

Kotte before 1542. 14.9 x 25 x 16cm. Handle and feet contemporary Indo-Portuguese, the lock-plate probably South German, mid-16th century silver mounts. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna



## COVER STORY: Ceylon Ivory: Pieces from various museums around the world

by Premila Thurairatnam



Kotte c.1543. 18 x 30 x 16cm. Mounts of gold filigree set with cabochon rubies and sapphires. Schatzkammer, Residenz, Munich



# The Ceylanikaum

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## The Ceylon Society of Australia

### PRESIDENT

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

### VICE-PRESIDENT

Dr Srilal Fernando

### SECRETARY

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

### TREASURER & PUBLIC OFFICER

Deepak Pritamdas  
Mobile: 0434 860 188  
email: deepakpsl1@gmail.com

### PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER

Vacant

### PUBLICATIONS OFFICER

Vacant

### EDITOR

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

### SOCIAL CONVENOR

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

### EX-OFFICIO

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

### Kumar Rasiah

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

### LIFE MEMBERS

Hugh Karunanayake  
Mobile: 0448 998 024  
email: karu@internode.net.au  
Doug and Hyacinth Jones  
Mobile: 0415 378 861  
email: dougjay20@gmail.com

### EDITORIAL SUB-COMMITTEE

Thiru Arumugam  
Hugh Karunanayake

### MELBOURNE CHAPTER CONVENORS

Sumal and Naomi Karunanayake  
Mobile: 0416 583 888 (Sumal); 0415 772 888 (Naomi)  
email:

### COLOMBO CHAPTER COMMITTEE

#### CONVENOR/LOCAL PRESIDENT

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

#### IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

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

#### VICE PRESIDENTS

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

Rear Admiral Y.N. Jayaratne  
mobile: +94 71 4918537  
email: ynjayarathna@gmail.com

#### LOCAL SECRETARY

Insiah Davoodbhoy  
mobile: +94 77 8705575  
email: insiyah.davoodbhoy@gmail.com

#### LOCAL TREASURER

vacant

#### LOCAL ASSISTANT TREASURER

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

#### EX-OFFICIO

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

#### Avishka Mario Senewiratne

Tel: +94 766122345  
Email : avishkamario@gmail.com

#### Anandalal Nanayakkara

mobile: +94 77 3272989  
email: anandalal10@gmail.com

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## From the Editor

Dear Readers

Welcome to the May issue, full of material covering a wide range of topics of interest to our readers.

The cover story by Premila Thurairatnam shows some exquisite pieces of Ceylon ivory caskets that are displayed in various museums around the world. The craftsmanship is of an extremely high standard, and the talented Sri Lankan carvers have done us proud! In keeping with the theme of art Dr Srilal Fernando's short article on the correspondence between Richard Gabriel and famous Sri Lankan architects Minette de Silva and Geoffrey Bawa highlights the important connection between art and architecture and also shows the creative tension between the two forms.

Thiru Arumugam has penned another fascinating piece about Dr Samuel Fisk Green, who established a hospital and dispensary in Manipay in the Jaffna area in the 1850s, which still exists today as the Green Memorial Hospital. He studied Tamil and translated key medical texts from English to Tamil and established the first Western Medical School in Ceylon.

Earlson Forbes has laid bare the bureaucratic inner workings of the openly racist White Australia Policy in his article titled *Fortress White Australia*. Earlson shows how the first Ceylonese migrants had to endure the humiliation of being assessed on just the colour of their skin by Australian immigration officials during the post World War 2 period. Some of the documents Earlson has included in his piece are so absurd in their wording that they could be seen as examples of absurdist humour!

Asoka de Silva's article celebrating the multicultural heritage of Sri Lanka is a timely reminder that a

diverse and tolerant nation is a stable and united one. Similar themes are shown in the books written by Hugh Karunanayake on his reminiscences of old Ceylon and Tony Saldin on his life story as a Sri Lankan of Malay background (replete with a handsome photo of Tony in full Malay attire!) reviewed by Manik de Silva and Somasiri Devendra respectively.

There are reports of previous CSA Meetings that cover irrigation systems built by ancient Sri Lankan kings that are still in use and a report on the 1962 Coup D'Etat, which makes fascinating reading.

Also included is a moving tribute to Prof Yasmine Gooneratne by her daughter Devika Brendon as well as tributes to the late Dr Srilal Silva by Thiru Arumugam and Hugh Karunanayake. Nihal Dias Abeysinghe has written a tribute to his late father Felix Dias Abeysinghe that gives us a window to a bygone era.

For members in Sydney please note the change of date of our Meeting to **SUNDAY 2ND JUNE** at 6.30 pm. Details are on page 34.

A reminder to everyone that the CSA website (<https://ceylon-society.com/>) is up and running. If you haven't done so, please fill in the form in the Join Us tab to receive your username and password. Then you can enjoy the archive of the past issues of *The Ceylankan* right back to the Society's inception. Apologies in advance for the unavailability of some old issues of the journal. It will be greatly appreciated if any readers have some or all of those missing issues please email me (on [adamraf2@tpg.com.au](mailto:adamraf2@tpg.com.au)) to make arrangements to send them to me for scanning and inclusion in the website. In future, I plan to have the Index on the website as well.

Happy reading!

ADAM RAFFEL

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### Ceylon Society of Australia

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

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

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



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

## Our Readers write

### GOLD COINS (KAHAVANU) of Sri Lanka

Thank you for publishing the article on Gold Coins of Sri Lanka and making it the cover story (J 105 Vol 27 No 1, Feb 2024). I have had positive feedback from some of the readers.

However, I wish to place on record that it was Dr Eranda Adikaram of Sydney who did all the hard work in terms of research and choosing the images. My role was only to make it more suitable for the general reader. This will be chapter in a forthcoming book by Dr Adikaram who, despite a heavy workload of being an anesthesiologist, has followed his passion and researched this very interesting area of early Sri Lankan coins which give insights to the history of the country. I must also note that the images on the top half of the cover were not part of this article.\*

Once again congratulations on a very readable *Ceylankan*.

Kind Regards,

Srilal Fernando

\* **EDITOR:** My apologies to the author for that oversight. In future, only images provided by authors will be included in the cover.

### Felix Dias Abeysinghe: An appreciation of a father

by Nihal Dias Abeysinghe



He was popularly known as the Commissioner of Elections and the High Commissioner to Australia.

I knew him as a God-fearing family man, highly motivated and a well organised individual.

At one time, in addition to his onerous duties as Commissioner of Elections he was at one and the same time holding down three important government positions.

As Acting Commissioner of Local Government, Commissioner of Elections and Secretary to the Local Government Services Commission. As usual he gave these assignments his best effort and worked pretty hard at them working late in office then coming home with the boot of his Hilman minx car full of files that he dealt with at home till two or three in the morning. He was educated at St Thomas College Mt Lavinia from where he entered The University Ceylon, Colombo, where he did History honours. He was an all-round good student and a devout Christian and later a member of the Diocesan Council of Sri Lanka. He was a member of the St Thomas College choir, played cricket for the College and subsequently for the University as well. He captained the University cricket team in 1938/39. He also captained the tennis team at University. His interest in cricket took him to captain the local government team which won their divisional league to be presented the award by the prime minister of the time the Hon. D.S. Senanayake.

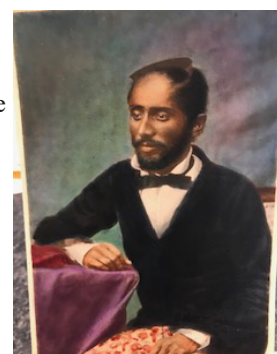
He spent whatever time he could with his family. He coached us in cricket at home showing us the various batting strokes and we had very vigorous catching practices as well and he said that fielding was one of the most important skills a player could have.

As a parent he was a wonderful role model, ever loving, caring and approachable. At the same time, he was a strict disciplinarian, a fact that I can vouch for being mischievous and the eldest in the family. He had wide knowledge of many topics and tutored my brother and me on subjects like Latin and English and my sister in Greek and Roman Civilizations and civics.

He enjoyed his spell as the High Commissioner in Australia, where, again, he did a lot of work. He had diplomatic qualities and he got on well with people and being a voracious reader had a good knowledge of history and current affairs.

An incident to display his early diplomatic skills was when an old man living in our neighbourhood came to dad asked him for certificate for his incorrigible son who was applying for a job. That put my dad into a quandary as he knew this boy was a loafer and a suspected pick pocket as well. The boy didn't want to disappoint the old man as well, but my dad couldn't recommend the young man knowing about his bad reputation. So, he gave him a short note saying "I have known David for a few years now, He is a tall strong boy who can run very fast. I can recommend him to anyone who can utilise skills of this nature." I am not sure where David found employment, but they all seemed to be happy with the letter!

Dushy Perera's short appreciation of my dad appears on the next page.



Nicholas Dias Abeysinghe:  
an ancestor circa 1850

## Felix Dias Abeysinghe: A Mentor without Peer and a Man for All Seasons

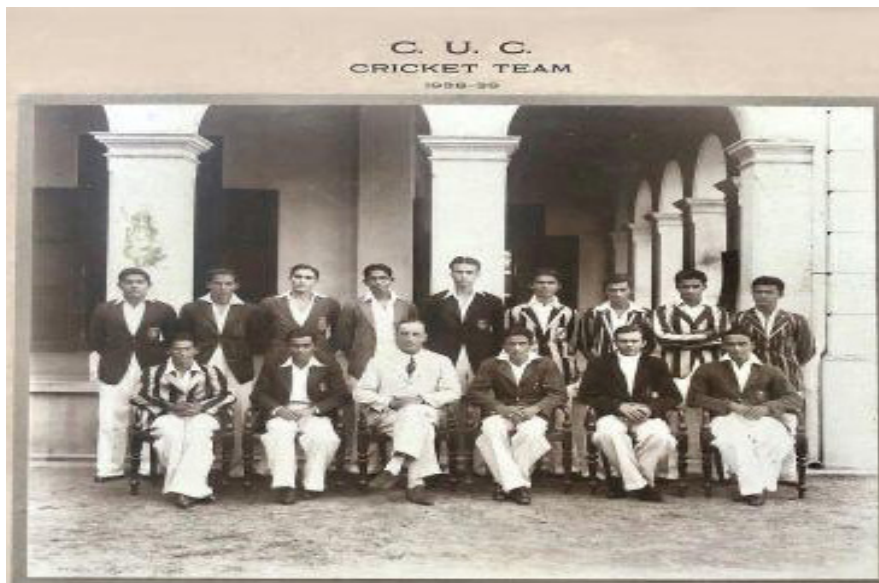
by Dushy Perera

“With malice towards none and charity to all” Abe Lincoln’s famous words from his inaugural address come to my mind when I reflect on the life and times of Uncle Felix, who passed away in Australia a few days before his 88th birthday which fell on 16th May 2021. Hence, it was fitting that a Service of Thanksgiving was held at St. John’s Church, Nugegoda on 16th May, where Uncle Felix devotedly worshipped every Sunday.

His achievements in life are too numerous for me to mention, which I am sure that other appreciations will carry. I am merely sharing my reflections as a schoolboy neighbour who saw him as a mentor par excellence! My father and Uncle Felix built and moved into their brand new homes down Albert Perera Mawatha, 3rd Lane as it was known then in the mid-1950s. We remained “good” neighbours till the Dias Abeysinghes sold out and migrated to Australia in the mid-1980s. 30 years of unbroken friendship!

In those days school started at 8.40 am and went on till 3.40 pm with a lunch break of one hour. Those were TV less days and playing cricket on his sloping lawn, cycling, climbing trees and playing hide and seek were among the favorite pastimes of the children of the neighborhood. When their tall French window was shattered by a “Bundalo” Samarasinghe leather ball six, Nihal his eldest son was reprimanded but never a harsh word to the rest of us cricketers!

I used to travel with Uncle Felix to school in his Peugeot 403. Many a lesson did I learn from him during those drives to school, which I looked forward to.



# COVER STORY:

## Ceylon Ivory: caskets and artifacts in various museums around the world

by Premila Thurairatnam

In Ceylon, ivory was used in carving as early as the 2nd century CE or earlier<sup>1</sup>. Descriptions of Lanka in the epic *Ramayana* refer to ivory-embellished chariots and ivory panels. By the 15th century, ivory carving had become important enough to result in placing ivory workers fairly high on the social scale, just below farmers. Ivory was the second largest export next to cinnamon. The carving was performed with a high degree of skill using simple tools like saws, chisels and rasps to produce ivory knife handles, combs, bangles, boxes, book covers, compasses and architectural elements, such as ornamentation around door frames. Use of ivory in religious images was unique to Ceylon since being an animal substance, other cultures regarded it as inappropriate or simply too difficult to obtain<sup>1</sup>. Even today, it is common practice to place mounted elephant tusks on each side of temple doorways with ivory confiscated from poachers or obtained from elephants that died from natural causes.

Products carved for Buddhist monasteries included covers for texts, fan handles (one of few items a monk could personally own) and scent sprayers. This last item was a masterpiece of ivory that consisted of a hollow cylindrical base and a long neck. A secret method, now lost, was used to turn a bottom piece of such thinness it could be compressed by hand to convey the scent up the neck<sup>2</sup>.

According to J.W. Bennett, an officer in the British colonial government, "Ceylon ivory is considered the most valuable for all the purposes of the manufacturer, being whiter, of finer grain, and retaining its whiteness much longer, than any other"<sup>3</sup>.

Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, who worked for the Portuguese in Goa, mentions a Ceylonese ivory cross of fine workmanship brought to Goa in the late 16th century:

My master the Archbishop had a crucifixe of Ivorie of an elle long, presented unto him, by one of the inhabitants of the Isle, and by him so cunningly and workmanly wrought, that in the hayre, beard, and face, it seemed to be alive, and in all other parts so neatly wrought and proportioned in lines, that the like can not be done in Europe<sup>4</sup>.

The Dutchmen held a custom of smoking tobacco in long-stemmed clay pipes which were very fragile. Cases were made to protect them and several of these of carved ivory panels over a wood case can be found in present-day European collections<sup>5</sup>.

Ceylon was the first Asian country to send an ambassador to Europe, when in 1541-42 the Buddhist monk Ramaraksa Pandita, who could speak fluent Portuguese, travelled to Lisbon as the representative of his government<sup>6</sup>. The Portuguese Queen Catherine (1507-78), consort of Dom João III (r. 1521-57) was an avid collector of oriental curiosities, amongst them



**Fig 1. Fan. Kotte 1540-55. Ivory, rubies and gold on wool, 57cm high. Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Munich; exh. Museum Rietberg, Zürich<sup>6</sup>**

ivory objects. Some of these she presented as diplomatic gifts or as presents to members of her family such as her daughter Dona Maria, the wife of Philip II, her nieces, the Infanta Maria of Braganza and Joanna of Austria. In 1561 she received 44 fans from the Far East of which the ones from Ceylon can be distinguished by their long elegant handles encrusted with figures, foliage and animals supporting a fan made of thin, flat flaps of ivory<sup>6</sup> (Fig 1).

Ivory caskets made in Kotte were sent as diplomatic gifts to the Court of Portugal, marking historical and religious events. A group of exquisite caskets has been examined by eminent curators Amin Jaffer and Melanie Anne Schwabe<sup>7</sup> and P.H.D.H. de Silva, director of National Museums, Sri Lanka<sup>10</sup>. Their decoration ranges from being entirely Sinhalese to a mixture of European and Sinhalese, the former predating the latter. Bhuvaneka Bahu (r. 1521-51), King of Kotte sought Portuguese support to subordinate his neighbouring rivals.

### Casket 1 - Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna



**Fig 2 (Casket 1). Kotte before 1542. 14.9 x 25 x 16cm. Handle and feet contemporary Indo-Portuguese, the lock-plate probably South German, mid-16th century silver mounts. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna<sup>7</sup>**

The earliest caskets (before 1542) depict scenes from *Ramayana* and traditional Sinhalese religious and mythological motifs (Fig 2). The front right panel depicts Dasaratha accompanied by his son Rama, acknowledging the blessings of the sage Vasitha who prophesied Rama's birth. The front left panel portrays two heavenly dancers (*apsaras*) and the middle panel a pair of holy geese (*hamsa puttawa*)<sup>7</sup>.



**Fig 3 (Casket 1). Right end of casket, Kotte before 1542. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna<sup>7</sup>**

The right end of the casket has a figure riding a heavily armoured elephant and it is thought that he is Bhuvaneka Bahu as he is portrayed with symbols of his position of King of Ceylon: distinctive holy headband (*chinnapat-tikadhatu*), a single rope of pearls (*ekavali*), sunflower referring to the King's membership of the royal solar dynasty (*suryavamsa*) and a frieze of royal lions (*raja simha*) a link to the first great King of Ceylon, Vijaya who was believed to have descended directly from a lion<sup>7</sup> (Fig 3).

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#### Casket 2 - Schatzkammer, Residenz, Munich



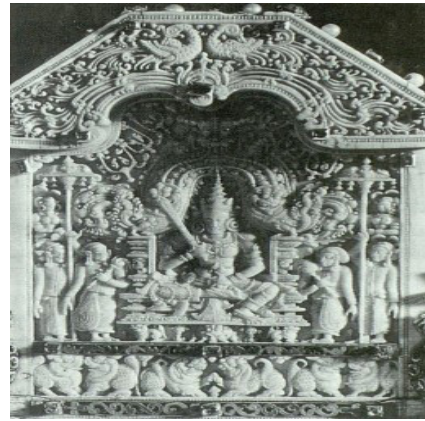
**Fig 4 (Casket 2). Kotte c.1543. 18 x 30 x 16cm. Mounts of gold filigree set with cabochon rubies and sapphires. Schatzkammer, Residenz, Munich<sup>7</sup>**

The earlier casket in Munich portrays the coronation of the effigy of Dharmapala by Dom João III in Lisbon in 1542-43. An embassy was sent from Ceylon to Lisbon with two effigies: one of the three-year-old Prince Dharmapala (grandson of Bhuvaneka Bahu) and the other of King Bhuvaneka Bahu<sup>7</sup> or Ambassador Ramaraksa Pandita<sup>10</sup> (Fig 4). The front left panel shows the taking of the oath with the King/Ambassador placing the Prince's right hand into the right hand of Dom João III. The front right panel shows the crowning ceremony where Dom João III places the multi-tiered crown of Lanka on the Prince's head.

#### Casket 3 - Schatzkammer, Residenz, Munich



**Fig 5 (Casket 3). Kotte 1547. 15 x 25 x 14cm. Gold mounts by Munich goldsmith set with diamonds, emeralds, rubies, sapphires and pearls. Schatzkammer, Residenz, Munich<sup>7</sup>**



**Fig 6 (Casket 3). Left end of casket, Kotte, c.1547. Residenz, Munich<sup>7</sup>**

The third casket represents political events of 1546 when Portuguese forces captured the fortress of Diu from the Sultan of Gujarat, securing Portuguese dominance over Lanka (Fig 5). The left end portrays Bhuvaneka Bahu seated on a lion throne wearing the Crown of Lanka and holding a lotus flower (one of the five emblems of Buddha) - Fig 6.

#### Casket 4 – Victoria and Albert Museum, London



**Fig 7 (Casket 4). Right end of casket carved from an image in a Book of Hours. V&A Museum<sup>7</sup>**

The casket in the Victoria and Albert Museum is the first to depict Christian motifs. This was sent to Portugal during the reign of Dharmapala who converted to Christianity thus fulfilling his grandfather's promise to the Portuguese<sup>7</sup>.

The sophistication and skill of these craftsmen from the Middle Ages in reproducing The Tree of Jesse – which prophesied that the Saviour would descend from twelve kings of Israel of his own family, from a Book of Hours printed by Thielman Kerver in 1499 is astounding<sup>7</sup>. Fig 7 shows a copy of the page from the Book of Hours alongside the carved end of the casket.

#### Sculpture of Virgin and Child – Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore

The largest ivory Christian sculpture made in Ceylon is of the Virgin standing on a crescent moon holding the Christ child who carries an orb. She may have once carried a rosary of gold or gemstones. She wears jewellery of South Asian origin indicating that the



**Fig 8. Virgin and Child, late 16th century. Ivory 32.5cm high. Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore<sup>8</sup>**

carver added elements considered essential to a deity, regardless of religion. Her drapes fall in precise, even pleats bordered by intricate ruffles along the edges<sup>8</sup> (Fig 8).

#### **Casket 5 – Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin**



**Fig 9 (Casket 5). Front of the casket, Kotte, 1578-80. 13.5 x 5.5 x 11.5cm. Mounts are silver gilt, probably contemporary. Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin<sup>7</sup>**

The growing European influence in the East and of Sinhala-Portuguese art can be seen in the casket in Berlin, reflecting the early understanding of the Christian faith in Ceylon. The front of the casket shows the coat of arms marrying European and Sinhalese motifs (Fig 9). The shield is surmounted by a 16th-century European crowned helmet from which it is separated by triple rows of beading (*arimbuwa*). On one side of the shield is the Sinhalese lion and on the other is a two-handled lily pot, known in Ceylon as a 'power vase'. This coat of arms likely belonged to Dharmapa-

la, a vassal of the Portuguese Crown and the last and only Christian king of Ceylon. In 1580 he bequeathed Kotte to the Portuguese Crown since he had no heirs and wanted his kingdom to remain Christian<sup>7</sup>.



**Fig 10 (Casket 5). Back of the casket, Kotte, Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin<sup>7</sup>**

The back of the casket is carved with scenes from the life of Christ. On the left panel, a kneeling Gabriel holds a banner that reads 'Ave M.', an abbreviation for Ave Maria or Hail Mary. The second panel depicts the annunciated Virgin in her bedroom, her hands raised in surprise and her dress overflowing into the leftmost panel. The third panel shows the nativity and the last panel the Ascension of the Innocents, the souls of the children massacred by King Herod rising towards heaven accompanied by an angel holding a lily<sup>7</sup> (Fig 10).



**Fig 11 (Casket 5). Left and right ends of casket in Berlin<sup>7</sup>**

The left end of the casket shows the attempted martyrdom of John the Evangelist who, according to legend, was boiled alive by Romans but rose out of the scalding water rejuvenated. The carving shows him naked in a cauldron set on flames amidst spectators some of whom are wearing turbans. The right end shows the Adoration of the Magi where Mary is seated with baby Jesus in her arms and Joseph standing next to her. At her feet kneels one of the three kings whilst the other two are standing<sup>7</sup> (Fig 11).



**Fig 12 (Casket 5). Lid of the casket in Berlin<sup>7</sup>**

The top panels of the lid are carved with Christian motifs. The left panel shows the Emperor Diocletian ordering the martyrdom of St Sebastian, his clothing adorned with a scorpion, a symbol of evil. On the next panel is Christ or God the Father holding an orb in his left hand and blessing with his right. On the concluding panel of the triptych is the attempted martyrdom of St Sebastian who was pierced by arrows. The last panel shows the Pentecost with Mary and the apostles receiving the blessing of the Holy Spirit represented in the form of a dove<sup>7</sup> (Fig 12).

#### Casket 6 – Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



**Fig 13 (Casket 6).** Kotte before 1542. 11 x 16.5 x 10.5cm. Mounts of gold filigree set with rubies, turquoise and rock crystal. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston<sup>7</sup>

The ornate work and rich embellishment with gems, pearls, gold, silver, brass, tortoiseshell and rock crystal make these caskets jewels of beauty giving joy forever as can be seen in this one in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (Fig 13). They're also of significant iconographic and cultural value.

#### Cabinet – India Museum



**Fig 14 (Cabinet).** Sinhalese, 26.7cm, India Museum<sup>9</sup>

Further Western influence can be seen in this ivory cabinet with turned-ball feet is reminiscent of work-box cabinets, ornamented with embroidered panels fashionable in England in the mid-17th century<sup>9</sup> (Fig 14). It is carved with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and the snake coiled around the trunk of the forbidden tree of good and evil. Poignantly, there's an elephant, a tusker at that, in the garden!

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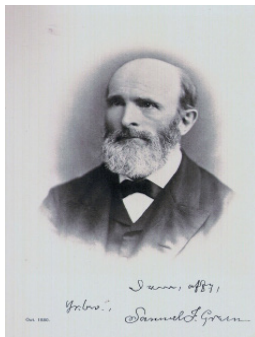
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**Author's Note:** The above group of caskets and artifacts in various museums around the world is a mere snapshot of a larger collection.

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# Samuel Fisk Green MD: Founder of the first Medical School in Ceylon

by Thiru Arumugam



Samuel Fisk Green (1822-1884) (pictured) was a Medical Doctor and Evangelist sent out to Jaffna by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) to work for the American Ceylon Mission (ACM). He arrived in Jaffna in 1847 and returned to America ten years later in 1857 due to failing health.

By 1862 he had recovered, got married and returned to Jaffna to work there for another eleven years until he finally retired in 1873 and returned to America. Some of his achievements in Jaffna were<sup>1</sup>:

- Studied the Tamil language in depth, sufficient to preach and write books in Tamil.
- Established a Hospital and Dispensary in Manipay which still exists and is now known as the Green Memorial Hospital.
- Prepared Glossaries of Tamil medical words, coining words if none existed. This was the case for the majority of medical and scientific words.
- Translated, or supervised the translation of eight major medical text books (including Gray's *Anatomy*) and other minor treatises into Tamil, a total of over 4500 pages of Tamil text.
- Established the first western Medical School in Ceylon and trained about 62 Medical Practitioners directly and over 50 more indirectly, teaching early batches in English and later switching over to the Tamil medium.

## Early years

Samuel Fisk Green was born in Green Hill, Worcester, Massachusetts, USA on 10 October 1822. He was the son of William E Green and Julia Plimpton, the eighth in a family of eleven children. In 1841 he went to New York and enrolled as a student of Medicine in the College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York. This College is now the Post-Graduate Medical School of the prestigious Ivy League Columbia University, New York and was the first American College to award the degree of MD (Doctor of Medicine). In addition to his medical studies, he also studied German, Latin, Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Philosophy and therefore had a well-rounded education. He graduated as a Doctor in March 1845.

He was always of a religious nature and during his student days he often thought of becoming a missionary when he completed his medical studies. In November 1846 he attended a farewell meeting organized by the ABCFM for Dr John Scudder who had previously worked in Jaffna from 1820 to 1836 and was now going to work in South India. Dr Scudder

was the first American who went abroad as a medical missionary. Dr Green immediately offered his services to the ABCFM. He received his letter of appointment on 26 November 1846, which he accepted<sup>2</sup>:

I yesterday received notice of my appointment as a Missionary Physician, to labour in connection with the Mission in the island of Ceylon. The decision of the Committee I welcome as a termination of my state of suspense. I feel their conclusion to be the will of the Lord concerning me.

In January 1847 he boarded with Rev. Samuel Hutchins in New Jersey for a few weeks to learn Tamil. Rev. Hutchins, who was fluent in Tamil, had been with ACM in Jaffna from 1833 to 1843. As Green had a good knowledge of Latin, Greek, French and German, learning one more language was not a problem.

On 20 April 1847, Green left America on the ship '*Jacob Perkins*' from Boston bound for Madras, now called Chennai. His luggage included a book on Tamil grammar, which he studied on the long voyage. After about four months of non-stop sailing the ship rounded Ceylon and reached Madras on 4 September 1847. He left Madras on 20 September 1847 on horseback, accompanied by three coolies, a servant and a horse-keeper, for the 200 mile journey south to Point Calimere which they reached on 2 October. A few days later, he sailed from there on a '*dhoni*' to Point Pedro reaching there in nine hours. He finally reached his station of Batticotta (Vaddukoddai) on 8 October 1847, the day before his twenty-fifth birthday.

## In Jaffna, 1847 to 1857

Green immediately engaged a Tamil tutor the day after he arrived. His target was to be able to preach in Tamil within one year. He set up a small dispensary and started seeing patients the day after he arrived. A few days later, on 20 October he was called to see a patient with a large abscess in the groin. The outcome was described as follows<sup>3</sup>:

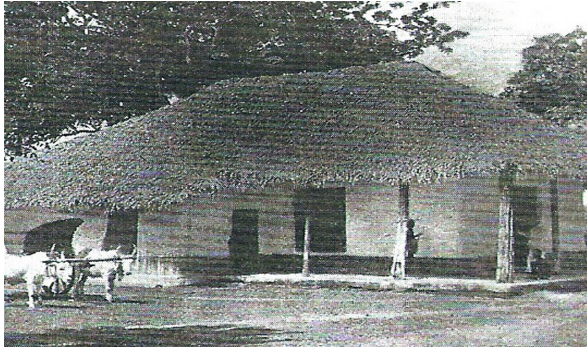
In the year 1847 there were very few English Doctors, and none among the Tamils of Jaffna had any idea of European medical practice. Mr Mutatamby, a Tamil and Sanskrit Pandit who was generally the Tamil teacher of the missionaries, got fever and was suffering from it for a long time. Fever got worse and worse daily, and suddenly turned out to be something else. All hopes of recovery were lost. Native physicians were unable to solve the difficulty.

After great hesitation and consultation, it was decided that Dr Green can be invited, because he was a missionary ... Dr Green pronounced that there was an abscess in the abdomen, and advised an immediate operation. He discovered the abscess and cut it open. The patient got free and was a hundred times better. Dr Green dressed the wound, and attended very carefully and cured him.

The people heard about the success, and the fame of the Doctor spread very soon throughout the peninsula of

Jaffna. The people began to talk that the English Doctor had removed the bowels out, adjusted them and refixed them, ... from that day forth Dr Green was considered a demi-god by the people, who all flocked to him afterwards from all parts of Jaffna.

In January 1848, ACM decided that Green should move from Vaddukoddai to Manipay as the latter place was more centrally situated in the peninsula. In Manipay, Green set up a dispensary and small hospital (Fig. 2). The Green Memorial Hospital exists in this location to this day (Fig.3).



**Figure 2 - Dr Green's Hospital and Dispensary, Manipay 1880s**



**Figure 3 - Green Memorial Hospital, Manipay today**

The population of the Jaffna peninsula at that time was about 300,000. Green estimated that about 30 western medical Doctors were required to meet the needs of this population. To meet this requirement, he decided to establish a small medical school, which would be the first in the country. In 1848, the first batch of three students was selected for a three-year course in medicine and surgery. Two of them had already completed their secondary education at the Batticotta Seminary, the forerunner of Jaffna College. At that time, three years was the standard length of a medical course in America and UK. Green modelled the course, subjects and syllabus on the course that he had followed in the College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York. He dissected two human bodies and displayed practical Anatomy to the students.

In 1849 the medical students had satisfactorily completed their first year of studies. Green carried out the dissection of seven human bodies with them. Meanwhile, Green carried out numerous operations including removal of tumors, cataract operations, amputations, treatment of fractures, complicated childbirths etc., with the assistance of his students. Dr C G Urugoda, the eminent medical historian and President of the Sri Lanka Medical Council made this comment<sup>4</sup>:

The real advances in Surgery took place during the British period. At first it was a private hospital, namely Green Memorial Hospital that took the lead in Surgery. General Hospital, Colombo was established only subsequently.

Samuel F Green was a medical missionary sent to Jaffna in 1847 by the ABCFM in Boston, Massachusetts. He established the first medical school in Sri Lanka and the eponymous hospital at Manipay. In the first thirteen months since his arrival, he treated 2544 patients, of whom a third had surgical conditions.

P A Dyke was the first and very long serving Government Agent of the Northern Province. He started collecting funds to set up a dispensary and hospital in Jaffna Town through the Jaffna Friend-in-Need Society. On 2 September 1850, the Friend-in-Need Society Dispensary and Hospital were completed and were open for business. This Hospital became the present-day Jaffna General Hospital in 1899. A few weeks later P A Dyke wrote to Green that he was prepared to give an annual Government grant of fifty pounds a year to his Medical School with no conditions attached. The grant continued for about thirty years and doubled in value twice within that period. This enabled Green to select the second batch of five medical students towards the end of 1850 (Fig. 4). All of them were graduates of the Batticotta Seminary.



**Figure 4 - Some of Dr Green's students, from left to right: S. Miller, N. Parker, J.H.Town, C. Mead, Joshua Danforth and A.C.Hall, all from the second batch of 1850-1853, except Joshua Danforth who was from the first batch of 1848-1850**

The first batch of three medical students completed their course in 1851. John Denison joined Government service as a doctor and was posted to Point Pedro. In July 1851 he died of cholera, contracted while caring for cholera patients. Eliatamby Waittillingam was employed in Mullaitivu. The third student, Joshua Danforth, was employed as an Assistant to Dr Green in his Dispensary. Danforth was later awarded the degree of MD by the College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York and became the Head of the Jaffna Friend-in-Need Hospital.

Green now had the urge to start writing and translating into Tamil. He started preparing a Tamil Medical Glossary. This Glossary extended over all branches of medical science: Anatomy, Physiology, Chemistry, Botany etc. In 1852 Green started work on an elementary treatise in Tamil on Anatomy, Physiology and Hygiene. The book was intended for medical students and was also used by final year students

in Uduvil Girls School. The work that he used for translation was Calvin Cutter's 189 page "*First book on Anatomy, Physiology and Hygiene for Grammar Schools and Families*". Green obtained from Cutter engravings for use for illustrations in his book. The book was printed by the ACM's Manipay Press and published in 1853. Within a week of release, a quarter of the print run was sold out. An order was also received for 134 copies from South India.

The second batch of students completed their course in 1853, and from this batch A C Hall was appointed Doctor to the Planters Association. The third batch of four students was selected in 1853. This batch included C McIntyre who later became a Senior Medical Officer in Government Service. His great-grandson Ernest Macintyre is a playwright and CSA Sydney member.

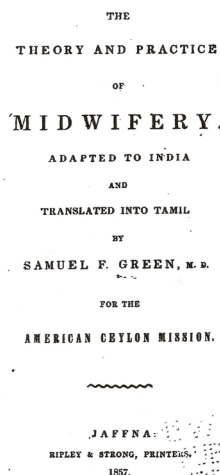
The fourth batch of eight medical students was selected in 1855. Green's intention in training doctors was that they would serve the population of Jaffna, but he was disappointed when he found them going off to Colombo and getting lucrative Government jobs. He decided that the only way of avoiding this would be by ultimately changing the medium of instruction to Tamil. But this would require a full set of textbooks in Tamil. He got the fourth batch of students to take down their lecture notes in Tamil. He then set about translating the medical textbooks into Tamil and the method used was as follows<sup>5</sup>:

A standard textbook was selected and a chapter translated with the aid of a *munshi* [teacher fluent in English and Tamil]. The translation was dictated to the class with explanations and enlargement as needed to render it thoroughly understood. They transcribed it and then their copies were carefully compared with Dr Green's copy, corrected and revised and a fair copy made. This laborious process went on for years. Additional translators and munshis and copyists were employed and finally Dr Green succeeded in getting through the press the following books, some 4000 pages in all: Cutter's *Anatomy, Physiology and Hygiene*, Maunsell's *Obstetrics*, Druitt's *Surgery*, Gray's *Anatomy*, Hooper's *Physician's Vade Mecum*, Well's *Chemistry*, Dalton's *Physiology*, and Waring's *Pharmacopoeia*. Several of these books bore the name of the Tamil physicians trained by Dr Green, his loyal assistants in the work.

In February 1856 Green completed the translation into Tamil of a medical textbook on midwifery. The book that he chose to translate was Maunsell's 244-page book *The Dublin Practice of Midwifery*. Maunsell taught Green obstetrics during his student days. Printing of the Tamil translation was completed in July 1857. Fig. 5 (see over) is the first page of this book.

The Tamil translation of Cutter's *Anatomy, Physiology and Hygiene* which was first published in 1853, was thoroughly revised and more illustrations added and printed in Tamil. As there was a substantial demand for this book in India, arrangements were made to print it in the Mission Press in South India. 3000 copies were retained for sale in India and 1000 copies sent to Jaffna.

Due to failing health (suspected tuberculosis), Green decided to return to America for a lengthy stay and recovery. What had Green achieved in his ten-year



stay in Jaffna? He had set up a small hospital and dispensary and treated close to 20,000 patients, including performing numerous operations; he had started Ceylon's first western medical school and trained twenty Tamils as medical practitioners; he had learned sufficient Tamil to preach in Tamil and translate medical books into Tamil; he had coined Tamil scientific and medical terms at a time

when western science was unknown to the Tamils; and he had translated into Tamil and printed two major medical text books.

### In America, 1858 to 1862

Green left Jaffna on 5 October 1857. He arrived in Madras on 23 October and on 19 December 1857 he sailed in the *Agra*, bound for London, reaching there on 1 April 1858. After spending a few weeks in England and Scotland he sailed from Liverpool on 7 July and reached New York on 21 July 1858. After meeting his brothers and sisters who lived there, he proceeded to his home village of Green Hill in Worcester where his 82 year old father lived.

In the spring of 1859, he was examined by Dr Jeffries who ruled that he doubted whether he could return to Jaffna. The ABCFM therefore suggested that Green stay in America for two or three more years and spend his time translating medical books into Tamil. Meanwhile Dr Nathan Ward, Green's predecessor in Jaffna, who was now in America, volunteered to go back to Jaffna to take Green's place. The ABCFM agreed to this and informed Green that when he recovered, he would have to work in Madurai in South India. Green reluctantly agreed to the changes, but under protest, as he said he had a strong attachment to his work in Jaffna.

During Green's absence from Jaffna, the fifth batch of eleven medical students was selected. They started their course with Dr Charles McIntyre as their teacher.

Dr Ward sailed out from Boston in the *Sea King* on 30 October 1860, bound for Madras. The ship reached Madras on 11 March 1861. A few months later news came back to Boston that when the ship was about thirty days out at sea, Dr Ward had fallen ill and died and was buried at sea. On 23 August 1861 Green wrote to the ABCFM that as he is now much better in health and that as "Jaffna was now destitute of a Physician" he was ready to return to Jaffna. The ABCFM agreed to this and Green started making arrangements for his return to Jaffna. Using 300 dollars which he had raised by a postal fund-raising campaign, he purchased the latest medical textbooks, equipment and medicines.

Green informed ABCFM in January that he was ready to travel to Jaffna and he was told that the next available sailing was in May 1862. He went from New York to Green Hill to say farewell to his father who was 85 years old and he knew that he would never see him again. Then Green sprang a surprise on his relations and friends<sup>6</sup>:

It soon appeared that he had chosen one to be his companion for life who was in every way worthy of himself; and on the 22nd of May at a farewell missionary meeting in the Central Church, where they both had been accustomed to worship, he was united in marriage with Miss Margaret Phelps Williams, the Rev. Sweetser performing the service.

On 26 May 1862, Dr and Mrs Green set sail from Boston on the *Star of Peace*, bound for Madras which they reached in October after a non-stop voyage. They set sail for Jaffna on a brig on 19 October, reaching Udupiddy and from there went on to Manipay.

### In Jaffna, 1862 to 1873

The Greens received a very warm welcome back to Manipay. A particularly warm reception was accorded to the newcomer 'Sister Green'. Green took over the teaching of the fifth batch of eleven medical students, whom he described as follows in a letter to his brother<sup>7</sup>:

I should like to have you present at two or three of my hour sessions with the medical class, eleven in number, an intelligent set of young men earnest to acquire the medical science and art, and who hang upon me so confidently and look to me so docilely for training ...

In 1863, P A Dyke, the Government Agent asked Green whether he would agree to be the Superintendent of the Friend-in-Need Society Hospital (FINSH) in Jaffna Town on a part-time basis. Green agreed, because the additional income would enable him to translate and print more medical text books in Tamil and also because the medical students would have exposure to a wider range of medical cases. Green was to spend two days a week in the FINSH and the Government would pay ACM 75 pounds a year.

On the first of January 1864, Green's first child, a girl, was born. Green wrote to his father<sup>8</sup>:

Pray thus for her, and that her parents may aright train this tendril, that it draggle not in dust, but clamber on the trellis of the Cross.

Julia certainly did not draggle in the dust, but clambered on the trellis of the Cross, because 42 years later in 1906 she did return to the land of her birth, Jaffna, as a missionary with the ACM for five years.

The fifth batch of students completed their studies in 1864 and the sixth batch of eleven students were selected. Instruction would be in Tamil, the main reason being that Green wanted his doctors to work among the poor people of Jaffna rather than go off and join government service. He wrote<sup>9</sup>:

I hope by going into vernacular education, to get some doctors who will in native dress start off afoot in response to calls, and not demand a horse and carriage to be sent and a heavy fee also in addition. This aping [of] European habits is very well in moderation, but young Jaffna overdoes it.

In 1866, Dr Joshua Danforth, who was in Green's first batch of students, completed the translation of the surgery textbook under the supervision of Green. It was revised and edited by Green and sent to the ACM's Press in Manipay for printing. It was titled *The Science and Art of Surgery*. It was a distillation of Erichsen's *The Science and Art of Surgery* and Druitt's *The Principles and Practice of Modern Surgery*. There was an urgent request from South India for 54 copies of this Tamil book on surgery which was met.

Green was so pleased with Danforth's Tamil translation, a monumental 504-page book, that he wrote to the President of his alma mater, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York, suggesting that the College confer Danforth with an honorary degree of Doctor of Medicine. In 1868 the President replied conferring the degree.

The sixth batch of students completed their studies in 1867 and the seventh batch of eleven students was selected. They were the second batch to be taught in Tamil. In 1868 Green terminated his part time work in the Friend-in-Need Society Hospital as he wanted to concentrate on teaching and translating. In his place, Danforth, of the first batch of students, was appointed as full time Superintendent of that Hospital.

In 1869, W C Twynam was appointed Government Agent, Northern Province. He arranged for the grant to Green's Medical School to be doubled to 200 Pounds a year in recognition of the work that was being done. This was significant because the Government was planning to open a medical school in Colombo to be called the Colombo Medical School, which was opened in 1870. Dr James Loos was appointed Principal of this School. 25 pupils were selected for a three-year course. Students were charged a fee of two pounds sterling to be paid at the beginning of each session, unlike in Green's School where tuition was free and in addition students from poor families were given bursaries.

The eighth batch of eleven medical students started their studies in 1871. They were the third batch to be taught in Tamil. In 1872 the translation into Tamil of Gray's *Anatomy* was completed and printed. It was titled *Human Anatomy* and was over 800 pages. It was translated by Daniel Chapman of the fifth batch of students. The translation was supervised by Green. David Wells book titled *Chemistry: Practical and Theoretical* was translated into Tamil by Green. Because the Mission Press in Manipay was now overloaded with printing these Tamil medical books, it was sent to South India for printing.

The ninth batch of eighteen medical students were selected and started their studies in 1872. By this time the health of both Green and his wife was fading, and they decided that it was time to return to America. On 7 March 1873 the Green family sailed from Jaffna to Colombo. On 27 March Dr James Loos the Colonial Surgeon and first Principal of the Colombo Medical School wrote to Green as follows<sup>10</sup>:

... I am grieved that sickness has prevented me from see-

ing you. I should have been happy to take you round our hospital and show you the work we are carrying on – **a work in which we are humbly imitating you** [author's emphasis]. Medical education in Ceylon is deeply indebted to you ...

The Green family sailed for London on the '*Good Hope*' on 29 March 1873 and the ACM did not have a foreign medical missionary for the next twenty years. It was left to Green's Tamil cohorts to shoulder the responsibility of carrying on what he had started for the next twenty years.

## In America, 1873-1884

After a stopover of three months in England, the Green family reached New York on 26 August 1873 and finally reached their ancestral home in Green Hill, Worcester, Massachusetts on 13 September.

From May 1874 onwards, Daniel Chapman from Jaffna sent to Green instalments of the translation of Dalton's *Physiology*. Green carefully revised and edited these instalments and sent them back to Jaffna. Printing of the Tamil translation of Well's *Chemistry* was completed in 1875. This book was translated by Green and ran to 520 pages. The ninth batch of eighteen students, the largest batch so far, completed their medical studies in 1875.

The tenth batch of eighteen students started their medical studies in 1876. In 1877 Green felt better in his health and wrote to ABCFM that it is now four years since he left Jaffna and that he was now ready to go back. He received an unexpected reply<sup>11</sup>:

So, after a careful consideration of the case, having in view your children and your own health, the advanced condition of the Medical Department in Ceylon in consequence of your past labours, and the adjustments made there in your long absence, the Committee did not think it expedient for you to return.

In 1878 in view of Green's eagerness to return to Jaffna, the ABCFM made a modified offer in which they would provide passages to Jaffna for Green and his wife and provide them with accommodation but Green would not be paid a salary but would have to earn a living by his medical practice. Green carefully considered the matter. The main reason for his return was to complete the set of Tamil text books. If he had to work in the Hospital and Dispensary full time, he would not be able to do this, so he respectfully declined the offer.

In 1879 the tenth batch completed their course. The eleventh batch of fifteen students was selected and they were the first batch who were required to pay tuition fees – three rupees a month. They did not realise that they would be the last batch in this Medical School. This batch completed their studies in 1882.

When the Government realised that Green was definitely not coming back, they decided in 1883 to terminate the annual grant of Rs 2000 to the Medical School. ACM had no alternative but to close down the Medical School. The achievements of the School over the past 34 years is summarised as follows<sup>12</sup>:

Of 113 Licentiates sent out from the School, of whom 87 are still living; 44 are or were at death employed on fixed salaries by the Governments of India or Ceylon, or by

various Hospitals, Missions etc.; 48 are or were at death in private practice; 11 have given up the practise of the profession at present at least.

It is sad to contemplate the closing of any department of the Mission work but we can remember that our Medical Department has made a good record and the influence of its work will long abide in the land.

With the closure of the Medical School, Jaffna did not have a medical school for almost a hundred years until the University of Jaffna Medical School opened in 1978. Green was thus a century ahead of the times.

Printing of the Tamil translation of Dalton's *Physiology* was completed in 1883. Printing of the Tamil translation of Waring's *Pharmacopoeia* was completed only in 1888. That completed the set of ten medical Tamil textbooks that Green had planned, making a grand total of over 4500 pages of Tamil text.

In the winter of 1883, it appeared that Green's health was failing. In the spring of 1884, it was clear that the end was in sight. On the morning of 28 May 1884 he called to his room, one by one, his brothers and sisters, children and wife. To each of them he said goodbye with farewell words of tender affection. A few minutes later he asked to be aided to turn to his side and soon breathed his last. Thus ended the life of one of the greatest men who lived in Jaffna in the nineteenth century. He was buried on 30 May 1884 in the family ground at Worcester Rural Cemetery. In his will he said<sup>13</sup>:

I wish that my funeral may be conducted as inexpensively as possible as may consist with decency and order. Let the exercises be simply to edification; and of the dead speak neither blame nor praise. Should I ever have a gravestone, let it be plain and simple, and bear the following inscription: viz.

SAMUEL FISK GREEN

1822 – 1884

MEDICAL EVANGELIST TO THE TAMILS  
JESUS MY ALL

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# SRI LANKA'S FACINATING MULTICULTURAL HERITAGE<sup>1</sup>

by M. Asoka T. De Silva

## The Rise of a Remarkable Civilization

"The historic migration of the Aryans in the 6th Century BC to the island of Sri Lanka heralded the birth of a civilization with a unique cultural heritage. These Aryans dispersed and dotted the country with settlements of farmers. They turned their industrial genius to the founding of diversified industries, building cities, and construction of stupendous irrigation works. They mixed easily with those who had a longer tradition than theirs of life in Lanka. The mingling of these two streams of traditions soon created a social revolution setting the stage for the greatest and grandest event that has happened in the country - the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka."

(Quote from: *Revolt in the Temple* – A Compilation by Sinha Publications to commemorate the 2500th year the birth of Lord Buddha, published in April 1953)



The introduction of Buddhism no doubt triggered a unique cultural revolution that transformed a nascent civilization to new heights in the world of Arts and Sciences. Royal patronage to religion and philosophy also meant the evolution of institutions and structures for the spiritual, mental, and biophysical wellbeing of the citizens. This is reflected in the

most elaborate and magnificent architectural edifices dedicated for religious purposes, which range from massive stupas, to imposing domes of mosques, and to the ornate and colourful figures of the Hindu temples.

The overall effect of state patronage is also reflected in the establishment by the Royalty as early as the 3rd Century BC an efficient public sanitary service for a hygienic environment to citizens, while the creation of the first globally recognized hospital is recorded to have been established in Mihintale in the 6th Century AD.

Coomaraswamy (1908), in his publication "*Medieval Sinhalese Art*" states "art is of first importance as the form of culture, which most easily humanize the toil, and spiritualize his ideas. All art is a very essential part of culture, an integral and inseparable part of any noble civilization". Buddhism he claimed, became indeed the chief patron rather than the opponent of fine arts, which spread from India to Ceylon, Burma (Myanmar), Siam, and Java in the south, and to China and Japan in the north.

## Cultural Reflections of Major Ethnic Groups

Sri Lanka's population is known to comprise approximately 73.9 % of Sinhala people, 12.7 % of Sri Lankan Tamils, 5.5% of Tamils of Indian origin, 7.1 % of Moors, and 0.8% of other minority communities, epitomizing a near perfect multicultural social organization. Among the minority communities, are the indigenous Vanni-latto (or Veddahs), Burghers of Portuguese and Dutch origin, the nomadic or gypsy community commonly known as the Ahikuntaka community, and the Kaffirs of African origin. It is also known that Sri Lanka may still be able to trace back a miniscule of descendants of Greek origin in the vicinity of Anuradhapura as reflected in the *Mahavamsa*.

The broad composition of the Sri Lankan population by the religious divide, comprise 69.3% of Buddhists,

15.5% of Hindus, 7.6% of Christians, and 0.1 % of others, signifying unity in diversity, a symbolic feature of a multi-ethnic, multilingual, and multi-religious society.

This multicultural civilization with a recorded history of 2500 years, enriched with a heritage of creative traditional knowledge and practices, was in fact the force behind the articulation of the great works of art, dance, wall and rock paintings, crafts, architecture, and most importantly the highly complex and technologically unique indigenous irrigation system the world has seen.

This cultural backdrop of the Sinhala people is replete with a variety of traditions, customs, rituals, and ceremonies. In relation to music, it has been noted that 75 musical instruments had been used in ancient Sri Lanka, of which there had been 26 varieties of wind instruments (bamboo and wooden flutes etc.) and 15 kinds of metal percussion hand cymbals, metal bells, tinkling anklets etc. Of these instruments, the ones in common use today are the various categories of drums '*magul bera*', '*geta bera*' '*mihingubera*', '*maddala*', '*udekki*', '*pāna-bera*', '*davula*', '*tammattama*', '*hēwisi*' and '*rabāna*' (www.virtual Library-Sri Lanka).

Traditional music, theatre, and dance of the Sinhala people ranging from folk music, daemon dancing and song, have in some instances been ritualistic as seen in the Devil Dance, '*Kolam*', '*Sokari*', '*Nadagam*' and folk drama. Music has always been intensively supported by drums.

There are three classical dance forms and several folk dances in Sri Lanka. The classical dance forms are 'Kandyan Dancing', 'Ruhuna Dancing' and 'Sabaragamuwa Dancing'. Kandyan Dancing is practiced in the hill country of the Island, Ruhuna Dancing is in the coastal or low country areas, and Sabaragamuwa Dancing in the Sabaragamuwa Province, particularly in the District of Ratnapura.

The globally recognized Kandyan Dancing curiously combines chanting with the playing of musical instruments, which would otherwise be considered incomplete.

Customs and traditions were not unique to the majority Sinhala community, but had also been a feature of the Ceylon Tamils, especially those of the Jaffna Peninsula. The Tamil community though of Dravidian origin shared many cultural features with the Sinhala community.

While the ethnic Sinhala community can take pride in the ingenuity of their forefathers, especially in relation to the mastery of hydraulics and irrigation works, the Tamil community in the Northern Province can take pride to a unique tradition of lift irrigation system not seen or known in any other country in the world.

This latter ingenious system of irrigation, based on a contraption popularly known as the "Well Sweep", is now a rare sight in Jaffna (Vamadevan, 2012).

The Tamils of Jaffna have traditionally been very proud of the conservative character of their speech. The isolation of Ceylon Tamils from the sub-continent for a long period is said to have presented some distinctive cultural traits, especially in their spoken Tamil

about which they would wish to preserve. However, although the local Tamils had resisted inroads of Sanskrit and Hindustani, which South Indian Tamils had succumbed to, it nevertheless is known to have possessed a very large vocabulary of words borrowed or corrupted from European languages, during colonial rule in the Island (Hussein, 2009).

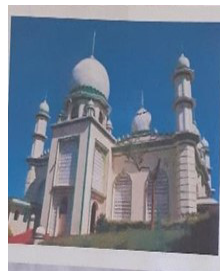
Sri Lankan Tamils are predominantly Hindus, but there are significant enclaves of Roman Catholics and Protestants (mainly Methodists), who consider themselves to be full members of the Sri Lankan Tamil community. *Shiva* is the supreme deity but is not worshipped directly. *Shiva* bestows his grace by running your life, so that one may aspire for nothing other than reunification with Him. The perspective taken towards the other deities is largely utilitarian.



Tamil Households celebrate a rich repertoire of calendrical and life-style rituals that bring the family together in joyous festival holidays. Village temples offer annual “car” festivals, in which the deity is carried around the temple on top of a huge chariot. It is claimed that with its utilitarian ethos, Sri Lankan Tamil culture does not encourage young people

to pursue careers in arts. Even so, young people today may receive instructions in traditional Tamil music or dance as a means of impressing on them the antiquity and greatness of the Tamil culture, music, and dance, which were previously associated with a caste status.

Another Tamil speaking community is the upcountry or plantation Tamils. They comprise South Indian migrant workers who migrated to Sri Lanka during the British Colonial period, in the later part of the 19th Century as agricultural labour for the upcountry coffee and tea plantations. These migrants significantly comprised persons within a particular caste hierarchy, which is evident in the allocation of positions (ranks), and of living quarters. This caste-based community structure was important in the context of labour management. For instance, assigning hierarchical positions to categories such *Kanakku pilais* (accounts personnel) and *Kanganys* (labour supervisors) facilitated labour management. Most of these migrants are Hindus, while about 7-8 % have become Christians. They were also known to follow the customs, traditions, rituals, and festivities of their South Indian Tamil ancestors. Consequently, in their traditional folk dances and festivals, they continue to use their traditional musical



instruments such as the *Tappu* and *Parai*.

The third most important ethnic community comprised the Sri Lankan Muslims, composed of Moors, Malays, and a small community of Memons. The Moors comprise the largest segment, being mainly descendants of Arab merchants and settlers, hailing from Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula, who arrived in Sri Lanka during the Medieval period. These early Muslim settlements in the Island, appear to have arisen through peaceful infiltration of Arabian merchants or settlers over a considerable period.

Tamil is the established language of the Sri Lanka Moors. In recent years because of political considerations, many of them have learned the Sinhala language and some children study Sinhala in schools.

The Malay community with a population of about 50,000 persons, is believed to be largely descendants of political exiles that include nobles, chiefs, soldiers, convicts, and freed slaves from the Indonesian Archipelago, who were brought over to the Island during the period of Dutch occupation. Malays speak Malay at home and prefer to educate their children in English. With the exception of the Bohras, who are Shites, all other groups are Sunni Muslims.

Hussein (2009) claims that certain cultural affinities between the Sinhala people and the people of the Indonesian Archipelago, especially with regard to sea-faring vessels and a few vocables, seems to have originated in the Malay world. Finally, there are the Memons, who are relatively recent migrants from various localities in Gujarat, who had migrated in the 19th Century for the purpose of trade. Being a community of recent origin, little is known about their contribution to the culture and traditions of Sri Lanka.

The Burgher community of Sri Lanka comprise descendants of the Portuguese and Dutch colonists who occupied the maritime provinces of the country from 1505 to 1798. Keeping political considerations aside, it has to be noted that the cultural impact of the Portuguese and Dutch influence has been substantial. However, since independence, a large majority of the Burgher community has migrated to other countries such as Australasia, United Kingdom, USA, and Canada. According to Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya, (2014), a renowned Sri Lankan Linguistic, “Language has been one of the strongest Lusitanian imprints evident not only in the Portuguese words in Sinhala, Tamil and Sri Lanka Malay, but also in the new language – ‘Indo-Portuguese, which evolved in the 16th Century. Since 1972, when Sri Lanka became a Republic, this language had been referred to as ‘Sri Lanka Portuguese Creole’. Nevertheless, the children of Portuguese and Sri Lankan parentage [traditionally referred to as the *Mesticos* (male) and *Mesticas* (female)], whose mother tongue was Indo-Portuguese, indigenized the Sinhala contact language. It is said that when the official Portuguese presence in Sri Lanka ended in 1658, with the expulsion of the Portuguese to Negapattanam (Coromandel Coast in India), the Mesticas were said to have been retained as the favoured wives for Dutchmen, because at that time attempts to bring Dutch women as wives had failed.

During the Dutch occupation, the Dutch language had been introduced in the fields of administration and legal affairs. De Silva Jayasuriya (2014), notes that Indo-Portuguese was the language of international trade and communication for about 350 years in Sri Lanka until English became the new Lingua franca and the prestige language.

It is said that from a cultural perspective music had been a powerful weapon for the Portuguese, – more powerful than their guns, and guitars were inseparable from the Portuguese. The cultural heritage of both the Portuguese and the Dutch in terms of their legacy in the Sri Lankan cuisine cannot be ignored. It is a long list which includes coconut cake (*bolo de coco*), and love cake (*bolo d’armor*) etc. In addition, their contribution to the culinary language is surprisingly lengthy, and includes terms of common use such as, *kussiya*

(kitchen), *bandesiya* (tray), *besama* (basin), *botale* (bottle) *gaereppuwa* (fork), *mesaya* (table), *peneraya* (sieve), *pirissiya* (saucer), *plaskuwa* (flask) *punilaya* (funnel) etc.

On the other hand, an important Dutch contribution is the introduction of the Roman-Dutch Law, which is known to be an amalgam of the Roman legal tradition and the Germanic convention. They also codified the indigenous laws and customs that did not conflict with the Dutch-Roman jurisprudence. An outstanding example was the codification of the Tamil legal code of Jaffna – the *Tesa*. Again, as with the Portuguese, the Dutch contribution to place names and common expressions both in Sinhala and Tamil languages have been substantial. Among Sinhala expressions are *kapoti* (finished), *bankoloth* (bankrupt), *thuttu deka* (not worth two pence) etc. Likewise, the English expression – “good for nothing” has been rendered in the Tamil language as *oru tuttukkum* (Asiff Hussein in www.Virtual Library – Sri Lanka).

Some of the Dutch culinary traditions in contemporary Sri Lanka are “*Breudher*” (sugar plum bread) which is a Christmas delight, *Kokis*, a sweetmeat served during Sinhala New Year, and the popular “*lamprais*”, a savory rice preparation served wrapped in a tender banana leaf.

### The Cultural Traits of Minor Ethnic Groups

Though much had been said and written about the cultural peculiarities of the main ethnic groups, only passing remarks have been made about the cultural traits of minor ethnic communities, the Veddhas, gypsies, and the *Kaffirs*.

The Veddhas or “*Vanniyalo-atto*” (forest people) claim lineage to Sri Lanka’s pre-historic Neolithic human beings. According to recent scientific investigations, it is estimated that their origin dates back to between 18,000 BC to 15,000 BC. Although spread across the country, Dambana is considered the capital location of the Veddha community.

The rituals and ceremonies are now a special attraction to both local and foreign visitors to locations such as Dambana, Rathu Gala (Matale District), Pollebedda and Henanigal also of Matale District, and Dalikana in Polonnaruwa District. Dambana, which is the center of attraction for visitors, has a cultural centre comprising a museum of Veddha arts and crafts as well as other attractions, that display their lifestyles, culture, traditions as well as their rituals and festivals. Turning now to the Ahikuntaka Community<sup>2</sup>, it is significant to note that this community has shown its determination to retain their identity and culture as a distinct nomadic community, and in this context, the leaders of the community had composed and ratified a “Charter” on 28th August 2011, which had been designated as the “*Kudagama Charter*”. Expressed in their own words, this ‘Charter’ declares that though they are a minority community, their contribution towards nourishing Sri Lanka’s cultural diversity is significant. They are also proud to declare that their professions consist of competent ‘Snake Charmers’, “Monkey Performers”, and “Fortune Tellers”, which distinguish them from other ethnic groups.

This gypsy community is believed to comprise about one thousand families. Interestingly this gypsy community has a caste hierarchal system. They are also known to speak the *Telugu* language, which is said to be the State language of Andhra Pradesh in India. They are known to follow their own legal system, where rules and regulations are imposed upon the community by the will of the majority, and where a group of elders well versed in their laws decide on conflicts and disputes.

Before concluding this account of Sri Lankan ethnic diversity, a brief reference has to be made to the so-called *Kaffirs*. Historically the *Kaffir* community came into existence during the early decades of the Nineteenth Century with the formation of the Ceylon Rifle Regiment by the British colonial agents for military services. One of these regiments had been composed entirely of Africans, the majority of whom were *Kaffirs*. A detachment of this Regiment doing garrison services in Puttalam had been disbanded. Consequently, the majority of soldiers and camp followers that comprised this regiment had elected to settle down in Puttalam with their families. This colony located in the outskirts of Puttalam, comprise *Kaffirs* who live in thatched-roof houses scattered round a cleared communal compound.

Brohier (1973) describes their physical appearance as characteristic of ‘Negroid’ origins with frizzly curled woolly heads of hair, and skins like polished ebony. The majority of the colonists were seen to speak a very corrupt form of Portuguese and were largely Roman Catholics.

According to Brohier (1973) most of these colonists were addicted to a sporting encounter where prize “game cocks”, are made to display their fighting skills, a type of fun acquired from Malays who were comrades-in-hand in the Ceylon Rifle Regiment. In addition, both the old and young showed their greatest advantage in traditional roles in music and dance. This happy-go-lucky community traditionally required only a minor event for an elaborate festive evening. Their sing-song chants to the flute and tambourine were both fun and laughter-provoking, due to their extravagantly fanciful movements of the square dance, which usually called for stately and dignified steps. Their *Kafferinhoe* called for lively tunes and alert movements. According to Brohier (1973), these Kaffir-Portuguese Chikoti and the accompanying music has now assumed a natural feature in Sri Lanka.

### Footnotes

1. This article is derived from an Invitation Submission (Chapter) titled, “Natural and Cultural Environment”, contributed by the present author to a publication titled *Natural Resources of Sri Lanka: Trends and Conditions*, National Science Foundation, Colombo (2018)
2. A compilation published by Dilmah Conservation, a globally recognized Sri Lankan manufacturing and exporting organization exporting high grade tea.

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## CSA General Meeting and Social Sunday 25th February 2024 at 6.30pm at the Pennant Hills Community Centre Ramsay Road, Pennant Hills NSW

**SPEAKER: Palitha Manchanayake**  
**TOPIC: Ancient Irrigation Systems of Sri Lanka**



Engineer Palitha Manchanayake had his education at Royal College, Colombo. He entered the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya, and graduated with Honours in Civil Engineering in 1972. He then joined the Irrigation Department as an Irrigation Engineer. Palitha served as a construction engineer at the Wahalkadawewa Reservoir Project

in Anuradhapura District in restoring the abandoned Tank. In 1976, he got his professional qualifications M.I.C.E (London), C.Eng. In 1981 Palitha obtained his M.Eng.Sc. Degree in Hydrology from the University of New South Wales, Australia.

From 1983 to 1987, Palitha served as Assistant Director at the Water Management Secretariat of the Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka, and was a Visiting Lecturer in Hydrology at the University of Moratuwa from 1981 to 1987. He served as a Consultant and Unit Author in Hydrology and Irrigation Engineering at the Open University, Nawala. Also, Palitha worked as a National Consultant in Water and Environmental Engineering for the ILO / UNDP from 1985 to 1987 in the formation and the setting up of the Technical Training Institute (TTI) at Katunayake.

He won the Ceylon Development Engineering (CDE) Award for the Best Paper published in 'Engineer', the journal of the Institution of Engineers, Sri Lanka, during 1984-85. He is a Fellow of the Institution of Engineers (F.I.E), Sri Lanka.

After migrating to Australia in 1987, he served as a Hydrologist at the Flood Forecasting Centre of the Commonwealth Bureau of Meteorology, Sydney, until retirement.

### **Ancient Irrigation Systems of Sri Lanka - Transcript of Talk**

With the arrival of Prince Vijaya at Thammenna Beach on the North-West Coast of Sri Lanka, and the subsequent establishment of his kingdom in that area, the earliest irrigation work had centred around the Malwathu Oya Basin.

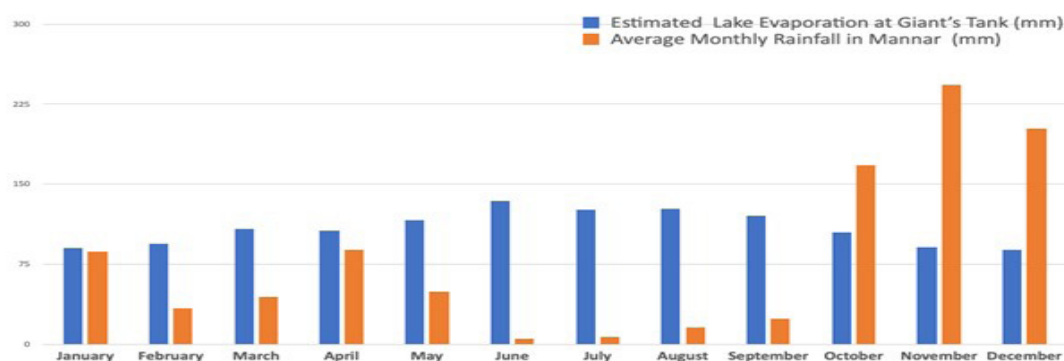
Prince Vijaya came in boats with 700 people from India and they were thirsty for water after travelling for hours, if not for days in the sea. Prince Vijaya wanted his men to find a fresh water source in the new country which they landed in. As they could not find a source easily, Prince Vijaya himself went in search, and found a lake beside which there was a tribal queen by the name of Kuweni sitting down there knitting. He got friendly with her, and subsequently with her help Vijaya became the King of Sri Lanka and he reigned for 38 years. It is the view of the late Mr. H. De. S. Manamperi, former Director of Irrigation and the Chairman of Mahaweli Development Board, that this particular lake was not a natural one, but a man-made lake. I wanted to investigate it and do some research into it.

I studied the Long-term Rainfall Records and the Evaporation Records of Mannar, which is quite close to the Thammenna Beach. The name 'Thammenna Beach' does not exist these days, though it was used some 2600 years ago. It showed mostly with 3 months of rainfall from October to December, the people of the locality survived in managing the dry weather for the rest of the nine months of the year. The monthly evaporations are found to be extremely high with values exceeding 100 mm from March to September, while the monthly rainfalls remain to be very low.

**Figure 1** (see over) gives a plot of monthly rainfall and the lake evaporation over the year at Mannar.

Figure 1

### Long Term Rainfalls vs Lake Evaporation in Mannar



This fact helps us to conclude that the Yakshasa Tribe, which Kuweni belonged to, would have had a really good knowledge of water conservation techniques to survive in the area. The Figure 1 illustrates the fact quite convincingly. King Vijaya's kingdom in Sri Lanka lasted from 483 - 445 BC and during that period he had constructed a number of small ponds and small diversions for irrigation.

As Malwathu Oya originates from the Ritigala mountain and flows past the city of Anuradhapura, most of the ancient kings opted to retain their kingdom at Anuradhapura, and a lot of reservoir development took place in and around the area from about 500 BC to about 700 AD. From there onwards, it shifted to Polonnaruwa and continued there until about 1200 AD.

All of the ancient dams of Sri Lanka are essentially Earthen Dams. The names of the kings who built the individual reservoirs and their period of construction are given in **Table 1**.

Table 1

Name of Reservoir	Name of the King	Period of Construction
Basawakkulama Wewa	King Abhaya	400 BC (1st Ever Tank)
Thisaa Wewa	King Devanampiyatissa	200 BC
Maha Villachchiya Wewa	King Vasabha	100 AD
Nuwara Wewa	King Gajabahu-I	125 AD
Hurulu Wewa	King Mahasen	300 AD
Minneriya Wewa	King Mahasen	300 AD
Kaudulla Wewa	King Mahasen	300 AD
Padaviya Wewa	King Mahasen	300 AD
Kalaa Wewa	King Dhatusena	470 AD
Nachchaduwa Wewa	King Moggallaana-II	550 AD
Kanthale Wewa	King Aggabodhi-II	610 AD
Parakrama Samudraya	King Parakrama Bahu-I	1170 AD

The first reservoir to be constructed in Sri Lanka was Basawakkulama Wewa in Anuradhapura. It was built by King Abhaya around 400 BC. It could most likely be the first ever tank constructed in the world.

**Table 2** gives their individual lengths of each of the bund and their operational heights of water. You may notice the reservoirs such as Nuwara Wewa, Hurulu Wewa, Kaudulla Wewa and Parakrama Samudraya have quite long earth bunds specifically 4.5 miles, 6 miles, 6 miles and 9 miles respectively. The Parakrama Samudraya has an operational height of water close to 52 feet.

Table 2

Name of Reservoir	Length of Bund (in Miles)	Height of Water (in Feet)
Basawakkulama Wewa	0.75	16.5
Thisaa Wewa	1.75	17.5
Maha Villachchiya Wewa	1.5	37
Nuwara Wewa	4.5	23
Hurulu Wewa	6.0	25
Minneriya Wewa	1.5	38
Kaudulla Wewa	6.0	25
Padaviya Wewa	2.75	22
Kalaa Wewa	2.7	30
Nachchaduwa Wewa	1.0	25
Kanthale Wewa	1.0	41
Parakrama Samudraya	9.0	52

The Irrigation Department of Sri Lanka was started by the British around 1900 as part of the then Public Works Department, and subsequently grew up into a major department of the country. During the British rule, they have restored a good number of these reservoirs which have been breached over the past floods, thereby acting defunct and growing out to be as part of the jungle. The British only reconstructed the 'breached section' of the dam which could be, say 400 metres in length and 10 metres in height. Once the reservoir is impounded after its restoration, the soil mechanics of the old reservoir bunds is under check, as certain parts of the old bund could collapse if proper quality control was not made in tamping of soil at that time.

In modern-day earth dam construction, we will have to select the correct type of soil, particularly the type of clay especially for the core trench of the dam etc. In order to find the correct soil type, the soil testers generally have to do a 'Borrow Area Survey' and find the appropriate soil. This would be transported to the dam site by way of push-cats, bulldozers and other earth moving equipment. After dumping the soil there, it has to be properly compacted as mere tamping would not help. It has to be consolidated by adding the necessary amount of water in order to arrive at the 'maximum dry density'. This could be achieved in arriving at the 'optimum soil-moisture content' which is determined by doing the in-situ measurements, while the construction work was going on. This is the method adopted in modern-day soil mechanics. But hardly any information exists about the king's soil mechan-

ics and the techniques they adopted in those days. We only know that several proportions of the many miles long reservoir bund were allocated to certain villages, and the construction would have been supervised by a village headman or his representative. So, if poor quality had been maintained for a certain reach due to lack of proper supervision, then once the reservoir is operating at full capacity, this particular reach could fail and cause a breach of the dam that could result in a disaster. But generally, they have done a superb job and it lasted for very many centuries.

So much so, the Minneriya Tank built by King Mahasen around 300 AD has never been breached. It had served the nation for 1700 years feeding them for every Maha and Yala Seasons. As such, the people in Minneriya are treating King Mahasen as a Deity, a God and they refer to him as “*Mahasen Deviyo*”. There is a *devaale* built in his name along the Minneriya Tank Bund, and the locals make offerings to him on each and every Wednesday and Saturday. In continuing with the topic of Ancient Irrigation Systems, I would like to make mention of ‘Sorobora Wewa’ in Mahiyangana. According to legend, it was built by a Giant named ‘*Bulatha*’ during King Dutugemunu’s reign around 102 BC. It has a capacity of 11,800 ac.ft and it caters for 1700 acres of paddy cultivation. What is noteworthy in Sorobora Wewa is its unique style adopted to issue water from the reservoir through a ‘rock cut deep canal’. This canal is being operated by a gate covering its 2 ft diameter opening. It has existed for over 2000 years and is still working fine. As such, this reservoir and the structure had been identified and declared as an ‘archeologically protected monument’.

The next topic is ‘**Keta Sorowwa**’ (pictured). It is a



masterpiece of innovation by ancient Sri Lankan irrigators, and it has been in good use for the past 20 centuries. It was invented around 400 - 300 BC. In the 19th century the British, while roaming around Sri Lanka, found this ‘*Keta Sorowwa*’ in rural tanks throughout the country, and they named it as ‘Morning Glory Spill cum Sluice’. Keta Sorowwa is a cylindrical clay pipe of 1 foot in diameter and running across the tank bund

at the bottom. From inside the tank, it is fitted with a number of Ketayas which are small cylindrical clay pipes of the same diameter of about 1.5 ft in height and is with a thick collar. As the water level rises, the extra Ketayas are added up to a height where a human could operate. Once the water level recedes, the top most Keta is removed from it. Then the water would spill over and act as a sluice for the waters to run into the paddy lots. This could operate only for small rural tanks with smaller heads of water.



**Preserved Biso Kotuwa of Maduru Oya Reservoir**

But for higher heads of water, the local engineers at that time invented the ‘**Biso Kotuwa**’ or the ‘Sluice Tower’. In the ancient days, it was referred to as the ‘*Biso Kotuwa*’, and in the present day it is being named the ‘Sluice Tower’. The Biso Kotuwa is the apparatus that was to function in regulating the outflow from the tank. It is a square chamber fitted with an inlet to bring-in water from inside the tank, and an outlet on the opposite side of the chamber to dispatch the water from it. All the management and operation of the sluice tower would be done through this square chamber. The operation of the Biso Kotuwa in the ancient days is not available to us now, and one could only guess how it had functioned at that time.

The next topic is the ‘**Yodha Elas**’ of Sri Lanka. When talking about the Yodha Ela of Sri Lanka one could talk about at least of 5 Yodha Elas, namely Kalawewa Yodha Ela (KYE), Elahera-Minneriya Yodha Ela (EMYE), Minneriya-Kanthale Yodha Ela (MKYE), Angamedilla Yodha Ela (AYE) and Minipe Yodha Ela (MYE).

The Kalawewa Yoda Ela (KYE) was built by King Dhathusena around 470 AD, and it was a canal joining Kalawewa to Thissaa-wewa in Anuradhapura. It had a length of 52 miles, and it is said that in the first 17 miles of this KYE canal, the drop in the water level was only 6 inches per river mile, which amounts to a gradient of 0.0001. The gradient which could be achieved with the present day levelling equipments is only 0.01. The KYE is a single banking channel travelling on a contour line, and it accommodates the intermediate flows from the forest cover on its way, and it was expected even to feed the small tanks nearby. This KYE is supposed have been built by adopting a series of “*Amunu Gilma*” techniques. It is done by connecting the Kalawewa to the closest village tank by a single banking bund, where it ends up in a single pool.



**Kalawewa Yodha Ela (KYE)**

These days this pool is connected to the next village tank by the same technique of ‘*Amunu Gilma*’ resulting in the continuation of a single banking bund in making a continued single pool.

The Elahera-Minneriya Yodha Ela (EMYE) starts from an old anicut built across Amban Ganga and takes water for a distance of 20 miles where it ends up at a bifurcation structure at Diyabeduma. This EMYE was built by King Vasabha around 100 AD.

The Minneriya-Kanthale Yodha Ela (MKYE) starts from the bifurcation structure at Yabeduma and runs for 20 miles to feed the Kanthale Wewa and then to the Vendraśan Wewa, which is located beyond the Kanthale Wewa. This MKYE was built by King Aggabodhi-I around 600 AD.



**Elahera-Minneriya Yodha Ela (EMYE)**

The Angamedilla Yodha Ela (AYE) starts off from another anicut built across Amban Ganga, and the AYE feeds Parakrama Samudraya reservoir in addition to its own catchment area. The AYE is only 4 miles long, and it was built by King Parakrama Bahu-I around 1170 AD.



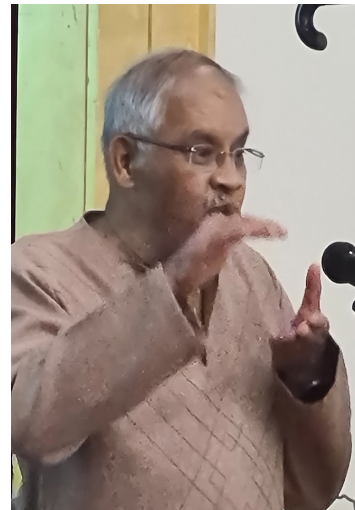
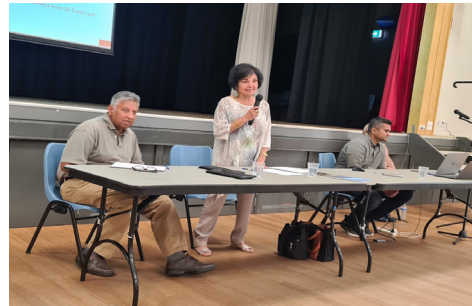
**The Bifurcation Structure at Diyabeduma located at the end of EMYE**

The Minipe Yodha Ela (MYE) originates from an anicut built across the main Mahaweli Ganga at Minipe, and it supplies water for 21,500 acres of paddy cultivation located on the Left Bank of the River Mahaweli. MYE was constructed by King Aggabodhi-I during 575 - 608 AD and it ran for 17 miles. Later it was extended to a length of 47 miles by King Sena-II during 853 - 887 AD.

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Some photos from the evening



# CSA Colombo Chapter General Meeting

Thursday 22nd February 2024  
at the Sasakawa Hall  
Colombo

**SPEAKER: K.K.S. Perera**

**TOPIC: After Commo has Roosted: The story of Sri Lanka's only Coup d'etat**

*Mr K.K.S.Perera is a well known freelance journalist and author of several books. He lives in Colombo.*

The Abortive or Abandoned Coup d'état of 1962, triggered by the introduction of social reforms under 'Bandaranaikism' in its early stages and the weak economic management, was perhaps an epic tale of an encounter between the de Sarams and Dias Bandaranaiques; where the latter pursued a transition to a new era, whereas the former craved to sustain the 'Status-Quo.' The plot was to overthrow Prime Minister Sirimavo and to establish a military "Junta".

In the coup conspiracy code-named, "Operation Hold-fast", CC Dissanayake DIG intended to seal off Colombo at 10 pm on Saturday, the 27th January 1962, announcing a midnight curfew. Willie Abrahams ASP was to take over Temple Trees and arrest the Prime Minister around 10 p.m. Col FC de Saram would inform Governor-General Sir Oliver Goonetilleke at Queen's House, that the Army and Police had taken control of the government.

"After Commo Had Roosted" was the code for arrest of Navy Commander. In the critical six-hour period from 5:30 to 11:30, pro and counter powers were engaged in intense discussions, shifting between city locations. John F. Barker, the last European Commander of the Air Force, oversaw security operations in the city and vulnerable spots. Navy Chief Rajan Kadirgamar, donned in blue battle attire with a sub-machine gun, patrolled Temple Trees. Uncertainty prevailed regarding the coup's status as 31-year-old Minister Felix R. Dais Bandaranaike led a defensive team with civilian IGP, Director CID S.A. Dissanayake, and Army and Navy Commanders. Simultaneously, unaware of the leak, conspirators held parallel meetings led by Col F C De Saram, CC Dissanayake DIG, Sidney de Zoysa DIG (retd), Col Morris de Mel, Rear Admiral Royce De Mel. The public were unaware of what was happening until disclosed by Radio Ceylon on the afternoon of the following day.

Port strikes, rising living costs, and escalating unemployment severely affected the country. The economy deteriorated rapidly amidst military involvement in quelling civil unrest over SWRD Bandaranaike's "Sinhala-Only" policy. For the first time, armed forces were deployed in Tamil areas against a civil disobedience movement. The entrenched elite faced tensions with civilian authority when efforts were made to increase Sinhala-Buddhist representation in the officer corps of the armed services and police. Simultaneous-

ly, there were endeavours to boost the influence of this demographic in the administration of both the armed services and the police.

Daily brewing displeasure and frustration extended to all sectors. DIG Sidney left the Service in disgust, forced into retirement for commenting on a speech by Minister Philip Gunawardena, following a warning by Dr NM Perera in Parliament. Sidney de Zoysa perceived this retirement as unjust. Douglas Liyanage, an efficient CCS in Colombo, faced an overnight transfer to Government Agent Mannar, considered a demotion. He didn't protest and accepted the move. Navy Chief Royce de Mel was demoted and suspended due to the detection of contraband items in a naval craft. Sri Lanka faced the early stages of the Sinhala-Tamil language conflict and tensions between Buddhists and Roman Catholics regarding school takeovers. Coup leaders linked the adverse effects of populist policies, including ethnic riots, economic decline, and political instability, to the ruling party.

In every gathering and drawing room, the lingering question remained: How long will this decline persist? Is there no way to halt it? Many saw the failed attempt as a desperate move by the military elite to retain their waning influence. Fuelled by a pervasive sense of power loss and diminishing prestige, some perceived it as a final effort to cling to authority. Factors contributing to this included Defence Secretary N.Q. Dias advocating for the 'Sinhala-Buddhist' cause and influential Minister Felix Dias Bandaranaike endorsing an authoritarian system in his early January speech. The first Coup meeting occurred at a Senior Army Officers Mess, while the police first met Douglas Liyanage and FC much later at Longdon Place.

The Army conspiracy was led by Colonel Maurice de Mel and Colonel F.C. 'Derek' de Saram, Deputy Commandant, Volunteer Force, and originated in the artillery, with Deputy Commandant of the Ceylon Volunteer Force, Lt Col Willie Abrahams, initiating it. In the Police, two chains of command emerged: Cyril Cyrus, "Jungle" Dissanayake – DIG range 1 directed metropolitan officers, and former DIG Sidney de Zoysa oversaw provincial officers. A special telephone line on Jan 25th connected Army headquarters to Echelon Square barracks. The coup leaders aimed to clear all city-bound roads of traffic within 30 minutes. Military vehicles with radios facilitated efficient communication and coordination, enabling quick responses to security concerns or emerging threats.

The other leaders were Don John Francis Douglas Liyanage, CCS – Deputy Director of Land Development, Colonel Maurice De Mel – Commandant, Ceylon Volunteer Force and former Chief of Staff of the Army. Rear Admiral Gerard Royce Maxwell de Mel, OBE, who had been relieved as navy Commander by then and designated as Captain over a controversy regarding smuggled goods being discovered in a naval vessel.

On the crucial morning of January 27th, referred to as D-day, CC briefed Stanley Senanayake SP Colombo about a conspiracy planned for the same night. Stanley, however, disagreed with his superior on the 'illegal act'. The delay in informing Stanley might be linked to his connections with his father-in-law, P de S Kularatne, a prominent Buddhist leader and former principal of Ananda College. Realising his misjudgment of Senanayake, Dissanayake contemplated a contingency plan or 'Plan B' to counter potential retaliatory action from pro-government forces, while Stanley leaked the facts to government through his wife and father-in-law.

Maurice was to position at Army headquarters, FC at Temple Trees, CC at Queen's House, and Sidney de Zoysa at the Depot Police. FC was scheduled to reach Temple Trees by 10:00 pm, using the password "*British Grenadier*". CC and Sidney were to move to Police HQ around 11:00 pm, with CC using the password "*Dowbiggin*". He would give the second signal at 11:00 pm when moving from Queen's House to Police Headquarters. After the successful first stage, all four plotters were to gather at Queen's House around 3:00 am on Sunday, the 28th morning.

Senior ministers, including Felix, officials like N.Q. Dias, DIG-CID S.A. Dissanayake ("Jingle"), acting Navy chief, and SP-CID John Attygalle, along with commanders of three forces and 20 others, were intended for detention in an underground bunker at the armory and ammunition dungeon at Army HQs. The Central Telephone and Telegraph Exchange would be shut down; Police headquarters, CID offices, *Times of Ceylon*, Lake House, and the only electronic communication institute, "Radio Ceylon," were to be taken over by 11 p.m. The initial plan to arrest the PM in the Deep South went awry due to a sudden cancellation in Mrs. Bandaranaike's trip to Kataragama. The conspirators were anxious, fearing that the PM had come to know of the coup.

After a protracted trial, 11 out of 24 were found guilty, but subsequently discharged by the Privy Council in UK, which ruled in their favour on issues of legality of the new Act and other technical issues. Minister Felix in a statement to Parliament on February 13 revealed that some suspects had revealed the involvement of two former PMs, Sir John Kotelawala and Dudley Senanayake in the conspiracy. "Dudley rose at the end of the speech and vehemently denied any involvement and even volunteered to face an inquiry. Everybody including some government Parliamentarians pooh-poohed the idea as a fabrication by Felix who directly handled investigations."

The *Criminal Law Special Provisions Act No. 1 of 1962*, passed with retrospective effect, introducing a Trial-at-bar with three Supreme Court judges, also made draconian provisions in accepting a statement by a suspect as valid evidence against any of the suspects indicted.

### **New Laws: post-hoc and ad hominem**

The government, resorting to desperate measures, introduced a bill in Parliament to create special courts and fix the accused which broadened offences examined by three judges appointed by the Minister of Justice without a jury.

The defendants were charged on three counts by the Attorney General on November 21st, 1962. The Trial-at-Bar found 11 guilty.

However, the Privy Council slammed the new law, and acquitted all eleven. In its ruling given in December 1965, it held the *Special Act of 1962*, is ultra vires of the Ceylon Constitution. It said that the Act had denied fair trial. The law had been specially enacted to convict the men. The men under trial did not have the protections that they would have had under general criminal law. The law's intentions were suspect, Ex post facto and Ad hominem. "Legislation directed against selected individuals or against the individual is not law, it said."

Not only Felix D.B, the son of a Supreme Court judge, but most lawyers learnt a few intricate technical specifics in Criminal Law.

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## Book Reviews

***Little known Stories of Old Ceylon*** by Hugh Karunanayake. Sarasavi Publishers. Rs. 1,600

**Reviewed by Manik de Silva.**

Hugh Karunanayake, antiquarian, collector of old books and objects related to Ceylon, and frequent contributor to this newspaper has put together in an anthology a collection of his articles, all of them published in *The Ceylankan*, the quarterly journal of the Ceylon Society of Australia he helped found 25 years ago. It was the privilege of the *Sunday Island* to republish many of them in this newspaper and his byline would surely whet the appetites of our readers to enjoy those and many more in this new book to be launched in Colombo on March 25.

Hugh flew home in a Royal-Thomian charter from Australia on board which he was the oldest passenger and resultantly hugely pampered on what he called a “fantastic flight.” After the rigors of watching the big match in the blistering heat, this old Royalist will be personally present at the Dutch Burgher Union when his book, felicitously titled “*Little known Stories of Old Ceylon*,” modestly priced at Rs. 1,600, is launched.

Fortuitous circumstances made Hugh a regular contributor to this journal. Dr. Srilal Fernando living in Australia who shares Hugh’s antiquarian interests, married to a kinswoman of mine, co-authored with Hugh and Avinder Paul. If I remember right, they wrote an article on Ward Place drawing a lot of information of the area from old title deeds. That established a link which has been of immense benefit to this newspaper and its readership, particularly to an older generation who can relate to the subjects Hugh chooses. His innate talent for spotting and telling a good story adds immensely to what he continues to write.

A member of what is called the **46 Group** of Royal College – boys who entered the school in that year – he says that most of his contemporaries including former Minister CV ‘Puggey’ Guneratne who together with his wife and 20 others were blown to smithereens by a suicide bomber in June 2000. Guneratne was leading an SLFP demonstration celebrating War Heroes Day. Notables like Upali Wijewardene and Lalith Athulathmudali were two years junior to Hugh, most of whose contemporaries are gone.

Though Hugh says, “without fear of contradiction” that the group of 100 ten and eleven years-olds who joined the school in 1946 as the “most outstanding and influential batch of students to enter Royal College or for that matter any school in Sri Lanka during the nation’s long and proud history.” This included three who were later command the Army (Lt. Gen. Nalin Seneviratne), Navy (Vice Admiral Asoka de Silva and Air Force (Air Vice Marshal Harry Goonetilleke). This is but a small sample of a long list of later VIPs from this batch.

After his schooling Hugh worked in the public and private sectors in Sri Lanka including some six years as a “covenanted officer” at Walker Sons and Co in Colombo. He took an external degree in Sociology from Peradeniya, worked in the Colombo office of Save the Children Fund and was later posted to Bhutan to work in their office there before migrating to Australia where he did many social service-related jobs for the State government.

His story “*The Lost boy from Ceylon*”, relates the story of Anna Florentina Dias Bandaranaike, elder daughter of Sir Solomon Dias Bandaranaike and sister of Prime Minister SWRD, who migrated to Britain with her adopted son, Augustine, and led a secretive life in a caravan evoked a great deal of interest in Sri Lanka where it was first published. This reviewer desists from narrating the gripping story here to give readers the pleasure of reading for themselves in its entirety as told by Hugh Karunanayake.

Another of the stories this reviewer remembers but is unfortunately not part of the published anthology is a yarn titled “*From Malgolla to Mysore ‘Without Regret’*” that was truly delectable. The Mysore Cup, a handsome piece of silverware, had been purchased at a Colombo auction by a friend who gifted it to Hugh. The fellow migrant friend knew nothing of its history.

But Hugh Karunanayake with the help of S. Muttiah, once of the *Times of Ceylon*, was able to ferret it out. The racehorse ‘*Without Regret*’ had won the trophy



for Charles Laing, a scion of a family who had owned estates and lived here for generations, at a Madras race meeting in 1940. Why Malgolla? That was the name of the plantation in Dolosbage the Laings had owned over three generations.

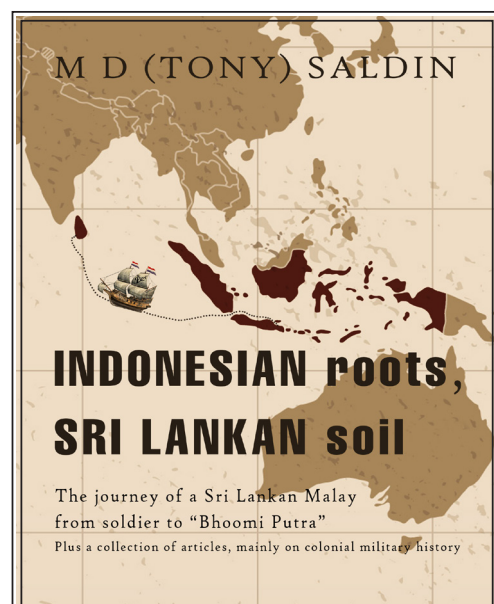
Hugh Karunanayake, in a moving tribute to his late wife, Tulsi,

has dedicated this book “to the fragrant memory of TULSI, my love, my life, my inspiration.”

Source: *The Island* 18 February 2024

The Editor gratefully acknowledges *The Island* newspaper in Sri Lanka as the source of this review.

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## It's the journey that matters!

Reviewed by: Lt. Commander (Rtd) Somasiri Devendra



Yes, the title tells it all. The author, **M.D. (Tony) Saldin** (pictured here in Malay attire) is on a journey, and he carries us along in his wake. But it is not an everyday journey, but a “Voyage of Discovery”; a voyage into his past to discover his identity and to revel in it. But there is even something more. He sees not only where and when his search began – in present day Indonesia – but also where it has brought him – a member of an established

community of Sri Lanka today. It is his understanding, and wholehearted acceptance of both his original and present identities that make this a book a “must read”.

Saldin’s inquisitive mind leads him to research his past. He is not satisfied at knowing he is a Sri Lankan Malay, and he wonders “Who are we?” Everyone in his community traces his roots to one or another of the islands in the Indonesian Archipelago or the Malay peninsula, but it is in Sri Lanka that these individuals from those many islands merge into the single community of “Sri Lankan Malays” (“British military officials .... came across a Malay speaking race in Ceylon and with one stroke of the pen, named them “Malays” for logistical purposes and for convenience”). So, he is a proud descendant of a soldier of fortune in the service of two colonial powers, and equally proud of the way his community became sons of Sri Lankan soil (*bhoomi putra*) and rendered great service to her.

This volume, the *Log Book of his Voyage*, is divided into three: **ROOTS**, **BRANCHING OUT**, and **FLOWERING**.

**ROOTS** is about his search and what he found. He speaks of his own family, descendants of “Enche Pantasih, accompanied by his wife, Sitti Sumba Warnil, from the ancient Kingdom of Sumenep, Madura, East Java,” 240 years ago; of the island of Madura about which we know so little; of the exiled Princes and soldiers of fortune recruited by the V.O.C known as the Dutch East India Company; of the difference between the policies of the Dutch and British East India Companies regarding the use of “native” troops.

It is full of his appreciation of his community and of the way it developed in a foreign land. He deals with its martial tradition and achievements, its preoccupation with weapons and firearms, its own Regiment the Ceylon Rifles, its barrack life, and how, both within and beyond the cantonment, this community developed its own culinary culture (*Watalappan, Dodol, Bibikkan, Nasi goreng, Achcharu, Sambal*) that is famed beyond community boundaries; its own folk culture (*Rabana, Sarong, Sarungal, Ja kotuwa, Kirichchiya, Batik*) – an amalgam of Javanese, Malay, Sumnapers, Madurese, Bugis, Malaccans, Amboinese, Sundanese, Tidorese, Balinese, Betawi, Minakangbau, Banjarese, Macassarese and others from the Dutch East Indies and the Straits Settlements.

Although having served the Dutch, the Kandyan and the British since the 17th century it is in the 19th century that the community became entrenched in the Sri Lankan social fabric and developed as full members of society.

During that period the figures of professional soldier Captain Baba Halaluddin Saldin of the Ceylon Rifle Regiment, Saldin’s great-grand-father; and Baba Ounus Saldin his great-grand-uncle: soldier, bridge-builder, founder of Malay language newspapers and chronicler of events looms large. His records form a commentary on Sri Lankan history. The author, like an impresario, showcases his community and its deeds and he awaits our applause.

Then – only then – does he bring himself to the forefront. His own ancestors who came from the island of Madura east of the main island of Java, his father and his 3 wives, his service record in WW2. Saldin’s own family, his extended family, family dynamics – they are all there, making a very human account from a distant past into very much the present. My personal favourite is his account of “*Growing up as a Malay in Sri Lanka*”. It is a beautiful reincarnation of this country in the mid-20th century and makes us understand how a multi-cultural society really works. I will say no more about it: it must be read.

**FLOWERING** is about how the Indonesian-Sri Lankan author’s curiosity led him into aspects of Sri Lankan History. Most of the pieces here have been published previously but, collected here, they illustrate the author’s last step in becoming a truly Sri Lankan *bhoomi putra*.

He starts with stories about Malays in Sri Lanka (*Saradiel & Police Constable Tuan Saban, “Indonesian Burghers”, Capt. Noordeen and King Sri Wickrama Rajasinghe, Sinhalese Lascorins*), he ventures out of his comfort zone (*Sri Lankan Kaffirs, Warriors of Japan, Keppetipola Disawa*) into the study of local place names in Wattala, his hometown, and finally to “*Ananda – the one-legged tree cutter*”. Truly, a quantum leap.

**BRANCHING OUT**, sandwiched between the others, is a totally different piece of writing. It is about Saldin himself; Saldin the working man. What makes this part special is that he takes us with him into a commercial world run on the Japanese work ethic. Saldin is aware that these work places are different from those we are all familiar with and he feels that we need to see another side of the commercial world. It is no treatise, however, but an account of another journey of his, a journey into his career. But even more than that, Saldin’s informal narrative style opens our eyes to the currents and undercurrents that moved within his professional world. Most readers would recognize bits and pieces of the narrative through common experience but the total story is really worth reading.

Perhaps there was something that bound the “**Ver-eenigde Oostindische Compagnie (V.O.C.)**” to the Japanese businessmen? Consider these comments by the author: about the Japanese he says, “*Unlike trading companies in other countries, which are generally specialized in certain types of products, sōgō shōsha have extremely diversified business lines, in which respect the business model is unique to Japan.*” And this about the V.O.C. “*It was originally a Netherlands government-backed military-commercial enterprise and traded in spices, silk, porcelain, metals, livestock, tea, grain, rice, soybeans, sugarcane, wine and coffee.*” Perhaps Saldin felt the visceral pull of the V.O.C., and that sent him to the arms of the Japanese?

Written in simple prose, narrated in bite-sized portions, served with generous Notes and References, this book is an easy and enjoyable read. Read it and follow the “yellow brick” heritage trail in the company of a genial host: Tony Saldin.

The book is available at Expographics, Barefoot and Sarasavi Bookshops at Rs:1,800/-.

# Fortress White Australia: What early Ceylonese migrants [1949 to 1969] were up against

by Earlson Forbes

The Six Australian Colonies came together on the 1st of January 1901 to form the independent Nation of the Commonwealth of Australia. From 26th January 1788, (arrival of the First Fleet at Sydney Cove) to the time of Federation, Australia was populated by convict and free settlers almost exclusively from Britain. The 1901 census put the population at 3.7 million. Aborigines were not counted in this census. A small percentage of the population was made up of Pacific Islanders and Chinese. The Chinese entered Australia in the second half of the 19th century at the time of the Gold Rush in Australia (mid-19th century) and in the years following. Between 1851 and 1870 about 50,000 Chinese were estimated to have entered Australia. Pacific Islanders had been brought to Australia in the second half of the 19th century as labourers.

From its inception the Nation of Australia embarked on a highly protective policy regarding entry into the country. Within one year of formation of the Nation, the Australian Parliament passed two Acts limiting immigration. These two Acts were the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*, and the *Pacific Island Labourers Act 1901*. The *Pacific Island Labourers Act* aimed specifically at putting a stop to admission of persons from this region. The Act stated, 'No Pacific Island Labourer shall enter Australia on or after the thirty first day of March one thousand nine hundred and four'.

Of the two Acts by far the more important was the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*. The *Immigration Restriction Act* aimed to limit all permanent entry into the country not by obvious reference to race or colour, but by imposing a

I have the honour to inform you that a

Chinese named Kang Yu Wei contemplates visiting Australia shortly. He was formerly a man of considerable standing in China but is now exiled from that country. It is understood that he is at present in Ceylon. For various reasons some of which have regard to his moral reputation the Government have refused permission for him to land in Australia. I shall be glad, therefore, if you will issue instructions that in the event of this man arriving at Fremantle he is to be subjected to the dictation test which should be applied in such a manner as to ensure its efficiency. It is probable that Kang Yu Wei understands English. Inquiries should be made on that point, and your officers should be in readiness to apply the test in Spanish or Italian.

I have the honour to be,  
Sir,  
Your obedient Servant,

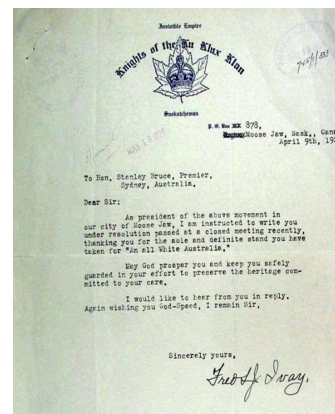
Figure 1

Dictation Test on any prospective immigrant. The Act stated that the following were 'prohibited immigrants'; namely, 'any person who when asked to do so by an officer fails to write out at dictation and sign in the presence of the officer a passage of fifty words in length in any European language directed by the officer'. This prohibition could be used not only against non-Europeans not proficient in English but also against those who were proficient. The dictation test could be conducted in any European language (French, Spanish, German etc.) **Figure 1** shows how the test was to be used against a Chinese wanting to enter Australia. Incidentally, the Chinese applicant was seeking to enter Australia from Ceylon and not China. In this dispatch which goes back to 1908, the Secretary Department of Immigration, suggests that the test be conducted in Spanish or Italian as the Chinese applicant may be proficient in English.

A typical passage used for the Dictation Test reads as follows: -

'The hairy adornment of the lion renders him more formidable appearance. But the plain fact is that the tiger's head and jaws are more solid, heavy and powerful than the lion's. We can only tell the difference when examining the skeletons of the 2 animals with a skilled anatomist.'

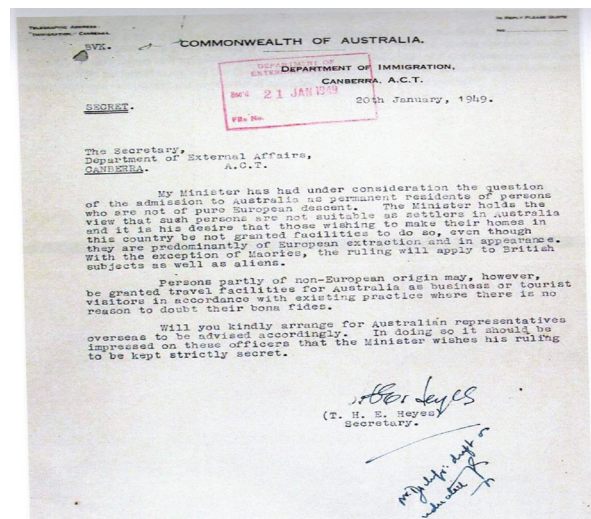
This restrictive White Australia policy of limiting entry to Australia to primarily British and some Europeans only, was adhered to in the first half of the 20th century. Not only Australia but other democracies openly or covertly supported the notion of white supremacy. Australian Policy was apparently considered to be a success in other lands and had its admirers and well wishers in Canada. **Figure 2** is a

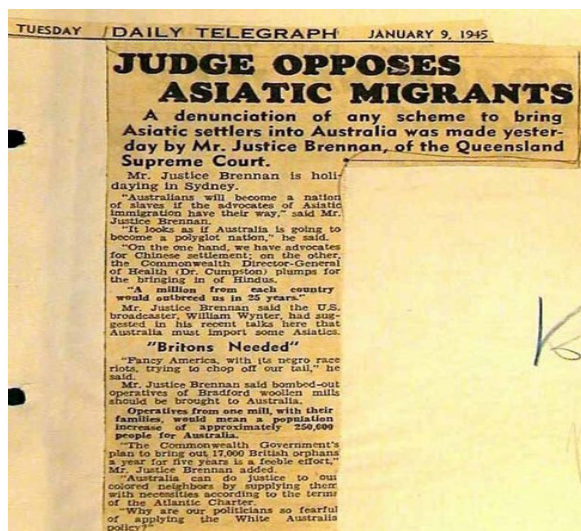


letter of admiration to Prime Minister Stanley Melbourne Bruce of Australia from the Ku Klux Klan. The letter thanks the prime Minister of Australia for his stand for 'an all White Australia'. The author who is the president of a chapter of the KKK, also invokes God's Blessing on the Prime Minister in preserving the heritage committed to his care. (Note: Bruce was Prime Minister and not Premier as stated in the KKK letter).

Figure 2

Although the end of the Second World War saw seismic change in many parts of the world, at first it did not bring any significant change to the White Australia Policy. The immigration minister at this time (Arthur Calwell) fully recognised the need for Australia to rapidly expand its population. 'Populate or perish' was his slogan. However, his choice of prospective immigrants was not without prejudice. Calwell added to his population slogan with the words: 'It would be far better for us to have in Australia twenty or thirty million people of 100 per cent white extraction than seven million people who are 98 per cent British'. Even as far out as four years after the end of the Second World War, the Immigration Minister's office sent out a secret dispatch in which it was stated that the Minister's view was that non-Europeans are, 'not suitable as settlers in Australia'. (See **Figure 3** below)





Even the judiciary at this time openly supported white only immigration to Australia. **Figure 4** (above) is an extract from *The Daily Telegraph*, January 9, 1945, which has the headline; 'Judge opposes Asiatic Migrants'. 'Australians will become a nation of slaves if the advocates of Asiatic immigration have their way'; Mr Justice Brennan of the Queensland Supreme Court stated. Justice Brennan went on to ask: 'Why are our politicians so fearful of applying the White Australia policy?'

### Ceylonese Burghers assail the White Australia Fortress

Although Fortress White Australia appeared to be as strong as ever, the years following the end of the Second World War saw momentous change in Europe, Asia and other parts of the world which would inevitably influence what went on in Australia. India and Pakistan achieved independence in 1947 and Ceylon in the following year. There was also independence on the horizon for countries such as Burma and Mauritius. In these countries there were minority communities within their populations which were of European and part European ancestry. In Ceylon, persons of British, Dutch and Portuguese ancestry (referred to as the Burghers) diplomatically approached Australia and requested admission as immigrants on the grounds that they were of European ancestry. Due in some degree to pressure from liberal members of government, Canberra marginally relented and decided that persons of predominantly European ancestry; European in appearance; and able to integrate into Australian society and way of life, would be considered for admission into the country as immigrants. Predominantly European was in the first instance interpreted by Canberra to be 75% European ancestry.

In the case of a Ceylonese who was applying for permanent admission to Australia as a migrant, (with family) there were at the time many hurdles to clear. Some hurdles were known while others were dependent upon the subjective whim of an interviewing officer or beyond the applicant's control.

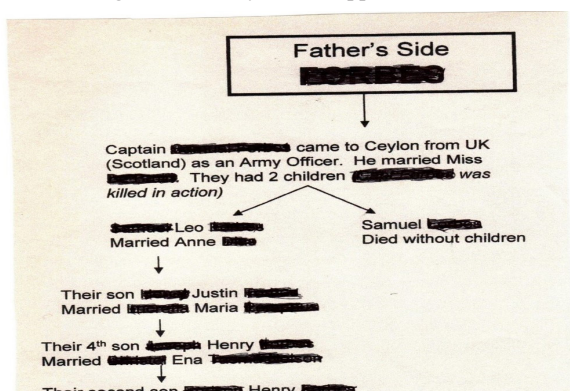


Figure 5

The primary requirement was to prove European ancestry. To meet this requirement an applicant had to produce a genealogy statement tracing ancestry to European parents, grandparents and beyond. **Figure 5** is one such abbreviated genealogy statement. This particular genealogy record is from a Ceylonese Burgher family of British origin. To protect privacy, names have been deleted. The original document reads as follows: -

The abbreviated genealogy statement sets out that: -

1. The founder of the family was an Army Captain who came out from Scotland and married (or co habited) with a female of Dutch origin. They had 2 male children. The founder, (Army Captain) was killed in action.
2. Only one of the two sons survived beyond adulthood. The surviving son married a female of Portuguese origin. They had children but how many is not known.
3. The eldest son of couple 2 above married a female of Italian origin. They had several children.
4. The fourth son of couple 3 above married a female of British origin.

The Principal Applicant for entry to Australia as a migrant, was the son of couple 4.

The applicant in question was able to trace European ancestry and appeared to satisfy the requirements of Australian Immigration. However, the genealogy statement had to be authenticated with citation of relevant official records. For example, a record of marriage of the couple in 1 above was not available, but District Court records of a Testamentary case cited the female of Dutch origin as the mother of the 2 brothers. Similarly, there was a Church record (St Lucia's Cathedral Kotahena) of the marriage of the couple in 2 above. Records from St Mary's Church Bambalapitiya substantiated the marriages of couple 3 in 1893, and of couple 4 in 1927.

As the ancestry statement above shows, persons of British heritage were able to trace their ancestry with a great degree of certainty as government and church records of births, deaths and marriages could be traced if relating to the later 19th century and the 20th century.

Individuals of Dutch ancestry were also at most times able to trace their ancestry. There were records of births deaths and marriages (in the Dutch Language) in government and Dutch Reformed Church records that could be accessed. In addition to churches in Colombo, the Dutch Reformed Churches in Galle and Matara were fertile sources of births and marriages records for the compilers of Dutch family genealogies. Also, some Dutch families maintained a record of family events in 'Stamboeks' (clan or family books) which proved to be another valuable resource.

In addition to all of the above, the Dutch Burghers had formed their own representative association; the Dutch Burgher Union, (DBU) as early as 1908. A very important part of the work of the DBU was the compilation of Dutch Family genealogies. In its publication, 'The Journal of the Dutch Burgher Union,' the DBU had traced the family history of many families in great detail.

In comparison to persons of British and Dutch origin, those of Portuguese origin had difficulty in tracing unbroken European ancestry. The Portuguese presence in Ceylon went back many centuries and as one would expect, during that time there had been formal and informal relationships between the Portuguese and the local communities, which had muddied the waters of these genealogies. Compilation of a family genealogy statement was at most times tedious work. Australian High Commission officials tasked with the examination and evaluation of these family genealogy statements, often found them confusing and misleading.

Submitting an acceptable family genealogy statement was only step one in the process of making an application for admission to Australia as a migrant. Many other hurdles had to be cleared. Following on the submission of requisite papers and documents, the next stage in the application process was the all-important interview at which several criteria had to be met.

The foremost requirement at the interview, was to be in the eyes of the interviewing officer, a person of 'Predominantly European Appearance'. This of course was beyond the control of the applicant. **Figure 6** (below) is the final page of the

16. If applicant has children over school leaver 'age' to be included in Certificate, have they an adequate knowledge of English? *Yes*

17. Is applicant a member of the Commonwealth Armed Forces? *No*

If so - Service No. \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Expiry \_\_\_\_\_

Places where served \_\_\_\_\_

18. General:

① hair

② wife interviewed this day

③ Appearance predominant European

Signature: *[Signature]* 1/4/57

Interviewing Officer

official interview assessment confirming that this requirement is satisfied. 'Appearance predominantly European', notes the interviewing officer and he/she signs off just below the observation.

If this requirement could not be met an applicant would be denied entry to Australia as a migrant. **Figure 7** (below) is an example of refusal on the grounds that, 'his colour was darker than we would feel it would need to be to secure his admission to Australia'. Note also that this refusal was issued although the applicant, 'was able satisfactorily to establish his genealogy'.

Memorandum for the Secretary, Department of Immigration, 28th January, 1950.

I refer to your memorandum 40/2/9413 concerning an application to enter Australia submitted by Mr. [Name] of [Address], Colombo, Ceylon.

Mr. [Name] was able satisfactorily to establish his genealogy. He is a member of the Burgher community but the High Commissioner did not feel able to approve his application for the reason that his colour was darker than we would feel it would need to be to secure his admission to Australia. This is, according to our understanding of the present interpretation, that a migrant should be of predominantly European descent. We would be grateful for advice if any decision were to be made to satisfy this requirement.

I should add of course that Burgher genealogies present some difficulty since although they are traced for several generations and more than a century through records kept since the Dutch administration of Ceylon, cases are believed to have occurred in which Sinhalese persons assume Dutch or Portuguese names upon baptism in their respective Churches. Many straightforward circumstances apply to the racial origin of Burghers of the last generation when the race of four grandparents can be accurately stated. However, in cases where these may be predominantly European, we have not always felt able to approve such applications because of the darker complexion of some applicants.

Official Secretary.

The unreliable and misleading nature of some genealogy statements which came across the desk of Australian officials at the Colombo High Commission, is also noted in some detail. In the memorandum dated 28th January 1950, the writer,

(Official Secretary), comments that: 'Burgher genealogies present some difficulty since although they are traced for several generations and more than a century through records since the Dutch administration of Ceylon, cases are believed to have occurred in which Sinhalese persons assume Dutch or Portuguese names upon baptism in their respective Churches'.

The next broad requirement was for the applicant and his/her family and dependants to demonstrate that they were able to integrate into Australian Society and way of life. As **Figure 8** (below) shows, this requirement covered several personal

and subjective matters pertaining to the applicant and his family, as well as social and economic criteria.

The interview report covers not only the appearance of the principal applicant but his work experience and several other observations about the applicant and family, his parents and siblings.

There is an unfavourable observation that, 'In appearance Mr .... is not approvable'.

However, his work experience is cited in his favour. The interviewing officer notes,

Mr. [Name] (aged 41) is a retired Major in the [Service]. His father and mother are [Names] and [Names] respectively. He is a member of the Burgher community and his colour is darker than we would feel it would need to be to secure his admission to Australia. This is, according to our understanding of the present interpretation, that a migrant should be of predominantly European descent. We would be grateful for advice if any decision were to be made to satisfy this requirement.

I should add of course that Burgher genealogies present some difficulty since although they are traced for several generations and more than a century through records kept since the Dutch administration of Ceylon, cases are believed to have occurred in which Sinhalese persons assume Dutch or Portuguese names upon baptism in their respective Churches. Many straightforward circumstances apply to the racial origin of Burghers of the last generation when the race of four grandparents can be accurately stated. However, in cases where these may be predominantly European, we have not always felt able to approve such applications because of the darker complexion of some applicants.

Official Secretary.

'He is Assistant Station Master at Maradana Station. He has had eighteen years' experience on the Railway. From 1941 -1946 he was a private in the Middle- East forces.' In addition, the applicant was observed at the interview to be, 'well-dressed and quietly spoken'.

Scrutiny at the interview then went well beyond the applicant. It extended to his wife, daughter and son. In this case the applicant's wife's parents had joined in the application as dependants of the principal applicant. Their position in relation to application requirements are also examined in detail. Fortunately for the applicant his wife is seen as, 'quite approvable. She is practically 100% European', notes the interviewer. Also favourably viewed is the applicant's teenage daughter. 'She is light in complexion and quite approvable'. Even the two-year-old son is assessed. He is said to be 'fractionally darker' than his sister, 'but well above borderline'.

The comprehensive nature of the interview is demonstrated in that it extends beyond the immediate family of the applicant. The applicant is questioned on the whereabouts of his parents and siblings. The interview notes state: -

Parents Dead.

Brother Mr. .... Ceylon. Has not applied.

Sisters Mrs. ....Ceylon. Has not applied.

Mrs. .... Ceylon. Has not applied'.

The dependant couple on the application, (wife's parents) are not spared of detailed assessment. The applicant's father-in-law is favourably considered. 'Mr. .... is a retired Major in the .... Army. His features and complexion are sufficiently European for him to be approved and his background is, of course, entirely satisfactory'. In addition, it appears that having family already settled in Australia is an asset. Further plus points for the father-in-law are noted as, 'He has two sisters in Australia; .....and a sister-in-law who is also in Australia'. The fact that the Major's wife 'is pure Sinhalese', and that she wore a sari to the interview does not prejudice the final successful outcome of the application.

Although there were some shortcomings as to the appearance of the principal applicant, his work skills, being well-dressed and softly spoken, coupled with the 'approvable' appearance of his wife, teenage daughter, toddler son and father-in-law, led the interviewer to conclude that: - 'He would not be greatly out of place in Australia'.

It is interesting to note the reason adduced by the applicant for his desire to leave Ceylon and move permanently to Australia. The applicant, a worker who had eighteen years' service on the railway and who had reached the position of Assistant Station Master at a very prominent Colombo railway station, was making the application to emigrate to Australia because: - 'He had been given the option to retire under the language policy proviso and must make a decision....'

The language policy of the government was the single most important reason for Burgher migration to Australia and other welcoming countries. Burghers wanting to migrate to Australia, seeking sympathetic consideration of an application often held themselves out to be, 'soft refugees.' In an official Despatch to Canberra on 4th August 1947, the Office of the Commissioner for Australia in Colombo observed: - 'Nearly all those Burghers who have interviewed the Commissioner state that they are anxious to leave Ceylon because there is a growing prejudice against them here'.

The Australian Commissioner's office, at this time located at The Galle Face Hotel, with not many staff on its roster, felt overburdened. In the same Despatch, (4th August 1947) it is noted: - 'This office is being approached continuously by Ceylonese anxious to emigrate to Australia. As many as 16 seek (and obtain) interviews in the one day'.

Besides the individual and family applications, there were proposals for mass migration put forward at this time. The most significant of such proposals was the one promoted by the Burgher Settlement League, whose secretary was Mr.

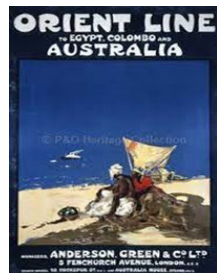
J. G. van der Hoeven. Mr. van der Hoeven's proposal was to set up a fund to assist Burghers to migrate to Australia. Migrants from the United Kingdom could under certain circumstances be eligible for a fully assisted (paid) passage to Australia. In Ceylon it was suggested that part or fully assisted passages could be extended to the mass migration scheme proposed by the Burgher Settlement League. Mr. van der Hoeven held out that the Burgher Settlement League could muster between 10,000 to 13,000 migrants. The plan involved charter of ships which could carry many migrants across to Australia (up to about 5,000 per trip).

The Australian Commissioner in Colombo was highly critical of the Burgher Settlement League and its grandiose plans. Meanwhile Canberra showed no interest in a scheme of part or full assisted passages from Colombo to Freemantle. The final nail in the coffin of mass migration was inserted when, in a Despatch dated 3rd February 1948, the Australian Commissioner very ironically noted regarding the Burgher Settlement League's plans: - 'As far as we can ascertain, only about nine members of his League have emigrated under his regis.' There was mass migration to Australia from Europe in the years following the end of the Second World War, but these plans were not to apply to Asia even if was to be limited to the predominantly European minority section of a population.

With all the issues involved in migrating to Australia, the number that went across from Ceylon was comparatively small in the first 12 years (from 1948 to 1960). The *Colombo Times* newspaper (7/10/60) in an article on the subject of Burgher migration stated: - 'About 2,500 have found a new home in Australia since 1948 and some 200 men, women and children now leave Ceylon every year.' These numbers are in line with Australian Department of Immigration figures, which in 1961 put the number of Ceylon born persons in Australia at 3400.

If one had successfully cleared all the hurdles, jumped through the hoops, and been approved to migrate to Australia, the journey (unlike today) was most likely to be by sea. Passenger liners sailed regularly from Southampton to Australia and New Zealand. Navigating through the Red Sea, the liners would pick up more passengers at Colombo or Bombay. Sailing Southeast in the Indian Ocean and crossing the Equator, the next stop after Colombo or Bombay would be Freemantle in Western Australia. One of the more popular shipping lines (the Orient Line) had its vessels all named with the first letter being 'O', (*Orcades, Orantes and Oransay*). Later in the mid-20th century the Orient Line merged with a rival enterprise to form the biggest passenger liner company in the world at this time, titled P & O, (Peninsular and Oriental). In the years immediately following the end of the Second World War, migrants were transported in converted war ships. In these vessels the slow journey was a most unpleasant experience. But as demand for travel by ship increased Orient and other companies built vessels specifically designed for passenger transport which offered a much more comfortable journey; especially if one could afford first class. Stopover in Colombo was popular.

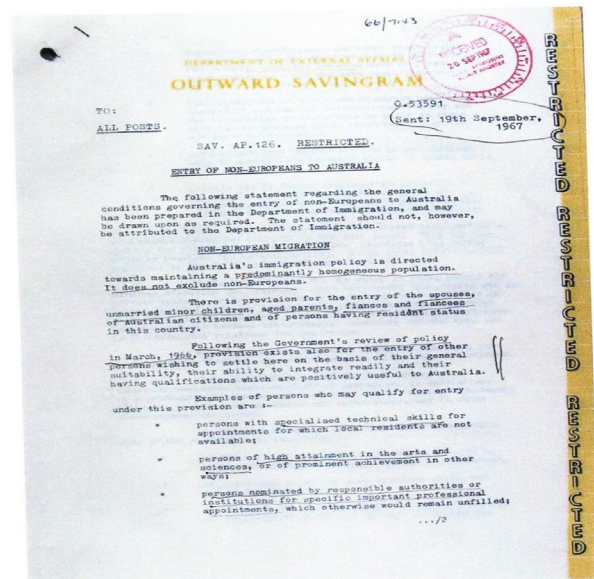
**Figure 9** (below) is the cover of a brochure and a poster advertising the attractions at this stop in the journey. Some passengers apparently did not appreciate all of the Colombo experience. In 1955 a migrant from Malta noted: - *We were overwhelmed at the Colombo wharf by a pervading enveloping aroma, which we discovered once on shore to be the smell of curries from the motley array of food stalls beyond the terminal*.



In the last couple of years of the 1950s, and progressively in the 1960s and 1970s, Australia's immigration

policy underwent a transformation to be more open, liberal and inclusive, and a policy from which reference to race was finally excised. There were many reasons for this transformation which will not be discussed here, other than one development which saw Ceylon as the centre of attention.

This event was the establishment of the Colombo Plan in 1951. Out of an initial grant of 31 million Pounds Sterling to the Colombo Plan, Ceylon received nearly 20 million Pounds. The Colombo Plan which sought to develop major infrastructure in member countries, also at the micro level provided funds for promotion of education and professional development. These initiatives brought decision makers in Australia in contact with educated professionals in Ceylon and Colombo Plan member countries. The close personal contacts led to the realisation in Australia that there was a pool of educated talent in Colombo Plan Asian member countries which Australia could use in its own development. To harness this resource Australia's immigration policy underwent a quantum change. From immigration policy based on selective European only migrants, through to immigration to 'populate the country', there was movement in the mid 1960s for a change in immigration policy geared to develop



Restricted communication to all consular posts on entry of non-Europeans to Australia.

and progress the nation. **Figure 10** (above) (Department of Immigration communication dated 19th September 1967 [Restricted]) states: - *Following the Government's review of policy in March 1966, provision exists also for the entry of other persons wishing to settle here on the basis of their general suitability, their ability to integrate readily and their having qualifications which are positively useful to Australia*.

The doors to settlement in Australia were thrown open to qualified professional and skilled workers. Among the numbers who migrated from Ceylon were some who had previously been trained under the auspices of the Colombo Plan and who desired to return to greener pastures 'Downunder'. **Figure 11** (below) is a photo of an immigrant from Ceylon at employment in Queensland.

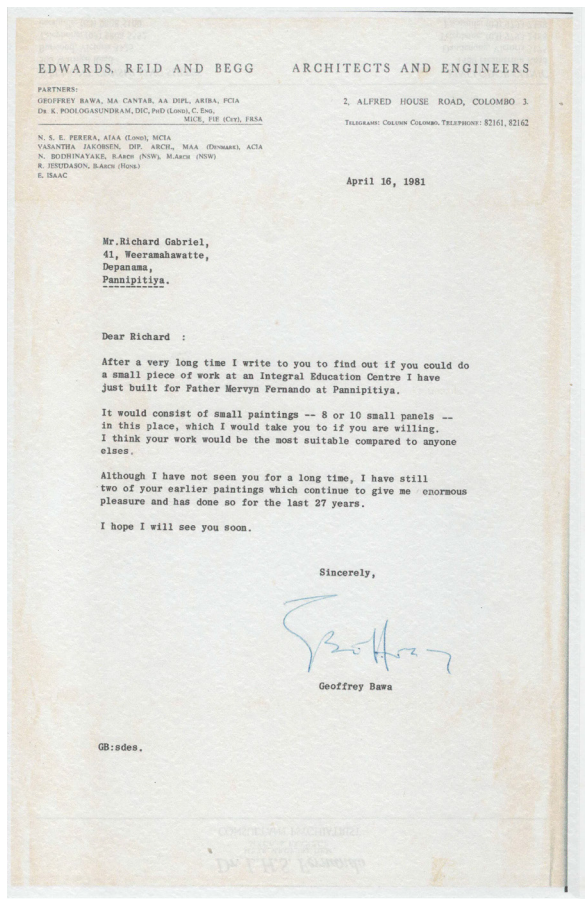


## Richard Gabriel, Geoffrey Bawa and Minette de Silva

by Dr Srilal Fernando

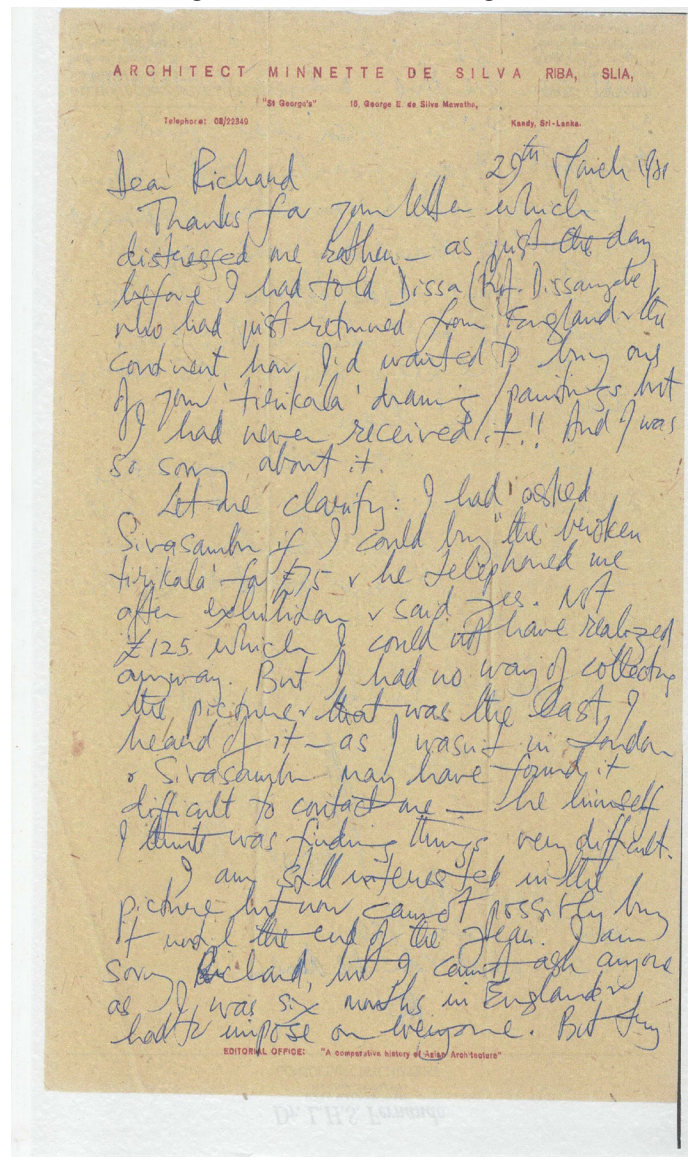
I had the rare privilege of meeting with Richard Gabriel regularly, over many years at his house in Dandenong North. He lived with his daughter Renee and son in law Hiran who were both architects. Hiran built a small studio for Richard. He would be at the easel or seated on his comfortable settee and I in the old wicker chair opposite him and we would talk about whatever he was painting. He could be drawn out to talk about the 43 Group, its members and the art politics of that time. When the inaugural meeting of the 43 Group happened, Richard was in his teens and was the youngest member of this Group. He mentioned that he did not speak a word at the meeting with Lionel Wendt being the dominant figure. However, Richard was a great observer of everything including people. There were artists now synonymous with the group who did not want to be identified with the others. Some had big egos and it was Lionel Wendt's force of personality and later the gentleness of Harry Pieris, the generosity of Harold Pieris and the practical Ivan Peries that kept the Group together.

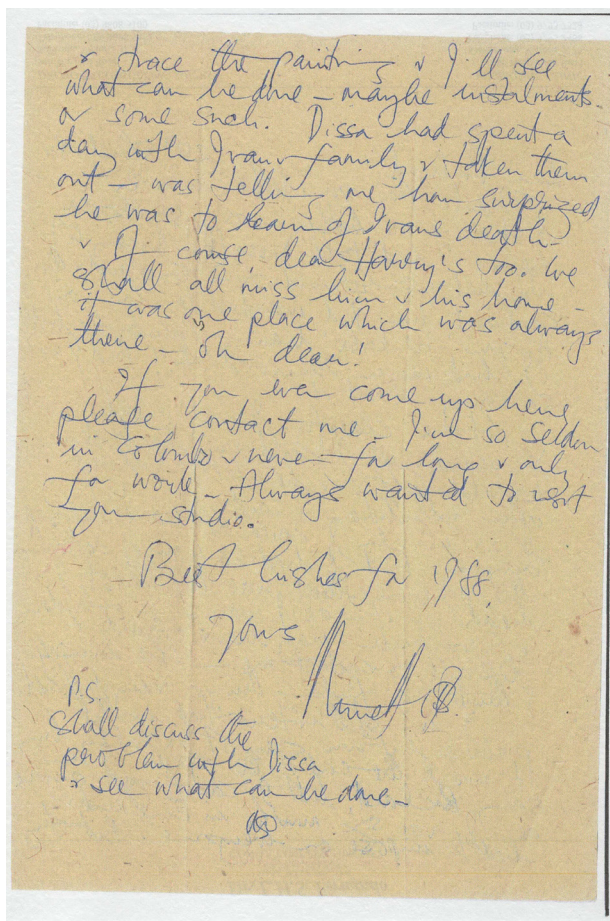
to 10 panels" for the Education Centre in Pannipitiya built for Father Mervyn Fernando. Geoffrey Bawa would have been aware of the etchings that Richard had done of the stations of the cross in 1975. This was a limited edition of 33, one for each of the years of the life of Christ. Bawa also mentions that he had two paintings by Gabriel that he treasures. I wonder if these are still in the Bawa archives. When I asked Richard whether he acceded to the request he said "No", which surprised me. Being a devout Catholic and a resident of Pannipitiya it would have been just the commission that would have been up his street. The reason for the refusal was a past experience with Geoffrey Bawa which was not pleasant to the sensitive Richard Gabriel. The discerning reader could be referred to the delightfully humorous exchange of letters between the Australian Artist Donald Friend and a Sri Lankan businessman Boniface Fernando in understanding why Richard Gabriel ignored this letter. Those of an older generation might remember the 7-story building in Wattala that was built by Boniface Fernando. Geoffrey Bawa and Donald Friend designed the enormous gates and the bar area. The gates were



Richard was a very quiet and simple man with very simple habits and style of living. However, he was not a simpleton. He had a very analytic mind and was a good judge of people. It is in this context that we can look at the letter from Geoffrey Bawa to Richard Gabriel. Richard had a dusty file, and I was privileged to look into its contents. The two letters presented are from that file.

The first letter, written in 1981 (reproduced above), is a request for a "a small piece of work consisting of 8





probably the first remote controlled gates installed in Ceylon. Incidentally Boniface Fernando's grandson is a colourful member of the present cabinet of ministers. The Second letter written in 1987 (reproduced above) was from Minette de Silva. This was a request to purchase a woodcut of Richard, *The Tirikala* or racing cart. She talks of Prof Dissanayake (Dissa) an avid collector of Sri Lankan art and Sivasambu who along with Ranjit Fernando and Martin Russell helped to organize the 43 group exhibition in the United Kingdom in the early 1950's.

Architecture and Art are closely linked. However, most architects are not artists. Their product can be a work of Art. An architect's work cannot be mere whimsy but as a science closely associated with art and craft. There have been excellent examples overseas. Le Corbusier the Swiss architect is known as an artist and designer. Looking at the local scene, Ismeth Raheem the well-known Sri Lankan architect is also known for his paintings. He is also an excellent writer whose work is thoroughly researched and presented in a very readable form. Not very well known is the work of Gamini Warnesurya, an architect trained in Australia under the Colombo Plan. He exhibited sometimes with the 43 Group, Well known to Richard Gabriel, he designed Richard's House in Pannipitiya. Gamini was 'discovered' at a tender age by Aubrey Collette, the then art teacher at Royal College Colombo. Aubrey himself was a cartoonist and artist and a founder member of the 43 Group. Gamini, a regular winner of the art prize at school exhibited with the 43 Group from 1949. He studied Architecture at the prestigious Sir J J School of Architecture in Bombay. In 1959 he came to Melbourne on a Colombo Plan

scholarship. He continued to paint and exhibited at the Richmann galleries. He won the Perth Art prize and was the first non-Australian to receive this award. Unfortunately, he gave up painting and passed away in Australia a few years ago. His painting called "*The Village*" was acquired by Geoffrey Bawa and it would be interesting to find out if there is more information in the Geoffrey Bawa Archives.

Another well-known architect, Chelliah Anjalendran liked colour and would advise or obtain paintings for his clients. Richard had a high regard for Anjalendran. He maintained his contact with Anjalendran after he moved to Melbourne.

Geoffrey Bawa was not one for bright colours. He is famously quoted as saying "I am for colour as long as it is black and white." However, his buildings were decorated by artists who used colour extensively like Ena de Silva, Barbara Sansoni, Laki Senanayake and Donald Friend. These connections between architects and artists is an area not frequently explored and ripe for research.

In the present climate of veneration of our architectural greats and artists it is common for them to be presented as demigods. Though their work was great it is easy to forget that they had their fair share of quirks and foibles. Some had very narcissistic aspects to their personality structure and did not acknowledge the others they worked with. It will be illuminating for the budding artists and architects to be aware of this and the picture portrayed by the fan clubs may not always be accurate. Their place in history is assured and this aspect can be discussed without any blemish on the record of their work. This has been done with delicacy and finesse in the writings of Picasso and Le Corbusier and many of the greats in other parts of the world.

One wishes that people like Richard Gabriel, Harry Pieris and Ivan Peries placed their observations and insights in print. This would have been more authentic than the secondhand records that we present.



Richard Gabriel: *The Cross*



Richard Gabriel: *Thirikkal Race*

# Appreciations

## Professor Yasmine Gooneratne (1936 - 2024)

A tribute by her daughter Devika Brendon



My mother, Yasmine Gooneratne, passed away on the night of Thursday 15th February 2024. She was 88 years old.

Emeritus Professor Gooneratne was an academic, scholar, researcher, creative writer and teacher. She was an exemplary and meticulous student at the Universities of Peradeniya and Cambridge, as well as an encouraging

teacher at the University of Peradeniya and Macquarie University in Sydney. She is internationally renowned for her contributions and her insights into literature, especially the literature of South Asia and Australia.

This is what is well known about this lady who is called a trailblazer and a writer of renown. She is part of a generation which produced some towering figures.

Yasmine Gooneratne as a private individual left clear instructions about what she wished regarding her funeral. Her directives show a great deal about her character and her values. 'No public notices. No public viewing. No public funeral. No memorial lectures. No fuss. No feathers. No posturing. No performativeness. No photographers. No selfies. No celebrities. No nonsense.'

Arranging such an event in contemporary Sri Lanka is quite a challenge! Cultural traditions are part of what make our society hold together, in a disrupted world. Her attitudes were open minded, fresh thinking and often challenging of norms and accepted beliefs. She was characteristically very tactful and restrained, but she was also a person who had strong convictions, and intense likes and dislikes. Her enthusiasm for new discoveries was an exhilarating experience to witness.

She had great contempt for hypocrisy and cruelty. She had a great sense of humour and a lively sense of fun. As she was a person of moral integrity, the repulsive conduct of people who prey upon the vulnerable saddened her, especially as she grew older. While always choosing to believe the best in people, she found herself unable to accept the lies that are spun by opportunists and predators on a daily basis. Her good opinion, once lost, was lost forever.

The darkening landscape of the world we live in was often remedied for her by music, art, the joy of beautifully made films and the beauty and versatility of literature. She read to my brother and me when we were children, and the great stories from the *Mahabharata* and children's classics like *101 Dalmatians* were thus

introduced to us in the best way possible: through the loving and expressive voice of our mother.

Yasmine Gooneratne was a wonderful cook, and an enthusiastic concert-goer and ballroom dancer. She beamed with approval on romantic love, and believed in the renewing and reviving effect of love on the human psyche: considering the transformative experience of falling in love to be one of the closest approximations available to us of the divine.

She was a generous person, in every way: generous with sharing her knowledge with students and emerging writers as a mentor. Generous in welcoming guests to our home. Generous in extending grace to broken people, one of the most compassionate people we ever knew.

She did not judge people on external factors. She did not look down on uneducated people. She was uninterested in people's assumptions about her, often launched by people who had issues and grievances with people from elite or elevated backgrounds. But she believed that people should try to develop themselves, in every situation in life. She shared with my father the belief that life was a great adventure, and I believe that part of the reason for their wonderful marriage lasting 60 years of their lives is that shared certainty. They each chose a wonderful companion in the adventure, and actively participated in each other's soul growth.

Of course I am biased, because I know her very well, and knew her close up. But I want to say that even if I was not her child, or related to her, I would still find her endlessly interesting. Because of her impatience with clichés and lazy thinking, her conversation was one of the highlights of my life.

I take the opportunity to thank Yasmine Gooneratne for her outstanding dedication and commitment to every task she undertook. She was whole-hearted, in every thing she did. She rose to the challenges she was faced with, and uplifted many who knew her by doing so.

She was a resonant role model whose impact only grows with the years.

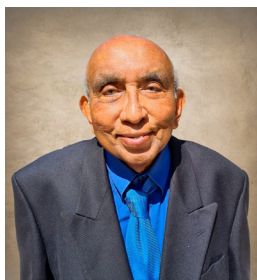
Her initials were M Y Gooneratne. And we were proud to call her ours. But her work belongs to everyone who appreciates it.

'And gladly would she learn, and gladly teach'



SOURCE: *The Sunday Times* (Sri Lanka)  
18 February 2024

## Dr Sirilal Silva (1934-2024)



Dr Sirilal Silva was born on 28 February 1934. He was the eldest son of Arthur and Lilian Silva. He started his primary school education at St Joseph's College. On Easter Sunday 05 April 1942, the same Japanese aircraft carrier fleet that attacked Pearl Harbour in Hawaii in December 1941, launched a bombing raid on Colombo. The objective was to destroy the British Eastern Fleet

believed to be in Colombo Harbour. The British, however, had previous intelligence warning and had moved the fleet out of the harbour. Sirilal recalls that he was on his way to church that Easter Sunday morning and saw the Japanese bombing Colombo harbour.

Following the bombing, the British Government assumed that a Japanese invasion was imminent and closed all the schools in Colombo and advised parents to move their children out of Colombo. The Silva family moved to Minuwangoda. After the war, the family moved to their ancestral property in Moratuwa, and he continued his studies at St Sebastian's College.

When he was sixteen years old, he was faced with the unexpected passing away of his father due to a stroke. As he was the oldest child, he had to take on the responsibility of being a 'father figure' in the family. His mother got a job as a Sub-Post Mistress. To supplement the family income, he kept a small dairy with four cows. He milked the cows early morning and delivered the milk to a shop before going to school.

After passing the Senior School Certificate examination he moved to St Benedict's College and then to Aquinas College to prepare for the University Entrance Examination. He obtained admission to the Dental Faculty of the Peradeniya Campus of the University of Ceylon in 1955 and resided in Arunachalam Hall. He graduated as a Dental Surgeon in 1960, topping his batch.

He joined Government service as a Dental Surgeon and attended to every patient with care even though very little time was allocated to each patient. He resigned in 1967 and set up in private practice in Colombo 6. He was soon regarded as a Dental practitioner who took meticulous care over each patient. He was a Visiting Lecturer at the Post-Graduate Institute of Medicine, Colombo. He was elected President of the Sri Lanka Dental Association in 1978. He was also interested in Acupuncture and was a Senior Lecturer and Examiner in the Open International University of Complementary Medicine, Sri Lanka.

He was also involved in The Organisation of Professional Associations of Sri Lanka (OPA) in its early days and was its President from 1984 for two years which was the maximum term allowed for an individual. On a visit to London, he successfully lobbied The Commonwealth Foundation for a grant towards the cost of building a headquarters building for OPA in Colombo. The building called the "Sri Lanka Professional Centre" was opened by President J R Jayewardene on 16 September 1982 and a plaque says that "This Building constructed with a generous grant from The Commonwealth Foundation". OPA is now a flourishing 52 Member organisation catering to 34 disciplines, with a total individual membership of over 60,000.

Sirilal married Anne Lilamani Fernando on 24 February 1962. He was a devoted husband and they lived a very happy married life until she passed away in December 2016. They have two daughters and for the sake of the children's future Sirilal decided to move to Sydney at the age of 60 years in 1994.

He was offered a post in the Dental field but this involved working in a remote outback location in New South Wales so he declined the offer and instead sat for the Australian Graduate Public Service Examination and joined Centrelink as a Fraud Investigator. He enjoyed working there and continued until he retired at the age of 75 years.

He was an executive council member and a Vice-President of the Sri Lanka Association of New South Wales in 1998. He was also a founder member of St Benedict's College Old Boys Association (NSW) since 1993 and was its Patron in 2009-2010 and took an active part in the Association's activities. He joined CSA on 22 March 2009 and was a member for exactly fifteen years. He attended CSA's meetings and events very regularly until the last years of his life.

During the past seven months, due to failing health he had to be confined to a nursing home. He passed away on 22 March 2024. He leaves behind his daughters Yasmin and Amali and a grandson Rohan. He was a generous spirit, a kind, compassionate man and a gentleman to his fingertips.

*Thiru Arumugam*

It is with great sadness that I received the news of the death of Dr Sirilal Silva, someone I have known for over fifty years. Sirilal was a member of CSA from the very early days and his membership dates back to over 20 years. Sirilal and his late wife Lilamani were a regular attendee at our quarterly meetings, and never failed to attend the Annual Dinner in December, always a keen and popular member of the group that stood around the piano singing away old favourites.

Sirilal practised as a dentist in Wellawatte in the premises of the sprawling building which housed A.W Jansz General Trader, Hardware merchant, and liquor distributor. Arthur Jansz established his shop at 135 Galle Road, Wellawatte well over a hundred years ago, and was the premier retail establishment in Colombo South for over 100 years. Upon his death his son in law Merrill Peries ran the establishment. Sirilal rented out his premises from Merrill's daughter Mrs Barthelot who migrated to Australia in the 1960s. Sirilal was a popular dentist and was so enamoured with the premises that he travelled to Australia met the owner of the premises Mrs Barthelot, and purchased the premises outright. In the early seventies my late wife and I rented an apartment next door to the Jansz building. On a dental appointment with Sirilal I was seated on the dentist's chair facing a window overlooking the garden next to our apartment. I was surprised to see my dear wife with our two year old son looking at the dental procedure being performed, through the window. That is a beautiful piece of memory that I will carry with me forever.

Sirilal lived in Park Road, but commuted in his Volkswagen to Wellawatte every day. He was the typical successful professional leading a comfortable life.

It was therefore with much surprise that we heard of his migration to Australia about 25 years ago. He chose not to continue as a dentist but worked for a few years in the Department of Aging. He had made the sacrifice of abandoning a very successful dental practice, in the interest of the future of his family, typical of the man.

Sirilal was a quiet, gentle, person with a dignified aura around him. His family and friends will miss him and his gentle ways. May he find eternal peace.

*Hugh Karunanayake*

### Obituary notices published in *The Ceylankan*

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



## CSA Meetings (Sydney)

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

**Please note:** Events that go ahead will be held strictly in compliance with safety regulations as required. The CSA Committee warmly welcomes Members and Guests to the General Meetings. A donation to defray catering expenses for the Social following on from the talk would be appreciated. Bringing a plate of food would also be welcomed!

## CEYLON SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA General Meeting at 6.30 pm on Sunday 2 June 2024 at Pennant Hills Community Centre, Main Hall on Level 1



The speaker for the meeting will be Distinguished Professor Buddhima Indraratna, AM, who will talk on the challenges, commitments and developments for advances in Transport infrastructure.

### Bio Data

Currently, Buddhima Indraratna is a Distinguished Professor of Civil Engineering and the Director of Transport Research Centre, at University of Technology, Sydney. Formerly, he was a Distinguished Professor and the Founding Director of Australian Research Council's Training Centre for Rail Infrastructure (ARC ITTC-Rail) at the University of Wollongong. He is also an Honorary Distinguished Professor at the Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand, Indian Institute of Technology in Assam, India, and Harbin Institute of Technology in Harbin, China. Buddhima is a Civil Engineering graduate from Imperial College, London, with his PhD from the University of Alberta in Canada in 1987.

Buddhima is a Fellow of the prestigious Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (FTSE), Fellow of the Institution of Engineers Australia (FIEAust), Fellow of the American Society of Civil Engineers (FASCE), Fellow of Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (FAusIMM), and a Fellow of the Geological Society of UK (FGS). He is a Chartered Professional Engineer of Australia, UK, and Sri Lanka.

Buddhima's contributions to geotechnical and railway engineering have been acknowledged through many national and international awards. This year on Australia Day 26th January, Buddhima received the honour of Member of the Order of Australia. The Australian Geomechanics Society bestowed its highest honour of Life Membership in 2023. This year also, Buddhima has had the signal honour of being chosen worldwide for the highly prestigious 2024 International Civil Engineer Award by the Jose Ibarra Foundation in Madrid, Spain, to be bestowed by the Queen of Spain in May. In October 2023, Buddhima received the prestigious Sir Visveswaraya Prize for the most outstanding contribution to Civil Engineering outside the UK from the Institution of Civil Engineers, London. His other significant awards include the 1st Ralph Proctor and 4th Louis Menard Lecture Awards from the International Society of Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering. He also delivered the 2009

EH Davis Memorial Lecture of the Australian Geomechanics Society for contributions to Theory and Practice of Geomechanics and the 2022 Stephen Marich lecture on Advances in Railroad Engineering.

For his pioneering contributions, he was honoured with the 2009 Business and Higher Education award by the Australian Commonwealth, 2011 Engineers Australia Transport Medal and 2015 Australia-New Zealand Railway Technical Society's Outstanding Individual Award. Other international awards include Thomas Telford Premium by the Institution of Civil Engineers (UK), twice the recipient of Robert Quigley Commendation Award by the Canadian Geotechnical Society, and the Medal of Excellence for life-time contributions by the International Association of Computer Methods and Advances in Geomechanics.

For his contributions to Sri Lanka as a UN expert, including landslides mitigation and post-tsunami rehabilitation works, Buddhima received the Sirimavo Bandaranaike Commendation via the Ministry of Science and Technology, and the B.D. Rampala Memorial Lecture, awarded by the Institution of Engineers, Sri Lanka.

Buddhima has been a consultant to various infrastructure organisations worldwide, and a former United Nations expert representing Australia. He currently leads numerous projects worth over \$ 1.5 million per year. He has published over 1000 papers, including 14 books, over 500 journal papers, and done more than 75 invited Keynote papers in all continents.

He is the Chair of the Ground Improvement Advisory Board of the Institution of Civil Engineers, UK, and the Chief Editor of the *Journal of Ground Improvement*.

### Synopsis of Talk

Professor Indraratna will talk on the challenges, commitments and developments for advances in Transport infrastructure. The perspectives of a Circular Economy will be dealt with and the drive to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the field of transport through research and technology. SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure - is of relevance as we strive for a better world of the future.

The talk will draw upon Professor Indraratna's internationally recognised leadership in the forefront of research, particularly in the area of rail networks of the future.

## MEMBERSHIP RATES

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

### Payment Methods

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

2. Pay by Bank Transfer to:

Account Name: Ceylon Society of Australia  
Bank Name: Commonwealth Bank of Australia  
Bank BSB: 062 308  
Account No: 10038725

Swift Code for overseas remittances: CTBAU2S  
Reference: Payee Name

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

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

\*\*\*\*\*

### Congratulations and a warm welcome to our New Members

- Eranda ADIKARAM, Harrington Park NSW
- Bandula Parakrama ALUWIHARE, Cherrybrook NSW
- Jim CAITLIN, Wollestoncraft NSW
- Gnanadarsha Sanjaya DISSANANYAKE, Macquarie Park NSW
- Ramona DE NIESE, Chadstone VIC
- Palitha MANCHANAYAKE, Epping NSW
- Kevin MELDER, Dalkeith WA
- Rama K RAMANATHAN, Bateau Bay NSW
- Lakshman RAMANAYAKE, Dural NSW
- Premachandra RANASINGHE, Castle Hill NSW
- Sarath WIJEKON, Castle Hill NSW

\*\*\*\*\*

### Notice to Members - Contact Details

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

\*\*\*\*\*

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Treasurer, Deepak Pritamdas  
on 0434 860 188

## WE NEED SPEAKERS

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

If you know of anyone, please contact as relevant:

- CSA President Pauline Gunewardene

Mobile: +61 419 447 665

Email: paulineg@ozemail.com.au

- Melbourne Chapter Convenors Sumal and Naomi Karunanayake

Mobile: 0416 583 888 (Sumal); 0415 772 888 (Naomi)

- Colombo Chapter Secretary Insiyah Davoodbhoy

Mobile: +94 77 8705575

Email: insiyah.davoodbhoy@gmail.com

## ADVERTISING IN

### *The Ceylankan*

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

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

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

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

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

## WANTED...YOUR LITERARY CONTRIBUTIONS

*The Ceylankan* is published quarterly and the Editor is on the look-out for your literary contributions.

Be assured that your work will be given careful consideration with a view to publication at all times.

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

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

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

