



**Thiruketheeswaram: site of a temple
from prehistoric times
by Thiru Arumugam
(Cover Story Inside)**



Keeping Our Heritage Alive
CSA

The
Ceylankam

The Journal of the Ceylon Society of Australia

ISSN 1836-8646 Journal 95 Volume 24 Number 3 AUGUST 2021 Editor: Adam Raffel



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The Ceylankan

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From the Editor

I have been writing this Editorial from May 2009 and it is with considerable regret and a tinge of sadness that I inform readers of *The Ceylankan* worldwide that this is my last as Editor. Health problems have got the better of me in recent months preventing me from continuing in this role any further. A role I looked forward to and enjoyed immensely. Our appreciative readership contributed to that in a huge way.

On taking over from then Editor Sumane Iyer in 2009, changes to style and format became inevitable. After a time, I felt *The Ceylankan* had to have a face, a trademark, an insignia, that will create an identity. It had to tell the story, conveying the sole mission of the Ceylon Society of Australia. At the risk of being tagged a 'brag', in early 2012, I designed the distinguishing masthead that you see today.

A warm welcome to my successor Adam Raffel, a highly qualified and experienced Editor. For further details see his BioData reproduced below. Please contact Adam on all matters relating to the magazine by email on: adamraf2@tpg.com.au. Also see page 2 for contact details of the Editorial Sub-Committee. Adam did the entire editing and design of this August 2021 issue. Exciting days ahead for our readers.

As always, this is replete, cover to cover, with contributions from our regular and other writers. Our Cover Story is an excellent piece of research by Thiru Arumugam. He writes about the temple at Thiruketheeswaram that existed long before the arrival of Vijaya in Lanka. However, by the end of the 15th Century the temple declined in popularity after the Portuguese arrived in the country in 1505 and by 1590, Thiruketheeswaram was one of the temples destroyed. And the author recounts details of how the Thiruketheeswaram temple was rebuilt on the

exact location of the ancient temple and consecrated on 28 June 1903. The photography of the temple and bronzes adorning the cover and the story are a treat. Incidentally, the author's father Sanmugam Arumugam was the Divisional Irrigation Engineer, Northern Province at that time and Thiruketheeswaram came under his purview.

In the *Colombo Bharathas* article Joe "Malli" Vaz writes about his grandparents, the Paiva family. Here he tries to put right the current trend of people normalising the Bharathas as "a single strand" although they have been active in Sri Lanka for more than six centuries. This makes absorbing reading.

Dr Leonard Pinto continues Part 4 of his series *The Fall of the Kandyan Kingdom* where he examines relationships between the king and people until the arrival of European colonisers when these relationships weakened rapidly. Also, Martin Pieris' interesting talk on the *Evolution of Art in Sri Lanka* for the Sydney CSA meeting is reproduced in full.

Hugh Karunanayake contributes a review of the talk by Logan and Premila Thurairatnam at the Melbourne Chapter in May 2021. The duo spoke about Alagu Subramaniam, an eminent writer and his brother-in-law S. Rajanayagam, a highly regarded Telecommunication Engineer, who played a vital role in ensuring that colonial Ceylon was closely engaged with its metropolitan power Great Britain during World War II.

Also included are two Appreciations; one on the life of Dr Nalini Kappagoda by Hugh Karunanayake, and the other on the life of Dr Brendon Gooneratne by Anthony van der Wall. Both Nalini and Brendon were long standing members of the CSA.

And there is more. Enjoy!

DOUG JONES

Adam Raffel - your new Editor



Adam was born in Colombo in 1960 and is the eldest son of the late Dr Chris and Mrs Carmel Raffel (nee de Fonseka). He attended Royal Primary School and Wesley College before migrating to Australia with his family in 1975. In Sydney he went to Macquarie University where he completed a Bachelor of Arts with a Double Major in Modern and Ancient History that sustains his passion for the subject to this day! He is a qualified librarian having worked in a couple of major Sydney law firms and also worked as a legal editor at Lexis Nexis (for-

merly Butterworths) and Thomson Reuters (formerly Law Book Company). He is now a freelance legal editor.

He has dabbled in acting having performed in several of Ernest MacIntyre's plays acting alongside Gandhi MacIntyre and the late Sunil de Silva. He is an avid reader of novels, history, plays and literary journals. He is currently working on a memoir of his parents who flourished in Ceylon during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. He hopes the role of being Editor of *The Ceylankan* will provide some historical background and, importantly, inspiration for his memoir of his beloved parents.

To our Members,

The time has regrettably arrived when our dear redoubtable Editor, Doug Jones, is hanging up his boots and retiring due to health issues which have unfortunately dogged him from last year.

Doug took over the role of Editor and joined the Committee in 2009. Over the past twelve years, he has done a brilliant job as Editor of *The Ceylankan*, keeping the flagship of the Society going from strength to strength.

It takes constant unremitting effort to keep the articles flowing in, ensuring a wide ranging cross section of interest, maintaining a high standard consistently, and unfailingly meeting the deadline of the quarterly issue going out to members. The last two years of failing health have made keeping this up very onerous, and yet this is what Doug has always taken pride in doing and achieved in full measure, and for which the Society - Committee and Members - is indebted to him.

I am appending Tributes to Doug for his contribution over the years from the founding President Hugh Karunanayake and two past Presidents, Thiru Arumugam and Harry de Sayrah.

In thanks and acknowledgment of his invaluable service to the CSA, we honoured Doug by bestowing Life Membership on him at the AGM of 2019. The citation I made on that occasion was for his "immense contribution to the CSA over the years and the flawless production of *The Ceylankan*" - a totally deserved recognition.

The changing of the baton from Editor Doug Jones to Editor Adam Raffel has been taking place with this August issue of *The Ceylankan*. Doug has been giving very generously of his time to work with Adam in achieving a seamless transition, and he will be assisting on the Editorial Sub-Committee with Hugh and Thiru. I hope you will find your reading pleasure is carrying on as before.

Adam is an Editor by profession and still working in that field, as well as having an excellent background in the literary and historical world. He has the technical skills that are necessary, even to familiarity with the same computer program that Doug has been using for the journal. He is most professional and dedicated to anything he undertakes, as I know personally over many years, and I have no doubt that he will bring all this to the role of Editor of *The Ceylankan*. So we are most fortunate in having him join us in this voluntary role. Welcome on board Adam!

Doug, it is our heartfelt hope that good health returns to you swiftly, and you have the very best wishes and blessings of all The Ceylon Society of Australia with you.

PAULINE GUNewardene
President

The Ceylankan is the flagship of The Ceylon Society of Australia. The quality of the journal mirrors the quality of the Society's activities. Doug Jones took over as Editor of *The Ceylankan* in May 2009 after departing Editor Sumane Iyer laid down his pen with the publication of Journal No 45 of February 2009.

Doug did not take long to get into full stride. Very soon he expanded the size of the journal from 32 pages to 36 and then introduced covers in colour, thus raising the quality of the journal by a few notches. Doug also had the capacity to communicate with a wide range of potential contributors, thereby expanding the journal's diversity of material and broadening its outreach.

The Society has been fortunate in its choice of Editors, first in David Goodrich, succeeded by Sumane Iyer, and then by Doug Jones, and now we have the promising Adam Raffel to follow in that great tradition.

However, it has to be acknowledged that Doug Jones's unbroken Editorship of over 12 years deserves special recognition, and the grateful thanks of our Society. The image of *The Ceylankan* has grown exponentially during Doug's Editorship, and it is something that we are forever grateful to him for. He has given the Society his time and effort ungrudgingly, amidst challenging demands on his time, and I am sure that our many readers from all corners of the globe would be appreciative of that. Well done Doug! - we wish you the best of health and happiness in the future.

HUGH KARUNANAYAKE
Founder President

The Ceylankan has been regularly issued quarterly without interruption from 1998. The first Editor was David Goodrich, who produced 16 issues and gave *The Ceylankan* a flying start. At the end of 2001, due to his failing health, he handed over the editorship to Sumane Iyer, who continued to establish the Journal on a sound footing and produced 29 Journals until 2009, when he handed over to Doug Jones.

Since May 2009, Doug, in his quiet, soft-spoken, unassuming way, has fashioned out 49 quarterly issues of the Journal over the past 12 years. Publication was maintained without interruption and the issues soon became 36 pages long. The issues were filled with absorbing articles with interesting snippets at the end of each article, *Readers Digest* style. *The Ceylankan* soon established an international standing. The Australian National Library in Canberra, and the New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland State Libraries hold complete sets of all the issues, which are available for reference. Copies are also held by the British Library in London, the Public Library and the Royal Asiatic Society Libraries in Colombo, and others.

Doug produced all his 49 issues on the

scheduled dates. The only exception was when the May 2017 issue was almost ready to go to print, Doug's computer crashed completely. To quote his own words: "My computer breakdown this time was devastating, debilitating and devilishly destructive. Whatever kind of demon took possession, it destroyed everything I had created over many, many years. When I turned my machine on, all I received was an empty black screen." There were suggestions that the May 2017 issue be skipped, but Doug was determined that CSA's proud record of uninterrupted issues of *The Ceylankan* should not be lost. He got his computer repaired, but the memory was lost and he had to prepare the issue all over again, starting from scratch. He got the issue out, only about a month behind schedule. A remarkable and dedicated effort.

Due to failing health, Doug has decided to lay down his pen and mouse. We have a worthy fourth Editor of *The Ceylankan*, Adam Raffel, who has already taken over. There is no doubt that the future of *The Ceylankan* is in safe hands, and we wish Adam well.

The Ceylankan has been described as the flagship of the CSA. Doug, you have kept the flag on the main mast of the flagship flying high! Your invaluable contribution will become fully appreciated as time goes by – thank you.

THIRU ARUMUGAM
Immediate Past President

I came to know Doug Jones some 30 years ago in Sydney. He is a well known journalist, and was the Editor of the Sydney Old Ben's Association newsletter and also of *Bell Chimes*, the bulletin of the Bell Birds Club, the oldest Sri Lankan Club in Sydney.

I invited Doug to join The Ceylon Society of Australia, and the CSA quickly picked him as Editor of *The Ceylankan*, which is read by members worldwide.

Doug was honoured in 2019 with Life Membership of the CSA in recognition of his services to CSA, and we wish him well in his retirement.

HARRY DE SAYRAH
Past President

Dear Readers

Stepping into the shoes of Doug Jones is a daunting prospect. They are, indeed, big shoes to fill. As Editor, I shall endeavour to maintain the integrity of *The Ceylankan* making sure that its articles are consistent with the values and mission of the CSA. In order to achieve this, I am ably assisted by and am eternally grateful to Doug Jones, Pauline Gunewardene, Hugh Karunanayake and Thiru Arumugam for all their expertise, help and encouragement in giving me this opportunity to edit *The Ceylankan*. I promise to undertake this role with enthusiasm and diligence to the best of my ability. Rest your quill Doug, and I wish you many years of health and happiness!

ADAM RAFFEL
Editor

Our Readers write

More on Ward Place

I read the article about Ward Place with interest. I lived at 69 Ward Place from early 1937 when No 69 was built, till early 1954 when I graduated MBBS, got married to Cynthia, daughter of Dr HO Gunewardene and left No 69.

The Dentist Dr W. Balendra was a neighbour. Opposite was Mr Ameen, next door to him Dr Lucas, anaesthetist. Adjacent, towards Borella was JR Jayawardene and in the opposite direction a couple of houses towards the Eye Hospital was Professor W Karunaratne Professor of Pathology.

My mother May Ratnayeke was the first Sri Lankan woman to be a FRCS (Edin) and was the Medical Superintendent of the Lady Havelock Hospital. My mother lived in Ward Place till her death. Tony Peries introduced me to *The Ceylankan*. His wife Srimi was my wife's (Cynthia's) cousin.

VALENTINE RATNAYEKE, Kangaroo Flat, Vic. 3555

Thanks Valentine. I should have consulted you to get snippets of information before I started writing the article. Your brother-in-law Ian was my classmate in school, and Norman was a couple of years senior. You may have heard that Srimi passed away in Colombo a few months ago. She was totally a 'lost soul' after Tony died.

HUGH KARUNANAYAKE, Blackburn North, Vic. 3130

New Editor

Dear Pauline, I am glad that we have a new editor. We have had excellent editors and Doug did a wonderful job under trying circumstances. Welcome on board, Adam. Thank you Pauline for your efforts.

Warm Regards

DR SRILAL FERNANDO (Melbourne Chapter) and CSA Vice President

Dear Pauline,

Thanks for your detailed mail and we welcome Adam Raffel as the new editor of the *Ceylankan*. Glad that he will be ably assisted by the former Editor Doug, who did a wonderful job during his tenure, and veterans in the likes of Thiru and Hugh.

Kind regards

TONY SALDIN Convenor/Local President, Colombo Chapter

Dear Pauline,

Congratulations, we are indeed happy that you have been successful in finding an excellent successor to our versatile former editor of the *Ceylankan*. We wish Mr. Adam Raffel a successful mission in this new role. With kind regards,

ASOKA DE SILVA Hony Treasurer, CSA - Colombo Chapter

COVER STORY



Thiruketheeswaram: site of a temple from prehistoric times

Thiru Arumugam

Thiruketheeswaram is located about eight km north of Mannar Town. It is on the coastal mainland of Ceylon, near the sea-shore, on the direct coast road from Mannar to Jaffna. It has been the site of a Temple dedicated to Siva from pre-historic times. The place name of Thiru-Kethu-Iswaram has been devised as follows.

Thiru means sacred or holy and *Iswaran* is another name for Siva. As regards Kethu, Charles Pridham in his 1849 book *A Historical, Political and Statistical account of Ceylon and its Dependencies* describes how the gods asked Vishnu to prepare an elixir which would make them immortal. The elixir was prepared by churning the oceans but a demon who was a bystander also managed to drink the elixir. When Vishnu realised this, he cut off the demon's head but he was too late as the elixir had already made him immortal. The two parts became Rahu and Kethu, which are significant planets in the Hindu astrological system. In order to propitiate his sin, Kethu (see Figure 1) wandered from place to place and ultimately

reached the shores of Lanka. He performed severe penances and he ultimately was blessed with the Lord's vision and the place where this occurred was named Thiru-Kethu-Iswaram or Thiruketheeswaram.

Mandodari was the wife of Ravanna. Her father Mayan was a descendant of Visvakarma, the progenitor of the tribe of artisans. The legendary belief is that Mayan built the temple at Thiruketheeswaram for daily worship by his daughter.



Figure 1 - Kethu

Paul E Pieris, the eminent Historian and Civil Servant, was the first Asian to be admitted to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he finally obtained a D. Litt degree. In a Paper presented to the Royal Asiatic Society in Colombo in 1917 (Vol. 26, No. 70) he stated that a temple existed at Thiruketheeswaram before Vijaya arrived in Lanka in the 6th Century BC.

Long before the arrival of Vijaya there was in Lanka five recognised Iswarams of Siva which claimed and received adoration of all India. These were Thiruketheeswaram

near Mahathittha, Muneswaram dominating Salawatte and the pearl fishery, Tondeswaram near Mantota, Tirukoneswaram near the great bay of Kottiyar and Naguleswaram near Kankasanturai.

The Poet Mailvaganam in about 1736 wrote the book *Yalpana Vaipava Malai* which is a record of the historical traditions of Jaffna. He confirms that Vijaya was a great temple builder and re-built the temple at Thiruketheeswaram.

He (Vijaya Raja) was a staunch worshipper of Siva, and began his reign by dedicating his city to that god and building four Sivalayams as a protection for the four quarters of his infant kingdom. In the east he erected Konesar Koyil at Thampala-kamam; in the west he re-built Thiruk-kethichchuran Koyil; in the south he raised Santhirasekaran Koyil at Mathurai; and in the north he constructed Thiruth-thampa-lesuran Koyil at Thiruth-thampalai at the foot of Keerimalai.

The adjacent ancient Port City of Matoddam

Adjacent to Thiruketheeswaram at the sea outfall of the Palavi River was the ancient Port City of Matoddam, also called Mahatittha. This was one of the largest ports in ancient Ceylon and was a port of call for ships from all over the world. When Vijaya got down his bride from India she is believed to have disembarked at this port with her retinue. B.J. Perera, the eminent historian, describes the port as follows in an article in the *Ceylon Historical Journal*, January 1952:

Although Mahatittha (Matoddam) is first mentioned in connection with the landing of Vijaya's second wife, there is no doubt it was used as a port by the Tamils long before the Aryan settlement of Ceylon. The existence of the Temple of Thiruketheeswaram, the origin of which is not covered by any existing historical records, is an indication of the antiquity of this port. Indeed, Mahatittha is the only port in the Island which can be called a buried city. Today the site of the port, presents a vast mound of piled up ruins in which coins and beads are laid bare by every shower of rain. The ruins of Roman pottery, coins and articles of foreign origin found here, are the first definite evidence to prove that Mahatittha was a great port in the early centuries of the Christian era.

The writer can personally vouch for this. As a schoolboy in the 1940s he remembers collecting pottery shards, beads and even uncut semi-precious stones at this site. To continue B.J. Perera's quotation:

... judging from the regular references to this port in literary works belonging to different periods we may infer that it continued to be the chief port for Rajarata up to the end of the 12th Century. There is not the least doubt that the great emporium of trade referred to by Cosmos was Mahatittha. The testimony of Cosmos relating to the importance of Mahatittha is attested to by finds of different types and forms of pottery from Rome, Arabia and China.

Visitors to Matoddam from the West came from Rome, Arabia, Persia, Phoenicia, Ethiopia, and Greece and from the East they came from China, Java and Burma. There were also many Indian visitors.

They came not only to purchase pearls and gems from Ceylon but also to trade goods with other foreign visitors to the port.

The slow decline in popularity of the port began in the 15th Century. The ports in Galle and Colombo were expanding and attracting foreign shipping. Additional problems were caused by cyclones silting up the Gulf of Mannar. As a result, foreign ships with a large draught could no longer navigate the Gulf of Mannar and they went to Pamban in India. Nowadays the sea adjacent to Thiruketheeswaram is completely silted up and is very shallow and the port city of Matoddam, famous for centuries, has disappeared with hardly a trace of its former existence.

Indian sages extol the glories of Thiruketheeswaram

In the 7th Century AD a resurgence in the practice of Hinduism commenced in South India, as Jainism gradually faded away. The resurgence was spearheaded by 63 Sages or *Nayanmars* who traversed the land holding discourses, giving lectures and talks, composing and singing hymns and holding prayer meetings. Among these Sages was Thiru Jnana Sampanthar who composed 384 cantos of religious verses. One of these cantos of eleven verses was devoted exclusively to Thiruketheeswaram. The verses describe in detail the city of Matoddam and the temple at Thiruketheeswaram on the banks of the Palavi River. The descriptions are so detailed that it appears that the Sage visited the temple.

Another one of the 63 Sages was Sundaramoorthy who lived in the 9th Century AD. He composed about a hundred cantos of religious verses, one of which contains ten verses devoted exclusively to Thiruketheeswaram. These verses also describe Matoddam and Thiruketheeswaram in detail. An interpretation of Verse 10 of his Thiruketheeswaram canto commences as follows:

*O glistening city of Matoddam, plentiful and abundant,
Where the darkly shimmering sea embraces the land.
In the vibrant gardens, bees echo melodious harps.
There in Thiruketheeswaram, the divine Lord resides ...*

The net result of these compositions was that Thiruketheeswaram Temple became well known in South India and was visited by many pilgrims in the middle ages.

Portuguese era

The Portuguese arrived in the western areas of Ceylon in 1505 and began their temporal and spiritual conquest of Ceylon. When they heard about the pearls which were being harvested in the pearl fisheries in the Gulf of Mannar, they moved northwards in 1540. In 1560 they started building a Fort in Mannar Town. By 1590 they had established a foothold in the Jaffna Peninsula and Thiruketheeswaram was also under their suzerainty. They then started

demolishing all the temples in the regions under their control and it is believed that the temple in Thiruketheeswaram was demolished by them at about this time. Stones from the demolished Temple were taken to extend the Portuguese Fort in Mannar Town.

Hugh Nevill (1847-1897) was a member of the Ceylon Civil Service. He published a Journal called *The Taprobanian* and collected Ceylonese artefacts. About half the items in the Ceylon Collection in the British Museum originated from the Hugh Nevill Collection. In an article in his Journal written in December 1887 titled *Mantota, its Temple and Ancient Trade* he wrote:

This city [Matoddam] was a great emporium, the population of which mainly belonged to the Kadiyar race, when it attracted the cupidity of the Portuguese ... The trade of the port was then shattered, and when the Portuguese finally destroyed Tamil rule in 1590, the old port [Matoddam] was abandoned in favour of Mannar which could be defended by the shallow channel between it and the mainland, from a sudden surprise by land. When they finally took possession, they sacked and burned the city of Mantotte, and razed its ancient Temple to the ground.

As a result for the first time since pre-historic times there was no temple in Thiruketheeswaram, a situation that continued to exist for the next 300 years.

Revival of Thiruketheeswaram

Arumuga Navalar (1822-1879), who was born in Jaffna, started a revival movement. Among his many activities was a campaign to rebuild temples which had been destroyed earlier. He brought to public attention the existence of Thiruketheeswaram, the site of an ancient temple now covered by the jungle tide. As a result, an application was made to the Government Agent to release the land, which was Crown land, for rebuilding of the temple. Sir William Twynam, the Government Agent, Jaffna, decided to visit the site and see the place himself. He visited the site on 22 May 1887 and made the following observations in his diary:

From Mantai went first to the site of the ruins of the ancient temple Tiriketchuram. The ruins of the ancient temple should I think be explored and the matter is one that I believe deserving the attention of the Government ... For years past people have been groping amongst the ruins for coins, jewellery, the remains of riches of the ancient temple ... I have now come to the opinion from what I saw today that the Government should not dispose of the site until it has been thoroughly explored under the supervision of some competent person.

There was, however, no 'competent person' to carry out this exploration at that time as HCP Bell was appointed later in 1890 as the first Archaeological Commissioner and Head of the new Archaeological Survey of Ceylon. Bell initially limited his field of work to Anuradhapura.

With growing pressure from the general public, Government Agent Twynam finally decided to hold a public auction at the Jaffna Kachcheri on 13 December 1893, to sell the tract of 44 acres of Crown

land comprising the original temple site and surrounding ruins. The land was sold to the highest bidder, RR Palanyappa Chettiar for just over Rs3000, he had raised the money by public subscription.

Exploration of the site

The purchasers did not waste time and in January 1894 STM Pasupathy Chettiyar set out to the site to begin exploration. He was supported in his activities by the Saiva Paripalana Sabhai, an organisation whose objectives included "... to establish, repair and renovate Saiva temples". The first objective was to find the exact location of the ancient temple. A team of 300 labourers began excavating the site. Over a period of six months they traced the foundation walls of the original temple. The foundation was of granite and it appeared that the walls had been of limestone with the upper portions in brickwork. The remains of an ancient well were also found.

They also found an ancient granite cylindrical Lingam. This is an abstract or an iconic representation of Siva and an emblem of generative and destructive power. An ancient granite Nandhi was also found, this is a seated bull which is the gate guardian of the abode of Siva. It is generally found at the entrance to temples and faces the deity. Among the other finds was an ancient granite statue of Ganesha and an exquisite bronze image of Siva and his consort made in Chola style and attributed to the 14th Century (Figure 2).

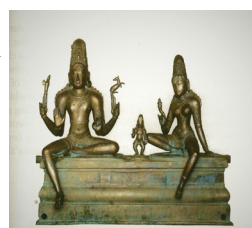


Figure 2 - Somaskanda

The Lingam that was found could not be used in the holy of holies in a new temple because it had been desecrated when the temple was destroyed 300 years earlier. Across the Palk Straits opposite Talaimannar there is in India a very large famous temple in Rameswaram. The authorities there became aware of the situation in Thiruketheeswaram and generously donated an ancient Lingam which they had obtained from Benares. This Lingam was installed in a small temporary temple built in Thiruketheeswaram on the exact location of the historic ancient temple and consecrated on 28 June 1903.

John Still, author of the well-known book *The Jungle Tide*, was Assistant Archaeological Commissioner and in 1907 he carried out some excavations at Thiruketheeswaram. He reported on his findings in *Government Sessional Papers* of 1911:

A great feature of the place is the stretch of sand hillocks on the eastern side of the principal ruins. This space is bare of scrub and is absolutely covered with debris, a little brick and very few tiles: but quantities of pottery, glazed and unglazed, glass of various colours, chank shells and ornaments made from them are to be had for the trouble of picking them up ... Thiruketheeswaram offers the most

promising field of research if excavations could be carried down deep, and over a considerable area.

A fund raising campaign was started to build a permanent temple and construction work started a few years later. This was completed and on 20 June 1910 a permanent temple was consecrated on the site of the ancient temple. Thus, the temple that was demolished in 1589 was resuscitated; but the humble beginnings of 1903 and the unpretentious temple of 1910 still remained to be built into a major temple, comparable with its former glory.

AM Hocart, Archaeological Commissioner, carried out investigations at Thiruketheeswaram from 1925 to 1928. The report on his findings is in the *Ceylon Journal of Science* dated 01 February 1928:

Excavation on a large scale than had been possible were begun in June 1926 at Mantai or Thiruketheeswaram, the Mahatittha of the Mahawamsa. **This mound is the best accumulation of debris so far known in Ceylon** and should yield a complete chronological series of pots, beads and other antiquities. As so far nothing more has been done to scratch the surface, it is too early to say anything about the site (My emphasis).

Palavi – an ancient water course reclaimed

It is customary for most major Hindu temples to be adjacent to water, either the sea, river, lake or tank. The hymns of the 7th Century sages described Thiruketheeswaram temple as being on the banks of the Palavi River. At Thiruketheeswaram in the early 20th Century there was no such body of water to be seen and furthermore fresh water was in short supply in the dry season when the wells went dry.

One day in 1948 a search party, which included a water diviner, set out from the temple and walked around the surrounding scrub jungle to find a source of water. When the group was on a small mound about a kilometre south of the temple, the water diviner said that there was water underground.



Figure 3 - Palavi Tank

Sanmugam Arumugam, father of the writer, was the Divisional Irrigation Engineer, Northern Province at that time and Thiruketheeswaram came under his purview. He initiated the task of restoring the breached dam and all work was completed in January 1949. The resulting Palavi Tank (lake), restored after more than 350 years, can be seen in Figure 3. Maha Sivarathri is the most important festival of the year in the Temple and the Palavi Tank plays an important role in the festival. Thousands of

When they cleared the scrub, they found that they were standing on the crest of an earth dam which had been wilfully demolished, probably at the same time as the demolition of the temple in the 16th Century.

pilgrims bathe in the Tank and fill pots of water which they take to the Temple and pour over the principal deity.

Temple Restoration Society formed

In October 1948 the Thiruketheeswaram Temple Restoration Society (TTRS) was formed. It is this Society that was responsible for carrying out all major construction and improvements to the Temple since then. Sir Kanthiah Vaithianathan was in the Ceylon Civil Service and was Permanent Secretary to three Prime Ministers. He was later appointed as a Senator and a Minister. In 1952 he became the President of TTRS, and held this post until his sudden passing away in 1965. During his period of Presidentship major improvements to the Temple were undertaken. Under his stewardship by 1960 granite shrines were constructed for Siva, his consort Gowri, Ganesha and several other minor shrines in the inner temple premises were completed.

Progress in the 1960s

By 1960 the new shrines mentioned in the previous paragraph were completed and the consecra-



Figure 4 - Bell Tower

tion ceremonies were held on 31 October 1960. A belfry tower was also erected for the temple bell. The bell was cast in England and is four feet in diameter and the gross assembly weighs two tons.

On a still day, the temple bell can be heard at a distance of about three or four kilometres. The bell and its tower were erected in 1961 and can be seen in Figure 4.

In 1962 a Gurukulam or training centre for priests was inaugurated. This was the only one of its kind in the country and previously those who wished to train as priests had to go to India for the required training. Brahmin youths of Senior School Certificate standard were recruited to follow the residential course. Initially the course took five years but it was subsequently shortened. The centre continued its work for more than two decades.



Figure 5 - Main Gopuram

The Raja Gopuram or Temple Tower is at the main entrance to the temple and is the tallest tower in the temple. In the case of Thiruketheeswaram this is on the eastern side and it has five tiers. Construction of this tower started in the early 1960s and it was completed and consecrated in 1968. It rises to a height of over 15 metres above the gateway structure. This can be seen in Figure 5.

Progress in the 1970s

In 1971 work started on the construction of new main shrines for Siva and his consort Gowri. The shrines included Vimanams (Towers) constructed above the shrines. Initially these towers and the decorative mouldings were made of cement and stucco, but the foundations of the shrines were made strong enough for later conversion of the towers to granite construction.

In 1974 R Namasivayam was appointed Secretary of the Temple Restoration Society. During the following years he worked very hard on the restoration and expansion of the temple. Sixteen subsidiary shrines were also constructed and the consecration of all the new construction, including the two new main shrines, was done on 04 July 1976.

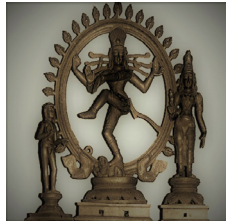


Figure 6 - Siva Nataraja (see front cover)

During this period several bronze icons were cast at the site by artisans from India. A typical example can be seen in Figure 6 and is Siva and his consort in the well-known form of Nataraja in the dance of creation.

Progress in the 1980s

Work on the third phase of the reconstruction of the temple started on 28 April 1983. A team of 14 sculptors (granite) and 7 sculptors (stucco) was engaged for this work, they were all from Tamil Nadu. Their work program was planned by the Government College of Architecture and Sculpture, Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu. This phase of the restoration involved building of a large granite hall (Maha Mandapam) at the entrance to the main shrines, embodying niches, motifs, pilasters and other ornamental embellishments. The niches were to house stone images.

Progress was slow, however, due to the military conflict in the country. All work came to a standstill in 1990 when the entire area was declared a high security zone and all temple activities including temple services came to a standstill.

Stage 1 of the New Restoration Works

In June 2003 the temple premises were handed back to the temple authorities, but with limited access to the public. From 2009 onwards, open access of the temple to the public was possible and temple reconstruction activities resumed.

In 2011 the Government of India gave an outright grant of US\$ 3.2 million towards improvement of the temple. The funds were used for materials and skilled labour for completing the hall, work on which was started in the 1980s. One hundred stone pillars and carvings were done at the School of Architecture and Sculpture in Mahabalipuram, South India. The carvings included several life-size stone

sculptures. The entire consignment of stone work required 140 containers for shipment from India to the temple site. Work started in 2012 and in 2015 there were 27 sculptors and stone masons from India at work on this project.



Figure 7 - Stone Pillars

By 2017 all work was substantially complete. Figure 7 shows the completed hall with stone pillars and carvings.

Stage 2 of the New Restoration Works

The second stage of the new restoration works included building granite stone Vimanams (Towers) above the shrines of Siva (see Figure 8) and his consort Gowri (see Figure 9). Also included were 30 new minor shrines, all built in granite stone. At one stage, 40 sculptors from India were working on this project. This work was funded by public donations and the total cost was estimated at Rs 417 million. The work was substantially completed in 2020, but the consecration ceremonies have not yet been held at the time of writing due to travel restrictions imposed because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This is the present situation of the temple at Thirukettheswaram, the site of a temple from the pre-historic times of Ravanna. As substantial sections of the temple have now been built with granite stone, which has a design life of a thousand years, the long term future of the temple is assured.



Figure 8 - Siva Vimanam
(see front cover)



Figure 9 - Amman Vimanam

(Note: Acknowledgement is made for the use of material from the third edition of the book titled *Thirukettheswaram: One of the Pancha-Iswarams of Ancient Sri Lanka* by Sanmugam Arumugam, et al, 2020. The book is available from all branches of Amazon including Amazon Australia. It was briefly Amazon's No. 1 best-seller in the category of Books about Sri Lanka History.)

The “Colombo Bharathas”: A Merchant Community

Joe “Malli” Vaz

The ghosts of forgotten family histories haunt the children of immigrants, pressing us to take on the role of scribes to recover and record those enduring tales implanted deep within our childhood memories.

This experience loosely corresponds to what social scientists studying diasporic identity describe as an interesting “Rule of Three”: The first generation of immigrants tries to “blend in,” often leaving their traditions and culture behind. Their children, the



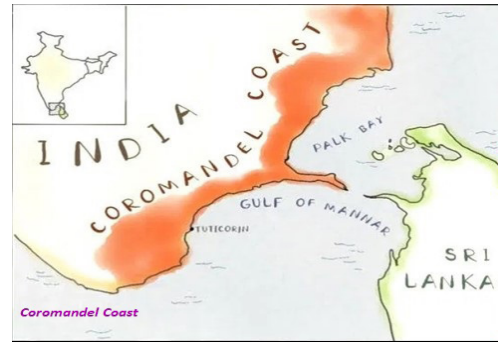
Iruthamma De Votta kin

second generation, who are born in the new country, become superficially curious about their identity and ancestry. But surprisingly, it’s the third generation that struggles to figure out who they are and where they came from, showing a strong desire to connect with the old country, language, culture and cuisine. In the arc of my family’s narrative, the generations of my great-grandparents and grandparents have been the principal actors, shouldering weighty risks as they left their Indian homeland in the 19th Century, crossed the gulf and settled in Sri Lanka. They helped to transform the island and were themselves changed as a result. Though unfailingly gracious to neighbours and friends, they were fiercely opposed to assimilation. A closed marriage network, kinship ties and devotion to the religion sustained a common-caste community. It is for this generation of mine that this minor epistle attempts to answer a frequently asked question: “So, who or what is a Bharatha? A ‘Colombo Bharatha?’”

In my adult years, because of an avid interest in migration, I became absorbed in my roots and the spirited details of my ancestry. My curiosity about the history of this socioeconomic group in Sri Lanka, however, failed to elicit meaningful answers from my extended family of cousins, aunts, uncles and others in the clan. (We are an “Indian family”, so everyone’s an uncle, aunt or cousin, even when he or she’s not.) Most pleaded it was outside their field of interest and politely moved on to other themes. For me, it is a persistent quest; other people’s stories are the stories that may clarify my unsettled family chronicle.

In the Beginning: India’s Coromandel Coast

A little research has turned up the following: The Bharathas are a traditional fisher community, since ancient times inhabiting the regions on either side of the Gulf of Mannar—that is, both southern India and north-western Sri Lanka. Here,



an endowment of nature gifted the Bharathas with a homeland full of lucrative natural resources: storied pearl banks and chank (conch) fisheries, with opportunities for other related ventures. Yet from the earliest years, fishing, pearling and chank fishing as primary occupations were considered by Hindus to be ritually polluting work, since they took life and touched blood. Therefore, Hindu Bharathas were excluded from participating in sacred temple rituals.

The Bharatha migration to the island from India can be deciphered in three phases. From the earliest times, the seafaring Bharathas were naturally drawn to migration and trade along the coast of the Gulf of Mannar. Prior to the arrival of the Portuguese in the 16th Century, the Bharathas were recruited by Sinhalese kings as mercenaries. These warriors and their families settled in coastal areas north of Colombo and elsewhere and came to be known as the “Negombo Bharathas”. They were augmented by migration to the west coast organised by the Jesuits and the Portuguese in an effort to promote Catholic expansion and military stability.

During the 19th-Century British colonial period, economic disruption from port and road development in Tamil Nadu and the pull from plantation expansion on the island brought another wave of Bharathas from across the gulf who came as immigrant traders. Distinctly a middle-class socioeconomic cluster, they were educated, thanks to missionary schools, and were experienced in retail, shipping and other commercial activities. These new citizens informally branded themselves as the “Colombo Bharathas”.

I had heard the term Bharatha and its vernacular synonyms Parava and Paravan, or the affectionate geographic nickname Paravanadu. In Dravidian languages, there is no equivalent for / Bh/; hence the appellation Parathar was pronounced

phonetically. In Sri Lanka, the preference is to be referred to as Bharathas, a name suggestive of a military pedigree harking back to Bharatha, brother of Rama and king of the city of Ayodhya. Another theory attaches the Bharathas to Jewish culture, suggesting connections to one of the lost tribes of Israel. Despite these folkloric assertions, the Bharathas are better described as a caste or lifestyle group within the Catholic Church, a view that considers the community's close association with the Portuguese colonisers of the 16th Century.

In keeping with their nautical traditions, the Bharathas were highly regarded as shipbuilders. In point of fact, their catamarans (from Tamil *kattu* 'to tie' and *maram* 'wood, tree') were the first craft with two hulls, an innovation unknown in the west until the 17th Century. Their long tradition of seafaring seems to be linked to their early lifestyle as warriors and members of the Tamil navy who fought for the kings and dynasties from whom they claim their descent.

In the immediate pre- and post-colonial periods, the Paravas' monopoly on these lucrative maritime trades provided them a springboard to move up the socioeconomic ladder. The entrepreneurial types set themselves up as chank and pearl traders as well as boat owners employing large numbers of low-wage divers. Susan Bayly, a Cambridge anthropologist, notes that "by the beginning of the 18th Century, the Paravas had emerged as one of South India's most highly organised caste groups." [1]

My earliest primary source on this rich but mysterious heritage was my grandmother, Mary Iruthyammal Devotta Paiva. Born in Tuticorin, South India, in the late 1800s, she found herself in Colombo, Sri Lanka, with her husband, Jeronimus Nazarene Paiva, when both were barely out of their teens. Periamma (pictured), as we called her (Tamil for 'elder sister', an odd misnomer), had a vivid sense of history: social history, community history and some dabs of political history. She routinely offered me verifiable stories, and occasionally dismissive comments on persons and places, with insights worthy of a social anthropologist. She recalled colonisation, which she accepted as God's endowment to this poor littoral on the South Indian shore — "poor", of course, being only her cavalier characterisation of her homeland.

In the details of her telling, Periamma's ancestral home, Tuticorin on the Fishery Coast of the south-eastern Indian seaboard, was a magical location

not unlike the fictional Brigadoon—a place barely affected by time. Situated on the Coromandel Coast, it has a frontage that covers 68 miles of coastline. Historically defined by seven port cities (*yelu ur*, in Tamil) and a contiguous basketful of smaller ports, this stretch of coastline was home to the Parava people and affectionately referred to by them as Paravanadu.

The Bharathas and Their Homeland in Literature

The Fishery Coast, a segment of the Coromandel Coast that forms the western boundary of the Gulf of Mannar, is celebrated in natural history for its marine ecology and its famed pearl banks. The Portuguese name for this littoral area was *costa de pescaria* while the Dutch toponym was *visserijkust*. This idyllic corner of South Asia and its pearl industry were also immortalised in the intellectual and literary world — in global literature by science fiction writer Jules Verne (1828–1905), in economics by English sociologist Harriet Martineau (1802–1876), in music by composer Georges Bizet (1838–1875), and in verse by poet and Indian freedom fighter Sarojini Naidu (1879–1949).

In Verne's magnum opus, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, the narrator, Dr Arronax, accompanies Captain Nemo to the seaboard of the Gulf of Mannar near Tuticorin to dive for pearls. After viewing a gigantic pearl in an underwater cave, they return to the surface and stop to observe a man from the Fishery Coast plundering the vast pearl bank:

It was a man, a living man, an Indian, a Black, a diver, a pearl-fisher, a poor devil no doubt who had come early in the season to fill his net. I could see the bottom of his boat, which was moored a few feet above his head. He dived and resurfaced repeatedly. He carried a stone carved in the shape of a sugar loaf, which he gripped between his feet and was attached to his boat by a rope. It enabled him to reach the bottom more quickly. It was the only tool he used. When he was on the sea-bed in about 5 metres of water, he quickly got on to his knees and filled his net with pinctadas grabbed up at random. Then he returned to the surface, emptied his net, hauled up his stone and recommenced the operation, which lasted no more than thirty seconds. [2]

From 1832 to 1834, Harriet Martineau, England's first woman sociologist, published the nine-volume *Illustrations of Political Economy*, a series containing fables about colonial negligence and the destructive effects of monopolies on local populations and the environment. In Volume 7: *Cinnamon and Pearls*, she asserted that the pearl divers of the Gulf of Mannar were "the natural native owners of the wealth of the region", who had been "kept bare of almost the necessities life" by an overbearing and extractive colonial regime. [3] Martineau wrapped her story about a lowly pearl diver in Ceylon in the liberal theories of the day and a readable style, arguing in favour of her choice to study Ceylon because its people had been "more thoroughly



and ingeniously beggared than any dependency”.[4]

Ceylon became the setting for the 1863 French opera *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* (*The Pearl Fishers*) under mixed-up circumstances. The key word “Orient” in 19th-Century Europe had become a standby for almost any place deemed “foreign and exotic”.

Inspired by the exploits of Napoleon Bonaparte in Egypt (1798–1801) and Charles X’s invasion of Algeria in 1830, the opera lionised the Orient. Its backdrop, however, initially northern Mexico, had to be switched to Ceylon on realisation of the faux pas. Once in the proper setting, the libretto described the superstitions of the island, highlighting scenic fantasies and descriptions from the recently published book *L’Île de Ceylan et Ses Curiosités Naturelles* (*The Isle of Ceylon and Its Natural Curiosities*) by traveller Octave Louis Marie Sachot.

Finally, *The Coromandel Fishers*, an inspiring 1905 poem by Sarojini Naidu, interprets the gruelling lifestyle of the fishermen along India’s eastern seaboard, underscoring the devotion of the fishermen to the ocean, personified as a mother figure.

Reviewing the work in its historical context, we cannot fail to recognise the imagery as an allegory for its times. This is Naidu the poet-activist at her best, in a strident call recruiting her countrymen to the cause of freedom from colonial rule, so distinctly expressed in these stanzas:

*Rise, brothers, rise; the wakening skies pray to the morning light,
The wind lies asleep in the arms of the dawn like a child that has cried all night.
Come, let us gather our nets from the shore and set our catamarans free,
To capture the leaping wealth of the tide, for we are the kings of the sea!
No longer delay, let us hasten away in the track of the sea gull’s call,
The sea is our mother, the cloud is our brother, the waves are our comrades all.
What though we toss at the fall of the sun where the hand of the sea-god drives?
He who holds the storm by the hair, will hide in his breast our lives. [5]*

Religion: Conversion by Choice

The North Star of Bharatha culture is the Shrine Basilica of Our Lady of Snows in Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu, South India. Built in 1582 and known to Tamil-speaking locals as the *Periya Kovil* (“Big Church”), it is centrally situated within sight of the old harbour, where in olden days commodities from the country’s major port cities, including barrels of drinking water, would be unloaded and local products hauled aboard: pallets of textiles and salt- fish destined for Colombo and South Asian ports.

The Basilica is also the community’s

cultural icon, deriving its fame as the repository of a statue known by its Portuguese name as *Senhora das Neves*, or Our Lady of Snows — in Tamil, *Panni Maya Matha* — gifted to the Parava people by the Augustinian nuns in Manila. The impressive edifice is painted bright blue and white in the Iberian tradition, resembling a larger, ornamented version of many Sri Lankan coastal churches.

Each year, around the 5th of August, a raucous weeklong festival emulating Hindu practice takes place in Tuticorin, proclaiming the history of the pearl fishery coast and its familial bonding with this South Indian community. The shrine, statue and festival are an integral part of the community’s life here.

The Bharathas’ association with the Catholic faith is both a compelling and an illuminating part of their story. In an example of historical irony, Christianity in this instance was embraced not at the point of the sword but in fulfilment of a diplomatic coalition. For several years in the early 16th Century, the fishermen of the neighbouring Muslim Kayalar caste, supported by local chieftains, had hijacked the community’s livelihood by plundering their pearl banks. Tensions between the two castes were naturally simmering, with the Paravas unable to battle the invaders militarily or politically.

In a highly risky move, a deputation of Parava leaders appealed to the Portuguese general, who, under the *Padroado* system (an arrangement between Rome and Lisbon), represented both king and pope. The new colonial power now held the superior firepower on the Indian coast, taking on the Muslims and restoring the locals’ livelihoods. The ensuing agreement was a straightforward one that satisfied both king and church. It required the Paravas to convert to Christianity and pay an annual tribute in exchange for the Kayalars being expelled from the coast.

In 1535, the Portuguese successfully expelled the Muslims and, in keeping with their agreement, approximately 20,000 Paravas accepted the Christian faith in an overnight mass conversion.

The great ceremonies of mass Baptism which followed this move were really declarations of tactical alliance rather than religious conversions as the term is usually understood. [6]

The descendants of these new converts — and thousands more family members who were later baptized by St Francis Xavier — have come to be known as known as “the children of Xavier”.

This swift adoption of Christianity by the community would inevitably result in problems of adaptation. In point of fact, in the absence of Christian instruction in the local language, the new religion was more or less a veneer applied to Hindu customs and caste traditions. The resulting syncretism, or blending

of two religions, was evident at several levels, and with the passage of time, some worthy practices have persisted while others have been given a new life through diversion.

For example, in current practice, we see the use of the gold chain, or *thali*, in marriage ceremonies. It is a tangible symbol, similar to the ring in western culture. In the Hindu liturgy, it is a sacred symbol of marriage presented to the wife by her husband. In the revised Christian (Bharatha) version, the *thali* contains the image of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove, incorporating the presence of the Holy Trinity, a crucial element of Catholic doctrine.

Equally prominent is the use of an opulent gold cart, known as the *pon ther*, in the August festival — it is the iconic standard bearer in Hindu festivals. The Parava version is a cumbersome gold-encrusted chariot, 75 feet long [7] and drawn through the streets of Tuticorin just once every five years, bearing the Our Lady of Snows statue. In the gap years, the statue is transported in a big golden palanquin, and on the first Saturday of each month the sacred image is set forth on a smaller palanquin.

Another consequence of the near-total absence of Tamil-speaking catechists and resulting ignorance of Christian doctrine among the new adherents, was that the Paravas continued to worship Hindu goddesses, such as Meenakshi Amman and Bhagavathi Amman. Francis Xavier understood the community's ingrained affection for the mother goddess traditions and, in an act of psychological diversion, successfully introduced the role of Mary, replacing one maternal goddess with another. The practice of mother goddess worship was thus converted into the veneration of Mother Mary. Half a millennium later, Jesuit evangelisation has successfully produced a vibrant Christian community in South India.

Caste Lifestyle and Christian Caste Lifestyle

The code of social gradation in Indian society, colloquially referred to as the caste system, is best understood through its abutting companion, the “caste lifestyle” — a rigid dogma of Hindu edicts in dress, dietary habits, marriage customs and traditions of worship. The Hindu holy books are a lexicon of the castes' lineage, from which we learn the origins and stratification of the four main caste groups (themselves divided into Brahmins and non-Brahmins), plus approximately thirty thousand lesser and subordinate castes (called *jatis*). The texts may also be referenced as a sacred writ of hereditary entitlement which endows higher castes, while those in the lowest castes are frequently subject to ingrained inequities and, sadly, even violence.

The Portuguese entry into India was destined

to have a transformative impact on the future life of the Bharathas and their Hindu caste lifestyle. The conversion to Roman Catholicism eventually culminated in profound Jesuit missionary activity devoted to eliciting worship of and compliance with the Church's *Magisterium* (declared doctrine). The clan's life was therefore consistently instructed in Christian truth, which established the new religious culture as a “Christian caste lifestyle”. The catechism displaced the *Vedas*, and the diurnal rituals of the *pujas* were forced out by the sacrament of the Catholic Mass. In marriage preparation, the consanguineal Hindu practice of union between first cousins was an early casualty, being promptly proscribed by church edict.

The rituals of baptism and the other sacraments had far-reaching clan repercussions imprinting on all, without exception, Portuguese first names and surnames (patronyms) sustaining a sense of distinct *jati* or caste identity. In its routine execution, it had all the trappings of a proud rite of passage. In *Fishermen of the Coromandel*, historian Patrick Roche writes:

So completely have Portuguese Patronymics been absorbed into the Paravar fabric that no Parava can have even the faintest recollection of what his or her indigenous occupation or clan name might have been. [8]

The unique ‘Christian name’ given at baptism was a forename that was a Tamilised European name: Suroni (Jerome), Soosai (Joseph), Xaviermutthu (Xavier), Yagappan (James), Pavel (Paul), Annamma (Anne), Arulappar (John), Lorthusaamy (Lourdes), Matheyu (Matthew), Maatha (Mary), Rayappan (Peter), Saviriyar (Xavier), Thevasakayam (God's help), Thomayar (Thomas), Thiresamma (Theresa). The patronyms, of which there were approximately seventy-two, were indiscriminately borrowed, usually from Portuguese soldiers who stood in as godparents in the baptism of a child or adult. Examples include Alvarez, Miranda, Pereira, Gomez, Motha, Vaz, Fernando, Corera, Roche and at least sixty-four others. [9]

The Bharatha Exodus, The Bharatha Arrival

Looking back with a wide angle on the 19th Century, we witness the Raj in South India converting the Tinnevely District hinterland into cotton plantations. Meanwhile, across the ocean in Sri Lanka, their counterparts were aggressively transforming the colony from subsistence farming to large-scale plantation agriculture. These two forces, on opposite sides of the Gulf of Mannar, were the push and pull factors leading to an exodus in the 19th Century of Bharatha families from the Fishery Coast and the surge onto the island of an energetic trading diaspora.

For two millennia, the South Indian Fishery Coast had been the principality of Paravanadu — the

land of the Paravas. Now, in the space of a quarter-century, the British Raj not only supported misplaced development but stripped the very foundation of an ancient people's way of life. Newly integrated rail and road networks, rather than connecting the seven port cities, bypassed six of them, with port modernisation limited to Tuticorin all to expedite the delivery of cotton to Birmingham and Lancashire mills. The bottom line is vividly captured in the words of historian Patrick Roche:

... these port towns were divested of their older roles as centres of commercial activity and education, and the void created in their maritime economy rendered them ghost towns, inhabited largely by a few fishermen, females and retirees from Government service or trade in Ceylon.[10]

The gateway to the new country, from the early 1860s, was the jetty of the Colombo harbour, with settlers usually arriving by boat mail — that is, aboard the steam-powered mail ships that plied between Tuticorin (on the India side) and Colombo (on the Ceylon side), a 16 to 18-hour journey across the 170 miles separating the two ports. On arrival, Bharatha immigrants followed the well-beaten trails of their pioneers, heading—usually by horse carriage, bullock cart or rickshaw—to their new homes in the precincts of Pettah, Kochchikade, Mutwal and Kotahena, or by rail to the hill country or coastal towns with their plantation environs, all locales with a developing familial population.

At their destinations, the settlers surveyed their neighbourhoods like tourists, fascinated by the shop houses and the multicultural citizenry, both strikingly different from the single caste townships of their former homeland. Predictably, some were conflicted between memories of the world they left behind and the challenges of acquiring a new language and coping with unfamiliar situations. The Colombo Bharathas were ahead of the adaptation curve, however, because their culture in many ways dovetailed with that of the local Karave, a fisher caste community that shared a colonial past and were acknowledged forerunners in the commercial world. Mutually comforting were the two groups' western names and other Portuguese and Dutch influences which had found their way into the languages and dress. Most of all, both communities had converted to the Latin rite of the Catholic religion, the focus of their social well-being, with commitment and devotion displayed in familiar religious traditions and rituals. [11]

Pettah: The Perfect Landing Spot

The commercial area of Colombo known as *Pettah*, a Tamil name meaning “area outside the military fort”, was the perfect backdrop for demonstrating the immigrant trader's business skills — both formal and informal — to a robust assembly of multiethnic competitors. Here Bharatha merchants

would have interacted face-to-face with every Indian trading ethnicity—Borahs, Gujarathis, Hyderabadis, Keralites, Malays, Memons, Moors, Nattukottai Chettiars, Parsis and Sindhis, to name but a few.

Pettah was a compact area laid out in the symmetry of an oversized crossword puzzle. Ambling down its premier conduit, Main Street, the immigrants would have encountered the diaspora's well-distributed pockets of specialised economic activity: exotic goods and services, wholesale and retail distributorships, middlemen, jobbers, salesmen and other functioning parts of the supply chain. At first, with untrained eyes, those ‘fresh off the boat’ from across the gulf may have been repelled by the din; history makes it clear, however, that they soon accepted the raucous atmosphere as a race towards price equilibrium.

The Colombo Bharathas made use of Pettah as a kind of home planet to satellite operations in the hill country and the coastal towns. First and most entrepreneurial among the visionary merchants was Paul Soris, who in 1861 founded a provision store in Nuwara Eliya and within a few short years added a model storehouse with well-stocked inventories of wines, spirits and imported foods. These operations plainly generated sizeable cash flows, encouraging Soris to branch out into fresh produce and flowers with the launching of a ten-acre garden near his hill-country operations. He followed it up with the construction of the small Pedro View Hotel for upper-class visitors to this incomparable resort in the hill country. [12]

The family firm of MP Gomez started its life in Ratnapura and rapidly opened branches in Colombo, Negombo, Chilaw, Avissawella and Balangoda. The energy and drive of the Gomez family encouraged its extended kinsfolk, and in short order, franchises were opened in Kandy, Bandarawela, Nuwara Eliya and the suburbs of Colombo, with the addition of gas stations to their business structure.

Perhaps the most extraordinary achievement by a member of the tribe was that of Santiago de Mel, also known as “Godfather” (*Aiya* or *Periva* in Tamil), who rose from status as a minor clerk in a forgettable commodity house, first to become the leading agricultural importer of onions from his own farms near Tuticorin, and then to innovate the distribution of cooking oils and kerosene by bullock carts throughout the island under the “**Rising Sun**” brand. The entire operation was staffed by his Bharatha relatives from the defunct port city of Vembar. [13]

By the turn of the 20th Century, Sri Lanka was beginning to realise the increasing presence of an industrious Indian diaspora: These were “the Toilers”, “the Traders” and “the Entrepreneurs” so vividly brought to life by S Muthiah in his masterpiece *The Indo Lankans: Their 200-Year Saga*. [14] Muthiah quotes GA Crowell, a 19th-Century Sri Lankan planter

(the editorial amendments are Muthiah's):

Wherever new roads have sprung up ..., towns spring up and commerce establishes itself... [Who] that saw Matala 20 or 25 years ago [could have imagined] it with its long street of thriving bazaars and its "Miranda".

Here Muthiah interjects his opinion of this Portuguese-derived (and thus clearly Bharatha) surname, with its Shakespearean "brave new world" association, as "not a bad name for its principal merchant and hotelkeeper". [15]

In these years, the massive expansion of Sri Lanka's plantations, focusing on the cultivation of tea, rubber and coconut, was a turning point in the island's economic life, negating the contraction of livelihoods just across the ocean. As this trade opened the country to commerce with the rest of the world, it created prototypical small towns with government offices which provided employment for a new class of workers, especially those with an English language education, whose wages and salaries were paradigms of a nascent middle class. This was an environment perfectly suited to the Bharatha trader invested in the culture of merchandising provisions, food, liquor and all the essentials of life to the new populations in and around the plantations island-wide and the rapidly growing city of Colombo. [16]

The Colombo Bharathas' contribution to Ceylon was immense, particularly through the retail stores they established in small towns throughout the island to provide the middle class and the wealthy with imported household goods, from food and drink to furnishing and clothing. What the British-owned shops offered in Colombo, the Bharatha shops offered in other towns in Ceylon. [17]

Pettah: The Home of Commerce

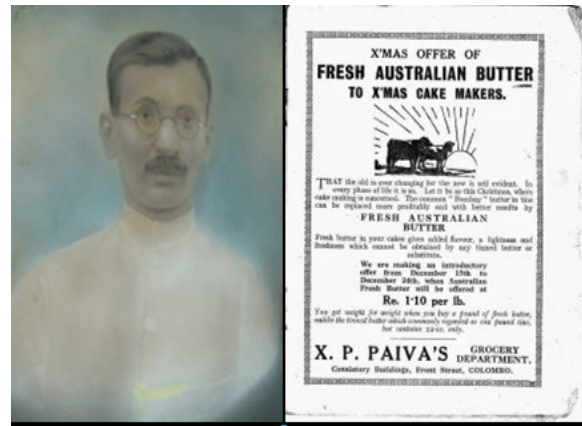
Pettah endures as a crucible for the collective memories of the Indian diaspora. The precinct's boundaries, enclosing approximately a square mile, are easy to make out if eyeballed from the pedestal of the iconic Khan Clock Tower.

I have walked the streets of this district several hundred times. Today, I resolve to slow down and see them afresh, realising that the diaspora's history informs my family's story, welcoming my ancestors to this island in a way that is deeper than a scroll in the parish register. The sociologist Ronald Takaki encourages immigrants to remember that "In the sharing of our varied stories, we create a community of a larger memory." [18] I love this sentiment.

My nostalgia for the past spurs me to seek out the iconic names that once gave this locale its cohesive energy, the numerous well-positioned Bharatha houses of commerce that once arose in this milieu, among them XP Paiva & Sons, known for imported foods and instructional books on Western classical music (full disclosure: XP was a member of my family); FX Pereira & Sons, the standard-bearer

for department stores, insurance brokers and shipping agents; its subsidiary, The Rupee Stores, a worthy iteration of Woolworth's dime stores; JL Carwallio & Sons, retailer of high-end ladies' garments; and Victoria Caterers, exclusive provisioner of the restaurant cars in the long-distance trains of the Ceylon Government Railway.

One could catalogue numerous others owned by members of the tribe, including those secluded



behind nondescript signage promoting their individual specialty. A well-known example is the "Fernando" businesses, including Dry-Fish Merchants on Old Butcher Street, now renamed as IX Pereira Street, memorialising a charismatic businessman-politician. I recognise more small and large imprints of Colombo Bharatha history in shopfronts and marquees, in transport conduits and side streets, in Pettah's pathways and aisles, in fact everywhere. And so, I accrue that history in my brain as I travel through the quarter.

Pettah in the years following World War II was also the community's cultural zone, where the endogamous marriage tradition frequently surfaced, always illustrated in the simple fact that everybody was seemingly connected to you or your family. That same fact earned you a special welcome in any Bharatha household if you or a sibling were accomplished and of marriageable age — and therefore assumed to be primed for "an arrangement".

Eventually I find that I have covered the main streets and the cross streets, and have gravitated to a well-attended evening service at St Philip Neri's Church — the Colombo Bharathas' church where, in the immediate postwar years, my father's several siblings were baptised or married, or both. Centuries ago, the shrine of Philip Neri on the western boundary of Pettah served the religious needs of the Bharatha Catholic seamen who called in at the Port of Colombo. Senior members of the community recall an opulent iteration of the feast of Our Lady of Snows, in which a statue was, and still is, paraded through the streets of Pettah. Rose petals would be placed in its path by pious Bharatha traders and their families. In some

years, the prestigious Ceylon Police Band would provide the orchestral backdrop for the devotional and formal services through the generosity of several Bharatha families. St Philip Neri's Church persists as a cultural touchstone in a way that most religious shrines do not, reminding the remaining Bharatha families in the city to explore their ethno-religious identity, as I have come full circle to do so now.

Benediction and Bon Voyage

In Sri Lanka, the Bharatha story, in a phrase, is one of immigrant success, for which we look back with gratitude on the long-term vision of our ancestors. Beyond Sri Lanka, Bharatha toilers, traders and entrepreneurs have continued to settle as emigres in Australia, North America and Europe especially in the post World War II years, disrupting traditional barriers through assimilation or education.

In these early decades of the twenty-first century, the clan is still on the move, now led by the demographic cohorts known as Gen X and the Millennials — the children and grandchildren of my own generation. I now understand nature's purpose for the curious sociological "Rule of Three". As a third generation immigrant of Colombo Bharatha ancestry, I am in a unique position to both preserve the genetic memory of our proud clan, and pass it along to those whose grandchildren, born in yet another corner of the world, to ask them, "So, who or what is a Bharatha?"

END NOTES

Joe 'Malli' Vaz grew up in Colombo and was educated at St Joseph's College and Aquinas University College, Colombo. An Economics graduate of the University of London, he received an MBA in International Management from the Thunderbird School of Global Management in Phoenix, Arizona. Over the years, he has worked in banking and finance, and graduated from several banking studies programs, including the School of International Banking at the University of Colorado Boulder. For the past twenty years he has been an adjunct instructor in business studies at colleges in the Phoenix, Arizona, area, where he lives with his wife, Nimal Wickramaratne.

The refinement of the pictures for presentation here was sorted out by Johnny De Silva of Melbourne, an old schoolmate who is not a Bharatha but a good citizen of the world.

I have used "Bharatha" for the Sri Lankan side of the chronicle and the typical Indian spelling and pronunciation, "Parava", for the Indian narration. Occasionally a neutral context may make the epithet incidental.

FOOTNOTES

1. Susan Bayly. *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society, 1700–1900*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge

University Press, 2004, p. 322.

2. Jules Verne. *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. Trans. David Coward. London: Penguin Classics, 2017, p. 255.
 3. Harriet Martineau. "Cinnamon and Pearls" in *Illustrations of Political Economy*, Vol. 7. London: Charles Fox, 1832, p. 22.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Sarojini Naidu. "The Coromandel Fishers" in *The Golden Threshold*. Hyderabad: William Heinemann, 1905.
 6. Bayly, p. 328.
 7. Bayly, p. 343.
 8. Patrick Roche. *Fishermen of the Coromandel*. New Delhi: Manohar, 1984, p. 27.
 9. Ibid.
 10. Ibid., p. 92.
 11. Ibid., p. 72.
 12. Ibid., p. 68.
 13. Arnold Wright, ed. *Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon*. London: Lloyds, 1907, p. 833.
 14. S. Muthiah. *The Indo Lankans: Their 200-Year Saga*. Colombo: Indian Heritage Foundation, 2003, p. 95.
 15. Quoted in Muthiah, p. 19.
 16. EFC Ludowyk. *The Modern History of Ceylon*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966, p. 95.
 17. Ibid.
 18. Ronald Takaki. *Civil Rights Journal*, Fall 1997, p. 50.
- ALSO SEE <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pRx_zr4vM0A> courtesy of Jayantha Somasundaram in Canberra.



Opening of IX Pereira Street in Colombo in the 1970s to commemorate the contribution made to commerce in Sri Lanka by Dewan Bahadur IX Pereira from the Bharatha community. Dewan Bahadur was a title conferred to distinguished Indians by the British Raj. The title ceased after Indian Independence.

A Tale of Two Brothers-in-Law

Hugh Karunanayake

Review of a presentation made at the meeting of CSA (Melbourne Chapter) held on Sunday 23 May 2021, by Logan and Premila Thurairatnam

The Ashwood Hall in Melbourne was the venue for a most interesting presentation by a husband and wife team, who were direct descendants of two eminent Ceylonese, well known personalities during 20th Century Ceylon. Alas, much of the achievements of Ceylonese who lived during the not so recent past, seem to be erased from the mind of the community and it was with much interest that the packed audience heard of the lives and achievements of the two brothers in law.

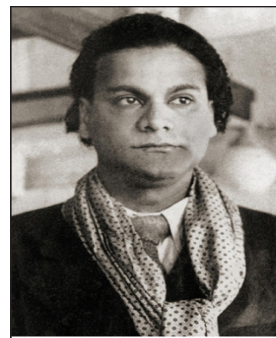
The subjects of the presentation were Alagu Subramaniam, an eminent writer and his brother in law S Rajanayagam a highly regarded Telecommunication Engineer who played a vital role in ensuring that colonial Ceylon during World War II, was engaged as closely as possible with its metropolitan power Great Britain as an ally during the war. Premila's grandfather was S Rajanayagam, her maternal granduncle being Subramaniam. Both presentations, (Logan on Subramaniam and Premila on Rajanayagam) were complemented with visuals on records and documents maintained by the family through the years.

Alagu Subramaniam born in 1910, left Jaffna College at the age of 16. By the age of 23 he was in London registered as a student in law. It seems that the eight years he took to qualify as a barrister were not misspent, as it was during and after that period that he was totally involved with literary work. He was part of the Bloomsbury group made famous by Leonard and Virginia Woolf, and was also a key contributor to a quarterly published in the 1940s named *Indian Writing*. Other reputed contributors to the journal included Rabindranath Tagore, James Tambimuttu, Mulk Raj Anand (known around the world as a key votary of Indian art and sculpture) and Jinadasa Vijayatunge of *Grass for my Feet* fame. He also authored several novels some, even now, used as teaching material in the study of English literature.

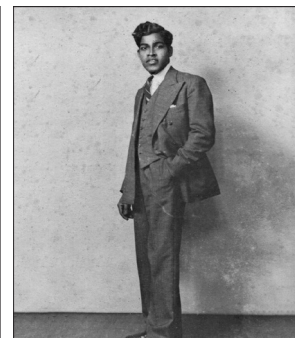
While Subramaniam's family appear to have already reached some eminence in the north of Ceylon, his father being a judge, his brother in law Sabapathipillai Rajanayagam, married to his sister Grace seemed to have arrived from humbler origins in the village of Karainagar. That did not deter Rajanayagam who after his primary education at the village school in Karainagar, entered the highly regarded Jaffna College and devoured educationally all that was on offer. His role as a pioneer

Telecommunication Engineer was critical during World War II, where maintaining contact among the allies was of utmost importance in dealing with the enemy. His role in establishing cable communications with India, and also between Colombo and Trincomalee (then a strategic centre of military operations) were recognised and acknowledged by the colonial government by an award of the Order of the British Empire at the age of 35, possibly being the youngest ever Ceylonese to receive that honour. Rajanayagam went on to lead a full life after serving as a consultant to reputed international organisations, and passing away at the age of 104.

The presentation on these two personalities were supplemented with visuals on the records, documents, awards etc assiduously collected and maintained by the family, and made the two talks all the more interesting if not adding authenticity to what was being said. The spellbound audience undoubtedly appreciated the evening's fare which for me served as a most delightful diversion from a cold wintry night. Thank you, Logan and Premila. Also a word of thanks with gratitude to my friend Jeremy de Lima for transporting me, to and back, from the meeting.



• Alagu aged 37 in 1947 when he returned to Ceylon.



• S. Rajanayagam in the 1930s.

Alagu aged 37 in 1947 when he returned to Ceylon S. Rajanayagam in the 1930s



Alagu standing at the centre as a boy with his parents on either side (circa 1917)

Evolution of Art in Sri Lanka

Martin Pieris

Transcript of a presentation at the Ceylon Society of Australia Sydney Meeting on Sunday 30 May 2021

This talk is about the evolution of art and art practice in Sri Lanka. I would like to acknowledge the decades of research done by prominent historians Senaka Bandaranayake, Senerath Paranavitana, Albert Dharmasiri, Ananda Coomaraswamy, RL Brohier, Ismeth Raheem, Ellen Dissanayake, Sarath Chandraseewa and, last but not least, Neville Weeraratne's chronicling of the 43 Group. I have used the work of these great researchers in forming my own opinions on the development of art practice and its relevance to the Sri Lankan society and culture.

*Art is a way we tell our stories,
The stories of our experiences,
stories of our lives,
Describing, the way we live,
Learning how we ought to live,
Shaping our lives,
Building our hopes
Attaching our fears
Forming our minds*

An extract from my film *Song of Lanka*

My interest in the Sri Lankan narrative started very late, some twenty-two years ago. It was a book that my daughter gave me for Christmas of 1998. The book was simply titled *Lanka 1986-1992*, by Stephen Champion, an English photographer. The content of his images moved me and brought back so many memories that I decided to return to Sri Lanka after a twenty-year absence. My training as a photographer made me see, not so much the subject of Champion's images, but the little details that were contained within these images.

The stories I heard in that short three-week stay hooked me to return there for over 35 trips in the 21 years since. One could say that I have gone to incredible efforts in finding excuses to spend a great deal of time there!

An exhibition, *Sri Lankans – Work in Progress* in 2002 in Colombo, was my first exhibition there, and my first excuse to hang around. Happily, for me, sponsored by the then Colombo Oberoi. This work eventuated in a book *The Sri Lankans*, which I published in 2007. It was launched in Colombo in January 2007 at the Barefoot Gallery. *Serendip to Sri Lanka a photographic journey*, a masters research project was the second, completed in 2011 with an exhibition at the university gallery in Newcastle. And it continues with my current PhD research, *The '43 Group and its Legacy in Sri Lanka*, a project that I have just completed, accompanied by a film *Song of Lanka*, an homage to Basil Wright's award winning 1934, *Song of Ceylon*.

Ancient Art

Our ancestors left markings on cave walls thousands of years ago. There are over 33 sites of cave drawings in Sri Lanka, that Senaka Bandaranayake says, are unfortunately, not yet well researched after the initial work done by HCP Bell and Charles and Brenda Seligmanns in the 1800s.

The arrival of Buddhism in the island saw a new aesthetic brought over from India, that according to Senarath Paranavitana, is the greatest cultural continuum and development outside mainland India. He says this, the first transplanting of culture of India outside its shores, was the most durable. Indian colonists in far off lands in Asia have created great monuments of art and architecture, which no doubt surpasses in magnitude and grandeur or in aesthetic qualities of the ancient Sinhalese art. However, in many of these lands, the people of the present day profess religions which are not of Indian origin, speak languages and practice culture and traditions that bear but little resemblance to the languages and cultures of India and have forgotten the very names of those who raised these mighty monuments.

Sigiriya Period



The Sigiriya paintings too, although believed to be similar to that of the Ajanta temples, form a far superior aesthetic and

fresco technique attested by prominent art historians. Although these works were not strictly religious in nature. These historians say that Indian masterpieces from that same period pale into insignificance. Benjamin Rowland in his publication *The Wall Paintings of India, Central Asia And Ceylon*, sums up thus:

The Sigiriya paintings, outside their existing and intrinsic beauty, are perhaps most notable for the very freedom they show at a period when the arts were tending to become more and more frozen in the mould of rigid canons of beauty. The apsaras have a rich healthy flavour that, by contrast, almost makes the masterpieces of Indian art seem shallow and effete in over-refinement. Just as the drawing is more vigorous than that of the more sophisticated artists of India, so the colours are bolder and more intense than the tonalities employed in the temples of the Deccan. Loudness of the colour approaches but escapes vulgarity...

There are several interpretations of the nature and subject of the Sigiriya paintings. Bell's interpretation that the paintings portray the ladies of Kasyapa's court in a procession of devotion to the shrine at Pidurangala, according to Senaka Bandaranayake, is a purely imaginative reconstruction and has no precedence in the religious and social traditions of

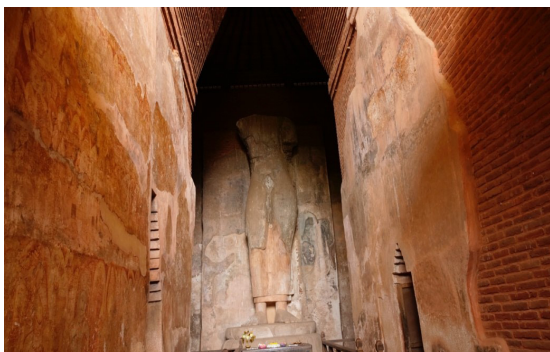
that period, in that region. However, he says, that the court ladies and their jewels could have been models for the Sigiriya artists and as such reflects life and social attitudes of that period.

Senarath Paranavitana, on the other hand suggests that the Sigiriya paintings represent Lightning Princesses and Cloud Damsels and attempts to explain these paintings as an expression of cult of divine royalty and the palace complex a symbolic reconstruction of the god Kuvera.

Bandaranayake says that Ananda Coomaraswamy provides the most logical explanation identifying the Sigiriya women as Apsaras in keeping with well-established South Asian traditions and recent studies reinforcing this idea. Apsaras are often represented in art and literature as celestial beings who carry flowers and scatter them over kings and heroes as a celebration of victory and heroism. The 21 figures now preserved, Paranavitana adds, are but a small fraction of the many hundreds that adorned the western face of Sigiriya rock. Senaka Bandaranayake agrees with this confirming that the mural extended some 140 meters in length and 40 meters high. The British archaeologist John Still, in his book *Jungle Tide* confirms this saying ‘the whole face of the hill appears to have been a gigantic picture gallery... the largest picture in the world, perhaps’.

Polonnaruwa Period

Leaving aside the rich architectural and sculptural monuments found at Polonnaruwa, the fragmentary remains of the wall paintings of Tivanka Pilimage (pictured) provides us with a fair idea of the grandeur of the art and excellent examples of the late classical style and stylistic trends of the 12th and 13th Centuries. Although the monument was known from an earlier time, the paintings were only discovered in 1885 by SM Burrows tunnelling along the inner wall



and uncovering two large panels, which he said was ‘profusely covered with paintings in very fair preservation’. Burrows continues that ‘both figures and faces are excellently painted, and full of life; and there is one female face, constantly recurring, which may be justly thought beautiful’.

Unfortunately, Burrows’ tunnelling and revealing the paintings also exposed them to the elements and when HCP Bell came along to excavate

fifteen years later, he found many of the paintings faded beyond recognition. Although, some copies of the paintings were made for the National Museum, very little had been done to preserve this treasure. In recent years, finally, an open roof has been added to half-heartedly preserve this valuable and fast disappearing treasure.

Senarath Paranavitana says that with the fall of the Polonnaruwa kingdom in the third quarter of the 13th Century marks the end of the creative period of Sinhalese civilisation – with the jungle tide enveloping the cities and shrines of a previous age. New cities were founded in other parts of the island but not on the same scale as before. Paranavitana adds that figurative sculpture of the late period was of a formal and frigid in character. Old school paintings disappear and replaced by a form of folk art of pleasing colour schemes and decorative designs.

According to Senaka Bandaranayake and Albert Dharmasiri in *The Rock and Wall Paintings of Sri Lanka*:

we have little or no evidence that before the 19th Century, that painting, and sculpture (unlike poetry and music) existed in secular social contexts in Sri Lanka except as architectural or craft decorations.

However, it was popular and was read and appreciated at all levels of society as indicated by the commentary of the Sigiriya graffiti. This is also true for portraiture and any form of portable art, like those seen in India.

European Colonisation



European colonisation brought a halt to a continuity of artisans and temple painters from the 15th Century in the low-country. With the arrival of the Portuguese, the age old artisan traditions responsible for the maintenance of the temple paintings disappeared. These

artisans and their families were put to work by the Portuguese, in the reproduction of religious paintings to help the spread of Christianity in Asia, and the production of exotic trinkets to be sold in Europe.

Marie de Sousa in her article *Ivory Catechisms* in the exhibition catalogue - *Christianity in Asia – Sacred Art and Visual Splendour*, pp.104, states that Christian conversions in the new Portuguese territories were swift and shared by several Catholic orders. However, she says, the Jesuits were the main advocates in the use of imagery in religious teaching with their attempts at modernising the Catholic Church. This was in response to the developing Protestant Reformation in Europe.

Whilst religious prints by Michelangelo,

Raphael and Rubens were brought from Europe, native artists highly skilled in ivory and wood, formally employed in the production of Hindu and Buddhist art, were employed to produce Christian art which eventuated with the production of imagery with a distinct local flavour, with local artists finding their own expressive modes of interpretation and creativity of Catholic doctrine.

However, it did not go well for local artists for very long, when the Portuguese Viceroy of India receiving an edict from King Joao III in 1548 ordering him to stop the use of local artists in Catholic art production. The edict read:

I am informed that the gentile painters are in the habit of painting images of Our Lord, Our Lady, and Saints, and selling them from door to door. Because this is a very bad act, I order you to forbid this practice and to forbid any gentile painters from making this said images, and from selling them, under pain of their being flogged and forfeiting their property.

Marie de Sousa indicates that this practice did continue as it needed to be renewed repeatedly in 1567, 1575 and 1585. She assumes that this was perhaps due to these artisans no longer being gentiles and already converted to Catholicism.

One hundred and fifty years after the Portuguese took over the coastal regions in Sri Lanka, the steady stream of employment in Christian art production for the local artists also concluded. The new conquerors, the Dutch and their new version of Christianity had no use for these 'trivial impressions' and were against any form of Roman Catholic imagery. Thousands of years of religious art practice came to an end.

Academic Realism and Orientalism

The temple artists of the central region, in the meantime, still enjoyed the support of the Kandyan rulers until their demise and the whole island falling into the hands of the British in 1815.

The temple art that had enjoyed the patronage of the Sinhala feudal system came to an end and valuable existing work was allowed to fall into decay. Ananda Coomaraswamy in his thesis, *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, (1908), says that the policy of British Governance in Ceylon during the early years was to ignore fraud, and let vandalism committed against the temples and temple property go unpunished as this was not their religion and therefore, not their concern. Weeraratne in *The 43 Group – A Chronical of Fifty Years in the Art of Sri Lanka* (1993), adds that early British Ceylon Government policies against the support and maintenance of temples in Sri Lanka were repealed by Queen Victoria in the late 19th Century, ensuring that elements of traditional craftsmanship was restored, however not without losing a few generations of development and enduring enormous damage to a previously thriving traditional art culture. Several temple paintings in Sri

Lanka include a portrait of Queen Victoria as a tribute to these concessions, including the Raga Maha Vihara in Dehiwala.

The early British period saw the introduction of the realist or naturalist tradition in Sri Lankan paintings with the influence of the Royal Academy and the British art schools, exercised through visiting British and other European painters and amateur European artists resident in Sri Lanka.

Ismeth Raheem in an article regarding the early British period in Sri Lanka mentions Hippolyte Silvef, a French painter who immigrated to Ceylon in the 1820s from Pondicherry and started an art school in Pettah in 1834. Soon there were seven schools of its kind run by European amateur and professional artists catering to the European elites and Euro-Asians within the 'white' areas of Colombo.

In the 1846, Andrew Nicholl, a celebrated Irish painter and watercolourist, applied for and was appointed as teacher of landscape drawing, painting and design at the Colombo Academy, the institution that eventually became Royal College.

While in Ceylon, Nicholl befriended the Colonial Secretary in Ceylon James Emerson Tennent and was commissioned by Tennent to make drawings of the scenery as they travelled throughout the island. Tennent went on to write and publish a two volume account of Ceylon which included some of Nicholl's drawings.

The British Academic styles were also promoted through organisations such as the Colombo Art Circle and its successor, Ceylon Society of Arts, and official art education through the Colombo Technical College at Maradana and in primary and secondary schools in Sri Lanka.

A great local supporter of the British academic style was Mudaliyar ACGS Amarasekera (1883-1983) who presided over the Ceylon Society of Arts for many decades.

Albert Dharmasiri refers to this art as 'inept trifling with the picturesque... a sterile and lifeless academism' and refers to much of Amarasekera's work as mediocre. Bandaranayake adds that 'in one form or another this tradition of the picturesque and of visual realism still persists in popular imagery and "drawing room" art of today'.

The late 19th century and 20th century saw the emergence of new temple works and artists such as M Sarlis and Solias Mendis.

Sarlis, who apprenticed to the theatre painter Richard Henricus in 1909, was a versatile painter whose work extended to the interpretation of Buddhist text in study material, illustration of Buddhist stories and the production of lithographic calendars and poster prints for wide distribution and of course, wall paintings of several Buddhist temples. Bandaranayake and Dharmasiri says that Sarlis, like his teacher Henricus, even in greater measure, provided a

link between the theatre and mural tradition of art in Sri Lanka.

Soliyas Mendis, a native of Madampe, in Sri Lanka, was born in 1897. His extraordinary achievement was the twenty-year project in creating the Kelaniya Rajamahaviharaya paintings. He trained as a temple painter working with his uncle, master painter, Memonis Silva and later went on to undertake his own temple painting projects, when he was offered the work at the Kelaniya temple. He was, no doubt, inspired by the Ajanta and Bengali traditions which he spent time travelling and studying before undertaking the Kelaniya project. Both Sarlis and Mendis contributed greatly to a new classical style of Buddhist art and eventually influenced Somabandu Vidiyapathy's murals at Bellanwila temple.

Artistic Independence

The idea for artistic independence in Sri Lanka was propagated for a long period in the minds of the founding fathers of the 43 Group, Harry Pieris and Lionel Wendt. The initial impulse was said to have been first voiced by Charles F Winzer, a British art educator who was appointed as the Ceylon Government Schools Art Inspector in 1920. During his tenure in Sri Lanka from 1920-1931 he established the Ceylon Art Club, challenging the dominance of the Ceylon Society of Arts, the organisation that was supported by the British establishment to promote an academic style of painting popular in England at the time.

With regards to Winzer, Senaka Bandaranayake and Albert Dharmasiri in *Sri Lankan Paintings in the 20th Century* points out that although Winzer's own work was 'broadly within the academic mainstream of the time...he was familiar with and not uninfluenced by the modernist painters of Europe and brought a new approaches to art and art education in Sri Lanka.' Bandaranayake and Dharmasiri also say that Winzer's 'Orientalist' style of painting and 'freer' sensitive drawings in ink and crayon could have served as inspiration to some of the painters of the '43 Group, although his work scarcely approached theirs, in quality and depth.

Winzer's view on the state of art in Sri Lanka and his opposition to the British academic style prevalent at that time gave expression to the '43 Group's impetus, stressing the need to preserve local culture. He said:

Our materials are different, our conditions are different, the demands of the public are different, and the public must be trained and enlightened by us sufficiently not only to appreciate our work but also that of the past ... But in spite of all the differences of time, of condition, of presentation, the eternal qualities of art, as shown at Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, should be studied, adapted to our life, and a continuity achieved.

Winzer also adds that:

...this continuity is closer to the decorative conceptions of modern art than to the realistic, true-to-life prettiness and cheap harmonies of academic achievement.

A counterpart to Winzer's Ceylon Art Club in Colombo was later formed in the northern province of Jaffna referred to as the Winzer Art Club and functioned from 1938- 1955.

The '43 Group was formed in the period just before Sri Lanka gained independence. By 1943, the year of the group's inception, Sri Lanka had been under European rule for over four centuries and the country was gradually moving towards self-rule. Ian Goonetilleke in his forward to Neville Weeraratne's biography of the '43 Group say, the desire for change was so great that '...if the group had not been born at that point of time, it would have had to be invented. So compelling was the necessity for change and upheaval.' Adding that 'sanctimonious styles of academism, pseudo-oriental impersonations, and ill-digested imitations of western naturalism had for too long held sway into the nineteen thirties.' The formation of the group was a strike out at the colonial establishment, and they were, Goonetilleke continues:

...inspired by an open-eyed and intense dedication to the crafts and skill of draftsmanship and colour in original and indigenous ways.

So it was that on the 29th of July 1943 at 11am, a group of artists came together in the home of one of the group's founders (Lionel Wendt), at Guildford Crescent in Colombo, to charter a new cultural direction in the arts of Sri Lanka.

The '43 Group brought together an eclectic collection of already established Sri Lankan artists of diverse styles and conceptual philosophies. The initial core group comprised of Lionel Wendt, Harry Pieris, George Keyt, Justin Daraniyagala and George Beiling and included Indian artist SR Kanagasabai, the Buddhist priest LTP Manjusri, George Claessen, Ivan Peries, cartoonist Aubrey Collette and young Richard Gabriel. Present at this inaugural meeting was also the film director Lester James Peries.

Neville Weeraratne points out that no formal manifesto was needed among a company of people who, though they practiced in different and unique styles, were committed to certain fundamental considerations on the nature and function of art.

As the inaugural meeting's minutes stated:

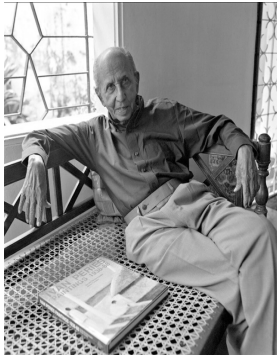
The Group shall be called the '43 Group. Group exists for the furtherance in everyway of art in all its branches.

Lester tells the story:

My brother and I were there fairly early. He was rather silent: Ivan hated two or three painters there with the depth of feeling which only Lionel, Harry and I knew. Lionel had cautioned him earlier - 'Please, Ivan, be on your best behaviour, and don't come after drinking a jar of toddy!' But Ivan was a good boy. He didn't disrupt the proceedings... the real surprise of the evening was Manjusri Thero whom none of us knew much about. Lionel kept his arrival secret. We all expected high-

flown, classical Sinhala from the monk. But Manjusri Thero put everyone at ease. He only spoke about the way he primed the canvas before painting – squeezing tubes and so forth. By this time things were moving nicely; Lionel had lost the touch of nervousness he displayed in the beginning and looked jolly.

Lester James Peries (pictured) also recalls the group as ‘temperamental characters and getting the whole lot of them under one roof could have spelt disaster. There could have been volcanic eruptions, abuse, angry talk. I think Lionel was aware of such dire possibilities.’



The group’s first exhibition was held in a corrugated warehouse in Darley road, Maradana. There were no formalities and Lionel commented that the ‘the exhibition opened like a flower’. The hostility of a large portion of the Ceylon press was evident in the level to which the public banter

was used to ridicule this group of artists who challenged the status quo set out by the Ceylon government sponsored Ceylon Society of Arts. A journalist who attended the opening night of the exhibition wrote:

To begin with, there were the surrealistic surroundings amid which one discovered that hidden hall in Darley Road, then there was the crowd of artists and their ‘arty’ friends. Hardly a Philistine in sight: but many a proud papa and fond mama basking in the reflected glory of their off-springs’ genius.

Another reporter wrote:

Dominating the scene was an artist who explained his pictures, or the correct attitude towards art with an almost ferocious intensity.

This reaction reflected, to some extent, the wider views of the English-speaking middle class which had by far the largest subscription to the English-language press in Ceylon, as it still does in present day Sri Lanka. This privileged class of the day was extremely reluctant to rock the proverbial ‘colonial boat’ and took it as a personal embarrassment when others tried to do so. There were several letters to the press that claimed, ‘a child could paint better’, or implied that the artists were ‘having-the-public-on’ or were ‘playing a practical joke’.

Neville Weeraratne says that it was not all bad, however, with some sections of the press providing more positive comment. Tori de Souza, from the *Times of Ceylon*, found the inaugural exhibition of the group:

...a stimulating relief from the usual pictures of old men with long beards, temple elephants and flamboyant trees. There are at least half a dozen works that would do honour to any exhibition anywhere in the world, and more than

three times that number of exhibits that would repay closer study’.

Weeraratne adds that even de Souza couldn’t resist a calculated comic snipe:

George Keyt continues to fascinate us with his geometry and algebra, his tangents and segments and his quadrants equating the human figure with all manner of harmonies, exciting and at all times satisfying rhymes and patterns...The *Journey*, one of the biggest of his pictures is a splendid example of his one-track genius.

The worst criticism lavished on the ‘43 Group came from the British army officer and official war artist and public relations man, John Napper (*Ceylon Review* of 1st December 1943). He said, ‘My strongest impression of this exhibition was that it was conceited’ and added that he liked the work of one man, Manjusri Thero, and that he felt that in the priest’s work, ‘there was a decided attempt to see things for himself through his own eyes’.

For the remainder he wrote:

...whilst I reiterate that any artistic endeavour is better than none and the reaction of the ‘43 Group is splendid, ...they must realise that the world that has grown up with Max Ernst, Dali, D. H. Lawrence, Ernest Toller and Stravinsky is no longer shocked and considers such behaviour as rather childish, and if not, affected. Let them spend their time going out amongst the earth, seeking genuine feelings and passions.

Some months later, following a *Ceylon at War* exhibition in 1944, a ‘skilled’ response from Lionel Wendt appeared in the *Ceylon Daily News*, noting that Napper had offered no criticism:

...only accusations – and a tone of Olympian patronage that today is funny because we have now seen Lt. Napper’s own work, presumably the result of growing up with the queer hotch-potch of Ernst, Dali, Lawrence, etc. and “going out amongst the earth” etc..

Weeraratne points out that the story of Napper’s remarks was important that it resulted in the resignation of Manjusri before the group’s third exhibition in March 1945. And the records indicate that Lester James Peries was asked to fill in the vacancy as an honorary member. Weeraratne adds that, Manjusri’s exit from the Group was controversial and even dramatic. It was described as a breakaway. It implied disenchantment. The fact that he had left the group after it had launched him caused some sadness at the time. However, Weeraratne says, none of this impinged on Manjusri’s own development and later achievement as an artist and a scholar.

In December 1944, a year after their first exhibition, the group suffered its greatest loss. Lionel Wendt passed away just after his 44th birthday, from a sudden heart attack. Wendt, whose enormous contribution was not only to the formation of the ‘43 Group, both practical as well as intellectual, but generally to the arts of Sri Lanka. His legacy continues in the present-day Lionel Wendt Art Centre - a theatre and gallery complex, built at the site of his home at Guildford Crescent, Colombo.

The local press continued to be critical of the work of the '43 Group's exhibitions in subsequent years. They were as, Weeraratne describes, treated as the local 'whipping-boy' by every art critic and humourist writing for the Ceylon press. Despite all this, the group held together after the passing of Wendt, under the careful guidance of Harry Pieris. The Pieris home at Barnes Place, became the group's meeting point. Weeraratne remembers that Pieris remained the quintessential teacher of the group.

The group's fortunes changed with their first exhibition abroad in 1952. Their first exhibition in England, at the invitation of the Royal India, Pakistan and Ceylon Society in South Kensington, was well received. Art critic, novelist, painter and poet John Berger, then working for the *New Statesman*, wrote in the forward to the exhibition catalogue of the group's attempt to achieve a synthesis between the work being done in Paris by Picasso and Matisse and the ancient traditions of Sigiriya which he said:

... took into account the emerging power and equality of Asia in the contemporary world, and could be discovered through the careful study of the work of this group.

Of George Keyt he said he '...would surely be recognised as an artist of important genius.' He was also very impressed by the work of Justin Daraniyagala and said that he would: '...unhesitatingly place ...alongside any of the 20th Century masters of expressionism.' Later in a formal review for the *New Statesman*, Berger wrote of the force of Ivan Peries, the nervous good drawings of George Claessen and the serious imagination of Richard Gabriel. In the *Art News*, 29th November 1952, Maurice Collis wrote that the objective of the group was: '...to express Ceylon in terms that are both Oriental and contemporary...' and he found such an objective right: '...as on thus can a modern Asian art be brought into being.' Of Daraniyagala's *Women and Clown*, he commented that:

...this picture could hold its own in the best company. The paint quality is very high. I know very few English artists who can paint as well and none who can paint better.

Of Richard Gabriel he said:

...a really choice piece of craftsmanship which shows how thoroughly the artist has studied the techniques of painting.

Two months after the opening of the Imperial Institute show, an interest was communicated by the French Embassy to the group's representative in London, Ranjith Fernando, of the possibility of holding a similar show in Paris. In July 1953, Ranjith Fernando went to Paris with a selection of the '43 Group members' work. The deputy director of the Petit Palais, Madame Suzanne Kahn, saw the artists' work in Paris and suggested an exhibition in the autumn of that year.

The Paris exhibition was held on the 13th November -21st December 1953.

Peter de Francia wrote:

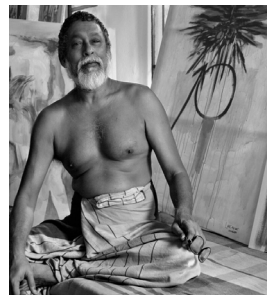
What characterises this school and makes it a living thing, is the degree of accomplishment in forming a synthesis between an age-long tradition and the 20th Century...in spite of an artistic inequality and tendencies so varied and necessary at present, the unity of sentiment, and the essentially lyrical quality of these canvases are evidence of a remarkable vitality. They form, very certainly, the foundations of a great art; they mark a beginning only, but a beginning of plenty and hope.

Art critic George Besson wrote that he found the '43 Group to bring, '...a new vision of living beings, and of their country...'

Individual praise was bestowed on Richard Gabriel and Ivan Peries by the purchase of their work by the Petit Palais for its permanent collection. In subsequent years praise also came for Justin Daraniyagala, Ivan Peries, Richard Gabriel and George Claessen by prizes won at biennales of Venice and Sao Paulo.

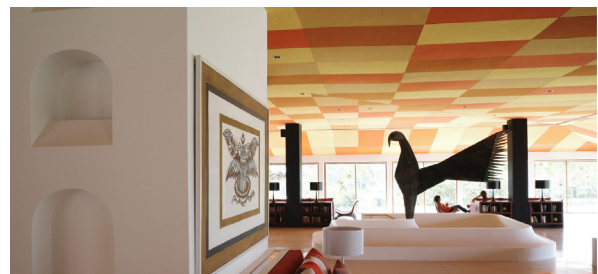
The Group held 16 group exhibitions in the 25 years of its existence, including several individual shows. The final exhibition of the group was held in 1967.

43 Group influences



43 Group influenced many others. Some 48 new and established artists were invited to exhibit with them in their many shows at home and abroad. Some of these artists were also invited to join the group as members. Some of the members were involved in education;

Richard Gabriel at St. Joseph's college, Maradana and Aubrey Collette at Royal College. They also joined others, teaching young children at a school started by Cora Abraham at Melbourne Avenue, that inspired future generations of artists like Laki Senanayake



(pictured) and Sybil Keyts, Thiagaraga and Jean Arasanayagam and Ismeth Raheem.

The Group's influence spread further, indirectly, to the many enduring projects of Geoffrey Bawa, that included the new parliament in Kotte, although Manjusri was an ex-member. Bawa's collaboration with Laki and Ena de Silva at Bentota Beach (pictured), with Laki at Kandalama, his brilliant staircase at LightHouse in Galle. Bawa's influence

also is still alive at the newly renovated Bentota Beach Hotel with new ceiling tapestries by Ena, sculptures by Laki and drawings by Ismeth Raheem.

90s Trend

90s Trend is a term coined by Jagath Weerasinghe, has seen the emergence of a new type of art with a concentration of social and political issues that has engulfed the country in recent years. Voices from the north, through the help of Thamotharampillai Sanathanan, is also making its way to the contemporary art scene in Colombo. These new artists are telling their own story and narrating their own lived experiences. Although this art does not fall into the decorative category, they speak to society at a cultural level, about social injustice and social imbalance that exist in the country.

Some of this art is also generated by the students and teachers at the University of Visual and Performing Art in Colombo, a dedicated art school that has evolved from the old colonial Maradana technical institution and the Haywood Institute. The inspiration for these new artists come from their teachers, Sarath Chandrajeewa, Chandragupta Thenewara, Priyantha Udageethara, Jagath Ravindra and Sanjeeva Kumara. And also Jagath Weeresinghe, Director of the Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology at the University of Kelaniya.

In recent years I have had the privilege to experience several art festivals held in Colombo – Colombo Biennale - Conceiving Space in 2016, Colombo Scope - Sea Change in 2019. These festivals not only bring artists in Sri Lanka together and give them opportunities to show their art and their narrative and expose them to the work of a variety of international artists and global trends in contemporary art.

In Colombo, several galleries like Saskia Fernando and JDA Perera at Horton Place and Paradise Road Café in Alfred place, give local up and coming talent a place to grow and experience professional practice.

In this presentation I have looked at a long period of evolution of Sri Lankan art and art practice with its wide variety of influences along the way. Sri Lanka is an island in the middle of the Indian ocean, a half-way point between maritime routes of the East and the West. As such, historically, it has been susceptible to the comings and goings of many cultures and social traditions.

I feel, that these influences have given the Sri Lankan artist a distinct way of creating a narrative in using the universal language of art and creativity in expressing their life and lived experience in a unique way – this, I feel is reflected in the work of the contemporary artists of Sri Lanka today.

Events that led to the fall of Kandyan Kingdom -Part 4

Dr Leonard Pinto

There is a view in Sri Lanka that most socio-economic evils in the country, including the 26-year war was the result of European colonisation, and to be truly independent and restore nationalism, we must return to the pre-colonial form of governance. It is true that Sri Lanka was governed for over 2350 years by about 190 kings, including about 20 Chola, Pandya and Dravidian rulers, and women, such as Leelawathie of Polonnaruwa and the notorious Anula of Anuradhapura, but the global trend has been a shift from monarchy to democracy, sometimes in execution of kings and on other times by reducing the monarchy to a ceremonial role or completely replacing the monarchy by parliament-senate democracies. In the history of Sri Lanka, the relationship among the king, the temple, chiefs and the citizens remained fairly even with usual political bickering, back-stabbing, assassinations and occasional battles against Indian invaders till the arrival of the European colonisers, who introduced a new factor in the relationships.

Figure 1 is a sketch of the socio-political and religious relationships that existed during the Kandyan

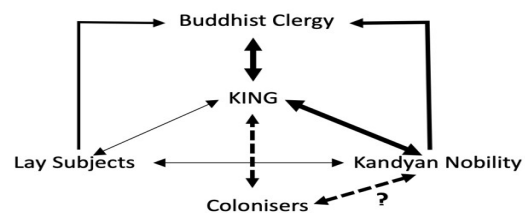


Figure 1. Relationships in the governance of Kandyan Kingdom. Thick lines – Strong Relation; Thin lines – Weak Relation; Dotted lines – illegal or intermittent relations.

period. Historically, there was a strong bond between the king, Buddhist clergy and the nobility in the kingdom. The king owned the land and the subjects worked on it. The king, through his Adigars (Ministers), Dissavas (Governors) and Rate Mahaththayas (Grama Sewaka) organised the subjects to work on land, produce food, supply labour, enrich the army and pay tax.

They were the backbone of the economy and the strength of the army. The clergy provided spiritual nourishment to lay subjects and political support to the king and chiefs. The king needed the confidence of Buddhist clergy and nobility for the stability of the kingdom. This system was not difficult with a Buddhist Sinhalese Kandyan king, but when the king is a foreigner, he had to make extra efforts to align himself with the religion, culture and the lifestyle of the Kandyan Kingdom. The last four kings of Sri

Lanka were Tamil/Thelugu-speaking Shaivite Hindus from South India (Table 1). They adapted to the situation, as demonstrated by Kirthi Sri Rajasingha's efforts in the revival of Buddhism by bringing in a Dutch ship 20 Thai monks led by Upali Mahathera to restore *upasampadava* (higher ordination), appointing Weliwita Sri Saranankara Mahathera as Sangaraja and rehabilitation of numerous temples, including the Temple of Tooth. Rajadhi Rajasinha who succeeded him, learnt Pali and Sanskrit, in addition to Sinhala, Tamil and Thelugu, wrote poetry and was a lavish patron of Buddhism. They made a significant contribution to Sinhala literature and according to Gananath Obeyesekere (2017), they were more Buddhist than Buddhist Sri Lankans.

Intermittently the king had encounters with the colonisers in battles, meetings or in signing treaties. By stealth the coloniser also approached the Kandyan nobility, who fell out with the King. This was the most dangerous path, which contributed to the collapse of the Kandyan kingdom, and for the British, having lost two battles with the Sinhalese (in 1803 and 1804), the conquest of the Kandyan kingdom without shooting a bullet. To take that path by the Kandyan nobility, the relationship between the king and the nobility must have deteriorated significantly. The deterioration in relationships would have arisen due to:

- (1) the loss or dilution of power and position in administration and finances of Kandyan nobility;
- (2) Disunity and under cutting among the Adigars;
- (3) Execution of Sinhalese people, including members of noble families and monks;
- (4) King Sri Wickrema Rajasingha's ambition to modernise Kandy city and ordering farmers to work in construction;
- (5) Infertility of Indian queens; and
- (6) the type of matrilineal succession of kings that became a policy in Kandyan kingdom, contrary to the Sinhalese royal custom of succession.

Obeyesekera (2017) considers Sri Wickrema Rajasingha to be a practising passionate Buddhist, a man of composure and majesty, who ruled according to law with dignity and firmness of mind. He says, "In my view all these cases of the executions or punishment of prominent chiefs and confiscation of lands for treason were fully justified under the law," and concludes that presentation of Sri Wickrema Rajasingha as a



Figure 2. Sri Wickrema Rajasingha

cruel king is a fabrication of British writers, particularly John Davy the British surgeon and John D'Oyly a colonial administrator. However, if we remove the British 'propaganda factor' that occurred after the fall

of the King, there were other factors before the fall, for which the King may or may not be not be fully responsible, as enumerated above.

Table 1 shows that the Indian influence on Kandyan kingdom began with Rajasinghe II with an Indian queen, and by the time of King Sri Vijaya Rajasingha, the Vaduga kings had consolidated power in Kandy. The preference for Madurai Nayakkar queens by Sinhalese kings would have been, among other things, the power of Madurai Nayak Kingdom (1529-1736) and Thanjavur Nayak Kingdom (1532-1673) in South India, with which the Kandyan Nayaks were connected. The Nayakships of Madurai, Tanjore and Gingee were governed under the major power of the Vijayanagara Empire (Karnataka kingdom), which lasted till 1565. Later the three kingdoms became independent of the empire and grew in power, culture and literature. When Chokkanatha Nayak (1662-1682) of Madurai wished to marry the daughter of his uncle, Vijaya Raghava Nayak of Thanjavur, the latter refused to give her daughter in marriage, and Chokkanatha invaded Thanjavur in 1673. As Vijaya Raghava was losing in the battle, he blasted off her daughter with other women in the fort, so that Chokkanatha would not take her. Vijaya Raghava was captured and killed, ending the Thanjavur kingdom. Madurai fell to Muslim sultans in 1736, ending Madurai Nayak kingdom. So, when Sinhalese kings became interested in Madurai princesses, Madurai Nayaks were not in the peak of their power.

Lorna Dewaraja (1974) is of opinion that the reason which prompted the Kandyan Sinhalese kings, particularly Sri Vira Parakrama Narendra Sinha (1707-1739), the last Sinhalese king to marry a queen from Madurai was to quell the power of his rebellious chiefs who were coveting the throne, and to produce a pure royal line 'unmixed' with the nobility, as hinted in the Sinhala poem *Mandarampura Puvata*. However, an account in a Tamil document titled, *Narrative of the Affairs of Kandidesam* states that Vijayaranga Chokkanatha (1704-1731) was enraged that a Kandyan delegation was seeking a royal bride from Madurai, and the delegation had to return with the daughter of Pitti Nayakkar from a poor family. She became the queen of Sri Vira Parakrama Narendra Sinha. The Dutch sources that provided transport to the Pitti Nayakkar, his daughter ('queen'), son and wife's brother also confirm that they were not from the ruling Nayak families. Dewaraja (1974) agrees that the military power of Thanjavur and Madurai was another reason for matrimonial alliances with the Nayakkars, as Vimaladharmasuriya I (1592-1604) and Senarath (1604-1635) received military assistance from South India to fight their common enemy the Portuguese, and Senarath's son, Rajasingha II (1635-1687) had espoused a princess from Madurai, as part of the price, which the Kandyan kings had to pay when they obtained military aid. *Culavamsa*, confirms that

the rightful queen of Rajasingha II was a bride from Madurai. Although the King had a Kandyan lady of noble birth as secondary wife, to whom he gave lands and wealth, the queen rank was reserved to Madurai bride. Madurai queen bore him a son, who ascended the throne as Vimaladharmasuriya II (1687-1707).

The Indian Nayakkar community in Kandy and Gampola grew with the arrival of more queens and more royal concubines for the subsequent kings. With them came their relatives and associates. They became powerful financially, held key administrative posts and advised the King. Ordinary Sinhalese felt inferior to Nayakkars but accepted them because they embraced Buddhism and acted piously. Naturally, the Sinhalese royal chiefs were not happy with this situation. The leader of the anti-Nayakkar movement was Pilimathalauva, who was appointed Maha Adikaram (Prime Minister) by King Rajadhi Rajasingha in 1790.

Pilimathalauva demonstrates a two-pronged approach to Kandyan monarchy; on one hand, he wanted to get rid of Nayakkars and restore the kingdom to the Sinhalese Kandyans as a nationalist, and on the other he wished to be the king with an egoistic motive. His approach is demonstrated as he:

- (1) attempted to destabilise Rajadhi Rajasingha;
- (2) nominated younger Kannasamy instead of the legal heir, elder Muthusamy from among the seven contenders to the throne from the children of queen's brothers, against the wish of Rajadhi Rajasingha and Moratota Dhammakkhanda Mahanayaka Thero of Malwatte;
- (3) controlled the governance of inexperienced Sri Wickrema Rajasingha, who was 18 and misled him against the British;
- (4) entertained deals with the British including the surrender of the British in 1803 at Kandy and a proposal to build a road from Trincomalee to Colombo via Kandy;
- (5) created division in the Kandyan court among the Sinhalese chiefs;
- (6) proposed the marriage of his son Kirthi Bandara to a granddaughter of Kirthi Sri Rajasingha to oust Nayakkars; and
- (7) attempted the assassination of Sri Wickrema Rajasingha with the assistance of a Malay Muhandiram Asna, his accomplices and with the intelligence provided by Balvattala Mudiyanse (Ratnasinghe 2004). Besides this plot there were other plots, including poisoning food by a royal cook, cutting the neck by a barber and stabbing the King in the bathroom by Siyambalapitiye Satambi. Sri Wickrema Rajasingha began to suspect Pilimathalauva as early as 1803 when he fled to Hanguranketha, when the British invaded Kandy as he told Major McDonald after his capture. The King initially stripped Pilimathalauva of his Maha Adikaram status and later had him executed on 26 August 1811. The King also suspected him of the

murder of Second Adikaram Erewwala and Dombagamuwe Dissawe, as they opposed the ideas of Maha Adikaram. Pilimathalauva was found guilty by the Royal Court, comprising Sinhalese chiefs.

There were executions of important Sinhalese persons, such as Ratwatte, Daulagala and Leuke Dissawe, Mampitiya Loku Bandara, a son of King Kirthi Sri Rajasinghe by Mampitiye Kumarihamy, monks Paranathala and Sooriyagoda theros and villagers who did not participate in the redevelopment of Kandy Lake. The King wanted to modernise Kandy, including Kandy Lake, Maligawe with the Paththiripuwu, Udawatte kele, roads etc., and this needed labour and finances. The villagers, village-headmen and even dissawes who failed to comply with the King's orders were punished, sometimes with death. They preferred to harvest their crops, rather than construct the lake. Add to all that came, a biological problem of the Nayakkar queens – infertility. Having no male successor to King Sri Vira Parakrama Narendra Sinha, the last Sinhalese king, the successor was chosen according to the *Marumakkathayam Law* of Nayakkars of Malabar. This was contrary to the Sinhalese law of kingship succession from the father to the son or brother to brother. According to *Marumakkathayam Law* the brother of the queen would be the next king (see Table 1).

Thus, Sri Vijaya Rajasingha, the brother-in-law of Sri Vira Parakrama Narendra Sinha became the next king. When Sri Vijaya Rajasingha wanted a queen from Madurai and sent envoys there in 1739, Madurai Kingdom has been reduced to anarchy and the remnants of Nayak families thought it was a blessing to accept the invitation from Kandy, in contrast to the reception that Narendra Singha's delegation received earlier. Two brothers, Rama Krishnappa Nayaka and Narenappa Nayaka, who were kinsmen of Bangaru Tirumala Nayak (governor under Vijayaranga Chokkanatha and a member of the royal family), made their way to Ramand to meet the Kandyan envoys. Narenappa was happy to offer his daughter, and they all came with their families to Kandy, as they were now dispossessed and landless in South India. Narenappa was destined not only to be the father-in-law of one king, but the father of the next two kings of Kandy. His two sons, one 5 years old and the other an infant were to become King Kirthi Sri Rajasingha and Rajadhi Rajasingha respectively. However, the selection of Rajadhi Rajasingha does not conform to *Marumakkathayam Law*, as he was the brother of Kirthi Sri Rajasingha, and the Nayakkars seems to have manoeuvred their way through.

During this period, the royalty of the queen seems to have superseded the Sinhalese ethnicity in selecting the heir to the throne. Thus, although Narendra Singha had no children by the Madurai queen, he had a son by a secondary wife of the Vellala caste. But his claim to the throne was not considered as his

mother lacked the royal status. Although Kirthi Sri Rajasingha had no children by any of his Madurai queens, he had two sons and six daughters by his favourite secondary wife, Mampitiye Kumarihamy, daughter of the Dissawe of Bintenna and granddaughter of the respected Mampitiye Dissawe. Her two sons were overlooked in selecting the next king and the choice fell on the King's brother who, became Rajadhi Rajasingha. In this selection some Sinhalese nobility and Buddhist clergy, including Weliwita Sri Saranankara therio supported the South Indian practice.

The fourth and last king of the Kandyan Kingdom was Sri Wickrema Rajasingha (1798-1815), a Madurai youth who was living in the palace and whose parentage is still open to doubt (Dewaraja 1974). One story is that he is the son of Venkata Perumal the chief priest of Rameshwaram Temple and Subbamma. When Venkat Perumal died, Upendramma a queen of Rajadhi Rajasingha invited her younger sister Subbamma to be another queen to the King, and Kannasamy the future Sri Wickrema Rajasingha arrived with his mother. Another story is that Subbamma came alone to Kandy and Pilimathalauva frequently visited her at Peradeniya and fathered Kannasamy.



Table 1. Summary of the Indian Vaduga kings in the Kandyan Kingdom

King of Kandy	Reign	Ethnicity	Relationship	Period
Vimaladharmasuriya I	1592-1604	Sinhalese	Qn. Dona Catarina (Kusumasena Devi)	Portuguese
Senarath	1604-1635	Sinhalese	Cousin of Vimala I, Qn. Dona Catarina	Portuguese
Rajasinghe II	1635-1687	Sinhalese	Son of Senarath	Port/Dutch
Vimaladharmasuriya II	1687-1707	Indian-Sinhalese	Son of Rajasinghe II	Dutch
Sri Vira Parakrama Narendra Singha	1707-1739	Indian-Sinhalese	Son of Vimaladharmasuriya II	Dutch
Sri Vijaya Rajasinha	1739-1747	Indian	B-I-L of Narndra Singha	Dutch
Kirthi Sri Rajasinha	1747-1782	Indian	B-I-L of Sri Vijaya Rajasingha	Dutch
Rajadhi Rajasingha	1782-1798	Indian	Brother of Kirthi Sri Rajasinghe	Dutch/British
Sri Wickrema Rajasingha	1798 -1815	Indian	Son of Subbamma, Rajadhi's S-I-L	British



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Leading Sri Lankan High Achievers In Australia

Srikantha Nadarajah*

There are several people of Sri Lankan origin, too numerous to mention, who had successful careers and contributed to society in Australia. However, it is worthwhile to identify those who can be regarded as high achievers, on the basis of having made a significant contribution at professional levels. It goes beyond having successful careers, which a larger number of people can claim to have achieved. We can consider those who are well recognised in various sectors.

I acknowledge that the list of people in this article may have inadvertently overlooked some who deserve to be recognised for their achievements and regret such omissions.

In law, foremost among them was Professor Christopher Weeramanthy. He served as Emeritus Professor of Law at Monash University from 1972 to 1991 and judge of International Court of Justice until his retirement as its Vice President in 2000. He was a highly regarded academic and judge at the highest levels in local and international affairs.

Another notable achiever in law was Dr Wickrema Weerasooriya, Associate Professor of Law at Monash University from 1990 to 2001, and an authority on Law of Banking in Australia. Among his publications was one on early Sri Lankan settlers in Australia. His doctoral thesis was on Natukotai Chettiar and growth of Merchant Banking in Sri Lanka. He was Sri Lanka's High Commissioner in Canberra from 1986 to 1990.

An outstanding achiever in medicine is Professor Siri Kannangara, who is a rheumatologist and foremost authority on sports medicine in Australia. After graduating from University of Ceylon, he proceeded to Guys Hospital, University of London to specialise in sports medicine. He captained the hockey and table tennis teams at university in Colombo and also played basketball during his student days, which gave him the incentive to follow sports medicine. He has lived in Australia since 1977 and served as physician and consultant to Australia's Olympic teams as well as World cup events. He has been Professor of Medicine, Sydney University, and has been awarded the Order of Australia for his contribution to the field of medicine.

Professor David de Kretser had a very successful career in the medical profession before becoming Governor of Victoria. He obtained a Doctorate of Medicine from Monash University in 1969. He is an infertility specialist, was foundation director of Monash Institute of Medical Research and Associate Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences. He is a Fellow of Australian

Academy of Science and was appointed Governor of Victoria in 2006. He was awarded the highest honour, Companion of the Order of Australia.

Dr Kethieswaran Thuraisingham was a very successful surgeon in Sri Lanka and Australia. After graduating in Colombo in 1960, he proceeded to England and was awarded Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1964. He was a surgeon at several hospitals in Sri Lanka for ten years. He served in Campbelltown Hospital from 1978 until 2013. He was an outstanding general surgeon for over three decades in Australia. He was also founding President of the local community sports club-where he excelled as a tennis player.

Professor Raina MacIntyre is a leading authority on infectious disease management in Australia. She was born in Sri Lanka and after an early education, migrated to Australia. She is the Head, School of Public Health & Community Medicine and Professor Infectious Disease Epidemiology at University of New South Wales. She is also an advisor to the Australian government on management of COVID 19.

Darrel Weinman was educated at St. Peters College Colombo. He graduated from University of Ceylon with first class honours. In England he was awarded Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1962. He was an outstanding neurosurgeon in Colombo from 1965 until migrating to Sydney in 1975. He had a very successful career as a general practitioner in Sydney for close to four decades until his death in 2018.

An outstanding achiever in Auditing is Nihal Fernandopulle. He was educated at Benedict College, Colombo, and qualified as a Chartered Accountant. In Colombo he served in various parts of the world including Zambia and PNG and became head of Audit at State Bank of NSW from 1989. Thereafter he was Head of Audit at Reserve Bank of Australia, reporting to the Governor and Board of Directors. Thereafter he became Consultant to Asian Development Bank to set up auditor generals' offices in Vietnam, Cambodia, Pakistan, Indonesia, PNG and Laos as well as advisor to the Bangladesh government for two decades.

We can all celebrate the career and achievements of Shemara Wikremanayake, who has broken all barriers including the glass ceiling and colour bar to reach the pinnacle of her career as Managing Director of Macquarie Bank, one of the largest investment banks in the world. Born in England, educated in England and Australia, she worked as a corporate lawyer, before joining the Macquarie Group in 1987 and being appointed Managing Director in 2018. She is the only female CEO among Australia's 20 biggest companies and the first Asian –Australian woman to head an ASX 200 listed company.

Arun Abey is an outstanding achiever as an entrepreneur in investment financial services. In

1983, he was a co-founder of IPAC Securities which became one of the world's largest financial planning firms after merging with Axa Asia Pacific. He was also founder of Walsh Bay Partners providing advisory services on financial planning. In 2019 he was awarded the Order of Australia for his services to the financial planning sector.

John Koch had an outstanding career in commercial banking. Educated at St Peters College, Colombo, and University of Ceylon Peradeniya, where he was also tennis champion. He was awarded a scholarship by the Commonwealth Bank to complete tertiary studies. There after he achieved outstanding success as a bank manager, and at the age of 52 years was promoted as General Manager retail Banking in one of the largest banks in Australia.

Yasmine Gooneratne was Professor of English at Macquarie University and Foundation Director of Postcolonial literature from 1990 to 1993. She is a world authority on Jane Austen. She was awarded the Order of Australia in 1990.

Laksiri Jayasuriya had an illustrious career in both Sri Lanka and Australia. He graduated with first class honours in psychology from University of Sydney in 1954 and was made the first Asian academic in the same university, soon after graduation. After a short period in the University of Colombo, he returned to Australia, and in 1974 was appointed Foundation Professor of Social Administration, University of Western Australia. He was one of the first Asians to be appointed professor at an Australian University. In Australia, he played an active role in advisory bodies in both state and federal governments.

Professor Premachandra Athukorala, graduated from Peradeniya University and was appointed Professor of Economics at the Australian National University from 2013. He is a consultant to the World Bank Asian Development Bank and the International Labour Organization. He is also a visiting Fellow of universities in the United Kingdom and USA. He is also an economic consultant for the Sri Lankan government and the Asia Pacific region.

Dr. Michael Roberts graduated from University of Ceylon in 1961 with First Class honours in History, and was a Rhodes Scholar to Oxford University in 1962 for outstanding achievements in sports and studies. He was a lecturer in History, Peradeniya University from 1961 to 1976. Subsequently, he was Associate Professor of Anthropology, University of Adelaide from 1977 to 2003. His major work supported by Percy Colin-Thome titled *People in Between* covering history of the Burgher community in Sri Lanka, is a landmark publication.

Dilip Kumar has been very successful in the business sector for over three decades. He has been Managing Director, Peninsula Motor Group. He is Managing Director for Hayundai Commercial

Vehicles. He is a strong supporter of Australian Rugby and has been Chairman of Australian Rugby Union.

Dr Lakshman Jayaweera is a Sydney based chemical engineer, who has been in the forefront of resource development, alternative energy, environment and chemical sectors in Australia. He founded a leading chemical company Hydromet Corporation in 1987. In 2013 he was appointed Chairman /Director General, Board of Investments in Sri Lanka. Dr Jayaweera holds a PHD in Chemical Engineering from the University of New South Wales.

Navaranjini Olagasegaram was an outstanding musician as a singer and piano teacher. She was a Fellow of the Trinity College of Music and Licentiate of the London School of Music. She won the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation competitions for English classical singing, back to back. In Australia she won several awards for singing including solo parts in productions of Sydney Philharmonia as well as lead roles in 14 operas of North Sydney Opera Company. She was also the only Asian to become an examiner for the Australian Music Examination Board.

Sunetra Nadarajah was also an outstanding musician and piano music teacher in Sri Lanka and Australia. She was a Fellow of the Trinity College of Music, London, with Teachers and Performers Licentiate. She was the youngest lecturer at the Teachers Training College, Colombo and head of the music division. She was accredited by the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and Music Examination Board and had a very successful career as a piano teacher for over three decades in Sydney. She had an outstanding success rate with her pupils, including coaching some for Fellowship examinations.

Michelle de Kretser is an outstanding writer and novelist. She was awarded the Commonwealth Writers Prize for her novel *The Hamilton Case*. She was Foundation Editor, *Australian Women's Book Review*. She has won the Miles Franklin Award for a record three occasions.

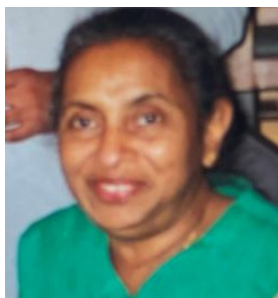
There are several others of Sri Lankan background, too numerous to mention, who had successful careers in medical, legal and academic professions, university lecturers, professors, accountants and business leaders in Australia, which shows considerable depth of talent, and reflects highly on our section of society.

*** Srikantha Nadarajah had a career in corporate and merchant banking over a period of four decades with leading international banks and financial institutions in Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia and Australia. He has an MBA from UTS and is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Bankers.**

OBITUARIES

Dr Nalini Kumari Kappagoda

21 Jan 1936 - 23 July 2021



It is with much sadness that I record the demise of Dr Nalini Kappagoda, lately of Bundanoon and Killara. Dr Nalini Kappagoda, a long-time resident, of West Pymble, Killara, and Bundanoon, in New South Wales, passed away at the age of 85 on 23 July. She was one of the most brilliant products of the Ceylon Medical College, from where she passed out as a doctor with First Class Honours in 1960. She was most likely the only student in the history of the Medical College to collect a bag of 4 gold medals during a studentship. In 1958 she was awarded the Hazarai Gold Medal for the best student at the Third MBBS examination. In 1958 she was also awarded the Loos Gold medal for pathology. In the same year she was also awarded the Mathew Gold Medal for Forensic Medicine. In her final year in 1960 she was awarded the Dadabhoy Gold Medal for Medicine. She subsequently obtained her PhD in Pathology from the University of London and was a Fellow of the Royal Australian Society of Pathologists.

With such a stunning record as a medical student, Nalini could have elected to specialise in any branch of medicine that she would care to choose. Gentle, and soft spoken by nature, she was modest and totally unassuming almost to the point of self-effacement. It was not surprising that she chose instead to be a microbiologist in which field she shone both in Sri Lanka, and in Australia, where she worked at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney for many decades until retirement.

Born in 1936 in Kandy to a family of eight, her father GDA Abeyratne was a renowned teacher at Dharmarajah College, where his prowess as an educationist was amply demonstrated when he was appointed the founding Principal of Vidyartha College, Kandy, a school since widely recognised as one of the best government schools in the Central Province. Her sisters Chitra, Hema, Rani, and Karmini were to follow the career path of their father, all taking to the teaching profession. Her sisters Hema and Chitra rose to be Principals of Visakha Vidyalaya, Bambalapitiya, and of Anula Vidyalaya, Nugegoda, and Musaeus College, Colombo, a unique and remarkable feat

both in sororal achievement, as well as in the field of education management in Sri Lanka. Nalini had three brothers Ananda, Asoka, and Chandra, men of great eminence in their chosen careers, all of whom have predeceased her.

It was in the Medical College that she met the love of her life, Medduma B Kappagoda, who chose to specialise in ophthalmology, a field in which he distinguished himself in Sydney where they migrated to in the 1970s after a brief spell of work in the UK. Affectionately known as “Kapper”, Medduma Kappagoda sadly passed away in 2004 after a brief but devastating attack of throat cancer. Kapper and Nalini were the proud parents of Chamari, and Astika, who followed in their parent’s footsteps and entered the medical profession in Australia. Sadly Charmari, a paediatrician, who was married to Dr Craig Winter, then Director of Emergency Medicine at the North Melbourne Hospital, passed away following complications arising after the birth of their fourth child Blake. It was a few months after Chamari’s death that Kapper was diagnosed with cancer, leaving Nalini to handle both personal losses, which she managed to do in her own quiet way, most stoically.

Sometime in the early 1990s both Kapper and Nalini, contemplating retirement, decided to build a holiday home in the very salubrious Southern Highlands of Sydney, called Bundanoon. They moved to their delightful architect designed home after retirement, and both engrossed themselves in the pursuit of water colour painting. Nalini soon specialised as a botanical artist and was a prominent member of the Botanical Art Society of Australia with whom she exhibited on a regular basis her artistry was simply stunning, and my children and I are the proud and happy recipients of the many products of her artistry. Within a few months after our own migration to Australia, in 1984, we were the delighted hosts to a visit from the Kappagodas who since then continued to be very close friends with us. They had migrated almost 10 years previously. I had known Kapper from my school days where he was a form senior to me, but with whom I associated closely. Nalini and my wife Tulsi became very close friends and our two families including the children remained part of a close and binding family friendship. When our son Harsha married in Sri Lanka in 2001, the Kappagodas made a special trip to share the joy and happiness associated with the wedding. In fact, they had booked tickets to fly to England where our second son Sumal married in 2004, but were unable to make it, as tragedy struck with the passing of their beloved daughter Chamari a few weeks prior to the wedding.

The Ceylon Society of Australia was first mooted in 1997 at an informal meeting held at my home in Wahroonga at which a few invitees were present to discuss a possible course of action. Kapper and Nalini were among those present, and they hosted

a subsequent informal luncheon meeting at their home in Bundanoon to further progress the formation of the Society. When the Society was formally established later, Dr MB Kappagoda was one of its seven Foundation Members. Nalini was a source of great support during the early years of the Society often making the three-hour trip from Bundanoon with Kapper. She was also one of a small band of ladies who saw to the catering arrangements for guests after each meeting. The first issue of the Society's journal carried a recipe from Nalini for the dessert Champagne with Summer Berries, which in fact she served after the luncheon at the informal meeting in Bundanoon in 1997.

To me personally, first the demise of Kapper, and now of Nalini, has made our world smaller, and less enjoyable. Memories of many holidays spent together by our two families keep crowding in at this sad hour. A most sincere friend has gone to her eternal rest. Nalini Kappagoda was a source of strength to all who knew her, especially those who had the privilege of enjoying a close friendship with her. She was very gentle in her ways and treated everyone with an abundance of affection and concern. Her worldly wisdom will be lost to all her family and close friends. Nalini is survived by her son Astika, daughter in law Victoria, granddaughter Maitriya, son in law Dr Craig Winter, grandchildren Daniel, Serena, Lara, and Blake. Her only surviving siblings Chitra and Kamani live in Sri Lanka. May Nalini be blessed with the attainment of the supreme Bliss of Nibbana.

Hugh Karunanayake



Flowering Gum. Watercolour by Nalini Kappagoda. (1999)

Dr Brendon Gooneratne 28 March 1938 - 21 June 2021 A Personal Recollection of a Friend



I was saddened to hear from Hugh Karunanayake of Brendon Gooneratne's passing. Hugh asked if I would write a tribute to Brendon in *The Ceylankan*. It is my privilege to do so.

I first remember Brendon as BWM Gooneratne, amongst many other senior boys, at school in Royal College, some three to four years senior to me, a school prefect, cricketer and athlete of some distinction. As youngsters we knew initials but not personal names.

I also remember him acting in the production of RL Stevenson's *Treasure Island* produced by Form 3 Royal College in 1951, when I was in my final year at Royal Primary School.

I had however never met him until the mid-1970s in Sydney, Australia. I was meeting up with Tommy Kelaart to go to a cricket match at the Sydney Cricket Ground. Brendon was also in that group. It was a good day full of good conversation and laughter and a day from which a good personal and family friendship was built.

Jilska and I were living in Winston Hills and Brendon and Yasmine in Dunmore Road, Epping. He and Yasmine then moved to Cheltenham Road, Cheltenham and, quite by coincidence, our family moved to Cobran Road, on the bush side of the railway a few years later. While we were moving Brendon and Yasmine afforded us a lot of interim storage space when the shift to Cheltenham took longer than planned. This was a great help.

It also seemed sensible for Brendon to become our family doctor and we were very happy with our decision. On two occasions, outside normal GP duties, Jilska and I had to use Brendon for some emergency major repair work. I will recount my experience. During one of my twice weekly evening squash sessions with Tony Rankine a careless and over enthusiastic racquet swing by me split my top lip in half. A visit to Ryde Hospital Outpatients' Clinic would have taken too long. After a quick call to Brendon he operated on me on the floor of his study and library. Many injections and stitches later I went home. The result did not look pretty and I anticipated a bad scar and perhaps a moustache to cover it. Today there is no trace of any such accident. His nurse at Trelawney Street, Eastwood told me at the time "Doctor is an excellent stitcher".

We found that we enjoyed one another's company and the many occasions we had together were embellished by the wonderful cooking of

Yasmine or Jilska. The food was always wonderful but I think what we all enjoyed most was the conversation and humour. We would talk for hours, not necessarily in total agreement, but satisfied to respect the differences. No subject was taboo. Literature, history, sport and politics were all given an airing.

Brendon was a man of great intelligence and many talents. A sportsman with a good school and university career, medical doctor but one with a complete education taking in literature and the classics, often in the original and very widely read. He was also committed to preserving the world's plant and animal kingdoms. He founded 'Project Jonah' to stop whaling (and insisted on playing 'whale song tunes' to us during dinner!). He was active in protecting elephants and was rightly irritated when an early request to visit South Africa (in apartheid days) was rejected and later reversed if he was prepared to visit with an "Honorary White visa".

Brendon was forthright and I think inclined to push to get his own way; not the most popular way to success and as friends we were aware of this and needed to be forthright in our own ways to disagree or not comply. This never interfered with our mutual friendship. We also found Brendon to be very attentive and caring. I would like to share another personal experience to illustrate.

When the owner of a private firm I was working for decided to shut down his company I was without a job for some months. While I was evaluating what to turn to next there were the usual good wishes from friends and acquaintances which, of course, were appreciated. From Brendon I had a weekly personal visit or telephone call and notations about various jobs in Australian and Sri Lankan newspapers which he thought I may be interested in. Rather more than the average call to duty, in my opinion but typical of the Brendon I knew.

For family reasons Brendon decided to retire in Sri Lanka and was able to persuade Yasmine, Channa and Devika to join him. He was proud and happy to have bought or built two lovely homes there. Jilska and I have visited them in both locations. Sadness, however, is never far away and the death of their son Channa must have been almost impossible to bear. He remained a committed Sri Lankan, proud Royalist, proud of his family and in my mind loyal to his friends.

In today's strange Covid19 confined social scene, if it were only possible to entertain two visitors to dinner in our home at a time, then Brendon and Yasmine would be very high on our preferred list and what a pleasant evening would await us.

Brendon was a "character", with his idiosyncrasies – sometimes misunderstood – but I was happy to have known him and have called him a friend.

Anthony van der Wall

TRIBUTES TO SUNIL DE SILVA
A note attributing that all photographs
published in the
May 2021 issue of
***The Ceylankan* in "Tributes to late**
Sunil De Silva" was by SIDAT DE SILVA
was omitted.
We apologise for the oversight.

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.



Please diarise - Members and Guests are welcome:
 1). The next General Meeting in Sydney is scheduled for **Sunday 29 August 2021**.
 2). The AGM & Social is scheduled for **Saturday 27 November 2021**.

Note: All meetings are subject to Covid19 restrictions/lockdowns. Events that go ahead will be held strictly in compliance with safety regulations as required.

Notice of Meeting

The **Third General Meeting** for 2021 will take place on **Sunday 29 August 2021 at 6.30 pm** at the Pennant Hills Community Centre, Main Hall on Level 1, Ramsay Road (off Yarrara Road), Pennant Hills. Admission is free to members and guests.

The Social following the Talk will have some short-eats provided since Covid19 restrictions do not permit the bringing in of food by various people. A donation to defray expenses would be appreciated.

**The guest speaker on the evening will be
RODERICK DE SYLVA on the Development of the
Tea Industry in Sri Lanka**



Tea is the second most consumed beverage in the world next to water. In 1824 tea was experimentally planted by the British in Sri Lanka, from seedlings from China and India, with the first commercial tea plantation begun with a small estate in Loolecondera near Kandy in 1867. The first tea

factory was built there in 1872, and in 1875 the first consignment was shipped to the London Tea Auctions. Tea planting then began to overtake coffee, which was devastated by a fungal blight known as Coffee Rust.

The first public tea auction in Sri Lanka was held in 1883 by Sommerville & Co. The Colombo Tea Auction is the oldest and biggest Tea Auction centre in the world. Tea is mostly sold through Tea Auctions in the major tea producing countries. The tea brokers and potential buyers taste and evaluate thousands of teas before buying them at the auctions, based on mostly overseas customers' requirements. The teas may be shipped as they are or blended into consistent standards, ready to be packed.

In 1925 the Tea Research Institute was established for research into maximising yields and methods of production. In 1955 the first commercial vegetative propagation of tea plants commenced from clonal varieties rather than from seedlings, and in 1965 Sri Lanka became the world's largest exporter of tea. Tea in Sri Lanka is grown in six principal regions, and categorised by elevation as High, Medium and Low Grown, with each district and elevation imparting its own distinct characteristics, in conjunction with geological, soil, climate, wind and rain patterns and manufacturing processes. Ceylon Tea has a unique flavour and is sought after.

In the 1970s the government nationalised the tea estates, and in the early 1990s, many of the tea estates were again privatised. Tea is still the main export for Sri Lanka and holds a vital place in the economy.

Roderick joined Lipton Ceylon in 1973 as a 'Trainee Tea Executive' after his schooling at St Joseph's and St Peter's Colleges, Colombo. The title Tea Executive encompassed the roles of Tea Taster, Tea Buyer, Tea Blender and Marketer of tea.

After training in the administration and support departments, he learned aspects of tea cultivation and manufacturing during a short stay on the model Lipton tea estate, Dambattenne in Haputale. He then entered the world of tea, specialising to be a

Tea Taster. It is a role much like that of a Wine Taster, with many similarities, as tea quality is impacted by ecological, climate and manufacturing factors. Besides tasting, the task of buying at the tea auctions is a challenge requiring a different set of skills, with the additional skillset needed to blend different teas to achieve a consistent standard.

Roderick spent 14 years with Lipton Colombo, during which time Lipton was acquired by Unilever, with Brooke Bond also being acquired by Unilever several years later. He climbed the ladder to be a senior Tea Executive, with time in Malawi and Singapore as Acting General Manager for the Unilever Tea Divisions there.

A few years after he migrated to Sydney in 1987, he was head hunted back to Unilever by an English expat he had trained in tea tasting in Sri Lanka and joined their Tea Division in 1994, where he tasted and bought teas from the tea auction centres around the world's tea producing countries. He had the responsibility for blending the teas from samples, before releasing the blends for packing by the packing plant in Melbourne, into the Lipton, Bushells and LanChoo brands of tea.

The 10 years in this role came to an end when Unilever decided to close the packing plant in Australia and import the brands as a finished product from bigger volume packing plants around the world, based on the same blend standards established in Australia, and this followed the exit of the other large packer, Tetley.

With the end of his time in the tea industry, Roderick moved careers into Compliance roles in Health Safety Environment and Quality Management. He retired recently from full time work, but has remained working part-time in this field.

WANTED...YOUR LITERARY CONTRIBUTIONS

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

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

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

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

MEMBERSHIP RATES

- **General Subscriptions for Australia:** \$35 per calendar year;
- **Pensioners' subscriptions:** \$25 per calendar year;
- **Sri Lanka:** Rs.3000 per calendar year;
- **Overseas members from USA/UK/Canada/Israel/Thailand and other countries:** \$45 per calendar year. If payment is not possible in Aust Dollars, please pay by Bank Draft or Bank Transfer in USDollars or Pounds Sterling and add Aust \$10 to the Aust \$45 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, P O 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: CTBAAU2S
Reference: Payee Name

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

Congratulations and a Warm Welcome to our New Members

RONALD CHANDRA ABEYDEERA, Patterson
Lakes, VIC 3197;
ANIL AMUNUGAMA, Delahey VIC 3037;
ROY FOENANDER, Taralgon, VIC 3844;
KELUM JAYASENA, Cooparoo, QLD 4151;
DOYNE EVARISTUS JOACHIM, Kings Langley
NSW 2147;
CLAUDE PERERA, Castle Hill NSW 2154;
ADAM RAFFEL, Glebe, NSW 2037.

GIFT SUBSCRIPTIONS

MARGARET DODD, Santa Barbara California
USA (from Hemal Gurusinghe, Convenor
Melbourne Chapter)

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, August and November.

If you know of anyone, please contact as relevant:

- CSA President Pauline Gunewardene

Mobile: +61 419 447 665

Email: paulineg@ozemail.com.au

- Melbourne Chapter Convenor Hemal Gurusinghe

Mobile: +61 427 725 740

Email: hemguru@hotmail.com

- Colombo Chapter Secretary Anandalal Nanayakkara

Mobile: +94 77 327 2989

Email: anandalal10@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.

Now, with the constant rise in costs of delivery of the Journal to members worldwide, we need to look at additional sources of revenue. Accordingly, the Committee has decided to accommodate advertising and promotional matter in the form of loose-leaf flyers, but not as part of the body content of the Journal.

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.

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Your nominee will have four quarterly issues
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Treasurer, Deepak Pritamdas
on 0434 860 188



Flowering Gum. Watercolour by Nalini Kappagoda. (1999).



White Waratah. Watercolour by Nalini Kappagoda (2004).