

Keeping Our Heritage Alive
CSA

The Ceylanikaum

The Journal of the Ceylon Society of Australia



COVER STORY

Mid-20th Century Colombo Fort & The Pagoda Tea Rooms

By Hugh Karunanayake & Sujiv Fonseka



The Ceylon Society of Australia

PRESIDENT

Pauline Gunewardene
Mobile 0419 447 665
Int. 61 2 9736 3987
paulineg@ozemail.com.au

VICE-PRESIDENT

Dr Srilal Fernando

SECRETARY

Sunimal Fernando
smfernando@optusnet.com.au
Int. 61 2 9476 6852 Mob. 0404 462 412

TREASURER & PUBLIC OFFICER

Deepak Pritamdas
Mobile 0434 860 188
PO Box 489 Blacktown NSW 2148
deepakpsl@yahoo.com

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Harry de Sayrah OAM, MJF.
Mobile 0415 402 724
harold.166@hotmail.com

PUBLICATIONS

Sunil de Silva
Int. + 61 2 4340 5940
sunil.desilva41@gmail.com

EDITOR/LIBRARIAN

Doug Jones (LIFE MEMBER)
Mobile 0415 378 861
12/11 Garthowen Crescent Castle Hill NSW 2154
dougjay20@gmail.com

SOCIAL CONVENOR

Amal Wahab
Int. + 61 2 411 888 182
awahab15555@gmail.com

LIFE MEMBERS

Hugh & Tulsi Karunanayake
Mobile 0448 998 024 Int. + 61 3 9878 5307
karu@internode.net.au

EX-OFFICIO

Thiru Arumugam Leslie Perera
Int. + 61 2 8850 4798 Mobile: 0418 230 842
thiru.aru@gmail.com lesanvee@bigpond.com

MELBOURNE CHAPTER CONVENOR

Hemal Gurusinghe
Mobile 0427 725 740
hemguru@hotmail.com

COLOMBO CHAPTER

Convenor/Local President

M.D.(Tony) Saldin
+9411 2936402 (Off.) +9411 2931315 (Res.)
Fax: +9411 2936377 Mobile: +94 777 363366
email: saldincan@sltnet.lk

Immediate Past President

Deshamanya Tissa Devendra
+9411 2501 489 email: tisdev@sltnet.lk

Vice-President

Fredrick Medis
+ 0722 256993
email: fredrickmedis@gmail.com

Local Hon. Secretary

Anandalal Nanayakkara
+077 3272989
email: anandalal10@gmail.com

Local Hon. Treasurer

M. Asoka T. de Silva
Int. 011 282 2933 Mob. +94 775097517
email: desilvaasoka@yahoo.com
Committee Members
Srilal Perera
077 5743785 email: srilalp@ymail.com

Daya Wickramatunga

+9411 2786783/0773 174164
email: dashanwick@gmail.com

The Ceylankan

CONTENTS

• From the Editor	3
• Our Readers Write	4
• Stanley Kirinde - A gentle & cultured Artist by Mahinda Wijesingha	6
• The extraordinary Alagu Subramaniam by Premila Thuraiatnam	7
• Life in Colombo in the mid-20th Century by Hugh Karunanayake	11
• The Pagoda Tea Rooms -An Icon bids goodbye - Joint Cover Story by Sujiv Fonseka	13
• Pearl Fisheries in the Gulf of Mannar by Thiru Arumugam	19
Events that led to the fall of the Kandyan Kingdom by Dr Leonard Pinto	24
• Book Review by Jeremy de Lima	27
• Sinhalese Lascorins of the British Army in Ceylon by Tony Saldin	28
Appreciations – Dr Robert Grant Sourjah by Hugh Karunanayake	32

From the Editor

With much sadness we record the passing of Dr Robert Sourjah in October after suffering a fatal stroke. He was 95 years of age. Robert was a pioneer member of the Ceylon Society and until recently continued to play a prominent role in the activities of the CSA. He was named the Grand Old Man of his alma mater Trinity College, Kandy. He was the first Captain of Trinity Rugby team in the Bradby Shield matches against Royal College. He also played for the Havelocks Sports Club in the club competition for the Clifford Cup when the Havelocks won the coveted trophy in 1951 and 1952.

Robert and his two sons Rohan and Lalin were bestowed the unique honour when named Trinity 'Lions' - only Father-Son combination to receive such honour.

Robert leaves behind his much-loved wife Inez their two sons Rohan and Lalin and their families including three grandchildren. Our heartfelt condolences to all members of this loving family.

Friends and family (and members of the Ceylon Society who knew Robert well) will greatly miss the friendly company of this most amiable and friendly gentleman.

"Going to lunch at the 'Pag' in twenty. Like to join? My shout." There may be some of our readers who have had that exchange at one time or other in Sri Lanka. Don't wait for your next sojourn in Colombo to do it. Won't happen. Not at the 'Pag; anyway. It is no more.

But there is a fascinating reminder of that glorious era in this issue of the journal. Hugh Karunanayake starts off in the first part of the cover story taking a vicarious walk around Colombo Fort, repainting the life and times in the mid-20th Century of that hive of daytime activity that turned into a lifeless hush of night

after office hours - five o'clock or thereabouts. Then comes Sujiv Fonseka - a heart and soul Pagoda Tea Rooms man - following Hugh's tracks as it were, as he sheds the pangs of his loss of this iconic eatery. Sujiv is missing the 'Pag' like a limb. Their nostalgia is infectious enough to keep you glued to the dining table.

Next you meet renowned Sri Lankan painter Stanly Kirinde. His good friend Mahinda Wijesinghe recalls that Kirinde was greatly admired and honored by world leaders and others of note for his artistic work and simple, cultural life. At the age of four he started sketching on tiny pieces of paper everywhere and till this day his paintings adorn the halls of his alma mater Trinity College in Kandy.

The well-known Sri Lankan-born author, barrister, broadcaster and prominent figure in London's Bloomsbury literary circuit in the 1930s and 1940s, Alagu Subramaniam receives glowing tribute from his devoted grand daughter Premila Thuraiatnam. Interesting reading.

Thiru Arumugam has once again penned a well-researched article on the "Pearl Fisheries on the Gulf of Mannar". He notes that while Sri Lanka is world famous for its precious stones, pearls pip the post because pearls are used in the form they are harvested sans the need for cutting and polishing them.

The Fall of the Kandyan Kingdom to the British is a topic that rouses much discussion and we have Dr Leonard Pinto exploring all the reasons for that fall in the first of a five part series.

Also Tony Saldin writes engagingly about the British Army's Sinhalese Lascorin Guards in Ceylon many of them made up of low country Sinhalese used to counter stiff resistance shown by the locals.

Enjoy!

FROM THE PAST... The Ceylankan April 2001

It may not be known to many that besides the court martialling of soldiers, in the old days, the army also court martialled certain animals should they commit certain offences.

The following actually happened. An elephant had been put under arrest charged with killing his keeper. In the inquiry, it was found that the native had offended the animal by stealing some of its food after it had been served out to it. The elephant caught him in the act, and therefore, he could get away with it. He put his foot on him, then wound the trunk around the keeper's body, lifted him high in the air and dashed him to the ground killing him.

Of course, the man was to blame, for nothing enrages an elephant more than stealing its food. The subsequent trial found him guilty and, of course, the army must have its penalties.

All the elephants in the station were lined up on two sides. The 'prisoner' was marched up to the punish-

ment area between them, around his neck a tremendous chain attached to collars of two other elephants on either side of him. His feet were placed in four holes and attached by chains. The brigade major then produced several sheets of foolscap, called the prisoner by name and bade him give attention to what he read, which covered the charge then, the evidence for and against him.



At the conclusion of this, the prisoner had been found guilty, and he was sentenced to receive forty eight lashes with a chain and then for three months afterwards have a log chained to his leg. the corporal elephant had a large chain placed in his trunk and at a signal he commenced to flog the prisoner. Blow after blow was given, the major counting each one. Not a sound was uttered by the other elephants, but the groans of the prisoner, as the chain descended across his ribs, was indescribable.

Our Readers write

Excellent publication

You have excelled again with a marvellous collection of articles in *The Ceylankan* (J91). I think the CSA journal is the envy of many other Editors of similar publications. I know of a few who are. Thank you all who contributed to this particular edition.

The tribute to Anura Tennekoon by Mr Skandakumar was so well done and can only be possible by people like our former High Commissioner - an exemplary representative of Sri Lanka. He very aptly concluded the tribute by quoting from the much respected American playwright and journalist.

Thank you for your excellent work.
We are grateful
GORDON COORAY, Endeavour Hills, VIC 3082

All we need to know about Baddeginnie

I received my copy of *The Ceylankan* a couple of days ago, and hasten to congratulate you on another magnificent production.

I have to make special mention of the well researched, and well written article on Baddeginnie by our former President Thiru Arumugam.

I have done the Sydney-Melbourne journey on countless occasions both by train and by road. While the inter city express does not stop at the Baddeginnie station, the road trip certainly passes a prominent directional sign to Baddeginnie. I have often wondered whether the name was Sri Lankan in origin, or perhaps Aboriginal.

Thiru's excellent article has settled any need for further speculation, as he has done a thoroughly researched piece providing us with all we have to know about Baddeginnie, its origins, and its recent history.
HUGH KARUNANAYAKE, Blackburn North
Vic 3130.

Promptly in my mail – every four months

Recent publications of *The Ceylankan* have arrived with beautiful, imaginative covers, the most recent of February 2020 (J89) intriguing me greatly. For the past several years I've been studying Goddesses of Europe, the Middle East and the Indian Kali and so it was wonderful to view the front cover of this current issue with its gorgeous bronze statues of several names, Pattini, Kannaki and Tara supposedly discovered on the Sri Lankan east coast. Thiru Arumugam's informative commentary on the statues enriched its value to readers like myself.

This issue also had several interesting features. Pauline Gunewardene's *Resplendent Lanka – forty leagues from Paradise* was an easy read of Sri Lanka's history and its move into the modern era; the memorial to Scot Dirckze, an outstanding member of the Burgher

community. And there was Hugh Karunanayake's always interesting articles and finally, Aubrey Koelmeyer's *Of manner, mores and maiden Aunts* that has so cleverly captured the pointed wit and folk wisdom of the Sri Lankan people.

Finally, my great appreciation to you and your team in bringing me *The Ceylankan* promptly to my mail box every four months.

GERALDINE DE SARAM-JANSZ, Oakville,
Ontario, Canada.

No. 244 Grandpass Road

Dr. Srilal Fernando's recounting of the origins and history of Grandpass in the August 2020 issue (J91) triggered me to contribute my two cents' worth on the only place I truly call HOME. It will always be HOME to me because I was brought into the world via a midwife in 1937 in what was probably the largest attached house in the area. Colombo 14 – *Thotalanga* – was a stretch of land that started off from under the Kelani Ganga bridge and terminated at the junction of Armour Street. Left of the junction lay Skinners Road (South) and to the right was Skinner's Road (North). The centre was the continuation of Grandpass Road – which morphed into Messenger Street along the dual tramcar line to Fort. The tram lines also traversed Skinner's Road (South) and culminated in Maradana – opposite the legendary Hotel Buhari. So much for a brief account of the immediate topography of Grandpass.

Although Grandpass is purported to owe its name to the Portuguese 'Grande Passo' many of the houses and other buildings that cluttered the busy suburb were of Dutch architecture and design and typically, solidly built.

The house that I was born in – No. 244 – was, to my recollection, over 35 metres in length from front door to the end wall. The front veranda, just short of a cricket pitch, housed 38 glass-paned windows and its ceiling was six metres high. The entrance was through two large seven foot double doors at each end of the veranda. From the veranda one stepped into the main living quarters which consisted of two entertainment halls and the dining room ahead with three large bedrooms to the left. The inner walls of the two halls and rooms were a couple of feet thick with both halls and the second room to the left also having a panelled ceiling at about five metres high, creating an attic of about two metres itself after the ceiling came over. The dining room could seat a dozen grown-up adults. A short flight of steps led down from it to the end passage which included a small room to the immediate right – followed by a large kitchen which was equipped with a brick fireplace that had space under for firewood. To the right of the hearth there was a three-tiered wooden slatted 'attuwa' to store other kitchen utensils and equipment.

The passage outside the kitchen stretched for a further distance to include a tap and sink for washing of the pots and pans – then next, a cavernous bathroom equipped with showerhead and two large zinc water

storage tubs with a small panel in the roof that let in direct sunlight.

Next to the bathroom another short, cemented passage separated it from the roomy joint toilets with ball and chain flushing systems. The toilets backed up against a long joining wall that served as the final attaching factor to house numbers 242 to the left and 246 to the right of my family abode.

The back doors of each of these houses on this joining wall opened up on another cemented corridor containing three large concrete-lidded sewerage tanks which serviced them.

A second wall which in turn backed up this ultimate corridor opened up onto the immense Lukmanjee Square, where resided the Borah community and employees of the Adamjee Lukmanjee Oil and Fibre Mills.

It is my compulsion to have to end this lengthy description of my birth-place with special mention of what was – in my view – the crowning feature of 244. It was the splendiferous ‘medha-midula’ or Dutch styled inner-house garden that was painstakingly nurtured and cared for by my multi-talented and singular paternal grandfather Martin. Pappa planted and saw to flourishing maturity pomegranate, custard apple, lime, jak, ‘murunga’ and Guava trees and other spices and herbs and shrubs that seven decades hence I barely recall. The rich dark earth – the hordes of insect life – in particular varying species of ants that thrived among the sand and leaves and the edible enjoyment of the produce from this little patch of ingenious horticultural engineering was heaven to all of my large Family Gerreyn, who were residents of Grandpass for three quarters of the 20th Century.

MAX GERREYN, Mirrabooka, WA 6061.

Sad News

This morning I received my copy of *The Ceylankan*, the August 2020 number of our Journal. When I began to glance through the pages, the first bit of sad and shocking news that I had to read was an Appreciation of Dr. Cuda Wijeratne who had died on 18 February this year.

Although Dr. Cuda Wijeratne was a very rare participant at our regular Lecture Meetings, he is one of the first of our members to send me the annual membership subscription fees. Last night when I was reviewing our accounts to arrange for the annual remittance of funds to the Parent Body, it never struck me that I was seeing Dr. Wijeratne’s name for the last time in our Membership List. Dr. Wijeratne had sent his cheque to me on 4th February 2020. The following day itself I sent him an acknowledgement, and apparently he had passed away few days later on 18 February 2020.

The Appreciation had been written by Mr. Nihal Seneviratne, a former Secretary of the Sri Lanka Parliament, who, in fact, is married to one of my distant relations.

What a Life!

M. ASOKA T, DE SILVA Dehiwela, Sri Lanka.

Request for Assistance

*The undersigned made this earnest request to
The Ceylankan for help in their project to restore
their Club to its past glory.*

The **Dambulla Athletic and Cricket Club** (abbreviated to **DACC** and also known as the **Radella Club**) is a sporting club located in the Tea Planting district of Dambulla in Sri Lanka, founded in 1856 by the British tea planters.

Situated at an elevation of 5000 feet above sea level, **it is the oldest sporting club in Sri Lanka** and in earlier, its activities included rugby, cricket, squash, billiards, snooker, tennis and badminton.

During World War II, Lord Louis Mountbatten, the Head of the South East Asia Command, headquartered in Ceylon, after the fall of Singapore to the Japanese, resided in the Radella Estate Bungalow overlooking the Club when he visited the troops who used the the club’s grounds for their parades/drills as well as for exercise.

On **17 April 1954**, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and His Royal Highness Prince Phillip, the Duke of Edinburgh visited the club, as part of their tour of Ceylon. They were hosted to a tea party, attended by planters and several dignitaries.

The magnificent Victorian-style house, with its wood paneled walls and an antique clock on top of the pavilion, was unfortunately destroyed by fire in **1964. This resulted in the numerous photographs and other memorabilia at the club being lost.**

On the initiative of Mr Selva Kanagasabai, a former planter and Rugby Captain of the Club, now resident in Australia, a project was initiated to source copies of team photographs and other memorabilia which could possibly be in the possession of former members of the club or even their descendents.

Therefore, it would be very greatly appreciated if those who have in their possession team photographs or other memorabilia of the Club, forward scanned copies of these to either Mr Selva Kanagasabai at herbertsk@bigpond.com or to me who is resident in Sri Lanka and assisting Mr Kanagasabai at devakaw@sltnet.sl.

Mr Kanagasabai’s intention is that all team photographs and other memorabilia of the Club received be restored and displayed once again at the Club as well as posted in a sub-site “DACC/Radella Club” on the History of Ceylon Tea website.

Your assistance in contributing towards the success of this project would be greatly appreciated.

Devaka Wickramasuriya



Stanley Kirinde: A gentle and cultured artist

by MAHINDA WIJESINGHE

Ars Gratia Artis
— his lifelong motto

Most would wonder who Sarathchandra Madduma Bandara Wickremasinha Kirinde (1930 – 2009) was, however the name Stanley Kirinde, locally and/or internationally is synonymous with the world of art.

Just as the Latin expression, *Ars Gratia Artis* - "Art for art's sake" - is used as a motto by the US film company Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, and appears in the circle around the head of a roaring lion in its motion picture logo, Stanley Kirinde used his easel and brush for art's sake but unlike the lion he never roared.

He was gentle as a lamb, and a cultured one at that. Stanley's seventh death anniversary fell recently.

Not possessing too much of an interest/knowledge in art and/or artists, I shall make known to the best of my ability and knowledge the impressions I have of Stanley the human being. Having closely associated with him for over a decade until he passed away, he was to my mind, the epitome of the sterling, worldly qualities a member of *Homo sapiens* could possess.

However, the technicalities in his field of art, and that of his contemporaries be it George Keyt, Harry Peiris, members of Group '43 or Lionel Wendt, I will leave it to the experts to explore.

It was a privilege and pleasure to know Stanley, his pleasant wife Iranganie (aka Ira), family of two sons Kumar (wife Chandani and grandsons Bhanuka and Rahel), and Ravi who is living in the UK.

Ira played the ideal role of Mother Hen to the artistic, sometimes borderline Bohemian life-style of Stanley. Of course not for him were late nights, nor were spirituous excesses his wont.

However, life was centered on his almost 24/7 love for painting. So naturally there was chaos, with newspapers, books, unfinished canvases, and paints etc., strewn around the house. Hence Ira had to keep a constant vigil and an almost maternal care over her husband regarding worldly affairs and his health. Stanley would have been lost without her and indeed it was a symbiotic association between the two of them.

Gradually it dawned on me – who had no clue of the art world - that Stanley is a legend with the easel and brush. Indeed he had made a name for himself in his chosen field from the tender age of 15 years when he bagged the first prize at the All-Ceylon Education Exhibition conducted in 1945. Then the floodgates opened until

his peaceful demise at the age of almost four score years.

Today, his works of art have been commissioned by Presidents of two countries. Stanley was requested by the President of India, K.R. Narayanan to paint his official portrait which now hangs alongside previous Presidents of India at the Rashtrapati Bhawan, India's official Presidential residence. It was a signal honour for a Sri Lankan. Sri Lanka's first President, J.R. Jayewardene, on more than one occasion requested Stanley to paint past historical events of our country, one of which now hangs at the President's House in Kandy.

Born in the village of Deegala, in the Dumbara Valley as the eldest in a family of seven boys and a girl, Stanley actually started sketching from the tender age of around four years. Pieces of paper, walls, floors and any surface that took his fancy were not spared. A piece of



•Trinity College, Kandy

chalk he carried in his pair of shorts much to the chagrin of his family, especially of his sister, was his constant companion.

Even her text-books were Stanley's drawing books! However, being the eldest he was the apple of the parents' eyes, and escaped being reprimanded for his antics, and which habit he continued until practically he drew his last breath. As Stanley once commented about his mother's attitude towards him: "She always thought I was a bit queer and would say "it's the vapours from the

paints makes you do all those funny things!"

Believe it or not, Stanley hated going to school. Reportedly he used to hide under beds to avoid his problem. Eventually he was forced to attend Trinity College at the age of nine. I can actually picture him as Shakespeare described in the *Seven Ages of Man*: "...Then the whining schoolboy with his satchel and shining morning face, creeping like snail unwilling to school."

Yet, he made the necessary effort to enter the University of Peradeniya, barely aged 20, to read for an honours degree in History. Of course he had illustrious contemporaries at Trinity, including Lakshman Kadirgamar, who must have been an inspiration to Stanley, and they remained very close and life-long friends.

Stanley held many important and responsible posts in the government in the administrative service, and as expected, performed his duties with integrity, honesty and skill. He was not only appointed as Additional Secretary, Ministry of Defence in 1982, and a few years later held the office of State Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Shipping, and so on, until he retired from government service after a distinguished career of 35 years. Another feather on his cap was when Stanley played a key and a satisfying role in the establishment of the Kotelawala Defence Academy around the same time.

In the meantime his alma mater Trinity College was not forgotten. Many were the occasions he did his duty to Trinity whether touching up fading paintings in the College chapel or any other similar requests by the school. His paintings are commonplace in most government offices around the country. Indeed one of his oil paintings adorns the wall in the Cathedral of the Anglican Church at Bullers Road.



• *With close friend and contemporary of Trinity College, Kandy Lakshman Kadirgamar. Photo courtesy Trinity College archives.*

The tributes and accolades he has received from all and sundry in appreciation of his skill are too numerous to mention, that eventually culminated in his being awarded the title of Deshabandu by the then President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga. A colourful biography, titled *The World of Stanley Kirinde* by Dr. Sinhara Raja Tammita Delgoda was yet another tribute published during his lifetime when his friend Lakshman Kadirgamar played a pivotal role in its production and the distribution.

However all such honours lay lightly on his shoulders? That was Stanley - a gentleman and an artist par excellence.

May his travels in Samsara be short and comfortable!

(First published in Sunday Times of 21 Feb 2016)

The extraordinary Alagu Subramaniam

Alagu Subramaniam (1910 – 1971) was a barrister-at-law, short story and radio script writer and playwright who hailed from Jaffna. His father was a judge and his grandfather a literary personage. Alagu had successfully combined in himself, his father's legal career and his grandfather's literary genius.

Alagu was a prominent figure in London's Bloomsbury literary circle¹ in the 1930s and 1940s. He wrote short stories that capture the behaviour of people whether it be Ceylonese during the colonial era or contemporary English life during and prior to the war. These stories were broadcast on the home and overseas services of the BBC. His



• *Family photo: Alagu at centre.*

short story 'The Mathematician' has been compared for its good-humoured raillery with one of the greatest writers of short fiction in history, Anton Chekhov². More



A tribute from his Grandniece
PREMILA THURAIRATNAM

recently in 2014, Prof. Gamini Fonseka, senior lecturer in English at Ruhuna University wrote a paper on the story 'Professional Mourners' which has attracted 4000 views from an international readership across the world³. His subsequent review of the short stories compiled in the book *The Big Girl* which appeared in the Sunday Island dated 23rd June 2019 has had 944 reads⁴. These stories were also reviewed by an Australian, Rodney Hall, which appeared in the Sri Lankan e-paper Daily FT of 16 February 2019 and has had 138 reads⁵.

Birth and Early Life

Alagu was born in 1910, the year that the famous Halley's comet which graces our skies every 75 years appeared. He was the eldest son of Judge A.R. Subramaniam and wife Gnanamma and grew to be a striking handsome figure of over 6 feet. tall. He spent his childhood in Trincomalee where his father was posted as

a district judge. They lived in a government house within the Fort with a sentry placed at the entrance. Alagu later came to Jaffna to attend high school. He completed his schooling at Jaffna Central College (JCC) and his Senior School Certificate (conducted by the University of Cambridge for Ceylon schools in those days), in December 1926, at the age of 16. He was then sent to England to study law. He went by ship with a photograph of his sister in his possession which he was instructed to present to his brother-in-law to be, who was completing an Engineering degree at Imperial College.

Move to England

Alagu was admitted as a student at Lincoln's Inn (one of the four Inns of Court) on the 26 April 1933 to do his bar examination. He was called to the English bar on the 25th of June 1941. These dates are from the Black Books of Lincoln's Inn⁶. He was called to the bar by the Treasurer (head of the Inn), Sir Herbert Cunliffe. He had been proposed for the bar by William Cleveland-Stevens, one of the Inn's governing body known as benchers.

Alagu would have done his bar examination course with the Council of Legal Education (CLE) in London. The CLE was at the time the supervisory body for legal education for the bar, on behalf of the Inns of Court. The course lasted a year and consisted of a series of lectures and classes on various subjects which culminated in examinations. In addition to passing the examinations, to be called to the bar, Alagu would have had to "keep term" by dining in the Hall of the Inn. They had to dine six times per term and do this for 12 terms (72 meals in all) which would take at least three years! This was a throwback to times when much of a student's legal learning was done in discussion with barrister members during mealtimes. Also, they had to be 21 years of age and have their names screened in the public rooms of their Inn for eight days in the term they were to be called in.

Lincoln's Inn is one of the largest Inns of Court situated on 11 acres. Its history dates back to the Middle Ages (1422)⁷. Shakespeare performed Twelfth Night (likely at Christmas) for the first time there. The Inn's most famous use as a court is in Charles Dickens' *Bleak House* opening scene with, "London. Michaelmas Term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall"⁷. This would have been the Old Hall built in 1489. The new Great Hall built in 1843 features in Harry Potter films. During the dining sessions which took place in the Great Hall, along with legal discussion, there must also have been a good deal of entertainment there, perhaps including performances of Shakespeare's plays. This would explain the following recollection by a gentleman living in Sydney who heard it from his mother who lived in Jaffna during Alagu's time there. Who knows, Alagu may even have taken part in those performances!

Once Alagu was hauled before the courts in Jaffna for drunken behaviour. While on the dock in his intoxicated state, facing the magistrate, Alagu recited Portia's soliloquy "*Quality of Mercy is not strained...*" in full from Shakespeare's *Merchant of*

Venice without a single flaw. The magistrate, who was astounded by the eloquence and faultless recitation, asked, "Who are you?" To which the prosecuting team answered, "Alagu is a barrister recently returned from England, son of district judge A.R Subramaniam". Upon hearing this "Who's who", the magistrate is said to have observed, "No wonder! Such an illustrious family and person. Defendant cautioned; case dismissed!"

Bloomsbury

Alagu was a prominent figure in London's Bloomsbury literary circle. The famous authors Virginia and Leonard Woolf were part of this group¹, and it is highly probable that Virginia reviewed Alagu's stories when he presented them at the circle. He was one of the founders and editors of the literary magazine *Indian Writing*⁸. Rabindranath Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru were two of its eminent contributors. This magazine became a platform for radical, anti-colonial South Asians, based in London. Alagu was also secretary of the London branch of

Indian Progressive Writers' Association and was involved in the anti-colonial organisation *Swaraj House*. He worked as assistant to Sasadhar Sinha who opened the Bibliophile bookshop in the winter months of 1935 in London. His

contemporaries were, Ahmed Ali, Mulk Raj Anand, Bhicoo Batlivala, Krishnarao Shelvankar, Iqbal Singh, M.J. Tambimuttu and Jinadasa Vijayatunga. He was closely associated with Iqbal Singh, Ahmed Ali and Mulk Raj Anand, who were founding members of the Progressive Writers Association. *Indian Writing* was published infrequently during the war and had financial support from T S Eliot. They published articles, short stories and reviews. The well-known writer R.K Narayan too, contributed⁹. Other magazines that Alagu regularly published short stories in were, *Life and Letters To-Day*, *Left Review* and *Tribune*¹⁰.

Mulk Raj Anand was probably the most closely connected to the Woolfs, having worked for a while as editor at the Hogarth Press which was founded by them. He is notable for his depiction of the poorer castes in traditional Indian society. His short, sharp novel, *Untouchable* first published in 1935 against the backdrop of Gandhi's campaign against colonialism, was written after the author spent several weeks in Gandhi's ashram. Anand and Alagu were close, so if there were contact with the Woolfs, Anand would probably have been able to facilitate this.

Meary James Tambimuttu was a Ceylonese poet who played a significant role in the literary scenes of London and New York. In 1939 he founded the literary magazine *Poetry London* which later became *Poetry London-New York*. Tambimuttu was five years younger than Alagu, arrived in London five years after him and



• Alagu's house photographed in 2020.

returned to Ceylon two years after him¹¹. But Tambimuttu moved to the United States in 1952, whereas Alagu remained.

Alagu was interviewed as the Bohemian with a glass of beer in his hand in *The London Illustrated* dated 7th December 1946¹². He said "Intellectuals are silly but quite harmless. Bloomsbury is a port of call in their education. There's no future in it." So much for Bloomsbury as a cradle of the intelligentsia!

Return to Ceylon

Alagu returned to his home in Jaffna in 1947, the year before Independence. He was a brilliant lawyer and when requested to appear for someone, he usually did this impromptu without preparation and won the case. Having lived in England for a considerable time, he did not adjust well to the conservative life in Jaffna and missed his English girlfriend whom his mother had put a stop to marrying. Although he could have had a successful legal career, he preferred his literary pursuits. Quote by Lester Hutchinson, D. es. L., former M.P. (British House of Commons) "Mr Subramaniam could have had a sound practice at the English Bar, but he preferred to pursue his literary work, which is of a higher order¹³." Those who can recollect Alagu walking down the Cross streets of Jaffna when they were children, say how he would walk along with the air of a poet, always wore a suit, had longish hair and wore a flamboyant scarf in the tropics, not for warmth but for colour. He was frequently invited to speak at 'After Dinner Talks' at schools and was popular for his enthralling speeches filled with humour. Alagu's much younger cousin recalls that they hid from him because he used to stare at beautiful girls, simply because he liked to admire them. He eventually married a graduate teacher from Udupiddy Girls College, Miss Sellakandu to whom he dedicated his second book. She was a progressive lady of her times, driving a car and taking Alagu about. They lived initially in Trincolmalee where Sellakandu was posted to teach and later moved to Udupiddy where they lived until his death in 1971. His first book was dedicated to his brother D.K (also known as Kirupa), who is mentioned as a fictional character in the story 'The Fan' as the rich judge's son, arriving at school in a sleek limousine. A JCC alumnus recalls Alagu frequently visiting the school between and after court sessions and how he studied *The Big Girl & Other Stories* as prescribed text at school. Another, Dr Nagalingam Ethirveerasingam, Gold medallist at Tokyo Asian Games 1958 said, "Everyone knows A.S. lived in a beautiful house in front of Vembadi hostel end. Every weekday I would see A.S. in a rickshaw going from his house to the Courts past Central. He was very fair, dressed like a barrister. I think he smoked a pipe. I always thought of him as an Englishman."

Stories

The Big Girl & Other Stories is a collection of 17 short stories by Alagu Subramaniam. They recount scenes and behaviour of the Jaffna society in the colonial era. Alagu started writing them when he was in his late twenties while in England and they first appeared in the Indian Writing magazine in the early 1940s, 'Professional

Mourners' appearing in the summer 1940 edition⁸. As stated in the commentary of one of the issues of this magazine, one critic described this group of writers as 'Professional Mourners' for their preoccupation with death! Some of Alagu's stories were translated into Russian, Polish, German, Tamil and Kannada languages. In 1964, these and other stories were compiled into the book and published. The book had gone out of circulation and was reprinted in 2018. Subsequently in 1971, a second book of short stories, *Closing Time & Other Stories*, was published. His last unfinished novel was *Mr Moon* which had a Bloomsbury setting; the plot is about the protagonist Hari in London, who learns of his girlfriend's killing in the newspaper. The murderer, Mr Moon is an artist in Bloomsbury. Curiously, Hari is described with long hair and wears a gaily coloured scarf like the author himself. He did not finish the last chapter and this novel was never published.

These stories reflect scenes of Alagu's personal



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

experiences of a bygone era. *The Big Girl* presents both the contrasts and continuities between past Ceylon and present-day Sri Lanka while incorporating some of Alagu's biographical details. His second book *Closing Time & Other Stories* contains more stories set in London, a representation of the life of a foreign student living and studying in London and during the blitz of WWII, as he had done¹⁴. The story

'Single Room' is about a new student in London looking for a room for himself. 'The Kid' features a law student who is also a writer. 'Liabilities' is about a barrister-at-law being a manager of a bookshop and 'Closing Time' is about a group of writers and poets who move from one pub to another after each one closes. 'Yuletide in London' is a well written short tale that takes the reader to Christmas in London with a memorable analogy between the froth in open beer bottles and the colour of snow on windowpanes. His experience of the war is evident in 'The Raid' where bombers, sirens and the cruelty of destruction are described. In 'The Panorama of Lord's' some of the characters are, Tambimuttu his Ceylonese poet friend in real life, the famous poet Roy Campbell and the well-known painter Nina Hamnett. Alagu's mention of Roy and Nina who are Bloomsbury members indicates that he knew them and was part of the group himself. This story also mentions Evelyn Waugh's novelette *The Loved One* which was first published in 1948, suggesting that this short story was not completed until after his return to Ceylon.

The story 'Son of a Judge' maybe about Alagu's younger brother. The imaginary town of Jhelum with its

fine harbour on the mighty Indian ocean, where the judge is posted, could refer to Trincomalee, where Alagu's father was also posted as district judge. There is a real Jhelum, a city on the right bank of the Jhelum river in the district of the same name in the north of Punjab province. It could be that Alagu heard of this place from his Indian friends in Bloomsbury and decided to use it rather than Trincomalee. 'A Box of Matches' is a sardonic tale about the American, Indian and Ceylonese cultures where one is not in the habit of saying thank you, unlike the English. He writes how people annoy him by getting a match or a light from him without expressing thanks. Furthermore, they borrow the whole box of matches and fail to return it! Later in the story, the author is abused in the official language in Colombo, for requesting a thank you.

In several stories, the manner in which mothers frantically arrange marriages for their sons about to go to England for further study, to prevent English women from 'catching' them reflected a common occurrence and happened to him as well. The irony is that although the natives aspired to copy the culturally 'superior' English, they also feared losing their own culture as a result of colonisation. As Rodney Hall writes in his review, Alagu demonstrates the effects of colonialism while rarely depicting the colonisers, uses simple language effectively to relate deeper ideas, and an economy of means to achieve a variety of effects⁵. In 'Cousin Thampoo' the comma in the last sentence placed differently would entirely change the story's meaning. In most stories, the final sentence has a comical or unusual twist which leaves the reader in contemplation. As Prof. S.W Perera, senior lecturer in English at University of Peradeniya writes in his journal article, "Alagu Subramaniam captures life in Jaffna about a half a century ago with an immediacy and assuredness that others have attempted but not always succeeded"¹⁵.

End notes:

1. Wikipedia: The Bloomsbury literary circle - was a group of associated English writers, intellectuals, philosophers and artists in the first half of the 20th century. This loose collective of friends and relatives was closely associated with the University of Cambridge for the men and Kings College London for the women, and they lived, worked or studied together near Bloomsbury, London.
2. Alagu Subramaniam, *The Big Girl* (1964), Reprint 2018, front page review by Sean O' Faoláin in *The Listener* (London).
3. EA Gamini Fonseka, *Servile Mourning for the Powerful: A Critical Reading of 'Professional Mourners'* by Alagu Subramaniam (2014), www.academia.edu
4. EA Gamini Fonseka, *Reminiscences of the Traditional Jaffna Community in Transition under Colonialism* (2019), www.academia.edu
5. Rodney Hall, *The Big Girl* (2019) <http://www.ft.lk/ft-lite/The-Big-Girl/6-672953>
6. Lincoln's archives registry, vol 3 p250, vol 6 p766, <https://archive.org/details/VOL318941956/page/n249>, https://archive.org/details/VOL619141965_201710

7. Wikipedia, Lincoln's Inn.
8. British Library, Indian Writing, Shelfmark ST-1803
9. Making Britain – The Open University, Alagu Subramaniam, <http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/alagu-subramaniam>
10. Alagu Subramaniam (2012) *The Mathematician*, Wasafiri, 27:2, 25-27, DOI:10.1080/02690055.2012.662313
11. Making Britain – The Open University, Meary James Thurairajah Tambimuttu, <http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/meary-james-tambimuttu>
12. British Library, Illustrated, shelfmark LOU.LD114, 7th December 1946.
13. Lester Hutchinson, D. es. L., *The Big Girl* (1964), Reprint 2018, back cover review.
14. Alagu Subramaniam, *Closing Time and Other Stories*, 1971.
15. S.W.Perera 2019 *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*: <https://journals.sagepub.com/loi/jcl>, Vol. 54(4) pp700-714.
16. Various - *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*: <https://journals.sagepub.com/loi/jcl>, June 1966 Vol.1(2), pp55-58, pp90-100; June 1987, Vol.22(2), pp90-97; March 1982 Vol.16(2) pp119-131; June 1985 Vol.20(2) pp122-133.
17. Suntharesan V. (2014) *Impact of Borrowings from English on Jaffna Tamil (A textbook for University students)*, www.languageinindia.com, Vol.14(6), p.426(34).
18. Dr Florian Stadler (2012) *Britain and India: Cross-cultural Encounters*, Wasafiri, 27:2, 1-3, DOI: 10.1080/02690055.2012.662008.
19. Rehana Ahmed (2012) *South Asians Writing Resistance in Wartime London*, Wasafiri, 27:2, 17-24, DOI: 10.1080/02690055.2012.662045.

Some wayward thoughts of C.S.Lewis

There is wishful thinking in Hell as well as on Earth.
Screwtape Letters (1942).

We have trained them [men] to think of the Future as a promised land that favoured heroes attain—not as something which everyone reaches at the rate of sixty minutes an hour, whatever he does, whoever he is.
Screwtape Letters (1942)

She is the sort of woman who lives for others—you can always tell the others by their hunted expression.
Screwtape Letters (1942)

I remember summing up what I took to be our destiny, in conversation with my best friend Chartres, by the formula, "Term, holidays, term, holidays, till we leave school, and then work, work, work till we die".
Surprised by Joy (1955)

Affection is responsible for nine tenths of whatever is solid and liveable there is in our lives.

This is a magnificent combination of twin articles to bring you avenues of cherished nostalgia gone but never to be forgotten. Firstly, Hugh Karunanayake traces the ethos and identity of life in Colombo Fort in the mid-19th Century, with its banks, department stores and hotels like the Pagoda Hotel. Alongside we have Sanjiv Fonseka bringing back his affectionate memories of the iconic Pagoda Tea Rooms which he patronised for lunch from the time he commenced his working life in The Fort in 2010.



Life in Colombo in the Mid-20th Century by Hugh Karunanayake

Mid-20th Century Colombo was very much Anglocentric. Ceylon, as the country was then known, was still in a state of "colonial hangover", not having rediscovered its indigenous identity yet. Although the country was granted Independence from its colonial rulers in 1948, the general ethos pervading its social, cultural and economic activities were prominently British influenced. The 'commanding heights' of the economy which were

tic demand. The rural economy had meagre links with the plantation economy and the two sectors, the urban and the rural, had distinguishing features both socially and economically. The major banks of the time were the Chartered Bank, located at the corner of Queen and Baillie Streets, the Mercantile Bank on Queen's Street, the National & Grindlays Bank in York Street, the Hong-Kong and Shanghai Bank in Baillie Street, and the State Bank of India also on Baillie Street.



• *The Grand Oriental Hotel.*

The Head Office of the Bank of Ceylon was in the Chamber of Commerce Building in Chatham Street. In addition to the banks were two large engineering firms (also catering to the needs of the plantations) Walker Sons & Co and Brown & Co which housed their head offices and showrooms within the Fort. The other service providers to the plantation sector such as the insurance companies, shipping companies, and produce broker firms, were all located within the Fort. There was also a sizeable Government sector presence, also related to servicing the plantation economy, such as the Customs Department, Import and Export Controls, the Central Bank, all located within the Fort.

A dominant slice of the white-collar work force of the country thus worked in offices in the Fort.

basically the plantations, and the agency houses which managed the plantations and their exports, were all controlled (with a few exceptions) by expatriate Britishers. They were responsible for the transformation of the economy from a subsistent peasant economy to a plantation economy over the previous two centuries, creating the infrastructure through building road and rail networks as well as ports and airports. The nucleus of the country's economy was very much the Colombo Fort.

The Colombo Fort was where all the major Agency Houses which managed the plantations were located. Also within the Fort were the major Banks (all foreign-owned and operated, except for the then nascent Bank of Ceylon established in the 1930s) servicing the financial needs of the export economy. The country's non-plantation agriculture was operating at subsistence level, its principal crop, rice, inadequate to meet domes-

There were, however, very few residents living in the Fort, the exception being the Baur & Co residential Flats in Upper Chatham Street, the resident naval personnel in the Naval Barracks in Flagstaff Street, and the gubernatorial presence in Queen's House. Colombo Fort in the mid- 20th Century was therefore very much a non-residential metropolis with a transient work force.

Life in the Fort during working hours on week days was a hive of activity. The thousands of white collar workers disgorged from the various transport services of the time including rail, tram, trolley buses and omnibuses were all temporary residents of the Fort who after closing time, left behind a silent, deserted city. Most of the clerks and stenographers employed in the mercantile firms in the Fort were unionised under the banner of the Ceylon Mercantile Union (CMU) spearheaded by its General Secretary P.B. Tampoe. Successive Collective Agree-

ments between the CMU and the Employers Federation sustained industrial peace. However, if there were major disagreements which resulted in strike action, not only the whole of the Fort, but the entire economy was brought to a standstill. This in itself signified the nature of the economy which was predominantly based on plantation produce. The Fort which provided work shelter to this significant workforce, however, adapted itself as a city to meet the needs of this transient population which had to be fed and entertained. The food and beverage industry within the Fort were characterised by restaurants, bars, and other adjuncts like billiard parlours and even a gymnasium within the YMCA.

Chatham Street and Bailie Street and Hospital Streets were well known and popular locales for their pubs and eateries. On Chatham St was the Dominion Hotel, the White Horse Inn (which served only beers and ales) and the Lord Nelson Hotel. "The Lord" as it was popularly known dates back from the early twentieth century when it was owned by two Malay entrepreneurs MC Amoo and AJ Cuttilan who also owned a hotel in Kandy, the Kings Hotel. On Bailie Street stood the British India Hotel, the Globe Hotel, while on Hospital Street there was Browns Bar, and on Canal Row was a pub called Ratnagiri, which was run by a man called Ratnasekera, and was a popular watering hole for Lake House journalists. Arrack could be bought by the bottle and shared. A bottle of arrack was Rs 8 and a dram Rs 1.10. A dram



• *The Bristol Hotel.*

was one eighth of a bottle, and soda water was on the house. That system of pricing was an invitation to surreptitiously bending the regulations, as one would think that the opportunity costs of providing soda, waitering, and cost of space will surely be more than the 80 cents per bottle consumed. The result, of course, was evident in the flagrant under measuring of liquor.

Also in the Fort were the somewhat up market hotels like the Bristol, and the Grand Oriental Hotel, both venerable institutions with residential facilities. The Bristol Hotel had a few permanent residents. DH Balfour of the Ceylon Civil Service lived in the Bristol, even after his retirement until he died there. The famous author Mark Twain also occupied its rooms during his visit, and was fascinated by his room boy who had long hair and tied together in a 'kondey'. The Bristol was the first building in Ceylon to have ceiling fans, prompting many passers-by to gaze in wonder at the amazing new technology! The Bristol was torn down in the 1970s and

the land converted into a car park. The GOH continues as The Hotel Taprobane and is fully owned by the Bank of Ceylon. The Bristol, together with the Metropole, the Globe, The Dominion featured billiard parlours where patrons could indulge in a game of billiards or snooker. They also had separate bars for arrack drinking patrons



• *Ratnagiri - pub in Canal Row.*

and another section for the snooty patrons who would prefer to enjoy their scotch and soda away from the 'hoi polloi'!

The Dominion, the Globe, and the White Horse Inn were in all owned by the legendary Arthur Ephraims who also owned the New Oriental Hotel in Galle, and the Grand Hotel in Mount Lavinia where he resided permanently and died in around 1940. The Lord Nelson Hotel which was originally owned by Malay proprietors Amoo, and AJ Cuttilan, was subsequently bought by TA Fernando who owned a hotel in Nuwara Eliya as well. The Globe was later bought by racing bookmaker NWJ



• *Cargills & Co Ltd. Department Store in Fort.*

Mudalige who also founded a popular eatery and bar called the Skyline Hotel in Wellawatte. The Metropole was owned by Mr BGS David, a former member of the minor judiciary.

The big retailers in Colombo were all located in the Fort and they were the big Departmental Stores like Cargills, Miller's, Whiteaway Laidlaw and Co, and Colombo Apothecaries, all stocking anything from a

pin to a motor cycle and employing hundreds of staff. Whiteaways and Colombo Apothecaries closed down in the sixties although Cargills and Miller's have metamorphosed into other entities keeping up to the changing demands from consumers.

After all the hustle and bustle within the Fort during working hours, if one visited the Fort after 6 pm you will be presented with a ghostly scene. All the offices would be shut, hardly anyone on the streets, not even the sound of a car. That was the best time to be in the Fort. Also on Sundays if you fancied a pre-lunch drink with friends in one of the Fort pubs which would give you a



• *The intricate fascade highlighting the design of the De Mel building on Baillie Street.*

peaceful atmosphere where one could have a quiet chat. Not having been to a pub in the Fort for many years now, I wonder whether modernisation has led the female of the species also to having a drink in those pubs which were "women free" not by law but by custom, in that era.

Of the eateries in the Fort there were the Madras curry joints down Hospital Street, where you could enjoy a steaming hot crab curry with a plate of rice served by bare bodied men with sweat dripping off them sometimes

into the curry as well, for that extra touch of flavour! The other pubs all served standard rice and curry gourmandised by the pen pushing brigade, and of course, there was the Pagoda which served its rice and curry with the rice served on a platter and the curries separately in smaller dishes.

The Pagoda was popular with local elites as a venue for a long lunch, and there were many regular patrons who were greeted with a customary welcome by its waiting staff, many of whom have worked there for years. The virtual lockdown of the Fort during the ethnic conflict and the resulting lack of custom compelled the owners of the Pagoda to close down this iconic establishment run by the Rodrigo family from Panadura. The Pagoda did not serve liquor, but its menu was always attractive, catering to the needs of the most discerning of patrons. Cafeterias also made their appearance with the YMCA opening up a popular service, to be followed by the YMBA also located in the Fort. If you were in an almighty hurry to get back to work the YMCA cafeteria with self serving facilities seem to negate the poet Milton's observation that "they also serve who stand and wait."

The Colombo Fort has had to suffer many vicissitudes of a different order than those it faced when it was under siege from attacking armies. The ethnic conflict of recent years and the resultant need for security measures during the eighties and nineties especially squeezed out the soul of a once vibrant city. Retail business has found its locale in other places within Colombo, and now maybe the most opportune time for urban planners to create a new haven in the heart of Colombo.

The Pagoda Tea Rooms at Chatham Street – an icon bids goodbye



By Sujiv Fonseka

I will never eat lunch at The Pagoda again. That is in no way a statement of condemnation – although it has been some time now since they served lunch there. The sad reality is that the Pagoda Tea Rooms served up the last of their famous chocolate cake, eclairs and iced coffee in mid-September of this year and shut the doors of their long-time home at the De Mel building on Chatham Street in Colombo Fort for the very last time.

For over a century, the 'Pag', as it was fondly known, fed legions of visitors and office workers in the Fort area. It survived two World Wars, the shutdown of the whole area during the Sri Lankan civil war, and even achieved its two minutes of global fame as the backdrop to much of Duran Duran's music video for *Hungry Like the Wolf*. Since that appearance in 1983, the Lonely Planet Guide book has ensured a constant stream of tourists in search of that 'downtown lunch' or cup of tea,

perhaps the only local restaurant to have made such a consistent appearance.

This is the story of that little establishment, which stood resilient through the wavering fortunes of the Fort over the past 100 years, while other competitors set up nearby, did their time, closed shop, and became fading memories. Until, that is, the rumours of the Pagoda's own demise were rumours no more.

The Pagoda Tea Rooms evolved in parallel with the commercialisation of Colombo in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Before the 1880s, Point de Galle served as the primary sea port of Sri Lanka. The Galle Harbour was also the main point of entry for tourists and the service point for transit. Many vessels on the Malacca, Eastern and Australian maritime routes laid anchor at Galle en route. The completion of the Colombo-Kandy railway, and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, resulted in an increase in sea traffic into the harbour at Colombo that

was largely used by fishing boats. This led to Colombo taking natural preference over Galle when proposals were first raised to create a deeper artificial harbour and the formal process towards construction was kicked off in 1870 under Governor Sir Hercules Robinson.

It took 15 years to achieve the completion of the South-West Breakwater, during which period shipping anchoring at Galle dwindled considerably. With P&O's

in the Fort area today. All of this is well documented in *'A Hundred Years of Ceylon Tea' 1867-1967* by D.M. Forrest, who goes on to say, *'...it was to be clear that however Kandyan the elevation, the interior was to be vintage Spiers & Pond! [the hoteliers and caterers based in Australia and London, who launched the world's first large-scale catering business] Marble-topped tables, bentwood ladies' chairs, ten dozen Rockingham teapots - that was the form. But there was an excellent technical proviso - 'Urns for boiling water, not only for making tea, of the best description, to be heated with gas'.*

Unlike many other buildings that came up in Fort during the building boom of the following years, which Mr. Hugh Karunanayake has previously detailed in this journal and which drew on several design features of European influence, the external façade and architecture of the Tea Kiosk is unusual among commercial buildings of the time as it appears to be of a unique local



• Entrance to the Pagoda at the De Mel Building.
Photo credit: indianodyssey.co.uk

Royal Mail steamships having abandoned Galle in favour of Colombo by 1882, the shipping and tourist volumes through Colombo port had increased dramatically ahead of the completion of the South-West Breakwater in 1885; that formal completion also sealed the fate of the Galle Port. This monumental, if little remembered, construction led to the transformation of Colombo into the island's commercial hub and is detailed in a marvelous album of photographs produced by WLH Skeen & Co. that is lodged at the Royal Commonwealth Society collections at the University of Cambridge. The album is accessible through the Cambridge Libraries website.

During the 1870s and 1880s, 'Ceylon Tea' had become the crop of choice after the decline and fall of Ceylon coffee. With the arrival of the enhanced Colombo Port, the Planter's Association of Ceylon was looking at ways to promote Ceylon Tea in the global market then dominated by India. There were only a few hotels in Colombo suitable for tourists at the time, and even fewer options for transiting passengers and crew to obtain refreshment. This laid the backdrop for the birth of the Pagoda Tea Rooms.

The official website of Cyril Rodrigo Restaurants, the long-time owners of the business, indicates the Pagoda was launched in 1884 (a year before the completion of the Breakwater) and although I have found no other documented evidence supporting this date, it is possible there was a small operation in place at the Port at that time. What is clear is that in 1890 the Planter's Association approached the Government for a grant of land adjacent to the newly completed passenger jetty at Colombo Port to construct a kiosk and promote Ceylon Tea.

A 'kiosk sub-committee' was formed to brief the contractors, Walker Sons & Company. Walkers would go on to build many of the fine structures that still stand

aesthetic, designed along the lines of an old walauwva. Its most noteworthy feature was the distinctive design of the roof and its capping structure, which resulted in the kiosk being referred to as 'THE PAGODA' from its inception. This was the descriptive element that helped name the Pagoda Tea Rooms that we all knew and loved. It seems likely the inspiration for the overall design was drawn from the 'Ceylon Tea House' that was erected for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition held in London a few years earlier in 1886; the image of this exhibit, reproduced in the Official Handbook and Catalogue of the Ceylon Court, bears strong resemblance to the cross-section of the later Tea Kiosk in Colombo. The 1886 exhibit is detailed as follows, *'In the open space between the Ceylon Court and Old London, and facing the Indian Palace, is the Ceylon Tea-House, from an inspection of which a good idea of Sinhalese timber architecture may be obtained. The building has been designed by Mr JG Smither, Architect to the Government of Ceylon'.*

The Kiosk sat facing the passenger Jetty exit, parallel to the Grand Oriental Hotel at the junction of Church and York streets. No expense was spared in treating visitors to a very special and luxurious experience and the Planter's Association spared no effort to ensure that the Ceylon Tea served at the Kiosk (the first thing the visitor saw on arrival) would be the visitor's most memorable first taste across their travels!

The Kiosk was ceremonially declared open by Governor and Lady Havelock at the end of 1891 at a well-attended 'society event', and did brisk business over the next decade. The Kiosk had spawned several imitators in the Fort area within a few years, many of which were owned by Ceylonese businessmen. Yet none could match the sheer opulence of the original that also had the full backing and financial clout of the Planter's Association. This also led to the birth of the Ceylon

Tea Kiosk established in London a few years after the opening ceremony; that Kiosk appears to have evolved into the now-defunct Ceylon Tea Centre in Regent's Street. Members of the Planter's Association are recorded having set up Ceylon Tea Kiosks at World's Fairs and trade exhibitions all over Europe and Australasia by the turn of the 20th Century.

The Kiosk in Ceylon was short lived, however, with the planned installation of a 20-foot statue of Queen Victoria in its location resulting in the government reclaiming the land less than ten years after the opening. After receiving compensation of around Rs 22,000, the Planter's Association wound up the business in 1900, although the statue itself took another two years to be installed.

Shortly thereafter, the business was re-established as a private concern named 'The Pagoda – First Class Tea House'. Although its original shareholders are not listed, various reports indicate that the Pagoda was initially set up as a private concern by members of the Planter's Association. The new restaurant was situated in the 'Australia Buildings' on York Street (which, at the time, housed the Millers department store and where the Fort Branch of Laksala is located today). The name was evidently intended to rekindle memories of the Ceylon Tea Kiosk (fondly referred to as 'The Pagoda'), although its new home did not host any such corresponding architectural feature.

The new Pagoda Tea House became a popular destination in the Fort, with luncheon service and a variety of tea time offerings available for the bankers, civil servants, and mercantile executives working in the area. Shoppers visiting the department stores in the Fort dropped in at Pagoda for mid-morning refreshments or evening tea. Although it is unlikely that dinner was served, given the general desertion of the Fort area at night due to its limited residential facilities, V. Tampoe-Hautin writing on the history of Colonial Cinema in Ceylon (2013) indicates that at least by 1907 the Pagoda at York Street appears to have hosted dramas and bioscope presentations, with tickets priced at between one and three rupees and the curtains rising at 9.30 p.m. The patrons were likely the more adventurous sort who did not mind returning to the residential parts of Colombo past midnight in an era where not all roads were well lit and few had motorcars!

The Pagoda is listed in the Ferguson's Ceylon Directory as having changed hands in September 1915, during World War I. It is likely that this is when the Rodrigo family became involved in the business, with the probable purchase of a controlling stake by Thomas Rodrigo (later Mudaliyar). By 1923, the Pagoda Tea House had relocated out of York Street to 14C, Baillie Street (now Mudalige Mawatha), located close to the Chartered Bank Buildings. The listed address is, today, an empty block of land, perhaps as a result of some abandoned and dilapidated buildings in the area being torn down for safety reasons post 2009, but readers familiar with the Fort prior to the 1990s may know additional details of its location on that road.

After a few years at Baillie Street, the Pagoda made its third and final move – this time named the Pagoda Tea Rooms (from 'kiosk' to 'house' to 'rooms'!) – into the building owned by H.L. De Mel & Co. on Chatham Street. The De Mel building, opened in 1922 is yet another Walker, Sons, & Co. construction, and was designed by William Claessen, the architect of The



• *The Ceylon Tea Kiosk. Image credit: ceylon. guide website.*

Bristol in Colombo, which at the time was the most luxurious hotel in the country. 'The Pagoda Tea Rooms' moved in to the ground floor of the building, which had previously served as the shop premises for Hassaram Motoomull & Co, Bombay merchants. The distinctive plate glass windows, shop front bulkhead, and the high ceilings of the interior made for a welcoming entrance for the hungry visitor.

It is after this relocation that the business really took off, and by the 1930s was under the stewardship of Mudaliyar Thomas Rodrigo's eldest son, Cyril, an enterprising restaurateur who expanded the business into the catering firm Cyril Rodrigo Restaurants. Amidst the gloom of World War II, he is recorded as having later purchased a restaurant named the 'Green Cabin' at Colpetty from a Burgher lady named Mrs. De Vos (of whom little information seems available), soon after the Japanese air raids in Colombo in 1942. The expanded Pagoda/Green Cabin, which its owner was proud to say never closed its doors during World War II, became a successful catering firm that undertook events island wide.

Like its York Street predecessor, the Pagoda Tea Rooms at Chatham Street became the preferred lunch destination in the booming central business district of The Fort, and had also served dinner before the 1990s. Sections of the restaurant had tables informally reserved for the regulars from the big government departments, the mercantile firms, the Central Bank and the other big banks resident in the Fort. Although business was badly affected by the exodus from the Fort after the Central Bank bombing of 1996, the restaurant remained open throughout that period in the hopes of better times to come. These hopes looked to be realized with the gradual opening of the Fort from 2010 onwards.

As it seems silly to talk about a restaurant without mentioning its offerings, let us look at what made the Pagoda special. The most well-known items at Pagoda included rice and curry, lamprais, and the famed Mongolian bbq rice, as well as a whole range of short eats and cakes – the most well-known of which were its chocolate cakes, chocolate eclairs, cream buns, and iced coffee and served under the Green Cabin name. I am personally aware of Sri Lankans, and even tourists, leaving the country with boxes full of frozen pastries and cakes from Pagoda in their baggage – they assure me these had thawed to the perfect consistency on reaching

actual restaurant staff). The familiar interior is easily identified if you look up that video on YouTube. Filming had taken twice as long as expected due to the load of the heavy lighting equipment having blown all the fuses in the restaurant and, once rectified, having sparked off a small electrical fire on the next attempt!

One of the lesser known yet harrowing ‘Pagoda stories’ occurred during the 1987-89 JVP insurrection. It was the habit of Ravi Jayewardene, the only son of the then president J.R. Jayawardene, to have lunch at The Pagoda every day. An expert marksman, who was also a key figure in the development of the Special Task Force,

the younger Jayawardene had by then landed on the hit list of the insurgents. One afternoon, a hit squad arrived at Pagoda looking for Ravi. The problem for them, however, was that Ravi J maintained a low profile, and, in an era before mobile phones and instant photography, hardly anyone knew what he actually looked like! This gave Deen and the other waiters an opening to distract the ‘hunters’ long enough for Jayawardene to make a surreptitious exit.

For most of the 20th century, ‘The Pag’ competed alongside ‘bar’ restaurants

like The Globe, Lord Nelson, The White Horse, and the Dominion, many of which were also located on Chatham Street. With the closure of the Pagoda, nothing now remains of any of these iconic eateries and watering



FIGURE 5. First Tea Kiosk, Colombo Jetty
• An elevation and cross-section of the Ceylon Tea Kiosk of 1891 (DM Forrest, 1967)

their destination, with no adverse effect on quality! In the 1960s, I am informed the Pagoda served rice and curry for around Rs. 1.30, with string hoppars and lamprais served on alternate Wednesdays for Rs 1.80.

I began eating lunch there when I first started working in the Fort in 2010 – by which time rice and curry was priced at about Rs 220, if I recall correctly, and steadily rose in price over the next few years. Although I have only the vaguest recollections of some visits there in the early 1990s, it appeared time had stopped still inside, with the wonderful vintage furniture looking forlorn within the husk of what must have once been a grand interior.

Soon my lunch ‘gang’ of three and I were ‘premier’ customers, eating there almost daily, served by the two senior-most wait staff who had worked there since the early 1970s - Deen and Tillakaratne. By what must have been some internal arrangement, none of the other waiters seemed allowed to serve us - and if the regulars were both unavailable on the day, their stand-ins seemed almost apologetic! The food was laid at our preferred table no sooner we walked in, with personal preferences in terms of accompaniments- the rice and curry came with a choice of fish, chicken, or beef- and drinks. The senior wait staff were full of colourful anecdotes, and even remembered how my father and his colleagues had similarly lunched there in the 1970s as young entrants to the banking sector in the Fort. The same waiters had been helping behind the scenes during the filming of the iconic ‘Hungry Like the Wolf’ video for Duran Duran at Pagoda in 1982/83, (although, according to Deen, none of the waiters seen wandering about twirling trays above their heads in the video were



An advertisement for bioscope showings at the Pagoda, c.1907

holes of that bygone era – aside from the lone barbershop next door defiantly maintaining the Lord Nelson name.

Despite my expectations at the time, the Pagoda never seemed to catch up with the rapid opening-up

and 're-gentrification' of the Fort area that followed from 2011. Although the restaurant underwent a basic facelift to facilitate the now increasing lunch crowd, and continued to draw many tourists via the Lonely Planet Guide, I personally feel it was unfortunate that the restaurant did not seem to capitalize or market its own history in any way. Although I often mentioned this to one of the restaurant's directors known to me, it is my understanding that there were differences of opinion within the management as to the exact direction of The Pagoda; a missed opportunity in my opinion.



• *The design of the external façade of The Pagoda.*

Sometime around 2017 came the big changes - probably after the business changed hands again and was bought over by extended family of the original owners. The old wait staff, many of whom had served for well

over 25, or even 35 years, retired (although some of them are occasionally in touch with me whenever I am in Sri Lanka). The quality of the rice and curry lunch took a nosedive, and itself was later replaced by a rather odd self-service buffet. Soon after, I believe the lunch service was done away with altogether - I am not entirely sure, as we stopped going there after the place ceased to be the welcoming daily retreat that it had once been. In the nearly nine years I spent working in the Fort, I have tried almost every 'lunch spot' in the area; from the parcels offered on the roadside by the 'ammeys' selling 'harbour kaema' to the upscale offerings on Hospital Street; many of the locations are no more. However, none of these - not even that age-old lunch outlet at the YMCA - could come close to matching that indescribable element and ambience of the Pagoda lunch.

And now even that is no more. When one of the directors of the De Mel company that owns the building, knowing my affinity to the restaurant, kindly informed me on the day that Pagoda closed shop, I knew the closure was inevitable. Whilst it is sad to see one of the last of the old Fort icons disappear, some of its spirit may live on in the newer, smaller, 'Green Cabin' that I am reliably informed has opened across the road on Chatham Street. The Pagoda we knew was not the first, and may not have been the last. Who knows? Perhaps its name will at some point be resurrected at the new Green Cabin, and someone will be reminiscing about the good times they had there, a hundred years from now.



Galle Road Bambalapitiya 1897

However, which section of the Galle Road in Bambalapitiya is featured here is unknown. Could any of our readers shed any light? If so we would like to know. One thing we know is there is a Street Gas Lamp in the picture. Can you recognise where it is?

The photo is from Henry Cave's book *Picturesque Ceylon*.

Cartoon by Max Gerreyn



Grumpy is 'a-roaming in the gloaming'

Grumpy was an extremely fussy Sinhalese, tall and white haired. He had broken through, he declared to all who would listen, by perseverance and determination to be a Chief Clerk in the Colombo Port Commission. He would return to his home in Station Lane, Wellawatte, to wash, change into a white suit, take up his stick and sail forth. People would wave and Burgher ladies with parasols taking the sea breeze would smile and boys in bicycles would swerve past him in Station Lane and shout 'Ado Grumpy' when they were safely out of reach of his stick. He would always walk on the land side railway track towards Bambalapitiya because he could see ahead and skip off the line when he saw a train in the distance. He would cross the bridge and walk up to a point where he could see the red dome of St Paul's Church beside the Galle Road. He had done over a mile. He then crossed to the sea side track for the walk back. When he got home the sun would be firing the sea with red and night clouds would hover inland.

Sometime he would set out later than usual. It all depended on the time he got home. His wife would say: 'Now late, also. Far didn't go today. 'Nother thing, carefully come on the bridge'

Grumpy would scorn a reply. He resented this wifely concern. He had come and gone on the bridge for years. He had paced these sleepers with the canal meeting the waves under his feet since the days he was a filing clerk in the Flagstaff office. He used to trip along that bridge when he was promoted Subject clerk. Now he was the chief clerk and took to wearing a white suit which he found was very dignified and made him much noticed. He was always commented on when he went 'a-roaming in the gloaming'.

(Excerpt from Carl Muller's *Yakada Yaka*. Penguin Books India © C.Muller 1994).

Pearl Fisheries in the Gulf of Mannar

by THIRU ARUMUGAM

Ceylon has an international reputation for its precious stones over the years. However, it is pearls that led the pack because, unlike other precious stones, they do not require cutting, grinding or polishing before being used in jewellery and can be used in the form that they are harvested.

Ceylon has been famous for its pearls from pre-historic times and it is well established that the Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans and Arabs coveted Ceylon's pearls. According to the Mahavamsa (Chapter VII) Vijaya arrived in Ceylon before 500 BCE and when his followers wanted to consecrate him as King, he refused to do so unless a Queen from a noble house was consecrated at the same time. His Ministers thereupon went to Madhura in South India to woo the daughter of a Pandu King carrying with them precious gifts including pearls. The Pandu King consented to the match and sent his daughter and companions to Ceylon. The Mahavamsa (Chapter VII.72) says that "*Then King Vijaya consecrated the daughter of the Pandu King with solemn ceremony as his Queen; he bestowed wealth on his Ministers, and every year he sent to his wife's father a shell-pearl worth twice a hundred thousand pieces of money*". Clearly, pearls had already been established as priceless precious stones.

The Mahavamsa (Chapter XI.14) also records in "The Consecrating of Devanampiyatissa" that he sent as a thank you gift to King Dhammasoka of India for introducing Buddhism to Ceylon, "*Pearls of eight kinds, namely horse-pearl, elephant-pearl, wagon-pearl, myrobalan-pearl, bracelet-pearl, ring-pearl, kakudha-pearl and common pearls ...*".

Pliny the Elder (23 –79 CE), the famous Roman writer, philosopher and friend of Emperor Vespasian, praised the pearl industry of the Gulf of Mannar as the most productive in the whole world.

The pearl oysters in Ceylon are found in the Gulf of Mannar, in an area of the sea stretching southwards from Mannar Island towards Wilpattu National Park and Puttalam. The pearl banks are in relatively shallow waters starting from about six kilometres from the shore and going westwards to about thirty kilometres from the shore. The total extent of the oyster bank is about 750 sq. km. The oyster bank stretches into Indian waters and there were pearl fisheries based in South India also from bases like Tuticorin, Tinnevely and Kilakkarai, from ancient times.

Arabs in the Pearl Industry

There are extensive oyster banks in the Persian Gulf and the Arabs have been involved in pearl fishing from ancient times. Between the 7th and 15th Centuries CE, they harvested pearls from the Gulf of Mannar. The Arabs, who were expert divers, harvested the pearls for the Middle East market and paid royalties to the Kings of

Ceylon. They also trained Ceylonese in the art of pearl diving.

Ibn Battuta (1304 –1368) was a Moroccan Muslim who was one of the world's greatest travellers, visiting all countries which had a significant Muslim population. In his lifetime he travelled 117,000 km which is equivalent to travelling round the world four times. He visited Ceylon in 1344 CE and was well received by the King and states that he was given valuable presents including several pearls. He also went to the top of Adams Peak. Not for him the labour of climbing, he was carried up in a palanquin!

Arab involvement in pearl fishing in the Gulf of Mannar came to an abrupt end when the Portuguese moved into the region in the 16th Century and wanted to establish a monopoly in the pearl trade.

Pearl Fishing by the Portuguese

The Portuguese were attracted to Ceylon by its spices and precious stones including pearls. At this time the Gulf of Mannar and Hainan Island in China were the biggest sources of pearls in the whole world. Karaitivu in Ceylon attracted the attention of the Portuguese. In November 1519 Antonio de Miranda de Azevedo wrote to the Portuguese Ruler regarding the Gulf of Mannar "*In this Island there is a pearl fishery. Your Highness could make great profits from it if it was forbidden to harvest it without permission*".

The Portuguese lost no time in erecting a Fort in Mannar in 1561. The King of Jaffna had a good income from the pearl fisheries and this passed into the hands of the Portuguese in 1561 when Mannar fell to the Portuguese. Finally, when the Kingdom of Jaffna fell to the Portuguese in 1619 they had a total monopoly of the Gulf of Mannar pearl trade.

The Portuguese constructed structures of shops, stores and lodgings in the temporary pearl fishing village. All pearl fishers and traders were registered. A Catholic pearl fisher paid a tax of 4 xerafims (equal to two Indian Rupia) whereas a non-Catholic pearl fisher had to pay double that amount. This gave the Portuguese a total income of 6400 pafacas in 1580. There were taxes imposed also on the pearl traders. In the 1590s this brought an annual income of 1375 pafacas. In the 16th Century the average annual income from all these sources was 10,000 xerafims.

Pearl Fishing by the Dutch

When the Dutch took over from the Portuguese capturing the Jaffna Fort in 1658, there had been no pearl fisheries for some years. The Dutch commenced pearl fishing and in 1666 and 1667 the pearl fisheries yielded a fair profit. In 1697, 13,600 men and 472 boats were engaged in the pearl fishing season which ran from February to April. Divers and traders came from Kalpitiya, Jaffna and Mannar and also from Tuticorin and Kilakkarai in South

India. The Dutch imposed taxes on the pearl trade. Divers had to pay a professional tax. In 1666 they collected 22,824 Rix dollars as taxes. A Rix dollar was worth about six shillings.

The Dutch continued exploiting the pearl oyster banks until the British took over in 1796. The best year for the Dutch was 1749 when the pearl fishery gave them an income of nearly 70,000 Pounds sterling.

Pearl Fishing by the British

The British lost no time in commencing pearl fishing. In the 1797 pearl fishing season they sold the Gulf of Mannar pearl fishing rights to a Chetty in Jaffna who bid 110,000 Pounds. This gives an idea of the value of pearls the bidder expected to harvest. This practice of giving pearl fishing rights to the highest bidder continued until 1833 when the British decided to take a direct interest in conducting the pearl fishery.

Towards the end of the 19th Century the pearl yield declined and in 1900 Governor Ridgeway decided to ask for expert advice from Prof. Herdman FRS and Marine Biologist James Hornell. They visited Ceylon and carried out detailed studies in the oyster banks. The results of their studies were published by the Royal Society, London, in five bulky volumes. Their studies suggested various measures to increase the yield of oysters but the Government was not prepared to meet the costs involved.

Pearl formation

A pearl takes up to six years to develop to a reasonable size. Therefore, it is not worth holding a pearl fishery more often than once in three years, to give time for the pearl to develop. The material of a pearl is calcium carbonate. A pearl is formed in a mollusc or oyster when a microscopic intruder enters the bivalve and settles inside the shell. This acts as an irritant to the bivalve and it secretes calcium carbonate nacre (mother-of-pearl) to cover the irritant, in successive layers to form a pearl.

The common belief that a grain of sand is the irritant that triggers off the formation of a pearl is rarely the case. The unique lustre of the pearl is caused by the reflection, refraction and diffraction of light by the translucent layers of nacre. Pearls dissolve in even a weak acid. Any attempt to clean a pearl with vinegar can be disastrous.

The oyster banks stretch from Mannar southwards towards Puttalam. Most of the banks are at depths of about 10 metres to 20 metres. There are about 50 banks in Ceylonese waters and they stretch from about six to thirty kilometres from the seashore. Banks which have significant oyster densities are around Karativu Island and Kudiramalai.

Conducting a Pearl Fishery

Up to 1906 the Government directly conducted the pearl fisheries and the system adopted was that twice a year the pearl banks were examined by a Marine Biologist and samples of up to 20,000 oysters were dredged and examined. If the average yield was found to be pearls worth Rs 10 or more per 1000 oysters, the Government proclaimed that a pearl fishery would be held in the following fishing season which is from February to April.

This is the inter-monsoonal period when the sea is calm and the water is crystal clear.

The fishery is advertised not only in Ceylon but also in South India, Middle East and Far East. The advertisements give details of the dates, the banks to be fished and the prospective yields of pearls.

In January the building of the temporary pearl fishing camp site is commenced at Marichchukadde near Wilpattu National Park. There was no road access and the only access was by boat. Since the oyster banks are in the Northern Province, the Government Agent (GA) Jaffna was directly in charge of proceedings. A large cadian bungalow was built for the GA and smaller cadian bungalows for the other Government officials such as the AGA, his assistants, the Superintendent of Police, the Medical Officer, Customs Officer and Harbour Manager. By mid-February numerous sailing craft bring a motley crowd of pearl merchants, divers, buyers, petty traders and labourers who all start erecting their accommodation using cadjans and timber from the adjacent jungle. By the time pearling starts towards the end of February, the population of the temporary fishing village has swollen to over 30,000.



• *Ready to Dive, Gulf of Mannar, 1926*

Pearl Diving

On pearl fishing days, depending on the prevailing winds, the starting gun is fired on the beach at about 2 am, and the fishing dhows set off for the fishing grounds. The Government ship is moored at the centre of the area selected for that day's fishing, and the fishing area is marked off by floating buoys. At dawn a gun is fired from the Government ship and pearl fishing starts off in earnest by divers from about 250 boats.

The divers came from Cape Comorin and surrounding areas, from Malabar in present day Kerala and Arabs from the Persian Gulf. The diver descends vertically standing on a stone weighing about twenty kilos to which is attached a rope. See Figure 1 above. The stone helps him to descend quickly without wasting precious time. He also takes with him a wickerwork basket which is tied to a second rope. On reaching the sea bed, the diver swims slowly shovelling oysters into the basket. When he cannot hold his breath any longer, he tugs both ropes and he is quickly hauled up to the



• **Figure 2: Arab Divers with nose clips, Gulf of Mannar, 1906 (Courtesy Estate of Leonard Woolf)**

surface by those on the boat.

The Indian divers are able to hold their breath for up to about 50 seconds and are able to work at depths up to about 15 metres. The Arab divers (see **Figure 2**) use nose clips and seem to have greater lung capacity because they are able to hold their breath up to 70 seconds and at depths up to about 25 metres.

Around noon a gun is fired from the Government ship. This is the signal that pearl fishing is over for the day. The boats then start their return journey and depending on the prevailing winds reach Marichchukadde any time from late afternoon onwards. On a good day the total harvest from all the boats can range from one to two million oysters.

Harvesting the Pearls

On arrival at Marichchukadde, the oyster harvesters carry their gunny bags of oysters to the Government's Kottu or Oyster Store where they divide their harvest into three equal heaps. A Government Inspector then selects two heaps for the Government and the oyster harvester can take away the third heap.

At 6 pm in the evening the Government starts auctioning its share of the oyster harvest (see **Figure 3**). Bids are invited starting at Rs 50 per 1000 oysters and



• **Figure 3: Pile of Oysters ready for sale by Auction, 1906.**

usually stops when it reaches Rs 70 per 1000 oysters. The Auctioneer then asks all those who bid how many thousand oysters they are prepared to buy at the highest bid price, and the deals are closed.

The following morning the successful bidders pay the Government their bid value in cash and remove their oysters. The oysters are spread out on the beach on mats for seven to ten days during which period fly

maggots attack and eat the flesh of the oysters. As a result of this breeding, the fishing village has myriads of flies. At the end of the ten-day period all the flesh is eaten away and only the shells are left. These are placed in dug-out canoes filled with water and rinsed out, and all that is left are shells, sand and pearls. The pearls are carefully picked out and graded according to size and colour and sold to dealers.

Leonard Woolf and the 1906 Pearl Fishery

Leonard Woolf, later to become a famous author and husband of the novelist Virginia Woolf, was in the Civil Service and was stationed in Jaffna in 1906. The November 2016 edition of this Journal carries a comprehensive history of his life. Woolf was just recovering from a severe attack of typhoid when the Government Agent asked him whether he was fit enough to accompany him to supervise the pearl fishery. Woolf thought that this would be an interesting experience and readily agreed. Woolf has given a detailed account of the pearl fishery in pages 85 to 98 of his book *"Growing"*, which is the second volume of his four-volume autobiography.

On 15th February 1906 he set sail from Jaffna to Marichchukadde in an open boat, reaching there 36 hours later. Walking up to the camp, he found that the GA and his wife had already reached the camp. The GA assigned to him the duty of being in charge of the Kottu, which was the hut to which the oyster harvesters brought their daily catch for sharing with the Government. If there was fair wind, the oysters were brought in during the late afternoon, but if the wind was light the boats arrived throughout the night and Woolf had to stay awake.

Woolf says that there were 4090 Arabs who had come from the Persian Gulf in dhows. There were also 4577 Tamil and Moor divers, mostly from South India. There was a total of 473 boats from which the divers operated and the pearl fishery went on from 20th February to 3rd April. He estimated the total number of people in the camp as between thirty to forty thousand. The long hours of work, the heat and the myriads of flies which bred in the rotting oysters made life quite unpleasant for Woolf.

On pages 95 to 96 of his book *"Growing"*, Woolf describes a tragic tale of an Arab which occurred during the pearl fishery, a tale which he says he will never forget for the rest of his life. In 1921 Woolf published a book of fictional short stories titled *"Stories of The East"*. One of the stories has the title *"Pearls and Swine"*. In that story Woolf incorporates verbatim the same true tragic tale of the Arab on pages 56 to 57 and this is reproduced here:

"I was told I was wanted on the shore. I went quickly. The sea looked cold and grey under the faint light from the East. A cold little wind just ruffled the surface of the water. A solitary boat stood out black against the sky, just throbbing slowly up and down on the water close inshore. They had a dead Arab on board, he had died suddenly while diving, they wanted my permission to bring the body ashore. Four men waded

out to the boat: the corpse was lifted out and placed upon their shoulders: the feet of the dead man stuck out, toes pointing up, very stark, over the shoulders of the men in front. The body was laid on the sand. The bearded face of the dead man looked very calm, very dignified in the faint light. An Arab, his brother, sat down, upon the sand near his head. He covered himself with sackcloth. I heard him weeping. It was very silent. Very cold and still on the shore in the early dawn.

A tall figure stepped forward, it was the Arab sheik, the leader of the boat. He laid his hand on the head of the weeping man and spoke to him calmly, eloquently, compassionately. The dead man had lived, had worked, had died. He had died working, without suffering, as men should desire to die. He had left a son behind him. The speech went on calmly, eloquently. I heard continually the word *Khallas* – all is over, finished. I watched the figures outlined against the grey sky – the long lean outline of the corpse, with the toes sticking up so straight and stark, the crouching huddled figure of the weeping man and the tall upright sheik standing by his side. They were motionless, sombre, mysterious, part of the grey sea, of the grey sky."

The dawn broke, red in the eastern sky. But the dead Arab would not see the dawn, or any other dawn.

Decline of Pearl Fishing in the Gulf of Mannar

1906 was the last year that the Government directly supervised the pearl fishery. After that the pearl fishery rights were given out to the highest bidder. From 1907 the pearl fishery rights were leased out to a Colombo based Company called Pearl Fishers Ltd, for twenty years, at an annual rental of just over three lakhs of Rupees per annum. In addition, the Company was required to carry out major improvements to the pearl banks including moving millions of oysters to favourable predator free locations.

The writer recollects how in the 1950s his father brought home a gunny bag full of rotten stinking oysters from the Pettah Fish Market – the proceeds of a pearl fishery. We eagerly set about prising open the stinking oysters to see whether we could find a pearl of great price. We tied handkerchiefs round our noses – those were pre-Covid days and there were no face masks! When we had worked our way through the gunny bag all we had was about ten small misshapen pearls of no commercial value.

In the early part of the 20th Century, for some reason the oyster yield in the Gulf of Mannar pearl banks started declining. Pearl market prices also declined and as a result that was more or less the end of the pearl fishing in the Gulf of Mannar. What caused the decline and fall of the pearl fishing industry? It can be laid fairly and squarely at the doorstep of one man – Kokichi Mikimoto. ***Mikimoto and his Cultured Pearls***

Kokichi Mikimoto (1858-1954) was born in the Shima Province of Japan in 1858. From his early days he was interested in pearls and wanted to discover an alternative way of producing pearls. He started a pearl oyster farm in 1888 and five years later he was able to produce cultured pearls by seeding oysters with a small piece of

mother-of-pearl from oyster shells. The pearls produced, however, were hemispherical in shape, not spherical. It took him another twelve years to produce spherical pearls and by the 1920s he was able to produce cultured pearls in commercial quantities.

Cultured pearls are produced by oysters in less than half the time that it takes them to produce a natural pearl, due to the size of the pearl seed that is introduced. A cultured pearl is produced by an oyster in less than two years. Visually, a cultured pearl cannot be distinguished from a natural pearl (Ladies please note!). The only way of distinguishing between a cultured pearl and a natural pearl is by taking X-Rays and studying the seed that caused the pearl to form.

By 1935 there were 350 pearl farms in Japan producing 10 million cultured pearls per year. This completely decimated the natural pearl industry worldwide. It also caused a collapse in pearl prices and cultured pearl production had to be cut down to maintain prices.

Mikimoto died in 1954 at the ripe old age of 96 years but the Mikimoto Pearl Company has gone from strength to strength. It is the official jeweller for the Miss Universe contests. The Company's annual sales of cultured pearls is worth about 500 million Australian



• **Figure 4: Pearling Luggers in Broome, Western Australia, 1914**

dollars. Mikimoto has been named as one of Japan's top ten inventors of all time by the Japan Patent Office.

Pearl Shell Fishing in Australia

Pearl shell fishing existed in Australia before European settlement. It centred around Broome in the northern part of Western Australia. First Nation people collected mother-of-pearl shells and traded them with Indonesian fishermen. European settlers became involved in pearl shell fishing from about the 1850s. Pearl shells were collected mainly by wading out into the sea at low tide. When these sources were exhausted towards the end of the 19th Century, diving for pearl shells commenced, using locally resident female divers.

By 1910, Broome was the centre of the pearl shell fishing industry (see **Figure 4**). About 400 pearling luggers were based around there and over 3500 people were involved in the industry, making it the world's largest pearl shell centre supplying 70 per cent of the world's requirements of mother-of-pearl. The divers came from Japan, Malaysia and other Asian countries.

After World War I, plastic was invented and used for making cheap buttons and similar items. This caused a complete collapse in the demand for mother-of-pearl for making buttons. The pearling industry in Broome collapsed and the industry ended when World War II commenced.

In order to protect the natural pearl fishing industry, the Australian Government enacted the Pearling Act of 1922 which prohibited anyone from producing cultured pearls. The Act was repealed in 1949 and today there are about 20 cultured pearl farms in Australia generating annual exports of cultured pearls worth about 200 million dollars.

The Opera "The Pearl Fishers" set in Ceylon

Georges Bizet was a French Music Composer of the romantic era who was born in Paris in 1838. His parents realised that he was a musical prodigy and he was enrolled as a music student at the Conservatoire de Paris when he was only nine years old. He blossomed out as a pianist and composer and his most famous work is the music he composed for the opera 'Carmen' in 1874. He died in 1875 at the age of 37 years, a few months after the premiere of *Carmen*, not realising that his music for that opera would become world famous.

In 1863, at the age of 25 years, Bizet received a commission to compose the music for a three act Opera titled "*Les Pecheurs de Perles*" (The Pearl Fishers), based on a French libretto (text). The opera was staged but did not receive a great response from the public and folded up after 18 performances. However, contemporary French composers like Berlioz commended Bizet's music as promising.

The story of the Opera is set in ancient Ceylon. Zurga is the head of a group of pearl fishermen and Nadir is one

of the pearl fishermen and they are great friends. Their duet "*Au fond du temple saint*" (At the back of the holy temple) popularly

known as 'The Pearl Fishers Duet' invariably appears in lists of best operatic duets.

One day the two friends go on a trip to Kandy. There they meet Leila, a Hindu Priestess and they both fall in love with her. This threatens to disrupt the vow of eternal friendship between the two men and Leila too is faced with the dilemma of conflict between secular love and her religious vows. The eternal love triangle develops from this point.

After its not very promising initial run in Paris "*The Pearl Fishers*" became more popular in the 20th Century and has been performed in the world's top opera houses like Milan's La Scala; London's Covent Garden and Sadler's Wells; New York's Metropolitan



• **Figure 5: Scene from the Opera "The Pearl Fishers", Colombo, 2008**

Opera where Enrico Caruso has played the lead role; and Sydney's Opera House where it had a two month run four years ago. In the latter performance, Ceylon born 'Gandhi' Macintyre, brother of CSA Member and playwright Ernest Macintyre, had a significant role as a Hindu Priest of Brahma. The Sydney Morning Herald of 17th January 2016 reviewing this production has this interesting comment about Opera Australia's Michael Gow, the Director: "*Gow has done away with the idea that this is a story about the conflict of piety, loyalty and love in an exotic locale, and replaced it with one about the kinds of people who ran the shabby colonial business of getting island peoples to dive in dangerous waters for pearls which were then sold on for huge profits*".

Colombo performance of "The Pearl Fishers"

In January 2008, the opera "*The Pearl Fishers*" was staged in Colombo, Ceylon for the first time, the country where the story is set. Many of the 120 strong cast were Sri Lankans who had to master the French accent. The Chorus group were mainly Sri Lankans. The 150 musicians were from France, India and Korea and the Conductor was Benjamin Levy. A scene from the Colombo performance can be seen in **Figure 5**.



***Make a Special present
this Christmas
with a Gift Subscription of
The Ceylankan
to family & friends***



**For just \$35 or
\$45 if
the nominee
is resident
outside Australia**

Your nominee will receive
four quarterly issues
mailed to his/her home.

Please contact the Treasurer,
Deepak Pritamdas
on 0434 860 188

Events that led to the Fall of the Kandyan Kingdom Part 1

Dr Leonard Pinto



From about the 16th Century, European nations yielded power, prestige and wealth through their colonies in Asia, Africa and America. The ethics of that strategy is much debated today in the context of universal human rights and the principles of moral philosophy. However, the leading thinkers at that time, including John Locke, John Stuart Mill and Hegel argued in favour of colonisation (Arnell 1996, Bell 2020). To justify colonisation, they used various arguments from natural law, converting heathens, civilising natives and bringing universal benefits to all nations, as valid moral arguments. Even Nietzsche's *übermensch* (superior man) and Heidegger's *dasein* (inner human experience) seem to support the superiority of European Aryans over other nations, implying a type of Darwinian survival of the fittest in the human society (Hulab 1998, Faye *et al.* 2006).

Arrival of Western powers: Invasion or invitation?

Although most Sri Lankan textbooks and articles by popular writers refer to the occupation Sri Lanka by Western powers as foreign invasions, other texts including Rajavaliya, Alakesvara yuddhaya and Mahahatana indicate that the first encounter of the Portuguese with the Sinhalese royalty in Kotte was cordial with exchange of gifts (Somaratne 1969). Portuguese arrived in Sri Lanka during the reign of Vira Parakramabahu VIII (according to Paranavitane, king from 1477-1496; Somaratne 1477-1489; and Rajavaliya 1469-1489) and his son Dharma Parakramabahu IX (according to Paranavitane, king from 1491-1513; Somaratne 1489-1513. Rajavaliya is silent on his reign. So, some Sinhalese writers say he was a Portuguese invention. The fleet of Don Lourenço de Almeida



Figure 1. *Padroo* erected by Portuguese in Colombo. It carries the Court of Arms of Portugal (*Quinas*) and the inexplicable year 1501. Almeida arrived in 1505/1506. His *Padroo* was destroyed by Moors in 1508. Was this carved by Joao de Nova's crew in 1501? Is it sculptor's error? It was discovered in 1898 facing Jetty entrance, where Queen Victoria's statue was, and moved to Harbour Master's Office.

However, others such as Kant and Diderot criticised colonisation, because of its unjust treatment of natives (Muthu 2003).

As a result of the European colonial strategy, their power and ethics, the coastal lands of Sri Lanka were colonised by Portuguese from 1505 to 1658, by Dutch from 1658 to 1796 and by British from 1796 to 1815. The British conquered the entire country in 1815 and ruled till 1948. The signing of the Kandyan Convention in 1815 by the Sinhalese chiefs with the British ended the 2357 years of indigenous Sinhalese monarchy in Sri Lanka. This series of articles attempts to describe the distal and proximal events that led to the collapse of the Kandyan Kingdom.

landed in Galle accidentally after a storm in the Indian Ocean, while chasing Moor ships near Maldives. They arrived in Colombo on 15 November 1505. According to other accounts, their stay in Colombo was brief and they returned to Colombo in early 1506 with an ambassador and an interpreter (different Portuguese historians name the ambassador as Payo de Souza (Barros), as Fernao Cotrim (Castenheda), and as Diago D'Almeida (Correa). According to the Jesuit Fr Queyroz, Payo de Souza prepared the way and Fernao Cotrim met the king and signed the treaty. Rajavaliya, which describes the arrival of the fair skinned people in the Colombo harbour who ate white stones and drank blood, and who were taken along a circuitous path to Kotte, also refers to the

assessment of Portuguese by Sinhalese intelligence led by Prince Cakrayudha (or a meeting of Chakra Raja with Almeida), as good friendly people with whom the king should make alliance and not go to war (Francis 1913). The Sinhalese king of Kotte welcomed the Portuguese, because of their naval and military power, value in trade, protection they could provide and the attraction of life-style, as the intelligence assessment had reported.

On arrival in Colombo, Don Lourenço dispatched the ambassador to propose a treaty with the king of Kotte to obtain the monopoly of trade in the Indian Ocean from the Moors, in return to protect the western coast of Sri Lanka from Puttalam to Weligama from Muslim smugglers and provide military intervention, in case of an attack. When the Portuguese arrived, the country was in a weak state, as it was divided into the kingdoms in Kotte, Kandy and Jaffna and the trade deals of local Muslims with foreign Moor and Arab traders were undercutting the income of the King of Kotte. Local Muslims were aiming to establish their kingdom under the Muslim leader Zamorin in India, and the King of Kotte feared that his kingdom would collapse sooner than later, as the increasing activities in the south were undermining his power already.

Under such conditions the Sinhalese king was most willing to invite the Portuguese to support him. From 1505 to 1518, Portuguese continued to do international trade with Sri Lanka in accordance with the treaty, with no interference in the internal affairs of the country. Dharma Parakramabahu IX (1489-1513) and his son Vijayabahu VI (1513-1521) continued to send gifts of cinnamon, gems, tusks and elephants to Portuguese authorities in Goa, asking them to build a fort in Fort, Colombo to protect the country. Finally the Portuguese accepted the invitation and in 1518 Viceroy Lopo Soares de Albergaria came to Colombo with a large fleet and built the fort Santa Barbara with a church dedicated to St Lawrence in memory of Lourenço de Almeida (who died in 1508 at the Battle of Chaul near Bombay). To this date St Lawrence is the patron saint of Colombo and the church has moved to Wellawatte. Fearing Portuguese influence on king Dharma Parakramabahu, the Muslims got him poisoned through his son Vijayabahu VI, but he too aligned himself with the Portuguese. Muslim traders were affected by the Portuguese presence in Colombo Fort and they instigated the Sinhalese people and the king. Sinhalese and Muslims attacked the fort. Portuguese repulsed the attack but later they dismantled the fort. However, king Vijayabahu VI distanced himself from these attacks and re-established the lost friendship with the Portuguese by increasing the number of elephants and bundles of cinnamon in the annual gift. So, initially, Portuguese did not invade (ākramanaya) Sri Lanka with an army, but were invited by the Sinhalese king. What followed was the tragic consequences of that invitation, which turned into battles and invasions.

The second invitation to Portuguese came from king Bhuvanekabahu VII (1521-1551). Vijayabahu VI had four sons from his first queen, named Bhuvanekabahu, Mayadunne, Raigam Bandara and Pararajasinha.

When Vijayabahu VI was planning to make Deva Rajasinghe by his second queen, the next king, the four step-brothers protested and had the father killed by a Muslim. Bhuvanekabahu ruled Kotte, Mayadunne ruled Sitawaka and Raigam Bandara, Raigama (**Figure 2**). This episode is the background to W.A. Silva's 1938 Sinhala novel and 2019 movie, *Vijayaba Kollaya*. Ambitious Mayadunne annexed Raigama, when Raigam Bandara



• Figure 2. At the time of the arrival of the Portuguese, there were three kingdoms in Sri Lanka; Kotte, Kandy and Jaffna. After Vijayabahu VI, Kotte was divided into Sitawaka, Raigama and Kotte by his sons who killed him.

died. He initially solicited military assistance from Portuguese, but they refused, as they had made a commitment with his brother Bhuvanekabahu.

Mayadunne's next goal was Kotte. Seeing trouble, Bhuvanekabahu VII strengthened his ties with the Portuguese to protect his kingdom against the attacks of his brother, Mayadunne of Sitawaka. Then, Mayadunne allied himself with Zamorin, the Muslim ruler of Calicut India, an inveterate enemy of Europeans. The Malabar Muslims (Māpillas) encouraged this conflict between Sitawaka and Kotte, hoping to expel the Portuguese from Sri Lanka and get back their trade monopoly. In 1527 Zamorin sent a force led by Pachi Marikar, Cunhale Marikar and Ali Ibrahim to assist king Mayadunne. The Portuguese brought in a fleet from Goa, led by Martin de Mello to assist Bhuvanekabahu VII. In the ensuing battle the armies of Zamorin and Mayadunne were defeated (Mendis 1983). Bhuvanekabahu pardoned his brother.

He also had a daughter, Samudra Devi, who was married to Vidiya Bandara. They had a son, Don Juan Dharmapala. While the king wanted to make Dharmapala the next king, there were three other contenders, two from a secondary queen and one from

his sister. All three were seeking assistance from the Portuguese. The king had the eldest son Hugo assassinated in 1541, and the other two Don Joao and Don Luis died of smallpox on their way to Goa in 1546. Bhuvanekabahu's affinity for Portuguese was such that he sent Panditha Rala (Sallappu Arachchi according to Rajavaliya) with a silver effigy of his grandson Dharmapala to Lisbon to be crowned by Joao III, the king of Portugal. After enriching the friendship between the king of Portugal and the king of Kotte and agreeing to military protection of Kotte, the delegation of Panditha Rala, five Franciscan Friars and St Francis Xavier, a Jesuit set sail from Lisbon on 12 March 1544 on board the ship Santiago and reached Goa on 3 September the same year. Panditha Rala disembarked in Goa for business and St Francis Xavier for his missions, while the Friars came to Colombo. However, St Francis Xavier came to Colombo in 1545 to deliver a letter from the king of Portugal to the king of Kotte and stopped at Neduntivu (Delft) near Jaffna on his way back. Again he came to Galle in 1551 on his way from Malacca, and went to Kalegana to see a sick friend, Miguel Fernandez and say mass there, while the ship was being repaired.

In 1551, King Bhuvanekabahu VII was 'accidentally shot' (in fact assassinated) in his Kelaniya Palace. His grandson, 16-year-old Don Juan Dharmapala succeeded him with his father Vidiya Bandara as the regent. When Don Juan Dharmapala died without children in 1597, he had bequeathed the kingdom of Kotte to the king of Portugal in his will, and the Portuguese claimed King Philip of the United Kingdoms of Spain and Portugal to be the king of Kotte under Captain General Don Jeronimo de Azevedo. This was obviously a betrayal of the kingdom of Kotte by King Dharmapala. If his grandfather and granduncle had been united and put aside their personal ambitions in the interest of the country, Sri Lanka would have traded with the Portuguese and remained as an independent country like Thailand, which was never colonised. On the other hand, according to Prof Peter Courtenay's assessment, "the arrival of the Portuguese saved the Sinhalese from the slavery of Moors. Had not Portuguese landed in then Ceylon, there would be no Sinhalese to-day, they would have all become Moormen" (Francis 1913). While this is an overstatement, the consideration of the fate of Maldives, Indonesia and Malaysia, and the global agitation by ISIS and bombings in Sri Lanka by National Thowheeth Jama'ath (NTJ), his statement cannot be fully undermined.

Bhuvanekabahu's over-dependence on the Portuguese was to consolidate his power against his brother, which changed the dynamics of power as fighting advanced, taking the form of Buddhist Sinhalese nationalism against Catholic foreign invaders. When Franciscan Friars tried to convert king Bhuvanekabahu, following the assurance given to king Joao III in Lisbon by Panditha Rala, Bhuvanekabahu resisted, saying, "let each one hold, whichever religion he prefers. In the meantime, I am satisfied with my own, and in future let all refrain from disputation. You may be quite sure that I will never embrace the Catholic religion or speak in favour of it. But, if I am forced, I will abdicate my king-

dom and abandon my native land rather than be dipped in the water of baptism" (Perniola 2014). Notwithstanding this, some historians consider him also as a traitor.

The invitation of Dutch to evict Portuguese is frequently mentioned in Sinhala history books, as "inguru deela miris gatta wagei" (exchanging chilli for ginger). It was a period of turmoil and confusion in Sitawaka. When Mayadunne was found dead, his son Rajasinghe I was suspected of patricide. As Buddhist monks would not find a pardon for him according to Buddhism, he turned to a Hindu priest, Arittakeevendu Perumal, who suggested pardon through sacrificial offerings. Rajasinghe I became a Hindu and persecuted Buddhist monks in his Sitawaka kingdom. He also invaded Kandy and appointed Virasundara Bandara, a Kandyan from Peradeniya to administer Kandy and persecute Buddhist monks there, which he refused. Virasundara Bandara was executed, but his son Konappu Bandara escaped to Kotte. He joined the Portuguese, was trained in warfare in Goa and was baptised as Don Juan of Austria. After defeating Rajasinghe I and capturing Kandy in 1592, the Portuguese made Don Juan of Austria the commander of newly built fort at Gannoruwa. He turned tables on the Portuguese, captured the 12-year old princess Dona Catarina (Kusumasana Devi) who was brought to Kandy by the Portuguese to be installed as queen and married her, claiming the right to the throne. Konappu Bandara alias Don Juan of Austria became king Vimaladharmasuriya I and re-established the Kandyan Kingdom.

References

- Arnell, B. (1996). John Locke and America: The defence of English colonisation. Oxford University Press.
- Bell, D. (2020). John Stuart Mill. Political Theory 38 (1):34-64.
- Faye, E., Watson, A and Goslan, R.J. (2006). Nazi foundations in Heidegger's work. South Central Review. Vol 23 (1): 55-66.
- Francis, M.G. (1913). History of Ceylon. An abridged translation of Professor Peter Courtenay's work. Asian Educational Services, Mangalore, India.
- Hulab, R.C. (1998). Nietzsche's colonialist imagination: Nueva Germania, Good Europeans and Great Politics. In Imperialist imagination: German colonisation and its legacy. ed. S. Friedrichsmeyer, S.Lennox and S.Zantop. University of Michigan, USA.
- Mendis, V.L.B. (1983). Foreign relations of Sri Lanka from earliest times to 1995. Ceylon Historical Journal monograph series. Tissara Prakasakayo, Dehiwala., Sri Lanka.
- Muthu,S. (2003). Enlightenment against empire. Princeton University Press.
- Perniola, V. (2014). Franciscans come to Ceylon. The Messenger, February 23, 2014. Colombo.
- Somaratne, G.P.V. (1969). Political history of the Kingdom of Kotte. Ph.D. Thesis. University of London. Published by ProQuest LLC (2018).

BOOK REVIEW

The Bogans

By Channa Wickremesingha

ISBN: 978-0-6481349-1-6

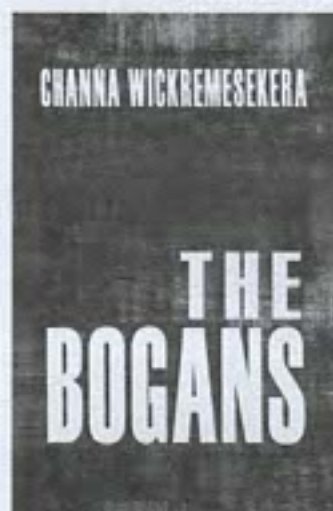
Date of publication - June 2020

Publisher: Wicks Publishing, Mt. Waverley, VIC

Copies from author on: channaau@yahoo.com.au

REVIEWED by Jeremy de Lima

In his latest book, released in June, the author, Dr Channa Wickremesekera has bravely chosen as the title *The Bogans* – an adjective which is very contentious and uniquely Australian.



While reviewing the book, I thought it appropriate to obtain a “dinky-di” opinion of this word and widely canvassed the streets. It is derogatory, and I will quote verbatim: “Swearing country bumpkins, from around Moe, wearing mocas (moccasins), and torn track pants”

This fictional story revolves around families of a cross-section of the recent Australian migrant strata, Malaysians, Indians, South Africans, Lebanese Muslims and, of course, Sri Lankan. Notably, this is a modern work as there are no characters from Australia’s historical post-war immigration wave of English, Greeks, Italians and other European countries like Poland and Czechoslovakia.

He presents the cast in a migrant concentrated residential area, an unnamed south eastern suburb in Melbourne which in fact (coincidentally?) has a high proportion of Sri Lankans. Evoking laughs at demographic social snobbery by using the affluent suburbs of Toorak, South Yarra and Wheelers Hill, he shows how the lower class ostentatiously spends to climb the “nouveau riche” social ladder.

Cleverly interspersed with common Australian slang and swear words, he includes almost every facet of a normal Melbourne life. Allegiance to Footy is prominent, with all major clubs scoring a guernsey. Gang warfare, a recent phenomenon in Australia, is presented culminating in a dramatic night time ASIO raid in a well woven plot. The modern social acceptance of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) is also noted.

Racial differences, which are natural in different cultures trying to assimilate, is evident throughout the story but are overcome at the conclusion by all parties coming together in a happy ending. What this novel achieves is to epitomise the words of the iconic Australian group, The Seekers “We are one, but we are many, and from all the lands on earth we come”

All told, a humorous novel, with a sardonic twist, certainly worth the read for both new migrants as well as established settlers who will, no doubt, recollect both the good and bad times when they started their lives, in what was to them a foreign country at that time.

The author is no stranger to the Ceylon Society having previously delivered a talk at one of our General Meetings. His thanks to our own Professor Yasmine Gooneratne for editing the first draft of this novel is very touching.

Migrating to Melbourne at the young age of 23 to pursue higher education, he turned to serious writing after completing his doctoral thesis on the history of the Sepoy army.

This book is available directly through Channa for AUD \$20. Postage cost as well as details of his nine other publications can be obtained from: channaau@yahoo.com.au.

The Martello Tower in Sri Lanka

Small defensive forts called Martello Towers were built along the coastlines across the British Empire during the 19th Century at the time of the French Revolutionary wars and onwards.



• Sri Lanka's Martello Tower
in Hambantota.

These circular towers were erected along in 16 countries around the world including England, Canada, South Africa, Australia and Sri Lanka.

The Martello tower in Sri Lanka, the only one in the Asian region, is located in the

Kachcheri premises in Hambantota, on the island's South coast. The tower is 12 metres tall with a five-metre girth and it is said that British soldiers were able to detect enemy ships arriving at this coastal town. During the British occupation there were 25 soldiers on guard throughout the day at the tower. According to hearsay, the tower may have been of help in repelling naval attacks by the French.

These towers had two floors and had a garrison of 15–25 men typically. Their round structure and thick masonry walls made them resistant to cannon fire, while their height made them an ideal platform for a single item of heavy artillery, mounted on a flat roof and able to be traversed, and hence fire over a complete circle.

The construction of Martello towers abroad continued until the 1870s until discontinued when it became clear that the towers could not withstand an onslaught of the new rifled artillery weapons. Many of the towers have survived to the present day, as the tower in Hambantota which was renovated about 20 years ago, funded by NORAD under the Norwegian-supported programme for rural development in the Hambantota District.

(Sources: Wikipedia, Google.



Sinhalese Lascorins of the British Army in Ceylon

By M.D. (TONY) SALDIN

British records show that the Ceylon Rifle Regiment (CRR) a unit of the British army in Ceylon were composed of Javanese and Malay soldiers, which they inherited from the Dutch, after they ceded the island to the British in 1796.

This unit initially known during Dutch times as the "Free Javanese Company" was the precursor to the Malay Rifle Regiment and the 1st Ceylon Regiment which were then re-named as the Ceylon Rifle Regiment. To the Malays of the CRR it was just another name for the Malay Regiment. The CRR soldiers were clothed in scarlet tunics with crossed shoulder belts, and white trousers with a *shako* as headgear. Each one was armed with musket and bayonet and in addition, always carried one's poisoned dagger (*Kreese*) by one's side for close quarter combat. Later on, the CRR was the first Ceylonese regiment to receive the Brown Bess rifle, an advanced weapon during that time, compared to cut-down muskets which was the standard issue.

The majority of the soldiers of the CRR were Javanese, Sundanese, Bandanese, Bugis, Madurese, Makassarese, Sumnapers, Sumatrans and Balinese recruits from the Indonesian archipelago, and also some from the Malayan peninsula, who were later recruits by the British. Princely Javanese exiles from Dutch times were usually appointed as officers of this regiment.

This might lead one to believe that no Sinhalese soldiers were recruited into the service of the British army. However, that is not true.

Lascorins in Portuguese (AD1505 - AD1650) and Dutch Service (AD1640 - AD1796)

Although the initial landing of the Portuguese in Ceylon was in 1505, it was not until 1518 that they built their first fortification in Colombo.

In the year 1551, the ruler of the low-country Sinhalese kingdom of Kotte was a puppet of the Portuguese. However, in the 1560s most of his kingdom was lost to his arch rival the warrior King Raja Sinha, the ruler of the neighboring kingdom of Sitawaka. With the death of King Raja Sinha in 1593, his kingdom collapsed and all its lands were absorbed into the kingdom of Kotte.

In 1597 with the death of Don Juan Dharmapala, the despised and childless Catholic King of Kotte, the Portuguese now found themselves in control of the southwest lowlands of Ceylon, since he had donated his kingdom on a platter to the King of Portugal,

The Portuguese in particular relied heavily on local soldiers to garrison their forts, since Portuguese *soldados* were few in number. Soldiers (*hewayo*) particularly from the Atapattu and Maduwa castes were in demand, since they were traditionally soldiers. Those from other castes such as farmer, fisher and Chando (Toddy drawers)

were also recruited. They called these soldiers "Lascorins," which is derived from the Persian word "Lakshari," meaning soldier.

The Portuguese ill-treated their *lascorins* to such an execrable extent that, in the Randiwela battle in 1630, most of them defected to the Sinhala king, who they believed was the hereditary ruler of Ceylon. In this battle, Constantine de Saa, the commander, and most of his men, were slaughtered by the Kandyans.

Usually a company of *lascorins* numbering thirty was commanded by an "Arachchi" a rank equivalent to that of a captain in the Portuguese army. The *lascorins* of each province were led by a *Dissawa* or provincial governor, who was assisted by *Mudaliyars*.



• *Lascorins are indigenous soldiers in Ceylon who fought for the Portuguese (1505–1658) and went on to serve as colonial soldiers until the 1930s. The lascorins played a crucial role in the colonial armies.*

Between the years 1636 and 1658, the Dutch ousted the Portuguese from Ceylon. The bulk of the Dutch fighters were from the East comprising of Malays, Javanese, Sundanese, etc. However, the Dutch also made use of *lascorins* (Sinhala: *Lascaringya batayo*) and, in 1679, a Dutch governor wrote in a report to the Hague that: 'It is chiefly with the help of the Lascorins from Colombo and Galle that the Honorable (Dutch East India) Company is able to defend the country against the people of the mountains (i.e. Kandyans). They form with their headman an army of over 5,000 stout men. As a regard for their services they have the best and largest villages, and nearly all of them harvest the produce of their estates (tax) free. For this reason, the Honorable Company is not required to give them any wages, except when they are sent outside

their Corales (an administrative sub-division of a Dissawa).'

In 1762, another departing Dutch governor reported that '*Lascorins are a kind of native soldier, armed with swords and spears, who are used for various purposes but mostly light services, such as, among others, the delivery of letters, and the carrying of messages etc. Nevertheless, in the 1765 campaign against Kandy, lascorins armed with muskets were found to be "good for surprise attacks, marauding expeditions, cattle raids, and as a cover for the flanks and the advance and rear guards." Even so they were considered to be unsteady, and it was recommended that "they must always be supported by a few Europeans and a party of Javanese."*'

However, during the Dutch period, the previous rank of *Arachchi*, which was equivalent to that of a captain during Portuguese rule, was downgraded to the rank of a sergeant, and *Kankanis* to that of a corporal. *Muhandirams* were equal in rank to that of a lieutenant, and *Mudaliyars* to that of a captain in the Dutch army. The three *Dissawas* of Colombo, Galle and Matara were all European officers of the Dutch East India Company or Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC).

Raising of a Sinhalese Regiment under British Service
Pursuant to stiff resistance by the inhabitants on account of various methods of taxation introduced by Governor Fredrick North in 1797, the governor felt that it was time to raise a regiment comprising of low country Sinhalese to counter any threats, to which the European military officers objected.

They considered the Sinhalese not suitable as soldiers. However, despite objections, the "*Ceylon Native Infantry*" was formed, and recruiting was initially brisk. By August 1800, two companies had been raised in Galle and two more were being formed in Matara. By July 1801, 750 men had been enlisted and their wages had also been increased. North was jubilant when he said that "*They are in high spirits and very fine men and many more are expected to enlist. They are even now of great use in the garrison and they are now perfectly drilled.*" Command of the regiment was given to Colonel Ramsay of the 80th Foot, and the NCOs and rank and file were dressed in the same manner as the "*Regiments of Color in the West Indies.*" However, many of such recruits began deserting and the Reverend Cordiner, the chaplain of the garrison wrote that:

"A life of military discipline proved, in the highest degree, irksome and uncongenial to their habits. They deserted in great numbers, and examples intended to terrify, only stimulated those who remained, to abandon their service. At length, a sufficient number of Indian recruits were obtained from the coast of Coromandel, and the Corps of Sinhalese was disbanded. In those regiments which are now called "Ceylon Native Infantry," there is scarcely to be found a native of the island."

This was the state of affairs during the formative days of the *Lascorin Corps*.

Native Militias during the Kandyan Wars

However, in instances when troops were in short supply, Lascorins were used together with regular troops to com-

bat the enemy. During the 1st Kandyan War (1803-1805) Alexander Wood, Agent for Revenue and Commerce in the Colombo district in March 1803 led a force of one sergeant and 12 men of the 65th Regiment, 24 free Malays and 100 armed Lascorins and some Moormen against 7,000 Kandyans. They dispersed on hearing of his approach.

In 1817, when the conquered provinces rose in revolt from November, companies of Lascorins were raised again to release frontline troops, for service in the hill country. By 1818 four companies of Lascorins comprising one hundred men were in service, each with two *arachchis*, two *kankanis* and 25 *lascorins*.

The pay of an *arachchi* was 12 Rix dollars, *kankanis* ten Rix dollars, and *lascorins* eight Rix dollars per month, in addition to clothing. Each one of them was also given 1/4-seer of rice and 1/40 seer of salt daily.

The "*Colombo Native Militia*" was raised due to favorable reports reaching the governor, on the performance of Lascorins in Uva and Sabaragamuwa, so much so that the wife of the governor, Lady Brownrigg presented the new corps with colors with the embroidered motto "*Duty and Honour.*" This corps consisted of 6 *Muhandirams* (native officers), 22 sergeants (*arachchis*), 38 corporals (*kankanis*) and 545 Lascorins or privates.

Isaac Dias Abeyratne Bandaranaike was appointed as captain of the 1st additional company of the Colombo Native Militia, Domingo Perera Wijesundera Seneviratna, captain of the 2nd additional company and Abraham Siriwardena Seneviratna Soodesingha as captain of the 3rd additional company. During the rebellion, Lascorins "*were employed in small numbers, and proved faithful and not deficient in personal bravery, when serving with regular troops*" reported the Governor, General Sir Robert Brownrigg, Bart, GCB.

Second Attempt at raising a Sinhala Regiment – the Corps of Armed Lascorins

British forces in the island were fully stretched, but in August 1818 they felt that the back of the rebellion was broken.

To meet the shortfall of troops, two battalions of Indian sepoy from Bombay had been brought down, but the expenditure to maintain them was a drain on the finances of Ceylon. Because of this reason, Brownrigg was planning to raise a Sinhala regiment to replace one of the sepoy battalions. His recommendation was that Pound sterling 8,000 per year would be sufficient to maintain such a corps, and his decision to cut costs was approved by his superiors in London.

The Corps was to consist of 5-captains, 5-Lieutenants, one adjutant, one sergeant-major, one regimental clerk, 25-sergeants, 25-corporals, 10-drummers and 475-privates, all natives.

The overall commander was determined to be a captain assisted by an adjutant, both to be European officers. The collectors in Colombo, Kalutara, Galle, Tangalle and Chilaw were responsible for recruiting the volunteers, who would hand them over to the military for training. Pay was 45 Rix dollars per month for a captain, 30 for a lieutenant, 70 for the adjutant,

25 for the sergeant-major, 50 for the regimental clerk, 15 for sergeants, nine Rix dollars and eight fanams for corporals, nine Rix dollars and one fanam for drummers and eight Rix dollars and two fanams for the privates. In addition, they were entitled to one *seer* of rice daily and, on the march, were given two ounces of dried fish and salt.

Captain Lewis de Bussche, a seasoned military officer, was in temporary command of the new corps, with Ensign Tydd of the 19th regiment as European adjutant and Sergeant-Major Ossman of the 1st Ceylon Regiment as native adjutant with the rank and pay of a native captain.

By May 1819, the raising of the corps was complete, so much so that Brownrigg was able to repatriate the sepoy battalion on loan from Bombay to India. In July, Brownrigg reported that the corps of Lascorins was "advancing in discipline and efficiency."

The duties of the new corps were "as armed escorts, guarding of provisions and native prisoners, searching for disaffected persons in the jungles, and to assist in the collection of revenue." Weapons issued were cut-down muskets. In the past, many Lascorins were considered to be "good shots." However, long after the corps had been disbanded in 1869, a former colonial secretary had remarked "you never could be certain that they would not fire the ramrod at you."

Captain de Bussche was still in command, but in 1822 Jemidars Abdul Noor and Koratotage Alwis Appuhamy were promoted as Subadhars. On 26 December in the same year, Native Adjutant Comardeen of the recently disbanded 2nd Ceylon was appointed Subadhar to replace Subadhar Ossman who had passed away.

In 1831 a request was made by London to reduce public expenditure and the governor suggested that the Lascorin corps be disbanded, which would entail a saving of pound sterling 4,300 per year. However, there were objections principally from the former Town Major Sir John Wilson.

Incidentally Sir John Wilson, KCB, was a British army officer who rose to the rank of full general in 1854, and was General Officer commanding troops in Ceylon. He served as acting governor of British Ceylon on two occasions until a permanent incumbent was appointed. He was acting governor for almost a year from 19.03.1811 to 11.03.1812 after the departure of the second governor, Lieut-Gen The Rt Hon. Sir Thomas Maitland, GCB, GCMG (1805-1811), and the appointment of General Sir Robert Brownrigg, Bart, GCB. (1812-1820) and for 10-days from 13 to 23 October, 1831, after the departure of the 5th Governor, Lieut-Gen Sir Edward Barnes, GCB, (1824-1831) and the appointment of The Rt Hon. Sir Robert Wilmot-Horton, Bart, GCB. (1831-1837). He died in his London home in 1856 aged 76.

Captain TB Gascoyne provided the following reply as to the usefulness of the Lascorin corps:

"The principal part of this Corps, which is composed of Cingalese, is always stationed at Colombo and has detachments in Chilaw, Puttalam, Mannar, and Hambantota.

Its principal duties are to assist the other native troops in giving Guards to the different civil jails, and bodies of civil prisoners employed at hard labor and in furnishing Escorts for money, stamps, Commissariat and Colonial stores, ammunition, civil prisoners etc. which are constantly required. The detachment at Puttalam forms the Guard, necessary for the protection of the Government Salt Lagoons, and the detachment at Hambantota, in conjunction with the Malay Company, is employed on similar duties at that station. Parties of this Corps are also occasionally required by the Civil authorities to attend at the execution of Native criminals and to quell riots, which may arise in distant villages."

Uniforms worn by the Lascorins were "round scarlet jackets and pantaloons" for all ranks.

Lascorin Attendants

There were two other units that probably remained in existence throughout British rule in Ceylon, in addition



• During the British occupation lascorins are seen here wearing shorts. The Britishers are in uniform with a soldier on horseback holding the Union Jack.

to the Lascorin corps. They were the "Lascorins of the Governors Gate, and "Lascorins of the Atapattu." "Atapattu" was the Sinhala term for "Royal bodyguard." For example, on 17 May, 1766, the Dutch Governor Falk appointed Don Simon de Silva Jayatilleke Seneviratna:

"Maha Mudaliyar and First Interpreter of our Gate, under the title of Siriwardene Jayatilleke Seneviratna, and we do attach to his office, nine and a half ranks (ranchus) of lascorins, of whom six and a half shall appertain to the said Maha Mudaliyarship; and he is permitted, according to previous example, and to advance his dignity among the villages outside the gravets (boundaries) of Colombo, to carry a flying banner and be attended by six tom-tom beaters, a hautbois player, and twelve lascorins."

When Sir Thomas Maitland, the British governor appointed Don David Jayatileke Abeysirwardena Illangakoon, as First Maha Mudaliyar on 01 January, 1810, he too was accorded the exact same privileges.

The former Dutch Dissawas, who were replaced by British Collectors, also had retainers of Lascorins.

In addition to acting as messengers and guards, the Lascorins also performed minor police duties, and

in emergencies, were drafted into the native militia. The embedded Lascorin company to the civilian or judicial officer concerned, was a status symbol in the eyes of the local inhabitants.

When the Chief Justice of Ceylon visited Galle on an official tour in 1820, Lieutenant Colonel James Campbell, referring to the Lascorins, said:

"When they travel in the discharge of their duties, they are attended wherever they go by a band of natives, armed with lances, and are likewise surrounded by a host of tom-tom beaters, who drum away with all their might, and a set of fellows blowing, as loudly and discordantly as possible, the most horridly squeaking pipes imaginable."

Cordiner mentions that during his tenure in Ceylon (1799–1804), the Lascorins attached to the law courts in Colombo were *"fantastically dressed, with Cingalese swords, and Hessian caps and feathers."*

The Lascorins usually wore tall conical peakless caps, complete with wings ending in a tassel and a tall feather plume. The lower half of the cap is decorated with two broad bands of lace. Over a buttoned waistcoat he would wear a long tailed single-breasted coat, decorated with large round buttons. The coat has an unusual collar which also forms lapels in the manner of a modern dinner jacket, decorated with broad bands of lace. The cuffs are round and are again decorated with two rows of broad lace, this in mid cuff. The shoulders have small wings on them. The lower body is covered with a long gingham cloth wrapped around the waist. A short-curved Sinhala sword with the pommel in the shape of a lion's head is carried in a scabbard supported by a broad belt.

Epilogue

Even though the British disbanded the Lascorin corps after sometime, they had a grudging admiration for the services rendered by this corps, for its usefulness as a native militia.

Though the first attempt at raising a regiment was not successful as outlined by Governor Brownrigg, subsequent events proved otherwise. However, it has to be admitted that although this corps played a secondary role in support of front-line troops, it performed its duties well, considering the circumstances. The reason for disbandment of this corps was not due to inefficiency, but due to economic considerations. During the last stages, they were more ceremonial attendants than fighting men.

References:

- The Lascorins of Ceylon in British Service - By Randolph Jones in the Journal of the Society of Army Historical Research - Spring 2002 - Vol. Eighty No: 321.
- "Orang Regimen" - The Malays of the Ceylon Rifle Regiment - By Professor BA Hussainmiya.
- Portuguese soldiers in 17th Century Ceylon - their dress, weapons and flags - By Randolph Jones

(The writer thanks Victor Melder in Melbourne, Australia, for providing the initial research material for this piece.)

APPRECIATION

Dean Jones

– Lanka's friend indeed!

by Rex Clementine

The Aussies were in Galle for the first Test of the series in 2004 and Dean Jones joked in commentary. He said that it took him less than four hours from Singapore to Katunayake but five hours to get to Galle from Katunayake! He was driving home some pertinent points. Travel in Sri Lanka before the highway days was a nightmare. Sri Lanka Cricket did not raise objections with the television company that employed Jones nor did the Sports Ministry. His criticism was well taken by all and sundry. Jones didn't mince any words. He was a bold critic. As The Island's former Editor Mr. Gamini Weerakoon used to say, 'A good journalist works with his resignation letter in the pocket.'



Jones was a huge fan of Sri Lanka. After the death of Tony Greig, he was an ideal ambassador to promote tourism and he did a splendid job. Some of his best moments in commentary came in Sri Lanka. He earned the nickname of 'Professor Deano' for the pre-match show that he did during a triangular series in Dambulla. Jones was dressed as a Professor giving the pitch report and supporting him was up and coming actress Anarkali Akarsha, just 18-years old. The show was a hit and fans took an immediate liking to both the ex-cricketer and budding actress.

Not that his career was entirely smooth. During a Test match at P. Sara Oval in 2006, Ten Sports fired him while the day's play was in progress for calling Hashim Amla a 'terrorist'. Jones was off air but the microphone in the studio had picked his remark. He apologised immediately and was reinstated a few months later.

The fact that he was shortlisted to take over from Graham Ford in 2017 as the national cricket team's Head Coach was a poorly kept secret by Sri Lanka Cricket. The Island asked him what would be the first thing he would do if he got the job. Jones said, 'ban football during training.' The Sri Lankan cricket team's obsession to engage in a game of football as warm-up before a day's play and training was frowned upon by many given the high number of injuries it was causing.

Jones was a fine batsman and, in his generation, only Viv Richards played one-day cricket better. A smart thinker of the game, it was Jones' bright idea to run the extra run on the throw in the vast Australian grounds. He earned a reputation as an excellent runner between the wickets and when asked what was his secret, he replied,

(Continued on Page 33)

OBITUARY



Dr ROBERT GRANT SOURJAH
(10 September 1925 – 1 October 2020)

It is with much sadness that we record the recent death of CSA stalwart Dr Robert Sourjah, who succumbed to a fatal stroke on 1 October, at the ripe old age of 95 years. He was taken to hospital on his 95th birthday, and lingered for a few weeks before passing on.

Robert Sourjah was a legend and his many accomplishments as a redoubtable rugby player, a Consultant Physician and as a most gregarious person who reveled in the company of friends, is hard to beat. He was acclaimed as the Grand Old Man of Trinity College, Kandy where he learnt of books and of the game called rugby football. His name has been long associated with the game of rugby football not only to everyone associated with his alma mater Trinity College, but also to generations of Royalists who have over the years come to respect and venerate him as the first captain of Trinity College in the famous Bradby Shield encounters between the two schools which passed its 75 years of engagement last year.

Born on 10 September 1925 in Kattankudy where his father Dr Abidin Sourjah was District Medical Officer, Robert lost his father to typhoid when the latter was just 41 years of age. His mother Catherine Antoinette Grant was the daughter of a wealthy British proprietary planter Robert Cohoun Grant who owned Crystal Farm Estate Kotagala and Invery Estate, Dickoya. Grant passed away in Poolbank Estate, Hatton. His remains lie buried at the Warleigh Cemetery, Dickoya.

On the death of Robert's father, his mother ensured that the children received a good education, and Robert and his younger brother Tony were admitted to Trinity College. Younger brother Tony passed away sadly at a young age from an infection leading to tetanus. His two sisters pre-deceased Robert.

The name Robert Sourjah is indelibly linked with Trinity College where he shone as a student and as a sportsman. The game of rugby first took root in Trinity and Royal Colleges where the annual encounter began in 1922. It was, however, in 1945 that the Bradby Shield was offered to the winner of the annual encounters between the two schools. Robert held the unique honour of Captaining the Trinity XV in that first encounter between the two schools. He was awarded the coveted "lion" for his prowess. His two sons, Rohan, who captained the Trinity Rugby XV in 1975, and Lalin who played rugby and captained the athletics team were also honored with the coveted "lion", and are the only father-son combinations to achieve that distinction.

These annual rugby football encounters played over the past 75 five years has evolved into a sporting cum social event much akin to the annual Royal-Thomian cricket encounter, and there is no doubt Robert has a special place in the Hall of Fame associated



• *Trinity College Rugby Football Team 1945*
Winners of the Bradby Shield -Robert Sourjah (captain)
Seated in centre holding ball.

with the event. His participation in the game continued after he left Trinity College and joined the Ceylon Medical School for medical studies, when he represented the Havelocks Sports Club in the club rugby competition vying for the Clifford Cup. Here too he excelled, with the Havelocks team winning the Clifford Cup in 1951 and 1952. All of his team mates have departed the earthly scene except for the venerable but still sprightly Hugh Aldons who lives in Melbourne.

I still recall with nostalgia the first occasion I met Robert about 25 years ago, sometime in the late 1990s when he and his wife Inez visited Sydney where their elder son Rohan was domiciled. Having befriended Rohan in somewhat serendipitous circumstances a couple of years earlier, we both being "bibliophiles" of some description, Rohan was keen that I meet his dad, and when the Sourjahs arrived, my wife Tulsi and I were on the list of invitations to the first of countless meals that we have had the privilege and good fortune to share. Before they migrated to Australia, in the late 1990s, my wife and I on a visit to Sri Lanka were invited to dinner at their home in De Silva Road, Kalubowila, which gave me the first insight into Inez's talent in the field of cuisine. Robert was then a Consultant Physician in Sri Lanka where he had previously also served in various areas, and also in the United Kingdom and in Saudi Arabia where he worked for the oil conglomerate Aramco.

Despite the western ethos that influenced his upbringing, Robert had strong beliefs in indigenous culture. A historian by inclination, he had studied the early history of Sri Lanka and ancient tomes like the Mahavamsa, known all about ola leaf manuscripts, and was influenced by astrology. He was a true Sri Lankan in those terms.



•The three "lions" Rohan, Robert, and Lalin; the only father-son combination to achieve the honour.

Robert and Inez were a couple made for each other, Robert the quiet no fuss conversationalist and Inez the very epitome of cordon bleu. Her cuisine was just out of this world, and what's more she enjoyed entertaining friends. I soon realised that any Old Trinitian who had not enjoyed the mouthwatering dishes at the Sourjah home, is either a misanthrope or someone who is lacking in the spirit of the old school. Their home in Sydney was a veritable clubhouse where the Trinitian fraternity in New South Wales met, wine and dined, and conducted meetings as well. When Robert turned 90 five years ago, his friends led by the Old Trinitian Association in NSW felicitated him at a dinner attended by over 150 guests in an exclusive golf club in Sydney. It was my pleasure and privilege to propose a toast to the health of Robert at the request of the Trinity Old Boys Association (many members of which I have come to know at the various luncheon and dinner parties at the Sourjah residence) followed by another toast by a Trinity Old boy, Dilip Kumar of Sydney.

The Ceylon Society of Australia is inching along to achieving its 25th anniversary, but not many members are aware of the significant role played by Robert's son Rohan Sourjah as its founding Honorary Secretary. The hard yards put in by Rohan and the other foundation members have created an extraordinary institution with a unique character. On Robert's migration to Sydney, he was an automatic choice for the CSA Committee which he served with great distinction for many years until the distance to be driven to meetings made him to opt out reluctantly. It may be appropriate to mention here, that Robert continued to drive his car right up to his 95th year until he had his fatal stroke. His attitude to life, the warmth in his friendship, and his all round care and concern for others is inspirational to us all. We will miss him terribly, but "at the going down of the sun, and in the morning we shall remember him."

He leaves behind his inseparable partner in life Inez, their two sons Rohan and Lalin (domiciled in USA) and their families including three grandchildren. Our heartfelt condolences go out to Inez, Rohan and Deanne, grandchildren Mark and Nicole, and to Lalin and Susan and daughter Sarah.

Vale Robert Sourjah dear friend !

*We'll meet again, don't know where, don't know when
We'll meet again some sunny day !*

– HUGH KARUNANAYAKE

Obituary notices published in *The Ceylankan*

All Obituary notices and Appreciations of Life recorded on these pages are restricted to deceased CSA members only. In keeping with that policy all notices are accompanied with a note indicating such membership status. Occasionally, we may inadvertently fail to indicate this important fact, as in the case of the Late Dr R.K.(Rajpal) de Silva (see page 30 of J88 - November 2019) who was a Member since 2002. We trust readers will accept our apologies for these omissions.

Dean Jones - Appreciation (From page 31)

'just common sense.' Soon, others followed the extra run on the throw theory while playing in Australia and it paid rich dividends.

His finest hour in the sport came in Test cricket though during the tied Madras Test in 1986. Jones made a double hundred and the scorching heat took a toll on him. He was vomiting and feeling uneasy but did not throw it away. At the end of his 210, Jones was hospitalized. Coach Bob Simpson said that it was the greatest innings played for Australia. His final Test match was played in Moratuwa in 1992.

Jones was in Bombay doing studio shows for host broadcaster on IPL games. The Island learns that he had gone for a run in the morning and was with former fast bowler Brett Lee when he suffered a severe heart attack in the seven star hotel lobby at lunch time. Lee desperately tried to save him with CPR after Jones collapsed but for no avail.

(From ISLAND newspaper on 20 September 2020. Published with permission).

No go fellows!

It's no go the merrygoround, it's no go the rickshaw,
All we want is a limousine and a ticket for the peepshow.
It's no go the picture palace, it's no go the stadium
It's no go the country cot with a pot of pink geraniums
It's no go the Government grants,
it's no go the election
Sit tight for fifty years and hang your hat on a pension..

– Louis Mac Neice, *Bagpipe Music* 1918



2020 AGM & SOCIAL

The AGM and Social that was to take place on 28 November has been postponed because of the Covid 19 restrictions on social gatherings and will be held as soon as Regulations permit. CSA members will be informed when appropriate dates for this function will take place.

Meanwhile, as the Constitution permits, the President and Committee members will continue to function in their respective positions until an AGM is held.

Future General Meetings for 2021

The following General Meetings are tentatively scheduled as follows:

Sunday 28 February

Sunday 30 May

Sunday 29 August

AGM & Social - Saturday 27 November

MEMBERSHIP RATES

- **General Subscriptions for Australia:** (All rates, unless otherwise stated, are in Australian dollars) \$35 per year;
- **Pensioners:** \$25 per year (to be reviewed in 2020)
- **Overseas members from USA/UK/Canada/Israel/Thailand:** \$45 per year.
- **Sri Lanka:** Rs.3000 per year.
- **Gift subscriptions:** \$35 or \$45 if the nominee is resident outside Australia.

Please arrange payment of Membership subscriptions for 2020 if still due, together with any arrears where applicable. Pay by cheque in favour of "Ceylon Society of Australia" and post to Deepak Pritamdas, P O Box 489, Blacktown, NSW 2148, Australia.

Or pay by Bank Transfer to Ceylon Society of Australia
Bank name: Commonwealth Bank of Australia

Account details: BSB 062 308

Account No. 1003 8725

Swift Code: CTBAAU2S

NOTE: Please include your name as payee, and kindly email all payment details to deepakpsl@gmail.com

Advertising in The Ceylankan

For some time, CSA members and others have indicated an interest in using the Journal to promote their goods and services. 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 a vehicle for research, study and broadcast 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 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.



Congratulations and a Warm Welcome to our New Members

CHANNA WICKREMESEKERA, 63 Smyth Street,
Mt. Waverley 3149.VIC.

AJIT WIJESINGHE
PO Box 57 Surrey Hills NSW 2010



WE NEED SPEAKERS

The CSA welcomes professionals and others interested in speaking at our public meetings on a subject of their choice. Meetings are held in Sydney, Melbourne and Colombo and take place quarterly in February, May, August and November of each year.

If you have anyone in mind, please contact CSA President Pauline Gunawardane on (Mob) +61 419 447 665 (email: paulineg@ozemail.com.au or Melbourne Chapter Convenor Hemal Gurusinghe (Mob) + 61 427 725 740 (email: hemguru@hotmail.com) or Colombo Chapter Secretary Anandalal Nanayakkara 077 327 2989 (email: anandalal10@gmail.com)

News from the Colombo Chapter

It has been a bad year for us because of the Pandemic and we have not made a splash in the pages of *The Ceylankan*. The only way we made waves was with the demise of our Vice President, Mohan Rajasingham, which was reported at length. However, in this last Journal for the year we think we should remind you of our existence!

We had planned two lecture meetings, beginning in March 2020 but the gods disagreed. After many months we were able to think of a gathering of people, but the designated speaker was not available. Nevertheless, our 94-year old Vice President, Frederick Medis, took up the challenge and delivered the first Post-Covid lecture on *Some interesting episodes in Sri Lankan History* on the 18th September at our usual venue. Fred made a brave effort, despite his age, and he was received very well by an appreciative audience not smaller than our usual gatherings. A member from the Press was also present and we look forward to some coverage in the national Press.

In late November or early December we hope to hold our next meeting, but much depends on whether circumstances permit. The speaker will be **Sunela Jayawardene**, a wanderer in the less visited wilderness of Sri Lanka, who will speak on *Trails that the Wildmen tread...* An Architect by profession, she is a lover of the wilderness on the lines of R.L. Spittel, Chris Urugoda and John Still and is a writer of note, having been shortlisted for the Gratiaen Prize for her "Line of Lanka: Myths and Memories of an Island". She is also recognised as 'Sri Lanka's leading environmental architect'. Her award-winning hotel projects include Jetwing Vil Uyana, Colombo Court, Jetwing Kaduruketha and Camellia Hills. She was the first Chairperson of the Federation of Environmental Organisations of Sri Lanka, and has spoken on environmental design and sustainable land management and lifestyles for various public fora including, EFL Green Conversations, Arthur C. Clarke Centenary and is the curator of Dilmah Conservation's Sustainable Lifestyles series.

The Colombo Chapter eagerly looks forward to her presentation, on a date and at a venue that is, alas! beyond us to be certain about.

TONY SALDIN
Convenor/Local President

Get yourself a copy of *The Ceylankan* INDEX

A combined A4 size volume of 64 page Index to compliment *The Ceylankan*. has been compiled. It is neatly set in large font with an appropriately designed cover. The Subject Index takes up 39 pages and the



Author Index has 20 pages. The composite work will be very useful for anybody who wishes to track down an article in a past issue of *The Ceylankan* and as Hugh says "... this significant work will no doubt be a great resource to writers, researchers and scholars of the future".

Prior to printing copies of the Index we would like to have some indication of numbers required. Members interested in obtaining copies need to contact a Committee member to reserve their copies..

NOTE: Hugh has about 10 extra copies of the Index which he has generously offered FREE (including postage) to CSA members in Australia on a first-come-first-served basis. If interested contact Hugh on karu@internode.net.au.

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 is 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.

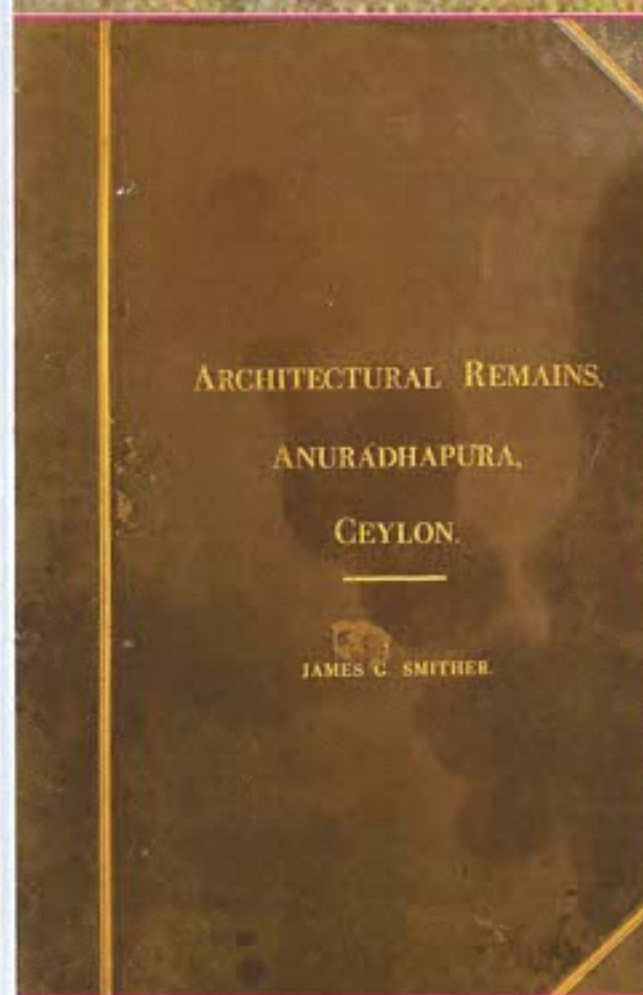
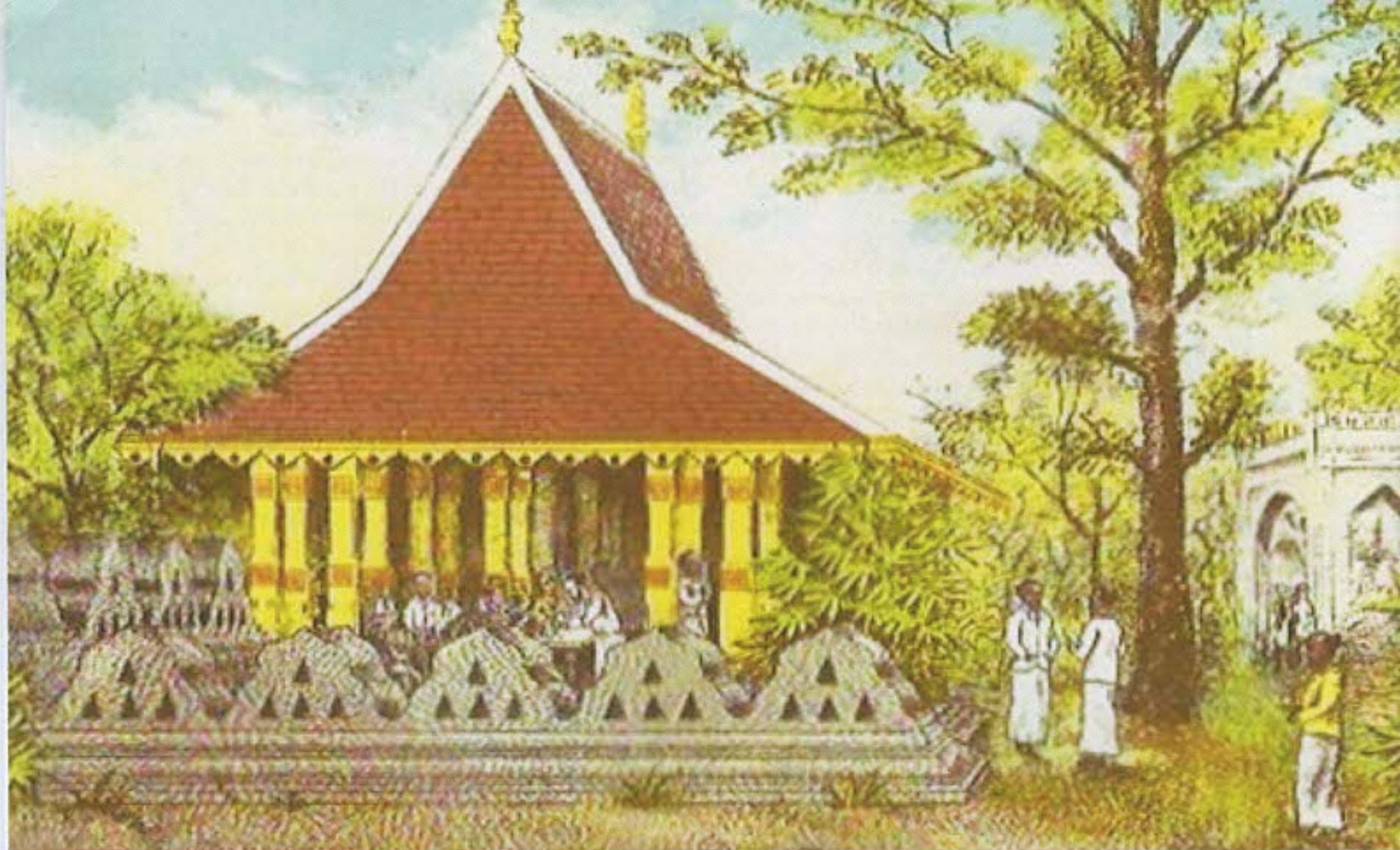
While every effort is made to print material that is relevant and correct, we do not take the responsibility for errors. The editor would appreciate any inaccuracies being brought to his notice without delay.

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.



Meals Ammi Made

We welcome our readers to send in their recipes for this column. They must be of Sri Lankan origin, family-orientated meals you learnt to prepare from your Ammi or Achchi.



• (Top) Ceylon Tea House exhibited in London 1886. from "Architectural Remains of Ceylon " by JG Smither 1892. Book pictured above left.

• (Above) A postcard image indicating the statue of Queen Victoria where the Ceylon Tea Kiosk once stood.