically, they ranked second only to Opel (57) in the AAC's list of German-built motor cars. At the same date, the 'X' series of registrations had only reached '2404', i.e. X-2404. This means that the Devendra car, X-9304, which was registered in 1935, would not have been included in that 1930 end-of-year total of 21 Adlers.

Interestingly, 20 of those Adlers were classified under the heading 'Motor Cars and Cabs', the remaining one listed in the column titled 'Lorries, Vans, &c.' That's because the latter vehicle was the 1920 Adler 30hp 4-cylinder hearse operated by A.F. Raymond & Co. Registered C-3740 in 1921, it was



• AFR 1920 Adler hearse C-3740\_RT.

Ceylon's first motor hearse, and was discussed in some detail in an article titled 'A.F. Raymond and 90 Years of Motor Hearses' I wrote for the 'Road



## IN MEMORIAM Shelagh Louise (nee Jansen) Goonewardene



Photo courtesy Menik Tissera & Heaven-Address

Mrs Shelagh Goonewardene, a founder member of the Ceylon Society of Australia and inaugural Convenor of the Society's Melbourne Chapter passed away on April 12 after a long illness. Loving wife of the late Ranjit, beloved mother of Anthony Anghie, Devinda and Devika (deceased). Sister of Suzette (deceased) and Dr Roger. A Requiem Mass for

the repose of her soul celebrated at St Scholastica's Church, 348 Burwood Highway, Bennettswood on Thursday April 18, was followed by a private cremation.

Shelagh will be greatly missed by her family, vast number of friends and by those members of the Melbourne Chapter of the CSA. Despite the many heartbreaking challenges she encountered in her earthly life, most creditably, she lived that life to the fullest. Shelagh was a regular and popular contributor to *The Ceylankan* with her poetry and articles relating to theatre, drama and the Arts.

One of her last gestures, days before she passed away, was to request son Devinda to submit two of her recent articles for publication in this journal. We are more than delighted to honour her final wishes. Her first "Post Colonial Politics and History as Dramatised in the Theatre" is published in this issue. The second article will appear in our August special edition dedicated to Shelagh's memory. It will carry tributes from close friends, university contemporaries, professional colleagues and others.

*"Angels, to whom the willing task is given,  
Shall tend, and nurse, and lull thee, as thou liest;  
And Masses on the earth and prayers in heaven,  
Shall aid thee at the Throne of the most Highest."*

— *Dream of Gerontius*; John Henry Cardinal Newman.

### Our Readers Write (Continued)

& Track' motoring supplement of Sri Lanka 'The Island' newspaper of June 3, 2011.

The accompanying photo, from the A.F. Raymond archive, shows the Adler hearse on duty in the funeral procession of an unspecified dignitary in the 1920s or 1930s. Gas-fuelled street lamps, and police or military personnel in British colonial uniforms, lend 'colour' and 'atmosphere' to the sombre scene.



• HCP 1911 Adler C-734\_RT

While the fate of this historic hearse is unknown (in all likelihood it departed long ago for that automotive graveyard in the sky) at least one Adler car survives in Sri Lanka. A 12hp 4-cylinder tourer, it was built in 1911 and registered C-734 in Colombo soon afterward. In the early 1950s it was bought by Mr. H.C. (Chitru) Peiris, one of the pioneers of the old car enthusiast movement in Ceylon/Sri Lanka, and was even used as the 'going-away' car when he married Rancee de Mel circa 1954/55. The 1911 Adler is pictured here at an early 'Ceylon Observer' Old Cocks Rally (probably in 1953), with Chitru Peiris at the wheel. Chitru died in September 2001, and the Adler is now in the custody of his second son Darup.

ROGER THIEDEMAN (Melbourne VIC.)

### Your views are valuable!

Keep those letters coming in dear readers. We value your thoughts and erudite comments on the Journal and its subject matter. Please keep them as brief as possible.

Letters, however, may be edited for reasons of length, clarity and content.



*If anything, Shelagh has made a tremendous contribution to our understanding of Sri Lankan drama and theatre. In this article, which is one of two, she sent in for publication in the journal a few days before she passed away after a long battle with cancer, she looks at the part local politics played in drama in Sri Lanka.*

## Post-colonial politics and history as dramatised in the theatre

by SHELAGH GOONEWARDENE

**T**he ancient land of Lanka emerged as a modern state when, as Ceylon, it was granted Independence in February 1948 by Britain who had been the last imperial power to rule it following the Portuguese and Dutch. This meant a recognition and re-emergence of its own identity after approximately 400 years of foreign rule. It is a matter of history that violent episodes initiated by civilians and even the waging of war by the state have accompanied the founding of several post-colonial modern Asian states such as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

In Sri Lanka, the country this paper will focus on, armed insurrections planned and executed by disillusioned and disgruntled youth took place in 1971 and during the period 1987-1990 which had nothing to do with the birth-pangs of gaining independence but everything to do with the policies and politics practised by the main political parties which affected education and economic development. The objective of this discourse is to highlight both politics and history as it can, and has been effectively dramatised in theatre by commenting on the theatre of that particular time in Sri Lankan history. Included is the detailed examination of a re-enactment of that period in a play which was written in 2009.

The Australian historian Greg Denning has made a very insightful study of the relationship between theatre and history. I quote from his book "Performances" (1996) published by Melbourne University Press where he says on page 127: *"the brilliance of theatre is that it represents experience and offers us the conventionalities by which the representation can be interpreted. We do not enter a theatre as if it were a Time Machine in which past experience is repeated... Experience represented in the theatre is dressed with the same particularities of everyday experience and has the larger-than-itself quality of everyday experience, but is transformed by being selected and shaped for interpretation."*

The 1971 insurrection which took place in early April had its roots in the formation of a radical left-wing party called the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) or People's Liberation Front (PLF) which

was a militant organisation led by a home-grown Communist Rohana Wijeweera, who had studied in Moscow and was a full-time party worker originally in the Ceylon Communist Party (Peking wing) who had been entrusted with the task of consolidating its "youth league." What actually happened was that Wijeweera, dissatisfied with his party's agenda which he may have considered unlikely to accomplish real, revolutionary change, broke away from it in mid-1965, taking a group of like-minded dissidents with him.

The main change in the thinking of the JVP leader and those in his party was the espousal of revolutionary means to effect deep social change, which meant, inevitably, that they embraced violence. They started collecting funds to purchase arms and other related weapons and material. As their membership consisted mainly of poor rural youth, it was not long before theft, plunder and extortion became the means by which they could build up their funds and arsenal of arms. According to some authorities who have written about the origin and history of the JVP, this new party became prominent through its propaganda efforts in the period prior to the parliamentary elections of 1970. It even lent qualified support to the United Left Front (ULF) a coalition led by Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike, which was the leading opposition party contesting the election. When, in fact, the ULF won the election, the JVP for a short period after the former assumed government, became intensely critical of it on the basis that it was hesitant to follow its election pledges to bring about a more socialist form of society by attending to the needs of the working class rather than a continued emphasis on the priorities of the middle class. A confrontation with the government became unavoidable as the JVP continued a campaign of aggressive anti-government propaganda and a return to crime and random acts of violence in order to accumulate arms and more money.

On March 16, 1971 Wijeweera was arrested and detained in a high security prison in Jaffna and a "State of Emergency" was declared in order to pre-empt any major acts of violence by the JVP,



which might take the form of an uprising. In fact, it was already too late and, although Wijeweera later claimed that they had no alternative because of the government's extreme actions, the insurrection broke out on April 5 with attacks on several police stations. While there was considerable violence let loose on individuals who got in the way – policemen and civilians – the government's strong retaliation proved too much for the insurgents. Foreign countries, in response to Mrs Bandaranaike's appeal, sent superior armaments from abroad and there was no possibility of poorly armed (sometimes only with knives and hand grenades) and poorly directed girls and boys who had no military training, surviving the onslaught by the security forces. Some insurgents were imprisoned and tortured, but the majority were killed, their bodies burnt to death on tyres or thrown into rivers. This was faceless and anonymous killing and so many youth were referred to as 'disappeared' – a new and ominous word that came into the vocabulary of violence which still exists in the country today. Abductions also took place which were referred to in Sinhala as 'ussan yanava' which could be translated as 'liftings'. The result was that many parents and relatives did not know what had happened to their children or where they were.

Several foreign writers and newspaper journalists wrote articles about these events<sup>1</sup>, among them, Rene Dumont, a Frenchwoman who was living in Colombo at the time. She reported: "From the Victoria Bridge on April 13, I saw corpses floating down the river which flows through the north of the capital, watched by hundreds of motionless people." She was not the only one who witnessed this sight. In doing this, the government's aim was to strike terror in the hearts of people.

By the end of the month, the insurrection had been overcome with the few pockets of resistance left wiped out in the 'mopping up' operations. The estimates of those killed varied according to the different authorities who attempted this task. Wijeweera, from prison, announced in 1972 that this number was 15,000. Rene Dumont's estimate was that it could have been as high as 50,000. The significant fact was that the majority of those who participated were Sinhalese Buddhists from a low socio-economic strata.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from Wijeweera who was sentenced to life imprisonment by the justice system that was brought into play, the other leaders who had not been captured or killed remained active in hiding. The causes which had brought about the insurgency in 1971 remained, and following the presidential election of October 1982, the JVP returned to a critical phase of violence in politics. Then came the communal violence of July 1983 which began the drift into civil war with the Tamil militant group, the

LTTE in the north and their acts of terrorism targeting the civil population of Colombo. All this affected the economy which went into recession and further impoverished all those rural youth who had been attracted to the JVP. The party was strengthening both in support and armed resources.

Thus began the second insurgency period from 1987 to 1990 when the JVP became a much more formidable force in society being actually able to terrorise Colombo by declaring 24 hour "curfews" during which no normal life could go on and all businesses, including formal and informal, as well as government departments, had to close as employees who came to work were threatened with death. The government's counter-offensive began effectively several months after the parliamentary elections of February 1989. Between 1987 and 1989, the terrible acts of the JVP and the retaliatory violence of the security forces reached a crescendo and while 1971 had been thought of as a *beeshana kalaya* or 'time of great fear' this insurgency which stretched through 1987 to 1990 was a time of even greater fear and terror.

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Yet life went on and somehow people continued their battle to survive and even keep to their daily routines. Universities closed for long periods and schools must have been similarly affected but continued to retain their pupils.

One of the most interesting features of the times was that the Sinhala theatre continued to thrive and attract audiences providing, not only entertainment but also a forum for dissent as it dealt with socio-economic themes and made references to events which directly affected the lives of people.

Both the government and the JVP seem to have been disinclined to interfere with what was happening on the stage because at no time did the theatre have to go underground as had happened in many other countries under authoritarian or dictatorial governments. This was despite strict censorship of the media and all publications, including plays which had to be submitted for approval for public consumption. Where the theatre scored against newspaper articles or writing of any sort which was offered to the public was in the area of performance. A theatre script can seem comparatively innocuous but when it is performed by actors, various nuances and emphases



come into their own, the characteristic actions or gestures of politicians, even their distinctive dress, can be adopted ensuring that the audience recognises who is being satirised or portrayed, without it being possible to give offense to anyone! Performance is also a creation of the moment, a moment or moments that are ephemeral and disappear into what seems a void but actually lodge in the memories and understanding of the members of the audience.

### *Student of Sinhala Theatre*

Ranjini Obeyesekere studied the situation in the Sinhala Theatre during the 1980s in considerable and fascinating detail<sup>3</sup> has provided some examples of scripts from which I take the following: **Naga Gurula (Synopsis)** *The play is set in Chile. It opens on a darkened stage. It is night in what was formerly the most famous theatre in Santiago, now abandoned and used as a distillery. A security guard, Pero, checks out the place and goes to sleep on some barrels. Debray, a well known former actor, arrives. He is drunk, takes out an old script and begins reading aloud. A group of people come in quietly from stage left, see Debray and move stealthily to the back and hide behind the barrels. Pero, woken by Debray's loud recitations, shouts at him to be quiet or get thrown out. They clearly know each other and there is a note of annoyed tolerance in Pero's tone. But just then a child from the group in hiding cries out, in a terrified voice. "Mother, will he kill us?" Of course the group is then discovered and say that they are refugees from Peru, fleeing political repression. They have crept into what they thought was an abandoned building for the night. Pero is about to throw them out but Debray intervenes.*

*In the drama that ensues several themes are touched on. How the theatre came to be shut down; why Debray chose to stay (the people here will be deserted; your audience abandoned); how Debray is beaten by the police for letting the cast run away; and for playing the part of Higgins, an autocratic colonial vineyard owner, in a recent production. The refugees are excited at meeting the famous actor and ask him to read a play to them. In the end all get involved in a performance of the very play for which the theatre was shut down where he played the role of Higgins. The play they perform is about the winery of Moncardo owned by Higgins, a Spanish colonial of the 15th century, who has forced the native Incas to work in his vineyards. A crisis has occurred because the Incas find that they are losing their children, who one by one are 'missing'. The audience learns as the play develops that they have been abducted and drowned in the vats, in order to add a special flavour to the brew. The Incas decide to set fire to the brewery.*

*The central conflict is woven around this theme of the missing children. Who is to blame and what action should be taken? The various different*

*positions, arguments, attitudes and reasons for different forms of action are taken up, played upon and subtly critiqued. The play ends with the Inca leader being murdered by an unknown killer, Higgins and his men in control and the Incas civilised and christianised.*

*The actors then revert to their former roles. Suddenly one of the refugees, a woman shouts, "Where is my child? He was here just now but he's gone. My son is missing." There is chaos as everyone looks for the child who is now, in reality, missing. The curtain falls.*

It is easy to see how effectively the implications of such a play would be driven home to the hearts and minds of the audience. The cleverness of the playwright in setting the play in another country and civilisation avoids the censorship that the script would have been subjected to had the setting been local. The different positions and arguments presented in "the play within the play," the events portrayed, all relate to what is happening around them in the reality of their lives to which the final climax is directed.

They know that there are children in their society who are missing presumably lost forever. Early morning on February 18, 1990 a short time before his 32nd birthday Richard de Zoysa, a well-known journalist, poet, actor and television personality was abducted from his home, his mother being witness to the event. The men who took him away wore uniform. The mother made immediate inquiries of people who were well positioned in their official capacities to find out what had happened. She was reassured that he was taken in merely for questioning. However, in the afternoon of the following day, a fisherman who had found a body floating out at sea, rescued it and brought it ashore. It was of a male who had been shot in the head and some others reported that his finger nails had been ripped off in what was probably a process of torture. This was Richard, identified by his mother Dr Manorani Saravanamuttu by a mark on one of his knees which had been the result of a childhood injury. Before his untimely death, Richard who was the Sri Lankan correspondent of the Third World News Agency, Inter Press Service, had been due to leave the country in a few days time to take up the important appointment of English editor at a new Centre in Lisbon run by the same agency. There were several theories put forward by various well known people, including politicians and pressmen, as to who had killed him and why, but the most likely explanation was that he was killed at the direction of President Premadasa or a close confidante of his, by a government vigilante group. The man who was prominent in this group was identified by Dr Saravanamuttu as a senior ex-policeman who had been promoted to a Secret Service Branch which dealt with subversive activities. The inquiry into Richard's death was halted on the government's orders by the



Attorney General in charge of the case when this identification was made and the judge's order that this man be produced in Court was ignored. This was by and large an admission of his guilt and his guarantee of government protection. It was a time of censorship and so newspapers gave hardly any publicity to the whole affair and neither did they publish appreciations or make reference to the many achievements that Richard had to his name which had made him a very public figure. The general tenor of the controversy surrounding his death was that he had been killed because he was either a member of the JVP or strongly sympathetic to its cause. Richard's death could not be ignored or covered up as with all the other anonymous young men and women who had been captured, imprisoned or killed by security forces because they were either members or suspected of being members of the JVP. Though dead, he became the face of all the "disappeared" to all the parents who had lost their children. He came from the upper middle class, not the rural peasantry, his parents were well known in Colombo society; his father from a prominent Sinhalese family, a member of which had been a former Finance Minister of the country, his mother from a very distinguished Tamil family which had produced well-known figures in several professions.

Here I must make mention of what I consider to be a pivotal argument for the frustration of the young people who joined the JVP. To my surprise, it is not mentioned in any of the material I have read either in regard to the 1971 insurrection or the insurgency of the 1980s. Among the many pursuits that Richard engaged in was teaching English. Richard, it seemed to me, had perhaps unknowingly, focussed on this very argument, when he began teaching English free of charge to all young people he encountered who had qualifications only in Sinhala and were therefore at a severe disadvantage when it came to getting jobs. I know this because I heard it directly from him since he was a personal friend. It is my theory that the Sinhala Only Act which was brought into being by Prime Minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike in 1956, who was swept into power on a rising tide of nationalism, and implemented by his wife when she succeeded her husband on his assassination, gave false hope to the many Sinhala educated who felt that they were discriminated against in their own country as the language of education was English – which they called the "kaduwa" – in English "a sword." With the promise of at last being acknowledged in their own language and gaining university degrees with Sinhala subjects they would finally be preferred when it came to job selection – or so they thought. Many poor rural families placed all their scant resources at the service of a son or daughter who could go to university, become qualified and get a good job which would help the whole family to a better quality of life, essentially, lift them out of poverty. They mortgaged their small

holdings and made sacrifices to achieve this. But the expected result did not come – there were no jobs for these Sinhala qualified youth when the time came for employment. The final blow was that the probable reason for this was that apart from jobs being scarce, they did not know how to function in English.

As Richard was a prominent theatre person he was involved in a play which was said to satirise President Premadasa. The poster advertising the play was apparently a picture of the President with the words "Who is this Man?" printed across it. It is not clear whether this was the title of the play and whether it was in English or Sinhala because it was never performed. The government suppressed the whole enterprise and arrested the producer who was never seen again. It is not certain whether other actors who were to take part in it were also taken away and never heard of again. The script itself must have been destroyed because it has never surfaced.

For the government, perhaps this was the final piece of what they considered evidence of the desirability of doing away with Richard De Zoysa. His supporters felt that the most damning evidence against the government was that Richard, who as a journalist was well aware of all the abuses against human rights committed by the government in power, would reveal all he knew once he reached Lisbon and had the freedom to publish the information.

In 2009, 19 years after the end of the insurgencies of the 1980s, Ernest Macintyre, one of Sri Lanka's foremost playwrights writing in English and living in Australia to which he and his family had emigrated in the early 1970s, wrote a play which focussed on the insurgencies and took specific material from both 1971 and 1987-1990 with very telling effect. The play is called ANTIGONE IN SRI LANKA as IRANGANI or in a shortened form IRANGANI which was a popular Sri Lankan name deliberately chosen by the playwright as it rhymes with ANTIGONE. The play draws deeply on the Greek tragedy ANTIGONE by Sophocles, juxta-posing an ancient dilemma with its contemporary parallel in the context of Sri Lanka's postcolonial history of violence. The Antigone of the early 5th century B.C. daughter of a doomed father Oedipus, renders time honoured funeral honours to her dead brother Polyneices against the express wishes of the King and the Senate of Thebes who had decreed that, as a traitor to the state, his body should lie unburied to be dispatched as carrion. She suffers the inevitable consequences of her disobedience and dies. Irangani, her counterpart in the period of the uprisings by poor rural youth already referred to, seeks a religious burial for her brother Robert who had joined the insurgents and died by torture followed by a bullet to the head.<sup>4</sup> In her case, she lives in the palace of the President, Sidat Rajakaruna, her uncle, who had taken Robert and herself into his



home in their early youth when their parents were killed in an accident, their mother being Sidat's sister. Irangani now seeks to rescue Robert's body from the anonymous heap of bodies of insurgents, wishing to give a religious service in the palace followed by a decent burial at Kanatte (Colombo's major burial ground). The president is adamant that he will not permit this as he is the Head of State occupying the palace by virtue of his position. Now begins the struggle between the human rights of the individual and the rights claimed by the sovereign state, the hallowed bonds of family pitted against the political bondage of the Head of State, an encapsulation of the continual conflict of the powerless with the powerful. For a full understanding of the dimensions of the drama, all that is implied directly and indirectly in the play, it is helpful for each member of the audience to read the playwright's preface and notes given in the programme, preferably before the performance. Not only do they give explanations of the historical backgrounds as well as the main ideas that govern the play, the identities of actual people mentioned and the significance of certain items used, but the audience follows the whole intellectual and creative process by which MacIntyre came to write what is probably his most meaningful play to date. He is dealing with universal themes that apply to all people in every country where there is conflict due to ethnicity and class, riches and poverty, the top and the bottom rungs of society, the human suffering implicit in secret wars and uprisings, intractable personal dilemmas that pit human beings against their governments.

An unusual aspect of this play is that apart from the above themes and historical events portrayed with all the immediacy and acute realisation of character that the performances of the players project, there is also an exploration of 'the other'. A crucially important character, Deputy Inspector General of Police Serasinghe who is a close friend of the President from the time of their shared schooldays provides a compelling view of how the terrible effects of torturing prisoners and killing them callously also lacerate and wound the humanity of these men in the security services who have to carry out the orders of their superiors. The weight of the personal burden that Serasinghe carries makes him uncertain of himself, and as the tragedy runs its course, he questions whether those who rise to high positions in the state, like Sidat and himself, have demonstrated proper leadership which should be strong but also wise and humane. This is underlined to great effect in the words of the poem that Robert had on his desk and which Irangani frames and reads out at a climactic moment later in the play. It asks where the middle class people were when the lights of their civilisation were flickering out and warns that one day they will have to account for their dereliction of duty to the poor and weak in the society they are responsible for creating.

So we see the hitherto unknown face of the insurgents as well, their humanity which has been betrayed and ignored.

As in Greek tragedy, the play ends with several deaths. All the deaths of the protagonists take place off stage but are reported to the audience not by a Chorus, but by Serasinghe and Alice Amma, the faithful old family retainer, in dialogue which conveys very vivid images of a burning pyre and the fearful actions of those watching it. They also relate the death of the President<sup>5</sup>, now a broken man who understands himself and what has happened to his family, all too late, outlined against the huge posters along the road that dwarf his small figure, the angry rumblings of the crowd surrounding his car from which he steps out in a last bid to rally his supporters, and the approach of the assassin.

As the final curtain came down on the opening night at which I was present, the audience spontaneously accorded the play and its fine performers with a well-deserved standing ovation. The extraordinary power of the theatre, the melding of words and performance, was made manifest and a clear indication that each person in the audience viewed all that was seen and heard from a great diversity of perceptions and was moved to express appreciation at the culminating *cartharsis* of both pity and fear, the essence and gift of Greek tragedy, now applied in a post-colonial context.

This play is as relevant to the present situation in Sri Lanka as it is to past historical circumstances. The need for a government that rules not only with strength but also with wisdom, understanding and compassion, especially in a country where Buddhism is the state religion, is still a perennial problem.

The insurgencies of 1971 and 1987-90 also pose a likely scenario of events that may take place wherever these needs are not met by any government in power, especially in a country that has a large percentage of young people. IRANGANI is a play that arouses the conscience and makes its demands felt. It cannot be performed without probably being banned if the climate of opinion in the community in which it is presented does not favour an open and healing discussion of all its significant aspects which delineate the political situation in many countries today. Most of all, I see the play as a fitting, living memorial to those known and unknown who died during the period of the uprisings, some inspired, others misguided or misinformed, others still, innocent but punished with the guilty, all aspiring to a vision of what they thought would be a better world. By implication it is also a memorial to the suffering of grieving parents and relatives, many of whom still do not know what fate their children suffered, because they have never seen their dead bodies.



## NOTES

- 1 A comprehensive guide to this documentation is provided in **Ian Goonetilleke, "The Sri Lanka Insurrection of 1971: A Select Bibliographical Commentary"** in *Religion and the Legitimation of Power in South Asia*, Bardwell L. Smith (ed), Leiden, Brill, 1978
- 2 See **G. Obeyesekere, "Some Comments on the Social Backgrounds of April 1971 Insurgency in Sri Lanka (Ceylon)."** *Journal of Asian Studies*, 33 (3), 1974 pp 367-384 which indicates that of the 10,192 persons imprisoned during and after this insurrection, 97.6% were Sinhalese and 94.3% were Buddhists.
- 3 See **Ranjini Obeyesekere, "Violence, Censorship and the Sinhala Theatre during the Eighties,"** *Studies in Society and Culture : Sri Lanka Past and Present* in association with The National Library of Sri Lanka, 1995
- 4 The reader will note that this is an accurate description of Richard de Zoysa's death and was an indirect reference to him as he was known to the playwright.
- 5 This scene recalls the death of President Premadasa killed in a huge explosion detonated by a suicide bomber on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1993. Security men accompanying him, were also killed and they included the ex-policeman who had headed the group that abducted and killed Richard de Zoysa. The demands of natural justice were fulfilled.

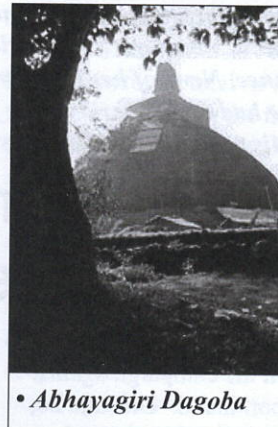
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Edited by Rajiva Wijesinghe, Published by The Sabaragamuwa University Press, 2000.



## THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF ANCIENT SRI LANKA

by Siri Ranawake

As in most countries the physical landscape is an essential feature in the development of the cultural landscape and so it is of the island of Sri

Lanka. Proximity and close access brought about by the close geological link with India means that from early times, human history has been closely linked with the Indian sub-continent. As is well known, the early settlers came from there bringing with them their arts, crafts and culture into their new home.

The major physical features of the island, viz. the natural division of the island into a number of environmental regions, each offering different sets of conditions for human and economic development, is itself a function of topography and climate.

The position of Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean places it astride the great sea routes past and present, between Europe, India and the Far East. From about the Second Century BC when the island became familiar to Greek and Arab sailors, it has been a port of call and an emporium of seaborne trade between West and East. While proximity to India profoundly influenced the civilisation and economy of the ancient Sinhalese whose origin was Indian, the island's insularity mitigated the forces of disruptive upheavals and changes in the Indian sub-continent.

While it is generally accepted that the northern Dry Zone is the most important region being the cradle of Sinhalese civilisation since the Second Century BC, recent excavations beneath the ancient city of Anuradhapura have revealed the remnants of an earlier civilisation dating back to about 800-900 BC. If the readings are accurate these findings predate the Mahavamsa account of the arrival of Prince Vijaya by over three centuries.

It has also been revealed that the inhabitants of Anuradhapura during this period were at an advanced level of civilisation with iron technology, rice cultivation, horse breeding and production of high grade pottery. These findings are the result of research and excavations conducted by Dr S.U. Deraniyagala, Director General of Archeology in 1969 and again in 1984 to 1989. He was assisted in the excavations by a British team headed by F.R. Allchin of Cambridge University with inputs from the British Museum and the Society of South Asian Studies. The results have succeeded in revolutionising existing concepts concerning the rise of civilisations in South Asia.



*In Part I of the Dr Mary Rutnam story, which commenced in the February issue, we read that Mary having worked for more than six months in the Green Memorial Hospital, Manipal, the fate of her future employment was suddenly in the balance. News of her secret marriage in New York to a Ceylonese, S.C.K. Rutnam, had leaked and as a result, she had to wait for a ruling from the headquarters of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in Boston about her employment. The story continues...*

## Dr Mary Rutnam (1873-1962): Pioneer for Women's Rights (Part II)

by THIRU ARUMUGAM

Meanwhile in America the campaign against Mary and Rutnam continued. On June 26, 1897 Mary wrote a 12-page letter to Dr Barton of the ABCFM giving her side of the story. She said that when she was doing post-graduate studies in New York, Rutnam called on her and suggested teaching her Tamil. She agreed and the Misses Leitch also thought it was a good idea. *"It was not very long before a feeling deeper than mere friendship became apparent. It was a matter of earnest prayer with me, from the very first I seemed to feel as if something was impending and I was powerless to act ... and I began to think that God had some special work for me to do in far away Ceylon"*. She added that there were no restrictions on marriage in her contract of employment and the subject was never even mentioned by the ABCFM or Misses Leitch. So when she consented to be Rutnam's wife she did not feel any disloyalty to the ABCFM and did not realise that she was doing wrong in keeping the matter secret. She said that one of

Rutnam's letters to her was stolen from the Manipal Post Office and the contents made public. She said that she had written about it all to her parents.

On June 29, 1897 the Leitch sisters wrote a very long letter to Mary. Some of the points mentioned in their letter include *"We think the greatest unkindness you could do to Mr Rutnam would be to marry him ... Our candid opinion is that he is a consummate beggar but without the push or willingness to work hard towards his own support ... A native man is brought up from his infancy to think about the dowry he will get from his wife ... If however you were to marry Mr Rutnam you would be doing the mission and the cause a very serious injury ... nine-tenths of his relatives, near and remote have never handled a knife and fork. Their usual way is to sit on the floor and eat with their fingers. You would not feel happy to sit down and eat with them on the ground"*.

### CULTURAL HERITAGE (from page 11)

Dr Deraniyagala's researches consisted of two phases. The first phase extended from 1968 to 1984 dealing with the pre-historic period of Sri Lanka with special reference to the Stone Age. These researches focussed on ancient sand dunes and several caves in the Sabaragamuwa Province. Stone Age cultures have been studied in terms of stone tool technology, subsistence practices, settlement patterns, burial practices and physical anthropology. In this context it has been established that humans of the Stone Age have inhabited Sri Lanka as early as 125,000 years ago, with the strong possibility that some of the cultural deposits are as early as 300,000 years ago, thereby preceding their first appearances in Europe by many thousands of years.

The second phase of Dr Deraniyagala's research commenced in 1984 and went on till 1989. I wonder whether it is still underway right now as I have no further information on that score. The second phase dealt with the period between 1000 BC and 300AD involving deep excavation in settlement areas in Anuradhapura, north east of the Thuparama. The early findings from about 30 feet below ground level, the remnants of an early civilisation have a

striking impact on Sri Lanka's history. The ethnicity of people who used iron technology, rice cultivation, horse breeding, production of high grade pottery, are a mystery. Were they the Yakkhas and Nagas mentioned in the chronicles?

In E.F.C. Ludowyk's "The Story of Ceylon" he says: "Take the Sinhalese, its major group. Beneath a patina of several centuries of civilisation, of considerable sophistication of thought and sensibility there lurks something of an older world, not properly assimilated with what replaced it or with the new, and even now disturbing by its presence. This may be little more than the effect on the observer of the complexity of the culture of a mixed group of people with long and varied traditions." He goes on to say "This is no ordinary complexity; it deepens as the major events of a long history are unfolded. At all times there seem to have been continually present in the culture, seemingly incongruous and irreconcilable elements."

The findings of Dr Deraniyagala's early research were recorded in Memoir No.8 of the Archaeological Department. However, Dr Deraniyagala noted his lament that the facilities available for research of a high standard are extremely poor besides the significant factor of the lack of finances.



### ***The Leitchs pile on the pressure***

To pile on the pressure, the Leitch sisters sent another long letter to Mary dated July 01, 1897. Some of the points they mentioned were: *"The natives easily take on a veneer. They dress well and make a good appearance when they go abroad. But immediately they return home, they relapse into their native habits going about the house wearing nothing but a loin cloth ... Almost every Hindu thinks that it is a husband's duty to occasionally beat his wife, in order to keep her in proper subjection ... There is scarcely a native in Jaffna who does not claim to be in debt ... It is true that Mr Rutnam is somewhat light complexioned but many of his relatives are very dark and some of his children might be almost black. And what about the laws of heredity? Would it not be reasonable to expect that the Hindu traits of deceit, falsehood, in short moral crookedness, will appear in the children? ... in mixed marriages the worst traits of both sides are likely to appear in the children ... This whole affair seems to us like a nightmare ... a Hindu expects his wife to be a constant servant while he plays the part of a grand lord"*.

On July 05, 1897, the Leitch sisters piled on the pressure with a long letter to Mary's parents in Canada in which they came out with the real reasons for their objection to the union. They wrote: *"Dr Irwin is beautiful and attractive and there is no reason she should throw herself away ... if she were to marry a native we would feel that a blow has been struck at our work. How could we go to fathers and mothers and ask them to send out a daughter. They would say 'the last young lady who went out there married a native' ... Mary would occasion ten times more harm to the cause of missions than all the good she can do in a lifetime"*. They also said that when the news of this union becomes public their fund raising would be affected. The letter continued: *"You perhaps do not know that it is the custom among Hindu men, as soon as a man loses his wife to begin to plan whom he will marry for his next wife ... native men are accustomed to think of women only as a convenience"*. It is strange that the Americans consistently refer to Rutnam as a Hindu when he was born a Christian of Christian parents and he was not a convert.

On July 07, Dr Barton of the ABCFM wrote to Mary's parents in Canada that: *"I cannot believe that your daughter has entered into an engagement with him with a full understanding of what it means, and if she has engaged herself to him I feel she would be thoroughly justified in breaking it. There is no way in which we can make Mr Rutnam a missionary of the Board and I see no way in which she could marry him and remain in her work in Ceylon"*. At least he did not go as far as the Leitch sisters who had written to Mary that she should break the engagement if she was only engaged, but if she was actually married she should take steps to get a divorce.

### ***Stoking up the fires***

During the last week of July 1897 the Leitches wrote a total of five letters to Dr Barton of the ABCFM stoking up the fires! Some of the thoughts they expressed about Mary were: *"She has deceived us all and lived a lie"*, *"She has ruined herself"*, *"The local papers will get hold of the story and hold her conduct up to ridicule. Her usefulness is at an end"*, *"We planned a nursing school at Inuvil, but by her conduct the best native families would not send their daughters"*, *"Missionary enterprise rests on confidence. She cannot behave like that and retain the standing of a missionary ... she must resign ... There is no point in keeping her out of pity"*. They also asked Bartonto investigate whether the marriage between them carried out in New York was legal.

The Leitches followed this up with a 13-page letter to Mary dated August 03, 1897. Some of their thoughts expressed in this letter include *"Your conduct is inexplicable. Yours was not a sudden impulse, but you never cared to take your parents or the Board into your confidence ... You kept your marriage a secret so that when the Board came to know you could force their hand ... It is best if you sever connections with the Board ... It is in your power to do us much harm ... If you cause trouble between the natives and the missionaries we will expose you"*. The Leitches also said that Rutnam's brother-in-law in India met the cost of his education in the hope that he would marry a relation in accordance with Tamil custom. He should therefore pay back what was spent on his education. He is trying to raise funds for a school in Anuradhapura. He should abandon this project and return whatever funds have been raised and go back to his native country.

### ***Mary's rebuttal***

On August 01, 1897 Mary wrote to the Leitch sisters with a point by point rebuttal. Some excerpts from her letter are: *"both my father and mother had written to me consenting that the marriage might take place after I had served some years in Inuvil (which was exactly what we hoped for and trusted for). It was your long letters to my parents that completely upset them ... We both fully realised that there would be prejudice by many of both nations and much opposition and the object of the secrecy of the affair was that we might have an opportunity of doing something to lessen these feelings ... You speak of incongruities, our Master never used knife and fork ... should we despair primitive manners? ... I also know of men in our own country who slap or ill treat their wives"*. Mary also wrote that at the Mission Committee Meeting at which her future was discussed, Mr Hastings, the Head of Jaffna College, said that the fact of her marriage *"was made known by treachery"* and that she thought that he was right.



### **Rutnam's supporters**

Rutnam did have his supporters and sympathisers in America. This included Louis Klopsch, the Proprietor of the "Christian Herald" which had the largest circulation of all the Christian weeklies in USA. On June 29, 1897 Klopsch wrote to Rutnam to say: *"The attack of the Misses Leitch came to us of course. It is very much like the usual attack of Missionary Boards and their friends. It does not influence us one bit"*. Klopsch followed this up with an insertion in the "Christian Herald" of August 25, 1897 which included the words: *"The marriage is announced of Mr S C K Rutnam MA, the talented young Christian Hindu, who recently graduated at Princeton University, to Miss Mary H Irwin MD. Mr Rutnam is well known to us through his eloquent and scholarly lectures on Christian education among the high caste races of India ... We trust that the united labours of the young couple for the evangelisation of the Ceylonese will be abundantly blessed by God"*.

### **Rutnam decides to return to Ceylon**

On August 11, 1897 Rutnam wrote to Barton of the ABCFM that he had decided to return to Ceylon and that if he could catch the connecting ship in England, he should be in Ceylon by the end of September. Rutnam said that he had written to Mary's father apologising and he had received a reply, some parts of which he could not understand. He quotes from Mr Irwin's letter: *"She [i.e. Mary] is now suffering from devices which however clever they may seem in the eyes of some people are sinful in the eyes of that God who is now punishing you (murder will out) ... You led her to believe that this was only a strong form of engagement to be followed up by a public marriage in five years, best thing now is go no further and at the end of five years we will consider the subject again"*.

By a letter dated August 26, 1897 the Leitches ramped up their pressure on Rutnam to leave USA and return to Ceylon. The gist of their letter was: *"You have done a most dishonourable thing. If the way you have treated Mary is known to the public, you will be mobbed. Plenty of coloured men have been mobbed for less. Leave the country. Do not try Mr Irwin's patience. He may hunt you and put a bullet through you. If you do not leave the country we will make your actions public. Your influence is dead here. You will be made into a laughing stock"*.

Rutnam set sail from New York in the *Lucania* on September 04, 1897, bound for Liverpool, England. This Cunard ship was the largest passenger liner afloat when she was launched. He sent a cable to Mary that he was leaving USA. On his arrival in Liverpool, he found a cable from Mary which had been sent to New York and re-directed to Liverpool. Mary's message was that she was leaving Ceylon for several reasons to join him and to please reply immediately. He sent a

cable to Mary that he was now in Liverpool and would be leaving for Colombo on the Orient Liner *Ormuz* on September 17. He sailed as planned as he did not receive any further message from Mary.

### **Mary's story**

Two chapters in Rutnam's book *"Race Antagonism in Christian Missions"* were written by Mary giving her views of the events that unfolded. Some of her narrative has already been included earlier in this article.

She arrived in Jaffna on January 17, 1897 and was disappointed to find that the McLeod Hospital for Women in Inuvil was still under construction and was actually completed more than a year later. This meant that Mary and Dr Isabella Curr had to work for the time being in the Green Memorial Hospital, Manipay where Dr Thomas Scott and Dr Mary Scott were already working. Apart from her medical work in the Hospital, Mary spent a lot of time learning Tamil and also conducting Bible classes. By early June 1897 rumours about her started spreading and she was asked pointedly by a missionary whether she was married. When she admitted it he said: *"It will be death to your influence and his ... Everyone will despise you. You will lower yourself by such a marriage, for no matter how educated a man may be, the born tendencies of the lower races are in him"*.

Mary says that at this time the storm clouds were also gathering round Rutnam in New York and *"it was as if I was compelled to stand helpless and silent and watch the cruel blow that was about to descend and crush the one I loved"*. The American Ceylon Mission (ACM) in Jaffna held a Committee Meeting to discuss Mary's situation on June 19, 1897 and what happened at the Meeting has been described earlier. The covering letter forwarding the Minutes to Boston said *"We especially feel that every such alliance can but be a new menace to the safety, and a new narrowing of the sphere, of every missionary (young and unmarried) of the Women's Board"*.

Mary added that as the matter became known in America her weekly mail increased in volume *"Every week brought lengthy epistles from the Misses Leitch, first against Rutnam's scheme for independent work in Ceylon, then about the engagement, and latterly covering the marriage ceremony"*. It was only later that Mary discovered that the Leitch's letters to her had been copied to Barton of the ABCFM, her parents and even to the other American missionaries in Jaffna. As a result *"my dear father and mother were led to believe that their daughter had promised herself to one of the greatest rogues in existence and in their broken heartedness wrote to me imploring me*



**•Dr Mary  
Rutnam.**



*to come home at once ... It did seem strange that the Leitches could write so much about one of whom they knew so little. Surely I had one hundred times more opportunity of knowing Mr Rutnam, his life, plans and spirit, than they or anyone else had".*

On September 03, 1897, Mary received a bundle of foreign mail. It included an official letter from Barton of the ABCFM that considered her *"connection with the ABCFM to have ceased - the Board henceforth having no control over your movements"*. She was also asked to refund immediately all monies spent on her by the Board including the cost of post-graduate training, outfit allowance, passage and travel expenses to Ceylon. Regarding this claim for a refund, a Minister of the Presbyterian Church in Canada later wrote a letter to Mary in which he said: *"Your father told me that your former employers were asking him to recoup them for the expenses incurred by them in connection with your relation to them. I dissuaded him from doing that on the ground that they and not you broke the contract"*. It must be noted that not only it was the Board that broke the contract but also that the contract did not say anything about her marital status or place any restrictions on marriage during the period of the contract. Anyway, we may safely assume that the Board backed down from the claim for a refund because later on November 26, 1897 Mary wrote to the ABCFM forwarding receipts for travel expenses from Canada to Ceylon and asking for reimbursement.

Among the letters that Mary received on September 03 was a letter from her mother who said that although they had previously given consent to the *"engagement they now believed after letters from the Leitches that 'Mr Rutnam was a rascal of the worst kind; and their minds were centred on the one object of saving their child from the clutches of this scoundrel' and begged for her speedy return to Canada"*. Mary believed from her parents' letter that the only hope of reconciliation with her parents was by her presence in Canada.

### **Mary decides to travel to Canada**

There was also a cable from Rutnam saying that he was returning from America by the first available steamer. This at once complicated matters *"for how could I think of returning home when he was on his way to me?"*. Mary decided to cable Rutnam to wait in America until her return. She also learned that the ACM missionaries Rev. and Mrs Howland were leaving Jaffna the following week for America by the Bibby Liner *Cheshire* on September 17. If a reply was received from Rutnam in time she could sail in the *Cheshire* with the Howlands to America.

On September 10 she finally received a cable from Rutnam to say that he had arrived safely in Liverpool and was leaving for Colombo on September 17 by the Orient Liner *Ormuz*. Evidently Mary's

cable to Rutnam asking him to stay in America until she arrived there had missed him. Not knowing his address in Liverpool, she drafted a cable to the Orient Lines asking them to inform Rutnam to wait in UK until she arrived there, and sent the message to Colombo asking one of Rutnam's friends, a Mr L to hand it over to the Orient Lines Office in Colombo for transmission to England.

The coastal steamer from Kankasanturai to Colombo was leaving on September 14 and she immediately started packing to leave Jaffna. She said goodbye to Rutnam's family whom she said were *"deeply sorrowed at my departure but trusted God to lead and guide me"*. She arrived in Colombo on September 16 and found to her utter surprise that Mr L had not forwarded her draft cable to the Orient Lines Office. When she asked him why he had not done so, he simply said that he did not believe God wanted him to do so.

Mary's immediate decision was to wait in Colombo for three weeks until Rutnam arrived and then proceed homewards to Canada to effect a reconciliation with her parents. She explained her decision to Mr L and was astonished when Mr L urged her to travel immediately by the Bibby Liner *Cheshire*. Mr L promised faithfully to meet Rutnam on arrival and explain the reasons for her departure and Mary finally believed that it was God's wish that she should travel by the *Cheshire*. She sailed from Colombo the next day, September 17, 1897, travelling with the Howlands.

### **AUTHOR'S NOTE:**

Sources of information for this article include microfilms in the National Library, Canberra of original handwritten letters by the following: Mary; her husband, S C K Rutnam; the American Missionary sisters, Mary and Margaret Leitch who were in Jaffna for seven years, mainly at Uduvil Girls College and raised funds for Jaffna projects in UK and USA thereafter; the American Ceylon Mission (ACM) based in Jaffna; and the parent body the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) based in Boston. Other sources of information include *Race Antagonism in Christian Missions*, a book published by Mary's husband S C K Rutnam in 1899 in which two chapters are in Mary's own words, and Prof. Kumari Jayawardena's book *Dr Mary Rutnam; a Canadian pioneer for Women's Rights in Sri Lanka* which was published in 1993 and describes Mary's social service work in detail. The other major source of information was Brian Rutnam, a grandson of Mary. He is a Sydneysider and an active member of the CSA and he kindly provided access to the text of Mary's personal diary covering the period 1906 to 1910 and also to his own personal notes on the Rutnam family. Information has also been taken from the extensively detailed Family Tree prepared by CSA member Jayantha Somasundaram of Canberra. He is a great-grandson of Elizabeth Agnew Chellama, a sister of S C K Rutnam. Rutnam was very close to this sister. All direct transcripts from these sources are printed in italics in this article.

*(To be concluded in the next issue.)*

### **Sweet nothing!**

It was mealtime during a flight on a British Airways plane: "Would you like dinner?" the flight attendant asked the man seated in the front row.

"What are my choices?" the man asked.

"Yes or no," she replied.



**M**y previous piece on the “*Early Years of Motoring in Ceylon*” (*The Ceylankan* No 60 November 2012) evoked a level of interest which has since prodded me to reflect on motoring in more recent times. The decade of the 1950s – mid 20th century Ceylon, could verily be described as the “golden age” of motoring. The early 1950s especially were years when the country enjoyed the “Korean boom”; when export commodities, mainly rubber, fetching record prices, with income tax relatively low, all leading to consumption going on at a gallop.

There were no national investment projects of note to capture the surplus that was generated, and most of the money that flowed in, went towards conspicuous consumption largely in the purchase of luxury goods such as automobiles. The Automobile Association of Ceylon (AAC) published a monthly magazine called *The Record* (first printed in 1927) which served as a forum for disseminating news about the automobile industry. A popular feature in later years was the listing of new motor cars available for sale with their prices and details of the local agents. In the 1950s one could observe at the bottom of the price list of the modest Ford Anglia (agents Richard Pieris and Co.) at around Rs 5500, and at the top was the Cadillac (agents Tuckers Autodrome) priced at around Rs 38,000. In between were other cars of which the most popular was the Morris Minor whose agents were Rowlands Ltd. Car Mart imported Volkswagen and the Peugeot; both of which were also very popular and dominated sales within the relevant segment of the price range. Walker & Sons were agents for the Austins, also much in demand especially in Jaffna where people were quick to recognise a quality, durable product. Brown & Co were agents for Triumph, and Standard, and Colonial Motors for Fiat cars. CFT Engineering imported Renaults and Tuckers Autodrome were agents for Cadillac, Buick, Vauxhall, Oldsmobile and Opel. Other than American cars, the bulk of cars imported into the island was from the United Kingdom which dominated the automobile scene. Imports were unrestricted in the early 1950s and on average, there were 25 new cars registered each day. Those were the days when people used a new car only for a year, buying the next year’s new model as quickly as it was imported!

Strangely enough there were no Rolls Royces or Bentleys listed on the *The Record*, but any motoring enthusiast could have imported them through the accredited agent which, I believe, was the British Car Co. an affiliate of Rowlands Ltd. A noteworthy aspect of car imports during the 1950s and thereafter was the fact that between 1948 up to now there were no new Rolls Royce cars imported into Ceylon. Records meticulously maintained by our member and Rolls Royce aficionado Roger Thiedeman of Melbourne indicate that there were around 33 Rolls Royce cars

## The Golden Age of Motoring in Ceylon

by Hugh Karunanayake

imported into the country from 1920 up to now of which four, those imported by Mrs Selestina Dias of Panadura (Reg B 701), Mr JLD Peiris (Reg C 4853) of Colombo. Sir Ernest De Silva (Reg ?) of Colombo, and Mr CEA Dias (Reg X 2365) of Colombo were the only cars imported new.

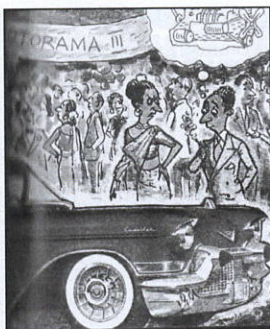
A peg or two lower in prestige but possibly much lower in price than a Rolls was the stately Humber Pullman and the Humber Super Snipe which were the automobiles of choice of the senior directors of the British-run mercantile firms of that era. Many of them had liveried chauffeurs to cart them around town, a sight that may arouse some amusement in the streets of Colombo of today!

The luxury cars of the 1950s reflected values of the growing post WWII American hegemony spreading across the world, transmitted through American dominated global media networks including the very influential Hollywood movie industry. People in Ceylon were not slow to absorb the influence of the mesmerising new automobile styles that were emanating from USA. “Mouth organ fronted” grills and the fancy “tail fins” of the Cadillacs, Buicks, Packards, Plymouths were very desirable objects which fascinated local elites. Tuckers Autodrome, capitalising on growing demand for automobiles, organised promotional events called “Autorama” at which well known female models of the day posed beside cars, drawing attention to curvy lines of both types! The photo here from 1957 shows Gunilla Buxton, Eva Wanigasekera and Rita Fernando standing beside a Cadillac EL1771. It is



• Models (from left) Gunilla Buxton, Eva Wanigasekera, and Rita Fernando at the Tuckers’ autorama.

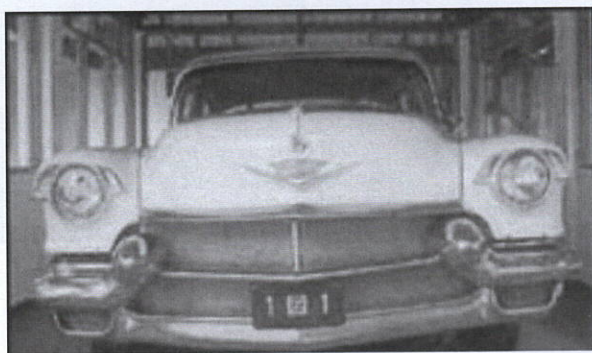




• Cartoonist Aubrey Collette's thoughts about 'autoramas'.

likely that there were around 15 Cadillacs, including convertibles, imported during the early 1950s. Among them were two sleek Eldorado convertibles owned by R. G. Senanayake (EY2889) and his brother Upali (EY 1713) homeware retailer Abdul Rahim (EL 6000) S.R. Muttiahpillai of Balangoda, FJ Lucas Fernando (EY 1517) whose Cadillac De Ville had a

silver plated cocktail cabinet replete with crystal ware fitted into the rear of the front seat. It was purchased by Hentley Joseph from the Fernando estate upon his death in 1958. Arguably the most talked of Cadillac was that owned by Sir John Kotelawala, bearing Reg No 1Sri1 which heralded a new nomenclature for



• 1SRI 1 Cadillac owned by Sir John Kotalawela.

car registration in 1958. It was imported duty free at a landed cost of Rs 17,000, a considerable sum of money in those days. After Sir John's death, the car was acquired by motor enthusiast Viswa Weerasuriya who donated it to the Kotelawala Defence Academy in 1994 where it is presently on display. Of the Buicks, there were two notable convertibles cruising along Galle Road on most weekends of which Onally Gulamhussein's car EL 1555 was strikingly attractive, with his wife Yvonne and her poodle seated on the front passenger seat. The other Buick convertible was owned by Ernest Perera. Farouk Abdeen who lived in the USA brought down a new Chevrolet Impala convertible which was the cynosure of all eyes at the time. The car unfortunately was involved in an accident, badly damaged and quite possibly written off.

Convertibles were very much in vogue during that period. There were two Benz convertibles that I knew of. (There were possibly more). RGC (Dickie) Pereira, the only son of RL Pereira then the foremost criminal lawyer of the country, and Dickie himself

on the verge of taking silk when he died aged 44 in 1954, owned the cabriolet bearing number EL782. He was on his way to the Anuradhapura courts when he suffered a heart attack and was rushed back to Colombo where he died only a year after he bought the car. This car was later owned by Dr J Sproule. and later by Geoffrey Bawa. A Benz 350 Convertible owned by Earl Arnolda was a head turner. It was later owned by Ray de Costa. Then there were the Austin A40 Sports, very popular convertibles in those days. Sydney de Zoysa, Jeff Felix (EL 4444), Basil Rajanayagam were among owners of these models. The MG convertibles too were always able to draw attention. The Series TC TD, TE, and TF had several enthusiast-owners. Names that come to mind are our former President Tony Peries who is reputed to have often done the 130 mile trip from Colombo to Passara in a little over four hours, Wakely Paul, brother of our member and avid motor enthusiast Avinder Paul, Sali Parakrama, and Irwin Dassenaik (EL 2471). The MGA which came in during the late 1950s took a different style from the T series and caught the fancy of the market. Young bucks of that era seen around town in their gleaming MGAs driving along with the hood down included Jayantha Fernando, David Silva, Faisal Abdeen, Killie Maharajah, Ranjit Wijewardene, and Tooty Rahim.

Another attractive convertible was the Sunbeam Alpine. Rajah Jayakody, the "Rajah of Balagalla" as he was light heartedly referred to sometimes, owned a sleek yellow model bearing No: EL 5005. It had the dubious distinction of going off a winding upcountry road only to fall several metres below on to another section of the same winding road! Perhaps the most notable of the Hillman Minx convertibles, of which there were a few, was that



• The Benz Convertible first owned by RGC Pereira.

(Photograph by courtesy of Asgi Akbarally -Classic and Vintage Automobiles of Ceylon 2012).

owned by Duggie Roberts, who earned the title of Mr Ceylon in 1951. His car EY6163 was a familiar sight with its hood lowered and Doug wearing a teeshirt to enhance display of his biceps, driving along. A car that was described as a sports saloon was the two- door Hillman Californian hardtop: after a couple of years,



its popularity went the way of all things transient. Karmann Ghia, manufactured by VW was also a very desirable car of which possibly a dozen or so were imported. One used by Arjuna Dias was ubiquitous on the roads of Colombo. Another highly regarded car was the Citroen, a good example of which belonged to our member Scott Dirckze, now resident in Colombo whose enthusiasm for its capability, it was rumoured, almost convinced the Government to set up an assembly plant for Citroen vehicles. Other continental cars that were imported in smaller numbers were the Simca, Borgward Isabella (Agents Steuarts Motors), the DKW, with its two stroke engine, and the Javelin Jowett. Peculiar to those times was the penchant for some motor enthusiasts to arrange to have a chosen registration number for their cars. Examples are: Gunam Thambipilai of Deniyaya who had EY 7777, EL 7777 and EN 7777 and Sir Razeek Fareed who had CL 5, CN 5 and EL 5.

In those days, long before violence stalked the country, politicians had no necessity to travel in bullet proof cars. It may be of interest therefore to note the choice of cars of politicians of that era. Apart from Sir John's Cadillac, SWRD Bandaranaike had a Chevrolet and later an Opel Kapitän EN 6161, used after his death by Mrs Bandaranaike. She later used a Mercedes Benz, and also the Prime Minister's official car was a Cadillac. Dr N.M. Perera was always a diehard Peugeot 203 enthusiast (owning at least two consecutive models) as was Pieter Keuneman. Dr Colvin R de Silva's car of choice was a Wolseley Sedan, having more than one car, and he having a considerable investment in the British Car Co. R. Premadasa had a Morris Minor, gifted to him by the vegetable *mudalalis* of the Pettah Market. He used to drive this car for many years till he was elected to



• Then Prime Minister D.S.Senanayake stepping into his official Rolls Royce.

Parliament. The car bearing Reg: No EN9729 is said to be restored and presently housed in the Premadasa home in Kehelwatte.

General Secretary of the UNP of those days Sir Ukwatte Jayasundera owned a Humber Pullman which replaced the Chevrolet he owned earlier with

the registration No CY1. Prime Ministers of Ceylon in the early years DS Senanayake and his son Dudley used as their official car a Rolls Royce Silver Wraith which was later shipped to London for use by the High Commissioner. There was no registration number assigned to the official car of the Prime Minister, instead a symbol of a gilded crown stood in its place.

With liberalisation of imports in 1977, the automotive sector in Sri Lanka entered a new phase. The dominance of British manufactured cars had declined considerably during the intervening period of 1961 to 1977 which prohibited new car imports. In its place, the global market had seen the emergence of Japanese-made cars which displaced major manufacturers even in their domestic markets in the USA, UK and Europe. With gradual opening up of car imports which commenced in 1977, Sri Lanka too adapted itself to the drastically changed global scenario. Companies like Freudenberg representing Toyota and Associated Motorways representing Nissan soon took the dominant share of the market and displacing the former market leaders like Walkers, Rowlands Car Mart etc. Although Sri Lanka has not reverted to "open imports" as was prevalent prior to 1961, there is nevertheless a substantial inflow of new and used cars mainly through the burgeoning diaspora now settled across the globe but still with family ties and interests well established in the old country. The national fleet continues to grow, and there is much evidence to indicate increasing interest in vintage cars including those from the 1950s, although it is sad to note that many of the cars discussed here have unfortunately ended up in the scrap yard.



### *Congratulations and a Warm Welcome to our New Members*

ARJUNA & HEATHER DHARMAKIRTI,  
Glen Waverley, VIC.  
DICK & GILLIAN EMERSON, Wheelers Hill, VIC.  
NIHAL & SUBADRA KAPPAGODA,  
Ontario, Canada.  
TONY DONALDSON, Melbourne, VIC.  
CAMIL GERAIS, Cherrybrook, NSW.  
TONY & MELANIE RANKINE, Cheltenham NSW.  
DR FREDDO & RANJI BENJAMIN, Westleigh NSW.  
DR SHELTON & JAYANTHI PEIRIS, Beverly Hills, NSW.

CORRECTION: A Gift Subscription from CSA member Michael Berman to his sister Mrs Moyra Brohier of Caterham, Surrey, England was incorrectly recorded in the February issue of Journal 61, as a Gift Subscription from Michael to Ian Berman of Glen Iris, VIC. We apologise for any inconvenience caused to all concerned.





# The saga of Elephants and the plantations in Ceylon

by Jayantha Jayawardene

***E***lephants have been an integral part of the coffee and tea industries in their early years in Ceylon. When the coffee estates were first opened up and the jungles were being cleared, elephants were used for most of the heavy work like uprooting stumps of trees that had been cut, drawing the logs to areas where they could be burnt etc. In later years, elephants helped transport material to construct the roads, railways, bridges and culverts. When the coffee industry failed, elephants were used to uproot the coffee bushes in order to plant tea in its place.

Planters in Sri Lanka have had a long association with wild elephants. This association started with the pioneer planters who moved to the upcountry areas to open up land for the cultivation of coffee and cinchona. Unfortunately, those early associations were always confrontational and detrimental to the elephant. The jungles that were inhabited by the elephants were cleared at a rapid rate to be replaced by coffee and cinchona plants. The elephants that had lived in these jungles for generations were shot indiscriminately if they got in the way of those clearing the jungles.

There is a belief that the elephants that inhabited these jungles went down to the low country when their habitat was invaded by man. This is not true. They were shot and killed. Later when these pioneer planters settled down on their estates they went after the wild elephants to shoot them, in what they called a sport! Books by writers like Sir Samuel Baker, Alfred Clarke, Harry Storey, Skinner and Sir

Emerson Tenant are replete with accounts of they or others shot elephants for sport.

Major Thomas Rogers is reputed to have killed 1,500 elephants. He was struck by lightning and killed at the Haputale Resthouse when only 40 odd years old. Ironically his grave at the Nuwara Eliya Golf Club also seems to have been struck by lightning. Major Skinner a roads engineer and Payne Galleway are reported to have killed over 700 elephants each.

On the other hand the pioneer planters used tame elephants, which were plentiful at that time, to clear the jungles and plant coffee. Elephants are sure footed and were very adept at moving, with heavy loads, over rough, steep and uncharted terrain. They were also used to uproot the stumps of the large jungle trees that were cut down. Elephants were hired on a daily basis and payment would depend on the type of work performed. The elephants to be tamed for work were caught by the kraal method, where the wild elephants were driven into a stockade and when



captive, tamed and trained for work. Tame elephants were used to assist in the taming of the wild elephants that were caught.

### Elephants on estates in recent times

Shawlands Estate, Lunugala had wild elephants coming up from the Bibile and Moneragala jungle areas and raiding the vegetable gardens of the labourers. Douggie Jenkins, Bevil Jansz and the late Russel Bowen were the Superintendents of Shawlands in the 1960s and 1970s.

Hubert Congreve has related a story to his son Kenneth, about elephants, when he was an assistant Superintendent on Hopton Estate, Lunugala in the 1950s. Elephants used to come to a site cut for a new building on the estate and slide down the loose earth, on their haunches, just like going down a mat-slide! They would do this repeatedly, quite obviously considering it an enjoyable game!

Hopton Estate had elephants visiting them in the 1960s and 70s as well. In the 1960s and 1970s Ron Ferguson and later Kumar Gunatileke were the superintendents of that estate. Wild elephants also came up to Hopton and Swinton divisions from the Bibile and Moneragala jungles and mainly raided the vegetable gardens of the labourers. In fact, Hopton had an item styled 'Elephant Damage' in the report that the Visiting Agent submits periodically. Yapame and Kehelwatte, both estates in Lunugala, also suffered the detrimental effects of the visits of wild elephants.

Elephants had come up from the Lunugala area and visited the large area of patna land between Mahadowa Estate, Madulsina and El Teb Estate, Passara. Both estates are over 4,000 feet above sea level. Their dung was found by Mike Clarke, Superintendent of El Teb, on one of his treks through the patnas. As Russell Tennekoon, the assistant superintendent of El Teb, at that time, says these elephants were 'just visiting'. Not seen. No damage done.

Elephants also visited Meedumpitiya division of Passara group when Douggie Lamb was the superintendent and David Witham the assistant superintendent on that division.

Sarath de Zoysa, who had a legendary stay as Assistant Superintendent under Fraser Spence on Roeberry Estate, Madulsima, says that in the 1940s there was no road to Roeberry. The horse or cart track ended at Metigahatenne. From Metigahatenne all machinery including parts for the factory that was being built, supplies, food etc. were brought by elephants. Elephants were used for the transport of various items by many estates that did not have suitable roads leading to them.

In the 1960s wild elephants have come up from the Wellawaya area to Gamawela Estate, Passara and Mahatenne division of Dammeria Estate also in Passara. I was superintendent of Dammeria in the

1970s but the elephants did not come there again.

On the other side of Badulla, a herd of elephants from the Talpitigala area used to come to Keenakelle and Ledgerwatte estates, which were in Hali Ela. The elephants caused very little damage while there.

A place where fairly large herds of elephants used to visit is the Elephant Plains in the Ragala area. These plains are located at one end of a 'ridge' formed by Hantane, Asgiriya, Wiltshire, Selegama and the North Matale Hills. When on the peak, looking left and down are Bramley, Maturata, Alma and High Forest Estates. Gonapitiya Estate is further on. These plains are divided into two blocks by Liddesdale, Diyanilla and Maha Uva estates.

In earlier times herds of elephant used to come up periodically from the Uma Oya and Sarasuntenne areas. Now they do not come up, mainly due to the extensive human habitations in their path. Alan Bowie, records in 1950, that in 1930 he saw and photographed a group of over one hundred elephants making their way towards the Elephant Plains. In 1950 he records seeing only 12.

However, even now their trails can be identified by the great trenches formed by constant

use and erosion.

Some are about six feet wide and about four feet deep. These herds used to feed on the succulent 'Diya-nilla' (*Rhynchoglossum notonianum*) that grew profusely



• An elephant clearing the jungle.

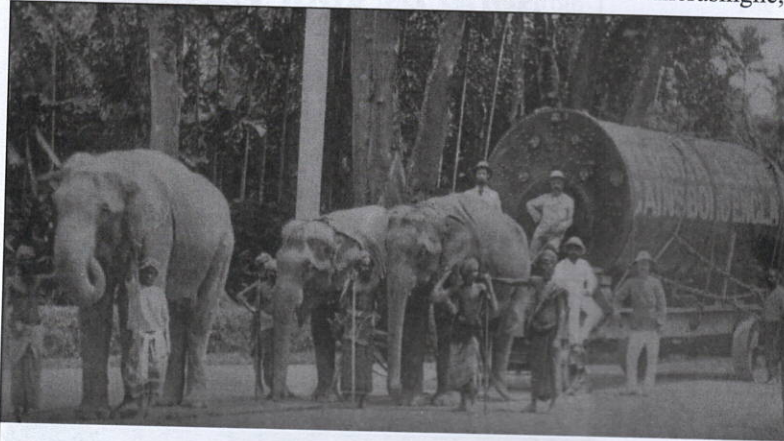
there. Diyanilla Estate, now a part of Liddesdale, gets its name from this plant.

In 1967, 1969 and 1970 when Ted Gottelier was the Manager of Poonagala Estate, Bandarawela, a wild elephant came up from the Koslanda / Wellawaya area and caused a lot of damage to the vegetable gardens of the labourers. The first time this elephant, which was a tusker, was encountered on the plantation was when the tea pluckers (pickers) were going to work one morning and saw it in the tea bushes.

A note by Mrs. Gottelier, who was an interested spectator during the first visit, states: "I was always under the impression that an elephant could not charge downhill as it would then be top heavy but what came next dispelled that impression. It charged the men downhill for about 150 to 200 yards, a gradient of about 1 in 6, through gums, grass, hidden rocks and uneven ground, as surefooted as anyone". Mike de Alwis, one time national rugby captain and Graeme Hamer were assistant superintendents on Poonagala during this time.



In the 1990s a number of elephants had come up to the Makaldeniya, Poonagala and Koslanda estates. I carried out a survey of these elephants when Viji Johnpulle was the superintendent of Poonagala, and found that there were seven elephants trapped in this area. They had come up from Wellawaya and Koslanda, through village gardens and rubber plantations, but had not been able to go back, mainly because of increased human activity. These elephants were all males. Most of them are still there. One intoxicated labourer of Makaldeniya Estate was killed one night when, in his drunken state, he tried to take



• *Elephants drawing a boiler to the factory.*

(All photographs provided by the author)

on a wild elephant he accosted. Wild elephants raided the Koslanda town during the 'Adi Poosai' festival in 1999. They brought down the banana trees that had been used for the ceremony.

In the 1990s the Department of Wildlife Conservation made an attempt to capture and translocate these animals. However with the first capture they encountered many problems. One was that, due to the hilly terrain, it was difficult to dart the elephants with a tranquilizer. If the elephant fell down with its head in a position lower position than the body, it would die due to the intestines etc. pressing against the diaphragm. The other problem was that these elephants were in a part of the estate that had only narrow winding field paths which made it difficult to bring the elephant to the main road. The elephant that was captured was re-located in the Yala National Park.

For many years elephants moving down from the fringes of the Sinharaja Forests used to appear on Deepdene Estate, Rakwana. Almost 50 years ago when Bathiya Jayaratne and later Sarath de Zoysa were in charge of Deepdene, elephants were regular visitors. Sometimes when coming late at night from Colombo or the club they used to encounter elephants on the road. Sometimes the elephants did not move away quickly keeping the occupants of the vehicle waiting. Elephants still visit Deepdene, though in smaller numbers now.

Sarath de Zoysa says that when he was on Deepdene, the Wildlife Department wanted to capture the three elephants that were visiting that estate regularly. The department staff surrounded the elephants and had them against a steep and almost sheer mountain. As the department staff watched helplessly the elephants climbed up this steep mountain, helping each other, especially the baby, as they climbed right up and went off.

This herd used to visit the cardamoms and paddy field at Aigburth Estate, Rakwana. Ralph Amerasinghe, then assistant superintendent of

Aigburth, says that they disturbed cardamom harvesting many times, when he was there, by coming during the day. Their smell preceded their arrival. He says that in the 1970s elephants were regularly encountered on the Bulutota Pass which is on the Rakwana – Deniyaya road.

In the past British road engineers traced new roads along the paths developed by the elephants since it ensured an even gradient. These 'road traces' were developed through constant use by elephants in their movements through hilly terrain. The Bulutota Pass with its 10 elbow or hair pin bends is a perfect example of

this. They also made even trails, later to be converted to roads, going from one mountain to the other, across the valley.

The Sinharaja forest reserve borders the even numbered bends of this pass. The most frequent sighting of elephants was at the 4th hair pin bend from the bottom. On occasion elephants were seen making their way from the sixth or fourth bend, along the road, to the fifth bend and onto the patnas close by.

These elephants also visited Hatherleigh Estate, Rakwana and Ensalwatte Estate, Deniyaya regularly. I remember the late Aelien de Silva talking of these elephants visiting Ensalwatte Estate when he was superintendent of there in the 1960s. In November 2011, an elephant came out of Sinharaja to the boundary of Ensalwatte Estate. The photograph here is of that elephant. In 2013 two elephants have been sighted on Morningside which borders Sinharaja.

On the other side of Sinharaja, elephants used come into Homodola Estate, Nakiadeniya in the early 1970s when Patrick Woods was the Superintendent. They used to frighten the rubber tappers and consume the banana trees in the labourers gardens. If you go up the hill past Aigburth and Aberfoyle Estates in Rakwana, you reach the Handapanaella plains which is at an elevation of 4,000 feet. These plains have plenty of food and water and as a result the few elephants left in the Rakwana area spend quite a bit of their time. Old stagers there say that this was popular





Meals  
Ammi  
Made

### CHOCOLATE CAKE by TEEKAY

120 gm sugar  
120 gm dark chocolate  
3 egg yolks  
90 gm butter  
¼ cup self raising flour  
3 egg whites (beaten)

#### Method

Melt chocolate and mix into sugar. Add slightly beaten yolks and softened butter and mix well. Mix in flour and finally fold in stiffly beaten egg whites  
Bake in 18cm diameter round pan at 180° C for 35 minutes.

#### Chocolate Coating

90 gm chocolate  
1 ½ tablespoons water  
30 gm butter  
4 or 5 cubes sugar

Heat together chocolate and water until chocolate melts and blends together, then add butter and sugar and mix.

Serve with cream and blue berries.

### Send us your recipes

Readers are invited to submit their favourite recipes for publication in this column. Preferably your recipes will be simple and easy to prepare. They must be of Sri Lankan origin and as this is a family-orientated column, we suggest that your recipes be of meals you learnt to prepare from your Ammi or Achchi.

So why wait? Send those mouth-watering recipes to the editor without delay.

#### *The Saga of Elephants... (from previous page.)*

'elephant spot' in earlier times when there were many more elephants. Kumarawatte Estate was a cocoa and rubber estate on a high hill close to Moneragala town. Bibile Estate, which was in the plains and Kumarawatte had herds of elephants visiting the estates and causing much damage. Ambrose Perera and Harold Winter were the superintendents of Kumarawatte and Bibile respectively in the 1970s.

There has always been speculation as to whether there are elephants still in the Adam's Peak area. There are elephants on the side opposite the steps that the pilgrims use. The elephants come to the side of the pilgrim route during the off season when there are no crowds. These elephants are seen very rarely though their fresh dung is found regularly especially in the area known as the Gouravilla Plains. Once, however, when Ralph Amerasinghe was the superintendent of Laxapana Estate a few elephants had come, in the night, to Dalhousie Estate which is at the base of Adam's Peak. Various reports suggest that there are seven to fifteen elephants in the Adam's Peak area.

Robert (Bob) Dobbs says that when he was an assistant superintendent on Moray Estate, Maskeliya in 1970/71, he had gone up twice to the top of Adam's Peak on the short-cut starting from the top of Rajamalai Division. This short cut was fairly steep and along a very rough, eroded and fairly overgrown narrow footpath. It met the main pilgrim path almost at the top. He had seen elephant dung on both occasions. Though the dung was not fresh, it was firm



• *This elephant came out of Sinharaja to the boundary of Ensalwatte Estate.*

indicating that they had been there within a month.

Major Skinner, the famous road builder, in 1940 found the footprints of an elephant on the summit of Adam's Peak at an altitude of over 7,000 feet. Only those who have climbed this mountain to its summit will have a true idea of what a precipitous climb it is.

No human has been killed in all these instances mentioned above. The exception being at Makaldeniya Estate as described above.







# Intruders into the Centenary Skies

by Capt. Elmo Jayawardene

Squadron Leader Leonard Birchall arrived in Ceylon on April 3, 1942. The flight was from Karachi to Koggala where an RAF base was operational. Birchall was from the 413 Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force. They, at that time, had a joint operation with RAF to conduct reconnaissance flights over the southern coast of Ceylon. The aeroplanes used were Catalina flying boats, cumbersome giants who had very long endurance that was needed for the extended range of surveillance over water.

The next day, April 4, Birchall and his crew of nine were on patrol. Prior to them, another Catalina had gone out on a similar mission and never returned. Reasons became a little clear later when the incident was repeated.

Birchall and his crew spotted stick-like images on the calm sea below. It was at 1600, and they flew lower and closer for better identification. The Catalina was 400 miles south of Koggala at that time, according to the calculations of the navigator. What Birchall spotted was the Japanese fleet of Admiral Chuichi Nagumo. He was sailing on course to Ceylon with six aircraft carriers, four battleships, three cruisers, three destroyers and a total of 300 carrier based aeroplanes.

Birchall ordered alert messages to be sent to Colombo. The laid out procedure was to repeat the transmission three times. As the second message was completed, the aeroplane rocked with machine gun fire from six Zero fighters that had taken off from the Carrier Hiryu after spotting Birchall's Catalina.

The radio officer was injured, the radio equipment shattered, and the bullets ripped the entire aircraft and damaged the fuel tanks.

With great difficulty Birchall managed to land his crippled aeroplane in the sea. The fighters continued to strafe and killed three of Birchall's crew members floating in the water. The remaining six were taken prisoner and interrogated as to whether any alert message was sent to Colombo. They vehemently denied having sent the message. For their luck, the



• Admiral Chuichi Nagumo.

Japanese intercepted a transmission from Colombo asking the Catalina to repeat the twice received message as it was not very clear.

The logical conclusion is that Colombo never read Birchall's warning correctly. It was all in Morse code, and the possibility is always there for a misread. When the Japanese fighter bombers flew overhead Colombo the next day, people were in church; it was Easter Sunday. The RADAR station was closed for maintenance, as it was the normal practice on Sundays. The two fighter squadrons, one in Ratmalana, and one in the Colombo Racecourse were on the ground and went into full alert only when they saw a sky-full of Japanese aeroplanes all over Colombo.

It certainly was a surprise attack, exactly like what happened at Pearl Harbour.

To accept logically that Birchall's message alerted Colombo is difficult. A lot had been written about how he saved Ceylon. Maybe true, maybe not, he certainly initiated the warning.

Had Colombo been on high alert, I wonder how many would have left their homes and attended church to celebrate Easter? Or for that matter, the RADAR station most certainly would have been operational and not closed for routine maintenance.

As in most matters of history, opinions could differ.

The Japanese aeroplanes led by Commander Mitsuo Fuchida flew into Colombo on April 5, 1945, at 7.30 am on Easter Sunday. There were 36 fighters, 54 dive bombers and 90 level bombers flying in formation. Commander Fuchida was a very well-known name in war annals, as it was he who led the attack on Pearl Harbour and also an attack on the city of Darwin.

Fuchida's fighters were the first intruders who flew over the ocean into the Centenary Sky. The Japanese mission was to seek and destroy the British fleet in harbour. They came from the south east. Seeing the Japanese fighters all over the sky, the Hurricanes scrambled from Ratmalana. The squadron stationed at the Racecourse grounds too started engines, threw chocks off and roared out to the sky to meet the enemy.

Dog fights took place in the Centenary Sky. People on ground heard and saw the aerial battle and climbed roofs to get a better view. The main attack was at the Colombo Harbour. While dive bombers screamed down to release bombs, the Zero fighter



escort flew their aeroplanes to their limits, battling against the RAF Hurricanes. Japanese aeroplanes were shot down, Hurricanes were shot down, parachutes drifted in the sky, pilots jumping out of burning wreckages. Ground batteries too opened fire on the attacking planes.

A Japanese pilot by mistake bombed the home for the mentally-challenged patients in Angoda and 20 inmates died. Around 37 was the total count of the dead on the ground that fateful morning. The number of aeroplanes lost is very ambiguous, varying figures keep cropping up at each turn of a page. One states seven Japanese planes were shot down and the RAF lost 27; not possible, unless some of the Hurricanes were destroyed before they even got airborne.

It is believed that Japanese aeroplanes crashed in the following sites. Near St. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia, Bellanwila, Pita Kotte, Horana, Galle Face Green and on the Colombo Racecourse grounds.

A few days before the Japanese attack, most of the British fleet had been moved out to the Addu Atoll of the Maldives, South West of Colombo. This was in response to some intercepted messages received in the previous week about a possible invasion.

"People knew of a likelihood of a Japanese attack. As a precaution, my father took the family to Bandarawela by train on the April 1." So said the son of the then President of the Colombo Aero Club.

The Japanese managed to sink the cruiser Hector and the destroyer Tenedos in the harbour itself. Then they located the cruisers Cornwall and the Dorsetshire 200 miles southwest of Colombo and sank them too. Some 424 sailors were killed and the 1,000 plus that survived were saved after hours in the water.

It was the first air-raid in the Centenary Sky.

Four days later, the Japanese attacked China Bay. This time they sank HMS Vampire and HMS Holyhock killing approximately 700 people. They hunted down the HMS Hermes and sank her near Batticaloa. The death toll on the doomed aircraft carrier was around 307 sailors.

During the attack on China bay, pilot Shigenori Watanabe operating a Japanese fighter bomber circled around a huge oil tank near the harbour. He had two others in the crew with him, Tokya Goto and Sutumu Toshira. They then power-dived their plane aimed at the tank in Kamikaze fashion. The aeroplane exploded on impact, instantly killed the pilots and completely destroyed the installation.

The Centenary Sky saw for the first time suicide bombers killing themselves for their country. Similar actions were repeated many times in another war, in another place, under the same Centenary Sky.

Friend or foe, the sadness is the same, they died for causes they believed in, and they were young.

Commander Fuchida's raid on Colombo was planned on the same strategy as what he did at Pearl Harbour. Had the British fleet been there on April 5, they certainly would have all been sunk.

The Japanese were not interested in destroying Colombo or any other place in Ceylon. They could have easily done so, if that was the intent. They had so many aeroplanes and complete supremacy of the sky during that Easter morning.

Ceylon was saved, from whom and how? If the Japanese were planning on an invasion, it is logical to think they could have bombed Ceylon and devastated everything. The first wave of aeroplanes was a total of 180, and there would have been another 120 waiting in the carriers. The Japanese planes sank every ship that was visible in the water.

Perhaps that was their plan, perhaps not. I wonder whether the answers will ever be known. Why did Admiral Nagumo take his winning fleet and move away without coming to Ceylon? He may have had his reasons or may have had his orders. The fact is Ceylon was saved, and that is what mattered.

Some stories came up of the people who played different roles when Japan invaded Ceylon on that Easter Sunday. Logically, they are all acceptable. Some have written evidence too. Each one merits mention.

'Rathu Palliya' is a little church somewhere in Kelaniya. There had been a small cemetery behind the church. People say they remember an unmarked grave there, swollen earth and a small white grave stone with no words to say who was buried. People also said that a Japanese pilot was buried there. He flew in on the Easter Sunday raid and was shot down and crashed and died.

Someone buried him, and marked his grave, no name. The cemetery is no more. New constructions are in place. There is no trace of the unmarked grave and the place and the people of the area had obviously forgotten the unknown Japanese fighter pilot.

Squadron Leader Leonard Birchall spent the war years as a POW in Japan. After the war, he returned home to Canada and visited Ceylon on a later date. His aeroplane was the first known to be shot down in the Centenary Sky, and his three crew members, the first to die.

Regarding the Catalina that flew out before Birchall's fateful patrol, there never was any trace of it. It is logical to think that they were spotted by the



• **Squadron Leader  
Leonard Birchall.**



Japanese fleet and some fighters would have shot them down. There is no record except that they were termed missing in action, the first to be so in the Centenary Sky.

A young Japanese man came in 1939 to learn to fly in Ratmalana. He became a member of the Aero Club. He was attached to some Japanese mission. Though he came to learn, he had known how to fly, and that too very well, though he pretended he was a student pilot. That was what the instructors whispered to each other in 'hangar small talk.'

The Japanese trainee pilot did many solo flights over and around Colombo and Ratmalana.

Maybe he wasn't learning to fly, but gathering information on what he saw from the Centenary Sky. It was also said he simply vanished after some time.

Star pilot Commander Mitsuo Fuchida became a defeated man after the war and started working as a farmer to feed his family. In 1950, he embraced Christianity and became an evangelist

preaching salvation and converting people to the faith. His book "From Pearl Harbour to Golgotha" was widely accepted in America and he toured the USA as an ambassador of peace, preaching the gospel.

Like Birchall, Fuchida too came to Ceylon in later years. Not firing a machine gun from a fighter aeroplane, but carrying a Bible.

Commander Mitsuo Fuchida led the attack on Pearl Harbour, the one on Darwin and on Colombo. He was also present at Midway when the famous air battle took place. Fuchida died in 1976 at the age of 73.

NOTE: This is an extract from the author's book *A Centenary Sky*, story about 100 years of aviation in Ceylon/Sri Lanka. This is from Chapter 10 about the Japanese invasion of Colombo on Easter Sunday 1942, written after considerable research.

## KEEP IT LIGHT

### World of a difference

Three Englishmen married women from different parts of the world.

The first man married a Greek girl. He told her she was to do the dishes and house cleaning. It took a couple of days before he saw any effect, but on the third day he came home to see a clean house and dishes washed and put away.

The second man married a Thai girl. He gave his wife orders that she was to do all the cleaning, the dishes and the cooking. The first day he didn't see any results but the next day it was better. By the third day he saw his house was clean, the dishes were done, and there was a huge dinner on the table.

The third man married a girl from Australia. He ordered her to keep the house cleaned, dishes washed, lawn mowed, laundry washed, and hot meals on the table for every meal. The first day he didn't see anything. The second day he didn't see anything either - but by the third day, some of the swelling had gone down and he could see a little out of his left eye, and his arm was healed sufficiently for him to make a sandwich and load the dishwasher. He still has some difficulty when he urinates.

.....

A lady was picking through the frozen Chickens at a TESCOs store but she couldn't find one big enough for her family. She asked a passing assistant, "Do these Chickens get any bigger?"

The assistant replied: "I'm afraid not, they're dead."

.....

The policeman got out of his car and the teenager he stopped for speeding rolled down his window. "I've

been waiting for you all day," the Cop said. The kid replied, "Well I got here as fast as I could." When the policeman finally stopped laughing, he sent the kid on his way without a ticket.

.....

A truck driver was driving along on a country road. A sign came up that read "Low Bridge Ahead." Before he realised it, the bridge was directly ahead and he got stuck under it.

Cars were backed up for miles. Finally, a police car arrived. The policeman got out of his car and walked to the truck's cab and said to the driver, "Got stuck, hey?"

The truck driver said, "No, I was delivering this bridge and ran out of diesel!"

.....

A teacher at West Australian High School reminded her pupils of tomorrow's final exam.

"Now listen to me, I won't tolerate any excuses for you not being here tomorrow. I might consider a nuclear attack, a serious personal injury, illness, or a death in your immediate family, but that's it, no other excuses whatsoever!"

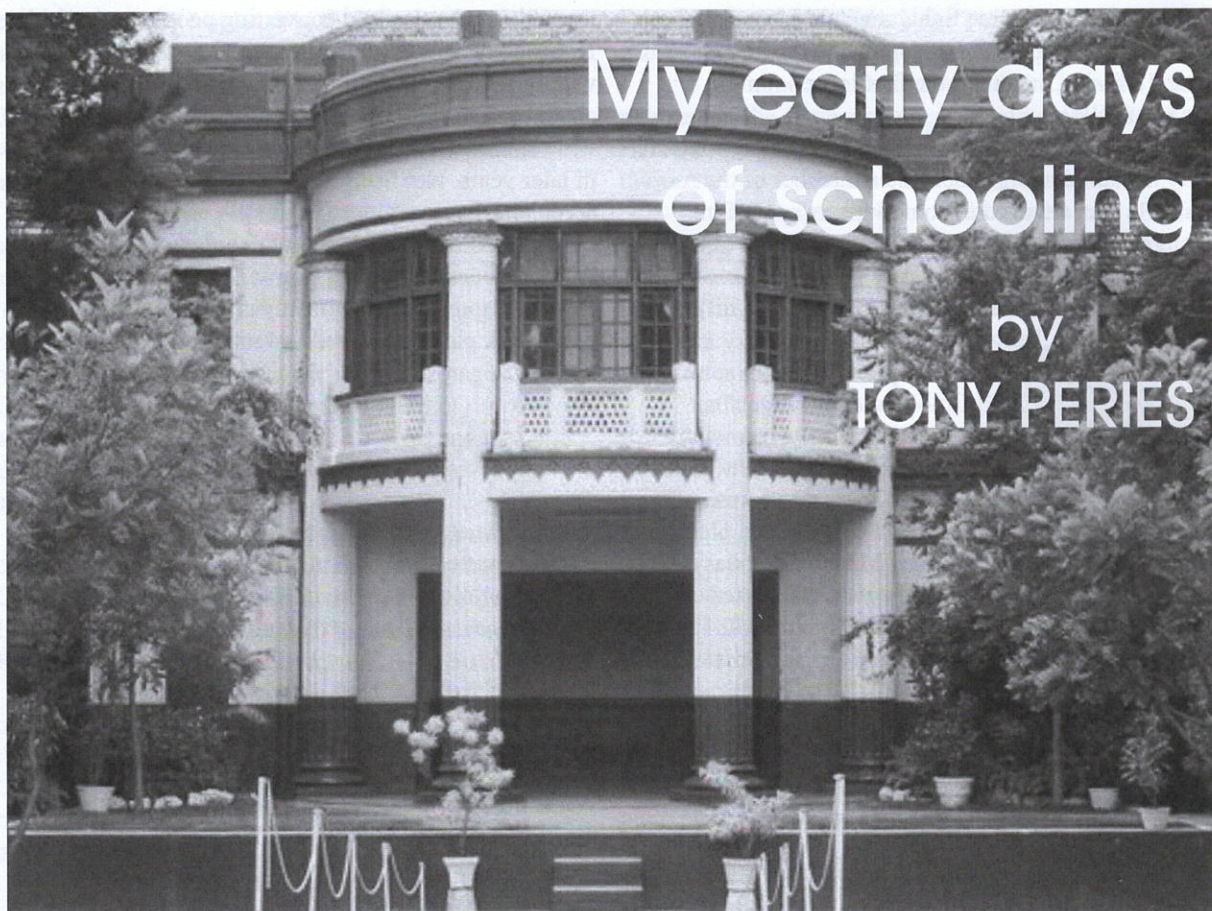
A teenager at the back of the room raised his hand and asked, "What would happen if I came in tomorrow suffering from complete and utter sexual exhaustion?" The entire class was reduced to laughter and sniggering.

When silence was restored, the teacher smiled at the student, shook her head and sweetly said,

"Well, I would expect you to write the exam with your other hand."

.....





# My early days of schooling

by  
TONY PERIES

**T**o commence the final instalment of my youthful saga, I entered St: Peters College (SPC) Bambalapitiya in 1940 at the ripe old age of nine. Many of my classmates from Holy Family Convent moved there a year earlier and some veterans had started schooling at SPC. These “senior men” barely gave us the time of day, initially!

SPC was a new school established in 1932 to satisfy the demand for Roman Catholic secondary education, from the populous suburbs of Colombo 5 and 6 and even up to Dehiwela and Mount Lavinia. The Rector (Principal) was Fr. Nicholas Perera, a still young and dynamic personality who quickly got an excellent school running. The principal of the lower school was Fr. Arthur Fernando, a man of ideas whose vision extended to involving boys in after-school activities. He was backed by a corps of excellent teachers.

My teacher, in the third standard was Mrs. Bridget Fernando, who maintained discipline without a heavy hand and kept most of the class interested. There were two or three parallel classes, all taught by women, the most interesting being Miss Lalitha Savundaranayagam (sister of the famous Emil) who was very stylish indeed and was nicknamed was “Chinthamani” after a South Indian film of that name. She was a creative type who always produced a colourful item for the year end prize-giving concert. From Standard Four upward, all teachers were male.

As I recall, our desks and seats were two-boy affairs with inkwells inbuilt though the ceramic

insert was detachable for washing. The school supplied the ink which came in large jars with two glass tubes sticking out of the closure: one of those was a spout and shutting the other with a finger controlled the flow. An ink monitor ensured the inkwells were full. Fountain pens were forbidden so we wrote with dipping pens equipped with a ‘G’ nib which was scratchy. A “relief” nib was smoother but was also not allowed and I managed to get away with a “Ladies” nib. In that class we were equipped with Copy Books which contained samples of beautiful writing that we were required to copy in the blank lines below: the sentences comprised uplifting phrases which I recall only “Xenophon the Historian”. There was not much emphasis on writing as a task but we always went home with inky fingers and often, ink spotted clothes.

The school was well laid out in extensive grounds bordering the Wellawatte canal and the large playing field at the end furthest from the Galle Road was very close to Layard’s Road in Havelock Town. The lower school was housed in two parallel rows of classrooms with wide verandahs so they were cool and airy. When the morning bell rang we lined up outside



our classrooms and after brief prayers, the "silence bell" sounded, talking thereafter being a heinous crime. Legend had it that some years previous, during silence a boy ran into the classroom area shouting at the top of his voice "Steinwall has fallen into the canal". The canal banks were strictly out of bounds but Steinwall went on to become a famous swimmer, perhaps inspired by his involuntary immersion!

I enjoyed being at a boys school, particularly in the first term when there was a cricket match almost every week so lessons finished at 12.30 pm on Friday and after lunch boys went to watch the cricket unless, of course, it was an "away" match. Small boys cannot stay still for very long so there was lots of jostling, and general horseplay with some watching of the cricket. Pineapple toffee, "bulltos" and other comestibles as also the ubiquitous gram were sold by itinerant vendors.

I do not recall any organised games for the younger boys but Fr. Arthur's initiatives provided wherewithal for cricket, rugby, badminton etc.,. Riding bicycles was another source of pleasure and boys used to pool their funds to hire a bike from one of the nearby cycle shops, the fee being I think 50 cents for a half hour, on a very rickety machine often with no brakes. Before I had been two years at SPC the remarkable Fr. Arthur had provided two or three bikes for the boys. That stemmed from another of his initiatives— the provision of a mug of Horlicks malted milk, at a few cents, during the mid-morning break. I think the agent for that product was Millers Ltd., who also sold Humber cycles and Fr. Arthur persuaded them, given the schools high consumption of Horlicks, to donate a bike, while heavily discounting one or two more. Not long after the bikes were introduced, I was racing two other boys and failed to take a bend near the chapel, hitting a pillar and almost knocking myself out, plus ruining the front wheel. As I hurt myself quite badly my father paid for the damage and there were no remonstrations at home or school.

My previous school, the convent, had a small library of books for each class, mostly "A.L. Bright Story" readers, which were abridged classics like "Robinson Crusoe". Those were insufficient to supply my voracious appetite for books so the quite extensive lower school library at SPC was a great delight. I think we were allowed to borrow only one book at a time thus I took one home every day. Boys also read the comics of the era like "Film Fun" which had black and white cartoons featuring stars such as Laurel and Hardy while "The Champion" had stories of fighter pilots, pirates and other such heroes. Boys traded these comics through many grubby hands, till the print was barely decipherable. Another popular item was "The Sexton Blake Library" cheap paperbacks retailing in England for about three pence each. The treasure trove of the day was a "Chums" or "Boys Own Paper" annual which had all of a year's

issues of those periodicals minus advertisements. One of those would last me through a school holidays. My exhaustive reading soon got me into an embarrassing situation, the repercussions of which were to echo down two decades and more.

The Rector, in his weekly assembly of the entire upper school, was constantly exhorting the boys to read more but apparently without success. He therefore decided to set before his audience an example of a lower school boy who read a lot. After some inquiries of the teachers he fixed on me and I was summoned to his office where I underwent a kindly inquisition, the key question being "How many books do you read in a week?" Depending obviously on the size of volume, I read five to seven books in a week but fearing disbelief of such a high number, I said two. The Rector in his next assembly quoted me by name as a shining example, because I read hundred plus books an year. I knew nothing of this till upper school boys started saying to me, derisively, "You're the guy who reads hundred books a year"! This accusation of disbelief was to haunt me for years, old boys recalling me as a fictitious phenomenon.

In my early years I found school work easy as reading was not a problem and I had a retentive memory, though arithmetic was a stumbling block: the horrors of algebra were yet to come and figures confounded me until I went to work and encountered mechanical calculators. Back then, we had to learn English grammar at which my mother excelled: I found analysing and parsing a mystery though I soon discovered that in tests and examinations these carried low marks and composition was THE thing, a breeze to me. Nevertheless, my mother who checked my homework, persisted in trying to perfect my grammar, to no avail. To this day, grammar remains a closed book to me!

One of my classmates was Anselm Abhayaratna whom I knew at the convent but had moved to SPC a year earlier than I- the two set of parents, both deeply religious, were friends and my mother found that Anselm was an experienced altar server and so she sought, forcefully, to enrol me.

The school also encouraged boys to be altar servers and to that end, had brief training sessions on Saturday mornings, when I often went to the school grounds, to join the many boys who lived in the vicinity and came to play games. Willy nilly therefore, I found myself in training and after all too short a time, actually serving at mass, said at the main and side altars by the many resident priests. My parents attended mass daily and began working on me to accompany them several times a week, to serve mass. The responses (in Latin back then) could be read from a small manual but the bell ringing and other rituals were hard to master, particularly by an unwilling learner. Fortunately, novices could accompany an expert and I often found myself



partnering Anselm. There was a vesting area wherein hung, in a variety of sizes, the appropriate attire, a red "frock" reaching to the ankles and a lacy hip length over-garment in white. The frock or cassock was made in a heavy denim material and seldom or never washed so it stank. Some of the older priests were capable of rewarding a bad error with a clip round the ear and one cantankerous ancient from outside Colombo, who came visiting regularly, was given a wide berth.

One day when I was serving at the next altar to this old priest, I noticed, he seemed to be kicking the single boy attending on him. It took my sleepy brain ages to understand this action: most priests wore "three quarter longs" secured by a belt or cord, under the cassocks. This priest's under garment had come adrift, hindering free movement of his ankles and he was trying to get his acolyte to remove the offending clothing, which was not registering with the unfortunate youth. My parents witnessed this amazing scene, which helped to bring my altar serving to an end before much longer.

SPC was, not surprisingly, keen on encouraging the practice of the Catholic faith so attendance at Sunday school was compulsory: there was about 45 minutes of classroom instruction followed by Benediction, which included three Latin Hymns and the closing one "Laudate Dominum" ... remains stuck in my mind. Instruction for the lower classes came from Miss Lizzie Ekanayake, who always wore white, including shoes, stockings and veil because she had wanted to be a nun but failed at convent life. She was a good, kind and deeply religious woman whose words fell on deaf ears. My old convent buddy, Ralph Forbes, and I were leading disturbers of the peace so we had to kneel on either side of Miss Ekanayake at Benediction. She also told us of a priest who saw the devil himself sitting on the shoulder of a boy who regularly chattered in church. Unable, even at the age of ten, to swallow this tale I asked my mother if it was true to which, she said, with perfect logic(!) that if Miss Ekanayake said so, it must be true.

Miss Ekanayake didn't really grasp the mayhem small boys were capable of, when, for some feast, she organised a torchlight procession, the lights being candles stuck in paper lanterns, meant to be kept alight in the chapel. In no time at all, chaos reigned as boys "accidentally" set fire to the lanterns and used the detached candle to drip hot wax on their neighbours, burn the wickerwork of the chairs etc.

The school had a fine large hall, with plenty of parking and it was from time to time, hired out for performances. It was thus that I saw my first adult play "The Red Dragon" by Dick Dias, an amateur playwright from Panadura, who had a big hit with this. The play was a blood curdling melodrama about a poor clerk who got into debt, falling into the hands

of Chinese Tongs. To my young eyes, the scenery and stagecraft were magnificent, with a torture chamber, and a skeleton emerging from a hidden panel in the wall.

In 1941, I started in the Fourth Standard, taught by V.B.M. de Silva, an affable character who maintained discipline without heavy handedness and a good teacher. He had a standard response to any really stupid answer "You are a first class madayan". We had a specialist drawing teacher, George de Neise, whose youngest son, Douglas, was playing for the First Eleven. George was a good portrait painter who also played the organ and the harmonium. In later life Douglas married Estelle Joseph, a talented musician: they migrated to Australia in the 1970's and their grand-daughter, Danielle, is today a world renowned opera singer. Something that stands out in my mind is the odd mixture of textbooks used, many intended for schools in England, a few for Indian schools and only history texts by S.F. de Silva for Ceylon.

Although the war had been in progress for nearly two years I don't recall that it had affected the even tenor of our young lives but that was to change dramatically when Japan attacked Pearl Harbour on 7th December 1941. Four months later Japan controlled S.E. Asia and Burma. In January 1942 I started in Standard 5: it was to be an apocalyptic year and as far as I can remember, all Colombo schools closed within a month or two, as their premises were taken over for use as military hospitals or to billet Defence force personnel. Many, many families left Colombo for fear of Japanese bomb attacks and my parents took us to stay with my father's widowed sister, also a Colombo resident who had moved to a house she owned in Bolawalana, near Negombo, very close to Kurana railway station on the Negombo-Colombo line.

I was enrolled at Maris Stella College to which I went on my bicycle, accompanied by the driver on his bike: he collected me again when school finished at 1.p.m. I found the new school interesting, one subject taught being poultry keeping. St: Peters, in common with many other Colombo schools had opened a country branch complete with boarding facilities at Minuwangoda. My parents and I visited the place a couple of times so I was keen to be a boarder having found classes took up half the day followed by baths in a nearby river and frequent sing-songs etc. My mother would not even think about it, thus I stayed at Maris Stella for a term, after which my parents moved back to Colombo. The danger of bomb attacks apparently past, St Peters had opened a branch, mostly housed in cadjan sheds, in the grounds of St Mary's Church, Dehiwela and I went there for the last term, with my two cousins, who lived just down the road

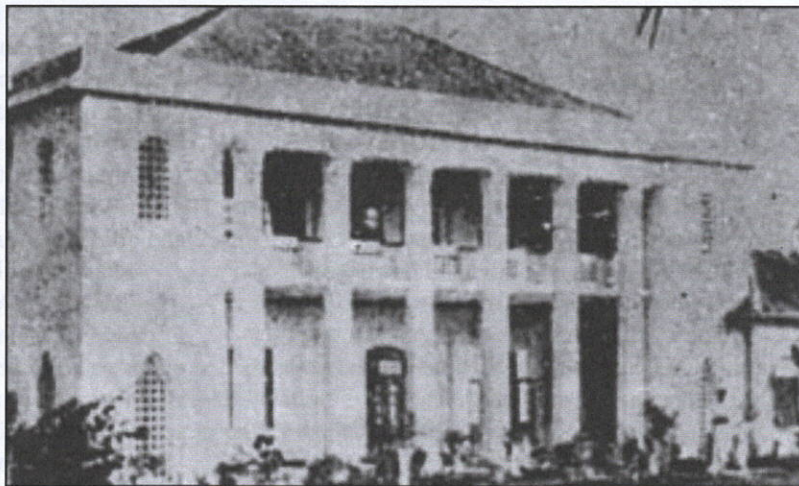


from us and were taken by car. I was taught by Alfred Perera, fresh out of Teacher's Training College and with all sorts of ideas which livened his class. School finished at 1 p.m. From time to time we had air raid practices and for the initial exercise my class took refuge in the house of the Parish Priest but only once as some boys raided the fridge, eating everything within, including his month's butter ration! Life was interesting as military vehicles of various shapes and sizes abounded, as too despatch riders on motor bikes: several houses down Elibank Road, Havelock Town, where we lived, had troops billeted in them so there was lots of exciting activity. Before 1942, we saw aeroplanes so rarely that everyone ran out to look when one was heard, but now aircraft activity was constant for there were fighter squadrons on what had been the racecourse and we were soon recognising them as Hurricanes, Harvard Trainers and a myriad others.

In 1943 I was still at SPC but at yet another new branch, in cadjan sheds purpose built in the grounds of the Roman Catholic Seminary, where the Bambalapitiya Flats now stand. The extent of land was substantial with a wide road frontage, running right down to the sea front. The land was extensively planted with coconut trees among which the young seminarians practised their manual labour. My early schooling had ended for I was then in the "prelim" form. The priests and senior lay staff who ran the college performed miracles to start and run branches in other locations and so for that matter did staff of all schools.

At the Bambalapitiya branch my class was taught by Cyril Ekanayake, a really gifted teacher and brother of Lizzie mentioned earlier in this article. Another sister, Marian, taught maths at Holy Family Convent and her brother, Joe taught maths at St Joseph's College. Cyril tried to teach even the weakest in his classes. Other teachers at the branch were W.B. de Alwis and a Dahanayake, said to be a younger brother of the famous politician. Charles Fernando, known as "Charlie Cotta" and Willie Gomez, who introduced boxing to the school, with great success as they became Stubbs Shield winners before long.

The branch Principal was Father Thomas Paris whose family were arrack distillers so he had private means and owned a car. I believe he was a good amateur industrial chemist with a deep knowledge of distilling to the extent that he was consulted by others in the business. I don't remember him doing any teaching but he was the A.R.P. Warden for the premises and during air



• The chapel building.

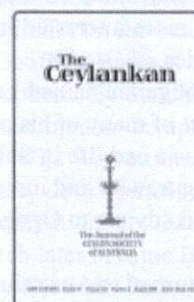
raid practices, while we crouched in slit trenches stuffing damp earth down each others shirts, he strolled around languidly, sporting a tin hat and a cigar.

That school's premises were highly convenient for me as I could walk there in fifteen minutes. We finished at 1.30 p.m. when I walked back home with Hubert Dharmasena and Michael van der Straaten who lived nearby. Hubert went to England where he married an English girl and settled down while Michael migrated to Australia in the early 1950's.

If you happen to read this guys, please get in touch.



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**SYNOPSIS OF MEETING**  
**Melbourne Chapter - October 28, 2012**  
**Donald Friend: a friend of the Bawas**  
**by Dr Srilal Fernando**

Donald Friend was one of the great Australian artists of the 20th century. He was born on February 6, 1915 and had one sister and two brothers. His parents separated when he was eight years old. His father was a grazier with little interest in books or paintings. It was his mother who influenced his love of art and beautiful objects. He was educated at Cranbrook and Sydney Grammar schools. Friend kept a diary from the age of 13 till a few days before his death in 1989. The diaries were published by the Australian National Library in four volumes with Volume III relating to his period in Ceylon.

During the great depression of the 1930s, Donald had to leave the private school and work as a farm hand in the family property in NSW. From a young age, he yearned to travel to exotic places and dreamed of being a romantic like Gauguin. He ran away to Northern Queensland in 1932, where he befriended Charlie Sailor, a Torres Strait Islander and lived with them. Donald spent two years there and did some beautiful paintings of the Sailor family. Realising life of a vagabond was not for him, Donald returned to Sydney in 1934 and attended art classes. He modelled himself in his painting and life on Norman Lindsay, the artist.

After receiving an inheritance from his grandmother in 1936, Donald travelled to England and entered the Westminster School of Art in London, a venue for further studies for many Australian artists. Meninsky, the famous art teacher was his tutor, wanted Donald to concentrate on the painting of line. Donald Friend was more interested in pen and ink using different shades.

He met a Nigerian named Lapido in London who was the subject of many of his paintings. He enjoyed African music and life in Soho; but in 1938 he boarded a fishing trawler and moved to Nigeria where he became an adviser to Ogogo, the local chief of Ikere.

Donald returned to Australia in 1940 as World War II began in Europe and formed a friendship with Russell Drysdale and William Dobell. In 1942, he enlisted in the Army. He hated the rigidity of army life but was later appointed a war artist. He moved to a boarding house in Woollahra at the end of war where he lived a very productive life in the company of other artists. He also decided to continue to paint in his style of traditional painting as observed by the human eye. This was the time of Pablo Picasso in Europe and Mark Rothko in the USA and Donald Friend made a deliberate choice to continue in his style of realist painting.

In 1947 Donald encountered the gold mining town in Sofala and Hill End with Russell Drysdale. Donald also commenced writing a number of satirical books, 10 in all, called Hillendia. Six books have also been written about him, including one by well-known Australian art critic Robert Hughes. There is also a film made about his time in Bali. He lived there on and off for 10 years.

A fateful meeting that led to a life time of friendship occurred between Bevis Bawa and Donald Friend in Colombo port in 1949 when Donald was on his way to Europe in the ship S.S. Toscana. Bevis Bawa was a military officer and Aide-de-Camp to several British Governors. They swapped yarns, with Bawa claiming to be a descendant of the Kings of Ceylon with Donald counter claiming that he was a descent of the Earl of Rochester. Bevis Bawa invited Donald to stay with him, an offer that was accepted in 1957 when Donald Friend arrived in Sri Lanka with his friend Russell Drysdale. Russell went back shortly afterwards. He came to stay for a few weeks but stayed on for almost five years.

Bevis Bawa had commenced landscape gardening as a hobby and wrote a newspaper column called "Briefly by Bevis". He developed a garden called 'Brief' near Alutgama. Bevis's father, a King's Counsel, had a client who could not pay his fee and he handed over his property in lieu. Henceforth, the property was named 'Brief'. The Queen of Denmark, Vivien Leigh and Lawrence Olivier had been Bevis Bawa's friends.

Donald and Bevis toured the entire island in a DKW car and Bevis writes in his Autobiography of Donald's powers of observation. He noticed things like waves breaking on the ocean, village life, cock fights, which he used in his paintings. Donald Friend moved to a bungalow at Brief which resulted in many paintings of people, places and snippets of everyday life in Ceylon.

Donald Friend's paintings were titled 'The Sick Mudalali', 'Elections', 'Roadside Teakade', 'Building houses', 'Galle', 'Street Scene', 'The Sleeper', 'Bastian's Baila Band', 'Musicians', 'Boys in Ceylon' and he painted extensively. His drawings are reminiscent of the work of 19th century British satirist, Thomas Rowlandson. 'The Sick Mudalali' is a highly detailed picture with the drama of the moment captured; in 'Election' one would notice the election signs; key, elephant, hand, umbrella with lots of people around. Donald's favourite colours, brown, yellow, green, and ochre representing colours of the earth with Chinese white as highlighting, can be seen here. During the intense period of artistic activity, he painted the mural at 'Brief' and the doors which became well known after they were installed in Geoffrey Bawa's house, off Bagatelle Road. It was sold to the Art Gallery in NSW in 1989, and it is now in their permanent collection.



The mural at 'Brief' incorporates detailed country scenes Donald observed in his travels, like a car broken down, a moving cart, a bag snatcher, bicycle, food sellers, papaw tree and a figure of a god. One view is that the god represents Donald and the flute, his paint brush.

The entrance to 'Brief' with Bevis Bawa seated surrounded by his staff by the side, could also be observed. This picture on an outside wall is getting damaged with water seepage, but restoration has proved prohibitive due to the huge cost entailed. Another painting of 'Galle' gives the impression of overcrowding inside Galle Fort.

Donald Friend visited a number of temples and was inspired by the wall paintings. His colour schemes of ochre, yellow and black highlighted with Chinese white seen in his paintings from Sailabimbarama were probably influenced by temple paintings.

Geoffrey Bawa, Bevis's brother studied Law before becoming an Architect. He completed Architectural Studies in the 1950s and returned to Ceylon in 1957 and developed his country property called 'Lunuganga'. Geoffrey Bawa worked on the concept that a place had a history, and it linked with the person who was to live in that space. A client's interests and personality were incorporated in his designs. His architectural style led to what is now termed Tropical Modernism in many parts of the world. The buildings he designed blended with the local climate and protected from the sun and the humid weather conditions. One of the classic examples embodying Bawa's principles being St. Bridget's Montessori. His former office now has been converted in to a Gallery Cafe.

Ulrik Plesner, a Danish Architect who came to Ceylon to work with Minette De Silva, the first lady architect of Ceylon, later joined Geoffrey Bawa and introduced Danish designs to local architecture. Donald Friend met Ulrik Plesner through Geoffrey Bawa, and Plesner obtained commissions for Donald through his influences. He got a commission to paint a mural at Baur's Building at Jetawana Road which never materialised; however, he painted a smaller mural for Baur's headquarters.

Through Geoffrey Bawa's influence Donald Friend got a commission to paint a mural titled "City of Galle" for McKinnon McKenzie & Company. The mural measuring 1.2 m x 3.2 m is surrounded by 24 small panels. It is painted in oils with the background in gold leaf and is on masonite. It now hangs in the board room of John Keels. The painting depicts life in the Fort, ships in the Port and the clock tower, a light-house, churches and the crowded buildings inside the Fort. Captain Bailey, the P.&O. officer stationed at Galle and living in Cloisenberg is shown peering through a telescope. Around the mural, there are 12 panels showcasing life in Sri Lanka.

Donald Friend was commissioned to draw the 'City of Colombo' for John Keels, which is a modern view of Colombo with four panels. The painting shows detailed views of the Ceylinco House building, with the Akasa Kade on top, Galle Face Hotel, the Chatham Street Clock Tower with four panels, again depicting different aspects of life in Ceylon. One panel shows a planter seated in a 'hansiputuwa', looking at his tea estate, while the lady of the house is serving tea.

An Automated Gate for Bonifus Fernando's Palatial house on the way to airport was designed by Donald Friend. He also visited Trincomalee and painted a 'View of the Bay from Fort Trincomalee'. Sri Lankan artists like Laki Senanayake, Ena De Silva, Barbara Sansoni, architect Ismeth Raheem and many others were inspired by Friend's work. He also introduced Terra Cotta tiles with various inscribed designs, and did a lot of other paintings, a few of which have been mentioned in his diary. His exhibition of 20 Aluminium Sculptures at the German Cultural Institute through the support of Ulrik Plesner and German ambassador Dr. Theodor Auer was a complete success. Slides of aluminium sculptures Lee Poo, Don Quixote, Aphrodite were shown to illustrate the talk.

Due to local taxation issues and increasing success in Australia, Donald Friend decided to leave Ceylon. A big farewell was arranged for Donald at 'Brief' and he also gave Rs 15,000 to his driver 'Podi Mahatmaya' to build a house. He left Ceylon on July 22, 1962 and spent five years in Australia. Donald realised that the art market had changed and his type of art was not being bought by the young.

He spent the years 1967 to 1979 in Bali. He was deeply interested in Balinese culture and visited ancient sites and collected artefacts. Further he bought a property in Batujimbar on the beach at Sanur. In the meantime Geoffrey Bawa visited Bali and met Donald Friend there. By then he had formed an international development company with the local entrepreneur Wija Waworuntu. In 1973 Friend commenced property development in Bali. Plans were drawn, but eventually it did not materialise and the land was sold which later became Bali Hyatt. Famous architects like Roy Grounds, Peter Muller, Kerry Hill and celebrities like Mick Jagger, David Bowie visited Donald Friend in Bali.

Donald Friend became ill with tuberculosis in 1974 and at the same time a dispute developed with Wija Waworuntu possibly over financial matters. Donald Friend decided to return to Australia. In 1986 Donald Friend had a stroke and Geoffrey Bawa visited him for the last time in 1987.

"Goodbye world of lovely colours. Aloha death". This is the last entry in Friend's diary dated 1989. A few days later Donald Friend died in sleep.

— Dilhani Kumbukkage





## SYDNEY

### TWO MEMORIAL ORATIONS

on Sunday May 26 commencing 6.30 PM  
at Pennant Hills Community Centre, 70 Yarrara  
Road, Pennant Hills.

#### (1) The Don Wijeratne Memorial Oration

Dr Chanaka Wijeratne will present

#### **"Spirits, Tsunami and Suicide - Mental Health in Sri Lanka"**

in memory of his father Dr  
Don Wijeratne (founder  
member of the society).

Dr Chanaka came to  
Australia in the early 1970s  
and is now Senior  
Psychiatrist at Prince of

Wales Hospital in Sydney, Conjoint Senior Lecturer  
at UNSW and a consultant to the NSW Medical  
Council's Health Programme. The broad areas of his  
expertise are Mood Disorders and Neuro-psychiatry  
and the assessment of Testamentary Capacity cases  
(Will challenges).

Dr Wijerate was born in Colombo and  
received his early education at Visakha Vidyalaya and  
Royal College. After coming to Sydney, he studied at  
Sydney Grammar and graduated in medicine from the  
University of NSW.

#### (2) The Shelagh Goonewardene Memorial Oration to be delivered by Ernest MacIntyre



Ernest was involved in drama  
from 1956 at the University  
of Ceylon. Thereafter he was  
with the RCyAF for seven  
years, with UNESCO for five  
and with the Re-insurance  
industry after arriving in  
Australia, during which time  
he obtained a Masters degree  
in Drama from the University of NSW. He has written  
17 plays, some of which have been school texts in Sri  
Lanka, Australia and India.

Ernest's topic will be

#### **Locating Shelagh Goonewardene in**

## the Spectrum of Theatre.

Shelagh Goonewardene passed away a few weeks  
ago after a long illness. She was Convenor of the  
Melbourne Chapter and a Founder member of  
the society. Ernest has known Shelagh from  
University days.

There is a spectrum in theatre; the light  
hearted school play at one end and dance theatre of  
a religious nature at the other end. This has come  
about because drama which had its origins in religious  
ritual has become secularised over the years. While  
entertainment covers the whole range, the spiritual  
element, from theatre's origins is found in an  
ascending or descending order. Ernest will trace how  
Shelagh traversed that spectrum through her life's  
journey in drama.

**NOTE:** After a brief discussion period, the usual  
Social will be the next item on the agenda. Those  
who are able to are please requested to bring a plate  
of non-sweet savoury finger-food. Please avoid cakes  
with icing as the general preference is for plain cakes,  
sandwiches and savoury pastries. To avoid duplication  
of items, please contact our Social Convener, Chandra  
Senaratne on (02) 9872 6826. A donation to CSA to  
help defray meeting costs, which could be made at the  
meeting, is an alternative.

## COLOMBO CHAPTER

on Friday, May 03, 2013 at 5.30 p.m

An illustrated talk presented by:

**MR. MUHAJ HAMIN, MISMM.**

#### **"LIGHTHOUSES IN SRI LANKA AND LIFE IN A LIGHTHOUSE"**

Mr. Hamin is a Member of the Institute of Supplies  
and Materials Management. He also has a Diploma in  
Journalism. He is a Freelance Journalist, TV Presenter,  
Compere and Moderator. He was employed at the  
Imperial Lighthouses Service and handled Logistics  
of Lighthouses from 1962 to 1975. He was thereafter  
seconded to the Sri Lanka Navy Lighthouse Service  
from 1976 to 1985 in the same capacity when the  
Imperial Lighthouse Service was taken over by the  
Government of Sri Lanka. Owing to Northern Area  
commitments, the Sri Lanka Navy handed over the  
Lighthouse Service to the Sri Lanka Ports Authority  
in 1985. Mr. Hamin retired from the Sri Lanka Ports  
Authority Lighthouse Service in 2004 and is currently  
employed as a Manager cum Marine Surveyor at M/s.  
Interocean Maritime Enterprises (Pvt.) Ltd., Colombo  
3. Prior to Mr. Hamin, his father, grandfather and great  
grandfather served in the Imperial Lighthouse Service,  
Ceylon and Minicoy.

Questions and discussions will follow.

**Venue: The Organisation of Professional  
Associations (OPA), 275/75, Prof. Stanley  
Wijesundera Mawatha,**



off Bauddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 7

**Directions:** (The OPA is situated mid-way down Professor Stanley Wijesundera Mw, one end of which joins Bauddhaloka Mw, near the Army checkpoint leading to General's House and the other end opposite the Colombo University grounds on Reid Avenue, between the former Ceylon Turf Club and the University of Colombo Arts/Law Faculty buildings)

**Members please invite any/all persons who are likely to be interested in attending and/or the proceedings of the Society.**

**Interested? Please contact persons below. No fee for attendance.**

Tissa Devendra, (President) e-mail: tdevendra@eureka.lk 011 250 1489

M.D. (Tony) Saldin (Hony. Secretary) e-mail: saldincan@sltnet.lk +94 777 363366 /011 2936402 (O), 2931315 ®

Asoka de Silva (Hony. Treasurer) email: matdes@sltnet.lk 011 2822933/ +94 775 097517

#### MELBOURNE CHAPTER

**Date: Sunday 12 May 2013**

*Time: 5:30 p.m.*

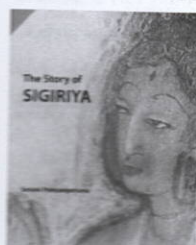
An illustrated talk by

**Senani Ponnampereuma**

based on his book

### "The Story of Sigiriya"

*Senani Ponnampereuma is a Sri Lankan author and IT Consultant who migrated to Melbourne in 1975. He is the son of Felix Ponnampereuma the world renowned soil scientist and the nephew of Cyril Ponnampereuma of NASA fame. While working as an IT professional at various major companies, Senani has kept up with his other interest of researching on Sigiriya. This has resulted in two must read publications this year - "The Story of Sigiriya" and "Sigiriya The Real Story" (an e-book).*



*The Story of Sigiriya is a beautifully illustrated book that presents Sigiriya in a fascinating new light. Senani, a good storyteller, uses a crisp narrative style to bring this story alive and introduces us to many previously unknown and overlooked facts.*

*He starts by setting the scene over 1,500 years ago when this story unfolded, introduces us to the key players, and then guides us through the events leading up to the creation, abandonment and rediscovery of what some consider the 8th Wonder of the World. He then continues to describe the ruins today, using some of the most vivid and never before seen photographs of Sigiriya.*

#### VENUE: St Scholastica's Community Centre St Scholastica's Church

348 Burwood Highway, BURWOOD  
(Melway 61 D6)

**(please park on the side streets or behind the church)**

For further enquiries

Contact Hemal

0427 725 740

### WE NEED SPEAKERS

The Society welcomes knowledgeable and persons with academic backgrounds to speak at our meetings in Sydney, Melbourne and Colombo. You may have potential candidates for speakers in your families, among friends or relatives who live in or visit Australia or Sri Lanka. Our meetings are held quarterly in February, May, August and November of each year. Dates can be arranged to suit the availability of speakers. Overhead projection and PA facilities are also available.

If you would like to share your knowledge and expertise among a group of like-minded people, please contact our President Harry de Sayrah on (Mob) 0415 402 724 or Hemal Gurusinghee (Mob) 0427 725 740 (Melbourne) or M.D. (Tony) Saldin 2440 769 (Colombo).

### YOUR LITERARY CONTRIBUTIONS

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

While every effort is made to print material that is relevant and correct, we do not take the responsibility for errors. The editor would appreciate any inaccuracies being brought to his attention.

Original, previously unpublished, material is sought, preferably of an anecdotal, historical nature, but any material will be considered provided it contributes to the CSA's ideals of being non-racial, non-political, non-religious and non-controversial.

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

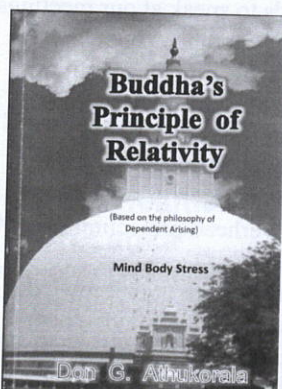
The views expressed in articles published are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the CSA.



## BOOKSHOP & WEB RESOURCES

This is a regular column for the benefit of members (& others) who author books or have books, maps & other collectibles and would like the Society to promote these materials on their behalf. No charges apply to members, **but donations are encouraged from all using this service.** Regrettably, items can be listed only in three (3) consecutive issues. Please contact the editor for further details.

### Buddha's Principle of Relativity by Don G Athukorala



Recommended retail price is \$25/- per copy.

Interested buyers can purchase a copy from **Sunil's Spice Centre in Thornleigh in Sydney (NSW)** or order the book by calling **Xlibris on 1-800-618-969**. Additionally, they can

order the book through **Xlibris online bookstore: <https://www.xlibris.com.au/bookstore/>**. They can search for the book using the author's name or book title.

## CHANGED YOUR ADDRESS ?

Have you recently changed your contact details – home address, email, telephone number and so on? If so, Treasurer Deepak Pritamdas would like to hear from you so he can update his mailing list and other records. This will help ensure you receive the Journal without interruption.

Contact Deepak on (Mob) 0434 860 4798  
Email: [deepakpsl@yahoo.com](mailto:deepakpsl@yahoo.com)

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 • *Universal Magazines Pty Ltd of North Ryde NSW 2113.*

He who has never hoped can never despair.  
 – George Bernard Shaw (Caesar & Clopatra - 1901)

## YOUR MEMBERSHIP – please keep it up-to-date

Subscriptions for 2012 are overdue and those for 2013 are now due. This is just a reminder for you to please try to keep your membership financial at all times. Australian members may send a personal cheque or MO in favour of the Ceylon Society of Australia to **Deepak Pritamdas, PO Box 489, Blacktown NSW 2148** OR arrange direct payment to the Society's bank account BSB 062-308 A/c No:1003 8725 at the Commonwelath Bank. A standing order on your bank to debit your account on a given date will ensure your subscriptions are never in arrears. 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 banks are requested to inform the Treasurer by email where possible of their transaction to avoid any confusion. Sri Lanka resident members have the option of paying in Rupees to the Local Treasurer. Please refer to inside front cover of this journal for contact details.

### ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES ARE:

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Sri Lankan resident members: SL Rs.3000

For details about your subscriptions status please contact Deepak on (Mob) 0434 860 188  
 email: [deepakpsl@yahoo.com](mailto:deepakpsl@yahoo.com)

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## Heard in Peradeniya

Setting: The regular Saturday morning feature of the surgical professorial appointment. A student was presenting a case of carcinoma of the rectum.

Consultant: "I say, what do you understand by the term 'semi-colon'?"

Students: named various parts of the colon one by one; singly or in combination, "ascending and descending", "caecum and ascending", and so on, until finally, someone figured out the answer:

"It is a punctuation mark". (*Veranja Liyanapathirana*)

(*Courtesy Peradeniya University Medical School Alumni Association, Australia Branch Souvenir, 2012*)



# COLOURS

## of my Sri Lankan food



Shahida Alam/Duka-Majesty World

by Chulie de Silva

**G**etting ready to have breakfast in the garden couple of days ago, I was struck by the colours of my tray. The ripe papaya, on a favourite stoneware plate picked up many moons ago in a sale in the UK, the classic Sansoni linen — wow! So out came the camera propelled by one side of my brain while the other joined my tummy and the papaya and was calling out like Alice in Wonderland's food "Eat me, eat me!"

For years before I cooked, I thought of the colours, the blending of flavours, seeing in my mind's eye how the food would look on the table or on a plate. However, I hadn't really focused on keeping a visual record although there are thousands of scribbled recipes and even more recipe cuttings and recipe books. Usually, by the time the food is cooked I am so hungry so it's easy to say, Oh! I'll photograph next time. But from now I'll photograph to remember these everyday colour spreads. They also have another phrase for these things we do now calling it "productive ageing." But that's another story.

Chicken rice is a Malaysian specialty and is not Sri Lankan but since I prepared it today and it is a "Made in Sri Lanka" dish, I've included it here. The secret they say in making it is never letting the water boil, so the Chicken stays plump and juicy. The red chillie ginger sauce, the cucumbers doused in soya sauce, and the side dish of soup are musts. Although the original chicken rice

recipe calls for cooking the rice in chicken fat, now I opt for plain rice. It is still yummy. The pair of laughing Buddhas as well as the old lace table cloth were collected when I used to forage in the Chinese shops in Kuala Lumpur after dropping the sons in school.

For a Southern-born Sri Lankan the aroma of a freshly cooked fish curry is unforgettable. The fish was bought straight from the sail driven catamarans as they landed on the beach at Hikkaduwa. Best cooked in a clay earthen chatti/pot it is/was a perennial favourite. You not only ate it with rice but with all the other Sri Lankan favourites like Milk rice, stringhoppers, pittu and hoppers. This curry for me is best with red country rice, and the potato curry in coconut milk balances the hot chillie gravy. The odd one here is the stir fried Kankun. The latter is again a modified Malaysian recipe, where I use Maldivian fish pounded with garlic and red chillies in place of the sambal blachan. Tumeric is used extensively in Sri Lankan cookery, like in the potato curry and its beneficial health properties are well known in Lanka as well as in the whole of South Asia. I recently read a western article waxing lyrically about tumeric and advising readers to sprinkle it on everything — even boiled eggs. Sri Lanka also has many varieties of bananas — yellow, red, green and they come in all sizes. These again are my favourites. The table cloth is a Sri Lankan handloom one which was a gift from my sister a good three decades ago!

The last photo was my lunch while on a field trip to Vavuniya. We had stopped at a wayside cafe for lunch, where we could select dishes from their cooked food stall. The food was served on a lotus leaf, the plate was a woven reed basket. About to dig into my food I was again taken back by the colours of the plate of food — so out came the camera, much to the amusement of my working colleagues.

Source: The above story and photographs reproduced on the back cover are from the author's blog [chulie.worldpress.com](http://chulie.worldpress.com) © All copyright with the author.





- (Above) Breakfast of ripe papaya on Barbra Sansoni linen.
- (Left) Chicken rice lunch today with cucumber, ginger & Chillie sauce on my favourite Pierre Cardin design plates.
- (Below left) Sri Lankan home cooked lunch of red country rice, potato curry with coconut milk, stir fried Kankun with chillie & garlic & seer fish red curry. Puwalu/Kolikottu banana for desert.
- (Below) Clockwise from bottom; Lentils curry, aubergines pickle, pappadams, stirfried potatoo with chillies called devilled potatoes or "ala eldala" and green beans with hot spicy prawns in the centre on a bed of red rice. (Also see page 35)

## COLOURS of my Sri Lankan food

PHOTOS & STORY by CHULIE DE SILVA



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